Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics

Global Anglophone Poetry

Literary Form and Social Critique in Walcott, Muldoon, de Kok, and Nagra

Omaar Hena

Modern and Contemporary Poetry and Poetics

Edited by Rachel Blau DuPlessis
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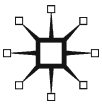

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For Mom and Dad
and in loving memory of Maara

Contents

Acknowledgments

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As readers will soon discover, I have an unapologetic commitment to the notion that a close, sustained attention to the nuances of verbal art can, at times, rejuvenate readers to the ways in which the "world is crazier and more of it than we think, / Incorrigibly plural," as Louis MacNeice puts it in "Snow" (1935). There is no question that my own world has been rejuvenated by the crazier-more-of-it-than-I-can-think-love of my friends and family. Rehoboth Beach has become a sanctuary and a home, especially in the middle and later stages of this project. Special thanks to Adam Howard, Holly Lane, and David Engel for their constant encouragement and sweet generosity. My love to my friends Linda Reck and Karen Hill, Amy and Bee Linzey, and Karen and Steve Savidge: your laughter, Hoff Challenges, and happy hours have revitalized me, time and time again.

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Introduction

> It is not only that any text, if it is not immediately destroyed, is a network of often colliding forces, but also that a text in its actually *being* a text is a being in the world…
>
> The point is that texts have ways of existing that even in their most rarefied form are always enmeshed in circumstance, time, place, and society—in short they are in the world, and hence worldly.
>
> —Edward W. Said, *The World, the Text, and the Critic*

This book conducts a comparative study of the cross-cultural constitution of global anglophone poetry written over the past 30 years, in the wake of empire and the acceleration of globalization. In the past decade or so, scholars have increasingly interpreted how contemporary literature, most often narrative fiction, imaginatively represents the flows of cultures, peoples, ideas, and economy across national boundaries and the ways literary institutions contribute to the globalization of world literature. In the midst of the global turn in literary studies, I study how contemporary poets on both sides of the Atlantic reinvigorate canonical literary forms associated with the long poetic tradition to engage local, political realities and the sweeping pressures of modernity at large. Through a series of close readings, I examine how the formal resources of poetry furnish the aesthetic means for critiquing urgent social inequalities facing the postcolonial world and ethnic minorities in the global North. For instance, each chapter pursues how contemporary poetry engages a range of problems stemming from globalization such as poverty and underdevelopment, political violence and genocide, the politics of cross-cultural appropriation, and ethnic migration and citizenship. Over the course of my discussion, I advance a dialectical method of literary reading—one that moves nimbly from the aesthetic nuances of poetic language, form, and genre to the social framings

of political-cultural contexts and back again—by illustrating how the extension of canonical, literary forms marks the inequalities conditioning cultural production within the domain of world literature while, at the same time, arguing that the formal renovations of verbal art can be put to the work of social critique, inventing self-critical forms of cross-cultural belonging and intersubjective attachment suited to the contradictions of the global era. To do so, I look to four eminent world writers: Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott (b. 1930) from St. Lucia, the Northern Irish born and American resident Paul Muldoon (b. 1950), Ingrid de Kok (b. 1951) based in Cape Town, South Africa, and the second-generation British Punjabi Daljit Nagra who lives in north London (b. 1966).

Clearly, the poets in this study are not bound by one region nor contained by a single context of writing. They differ along lines of racial and ethnic backgrounds, gender, education, and their public recognition in the poetry world and the scholarly domain. Their writing works in diverse aesthetic modes and forms to address divergent social and political preoccupations. "If comparative studies are to result in the production of new and destabilizing knowledges," writes scholar of comparative literature R. Radhakrishnan, "then apples and oranges do need to be compared, audaciously and precariously" (455). It is in this spirit of audacious, precarious comparison that I have joined together a group of writers who, in the midst of what initially seem like incommensurable differences, connect to one another by receiving and re-purposing canonical literary forms—as poets and poems look to other times, other places, and other literary traditions from Homer to Seamus Heaney—to engage pressing social contradictions as they are locally situated and globally imagined.

To be sure, it has become especially vexing for contemporary writers, including those considered here, to extend modes of writing belonging to the Western canon and associated with the domain of "high art." After all, such literary forms carry the baggage of imperialism, racism, and neocolonialism. Even worse, extensions of the Western canon might seem an act of ideological mystification, insofar as cultural representations of globalization through literary modes threaten to disguise the economic, social, or political underpinnings shaping cultural production. Re-using Western poetic conventions risks perpetuating the unequal power structures and aesthetic ideologies as they are mirrored in the literary sphere. And yet, despite these risks many world authors continue to adapt canonical forms, treating them as highly versatile aesthetic resources for addressing the social realities of globalization. Because the medium of poetry has an especially long history, it has the unique advantage of tapping into prior histories of colonial conquest as they are carried in the conventions of form, genre, and intertexuality.

One key claim of this book is that by placing interpretive emphasis on the renovation of aesthetic forms, we can see how global anglophone poets display a Janus-faced vision: both looking back to account for the continuity of irreparable historical realities across diverse but overlapping contexts of writing and looking forward to patterning more robust models of worldly belonging that would match the aesthetic and political complexities of the contemporary world. That said, we cannot overlook how the re-use of "literary" forms carries significant ideological force and is subject to political scrutiny, in that canonical inheritances formally embody disparities of economic and cultural capital structuring the field of world literature. Another counterclaim running across this study is that the act of extending conventional modes significantly enables certain writers and artists (though in varying degrees and along different scales) to gain institutional recognition over others in the exclusive arena of "world literature." In the pages that follow, this book seeks to rise to the challenge of advancing a dialectical model of reading, one which can, on the one hand, grant agency to the diverse ways in which English-language poets re-purpose literary inheritances to negotiate between local perspectives and the far-reaching effects of globalization and, on the other, accommodate a materialist account for the broader social contexts and inequalities underpinning global literary production. Sustaining both of these arguments simultaneously clarifies the hierarchies shaping world literature so as to demonstrate the ways in which aesthetic texts, as "beings in the world," are enmeshed within economic, political, cultural, and social forces and historical circumstances, as can be seen in Said's phrasing in the epigraph. But it also opens up a space to see how global anglophone poetry conducts social critique through formal means.

This book proposes a critically engaged, historically attuned formalist criticism to reconcile two reigning, but often opposed ways of reading contemporary literature in a cross-cultural frame: first, those who advocate studying nonhierarchical tracings of texts across national and temporal boundaries and, second, those who stress the ways world literature ideologically expresses the structural inequalities of economic and cultural capital. The first, anthropological-culturalist paradigm has been perhaps most fully articulated by David Damrosch in *What Is World Literature?* (2003). Here, Damrosch proposes a now oft-cited model of world literature as encompassing "all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language" (4). For him, world literature does not refer to "an infinite, ungraspable canon" but, rather, "a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike" (5). This model has several appeals, not the least of which is

its project to include the human species as a whole. For Wai Chee Dimock, planetary approaches also challenge "the chronology and geography of the nation" by, instead, reading American literature across alternative temporal and spatial scales, through African, Asian, and European presences, "binding continents and millennia into many loops of relations, a densely interactive fabric" (4; 3–4). In the context of the Bush-II political climate and the transnational turn in literary studies, Dimock's concept of "deep time" opens up "American" literature to other cultures, languages, and literatures, which, for her, interact through complex networks of "kinship," "affiliation," and reciprocity (3).

Culturalist approaches have significantly transformed studies of modern and contemporary poetry as scholars have displaced restrictive, "national" boundaries in preference for "transnational" scales. For instance, Jahan Ramazani's *A Transnational Poetics* (2009), which won the ACLA Harry Levin Prize in 2011, has called for re-mapping twentieth- and twenty-first-century English-language poetry. His study seeks to revitalize the field by tracing "circuits of poetic connection and dialogue across political and geographic borders and even hemispheres" and "examining cross-cultural and cross-national exchanges, influences, and confluences in poetry" (x–xi). Oscillating between the details of poetic language and systems of "global flows and circuits," he surveys the many ways poetry from the Americas, Britain and Ireland, the postcolonial world, and Oceania contributes to "transnational experience" (xiii). Ramazani's method blends a formalist analysis of poetry with the cultural globalization theories of James Clifford, Arjun Appadurai, and Kwame Appiah as well as British economist (and key architect of Tony Blair's Third Way platform) Anthony Giddens. These theorists inform Ramazani's argument that "the elasticity of poetry [. . .] is well suited to evoking global modernity's interlinking of widely separated sites" (14). In these ways, the transnational energies of poetry question, resist, and displace national political boundaries by, instead, circulating within the flows and disjunctures of the global cultural economy.

There is now no denying the sheer proliferation of "Englishes" as the language travels, giving expression, in the words of one scholar, to "interactive developments in different places rather than activities concentrated in a literary capital" (Clunies-Ross 316). Although I share Ramazani's emphasis on the cross-cultural constitution of contemporary poetry, his study is arguably indicative of some of the shortcomings of culturalist paradigms. By virtue of its understandable desire to move beyond outworn imperial binaries, *A Transnational Poetics* plays up English-language poetry's production and circulation beyond the nation through the newness of globalization. Yet in doing so, it at times downplays the nagging persistence

of imperial discourses as they structure liberal models of globalization; in other instances, *A Transnational Poetics* construes modern and contemporary poetry as giving positive expression to cosmopolitanism to challenge the strictures of the nation-state and economic globalization. Still, the binaries held over from colonialism and the Cold War (of West/rest, center/periphery, colonizer/colonized, ethnos/demos, sameness/difference) are far from over and continue to frustrate claims to cosmopolitan culture. As Jacob Edmond has argued in *A Common Strangeness* (2012), such binaries remain entrenched in global theory as much as in comparative literature, area studies, and contemporary poetics. Edmond's study of Chinese, Russian, and US avant-garde poetry perceives a shared preoccupation with artistic and cultural estrangement to work dialectically within "the dichotomies of the national and the international, the individual and the collective, the local and the global" (11). I join Edmond in my emphasis on linguistic alterity and estrangement. Poetry's capacity to unsettle and estrange needs emphasizing when humanistic and social sciences discourses at times overlook the enduring inequalities and racial exclusions held over from colonial history, exclusions that work in tandem with liberal, capitalist discourses of development and progress.[1] My deliberate focus on the prevalence of Western literary inheritances among a group of poets and poems hailing from diverse locations affected by the British Empire is meant to underscore the recurrence of imperial legacies, extending back to the transatlantic slave trade and up through contemporary debates over citizenship and racial discrimination, whose "differing/traumatic histories," as Romana Huk similarly argues, poets and readers "can't (and can't afford to) lose" (781). As I will explain in greater detail, one basis for selecting these particular poets and poems is because they question the relation between literary form and the violent negations of globalization that liberal discourses of nation and transnationalism often wish to develop, surpass, or repress—even as this body of poetry, by virtue of its "literary" constitution, capitalizes upon the exclusions it aesthetically reconfigures and disfigures by participating in unequal networks of global literary exchange.

Another risk in culturalist approaches concerns the central role of local, regional, and national contexts. This book retains a sharp distinction between Caribbean, Irish, South African, and British national boundaries, even as the cross-cultural energies of literary texts make these boundaries appear to blur and collapse on the page. Ramazani's panoptic study "traverses national, regional, racial lines [. . .] moving rapidly across a range of authors rather than dwelling on a single example" (xiii). But as William J. Maxwell notes, the transnational energies of modern and contemporary poetry often appear as forcefully as they do by virtue of national, political

pressures, such as state-sponsored "disciplinary mechanisms" of border control, immigration, and citizenship (363).[2] It is for these reasons that Matthew Hart in *Nations of Nothing But Poetry* (2010) emphasizes the roles of nation and nationality in shaping "the political production of transnational texts" in a diverse cast of writers spanning Hugh MacDiarmid, Basil Bunting, Mina Loy, Melvin Tolson, Harryette Mullen, and Edward Kamau Brathwaite (19).[3] Synthetic vernacular poetries, according to Hart, embody a double bind that both asserts the particularity of ethnic identities in resistance to dominant, hegemonic conceptions of nationhood founded in "standard English" and flaunts the artificial construction of such identities as already caught within the political restrictions of the State. Local differences matter, I maintain across this book. Specific poetic communities, political preoccupations, cultural resources, and national-regional discourses significantly shape the ways in which Walcott, Muldoon, de Kok, and Nagra fashion their particular models of cross-cultural poetics to navigate between local and global perspectives.

Perhaps most significantly, however, culturalist approaches to world literature by and large bracket the inequities of economic and cultural capital conditioning literary production. Indeed, the language of "circuits" and "flows"—words that appear more than two dozen times in Ramazani's book—construes poetic discourse as expressive of liberal, normative discourses of global modernity (as conceived by Appadurai and Giddens) without sufficiently addressing how different modes of "transnational poetics" themselves intersect with the global literary marketplace. My readings are significantly informed by Ramazani's culturalist approach. But I also bring a sociological-materialist corrective that can detail how specific local, historical contexts and a given writer's relation to centers of literary production in the global North bear upon the aesthetics and politics of cross-cultural poetics.

In contrast, sociological paradigms have largely been informed by Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems analysis and Pierre Bourdieu's sociology of culture. This second approach tends to emphasize institutional forces structuring "world literature." But here, sociological studies carry the opposite risk of overlooking the agency of authors, texts, and readers in actively questioning how literary forms relate to the global literary marketplace. We can see this problematic in Pascale Casanova's *The World Republic of Letters* (1999, 2004) and James English's *The Economy of Prestige* (2005). For Casanova, "world literature" occupies a semiautonomous zone subject to its own rules and conventions, distinct from the world-system of globalization. In direct contrast to a scholar such as Damrosch, Casanova is less interested in the category of "world literature" as a mode of transhistorical

circulation than in contests and rivalries over cultural capital from the nineteenth century forward, whereby literary institutions especially in Paris shape the kinds of world literature that gain entry into cultural centers positioned along the "Greenwich Meridian of literature" (*World Republic* 87–88). Those authors from the colonial peripheries struggled for global recognition within "world literary space" by writing in established precepts of international modernism readily recognizable to metropolitan audiences in Paris (up to the mid-twentieth century) and now more so in New York and London ("World" 72; *World Republic* 330–31). For Casanova, the arena of "world literary space" stands as an intermediary area where the conflicts and struggles due to the world-system—"political, social, national, gender, ethnic"—become refracted in literary texts and forms ("World" 72). James English similarly maintains that literary institutions consecrate a particular kind of world literature within an increasingly standardized system of global cultural exchange, which he studies in *The Economy of Prestige*. He historicizes the entrenchment of mainstream publishing houses, the rise of literary festivals, and awards, particularly the Nobel Prize. Contrary to Goethe's proclamations concerning the arrival of *weltliteratur* in 1827 ("the epoch of world literature is at hand, and everyone must strive to hasten its approach"), English theorizes the advent of "world literature" as akin to "world music": both are recent phenomena whereby contemporary dominant institutions brand (and reward) those artists who combine a particular relation to their local culture of origin with "multiculturalism," democratic anti-imperial politics, and cosmopolitan (i.e., Anglo-European) modernist codes capable of elevation to "universal aesthetic principles" (308). Far more so than ever before, the impersonal mechanisms of literary institutions (in the eyes of both Casanova and English) consolidate and reinforce standards of "global" aesthetic taste and merit, often bypassing local, national, or even international scales, as contemporary authors compete for recognition in the contested regime of "world literature."

This book departs, however, from reigning sociological studies of world literature in important ways. Casanova states that her project attempts "to restore the coherence of the global structure within which texts appear [. . .] in order to return to the texts themselves" ("World" 73). Missing from her study is a fine-grained attention to the various aesthetic maneuvers authors and texts deploy. As I discuss in my chapter on Walcott, English's emphasis on awards and prizes explains how and why certain texts and authors become consecrated as "world literature"; yet, his model subordinates the aesthetics of individual texts to extra-literary concerns on publishing institutions and networks without fully accounting for the ways writers, texts, and readers actively question institutional branding mechanisms.

Whereas culturalist paradigms often overstate the transnational energies of poetry at the expense of attending to local contexts and literary institutions, materialist approaches conversely can diminish the aesthetics of individual texts and the agency of authors to pattern, challenge, and at times celebrate their writings' necessary entanglement within the global literary marketplace. In turning to Walcott, Muldoon, de Kok, and Nagra, my framework reads cross-cultural poetics dialectically by intertwining culturalist studies of "world literature" with sociological paradigms of "world-literature." I take as my focus the period after the institutionalization of "postcolonial aesthetics" and amid the establishment of global anglophone literature, between the mid-80s to the post-9/11 moment. Archival histories of print—as in the scholarship of Gail Low, Nathan Suhr-Sytsma, and Peter Kalliney—are uncovering how transnational networks of publication, often under the banner of "Commonwealth Literature," were formative in the development of postcolonial literature and criticism in the decades between the 1930s to early-80s.[4] In *Commonwealth of Letters* (2013), Kalliney excavates the reciprocal exchanges between late colonials and British modernists in transforming "London from relative parochialism to literary metropolis during the middle decades of the [previous] century" (258). That three of the authors appearing in this book have published with Faber testifies to London's enduring centrality in shaping and perpetuating (Anglo-modernist) "standards" of aesthetic taste and merit. Kalliney further reveals how white, British modernists "actively recruited late colonial and postcolonial intellectuals" as collaborators and peers in order to revive mid-century cultural institutions and to extend Anglo-modernist techniques of alienation, difficulty, allusion, fragmentation, irony, and autonomy (4). Kamau Brathwaite and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, for instance, reinvigorated Leavisite methodologies of "close reading" and literature as "a living language" to re-constitute postcolonial "organic communities" through their emphasis on "racial and cultural difference" (115). Postcolonial writers, then as now, perceived many of these modernist precepts as liberating for unmasking the racial exclusions and imperial underpinnings of "English literature."

Without taking an antagonistic relation to historical studies of print, my critical formalist approach looks inside poems, examining how the aesthetic properties of poetry register the coimbrication of literary and social concerns. I am, of course, not alone in my endeavor to think together "world literature" and "world-literature." In *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace* (2007), Sarah Brouillette examines how established postcolonial authors such as Walcott, Salman Rushdie, and J. M. Coetzee develop literary strategies of authorial self-consciousness when representing, and capitalizing upon, local conditions of postcoloniality at the same time as

they realize how their writing is targeted for and consumed by educated, metropolitan readerships in the global North (especially the United States and Britain). As she argues in response to Casanova: "The 'world-readability' or universalizability of a given work is not inherent in it or essential to its position in the world system. It is instead the result of a series of actual or imagined reading practices that can also be challenged or opposed, in some cases by the very texts that achieve global acclaim" (80–81). In a similar vein, Alexander Beecroft has also asked whether it is possible (or even desirable) to think of "World Literature without a Hyphen" (2008). In his essay, Beecroft observes how "world-systems" analyses heralded by Casanova and by Franco Moretti in *Distant Reading*, though quite different from one another, nevertheless depend upon center-periphery models (whereby literary production in the global North is exported to sundry locales elsewhere). They furthermore tend to construe "world-literature" as equivalent to institutions of the global literary "world-system within which literature is produced and circulates" (88). Beecroft proposes, instead, an unhyphenated world literature as a means of creating a typology of literary systems. Doing so requires outlining the "multiplicity of strategies used by literatures to relate to their political and economic environments" (91). Bringing together studies of "national" literatures and critical approaches to world literature, scholarship could take "as its object not a world-system which maps roughly onto Wallerstein's world-system, but rather, and simply, the literature—the verbal artistic production—of the world" (100).

Throughout the pages of this book, I seek to develop a critical method that moves back and forth between analyzing the literary strategies poems exploit to mediate social realities of globalization and, in doing so, to construct aesthetic models of globalism through the inventiveness of literary form—here, world literature understood as an open-ended, endless process of world creation—*and* accounting for the extra-textual contextual frames that condition aesthetic forms due to the material effects and institutional structures of literary globalization—here, world-literature as a system of unequal literary exchange. To do so, my book homes in on recurring tropes of "literary inheritances" as an organizing analytic. This term is meant to encompass the range of formal devices available to poetic discourse: from the smallest unit of the letter to torsions of figurative language, tensions between syntax-lineation and stanzaic patterning, lexical drift and etymological layering, flutterings of voice and stagings of multiple personae, dense historical and literary allusion, the compression of time and space across a single poem and even a single line, traversals of literary influence, to the re-invention of canonical forms and genres such as epic, philosophical long poem, elegy, lyric, and dramatic monologue. My method of reading "inheritances" through the

double maneuver of receiving and re-purposing Western canonical forms spanning both sides of the Atlantic is informed by the late writing of Jacques Derrida, particularly as theorized in *Specters of Marx* (1993, 1994) and in his interview with Elizabeth Rudinesco, "Choosing One's Heritage" published in *For What Tomorrow* (2004). Though these texts by Derrida are somewhat different in their focus, I have found several aspects of his concept of "inheritance" illuminating for my analysis. To begin with, Derrida calls into question any self-given or univocal qualities often attributed to an inheritance or a legacy. Instead, he describes the structure of any inheritance as constituted by its "radical and necessary *heterogeneity*": he says "it is never gathered together, it is never one with itself" (*Specters* 18). The presumed unity or coherence of an inheritance occurs retroactively, "to maintain together that which does not hold together" (20). As I demonstrate, the writers in this book likewise conceive of literary inheritances as thoroughly heterogeneous, never one with themselves, and hence open to new iterations.

The "task of inheriting," for Derrida, requires responding to what he calls "a double injunction" by moving back and forth between two apparently contradictory poles of necessity and agency, of receiving and reaffirming (*For What* 3). According to the first injunction, one receives a past by being beholden to and enthralled by a heritage whose heterogeneity exceeds mastery. And yet, for Derrida there is a necessary responsibility for human subjects to make something of inheritances, which leads to a second injunction "*to reaffirm by choosing*": "'One must' [il faut] means *one must* filter, sift, criticize, one must sort out several different possibles" of an inheritance (*Specters* 18). Responding to this double injunction is an ethical act for "coming to terms" with a prior "irreparable tragedy" of history in its plurality (*Specters* 24). By working within the double injunction of receiving and reaffirming, Derrida suggests a very particular relation to inheritances, one which corresponds to a more uncertain and divided form of agency. For him, a proper relation to inheritances "means simply not accepting this heritage but re-launching it otherwise and keeping it alive" even to the point of betraying and violating it (*For What* 3). In his essay on Nelson Mandela, for instance, Derrida describes the South African leader as a "true inheritor" of Western, European models of political democracy. Mandela "respects the logic of the legacy even to the point of turning it on occasion against those who claim to be its guardians, to the point of revealing, against the usurpers, what has never been seen in the inheritance: the point of giving birth, by the un-heard-of act of a reflection, to what had never seen the light of day" (*Psyche* 66). In sustaining this double injunction, the subject can inhabit the contradictions of an inheritance in ways that simultaneously "relaunch it otherwise," carrying it forward and transforming its "most 'living' part," and that bear an acknowledgment

that any re-launching is partial, incomplete, and hence always calling for more. Inheritances "call for more" because, as finite subjects, our choices are necessarily limited before an utterly inassimilable past. That is, we come in sequence, belatedly, after many who have already come before and with a knowledge that there are still others who will come after. And we do so with an awareness that our selection of elements from a heritage, which is necessarily contaminated and compromised, may well re-inflict the very historical violence that one would hope to counteract (*For What* 4).

With this in mind, across this book I examine how tropes of literary inheritance furnish a multilayered analytic, indeed a "critical task" in Derrida's resonant phrase (*Specters* 67), for rising to the challenges and opportunities of reading global anglophone poetry in a cross-cultural frame, examining how innovations in literary form become the fuel and engine for conducting social commentary and critique. It matters that Walcott, Muldoon, de Kok, and Nagra self-consciously work within the inheritances of Anglo-European poetic forms and in sustained conversation with the canon. Re-articulations of canonical forms in contemporary contexts provide the means for these poets to engage historical experiences of exclusion, inequality, and suffering. For instance, each chapter examines a different thematic, social problem including poverty in the Caribbean (Walcott), Northern Irish preoccupations with (and appropriations of) Native American cultures in the New World in the name of cross-cultural identity formation (Muldoon), South Africa's ongoing history of apartheid and subsequent challenges of social transformation for the newly democratic nation (de Kok), and recurring debates over ethnic migration, political citizenship, and nonbelonging in the United Kingdom and Europe (Nagra). Because Western poetic inheritances themselves carry messy and contentious histories deriving from colonialism, their re-use makes especially visible how individual poems distill and, indeed, re-inscribe prior histories of conquest and inequality. At the same time, however, each of the poets in this study treat distant and disparate literary forms belonging to Anglo-European locations of production as heterogeneous, open-ended resources capable of becoming "repurposed otherwise" to question, critique, and imaginatively reconstitute the disjunctures of globalization within politically charged contexts of writing. But my usage of literary inheritances also designates a materialist critique over how different aesthetic models of globalism are conditioned and delimited by local, political circumstances and through the inequalities of the global literary marketplace. Indeed, it is by virtue of extending Western canonical forms that each of these poets becomes legible, in uneven ways, within world letters.

At the same time, however, I perceive the act of criticism as a collaborative project, even an intervention, in interpreting those literary texts that

thematically engage questions of globalization and invent aesthetic models of globalism that appear to be irreducible to the literary marketplace. In these ways, my own perspective is aligned with Pheng Cheah's arguments on world literature, which he defines in the following way:

> Literature is the force of a passage, an experience through which we are given and receive any determinable reality. The issue of receptibility is fundamental here. It does not refer to the reception of a piece of literature but to the structure of an opening through which one receives a world and through which another world can appear. This structure is prior to and subtends any social forms of mediation [. . .] because it is nothing other than the force of giving and receiving a world. [. . .] Literature can play an active role in the world's ongoing creation because, through the receptibility it enacts, it is an inexhaustible resource for contesting the world given to us through commercial intercourse, monetary transactions, and the space-time compression of the global culture industry. ("What Is a World?" 35)

Here, Cheah directly connects Derrida's theory of birth and creation (which relates to his concept of "inheritance") to the receptivity that "world literature" both demands and enacts for its readers to collaborate with a text, at once receiving a world and enabling another world to appear. The category of world literature is narrower than reading for the wayward circulation of texts (Damrosch, Dimock, Ramazani) as contributing to circuits and flows. "World literature" is filtered through, but not wholly reducible to, institutional structures perpetuating conflicts over cultural capital within "world literary space" (Casanova) and "the economy of prestige" (English). And it, is related to, but distinct from, a systematic mapping of "devices, themes, tropes—or genres and systems, world-systems mapping" through "distant reading" and databases (Moretti 49). It more precisely encompasses, for Cheah as for me, those texts that in content and form track the contradictions of "contemporary globalization as well as older historical narratives of worldhood" that at one and the same time "contest this world by offering the image and timing of another world" (36). To be sure, the "inexhaustible resource" that Cheah ascribes to "literature" in many ways legitimates the activities of literary criticism (as scholars "mine" texts for interpretation and publication) in ways that cannot but replicate the unevenness of the literary field. For instance, his argument that literary acts "contest this world" by offering "the image of another world" is, in many ways, a familiar strategy for artists and readers to re-value the literary as distinct from its material bases and ideological underpinnings. What we need, in my own view, is a

flexible practice of close reading that collaborates with literary texts, examining the formal ways in which they pattern the social effects of globalization, and that interrogates how these texts re-inscribe the inequalities of cultural capital, thereby delineating how certain "images of globalism" gain currency over others by virtue of the disparities of world literature.

More than anything else, this book looks to eminent poets for the ways their writing compels a mutually corrective way of reading the aesthetic and the social off of one another. By studying literary inheritances belonging to canonical forms, we can see more clearly how the historical inequalities of colonialism and globalization become distilled within the formal properties of poetic texts, which have their own ways of linking the global/local nexus along a continuum. At the same time, I describe how structures of global literary exchange privilege certain forms of cross-cultural poetics in relation to others: this line of analysis keeps in view the aesthetic, social, cultural, and political hierarchies shaping world literature. Taken together, these chapters debate the aesthetic and political complexities that arise when mainstream English-language poets receive and refashion literary forms to link local and global perspectives and, relatedly, how these inheritances mark the wider divisions subtending the production, proliferation, and critical appraisal of world literature. But in addition to situating poems within their social frames, I also read extra-literary contexts back into the literary text. Because poetic discourse treats social crises as problems over meaning and of language, I maintain that experimentations in literary form can recalibrate how we perceive these realities by self-reflexively marking the limits of poetic representations of globalism before real-world instances of suffering and inequality, which furnish the grounding conditions for global cultural production and public recognition within the literary marketplace. This way of reading, in turn, grants agency to poets, poems, and readers in collaborating to create fluid, heterogeneous discursive models of intersubjective attachment and worldly belonging that work within, and strategically refuse to resolve, the contradictions constituting the creation—and scholarly reception—of global anglophone poetry. There is, to be sure, no outside of this double-bind. But by working within it, this group of writers places its own aesthetic strategies under critical scrutiny. In doing so, Walcott, Muldoon, de Kok, and Nagra compel their readers to continue to question how cultural forms encode social realities of globalization through the extension and proliferation of "world literature" more broadly. Ultimately, I credit poetic discourse for questioning the limits of its own aesthetic figurations. Literary reading, I maintain, can generate more refined forms of language in apprehending intractable social realities, holding out the possibility—though always without guarantees—of inventing self-critical conceptions

of intersubjective, cosmopolitan attachment before real-world crises as they necessarily become disfigured and reconfigured in verbal art.

It is worth pausing briefly to mention that the canonical bent of my critical focus relates in part to recent scholarship re-appraising the relevance of classical texts in postcolonial and global anglophone letters extending back to Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin's landmark collection, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989, 2002). One important recent book is Ankhi Mukherjee's *What Is a Classic?* (2013), which has informed my own differentiation between the "canon"/"canonicity" and my analytic of "inheritances." As Mukherjee argues, the canon (and canonicity) tends to connote the exclusionary selection and consecration of a list of authors upheld by literary institutions, anthologies, university curricula, and scholarly publishing, which, by regulating and normalizing standards of aesthetic taste and merit, perpetuate the inequalities of cultural capital masked as they are by ideologies of universality (30–31). In contrast, Mukherjee proposes an analytic emphasizing the *question* of "the classic." The classic question, she acknowledges, is inextricable from the divisions of imperial ideology and Western markets' desire for postcolonial texts. She re-thinks the "classic" as defined as a "singular act" that "survives ideological determination as well as skeptical questioning—in fact it defines itself by surviving" (31; 39). It survives, however, retroactively by virtue of unresolved questions belonging to the functions of literary criticism in "giving poignant form to the latecomer's desire to be a precursor, bringing new literary value into performance, and articulating those voices [previously] dominated or occluded [. . .], while also affording escape to poetics, artifice, and the force of transnational literary space" (20). Although this book is not directly concerned with canon formation or the classic question per se, my analysis of the "survival" of prior, canonical texts and forms similarly intertwines a materialist consideration of contemporary poetry's imbrication within the divisions of the world literary system and a culturalist argument for the agency of writers, texts, and readers in shaping new identities, new lines of literary affiliation, and new political arrangements.

This brings me to the organization of my book and the basis of my selection of writers. The chapters work chronologically and proceed from relatively major to minor standings in world literature. But I have also designed the shape of this book to move along a continuum of the global/local nexus, from macrovisions of globalism as they are locally embedded (Walcott and Muldoon) to microperspectives of globalism that become recoded as "national" (de Kok and Nagra). That said, the case studies following can be read individually, allowing readers to delve into the individual topic, region, or poet that most interests them. What's more, this book does not

does not aspire toward a master narrative or a comprehensive, systematic account of the global inflections of contemporary poetry in James English. Had I world enough and time, I would have included discussions of Michael Ondaatje (Sri Lanka, Canada), Lorna Goodison (Jamaica, United States), Agha Shahid Ali (Kashmir, United States), and Tade Ipadeola (Nigeria), whose *The Sahara Testaments* won the 2013 Nigeria Prize for Literature. Though this book is by no means exhaustive, my goal is at least to propose a representative critical practice for interpreting cross-cultural poetics in a comparative frame that other scholars and teachers might translate to studies of world literature more generally.

Readers of contemporary literature have become well familiar with Derek Walcott's "polycentric" vision of literary creation and transhistorical conception of influence. Such theories are mirrored in debates in world literature. My opening chapter examines the fraught intersection of epic and global economy in *Omeros* (1990). When Walcott took to writing his epic of the Caribbean in the late 1980s, St. Lucia had already attained full political independence nearly a decade earlier (1979) but quickly became incorporated into US economic control through the Caribbean Basin Initiative (1983), with the region becoming increasingly dependent upon tourism and foreign direct investment thereafter. Walcott, himself, had become by this point an institutionalized figure in postcolonial letters: a self-fashioned "fortunate traveler" splitting his time between his teaching appointment at Boston University, international literary festivals, and his home outside of Castries. Postcolonial modernism has, to be sure, come to define world literature largely because it appeals to readerships and institutions in the global North, precisely in the ways English describes. Walcott's cross-cultural poetics nonetheless needs to be understood, I insist, within his Caribbean context. Walcott shares a genealogy connecting him to Wilson Harris and Édouard Glissant who similarly adopt a posture of cosmopolitanism and local rootedness. As I explain, this more Eurocentric mode of Caribbean writing is positioned at one end of what Chris Bongie has termed the "creole continuum." At the other end of the continuum are more Afrocentric and politically resistant writers such as Kamau Brathwaite and M. NourbeSe Philip. Though these two poles are interwoven and mutually constitutive, it is nonetheless worth recalling that creolized, avant-garde modes have not received the same level of recognition among international conglomerate presses and awards of global recognition. This is to stress that Walcott's cross-cultural poetics is shaped both by its Caribbean grounding and by its prevailing appeal to dominant literary institution and readerships, as the poet himself is well aware. It is not by accident that his deep engagement with the canonical forms, progressive politics, worldly disposition, and local

attachment appealed so strongly to the Swedish Academy when they subsequently named Walcott the Nobel Laureate in Literature in 1992.

These geopolitical and biographical contexts inform my dialectical argument about how Walcott re-invents epic to confront the Caribbean's conditions of economic underdevelopment and "poverty" in *Omeros*. For Walcott, the act of figuring the sublimity of global capital requires epic—a highly ambivalent gesture given the genre's long association with empire. First and foremost, I examine how Walcott imbues "epic mythopoeia" as a world-making process capable of inventing a poetics of global economy, at once produced by but (in his eyes) irreducible to globalization in the raw. Here, I trace two epic figures of the "wandering boat"—Achille's canoe *In God We Troust* and the poet-narrator's circulating craft, or *techné*—for the ways they mediate the contradictions of global cultural economy. In my eyes, the poem re-purposes epic to invent an aesthetic model of globalism, re-constellating global capitalist ideologies of individual self-interest and monetary accumulation to arrive at conceptions of intersubjective attachment premised in an ethics of sacrifice and giving. Reading *Omeros* together with Georges Bataille's theory of general economy brings into view how Walcott similarly thinks epic creation as a form of ceaseless expenditure, locating wealth and value in poverty. Such a model is counteracted, however, by the fact of Walcott's decision to pattern poverty in the Caribbean through recognizably Eurocentric cultural codes, and in deep conversation with the epic tradition, positioned Walcott as world author to accrue significant cultural capital. Here, I look to the ways *Omeros* formally registers the divisions of the literary marketplace, which circumscribe his model of globalism and replicate the economic and cultural inequalities his epic would aspire to "redress." Like the other poets in this book, Walcott brings his poem to a limit that it cannot touch and, in many ways, effaces the very real conditions of poverty beyond the text. Crucially, however, Walcott recognizes how the question of poverty functions as a problem of figuration and of language. By looking to his Nobel speech, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory," we can see how Walcott sensitizes his readers to how terms such as "poverty" and "the people" are discursively (and hence ideologically) mobilized and, potentially, how they might be rejuvenated. In the doing so, Walcott gains institutional centrality in world literature, transforming "St. Lucia" into a new "center" of poetic production even as he places his aesthetic patternings of poverty under severe critical scrutiny.

My dialectical reading of Walcott sets the course for the following chapters as subsequent poets question the possibilities and limits of their writing to sustain local and global perspectives by re-articulating canonical literary inheritances. Chapter 2 takes as its focus the poetry of Paul Muldoon,

studying the ways he engages the intersection of empire and globalization in the transatlantic world through his recurrent preoccupation with—or appropriation of—American Indian cultures. This preoccupation spans most of his career, beginning from "The Indians on Alcatraz" in his first collection *New Weather* (1973), continuing in poems such as "Promises, Promises" from *Why Brownlee Left* (1980) and the widely anthologized title poem of *Meeting the British* (1987), gaining greatest complexity in his masterpiece "Madoc: A Mystery" (my central focus), and persisting in muted form in the later poem "As" from *Moy Sand and Gravel* (2002). At first blush, my selection of Muldoon highlights the challenges of comparison in a study such as this. Like his Northern Irish peers Medbh McGuckian and Ciaran Carson, Muldoon came of age during the Troubles in the 1970s and 80s. After his move to the United States in the early 90s, he quickly became a professor at Princeton University and is currently poetry editor at *The New Yorker*. What's more, though his highly learned, "academic" style connects him to Walcott, de Kok, and Nagra, he stands out by, on the whole, seeming to evacuate his poetry from explicit social, political engagement by instead granting priority to formal, aesthetic innovation in cultural production. In the midst of these differences, however, we can detect a number of points of commonality, not least of which are Ireland's colonial history and subsequent centrality in world literary creation. As epic poems appearing in the same year with the same publishing houses, both *Omeros* and "Madoc" hold in common a sustained self-reflection upon how their writing can confront peoples and histories nearly decimated by conquest and inequality on both "local" and "global" scales, even as their poetry's densely allusive, difficult, and metropolitan modes solidify the preeminent position of each author within the poetry establishment.

The cross-cultural comparisons animating Muldoon's work create an occasion to think through the aesthetics and politics of comparison itself, a recurrent debate in studies of world literature. The violent backdrop of the Troubles (which repeatedly cast Ireland and Britain in an antagonistic binary) combined with Muldoon's idiosyncratic theory of Irish literature has influenced him to conceive of "Ireland" through its irrepressible alterity and global entanglement. He defines one feature of Irish literature through what he calls the technique of "imarrhage" ("Getting Round" 113; *To Ireland, I* 74). This a portmanteau for the "bleeding image": the hemorrhaging of sounds, words, images, genres, histories, and cultures into one another, which embody traumatic legacies of conquest and historical violence in Ireland and beyond. Imarrhage comprises a crucial element in his cross-cultural poetics, enabling him to bring into comparison otherwise incommensurable relations between "Irish" and "Indian" cultures. But Muldoon's comparisons

are also historically informed by British colonial legacies of transplantation and genocide as they were conducted in Ireland before being carried out in the New World.

Reading "Madoc" beside Edward Said's *Freud and the Non-European*, I show how Muldoon excavates a mythic "secular wound" binding Irish and Indian cultures through shared, though unequal, inheritances of traumatic dispossession. At the same time, he is aware that his decision to "play Indian" in the name of globalizing Irish subjectivity is fraught with risks. To pre-empt charges of cultural imperialism, he figures "Irish" and "Indian" cultures not as discrete wholes but as fakes and counterfeits. In doing so, he underscores his poetry's own act of "forging" shared, traumatic Irish/Indian inheritances that are further encased in counterfeit *literary* inheritances. Muldoon's "Madoc" is, after all, a parodic rewriting of Robert Southey's *Madoc* (1805), an epic poem celebrating colonial discovery in the New World. Indeed, Muldoon draws his risky comparisons between Irish and Indian histories through his ironic appropriations of British literary inheritances: "Madoc" transports British Romanticism into the New World and re-invents Anglo-modernist imagistic fragmentation. In my reading, Muldoon's counterfeit measures perform a double function: they mourn the loss of "origins" and the near extinction of indigenous cultures as they are entombed in his fragmentary long poem. And yet, because he casts "origins" themselves as counterfeits, he authorizes his poetry to embrace the wide-ranging comparisons globalization inaugurates and to pursue his work's institutional centrality and prestige, especially by appealing to poetry's irreducible relation to economic and political determination. In the midst of this impasse, he approaches the politics of comparison by stressing the inequalities and forgeries entailed in bridging the Irish/Indian divide through his handling of counterfeit literary inheritances, however provisionally and ambivalently. Ultimately, Muldoon alerts the reader to his writings thorough saturation in the divisions of global exchange even as he offers his literary creations as unasked-for gifts to the indigenous peoples and histories beyond the text, which appear in disfigured, negated form through the bleeding image of his poetry.

In Chapter 3, I shift from eminent world poets working in epic scales to examine how a comparatively peripheral English-language poet writes in lyric forms to negotiate, in this instance, the contradictions of post-apartheid South Africa in a cross-cultural frame. To do so, I turn to one of the country's leading poets, Ingrid de Kok, who recomposes the newly democratic nation through the conventions of elegy and anti-elegy to interrupt discourses promoting national recovery and global integration. She has published five collections to date, mostly with local South African presses such

as Ravan (Johannesburg) and Kwela/Snailpress (Cape Town). The other poets featured in this book publish with the most prominent (some might allege dominant) literary presses in the English-speaking world: Farrar, Straus and Giroux in the United States and Faber in the United Kingdom. That de Kok so explicitly fuses the "literary" and the "political" may explain why she has only recently become published in North America, through the smaller, independent Seven Stories Press, which (in the words of their homepage) showcases "works of the imagination and political titles by voices of conscience." Focusing especially on her collection *Seasonal Fires: New and Selected Poems* (2006), I study how her short, elegiac poems privilege what she calls "the smaller gesture" ("Cartography" 11). To my eyes, the "smaller gesture" figures in her work as a micromodel of globalism that re-orients her readers to experiences of "vulnerability" as a necessary imaginative resource for re-conceptualizing the possibilities of cosmopolitanism, at home and abroad.

Tropes of vulnerability figure in two ways: both through the susceptibility of her subjects to violence on personal and collective levels and the "opening up" of South African poetry to wider, cultural forces, for good and for ill. On the one hand, she repeatedly questions the possibilities of cultural representation to conduct the work of national mourning over the failures of social transformation on the part of the African National Congress (ANC) government amid widespread poverty, the epidemic of HIV/AIDS, and violence including rape and xenophobia toward migrants. On the other, she has also written a series of poems that takes on "cosmopolitan" perspectives by focusing on instances of transhistorical catastrophe spanning ancient Alexandria to contemporary Baghdad and the plight of noncitizens in Europe and South Africa alike. In both instances, she exposes how national and cosmopolitan discourses are often blind to their own rhetoric and to those whom they presume to represent. Her writing aspires to make visible the invisible "remainders" and "residues" of modernity—such as victims of violence and war, the plight of noncitizens, and the unremembered dead—who have been left out of or made invisible by Western liberal discourses of nation and globalization. She does so, however, by foregrounding layers of discursive mediation: instances of vulnerability appear as "prints," "fragments," and "shards," themselves encased within elegiac precursors from Ovid, Virgil, and Shakespeare through Blake, Thomas Hardy, Yeats, and Walcott too. In effect, her writing risks adding yet another layer of violation, effacing particular histories of loss through her selective rewritings of Western aesthetic traditions.

We can partly explain her literary investments through her graduate education at Queen's University (by reputation the most "high art" of Canadian

universities), where she wrote her master's thesis on Hardy in the late 70s. But this investment also connects her to a specifically South African tradition of "white writing" (as in the narrative fiction of J. M. Coetzee), which self-reflexively calls attention to her position of privilege as a highly educated, English-speaking white poet of Dutch descent who holds a position at the University of Cape Town. "White writing" also marks the asymmetric relation between the legacy of Anglo-European aesthetic modes and South Africa's socially fragmented, ethnically diverse, and polyglot polity comprising 11 national languages. Her elevated, metropolitan style contrasts with many of her peers such as Jeremy Cronin, Lesego Rampolokeng, and Yvette Christiansë. In comparison to Walcott and Muldoon, who stand at the center of poetry world in the global North, we can also see how a relatively peripheral poet is compelled to compose in traditional forms, enabling her to insert herself, and South African poetry more broadly, within literary centers located in New York, London, and Europe. (De Kok has won numerous awards including a Rockefeller Foundation Bellagio Centre fellowship, held international residencies in Canada and the United States; her poetry has been translated into nearly a dozen languages.) By working within these limitations, her writing nonetheless conducts work of "impossible mourning" for national and global loss, but does so by recalling how her recompositions negate the historical instances of vulnerability that her writing would seek to commemorate, if not recuperate. In doing so, she produces more nuanced ways of apprehending these social realities through cross-cultural poetics, however unequally.

In Chapter 4, I examine how one of the United Kingdom's most up-and-coming writers, the London-born and British Punjabi poet Daljit Nagra, renovates conventional poetic forms and authors associated with "the British tradition" to figure social problems over migration, nonbelonging, and citizenship in the context of neoliberal multiculturalism under New Labour (1997–2007) and after. Nagra's debut collection, *Look We Have Coming to Dover!*, was published by Faber in 2007: he joins Derek Walcott as the only other "poet of color" included on Faber's list. In many ways, Nagra extends a diverse lineage of artists and thinkers—since the *Windrush* generation in the mid-twentieth century up through Black British writing between the 70s and mid-90s—who have similarly sought to remake "Englishness" through minority cultural representation fashioned to the "new ethnicities," in Stuart Hall's phrasing. To be sure, the activity of contesting and transforming dominant regimes of representation was crucial in the Thatcher- and Major years of hegemonic racism.

When Tony Blair was elected as prime minister in May 1997, however, claims to multicultural Britishness suddenly became the dominant regime.

Months after coming to power, New Labour adopted rhetoric of inclusion and diversity under "Cool Britannia," passed legislation to curb racial discrimination, issued a series of reports on the future of multiethnic Britain, and later in 2001 addressed the question of citizenship amid new migrations, largely from Eastern Europe. Despite some gains, many systemic inequalities remained—and still remain—intact, especially for Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) peoples who make up around 7 percent of the population. As part of "Third Way" platforms reconciling capitalist growth with social welfare, these policies have had significant consequences in the cultural domain. A series of initiatives under the Arts Council England, such as the "decibel report" and *Free Verse: Publishing Opportunities for Black and Asian Poets*, examined the lack of representation of BME artists and poets. As a result, government funding for the Arts Council England and other arts initiatives became dependent upon promoting diversity through recruiting, hiring practices, and support for cultural production. Meanwhile, national education has expanded the Graduate Certificate in Secondary Education (GSCE) to include sections on "Poetry from Other Cultures" in the "English Language" section of the examination. There is, though, a separate category of "English Literature" for canonical authors, such as Shakespeare, who address "universal" themes and belong to England's "literary heritage." It is within this highly contested terrain that Nagra faces a number of complications in how to represent ongoing exclusions in the social-political domain for British Asians without simply fulfilling state-sanctioned programs of diversity, on the one hand, while on the other, how to make a new space of inclusion for himself and other BME poets by reconstituting the exclusive domain of English letters.

