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India and Australia: Reading the Postcolonial Connection

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A recent pivot to India in Australia has aroused a great deal of interest. Tellingly, a venue for the celebration of this closer relationship was a cricket match, an embodiment of the influence of the British Empire around the world. Indeed, when we think of the relationship between these countries it inevitably occurs in the context of cricket. This offers a hint as to the deeper similarities between the countries. Despite their vast differences they share the dubious distinction of being former colonies. But their specific relationship can be seen in the emergence of the Indian film industry. Cinema was born in Paris with the Lumière show that opened on 28th December 1885. Maurice Sestiere, the Lumière man, was on his way to Australia, but owing to shipping routes between the colonies had to stop over in Bombay where he decided to screen the Lumière film. Thus virtually by an accident of history and imperial geography, the Indian film industry was born, and from this moment a culturally situated film industry arose. But this accident of history was one predicated on India and Australia's imperial connections.

The many differences are obvious to all, but even if we concentrate on the single and most obvious difference - the ethnic complexity of India versus the whiteness of Australia, we discover very quickly just how constructed this difference actually is. For Australia is just as multiplicitous and complex as India, we only have to look at the literally hundreds of indigenous and migrant languages to see this. In fact the myth of a unified people, whether unified by language, culture or politics is a necessary nationalist fiction of cohesion developed in the interests of the state. Given the imperial function of the nation state we could say that both India and Australia as they exist in contemporary consciousness are specifically imperial constructions.

Despite their vast differences, both India and Australia share, historically, a similar place in the European imagination. Although the Raj was the jewel in Queen Victoria's crown, it was regarded, like all colonies, as both irredeemably other and in need of the 'nurture' of imperial rule. The myth of the civilizing mission led to the most distorted assumptions: that the building of the Indian rail system, for instance, and the structure of British administration compensated for colonial oppression and alienation. This is a fantastic fallacy. India was one of the richest countries in the world, if not the richest when first encountered by Europeans. It is pertinent that the word 'loot' is Indian in origin because the East India Company proceeded to loot India of its wealth for over two centuries. For all the self congratulation of the civilizing mission, the destruction of structures of governance, the destruction of the weaving industry and the succession of famines which led up to a catatrophic famine from Churchill's withholding of food in WWII were the sordid 'benefits' of English administration. As Tagore put it "The wheels of fate will someday compel the English to give up their Indian Empire. But what kind of India will they leave behind, what stark misery…waste of mud and filth they will leave behind them!" (cited Mehta 2012, p.174)

Australia, on the other hand – *Terra Australis* – was regarded as Terra Incognita, the unnamed, the Nothing beyond the boundaries of the civilized world, the unnatural and contradictory underside of the globe. From the beginning of settlement it was a place of horror, imprisonment, an upside-down land, beyond the edge of the world. And yet it is also Espirito Santo, the land of the Holy Spirit, the land of possibility – of new beginning. Curiously, both places retain much of this paradoxical conflict in the imagination, which attests to one of the points I want to make -- the strangely persistent power of the European imagination in the construction of the former empire. This power needed to be resisted if these two countries were to take hold of their own forms of Modernity and despite their apparently vastly different *experiences* of colonisation the *dynamic* of postcolonial opposition and transformation remains similar.

In terms of its literary writing, its creative production in the language of the coloniser there are three fundamental areas in which the experience and production of India and Australia can be compared - the uses and developments of Language; the function and transformation of history; and the impact of the ideology of nationhood which is where the theme of deocracy comes in.

Language

In speaking of language I am referring to the adoption of English as a creative and administrative language in the two continents. Different though the process may be, we may see this limited application of the problems of language as a model for the whole creative engagement of the postcolonial society with imperial power. In both countries the development of literatures in English has given birth to some of the most resonant *imagining* of cultural experience, and in India's case has transformed the discipline of English literature itself. This is indeed why literature and other creative arts are valuable, they enter those border zones of cultural reality where knowledge and identity are in constant flux and its imaginings of that society become in a powerful way, a part of that society.

