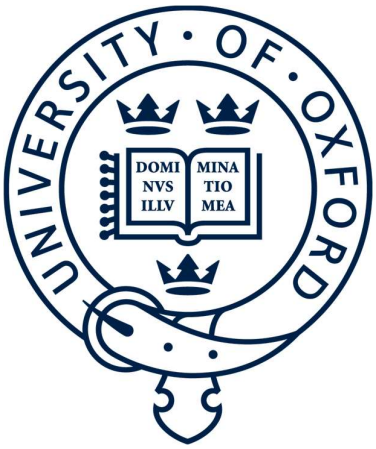
No Other World?
Postcolonial Inheritance
in Anglophone World Writing



Ann Ang

Wadham College

University of Oxford

A thesis submitted for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy in English

92 431 words

Michaelmas 2021

Table of Contents

Acknowledgments…… ii

Abstract…… iii

Introduction…….. 1

Chapter 1
The Small Human Space in the World at Large:
Reading Kiran Desai in the New Millennium…….. 55

Chapter 2
Borrowing from Time:
Worlding the Past in the Fiction of Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng……. 101

Chapter 3
Figurations of the Filipina:
Fish-Hair Woman and *La India* as Philippines Anglophone World Writing……. 154

Chapter 4
Singlish-ing as Worlding:
The Poetics and Politics of Arthur Yap, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan……. 203

Coda:
"The Discomfort of Her Levelling Gaze"…….. 268

Appendix: Poems in Chapter 4 ……. 283

Works Cited …… 292

Acknowledgements

Before the first words were written, this DPhil began as an endeavour in reading the world. I would like to express my deep gratitude and appreciation to the people who helped me recognise the worth and the nature of my work:

My supervisor, Ankhi Mukherjee, whose confidence in me as a researcher was always a source of support even as she generously challenged the research to grow further than I had ever imagined before arriving at Oxford;

My Transfer of Status and Confirmation interviewers, Elleke Boehmer, Peter McDonald and Michelle Kelly, whose responses and queries were instrumental in clarifying the direction of this project and the journey onwards;

Fellow graduate students and interlocutors, some of whom are now faculty: C. S. Bhagya, Kelly Yin Nga Tse, Robert Freeman, Chelsea Haith, Hyei Jin Kim, Camille Stallings, Charlotte Hand and Zhao Ng, for many perceptive interventions on individual chapters, conference papers, and research ideas, some still-born and others taking baby steps, and most of all, for counsel and companionship;

Faculty and fellow participants from the Institute of World Literature: too many to name but I thank you all for a virtual summer of warm intellectual comradeship at a time when the pandemic locked down the globe;

The wonderful Filipino writers and scholars who welcomed me into their literary world: Larry Ypil for many food-filled conversations, Victor Fernando R. Ocampo for sharing his work on magic realism in the Philippines and Vicente Rafael for reading an earlier version of my third chapter;

Scholars, writers and artistic practitioners who have availed their research, time and encouragement: Angelia Poon, Philip Holden, Weihsin Gui, C. J. Wan-Ling Wee, Brandon K. Liew, Cheryl Julia Lee, Joshua Ip, Alvin Pang, Suzanne Choo, Loh Chin-Ee, Angus Whitehead, Ian Tan and Faith Ong;

Fellow educators, teacher-practitioners and my students who remind me that the classroom always matters;

Mama, Papa and John, for everything else.

This DPhil at the Faculty of English was generously funded by a Faculty Development Scholarship from the National Institute of Education, Nanyang Technological University. I am also grateful for the following sources of financial support which made attendance possible at the American Comparative Literature Association's annual meeting in 2019 and the Institute of World Literature in 2020: the Maxwell and Meyerstein Fund at the Faculty of English and the Pollard Grant from Wadham College.

Abstract

This thesis theorises Anglophone world writing as a meta-genre that pivots between the localised politics of English and the transnational pressures of the Anglo-American book market in the period 1990-2010. Written from the perspectives of India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, my dissertation explores networks and circuits of literary imagining, which bring into visibility the charged contexts of writing English literature in postcolonial societies. By discussing selected novels, short stories and poetry from the four countries under study, the thesis foregrounds literary world-making as a unique and imaginative endeavour that both challenges and extends the scripting of locality in mobility. Amidst the inherited concerns of decolonisation, nation building and cross-border cultural flows, local literary traditions and contemporary writing practices continue to inflect and pluralise the Anglophone in resistance to the Anglosphere.

Throughout its four chapters, the thesis foregrounds a readerly stance to Anglophone world writing as inheriting and expressing ongoing postcolonial processes in the long durée. My argument examines the work of the Indian diasporic writer Kiran Desai; the mobile Malaysian novelists Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng; the Filipino-Australian novelist Merlinda Bobis and Filipino fictionist Rosario Cruz-Lucero; and the Singapore poets Arthur Yap, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan. Anglophone world texts are textured by the play of enlarged, decentred cartographies (ch 1) and the contours of fictional memory, which inscribe alternative historical loci (ch 2). World-characters are both mythic and spectral in their interrogation of unfinished postcolonial processes (ch 3), while the literary voice in standard English is fruitfully fissured by an aberrant and startling range of English-ing (ch 4). By making a field distinction between "Anglophone world" and "Global Anglophone," this dissertation returns the Anglophone to locations where the universalising pressures of global English are reterritorialised and revitalised as heterogenous, living literatures.

Introduction

Deep in the tropical highlands of Cameron Highlands of Malaysia lies a fictional, traditional Japanese garden named Yugiri. In the elegant and atmospheric prose of *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012) by Tan Twan Eng, readers are transported to the verdant surroundings of a horticultural wonder which itself has been transplanted. Relying on the technique of *shakkei* or borrowed scenery, as rendered through the artful placement of shrubs, rocks and trees, even the distant mountains are framed momentarily by the viewer standing in place. Yun Ling, a Malaysian Chinese woman who has recently survived the war by escaping a Japanese prisoner camp, discusses the naming of an almost-finished pavilion with her sensei. Her apprenticeship and unlikely friendship with Aritomo stem from a promise she made to her younger sister Yun Hong as a war victim, which was to establish a Japanese garden in her memory. Urged by the former gardener to the Nippon emperor to think of a name, Yun Ling says finally, "The Pavilion of Heaven." Aritomo objects in disgust, "That is the sort of phrase ignorant Europeans come up with when they think of…*the East*." The master of Japanese horticulture, however, is quickly put in his place when Yun Ling reveals that the origin of the name is none other than "The Cloud" by Percy Bysshe Shelley, which was one of her sister's favourite poems. Amidst the many spatial and temporal displacements of Yugiri, where distant worlds are crystallised in mobility, Yun Ling adds another by reciting Shelley's concluding stanza, reproduced in full within Tan's text:

> I am the daughter of Earth and Water,
>
> And the nursling of the Sky;
>
> I pass through the pores of the ocean and shores;
>
> I change, but I cannot die.

Remembering how Yun Hong had so often spoken these lines, I stopped; I felt I was stealing something from her, something which she had treasured;

"I have heard nothing about a pavilion," Aritomo said.

For after the rain when with never a stain
The pavilion of Heaven is bare,
And the winds and sunbeams with their convex gleams
Build up the blue dome of air,
I silently laugh at my own cenotaph,
And out of the caverns of rain,
Like a child from the womb, like a ghost from the tomb,
I arise and unbuild it again. (148)

More than simply a quotation, Shelley's verse is resonantly re-signified as part of this young woman's struggle to honour her sister's memory and interestingly reframed by the interspersed dialogue as a "stealing." But far from laying to rest the ghosts of the past, Yun Ling's recitation has awakened, "like a ghost from the tomb," her sister's spirit and the English poet's words, both of which now exist as fictionalised afterlives in a circulatory network of allusions. In the tranquil, rain-washed, almost other-worldly setting of Yugiri, Yun Hong lives again, however metaphorically and impossibly, through Shelley's evocative lines about the ceaseless change within the water cycle, like a cloud that may "arise and unbuild" the empty pavilion of Heaven. Itself inspired by Arthur Hacker's 1902

painting of the same title,[1] the English Romantic poem is now reinscribed and sutured to a broader Anglophone imaginary, one transfigured, quite fascinatingly, by Malaysia as a minor cultural location on the world stage. The latest addition to this series of ghostly incarnations is Tan's own text, *The Garden of Evening Mists*, which won the Man Asian Literary Prize and was shortlisted for the Man Booker.

The worldly nature of Anglophone literary writing from South and Southeast Asia is also a question of writerly identity in the countries under study, which has since the heady decades of decolonisation and political independence, been relentlessly though necessarily framed with the nation as the default locus. During a press conference in 2009, held at a downtown bookstore in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysian poet Wong Phui Nam declares that the "tradition of writing in English is dead," as signalled by the absence of young Anglophone writers in Malaysia. Ironically Wong was speaking at an event to publicise the annual Singapore Writers Festival held across the border to the south, when he added, "in ten to twenty years' time Malaysian writers in English will be an adjunct to Singaporean writing" (Bakar). Yet as one of pioneering members of the Malaysian Anglophone tradition since pre-independence in the 1950s, Wong could not have been unaware of Tan and his countryman, Tash Aw, whose recent novel, *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005), was long-listed for the Man Booker Prize.

In Malaysia, where the production of a national literature is restricted to works in Bahasa as the national language, English is relegated to a "sectional literature" deprived of the ethnolinguistic backing of any of its racialised communities, including those of immigrant origin such as the Malaysian Chinese and Malaysian Indians. To write in English, and to persist in it, as Wong explains in an interview, is to recognise Malaysia as

[1] Hacker's oil painting, *The Cloud*, was exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1802 and features a reclining female nude amidst the miasma of shifting clouds, representing the "erotic charge between the genii and the Spirit" (O'Neill et al. 568).

a "a country cobbled together by colonial-capitalist interests," where the nation is founded on the basis of a break from the precolonial past as opposed to restoration of a lost plenitude (Samad 101). In this state of being "culturally naked," English for Wong was the best language to reinvent a Malaysian sensibility because Anglophone literary writing would be as alienated as the writers attempting to work in it, and further energised by a continued belief in the nation as a meaningful political and cultural unit if Bahasa could be made available to other cultures as a common language. However, Wong was so troubled by the pervasive ethnonationalism that followed the National Language Act of 1967 that he did not publish any new poetry between 1968 and 1989: English did not allow him "legitimacy" as a writer in his own country, he protested (Quayum 82).

Depicting British Malaya on a greatly expanded canvas which weaves together familial trajectories accruing from the vicissitudes of the second world war and the lives of Chinese immigrants in the peninsula, Aw and Tan, by contrast, address the Anglophone world at large. On the enlarged circuitry of the international books market, Wong's countrymen lay claim to Malaysia as literary subject with a transnational panache that exceeds the older poet's more scrupulous concerns about tradition, from which writers who benefit from the affordances of a worldly address in a global language should consider themselves disinherited, because their work was not created under conditions where English is an illegitimate language for literary production. In an interview about his most recent novel, *We, the Survivors* (2019), Aw himself discusses how he remains troubled by his authorial and educational privileges, while members of his extended family struggle in factory jobs and rural shops. Decrying the myth of Asia's rise, Aw observes that as a member of the Chinese minority in Malaysia with working class roots, "people with my kind of upbringing were not destined to be writers…to become a novelist was about as likely as becoming an astronaut" (Chin, Y. Z.).