By teasing out the conditions of inclusion and exclusion, I study how his poetry negotiates preoccupations over "citizenship" by intertwining British Punjabi resources, often composed in his synthetic "Punglish," with canonical inheritances associated with the "British tradition" including Christopher Marlowe, Matthew Arnold, Rudyard Kipling, and George Orwell, as well as Seamus Heaney and Muldoon. First, I situate Nagra within recent debates over Englishness and citizenship, studying how his poetry works within and also seeks to challenge neoliberal multiculturalism by recalling the imperial underpinnings of modern, liberal citizenship and by retrieving preimperial forms of "Englishness" as a "translatable identity" created from afar, in Robert Young's conception. In the post-Blair moment, flexible models of Englishness—and Nagra's ironic posture of marginality—run the risk of becoming indistinguishable from multicultural celebrations of inclusion and diversity. As a frequent performer around Britain and a secondary teacher at the Jewish Free School in north London, Nagra is however

especially attuned to the ways aesthetic constructions become instrumentalized as politically representative of "other cultures." He self-reflexively works through this conflict through a series of poems on "representation," staging how his writing is folded into institutional mechanisms such as the secondary education system and the literary marketplace.

By making apparent the economic and political structures conditioning multiethnic cultural production, Nagra is able to carve out a space to re-imagine citizenship within and, potentially, beyond its strict, liberal discursive iterations. In my readings of his recurrent motif of "the passport," Nagra invents a conflictual, disruptive model of citizenship as irreducibly "dissensual," in the usage of Jacques Rancière. The problem becomes, however, that Nagra's poetics of citizenship itself depends upon the fact that he grafts British Asian experiences of exclusion upon highly recognizable and preeminent poetic precursors, such as Arnold, Heaney, and Muldoon, who have come to stand for the poetry establishment. In order for him to forge his own literary passport into English letters, Nagra must re-inscribe aesthetic ideologies of poetic taste and the presumed relevance of the canonical forms. That said, Nagra has in recent years put his cultural capital to the work of developing BME poets, as through the Complete Works Programs sponsored by the British Arts Council. Ultimately, Nagra textualizes the political, cultural, and aesthetic hierarchies shaping poetic production, clarifying the limits of inclusion for the many other "minority" poets working within the British poetry world.

"Discourses of worldliness are autobiographical in genre and confessional in institution," writes Gayatri Spivak about studies of world literature, "even when their interest is not exactly so" (*Aesthetic Education* 458). This book is no different. My interest in the cross-cultural fabric and global imaginative reach of contemporary poetry is partly informed by my own hybrid upbringing, having grown up in a Bengali Irish, Muslim Catholic household in upstate New York. While my readings are driven by "literary" questions, my investments are neither purely aesthetic nor solely theoretical. I conclude by touching upon how my critical practice carries pedagogical consequences for teaching seminars in global anglophone poetry by continually putting to question how cultural forms interrelate with—mediate, reflect, refract, and sometimes reconstitute—social realities of globalization as they are locally grounded, historically conditioned, and discursively framed. Overall, Walcott, Muldoon, de Kok, and Nagra rejuvenate verbal art by self-reflecting upon the material contradictions undergirding literary production in the contemporary era while enriching our ways of writing, thinking, and talking about our new, and all too familiar, global realities.

CHAPTER 1

Derek Walcott's Poetics of Global Economy in *Omeros*

"It Have Some Things Worth More Than a Dollar"

Readers of world literature and postcolonial studies have become well attuned to the ways Derek Walcott (b. 1930) patterns the cross-cultural constitution of the Caribbean through his sustained conversation with Western literary inheritances, what he called in 1970 "the greatest bequest the Empire made" (Hamner 50). "We knew the literatures of empires, Greek, Roman, British, through their essential classics," he recalls concerning his colonial education in his early essay "What the Twilight Says" (1970), "both the patois of the street and the language of the classroom hid the elation of discovery. If there was nothing, there was everything to be made" (*What the Twilight* 4). Across his career, Walcott challenges center-periphery models of literary affiliation, instead conceiving of the poetic tradition as a dynamic, open-ended process of world renewal. Nowhere is this more visible than in his monumental epic, *Omeros* (1990). Here, I examine the ways in which St. Lucia's Nobel Laureate of Literature receives and re-invents the literary inheritances of the epic genre—and its loaded imperial connotations—to mediate his recurring preoccupations with poverty and neocolonialism in the Caribbean.

If Walcott's poetry has become distinguished by an unusual "ability to sustain multiple affiliations" through an "openness to a plurality of literary forms and approaches" (Malouf 126), it is worth stressing how local and global pressures condition this model of Caribbean poetics, which is not without conflict. The polycentric impulses animating Walcott's writing place him squarely within a lineage of Caribbean thought—including Cuban novelist and ethnomusicologist Alejo Carpentier (1904–80), Guyanese poet and

novelist Wilson Harris (1921–), and Martinican poet and theorist Édouard Glissant (1928–2011)—which figures processes of transculturation as giving positive expression to the irrepressible fluidity of cultural identities, disrupting essentialist and separatist discourses of race, nation, history, and culture. "The poet's word," to take just one example from Glissant's *Poetics of Relation* (1990), "leads from periphery to periphery, and yes, it reproduces the track of circular nomadism; that is, it makes every periphery into a center; furthermore it abolishes the very notion of center and periphery" (29). Such a conception of the Caribbean poet's word resonates with debates in world literature, which likewise conceive of the circulation of cultural forms in the global era as surpassing center and periphery. The nomadic, rhizomatic version of Caribbean poetics, which often celebrates the cross-cultural exchanges and multidirectional flows that the global cultural economy makes possible, comprises, according to Chris Bongie, only one pole along "the creole continuum" (23–24; 49–52).

At the other end of the spectrum are those Caribbean and postcolonial writers who assert a strategic, creolized localism as resistant to becoming absorbed within imperial, Eurocentric discourses of global modernity. We can see this strategy perhaps most vividly in the work of Walcott's oft-named rival and peer Kamau Brathwaite (1930–). In his essay "World Order Models: A Caribbean Perspective" (1985), Brathwaite explicitly contests social science frameworks whose claim to global unity through supranational political organizations, he says, "leaves a significant part of the world out of this [world making] model" (55). As an alternative to the "superstructural projection" of a "Just World Order," he theorizes an underlying "infrastructure" to every particular cultural group or polity, or what he calls "nam" (56). Playing upon the words "name," "man," and Ghanaian Akan deity "nyame" (or sky god), nam refers to "the reduction of one's **name** to its essentials [. . .] it is the necessary disguise of **man** hood, retaining the possibility of resurrection, the divine spark, **nyame** or **dynamo**." Through its orthographic transpositions, linguistic translations, and cultural absences, "nam" locates an authentic "essence" specific to a given culture even as it marks the loss of origins due to the ravages of colonial conquest and slavery. From one perspective, Brathwaite's notion of nam replicates the binaries of global/local and European/non-European, paradoxically re-inscribing an essentialism that his theory of creolization in *The Development of Creole Society in Jamaica* (1971) seeks to dismantle. From another perspective, nam serves as a strategic essentialism, a "metaphorical reality" for naming an "indestructible culture-core" that in times of crisis can become "reactivated" for "oppressed peoples" to resist the hegemonic effects of globalization (53; 56; 63). For him, "when one becomes conscious of these [unconscious connections], a

whole new world begins to open, whole centuries of history rip open like paper because they've always been there" ("History" 32).

It is not difficult to see, however, how these seemingly opposing poles along the creole continuum—the one, privileging circular nomadism and polycentrism in order to figure "Caribbean identity" as open-ended and interrelational, the other laying claim to a strategic, authentic localism to underscore the perseverance of historical, cultural origins—form convex images of one another. Indeed, the Walcott/Brathwaite dichotomy, as Elaine Savory has eloquently demonstrated, has been disabling to understanding how both poets, in overlapping ways, have contributed to the making and transformation of the hybrid Caribbean over the course of their respective careers. "The linguistic registers for both poets," Savory concludes in her learned re-thinking of the critical, historical, and aesthetic locations of Brathwaite and Walcott, "range from Creole to Standard or International English" (237). They work in "personal" and "epic" scales by combining "oral *and* scribal" modes (236). And both poets redouble the local and the global, each intersected by and interwoven within one another, to give aesthetic expression to shifting space of creolization—the historical mixing of peoples, cultures, languages, belief systems, and temporal-spatialities crisscrossing the Atlantic—and to lay bare what is arguably unique to Caribbean poetics by virtue of the region's long, traumatic history of cross-cultural interactions and worldly entanglements (238).

Without wishing to reinforce a reductive opposition between Walcott and Brathwaite, it strikes me that we cannot overlook the ways in which Walcott's writing has gained significant *institutional* centrality and canonization in world letters. If Brathwaite has not, by comparison, received as much critical attention it is likely due to the difficult, experimental quality of his writing (T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* has been an abiding influence on Brathwaite's typographic patternings and aural proliferations). Brathwaite has garnered many awards, including the prestigious Neustadt Prize (1994), and published significant volumes of poetry, criticism, and history, producing a rich body of work that, I hope, will receive even greater critical attention it deserves and rewards. The St. Lucian poet, meanwhile, has acquired a considerable mass of readers both within the academy and beyond. To an extent, we can explain this through Walcott's dexterity in translating his local, political concerns through his recourse to Western aesthetic inheritances readily recognizable to readerships schooled in Anglo-modernist techniques of complexity, intertextuality, and aesthetic self-consciousness, at least as seen from his international publication and critical reception.

In the years before writing *Omeros*, Walcott would transition from his earlier "Caribbean phase" (in the words of Patricia Ismond) to becoming an

"international man of letters" from the 1980s onwards (King 474).[1] This was when Walcott truly entered into "global" recognition through a MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (1981), prestigious Ivy League teaching appointments before settling at Boston University (1981–2009), his publications with Farrar, Straus and Giroux, and his jet-setting itineraries through international circuits of poetry readings and festivals. All of these factors set the stage for the reception of *Omeros* as an instant classic, which led to his being awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature (1992). In these ways, Walcott's elite position within "world literature" would seem to fulfill Pascale Casanova's arguments over how so-called peripheral writers gain entry into "literary space" by assimilating culturally sanctioned modernist modes discernible to metropolitan centers of literary production, here in New York and London (*World Republic* 180).

But this does not mean that institutional mechanisms promoting and profiting from "world literature" determine how authors, texts, and readers interpret the political valences of aesthetic forms in the global era, particularly in instances when authors and texts strategically anticipate their writings' reception by metropolitan readerships and the literary marketplace more broadly. Sarah Brouillette, in her analysis of "The Fortunate Traveller" (1982), aptly describes Walcott's contradictory predicament as a strategically invented persona "torn between a desire to speak *on behalf* of his poetic subjects and Southern compatriots, and a wish to pursue the interests of his own fame or canonization" (*Postcolonial Writers* 40). Again and again, his performance of Western learning through modernist difficulty and intertextuality comprise the aesthetic substance through which he mediates the contradictions of neocolonialism in the Caribbean to his metropolitan audiences. Conversely, however, these same aesthetic qualities—and the poet's attendant self-questioning and self-criticism—mark a seemingly insurmountable disconnect between his role as spokesperson and the subjects and subject-matter politically animating his work, which all but guarantees his literary success due to the enduring ideologies of the poet's modernist alienation before intractable social inequalities.

Consider, for instance, how *Omeros* begins. "'This is how one sunrise," announces Philoctete at the opening of the poem, "we cut down them canoes'" (3). Philoctete smiles for American and European tourists and, "for some extra silver," shows them a scar on his leg (4). The scar, we learn, comes from a rusted anchor and so emblematizes the legacy of the slave trade, whose history continues in a new form through economic globalization. Yet not everything is for sale here: Philoctete refuses to "explain its cure. / 'It have some things'—he smiles—'worth more than a dollar'" (4). Philoctete, in canny awareness of his role as tour guide, gladly accepts extra payment to

show the damage of history to willing tourists—in much the same way as Walcott too reaps literary fame by putting the violence of neocolonialism in the Caribbean on the page for his reading audience. At the same time, though, Philoctete and *Omeros* hold in reserve a secret knowledge to cure personal and collective suffering. Here and throughout the poem, Walcott appeals to forms of intersubjective value beyond monetary exchange—ostensibly *poetic* forms of value and knowledge whose "excess" would challenge economic globalization's logic of equivalence and substitution. Do they? Readers of the poem will recall that Philoctete is not fully cured even after the obeah-figure Ma Kilman immerses him into a steaming cauldron to release him partly from his pain (247). If anything, the text's appeal to poetic value through excess derives from the excessive damage that imperial history has inflicted upon the Antilles, as emblematized in Philoctete's scar. So while Philoctete may claim from the start that he possesses a secret knowledge of his cure, this claim is betrayed by the reader's later recognition that, in truth, Philoctete—and *Omeros* as a whole—does not possess such knowledge because a full and complete healing from the damage of history is shown to be impossible. "It"—poetry—"have some things worth more than a dollar": this something "worth more" functions for Walcott as a strategic placeholder whereby he invests his writing with the capacity to displace prevailing ideologies of individual self-interest and monetary accumulation by instead appealing to conceptions of worldly belonging and intersubjective attachment not reducible to the market, whether touristic or literary. Needless to say, in the contemporary era such a vision of poetry (as before or beyond commercial exchange) is in the end finally unavailable. It is as if by attributing to his poetry an additional, nonmonetary aesthetic value, Walcott invites the reader to mine the text, at once redoubling Philoctete's suffering and furthering the poet's institutional standing within the literary field by virtue of his deep engagement with Western canonical forms.

The example of Philoctete brings to light a double bind deriving from the ways Walcott handles the epic genre to pattern his social preoccupations over poverty and underdevelopment in St. Lucia. Here and across the poem, Walcott imbues epic mythopoeia with a world-making and world-renewing potential capable of inventing a poetics of global economy, at once dependent upon but not reducible to economic globalization in the raw. Several readers have tracked the poem's many allusions to the Western literary tradition, most recently Ankhi Mukherjee in *What Is a Classic?* (84–98). While I touch on the poem's investment in canonical authors and texts, they are secondary to my primary concern with the roles of the epic genre in mediating Walcott's concerns over globalization. For this reason, I focus on one of the key literary inheritances of genre: I am referring to the epic figure of the "wandering

boat" as emblematized through Achille's fishing canoe, *In God We Troust*, and Walcott's self-portrait of his own circulating "craft," in the classical sense of poetic labor, or *technē*. These vessels function as two contrasting mediators of global cultural economy within the text. By tracking the production, circulation, and returns of these figures, we can see how Walcott works in and through discourses of global capital only to arrive at other forms of value premised on expenditure and sacrifice as unacknowledged but true sources of wealth. In my reading, *Omeros* constructs a "general global economy," as informed by Georges Bataille, which understands loss and poverty as the unacknowledged foundation for the creation of intersubjective meaning and value. By inventing a poetics of general global economy through the reinvention of prior artistic forms crossing East and West, Walcott casts the imagined space of St. Lucia as a new center of literary production, enacting a people and a place in the process of becoming by now entering into world literature. Such a way of linking the local and the global—as I discuss in the conclusion to this chapter—is precisely what the Swedish Academy praised in Walcott's poetry when they awarded him the Nobel.

The problem becomes, however, that as much as Walcott casts himself as a New World Adam, investing epic mythopoeia with world-renewing potential that "annihilates history" (*Twilight* 40), the poet becomes even more "enmeshed in history the more he tries to escape it" (Gikandi *Writing* 9). In light of Walcott's canonical standing, I pursue a parallel counterargument that puts his aesthetic model of globalism under critical scrutiny, emphasizing how the broader structural inequalities of the global literary marketplace significantly condition and constrain his poetics of global economy in *Omeros*. As we have already seen, he is all too aware of his institutional position. By self-reflexively representing the "poverty" of the Caribbean through Western literary traditions, Walcott sanctions his pursuit of cultural capital while placing himself at an even further remove from the political subject matter that furnishes the grounding condition for his aesthetic figurations of globalism. Scholars of publication history and print tend to examine the roles of institutions—publishing houses, reviewers, literature festivals, awards, and prizes—in shaping literary production. As I explained in the Introduction, my emphasis falls, instead, on how these social pressures appear on the page. The formal and thematic properties of *Omeros* register the asymmetric relation between, on the one hand, its poetics of global economy and, on the other, the geopolitical contexts that shape, delimit, and constrain this aesthetic model of globalism by virtue of the inequities of the global literary marketplace.

Needless to say, Walcott does not resolve these contradictions. In my reading, *Omeros* provides a rich example for reading the aesthetic and

political complexities that arise when a "world text" repurposes epic to recall the imperial past as it structures contemporary globalization in the Caribbean. His writing invests poetic agency to enact conceptions of intersubjective, worldly belonging premised upon an ethics of "sacrifice" and "giving" as meaningful alternatives to global capital's prevailing ideologies of individual self-interest. At the same time, my study of Walcott's poetics of global economy—for this highly canonical world author, the epic poem, and its critical interpretation—necessarily replicates the inequalities subtending the production and proliferation of world literature. It is, however, by making visible and working within these limitations that *Omeros* derives its actual power. I conclude by briefly turning to Walcott's Nobel speech, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory," placing it in conversation with debates over the institutional power of the Nobel Prize. Here, we can see how Walcott strategically performs his cultural distance, both from centers of literary canonization and from the "poverty" and "people" of the Antilles. If anything, he demonstrates how the categories of "poverty" and "the people" function discursively, and hence ideologically, thereby alerting his readers to the ways such terms are mobilized in language and, potentially, how they might be reimagined and rejuvenated in the name of the lived realities of poverty beyond the text.

"Everything Was Money": Global Trade, Poetic Technē

For Walcott, the sublime extension of the global capitalist economy requires the capaciousness of the epic genre, which we can see through the very structural composition and sweeping narrative scale of *Omeros*. Divided into seven books comprising 64 chapters, the poem is stitched together through several overlapping narrative threads connecting through myriad economic transactions, which create a shared condition of loss and affliction for all of the poem's figures, human and natural alike.[2] These narratives include the characters of the fishermen Achille and Hector, who vie for the love of Helen (who is repeatedly figured in economic terms), the wounded Philoctete, the modern-day obeah Ma Kilman, the blinded griot-figure Seven Seas, the World War II veteran Major Dennis Plunkett and his Irish-born wife Maud, the wandering poet-narrator, and the island of St. Lucia itself.[3] Indeed, St. Lucia may function as the first and last node of global economy in the text. And this history stretches far back, such as when Walcott haunts the text with the present absences of Aruac peoples who inhabited the island until Columbus's arrival in 1502. By 1660, the French, after signing a treaty with the indigenous Caribs, turned the island into a locus of transatlantic imperial trade. Indeed, in a series of treaties and

trade battles (including the Battle of the Saints in 1782), St. Lucia became a commodity all its own, passing between the French and British 14 times before coming under British rule in 1814. The traces of imperial economics, "free enterprise that came with an empire," appear in the poem through St. Lucia's decrepit sugar plantations from the early nineteenth century (*Omeros* 60). But even after the island's independence in 1979, political decolonization gives way in *Omeros* to global economic re-colonization in the form of tourism, overwhelming debt, and foreign investment.

We can see the force of global economy especially prominently in the poem's epic question, a classical generic convention that establishes an epic text's *raison d'être*:

> Where did it start? The iron roar of the market,
> with its crescent moons of Mohammedan melons,
> with hands of bananas from a Pharaoh's casket,
>
> lemons gold as the balls of Etruscan lions,
> the dead moon of a glaring mackerel; it increases
> its pain down the stalls,
>
> .....
>
> The stalls of the market contained the Antilles'
> history as well as Rome's, the fruit of an evil,
> where the brass scales swung and were only made level
>
> by the iron tear of a weight, each brass basin
> balanced on a horizon, but never equal,
> like the old world and new, as just as things might seem. (37–38)

Invoking the Greek mythological trope of the scales of justice, each side of the scale is metaphorically a basin of the Atlantic, with the Caribbean and the Mediterranean "balanced on a horizon, but never equal." And just as consumers exchange money for goods, so too does Walcott's rhetoric enact pointed exchanges between the commodities on the page and the hidden history they objectify through their production and worldwide commerce. For instance, the epic catalogue above metonymically associates melons, bananas, lemons, cabbages, red peppers, and sapodillas with Islamic, Egyptian, Etruscan, Roman, and Spanish empires, all of which flow—through running enjambments and the elongation of two sentences across 18 lines—into the stalls of the Antilles' contemporary economy. What's more, on the level of metaphor, the tenors of Walcott's extended comparisons refer to sundry exotic fruits whose vehicles correspond to the violated body (Walcott's list includes hands, balls, heads, carcasses, hearts, nipples), which

represent the whole of human labor that has been systematically alienated and disembodied. Poetic language underscores the violence perpetuated by economic exchange, which profits on oppositions and antinomies to create wealth. And yet, Walcott momentarily suspends economic and cultural antimonies: for the act of exchange, like poetic language, also draws oppositions together. So even as *Omeros* demystifies the illusion of any equitable balance between "old world and new," the poem also revels in the large-scale connections that global economy makes possible.

This reading of *Omeros*'s epic question brings to stark relief what I see as a paradox at the center of the poem, which corresponds to a larger conflict over Walcott's particular aesthetic model of globalism—cross-cultural, polycentric, and politically resistant to the machinations of neocolonialism in the Caribbean—and his writing's necessary imbrication within the divisions of literary institutions. First in moments such as these, Walcott figures poetic labor, or *technē*, as capable of redressing or counterbalancing the traumatic losses produced by the inequities of global capital. The "iron tear" at the end of the passage, a metaphor for poetic condensation, would seem to account for economic imbalances by presenting the text itself as a hard remainder of (and small recompense for) the ongoing nightmare of the modern capitalist system. The desire for counterbalancing and account making is, however, counteracted by another tendency: the ineluctable necessity of exchange and circulation in order to create value in the first place, which holds true for *Omeros* itself. Although Walcott seeks a poetics of redress, his text also bears an acute awareness that all value—economic, cultural, and poetic—accumulates through the insurmountable unevenness of exchange, thereby exacerbating the losses and inequalities his writing seeks to forestall. "The poem evokes pity," Paula Burnett claims, "not only retrospectively in relation to the suffering of the past, but actively, in response to the analogous suffering caused by the global market system of today" (*Derek Walcott* 76). A central problem, however, concerns how *Omeros* evokes pity for past and present suffering by calling attention to its own figural status—which redirects the reader to the materiality of language as the aesthetic substance of political transfiguration—and, in doing so, perpetuating the inequalities of Western literary inheritances, especially the epic genre, which further enables him to garner cultural capital and prestige.

To be sure, Walcott has expressed ambivalent attitudes about the label of epic, both in interviews—as when he stated in 1997, "I don't call [*Omeros*] an epic; I call it a very intimate work" ("Reflections" 240)—and in the poem itself, as when the narrator confesses concerning the Homeric epic "'I never read it,' / I said. 'Not all the way through'" (283).[4] Gregson Davis, however, has examined how Walcott's repeated "disavowals," through the

epic figure of *recusatio* (refusal), actually work to absorb the text into the tradition that his poetry transforms and changes. "In his many appropriations of epic subject matter," Davis argues, "Walcott reveals that he is not actually renouncing 'epic' so much as redefining it and, in the process, demonstrating the fundamental fluidity of the whole concept of genre" (328). Joseph Farrell similarly interprets Walcott's deliberate "inversion" of epic conventions as "a logical extension of the epic genre's capacity to reinvent itself" (262). Such arguments over the fluidity and reinvention at the heart of the epic genre parallel Walcott's own statements on his relation to the world poetic tradition more broadly. In his "Reflections on *Omeros*," Walcott conceives of art and the literary tradition not through a chronological, linear model of artistic progress and imitation (which would consign later artists to the position of derivative belatedness), but rather through "associations or references" whose "simultaneity" makes Joyce, for instance, "a contemporary of Homer" (Walcott "Reflections" 239, 241). Elsewhere in "The Muse of History," Walcott describes tradition as "a living element" that is "lived on the page" (*Twilight* 62). Walcott's notion of simultaneity in many ways accords with Eric Hayot's call for a "non-progressive model of literary history" in world literature (*On Literary Worlds* 9). Tracking structural and relational lines of influence and inheritance that are always constructed retroactively in specific contexts of writing becomes, for Hayot, a means of "grasping the presentness of the present" (37). Perceiving tradition through simultaneity enables Walcott to displace geographically separate or historically linear models of literary creation (premised on the burden of influence and teleological development) in preference for the multiple relations and coeval affiliations that Caribbean epic poetry makes possible.

Walcott's choice of epic is not, however, without its own problems considering the genre's long historical connection to empire. (This connection may in part explain Walcott's own caginess about the epic label.) In his seminal study *Epic and Empire*, David Quint delineates two opposing but dialectical strands of epic: heroic epic and romance. Heroic epics, such as Homer's *Iliad* or Virgil's *Aeneid*, tend to disguise commercial activity by subordinating it to the quest for some higher cause—fame, for example. The epic hero thus stands above and often apart from figures of trade, traders, and trading. The teleological narrative thrust of heroic epic, where event follows event in sequential order of cause and effect, retroactively constructs the underlying ideological rationale for imperial conquest (Quint 9). We can detect heroic elements insofar as *Omeros* is a founding epic, or perhaps a counterfoundational epic through its establishment of "St. Lucia" as a vital space of world literary creation. At the same time, however, Walcott also extends the tradition of romance epic, which makes manifest the ideological significances

concerning empire and economy, especially by privileging the perspective of those who are on the receiving end of empire. According to Quint, romances "valorize the very contingency and open-endedness that the victors' epic disparages: the defeated hope for a different future to the story that their victors may think they have ended once and for all" (9). Romance's narrative design—circular, wandering, and episodic—corresponds to the losers' incomplete agency, particularly as they perceive history as happening by haphazard event. This strain of epic also tends to make commerce and trade central to its narrative drive, which serves as a counterpoint to heroic epic's disdain for trade. Romance instead acknowledges and at times celebrates the vicissitudes and indeterminacies of everyday needs (Quint 261).[5] One of the key tropes of romance is the figure of the "wandering boat," which functions as the means by which the epic hero travels from port to port where he engages in commerce. Structurally speaking, the wandering boat is also the device that accumulates the epic's narratives of trade and so has interpretive value for the reader.

We can see how *Omeros* extends the tradition of romance by tracking the internal production, circulation, and return of its dual wandering boats: Achille's fishing canoe, *In God We Troust*, and the poet-narrator's circulating "craft," here used in the classical sense of poetic *technē*.[6] (Readers have tended to see the narrator as a self-portrait of Walcott himself, sometimes conflating the two together. I refer to this figure as the narrator because, as the text reminds us, "every 'I' is a // fiction finally" (28).) These two vessels—the one low, local, and commercial, the other high, cosmopolitan, and artistic—together carry the contradictions of global economy within *Omeros*'s sea-born pages. Walcott moreover describes the iconic image of the moving ship, "a sail going out and a sail coming in," as representing the "global metaphor" for the poem's preoccupations with economic transfer and circulation (*Omeros* 223).[7] In addition to their epical value, Achille's *In God We Troust* and the narrator's poetic *technē* are also, in the words of Marc Shell, "tropic metaphors," or signifiers for currency more generally (7). In *The Economy of Literature*, Shell explains how literary texts "are composed of small tropic exchanges or metaphors, some of which can be analyzed in terms of signified economic content and all of which can be analyzed in terms of economic form"; he goes on to say that "one goal of literary criticism is to understand the connection between the smallest verbal metaphor and the largest trope" (7). Indeed, these two contrasting vessels constitute *Omeros*'s tropic metaphor in both senses of "tropic": a turning, rhetorical figure carrying economic content and Walcott's circulating textual metaphor for the currency of the tropics.

From the very opening lines of the poem, *Omeros* focuses the reader's attention on the building of Achille's canoe. As Philoctete narrates to

tourists and the reader, the fishermen, having downed several hits of rum, "turn into murderers" and axe down the "*laurier-cannelles*" before gutting the trees into canoes (3). Walcott metaphorically compares the felling of trees to the extermination of native peoples, cultures, and religions. Just as the Conquistadors wiped out the Aruacs, "and their language was lost," so too do Achille and his fellow fishermen "wound" the trees with chainsaws, leaving "raw holes" in the ground. Walcott repeats the word "hole," "hollow," and "wound" several times in these lines to stress the absences at the heart of poetic and economic production (6). Slowly, however the trunks move "in eagerness to become canoes // . . . feeling not death inside them, but use— / to roof the sea, to be hulls" (7). Finally, we read "everything fit": the canoes are blessed by a priest or shaman figure, who smiles jestingly at Achille for naming his canoe *In God We Troust*: "Leave it!" Achille retorts, it "Is God' spelling and mine" (8).

The production of the canoe through a violent transformation of raw materials, the ritualized or sacrificial inflection given to the process of exchange, and the "coining" of the name of Achille's craft combine to underscore the violence contained and unleashed in the process of creation. Walcott, through his series of metaphors that yoke together African rituals, Caribbean native peoples, and European imperialists, similarly equates the creation of a canoe with the wholesale extermination of disparate cultures. The canoes "forget their lives as trees," suggesting that acts of economic and poetic production alike demand a necessary historical amnesia. Viewed in this way, the very act of creation, marked as it is by radical loss and decimation, discloses how Achille's canoe is "stamped" (as Marx so often puts it) with the material relations of empire and conquest (*Capital* 131, 161, 168). For value, says Marx, "does not have its description branded on its forehead; it rather transforms every product of labour into a social hieroglyphic. Later on, men try to decipher the hieroglyphic, to get behind the secret of their own social products: for the characteristic which objects of utility have of being values is as much men's social product as is their language" (167). To interpret the commodity for its value is, as Marx instructs, one and the same as deciphering language itself. Likewise stamped with the inequality embedded in language, Achille's canoe is that "social hieroglyphic" that demands interpretation to yield up its invisible and contradictory history. In contradistinction to Marx's conception of the alienation of labor in commodity culture, however, this moment in the text highlights Achille's unalienated relationship to his livelihood and its basis in inequality.

But it is the naming of his canoe with the words *In God We Troust* that represents the text's most direct marker of its commodity status: money.

"Everything was money," Achille muses (44). Indeed, his initial source of conflict throughout Books I and II results from his unequivocal trust in the money-form, with gold as the universal equivalent and sole source of value. On one level, the name *In God We Troust* ironically appropriates and distorts the US motto. The name "In God We Trust" lends supposed divine authority and meaning to an image that lacks actual or substantial value. And such conferrals of meaning are, as the poem here implies, equivalent to the creation of literature. The insertion of the letter "o" in "trust" points to a lack at the center of all monetary and symbolic exchange, which demands the trust of its participants. The name of Achille's craft questions the self-authority of the currency of the United States and its hegemony over Caribbean economies. If the act of naming functions as a form of branding, *In God We Troust* points to the internal contradictions, failures, and emptiness behind the US motto and by extension behind global capital itself. At the same time, however, an "o" is not the same thing as lack but may instead move in the opposite direction: not toward nothing but toward something *more* that cannot be accounted for in economically quantifiable or even in linguistically symbolic terms. As a ritualized object, the signifier *In God We Troust* points to a poetic economy that, while suffused with global capital, is marked by an excess that would thwart the symbolic currencies of capital and its logic of general equivalence. That said, Achille's wandering craft does connect him to money metonymically. After coining his pirogue, Achille uses his canoe to earn money through the fishing trade; and so even if his vessel does not equate to money, it is an agent for monetary exchange and accumulation. Walcott self-admonishingly implicates his own making of poetry as similarly marked by its lack and its excess, exposing how Achille's canoe—like the text itself—is stamped with material relations of economic inequality even as it seeks to reconfigure them through *poiesis*.

Achille's economic plight parallels the narrator's self-portrait of the creation of his poetic craft or *technē* at the end of Book I. The narrator's wandering boat, his poetic craft or *technē*, provides an occasion for reading how the poem stages the contradictions and ambivalences over Walcott's relation to his position of privilege within the literary marketplace. Importantly, the narrator's "craft" initially develops through its repeated and strategic juxtaposition with other vessels of exchange including tourist liners, colonial freighters, and Western artworks too. Within the text, the production of the narrator's figurative "craft" begins when he walks with the ghost of his deceased father, Warwick, down to the wharf in Castries. (Walcott was only a year old when he lost his biological father in 1931.) Standing upon the wharf, they encounter a tourist "liner as white as a mirage, / its hull bright

as paper, preening with privilege" (72). Warwick tells his son to dedicate his life to the creation of a rival vessel that might surpass the liner's wealth:

> "Measure the days you have left. Do just that labour
> which marries your heart to your right hand: simplify
> your life to one emblem, a sail leaving harbour
>
> and a sail coming in. All corruption will cry
> to be taken aboard. Fame is that white liner
> at the end of your street, a city to itself,
>
> taller than the Fire Station, and much finer,
> with its brass-ringed portholes, mounting shelf after shelf,
> than anything Castries could ever hope to build." (72–73)

The narrator here receives his epic responsibility to commit himself to the emblem of a moving sail. The poem's global metaphor for circulation and travel, "a sail leaving harbour // and sail coming in," is also a metonymy for *poiesis* itself through the associative chain of sailing-as-writing, writing-as-trade, and trade-as-building. Following Warwick's metaphor, the epic and cruise ship are cities unto themselves, with intricate epic designs and "brass-ringed" windows containing Western literature (from Homer, Virgil, Dante, Shakespeare, Yeats, and Joyce among so many others) that, in its learned intertextuality, mounts "[book] shelf after [book] shelf." The magisterial presence of the tourist liner suggests the difficulty of producing a Caribbean poetic craft that does not simply depend upon or mimic American and European monetary and poetic economies. Clearly a vehicle for Walcott's critique of the economic and racial ills of North American tourism, the tourist liner, however, also symbolizes Walcott's dependence upon Northern literary institutions that toss coins to Caribbean artists in the form of book contracts, poetry readings, university positions, and grants.[8]

Immediately following this passage, though, the disembarking modern tourist liner leaves in its wake Warwick's memory of a colonial freighter from the early to mid-twentieth century (73). The poem here joins these two ships together as vessels for (neo)colonial exploitation of Caribbean labor, underscoring the continuity of economic history through repeating patterns of imperial trade. Warwick proceeds to recall a formative incident from his childhood when he witnessed women carrying hundredweight-baskets of coal, all "balanced on their torchoned heads" (73), up a wooden ramp to the hull where "two tally clerks in their white-pith helmets" marked off the loads of coal (74). As compensation for their labor, the women received "one copper penny." Throughout these lines, Walcott repeats the word "balance"

in order to compare, problematically, the creating of poetry with the carrying of coal. In effect, he suggests that the means of poetic production derive from a desire to redress colonial economy:

> They walk, you write;
>
> keep to the narrow causeway without looking down,
> climbing in their footsteps, that slow, ancestral beat
> of those used to climbing roads; your own work owes them
>
> because the couplet of those multiplying feet
> made your first rhymes. Look, they climb, and no one knows
> them;
> they take their copper pittances, and your duty
>
> from the time you watched them from your grandmother's house
> as a child wounded by their power and beauty
> is the chance you now have to give those feet a voice. (75–76)

By collapsing these two historically and physically disparate conditions of labor, Walcott opens his own work to fresh criticisms. For one, the effort to equate coal-carrying with poetry fails to call attention to the unequal demands upon the body. Though Walcott writes "crouch[ed] with a writing lamp over a desk," remembering this incident from a distance, the women workers must toil while balancing baskets atop their heads (75). To this we must also add a notable difference in economic remuneration: the women carriers take paltry "copper pittances" for their loads of coal while his poetic labor goes on to reap monetary gain and literary recognition. What's more, the women become erotically-charged symbols of St. Lucia's economic subjugation.[9] Both father and son view from a distance the women carriers, and so the colonial monetary economy becomes overlaid with a sexual or libidinal economy. The problem thickens all the more when we consider the narrator's sense of "duty," a word that expresses ethical or moral obligation. The rhetoric of duty rings paternalistic in its sound of necessary pity. We can read these lines for the symptomatic responses that economic inequality creates: the narrator's sense of duty springs from a simultaneous knowledge of profound alienation from, as well as a deep desire for intersubjective connection with, human subjects whose value as humans is debased by economic exploitation.

There is no question that the rhetoric of "duty" (as obligation and recompense) is deeply problematic. That said, these lines, when read as poetry, underscore the figural status of the coal-carrying women: they are produced

by and yet remain at a remove from the text, such that poetry can only gesture toward human exploitation through linguistic figuration. And this happens by venturing to "give those feet a voice," hoping that poetic production—ancestral beats, multiplying feet, rhyming couplets, and here prosopopoeia—might give a textual body and a voice to those who are, at least in the eyes of colonial traders, invisible, less than nothing, and no longer remain. This, then, is a fundamentally *poetic* value: the long, repetitive process of poetic labor, which, in giving voice to the dead, finally remains insufficient before history.[10]

Both of these early examples illustrate a self-conscious failure of poetic language to redress loss: words, the currency of poetic trade, amount to less than mere "copper pittances." Within the text, neither Achille nor the narrator can figure value outside of the money-form. American dollars, Western artworks, and the currency of the English language determine the bases for the value of their respective vessels. And while both of their respective commodity forms are grafted upon the damage of economic, imperial history, the production of Achille's craft and narrator's incipient *technē* illustrates the difficulty, if not impossibility, of producing forms of value that function outside the monetary global economy, which severely constrains Caribbean workers and artists from changing local conditions of loss.

Transatlantic Circulation: Figuring Origins of Global Economy

While the text draws attention to the production of its internal commodity-forms, it also makes visible how interpretive value, rather than inhering in the production of things, instead accrues through their movement and circulation within exchange. This in part may explain why in Books III, IV, and V Achille and the narrator unexpectedly enter into wayward global circulation to Africa and Europe respectively. At the same time, these books also cast the Caribbean as ensnared between the seemingly distant past of the slave trade and the consolidation of global (read Northern and Western) capital since World War II. Concerning the poem's many meridian crossings, Rei Terada has queried how "the reader is meant to compare these journeys from *Omeros*, but less clear is how they measure up to each other. Walcott's treatment of the two journeys is asymmetrical" (37). In my reading, the middle books of *Omeros* contain two contrasting axes for interpreting transatlantic circulation, one intratextual and the other intertextual. As we will see, these two axes converge through the poem's self-reflection on the contradictory politics of art, such that even as the poem figures the divisions of the global monetary economy in content, it also draws upon the bank of world literature to accrue cultural capital.

On the intratextual level, we can explain Achille's return to seventeenth-century Africa and the narrator's tour of contemporary Europe as dual movements into the traumatic origins of economic globalization in the Caribbean. In Book III, *In God We Troust* diverts Achille 20 miles off the St. Lucian coastline, out past "the last // point where the Trade" winds blow "into the open ocean" (127; 131). From here, Achille falls into a sunstroke while adrift on the Atlantic and begins his imaginative crossing on a dream-journey back to seventeenth-century Africa. Like his enslaved ancestors, Achille circulates involuntarily; he is forced to witness the beginning formations of the modern world capitalist system as well as to remember his forgotten African cultural origins. As one critic puts it, "the Atlantic becomes a cartography of the fragmented heritage of all those who undertook the Middle Passage, with Achille's journey representing the journey of millions" (Farrier 29). But while the poem suggests a Black Atlanticist interpretation of this Middle Passage, we can also read Achille's transatlantic crossing as propelled by the losses endemic to economic globalization, whose modern history begins with what Walcott calls the "great design / of the triangular trade" (130).[11] Throughout Book III, Achille beholds the slave trade's tragic machinations, where African raiders capture 15 slaves—"the raid," we read, "was profitable" (145)—and his ancestors are soon sold for "silver coins multiplying on the sold horizon" (149). The conversion of entire cultures and peoples into currency ultimately makes "each man . . . a nation / in himself, without mother, father, brother," and thus doubly alienated from self and the larger collective (150). Human seizure, financial profit, cultural fragmentation, and alienation: this is how the poem figures the foundational logic of the modern world's primary trade pattern whose legacy reverberates up through the present.

In contrast to Achille's involuntary circulation, the poet-narrator deliberately leaves the island in Books IV and V, and he does so in shame and disgust over the Caribbean's dispossession. By traveling to Europe and "learning his trade," he self-consciously chooses to participate in global migration in order to return later (he hopes in vain) better equipped to give his home the refinement of artistic culture he initially thinks it lacks. "You must enter cities," Warwick says to his son, "that open / like *The World's Classics*" (187). And only through world travel, Warwick thinks, will his son "cherish our island for its green simplicities," and thereby garner fame. In Warwick's mind, the acquisition of artistic and book knowledge translates into cultural capital: for him "power / and art [are] the same" (205). In Book V, the narrator therefore heads for Europe, sailing from the wharves of Lisbon to the City of London along the Thames, across the Irish Sea to Howth Head in Dublin, then to Greece along the Aegean, and up the Bosporus to Istanbul before

"re-enter[ing] my reversible world" in North America, which the poem figures as the contemporary center of global imperialism (207).

Ironically, of course, what the narrator encounters during his grand tour is not a "classical," or "refined" European civilization that opens up hospitably like *The World's Classics*. Instead, he experiences in his travels a provincialized Europe whose present commercial life is built upon the legacy of colonial trade. To offer just one of several instances, while in London the narrator heads up the Thames where "he s[ees] the tugs chirring up a devalued empire // as the coins of their wake passed the Houses of Parliament" (195). Perhaps not surprisingly, the heart of Europe's imperial darkness is London's banking district, "the City that can buy and sell us" (197). Political decolonization comes with economic re-colonization. And the uneven economic relations between metropolitan center and Caribbean periphery now become all the greater.

Troubling as their journeys into the dark origins of economic globalization are, only once Achille and the narrator enter into these sites of dispersal do they discover that they are linked to others who are likewise economically subjugated. Paradoxically, the vicissitudes of circulation produce forms of value that at once appear to precede and supplement the simulacra of monetary currency (for Achille) or artistic prestige (for the narrator). So much so that value in the text is no longer equated with empirical, quantifiable measurement of worth. The dissolution of symbolic registers of value in turn clears the way for advancing nonrational and excessive modes of value through imagined, intersubjective linkages with other experiences of dispossession.

To return to Achille, even as he grieves over the collective losses of the modern world system, what the poem sings as "the one pain / that is inconsolable," he also mourns an intimate, personal loss: the loss of his name and hence his cultural-racial-historical subjectivity (151).[12] During his encounter with his father, Afolabe, Achille discovers the counterfeit nature of his name. As Afolabe says, Achille is "only the ghost // of a name" and so he asks his son:

> Why did I never miss you until you returned?
> Why haven't I missed you, my son, until you were lost?
> Are you the smoke from a fire that never burned? (139)

As we have previously seen with the naming of *In God We Troust*, naming-as-coining is central to the history of trade, both its remembering and forgetting. The name "Achille" is a trace, a faint residue of an event (the metaphorical fire of Greek epic heroism or the terror of slave trade) that he has never directly experienced.

At the same time, however, the demystification of his name is also an open site for re-defining his self-worth. By entering into the empty space of his personal and collective history, Achille can re-evaluate his relation to his craft, the kind of currency it uses, and the substance of the backing behind it even if through its very lack. "With the Trade behind them," Achille's mate wakes him from his sun-stricken haze, and in the bilge of *In God We Troust* Achille sees a kingfish, which his mate has caught over the course of the night (157). To imprint the kingfish with value, Walcott repeats the word "silver": "steel blue and silver" (158), a seagull holds "silver" in its beak (158), "the albacore's silver weight" (160). The kingfish operates on several registers of value in the poem. For one, on an epic level, if Achille represents something of a questing knight, he in turn receives the kingfish (a blue albacore, or "ton" in patois) as a small return for the innumerable losses he has unconsciously witnessed. The kingfish, then, is the unasked-for epical gift that arises out of the Atlantic's long history of economic and cultural loss. On an economic or material level, by metaphorically figuring the fish as equivalent to a precious metal, the text suggests that the fish, and not the substance of silver per se, is Achille's source of sustenance and sustainability. The fish, and not gold or money, is his currency that he will use through the local trade of fishing, a trade that commemorates and continues his lost African roots. On an epistemological level, the sudden, unexpected presence of the fish stands for a nonrational, non-self-interested form of value in Achille's knowledge concerning his relation to transatlantic African history and diaspora. At the same time, however, one cannot but hear an echo of T. S. Eliot's "kingfisher" from *The Waste Land* (1922). In this sense, the presence of the fish may also signify the persistence of colonialism, Christianity, and the Western canon as establishing the coordinates of subjectivity and value for Achille and the poem alike.

The narrator's entrance into the networks of European exchange is likewise an entrance into massive loss, as we saw in his experiences in London. Such confrontations with the overwhelming power of global capital lead the narrator in Book V to question whether imperial economies (and so-called European civilization) can ever be "redeemed by the creamy strokes of a Velázquez, // like the scraping cellos in concentration camps, / with art next door to the ovens . . . ?" (205). Clearly, the answer is "no." The sharp juxtaposition, simultaneity even, between European high art and mass atrocity ("art next door to ovens . . . ?") forecloses any possibility for artistic redemption—in its multiple senses as in "transcendence," "liberation," and "absolution" (*OED*, "redemption"). Art, here, is not just side by side the violence of modernity. The two, in Walcott's eyes, are mutually constitutive: such a political vision would appear to cast his own art in the image of modernity's violence.