But in aligning these two very different colonial situations we compare the difficult and controversial *adoption* of the imperial language in India, with the *transplantation* of that language in Australia. The role of Macaulay's Minute to Parliament in 1835 is well known. The Charter Act of 1813, devolving responsibility for Indian education on the colonial administration, led to a struggle between Anglicists and Orientalists, ultimately resolved by Macaulay's Minute, in which we find stated not just the assumptions of the Anglicists, but the profoundly universalist assumptions of English national culture itself. "We must educate a people who cannot at present be educated by means of their mother-tongue", says Macaulay, with breathtaking confidence, "The claims of our own language it is hardly necessary to recapitulate." It worked so well, says Viswanathan, because "the strategy of locating authority in the texts of English literature all but effaced the sordid history of colonialist expropriation, material exploitation and class and race oppression behind European world dominance" (Viswanathan 1987: 22). English literature "functioned as a surrogate Englishman in his highest and most perfect state" (23).

In India the alien colonial tongue became the language of the elite, in Australia the linguistic landscape was dominated by a putative single language. I say putative because in fact no language is single and unified. But both (forcible) adoption and transplantation generate a *transformation* of the language; both engage in a postcolonial process of appropriation by which the language is changed to adapt to the conditions of local experience. The unifying anglo-centric simplicity of the assertion that Australia is an "English speaking country" is itself the working out of a subtle kind of imperialism, one taken over by the nation-state. In both India and Australia there is struggle over language, both demotic and aesthetic, a wrestling with its power to construct reality and a political intervention in that process of construction. And this occurs in the postcolonial society whether English is a 'mother-tongue' or 'other-tongue'.

The crucial point here is that if we recognise that language is the prime vehicle of imperial control, it is in the very instrument of domination that the similarity of postcolonial resistance in India and Australia emerges. By being appropriated it became a powerful medium for communicating cultural difference and re-imagining a social future. It is the logic and dynamic of this postcolonial resistance rather than the specific social and cultural consequences that connect the two. The dissemination of the language produced consequences that the imperial administration could never have foreseen

History

Another thing that unites these strange bedfellows is history, not their very different histories but the imperial phenomenon of History itself. Australia and India, like the rest of the world, want to enter history, because, as Ashish Nandy puts it "Historical consciousness now owns the globe… Though millions of people continue to stay outside history, millions have, since the days of Marx, dutifully migrated to the empire of history to become its loyal subjects." (1995: 46) When colonial societies are historicized they are brought into history, brought into the discourse of modernity as a function of imperial control – mapped, named, organized, legislated, inscribed. But at the same time they are kept at History's margins, implanting the joint sense of loss and desire. As Chakrabarty reveals world history is the history of Europe.

But the story of the past is critical because it is the story of *what* is real and *how* it is real. We can no more ignore that reality than we can ignore the date. No other discourse has such a power to narrate the future, because, apart from geography, no other discourse has such a claim upon 'world reality'. History, that relatively recent discourse of European Modernity, so central to Europe's invention of the world, not only records 'the past' but outlines a trajectory that takes in the future. It is precisely that future that seems undermined by a fixation on a colonial past. Does this fixation on the workings of colonial power continue to privilege colonial society? If so, why, then, do writers and creative artists continually re-imagine that history and the consequences of that relationship? Is it because a colonial history touches us at our core?

The OED gives one definition of history as: "a written narrative constituting a continuous methodical record, in order of time, of important or public events, especially those connected with a particular country, people or individual." Each one of these elements - its written form; its weddedness to chronological time, its will to truth, its continuity, its teleology, its narrativity, its aspiration to be a

scientific record of events; its articulation of what constitutes events of historical value - has been important in the imperial function of history over the last two centuries.