For Wong, younger novelists, like Aw, whose works were published by Anglo-American presses, would be writing in a different sort of literary English, one unconstrained by the pressures of cultural minoritisation and linguistic erasure. For more recent Malaysian novelists, the wider circulation of global English affords an unbounded address to larger audiences conversant with longer and deeper literary traditions in the Anglophone, beyond the limitations of a comparatively minor body of Malaysian letters to draw upon—itself the result of a historical and linguistic break despite earlier calls to claim "a renaissance of abiding Asian traditions" (Fernando *Cultures in Conflict* 136). But in aspiring to bring Malaysian writing closer to a canon of world literature, they seem to be no longer authors in a national sense, or even Malaysian at all, as Wong suggests. Is there no other world beyond the nation, then, if one is to be considered a Malaysian writer, or at least no other literary writing in English that can be considered Malaysian?

While Anglophone writing in Malaysia is by no means a paradigmatic case, as a literary scene it has several aspects which may speak fruitfully in juxtaposition with the Anglophone literatures of the new millennium in India, the Philippines and Singapore. The visibility of Malaysian novelists on the Anglo-American publishing circuit, the minor status of English in Malaysia and its troubled history of racial politics arising from an earlier period of national formation, bespeak the mutual imbrication of transnational literary production and the mobility (both physical and cultural) of authors, as undergirded by English as a major language of circulation. New nations often elided the former colonial role of English in order to reinscribe the past in terms of a national teleology. But the spatialisation of literatures in English as Malaysian, Australian or Indian writing in English obscures how literary English is comparatively and heterogeneously instituted in each of these loci. Within a genealogical model of literary tradition, the relatively recent emergence of Anglophone traditions in these countries meant that such literary works were

perceived as being secondary to what Salman Rushdie has famously called “Eng. Lit.” or the “great sacred thing itself” (*Imaginary Homelands* 62).

Yet the pages of Aw’s and Tan’s novels are replete with compelling visions of a Malaysia constructed with an imaginative worldliness that reveals how the Anglophone text is imbricated in the temporal and geographical dislocations of the Anglophone as a heterogenous body of literatures, as much as it is buoyed up by the English language as a global vernacular that ensures a wider textual relay beyond Malaysia. This is especially so, as Anglophone literary publication in South and South East Asia continues to be dominated by major Anglo-American publishing houses known as the “Big Four,” such as Penguin Random House and HarperCollins (Schaub), which in turn constitutes a fraught context for contemporary Anglophone writers from these regions who attain popularity abroad while continuing to write from their respective loci. Moreover, Anglophone writing in the twenty-first century is produced in the context of US global capitalism, and often seen as complicit with the literary trade as a neoliberal market. As this dissertation will contend, these material circuits are entangled with symbolic relays where the Anglophone postcolonial text as world literature revises both the rubric and the list of works in the canon. Besides being a conduit for cross-border exchange, the Anglophone world text often features temporal disjunctions, depicting or otherwise leaping across a multitude of historical periods. Owing to the colonial origins of English as a literary language in these countries, such discussions about the status and place of the Anglophone writer seem, however, to be a perverse resurrection of the decolonial years of a place like Malaysia, which obtained political independence in 1957 and experienced long-drawn debates about its national culture and language during the 1970s. Why and *how* does English continue to matter as a literary language for postcolonial writers, especially in the new millennium?

Though there is scope for further debate on Wong's sentiments at the 2009 press conference, the struggle of Malaysian writers to articulate their status as Anglophone writers recalls an earlier and more famous political and aesthetic reckoning with English, that of Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who famously resolved to write only in his native Gikuyu in 1967, after successfully publishing three novels in English. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), Ngũgĩ describes the developmental context of his country, and concurrent efforts to delineate an educational curriculum that would answer to the emotional experience of Kenya's organised peasantry and working classes. He explains how it was necessary to choose one's own language above English to avoid "psychological violence" because language is a carrier of culture, beyond its pragmatic function of communication (9). In doing so, he sought to undo what he saw as colonial alienation due to the choice of English as a language "mediating between me and my own self; between my own self and other selves; between me and nature" (15). For Ngũgĩ, choosing a language implied an escape into a different world, with a corresponding change in his culture and identity. Despite the status of the English as the language of science and economic openness at the time, Gikuyu still contained within its linguistic borders the discrete and complete social world of the Gikuyu community.

Wong and Aw, by contrast, are speaking from a different moment in the new millennium and in the context of Malaysia as a culturally and ethnically plural society, at a time when the dominance of English as a universal language of knowledge access and cultural exchange has grown, while its usage and presence in Malaysia competes with non-Anglophone literary traditions in Bahasa and *Mahua*.[2] The passage of a half-century of independence in Malaysia meant that earlier decolonial goals of national imagining and

[2] Malaysian writing in Mandarin Chinese or *Mahua* (马华) is an established and distinct body of writing, which has its beginnings in the 1930s. *Mahua* is published predominantly in Taiwan and read within the Southeast Asian sinosphere.

economic development became contoured by the exigencies of the Cold War and the neoliberal integration of the global economy. As Sharae Deckard and Stephen A. Shapiro note in their introduction to *World Literature, Neoliberalism, and the Culture of Discontent*, neoliberalism operates outside state governmentality as a phase of capital accumulation in the world-system (4). Concurrently, and within various emergent South Asian and Southeast Asian nation-states, where the nation exercises a modernising and unifying force, the consolidation of a precolonial locus operates through monolingual and monocultural policies despite these societies being inherently plurilingual.[3] Consequently, "many Asian Anglophone writers find themselves marginalised in their societies, regarded as paradoxically both elite and irrelevant," though with English established as an international lingua franca by the nineties, the language, "once detested as an instrument of colonial oppression" is now reinvented as "a desirable form of cultural and social capital that strengthens a nation's competitive power in the global economy" (Lim et. al. "Asian Literatures in English" 790). Hence, English for South Asian and Southeast Asian writers is never a fully universal language, because it holds in the pen and on the tongue, the frisson of uneasy pluralities and remembrances within the nation and beyond, in the broader transnational spectrum of the Anglophone—such a writerly consciousness cannot but perceive literary English as different to itself, even as it presents an expanded terrain to register the sensibilities of living and writing from their respective loci.

Unfortunately, such Anglophone potentialities—one thinks here of Yun Ling's recitation of "The Cloud" as expressing the tenor of a certain postmillennial Malaysian worldliness—tend to be elided by how English continues to signify an Anglo-American cultural aegis broadly conceived, where the west is conflated with the unified globe. From

[3] Here the term plurilingual is contrasted to multilingual, as expressing a more organic, everyday dimension of language use. The term multilingual "typically conceives of the relationship between languages in an additive manner" and "in society, multilingual often connotes different language groups occupying their own niches in separation from others" (Canagarajah 7).

the 1990s, the priorities of international capital were integrated into the structures of Asian economies and societies, of which the learning of English as a medium of communication is one aspect. English has been christened in a celebratory fashion by David Crystal as a global language because "nobody owns it anymore" (2), but this appears rather premature from the perspective of postcolonial South Asia and Southeast Asia. As C. J. Wan-ling Wee observes in *Asia Modern*, from the perspective of Asian societies "the reterritorialised West has become part of [their] Others" (19). The supposedly free-floating, deterritorialised flows of capital and culture require a more rigorous understanding of their actual reterritorialisation in the postcolonial societies under study. If we are to take a properly postcolonial view, these societies are not so much colluding with the west than integrating selected aspects into their functioning as modern economies and nation-states. A certain schism is present in attitudes towards the English language, where despite an increased sense of everyday and literary ownership, literary English remains a marker of elsewhere, otherwise known as "the world."

While Wee's usage of the terms deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation directly references *Anti-Oedipus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972), Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari extend the same terms to literary analysis in their later volume *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* (1975). In the chapter, "What is a Minor Literature?" Deleuze and Guattari address this question by discussing Franz Kafka's fractious relation to German as a literary language. The son of German-speaking middle-class Ashkenazi Jews in Prague, writing in German meant a fourfold deterritorialisation from Czech and Yiddish, as well as from German as a major vehicular language and cultural fount. In this sense, Kafka's writing is necessarily minor within a major language, and as Deleuze and Guattari clarify, "a minor literature doesn't come from a minor language; it is rather that which a minority constructs within a major language," with the language of minor literature demonstrating

"a high coefficient of deterritorialisation" (16). That is to say, the subject and tenor of Kafka's work in German expresses an estrangement from the sensemaking of his immediate Czech territoriality, with its well-known surrealism and abstraction. Most writers respond by reterritorialising language and enriching the representative or symbolic function of words. Indeed, as my argument will go on to discuss, between deterritorialisation and reterritorialisation, Anglophone world writers are reinventing the referential loci of Anglophone writing in ways that are both reverential and playful, in order to deflect and refract the effects of English as a transborder, vehicular language. Unlike Kafka's "purely intensive usage of language," where "a perfect and unformed expression" thrives on the limit case of sense as non-sense (19), the authors I will discuss recuperate, or otherwise constellate, the signifiers of their postcolonial condition as part of their literary work. What was previously emptied and deterritorialised by global English is reterritorialised as world writing.

For the dissertation at hand, the place of English as an international language is most saliently linked to literary studies in the new millennium as part of the material circuits of the international publishing industry, which remain dominated by Anglo-American presses. Catering to a reading public disproportionately located in the Anglosphere, which typically refers to the US, Britain, Canada, New Zealand, and Australia (Bilbija), the literary trade in English has been vilified by Tim Parks as giving rise to the "dull new global novel." Parks identifies literary prize culture and the disproportionate translation of non-Anglophone texts into English as two factors driving a worldwide redefinition of literary greatness as international rather than national. With readability at a premium in the world market of books amidst rapid globalisation, Parks laments the oversimplification of language in literary works that circulate across borders. The cultural spread of English as a form of soft imperialism, through institutions such the

British Council, has been well-documented. But despite attempts by linguists to enumerate fast proliferating varieties of English or to reconcile the homogenising tendencies of global English with multiple Englishes, such critiques invariably reinforce a centrifugal rubric.[4] Conversely, a study of Anglophone writing as a network of textual transmission, originating in varying postcolonial source contexts in South Asia and Southeast Asia, would illuminate how the institutionalisation of literary English results in new protocols of reading. By pushing against the residual colonial formations of public culture, state policies and education, the Anglophone is revealed as non-Anglocentric in both literary depiction and frameworks for reading.

The thesis has, at its heart, the theorisation of "Anglophone world writing" as a meta-genre pivoting between the localised politics of English and the transnational pressures of the Anglo-American book market. I employ the term "meta-genre" not to engage in literary taxonomy, but with the understanding that genre is "the *relationship* between textual structures and the situations in which they are read" (Frow 13, italics original). In a complex text, the layering of multiple genre frames "creates effects of truth and reality" (Frow 19). Here the cross-border material diffusion of Anglophone texts prompts us to consider other networks and circuits of literary imagining, which bring into visibility the charged contexts of writing literature in English in postcolonial societies where any language, including English, is a choice made problematic by the concerns of decolonisation, nation building and a global economy characterised by cultural flows (Appadurai "Disjuncture and Difference" 296). Although English sometimes assumes (or is assumed to possess) the status of being a universal and neutral language, in the countries under study, namely, India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, English was either

[4] A further discussion of English in a transnational moment can be found in *Linguistic Imperialism Continued* (2009) by Robert Phillipson while Braj B. Kachru's *Asian Englishes* (2005) remains a seminal work in broadening the typology of multiple Englishes. For an introduction to English as an international language, see *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language* (1994) by Alastair Pennycook.

regarded as an instrument of the governing elite or as a means to social and sometimes transnational mobility. That writers in postcolonial societies continue to produce literature in English should be understood less as a vote of confidence in the English language itself, but as an imaginative reterritorialisation of Anglophone writing vis-à-vis the specific political, cultural and literary circumstances of these societies. Because English is a language choice which arrived with colonialists, the Anglophone for these writers is neither a linguistic world in toto, nor a cultural system necessarily in competition with their own. Instead, Anglophone world texts are textured by the play of enlarged geographical and temporal terrains, characters that are both rounded individuals and interpretative allegories, while the literary voice itself is fruitfully fissured by an aberrant and startling range of English-ing.[5] Though this line of argument is anchored by the transnational and material circuits made possible by the Anglophone publishing industry, it recognises, equally, how literature's inventive energies reconfigure the ontic world and resist the reduction of "the world to a spatial object produced by the material processes of globalisation" (Cheah *What Is a World?* 28).