Paradoxically, while the text deliberately shows how art is put to the service of power, it also frequently appeals to the emancipatory potential of writing through the simultaneity of artworks, at least as Walcott understands it. And this brings me to the intertextual axis of transatlantic circulation. For while the intratextual economy proceeds toward negation (as each figure is emptied out and reduced to nothing by virtue of their violent encounters with the global monetary economy), on an intertextual level the poem proceeds in the opposite direction: not toward negation but toward excessive accumulation and the consolidation of cultural capital. Walcott fills the text with an abundance of allusions to world artists that circulate like coins across *Omeros*'s pages. For instance, in Ireland, the poem joins in song with the "muse of our age's Omeros," James Joyce. As several readers have well established, Joyce represents in Walcott's imagination an invaluable resource for forging alliances of aesthetic and political critique, premised on shared experiences of racial alienation and economic dispossession.[13] The Irish case is perhaps an easy one to make for cross-cultural affiliation. But what about "great white" artists from the American imperial center? Toward the end of Book V, the narrator meditates on the question of his "privilege," as in this example when he draws his metropolitan education into comparison with the American transcendentalists Emerson and Thoreau:

> Privileges did not separate me, instead
> they linked me closer to them by that mental chain
> whose eyes interlocked with mine, as if we all stood
>
> at a lectern or auction block. Their condition
> the same, without manacles. The chains were subtler,
> but they were hammered out of the white-hot forge
>
> that made every captor a blacksmith. The river
> had been crossed, but the chain-links of eyes in each face
> still flashed submission or rage; I saw distance
>
> in them, and it wearied me; I saw what Achille
> had seen and heard: the metal eyes joining their hands
> to wrists adept with an oar or a "special skill." (210)

If Walcott's earlier poetry has been divided to the vein between his dual cultural inheritances of Western and African traditions, here, the word "privilege" signifies not simply intellectual distinction or superiority, but a shared, though unequal subjugation that figuratively binds the narrator to other world artists. This moment of crossing occurs, crucially, over the bridge of

metaphor. Indeed, Walcott's simile ("as if") joins together the "we" of the African diaspora with Emerson and Thoreau: "their condition / the same, without manacles." But at the same time as these metaphors collapse cultural and historical divisions for the sake of forging imagined connections with Western artists, the metaphors here seem so strained and emphatic that they give the reader pause: Is the "lectern" the same as the "auction block"? Are the "chains" of aesthetic connection really made from the same "white-hot forge" as those of chattel slavery? Is every "captor" necessarily a "blacksmith"? The point here is that the condition of "privilege" is premised on a paradox: as a "special skill," it signifies the power of the elite, the learned, and the captor; at the same time, the "special skill" of art is also retroactively constructed by virtue of the poet's privilege, arising from out of its alienation from historical, material conditions of deprivation. The politics of aesthetics, for Walcott, functions dialectically through its simultaneous incorporation within and resistance to the material grounding conditions from out of which it necessarily derives—and protests against—in the name of the negative freedom of "poetic privilege." In this instance, art for Walcott gains its political purchase, then, not through its commemoration of monumentality but rather through its capacity to animate cross-cultural linkages through the highly unsettling processes of aesthetic exchange done in full awareness of its thorough imbrication within structural inequalities.

Along an intertextual axis, *Omeros*'s recourse to art and artists constructs a global economy of culture that questions the legitimacy of America or Europe's monetary economy even as it depends upon it. Indeed, the flow of artistic currencies in Books IV and V imaginatively brings the world of art and artists closer together, in greater interdependence. For instance, if we read the names of artists as figurative coins circulating throughout *Omeros*, Walcott builds symbolic "credit" by borrowing foreign cultural currency from Greece (Homer/Omeros), Italy (Dante's loose terza rima), Ireland (Yeats and Joyce), Martinique (Aimé Césaire), Romania (Paul Célan), France (Max Jacob, Marcel Duchamp), Andalusian Spain (Diego Velázquez), Poland (Czesław Miłosz, Zbigniew Herbert, Adam Zagajewski), and North America (Melville, Emerson, and Thoreau), and many others. Read as a figurative banking institution, *Omeros* in turn re-mints these foreign coins, makes them integral to a contemporary Caribbean poetic economy, and sends them back out into the global literary marketplace. The world of art and artists are thus the textual currency that Walcott's *technē* circulates to accumulate cultural capital for its author and St. Lucia.

The two axes of circulation throughout these middle books can, in turn, be seen as embodying an irresolvable contradiction concerning Walcott's patterning of global economy in the text. On an intratextual level, the

transatlantic circulation of Achille and the narrator seeks to excavate and uncover the traumatic origins of the global monetary economy in the Caribbean, stretching back to the slave trade and continuing through the post-War era. This is a strategy on Walcott's part that will set the stage for him to speculate upon other forms of value located in excess, sacrifice, and loss, as we will soon see. On an intertextual level, though, the poem further consolidates the author's cultural capital by drawing his writing into equivalence with other world artists. While in content *Omeros* makes visible the invisible consequences of economic globalization in the Caribbean, the poem simultaneously inscribes a global economy of literature, a move that figures "St. Lucia" as a new center of world literature by creating lines of cross-cultural literary affiliation. This nonetheless carries the cost of Walcott becoming even further removed from his subject matter as he pursues prestige and performs the role of an international man of letters, however ambivalently.

"The Sea Was My Privilege": Speculation and Sacrifice

As we have seen, the word "trade" contains within it two poles of signification that the poem sets in tension with one another: the first being a system of equivalent exchange through monetary and human capital and the second meaning a vocational act or practice of making (*technē*). The onset of the world-system of global capital, which for the poem begins with the slave trade, forces the act of making or *technē* into commercial exchange. Yet the text attempts to recuperate *technē* in the midst of economic globalization's logic of universal equivalence. Walcott's attempt to retrieve a nonmonetary form of value through poetic making is, of course, impossible. We might go so far as to say that this conception of "the literary"—as before or beyond exchange—is one of the most saleable goods on the global literary marketplace, insofar as it is often marketed as conferring and guaranteeing an author's worth.

Omeros's poetics of global economy meets a critical limit that it cannot surpass or transcend. Economic globalization, which proceeds through the creation and exploitation of chronic poverty, leads both Achille and the narrator into the double bind of desiring a space of relief and redress—whether real or poetic—apart from poverty while simultaneously recognizing that such desire cannot escape mechanisms of circulation that deepen loss. While the processes of circulation lead Achille and the narrator to undergo a transformation in their relation to their respective modes of trade, upon their return to St. Lucia neither can change anything within the social and economic sphere. For example, in Book VII Achille is repeatedly frustrated over

the prevalence of the tourist industry on land. In response, he sails south only to discover how large-scale fisheries have overtaken the sea. The degradation of his ritualized vocation to fishing leads him to seek redress, "some cove he could settle like another Aeneas, / founding not Rome but home, to survive in its peace" (301). The narrator, for his part, returns to St. Lucia as something of a tourist himself in these later books. While riding in a taxi taking him from the airport to his hotel, he meditates on the ways he exploits the Caribbean's condition of economic destitution for his own self-gain:

> Didn't I want the poor
> to stay in the same light so that I could transfix
> them in amber, the afterglow of an empire . . . ? (227)

The narrator's impulse toward redress ossifies the poor, denying the subjects of his poetry the possibility for agency and change. "Had they waited for me," he continues searchingly, "to develop my craft?" (227–29). In a rhetorical style that echoes W. B. Yeats's self-questions and self-rebukes (in "Man and the Echo," for instance), the speaker directly interrogates the double-edged nature of his "elite" position as metropolitan artist. Not unlike the multinational tourist industry, he too makes "paradise" out of "poverty" (228). It would be absurd, he implies, to imagine that the poor have waited for him to develop his craft. Simply acknowledging this contradiction does not absolve the narrator (or Walcott) from his radically unequal relation to St. Lucia and its very real, material poverty. Indeed, this overt self-questioning speaks, if anything, to the kinds of symptomatic responses global capitalism produces.

The problem for the poem, and for readers, now becomes how to think through the category of "poverty" as an organizing principle for understanding *Omeros*'s poetics of global economy. To inhabit this impasse, we can reframe the problem of global economy in the poem by using loss itself as not the effect but the very foundation for reading value in the text. Indeed, this shift in perspective enables readers to perceive how *Omeros* re-constellates global economy in a way quite akin to Georges Bataille's notion of "general economy."

In his writings on economy, Bataille distinguishes between two kinds of economics. Classical economics, he says, bases its theory upon a restrictive, monetary economy whose end is "the production and use of wealth" (183). In accordance with the bourgeois values of diligent productivity, fiscal frugality, and the conservation of capital and energy, this strict economy (for Bataille) is above all concerned with the goals of monetary accumulation and utility. Useless forms of consumption thus defy the laws of use and

necessity (185). As a result, any and all nonproductive activity, especially poetry, appears antithetical to "the fundamental necessities of production and conservation" (168).

In a crucial reversal, however, Bataille counters the classical, monetary economy with the notion of a general economy. Every system of exchange (whether it is economic, biological, ecological, social, cultural, and so forth) produces more than it needs to survive. This something more, something that is always internal to the system, is an excess. According to the laws of Bataille's general economy, wealth does not accrue through production and accumulation but, on the contrary, through "the principle of loss, in other words, of unconditional expenditure" (169). And what is spent is an excess of energy that permeates every level: from the microlevel of small organisms, to individuals and groups, all the way out to large systems of economy, politics, culture, and ecology (169). Bataille uses the example of the sun to model his notions of general economy: "the origin and essence of our wealth are given in the radiation of the sun, which dispenses energy—wealth—without any return" (189). All life is sustained through this un-returned, un-requested expenditure of energy, which is in actuality a gift. The sun's gift of energy makes possible the growth of life, which in turn produces greater waste and excess that too must be spent or destroyed, creating an economic system premised on the constant movement of energy, such that excessive spending and unconditional giving produces wealth out of loss, even as that energy is being consumed. Indeed, in contradistinction to the global monetary economy, wealth can now be seen as a form of poverty: the principle of loss backs all systems of exchange. "The term poetry," Bataille says, "applied to the least degraded and least intellectualized forms of the expression of the state of loss, can be considered synonymous with expenditure; it in fact signifies, in the most precise way, creation by means of loss. Its meaning is therefore close to that of *sacrifice*" (171).

With this in mind, *Omeros* can be seen to enact a general global economy, one that understands loss, sacrifice, and giving as unacknowledged foundations for the creation of meaning and value. To do so changes the very terms of exchange itself: from the dominant goals of production, self-interest, and accumulation to the processes of consumption, sacrifice, and expenditure. So, how does *Omeros* speculate on an alternative form of global economy premised on sacrifice? Toward the end of the poem, the marble bust of Omeros forces the narrator to confront his complicity in the buying and selling of St. Lucia. In the final book, they descend into the island's Malebolge, a Dantean circle of fraud called "the Pool of Speculation," a phrase that, as we will soon see, is potent with meaning (289).[14] Once inside this "hell in paradise," they see all those "who had sold out their race" in search of profit

and self-gain: from English colonial businessmen, who thought their mines "could turn sulphur / [into] gold" (289; 60); to government officials, "the traitors," who "saw the land as views / for hotels" (289); to real estate agents who "had rented the sea / to offshore trawlers" (290); to Hector himself, who traded his canoe in for a transport van (292). All boil "in the lava of the Malebolge / mumbling deals as they rose" (289).

But worst of all are the poets themselves:

> Selfish phantoms with eyes
> who wrote with them only, saw only surfaces
> in nature and men, and smiled at their similes,
>
> condemned to their pit to weep at their own pages.
> And that was where I had come from. Pride in my craft.
> Elevating myself. (293)

Poetry especially falls victim to the corruption of economic speculation, the "buying and selling goods, land, stocks and shares, etc., in order to profit by the rise or fall in the market value, as distinct from regular trading or investment" (*OED*, 8). "Speculation," because a counterfeit form of trade, perverts poetic trade, as the craft of verse collapses into commercial activity for public consumption. Moving out of his initial concern that his treatment of the Caribbean's poverty has been inadequate, the narrator eventually arrives at another kind of "poetic vision," another kind of "poetic speculation" of global economy.

And such a vision demands a hard look into poverty itself. Before the figure of Omeros departs from the text, he prods the narrator to re-examine his relation to poverty:

> "You tried to render
> their lives as you could, but that is never enough;
> now in the sulphur's stench ask yourself this question,
>
> whether a love of poverty helped you
> to use other eyes, like those of that sightless stone?" (294)

Mimetic representation of economic dispossession is ultimately insufficient, according to Omeros. His last question to the narrator, whether "a love of poverty" has brought him closer to the subjects of his verse, is well worth consideration. Asking about a love for the poor, Omeros also wonders whether the narrator's poetic *technē* holds loss as a dearer form of value, enabling him to see through the eyes of the others he represents. The question in fact

turns back upon itself. If global modernity and poverty are co-constitutive, then in addition to loving the poor, the narrator must also by implication embrace globalization. The predicament is highly ambivalent and contradictory. A love for the poor, here, implies a love of poverty, and demands a vision of poetic craft premised on an economy of sacrifice, of giving up and submitting to the inexorable logic of global modernity. And a poetry that embraces poverty creates another kind of poetic vision, another mode of speculation.

Significantly, the narrator does not respond directly to Omeros's question. Yet immediately after the foregoing moment, the narrator receives a transformational clarity of vision: "My light was clear" (294). And through this new "speculation," a love of poverty, he sees the sea itself as the basis for intersubjective connection. "The sea was my privilege," he recognizes. The sea thus forms the originary site of imaginative value, which is also the poem's predominant metaphor for global economy in all of its unfathomable power. Like the sublime, it is both terrible in its devastating effects and awesome as the basis for poetic inspiration, from Homer's Aegean to Joyce's Liffey to Walcott's Caribbean. Indeed, the sea functions both literally and figuratively as the Caribbean's source of constant expenditure and sacrifice, of nourishment and sustenance: for "*mer* was both mother and sea" (231). As the poem's central site of global economy, the sea includes everyone into the shared condition of destitution, including Hector, Achille's African ancestors of the Black Atlantic, Dennis Plunkett's distant forebearer, the drowned Dutch trader and midshipman, as well as Achille too, whose end, long after the poem is over, "will be a death by water," as he becomes "a shade on the sea-floor" (320; 296). Each and every one of the poem's figures thereby "[share] the same privilege," "the one wound, the same cure" (295). As a repository for collective mourning, holding within it the calcified bodies of traders and African slaves, sunken gold, and submarine ecologies, the sea comprises the surface and substance of the poem's global economy. Moreover, the sea in the poem also refers self-referentially to the wealth and loss inhering in the circulation of poetic language itself, in all of its paradoxical permutations and contradictory processes. *Omeros*'s emphasis on the democratic constitution of the sea thus points to the fluid nature of all national and cultural boundaries.[15]

The trope of the sea figures as a space of poetic excess that, in its fluidity, is not separate from the economy but, on the contrary, constitutive of it, at its very foundation. And we see this in the poem when, after receiving his renewed vision of poetic speculation, the text delves once more into the sea. What we find under the sea surface is not monetary wealth such as imperial currency or gold but *coral*. Now we read that on the ocean floor "a quiet

culture is branching," one that "feeds on its death, the bones branch into more coral, // and contradiction begins" (297). And out of death, "a patient, hybrid organism // grows in [History's] cruciform shadow."

The image of coral is "something rich and strange," to quote Ariel, in its layers of meaning and history. Walcott's poetic artifice of ecological, submarine organicism reflects self-consciously on *Omeros* itself as a foundational epic for global economy. The literary trope of coral further suggests the growth of new epic systems created from out of the skeletal remains of previous poems of colonial conquest, hearkening back to one of Ariel's most memorable songs of mourning in *The Tempest*:

> Full fathom five thy father lies;
> Of his bones are coral made;
> Those are pearls that were his eyes:
> Nothing of him that doth fade
> But doth suffer a sea-change
> Into something rich and strange. (act 1, scene 2, 395–400)

By figuring itself as an epic fully aware that it, too, will be wiped away, *Omeros* shows the contingency of poetic growth and design, and so speaks to the productive contradictions and tensions at the heart of the text's poetics of global economy. I need to add that "coral" figures here not as a real-world entity—only in Shakespeare is coral made of bone—but as a literary organicism, comprising a rich patina for the renewal of epic poetic creation from past texts whose remains survive, but now in changed form.

For the migrant nature of epic's long literary history, stretching at least as far back as "the wanderings of Gilgamesh" and of Odysseus, at once provincializes and far predates the relatively recent advent of global capital (296). *Omeros* then contains the many layers and strata of epic's history. Unlike heroic epic's aspirations for political conquest and textual permanence, however, Walcott's is one "where every line was erased // yet freshly written in sheets of exploding surf." Such a vision is not unlike Pheng Cheah's conception of the textuality of economy: "Global capitalism is not a totality but a textual network, a sheaf of differential processes . . . although global capitalism is a formation with great extension and deep penetration, 'it' cannot be enclosed as a cognizable totality. Since it is also a product effect of force relations that overflow it, there are points of weakness generated within 'it' that 'it' cannot account for" (*Inhuman* 176). *Omeros* is such a textual network that, in patterning capital's sublime extension, it also reveals moments of weakness internal to capital—where it breaks down and cannot sustain itself but for acts of giving and sacrifice.

Omeros's renewed vision through poetic speculation returns the reader to the realm of the everyday. It is fitting, then, that the poem concludes not with the narrator's epic journey with Omeros—which focuses our attention on the poet's literary exchanges and conversations with the dead—but, crucially, with Achille and the fate of the poem's many other figures (Helen, Ma Kilman, the blind Seven Seas, Philoctete, Major Dennis Plunkett grieving for his deceased wife, Maud), all struggling to get by. The poem's celebration of the everyday concludes with the circular wanderings of *In God We Troust*, which brings Achille toward recognition of the violent inequalities that his trade requires in order to build an economy premised on an ethic of survival and sustainability. And so in the closing passage of *Omeros*, Walcott leaves us with a moving tableau of Achille's return from the sea, his craft *In God We Troust* teeming with silver fish:

> Out of their element, the thrashing mackerel
> thudded, silver, then leaden. The vermilion scales
> of snappers faded like sunset. The wet, mossed coral
>
> sea-fans that winnowed weeds in the wiry water
> stiffened to bony lace, and the dripping tendrils
> of an octopus wrung its hands at the slaughter
>
> from the gutting knives. Achille unstitched the entrails
> and hurled them on the sand for the palm-ribbed mongrels
> and the sawing flies. As skittish as hyenas
>
> the dogs trotted, then paused, angling their muzzles
> sideways to gnaw on trembling legs, then lift a nose
> at more scavengers. A triumphant Achilles,
>
> his hands gloved in blood, moved to the other canoes
> whose hulls were thumping with fishes. In the spread seine
> the silver mackerel multiplied the noise
>
> of coins in a basin. The copper scales, swaying,
> were balanced by one iron tear; then there was peace. (324)

Displacement, gutting, and death: these are the necessary outcomes of Achille's fishing trade. Walcott compares the fish scales, shining "silver and vermillion," to monetary currency that multiplies and grows "like coins in a basin." The fish, through their exchange for money on the market, will of course contribute to Achille's survival. His livelihood is thus "backed by silver" in two senses: the silver coins he will later earn and, before that,

the silver scales of fish. His source of wealth and meaning is not, however, simply reducible to money or silver. Throughout the poem, money disguises its empty status by offering itself as an object of absolute value. Money, in this sense, papers over loss. In stark contrast, Achille's eviscerated fish quite literally show their wounds, leaving his hands "gloved in blood." This is the day-to-day practice of trade for Achille, who has a lived, intimate relation to the currency he circulates and its connection to death. Placing his fish on the copper scales, which sway and are then brought to balance with "one iron tear," Achille thus balances loss with loss.

As we can see, this concluding passage aspires to see the world anew by pointing to poetry's own insufficiency before the sublimity of the natural world. As we read in *Omeros*'s closing lines: "When he left the beach the sea was still going on" (325). In this sense, *Omeros* would appear to go beyond itself, dismantling the poem's epic architecture. Yet as several readers have observed, the movement to displace poetic artifice before the real world only underscores the priority of rhetoric, poetic design, and self-reflexivity in the first place (Melas 167–68; Figueroa 36). The polysemous significances of "the sea still going on," for instance, would refer all at once to the fluid materiality of ecology that Walcott's poetry evokes but can never touch; to the renewal and replenishment of epic poetic creation that continues into the contemporary era; and to the ongoing presence of economic globalization that forms the grounding condition underpinning Walcott's elite poetic labor.

At the same time, however, Walcott's aesthetic model of globalism—one that invests poetic creation with the power to pattern (if not imaginatively reconfigure) the contradictions of the Caribbean's social, economic inequities through the re-articulation of Western, metropolitan texts of world literature—makes all too legible how such a vision is shaped and conditioned by the institutional mechanisms that deepen Walcott's cultural capital and confirm his canonical position in the global literary marketplace, a process that would culminate in the Swedish Academy's decision in 1992 to bestow upon Walcott the Nobel Prize in Literature.

The Poverty of Poetry?

The Nobel Prize is, perhaps without question, the preeminent literary institution advancing the structural inequalities of world literature through what James English has termed the "economy of prestige." The category of "world literature" is, for English, inseparable from the recent acceleration of globalization, and it functions in much the same way as "world music" insofar as institutions of the global literary marketplace confer value upon those texts and authors that display a particular relationship to their "local," "national"

culture and to "global," "cosmopolitan" forms of attachment, as we have seen in *Omeros* (312). We can see this mechanism at work in pronounced ways through the Swedish Academy's relatively recent canonization of postcolonial authors, beginning with Nigerian poet and playwright Wole Soyinka (1986) followed in quick succession by Naguib Mahfouz (1988), Walcott (1992), V. S. Naipaul (2001), J. M. Coetzee (2003), and Orhan Pamuk (2006). (It is also worth noting that Walcott's North American publisher, FSG, acquired eminent "world poets," including Joseph Brodsky and Seamus Heaney, both of whom won the Nobel in 1987 and 1995, respectively.) The Swedish Academy, as English explains, construes the award not as a means of recognizing writers claiming local, indigenous authenticity, nor those who have been lauded as "the best" at the level of national festivals and awards of recognition. Rather, the Nobel claims to recognize those authors whose work grows out of local, regional culture of origin with an appeal to "universal" values of human interconnection and transcendent genius, often through a literature promoting democratic (if not multicultural) politics. The increasingly "multicultural" inflection of the Nobel also enables the Academy to sidestep the related charge of imposing hegemonic, metropolitan and often modernist standards of literary value as they spread from centers in the global North (London, New York, Paris) to their sundry peripheries. Indeed, English argues that it is by virtue of straddling—even forging—"local" roots and "cosmopolitan" attachment that Nobel Laureates come to occupy a space in "world literature," with literary markets and publishing houses increasingly seeking out and promoting those authors whose work would have potential Nobel-appeal (302–5).

It has not been difficult to see how Walcott deliberately positions his particular brand of Caribbean poetics for global canonization. This does not mean, however, that Walcott's writing relates in any straightforward way to the institutional structures within which he works. "When recounting the features of literary value in the metropolis," argues Timothy Brennan concerning the Swedish Academy's recognition of authors from Africa, Central and South America, and the Caribbean over the past few decades, "one should distinguish between its inspired creators and its later, routine functionaries" who often work to contain and sublimate the political valences of postcolonial literature (199). In his brief discussion of Walcott, Brennan notes how the Swedish Academy—and many North American and British journalists, critics, and reviewers—singled out for praise the Caribbean poet's historical breadth, multicultural inclusiveness, and extension of the classical, Western tradition. These qualities were often elevated at the expense of Walcott's more politically divided poetry (as in "Laventille" or "The Gulf," for instance), his dramatic work written in creolized vernacular, and his deeply ironic treatment

of the complicity of his Western-style literary education in neocolonialism, as in "The Fortunate Traveller." In the midst of Walcott's canonization (and seeming incorporation into "universalist" conceptions of world literature,) Brennan calls attention, instead, to how Walcott in his Nobel speech performs his "cultural strangeness" both from local St. Lucian cultures and from European canonizing institutions that would assimilate him as one of their own (201). "Whatever else he does," writes Brennan, Walcott "makes a point of exposing his own role as a literary man and drives home a point about the sheer imaginative labor involved in entering and exiting the lives of 'the people.'" This "cultural strangeness"—and Walcott's canny, self-critical performance of it—in many ways derives from his colonial literary education in the Caribbean and from his increasingly established institutional position within the domain of world literature. As Brouillette similarly argues, "Walcott's conflicted hesitation about his relationship to his material *is* in many cases his material" (*Postcolonial Writers* 43).

Throughout this chapter, I have pursued a dialectical argument over how Walcott invents a poetics of global economy premised in sacrifice to mediate his preoccupations with "poverty" and underdevelopment in the Caribbean on the one hand and, on the other, how his metropolitan brand of Caribbean poetics necessarily re-inscribes the inequalities his writing desires to counteract, dividing him from the "people" whose real lives form the grounding conditions for his poetic labor and enable his pursuit of cultural capital. For my purposes, we can see this double bind quite vividly in his Nobel lecture when Walcott claims, albeit parenthetically, that "in the Antilles poverty is poetry with a V, *une vie*, a condition of life as well as of imagination" (*Twilight* 72). He goes on to say that his hope in writing *Omeros* was to create "a fresh language and a fresh people, and this is the frightening duty owed" (*Twilight* 79). Much like Bataille, who lauds life's "immensity" and "exuberance," Walcott writes *Omeros* as a "celebratory" poem ("On *Omeros*" 36). Elsewhere, Walcott construes poetry as a "votive act," something akin to prayer or benediction, that in this critical context might appeal to other ways of being and knowing in the world that exceed (or even precede) the all-encompassing hegemony of globalization (*Conversations* 191). These claims about the transformative, rejuvenating power of mythopoeia necessarily meet their limit, however, once "poverty" crosses over from a figural category to a real-world reality. Walcott's conflation between "poverty" and "poetry" clearly risks aestheticizing real-life conditions of deprivation.

There is, however, another way of understanding this relationship. Walcott here underscores the figural status of "poverty" that relates *appositionally*, even *chiasmatically* to "poetry." Reading Walcott to the letter, the copula metaphorically linking "poverty" and "poetry" depends upon a

crucial addition that poetry—as inert matter—lacks: "une vie." On the one hand, the removal of the letter "v" acknowledges his poetry's insufficiency before the plenitude, or *vie*, of the lived world. On the other, however, the removal of the "v" and simple inversion of "rt" to "tr" equally testifies to the sheer exchangeability of language: as if "poverty" and "poetry," through an orthographic sleight of hand, are equally interchangeable due to global capital's totalizing logic of equivalence, which masks their unequal, conflicted relation to one another. In this latter instance, his poetry proves inextricable from—and indeed participates in and exacerbates—social inequality by masking it through a series of false equivalences. Walcott's poetry must finally displace itself when confronting the irreducible, singular, lived conditions of poverty in the Antilles. Thus read, "poverty" and "poetry" are interrelated but nonidentical to one another.

In my reading, Walcott's writing holds both of these perspectives in productive tension with one another. Because he perceives social problems stemming from globalization as crises in language and meaning, his formal innovations heighten the reader's attention to the ways grounding conditions of poverty in the Antilles, which must necessarily remain beyond the text, become mediated and all too often obscured through discursive representation, poetic or otherwise. In marking his writing's own limitations, Walcott nonetheless succeeds by placing his aesthetic strategies under severe scrutiny and thereby questioning the mechanisms—aesthetic, economic, political, literary—through which the categories of "poverty" and "the people" become rhetorically mobilized, for whose interests, and in whose name. To be sure, Walcott's bardic image of the poet, as healer and mediator of social strife, will become challenged, negated, and reformulated by the subsequent poets in this study due to their own local pressures and their unequal standings in world literature. In this instance, it is not difficult to see how Walcott's strain of Caribbean poetics—cross-cultural, polycentric, metropolitan, world-renewing—enables him to gain legibility as a world author, especially by virtue of the ways epic literary inheritances provide the aesthetic substance for mediating the contradictions of poverty and underdevelopment in St. Lucia and elsewhere. If his appeal to the aesthetic domain as dependent upon but nonreducible to globalization appears to some readers as a mystification, we might nonetheless credit Walcott for making visible the ideological formations conditioning the unequal domain of world literature, formations his writing aesthetically embodies, seeks to challenge, and fails to redress.

CHAPTER 2

Playing Indian/Disintegrating Irishness: Paul Muldoon and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Comparison

Equal to the Fracture: Muldoon's Counterfeit Measures

My reading of Derek Walcott's *Omeros* is paradigmatic for debating the aesthetic and political complexities that arise when literary inheritances belonging to Western, canonical forms mediate intractable social contradictions stemming from global modernity and, at the same time, for investigating how these forms work within and replicate the hierarchies of cultural and economic capital in world literature. In this chapter, I turn to Northern Irish-born and US resident Paul Muldoon. This chapter similarly questions how his experimentations in British literary forms engage, in this case, the conjunction of imperial modernity and globalization upon the Irish state and the New World. We can see this through his recurring preoccupation with—or cultural appropriation of—the connection between Irish and American Indian cultures across his work.[1] This preoccupation begins with "The Indians on Alcatraz" in his first collection *New Weather* (1973), continues in poems such as "Promises, Promises" from *Why Brownlee Left* (1980) and the widely anthologized title poem of *Meeting the British* (1987), reaches its apogee in "Madoc: A Mystery" (1990), and persists in muted form in a poem such as "As" from *Moy Sand and Gravel* (2002). While touching on different moments of Muldoon's career, I anchor my discussion through his masterpiece "Madoc": what one critic calls "the most complex poem in modern Irish literature" also stands as Muldoon's most sustained treatment of the intersection of Amer-European and Indian cultures, in all

of their conflict and fluidity (Goodby 296). My study of Muldoon has been motivated by a series of interrelated questions: In what ways, aesthetically, does he interweave Irish and American Indian cultures, in their historical particularity and asymmetric relation to one another? How *are* we to understand his decision to encase Irish and indigenous cultures within canonical British and Irish literary traditions? How does his writing, through its deep engagement with history, genre, and form, register the challenges of conceiving subjectivity through the inequalities of cross-cultural comparison, particularly when images of "Irishness" and "Indianness" alike have become thoroughly commodified, circulating goods and given how his writing often celebrates its imbrication within the global literary marketplace? And, relatedly, how does Muldoon's status as an Irish writer shape and condition his particular model of cross-cultural poetics, especially for a writer who, despite or because of his upbringing in Country Armagh, has come to stand for the poetry establishment itself?

In many ways, my focus on a Northern Irish poet's handling of American Indian materials may appear symptomatic of the difficulties of bringing together a group of writers exhibiting such disparate political and thematic concerns, such varying relations to the legacies of English-language poetry, and working out of such different political-historical contexts. These asymmetries become perhaps all the more accentuated given Muldoon's distinguished reputation as a "poet's poet"—in the words of the *The Times Literary Supplement*, "the most significant English-language poet born since the Second World War" (Knight)—who privileges "difficulty" and "complexity" as the *sine qua non* for verbal art.[2] His writing has become renowned for its rigorous formal experimentation, exuberant wordplay, dense allusion, hermetic subjectivity, and encyclopediac learnedness that often appears in a wry, off-handed, even mischievous manner. Muldoon's signature qualities have, though, garnered him numerous awards, including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the T. S. Eliot Prize, and the Pulitzer Prize. At this moment of writing, he splits his time between his position as poetry editor at *The New Yorker* and the Howard G. B. Clark '21 Professor in the Humanities at Princeton, where he is also chair of the Lewis Center for the Arts. In addition, Muldoon stands out in this book as neither an "ethnic other" nor as demonstrating the explicit social, political investments we see far more clearly in the writings of Walcott, de Kok, and Nagra. Eschewing the role of poet as representative, a role associated with his former tutor at Queen's University Belfast, Nobel Laureate Seamus Heaney (b. 1939–2013), Muldoon opts for indirection and obliquity, a posture he shares with his Northern Irish contemporaries Medbh McGuckian and Ciaran Carson who also came of age as writers during the decades of the Troubles between the 1960s and the 1980s.

From the very beginning of his career, Muldoon has fashioned a poetry that, in the words of "Hedgehog," "shares its secret with no one" and "gives nothing / Away, keeping itself to itself" (*Poems* 22). That Muldoon does not as explicitly fuse formal and political concerns (in the ways Heaney and Walcott certainly have), combined with his highly learned "academic" style, may have precluded him from winning a Nobel, up to this moment of writing at least.

And yet, these seeming incommensurabilities belie significant points of connection. For one, his Irish context connects him to the other writers in this study and to the wider field of world literature. Ireland was (and, in certain respects, continues to be) Britain's oldest colony, given Northern Ireland's political status within the United Kingdom. When Walcott identifies with Synge, Yeats, and Joyce as "the niggers of Britain," he recalls Ireland's relationship to colonial discourses of race (*Conversations* 59). It is by now a commonplace to note how modern Ireland became a key center of world literary production, enabling other writers to enter into world literary space, as Casanova has documented. We need only think, for instance, of the significance of Yeats to Chinua Achebe, Joyce to Salman Rushdie, Beckett to J. M. Coetzee, and Oscar Wilde to Junot Díaz. As the next two chapters demonstrate, this is also the case for lesser known writers such as de Kok and Nagra, who similarly adapt Irish resources to confront their own respective crises due to global modernity, thereby gaining recognition in anglophone letters.

On that note, Walcott and Muldoon hold more in common than may initially appear, despite being separated by a generation and a continent. Around the time when Walcott took to composing *Omeros* and became a member of the cosmopolitan literati through readings and festivals, Muldoon too was poised to rise to international acclaim. In 1986, he left his position as a radio producer at the BBC in Belfast and earned two university fellowships, one at Cambridge and the other at the University of East Anglia (1986–87). After moving to the United States in 1987, he held a series of positions at Columbia University, UC Berkeley, and University of Massachusetts before settling at Princeton in 1990. It was in this year that *Omeros* and *Madoc* were published by the same publishing houses (FSG, Faber). Both are epic poems and can be seen as "world texts" insofar as they track the confluence of transatlantic imperialism within contemporary globalization. Muldoon takes his title from Robert Southey's *Madoc* (1805, 1812), an epic poem celebrating British colonial discovery, exploration, and colonization and based on the legend that the Welsh prince Madoc "discovered" and settled in the New World three centuries before Columbus. The main narrative of Muldoon's poem, which takes place all across nineteenth-century North America from 1798 to 1873, imagines what would have happened if Samuel

Taylor Coleridge and Southey had carried out their real-life plans to leave England and to settle along the banks of the Susquehanna River in northern Pennsylvania, establishing a "pantisocracy," or utopian community based on the Enlightenment ideals of "the equal government of all" (*Poems* 212).[3] Muldoon ironically depicts, however, how Coleridge and Southey's utopian dreams, when put into practice in nineteenth-century North America, turn into an imperialist nightmare of torture, violence, and genocide. The other narrative, however, occurs in a futuristic twenty-first-century Ireland that has become overrun by a technocratic, global corporation identified as "Unitel," where the poem's central figure "South" is mysteriously captured and tortured. In its structural double-framing, "Madoc" demands to be read both in national and global frames. A great deal of the poem, after all, occurs in a Pennsylvania town named "Ulster"; 1798 was the fateful year of the Irish Rebellion, led by the United Irishmen and inspired by the French and American Revolutions. And the poem's central figure, "South," has unmistakable political resonances referring to the Republic of Ireland.

Like Walcott's Caribbean epic, Muldoon's fragmentary long poem also displays temporal and geographic disjunctiveness: both poems incorporate various cultural references and indigenous groups, which comprise clear signs of its global textuality. He states that his long poems in general are "outwardly concerned with attempting to be equal to the variousness and complexity of the world, to be equal to the fracture by reflecting that fracture" ("Paul Muldoon" 76). In this case, Muldoon's seemingly fractured yet tightly formal mode of writing seeks to give a shape and a form to the fractures of globalization, particularly through his emphasis on indigenous cultures nearly wiped out due to colonial conquest and neocolonialism. At the same time Muldoon, like Walcott, also self-reflects upon the ways his use of elite forms registers his poetry's asymmetric, even incommensurable, relation to its political subject matter, which his writing confronts, obscures, and capitalizes upon. But whereas *Omeros* creolizes the conventions of Homeric epic to mediate poverty in the Caribbean, "Madoc" transports British Romanticism into the New World and extends Anglo-modernist imagistic fragmentation to be equal to the divisions of the global era.

The cross-cultural comparisons animating Muldoon's work provide an opportune occasion for responding to Susan Stanford Friedman's call for a model of comparison in world literature that holds in productive tension "commensurability and incommensurability" by taking into account the politics of comparison itself (507). First, I explain how Muldoon's Northern Irish political context, combined with his peculiar relationship to Irish literature more generally, informs his idiosyncratic cross-cultural poetics. In ways that are akin to Joyce's *Finnegans Wake* (1939) and Brian O'Nolan's

(or Flann O'Brien's) *At Swim-Two-Birds* (1939), Muldoon similarly troubles prevailing conceptions of linear history (literary or otherwise) and coherent subjectivity. His overarching strategy for describing the intertextual composition of Irish literature, a strategy that applies to his own work, is through what he calls "imarrhage," a portmanteau for the "bleeding image": the hemorrhaging of sounds, words, images, genres, histories, and cultures into one another which embody Ireland's traumatic legacies of conquest and historical violence (*To Ireland, I* 74). By relating the lyric subject, "I," and "Ireland" to one another through their self-dividedness and otherness, Muldoon re-conceives Irish literature as itself already cross-culturally constituted, though quite unevenly.

Here, I read "Madoc" alongside Edward Said's *Freud and the Non-European* to re-think how Muldoon figures Irish and Indian cultures as intertwined through a mythic "secular wound" of traumatic dispossession. For Muldoon as for Said, the "secular wound" figures as a space of irrepressible alterity in personal and collective subject formation and hence the basis for reconstituting Irish and Indian histories, however ambivalently. At the same time, however, Muldoon is all too aware that his decision to "play Indian" in the name of globalizing Irishness through highly literary modes carries its own set of problems, leaving him open to charges of cultural imperialism, primitivism, and Irish orientalism. As a way through these problems, Muldoon instead underscores the "counterfeit" status of indigenous cultures in his writing, that is, Irish and American Indian cultures figure not as expressions of local authenticity nor as discrete, original wholes but as "fakes." Muldoon repeatedly profiles how his writing self-reflexively engages in, and hence knowingly, re-inscribes the logic of appropriation by underscoring the "forgeries" entailed in bridging the Irish/Indian divide. Importantly, the counterfeit cultural inheritances in Muldoon's writing are themselves encased within counterfeit *literary* inheritances, as when he wryly appropriates British Romanticism and Anglo-modernist fragmentation.

As I see it, his "counterfeit" measures perform a double move: they encode the traumatic loss of "origins," often silently mourning the deep histories encased and distorted within "counterfeit" British and Irish literary inheritances. At the same time, the counterfeit status of any inheritance enables Muldoon to embrace cultural globalization, celebrating the cross-cultural connections his image-making makes possible, which would appear to free him from "appropriation." Concerning this question, he has said in a 2004 interview: "Certainly I've heard that argument and I can understand it. On the other hand, I'm not really sure who owns that material. I don't think it belongs exclusively to Native Americans any more than women writers have exclusive rights on womanhood or gay writers on gaydom" ("Paul

Muldoon" 82). Muldoon does not exhibit the same kind of vexed self-questioning that we have seen in *Omeros* given the St. Lucian poet's relatively greater proximity to local experiences of economic privation in St. Lucia and elsewhere in the Caribbean. To be sure, Muldoon has evinced a subtle anxiety over his decision to continue the Irish/Indian link after "Madoc" and since his settlement in the United States, as I discuss in the conclusion. This may be due to his keen awareness of his writing's thorough saturation within global literary exchange, as exhibited in his poem "As." There is no denying the fact that Muldoon's signature, self-cancelling poetics—which for him remains irreducible to the pressures of global modernity—functions as an important mechanism through which he has come to prominence within elite poetry circles, placing him at an even further remove from the lived realities of indigenous peoples who continue to struggle for rights and self-determination. His writing does, however, question the linguistic means through which images of indigenous cultures have been, and continue to be, appropriated, imitated, and re-purposed for a wide variety of aesthetic and political ends. In the process, he at once commemorates and replicates the negations global modernity inflicts upon Native American cultures, offering his literary creations as unasked-for gifts to the indigenous peoples and histories as they appear in negated form through the bleeding images of his poetry.

Ireland/I

Muldoon's model of cross-cultural poetics arises at the intersection of his particular relationship to the Northern Irish literary context, his peculiar understanding of the lyric subject before his or her political community, and his idiosyncratic reading of Irish literature generally. To begin by way of comparison with his mentor and elder, Seamus Heaney in *The Redress of Poetry* construes the poet as a divining "medium" through which broader social conflicts can become channeled and, ideally, brought to equilibrium. Invoking Wallace Stevens's view of poetry as "a violence from within that protects us from a violence without" (quoted in *Redress* 1), Heaney similarly argues that his poetry, however self-divided, nonetheless "offers a response to reality which has a liberating and verifying effect upon the individual spirit," which, for him, happens by virtue of the ways "the coordinates of the imagined thing correspond to those of the world that we live in and endure" (*Redress* 2; 8). In light of my previous discussion of Walcott, it is not difficult to see how such a restorative vision of poetry—in bringing to balance the political and the metaphysical, the local and the global, the poet and the world—would prove so appealing to the Swedish Academy when they awarded Heaney the Nobel Prize in Literature in 1995.

By contrast, Muldoon repeatedly "disavows the notion of poetry as a moral force, offering respite or retribution," though as we will see he does invest poetry with "effect[ing] a change in the world but accepts, both reluctantly and with a sense of relief, that such change can only ever be slight" ("Getting Round" 127). The stark realities of political violence—spanning Bloody Sunday in Derry 1972 when British troops shot 26 civil rights protesters and killed 13, the Hunger Strikes by Republican prisoners in Maze Prison and the death of Bobby Sands in 1981, and the Remembrance Day bombing at Enniskillen in 1987 only one year after the signing of the Anglo-Irish Agreement as an attempt to end the Troubles and pave the way for devolution—significantly shaped the younger Muldoon's skeptical, ironic attitude concerning his poetry's relation to Irish social realities in comparison to the bardic role adopted by his elder, Heaney. The very real hardening of sectarian lines along the binary terms of Irish/British, republican/unionist, nationalist/loyalist across Northern Irish society and culture during these years conditioned Muldoon, and many other Irish and Northern Irish writers of his generation, to refuse most if not "all utopian indulgence" in his writing, as Edna Longley puts it, and instead only proffering "an image of poetry's failure at the impasse of the split self and the split community" (225).

And yet, if subjectivity often appears as a space of foreclosure and absence in his writing, Muldoon nonetheless deploys this self-cancelling mode as a strategic placeholder for patterning conceptions of subjectivity premised in constitutive difference, which, in my eyes, demonstrates the opportunities and challenges for imagining cross-cultural models of Irish belonging. For instance, in his 1998 Oxford Clarendon Lectures (later published in *To Ireland, I* [2000]), Muldoon looks to the very first Irish poem, the twelfth-century mythological cycle *Lebor Gabála Érenn* (Book of Invasions), where Ireland's first poet, Amergin, presumes to "speak for Erin" but is himself an outsider and a conqueror. Having just landed off the boat, Amergin is not indigenous but is the son of *Mil Espáin* ("Spanish Soldier"), whose wife Scota is the daughter of an Egyptian pharaoh (*To Ireland, I* 3). For Muldoon, Amergin is exemplary in distinguishing what is unique to Irish writing generally. "Irish writers have a tendency," he writes concerning the relationship between "Ireland" and "I," "to interpose themselves between [Ireland, I], like that narrow-shouldered little comma in the general title of this series of talks, either to bring them closer together, or to force them further apart. It's as if they feel obliged to extend the notion of being a 'medium' to becoming a 'mediator'" (35). As in so much of Muldoon's poetry, a lot depends upon the micronuances of texuality (that narrow-shouldered comma) in reconceptualizing the fraught relation between the Irish writer and the social-political sphere.

From his perspective, any attempt to "speak for Erin" compels Irish writers to adopt a number of aesthetic strategies for negotiating between the divided subject "I" and the divided community of "Ireland." The first entails taking on a posture of liminality and heightened self-consciousness before historical realities of conquest. Second, Muldoon describes the ways in which Amergin and subsequent authors repeatedly project a "world-scrim" (*féth fíada* or invisible mist), whereby the literary text sets up a parallel domain or a "time warp" blurring the distinction between inside and outside, this world and another coterminal world, one text and another (7). The notion of "a parallel universe," he notes, "offers an escape clause, a kind of psychological trapdoor, to a people from under whose feet the rug is constantly being pulled, often quite literally so" (7). Such is the case, as we will see, for his handling of indigenous cultures through the time warped, world-scrim of a poem that is "Madoc." Yet another strategy is "runic" writing (from Old Irish *rún*): "the urge towards the cryptic, the encoded, [. . .] the virtually unintelligible" (73). For Muldoon, the impulse toward cryptic mystery does not evade politics but, on the contrary, "allows the individual to make manifest a multiplicity of points of view, including political points of view, allowing him or her the freedom to shape-shift." And a fourth strategy comprises Irish literature's "contagyious" impulses: its disruption of linguistic rationality and linear narrative by, instead, emphasizing "the slip and slop of language, a disregard for the line between sense and nonsense," and Irish literature's digressive, transgressive, and regressive narrative forms (107).

Taken together, these strategies, even beyond self-reflecting upon Muldoon's poetic project, offer a key to understanding what I take to be his particular brand of cross-cultural poetics. The example of Amergin enables Muldoon to reconceive "Irish" literature as, from its inception, already globally entangled, other-to-itself even when—especially when—it appears to "speak for Erin." Relatedly, the strategies outlined above hold in common the intertextual energies animating Irish writing—the "bleeding image" or "imarrhage" as histories, cultures, texts, and words hemorrhage into one another—are themselves expressive of historical realities of conquest, which become encoded and disfigured in the bleeding image of the literary text. Perhaps most importantly, because Muldoon figures the lyric subject and the political community as self-divided in themselves and in relation to one another, they do not remain deadlocked in a stalemate of indeterminacy nor do they collapse in upon themselves. Rather, in ways that surpass Heaney and, arguably, his peers Medbh McGuckian and Ciaran Carson, Muldoon engineers a cross-cultural model of "Irish literature" whose irrepressible alterity and irreconcilable internal divisions give way to a larger set of contradictions facing Irish writers: namely, how to draw comparisons with other,

non-Irish cultures who have undergone irreparable traumatic violence. In these ways, Muldoon seeks to lay bare how the bleeding images of Irish writing embody the violence of its own waves of conquest. In my reading, his poetry furthermore clears a space for thinking through the aesthetic and political consequences that result in linking disparate cultures and histories in their incommensurable relation to one another in the global era.

The Secular Wound in "Madoc: A Mystery"

To be sure, the aesthetic strategies that Muldoon delineates in *To Ireland, I*—the heightened self-consciousness of the divided subject before the divided community; the projection of a world-scrim as an escape clause for those under threat; the tendency toward cryptic mystery to espouse or withhold multiple, political points of view; the prevalence of "contaygious" writing through a disruption of linguistic rationality and linear narrative—recur across his work. But they come into high relief in those poems explicitly linking local and global perspectives as, for instance, in his other brilliant long poem, "Yarrow," from *The Annals of Chile* (1994). Given Muldoon's abiding interrogation of the Irish/Indian connection in "Madoc," we can see the peculiar challenges he faces in his decision to draw upon British literary inheritances to engage the traumatic effects of transatlantic imperialism and contemporary globalization upon the past and future of Ireland and elsewhere.