The discipline of history emerged at a strategic moment of choice between possible discursive options, the apparently neutral narrative form succeeding by virtue of its resemblance of the purity of scientific disciplines. Hayden White asks the crucial question: what do we rule out when we constitute history in this rigorous scientific way, and insist that any other procedure would reveal a want of discipline? (White 1982: 120). His answer is *rhetoric*, which can be described as an awareness of the variety of ways of configuring a past which itself only exists as a chaos of forms. The indigenous narrative of the Dreaming may be said to reinstate rhetoric by dispensing with the western obsession with the order of events and the scientific record which dispensed with the element of interpretation.

History occludes local pasts in various ways, sometimes by nominating the pre-colonial as 'primitive' and 'prehistoric', sometimes (as in India) by 'orientalising' it as exotic, sometimes by overshadowing it with the prestige and status of modern history's scientific method. In settler colonies the suppression of the local history is more subtle: postcolonial history (other than the officially 'national') is regarded as having no value or importance because 'nothing significant' has occurred: Australian colonial history is simply an extension of British history. Whatever the particular way in which History dominates the local, it is fictional narrative which provides the most flexible and evocative response, principally because fiction is best able to reproduce the fundamentally allegorical nature of history itself.

The reason literary writing is so efficacious is that it returns rhetoric to history. The dominant mode of this 'writing' has been allegorical, making allegory itself a site of struggle, and a mode of counter-discourse in all forms of colonial society, and, indeed, in our present 'global culture'. The 'great' literary allegories of the English literature canon have been the most influential formulators of what it is to be human and have thus become the particular objects of counter-discourse. Thus, "allegorical writing, and its inherent investment in history provides the postcolonial writer with a means" not only of proposing that history can be "opened up to the transformative power of imaginative revision," but "also of building it into the structuring principle of the fictional work of art" (Slemon 1988: 159). Ultimately, allegory is crucial because history itself is allegorical. Contemporary anti-narrative theories such as quantitative history, cliometric history, theory oriented history and psycho-history are more self-consciously allegorical than

traditional narrative histories, but this merely serves to articulate the allegorical nature and function of narrative itself (Kellner 1987: 27)

The significance of allegory to postcolonial accounts of history is the opportunity it opens up for what Edouard Glissant calls a "prophetic vision of the past." Talking about the difficult phenomenon of Caribbean history, the history of a people robbed of a prehistory, taken out of their own history, so to speak, and then denied a reality within early accounts of plantation society, Glissant conceives a history in prophetic terms: a past conflated with the present that the writer must continually strive to capture. "The past," he says "to which we were subjected, which has not yet emerged as history for us, is, however, obsessively present. The duty of the writer is to explore this obsession, to show its relevance in a continuous fashion to the immediate present" (Glissant 1989: 64). This prophetic vision, he explains, is neither a nostalgic lament nor a narrative locked into the scientific method of history. It enters the allegory of historical narrative in order to revision the future. A striking example of this, according to Wilson Harris, is the ubiquitous limbo dance found in the carnival life of the West Indies which is an allegory of the slaves' passage from Africa to the Caribbean, a continually and allegorically performed history, prophesying regeneration and renewal. This is a compelling image of a history that functions in the present, that not so much forms a dialectic between memory, future time and the present, as *enacts* the presentness of history.

It is in literary narratives, because they so closely mimic the narrative mode of history, that the allegory of imperial history can be most effectively contested. It is also in literary narratives that a prophetic vision of the past can be realised. By comparing an odd couple, an Indian and Australian novel, investigating one very small example of a much more widespread process, we discover the extent to which these different societies share strategies of transformation. Literary writing in postcolonial societies exceeds the aesthetic function of canonical works, as the imagination itself tests the political strategies that are critical to various forms of social transformation. The creative arts are crucial to this transformative process because social change must first be imagined before it can be brought into being. When we become bemused by the mean-spiritedness of our politicians and institutions, it is in our power to initiate change by first imagining. Ultimately, the imagination is nothing less than prophetic.