As indicated by the preceding discussion, the dissertation is not primarily interested in English as a language, even from the perspective of another language, though it is indelibly shaped by asymmetries within literary English when writers themselves are bi- or multi-lingual.[6] In a sense, Anglophone world writing is born-translated in its "break with the unique assignment of languages, geographies and states in which one place is imagined to correspond to one language and one people" (Walkowitz 22). But instead of employing

[5] I am indebted to Shu-Mei Shih's scholarship on the parallel concept of the Sinophone and its capacity as an object of study to disrupt equivalences between the nation-state (China in this case) and language, culture and ethnicity ("The Concept of the Sinophone" 710-711). As Shih discusses further in her later work, *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone articulations across the Pacific*, the Sinophone may be reconceived as "an open semiotic field capable of coding, recoding, and decoding for resistant purposes," where visuality in global capitalism exceeds colonialism and imperialism as ideological and discursive instruments (10).

[6] I am also indebted to Minae Mizumura's compelling account of being "condemned" as a non-primary user of English to reflect on the relative status of other local and national languages in *The Fall of Language in the Age of English* (2015).

linguistic difference as the main fulcrum to read shifts in historical and cultural formations, and consequently how literary texts are "world-shaped" (Walkowitz 110), I argue that the chronotope of world relies crucially on how postcolonial localities are re-signified and reiterated transnationally in the literary diegesis. I ask if we can refuse the conflation of English with the conceptual rubric of globalisation, which from the Brandt Commission report of 1980, has "appeared unambiguously with the ideological weight of its North American-Western European capitalist associations and affirmations" even as various theorists in the 1990s articulated both hegemonic and anti-hegemonic definitions of the term (Gupta 8). As a result, globalisation is rendered "more or less normatively neutral, acontextual, applicable to claims from contrary ideological positions" (Gupta 8).

Conversely, Anglophone world writing, as I define it, is inherently opposed to the assumed universality of globalisation, where diverse perspectives proliferate under a rubric of equivalence. Instead the Anglophone is discussed as a complex postcolonial inheritance that contributes to the localised production of literary worlds amidst the affordances of a transnational address to a wider audience. Here, the post-ness of the postcolonial refers less to the eradication of a colonial past, but to postcoloniality as a historical condition, comprising "the long history of colonial consequences" (Gandhi 3).[7] Unlike diaspora as a framework, which is defined by the real or imagined movement of a community between a homeland and a place of sojourn (Quayson and Daswani 3), a postcolonial location in world writing continues to work through the insufficiencies of postcolonial nations and societies, through the aesthetics of literary worlding. Just as Wong Phui Nam sought to reinvent English as a poetic language for a new Malaysia, while unfortunately remaining enmeshed in the dispiriting status of English as a minor literary language in his country,

[7] In *Beyond the Mother Tongue*, Yasmin Yildez provides a parallel conceptualisation of the "postmonolingual", not as the overcoming of the monolingual by the multilingual, but as "the unfolding of the effects of the monolingual and not to its successful overcoming or transcendence" (4).

the historical condition of Anglophone writing in specific postcolonial contexts comprises an important frame for literary reading. For later writers like Aw and Tan, the Anglophone brings together their originating locus of Malaysia, with the added factor of a worldly address via publication by UK or US presses.

Hence the postcolonial inheritance of Anglophone world writing is activated on the larger transnational and material circuits of the international book trade as a significant development in itself. This confluence between the local and supra-local in turn gives rise to the enlarged spatial and temporal scale of Anglophone world writing, as well as the construction of cultural identities and trajectories that exceed the nation-state. Throughout the dissertation, I employ the term "transnational" to indicate gradations of reading that recognise the "permeability, transcendence, or irrelevance" of borders (Quayson and Daswani 5) even as the boundaries between nations, languages, cultures and other transnational actors are reconfigured. My theorisation of Anglophone worldliness is anchored in the scale and porosity of the transnational, but with an important difference—that the term "world" carries the philosophical weight of world-formation. In the literary text, this is expressed as aesthetic worlding from within Anglophone writing as a postcolonial literary and cultural medium.

In *The Creation of the World or Globalisation*, John-Luc Nancy famously distinguishes between globalisation and world-forming, or *mondialisation*, which remains untranslatable from French, linguistically and epistemologically. As Nancy explains in the preface to the English translation, globalisation in English indicates "an enclosure in the undifferentiated sphere of totality," whereas *mondialisation* is "an expanding *process* throughout the expense of the *world* of human beings, cultures, and nations" (28, italics original). World-formation is untranslatable because it is part-remainder; being is processual and immanent, stemming from "the horizon of a 'world' as a space of possible

meaning for the whole of human relations" (28). This continuous struggle in world-formation, as Nancy elaborates later, works against the naturalisation of metaphysical approaches, in which "the realisation of a reason, of a ground, and of a rationalisation" is completed as natural history (81). This push against western metaphysics in its totalising dynamic finds its equivalent in recent scholarly conversations about world literature, that seek to recognise the horizon of "world" as not merely a departure, but crowded with different histories and futurities. In the introduction to *The Cambridge History of World Literature*, Debjani Ganguly observes that "the topology of literary history today is marked by the disappearance of this epistemological ground," previously defined by a teleological logic open to an "infinite future" (8). Instead, our present juncture has given rise to the distinctively multi-scalar nature of world literary approaches which remains self-reflexive in exploring the provenance of "world":

> Working at the crossroads of five disciplinary areas andtheoretical constellations – comparative literature, English literature, area studies, postcolonial studies, and globalization studies – world literature, as envisioned in these volumes, functions across a comparative, multi-scalar, translational, and intercultural space–time continuum – a continuum that poses a challenge to a one-world and totalizing model of production in our capitalist era, however combined and uneven. (14)

Neither limited to the literature of the world capitalist system nor any of the republics of letters which have arisen in prior eras, Ganguly advocates for an approach to world literature that "pivots around multi-world models and literary systems" where "the challenge for the historian of world literature is to make visible the various intersections

and thresholds of change, not all of which coalesce into a single historical trajectory" (*Cambridge History* 15). In such a polysystem, the non-Anglicised world need not be categorised as being peripheral or semi-peripheral. My argument, in turn, advances Anglophone world writing as a framework for reading both the worldliness of the postcolonial literary text in its transnational context and world-formation in the literary text. Whether as historicised worldliness or aesthetic worlding, the Anglophone can be read as an impulse towards a pluralised relationality.

Adopting this departure as the basis of a historical formalist approach to the postcolonial in a world literary mode, my dissertation attends to the spatially disjunctive and temporally unbounded aspects of textuality in contemporary Anglophone texts from South Asia and Southeast Asia. This wide-ranging study includes contemporary Anglophone works from India, which redefined Anglophone writing in the 1990s, as well as the major Anglophone countries of Southeast Asia: Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore. The writers discussed are Booker Prize Winner Kiran Desai; the mobile Malaysian novelists Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng; the Filipino-Australian novelist Merlinda Bobis and Filipino fictionist Rosario Cruz-Lucero; and the Singapore poets Arthur Yap, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan. By reading their work against the localised institutionalisation of literary English, which operates, at the same time, through English as a transnational and deterritorialising medium, my discussion aims to generate a readerly approach that accounts for the postcolonial in the context of the new and transnational millennium.

More than simply tracing the various material and socio-historical contexts that underpin Anglophone world writing, I seek to theorise Anglophone world-making as a mode of literary reading that returns the worldliness of such texts to a postcolonial scene of writing. This intensified focus on the Anglophone seems to imply that there is no other

world beyond the long arc of British imperialism and its apotheosis in a global economy dominated by the US. That, however, could not be further from the intent of this project, which aims to understand the complexities of reading and writing literature at a time when few linguistic and cultural worlds are not entangled or interwoven with broader transnational flows. Indeed, there is no other world unless we confront this otherness reterritorialised within ourselves, deterritorialised as a renewed interrogation of worldliness and worlding.

Inheriting the Postcolonial

In the literary ecosystems of India, Malaysia, the Philippines and Singapore, English plays a complex role as the Anglophone, that confluence of relationalities which is not merely cross-border and geographical as an effect of contemporary global flows in the mediascape but also diachronic as an inheritance from colonial histories (Appadurai "Disjuncture and Difference" 297). As a literary medium, the English language has its economic function in terms of the world market for Anglophone writing, which is to be distinguished from the Anglophone as a cultural system that writers from former colonies have remade according to their own aesthetic priorities. Yet in doing so, they inherit the expanded material circuits of a global language as well as the temporally uncanny manner in which literary English reverts to unfinished colonial histories that reverberate in the present. While this dissertation argues that the primary driving force of such literary worlding derives from such unfinished postcolonial processes, it is also important to consider how literary reimagining extends these processes in response.

Having begun this thesis by examining the fractious, asymptotic manner in which recent Anglophone writing from Malaysia is disclaimed as more global than Malaysian, I preface this section by retreating a decade earlier into the 1990s and the era of American exceptionalism, following the fall of the Berlin Wall and the end of the Cold War, and to

another key locus, the island city-state of Singapore. Vilashini Cooppan reads 1989 as an epochal moment, after which "world" would signal "this global grid's measure, tracing the lines that variously divide and connect a planet's worth of persons, goods, information, forms, genres, and affects" as animated by the flows of global capital ("World Literature after 1989" 180). The worldliness of 1989 harks back to a moment in which Goethe conceptualised *Weltliteratur* as a network of free-flowing and international exchange at a time of rising national aggression. Thus "world" as the "mode of 1989" is characterised by "that moment's constitutive doubleness, its haunted temporality and cross-hatched spatiality, as the locus of a permanent revolution or a revolution in motion" (181), which Cooppan describes quite endearingly as a "Gong, clang, clank – the spectral echoing of the category of world literature across time, a skeleton of a method" (189).