"Madoc" is itself an amalgam: a hybrid genre combining British Romantic philosophical long poem with counterfactual historical fantasy and science fiction. Muldoon composes his experimental, avant-garde long poem through 233 fragments each surtitled with the name of a Western philosopher enclosed in brackets, from "[Thales]" through "[Hawking]." Many of the poem fragments are written in closed forms such as rhyming couplets, elegiac quatrains, and sonnets. He also incorporates, though, prose poetry, a Senecan creation myth, direct quotations from Southey and Coleridge, selections of poetry from Byron and Thomas Moore, journal entries from the Lewis and Clark expedition, a speech from the Seneca orator Red Jacket (Sagoyewatha), and even a map and a right triangle. Whereas Walcott perceives Homeric epic as simultaneous with the Caribbean, one which annihilates history and produces a fresh language and a fresh "people" (even as his writing acknowledges its radically asymmetric relation to "poverty" and the metaphorical category of "the people," which can be put to divergent political purposes), Muldoon underscores how, in this instance, the world-making impulses of epic poetry and myth replicate—and may well undergird—discourses of empire and globalization in their desire for totality. His formal emphasis on quotation and *bricolage* re-assembles world-making discourses in literary

and extra-literary spheres alike, re-inflicting the ways in which they fracture and intermingle formerly discrete histories and subjectivities, which, in Muldoon's eyes, themselves comprise a violent collocation of fragments, retroactively mythologized into "authoritative" coherence.

The imaginative world of Muldoon's poem as well as the "real" world of North American imperial history are put in motion by the Madoc-myth, which drove European searches for whiteness in the New World.[4] According to the legend, the death of King Owen Gwenyth in 1169 embroiled the medieval Welsh kingdom in a war of succession. While King Gwenyth's sons vied for the throne, Prince Madoc—whom Southey describes in his preface to *Madoc,*which Muldoon excerpts under the name "[Dee]"—enlisted a few companions and fled "his barbarous country" by sailing "west," though exactly where in the west we do not know (*Poems* 236). Having left his companions in this new land, Madoc briefly returned to Wales to pick up "a fresh supply of adventurers" (in Southey's words), again left his home country, and was never heard from again (236).

The origins of the myth derive not from medieval Welsh history, however, but the beginning years of the British Empire in the late sixteenth century. The imperial assumption that the Welsh eventually miscegenated with American Indian tribes became a justification for British American exploration and domination of the New World. Thomas Jefferson, Lewis and Clark, John Evans, and George Catlin (all of whom appear in Muldoon's poem) were each convinced that traces of Welsh national-racial ancestry—at the time de-Celticized and appropriated as British—must exist within some native tribe of the Americas. For if Madoc (and the Welsh) did indeed "discover" and "settle" the pre-Colombian New World, the British were no mere invaders or colonizers. Instead, their arrival was an encounter with versions of themselves, albeit in more "primitive" form. "What is abundantly clear" says Gwyn A. Williams in *Madoc: The Making of a Myth* (one of Muldoon's many source texts), "is that any story of Madoc *as discoverer of America* was and is, in itself, essentially *precarious*. After all, even if, by some miracle, it had proved possible (or does prove possible) to verify the story, what would that signify or have signified?" (italics in original 66). It is this question, along with these historical and discursive pretexts, that drives both Southey's and Muldoon's "Madoc." Muldoon returns to and distorts the Madoc-myth in 1990 to retrieve it and break it free from the ossified "tradition" that was to become a foundation for European and American expansionism. "Madoc" demonstrates, according to Clair Wills, "the ways myth and history are imbricated with one another, and the fact that myths and fictions (including poetry), while they may be 'ideal' constructions of the imagination, none the less have real effects" (*Improprieties* 196).

Several of Muldoon's readers have well established how the operations of imperialism subtend cross-cultural encounters throughout the poem. Robert Southey, for instance, builds his colony, "Southeyopolis," through the enslavement of Cayuga Indians. Coleridge, in contrast, "goes native," hoping to shed his white skin by losing himself through opiates while among various American Indian cultures, including the Seneca, Modoc, and Spokane tribes. Even the real-life American Indian figure Joseph Brant wears a calico print shirt and offers Coleridge, to his surprise, "tea and scones, // pres- / erves and clotted cream" (227). Coleridge doesn't realize that Joseph Brant is a thoroughly hybridized (and largely Anglicized) Mohawk chief who has, in his own words, "stuffed himself with whiteness" (238). Elsewhere, Irish figures, who would might seem to be members of the oppressed, cannot escape imperialist responses to cultural encounters. One such figure, Bucephalus, a talking Irish horse, ceaselessly projects Irish place-names onto his foreign surroundings while simultaneously engaging in sexual conquest before contracting and dying from syphilis. Another, Alexander Cinnamond, the Scots-Irish scout, whose villainous presence Muldoon signifies with the ominous repetition of "de dum, de dum," takes relish in his slaughter of American Indians. We first meet Cinnamond "fondl[ing] a tobacco- / pouch made from the scrotal sac // of a Conestoga" (208); Cinnamond later sports breeches "made from the epiderms, de dum, / of at least four, maybe five, hapless Gros Ventre women" (293). Muldoon may include Cinnamond and Bucephalus to forestall the Irish-as-postcolonial, particularly in light of Ireland's participation in the imperial project in North America and elsewhere (as Joseph Lennon has documented in *Irish Orientalism* [2008]). In short, few figures in the poem ever fully "see" another culture because they rely on imperialist frames for reading difference, frames that attempt to control, and hence cannot account for, the fluid and heterogeneous composition of cultures in the contact zone. In my view, "Madoc" does, however, provide a way out of this impasse, which opens onto more nuanced, though divided, conceptions of cross-cultural subjectivity. To do so requires an explanation of the poem's internal, structural designs and narrative framings, and its central figure, South.

As I mentioned earlier, while the bulk of the poem takes place in nineteenth-century North America, "Madoc" is a frame narrative and actually opens in twenty-first-century Ireland. This outer frame concerns a figure by the name of South who works at the Unitel Plant, a kind of global state apparatus that contains and polices various artifacts of colonialism. Carrying a briefcase, South mysteriously ingests a scrap of paper inscribed with the letters "CROATAN," which he interprets as "C[*oleridge*] RO[*bert Southey The S*]ATAN[*ic School*]" (205); South nostalgically, and mistakenly, believes himself to be a descendant of Southey.[5] After setting off Unitel's alarms,

South is captured by "a wet-set // out for revenge," who hook up South to a "retinagraph" (204), a fictional device that can read South's inner thoughts and project them before his captors—including us, the reader:

> So that, though it may seem somewhat improbable,
> all that follows
> flickers and flows
> from the back of his right eyeball. (205)

Aptly surtitled "[Heraclitus]," this fragment opens onto the poem's retinagraphic textuality: we now discover that what we are reading is the flux and flotsam of South's unconscious as it is transcribed into a momentary, imagistic projection onto the pages of the poem. South's physical "eye" thus becomes the poem's lyric "I." In stark contrast to Walcott's carefully crafted persona, whereby the cosmopolitan poet's "I" fictionalizes its ambivalent representation of "the people" of St. Lucia, Muldoon figures the lyric subject as a fragmentary composite of fleeting quotations, a world-scrim through which the poem retinagraphically "writes itself" and thereby splits "I" and "Ireland." In order to access "Madoc"'s mystery, the text directs the reader's attention toward the central figure of South. Who is he? Why has he been captured and tortured? Who is this vengeful "wet-set" and what are their motives? What are South's cultural-racial-historical origins, and what bearing might any of this have for a globalized Ireland in the twenty-first century?

At the same time, though, Muldoon also inserts a second figure named "South," a double, who appears in "Madoc"'s main narrative. The nineteenth-century South is the albino child and progeny of Alexander Cinnamond's rape of Southey's wife, Edith. The doublings of the poem's two "Souths" suggest that the nineteenth-century South may be the distant ancestor of the poem's lyric subject. Indeed, this earlier South is, to my eyes, at the very heart of "Madoc"'s mystery.

Muldoon deliberately invites the poem's other characters, as well as the reader, to misrecognize South through his albino appearance: visually, his whiteness epitomizes racial purity, yet biologically he is a mongrel, a bastard, an unhappy union of Scots-Irishness (Cinnamond) and Englishness (Edith Southey). Bucephalus, upon looking at the white-haired boy, says to Southey: "Penguin. From the Welsh // *pen* and *gwynn*, meaning 'head' and 'white'" (268). The *OED* confirms the word origin for penguin. Later, however, we read in the fragment entitled "[Whitehead]":

> Southey wakes in a cold sweat;
> penguins don't have white heads. (291)

The disjunction between language and material reality ("penguins don't have white heads"), particularly the playful discrepancy between white and black, raises the possibility, which Southey himself intuits, that South isn't white at all. On another level, these lines also indicate Muldoon's subtle critique of reading race through visual and symbolic markers. Specular observation and language alike fail to register differences that exist beneath the surface.

If we were to take Bucephalus at his word, South could not possibly be anything other than white and certainly not a mixture of English and Cayuga Indian. But South's dual cultural inheritance occurs from the very moment we meet the newborn in "[Frederick the Great]":

> September, 1800. A Cayuga wet-nurse dandles
> the infant in her lap
> while Southey recites from his endless
> saga of *Thalaba*
>
> *the Destroyer*: "the fluted cypresses
> rear'd up
> their living obelisks . . ."
> Hartley sulks as Bean expresses
>
> milk from her diddly-doos,
> then resolutely cups
> the spout of the tortoise-shell powder-flask:
> "Not until you see the whites of their eyes." (255)

Muldoon depicts in these lines the splitting of South's psychic and cultural subjectivity. On the one hand, the infant South receives physical nourishment from his cultural mother, the wet nurse, Bean, while on the other he hears Southey's lines from the Orientalist epic *Thalaba*, "the fluted cypresses / rear'd up / their living obelisks," which suggest the imposition of linguistic and cultural order upon an unruly natural environment (*OED*). South is thus divided internally between two cultural inheritances: his physical attachment to and nourishment from Bean, the mother, and so Cayuga Indian culture generally, and by the divisive words of the father, and so patriarchal, imperial control and violence. South then is not English-Scots-Irish. Culturally speaking, and contrary to all appearances, South "expresses" a mixture of English and Cayuga Indian cultures.

The two cultural tributaries of South's hybridity come into violent collision with each other 20 years, and more than 100 poem fragments, later. The complicated events with regard to South at this time in his life require some explanation. Southey, after having built "Southeyopolis" through the

forced subjugation of several Cayuga Indians, also forbids the Cayuga from practicing indigenous cultural rituals, such as the False Face mask dances and the White Dog Ceremony. When a few Cayuga women strangle a white coyote, disturbing Bucephalus's burial mound, Southey characteristically (mis-) "interprets this as a revival / of the white dog ceremony // and inaugurates a witch-hunt" (308). This leads Southey, only a few lines later, to elect South's wet nurse, Bean, as a scapegoat for the group. As Southey violently flogs Bean ("After ten, her back and buttocks are blood- / smirched"), South comes in between his father's rod and his mother's body and "takes a blow to his shoulder-blade / for his pains [. . .] leaving a deep, trifoliate / graze" (309). With the Cayugas on the brink of revolt, the wounded South "leads an exodus" of Indians out of Southeyopolis: "As to where he goes? It's a matter of pure conjecture" (309). Like the Welsh prince Madoc before him, it would thus appear that South has "disappeared" with the Indians, adding yet another incertitude to the poem's many mysteries.

But after another 20 years, so in 1843, and only 15 poem fragments more, we encounter this incident recounted in "[Barthes]," which seems to come out of nowhere:

> March 20th, 1843. An almost naked "Mandan" in harlequin
> red and black lozenges
> manages only one shot from his squirrel-gun
> before a raiding party of "Shoshones"
>
> rush his buffalo-wallow
> and wrestle
> him to the ground. His ululations are to no avail.
> They take his scalp. The rehearsal
>
> ends with the "Shoshone" chief returning the pony-tail
> wig to his victim
> who stuffs it into a buckskin medicine-bundle,
> his *vade mecum*,
>
> which is then lodged in a glory-hole
> back in his caravan.
> This afternoon finds "Catlin's Indian Gallery"
> somewhere in deepest Wales. In the port, say, of Carnarvon. (315–16)

George Catlin was famous all over Great Britain and Ireland for his traveling Indian Gallery, which featured his paintings of American Indians as well as staged performances such as these, where he and his nephew, Theodore

"Burr" Catlin, would play Indian to enthralled white, British and Irish audiences. Immediately following this section of the poem, moreover, we learn: "The 'Shoshone' is indisputably the artist's nephew, Theodore 'Burr' Catlin. As for the 'Mandan', when he washes off his lamp-black and vermillion paint, there's a fleur-de-lys on his shoulder-blade" (316). We can now identify the Mandan as none other than South; and his wound, that "deep, trifoliate graze," resembles the fleur-de-lys, the insignia of the Prince of Wales.

How might we understand the chain of events that compels South to play Indian after "leading an exodus" out of Southeyopolis? Freud's *Moses and Monotheism* offers a helpful analogue for reading South's racial performance. In that text, Freud speculates how a stable, coherent, and particular idea of Jewish cultural identity could have been forged only through the collective and violent repression of the unfactual truth that Moses was Egyptian. Edward Said, in one of his last writings, *Freud and the Non-European* (2003), re-considers Freud's Moses and asks whether the founder of the Jewish religion, who is himself non-European, might speak to contemporary crises in cross-cultural identity formation on a global scale. Freud's Egyptian Moses, argues Said, subverts stable and originary bases for advancing Jewish particularity or exceptionalism (45). More than this, though, Freud conjectures that the founder of Jewish religion and identity was himself "always outside the identity inside which so many have stood, and suffered—and later perhaps even triumphed" (54). The true power of Freud's text for Said concerns the notion that Freud's excavation of the repressed Egyptian culture lurking within Jewish identity exposes the irresolvable, irreconcilable "secular wound" at the heart of other "besieged" cultural identities that violently repress their inner alterity (53). And this is where Said finds in *Moses and Monotheism* a theoretical model for conceiving of the "diasporic and unhoused" nature of cosmopolitan, globalized cultural identities in "our age of vast population transfers, of refugees, exiles, expatriates and immigrants" (53).[6]

This model exemplifies Muldoon's figuration of global Irishness through South. Though the incidents from South's life comprise only a small part of "Madoc," they are crucial for understanding the cross-cultural trauma that Muldoon imagines as the basis for the Irish Celtic diaspora, with South as its founding figure. Like Moses, South "leads an exodus," here of Cayugas to Wales and Ireland. South's wound, the fleur-de-lys, marks him as the father or monarch of the Celtic race, a group of which he is never fully inside. Moreover, by performing the role of the victim in the incident above, South re-plays and hence re-covers his initial wounding by his father Southey, a wound painted over as it is by "lamp-black and vermillion." Notice, too, he carries that "buckskin medicine bundle," which Catlin says "is the key to

Indian life and Indian character . . . It would be considered ominous bad luck and ill fate to be without it" (112–13).

In Robert Southey's epic poem *Madoc,* the Welsh prince represents a British hero of the New World who, through the power and zeal of his mission, converts and pacifies the savage Aztecs and the sentimentalized, peace-loving Hoamen. And by the end of Southey's poem, while some of the Aztec Indians leave in an exodus south, the converted remain with Madoc. Here in Muldoon's text, however, South returns to Wales, restoring the Madoc-myth to its imperial beginnings: "in the port, say, of Carnarvon," from which Madoc ostensibly first sets sail. "Carnarvon" is, significantly, an Anglicization of "Caernarfon." As the seat of the Prince of Wales, "Carnarvon" stands as a potent symbol for the imposition of English rule over the Northern Welsh, who become consolidated under the English crown, stretching as far back as Edward I in 1284. In the poem, it makes sense that Catlin's Indian Gallery would return to, "say, Carnarvon": we could read this transatlantic circulation as either an instance of colonization in reverse (whereby Indians colonize the British), or, as I prefer, as an ironic, if not subversive homecoming such that the imperial origins of Irish Celtic and American Indian cultural identities become short-circuited and re-routed through one another "in deepest Wales."

From one perspective, South's Indian disguise is just part of the symptom that covers the deeper sickness that British imperialism—economic exploitation, slavery, and genocide—has inflicted upon him and half of his family's heritage in the poem. Tim Kendall interprets South's performance as his "artificial reconciliation of opposing impulses in his identity [that] fails to achieve the desired assimilation" ("Parallel" 238). And yet, from another perspective, South's Indian performance is no mere appropriation or theft: by playing Indian he repeats the trauma in order to master it, revel in it, and partially heal from it. South's compulsive repetition of victimization through racial performance may speak less to his wish to re-live his earlier trauma than to his desire to gain agency and control over it. The compulsion to repeat, as Judith Butler argues, can constitute "an affir-mative response to violation": "The force of repetition in language may be the paradoxical condition by which a certain agency—not linked to a fiction of the ego as master of circumstance—is derived from the *impossibility* of choice" (*Bodies That Matter* 124). To me, it seems that South is caught between the desire to assimilate and to gain the recognition that he never can.

Like Freud's Moses, it is South's condition of being unassimilable that marks him as most fully Irish. Indeed, this is not so much a performance for South. Rather, the act of playing Indian, through all of the contradictory play of appearances, embodies the inherent paradox at the traumatic core of

Irishness in the text: though white on the surface, Irishness is also an internally conflicted and an antagonistic combination of Cayuga Indian and English cultural roots. Art, racial performance, and cultural crossing enable South to come closer both to that which he is and to that from which he has become exiled: his inner Cayuga Indian identity. As with any performance gesture, his playing Cayuga signifies that South *is* Cayuga and this performance produces its own biological facts and its own cultural meanings.

On a much larger level, by presenting South as the founding figure of modern Irishness, Muldoon revolutionizes what it means to be Irish, recovering the national category through its otherness. Neither racially pure (albino) nor biologically hybrid (Ulster-Scots-English), the supposed origins of modern Irishness grow out of a site of irrepressible cultural heterogeneity and hybridity that is inseparable from the history of empire. Muldoon's vision of Irishness is fluid, porous, open-ended, and globalized, and yet constituted, at its heart—or at least on the shoulder-blade—by a physical wounding and cross-cultural trauma that is inextricably tied to other dispossessed diasporas around the world. Even when at home, Muldoon suggests, Irishness is always already un-housed, unhomely.

From here, we can decipher how South's cross-cultural origins and transnational history have profound implications for the globalizing of Irish lyric subjectivity, as represented by the poem's twenty-first-century "South," whose name also signifies the contemporary Irish nation-state. Returning to "Madoc"'s frame narrative, we can now see that the vengeful "wet-set" behind the retinagraph are actually "Cayugas" in Ireland, who are likely descendants of nineteenth-century Cayuga Indians (*Poems* 321). What's more, throughout the poem, we learn that the word "retina" derives from the Latin, *rete*, originally meaning a net, or network (271); later we read "From the Latin, *rete*. Unconscious" (284). Following the chain of metonymic associations, if South is both the poem's lyric subject and the future Irish state (North and the Republic), then he contains within himself and is in the process of excavating the "unconscious network" of transatlantic imperial history and conflict that occurs in the main narrative of the poem as well as his repressed English-Indian familial ancestry. That is, if "South" initially appears as a figure for the twenty-first century Irish state, we quickly come to see how modern Ireland's hybrid self-constitution (at once "Indian" and "English" but not purely "Irish") is scattered and deterritorialized.

Because of the traumatic nature of his personal history and of Ireland's national history, however, South must re-cover the past *indirectly*, through self-fragmentation and poetic framings, most notably in the form of the retinagraph. The retinagraph aptly captures the problem of mediation contained in any attempt to write how colonial history bleeds into the global

present and produces violent effects on human subjectivity: after all, the retinagraph is the instrument by which South traces his history, as well as the very engine and symptom of the technophilic globalization that South's history needs to negotiate. Whatever conveniences it might suggest, the retinagraph reminds us that to write the confusion of the global present and the chaos of the global subject is an impossible task. For the speed and intensity of global modernity and its effects on human subjectivity are far too sublime to represent in language, and likely stored in the unconscious, at least as the poem suggests.

And yet, South-as-global-subject *does* have a history. The poem patterns the impossibility of representing the global subject through its narrative framings and linguistic fragmentations. Transcribing history as a series of rapid and fleeting projections, all "flickering" and "flowing" from his right eyeball, the retinagraph consequently fragments the coherence of South's past by breaking it up, reassembling it, and representing it as a sequence of the 233 flashing images (205). What's more, his history is no longer out there, separate from him, but instead flows through and becomes inflicted upon him. Muldoon's strategy of retinagraphic textuality, which at once fragments and organizes South's history, is the poem's way of dealing with this contradiction as the text gives a shape and a form to the disjunctive temporalities of nineteenth-century North American colonialism and twenty-first-century Irish globalism as they redouble into one another.

The retinagraph violently disperses South's subjectivity, yet does so to re-cover Ireland's bifurcated racial lineage (half-English, half-Indian—neither fully Irish). Before he is captured, South moves through the Unitel plant by quoting from Coleridge's "Kubla Khan" and involuntarily declaiming lines from Southey's *Thalaba the Destroyer*, in particular "The fluted cypresses / rear'd up their living obelisks" (321). These are the very lines Southey recites to the white-haired South when the latter is an infant suckling on Bean's breast. At the start of the poem, the twenty-first-century lyric subject South has forgotten or repressed his Romantic forefather's connections to imperial violence and genocide. Now, however, through the retinagraph, South witnesses how Southey's Orientalist fantasy *Thalaba* presages the acts of torture he enacts upon the Cayuga Indians in Southeyoplis. Southey's lines initially appear as seemingly insignificant and involuntary. Yet, when understood as "screen memories," we can see how South seeks to replace memories of colonization under Southeyopolis with the ostensible safety and beauty of Southey's poetry, which itself violently transforms images of nature into an artifact for human use (Freud *The Uncanny* 7). These lines also signify, however, South's desire to re-member, to re-connect with his collective, hybrid past by way of his distant ancestor, South, and thus Ireland's founding trauma.

At the same time as the retinagraph re-collects imperial history flowing through the subject, South and the poem itself nevertheless appear in constant danger of "disintegration." Indeed, the main narrative of the poem is interrupted at several points by a voice, presumably a Cayuga Indian, stating: "At any moment now, the retina will disintegrate" (254); "Any moment now. The retina. Disintegrate" (283); "At any moment now, the retina / will be in smithereens" (320). The lyric subject—South's retina, which is also the poem's unconscious network of narrative and poetic associations—speaks from the near future. And the retina will disintegrate because, within the context of the poem, South has been physically dismembered and has arrived to the point immediately before death. Furthermore, his full and complete remembering of the past is far too traumatic for anyone to bear.

But South likely also further reflects Muldoon's need to speak from the future to make partial sense of his transnational migration as well as the complex relation between imperialism and globalization and their overlapping historical and cultural effects upon Ireland and North America. When asked about the multiple framing devices and fragmentary poetic structure of "Madoc," Muldoon commented retrospectively: "I couldn't, I realized afterwards, write in my own language. I couldn't write about the here and now. So I framed ['Madoc'] in the future and set it in the past" ("Paul Muldoon" 86). "Madoc" levies the poet's personal concerns about exchanging one location mired in colonial conflict (Northern Ireland) for another (Reagan/Bush I-era US). Muldoon's inability "to write about the here and now"—his decision to frame the poem in an Ireland of the near future and to set the bulk of the narrative events in the North American past—reflects the poet's psychic reckoning with the defamiliarizing and dislocating experiences of his transnational (or transcolonial) condition, at least at this earlier, transitional point in his career before he came to international prominence.

It would make sense then that the disjunctive time and place of the poem's enunciation (Ireland in the future, North America in the past) interrupts the present time and location of the poem's composition (United States in 1987–90). Muldoon's overwhelming preoccupation with "the disintegrative moment" of South's lyric enunciation extends the poem's cross-cultural imaginative reach: it is by virtue of being on the brink of disintegration that South can apprehend the complicated and painful network of imagined and real imperial histories that flow through him. One critic of the poem says in resignation that "*Madoc* squanders its noble impulse to recovery in a display of postmodern cleverness which seems to testify, ultimately, only to the facility (and omnipresence) of the allegedly self-effacing author" (Smith 193). As we've seen, Muldoon clearly wants the politics of his poetry to be understood

as protean and evasive. Nonetheless, my own view is that "Madoc"'s playful, fractured, and densely allusive aesthetics carry a sharp political edge. For all of the poem's dissonance and disruption, its performance and play, "Madoc" deploys a poetics of formally controlled imagistic disintegration to pattern the unrepresentable trauma of transatlantic imperialism and its continuing effects in the global era. Muldoon's multilayered narratives, ironic humor, and language games, far from constituting an evasion of history and suffering, signify his way of confronting the pain and complexity of history.

A vast, sprawling network of flowing fragments, "Madoc"'s experimental form and narrative encasings thus bring to the fore the problem of writing the imbrication of globalization together with the imperial history of the Irish nation-state and deterritorialized Irish lyric subject. Considering how Muldoon's transatlantic travels parallel those of Coleridge's and Southey's, it strikes me that Muldoon self-critically suggests his own poetry's complicity in world-building projects. What's more, his appropriation of Southey's "Madoc" further demonstrates the ways in which the extension of Romantic orientalism, however ironic, re-inflicts colonial violence, reminding us of the ways in which images of indigenous cultures—which have "real histories"—become indistinguishable from "counterfeits" and "fakes," a symptom that his poetry both exposes and refuses to heal.

Tsk, Tsk: The Politics of Appropriation

By now we may well ask if in his effort to globalize Irish identity and lyric subjectivity, hasn't Muldoon appropriated the very cultures he wishes to commemorate and preserve? On the whole, Muldoon's critics have defended the poet's nuanced engagement with indigenous histories and his self-indictment for the risks of appropriation.[7] There remain, to my eyes, unresolved interpretive and ethical problems with Muldoon's cross-cultural comparisons, especially considering his deconstructive aesthetic mode on the one hand and, on the other, his undeniable distance from the lived experiences of indigenous peoples. The question of appropriation is a clear marker of the globalization of culture, and is often shorthand for cultural imperialism. The appropriation of American Indian cultures, which so often stand in for ahistorical locality, spiritual mysticism, or political resistance, is especially fraught when such cultures are set against the modern and the global. Beyond Marianna Torgovnick's foundational work on primitivism, there is now a considerable body of scholarship critiquing non-Indian, white writers for invoking American Indian figures in literature and film. One collection of essays, *Selling the Indian*, describes how non-Indians, especially white Americans, have exploited and sold various forms of Native

American culture (including everything from music, dance, and literature to the designs of baskets and pillowcases) largely to suit the political-aesthetic interests of dominant (white) American culture.[8] The appropriation of Indian culture by non-Indians ultimately amounts to, in the words of the editors Carter Jones Meyer and Diana Royer, "cultural imperialism" and "cultural genocide," both of which systematically erode and pervert native cultures: "[the] net effect will be the displacing and then the replacing of Indians within their own cultural contexts. In short they will no longer own their identity in the same way that Indians no longer own most of the land that was theirs when whites began to settle in the New World" (xi). More specifically, Meyer and Royer single out non-Indian *poets* who mimic or appropriate "an Indian identity or higher Indian 'powers' to convey certain mystical truths" to their readers (xi–xii).

So what does a Northern Irish poet, so recently transplanted to the United States, have in common with the many American Indian cultures he invokes? And does Muldoon's deploying of American Indian history and culture in "Madoc" fall into the criticisms raised above? When asked by an interviewer why he has been so attracted to American Indian material across his career, beginning with his very first volume *Knowing My Place* (1971) and continuing through *Moy Sand and Gravel* (2002), he says candidly:

> You know what? It's very simple. I think it's almost as simple as this: I've always wanted to be an Indian. When I was a child I had a tent, a bow and arrow. I still have a bow and arrow. It's pathetic really. I know this runs the risk of sounding like noble savageism, but I'm very taken by the idea of the underdog, the underprivileged, the renegade, either by choice or by force of circumstances. And I think that impulse is still very strong in me as it's strong in other poets. It's the impulse not to belong, not to fit in, and it's one by which I live.
>
> But my interest in Native Americans does go beyond that. If you look up at my bookshelves you'll see how much I'm interested in their cultures, and how much I wrote out of them. ("Paul Muldoon" 83)

Despite Muldoon's own admissions of "sounding like noble savageism," there is something else here—both in terms of Muldoon's context of writing as well as in the context of cultural globalization in Ireland—that, I think, distinguishes Muldoon from, on the one hand, the group of poets who are usually charged with "white Shamanism" (such as Gary Snyder and Ted Hughes, to name only the most prominent examples) and, on the other, from critics who view any identification with American Indian culture as a form of cultural imperialism and cultural genocide.

For one, the Irish/American-Indian connection has a long history. We know from Irish and American historians as well as from Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*, how the British viewed both groups as comparable savages. Indeed, Ireland was an initial imperial laboratory for taming the wilderness and subduing the natives, whether through land acquisition or genocide, before Britain inflicted colonial practices on American Indians in the New World.[9] Considering this cross-colonial connection, it is not altogether unusual for Muldoon to identify with American Indians. Many other Irish writers have played upon this trope, from James Joyce's short story, "An Encounter" from *Dubliners* (1914), through the twenty-first century, as in Neil Jordan's film *Breakfast on Pluto* (2005), itself based on Patrick McCabe's novel.[10] Elsewhere, poet John Montague has written with only half-irony: "An Irishman of Gaelic background is, in a sense, a White Indian" (52). Irish cultural critic Fintan O'Toole has charted a cultural history of the Irish playing Indian, which begins with an earnest identification in the nineteenth century only to become parodied and ironized in the later twentieth century to the point where O'Toole claims: "the Indian metaphor has been taken on by contemporary Irish culture as a device which frees it from the burden of identity and lets it loose to play games with the world" (30).[11] Muldoon likewise taps into and seeks to dismantle colonial stereotypes that have affected Irish and Indian cultures, albeit in unequal ways.

Despite these historical literary contexts informing the Irish/Indian connection, we are still left wondering how American Indian cultures figure in his poetry, and, to what extent these aesthetic strategies perpetuate cultural appropriation. Muldoon's earlier, pre-"Madoc" poetry, written while he was still living in Northern Ireland during the years of the Troubles in the 70s and 80s, tends to filter Native American histories and figures through a parabolic or allegorical mode. Perhaps preempting critics of primitivism and cultural imperialism, he tends to set up what we can think of as a two-way mirror whereby Native American and Northern Irish histories of colonialism become reflected and refracted through, but still remain at a distance from, one another. His first poem on American Indians, "The Indians on Alcatraz" (first published in *Knowing My Place* in 1971 and in another form in *New Weather* 1973) was written soon after the Indians of All Tribes occupation of the island from November 11, 1969, through April 2, 1970, as an act of reclamation of nonused federal land under the Treaty of Fort Laramie between the United States and Sioux in 1868. "The Indians on Alcatraz" concludes:

After the newspaper and TV reports
I want to be glad that
Young Man Afraid of His Horses lives

As a brilliant guerilla fighter,
The weight of his torque
Worn like the moon's last quarter,
Though only if he believes
As I believed of his fathers,
That they would not attack after dark. (*Poems* 24)

The events in Alcatraz were reported all over the world and Muldoon likely viewed images through mass media, including *The Times* of London.[12] Here, images of American Indians (stereotypically cast as wily, violent, and rebellious) bore an uncanny resemblance to corporate media representations of Northern Irish Catholics during the 60s and 70s. While American Indian cultures became available to Muldoon (in part) through American popular culture and global media, his poems turn these discourses against themselves. In the lines above, the Northern Irish "I" refracts contemporary reports over sovereignty back through the Oglala Sioux chief, Tȟašúŋke Kȟokípȟapi (1836–1900), and, it seems, the 1890 Wounded Knee Massacre when the US Army's 7th Cavalry Regiment killed as many as 150 unarmed Lakota. Part of the difficulty of these lines stems from what has become Muldoon's signature experimentation with syntax, which we can see through the use of the conditional: "only if he believes, as I believed of his fathers, that they would not attack after dark." It is as if Young Man Afraid of His Horses still lives in the present so that the "I" can return to an earlier time ("as I believed") to entertain the possibility that an after-dark attack might preempt future reprisals of violence. Interestingly, what initially seems like a present-speaking "I" becomes time-warped and dislocated—again, we can see here the classic Irish strategy of the "world-scrim"—in order to comment parabolically upon Northern Irish concerns, which themselves become redoubled through the convex mirror of Native American histories, and to hold at bay past, present, and future violence. On the one hand, the "I" cannot escape the discursive frame of stereotype: he hopes that Young Man Afraid of His Horses might live on as "a brilliant guerilla fighter," a phrase that cannot but bring to mind an image of a Northern Irish paramilitary member. On the other hand, such an attractive ideal of violent resistance threatens the "I," in that stereotypes of Native Americans or Northern Irish Catholics run the risk of reproducing, proleptically, the violence that they would seek to forestall. It is not only that Young Man Afraid of His Horses and an unnamed paramilitary mirror one another as analogous figures of political resistance. Rather, the poem seems to invoke these stereotypes to point to their simultaneous insufficiency and tragic inevitability for thinking through cross-cultural comparisons within and beyond a colonial matrix.

Here, once more, we can see how it is by virtue of Muldoon's experimentations in language that his writing disrupts conventional binaries structuring imperial discourses of race and identity politics, warping linear history and negating coherent subjectivities to forge horizontal models of worldly belonging through his Irish/Indian linkages, which, however fictive and problematic, would otherwise be impossible to envision.

Across his writing, Muldoon demonstrates a historical immersion in Native American source materials in order to crack the frame of colonial stereotypes. His knowledge and recourse to American Indian history leads his reader to look up the real-life figures of Samson Occom, Handsome Lake, Red Jacket, Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea), Sacajawea, Captain Jack (Kintpuash), and the haunting presence of Blackbird, who frequently appears in "Madoc," though is long deceased by the time the narrative begins. As other critics of the poem have noted, "Madoc" contains no fewer than 23 tribes and several dozen words of American Indian lexical origin (McCurry, "S 'Crap"103; Kendall, "Parallel" 234). And yet, Muldoon repeatedly recalls to the reader how the historical specificity of American Indian cultures, in all of their diversity, is filtered through multiple layers of mediation and, hence, becomes visible as fakes, repetitions, and doubles. This strategy on his part underscores the problem of "accurately representing" historical realities—and the speculative connections between Irish and Indian cultures—as well as the politics of comparison itself.

Indeed, by the time he comes to write "Madoc," Muldoon figures American Indian cultures as part of, and constituting, a world in motion. Neither autochthonous nor self-contained, American Indian figures compose, both within themselves and in their struggle with imperial, global modernity, a conflicted amalgamation of cultures hybridized all the way down. We see this through several of the poem's real-life figures but perhaps never as self-consciously and (un)cannily as in "Madoc"'s brief depiction of an unnamed Cayuga donning a False Face mask. The False Face represents one of the most "indigenous" of Indian cultural artifacts and ceremonies often used for personal and collective healing and mourning. [13] Here Muldoon literalizes the counterfeit nature of the False Face and its divestment from authentic American Indian roots:

> Beyond the ramparts, a Cayuga grips
> the heft of a rattle
> made from the carapace
> of a mud-turtle.
>
> The jaws
> of his poplar-wood false face

are the jaws
of a vice.

The tongue prates
from its garrotte.
The neb is the neb of a prie-dieu
or misericord.

One eye is a wizened fern-
pod,
the other a fat gold sovereign
to airie thinnesse beat.

Its ogle-leer. Its wry perusal
of a field
of mangel-wurzels. A parasol
of horsehair and felt.

The Cayuga adjusts the lambda
of his grotesque
helmet
and grips the rattle-heft, tsk tsk. (282)

The passage above, six cross-rhymed quatrains surtitled with the name of Karl "[Popper]," comprises just a brief moment in the poem and may seem peripheral—indeed, the Cayuga is "beyond the ramparts" of Southeyopolis—in comparison to the many other American Indian figures that populate "Madoc." (It is worth noting in passing that Muldoon may hint to Popper's *The Open Society and Its Enemies*, which advances liberal democracy, pluralism, and human rights as against the totalitarianism of closed societies, embodied in Southeyopolis.) "[Popper]" offers a self-reflexive meditation on the intersection of the global and the indigenous: the ways the poem simultaneously appropriates, performs, and seeks to preserve "indigenous" cultural practices, practices that are themselves already saturated with outside influences and presences.

On the one hand, the False Face includes "local" objects violently wrenched from their natural environment (the mask made of poplar-wood, the rattle from a mud-turtle's carapace, one eye from a fern-pod, and the "parasol / of horsehair and felt"). On the other, the Cayuga has picked up the detritus that Southey has tossed outside the city walls. Significantly, most of these items have associations with torture and violence, including the jaws made from a vice, the tongue from a "garrotte" (which refers to the rope used in the "Spanish method of capital punishment by strangulation"),

and the nose from a "misericord," or dagger (*OED*). Even the eye is made of the currency of imperialism: a "fat gold sovereign / to airie thinnesse beat," an ironic allusion to Donne's "A Valediction: Forbidding Mourning," which tellingly compares "expansion" to "gold to airy thinness beat." Though Donne admittedly does not refer to political "expansion" in his comparison to the "two souls" who bridge geographic divides, Muldoon may suggest how a poetic trope of expansion might become literalized through actual empire. Muldoon's lexicon, too, draws from and juxtaposes Anglo-Norman, Spanish, French, German, Dutch, Latin, Greek, and Indian word origins. And the poem's syntactic arrangement (the jaw is . . . , the neb is . . . , the eye is . . .) distances each part of the mask from the object used metaphorically to represent it.

Taken together, these features of the False Face are just that: a counterfeit conglomeration composed of various cultural origins all masquerading as "authentic" ceremonial practice. As we can hear through Muldoon's rhyme of the "grotesque" mask with the "tsk tsk" of the rattle, any attempt to perform "indigenous" rituals of cultural healing are condemned to failure due to their automatic and necessary circulation within a global economy of objects and goods. At the same time, though, the Cayuga's ominous "ogle-leer" and "tsk tsk" also reflects Muldoon's *self*-admonishment for appropriating the very cultures he wishes to preserve and to heal. Muldoon's native representations are here inextricably tied to, and indeed produced by, imperial violence. He seems to know this and yet embraces this as a problematic but productive predicament. The False Face mask, far from being a true, authentic expression of an organic Cayuga culture is instead an uncanny, hybrid fusion of indigenous and global refuse patched together through *bricolage*. At once celebratory and self-critical of how his cross-cultural poetics can combine disparate cultural signifiers whose histories all begin in violence, Muldoon here shows the constitutive modernity and hybridity of the most spiritual of Indian healing practices. In this example, he figures "cultural authenticity" not through the retrieval of an originary pure past but through an acceptance of how the local and indigenous are themselves a composite mixture, perpetually in process and repeatedly "put on." Even the Indian, then, plays Indian.

This example highlights how the "forgeries" of cultural authenticity take shape in and through the counterfeit status of canonical literary inheritances. For Muldoon as for the other writers in this study, cultural-literary inheritances repeatedly figure not as pure origins but as heterogeneous contaminations through their messy relationship to colonial conquest and, at the same time, important resources for inventing models of cross-cultural subjectivity suited to the aesthetic and political complexities of the global era. Returning to "Madoc"'s other hybrid Cayuga-English-Irish figure, the

twenty-first-century South, the poem concludes with a bleak vision of the future, where in the final lines of the poem we are only partly reassured:

> It will all be over, de dum,
> in next to no time—
>
> long before "The fluted cypresses
> rear'd up their living obelisks"
>
> has sent a shiver, de dum de dum,
> through Unitel, its iridescent Dome. (321)

Unitel's "iridescent Dome" clearly evokes Coleridge's "stately pleasure-dome" in Kubla Khan's Xanadu. If Unitel figures as a twenty-first-century global state apparatus of surveillance and torture, it would seem that the poem's concluding image of the "iridescent Dome," however utopian or enticing, cannot but recall the persistence of Romantic orientalism, in all of its vanity and self-delusion, into the present. Sadly, even when on the brink of death, South endlessly repeats Southey's lines, which we will recall act as screen memories for the founding trauma of his distant ancestor and double. Yet at the same time, Muldoon's final lines contain a glimmer of hope. South, after all, never actually dies. Instead, he survives, if only for a moment that is deferred indefinitely. Seen from another perspective, Unitel's "iridescent Dome" might hint at the possibility for a radiant vision of a future Ireland barely living on in the face of overwhelming pain and catastrophe. Seen in this light, "Madoc" adopts counterfeit measures to carve out a "mysterious," ambiguous space for bringing together Irish and Indian histories in their mutual entanglement and inevitable difference from one another, measures performed with the hope, however provisional, of re-imagining the past, present, and future of "Ireland" and beyond. And yet this utopian possibility also demands qualification: Muldoon's utter delight in image-making, and the counterfeit connections that his image-making make possible due to their dissemination in the era of late capital, would also seem to evacuate the notion of "a future Ireland" itself, as if subjectivity, history, and "Ireland" have become transformed into a series of recycled, flickering images entirely subsumed within the Unitels of the world.

Muldoon's Point: Incommensurable Comparisons

Since Muldoon's settlement in the United States, "American Indian" signifiers tend to figure much less prominently after "Madoc," which may be due to his institutional position at Princeton combined with his increased

proximity to North American indigenous cultures and prominence through elite venues of publication. Concerned that he runs the risk of self-parody, Muldoon admits in an interview from 1994 that "maybe I've done it just once too much" ("An Interview" 19). When Native cultures do appear, they do so nominally—that is, as "nominals." To give just two examples, his libretto, *The Shining Brow* (1993), initially seems to bid farewell to

> the Ottawa, the Ojibwa, the Omaha Sioux,
> the Potawottoman;
> so much for all that tittle-tattle;
> they have all gone into the built-up dark. (86)

Here speaking through the persona of Frank Lloyd Wright, Muldoon performatively summons the "Ottawa, the Ojibwa, the Omaha Sioux," such that North America's first cultures "might come sweeping back across the land" (86): a land that, he writes, "was not 'borrowed' but 'purloined'" (76). At the same time, the poem's act of memorialization becomes undercut by the metonymic sliding of histories and cultures into one another, as when the portmanteau, "Potawottoman," fuses the Potawatomi peoples of western Michigan through lower Ontario with the Ottoman Empire. In ways we have seen before, Muldoon wryly mocks his writing's "tittle-tattle" for presuming to entomb Native cultures within the "built-up dark" of the stanza, as if his poetic figuration might negate the other built-up dark of US expansionism and neocolonialism.

Muldoon's tic of metonymic sliding and sonic echoing appears even more pronouncedly in his later poem, "As," from *Moy Sand and Gravel* (1998). "As" comprises 11 stanzas of nine lines, each beginning with "As x gives way to y" before concluding with the refrain "I give way to you." The second stanza reads:

> As bass gives way to baritone
> and hammock gives way to hummock
> and Hoboken gives way to Hackensack
> and bread gives way to reed bed
> and bald eagle gives way to Theobald Wolfe Tone
> and the Undertones gives way to Siouxsie Sioux
> and DeLorean, John, gives way to Deloria, Vine,
> and Pierced Nose to Big Stomach
> I give way to you. (36)

One tendency of the passage above veers toward arresting or freezing the nominal so as to question the notion that particular cultures, languages,

and peoples are all equally interchangeable and disposable. For instance, "Hoboken" and "Hackensack," though given by Dutch colonists, both derive from the now extinct Algonquin language of the Lenape. Similarly, "Pierced Nose" and "Big Stomach" are English translations for the Nez Perce and Gros Ventre, themselves French exonyms for the Niimiipu and Atsina peoples of the Northwestern United States. Muldoon reminds us, in the words of Native American Studies scholars Jace Weaver, Craig S. Womack, and Robert Warrior, how the "colonial process has always depended upon division and the power to bestow names. Most of our peoples are known popularly today by names they did not call themselves" (6). Even the former General Motors' executive and founder of DeLorean "gives way" to one of the most significant American Indian scholars and activists of the latter half of the twentieth century, Vine Deloria, himself of Sioux descent, as if to grant antecedence to the First Peoples over and against the ascendancy of US neocolonialism.[14] A countertendency to the lines above, however, pulls in the opposite direction, which we can see through the extended simile: Muldoon's incommensurable comparisons deliberately replicate and exaggerate globalization's logic of false equivalence, exposing the political-economic mechanisms through which counterfeit images (whether of "indigenous cultures" or others) appear decontextualized and dehistoricized in the first place. Alerting the reader to his own writing's thorough saturation in market exchange, Muldoon offers the poem as a counterfeit negative image of the peoples, cultures, and histories beyond the poem that have become encrypted in the nominal all the while luxuriating in the incommensurable comparisons his poetry generates.

There is, to my mind, a way of working within this contradiction, which hinges on the verb phrase "gives way." In *The Laws of Cool*, Alan Liu recalls Claude Lévi-Strauss's arguments over the necessity of myth to mediate irresolvable contradictions and originary traumas, especially through the potlatch. Writing in reference to cyberpolitics and the new technologies under global capital, Liu argues: "Market exchange relates America to the world, the entrepreneur to the consumer, and [. . .] the individual to community. Unless, of course, the *opposite* of the market—that is, gift exchange—mediates these polarities. Even when identities [. . .] are bound together in capitalistic relations, capitalism has not so far been able to explain those relations without leaving a significant remainder" (254–55). How might we read Muldoon's "As" through Liu's significant remainder? As we have already seen, the structure of the simile reproduces and, to a degree, satirizes global capitalism's logic of substitution and disposability. At the same time, though, "As" puts on vivid display the Joycean technique of "imarrhage," or "the tendency towards the amalgam, the tendency for one event or character to blur or bleed into one another" (*To Ireland, I* 74). We can see and hear

the poem's incommensurable comparisons through its similes, the slipping and sliding of metonymy, and swirling echolalia (in *ōn*, *ock*, and *oo* sounds to name a few). By the end of the stanza, the lyric subject "I" becomes desubjectivized only to "give way" to the "you" of the reader. Indeed the missing "a" in "gives way" cannot but bring to mind "gives away": read in this light, "As" performs an offering, an unasked-for gift to the Native histories and peoples beyond the text who have, in however small a degree, furthered Muldoon's literary recognition and who now appear in disfigured, counterfeit form through the bleeding image of his writing.