Shashi Tharoor's *The Great Indian Novel* and Peter Carey's *Oscar and Lucinda* demonstrate that writers may write back to imperial history from very different perspectives, in different ways and with very

different allegorical modes. Tharoor contests the *universality* of imperial history, while Carey contests its *teleology*. *The Great Indian Novel* retells the story of the breakdown of Empire in India, and the emergence of independence, through the lens of the *Mahabarahta* which forms a counter-discursive frame through which the scientific pretensions of a colonial history may be dismantled. In effect it absorbs and overwhelms the apparently universal history of the nation in a larger mythic framework. *Oscar and Lucinda* balances its prophetic vision on an allegorical journey which depicts the teleological, often visionary, but deeply contradictory progress of European civilization; a journey which is transformed as it progresses. The novel dismantles the teleology of history by revealing this apparently progressive movement hinges on moments of pure chance. The *Mahabarahta* and the settler journey outward and inward present two distinctly different cultural motifs for their allegorical movement. While they share an attack on the allegory of imperial history these two novels engage that allegory in the ways that have been most significant to the cultures from theich they emerge. Their allegories employ the difference of their cultural ground as a site of resistance.

Myth and History: The Great Indian Novel

The central story in *The Great Indian Novel* is India's move to independence. The story of partition is the narrative in which time and space, history and geography meet. But the truth this novel expresses so well is that every effect of imperial power in South-Asia is at the same time a moment of redefinition of empire. The catastrophic construction of modern India, so consummate a demonstration of the consequences of imperial power, is nevertheless an engagement in which the effects of change work dialectically. And this dialectical relationship is most potently revealed in the use of the English language itself. The process within which the relationship of the colonizer and colonized operates becomes dialogic when the master-tongue is appropriated. The English language is not simply appropriated to describe Indian culture, it is in a subtle way implicated in its construction.

The Great Indian Novel overlays the broad outlines of the *Mahabarahta* upon the story of India's postcolonial history in a way that not only provides a reconceptualisation of events in the context of a dense mythology, but also serves to disrupt the discourse of history itself, projecting it into the future. We can think of it as the overlaying of an allegorical cultural map upon the narrative of official history to effectively 'reshape' it. The process of this overlaying provides a 'timeless' allegorical framework for the events of India's move to independence without necessarily discarding historical narrativity. Indeed the

contingent and dialectical movement of that narrative is emphasised and by interpolating the *Mahabarata's* sense of the recurrence of historical events, the power of the imperial/empirical history of India is undermined in a kind of allegorical one-upmanship.

This writer's India therefore becomes endlessly redefinable.

> History, Ganapathi -- indeed the world, the universe, and all human life, and so too, every institution under which we live -- is in a constant state of evolution. The world and everything in it is being created and re-created even as I speak, each hour, each day, each week, going through the unending process of birth and rebirth which has made us all. India has been born and reborn scores of times, and it will be reborn again. India is for ever; and India is forever being made (Tharoor 1989: 245).

It is in the light of this salutary view of the universe that the writer is given a free hand in his intervention into historical truth. The 'positive transparency' by which he appropriates the past creates a dialogue between history and culture that illuminates the allegorical function of each.

For the non-Indian reader the access to Hindu cosmology through the *Mahabarata* occurs in exactly the same way that the Indian readers of the Great Tradition of English literature were expected to absorb the values of Western civilization from their reading. *The Great Indian Novel* not only demonstrates the process of the postcolonial interpolation of history, but the kind of 'resistance' which can be achieved by an interpolation of the category 'literature' itself. The layering of the transparency of Indian cosmology, values, assumptions, world view upon that history via the *Mahabharata* enacts the civilizing mission *in reverse*.

By naming those people who played the major parts in contemporary Indian history according to the names of the *Mahabharata*, history itself is 'known' in a different way. By so manifestly exceeding the linear narrative of history, the story of India is known in a way which cannot be confined by History. This power to interpolate a dominant discourse and transform it becomes prophetic. The immense depth and spread of Indian cosmology exists as a kind of ground on which the story of India's move into independence can be read, a story in which irony and parody are all the stronger when read from the perspective of the timeless Indian myth.