As a tiny island with aspirations to become a global city, Singapore is by necessity and by choice, firmly enmeshed in global flows across the political, economic and cultural spectrum. Having educated two generations in English as a first and common language, the "haunted temporality" and "cross-hatched spatiality" that Cooppan observes can be detected in the growing discourse surrounding English as the inflection point between local and the foreign. In the popular culture of 1990s Singapore, to speak and write in "correct" English meant acquiescence to the sophistication of a western accent and an amnesiac deracination of one's speech. In "The Merlion" by Alfian Sa'at, the subject of which is the half-fish and half-lion national icon, an un-named speaker stands before the statue of the Merlion and lambasts it with a brashness that would be understood as typically westernised. Calling it "a lesser brother of the Sphinx" whose "jaws / clamp open in self-doubt," this onlooker lavishly satires its inability to swim without paws, dubbing it "a post-Chernobyl nightmare." Though only the most hardened patriots would be offended by this humorous attempt to cut the popular symbol down to size, it is the response to this

monologue, by another anonymous speaker, that reveals the fundamental unease behind the first speaker's employment of poetic English:

> "I know exactly what you mean," I said,
> Eyeing the blond highlights in your black hair
> And your blue lenses the shadow of a foreign sky.
> It spews continually if only to ruffle
> its own reflection in the water; such reminders
> will only scare a creature so eager to reinvent itself." (*One Fierce Hour* 21)

To enter the aesthetic and ethical struggles of Anglophone writers like Alfian[8] is a task that my own positionality has ill-prepared me for. Though born and raised in Singapore, I encountered literary English mainly in the form of the English canon from Beowulf to the modernist period. To date, my only formal education in Singapore and Malaysian Anglophone writing remains a single module during my undergraduate degree. Educated in English as a first language and ineptly bilingual with Mandarin Chinese as an ascribed mother tongue, literary English is for me, a site of cultural and institutional forgetfulness manifested as a vast sense of inadequacy in relation to my scholarly and critical apparatus. Aside from being located in Southeast Asia as an under-theorised region in postcolonial and world literary studies, "postcolonial literature" was something written elsewhere, or as my undergraduate English class on the topic would have it, mostly in South Africa and India. When I began my doctoral work, I was often greeted with bewilderment when I described Singapore Anglophone writing as postcolonial. Surely, the entity "Singapore" had arrived? But that "Singapore" has arrived as an Anglicised name within the

[8] As Malay-Muslim names follow patronymic naming conventions, Alfian Sa'at is referred to as "Alfian."\

Anglophone common space of Singapore society, implies a strange nexus of forgetfulness and self-reinvention, despite the Sanskritic origins of the term in thirteen century Srivijaya. In response, my argument attempts a restitution of the difference between English and the Anglophone, a difference that bespeaks the unmooring of literary worlding from both the colonial legacies of English and a national approach to literary study. The Anglophone, in this sense, is a "translation term," which James Clifford defines as "a word of apparently general application used for comparison in a strategic and contingent way" (39).

My dissertation insists on reading Anglophone world writing as "postcolonial"—a term that carries a long and varied intellectual trajectory into the new millennium, and is distinguished by an ethics of resistance conveyed through political action and cultural expression. The "post-colonial" was first employed in the social sciences, and in response to world-historical conditions in the 1950s and 1960s, where newly independent nations sought renewed forms of economic and political organisation within the three-worlds structure of the Cold War (Young 2001, 58-59). In this sense, as Neil Lazarus observes in *The Postcolonial Unconscious*, "postcolonial" is a "periodising term, an historical and not an ideological concept," even as it became subsumed later by a growing intellectual discourse of postcolonial theory and criticism in western institutions (11). Citing Homi K. Bhabha's 1992 essay, "The Postcolonial and the Postmodern" as an example, Lazarus points to how the postcolonial became a "fighting term" and a "theoretical weapon" in the realm of cultural studies, in order to disavow the homogenising effects of social science categories such as underdevelopment and the nation (12). Bhabha's focus on cultural ambivalence and hybridity has since passed into the canon of postcolonial theory, but as Lazarus elaborates, the history of capitalist imperialism in the twenty-first century, aptly demonstrated through the US invasions of Iraq and Afghanistan, requires a postcolonial critique that speaks to "the 'new world order' of fully globalised capitalism" that he calls

"the postcolonial unconscious" (14). In *Resistance Literature*, Barbara Harlow offers a model of reading resistance into literary and cultural texts within and beyond the allegorical approaches of the first world academy. The literature of resistance, she writes, sees itself as "immediately and directly involved in a struggle against direct or ascendent forms of ideological and cultural production" (28-29). Harlow's volume attends to popular writing that "calls attention to itself, and to literature in general, as a politicised and politicised activity" (28).

Such an approach immediately meets with two challenges, in the context of reading contemporary Anglophone writing from South Asia and Southeast Asia. Firstly, the popularity of such writing is subtended by the evolution of localised Anglophone literary production and publishing amidst the Anglo-American dominance of the book industry. Secondly, the use of literary English in the new millennium must be seen as a complex inheritance, which has been rendered at different historical junctures in terms of various sociocultural configurations: from the legacies of English medium education in the colonial period as linked to an Anglicised and post-independence elite; to debates in relation to national culture and language, given how the borders of most postcolonial nations contain a heterogeneity of peoples and traditions. Diachronically, the Anglophone, as a literary and cultural medium, is a disjunction between the nation and its colonial past. Distinguishing between settler colonisation and economic domination as the two major forms of colonialism, Robert Young acknowledges that "colonialism involved an extraordinary range of different forms and practices carried out with respect to radically different cultures, over many different centuries" (17). Young's employment of the term "practices" dovetails with my observation that the Anglophone is inherited differently in distinct loci, and proves a crucial shaping context in reading postcolonial writing in the long durée, for all its variance. Like Lazarus, Young reads postcoloniality as the economic,

political and cultural systems characterising the global system, under which postcolonial nations are required to operate (57). Against these, postcolonial critique "incorporates political and theoretical practices whose reach extends back into the history of the colonial past as well as the day-to-day realities of the postcolonial present" (66). Intriguingly, a postcolonial response features a fulcrum-like relationship to history, where social and political formations are productively reinterpreted as part of contemporary praxis. Postcolonialism, for Young, "is defined by this particular combination of historical practice extended into a politics of translation designed to transform the conditions of the present" (66). Like many other critics (Gikandi 1996, Gandhi 2019, Watson 2021), Young highlights the heterotemporality of postcolonial approaches. By reading, otherwise "translating," the after-effects in the new millennium as a postcolonial inheritance, I invoke the same temporal structure as an interpretative approach to recognise resistance in contemporary Anglophone texts which are often read within discrete national traditions or in relation to utopian construct of transnational and friction-less mobility.

Translation here, of course, refers to more than the practice of linguistic translation or interlingual equivalences. In *Provincialising Europe*, Dipesh Chakrabarty makes a well-known argument for a historiographical project that reveals the limits of a historical discourse centred on the modern European subject. Instead of situating the postcolonial subject on a progressive timescale, where the anti-modern is relegated to the "waiting room of history" (7), Chakrabarty highlights the intractable and irrefutable presence of minor and subaltern histories. He eschews a conceptual model of "incommensurabilities," which is "neither the absence of a relationship between dominant and dominating forms of knowledge nor equivalents that successfully mediate between differences, but precisely the partly opaque relationship we call 'difference'" (18). In place of "transparency," Chakrabarty evokes "transclucence" to describe this desired mediation between non-

Western histories and the analytical categories of western thought. Where the analysis of the literary object is concerned, this requires a careful if richly textured translation of the social into the literary, as Ato Quayson explains in *Calibrations*. Terming his reading method a "translational transaction" (xiv), Quayson foregrounds the singular nature of the literary, through which he adopts "the ideological notion of using the literary as a means toward social enlightenment" (xv). Quayson is careful to qualify that his is not an argument for cultural relativism, but a reading of both literature and society recalibrated according to the way "the literary representation is intelligible only as part of a network of reciprocal determinations" (xxiii).

Following Quayson's ambidextrous approach, I read the aesthetic contours of Anglophone world writing in its specific, particularised entanglement with literary English as a postcolonial inheritance in the countries I discuss. Accordingly, many of the literary works that are discussed in this thesis depict the colonial period in tandem with postmillennial sensibilities, where a transnational idiom arises from within the networks of empire and is refigured for the present moment as the postcolonial in process. The postcolonial question must, more than ever, be asked of societies that seek to elide structural inequalities of race, class and linguistic identity within a nation-state that is often aligned with the priorities of neoliberal capital. Anglophone world writing from these locations answers this call through imaginative worlding; their postcolonial resistance is revealed when held in relief against what Elleke Boehmer calls "the difficult, fraught, and fussy specificities of the postcolonial" (163). The processual reading of literary texts "insists on a deep minute-by-minute involvement not only in the often painful past, or in anticipations of the future, but, intensely, in the now, in the jagged dimensions of the postcolonial present wherever located" (7). Unlike Boehmer, my argument claims that the scale of the world is important for literary texts which resist their positionality in the

margins, from protesting the objectification of the Filipina transnational worker amidst the economic deficiencies of the Philippines to advocating against the racialised transnational exit of non-*bumiputera* Malaysians. Anglophone worldliness is conveyed through the depiction of polymorphous geographies and newly figured histories, which confront and escape the insufficiencies of the postcolonial nation to reterritorialise their respective locations in mobility. Such writing, which is at once world and postcolonial, arises from the grounded Anglophone particularities of postcolonial societies that have their beginnings in the colonial era.

The introduction of English as the language of the British colonial administration and its subsequent institutionalisation as the medium of access to education and scientific learning is well-studied in the context of the British Raj. In *Masks of Conquest*, Gauri Viswanathan discusses in her seminal volume how the development of English studies in India led to the secularisation of culture and literature as objects of study, while simultaneously producing the Indian subject as one needing "mental and moral cultivation" through the study of English letters (5). The result was "a blueprint for social control in the guise of a humanistic program of enlightenment" (10).[9] Despite this, many upper-caste and upper-class Indians embraced the learning of English in addition to those for whom proficiency was required by their employment with the British, as Rosemary Marangoly George discusses at length in *Indian English and the Fiction of National Literature*. By the early twentieth century, it was "already in place as the language of social mobility, of urban life, of the upper castes, and of male members of the population" (18). Despite this elite affiliation and its earlier colonial origins, English in India "provided nationalists with a linguistic location where the shape of a national community could be

[9] Ironically, Viswanathan also observes that English medium education was in demand in India before 1835, making the Act less of a revolutionary move than it might have seemed.

sketched" because English language communication signalled an audience that belonged to more than one linguistic community (20). Because caste and region were unmarked in English, the language evinced a seeming neutrality which made it a common space or foil to attempts to institutionalise a new linguistic medium. In the context of proposals to make Hindi a national and standardised language, which resulted in widespread resistance, particularly from Tamil and Kannada-speaking regions, the constitution of a newly independent India that came into effect on 26 January, 1950, was written in English (23). After a period of debate, the Official Language Act of 1967 made English an associate language with Hindi for an indefinite period.[10]

Likewise, English arrived in the Philippines with the first American teachers in the early years of the twentieth century. Given that literary culture in the archipelago's hundred and twenty other languages were primarily oral and that Spanish was not taught in a systematic manner until after 1853, the first substantial works of Filipino literary writing after American colonisation in 1898 were Anglophone. This reflected not just English as the medium of education, but a literary ecosystem centred on universities founded by the Americans, such as the University of the Philippines. American English is one of the Philippines's two co-official languages, alongside Filipino, or standardised Tagalog. While English was instituted as the country's official language in 1935 and helped facilitate communication among the archipelago's many ethnic groups, a National Language Institute was founded shortly after in 1937 to construct an indigenous common language, for which Talagog in its original form was chosen as the base, though this was subject to disagreement from other linguistic communities, notably Cebuano, over the succeeding decades. Nevertheless, English in both the Philippines and India would remain an

[10] The term "associate language" derives from Jawaharlal Nehru's speech in 1958, where he makes the case that English is necessary because he does not wish "the people of non-Hindi areas to feel that certain doors of advance are closed to them." The decision to use Hindi or not as a national language should in fact reside with non-Hindi-knowing communities (quoted in Gupta and Kapoor 113).

esteemed language, and one divided between the teaching of a British or American canon of classics and English language learning for communication in order to reflect a difference in historical and cultural memory.