This, in turn, brings me back to the question with which I began this chapter over the question of comparison and (in)commensurability. Muldoon's turn to the overworn image of the American Indian, whether as a symbol of anti-imperial resistance or cross-cultural subjectivity, is not by accident. American Indian signifiers form a complex knot of cultural and political influences across his poetry, originating from popular culture, mass media, postcolonial discourse, and American Indian history itself. He further bears a canny awareness that, while Irish and Native histories of colonialism have been intertwined, they remain nonidentical to one another. Previously, we saw how Walcott invests his writing with world-renewing potential through epic mythopoeia, as if *Omeros* could invent a poetics of global economy as dependent upon but nonreducible to globalization. Muldoon is, without question, deeply skeptical of poetry's restorative potential. His writing reinflicts and, however sardonically, counters the negations of globalization's effects upon indigenous histories and peoples under threat of erasure. In this instance, it is as if Muldoon's retinagraphic textuality in "Madoc" and the machine-like series of similes and substitutions in "As" furnish the formal mechanism for Muldoon's writing to come as close as possible to mimicking globalization's logic of false equivalence. And yet, these same formal mechanisms, by pointing to the "remainders" of modernity as they are encased in canonical literary inheritances, simultaneously appeal to the poetic domain as occupying an ambiguous, even "mysterious" zone produced by, enmeshed within, yet irreducible to globalization. Such a vision is, of course, impossible and, in some ways, accounts for his eminent standing in the poetry world. Still he credits poetry for its disruptive potential to produce new ways of seeing, thinking, and writing the complexities of the global era.

During the same years of "Madoc"'s composition, Muldoon gave a public address on a BBC radio program, titled "The Point of Poetry." He ended the talk by saying:

> For, at its best, poetry does not comfort us, as some people
> —indeed some poets—would have us believe. The point of poetry

> is to be acutely *dis*comforting, to prod and provoke, to poke us in the eye, to punch us in the nose, to knock us off our feet, to take our breath away. (516)

Restlessness, discomfort, and provocation: these comprise some of the abiding elements to Muldoon's often shocking and disruptive cross-cultural comparisons for creating new and dislocating forms of worldly belonging and intersubjective attachment through his "pointed," at times lacerating poetic creations. In these ways, his writing raises the kinds of debates we often hear in world literature. Natalie Melas, for instance, has proposed methods of comparison in which "the overarching commensuration of imperialism's cultural comparison is overturned and relayed in the postcolonial condition as cultures come into constant contact without a unifying standard, thus engaging in ubiquitous processes of comparison that are no longer bound to commensuration" (*All the Difference* 37). Throughout this chapter, I have shown how Muldoon's flexible re-articulation of British literary inheritances (themselves open-ended and heterogeneous) mirrors the cross-contaminations between Irish and American Indian cultures to reveal their nuanced historical entanglement, their difference from one another, their analogous experiences of colonial dispossession, and their unconscious identity through the "secular wound." Risky acts of appropriation constitute a necessary, enabling violation, in the name of fracturing discourses erecting insurmountable difference and patterning new connections along the Ireland/Indian divide. However knowing, self-reflexive, or ironic, his poetry cannot, however, overcome how signifiers of alterity and local authenticity (Irish, Indian, or otherwise) have themselves become transformed into counterfeit brandings, which, in turn, are susceptible to appropriation and to contradictory, and finally uncertain, political ends. If anything, Muldoon approaches the politics of comparison through his handling of "counterfeit" canonical resources, which his writing playfully satirizes and pays homage, redrawing lines of literary attachment through their irrepressible contamination. In "Madoc," Muldoon re-purposes canonical British literary histories by returning to the Romantic era, a time before the consolidation of empire in the latter part of the nineteenth century, to critique its orientalist valences as well as to excavate Romanticism's insurgent impulses of rupture and revolt. As we will see, Muldoon's emphasis on the cross-cultural contaminations and alterity internal to literary inheritances will become a significant resource for the British Punjabi Nagra, who looks to Muldoon to question the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the contemporary UK poetry scene. In this case, we can conclude that it is by virtue of Muldoon's nuanced handling of canonical literary inheritances that he self-reflexively

marks his poetry's remove from the experiences of indigenous peoples and histories beyond the text of those who continue to struggle for rights over sovereignty, resources, and recognition. As perhaps the best alternative we may have, his poetry profiles the "forgery" entailed in making cross-cultural comparisons. What is demanded, it seems, is both an abiding awareness of how the act of comparison cannot overcome re-inflicting the inequalities and asymmetries between particular cultures and histories even as he insists upon the necessity of doing so self-reflexively as a way of interrupting, even if momentarily, ideologies of equivalent exchange and insurmountable racial difference, in the name of excavating the "secular wound" as the basis of personal and collective subject formation. If Muldoon privileges the "secular wound" for animating the possibility of worldly belonging between Irish and non-Irish cultures, South African poet Ingrid de Kok, the focus of my next chapter, figures "vulnerability" as a powerful imaginative resource for re-imagining political community at home and abroad. Her cross-cultural comparisons, however, draw upon literary inheritances flowing through the elegiac tradition, spanning Virgil through Walcott, to envision South African, national consciousness in a cosmopolitan frame, for good and for ill. It is to her I now turn.

CHAPTER 3

Recomposing South Africa: Cosmopolitanism and Vulnerability in Ingrid de Kok

The Elegiac Imperative and Poetic Recomposition

In her 1998 essay, "Cracked Heirlooms: Memory on Exhibition," Ingrid de Kok (b. 1951) focuses on the vexed problem of collective mourning and memorialization in the aftermath of apartheid and acceleration of globalization in contemporary South Africa. "There is a strong impulse in the country," she writes, "supported and sustained by the media, for a grand concluding narrative, which will accompany entry into the globalized economy and international interaction with the world. [. . .] This impulse has the potential to produce newly energetic registers, but equally it has the potential for amnesia" (61). As a strategic interruption to liberal discourses promoting healthy recovery through nation building and integrating South Africa into the global economy, de Kok proceeds instead to defend what she calls "the elegiac imperative" of artistic remembrances to apartheid. She interprets, for instance, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) hearings through the lens of ritual, which, despite their failure to provide national catharsis, at least allows "contradictory voices to be heard."

As an example of the "elegiac imperative," her essay focuses at one point on local art exhibits and institutions, such as the District Six Museum in Cape Town. The area of District Six was one of the most cosmopolitan and polyglot areas in all of South Africa during the late nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In 1966, the apartheid government under the National Party designated District Six as "white only," renamed the area "Zonnebloem" (Dutch

for "sunflower") in 1970, and leveled almost all the buildings to the ground in the late 1970s, removing 60,000 residents by force. After the election of Nelson Mandela, however, the District Six Museum opened its doors in 1994. The installations of maps, photographs, and testimony of previous residents textually re-assemble the area's once vibrant, multiethnic constitution; it mourns the city's history of violence and forced removal under apartheid; and it gestures to a worldly vision of South African national consciousness. In the conclusion to this chapter, I will return in greater detail to discuss the significance of District Six to de Kok's poetry. For now, it is worth noting how the District Six Museum succeeds, in de Kok's eyes, by emphasizing the incomplete nature of memorialization, or how every act of remembrance is a necessary act of forgetting due to the exclusions entailed in the act of representation. By foregrounding the materiality of aesthetic mediation, the exhibit thereby enacts, as she puts it, "the absences and divisions" at work in forms of cultural remembrance but that acquire renewed force given South Africa's divided history (71). For her, the "elegiac imperative" serves a double purpose: she lauds artistic works that remain stuck with the history of apartheid, refusing to move on as an ethical response to state-sanctioned racial segregation even as these works construct "images of loss, destruction, and resistance" as part of the "mediating ritual of renarration, the recontextualizing of the past" (71). While the elegiac imperative cannot "'resolve' the turbulence" of history, it can, she claims, "recompose it" as a means of preventing cultural amnesia and inventing usable pasts for the sake of a more equal future (61).

Interestingly, de Kok frames her argument over national remembrance by looking cross-culturally and across the Atlantic: she lifts her title, "Cracked Heirlooms," in fact from Derek Walcott.[1] The Nobel Laureate memorably remarks in his 1992 acceptance speech, "The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory":

> Break a vase, and the love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. The glue that fits the pieces is the sealing of the original shape. It is such a love that reassembles our African fragments, the cracked heirlooms whose restoration shows its white scars. (*What the Twilight Says* 69)

Whereas Walcott's "cracked heirloom" reassembles fragmented African and Western resources into new wholes, de Kok grafts the "cracked heirloom" of the Antilles upon the fractured cultural landscape of contemporary South Africa. "The gluing together may be the key function of art and cultural education in a time of social change," de Kok says, but it first "involves seeing and feeling the fragmented, mutilating shards, before the white scar can

be celebrated" (62). In contrast to the epic scale of Walcott or of Muldoon, though, de Kok privileges what she calls "the smaller gesture" by writing in shorter, lyric forms ("Cartography" 11).

To my mind, her emphasis on the smaller gesture proposes a micromodel of globalism that, in refusing totality, figures images of shared "vulnerability" as a crucial component in advancing cosmopolitan consciousness, however unequally and provisionally. Since 1988, she has taught at the University of Cape Town in the Centre for Extra-Mural Studies. In the meantime, she has garnered numerous awards, visiting residencies, and fellowships including a Rockefeller Foundation Fellowship at the Study and Conference Centre in Bellagio, Italy (1999). To date, she has published five collections: *Familiar Ground* (1988), *Transfer* (1997), *Terrestrial Things* (2002), a collection of selected and new poems in *Seasonal Fires* (2006), and *Other Signs* (2012). Though a fixture within her country's literary environment, she has only recently begun to receive the scholarly attention that her poetry merits.[2] Here, I examine how her recomposition of Western literary inheritances registers the challenges of writing post-apartheid South Africa through a cross-cultural frame, especially when the re-use of canonical forms threatens to re-inscribe the social, political, and aesthetic inequalities for a country still reeling from the legacy of apartheid.

The relationship between South African literature and the cross-cultural has assumed several metaphorical figurations in recent scholarship. For Leon de Kock, the irrepressible heterogeneity of the country—one that bears the marks of historical ruptures and violence on the ground that is matched in the literary domain by a crisis in aesthetic representation—can only be held together through the metaphor of "the seam." It is not by accident, for him, that the most visible South African writers in the global literary marketplace such as J. M. Coetzee, Nadine Gordimer, Zoe Wicomb, and Zakes Mda, among others, are those who most vigilantly "hit the seam," revealing how the coherence of "South Africa" is always internally riddled by a constitutive otherness that does not allow the nation to close in upon itself ("South Africa" 284). By way of comparison, Mark Sanders connects his metaphor of "human foldedness" to the problem of South African intellectuals' "complicity" with the injustices of apartheid. The constraints of complicity, for him, become a generative way for white and black writers to think through the political problem of acknowledging a responsibility for "the basic folded-together-ness of being, of human-being, of self and other" (11). And Sarah Nuttall describes South African literature through the metaphor of "entanglement," which, while keeping sharply in view how "forms of separation and difference do still occur, materially and epistemologically," nonetheless brings to light how "those sites and spaces in which what was once thought

of as separate—identities, spaces, histories—come together or find points of intersection in unexpected ways" (20). Missing from the conversation, however, is a consideration of the significance of tropes of "vulnerability": in de Kok's work, vulnerability functions both as an image of the susceptibility of her subjects to corporeal violence on personal and collective scales as well as an "opening up" of her poetry to world literary inheritances belonging to Anglo-European traditions of writing, thereby clarifying how the divisions of cultural capital condition and circumscribe her cross-cultural poetics.

To be sure, the literary is not for her a semiautonomous space but, on the contrary, a real-world participant in apprehending and re-framing the contradictions structuring the South African social and cultural landscape. The title of her 13-line poem "Reparation," for instance, directly references the "Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee" (RRC) under the TRC. As part of the TRC's *Final Report*, which was delivered to Nelson Mandela in October 1998, the RRC outlines five measures toward "redress" for victims of "gross violations of human rights," including "urgent interim repair," "individual repair grants," "symbolic reparation," "community rehabilitation programmes," and "institutional reform" (*Truth and Reconciliation* 175–77). Her poem, however, challenges the quantitative calculus of "reparation" as articulated by the State.[3] The first two stanzas negate the mathematics of restitution ("Can't subtract what might have been. / Can't add up to a sum we understand"), rebuking the notion of reparation in the face of irrecoverable human loss. In the final five-line stanza, de Kok places side-by-side images of physical mutilation, familial sundering, and spiritual loss:

> But can't repair, and can't restore
> an uncut arm, unbruised genital,
> untroubled sleep, unscarred face,
> unweeping mother, children, faith
> or wide unwatching private space. (139)

These lines distill in miniature form the doubleness of de Kok's "elegiac imperative." In many ways, her poetry is committed to "resistant mourning" by dwelling in grief and remaining attached to the lost person or object, thereby displacing the ready recompense that cultural commemoration, including poetry, might afford (Rae 16–17). The lines above clearly underscore the impossibility of restoration through monetary or symbolic means. For instance, the prefix "un-" marks the ambivalence of her elegiac imperative: it is as if the text wishes to undo bodily violence and thereby to rectify or even reverse history, which we can see through the series of negative modifiers ("uncut," "unbruised," "untroubled," "unscarred," "unweeping"). At the

same time, the repetition registers how such a desire is, in truth, impossible and so re-inflicts historical violence by adding another layer of linguistic scarring, bringing to sharp relief how the "wide unwatching space" of the stanza struggles to contain physical wounds that exceed poetic figuration. On a formal level, the 13 lines above might be read as a truncated sonnet. The absent final line may embody an internal lack within the rhetoric of "reparation," pointing to the failure of any language—poetic, economic, political, spiritual, or otherwise—to account for loss. Indeed, the missing final line gestures toward the physical absence of the deceased, an absence keenly felt in grief and beyond language. Yet, the poem's contending with grief and recompense turns upon itself once more, opening up what I perceive to be a democratic politics that can only be perceived in its absence: the adamant refusal of consolation in "Reparation" may well bespeak a protest to the vacuity of liberal social-political discourses that themselves perpetuate the injustice of loss and beget the language of reparation. Seen from this perspective, that missing final line would thus leave open another, nonsymbolizable way of apprehending loss beyond reigning structures of meaning, one that can only be intuited by recognizing a vulnerability to bodily harm and finitude.

This reading distills in miniature how de Kok's poems work through forms of national and worldly loss, emphasizing "vulnerability" as a potent, but often unacknowledged, imaginative resource for figuring democratic politics even as she points to her writing's limited capacity to reconstitute suffering by virtue of its inscription within elite forms. On the one hand, she imbues images of vulnerability and weakness with potential for reimagining political community and intersubjective attachment by grieving the lives that, in Judith Butler's words, would otherwise not "count as lives" (*Precarious Life* 20). "To grieve," Butler writes, "and to make grief itself into a resource for politics, is not to be resigned to inaction, but it may be understood as the slow process by which we develop a point of identification with suffering itself" (30). On the other hand, however, de Kok's writing demonstrates how instances of vulnerability appear in her poems as textual remainders: as fragments, prints, and shards that are often further encased in the Western poetic tradition spanning Walcott, of course, but also Virgil, Ovid, Shakespeare, Blake, Hardy, Yeats, and many others. Her selective re-compositions function as her particular way of feeling the fragmented, mutilating shards of other times and places of loss that become recoded as "national."

The readings that follow proceed by working back and forth between national and cosmopolitan frames of reference, arguing along the way for a dialectical, mutually corrective understanding of the national-cosmopolitan nexus, a dialectic hinging on the trope of "vulnerability." De Kok renders South Africa vulnerable, and thus open, to wider cultural forces as part of the project

of reconstituting the poetic fabric of the nation, for good and for ill. Conversely, de Kok has also written a series of poems that appear to take on a cosmopolitan perspective in their emphasis on transhistorical catastrophe, ethnic migration, and hospitality. The cosmopolitan dimensions of her writing do not so much aspire toward a universalism or a postnational future as question how celebratory claims to cosmopolitan culture risk eclipsing the remainders and residues of global modernity, such as victims of war, the unremembered dead, and the plight of noncitizens. In both instances, vulnerability in her writing interrupts "national" and "cosmopolitan" frames. She repeatedly exposes how national and cosmopolitan discourses are often blind both to their own rhetoric and to those they cannot account for but presume to represent. Specifically, her poems aspire to make visible the invisible losses that prove recalcitrant to incorporation into liberal discourses subtending the body politic.

At the same time, we can see especially vividly how her decision to interweave South African realities through canonical forms and the conventions of anti-elegy (themselves deriving from Anglo-modernism) enables her to become visible within the global North. To be sure, she does so at a far smaller scale than authors closer to the anglophone economic and cultural core, such as Walcott or Muldoon. In many ways, her overt engagement with mainstay authors belonging to the tradition of world literature marks her peripheral institutional position in relation to "centers" of literary production in the United Kingdom, Ireland, and North America. And yet, when seen from a South African perspective, her deliberate re-use of canonical forms furthermore lays claim to her politics of location, as a privileged white woman writer working in English and embedded in her country's often divisive literary landscape. Her "literary" mode, as we will see, contrasts sharply with that of her contemporaries writing poetry of resistance such as Vonani Bila, the anti-lyric political verse of poet-politician Jeremy Cronin, never mind the performance poetry of Johannesburg-based Lesego Rampolokeng. Reading for the ways de Kok works within these constraints enables us to see how her writing nonetheless contributes to advancing a more robust, but self-critical cosmopolitan consciousness, as part of a potentially endless, unfinished process of recomposing the nation through the cracked heirlooms of world literature. Such possibilities may well be impossible but they are, for her, nonetheless necessary in challenging reigning, liberal conceptions of the nation and globalization in a South African context of writing.

Mourning the Nation, Remembering into the Future

During the apartheid regime (1948–94), artists and intellectuals—belonging to different ethnic backgrounds, writing in any one of the now 11 officially

recognized languages, whether residing "freely" in the country, detained in prison, or forced into exile for opposing the State—had a clear, common cause of political transformation. The measures taken by the National Party to impose apartheid (literally "separateness") sought to saturate every aspect of public and private life. These measures included the series of acts beginning in 1950 prohibiting miscegenation, assigning fixed racial categories and dividing the country into "homelands," forcibly removing millions among the black population into townships and settlements, restricting and often forbidding employment, and instituting "pass laws" that required blacks to carry a passbook at the risk of arrest and imprisonment.[4] The apartheid regime also allowed police to incarcerate civilians without cause, often resulting in torture and death as in the brutal instance of Steve Biko in 1977. Political opponents to apartheid were also sent to confinement and hard labor on Robben Island, where Nelson Mandela, current president Jacob Zuma, and many others organized political resistance from within.

Despite the "miracle" of peaceful transition from F. W. de Klerk's National Party to the popular election of the African National Congress (ANC) under Mandela in April 1994 and the founding of the "rainbow nation" in the words of Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the democratic government has been haunted by apartheid's enduring inequalities. Though South Africa has the strongest economy on the continent, wealth remains consolidated among whites and a small black elite. Admittedly, the black middle class has grown considerably since the late 1990s, even outpacing the number of people in the white middle class. Still, under the ANC presidencies of Thabo Mbeki (1999–2008) and Zuma (2009–), the State has faced alarming rates of unemployment (25% nationwide and upward of 60% in the black townships in 2012) and violent crime, particularly rape. During the 1990s and 2000s, the pandemic of HIV/AIDS led to infection rates as high as 19 percent among the entire population in 2006, a problem that has been partly attributed to Mbeki's resistance to antiretroviral drugs. In May 2008, the country saw a series of xenophobic attacks by nativists upon migrants from Zimbabwe and Mozambique, killing as many as 60 people, including many South Africans, and displacing up to 35,000 people. André Brink noted in 1993 that "a widespread gloom is settling over many central European, South African and South American writers, in the curious conviction that 'there is nothing to write about anymore'" (Brink 1). If poetry still appears a relatively minor, if not elite, genre carrying little political importance, many poets nevertheless continue to question the politics of writing to contest enduring racial inequalities in the name of democratic politics.

Post-apartheid poetry is marked by an awareness of the global vectors suffusing the "rhythms and routines of ordinary living," or what Michael Chapman calls a poetry of "the low mimetic" (Chapman 178). This

awareness sharply contrasts with, on the one side, the earlier generation of poets who pitted an Anglo-European modernist style against the "big structures" of apartheid and the Cold War, or, on the other, with Soweto poets informed by the Black Consciousness movement. South African poets writing in English have taken on an increasingly flexible range of subject matter. They borrow more freely from indigenous, local, and cross-cultural sources. They compose in a variety of poetic forms and modes whether lyric, anti-lyric, found poetry, or spoken word. And they publish with established and boutique publishing houses (Congress of South African Writers, University of KwaZulu-Natel, Kwela/Snailpress, Gecko, Deep South, David Philip Botsostso, Umuzi/Random House), in journals (*New Coin*, *New Contrast*), and in audio and digital formats. The sheer fractiousness of South African poetry on the page also makes quite manifest the highly contradictory, if not irreconcilable, ideological positions that constitute the social and political terrain more broadly (Sole "Licking the Stage" 160).

Concerning the politics of post-apartheid poetry, de Kok comments that

> among many, there are two apparently conflicting pressures at work: one towards an identification with the nation, which requires a way of writing into a celebratory space, into the future; the other towards a critical analysis of the new dispensation. The latter may include expressions of anger and disappointment at the pace of change or at the rise of a self-interested new elite. ("Cartography" 10)

At one end of the spectrum, there are some poets who extend the tradition of Zulu praise poetry (*izibongo*) to voice support for the ANC-led government, as when Mzwakhe Mbuli performed at Mandela's inauguration, or when poet-diplomat Lindiwe Mabuza lent her support to the State's neoliberal policies in *Voices That Lead* (1998). At the other end of the spectrum, there are those who have extended the Black Consciousness poetry of resistance. For instance, Vonani Bila's "This World Is For Sale" imperatively proclaims: "burn the fires now / do not accept crumbs / nor sell our revolution / always keep left" (*Handsome Jita* 97). In between these two poles, however, poets have adopted a wide spectrum of aesthetic strategies to question the politics of poetry in the post-apartheid—or as some critics have called it the "post-transitional," "post anti-apartheid," or "post post-apartheid"—era. However we label the literature written since 1994, the "post," far from moving beyond apartheid in the name of freewheeling global interconnectedness, functions instead as a strategic marker, signifying both the endurance of apartheid's material forms of inequality and the undeniable opening up of South African literature to comparative frames of analysis.

Before turning in depth to de Kok, I'd like to briefly touch upon three of her contemporaries—Jeremy Cronin, Lesego Rampolokeng, and Yvette Christiansë—to position her within the wider poetic landscape and to draw out the implications of her comparatively "literary" mode in addressing South African political realities. First, Jeremy Cronin has divided his time between his poetry career and acting as the deputy general-secretary of the South African Communist Party and (at this moment of writing) deputy minister of Public Works. Long before his work in government, Cronin was arrested in 1976 under the "Terrorism Act" for his underground publications and communist involvements. He spent seven years in Pretoria Maximum Security Prison, an experience that culminated in his first collection, *Inside* (1983). Since the 1980s, Cronin's subsequent collections *Even the Dead* (1997) and *More Than a Casual Contact* (2006) similarly construct an image of the poet as a strategic "representative" of the collective due to his direct involvement in political negotiations during the period of political transition (1990–93) and his role as a member of parliament (1999–2009). Writing against the notion of poetry as "the object of a contemplation / (Thou still unravished bride…) that obscures," Cronin instead draws his readers into "the mud of [its] production // The complicity in our gaze" (*Inside and Out* 92). Poetry, he claims, is "a fully-fledged citizen" wholly immersed in and critically engaged with other registers of discourse, including political speeches, the corporate media, and television and popular culture (Berold 129). For instance, "After More Than a Casual Contact" uses the language of abstraction to ironize the Mbeki government's adoption of neoliberal economic policies of the Washington Consensus through the 1996 Growth Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) program:

> Mass action becoming
> Transaction
> Liberation
> Liberalization
>
> Equality
> Equity (*More Than* 62)

The hanging nominalizations in the lines above mimic the impersonal language of corporate, bureaucratic discourses that carry material effects upon everyday people "living with a disappointment / not without a cure" (63). The poem proceeds to mention the suffering of individuals living in poverty and without education, afflicted with HIV, or dying due to malnutrition. Cronin's title may suggest the dangers of contact through unprotected sex but it may also

refer to the "more than casual contact"—or palpable disconnect—between disembodied political rhetoric and the realities that his poetry both hortatively indicts and laments. The poem concludes by forging solidarity with the "us" who "survive" (as in "live on," *sur-vivre*) through poetic inscription:

> All the more reason to keep faith
> To struggle
> To stay
> To stay on
> To be gentle
> To all those, who
> Somehow, more or less
> (That's all of us)
>
> Survive

Here and elsewhere, he credits the energies of anti-lyric to make visible broader social contradictions that, once perceived in discourse, can enliven the reader's momentary sense of community, one that is necessarily fractured and open-ended (Cronin, "An Interview" 522). Like de Kok, he often brings literary and nonliterary discursive registers into jarring relation with one another so as to mark the failures of social transformation and to enact a newly constituted body politic.

Whereas Cronin emphasizes the self-divisions distinguishing the poet-as-representative, Soweto-based Lesego Rampolokeng extends the long tradition of the poet as a madly inspired prophet (or *vates*), a posture shaped by his having grown up surrounded by violence in the Johannesburg townships and amid the political activism of the Black Consciousness movement. One of the country's most prolific performance poets, Rampolokeng has been a frequent presence on national and international stages, especially in Germany and the United Kingdom. Noting Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" and Aimé Césaire's *Cahier D'un Retour au Pays Natal* as important influences, he conceives of all of his compositions, in whatever medium, as a delicate balancing act between "the word in motion, the word free—I mean without bounds—and the written WORD" (Berold 32). Rampolokeng's poetry is marked by its arresting imagery of physical violence ("hope has become a rope around the neck / when the whip continues to crack from high power-towers" [*Bavino Sermons* 47]), its celebration of abjection ("a line of semen & excrement runs from president to resident" [63]), and its unforgiving embrace of vulgarity ("life is a bitch yes disease & pestilence / commerce dictates you fuck her in silence" [103]).

Interestingly, as far apart as Rampolokeng is from de Kok's context of writing, the two poets share similar aesthetic commitments to formal innovation, which, in his case, appears through musical incantation, verbal experimentation, and densely allusive textual designs that spiral out globally, despite (or even because of) the stated political exigency of his fiery prophetic visions. For instance, "The Bass Re-Incarnate" denounces in dubbeats the debasement of "capitalisation's celebration," "sin-vestment," and "imperial insemination" (*Head on Fire* 49). The poem concludes:

> sheol i dwell in hell without a name
> david-sling the wicked-word spouts flame
> into the human soul the perdition hole-
> retribution for every head fallen in
> damnation-poetry i seek redemption in (49)

Though fashioning himself after the poet-king and warrior David, the diminutive lyric "i" speaks from beyond the grave, stanzaically dwelling in a land of the dead (from the Hebrew, "sheol") and spouting flames upon a political-economic order that is beyond repair. The final line splits the "i" between its containment within "damnation-poetry" and its search for a "redemption" whose only freedom may be that it exists in a "hell without a name," and so has yet to be ordered by the confines of symbolic language. But if Rampolokeng often relegates his speakers to a self-lacerating living-death, he also "re-incarnates" the basslines of indigenous and global poetic sources, including Zulu praise poetry (*izibongo*), Soweto poetry, American rap artists, Jamaican dub poets, and T. S. Eliot. Restoring poetry to chant, he converts his many "i"s into globally woven but locally spoken social texts that, beyond indicting the brutality of a world that has bent his poetry into its broken shape, enunciate forms of negative aesthetic freedom by speaking and writing in "a language we can't think in" (*Bavino Sermons* 48). Rampolokeng's poetics of putrefaction recalls Adorno's statement that the ugly in art "denounce[s] the world that creates and reproduces the ugly in its own image, even if in this too the possibility persists that sympathy with the degraded will reverse into concurrence with degradation" (*Aesthetic Theory* 48–49).

A member of the South African diaspora, Yvette Christiansë assumes the roles archaeological excavator and exilic outsider in relating to her former motherland. Her poetry brings to the surface submerged African memories of dispossession and resistance spanning the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, re-constellating the South African national imaginary in a transhistorical frame. Born in Johannesburg, raised first in Cape Town and later Swaziland,

she moved with her family to Australia in her adolescence to escape the apartheid regime before taking up residence in the United States, where she has taught at Fordham University, Princeton, and most recently Barnard College. Her two collections of poems, *Castaway* (1999) and *Imprendehora* (2009), for instance, draw upon mid-nineteenth-century records on the South Atlantic island of St. Helena, which is renowned as, among other things, the location of Napoleon's exile and eventual death. In *Castaway*, Christiansë allegorizes her own personal origins: she, herself, is of mixed-race ancestry and her grandmother was born on St. Helena. In her subsequent collection, she incorporates passages from the *St. Helena Register* to give voice to previously enslaved Africans who in the mid-nineteenth century took over the slaveship *Imprendehora* (Spanish for "enterprise"), only to be labeled as "liberated slaves" and thereafter sent to the New World and the South Asian subcontinent. But the voice of history in the following lines, however distant in time, cannot but speak to the "days of liberation" in present-day South Africa:

> They call our days liberation,
> our feet know otherwise
> this ground hurts
>
> Well, if we sing, our chins reaching
> our feet might move
> but not our hearts. (*Imprendehora* 25)

Though recognizing the significance of the end of bondage (whether in the nineteenth- or twenty-first century), the metrical "feet know otherwise," as if "this ground" of freedom deictically signals the "hurt" of the text. Similar to the ways that de Kok patterns the local-global nexus, Christiansë figures South Africa as propelled outward into transhemispheric circuits of connectivity at the same time as she summons prior histories of migration and dispersal as they flow back through the national imaginary.

In contrast to her peers, de Kok, due to a number of factors, exhibits a significant investment in highly "literary" modes. Her sustained engagement with the canon is likely shaped by her MA education in the late 70s at Queen's University (Ontario), whose English department has had a somewhat "conservative" reputation due to its investment in "the canon" and more conventional models of literary history. It was at Queen's that de Kok wrote her thesis on Thomas Hardy.

But her inclination for mainstream anglophone poetic traditions also connects her to a particular strain of South African cultural production,

namely, the subgenre of "white writing" as in the works of Lionel Abrahams, Alan Paton, and perhaps most prominently J. M. Coetzee. In his foundational study, Coetzee focuses on English- and Afrikaans-language writing produced between the nineteenth-century British colonial period through apartheid in the late 1970s. "White writing," rather than designating a "body of writing different in nature from black writing," instead functions as a heuristic for writing "generated by the concerns of people no longer European, not yet African" (11). Like her white predecessors, de Kok's writing embodies a "cultural doubleness" by virtue of her peripheral position with respect both to metropolitan centers of literary production in Europe and North America and to non-white African writers, whose imaginative works may be rooted in their lived experiences of racial alienation and economic dispossession (Leon de Kock, "South Africa" 284). In one interview, de Kok calls for "historical decorum" on the part of "those of us who are white, who were beneficiaries of apartheid" given the "massive suffering and humiliation and appropriation" that non-white South Africans have endured (Berold 116). Yet she equally refutes the notion "that certain topics are the province of certain people whether by gender, by race, by suffering, or by origin," which perpetuates "literary ghettoes, homelands, apartheid reproduced in ideas and expression."

De Kok's "elegiac imperative" designates her specific way for linking national, political concerns to the sweeping pressures of global modernity. Extending Anglo-modernist adaptations of elegy and anti-elegy, de Kok flouts the genre's long-standing conventions—the naming of the virtues of the deceased, pastoral conventions imbuing nature as sympathetic to loss through the pathetic fallacy, listing the procession of mourners, cursing the injustice of death, the role of fertility rites and vegetation gods in restoring the lost person to the diurnal rhythms of nature, and the upward movement from the depths of grief to transcendent apotheosis and consolation—by instead adopting a mode of "resistant mourning" and "anti-elegy." De Kok, like many other anti-elegists, often seeks to subvert "the consolatory promise" and "compensatory economy" that distinguishes the traditional elegy (Ramazani *Poetry of Mourning* 4).

Her poem "What Everyone Should Know about Grief" (1997) proves illustrative in understanding how she questions the aesthetics and politics of mourning across her oeuvre. Over the course of six stanzas composed of five lines in irregular rhyme, de Kok lays bare the contradictions of "healthy mourning." From the very opening lines, we learn that she ironically lifts the title of her poem from a magazine headline where "grief finds its marketable stage" sandwiched "between aerobic virtue on one page / and the thrills of Machu Picchu on another" (*Transfer* 21). In large part, the poem overturns normative

discourses of grief promoting self-improvement ("long walks," "therapies"), consolation ("the comfort of belief"), and eventual detachment ("let go, move on"). Indeed, in the fourth stanza, the speaker rejoins: "But everyone knows sorrow is incurable," listing broken, disjointed images of "a bruised and jagged scar," "shrapnel seeded in the skin," and "undoused burning pyres of war." Interestingly, the page layout of "What Everyone Should Know about Grief," as it appears in her collection *Transfer* (1997) and in her selected collection *Seasonal Fires* (2006), gives the distinct impression that the poem concludes with a decidedly anti-elegiac image of a world on fire and beyond repair.

As we turn the page, though, we read these final two stanzas:

> And grief is one thing nearly personal,
> a hairline fracture in an individual skull;
> homemade elegy which sounds its keening
> in the scarred heart's well;
> where it is too deep to reach
>
> the ladder of light
> sent down from land above,
> where hands write words
> to work the winch
> to plumb the shaft below. (*Transfer* 22)

In sharp contrast to the magazine article mentioned earlier in the poem, this "homemade elegy," it seems, proffers little advice to the aggrieved, merely retracing the skull's hairline fracture or echoing an Irish lamentation for the dead ("keening," *OED*). These lines also betray the *nearly* personal dimension of grief by insisting upon its necessary communicability, but now on a different order. Consider, for instance, how the enjambment linking the two stanzas suspends the reader between an outright denial and then possible fulfillment of solace ("where it is too deep to reach // the ladder of light") only to withdraw consolation once more by metaphorically linking the privacy of the "scarred heart's well" with the well of the South African mines. Here, the image of the dark well combined with the Irish word "keening" may invoke another political elegist who is central to de Kok's imagination: Seamus Heaney, who in "Personal Helicon" also looks into wells to "set the darkness echoing" (*Opened Ground* 14). Similarly, de Kok's writing hands "work the winch" to plumb the depths of South African losses all the while bringing to relief how her poetry approaches, but cannot touch, experiences of private and collective suffering. She questions the efficacy of poetic compensation by both attacking and recycling clichés ("ladder of light," "scarred heart's well," and "plumb the shaft").

The prevalence of clichés demonstrates how her writing is positioned against, marked by, and necessarily entangled within discourses of healthy mourning and their attendant logic of compensatory grief.

De Kok's poetry is marked by two interrelated tensions. The first tension derives from an ethical-political commitment to resistant mourning—that is, in the words of Patricia Rae "as a resistance to reconciliation, full stop: a refusal to accept the acceptance of loss" (16)—and a countervailing desire for her poetry to retain what Peter Sacks calls "the fictions of consolation," albeit in qualified form (*The English Elegy* 2). Indeed, de Kok herself openly admits that she agrees with Sacks (who was also incidentally born in South Africa) when she notes that "the imagination operates most powerfully within the spaces of absence, loss, and figuration, providing a dialectic of language and the grieving mind. In effect it brings back into our presence the disappeared, in a newly refigured form" ("Cracked Heirlooms" 62). As she explains in a 2003 interview:

> Elegiac poetry (or any art) cannot heal the burden of the past. It can only symbolically reconfigure the past, own its burdens and losses. Traditionally elegy offers some "blessed hope."
> .....
> In the twentieth century and beyond, the traditional resources of elegy have of necessity been eroded; but its formal gestures still signal more than just a reference back to the history of the genre—they can still somehow remember into the future. ("Strangely Tender" 37)

The problem becomes, however, that de Kok's aesthetic reconfigurations of loss are necessarily nonidentical to the real historical losses of those who no longer remain. To believe that poetry can bear the weight of history's losses may, at best, attribute a utopian hope to forms of cultural production and, at worst, amount to a betrayal of the dead by attributing poetry with a compensatory power before the finality of loss.

Her way through this first tension, between anti-elegiac resistant mourning and elegiac consolation, is by way of a second tension: de Kok mediates the specificity of South Africa's national, historical context by looking beyond its borders, to other times, other places, and other literatures of loss. Indeed, her reference above to elegy's traditional promise of a "blessed hope" derives from "The Darkling Thrush," which Hardy dates on December 31, 1900, at the dawn of the twentieth century and composed in the same years as the Second Boer War (1899–1902), when the British Empire defeated the Dutch-controlled South African Republic and Orange Free State. Though

distancing herself from Hardy's promise of a "blessed hope," she also shares his signature tone of hesitant skepticism. If de Kok's elegies "remember into the future," they do so by entering into conversation, sometimes silently at others vocally, with prior elegies thus redoubling the nation in collective grief and creating linkages across the elegiac tradition.

Her poem "Too Long a Sacrifice" (2006), for instance, appropriates Yeats's political elegy for the members of the Easter 1916 Rising. "Memory," she writes, "returns like weather," ebbing and flowing "like a rip tide / shuttling the unburied dead" (*Seasonal Fires* 140). "Too Long" is composed of seven quatrains, whose clipped two, three, and four beat lines often mimic Yeats's metrical pattern. "Too Long" opens, though, in a lyrical register that intertwines the space of nature with the political domain of the TRC:

> The emptied shell
> hears the pleated sea
> grant clemency
> to wrecks and submarines. (140)

The lines above metaphorically cast the attendees of the TRC hearings (which de Kok herself witnessed first-hand) as an "emptied shell," silently listening while the commission grants clemency to the perpetrators of apartheid. Of course, "the emptied shell" cannot but also refer to the empty vessel of the poem itself that, like the sea, is silently indifferent to and powerless before the "wreck" of history. "Too Long a Sacrifice" switches back and forth from an ecological language framing political allegory, as in the lines above, to a direct indictment of "forensic men / in the archive of modernity" whose "statistics / tell us things are getting better" and that "'Life goes on'" (140). The speaker vacillates between these two registers, as though neither proves suitable to grieve "for those who queue in the cold dawn air / uncounted by the census" (141). As if completely beside herself, the speaker finally laments:

> What to do? Watch and pray?
> No benign conclusion waits
> in the wings, enters to pull the curtain
> down over hunger, grief and hate. (141)

While directly stating the impossibility of enshrouding "hunger, grief, and hate," she nevertheless still yearns—even through denial, personification, and understatement—for the assurance of a "benign conclusion" or a "pulled curtain." De Kok's rhetorical questions, so reminiscent of Yeats's vocative "O when may it suffice?", incite a politics of rage that is, nonetheless, formally

restrained (if not claustrophobic), both to protect the speaker from what could become an all-consuming animus and also to mark, self-critically, an asymmetry between high, canonical texts such as Yeats's "Easter, 1916" and the specificity of individual losses before South Africa's TRC.

By and large, de Kok's empathetic imagination focuses on figures we might think of as most susceptible to injury and harm: children, teenage women, and mothers, all of whom would seem unassailable, if not threadbare, images of vulnerability. From another perspective, though, she self-indicts her writing by flaunting how her art engages in the commerce of grief. For instance, she writes an early poem "Small Passing" upon hearing about a white mother told not to grieve for her stillborn baby "because the trials and horrors suffered daily by black women in this country are more significant than the loss of one white child" (*Seasonal Fires* 51). The title of the poem "Compassionate Leave" describes the exodus of peoples leaving their homes "to watch and pray for dying ones / shrunken under sheets"; but the title is also suggestive of the "leave" of compassion from the public well of empathy in light of the HIV/AIDS pandemic (*Terrestrial Things* 63). The short poem "Women and Children First" initially seems like a list of clichés about those "first to be hurt" (61). The text however reflects how "this"—writing—"makes it worse," at once acknowledging her own complicity in perpetuating the language of victimhood and turning these same images "inside out" in order to question discourses that maintain that one life is more grievable than any other.

De Kok's work of national mourning pertains to the "victims" living in the post-apartheid state and also to former white beneficiaries, indeed the founders of apartheid and her heirs. For instance, de Kok responds to the program of national re-definition—through the renaming of city streets and hospitals and transforming public spaces to reflect a more inclusive vision of the country's ethnically hybrid makeup and to signal the end of white rule—by demanding instead to "Bring the Statues Back" (*Seasonal Fires* 142–43). The long, slender shape of the poem's seven stanzas resembles in miniature form the statue of former National Party prime minister, H. F. Verwoerd. Her poem sarcastically reduces "apartheid's architect" to "a dangling man / at the end of a winch on a crane," before describing how his monument becomes entombed in "a garage in Bloemfontein / where his chipped statue friends / gaze at him disconsolately" (142). The poem concludes:

> Let's put Verwoerd back
> on a public corner like a blister on the lips;
> let's walk past him and his moulded hat,
> direct traffic through his legs,
> and the legs of his cronies of steel and stone. (143)

The actual statue of Verwoerd, which overlooked the center of Bloemfontein, was removed in September of 1994 under Mosiuoa Patrick "Terror" Lekota, who served as the first black Premier of the Free State from 1994 to 1996.[5] The statue has, in fact, been reassembled and erected in the "white homeland" of Orania by an Afrikaner community claiming their own right to remember their "heritage."[6] By and large, the ANC-led South African government has not destroyed national monuments or plaques commemorating political figures of the National Party (as was the case in post–World War II Germany, for instance) but adopted, instead, an "assimilative strategy" so as "to incorporate divergent and often hurtful histories rather than privilege or re-balance the scales in terms of specifically African histories" (Meskell 168). De Kok, however, flaunts South Africa's "blistering" history through her own written monument of "steel and stone." What one critic claims concerning images of South African statues in Ivan Vladislavić's "Propaganda by Monuments" (1996) equally applies here: "Reading statues, monuments, and icons as signifiers, and noting the lack of any inherent link between signifier and signified, icon and ideology, raises historical questions of how such iconographic representations come to be invested with meaning in the first place" (Warnes 75). Concerning the removal of monuments, she herself expresses that "for the project of reconciliation to succeed, individuals and nations require the physical evidence of our suffering and complicity to be displayed as part of a new pattern. Made visible again, they need to restore us to the vocabulary of the past" ("Cracked Heirlooms" 71). In calling for a public remembrance of apartheid's architects, "Bring the Statues Back" demands collective white accountability for the still present structures of economic-racial inequality, as if to say to her white beneficiaries: "Look upon what 'we' have lost. Look what has sustained, and continues to sustain 'us.'"

Here and elsewhere, de Kok writes the post-apartheid moment as one of lack: her political elegies remain stuck in grief, remembering the uncounted lives and messy histories often excluded from representation whether in mass media and statistics or in statues, monuments, and memorials. Her writing cultivates a "disenchanted perspective" toward political discourses that have yet to live up to the promise of democracy (Parry "The New South Africa" 180). That said, her poetry's self-reflexivity also incites her reader's capacity for self-reflection: this would entail, to borrow from Butler once more, an impossible envisioning of the losses of those who have been made "unreal," who have "suffered the violence of derealization," and who therefore have not been "lost" at all, and demand the dignity of a life worth mourning (*Precarious Life* 33).

Cosmopolitan Remainders

While de Kok's poems of national mourning lament the failures of social transformation, they also renew the resources of elegy to confront the intractable divisions of post-apartheid South Africa, thereby accruing cultural capital for a "minor" poet to enter the fractious domain of world literature. In making visible a disjuncture between the Anglo-European inheritances and the particularity of her country's losses, de Kok brings her readers to a limit of discursive figuration, a move that continually opens and closes her poetry's capacity to pattern grief and vulnerability. Here I switch the focus of my analysis to examine another related dimension of her work: poems explicitly about cosmopolitanism in their centrifugal emphasis on travel, migration, and tourism. Through a close reading of two poems in particular ("Pilgrimage" [2006] and "Merchants in Venice" [2002]), I examine how de Kok attends to what I am call the "residues" and "remainders" of globalization—victims of large-scale atrocity and the plight of exiles and migrants—which haunt claims to an emancipatory, cosmopolitan consciousness.

Similar to her poems on national mourning, her cosmopolitan poetry likewise re-orients the reader in human vulnerability to larger, impersonal forces that inhibit human freedom despite claims (including de Kok's) that the work of culture might recompose human suffering. In *Inhuman Conditions*, Pheng Cheah, for instance, has theorized a key blind spot in cosmopolitan theory, which also appears in de Kok's writing. As Cheah explains, the various strands that compose cosmopolitan discourses—from the philosophical writings of Kant, Hegel, and Marx right through contemporary postcolonial theories of hybridity and discrepant cosmopolitanism championed by Homi Bhabha and James Clifford—suffer from a common, and for him misguided, assumption of "anthropologistic culturalism" by which humans aspire to use the work of culture (and knowledge more largely) to transcend the forces that constrain and bind them to "the given" (101). For Cheah, "the given" encompasses the material inequalities of global capital, the unevenness of which fails to produce "emancipatory cosmopolitan consciousness" due to underdevelopment and poverty in postcolonial nation-states (95). "The given" further describes the enduring political realities of nationalism and the nation-state, which, far from leading us to some postnational space or world republic, delimits citizenship for ethnic migrants (105). But "the given" foremost denotes how all humans are, at base, "creatures who are given and who come to exist and cease to exist not by our own making" (100). This last sense of "the given" grounds humans in their mortality, their weakness, and, he says, in their "radical vulnerability" (100). Cheah joins Butler in construing vulnerability as capable of establishing an evident but

all too often unacknowledged basis of intersubjective ethics in the era of globalization: the demand for responsibility to and for one another due to "a condition of miredness" in our finitude (117). The problem hinges upon what he calls "the aporia of given culture": culture is made out of the economic, political, and ecological forces that cultural activity would presume to transcend; these constraining forces that limit human flourishing live on, however, in spectral form in works of culture and knowledge (100).

Cheah's insights prove quite productive for reading the cosmopolitan impulses of de Kok's writing, which likewise invests poetry with a transformative power to overcome the given forces that constrain and yet subtend her craft. To put this contradiction succinctly: If de Kok's poems promote an ethics of cosmopolitanism, to what extent does her writing demonstrate its imbrication within the inequalities structuring lived realities of exclusion and the production of world literature? Or might it be possible to read her poetry in a way that marks the asymmetries and gaps between the claims to cosmopolitan culture and the very real human loss and suffering that globalization brings, both in South Africa and elsewhere? The answer to these questions, in my reading, demands attending to her writings' acute emphasis on the materiality of aesthetic mediation—especially her recasting of Anglo-European aesthetic and philosophical resources—and their necessary co-implication with the instances of vulnerability subtending her craft.