The allegorical mode makes visible that which exists as a hidden function of historical narrativity. Nowhere does allegory seem more appropriate as a mode of history than in the vibrant and irreducible complexity of India. In this novel the transparency of the *Mahabharata* gives way directly to allegory at the moment of historical crisis: the break-up of India itself. This occurs in the birth of Draupadi, the beautiful symbolic progeny of the union of empire and decolonizing state. Draupadi, the daughter of Dhritarashatra (Nehru), and the Vicerine (Lady Mountbatten), is India herself; beautiful, hybrid, mysterious, "Draupadi was like the flame of a brass lamp in a sacred temple of the people" (309). Her marriage is the allegory of India's future: "Yes of course. Draupadi had to be married one day. But to tie that boundless spirit to any one man -- it would be a crime; it would diminish and confine her, and all of us" (311). In a dream Ved Vyas sees that it is Arjun the perfect, Arjun the hero of mythology who succeeds in winning her. Ironically, India enters the ambivalent realm of modernity by having to marry Arjun's brothers as well. The dream marriage of Draupadi and Arjun must also include the stolidly political and bureaucratic Yudhishtir, the soldier Bhim, it must include the glib banalities of diplomacy and the agonising dilemmas of administration in the persons of the twins Nakul and Sahadev (321).

Such imperatives exist outside the theatre of official history, but they explain much about the ambivalence of decolonisation. Imperial history, is like a stage on which the universal drama of the Enlightenment is played out. But History is not a staged play, a theatre played out on the passive stage called 'India,' as imperial history might contend, but a story without end. This strikes at the very heart of the teleological perspective of Imperial history because the end of such history is the perfection of the civilizing process.

Oscar and Lucinda: Chance and Historical Purpose

When we turn to *Oscar and Lucinda* we find a different mode of allegory. Rather than overlaying history with a cosmological map like the *Mahabharata* this novel addresses those aspects of imperial history of most significance to a settler colony: its inexorable teleology; its narrative of civilization; its inscription on the *tabula rasa* of Australian space. The allegory in *Oscar and Lucinda* is that of the movement of imperial history itself: the classic journey of civilisation into the wild on its historic mission to bring light into the darkness. On the face of it, the novel is an engaging story about a naive religious boy who, following God's will, leaves his father's church and makes his way across the terrifying sea to Australia, where he conceives and executes a fantastic plan to build a glass church and sail it up the Bellinger river as an act of love for Lucinda. But Oscar's journey is an ambivalent subversion of our usual assumptions

about the progress of civilisation from Europe to Australia. The allegorical journey not only disrupts the fixity of history but also dismantles the teleology of historical development.

Imperial/empirical history is a story of development towards a particular end. This is one meaning of the term 'historicism.' But its teleological impetus is centripetal, that is, it constantly moves towards the centre, and establishes an order fundamental to imperial discourse - it orders reality. This elaborate story of Oscar's floating church, representing as it does the movement of white society into the unknown, the importation of spiritual solace, the 'gradual amendment' of society, as Lord Acton puts it, the forthright movement towards order, is itself a parody of the allegory of imperial history. Such history is grounded on the imperial *telos* of progress and civilisation, the telos of order. The idea of a *telos* - an end or goal to which the transcendent movement of history is directed, is implicated in the idea of the sequential itself. For out of the notions of contiguity and temporal sequence emerges the principle of *cause*, which can, in turn, be seen to be a product of narrative structures once the world is considered as a text.