The lack of a natural language that would fully express the plurality of the new postcolonial nation was also a predicament faced by writers in Malaya, later Malaysia and Singapore after the latter's separation in 1965. Malayan society was divided along both ethnic and class lines, owing to British colonial policies for the management of a plural society. Administered as British Malaya, the first examples of literary works in English appeared in the Straits Chinese Magazine in the 1930s, though there was an extant tradition of Malay letters dating from medieval to colonial times (Poon et. al. 6).[11] The descendants of long-term Chinese residents from as early as the seventeenth century, the Straits Chinese were also a highly-educated, Anglophilic and distinctly cosmopolitan class, who were keen on legislative representation while also being fiercely loyal to the British (Keong 47). After Malaya's independence in 1957, the National Language Act of 1967 designated Malay as the sole national language and the exclusive basis of a national literature, despite the presence of significant ethnic Chinese and Indian communities. With Singapore's separation and ensuing independence from Malaysia in 1965, English, by contrast, was enshrined in the constitution of newly independent Singapore in 1965 as one of four official languages, the others being Malay, Tamil and Mandarin Chinese.

In order to further illustrate the bifurcated status of English during the first decades of independence, I present briefly the response of two earlier scholars, both of whom conclude that the Anglophone as a cultural system needs to be affirmatively subordinate to the nation. Srinivasa K. R. Iyengar, the preeminent scholar who coined the term Indian

[11] Of these, the most notable are the *Sejarah Melayu* or the Malay Annals, dating from the Malacca Sultanate in the fifteen to sixteenth centuries, and the *Hikayat Abdullah*, written by Munshi Abdullah at the beginning of the nineteenth century, containing his observations about the beginnings of British colonialism in Malaya.

Writing in English, approaches literary English in India with a bracing generosity that categorically refuses the ideological reduction of language to cultural essence by the Angrezi Hatao movement. In his introduction to the first edition of *Indian Writing in English* (1962), Iyengar dismisses the racial complex underlying Anglo-Indian writing as constitutionally unsuited to Indians and foregrounds the creative and "dedicated spirit" of writing in English while being bilingual. He pays tribute to nationalist writers such as Sri Aurobindo and Rammohan Roy, observing that while "English has become ours, it is not less ours for being primarily the Englishman's or the American's" (8), and adds that Anglo-Indian literature has taught India to be "a new nation and a new people" (8). Though this is not the place to debate the extent to which notions of a unitary India were first expressed in English, even in 1962 Iyengar anticipates some of the grandiosity of global English: "The future of English is indeed immense, and as the human mind of the future acquires an international sweep, what is more likely than English rising to the highest heights and achieving a global comprehension, thereby ending the half-real, half-mythical East-West dichotomy once and for all" (7). His views indicate how in the 1960s and 1970s, English was indeed viewed by certain writers and literary scholars as an aspirational and universal idiom, in contrast to the later mood of automatic suspicion that accompanies its hegemonic status.

Similarly in 1967, before the national mood in Malaysia was soured by mass race riots later in 1969, Lloyd Fernando made equally hopeful remarks in his Inaugural Lecture as Chair of English at the University of Malaya, later published as "English, Literature and Bilingualism in South East Asia." Like Iyengar, bilingualism is also important for Fernando. A deep facility with other languages would allow writers to imbue literary English with the conceptual richness of Malayan experience. "There is enough ground swell in our traditions to absorb what is best in the specifically British literary tradition and

make it undergo a sea-change," Fernando observes (89). The astute and located study of literature in English would enable students, in fact, to resist "certain western habits of thinking" (90) where the instrumental value of language is privileged, to the extent that "many Asians today disconcertingly undervalue nearly all their traditions of belief, habit, custom, and even language" in pursuit of western practices in personality and society as the epitome of modernity. As the reflexive study of language in culture, literature is a celebration of the way English could be inhabited to express a Malaysian worldview, while "the major humanistic discovery of our time is that no language by itself alone is capable of giving us a true and sufficient picture of the world" (109).

The Postcolonial Present in the New Millennium

Almost half a century later, Anglophone writers inherit the tensions of English as a literary medium. The language itself becomes a flashpoint for the anxieties of national unity or a scapegoat for the failures of colonial history. With English becoming a global language of cross-border mobility, the imaginative worlding of such a postcolonial inheritance occupies the same space as a transnational reckoning with the long aftermath of empire. Such a deterritorialisation of English, first from its original English tradition of letters, then in the context of postcolonial negotiations between different cultures within the same nation, and amidst the contemporary intensity of cross-border flows as a result of the global economy, has meant that Anglophone world writing necessarily answers to the exigencies of the Anglo-American publishing industry. Since the 1980s, and the runaway publishing success of *Midnight's Children*, Indian writing in English has come to disproportionately represent Indian literature in general. As the language of the country's growing middle-class, English was a conduit for expressions of pan-Indian identity and the articulation of the Indian nation as tied to the double challenge of writing prose and writing

national history (Gopal 13). When the country celebrated its golden jubilee in 1997, it was amidst the glare of international media attention, which became an occasion for India to be represented at its best on the world stage. An example of pan-Indian identity at this time was Rushdie's own audacious pronouncement in his introduction to *Mirrorwork: 50 years of Indian writing*, an anthology published to coincide with the jubilee. He wrote: "prose writing—both fiction and non-fiction—created by Indian writers *working in English*, is proving to be a stronger and more important body of work than most of what is produced in the sixteen "official languages" of India…indeed 'Indo-Anglian' literature represents the most valuable contribution India has made to the world of books" (Introduction, x, italics original). Unsurprisingly this sparked a strong reaction from Indian academics, such as Meenakshi Mukherjee, who would later make the clear-eyed observation that "those who write in English do so because—no matter what language they speak at home—they have literary competence only in English" ("The Local and the Global" 169). The larger question here concerns the complicated politics of laying claim to English, as an Indian language hemmed in by a colonial provenance and an extra-national tendency.

Likewise, the space of Anglophone writing in the Philippines is a liminal zone that brings together a longstanding national tradition of literary output in English, and a love affair with America as former colonial master and immigration destination of choice. Many Filipino writers are simultaneously claimed by the Philippines and the US, and continue to work creatively in both literary scenes. Jessica Hagedorn, for instance, was the winner of the American Book Award, and also earned a National Book Award nomination for her novel *Dogeaters* (1990), while her edited collection of crime fiction titled *Manila Noir* (2013) received a Philippine National Book Award. Other contemporaries include Elaine Castillo, Gina Apostol, as well as Merlinda Bobis, whose creative output as a Filipino-Australian poet, novelist and playwright, reflects the organicity of borders in the

Austronesian region. Given the dominance of the Anglo-American academy and the circulation of popular texts, the general reader is more likely to encounter Filipino writers as Asian-American or Pan-American writing. However, Hagedorn and her female contemporaries constantly negotiate the diasporic space between home and elsewhere; between contemporary experiences and a precolonial past through the contours of the Anglophone. A significant number are cross-genre writers, for whom the migration of aesthetic forms between drama, fiction and film affords a meta-commentary on the importance of speaking beyond commodified tropes. For these Filipino writers, the colonial encounter must be read not simply as "languages constantly crackling in the air" (Hagedorn "Words without Borders") but in its somatic, bodily encounter with almost-lost indigenous practices.

For Malaysian writers, the national language act of 1967 defined Bahasa as the only official language in Malaysia (Stephen 3), much to the ire of minority immigrant or non-*bumiputera*[12] Chinese and Indian communities who were equally citizens of the newly independent state. The phasing out of English as a medium of education from 1970, and the establishment of institutions such as the Dewan Bahasa dan Pustaka, which translated works from English into Malay and vice-versa, removed the privileged status of English (Tope 371). Despite English being a minor language of literary production, the larger Anglo-American books market has debuted several Malaysian Anglophone authors, who are mainly of Chinese or Indian descent. Representative authors of this generation of writers include Tash Aw, Tan Twan Eng, Preeta Samarasan and Zen Cho, the last being a fantasy-genre writer utilising elements of Malaysian culture and geography in her depiction of British magic. More than simply a medium for wholesale commodification aimed at western audiences, English as a major literary language is a means for these

[12] Literally translating as "son of the soil," the term *bumiputera* was devised by Malay nationalists.

writers to re-imagine neglected immigrant and cultural narratives as part of a more capacious worlding of Malaysia, as their literary texts reach readers beyond their home market. The Anglophone nature of these texts is the site of a curious exchange, where the transnational space of a vehicular language is less strategic exoticisation, to borrow Sarah Brouillette's term, than the tactical marshalling of manifold cultural forms from a minor location, in order to create an internal economy of significations. Anglophone world writing, instead of simply depicting colonial history, inherits the postcolonial by reimagining the languages, histories and cultures that intermingle in Malaysia.

Finally, of the major Anglophone literary ecosystems in Southeast Asia, Singapore stands out as the anomaly for a starkly national focus on the definition of English-usage, which has resulted in the consecration of a colloquial variety of English, Singlish, as a literary language. Since the island's independence, Singapore's English language policy has been premised on the pragmatic need for global economic competitiveness and as a neutral inter-ethnic common language (Stroud and Wee 256). It has also been the main medium of education (Tong and Pakir 179). English then, as now, is a prestige language deriving its cultural capital from the political and economic formations of its time. While the government's employment of foreign language experts highlighted "the state's inability to free itself of the hegemony of the native speaker ideology" (Lim, Pakir and Wee 10), others have affirmed Singlish as the language of social solidarity and authentic national identity, calling it a "social glue" ("Singlish: Can or Not" 1993, 34) and arguing that it is a "badge of identity" for a young nation (Veloo 1994, 3SS8). Against the internally colonising role that the state plays, Singlish, as a local variety of English, is deliberately disruptive. In particular, Anglophone poetry in Singlish can be discussed as inflecting a brand of worldliness that intervenes in and departs from a discourse of English as neutral, transparent and global. The genre's capacity for lyricism and innovative

flexibility in form allows for an understanding of worlding as both the epistemic propositions put forth and the intersubjective location of the reader that results.

While the notion of an inheritance connotes belatedness and a fait accompli, this dissertation argues that within the ambit of the literary text, worlding is a powerfully imaginative process that transmutes the cultural system of the Anglophone. Inheriting the postcolonial, in this new sense, is to reconfigure its post-ness for a contemporaneous moment in which the Anglophone is beginning to be less anchored in Anglo-centricity. Writing about the moment of political independence in the context of British Malaya, Jini Kim Watson observes that the process is usually understood as a "detachment or separation" from the colonisers in order to become a sovereign nation, which is in fact undergirded by "a suturing force that will make the hitherto fragmented colonised polity whole once more" (*Cold War Reckonings* 107). Besides territorial or ethnic restoration, there is a further need for "an organic realignment between a people and a state" (*Cold War Reckonings* 107). Though Watson's immediate purpose is to discuss the shift from a colonial to the bipolar power structures of the Cold War, her thinking here is important for what it suggests about non-organic alignments between the state and national imaginings, such as when a national language is nominated or constructed at the expense of the heterogeneity of cultural and linguistic identities within the new nation.