For de Kok, one central problem becomes how and whether poetry can ethically respond to large-scale loss, especially when the technologies of mass mediation all too often capitalize on, and de-sensitize subjects, to political violence through the spectacle of mass atrocity in the post-9/11 era. We can see one response to this contradiction in "Pilgrimage," which at once elegizes and ironizes the touristic commercialization of suffering. The opening of the poem imperatively tells the reader to:

> Take a trip, take a tour.
> Go to newly bombed cities
> to see what remains in the rubble,
> scorched fragments or things saved whole. (*Seasonal Fires* 146)

The subsequent two stanzas amass a series of toponyms, which function as public memorials and tombstones for transhistorical catastrophe: "Visit Baghdad to scan what's left / of the beginnings of civilization," we're told. The speaker then demands we imaginatively "reassemble" the "giant sandstone Buddhas" of sixth-century Bamiyan, Afghanistan (which were destroyed by the Taliban in 2001), before summoning "the flattened towers of New York City, / ravaged Mogadishu and Beirut." From the post-9/11 world, the third stanza shuttles backward in time to "ancient Byzantium and Alexandria,"

the "Bushman deserts" of the Kalahari in southern Africa, which are placed side by side New Mexico's "Aztec mounds" until the end of the stanza fast-forwards to World War II, with one metrical foot in Holocaust Europe and another in post-atomic Japan:

> Closer and closer, while some still remember the detail,
> travel to Coventry, Warsaw, Dresden,
> Hamburg and Hiroshima,
> place your feet in the prints of the dead. (146)

Human figures are conspicuously missing here, and in nearly every word of the poem. "Pilgrimage" holds the dead at a textual remove. They are "prints," literalizing how the dead are absent from direct representation: or, that the dead are *only* present in re-presentation, as images, such that the poem's own metrical "feet" are written on top of human traces whose presence can only be hinted at through fragments. In one sense, the poem's rapid-fire juxtaposition of place-names in just a few stanzas—even in just two lines or the same line—indexes how normative discourses of memorialization in the age of globalization efface a historical consciousness of violence, as though all instances of suffering are equally exchangeable.

The problem, though, is that while "Pilgrimage" ironizes how the spectacle of political violence readily collapses into touristic consumption, the poem risks perpetuating and, indeed, exacerbating the historical amnesia that it seeks to cure, which we can see through the compression of the times and spaces of worldly loss. By the final stanza, "Pilgrimage" interrupts its own catalogue of catastrophe by instead attending to the slow, laborious processes of re-memorialization:

> And then fast forward with your guide book
> to cities undestroyed.
> Go now. To still breathing
> places of accumulated love and power,
> where the line of a drawing,
> an angle of light on a building,
> a word's gravid pressure on a page
> the sound of a ribbed instrument,
> things made by hand, remade by eye or ear,
> have not yet been forgotten, razed. (147)

Whereas the previous two stanzas consolidated incommensurable sites of political violence, now the elongated fragment of the final eight lines and its halting caesurae self-consciously reflect upon the variegated processes of

aesthetic making and apprehension: as if "the line," "an angle," "pressure," "sound," and "things made" and "remade" are the true repositories of civilization. In this way, the stanza itself becomes that "still breathing / place" that accumulates the fragments of culture that are under threat of erasure. "Pilgrimage" inscribes a written record in verse of global loss: it seeks to collect and examine that which has been or soon will be leveled, from ancient Byzantium to contemporary Baghdad. But even as the text reveres human artifacts, resuscitating and breathing life into them, it also condemns artistic makings to eventual oblivion: the closing words are "forgotten, razed." There is a self-reflexivity to the word "razed," which figuratively connotes "to erase or obliterate (writing, a record, etc.), originally by scraping" (*OED* 2.a.). But the finality of "razed," a word about writing that rhymes with "page," also signifies how the text too threatens to erase the objects it seeks to "*raise*" on the page. Figuring a worldwide inheritance of suffering, the poem staves off imminent destruction by saying, as if in vain, "not yet." This admittedly idealistic strategy nonetheless functions as a retroactive protective mechanism, akin to what R. Clifton Spargo has called "a belated protection of the dead" (*Ethics of Mourning* 6). For Spargo as for de Kok, such an "impossible protectiveness" grants value and meaning to the deceased and to those facing imminent harm (13). In turning "to cities undestroyed" after having previously enlisted cities that have been rebuilt ("Coventry, Warsaw, Dresden, / Hamburg and Hiroshima"), de Kok marks both that which has been irretrievably lost and how her poem doubly erases the past, which we can see through the prefix "un." Similar to my previous discussion of "Reparation," the prefix "un" not only enacts the violence of writing on top of the remains of the past but also hints toward the absence of erasure, in that the rebuilding of cities becomes a form of forgetting. If nothing else, this poem demonstrates the failures of cultural commemoration to preserve that which is beyond the memorial text: the real but ultimately silent and often anonymous persons who no longer remain but who persist in spectral form.

In many ways, de Kok's transhistorical sweep of worldwide inheritances of loss in "Pilgrimage" is resonant of the cosmopolitan ideal that, as Kant poetically describes, maintains that "a transgression of rights in *one* place in the world is felt *everywhere*": this phrase functions as his definition of what he calls "cosmopolitan right" (*Perpetual Peace* 119). In a rhetorical structure that is almost identical to that of "Pilgrimage," Kant's "Third Definitive Article for a Perpetual Peace" circumscribes planet Earth as a totality but only after having summoned and unified fragmentary geographies and temporalities of violence. From the "inhospitableness of coastal dwellers" along the Barbary Coast and the plundering raids of Arabic Bedouins in the desert to the relative isolation of "China and Japan (*Nippon*)" and the

hypocrisy of European trading companies seeking "profit" through "the cruelest and most ingenious slavery" in the Sugar Islands, Kant's text figuratively maps the fault lines and blockages to the creation of cosmopolitanism. Interestingly, it is only after Kant surveys injustice the world over that he posits his notion of "cosmopolitan right" as a solution to the violence that his language has already marshaled:

> Because a (narrower or wider) community widely prevails among the Earth's peoples, a transgression of rights in *one* place in the world is felt *everywhere*; consequently, the idea of cosmopolitan right is not fantastic or exaggerated, but rather an amendment to the unwritten code of national and international rights, necessary to the public rights of men in general. Only such amendment allows us to flatter ourselves with the thought that we are making continual progress towards perpetual peace. (119)

There is a strange paradox at work in Kant's invention of cosmopolitan right. "Cosmopolitan right" forms an "amendment to the unwritten code of national and international rights," a code that does not exist but comes to exist through the textual positing and subsequent iteration of its (non)existence. Cosmopolitan right is oddly, at one and the same time, a necessary substitute for, and replacement of, already existing national and international rights *and* an essential addition to these same rights because national rights are themselves lacking. Both substitute and addition, the supplementary notion of "cosmopolitan right" is structured around the aporia of writing. It is a fiction, a *poiesis*, but a necessary fiction. Without it, there would be no imagining of the possibility of perpetual peace, which, by the end of the passage, is held out as the promise of the text.

Kant's *Perpetual Peace* offers a rich analogue for reading de Kok's poems on cosmopolitanism, particularly as she takes up and revises central Kantian tenets of planetary connectivity and hospitality. De Kok both extends and disrupts the universalist pretensions of Kantian ideals of cosmopolitanism. "Pilgrimage" embodies many of the hallmarks of cosmopolitanism: the transgression of rights in one place as felt everywhere through transhistorical memory, the conception of the planet as a unified whole through the invocation of transnational geographies of loss, and an ethical commitment to democratic, anti-imperial politics at home and abroad. This happens, however, by understanding cosmopolitanism first and foremost as a poetics: that is, a textual event whose rhetorical strategies are risky affairs, prone to contradiction and dissolution. What is implicit in Kant is made explicit by de Kok. Claims to "cosmopolitan right"—another name for basic standards of human dignity, freedom, and flourishing both beyond and before any

legitimizing political institution—arise from out of the violent remainders of modernity, "the prints of the dead," which, in de Kok's view, must be brought to light to advance more just models of cosmopolitan imagining.

The global dimensions of her poetry are, moreover, inseparable from her recurring preoccupation with the plight of foreigners, refugees, and noncitizens. We can see this preoccupation prominently in a number of poems focusing on North African migrants in Italy and South Africa, respectively. For instance, her latest collection to date, *Other Signs*, juxtaposes one poem lamenting the 2008 riots due to xenophobia, "Today I Do Not Love My Country," with another, "Haraga," on peoples from the Maghreb living without papers in Italy. As she explains in her "Acknowledgments" page, "Haraga" (or "harraga") is an Arabic word literally meaning "those who burn," and it has come to carry three levels of signification referring to "illegal migrants" in general, those who burn their documents and, often, their fingertips to avoid identification by those policing the state's borders, and third, any person who challenges the state (*Other Signs*). "Haraga" concludes by welcoming in "those who have burnt": "Until DNA traces you to / scarred city, dead kin, / this door is open. / Stay out, if you mistrust these words, / or come, however briefly, in" (19).

For Kant, an unconditional "right to hospitality" forms the bedrock of his ideal of cosmopolitanism (118). But, as Derrida points out, because resources are finite, the categorical imperative to unconditional hospitality that should be extended by hosts to foreigners always runs the risk of slipping into hostility. Namely, members of the host country often perceive a threat to their own dispossession resulting from the demands by foreigners for the same privileges that hosts enjoy as citizens. In *Rogues*, *Of Hospitality*, and *On Cosmopolitanism and Forgiveness*, Derrida lays bare this abiding contradiction of hospitality. Specifically, that the ideal of unconditional hospitality—"the right of an alien not to be treated as an enemy" (Kant 118), an ideal that speaks urgently to the contemporary scene where uneven economic globalization fuels mass migration into overdeveloped countries, which are subsequently caught between balancing their dependency upon migrant labor and their visitors' claims to citizenship—slides into hostility and, often, racism toward ethnic migrants.

"Merchants in Venice" may stand as de Kok's most sophisticated meditation on hospitality, particularly as she focuses on the plight of Senegalese migrants illegally living in an inhospitable, if not hostile, host country. The poem opens by filtering cross-cultural encounter through the perspective of a white, South African tourist speaker:

> We arrive in Venice to ancient acoustics:
> the swaddling of paddle in water,

thud of vaporetto against the landing site,
and the turbulent frescoes of corridors and ceilings,
belief and power sounding history
with the bells of the subdivided hour,
on water, air, and all surfaces of light. (94)

De Kok's repeated use of the first personal plural "we" takes on several different valences over the course of the poem. Initially, the "we" seems to designate a group of tourists enraptured by the sensuousness of the city, rhetorically designed through the intricate, almost architectural patterning of sounds, sights, and smells. By the second stanza, though, the "we" demarcates a more specific division between an ostensibly nonracial African "we" and European high culture. The speaker figures her African sensibility as positioned to the periphery from, and perhaps diminished by, Venice's long history of art and iconography, as she asks "what do we Africans have to do with this?" To her, the refined domain of the aesthetic bespeaks "power sounding history," which cannot silence the commercial underpinnings of artistic beauty as "the city keeps selling history and glass."

The motifs of high art and luxuriant decadence in the first two stanzas give way, however, in the third stanza to images of touristic economies and cultural goods, as the speaker encounters three Senegalese street vendors living without papers:

On the Rialto, tourists eye the wares
of three of our continent's diasporic sons,
young men in dreadlocks and caps, touting
leather bags and laser toys in the subdued dialect
of those whose papers never are correct,
homeboys now in crowded high-rise rooms
edging the embroidered city. (94)

For de Kok, the apparent dichotomy of Venice's cosmopolitan culture—the one high, refined, and the central transmitter of history and power, the other low, touristic, and a peripheral manifestation of social detritus and economic waste—is not a dichotomy at all. Both are part of the same process whereby cultural goods and peoples circulate in economic-political relations that establish arbitrary but real boundaries of who does and does not count within state-sanctioned realms, whether of culture or of citizenry. And it is at this point when the "we" and "our" now merge together the South African speaker's white subject-position with black North Africans. This merging is, of course, highly unequal given their differences of race,

class, and national origin. The speaker nonetheless claims for her own "our continent's diasporic sons": they are, from her perspective, "homeboys," as if the speaker might shed her white skin and give up her position of privilege in order to forge a post-racial solidarity with the dispossessed.

Indeed de Kok tests the boundaries of race, citizenship, and belonging by, at one and the same time, testing the boundaries of poetic representation. For instance, the syntactical structure of this single sentence subordinates "our continent's diasporic sons" in a prepositional phrase, modifying first "of three," which in turn modifies the "wares" they sell to tourists. The vendors begin, then, as objects twice-removed from the speaker-tourist's consuming gaze. The series of dependent clauses that complete the sentence create the effect, momentarily, that the objects of the sentence are now subjects ("young men in dreadlocks . . . ," "touting leather bags . . . ," "homeboys now . . . "). All the while, however, the merchants come into relief only through the objects metonymically attached to them: dreadlocks and caps, leather bags and toys, spoken dialect, and crowded rooms lining the edge of the "embroidered city." Indeed, this last phrase—in addition to recalling Venice's economic history in the textile industry stretching back to the fourteenth century—underscores the aesthetic act of weaving or *texere* at work in this passage. By the end of the stanza, the speaker does not speak for the subjects she portrays. They remain at a distance, other to and from her own subject-position, even while she places them, structurally, at the very center of the poem. They are invented in the crowded room of the embroidered stanza. In this sense, the poem foregrounds its own process of mediation all the while bringing to the center figures that might otherwise seem marginal to commerce and art alike: figures whose real subjectivity remains elusive and who are known only by the objects and places around them.

For Venice's inhabitants and visitors, Senegalese street vendors are a familiar sight and are a continuing hot point on debates over citizenship in Italy, as elsewhere. But "Merchants in Venice" does not take their presence for granted. Insisting to be read historically, it asks the reader "How did they get from Dakar to Venice? / What brotherhood sent them to barter and pray?" Senegalese migrants, largely members of the Wolof ethnic group and adherents of the Mouride Muslim brotherhood based in northwest Senegal, came en masse to Italy (often by way of France) in the 1980s following crises in Senegal's agricultural sector. After the passage of the Martelli Law in 1990, which granted amnesty to illegal immigrants and refugees, Senegalese migrants began traveling directly to Italy.[7] It makes sense that the experience of Senegalese migrant workers resonates for de Kok, particularly as "Merchants" may indirectly comment on the treatment of Mozambique

and Congolese immigrants living in South Africa (especially Johannesburg, since 1994) and the eruption of xenophobic violence.

De Kok's Senegalese vendors, in addition to their function as social-political referents, become transformed in the final stanza into unlikely, even un-homely, merchants of art and literature:

> Into the city we have come for centuries,
> buyers, sellers, mercenaries, spies,
> artists, saints, the banished,
> and boys like these: fast on their feet,
> carrying sacks of counterfeit goods,
> shining in saturated light,
> the mobile inheritors of any renaissance. (95)

The street vendors in the poem, even as they represent specific social histories and migration patterns, do not merely signify radical cultural particularity. On the contrary, the poem treats them as *aesthetic* figures with mobile literary inheritances. For instance the Senegalese, even before their Shakespearean homology with Shylock, become overlaid with a figure from European antiquity, himself fast on his feet and a carrier of counterfeit goods: Mercury/Hermes, the go-between of gods and humans, the patron of commerce, the protector of travelers and thieves, and a figure for poetry and hermeneutics. But in recalling *The Merchant of Venice*, the poem brings into dialogue how contemporary, early twenty-first-century political concerns over global economy, citizenship, and ethnic migration replay debates extending back to the Venice of the late sixteenth century. As Immanuel Wallerstein has detailed, between 1560 and 1620 the Northern Italian states of Genoa, Florence, Milan, and especially Venice were "core" players in Europe's transition from feudal, agricultural-based economies to the development of the modern world-system of capitalism (215–21). The centrality of Venice would decline by the mid-seventeenth century due to war, famine, and the city's unstable economic base. Nonetheless, when Shakespeare wrote his play (in 1596 *The Jew of Venice* was listed in the Stationers' Register), Venice's opulence and unrivaled prosperity was inextricable from its cosmopolitan makeup, given the influx of Arab, Jewish, Turkish, and European traders.

Seen in this light, de Kok's recasting of "Shakespeare" may serve a double function. As the most canonical of authors in the English language, he and his corpus are aligned with the hegemonic status of Anglo-European economic and cultural economies, whereby a peripheral poet like de Kok must draw upon the bard's cultural capital in order for her poem to gain

recognition as a "world text." In one sense, then, de Kok retains a Eurocentric point of reference by framing the social, political realities of Senegalese ethnic migration through Shakespeare's Shylock, thereby underscoring how the Senegalese migrants (and by extension the South African poet) depend upon the hegemonic power of European economic and cultural currencies to acquire visibility. This is not unlike what we saw earlier in my discussion of Walcott: in *Omeros* he too figures the Western canon and the classics as the gold standard against which his epic poem demands to be compared. But whereas Walcott draws upon and consolidates the centrality of the canon (even as it seeks to displace it through its concluding turn to the primacy of ecology and the lived world), de Kok posits the standard of "Shakespeare" in general and *The Merchant of Venice* in particular *strategically*, yes, not only to pay homage to that touchstone play on racial difference, economy, and political community but also to tap into the ways that signify that early modern concerns are by no means over. Shakespeare and de Kok connect by calling into question how centers of modernity have been historically constituted through irrepressible differences—whether Jewish or Senegalese, English or South African—that challenge the logic of "dependency" or "center-periphery" models of analysis. Such models fail to account for what scholars such as Susan Stanford Friedman describe as the polycentric, rhizomatic constitution of world literature and global culture ("World Modernisms" 511). The poem, after all, is a hybrid composition whose source materials cross England (Shylock), Italy and Greece (Mercury/Hermes), Senegal, and South Africa. This is to emphasize that her recomposition of "Shakespeare"—and his status as a canonical writer from the Anglo-dominated cultural and economic core—extends the canon to consolidate her cultural capital and draws her writing within the ambit of the global North.

That said, the conclusion of the poem implicitly questions the range and limits of modernity: When, where, and to whom does renaissance belong? Notably, the final line does not capitalize "renaissance." Modernity is not, here, the sole provenance of Italy or of Europe. Nor is it a totalizing project with teleological purpose. Instead, renaissance happens in localities, modified with the simple adjective "any." Thematically speaking, the Senegalese vendors (like the poet herself) are the mobile inheritors—the makers, buyers, sellers, and carriers—of modernity in flight, made and re-made through commercial as much as cultural economies. Even the poem's title and its subtle prepositional shift—not "Merchants *of* Venice" but "Merchants *in* Venice"—does far more than allude to Shakespeare; it asks, more generally, who is ever "of" a place? Or are we always already "in" a place, whether by decision or by happenstance? Previously, we saw how de Kok positioned the Senegalese vendors into multiple relationships behind the preposition

"of"—being, all at once, "of" another place and possessing a history and a subjectivity independent from their status as "migrants," at a "distance from" the poet-speaker's subjectivity, genitive "of" Venetian commercial and cultural economies, and encased "within" the embroidered rooms of the city-poem. This sliding between "of" and "in" comes to heightened effect by demonstrating how particular, social-political realities of ethnic migration, which are genitive "of" Venice's cosmopolitan history, become transformed—and renewed—through their new position "in" the domain of high culture, entering into conversation with Shakespeare as a way of emphasizing the differences and alterities that contribute to, maintain, and challenge the boundaries of political and literary communities alike.

Read this way, "Merchants in Venice" espouses a renaissance without limitation, synonymous to a cosmopolitan ethics of hospitality belonging to anyone. Such a phrase, "ethics of hospitality," may seem strange. Indeed, Derrida goes so far as to claim that one cannot "cultivate an ethic of hospitality" because, on the contrary, "hospitality is culture itself":

> Insofar as it has to do with the *ethos*, that is, the residence, one's home, the familiar place of dwelling, inasmuch as it is a manner of being there, the manner in which we relate to ourselves and to others, to others as our own or as foreigners, *ethics is hospitality*, ethics is so thoroughly coextensive with the experience of hospitality. (*On Cosmopolitanism* 16–17)

"Merchants" admittedly idealizes the conditions of ethnic migration, encased as they are within European art forms. De Kok risks being overly celebratory in a way that, say, Daljit Nagra is not. What's more, the cross-cultural imaginings of "Merchants" is susceptible to the charge of a facile universalization of travel, such that discrete, particular histories become emblematic of all displaced cosmopolitan subjects ("artists, saints, the banished"), including the speaker too through the newly inflected first person pronoun "we," which would include anyone and everyone. And yet, "Merchants" bets on comparison and generalization: both to respect the singularity of historical experiences of dispossession and because such comparisons between particulars are worth making. The dwelling spaces of de Kok's stanzas welcome foreign figures, speaking at once to the vexed plight of noncitizens in Europe and to those living without papers in post-apartheid South Africa.

"How We Too Should Grow and Live"?

Across her writing, de Kok returns to the possibilities and limitations of re-articulating canonical literary inheritances to recompose South Africa's

historical political realities amid the intensities of globalization. In many ways her extension of the canon, especially the history of elegy and anti-elegy, underscores the persistence of irreparable historical contradictions including the ongoing legacy of apartheid, the failures of representative democracy, economic neocolonialism, the plight of noncitizens, and xenophobia. At the same time, she draws strategically upon Western forms to reflect upon the ways these social contradictions become encoded, obscured, and often negated by virtue of adopting elevated modes of representation associated with Anglo-American cultural hegemony. As I've shown, her reuse of Shakespeare, Hardy, Yeats, and others carries the risk of re-inflicting the very inequities and instances of loss that her elegiac imperative would seek to counteract, particularly given the vexed status of the English language and the Western canon amid South Africa's polyglot, multiethnic constitution. What's more, her peculiar proclivity for largely male writers (she titles one poem "My Muse Is a Man" in her fifth collection, *Other Signs*) belonging to the "canon" is suggestive of the demands a comparatively lesser known poet like de Kok confronts in order to gain institutional recognition and visibility within global anglophone writing.

By way of conclusion, I would like to touch upon her short lyric poem, "Sunflowers," which appears as the penultimate poem in *Seasonal Fires* (2006). If "What Everyone Should Know about Grief" figures as a poetic manifesto on her conception of elegy and anti-elegy, "Sunflowers" self-reflexively meditates upon the powers and limits of art as a discursive space that might teach the reader how "we too should grow and live" through a miredness in loss. In my reading, the poem provides a rich, though subtle way to tie together the national and the cosmopolitan strands of her writing. In contrast to many of de Kok's other more overtly "political" poems that take up topical concerns, "Sunflowers" initially appears to be evacuated of any real-world referent that would signify national or global political realities. The poem seems abstracted from the material underpinnings of the global capitalist economy. It makes no direct appeal to national, transnational, or postnational forms of politics. Nor does it speculate upon the possibility of world citizenship, multiple belonging, or hybrid cultural identities. What's more, the poem contains no figures of travel or displacement, unless we count her passing reference to the European artists Vincent van Gogh and William Blake. Indeed, in contrast to her other overtly political poems, "Sunflowers" frames the politics of aesthetics in squarely aesthetic—and, for that matter, Eurocentric—terms:

> In case you think
> the sunflowers in the field
> are always on summer holiday,

florid fools raising
oil-stained cheeks
like drunks in a bar,
you are wrong.

Believe me:
that yellow and the deep furry eye
is Apollo's camouflage, aka God.
They're allies of the sun,
timepieces on the landscape's wrist
and van Gogh and Blake are visiting this afternoon
to tell us what they mean
and how we too should grow and live. (*Seasonal Fires* 185)

Just what do these sunflowers "mean"? What is their secret that might teach us how "we too should grow and live"? To be sure, the first stanza adamantly refutes any connection between the realm of art and the space of the political, as we usually think of it at least. Though the middle of the first stanza initially compares emblems of aesthetic beauty with leisure ("always on summer holiday"), irrational nonproductivity ("florid fools"), and waste ("drunks in a bar"), the speaker reassures us that the sunflowers do have a value but one that cannot be measured in social terms of utility. By the second stanza, the "sunflowers" shift from static symbols of beauty to dynamic allegories for making and interpretation, narrating the temporal process of poetic creation that might enliven how the domain of high art "might teach us how we too should grow and live."

The poem makes its appeal to an enlivened aesthetic consciousness through the palimpsestic, ekphrastic, and intertextual layers of the text immediately following the speaker's imperative, "Believe me." In addition to van Gogh's *Sunflowers* series (1888–89) and Blake's "Ah! Sun-flower" (1793), the poem also invokes Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, where Apollo, the god of sun and poetry, foreswears the love of Clytie, who after nine days of mourning, suffering, and self-starvation is transformed into a heliotrope, or sunflower in modern adaptations of the myth (144). Despite their canonical status, it is worth recalling that each member of this triumvirate was also very much a transitional figure, if not revolutionary, in his own time: van Gogh brings into being early European Impressionism in response to the mimeticism of Realism; Blake inaugurates Romanticism from out of the late Restoration's idealization of reason and progress; and Ovid absorbs and remakes Greek myths for a Rome in transition from the golden age of the republic to the Augustan Empire. Taken together, the intertextual resonances and palimpsestic precursors to

"Sunflowers" illuminate how high art—one, I would add, stripped of pretension and metaphorically restored to the diurnal movements and rhythms of the everyday ("timepieces on the landscape's wrist")—might have a lesson to teach South Africa how the "we" of the nation "too should grow and live" amid the losses in the post-apartheid era. For me, it is hard not to hear in the poem's final lines the evocative words of Frantz Fanon: "It is at the heart of national consciousness that international consciousness lives and grows. And this two-fold emerging is ultimately only the source of all culture" (*Wretched* 247–48).[8] As we have seen across this chapter, so too does de Kok cast South Africa as a "two-fold emerging," such that a truly national consciousness arises not in isolation but through its dialogue with other literary and artistic traditions. "Sunflowers," then, withdraws into the aesthetic domain as its way of reframing "life" in poetic terms. Or so it would appear, for this is only half of the story, as I understand it.

To tell the other half, we need to displace the poem and translate it back from the aesthetic to the political domain. Given de Kok's context of writing in Cape Town, we can detect "sunflowers" as a translation from the Dutch, "zonnebloem." Any person aware of the history of Cape Town's District Six would immediately notice how the name "Zonnebloem" is especially politically charged. The region called Zonnebloem in the early nineteenth century was a farming estate just outside of the then-urban center of Cape Town. During the city's rapid industrial growth, Cape Town was carved up into six separate districts in 1867. From the late nineteenth century, District Six became one of the most heterogeneous areas in all of Cape Town. Home to black, mixed, and white South Africans and to Indian, Chinese, Malay, Jewish, Portuguese, Irish, British, and Dutch immigrants (among many others), the largely working-class community bustled with shopkeepers, clergy, and educators, as well as prostitutes and gamblers working and living cheek by jowl in tight quarters, often without water or plumbing due to government neglect. The cosmopolitan composition of District Six changed radically, however, in the latter half of the twentieth century. After the Nationalist Party passed the Group Areas Act in 1950, apartheid propagandists such as the Cape Town magazine *Die Burger* condemned the area as morally depraved and a slum. In 1966, the government designated the urban region at the foot of Table Mountain as "white only." Over the course of the next 14 years, the state uprooted 60,000 non-white residents from District Six and leveled nearly all of the buildings to the ground, except places of worship. State-sanctioned demolition did not proceed without strong local opposition, however. The residents of District Six had a long history of organized political activism: many community members resisted relocation, sometimes standing in front of bulldozers, and would later organize "The

Friends of District Six" in 1979 to prevent residential development. Two years later, the government would establish the whites-only Cape Technikon (now Cape Peninsula University of Technology). Before that point, however, District Six was renamed "Zonnebloem" in 1970, a performative act in language that would politically participate in the on-the-ground deracination that was already happening at the time and that was still to come up through 1981.[9]

How might this context reframe the politics of de Kok's poem? Might her poem's act of translation demonstrate how emblems of aesthetic beauty cannot help but embody their uneven relation to physical, material violence, which becomes enacted through the imposition of poetic forms borrowed from European sources? Apollo is, after all, that Nietzschean figure for aesthetic harmony and order that stands in dialectical relation to the ecstatic violence of Dionysius. Classical images of flowers in poetry conventionally signify an incipient beauty foreshortened by time (Ovid) or cut down by war (Homer's *Iliad*). In the concluding line to "Ah! Sunflower," Blake also presses the poem, and the reader, not to life but to the space of death: "Where my sunflower wishes to go" (26). Similarly, de Kok's sunflowers may well portend the persistence of apartheid's political contradictions that forestall the flourishing of democracy for the still newly budding South African state. It is as if de Kok seeks to negate the disenchanted world of political violence ("Zonnebloem") through a re-enchanted domain of the aesthetic ("Sunflowers"). This act of negation, however, re-inscribes the unruly violence that her poetry would seek to remedy: the poem invokes the historical cruelty of Zonnebloem but retains it—and recodes it—through translation. "Sunflowers" holds out the possibility of learning to grow and live through art, a possibility that the poem must finally withhold to itself, leaving the reader to await the impossible moment when van Gogh and Blake arrive to tell us what they mean. To learn to "grow and live" occurs by conversing with the dead across temporal and geographic boundaries as prior histories of loss that have been de-materialized and dis-embodied become, in turn, re-materialized and re-embodied in verbal art. That is, "Sunflowers" commemorates the particularity of South African history but does so by sounding an ominous warning that the re-inscription of Anglo-European art forms in South African contexts of writing may well erase or silence difference in much the same way that District Six was leveled and nearly erased by the establishment of the whites-only Zonnebloem district, thereby placing aesthetic figurations of loss under self-critical political scrutiny.

By working within these divisions, her renovations of elegy conduct work of impossible mourning for the specificity of South African national losses as they become filtered through other times and places of suffering,

calling attention to those lives occluded or erased by dominant discourses of nation and global modernity. Her poetry fails to interiorize the losses that no longer remain but that persist—live on, *sur-vivre*—as the traces, residues, and remainders of Western aesthetic inheritances of mourning. In the process, however, her rewritings of authors and texts belonging to "the long poetic tradition"—like those of the other writers in this book—cannot but replicate the divisions of cultural capital, demonstrating how her writing is necessarily enmeshed within the very mechanisms of inequality and suffering it would seek to forestall. This failure is, nonetheless, the sign of her poetry's power: in putting into productive tension the solidarities and oppressions made possible by appeals to cosmopolitanism, her writing creates more nuanced ways of perceiving South African political realities all the while making visible how a relatively marginal English-language South African poet redraws the boundaries of world letters.

CHAPTER 4

Literary Citizenship in Daljit Nagra

"Swarms of Us, Grafting In"

In the title poem of his debut collection *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* (2007), Daljit Nagra (b. 1966) updates Matthew Arnold's "Dover Beach" to imagine the conditions of stowaways "huddled" in the bottom of a British cruiser, while above deck, "cushy come-and-go / tourists" stand at the head of the prow "lording the ministered waves" (32). Winner of the Forward Prize for Best Individual Poem 2004, "Look We Have Coming to Dover!" goes on to describe the tumultuous process by which undocumented migrants, after disembarking from the ship, eventually "escape hutched in a Bedford van" before working illegally for "seasons or years," all the while "unclocked by the national eye."[1] Besides nodding to "Dover Beach," Nagra also invokes D. H. Lawrence's *Look! We Have Coming Through!* (1917) as well as W. H. Auden's *Look, Stranger!* (1936), later re-titled *On This Island* (1937), and "Dover 1937" to mediate his concerns over migration, nonbelonging, and citizenship in contemporary Britain, the focus of this chapter.

When Nagra's poem appeared in the pages of *Poetry Review* (2004), the London-born writer and secondary school teacher quickly became touted by many media venues, including the BBC's *Newsnight Review*, as "the voice of British Asian" poetry. Since then, Nagra has arisen as one of the most celebrated among a new generation of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) poets, including Moniza Alvi, Benjamin Zephaniah, Bernardine Evaristo, Patience Agbabi, and Lemn Sissay. Unlike his contemporaries however, Nagra is to date one of only two "poets of color" published as part of Faber and Faber's illustrious list. The other is Derek Walcott. Nagra has subsequently published with Faber a second collection, *Tippoo Sultan's Incredible White-Man-Eating Tiger*

Toy-Machine!!! (2011), and an adaptation of the *Ramayana* (2013). Faber has long envisioned itself as setting the standard of British poetry and contributing to the creation of national consciousness. Here, I tease out the tensions of inclusion and exclusion, reading for the ways Nagra's *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* interweaves canonical literary inheritances (including Arnold of course but also Christopher Marlowe, Rudyard Kipling, George Orwell, Seamus Heaney, and Paul Muldoon) with British Punjabi cultural resources (often inflected in his synthetic "Punglish") to engage the contradictions of multiethnic Britain. In particular, I examine how Nagra invents a model of citizenship premised in "dissensus" in Jacques Rancière's usage, one that repeatedly questions the discursive boundaries for deciding "who counts" in the political and literary domain alike. In the post-Blair context, his poetics of citizenship produces its own complications, especially for a BME author who garners recognition by virtue of working within squarely canonical English traditions. My readings open onto wider debates over how his renovation of mainstream poetic forms embody the structural inequalities conditioning minority cultural production, especially in the context of neoliberal multiculturalism within the twenty-first-century British literary field.[2]

To be sure, Nagra extends a diverse lineage of BME writing that has historically questioned the boundaries of Englishness by overlaying multiple aesthetic traditions from within and beyond the borders of the United Kingdom. We can think back to the "*Windrush* generation"—named after the arrival of 492 male passengers aboard the *MV Windrush*, which crossed the Atlantic from Jamaica and docked in Tilbury on June 21, 1948—of Caribbean and African artists. Between the 1950s and the 60s, former colonials living in London (such as Louise Bennett, James Berry, and E. A. Markham) related with white, English poets, publishers, and promoters through what Peter Kalliney describes as a relationship of "affiliation, patronage, emulation, and competition" rather than outright "appropriation" (118). On the one hand, established postwar British writers and publishers took an active interest in furthering Caribbean writing, as through the BBC program *Caribbean Voices*. On the other, colonial writers reciprocated these forms of patronage by reinvigorating modernist techniques to pattern the dislocations of (post)colonial experience, a welcome move for members of the London elite who sought "to preserve the tattered remnants of modernist culture in the face of national and imperial decline" (118).

This back history laid the foundation for the subsequent emergence of mainstream postcolonial aesthetics of the 70s, 80s, and 90s. We can think, for instance, of Jamaican dub poet, Linton Kwesi Johnson (LKJ), whose "Inglan Is a Bitch" (1979/80) creolized Standard English to assert a politics of solidarity against the hegemonic white racism of the National Front and

the exclusionary practices of the Thatcher-era state, while also deploying carnival dub rhythms to give voice to Black British experience. In subsequent years, novelists such as Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi, poets such as John Agard, Grace Nichols, Jean Binta Breeze, and poet-novelist Jackie Kay (who is also a Forward Prize winner) variously represented the "new ethnicities," in the words of Stuart Hall. Across genres of visual art, narrative, film, music, and poetry, Black British cultural production sought to "challenge, resist, and where possible, to transform the dominant regimes of representation" and, at the same time, to re-constitute nationhood through diverse renovations, counterwritings, subversions, or outright rejections of canonical, British forms and Eurocentric discourses ("New Ethnicities" 442). It has become, by now, *de rigeur* to observe how the cross-cultural constitution distinguishing Black British writing "exposes, for all Britons," in the words of John McLeod, "the criss-crossings, the comings and goings, the transnational influences, which arguably inform the construction of virtually all texts and canons that bear the signature 'British'" ("Fantasy Relationships" 102).

In the Conservative years of Thatcher and John Major, the "new ethnicities" were crucial in transforming the dominant regimes of representation. Under New Labour (1997–2010), however, the language of hybridity and cross-cultural Britishness *became* the dominant regimes. When former prime minister Tony Blair was elected to power in May 1997, many celebrities, musicians, and artists visited 10 Downing Street, electrifying the zeitgeist that was "Cool Britannia": a younger, hipper, and more diverse national image fashioned for international appeal. The then-newly elected government was quick to advance antiracist rhetoric, recasting the nation in *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (or Parekh Report) as "a community of communities, both a liberal and a multicultural society" (Runnymede Trust ix). Within the political sphere, Blair's party took significant measures to combat institutional racism including police discrimination, such as the Macpherson Report (1997–1999), which developed partly in response to the killing of black teenager Stephen Lawrence in 1993, the passage of the Human Rights Acts (1998), and the Race Relations (Amendment) Act in 2000 to outlaw discrimination and hold public authorities responsible for racial equality. Despite these significant steps toward racial equality, many long-standing forms of discrimination and economic inequality have remained in place for ethnic minorities who make up between 6 percent and 7 percent of the total population in Britain according to the 2001 census. Third Way political ideologies—in reconciling capitalist growth with social welfare—overwhelmingly promoted diversity at the local level, leaving communities responsible for individual "self-government" (Back et al. 448). These

systemic inequities contributed to the eruption of riots across Oldham and Burnley (Lancashire) and Bradford (Yorkshire) during summer 2001. (Ten years later and under Prime Minister David Cameron's Conservative Party, the police shooting and death of Mark Duggan led to the 2011 England Riots at the very same time as the right-wing UK Independence Party gained traction.)

After Blair's second victory in 2001, questions surrounding immigration, citizenship, and inclusion acquired even greater urgency. To give one example, Home Secretary David Blunkett wrote in the preface to the white paper, *Secure Borders, Safe Haven: Integration with Diversity in Modern Britain* (2002): "to enable integration to take place and to value the diversity it brings, we need to be secure within our sense of belonging and identity…and to embrace those who come to the UK" ("Foreword"). Blunkett proceeds to claim, however, that "a clear, workable and robust nationality and asylum system is the prerequisite to building the security and trust that is needed. Without it, we cannot defend those who would stir up hate, intolerance and prejudice." *Secure Borders, Safe Haven* is exemplary in the government's ambivalent handling (to put it generously) of "diversity" and "assimilation": embracing a multicultural rhetoric of inclusion while at one and the same time policing the political borders of the State to shore up a "secure" sense of national belonging to "prevent" xenophobia and racial discrimination from within (Back 446). Soon after Blunkett's white paper, New Labour sought to curb migration by withdrawing support of asylum applicants who either took too long to apply and/or had dependent children so did not leave the United Kingdom (Squire 52). These policies have contributed to what has been described as "xeno-racism" toward "bogus" asylum seekers, especially peoples from Eastern Europe, even while British ethnic communities and "illegal migrants" are perceived as beneficiaries of New Labour's embrace of inclusion (Beynon and Kushnick 237).

New Labour's policies have had significant reverberations in the cultural domain. In July 1997 and only months after entering into power, New Labour established the Department of Culture, Media and Sport as part of the Third Way platform of developing diversity in cultural production and arts institutions. Working in tandem with think tanks such as Demos and the Institute for Public Policy, the liberal party claimed that "Britain's economic future lay with the move towards an increasingly knowledge-based economy" (Oakley 69–70). Since the early 2000s, the Arts Council England has prioritized—and monitored—how arts programs "promote equal access to arts venues and events, artistic expression and participation in the arts," as phrased in their February 2005 report titled "Race Equality Scheme" (Arts Council 3). Two months later, in April 2005, the decibel

program (under the Arts Council England) released a report titled "Decibel Evaluation: Key Findings," which aimed to "develop diversity in the arts in England," especially through the involvement of "people from African, Asian, and Caribbean backgrounds" (2). As a result of the decibel report, the Arts Council made funding—for arts organizations, magazines, and other initiatives—dependent upon the recruitment and representation of staff and artists from "culturally diverse" backgrounds (12). Nagra in fact received the South Bank Show Decibel Prize in 2008 and so was one of the first beneficiaries of new government schemes to support the development of BME artists.[3] Over these same years, the dissemination of British culture was viewed by New Labour quite like an Arnoldian "social cement" but now for the sake of fostering international relations through neoliberal means. To give just one example: in 2002 the "British Council [sent] Linton Kwesi Johnson, of 'Inglan is a Bitch' fame, around the globe as an envoy of Britishness" (Donnell, "Nation and Contestation" 16).

Closer home, New Labour used art and culture to procure a notion of a national polity unified in its diversity. In the area of national education, the Graduate Certificate in Secondary Education (GCSE) includes a section on "Poetry from Other Cultures," which now features poems such as John Agard's "Half-Caste" and Grace Nichols's "Island Man" on its required syllabus. (The GSCE lists canonical authors, such as Shakespeare, associated with "universal" themes and England's "literary heritage" under "English Literature" whereas contemporary "minority" writers are included under "English Language.") As an English teacher and frequent performer, Nagra is especially attuned to how aesthetic constructions become instrumentalized into political representations of "other" cultures in the name of multicultural politics, whether in the classroom, on the stage, or on the page.

It is within this contested terrain that Nagra, like many other BME writers, questions the strategies available for re-constituting the discursive limits of Englishness amid continuing racial, social, and economic inequalities facing ethnic minority communities. At the same time, he fully recognizes how he functions within State-sanctioned literary institutions that seek out and cash in on art works—especially those that extend canonical English cultural traditions—as expressive of Cool Britannia. Nagra inhabits this paradox by textualizing the unequal structures that give rise to his aesthetic representations of citizenship and their finally asymmetric, if not incommensurable, relationship to lived realities of exclusion, which are further encased within British literary inheritances, themselves cross-pollinated with Punjabi idioms.

We return, now, to "Look We Have Coming to Dover!" In the final two stanzas, the speaker commands the reader to "imagine" the speaker and

his brethren living the dream of economic prosperity and self-sufficiency, thanks to Tony Blair:

> Swarms of us, grafting in
> the black within shot of the moon's
> spotlight, banking on the miracle of the sun—
> span its rainbow, passport us to life. Only then
> can it be human to hoick ourselves, bare-faced for the clear.
>
> Imagine my love and I,
> our sundry others, Blair'd in the cash
> of our beeswax'd cars, our crash clothes, free,
> we raise our charged glasses over unparasol'd tables
> East, babbling our lingoes, flecked by the chalk of Britannia! (32)

Just who are the "swarms of us, grafting in"? At first glance, the speaker appears as ironic "representative" for his British Punjabi collective, unabashedly celebrating the arrival of global Britishness now that, at long last, the English language and its literary inheritances have been deterritorialized. The increasingly longer lines mimic both the rolling sea-waves and the infiltration of ethnic migrants into English social and cultural life. Indeed, the speaker takes no small pleasure in refashioning Arnold's England as a "land of dreams, / So various, so beautiful, so new" (Arnold 1368). The latter line serves as the epigraph to Nagra's poem. Arnold, for his part, nostalgically yearns for a lost realm of beauty while "ignorant armies clash by night." Nagra in contrast relishes the mixing of cultures and languages, as he, his lover, and "sundry others" re-orient themselves "East" to toast their imagined homelands through the polyglot sound of "babbling lingoes," even more "flecked" with the white "chalk" of standard English.

And yet, Nagra's staged persona, ostensibly speaking on behalf of "the swarms of us," is itself internally divided and emphatically polyvocalized to register the fractured British social, political, and literary landscape. For instance, the economic language throughout these lines tallies the human costs minority subjects must pay before they are recognized as full citizens. The deployment of the pathetic fallacy, a device which Arnold notably uses throughout "Dover Beach," functions ironically here: Nagra's moneyed moon and sun would seem to naturalize the link between economic solvency ("in / the black," "banking on the miracle") and political citizenship ("passport us to life"). Across these lines, he repeatedly transforms nouns into verbs ("graft," "bank," "passport," "Blair"): his nominalizations mock New Labour's bureaucratic, corporate discourse even as his neologisms renew

English-language poetry through his raucous "Punglish." Following the logic of the poem's syntax, the conjunction of the "economic" with the "political" here serves as the necessary precondition ("only then") for diaspora communities to "hoick" (slang for "lift") themselves up to the status of the "human." Nagra cues in the reader to the nagging inequalities held over from the 80s and 90s that have remained intact, especially for Pakistani, Bangladeshi, and Black Caribbean communities in the areas of education, employment, and police discrimination (Phillips 205). In effect, his speaker returns to sender dominant stereotypes of the "swarms" of minorities who profit from the welfare state and bask in multicultural inclusiveness, despite or even because of the failures of "cruel Britiannia." Given the context of "xeno-racism" toward "bogus asylum seekers," the poem's "I" may divide once more, to speak to the disjunction between New Labour's rhetoric of "inclusivity" and lived realities of exclusion for the most recent group of migrants from Eastern Europe. Arnold is often invoked as an exemplar of self-improvement and collective betterment through entrenched ideals of aesthetic refinement. The ironic concluding lines of "Look We Have Coming to Dover!" nonetheless tap into a melancholic undercurrent of "Dover Beach": for as much as England may appear like "a land of dreams," it "Hath really neither joy, nor love, nor light, / Nor certitude, nor peace, nor help from pain" for many of Nagra's figures. At the same time, however, his re-articulation of "Arnold" serves as a crucial mechanism for a new British Asian poet to insert himself into anglophone literature. The speaker may equally stand in for Nagra-as-nouveau-arrivé who reflects upon his own passport into English letters, accruing cultural capital by flecking his verse forms with the chalk of Britannia. In this reading, the "swarms of us" may ultimately refer to the critical mass of BME artists beyond the text who continue to struggle for inclusion in the literary marketplace, at least in the medium of print.

Overall, I look to Nagra for the ways his writing constructs a conflictual model of citizenship, one which seeks to interrupt and re-constellate the linguistic frames for asking who counts in the political and literary domains. At the same time, I delineate how his poetics of citizenship is itself circumscribed by the fact that his newly earned prominence among elite institutions derives from having grafted the experiences of ethnic minorities upon canonical British literary inheritances: his writing lays bare the inequalities minority writers must confront and, often, re-inflict in order to acquire entry into the exclusive territory of English letters. I conclude by describing how Nagra has subsequently put his cultural capital to the work of furthering the development of BME writing in the midst of very real inequalities of "representation" in the contemporary British publishing scene.

"A Right Savage I Was": Englishness, Citizenship, and Race

Across his poetry, Nagra dwells repeatedly on the knotted interrelation between Englishness, citizenship, and race, an interrelation that has gained greater complexity in the context of New Labour and Cool Britannia. In the past two decades, scholars have tended to theorize "Englishness" through its fraught relation to colonial otherness, especially as imperial epistemologies of race become replayed within contemporary discourses of national belonging. In *Maps of Englishness*, Simon Gikandi theorizes how Englishness was made by and through its difference from (and superiority over) "colonial alterity" (50), in particular black Africa and (what Gikandi calls) the "Celtic periphery" in the nineteenth century (xvii). Far from a stable category, Englishness is (for Gikandi) historically founded on a dynamic process and inherent paradox of incorporation and expulsion: "the need to define the national character against a colonial other that it [Englishness] must then disown" (55–56).