In *Oscar and Lucinda* the teleology of history is firmly linked to the divine order of things. The titles of the chapters (Ascension Day, After Whitsunday) give the direct sense of a coherent and ordered movement of history. Thus the Church calendar becomes the metaphor for the ordered and *authorised* movement of historical time. But the novel's response to this is to show events unfolding not by moments of synthesis or continuity but by the completely erratic operation of *pure chance*. Chance not only profoundly influences the progression of the story, but is *the* way in which the narrative progresses. Time after time Oscar's and Lucinda's history advances by means of moments of chance, which appear to be the only driving force of progress, and could be seen as *aporia* which at various points, deconstruct the assumptions of causality and continuity on which (imperial) history is established. The most sustained demonstration of chance in the *Oscar and Lucinda* is gambling itself, which both actually and metaphorically dominates the action. On three important occasions Oscar paradoxically confirms what he takes to be divine guidance by an act of pure chance. Faith itself becomes the ultimate gamble, as he says to Lucinda on board the ship to Australia: "Our whole faith is a wager, Miss Leplastrier ... we bet that there is a God. We bet our life on it" (261). If faith and life are a gamble then one of the greatest gambles is love, as Lucinda demonstrates when she bets her inheritance upon the success of Oscar's journey as a sign of the gamble of her whole life (388-9).

***Reading the Country*: "How shall we write History?"**

Benterrak, Muecke and Roe's *Reading the Country* is an iconic text which, although it precedes the Mabo judgement, stands an introductory text to the emerging task of finding a different kind of Australia than the one presumed by colonial invasion, one that encompassed those for whom the land had been home for 60000 years. The book foregrounds Paddy Roe's explanation of country on the Roebuck Plains, around Broome on the west coast of Australia. In many ways this search is just as hopeful as many others of finding a new national imaginary, an Australia of diversity and acceptance, of dialogue and understanding. Muecke invokes I.A Richards' explanation of what books are for: "A book is a machine for thinking with." This is an apposite explanation because *Reading the Country* is an attempt to think through a different way on knowing country, and thus finding a different – other than white – Australia.

In the process they discover that the land is crossed by roads and fences offering a different meaning to the land. For instance, *Garrigarrigabu* on the eastern side of the plains is named for the springs that provided water to Aboriginal people The roads and fences construct a very different country from the land of sweet water springs, one dedicated to exploiting the country, the other to a knowledge of the sustaining power of country.

Krim Benterrak's painting "Djarmanggugan" "establishes a sense of place in which the carving out of property indicated by the fences does not overwhelm the sense of Aboriginal land. The ways of thinking about this are myriad

> Listening to Paddy Roe, one is astounded by the range of his knowledge of the country… His knowledge covers the areas we call history, botany, medicine, biology, meteorology, religion, sociology, politics… (1984: 67)

Muecke wonders what the strategy of listening to him might be since any question is shaped by the discipline in which it arises. But one significant discourse is that of the past and in this there is a distinction between history and memory. This is a tension that exists in all postcolonial discourse. But crucially it is a story of belonging. We assume that Aboriginal culture has a static primeval relationship to the land that fixes it in a state of permanent belonging. But such belonging is continually performative. The narrative of place and Dreaming recited by Paddy Roe is a strategy of establishing the Aboriginal subject in place. It is such narrative that establishes belonging.

The most thought-provoking section in *Reading the Country* is "How Shall we write History?" While Aboriginal identity is formed by and exists in stories, European history is always understood as the single,

unified, unproblematic, extra-textual, extra-discursive truth. It is thought to be the objective and 'scientific' knowledge that can be used to explain the world. The question the human sciences had to face in the nineteenth century was What does it mean to have a history? "This question," Foucault maintains, "signals a great mutation in the consciousness of Western society, a mutation which has to do ultimately with "our modernity," which in turn is the sense we have of being utterly different from all other forms of humanity known to history" (Foucault 1970: 219-220).