Moreover, the Anglophone is a linguistic circuit for international media, which blurs national borders, rendering its imaginaries less amendable to state discipline. In an earlier volume, co-edited with Gary Wilder, Watson delves further into the complexity of what they term the postcolonial present in the new millennium, where neither nationalism nor socialism present viable political pathways. In an era dominated by the rise of neoliberal capitalism, the west has become increasingly intertwined with its others through war, financial crises and ecological catastrophe. A postcolonial political present, Watson

and Wilder assert, may require different ways of thinking through "the social organisation of time, lived and remembered experiences of revolution, temporal ideologies of success and failure, and figurations of history as crucial dimensions of the (post)colonial problematic" (11). Instead, postcolonial theorising could strive to work outside "the spatial reifications imposed by statist logic, methodological nationalism, and varieties of nativism and culturalism" and "the temporal reifications imposed by abstract clock time and conventional historicism" (11).

The meta-genre of Anglophone world writing advanced in this thesis adds to this endeavour by examining the Anglophone as a sociocultural condition that literary texts reinvent in tandem with the locus of the postcolony. As will be detailed later, the Anglophone works under discussion can be seen as negotiating colonial residues inherited through literary English as a medium. English in Anglophone postcolonial nations comprises a linguistic and cultural schism with the past, but also a living boundary and a point of departure for literary worlding in terms of the unique postcolonial inheritances of each South Asian or Southeast Asian locus. In these societies, the universal role of English is attenuated by debates about the role of English vis-à-vis a multilingual environment, the fissiparous nature of national imagining amidst attempts to manage cultural identities, the outsized influence of the Anglo-American publishing industry on the localised production of literature and the production of locality in mobility. On this relay of literary significations, such texts are beginning to be read in new locations, alongside a further scrutiny of the Anglophone as an evolving cultural formation.

The Worldliness of Anglophone World Writing

The Anglophone, particularly the "Global Anglophone" as a term, has an unfortunate origin in the field of literary studies. As a denotation, it emerged primarily as a job market

descriptor in the US and "entered into literary critical discourse foremost as a problematic substitute for established disciplinary terms like postcolonial and World Literature" (Anam).[13] Instead of arising organically from intellectual scholarship and debate, its prominence as a job-market descriptor seems to have led, meme-like, to further publications claiming the term as a keyword, as Nasia Anam details in her introduction to *Forms of the Global Anglophone*. What is at stake in the term "global" as yoked to the "Anglophone" is a certain neutralisation of the term's critical edge as well as the oppositional, anticolonial strand of postcolonial studies. The "global" privileges neoliberal market forces, while "Anglophone" conveniently evades "more politically thorny issues of translation or area studies training" that are present in both postcolonial studies and world literature. A brief glance at the categories under the MLA job list reveals the inclusion of "comparative literature," "literature, multicultural," and "literature, global Anglophone," the last of which was "literature, world" prior to 2021, much to the ire of non-Anglophone scholars in the field.

Since then, other scholars have chosen to rehabilitate the "Global Anglophone" by positioning it as a site to critique the limitations of poststructuralist-inflected and ahistorical approaches to reading postcolonial writing. By electing to consider the Anglophone in South Asia as the backdrop for "a South Asian Hindi–Urdu–Bangla language economy," Ragini Tharoor Srinivasan observes how the global Anglophone may ironically provide a rubric that foregrounds the politicisation of culture amidst the presence of other literatures of the subcontinent. Because the study of the postcolonial writing of South Asia is disproportionately dominated by South Asian Anglophone literature and literary cultures, "Anglophone literature from the South Asian subcontinent and its

[13] In her introduction to a special issue on the Global Anglophone, Nasia Anam discusses the disciplinary emergence of the term: http://post45.research.yale.edu/2019/02/introduction-forms-of-the-global-anglophone/

diasporas is the primary archive through which students in the Anglo-American academy encounter South Asia" (312). Srinivasan goes so far as to make the case that, having been the "poster-child" of postcolonial studies, South Asian Anglophone writing "having been intractably postcolonial…[was] never really South Asian at all" (313). Conversely the global Anglophone, if understood reflexively, "detaches South Asian Anglophone literatures from the transnational, transhistorical postcolonial and delivers us (back) to South Asia in its multilingual and regional specificity" (313).

In their introduction to the *Handbook of Anglophone World Literatures* (2020), Stefan Helgesson, Brigit Neumann and Gabriele Rippl further trace the genesis of Anglophone world writing to Erich Auerbach's work. Grounded in philology and a tradition of *weltliteratur*, Auerbach's thinking influenced, in turn, the postcolonial agendas of Edward Said and Homi K. Bhabha as they sought to understand cultural texts produced in exile or migration. By expanding their critical apparatus to apprehend the Anglophone as non-coeval with the universality of global English, the editors foreground the study of a "flexible canon of globally circulating texts," which is textured by the asymmetries of the Anglophone as a circulatory system:

> As open, inherently pluralised and poietic configurations, world literatures are reducible neither "to the materiality of the actual world we inhabit" (Ganguly 2016, 69) nor to their material trajectories spanning different places and periods. Among the plethora of literary strategies of 'worlding' the exploration of the interconnections, tensions and conflicts between the local and the global seems to be a recurring element of many Anglophone world literatures, which respond to histories of globalisation, colonialism, migration and translocation. This concern not only materialises in the topical modelling of transcultural imaginaries and the

> intertwining of the local with the global. It also materialises in the literariness, i.e. the formal repertoire of many world literatures, which thrives on cross-cultural exchange, relationality and connectivity and which points beyond the established centre-periphery model (cf. Neumann and Rippl 2017, 3). (6)

This gradual movement away from "globe" to "world" is instructive for this dissertation, which reckons with the structural and material conditions under which postcolonial writers operate, while striving to understand the nature of worldliness generated by relevant literary texts. This section of the introduction aims to theorise the worldliness, that is, the world-imagining of Anglophone world writing through key theoretical debates. After tracing earlier regional formations that facilitate an exchange of literatures in English, and their limited scope, the discussion then turns to other theories of literary English as the site of an immigrant but postcolonial sensibility in the imperial metropole. The medium of literary English limns the past of empire with the contemporaneity of raced and classed unbelonging in the UK and my overall argument highlights the analogous, though distinct, reframing of Anglophone literature in Southeast Asia and South Asia as a palimpsest of colonial residues in the ongoing postcoloniality of the new millennium. This, in turn, is an attempt to augment existing approaches in the field of world literary studies, which tend towards totalising frameworks anchored in materialist perspectives on textual circulation. By espousing a hermeneutics of reading Anglophone world writing in tandem with the Anglophone as a sociocultural formation, I make a case for how such writing reveals and pluralises the locatedness of identities rendered in English, amidst the heterotemporality implied by the postcolony's modern condition.

What presents a further challenge is that much of my dissertation concerns Anglophone writing from the Philippines, Malaysia and Singapore, which has, to date,

been minimally critiqued or read as world literature because the question of the English language is mostly framed within the educational and political priorities of the nation; and Anglophone writing, within a national, frequently multilingual, literary tradition. Southeast Asia in particular, is a provisional and multifarious unit of study where much literary scholarship faces the challenge of enumerating the region's many countries and cultures, while discussing shared civilisational and colonial histories.[14] In many cases, the concept of Asia was shaped by the geopolitical realities of the Cold War, in which the English language would be conflated with the political agenda of the English-speaking "free world."[15]

In the late 1980s through to the first years of the 1990s, a regional discourse on Asian authors working in English was centred in English Departments in Hong Kong and the Philippines, while the University of Malaya has published two regional Anglophone journals.[16] Amidst enduring postimperial networks, the transnational trajectories of these literary personalities were conceived through older notions of the expatriate, while the term Commonwealth was more commonly used than the postcolonial. Of interest from this period is *S. E. Asia Writes Back!* (1993), an anthology of creative writing and criticism published by Skoob Pacifica in London. With its inclusion of new writing from Malaysia,

---

[14] For an overview of scholarship to date, see "Prolegomena to a Literary History of Southeast Asia" by Rajeev S. Patke, who also credits the Anthology of ASEAN Literatures (1983-2000) with curating a localised selection of writing during the period.

[15] In *Cold War Reckonings*, Jini Kim Watson presents a study of five PEN-organised Asian Writers' Conferences between 1962 to 1981. Even as PEN advocated for the protection of literary freedoms as a universal right, "freedom" in decolonising Asia was equated with an anti-communist stance. Noting the assumed correlations between "free literature," the "essence of Asian culture," and world literature, Watson observes how in this strained formulation, Asian literature can ascend to the status of "great" world literature only by virtue of its anti-communism (40).

[16] The Southeast Asian Writer's Conference (held every two years from 1983 to 1990) led to the publication of *Literature and Liberation* (1988), a collection of five essays by practicing authors on the titular theme. A Symposium on English Literature by Asian authors, hosted by the University of Hong Kong and jointly organised by the British Council in 1990 resulted in the volume *Asian Voices in English* (1991), which features a more expansive list of authors, including the British publisher Leon Comber, the Tamil-Canadian scholar Chelva Kanaganayakam and the diasporic Chinese writer Han Suyin. Two significant literary periodicals also played a role in fostering an exchange of creative and critical work during this period: *Tenggara: The Journal of Southeast Literature* (1967 to 2001) and *SARE: Southeast Asian Review of English* (1980 to present), both published by the University of Malaya.

Singapore, and the Philippines, alongside the texts of Nobel Lectures by Derek Walcott and Wole Soyinka, the volume represents a knowing attempt to ensure the visibility of a now-minoritised region in the fast-growing field of postcolonial writing. Interestingly, editor Ike Ong quotes from Ashcroft and his fellow editors when closing his preface. Postcolonial literary theory, he cites, "deals with the problems of time and space…to construct a future" through an "inherently comparative methodology and the hybridised and syncretic view of the modern world which this implies" (2). That Ong, of Malaysian extraction himself, chose to end his preface with Ashcroft et. al.'s definition of postcolonial literary theory represents an attempt to write back to the geographical limitations of the anthology's namesake, *The Empire Writes Back* (1989), which surveyed the regional unit of the Pacific Rim, extending in an arc from Sydney to Beijing.

As indicated by this brief survey, the transnational dimension of Anglophone literary study has been modulated according to different regional scales. Whether as Southeast Asia, the Pacific Rim or the frustratingly general "Asia," each signals a specific worldliness and a set of epistemic assumptions arising from a historically situated relay of writers, publishers, scholars and literary critics. Yet, as would be germane to the discussion at hand, none of these earlier approaches to literary English view the Anglophone reflexively as a material circuit anchored in English as major language of literary circulation. Though the regional breadth of these symposia and essay collections invites a comparative approach, authors remain identified by country and the nation remains as the naturalised lens of literary study even within the broader and primarily cartographic rubric of postcolonial studies, while the cultural formations and power structures of literary English remain hidden from view.

In his introduction to *S. E. Asia Writes Back!* the literary scholar John McRae muses that "English can, ironically, become the language that will put South East Asia on

the world map as a cultural presence" despite the "multi-racial multi-cultural panoply of the area" being its "greatest creative resource" (11). He laments that some of the early examples of Anglophone writing were imitative of western writers, so that "literature might well have got lost in the rush to become more Western than the West," but acknowledges that attitudes towards the ownership of English as a literary language are changing. Mentioning literary figures as diverse as Rabindranath Tagore and Patrick White, McRae observes that "any English with a voice mature enough to produce a literature in its own context was welcomed onto the world stage as a participant in and a contributor to the ever-larger domain of world literatures in English" (15). A voice in English is said to be "mature" if it reflects "the realities, needs, and aspirations" of its originating culture (15). But beyond making this mimetic connection between lived postcolonial reality and its transmutation into English as a "universal language" of world literatures, McRae does not theorise how literary English would become a vehicle for new originating contexts. Neither does he say more about how the lived realities of Southeast Asia would be universalised in Anglophone writing. While writers such as Edwin Thumboo and F. Sionil Jose have made a case for national literatures in English as decisively reflecting a break in terms of ownership towards the English language, it seems uncertain whether one could entirely own a major, transnational language which circulates so porously across borders.[17] Since then, Asian literature as world literature inherits a co-opting into the Anglosphere of the "free world," where the west has become "the privileged meeting ground for all ostensibly cross-cultural conversations" (Gandhi 136). Other conceptualisations of Asia or Southeast Asia tend to be relegated as partial or peripheral in relation to the liberal west as "world."