Postcolonial theories of Englishness help to explain Britain's transformations in modern political citizenship, especially in the aftermath of decolonization and mass migration since the *Windrush* era. In the early 1950s, Nagra's family fled the Punjab, after the bloody violence of the Partition in August 1947. The mid-century decades saw the first large influx of Indians and Pakistanis to the United Kingdom. In 1956 alone, South Asians, according to Kathleen Paul, "accounted for a quarter of the year's 40,000 increase in the 'coloured population'" (148). This was only eight years after the passage of the British Nationality Act of 1948. According to the Act, any person pledging sovereignty to the Crown and residing beyond the geographic borders of England (Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland, and Ireland, as well as former British colonies) could enjoy the privileges of British citizenship, including movement to and settlement within Britain. This form of multiracial citizenship, "Citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies" (or CUKC), did not, however, apply to immigration when it was initially designed (Hampshire 19). In the 1950s, Britain actively encouraged migrants from the colonies in supplying manual labor in the public services sectors (jobs often not desired or taken by whites) at the same time as the government adopted employment policies through "strategies of subordination derived directly from colonial policy," according to Ashley Dawson (11). "By tacitly aiding employers in their search for a more 'flexible' and hence more easily exploitable workforce," Dawson argues in *Mongrel Nation*, "the state helped undermine the power of organized labor and advanced a strategy of accumulation based on the fragmentation of the working class along racial lines." These tensions would erupt in a series of race riots in Notting Hill and Nottingham in 1958 and the tightening of immigration laws and rights.

Over the following three decades, Parliament took steps to curb immigration, as when the Commonwealth Immigrants Act (1962) restricted immigration to those with employment vouchers. After Enoch Powell warned that increased immigration would culminate in "Rivers of Blood" (1968), Parliament passed the Immigration Act of 1971. The act asked applicants: "where were you born?" and "who were your ancestors?" so as to grant privilege of movement and residency to white Britons abroad and born within the United Kingdom, over darker others who were deemed less than "British." The boundary between "black" and "British" became sharper during the volatile 1970s through police raids on predominantly black communities and the use of "sus" (suspect) laws. In the run-up to the 1979 election, the Tory candidate Margaret Thatcher worried that the nation would be "swamped" by peoples of color. Up to this point, residents of white settler colonies could make claims to citizenship through British ancestry. Under Thatcher, Parliament passed the British Nationality Act (1981), which redefined British citizenship not through the shifting borders of ancestry, allegiance, and place (the *ius soli*) but through the stricter boundaries of biological parentage (Hampshire 42–43; Paul 182). The act has become the basis for British citizenship to date: currently, in order for a person to count as a British citizen, at least one parent must already hold citizenship or permanent residence in the United Kingdom.

In *The Idea of English Ethnicity*, Robert Young proposes, however, that current arguments concerning Englishness as divided due to colonial alterity (as articulated by Gikandi, for instance) are very much a recent phenomenon and, he argues, historically more complicated than some postcolonial theories tend to suggest (11–12). Over the course of the nineteenth century—before the consolidation of empire in the early twentieth century and well before more recent theorizations of "Britishness"—the concept of "Englishness" was translated from an English national identity at home, in "Englandland" (as he phrases it), to a "diasporic identity" (231). In Young's eyes, Englishness became devised "for those who were precisely not English, but rather of English descent" especially those living in the Commonwealth and settler colonies including (among others) Americans, Canadians, Australians, Kiwis, South Africans, and Anglo-Indians (1).

Flexible, heterogeneous, and delocalized, Englishness was overwhelmingly created from afar, by those who often never visited the originary homeland, and who in turn enabled its fullest expression through "filiations of a vaguely defined Anglo-Saxon ethnicity, common language, institutions and values" (236). To explain the paradox of Englishness, Young turns to a quintessentially "English" poem in its perceived celebration of patriotism during World War I: Rupert Brooke's "The Soldier" (1915), whose speaker wishes to be remembered as "forever England" but only after having been interred

in "some corner of a foreign field." Brooke's poem distills, for Young, how Englishness in the early twentieth century would crystallize into its most coherent form only when furthest "away from home" and, in the process, become dispersed through its admixture with the other, the foreign (2). The "authenticity" of Englishness—as with all categories of identity, arguably—functions a "translatable identity," a "mode of masquerade," which, far from giving expression to an authentic core, instead entails a series of institutionalized, cultural scripts whereby potentially anyone could perform "Englishness" by adopting "the right language, looks, and culture" (1–2). This is not to overlook the ways in which "Englishness" has been and continues to be coded in terms of a coherent history stretching to 1066 and even further back to imperial Rome. If imperial ideologies have sought to solidify Englishness through the apparent fixities of race, language, and place, Young nonetheless credits the nineteenth-century model of diasporic Englishness—along with its basis in liberalism, tolerance, and self-criticism—as specially suited for re-translation by "non-white" postcolonial and ethnic migrants as Britain becomes ever more a "syncretic community of minorities" (239).

Nagra handles Englishness in quite contradictory ways. Tongue-in-cheek self-identifying as a brown-skinned English-born "native" (he grew up in Sheffield where his parents ran a corner shop in the 80s), he also calls repeated attention to the particularity of his Sikh religious-cultural background, though often through irony and sometimes shame, if not loathing (*Look* 6). By and large, his poems emphasize his speaker's alienation and exclusion both from "white" English culture and from his perceived Punjabi community. Often directly alluding to critical debates in postcolonial and Black British discourses, Nagra emphasizes the racial underpinnings of Englishness from the postwar years, in the aftermath of decolonization and waves of ethnic migration. At the same time, however, Nagra equally realizes how "Englishness" has, since the early nineteenth century and before the consolidation of empire, long been invented from outside England's borders and initially functioned as a "translatable identity" (in Young's phrase) until it became more tightly tethered to race.

Look We Have Coming to Dover! takes up this knotted problem from its very beginning through an epigraph by George Orwell: "The people have brown faces—besides, there are so many of them! Are they really the same flesh as yourself? Do they even have names? Or are they merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff?" The quote comes from Orwell's 1939 essay, "Marrakech," which describes his six-month visit to Morocco after he was wounded fighting in the Spanish Civil War. "Marrakech" begins with Orwell's description of a local funeral procession, leading him to ruminate more generally on the ubiquity of poverty and disease in the then-French

colony. The following words immediately precede Nagra's epigraph: "When you see how the people live, and still more how easily they die, it is always difficult to believe that you are walking among human beings. All colonial empires are in reality founded upon that fact" (427).

The presence of "Orwell" as an entry into Nagra's collection has several layers of significance, both political and literary. In the early 2000s, many political leaders invoked Orwell as an exemplar for harmoniously reconciling "difference" with an open, patriotic "Britishness." For instance, Home Secretary Jack Straw in his response to *The Future of Multi-Ethnic Britain* (The Parekh Report of 2000) admiringly quotes from Orwell's essay "England Your England" (1941): "In left-wing circles it is always felt that there is something slightly disgraceful in being an Englishman, and that it is a duty to snigger at every English institution, from horse racing to suet puddings" (quoted in Straw). For Straw, Orwell remains relevant in the era of globalization as a way of "standing up for Britain" in order to "build a more inclusive, stronger society." If Orwell here represents a patriotic Englishness open to difference, this may have as much to do with his own relative outsider status (akin to Young's arguments over how English ethnicity has been fashioned beyond the political borders of the United Kingdom). After all, the Indian-born Eric Arthur Blair was partly of Scottish descent; his change of name, for one scholar, "was a loaded choice, swapping a British/Celtic king for an English saint" (Maley 117). "Orwell" took his name from the Suffolk river, rivers being longstanding symbols of Englishness and empire in literature from Edmund Spenser to Joseph Conrad (117–18).

To return to the epigraph above, Nagra clearly satirizes Orwell's orientalist rhetoric. As critical as Orwell certainly was of empire's reduction of human beings to the less-than-human, being a product of his time and place, he nevertheless could not cross the color line separating colonizer from colonized. (It is worth mentioning that Edward Said comments upon this same passage from "Marrakech" in *Orientalism*, to which Nagra may also allude given his knowledge and parody of postcolonial discourse.) But even as he ironizes Orwell for his racial myopia (and how "Orwell" has gained renewed currency in contemporary political discourses), Nagra may cue the reader in to his own uncanny relation to Orwell. In a delightful irony made possible by the cultural globalization of anglophone letters, a British-born, Indian writer standing "outside" of English letters can now re-work an earlier Indian-born English writer who has come to stand for the national heritage *par excellence*. Nagra and Orwell could now be seen as inverse images of one another, holding in common how Englishness remains nonidentical to itself by virtue of having been created by "outsiders." What's more, Orwell's rhetorical questions implicitly bear upon Nagra's own challenges. He too

faces the difficulty of giving a face and a name to his purported community, a community that he himself risks effacing as "undifferentiated brown stuff" by virtue of becoming encased within canonical British authors.

Consider, for instance, "The Man Who Would Be English!," whose title makes direct reference to another Indian-born English writer, Rudyard Kipling, and his orientalist story, "The Man Who Would Be King" (1888). Nagra's poem tells of the failed attempts of a lyric speaker to get "well in with the English race," beginning from his early days at school to young adult life when

> we plundered up gulps of golden rounds for the great game united at our local, we booed the mounted screen—at the face of the anthem'd foreigner when we were at home. Then we chanted with heart and soul for God and Queen! (15)

The speaker's adoption of the first person plural "we," as well as his apparent "unity" with all things "English" (pub life, football culture, and nationalist fervor) would seem to make him a "local" and "at home." The fantasy of ethnic-national incorporation is, however, undercut by submerged violence toward, and self-definition against, "foreigners." In the subsequent stanzas, the now first person singular lyric subject says "I was one of us, at ease, so long as I passed / my voice into theirs." By the conclusion of the three stanzas, the speaker suffers a double alienation from both English and Indian cultures, so much so that, after his parent's grocery shop has been spray-painted with racial epithets, he is reprimanded by his wife: "*Lookk lookk ju nott British ju rrr blackkk…!!!*" Nagra's act of mimicry is here riddled with pain and anxiety because in the eyes of both the English and his family, he is, in the words of Bhabha, "*almost the same but not white*: the visibility of mimicry is always produced at the site of interdiction" (89). Again, this is a double interdiction, a double alienation, so that the speaker's confusion over his group belonging splits him between two cultures, making him at home in neither.

It would be a mistake, however, to interpret "The Man Who Would Be English!" as solely about cross-cultural misrecognitions of who is and is not English on the level of identity: the poem is also obliquely about how "rights" to citizenship must pass through the rhetoric of race. For at the center of the poem, Nagra writes that although his speaker "didn't *bud-bud ding-ding* / on myself" (slang for discriminate against his own South Asian kind), nor does he have a "distant land forever / with rights to my name" (15). This last phrase is worth attention, because it links Englishness to rights to political citizenship. As Paul Gilroy, Saskia Sassen, and Étienne Balibar, among many other theorists have argued, the question of citizenship is inseparable from

colonial epistemologies (and anthropologies) of race and cultural difference.[4] Like Nagra's speaker, the category of citizenship similarly suffers an internal split between, as Balibar argues, the "*ethnos*" and the "*demos*" as the dual and self-conflicted terms for the identity of "the people" of the nation-state ("World Borders" 76). *Ethnos*, he explains, refers to the community of the nation that has its basis in fictive memories of racial, ethnic, religious, and linguistic purity or singularity; the *demos*, on the other hand, corresponds to all those who enjoy the rights and liberties afforded to the citizen of the state. Enlightenment conceptions of modern political belonging begin by taking the *ethnos* as the first and necessary condition for the *demos*, consequently leading to "systems of exclusion: the divide between 'majorities' and 'minorities' and, more profoundly still, between populations considered native and those considered foreign, heterogeneous, who are racially and culturally stigmatized" (76). In "The Man Who Would Be English!," the lyric speaker mistakenly believes that by adopting English cultural practices of the *ethnos* he will pass into the realm of the *demos*. And as Nagra's poem demonstrates in content and form, to contend with the rhetoric of citizenship is to confront the colonial legacy of race, which continues to draw the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. I will return later in the chapter to examine in greater detail how Nagra's poetry recalibrates prevailing discourses over rights and citizenship through his motif of the passport. For now, though, I want to underscore how Nagra ripostes orientalist writers to illustrate the imperial underpinnings of nationhood at one and the same time as he retrieves residual forms of diasporic Englishness. While his speakers only *would* be English but for the boundaries of race, his poetry is thoroughly English insofar as it makes visible how Englishness achieves its fullest consistency when articulated from afar as a translatable identity.

Another key way Nagra reconstitutes Englishness, however, is through his re-articulation of contemporary Northern Irish poets. Like so many postcolonial writers such as Walcott, de Kok, Rushdie, Coetzee, Ramanujan, and Lorna Goodison, Nagra similarly looks into the dark glass of Irish literature to see, in part, his own fractured reflection and, in the process, to manufacture new images of anglophone writing, a process that is not without its own forms of conflict, as I have stressed across this book. Consider, for instance, the poem "Yobbos!," where Nagra portrays a racial encounter between the poet-speaker and a group of white, English hooligans (the title is slang for boyish "louts" or "hooligans" [*OED*]). The poem reads:

> A right savage I was—sozzled
> to the nose with sprightly
> Muldoon, squeezed into the communal

sweat of a Saturday tube home—
I'm up to p. 388 of his sharp lemon-skinned
Collected Poems

when some scruffy looking git pipes to his crew—
Some Paki shit like,
eee's loookin into!

My blood rising, especially when my head's
done in with words like
"Badhbh"…"Cailidin"…"Salah-eh-din,"

I nearly get blunt, as one of them—
Well mate, this Paki's more British than that inde-
cipherable, impossibly untranslatable

sod of a Paddy—
only I don't 'cos I catch my throat gungeing
on its Cromwellian vile, my tongue foaming for soap…(11)

In many ways, the complexity of "Yobbos!" hinges on tropes of recognition and misrecognition, surface and depth. Initially, the "crew" (mis)perceives Muldoon's language as amounting to "*some Paki Shit*" before realizing that the "Paki" speaker is more "British" than the "sod of a Paddy." In effect, Nagra points to the ways colonial discourses othered the Celtic periphery and Asian subcontinent alike, making manifest how nineteenth-century imperial epistemologies of race subtend the moment of cross-cultural encounter in global London.

The poem's critique of race depends on the reader's knowledge of a larger framework of postcolonial literary criticism residing just under (or on top of) the surface of the text, which Nagra hints at through the imperial commodity form of "soap." Indeed, the epigraph to the poem is a quote from a late nineteenth-century Pears Soap advertisement, found in McClure's Magazine from 1899: "*The first step towards lightening THE WHITE MAN'S burden is through the virtues of cleanliness*." The advertisement itself depicts a white, distinguished colonial administrator washing himself aboard a sea-vessel traveling in between center and periphery. As Anne McClintock has detailed in her much cited discussion of soap's social history in *Imperial Leather*, soap advertising in the mid- to late-nineteenth century was a powerful instrument of organizing and solidifying British imperialist, middle-class ideologies of racism through the commodity form (210).[5] Before that time, from the eighteenth to early nineteenth centuries, she explains, cleansing rituals in Britain remained more or less as they were

from the time of Elizabeth I. But with the rise of industrial capitalism, the spread of the British Empire, and the increased traffic of merchants, colonial administrators, and missionaries, colonial discourses drew sharper boundaries between "civilized" and "savage." Indeed, Englishness and soap share a homologous, if not overlapping, history in empire: Pears Soap rose to commercial profit and cultural eminence during the height of imperial power in the late nineteenth century, "during an era of impending crisis and social calamity" when the borders between classes, races, and genders were becoming all the more porous and therefore in need of discipline and demarcation (211). Nagra's epigraph invokes this same rhetoric of racial hygiene and imperial progress that was enlisted for the mission of the "white man's burden." Soap's repressed imperial history returns here as the speaker foams at the mouth with "Cromwellian vile" (a Punglish pronunciation of "bile" and an allusion to Oliver Cromwell's "vile" military massacre of the Irish between 1649 and 1650).

"Yobbos!" replays colonial discourses of race to reflect upon contemporary concerns over Englishness and multiethnic belonging and, in the process, turns every group within its orbit—South Asian, white British, and Irish—into entangled and overlapping diasporas. For instance, the opening tercet, when read unto itself, syntactically squeezes together the Indian Nagra and Irish Muldoon, both poets "sozzled" in (a dialect word for sloppily mixed or mingled) with one another as "right savages." Above all, Nagra sees in Muldoon's language an embrace of contamination, whereby "Yarrow" intertwines Irish mythological figures such as the goddess of war, Badhbh, and her father the king of the Sidhe's, Cailidin, with the Muslim Ayyubid leader Salah-eh-din. Nagra pays homage to Muldoon's linguistic inventiveness, as when "Yobbos!" adopts "Yarrow"'s tercets, which extend a single sentence across several stanzas. Here, Nagra's elliptical syntactic structure refuses closure. In doing so, the poem suggests the perpetuation of colonial histories of racism that have by no means ended but, rather, flow into and repeat within the "present" moment of the speaker's enunciation. Nagra also experiments with Muldoon's characteristically elastic para-rhymes, as in "sprightly" / "inde-" / "paddy" and "lemon-skinned" / "Salah-eh-din." Indeed, the Muldoonian elements of "indecipherability" and "untranslatability" mark the alterity of Nagra's poetics. By the end of the poem, the speaker's mouth foams for soap, which I read as having several layers of significance. In one sense, he is being throttled or disciplined for his complicity in imperialism, as if anyone person or group is more "British" than any other. Imperial ideologies of nation and race may continue to uphold standard English to police the boundaries of ethnic difference (and inflict the punishment of "washing one's mouth out with soap" as a cure for bad

language). In another sense, though, the speaker is also becoming aware of his complicity in perpetuating imperial tropes, such that his "throat" and "tongue" themselves *know* that imperial ideologies of difference cannot finally overcome the abject truth of contamination—the "gunge" or slime—which continually thwarts the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, inside and outside, past (imperial) and present (global), literary and nonliterary. The speaker's tongue foams for soap, then, precisely because he—and the poem as a whole—has succumbed to imperial presumptions of racial difference as a necessary strategy for uncovering the irrepressible alterities and linguistic contaminations at the heart of Englishness.

It is worth noting as well that this entire exchange occurs on the London tube, which seems to function as an unconscious strata of "Englishness." Even while ensconced within the metropole, each of the figures in the poem become "othered" through their entanglement with distant, foreign borders at one and the same time as the Punjabi British speaker, the white yobs, Northern Irish Muldoon, and even Saleh-eh-din become all the more English, now in redoubled, uncanny form by virtue of their alienation from and central position within the underground industrial machinery of the metropolitan center. Formally speaking, Nagra performs a knowing, ironic mastery over his political subject matter as when he assumes a dominant position over the yobs, fending them off with the cultural capital of Muldoon.

In each of the examples above, we can see a recurrent pattern in Nagra's treatment of Englishness. In content, he challenges neoliberal ideologies of multiculturalism and "Cool Britannia" through his emphasis on nonbelonging and cultural-linguistic contamination. His speakers figure as doubly excluded from dominant conceptions of Englishness (as connected to race, language, and place) and from their working-class British Punjabi community. The position of double exclusion opens onto a third, hybrid space through which to reconstitute "Englishness," exposing its imperial hierarchies and animating a flexible, cross-cultural model of national identity such that Arnold, Orwell, Kipling, and Muldoon become re-fashioned to speak to British Punjabi concerns. Once we become aware of his formal cues for testing the boundaries of Englishness (through parodic appropriations of canonical British authors, sly allusions to postcolonial discourse, and cross-cultural blendings), it becomes all too apparent that Nagra has never really been "outside" of Englishness at all. Englishness, to recall Young's arguments above, has long been a contested diasporic identity fashioned from afar and by writers who have rarely occupied an "English" identity in any straightforward way. In the post-Blair context, however, such fluid and flexible models of Englishness run the risk of all too easily slipping into New Labour celebrations of diversity, which his writing seeks to challenge, if not

displace. This paradox is not lost on Nagra: he capitalizes upon his perceived status as "other-than-English," re-inscribing the cultural and literary codes his readers would expect from a "minority" writer positioned on the margins of, but poised to take center stage in the arena of English letters.

"Masks That Don't Sit for a Brit": The Question of Representation

Besides reconstituting Englishness in the context of New Labour, Nagra faces an additional problem concerning "representation," a word that appears in several poems. Nagra is especially attuned to his commodity status and, consequently, to how his cultural productions appear to speak on behalf of his implied community. Nagra troubles his "representative" status by taking on staged personae and alter egos, speaking in "Punglish," and exploiting the polyvocalism of the dramatic monologue. At issue are the ways that two related institutional mechanisms—secondary education and the literary marketplace—condition and often transform artistic constructions (re-presentations) by ethnic minorities into sanitized representations of difference. As I mentioned earlier, Nagra teaches English at the secondary school level, which makes him all the more sensitive to the role of poetry in the classroom, as well as to the contemporary British secondary education system's canonization of "English" and other writers who are put to the service of the state's agenda of "multiculturalism." In response, he often adopts multiple voices, puts on masks and personae, and deploys trickster-like humor to comment satirically upon institutions that fetishize difference even as his poetry foregrounds its own fabricated exoticism, realizing that it too cannot escape the political and economic structures that convert artistic inventions into political representations, or spokespersons, for "other" cultures.

In postcolonial theory, the problem of "representation" has been well rehearsed. Perhaps most prominently, Gayatri Spivak (writing in reference to Marx's *Eighteenth Brumaire*) delineates two senses of the word "representation," which are interrelated but ultimately, as she puts it, "discontinuous": the first concerns political representation of individuals to the nation-state as in *vertreten*, "speaking for"; the second refers to aesthetic representation and making as in *darstellen*, "re-presentation" (*A Critique* 256–57, 263). There is an insurmountable disjunction between these two modes of representation as well as a necessary inequality between them, which is too often elided or glossed over, as when a political representative appears to speak on behalf of a group, when in truth the rhetorical act of "speaking for" is more accurately a mode of substitution, or "re-presentation," and hence an aesthetic *construction*. Spivak above all insists on maintaining a rigorous distinction between

the two axes of representation so as to avoid, on the one hand, transforming diasporic subjects like Nagra into "transparent" spokespersons or "informants" for their supposed cultural constituency and, on the other, construing irreducibly heterogeneous and internally divergent groups into objects and not agents of knowledge (257, 264). To misappropriate Marx, we might venture to say that Nagra cannot represent (*vertreten*, speak for) himself; he must be represented (*darstellen*, re-presented and de-constructed) through staged personae, masks, ventriloquy, and intertextual literary references.

Writing in what could now be called a post-postcolonial moment, when many of the key concepts of postcolonial theory have been absorbed into and parodied by contemporary cultural texts, Nagra negotiates how such critical debates over artistic and political representation impinge upon minority and ethnic poets, especially in light of their institutional canonization through the Arts Council and educational curriculum.[6] Indeed, Nagra's strategies for poetic self-representation are remarkably complex and double: on the one hand, he himself "plays desi," frequently blacking himself up and putting on the voice of the South Asian informant to make himself "sound 'poreign'" to an English readership, while, on the other, his poems simultaneously enact a political critique of "representation" by highlighting the institutional processes of mediation that condition such representations in the first place. As a way through this problem, his writing conducts a meta-commentary on the broader economic and political structures constraining multiethnic representations of "authenticity."

Consider, for instance, "Kabba Questions the Ontology of Representation, the Catch 22 for 'Black' Writers." The title figure of Kabba, speaking in Punjabi English dialect, laments how his son is forced to prepare for the General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) through anthologies that segregate representative poets of Britishness ("yor HBC // of Eaney, Blake, / Clarke, showing us how // to tink and feel") from those poets "*from Udder Cultures // and Traditions*,'" as the GCSE anthology titles them (42–43). (Indeed, Nagra's inclusion of Irish poets such as Heaney and Austin Clarke likely satirizes how non-British poets repeatedly become absorbed and domesticated within the "national heritage.") "'*Udder*'?" Kabba exclaims: as far as he is concerned "alll // yor poets are '*Udder*'!" Along the way, Kabba worries that his son will take as truth the poetic representations from "*Udder cultures*," as when he mockingly alludes to "Sacrifice" by Taufiq Rafat and "Night of the Scorpion" by Nissim Ezekiel, both of which are included in the GCSE examination. To Kabba's mind, the GCSE turns poetry into a political tool for the sake of national subject formation, in ways that are arguably not unlike Gauri Viswanathan's historical account of colonial education as a "mask of conquest" in nineteenth-century India.[7]

But even as Nagra uses the comic persona of "Kabba" to indict the British education system for indoctrinating its citizens in multiculturalism (a move that ends up fetishizing and sequestering cultural difference), Nagra too becomes the object of Kabba's satirical critique. Kabba protests: "Yoo teachers are like / dis Dalgit-Bulram mickeying // of me as Kabba," thus calling into question the self-certainty of the speaker's representative voice, which is "mickeyed" (imitated) by "dis Dalgit-Bulram" Nagra. In a brilliant concluding twist, the poem ends:

> So vut di coconut do—to shy to uze
>
> his voice, he plot me
> as "funny," or a type, even vurse—
> so hee is uzed in British antologies—
> he hide in dis whitey "fantum" English, blacked,
>
> to make me sound "poreign"!

Kabba's "coconut" son (slang for a black person who has "sold out" and become white) suddenly stands in for the poet himself who speaks through a "type," a word that paranomastically calls attention to the material textuality of "Kabba" as a "plotted" creation of "typed" "vurse." This phrase, "even vurse," punningly sounds "even worse," as if Nagra self-satirizes the quality of his own writing by putting on the voice of "authenticity" in order to gain institutional recognition in "British antologies." The poem, in turn, reflects upon the risks of deploying a "native" voice that sounds politically representative and authentic when it is already doubly spoken over by what Kabba calls "dis whitey 'fantum' English, blacked, // to make me sound 'poreign'!" Behind the "black" mask of Kabba's "poreign" language is, then, the white "fantum" of standard English, itself just one dialect among many.

The double bind over representation to which Kabba refers corresponds to the theoretical impasse described by Spivak: on one level, Nagra's lyric subjects, here and in other poems, demonstrate the extent to which they are misappropriated as spokespersons for their community to a larger white, British audience. On another level, the poetic text (what Kabba calls "di garment / of my voice" that may be shaped into "sestina, sonnet, tanka, // tum-ti-tum") foregrounds how the representative voice is itself fabricated, ventriloquized, and negotiated in and through competing registers of language that are, in turn, shaped into poetic form and design. By writing in "Punglish," Nagra himself appropriates "lower" registers of language not to affirm his authentic, Indian cultural roots but to contest how "higher" modes of discourse are deployed in the service of literary education for the sake of

understanding Britain's other cultures from a safe distance. Rather than collapsing both modes of representation into one another, "Kabba" alerts the reader to the layers of mediation and the numerous voices contained within a single utterance: that there is no single voice, no one community, whether British, Indian, or "udder." What's more, Nagra critiques his own poetic enterprise, which exploits "Kabba" to rail against the nation-state's valorization of multiculturalism and to interrogate the literary market's demand for and consumption of difference, all the while knowing that such literary institutions are inescapable. "Kabba" thus speaks to an ineluctable aporia concerning representation, citizenship, and diasporic textuality: the need to give an account of inequality and exclusion, one that might be representative of diasporic experiences, while self-consciously displaying how every account is a portrait, a re-presentation that necessarily performs exoticism due to the economic mechanisms of circulation and political demands for cultural difference. As a way of working within the confines of this contradiction, Nagra "plays Indian," much like Paul Muldoon does in a different context in "Madoc: A Mystery," leaving identity a placeholder wherein social and political contradictions become played out through masks, impersonations, and parody. More so than Muldoon, however, Nagra fashions himself as a "brand" for public consumption.

At issue for Nagra is his keen awareness of his poetry's commodity status and how to manage his ambivalent relation to the imperatives of "representation" within literary institutions. Given the realities of neoliberal multiculturalism, he repeatedly exposes (and capitalizes upon) the "branding" mechanisms conditioning his staged representations. Sarah Brouillette describes his strategy as thoroughly "metapoetic," insofar as his "self-representation"—at every level from the speakers in his poems, to his interviews, public performances, book design and packaging, and website—demonstrates how "his labor is self-consciously designed to perform the writer's concern about his alienation from his purported community" (*Literature and the Creative Economy* 120). To be sure, the poet's staging of "authentic identity" as knowingly performative makes it readily amenable "for inclusion in official multicultural initiatives" premised upon unity-in-diversity (120). On another level though, his performed alienation (from his "community," from "white" Englishness, and from political imperatives and arts initiatives seeking representations of otherness by multiethnic British writers) appeals to notions of poetic value as recalcitrant to, if not altogether beyond, neoliberal ideologies of global capitalist consumption and arts initiatives sanctioning multiculturalism. In this way, his sly nod and wink about his poetry's alienated commodity status both acknowledges and refuses its automatic reduction to market forces, a double move that is, finally, "indistinguishable

from the branding process [his writing] is designed to register and resist" (132).

In many ways, Nagra nonetheless seeks to preempt these forces by foregrounding the packaging of his poetic self-representation, such as in "Booking Khan Singh Kumar," whose title refers to Nagra's performance alter-ego and early pseudonym in his chapbook *Oh My Rub!* (2004):

> Must I wear only the masks that don't sit for a Brit
> Would you blush if I stripped from my native skin
>
> Should I beat on my chest I'm a ghetto poet
> Who discorded his kind as they couldn't know it
>
> Should I foot it featly as a Punjab in Punglish
> Sold on an island wrecked by the British
>
> Did *you* make me for the gap in the market
> Did *I* make me for the gap in the market
> .....
> Should I talk with the chalk of my white inside
> On the board of my minstrel—blacked outside
>
> Should I bleach my bile-name or mash it to a stink
> Should I read for you straight or Gunga Din this gig
> .....
> Do you medal yourselves when you meddle with my type
> If I go up di spectrum how far can ju dye
>
> More than your shell-like, your clack applause
> What bothers me is whether you'll boo me if I balls
>
> Out of Indian! (6–7)

Likely hinting at Frantz Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks* in the poem's opening lines, "Booking Khan Singh Kumar" wryly interrogates how a minority British poet "must" or "should" represent himself to a mainstream, British audience. Nagra conducts something of an exotic striptease that flaunts his status as "Indian" other who fills "the gap" in the British literary market's desire for the authentic voice of the diasporic subject. Through its series of unpunctuated rhyming couplets, "Booking" "meddles" with the binary of identity/difference that (stereo)typically structures the representation of authenticity. For instance the absence of rhyme and subtle slant-rhymes (of Brit/skin and Punglish/British) may point to the perceived mismatch between British identity and dark skin or between vernacular and Standard English.

Nagra's performance of the diasporic subject suggests that, while British culture may perceive and economically receive him as "blacked outside," the moment he enters the literary marketplace, Nagra wears a black "mask" to cover over his English skin that resides beneath his supposed "native" hue. The great irony of the poem, of course, is that while British readers may misrecognize and miscategorize "Khan Singh Kumar" as a native informant, underneath it all he is in truth returning back to Britishness its own dark self-image, through figures such as "Gunga Din."[8] Nagra transforms his poetic persona into a literary extension and ironic reversal of Kipling's type. So even as he struts his Punjabi persona, metrically "foot[ing] it featly," Nagra exploits the market's desire for difference as well as its self-congratulatory impulse to incorporate diasporic writers into English culture's "melting-pot phase" of assimilation through literary awards and prizes.

That said, beneath the poem's ironic humor, verbal dexterity, and clever slant-rhymes (poet/know it; stink/gig; applause/balls), there is an undercurrent of self-hatred that derives from Nagra's "bile-name." And this erupts in the exclamation of the poem's final lines. Here, Khan Singh Kumar confesses that beyond loathing the empty, cacophonous approval of his audience (which we hear in the k- and l-sounds of "shell-like" "clack applause"), he is more "bothered" by the prospect of being rejected "if I balls // Out of Indian!" It is worth pausing on this final line: we might expect the British slang to read "balls up," as if the speaker fears being booed for "messing up in playing Indian." In this final line, however, Nagra conducts a subtle prepositional substitution, so that "balls up" becomes instead "balls out of Indian," such that the speaker momentarily slips "out of" his Indian role. By slipping into and perverting British slang ("if I balls out of [slip out of my role as] an Indian), Khan Singh Kumar returns to his British audience the fiction of Indian authenticity that they have already created for him in advance, so much so that this image is not "Indian" but British through and through. For even if he could and were to represent his so-called Indian identity truthfully or sincerely, neither he nor his reader would ever know it because an authentic Indian identity doesn't exist. Or, Nagra's being "Indian" only exists through absence and lack in relation to "Britishness," which his performance act attempts to fill up and evacuate at one and the same time.

In the end, the joke of Nagra's performance is on the reader who tries to decipher and to pin down the supposed origins of Khan Singh Kumar's Indian identity. Even by interpreting his tri-part name, we can see how "Khan Singh Kumar" yokes together three disparate regions and religions of the Asian subcontinent: "Khan" is a common Muslim name as well as a title from the British Raj; "Singh" is from the Sanskrit meaning "lion" and

is a prominent Sikh name of peoples from the northern part of India; and "Kumar" refers to the Hindu god of war, and is a common name in the southern part of India and Sri Lanka. Nagra's stage persona would thus seem to speak for all South Asia. In the act of naming, Nagra gathers the internal divisions and fragmentations of the South Asian diaspora, transforming them into a fictional whole that he congeals and obscures through poetic performance.

Through their performed self-minstrelsy, "Kabba" and "Khan Singh Kumar" bring to the fore how discourses of nationhood depend upon myriads of others to sustain what Graham Huggan calls the image of England's own "fragile self-identity," which is just as performed, constructed, and re-presented as are poetic personae (88). Nagra's "staged marginality" makes evident "the process by which marginalised individuals or social groups are moved to dramatise their 'subordinate' status for the benefit of a majority or mainstream audience," and in doing so, "displace identity categories, and the underlying ideological rationale, that serve to justify such structures" of oppression (Huggan 87, 104). Huggan argues, following Judith Butler, that the performative quality of "staged marginalities" in the works of Rushdie, Naipaul, and Kureishi "can be seen as on one level as parodies of white expectations and, on another, as demonstrations of the performative basis of all identity formation" (95). What's more, Nagra's poetic strategies register how ethnic artistic re-presentations necessarily support, are intersected by, and replicate the political and economic structures that capitalize upon the consumption of difference in post-1990s multicultural Britain. In my reading, as in Brouillette's, Nagra works through this problem by conducting a meta-commentary on the broader economic and political structures constraining and manufacturing multiethnic representations of "authenticity." Like Brouillette, I credit Nagra for making legible the forces conditioning BME cultural production, putting into dialectical tension appeals to aesthetic autonomy and commercial-political utility. But we can go even further. By inhabiting these constraints, Nagra carves out a space for imagining a poetics of citizenship that might function both within and beyond its strict, liberal discursive iterations. It is to this possibility that I now turn.

"The Shape of a Passport Photo"

Through the recurrent motif of the "passport," Nagra directly intertwines his thematic preoccupation with "political citizenship" with his formal concerns over "literary citizenship": this intertwining opens up several possible models through which to understand his poetics of citizenship. In the political register, Nagra figures modern, liberal citizenship through the textual

negations and exclusions that affect minority subjects. I noted this earlier in my discussion of the title poem, where the speaker of "Look We Have Coming to Dover!" hopes that economic success will "passport" him and his community "to life" (32). This materialist conception of British citizenship, which binds the political and the economic together, is not unlike Inderpal Grewal's theorization of citizenship. For Grewal, diasporic subjects "become national" through transnational circuits of consumption.[9] The apparent identity between political belonging ("citizenship" and "rights") and social belonging (here, "Englishness") is in large part due, as Grewal sees it, to the power of consumption (global capitalism). Diasporic subjects' incorporation and performance of a national "lifestyle," she says, thus give way to "struggles for liberal democratic rights as they inserted themselves into consumer culture" (9). Several of Nagra's poems illuminate this conception of citizenship-through-consumption in a British context. The passport functions in "Look We Have Coming to Dover!" as the textual means through which to engage in consumer culture ("beeswax'd cars," "crash clothes," and "charged glasses") in order to lay claim to political rights and citizenship, as identified with the British welfare state (32).

Such a notion of citizenship aligned with enjoying the rights to consume the nation is not, however, without its own ideology. Taken to its extreme, this discursive model of citizenship could be seen to exacerbate—or willfully ignore—economic hierarchies that subtend the relation between the global North and South. For instance, in a poem titled "For the Wealth of India," Nagra shows what happens when models of British citizenship premised on consumption travel back to India. Here, Nagra takes on the voice of a young woman who travels to Jullunder, India, with her mother and aunt in search of "the blood-sari to wow the guests / into awe when I walk the aisle / to the Holy Book of my biggest day" (8). Throughout, Nagra describes the shopping venture in the language of conquest as his protagonists "ransack the bazaar" and "lap up / our suits, shoes, and bags" but not before "spinning / a penny to some limbless in a bucket" (8–9). The poem's scathing indictment of First World, neocolonial consumption is not, of course, without an equally unsavory gender bias on Nagra's part. Much like T. S. Eliot's ironic treatment of gender in *The Waste Land* ("In vials of ivory and coloured glass / Unstoppered, lurked her strange synthetic perfumes, / Unguent, powdered, or liquid—troubled, confused"), "For the Wealth of India" critiques capitalist modernity by equating Western decadence with women's boundless desire to consume (Eliot 8).

That said, Nagra frames "For the Wealth of India" through an epigraph from Christopher Marlowe's *Tamburlaine*, which reads: "I mean to cut a channel…that men might quickly sail to India" (8). In Nagra's text,

his diasporic subjects do just that, "tucking under / continents to clip the distance, / zoomed to our ancestral homeland" (8). If, as Aihwa Ong argues, "South Asian diasporic subjects in advanced capitalist societies are widely constructed as liberatory figures who subvert oppressive national cultures and even the capitalism that sustains their elite status," Nagra's poem brings his jet-setting diasporic subjects down to the ground, as it were (232). Through the poem's short, clipped lineation, which stretches a single sentence over 20 lines in each of its three stanzas, "For the Wealth of India" reflects on the contradictions inhering within the relation between political citizenship and economic consumption for diasporic subjects living in the former imperial metropoles and desiring to reconnect with lost homelands in the postcolony. Ong's notion of "flexible citizenship"—what she calls "cultural logics of capitalist accumulation, travel, and displacement that induce subjects to respond fluidly and opportunistically to changing political-economic conditions"—may provide (for some) the ease of consumption, the speed of movement, and diasporic self-fashioning. As Nagra's poem makes clear through its hypotactic structure and explicit hierarchies, however, the privilege of "flexible citizenship" also risks solidifying the economic divisions and cultural misconceptions between diaspora communities and their former national homes, which remain the objects of consumption in the poem (6).

Elsewhere, though, Nagra invokes the trope of the passport to explore the multiculturalist demands of citizenship for the sake of ethnic incorporation and cultural assimilation, or a respect for and equivalence of differences. Such a model is represented in "All We Smiley Blacks!," which describes a carnivalesque assembly of ethnic minorities in a public park in Slough (one of the most diverse cities in all of the United Kingdom), where the town mayor and "Parky" (town-park overseer) preside in a celebration of multiculturalism. The figure of the Parky puts on a pyrotechnic display of fireworks that "outline nations of the globe, so / that sky is a screen on which world is mapped…" (49). Nagra's poem may be a contemporary rewriting of John Betjeman's "Slough" (1937, 1939), which begins "Come friendly bombs and fall on Slough! / It isn't fit for humans now" (21). In response to what Betjeman saw as Slough's economic underdevelopment through factories and inauthentic cultural life in the pre–World War II era, the poet acerbically critiques the middle and lower classes who, he writes, "talk of sport and makes of cars / In various bogus-Tudor bars" rather than "look up and see the stars" (22). A spokesperson for "Little England," Betjeman expresses a bourgeois nostalgia for an earlier, simpler Slough, one closer to nature, before the messy business of industrialization and, later, mass migration.

Nagra ironically displaces Betjeman's bombs with the Parky's illusory fireworks. Projecting fantastic images of an "oceanless / borderless" world of

belonging and inclusion, the Parky's pyrotechnics might seem to correspond to an idealistic universalization of citizenship, at least until the end of the poem:

> One of us blesses, *We're everywhere, welcome to stay!*
> One of us, swarthily: *Is dat cloud for England and India?*
> Is the stamp of arrival, our passport this park?
> This hologram of home! We holler the flag of our dance! (50)

The content of the poem projects a world where nations intermingle, political boundaries dissolve, and all are welcome to stay. By concluding with the exclamatory line "This hologram of home! We holler the flag of our dance!," the text deictically claims a notion of collective home and postnational belonging within the space of the poem, as if to restore poetry to song and dance. The formal, stanzaic shape of the text (that loosely imitates rhyme royal across five slant-rhymed septets) belies such content, however. Rhyme royal stanzas are conventionally one of the most "English" of forms, extending back to Chaucer and subsequently adapted by Shakespeare, Spenser, Wordsworth, and Auden. Metaphorically construing the public space of the park as a "stamp" in a "passport," Nagra's language questions the illusory nature of multicultural citizenship. Like the poem itself, the Parky's idealized creation of borderless inclusion is little more than a "hologram," an insubstantial image of post-ethnic national belonging. For as much as Nagra may seem to celebrate the possibility of multicultural citizenship in the closing line, the title of "All We Smiley Blacks!" reminds the reader of the racial division that forms the basis for the poem's kaleidoscopic vision of citizenship, that is, the nation-state's desire for ethnic incorporation still depends upon the creation of separate but unequal cultural spaces of sovereignty. Hence the park. Liberal democratic models of citizenship, as Balibar contends, depend upon the epistemology of the "border" (here of race) to draw the lines of inclusion and exclusion, as well as to determine the grounds upon which political-cultural recognition is granted to ethnic others within the larger public sphere ("World Borders" 75–6). "All We Smiley Blacks!" literalizes, in poetic language and form, the fantasy of erasing this structural border. That is, by encasing the fantasy of a free-floating global citizenship open to anyone within the restrictions of a highly English stanzaic form, the poem structurally exposes the "hologram" of New Labour discourses of inclusion and multicultural citizenship. And yet, the poem equally suggests the necessity of reframing fantasies of "inclusion" that arise precisely by virtue of persistent exclusions when it comes to modern citizenship.

There is another way to understand citizenship, not through affirmation but as negation. Previously, we saw how Nagra links up with Muldoon to

make manifest the imperial underpinnings of modern citizenship and, in the process, to create cross-colonial, cross-racial linkages through linguistic contamination. His preoccupation with Northern Irish poetry becomes even more pronounced and sophisticated in "Digging," a direct rewriting and utter transformation of Seamus Heaney's poem of the same name. An ars poetica, Heaney's "Digging" (1966) constitutes a Northern Irish political manifesto concerning the power of poetry in a state of colonial crisis. Heaney uses poetry to write his personal and collective history—a deeply archaeological, anthropological, and, indeed, political act—against the British imperialist assumption that the Irish are without history and to forge continuities with agricultural labor in order to speak on behalf of his rural community in Northern Ireland. Heaney begins by meditating on the speaker's early uncertainty over the value of writing in a culture that defines worth through a direct, physical connection to the land. In comparison to his father, "who could handle a spade, / Just like his old man," the speaker is riddled with anxiety over the derivative worth of his intellectual labor (3). He resolves, however, that even though he has "no spade to follow men like them," he will take up the "pen" to dig into his buried psycho-familial-cultural-political past. In a Northern Irish context, Heaney's double exclusion from the tradition of British poetry as well as from his rural Irish past compels him to textualize his predicament. The "living roots" that "awaken" in the speaker's "head" happen retroactively, through the incisive labor of poetic excavation that re-imagines the past from the standpoint of the present so as to cull forth new modes of cultural-political belonging where he feels he has none. Heaney's "Digging" instantiates a Northern Irish poetics of citizenship by creating a psychic and literary territory of Irish nationhood in a colonial setting of conquest and occupation.

In response, Nagra writes his version of "Digging," the first two stanzas of which read:

> Squatted against the bedroom door with left leg
> stretched, wiping sweat from my thigh,
> I shave hairs to the shape of a passport photo.
> Into the good skin, steeling along
> the top end of the picture—a straight incision
> until blob by seamless blob, over
> the Stanley knife, a rivering of blood.
>
> Once under the fold, down to the roots,
> nerve-hand holds for slicing
> level the parallel lines of a photo.

> Leaning deeper so the unconscious,
> deeper so the gore geometric be heaped up,
> I drop the silvery haft, the leg,
> lug back the flap. (39)

The two sides of belonging—alienation and attachment—connect Heaney and Nagra in cross-cultural poetic affiliation. Both poems take as starting points a strategic position of systematic exclusion that enables the poet to write himself into a poetic tradition. Whereas the Northern Irish bard imagines belonging through linguistic accretion and cultural-social filiation (Heaney inherits the need to dig), the Punjabi British poet figures it through negation and self-mutilation, as the poet-speaker uses a Stanley knife to slice the shape of a passport photo into his left leg. An ars poetica, Nagra's "Digging" reflects in form and content upon the discursive violence unleashed by political citizenship. In addition to his allusion to Powell's 1968 speech ("rivering of blood"), the iambic septets and "parallel lines" themselves stand in for the "geometric gore" of the poem. Throughout these first two stanzas, Nagra appropriates Heaney to probe the conscious and "unconscious" violations, which are self-violations, which strict political citizenship inflicts upon the bodies of diasporic subjects. For instance, Nagra mimics Heaney's signature sound effects (hard, consonantal, and guttural, as in "drop the silvery haft, the leg / lug back the flap"), repeats several of his stock and trade words ("squatted," "roots," "deep," "straight," "slicing," "lug"), and translates Northern Ireland's "good turf" into "the good skin." If the purpose of Heaney's poetic excavation is to reawaken living roots in his head, for Nagra the literal and figurative "point" is to go "down to the roots" of the human body, and to "heap up" the "unconscious," "gore" of national belonging, thereby approaching citizenship by way of that which precedes and produces it: the body.

If the first two stanzas draw their creative and political energy from the Irish textual progenitor, the third and final stanza forges a passport of literary citizenship, but one which is not without its own set of contradictions:

> I hear a cry from some of myself.
> So this is me. This
> *jameen*. This meat
> for which I war
> myself.
> This.

Heaney proceeds by projecting his originary roots upon the external environment before psychically internalizing those same origins and recreating

them upon the page. Nagra, in stark contrast, begins by internalizing his lack of political belonging, taking out the violence of citizenship upon the body, so as to show in poetic form and poetic language the open secret—the open wound—of modern citizenship. For instance, the increasingly shorter, clipped lines and halting ceasurae in the final stanza reflect the speaker's growing recognition of his double alienation: both from the nation-state and from his attachment to his body. On the one hand, Nagra's speaker exploits his body to remind himself-to-himself as a living, speaking human body. On the other, he realizes that he has become, in fact, an "alien," a foreigner and a stranger to himself and his own humanness, which also occurs on the level of language itself. Whereas Nagra earlier imitated Irish-inflected sounds and meters, now he includes the Punjabi word "*jameen*," which the poet translates as "ground beneath his feet" (Nagra 55). In one sense, the ground beneath the speaker's feet is part of him, his "meat" and flesh; in another it may also suggest the speaker's alienation from English territory.