Social Formations: the Transnation

The third way in which we may see a postcolonial connection between India and Australia is in the social formations that characterise them. By social formations I don't mean social institutions but really the dynamic operation of the actual societies beneath the repressive weight of certain imperialistic assumptions about how each is constructed – including the repressive weight of the *names* "India" and "Australia' themselves. The actual diversity of both countries challenges those principles on which modern states are founded – 'nation'; 'identity'; 'race'; 'people'. The constant marginalisation of the colonial world pushed it through a kind of psychic barrier beyond which all things, all experience, was recognised as in some way marginal, in contradistinction to the centrality of authorised notions of reality. There can be few writers as enthusiastically committed to subverting the monologic discourse of nation as Salman Rushdie, who sees the nation as a seething, teeming tangle of realities rather than one national reality embodied in the national myth. We get a very clear picture of Rushdie's view of the nation in *Step Across This Line* (2002), where he says: "Good writing assumes a frontierless nation. Writers who serve frontiers have become border guards." The literary accounts of journeys across national boundaries belong with these stories of the journey of becoming. "In our deepest natures," says Rushdie, "we are frontier-crossing beings. We know this by the stories we tell ourselves; for we are story-telling animals, too." (2002: 16) Rushdie's utopian vision is not merely an egalitarian India but a transitive collectivity that continues to cross the borders of a national mythology. This is the character of all nations but for Rushdie, India is in a particularly strategic position to identify the slippery and interweaving character of what I call the *transnation* (Ashcroft 2010; 2011; 2017). The nation-state exists by suppressing the proliferation of subject positions within its borders but the transnation is a horizontal reality – distinct from the vertical, hierarchical authority of the state. In this horizontal reality culture still escapes the bounded nation state society, *exceeding* the boundaries of the nation state and operating beyond its political strictures through

the medium of the local. This excess is the transnation and it is just as signficant in Australia as Rushdie's India.

"Transnation" appears at first to be a familiar term based on the idea of the transnational. But I coin the term to refer to much more than 'the international', or 'the transnational', which might more properly be conceived as a relation between states, a crossing of borders or a cultural or political interplay between national cultures. Transnation is the fluid, migrating *outside* of the state that begins *within* the nation. This 'outside' is geographical, cultural and conceptual, a way of talking about subjects in their ordinary lives, subjects who traverse the various categories by which subjectivity is normally constituted, who live 'in-between'. The transnation occupies the space we might refer to as the 'nation,' distinct from the political structure of the state, which interpellates subjects as citizens. These subjects may indeed identify themselves as national, particularly in sport and war, but the transnation describes the excess of subject positions swirling within, around and beyond the state.

If the archive of the nation is national history, the archive of the transnation – that proliferation of in-between subjects – is cultural memory and cultural memory in both India and Australia has been propelled by the weight of imperial dominance which morphed into the dominance of the nation-state. Various forms of cultural memory, and various relationships with cultural memory distinguish the transnation from any identification with national history. This is because such memory, although it may overlap historical memory, operates in a very different space from that striated space described as 'national culture,' which relies on the order provided by typification. Cultural memory is very often connected to particular visions of the future, a future that transforms the present, a future that exists beyond any notion of national destiny. Different literary representations in Australian literature: indigenous, settler sacred, diasporic, gendered and artistic, all committed to some re-vision of place, demonstrate the energy that exists in the smooth space of the transnation. But the most intriguing aspect of this is the utopianism they all share. Unlike pre-independence nationalist utopias, the utopianism of the transnation is a vision of the future grounded in memories that exist outside the memory – some might say the institutionalised forgetting – of history.

Utopian theory has undergone a vigorous renaissance during the post-Cold War period of global empire. The philosophy of utopianism is presided over by Ernst Bloch's magisterial three volume work *The Principle of Hope* (1986) (originally *Das Prinzip Hoffnung* 1938–1947) a Marxist dominance of utopian

thought most recently confirmed in Fredric Jameson's *Archaeologies of the Future* (2005). For Bloch, literature has a significant utopian function because its *raison d'etre* is the imaging of a different world – what he calls its "anticipatory illumination." The anticipatory illumination is the revelation of the "possibilities for rearranging social and political relations to produce *Heimat,* Bloch's word for the *home* that we have all sensed but have never experienced or known. It is *Heimat* as utopia… that determines the truth content of a work of art." (Zipes 1989: xxxiii). *Heimat* becomes the promise in postcolonial writing that replaces the promise of nation. It may lie in the *future* but the promise of *heimat* transforms the present. It does this through what Eduard Glissant calls a 'prophetic vision of the past,' an access to cultural memory that defines the future outside of any prescription provided by national history (Glissant 1989: 64). While Australian and Indian cultures may seem radically different from those of the deracinated populations of the Caribbean, the distinction he makes between history and cultural memory when he says: "The past, to which we were subjected, which has not yet emerged as history for us, is, however, obsessively present" (64) – holds true for the Australian and Indian transnation.