[17] Jose and Thumboo elaborate on their views in *Writing Asia: The Literatures in Englishes* (2007).

Returning to the aim of this section to elucidate prior thinking on the worldliness of the Anglophone, the discussion now turns to the conceptualisation of Englishness in the context of metropolitan English literatures in the UK. While this might seem counter-intuitive for a dissertation that desires to locate the Anglophone as a mode of reading away from the centralising pull of the post-imperial centre, literary English is an aesthetic mode of negotiation with migrant identities that enfolds the long aftereffects of empire in a similar configuration to the argument at hand. In *Bad English: Literature, Multilingualism, and the Politics of Language in Contemporary Britain*, Rachael Gilmour provides a fascinating account of how Scottish novelist John Kelman struggled to understand the relationship between his working-class Glasgow language-world "in relation to the operations of English as a globally dominant language, wielding power derived from histories of empire" (39). The key challenge was a set of dominant language ideologies, where standard English "constitutes the language-world of novelistic narration, its often-omniscient voice" (39). In the English novel, the voices of servants and colonial figures are contained and minoritised within dialogue, remaining unmarked by social and political asymmetries which were apparent to a Scottish writer like Kelman. However, by listening and learning from new poetic voices in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly Linton Kwesi Johnson and John Agard, Kelman and his fellow Glaswegian writer Tom Leonard developed an understanding of literary idiom which is politicised in the same gesture as it is localised. Against the backdrop of language activism in the Caribbean as well as Vernacular English and Ebonics in the US, Leonard regarded the vernacular aesthetics of his own writing as part of an international pattern of language insurgency at this time.[18] More than simply the language itself, official, institutionalised English as a standard form

[18] Language debates also took place in India, the Philippines and Malaysia during this period, as mentioned in the previous section of the introduction.

of language "thus appears exposed as an ideological far more than a linguistic object" (7). Such ideologies were tightly enmeshed with standard English debates in Britain during the 1980s and 1990s, where the mastery of proper English linked national order with notions of purity, impurity, nativism, race and class.

As a cultural system, the Anglophone consists of material and socio-political contexts that constitute the cultural politics of literature in English in the countries under study. Often organised according to the cultural production and distributive priorities of a western other, the Anglophone is increasingly reinhabited by the world-imagining of Anglophone Asian writing. Through these literary texts, the Anglophone can become a meta-discursive and critical tool to reveal the perils of taking literary English in South Asia and Southeast Asia as unproblematically homogenised by ideologies of English as a global and universal language. Writing in the same period under scrutiny in Gilmour's book, Stuart Hall has commented extensively on cultural identity during Britain's multicultural turn, which takes place during a weakening of the nation-state and the neoliberal integration of the global economy. In "The Local and the Global: Globalisation and Ethnicity," Hall expounds on the dangers of Englishness as the English eye, which becomes "coterminous with sight itself" and becomes the driving force of an order of representation that persists as a dangerous and narrowly defined nationalistic racism today (20). Folded within the homogenous and homogenising entity of English identity are differences of race, class and gender. In response, "the subjects of the local, of the margin" (34) must reinscribe their hidden histories, not simply as a matter of visibility but as "history without the majority inside it, history as a minority event" (35). To be locally "placed" is to see Englishness as one ethnicity among many other similarly located ethnicities. On the contrary, should any ethnicity view themselves as an exclusive enclave, they put themselves at risk of extremism. As with Hall's insistence on location and a

locational rubric, Anglophone writing, in engaging with an ever-larger terrain of signification, now requires an internal logic of minoritisation—itself an act of location, in order to steer clear of the epistemic anchor of the metropolis.

If we take a long perspective on Englishness, the institutionalisation of the English language in the postcolonies is part of the unfolding and enduring effects of its beginnings in empire. Redefining the Anglophone as critical tool requires a further rethinking of the teleological temporality implied by its origins in a history of British imperialism. In *Maps of Englishness*, Simon Gikandi discusses the production of modern Englishness and the instrumental implication of colonial spaces and subjects through cultural texts from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, ranging from the Victorian travel narratives of Mary Kingsley and Mary Seacole to novels by Joseph Conrad and Salman Rushdie. Despite decolonisation and the political independence of Britain's ex-colonies, and their best efforts to assert a new national identity by breaking with the past, the colonial episteme persists in the "idea of bourgeois civility and identity" as desired and emulated by the colonised middle classes amidst the larger national project of political independence and economic development (32). This is especially so with new nations whose borders and peoples were assembled through the complicated history of colonialism, and as part of migration and resettlement during the imperial era. Postcolonial theory, Gikandi attests, needs to "recover the circumstances that produced colonial and postcolonial cultures and texts." He proposes that empire be read "(a) within its founding mythologies (which need to be demystified); (b) from the perspective of its inevitable end (its apoplectic moment of closure); and (c) in relation to the dialectical configuration of metropolitan identities after empire" (33). The last, as Gikandi observes, is a process driven by the insight that Britain can only be fully understood in relation to its colonies. Without reducing the debate to a matter of relativism between postimperial metropole and former colonies, Gikandi

explains that the dialectic between the two inheres in a "temporal disjunction" between empire and newly independent nation, where the latter inaugurates its own teleology, mimicking the logic of empire itself through a fresh telos. Therefore "postimperial identities [are] possible only in a temporality and cartography that transcend empire and nation and their founding mythologies of origins, of home, of unique subjectivities" (195).

Building on Gikandi's discussion, and reverting to the perspective of the Asian countries under study, I contend that the manner of transcending the monologic of origins unfolds differently from the locus of the postmillennial nation as a former colony. Whereas Gikandi's main argument concerns Englishness in its "postmortem, in order to claim a space in the metropolis" (212), I examine how economic and educational contexts relating to the English language in the postcolonial and developmental nation generate a localised framework of the Anglophone, which nonetheless remains imbricated with the residue of its origins in empire. In refining our understanding of the Anglophone in the world from a more resolutely postcolonial perspective, it is necessary, quoting Gikandi for my present purposes, to ask "what does it mean for a formerly colonised subject to read the culture of Englishness?" (19). Even from the viewpoint of a later generation who has not experienced colonial rule, it is equally important to "read the culture of colonialism inside and outside Englishness" and "the Great Tradition [of English literature] simultaneously as the vector of the same and the other" (19). Whereas Gikandi has as his focus, a revised conceptualisation of Britishness, a model of migrancy that exceeds the nation as concept and methodology does not fully reckon with the force of national literary traditions in postcolonies, where English remains an important literary medium that is not always sutured to the cultural baggage of ethnic Englishness.

In my theorising of the Anglophone world writing as a reading model, this inside-ness and outside-ness of English was earlier described as an integration of the globalised

west within Asian societies. This reterritorialisation, whether as the language of India's upwardly mobile middle-classes or Malaysia's outwardly mobile diaspora, is constantly shadowed by a deterritorialising, centripetal proclivity of English as a global language. The entanglement of the postcolonial and the transnational comprises a specific worldliness that this thesis defines as Anglophone worldliness—a definition that restores the visibility and fraught contours of language as a cultural medium for the reading of world literature, which was inaugurated as a field through totalising frameworks which materialised language as a neutral mode of circulation. Concurrently, bringing the cultural and literary ramifications of English into view from the locus of the postcolony means that the Anglophone as critical tool is historicised as a hermeneutical framework for reading. Folded within this is the notion of minor transnationalism, which as defined by Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih, refers to the implication of the transnational in the processes of global capital while being "a space of exchange and participation wherever processes of hybridisation occur and where it is still possible for cultures to be produced and performed without necessary mediation by the center" (5). My emphasis on worldliness, as enfolding the transnational, makes visible the status of English as a universal language and the language of modern knowledge production. When considered against the broader spectrum of Anglophone cultures, literary English reproduces residual colonial formations as much as it enables a world writing that engages and exceeds literature in English as a postcolonial inheritance.

Localising the Anglophone in World Literary Studies

The field of world literature is generally understood to have been inaugurated by three seminal works, *The World Republic of Letters* (1999) by Pascale Casanova,[19] *Conjectures*

[19] First published in French in 1999, and subsequently translated into English in 2004.

on World Literature (2000) by Franco Moretti and *What is World Literature* (2003) by David Damrosch. Both Damrosch and Moretti claim world literature at the scale of the world, with the former employing a rigorous materialist focus on the circulation of texts as an approach to literary reading, and the latter developing a model of distant reading. While the presence of multiple languages and the importance of translation as part of the wider machinery of textual circulation is implicit in both Damrosch's and Moretti's models, the in-between place between languages is a point of transit that naturalises each language as a linguistic container. Casanova, by contrast, equates translation into French with the consecratory power of literary taste making centred on Paris, but does not actively consider how the Francophone manifests differently elsewhere. A parallel scenario would, of course, be the Anglophone as a major circulatory language, seemingly universal and neutral to those who exercise sufficient cultural facility. In many locations in South Asia and Southeast Asia, however, the English language and the Anglophone as a consecratory system, is never depoliticised, if only by contrast with other languages in a multilingual environment.

Hence in Casanova's approach, we lose sight of what Jonathan Arac calls language-ness as a universalising tendency at the world-scale, that is more aligned with notions of "globe" rather than "world." In "Anglo-Globalism?" Arac discusses how competency in classical European languages is no longer sufficient to deal with the expanding horizon of literatures in the discipline of comparative literature. Herein resides the thrill of Moretti's theorising of distant reading as an enlarged comparative unit, which leaves linguistic competence to national literatures, allowing the comparative scholar to aggregate these localised scholarly efforts through a broader study of form as evolution (39). However, Moretti's formulation troubles Arac: in view of a new global order emerging in the 1990s, the end result tends towards a mistaken idiom of capacious address

that allows for a "covert imperialism" in the form of "the diminishment of language-based criticism in favour of a monolingual master scheme" (44), that is, the globalised usage of English and study of literatures as part of the global Anglophone. More than the submerged linguistic ideologies which Gilmour discusses extensively or Hall's insights into the local and the minor, Arac's perspective suggests that literary writing in English should be read with full awareness that the Anglophone is an overdetermined site of cultural production which draws on both colonial and postcolonial knowledge rubrics.