By re-naming the ground beneath his feet in Punjabi, Nagra also momentarily dislocates himself into a foreign land at another historical moment: to the Partition of the Punjab between India and Pakistan in 1947 and the bloody violence that ensued between Muslims, Hindus, and Sikhs from that "straight incision" of boundary drawing. "Digging" thus transposes the contemporary problem of citizenship for multiethnic subjects living in Britain onto its earlier colonial precedent for those living in the traumatic aftermath of the Partition. Because Britain's imperial history of boundary drawing resides beneath the surface of the contemporary impasse over ethnic migration and British citizenship, Nagra's speaker is here compelled to locate both of these temporalities and geographies into one and the same time and space: the speaker repeats Britain's imperial political legacy in the Punjab by now, in the era of globalization, living it all over again from within England's borders. To draw once more from Balibar concerning the imperial epistemology shaping the discourse of political borders in the global age: "Drawing 'political' borders in the European sphere, which considered itself the *center of the world*, was also originally and principally a way to *divide up the earth*; thus, it was a way at once to organize the world's exploitation and to export the 'border form' to the periphery, in an attempt to transform the whole universe into an extension of Europe, later into 'another Europe,' built on the same political model" ("World Borders" 75). In poetic terms, "Digging" reminds the reader of the hegemony of the "border form," its failure within and beyond Europe, as well as the human costs it entails.

Indeed, Nagra's unsettling poetics of citizenship recalls theoretical arguments made by Rancière in his landmark article "Who Is the Subject of the Rights of Man?" (2004). Writing in reference to the contemporary European

scene, Rancière calls into question prevailing conceptions of "who counts" when it comes to political representation in liberal democracy. Democracy is not, for Rancière, merely a political institution that represents a pregiven group of citizens. It is produced instead through the uncertain *linguistic* process of inscribing and textualizing, as he says, "the count of the uncounted—or the part of those that have no part" (*Dissensus* 70). Rancière's resonant paradox refers to those subjects who, in the eyes of the nation-state and national community, do not count, and are not represented in any legislative sense. And yet because these subjects form a part of the whole of the people (the *demos*), they should (and do, in theory) possess—as human beings—the basic democratic rights denied them in the first place. As he puts it in a chiastic paradox: "The Rights of Man are the rights of those who have not the rights that they have and have the rights that they have not" (67).

As a supplement to the whole of the nation, diasporic subjects occupy two positions at one and the same time. By virtue of their perceived racial difference from the national *ethnos*, they are an unassimilable addition to the national populace, and so external to it—particularly in contemporary Britain and Europe. Diasporic subjects are political subjects who, by occupying the space of lack and exclusion vis-à-vis the liberal democratic nation-state and its demands of counting and classifying for the sake of legislative representation, are "an empty part," a supplement that divides the national *ethnos* against itself. And yet, because the national *ethnos* requires a supplementary other to sustain the ideological ruse of the nation's self-image as enclosed, diasporic subjects are also constitutive of Englishness, and so internal to it. Diasporic "subjects," not human presences per se but those persons who gain subjectivity through textual inscriptions and linguistic demands for inclusion and recognition (as Nagra does in poetry), challenge the very terms and bases of political belonging beyond the *ethnos* (the national people, the *Volk*, or *peuple*) to the *demos* (and so *all* people).

As I see it, "Digging" shuttles back and forth along two mutually opposing interpretive trajectories. Along the first, Nagra would seem to inscribe a poetics of citizenship as premised in negation and alienation: his rewriting of Heaney carves out a discursive space through which to re-imagine "citizenship" as irreducibly "dissensual," in Rancière's sense of the term. Citizenship is here not a pregiven political entity, nor even a matter of inclusion and exclusion, but rather an open-ended textual process for challenging the linguistic bases marking the differences between a community and its others. Read in this light, "Digging" marks the speaker's nonidentity with himself, which, in turn, puts into play the self-divisions of "citizenship" itself. "This," returning to the end of the poem, is what the speaker needs to repeat and name as his impossible condition. "This"—"this" human gore,

"this" inhuman cry that is both "me" and "not me," "this" monstrous thing or "meat" that the nation-state has made him into, all of which is "this" poem, "this" text—is the debased, underlying truth of modern, British political citizenship, which is often premised upon the foreclosure of ethnic minorities, forcing them into an internal "war" against their very humanity. As hideous as Nagra's speaker may appear, one who simultaneously relishes and anguishes in his self-mutilation, the poem succeeds in giving back to the nation-state a perfect image of modern citizenship in its own distorted form: though citizenship would appear to delineate a pregiven populace, it more precisely refers to the activity of questioning the bases of deciding "who counts," challenging the boundaries of inclusion and exclusion, and demonstrating how a given political community remains nonidentical to itself. And by overlaying Britain's contemporary problem of citizenship in 2007 onto post-Partition India in 1947, "Digging" excavates the imperial foundations of political citizenship in the global era. Nagra's re-inscription of Heaney is no mere derivative or copy. Rather, both texts, which can be read backward and forward in literary history, forge cross-cultural literary connections converging over the question of who "counts" as writing poetry in "English," even if through its rhetorical negation and constitutive lack.

The problem becomes, however, that Nagra's complete reconfiguration of citizenship, potentially open to anyone, depends upon a dominant structure of aesthetic exclusion by shoring up the cultural capital associated with "the tradition" of British poetry. Heaney certainly began at the margins of British letters but, by 2007, his name had become a metonym for the mainstream literary establishment that seeks out "conservative" poetic forms written in the lyric tradition. Along this second line, then, we can see how Nagra patterns his poetics of citizenship only after having grafted the experiences of exclusion for minority subjects upon a preeminent Irish precursor who, by standing both inside and outside the "center" of British poetry, comes to define that center. Seen in this way, the institutional name of "Heaney" countersigns Nagra's literary passport, enabling the younger poet to go on and receive the stamp of Faber. By keeping both of these perspectives in view, we can nonetheless see how the newly issued "Digging" also reflects upon the "self-harm" that the speaker, the poet, and other multiethnic artists must inflict—writing within canonical constraints, adopting "confessional" verse, and bearing the wounds of ethnic minorities to reading audiences—as a necessary precondition for entry into the niches of London's poetry world and the broader domain of global anglophone literature. Nagra makes legible how the excavation of "roots" and "origins" does not merely probe into an unconscious political, imperial ideology simmering just under the surface while structuring modern citizenship (Powell's rivering of blood). It is not

enough, in other words, that Nagra excavates Britain's unfinished imperial past as it recurs in the contemporary political domain, as epistemologies of race and nation feed into discourses over citizenship, multiculturalism, and inclusion. More importantly, for my purposes, Nagra also uncovers an unconscious *aesthetic* ideology shaping the presumed relevance of British canonical forms, which continue to set the terms of inclusion and exclusion for minority poets seeking a passport into the literary field.

The Limits of Inclusion

In the very same year that Nagra received confirmation that his manuscript *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* was accepted by the country's premier publishing house (2005), the Arts Council England published a report titled *Free Verse: Publishing Opportunities for Black and Asian Poets*. Initiated by Bernardine Evaristo and edited by Danuta Kean, *Free Verse* found that poetry by minority ethnic writers comprised only 0.64 percent of all books listed by mainstream presses (such as Faber or Bloodaxe) and 1.8 percent among minor presses. In light of the success of Black, Asian, and minority poets on the performance circuit and their overwhelming lack of visibility in print, Kean and a team of researchers conducted a year-long inquiry surveying poets and publishing editors "to promote [. . .] concrete and cultural changes in the poetry world" (3). On the whole, minority poets responded that they do not believe discrimination and prejudice to be a significant barrier to publication. Among published poets, many cited the importance of peers and networking opportunities as crucial to the acceptance of their work (5). At the same time, one of Faber's main poetry editors, Paul Keegan, stated that "poetry is an inherently conservative genre. It tends to open up relatively slowly and has not diversified as freely as fiction" (10). Neil Astley, editor at Bloodaxe—a press which has, by comparison, a diverse list of English-language poets from around the world living in the United Kingdom—similarly observes that the publication of poetry is peculiar insofar as, beyond lack of sales, it is especially targeted for poets and poetry specialists, not general readers (14). Astley explicitly acknowledges how poetry editors tend to uphold standards of "taste," which, in his view, comes at the cost of opening the field to a broad range of poetry informed by African, Caribbean, and Asian cultural codes that differ from Anglo-European canonical traditions. Perhaps not surprisingly, *Free Verse* concludes that institutional support through government subsidies, as well as apprenticeships through professional mentoring, formal workshops, and publishing outlets would significantly mitigate the existing inequalities BME poets face in the publishing world.

Like many of his established contemporaries, Nagra has devoted his cultural capital toward cultivating a younger generation of minority writers across a number of venues, both "mainstream" and "minor." For instance, he has joined up with The Complete Works Project (TCW), founded by Bernardine Evaristo in 2008. With the support of the Literature Development Agency and the Arts Council England, TCW sought out and mentored ten up-and-coming poets through two years of financial support, week-long residential courses at Arvon, and inclusion in the anthology *Ten: New Poets from Spread the Word* (Bloodaxe, 2010), coedited by Evaristo and Nagra. At this moment of writing, TCW is now in its second iteration, thanks to the patronage of UK Poet Laureate Carol Ann Duffy and editor-poet Kwame Dawes. He has also edited an anthology, *Broodings from B006* (2012), a collection of short stories by secondary students at Cranford Community College. This brief sketch is meant to highlight how, in a relatively short amount of time, the transformations in the arts industries (under New Labour and the Arts Council) have sought to conduct meaningful institutional change by improving the visibility of minority writers in print. But if "diversity" has itself become a saleable commodity in British poetry, it is also one that has compelled writers such as Nagra and Evaristo among others to negotiate a very particular relation to their "community" and to reigning ideologies of aesthetic value and taste: often by problematizing the very notion of "community" itself. This is especially evident in the ways Nagra models his cross-cultural poetics through Anglo-modernist predecessors, as when he cites Stevens, Pound, and Eliot as models for "teaching poetry" in his November 2011 *Guardian* article.

In recent years, many scholars and artists have called for a reconceptualization of the Black British canon, whether labeled as "BME," "minority ethnic," or "beyond definition" in the words of a 2010 issue of *Wasafiri* on "Black Britain." Alison Donnell has made a persuasive case for reformulating Black British canon formation beyond a closed, authoritative system of texts toward "an agent of cultural interrogation and dialogue" (190). She proposes the notion of a "diverse, contingent, renewable canon" open to "oppositional voices," "debate and even conflict," as one must acknowledge the hierarchical basis of selection that becomes suited to "the particular values of a work in a certain context and at a certain time" (191).

Through his savvy re-articulation of mainstream British literary inheritances, Nagra sustains a double vision for apprehending the aesthetic and political complexities of cross-cultural poetics in global Britain: his writing re-activates colonial epistemologies of racial and political division as they structure contemporary debates over migration, citizenship, and belonging under neoliberal multiculturalism. At the same time, his poetry seeks to

legislate its own passports of literary citizenship, forging a new center in anglophone poetic creation for his British Asian community. In the process, his writing also marks the limits of inclusion across the literary field of contemporary British poetry, thus textualizing the challenges "minority" writers confront by having to replicate prevailing conceptions of "poetic value" and "taste" and working within recognizable English canonical forms. By putting these contradictions into play, Nagra clarifies the aesthetic and social hierarchies shaping contemporary poetic production, recalling to readers the many other Black and Minority Ethnic poets working within, but often unrecognized by, the unequal British publishing scene.

Conclusion

"To world is to enclose," writes Eric Hayot, "but also to exclude. What falls in the ambit of those enclosures and exclusions will determine the political meaning of any given act of world-making, as it does so clearly in our debates in world literature" (*On Literary Worlds* 40). To be sure, a study of only four poets working squarely within mainstream, metropolitan modes of writing inevitably performs a number of exclusions. My preference for formal or what might be called "academic" poetry often in conversation with the legacy of Anglo-modernism is necessarily shaped by my own professional training, reading practices, and occupation at a private institution of higher learning in the United States. These omissions could be extended almost endlessly. As is evident by now, I have foresworn a totalizing account or a teleological literary history that would track the development of canonical forms in English-language poetry across the world. Clearly, no study of global anglophone poetry can be comprehensive.

My journey across Walcott's wide Caribbean, de Kok's cosmopolitan South Africa, Muldoon's Ireland fractured through Native America, and Nagra's multiethnic Britain has nonetheless sought to develop a model of reading that—by shifting nimbly from the nuances of poetic texts to historical, cultural contexts and back again—debates the aesthetic and political complexities that arise when contemporary English-language poetry draws upon and re-purposes canonical literary inheritances to navigate local perspectives and the disjunctures of globalization. Such a framework has, I hope, advantages for conducting comparative studies of world literature in the twenty-first century. By way of conclusion, I would like to touch upon a few of these advantages on levels both scholarly and pedagogical.

When I initially began this project, literary studies was undergoing a transformation from postcolonial to "transnational" and "global anglophone" rubrics of analysis. Inspired by these developments in the field, I

started by asking how poetry in English from the past three decades and by writers associated with the postcolonial world refashion Western literary inheritances as a means of engaging the persistence of irreparable historical contradictions due to imperialism and uneven globalization and, at the same time, as a way of patterning discursive models of intersubjective worldly belonging suited to the polycentric constitution of contemporary cultural creation. While the spirit of this question has largely remained a guiding force in my study, much has changed in the field. As I outlined in the Introduction, studies of world- and comparative literature became increasingly divided between culturalist, anthropological approaches that often privilege the emancipatory potential of cosmopolitan culture through literary circulation beyond national-historical boundaries on the one hand and, on the other, sociological, materialist analyses that investigate how the economic forces of the literary marketplace produce and disseminate "world literature" as a commodity targeted for metropolitan readerships and arbiters of taste in the global North. These methodological disagreements persist, as evident in Susan Stanford Friedman's anthropologically inflected planetary modernisms in *Provocations: Modernist Studies for the Twenty-First Century* (Columbia UP, forthcoming), Emily Apter's defense of "untranslateability" as recalcitrant to substitution under economic globalization in *Against World Literature* (Verso 2013), or more balanced calls for a sustained consideration of the ways the materiality of literary production mediates divisions of labor in Sarah Brouillette's latest work on "World Literature and Market Dynamics."[1]

In the midst of these ongoing transformations in the field, I have sought to develop a way of close reading that bridges culturalist and sociological approaches to world literature. Culturalist, anthropological schools, on the whole, tend to emphasize the movement of texts across time and space to challenge reigning disciplinary conventions of area, period, and genre. As I have shown, however, culturalist paradigms often elevate aesthetic considerations at the expense of material, economic structures, as certain "world texts" and "world authors" gain prominence over others. Sociological approaches, conversely, can overlook the ways authors, texts, and readers often challenge how cultural productions become absorbed—and often neutralized—within literary institutions. We need even more studies of how "English" as a "global literature" is produced by, interacts with, and sometimes seeks to trouble the mechanisms of the global literary marketplace. At the same time, I have felt uneasy—at times even resistant to—positing any straightforward or systematizing way of understanding how literature relates to institutions of global exchange. The singularity of a literary text has compelled me to develop this relation on a case-by-case basis. By looking for

these pressures on the page, I have granted authority to the aesthetic strategies at play in particular cultural texts. Formal readings of global anglophone poetry are especially apropos given the densely textual fabric of the genre and in light of the ways in which this group of writers—like many world artists nowadays—preemptively figure how their writing will become received (and often instrumentalized) by publishing houses, economies of prestige, venues of critical reception, and national programs. Throughout, I have treated the category of "world literature" as at once a hierarchical world-system of literary exchange and as an open-ended linguistic process of world creation capable of inventing new ways of apprehending and potentially reconfiguring the contradictions of globalization as they are locally embedded. Overall, I have sought to advance a dialectical, mutually corrective way of reading the aesthetic and the social off of one another, moving back and forth between the inward pull of poems by attending to the literary patternings of globalism and the outward movement to the world by accounting for the extra-literary contextual frames conditioning literary production (even as I recognize that every context is yet another text through which we read).

To reiterate briefly the thrust of my argument. I have selected these writers for comparison for two main reasons: first, they hold in common a sustained engagement with literary forms belonging to the "long poetic tradition"; and second, by working within dominant, canonical forms, they test the linguistic possibilities of verbal art to contend with violent, often traumatic consequences of modernity at the current temporal conjuncture caught as it is between the ongoing legacy of empire and the onset of globalization. In doing so, these poets invite readers to examine how their writing devises different aesthetic models to contend with local, historical realities and the sweeping pressures of global modernity. I have emphasized how literary forms carry within them the legacy of colonialism, racism, political-social exclusion, and economic underdevelopment. Their re-use recalls these messy histories and furthermore calls attention to the inequalities of economic and cultural capital as they structure contemporary literary production. In the process, I have sought to show how the genre's inheritances are far from monolithic repositories of meaning but dynamic, open-ended resources, capable of becoming (in Derrida's phrasing) "re-launched otherwise." For instance, Walcott put the epic genre to the task of re-thinking "poverty" in the Caribbean, imbuing epic mythopoeia with enacting an ethics of giving and sacrifice as a meaningful alternative to global capital's precepts of self-interest and monetary accumulation. Muldoon's renovation of British Romanticism and imagistic fragmentation—and his Irish strategy of imarrhage, or the bleeding image—figures a mythic, traumatic bond between

Irish and American Indian histories premised upon the figure of "the secular wound." In a South African context, de Kok recomposes the post-apartheid nation through the elegiac tradition, both re-orienting her readers to lived conditions of "vulnerability" and opening up South Africa to cosmopolitan forces, for good and for ill. And in the post-Blair era, Nagra inflects canonical British authors and forms in "Punglish" to speak to British Asian experiences of nonbelonging amid New Labour platforms of Cool Britannia and neoliberal multiculturalism, all the while re-constituting citizenship by redrawing the discursive boundaries of inclusion and exclusion in the literary and political domain alike. In each of the chapters above, I have invested agency in the activities of poetic creation and literary interpretation in patterning flexible conceptions of worldly belonging and cross-cultural attachment produced by, but that appear "irreducible" to, the mechanisms of global literary exchange.

Claims to literature's "irreducible" status may be, however, its most attractive characteristic within the literary marketplace, especially in the field of world literature. Indeed, we might say that it is by virtue of the fact that these authors adopt particular postures in linking the local/global nexus, work within canonical forms informed by the legacy of Anglo-modernism, and that they appeal to ideologies of aesthetic taste by construing "the politics of poetry" as recalcitrant to liberal political and economic determination that they become visible within mainstream venues of world literature. For this reason, I have pursued a counterargument, interrogating how imaginative models of globalism are conditioned and significantly delimited by local circumstances and the hierarchies distinguishing the domain of world letters in English. The canonical bent of my study has the advantage of vividly demonstrating how institutions of global recognition such as the Swedish Academy, a given writer's more established (Walcott, Muldoon), relatively peripheral (de Kok), or newly arrived position (Nagra) in relation to publishing centers and metropolitan readerships in the global North, and uneven distributions of power at local and global levels all contribute to certain strains of cross-cultural poetics gaining ascendancy over others.

It is from this vantage point that we can begin to detect important differences between these writers, especially as their particular models of globalism themselves embody divisions in the literary field more generally. As we have seen, Walcott advances a polycentric model of globalism, one which invests epic mythopoeia with world-renewing potential, "creating a fresh language and a fresh people" as he says in his Nobel speech. This needs to be understood as arising from his local context of writing, extending a Eurocentric lineage of Caribbean poetics, and shaped by the geopolitical forces (dominant literary institutions and economies of prestige) within which he was

operating and pursuing acclaim. Given St. Lucia's (neo)colonial history and relatively new arrival on the scene of world literature, it makes sense that Walcott fashions his affiliation to the "literary bequest" through coevalness and simultaneity, which challenge imperial chronologies of development, progress, and colonial belatedness. Still, his particular way of linking the local and the global—at once claiming a posture of localism infused with a cosmopolitan knowingness, all the while anxiously self-criticizing how his Western-infused poetics capitalizes upon the "poverty" his writing aspires to counteract if not "redress"—ensures his institutional position in anglophone letters. By comparison, Muldoon's cross-cultural comparisons figure disparate histories, cultures, geographies, political communities, and literary inheritances as irrepressibly plural and divided in themselves. This connects him to Walcott but also situates him in his Northern Irish context and Irish literature generally. As we've seen in a poem such as "As," Muldoon formally acknowledges contemporary poetry's thorough saturation within global exchange, mimicking its logic of substitutions as closely as possible. Still, his controlled, self-reflexive comparisons appeal to the aesthetic domain as occupying an ambiguous zone enmeshed within but irreducible to the mechanisms of globalization, a gesture that furthers his standing as a "poet's poet." Over the course of the twentieth century, Irish writing has come to occupy a "center" in anglophone letters. This fact may partly explain why Muldoon appears to stand both "inside" and "outside" the English-language poetic conventions he ironizes, upends, and masters through his performance of encyclopediac allusiveness and formal ingenuity, solidifying his canonization in the poetry world. In de Kok's case, the overwhelming prevalence of canonical forms and authors in her work takes on quite different valences. In one sense, her literary investments demarcate her position of privilege, alerting us to the radical discrepancy (even insufficiency) between Western elegiac forms and post-apartheid political realities. At the same time, we can also detect the extent to which a marginal writer *must* link up with the cultural capital of authors recognized as central to the Anglo-American cultural core (Virgil, Shakespeare, and Yeats among others) for her to become legible in the global North, even by a smaller New York press such as Seven Stories. Still, her selective recomposition of elegiac forms also performs the work of impossible mourning in the name of advancing a cosmopolitan-national consciousness that remains vulnerable, and thus "open," to other times and places of loss. Switching to the UK scene, we can see a similar pattern in Nagra in that his decision to rewrite authors associated with the "British literary tradition," from Marlowe, Arnold, and Orwell to Heaney and Muldoon, cosign this British Punjabi's literary passport into English letters, thanks to the imprint of Faber. Yet Nagra belongs

to a younger generation of British Ethnic Minority authors who, by performing an "outsider-status," are in many ways constitutive of "Britishness." Nagra self-reflexively ironizes his status as a branded minority, which is, in many ways, to be expected from contemporary artists. His writing nonetheless challenges liberal discourses of citizenship for diaspora communities in the divided social sphere and furthermore has put his cultural capital to the work of opening the field to "minority" authors in the rarefied arena of the UK poetry world. From one perspective, we conclude that re-articulations of aesthetic forms belonging to "high art" further circumscribe the domain of the aesthetic from the social-political spheres, thus testifying to poetry's inefficacy—after all, we all know that poetry makes nothing happen—and thereby enabling these writers to perform their learning to readerships, pursue cultural capital, and further authorize their standing in world literature, however unequally. This is undoubtedly the case. To this we can add another perspective, which is my own: by acknowledging and inhabiting these limitations, their writing makes visible the hierarchies of the literary field and furthermore recalls the grounding conditions of inequality as they are disfigured and re-configured in literary form. From this vantage, we can see more clearly the ways in which global anglophone poetry conducts social critique and commentary through aesthetic means—as verbal art displaces itself before social realities—while we as readers must look into the ways formal patternings of globalization are undergirded by the political and economic structures conditioning cross-cultural poetics.

But this style of reading also carries pedagogical implications, especially for those of us who teach surveys and seminars on modern and contemporary anglophone poetry in comparative frameworks. My home institution, Wake Forest University, has recently redesigned the shape of the English major by offering gateway courses covering the historical foundations of canonical American and British literature before undergraduates take upper-level seminars grouped along categories of "genre and aesthetics," critical approaches to "literary history," single "author studies" (such as Shakespeare, Milton, Austen, and Joyce among others), and courses on the relation between literature and its social, political, and cultural worlds of production.

Overall, my seminars on global anglophone poetry investigate the many ways in which poets question the powers and limits of aesthetic representation to pattern the contradictions of modernity within specific locations, through institutional networks, and across the historical transformations of decolonization, mass migration, and globalization. The class begins with more "formalist" styles of writing in dialogue with "the literary tradition" and slowly tips toward diasporic avant-garde writing, which combines multiple genres and tends to blur the boundaries between "literary" and

"social" texts. For instance, the class traverses contemporary Irish poetry (Heaney, Boland); Caribbean (Bennett, Walcott); South African (de Kok, Lesogo Rampolokeng); South Asian (A. K. Ramanujan, Agha Shahid Ali); and Black and Minority Ethnic British (Linton Kwesi Johnson, Grace Nichols, Bernardine Evaristo, Nagra). In our final month, we back track, going over familiar geographic terrain but now by looking to more experimental writing, as in Muldoon's *Annals of Chile* (1994), Brathwaite's post-9/11 elegy *Born to Slow Horses* (2005), M. NourbeSe Philip's *Zong!* (2008), and finally Craig Santos Perez's *from unincorporated territory [saina]* (2010). Organizing a syllabus around regional and generational boundaries carries the benefit of showing why local contexts continue to matter in shaping poetic production and its critical reception in "national" and "global" frames.

In addition to reading each author's writings on poetics and selected criticism, my students like many in (North American literature seminars) conduct presentations covering selected readings from culturalist paradigms to global literary studies and sociological criticism on histories of print. These readings provide a framework for our comparative readings and furthermore explain how networks of literary exchange have provided the infrastructure for certain world writers to achieve more "global" recognition over others, both among their regional milieu and by virtue of the ways they work within received assumptions about poetic taste and the perceived value of canonical forms. For instance, it is not difficult to see how the metropolitan leanings of Nobel Laureates, Heaney and Walcott, appeal to dominant literary institutions insofar as their writing invites analysis through precepts of "close reading," emphasizes their dividedness and alienation (often by recasting Anglo-modernist aesthetic conventions), and adopts political postures that straddle cosmopolitan worldviews and local rootedness. Conversely, the experimental, politically charged, Afrocentric "orature" of poetry in writers as diverse as Brathwaite, Philip, or Rampolokeng have, by comparison, appealed to smaller readerships, often in avant-garde and performance poetry circles. Nonetheless, we can draw connections between mainstream and diasporic avant-gardes, insofar as the latter often posits a "synthetic localism" by subordinating "high" Anglo-modernist forms (especially Pound, Yeats, Eliot, and Stein) to the purposes of an aesthetics resistant to imperial, global modernity. What we come to see, then, are redoubled localisms (themselves globally interwoven), as in Brathwaite's "tidalectics" in *Barbajan Poems* (118) or his latest phase of "transboundary poetics." Philip's *Zong!* (2008), in fact, includes dismantled sonnets, disjointed sestinas, and mangled allusions to Virgil, Shakespeare, Milton, and Wallace Stevens to mourn the death of 150 Africans thrown overboard the slave ship *Zong* in 1781, an event itself mediated through the English legal document "Gregson

v. Gilbert" (1783). By the end of term, students write a research paper focusing on two poets related along a specific point of comparison and situated within a critical-historical framework. Ultimately, this pedagogical model insists upon the necessity of looking for cross-cultural literary connections while equally recalling how such connections are contingent and, at times, incommensurable due to important regional differences, political outlooks, theories of language, and broader disparities of the world-system of literary exchange. But it also insists that comparisons across incommensurable differences are worth making by emphasizing difference as generative for conducting comparative work.

Few topics of conversation are met with more passion or more indifference than debates over poetry's relevance in the global era. Debates over the "relevance of poetry" appear nearly every month—almost every week, it seems nowadays—in poetry magazines, scholarly journals, educational curricula, political discourse, and mainstream journalism. If we often hear global anglophone poets and scholars of world literature alike appeal to the value of world literature's "irreducibility," such claims need neither fall into the trap of "undecidablity" nor become appeals to the value of literature as an end in itself. My own perspective accords with poet and scholar Peter Robinson. "The minutest and most poetically technical of qualities," he writes, "the timing of a cadence or a rhyme, for instance, can only be appreciated and admired as bearers of values if these are understood as shaping matters beyond those technical operations" (739–40). I have similarly defended the relevance of this body of poetry but only if its "irreducibility" is put to the task of asking more sophisticated questions over how verbal art mediates irresolvable social crises and, in doing so, makes visible the unequal structures conditioning cultural production in the contested domain of world literature and its socio-political underpinnings.

But I have also translated the divisions of world literature back into the literary text as well, asking how aesthetic uses of language can sometimes make legible their own limitations before social realities that constitute the grounding conditions of cultural production. "If what happens in the literary text," writes Gayarti Spivak, "is the singularity of its language and that singularity is in its figuration, that figuration can point to the depth of the content by signaling that the content cannot be contained by the text as receptacle. To note, this is not to say the text has failed. It is to say that the text has succeeded in signaling beyond itself" ("Thinking Cultural Questions" 350). A critical practice combining an attention to the nuances of genre, form, and language and a sensitivity to historical context, as I have attempted here, pursues the diverse linguistic ways poems signal beyond themselves by engaging real-world crises as they appear in figural form: "poverty" in

Walcott, the "secular wound" in Muldoon, "vulnerability" in de Kok, and "citizenship" in Nagra. Keeping text and context in frame clarifies how the layers of poetic discourse formally register the complexity of these realities, realities that in turn become struggles over language and meaning. This self-reflexive method of literary reading holds out the possibility, though always without guarantees, for readers to self-reflect upon very real experiences of suffering and inequality as they become encoded in verbal art. By testing the limits of aesthetic figuration, contemporary anglophone poets compel their readers to question the discursive limits framing how we can think, write, and speak about intractable, but urgent social contradictions of globalization as problems of common concern.

Notes

Introduction

1. I join Edmond in emphasizing the potency of linguistic defamiliarization in reconstituting our discursive frames for apprehending globalism beyond Cold War binaries. The "common strangeness" distinguishing the writing of Arkadii Dragomoshchenko, Dmitri Prigov, Bei Deo, Yang Lian, Charles Bernstein, and Lyn Hejinian forms an important, though till-now unacknowledged resource for reading "not only avant-garde poetry but also the multivalent poetics of contemporary culture and history at large" (198). Also see Sanjay Krishnan's *Reading the Global*, which (like this book) defends practices of literary reading to "disrupt" dominant, naturalizing perspectives of "the global" as automatically aligned with globalization's ideology of development and progress (4). Krishnan's emphasis on defamiliarization seeks to "activate other, less conformist ways of thinking about the world" (5). Such an interpretive double maneuver, far from replacing the global perspective with another, resistant or autonomous mode of globalism, instead examines how framings of the world aligned with imperial, global modernity can become re-framed and re-constellated so as to allow the perception of other perspectives of worldiness that might otherwise be "suppressed or invalidated" (14).
2. Maxwell describes how in 1923 the US State Department prevented Claude McKay from returning both to Harlem and his country of birth, Jamaica, due to his socialist and anticolonial politics, a reality that led to his travels to Europe, the Soviet Union, and Africa and significantly informed his poetry's itinerant qualities on the page.
3. These poets, in Hart's estimation, work within avant-garde forms not to escape from local or national identities but as a way of persistently "troubl[ing] the border between vernacular self-ownership and the willful appropriation of languages that will be forever foreign" (7). For Hart, "vernacular discourse simultaneously confirms and deconstructs the sovereignty of ethnonational identity" (12).
4. On mid-twentieth-century transnational networks of publication that gave rise to postcolonial literature, see Gail Low's *Publishing the Postcolonial* (2012)

and Nathan Suhr-Sytsma's "Christopher Okigbo, Print, and the Poetry of Postcolonial Modernity."

1 Derek Walcott's Poetics of Global Economy in *Omeros*

1. This division in Walcott's career admittedly demands some qualification. Walcott has long fashioned himself as a cosmopolitan artist with local attachments, especially when we recall how he modeled his earliest self-published collection, *Twenty-Five Poems* (1948/49) on the layout of Faber and Faber and often mimicked the styles of Yeats, Eliot, Auden, and Stephen Spender. Conversely, it would be a mistake to perceive Walcott as having transcended his Caribbean roots, given that he retains his St. Lucian nationality and permanent residence in Gros Islet.
2. On Walcott's poetics of affliction, see Ramazani's *The Hybrid Muse* (49–71) and Breslin's *Nobody's Nation* (241–72).
3. On Walcott's allegorical treatment of Helen and St. Lucia, see Charlotte McClure's "Helen of the 'West Indies': History or Poetry of a Caribbean Realm" in *Studies in the Literary Imagination* 26 (1993): 1–11.
4. On debates over the epic status of *Omeros*, see Joseph Farrell's "Walcott's *Omeros*"; Davis's "'With No Homeric Shadow'"; Dougherty's "Homer after *Omeros*"; and Joe W. Moffett's *The Search for Origins in the Twentieth-Century Long Poem* (61–90).
5. See Quint's *Epic and Empire*, particularly his chapter "Tasso, Milton, and the Boat of Romance" (248–67).
6. Carol Dougherty notes in passing that "embedded in [Walcott's] poetic craft is a (metaphoric) nautical craft, an image that suggests we revisit Odysseus's maritime adventures and the poem that celebrates them" (353).
7. In one interview, Walcott says: "This literature comes out of an even more physical resemblance to, say, the Aegean or to the fables of wandering and return that are physically present every day if we look out in the Caribbean and see a sail going out or coming back in . . . It's such a powerful iconic thing that no matter where you are, you think of a single sailor as Ulysses. That has become a global metaphor." See the poet's interview with William Ferris in "A Multiplicity of Voices," http://www.neh.gov/news/humanities/2001-11/multiplicity.html.
8. Pollard notices the economic inflection of these lines as well (168).
9. Jonathan Martin also notes this connection. See "Nightmare History: Derek Walcott's *Omeros*." *Kenyon Review* 14.3 (1992): 197–204.
10. As Pollard comments, Walcott's "poetry can commemorate even the debased work of these women laborers as reflecting the beauty of their endurance" (163). Likewise, Paul Breslin says that Walcott's seeming "self-aggrandizement diminishes when we remember that what the poet gives is finally only given *back*, having been first acquired from the women his verse will celebrate. We can see the analogy as one of reciprocity rather than unmitigated appropriation" (*Nobody's Nation* 260). I would add that this is a self-conscious performance of *uneven* reciprocity.

11. For Black Atlanticist readings, see Farrier's "Charting the 'Amnesiac Atlantic'"; Isidore Okpewho's "Walcott, Homer, and the 'Black Atlantic'"; and Jonathan White's "'Restoration of Our Shattered Histories.'"
12. See also Joe W. Moffett on the significance of Achille's name and search for origins (76–79).
13. For readings of Walcott's Irish affiliations in *Omeros*, see Irene Martyniuk's "The Irish in the Caribbean: Derek Walcott's Examination of the Irish in *Omeros*" in *South Atlantic Quarterly* 32 (1999): 142–48; Charles Pollard's "Traveling with Joyce: Derek Walcott's Discrepant Cosmopolitan Modernism" in *Twentieth Century Literature* 47.2 (2001): 197–216; Maria McGarrity's "The Gulf Stream and the Epic Drives of Joyce and Walcott" in *Ariel* 34.4 (2003): 1–22; Paula Burnett's "Walcott's Intertextual Method: Non-Greek Naming in *Omeros*" in *Callaloo* 28.1 (2005): 172–76; and Michael Malouf's *Transatlantic Solidarities: Irish Nationalism and Caribbean Poetics* (University of Virginia, 2009).
14. Critics generally interpret the climactic exchange between the poet-narrator and Omeros in terms of Walcott's multiple literary inheritances and paternities, particularly from Homer, Virgil, Dante, and Eliot. See Rei Terada (202–3); Pollard's *New World Modernisms* (168–71); and Michael Thurston (123–46).
15. As Paul Breslin puts it "water, the element of renewal, fluidity, and unceasing change, is for Walcott the imagination's home—as no solid land, however dearly beloved, could ever be" (21). See "Derek Walcott's 'Reversible World': Centers, Peripheries, and the Scale of Nature."

2 Playing Indian/Disintegrating Irishness: Paul Muldoon and the Politics of Cross-Cultural Comparison

1. I use both "American Indian" and "Native American" to refer to the diverse indigenous peoples of North America and the present-day United States. I realize these labels are compromised at best, both deriving from European sources. Where possible, I refer to specific tribes and figures that Muldoon invokes.
2. See Rajeev Patke on the question of "'Responsibility' and 'Difficulty' in the Poetry of Paul Muldoon."
3. Coleridge and Southey, of course, never fulfilled their Romantic dreams to preach pantisocracy in North America, despite their attempts in 1794 to garner funds for such a venture through weekly lectures and cowriting a play, *The Fall of Robespierre*. See Paulin (32–46).
4. See Cosgrove on a thorough explanation and history of the Madoc-myth.
5. This modern spelling of "C-R-O-A-T-O-A-N" refers to the word found carved on a piece of wood when John White returned to the abandoned colony of Roanoke in 1590, and has nothing in fact to do with the Greek colony of Crotona. To date, scholars are still uncertain as to what "Croatoan" might have signified.
6. Interestingly, Said exempts Freud from orientalizing Egypt because of his "implicit refusal, in the end, to erect an insurmountable barrier between

non-European primitives and European civilization" (19–20). Jews for Freud, through their assimilation into and nonexcludability from European culture and history, straddle two cultural locations simultaneously as both non-European and European.

7. See Kendall's "'Parallel to the Parallel Realm': Paul Muldoon's 'Madoc: A Mystery'"; Jacqueline McCurry's "S 'Crap': Colonialism Indicted in the Poetry of Paul Muldoon" and "A Land Not 'Borrowed' but 'Purloined': Paul Muldoon's Indians"; Wills's "The Lie of the Land: Language, Imperialism, and Trade in Paul Muldoon's *Meeting the British*"; and Kathleen McCracken's "'Two Streams Flowing Together': Paul Muldoon's Inscription of Native America," which is the most thorough analysis of his American Indian poems.
8. For instance, in *Fantasies of the Master Race* Ward Churchill construes white American literature and film as engaging in one long, sustained act of colonization over (and disavowal of) Native American cultures. Philip Deloria, by contrast, in *Playing Indian* examines how white Americans have repeatedly put on, appropriated, and performed American Indian culture, from the Boston Tea Party to New Age spirituality and the Grateful Dead, for the sake of expressing the internal ambivalence of an unfinished American identity that is both revolutionary (and against the tyranny of British imperialism) and reactionary (and premised on the exclusion of white America's own "others"). Also see Smith's *Reimagining Indians,* which excavates how Anglo-American texts produced between the 1880s and the 1930s looked beyond the stereotype of "noble savagery" to a common and shared humanity between Indian and non-Indian cultures.
9. For a history of the transplantation of English colonial practices, see Palmer and Canny. For the Irish as akin to other colonial "primitives" and "savages," see McClintock's widely cited discussion in her chapter "The Lay of the Land: Genealogies of Imperialism." Luke Gibbons offers an even more detailed literary, cultural, and historical analysis of the Irish/Indian connection through the Irish Gothic novel written during the early years of the American republic (30).
10. On Irish representations of American Indians in James Joyce and Neil Jordan, see Greg Winston's "'Reluctant Indians': Irish Identity and Racial Masquerade" (153–71).
11. As one example, O'Toole cites Buffalo Bill Cody (who was of distant Irish descent) and his Wild West Show and goes on to describe Irish Americans in Chicago and New York donning Indian garb as a badge of pride and racial otherness. In 1992, several members of the Sioux traveled from South Dakota to Ireland to enact a reconciliation ceremony with villagers in Killinkeere, County Cavan, home of General Philip Sheridan who said "the only good Indian is a dead Indian" (18).
12. *The Times* published regular reports of the Alcatraz Occupation from November 11, 1969, through April 2, 1970. On November 24, 1969, a story was headlined "Indians on Alcatraz." For more on mass media depictions of American Indians, and on coverage of the Alcatraz Occupation in particular, see Mary Ann Weston's *Native Americans in the News*.

13. The False Face Society (a term first applied in the 1600s by the British to all Iroquois tribes) has a long and complex history. Mask dances and rituals were performed (and given different terms and put to a wide variety of uses) by Seneca, Onondaga, Mohawk, Cayuga, among others. In recent decades, False Face masks have been exhibited in museums and marketed for sale on websites and in stores selling exotic goods. Not surprisingly, this has fed fire to the ongoing debate over the appropriation of "native" or "indigenous" cultures. For more on the False Face Society and the myriad meanings of the masks, see Fenton.
14. The reference to "DeLorean, John" likely hints to Muldoon's contribution to the BBC television production, *Monkeys* (dir. Danny Boyle, 1989), which profiles DeLorean's arrest and eventual acquittal for drug trafficking.

3 Recomposing South Africa: Cosmopolitanism and Vulnerability in Ingrid de Kok

1. Walcott's readers have noted that he too steals the metaphor of the broken vase from Walter Benjamin's figure for translation (Burnett, *Derek Walcott* 26). See Benjamin's "The Task of the Translator" in *Illuminations* (79).
2. Anthony O'Brien emphasizes the significance of de Kok's feminism in contributing to political democracy (133–75). See also Mashudu Mashige's "Feminism and the Politics of Identity in Ingrid de Kok's *Familiar Ground*." Other readers have focused on de Kok's poetic response to the TRC (in her collection *Terrestrial Things*). See Susan Spearey's "'May the Unfixable Broken Bone / [. . .] Give Us New Bearings," Shane Graham's *South African Literature after the Truth Commission* (62–76), and Sam Raditlhalo's "Truth in Translation: The TRC and the Translation of the Translators." On HIV/AIDS in her poetry, see Sarah Brophy and Susan Spearey's "'Compasionate Leave'? HIV/AIDS and Collective Responsibility in Ingrid de Kok's *Terrestrial Things*."
3. In these ways, de Kok echoes the landmark project of Antjie Krog in *Country of My Skull* (1998), which combines a journalistic account of the TRC proceedings with history, memoir, and philosophical analysis.
4. See James Barber, *South Africa in the Twentieth Century* (134–44).
5. The name "Terror" has nothing to do with Lekota's involvement in political violence but refers instead to his formidable skills on the football pitch.
6. See James Kirchick's "In Whitest Africa" on the debate over the restoration of Verwoerd's statue in the "whites-only town" of Orania and the inhabitants' claims to "cultural preservation."
7. In addition to Bruno Riccio's scholarly work on the social-cultural history of Senegalese migration patterns to Italy, see Kitty Calavita's *Immigrants at the Margins* (63) for her study of "the economics of alterity" concerning African and non-EU migrants in Italy and Spain.
8. To put a point on the internationalism of Fanon's address "on national culture," he delivered these words not in Algeria but in Rome at the "Second Congress of Black Artists and Writers" in 1959.

9. This brief history of District Six is drawn from John Western's *Outcast Cape Town* (137–59).

4 Literary Citizenship in Daljit Nagra

1. *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* was also awarded Best First Collection in 2007 by the Forward Arts Foundation, which since 1991 has sought to expand the reading audience for contemporary poetry in the United Kingdom. through lucrative awards, a national poetry day (usually in early October), and the publication of *The Forward Book of Poetry*.
2. While not squarely addressing questions of "citizenship," Dave Gunning reads Nagra through a Bloomian critical lens, connecting the poet's parodic handling of the English poetic tradition with his anxieties over representing his British Punjabi community given "the discursive expectations of a society structured by racialization" (95). Brouillette similarly examines Nagra's preoccupations with "representation" and "authenticity," but through an analysis of his relation to UK creative industries and ideologies of neoliberal multiculturalism. For her, Nagra's ironic "meta-commentary" on his "self-branding" as well as the problem of "ethnic authenticity" itself represents a core tension concerning his anticommercial politics that self-reflexively participates in his own commodification: "It offers resistance to its own reduction to a market function accorded it as authentically representative work, but in a way that is readily available for renewed commodification, becoming a form of saleable distinction offered to poet and reader alike" (*Literature and the Creative Economy* 132).
3. Brouillette provides a similar account of the *decibel* program. She explains how *decibel* linked up with literary prizes in promoting BME authors under the guise of inclusion and, consequently, has sought to create new markets for book industries. See *Literature and the Creative Economy* (117–18).
4. For Paul Gilroy, the dissolution of the Empire—combined with Britain's economic decline and political devolution—gave rise in the mid- to later twentieth century to collective shame over the perceived lost greatness of Britishness. Within the literary sphere, we might think of Graham Greene's *The Heart of the Matter* (1948), John Osborne's *Look Back in Anger* (1956), or Philip Larkin's "Homage to a Government" (1974). According to Gilroy, these collective feelings are now taken out through xenophobia upon "citizen-migrants" who are perceived as "alien intruders" lacking "any substantive [. . .] connections to their fellow [white, British] subjects" (*Postcolonial* 90). Balibar locates the imperial epistemology of European citizenship: in his collection of essays, *We the People of Europe?* (8–10), "World Borders, Political Borders," as well as "Europe, an 'Unimagined' Frontier of Democracy," Balibar argues for a new model of citizenship beyond what he calls "racist anthropology" ("Europe" 42). Saskia Sassen similarly argues that the legal status of rights (assumed in citizenship's connection to the nation) often remains unfulfilled to those groups who are perceived as other to, or less than, the nation. Consequently, "groups defined by

race, ethnicity, religion, sex, sexual orientation, and other 'identities' still face various exclusions from full participation in public life notwithstanding formal equality as citizens" (197). Sassen, like Balibar, argues not for a post-national, transnational, or subnational subjecthood in citizenship, but for a re-definition of the "national-self" on both institutional and epistemological levels of its self-image that might make room for more "expansive inclusions" (202).

5. See McClintock's chapter "Soft-Soaping Empire" (207–31).
6. See Paul Jay's chapter "Post-Postcolonial Writing in the Age of Globalization" in *Global Matters* (95–117).
7. Gauri Viswanathan's *Masks of Conquest* traces the history of literary education in colonial India that was used, in her widely cited phrase, as "an experimental laboratory" for molding colonial subjects through the indoctrination of Enlightenment precepts of correct moral judgment, aesthetic refinement, and civic docility and passivity, all of which are purportedly found in literary works (8). The academic institution of literature and literary education came home, as it were, to England only later (1871) after it was first established in nineteenth-century India (142). In "Kabba Questions," Nagra gestures to the imperial basis for British literary history, suggesting that English literature never really was England's.
8. Gunga Din is a popular figure in the British imagination who derives from Kipling's poem in which a British soldier, nearly dying from a bullet wound, sings the praises of an abiding Indian water servant, not however without Kipling's racism: "Though I've belted you and flayed you, / By the livin' Gawd that made you, / You're a better man than I am, Gunga Din!" (420).
9. As Grewal explains, "Americanness d[oes] not always or necessarily connote full participation or belonging to a nation-state" but instead is produced through "forms of transnational consumption and struggle for rights" (8).

Conclusion

1. Brouillette's essay is forthcoming in *Institutions of World Literature*, ed. Stefan Helgesson and Pieter Vermeulen (Routledge, 2015).

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