In the light of the concept of transnation phrases such as "the Indian world" begin to fall apart before our eyes. Which Indian world? which culture? which group? which speakers? Surely the idea of an Indian world cannot be supported in any other way than as the other of Europe. In both India and Australia (curiously enough) the idea of a discrete world is held together by stereotype - the stereotype of a 'Hindu civilization' on one hand, the 'typical Australian' on the other - and the historically recent concept of 'nation'. In both India and Australia these essentialist unities of 'race' and 'nation' and the dynamic of nationalism appear to focus resistance to imperialism but these are themselves further versions of imperial control. In practice the notion of Indianness or Australianness is essentialist. There is an ambiguous relationship between imperialism and nationalism. According to J.A. Hobson in his influential *Imperialism: a Study*, "Colonialism, in its best sense," by which he meant the settler colonies, "is a natural overflow of nationality." But "When a State advances beyond the limits of nationality its power becomes precarious and artificial." (Hobson 1902: 8. Quoting Seely "Expansion of England lect iii)

> A nationalism that bristles with resentment and is all astrain with the passion of self-defence is only less perverted from its natural genius than the nationalism which glows with the animus of greed and self-aggrandisement at the expense of others. From this aspect aggressive Imperialism is an artificial stimulation of nationalism in peoples too foreign to be absorbed and too compact to be permanently crushed. (1902: 11)

Hobson's prescient complaint was that empire-bred nationalism undermined the possibility of a true internationalism. And imperialism certainly ended up supporting Nehr's nationalist agenda.

The mobility and heterogeneity of the transnation run counter to the binarisms installed by imperial history which have become signatures of the difference between regions such as India and Australi. Binaries such as black/white; primitive/civilised; third world/first world (although the settler colonies may better be termed the second world) are instantly recognisable, even if disagreable signs of a difference which we all come to take for granted. But what I am proposing is that these differences are a function of imperial control, of a way of organising the world into digestible concepts. What we discover is that both India and Australia are vast intertextual networks of heterogeneous social formations which are not amenable to much simple comparison at all.

But it is when we consider the notion of race that this apparent conflation of postcolonial experience seems most difficult. For clearly, there are racial factors which insurmountably separate India and Australia. But what do we mean by "race?" Fundamentally it comes down to the most egregious of binarisms - that of black/brown and white - a binarism fundamental to the maintenance of colonial control. For both 'black' or 'brown' or 'white' are traversed by ranges of ethnicity so diverse and intertwined that they can never be unravelled. Both are constituted of subjects who are not only in constant process but in constant deferral of any notion of what race might mean. Now black and white may operate very well as a focus of resistance, but like any binarism, the sliding of one under the other in apparent reversal of, or resistance to the structure of power, merely keeps the binarism itself in place. There is no way forward.

So to conclude let me reiterate four points: First, "India" and "Australia" are themselves conceptual consequences of the experience of imperialism. Second, In the adaptation and use of creative language, in the conception of place and in the analysis of social formations, India and Australia both come into being through a constant dynamic of power and its resistance.

In the adaptation and use of creative language, in the conception of place and in the analysis of social formations, India and Australia both come into being through a constant dynamic of power and its resistance. Third, Both these words 'India' and 'Australia' essentialise what is a vast and hybrid rhyzome of social experience. Fourth, An understanding of the heterogeneous nature of both societies, so conveniently essentialised by the words India and Australia may provide a way of differently conceiving

the politics, the history and the social possibilities of both places. There is no question of the vast differences between these societies, but comparisons which draw out the similar postcolonial dynamic operating in each may help to show the extent and depth to which the imperial process has helped to form a great diversity of nations in the world today.

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