In the ironically titled *Forget English!* Aamir Mufti observes how "hidden inside world literature is the dominance of global English," a dominance so hegemonic that the Anglophone has "taken the form of a reification or even an apotheosis," erasing the historical scene of its emergence as a "transparently universal good" (13). Mufti goes on to make a case for a further examination of the "*cultural system* of English" as "World Anglophone literature," which encompasses long and complex processes of linguistic assimilation and literary acquisition (12-13, italics original). Whether as the language of composition, of reading or of translation, the cultural rubric of English is present as a crucial, though often invisible interface, which requires further critique and study. For Mufti, the example of Indianised English in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* is a diverting heterogeneity that is packaged as "one of its supposedly exotic pleasures" (160). The earthy, vernacular speech of Padma, who is the constant companion of Saleem Sinai in the novel, is less mimetic of the social type she purportedly represents, than of "Hinglish" or the Anglophone speech habits of urban middle-class Indians. Hence the representation of vernacular speech and corresponding "life forms" in the Anglophone novel "is a means of *bridging a certain type of social distance* characteristic of postcolonial society, either within the nation-state or across a wider geopolitical

landscape" (163, italics original) even as such Anglophone heteroglossia submerges and erases the social and political structures contributing to such distinctions.

By way of contrast, Mufti presents a short study of the ghazal form, focusing on Agha Shahid Ali's Anglophone translations of Faiz's verse in Urdu, which read more as adaptations or transcreations. Unlike the Pakistani Anglophone novel, which he views as already subject to the same exonormative pressures as the Indian novel in English, Mufti provides several close-readings to illustrate how, in "this transposition from Urdu into English," an adequate reading requires a "non-national—that is, *exilic*—social imaginary" (194, italics original) that reflects Urdu as the linguistic and cultural other of the subcontinent. Shahid's other ghazals, such as "Beyond English" and "In Arabic," perform remarkable relays between English and other vernacular spaces, bringing to light "the submerged network of relations between the cultural system of English and vernacular spaces" (195). These poems, Mufti observes, "seem to express a desire for a *world culture* but see it as a space of disturbance or conflict" (200, italics original), revealing the importance of understanding interlinguistic contours as cultural expression, in excess of nationalising and centralising approaches to reading literature. This leaves us with "a world English that is just a bit less naturalised as the language of poetry" (200).

Forget English! highlights how a scrupulous awareness of the power formations underlying such historically situated interactions between languages is important. The volume also answers Arac's earlier call that we attend to the limitations of a monolingual master scheme. In a similar vein, Emily Apter's important work, *Against World Literature*, has now been accepted as an important response to some of the clumsier conceptualisations of the field, where the curricula for world literature, in its featuring of diverse literary traditions, assumes a reflexive and touristic cultural equivalence, organised in terms of nationally and ethnically branded "differences" (2). Evoking untranslatability

as a "deflationary gesture" (3) towards such conceptualisations of World Literature, which she capitalises to indicate its tendency towards oneworldedness, Apter does not excuse translational studies from falling into the trap of plurality and horizontality when translation is assumed, uncritically, to be transparent. Instead, she refers to Peter Osborne's definition of the untranslatable as the site of "fractured histories of translation" (41) and further elucidates the intellectual history of translation through an exegesis of Barbara Cassin's *Vocabulaire européen des philosophies: le dictionnaire des intraduisibles*, in which the word "translation" is shown to be nationally marked. The untranslatable then, if one is to truly evade what Apter astutely terms the "trademarked political zones" marked by national and ethnic labels, must be seen as the site of a "militant semiotic intransigence," grammatically intelligible but otherwise having the force of non-sense (41). Although commonly understood to lead to an equivalence between source and target languages, translations themselves have been perceived as introducing creative differences into major languages and dislodging cultural or significatory fixity (Bassnett 156). Thus a translational model of comparative reading must be able to accommodate the disruptive poesis of the untranslatable, which Apter further defines as a "a critical praxis capable of adjusting literary technics—interlinear translation, exegesis, gloss, close reading—to the exigencies of a contemporary language politics" (49).

A translational approach to Anglophone world writing subverts literary English, though not necessarily from the perspective of another language. The Anglophone cultural system presents a distinct set of challenges owing not only to its assumed universality, but the resolute claim that writers have made to inhabit English as their own, from Toru Dutt to Joseph Conrad and the masters of Philippine fiction such as Nick Joaquin. Like translation, the Anglophone harbours the potential for being illuminated as a comparative exercise for contexts that are not neatly trans-national or cross-cultural, from the

perspective of fictionists and poets for whom English is a universal and local idiom, but never national in its claim on identity. Adopting Apter's term, the "critical praxis" of Anglophone world writing hails from literary production and reading that detach English-ing from Englishness, even as such writing is read and circulated through the networks of the UK-US publishing industry. Instead of a postimperial emphasis on a canon of English letters, Anglophone worldliness brings together the multifarious ways in which literary English has been instituted in local contexts, with an emphasis on an unfinished postcolonial project in a transnational age. The "untranslatable" in Apter's thinking becomes, for my discussion, a reframing of the terms of critique for literatures in English, where national traditions of literary study are discussed in relation to English as an elite language of colonial inheritance, as much as the language itself coheres the reality of transnational economic and symbolic flows.

As will be discussed further in the next section, Anglophone world writing harnesses the expanded scale of global trajectories to enact multifarious re-visionings of history and cultural identities, putting the localised institutionalisation of English into play amidst a transnational worlding. Whether as a common language pivoting between racialised identities in Singapore, or as the idiom of Manila's elite Hispanic set, to write post-colonially in English and in the new millennium interrogates the heft and weave of colonial and national histories in these contexts. In an Anglophone world text, the deterritorialising trajectories of the Anglophone are employed to reinvent localised spatialities and temporalities, as much as these are set in motion across geographical, temporal and cultural borders—a reterritorialisation of literary English according to the priorities of the postcolonial in the new millennium. In the pluralised and reimagined relationalities of the Anglophone world text, new worlds are opened in a way that modulates the nature of Anglophone writing itself.

From Worldliness to Reading the World Anglophone Text

Having touched briefly on the Anglophone literary spheres of Malaysia and Singapore, I turn in this closing section of the introduction to the third major Anglophone country in Southeast Asia, the Philippines. The corollary to reading Anglophone world writing is of course writing the Anglophone world, but very often authors from less prominent locations on the international circuit are asked to augment their work through a self-performance of their cultural personas. In an essay published in Manila in 2003, the Australian-Filipino poet, novelist and playwright Merlinda Bobis describes how she could not write in English during in her first years in Australia, where she moved to begin a creative doctorate in 1991. In "Border Lover," she queries, "how does one negotiate through the border: from Bikol to Pilipino, to English, and then back? Or from poetry to drama then to the short story, then to the novel? How does the writer cross over to the realm of performance?" (119). Filled with the anguish of dislocation and "dumbness," she sought out dance as a "survival exercise." She danced traditional Filipino dances in her small cold flat to Joey Ayala's music until the first lines of her next major work emerged from a "an act of 'word-ing the body'" ("Border Lover" 125). Though she began her time abroad with fears "that English would colonise [her] all over again and side line [her] Pilipino," it was through such artistic self-scrutiny, as expressed in the afterlife of this essay, that Bobis is able to assert herself. "So English is mine," she concludes, "I cannot be colonised by it" ("Border Lover" 127).

Throughout her writing career, Bobis is all too aware of how her Filipino "otherness is legitimised, packaged and consumed within the Australian nation" ("The Asian Conspiracy" 3). A declarative statement like this takes aim at the literary gatekeeping of Australia's publishing industry, as prompted by the multilingual milieux of her first home in the Philippines, where the designation of Tagalog-based Filipino as a

national language in the 1987 constitution led to a massive outcry from other non-Tagalog regions, and resulted in both English and Filipino being designated as official languages. Hence reading the local in Anglophone world writing means attending to the way locality, especially localised attitudes towards English, are produced in mobility, while refusing to conflate such trajectories with global capital flows. Instead, accounts of writerly being such as Bobis's indicate how important it is to view the border-crossing of a transnational writer as an energetic relay between postcoloniality in the longue durée and the homogenising pressures of global English as funnelled through Anglophone publishing.

These entangled contexts of textualization resemble B. Venkat Mani's concept of bibliomigrancy, defined as "the physical and virtual movement of books," which "manifests itself though many material nodes" including publishers, booksellers, authors, readers, collectors and political groups, among others (39). National literary space shapes, and is shaped, by world literary space in shared political and historical moments. For Mani, world literature is not necessarily a choice between distant and close readings, or an escape from national traditions into the broader discourse of worldly circulation. Neither is it a consolidation of world literature according to a single centre of literary production. Instead, it is "the productive tension between these binaries that gives world literature its many contested meanings, which in fact are in turn historically constructed, culturally located, and politically charged" (33). Bibliomigrancy, in turn, responds to this need to theorise the material and symbolic circuitry underlying such tensions. Building on Mani's approach, this dissertation asserts that Anglophone worldliness is a processual, relational nexus in which South and Southeast Asian Anglophone writers operate, while the nation itself is constantly renegotiated as a category—a gravitational locus that my argument puts forth as a hermeneutic frame for reading postcolonial writing in a transnational moment.

In *What is a Classic?* Ankhi Mukherjee reads the literary classic as a question, which "signals the kind of agonistic debate that enables the literary-critical field to produce its own criteria for cultural distinction" (13). Under the auspices of a "a deterritorialised world," the literary critic faces the dual challenge of maintaining a "critical distance from the object of inquiry," while actively scrutinising "his or her own emplacement and affiliations" (13). With reference to Edward Said's thinking on the role of the critic, Mukherjee outlines the ethical stakes of being an individual critic who articulates "the time, space, and critical language" of a world in which literature circulates on an enlarged spatial axis, without being co-opted into the "dominant culture" of the humanities (13-14). Accordingly the classics discussed in the volume as whole are re-read at the limits of the nation and the peripheries of the globe, while advancing a model of critique that attends to an active "rewriting or restaging [of] canonical value" (23). Writing about the prolepsis and radical aesthetics of Conrad's fiction, and alluding to Homi K. Bhabha's *The Location of Culture*, Mukherjee views his novels as enacting a "a vision of literature and a lesson of history" through a "contestatory resituation of history on spatial, rather than temporal axes, and as simultaneity" (56). Like Mukherjee's seminal work, my dissertation pushes both outwards, towards redefining Anglophone world writing as a critical framework, and inwards, towards a readerly praxis that recognises how Anglophone writing is negotiated within textual aesthetics. Though not all of the texts I discuss would be considered classics, each demonstrates an ability to work with situated histories and contexts of mobility to reinvent the Anglophone as a readerly framework.

Therefore, in defining the worldliness of Anglophone world writing, I consciously defect from the concept of world as a totality, to insist on world as verb and worlding as

process.[20] Even as Anglophone world writing derives much of its scale from being transnationally addressed and circulated, this material basis is reinvented within the literary text as an imaginative, excessive mediation of sociopolitical realities. Through worlding as an aesthetic process, literary texts powerfully redefine the Anglophone as non-Anglocentric. Throughout this dissertation, worlding is understood as a diegesis arising from the formal qualities of the literary work, which in turn shapes the reader's epistemic reception of the sociocultural realities that are depicted. In *On Literary Worlds*, Eric Hayot goes beyond two conventional understandings of the world of a literary work as the author's sociohistorical milieux (Balzac's world of early nineteenth century Paris, for instance) and the "world of the work of art" which is "the unity of form, diegesis, and feeling composed by the rough totality of a work" (43). He sharpens the second sense as an "aesthetic world," which is "the diegetic totality constituted by the sum of all aspects of a single work or work-part, constellated into a structure or system that amounts to a whole" (44). This diegesis may not necessarily have a basis in the unfolding of plot or the depiction of setting. Even a haiku in which nothing happens, Hayot explains, constitutes a world through the "total unity created by the arrangement of its references (or refusals, in some cases, to refer)" (44). Literary worlds, therefore, are "always a relation to and a theory of the lived world, whether as a largely preconscious normative construct, a rearticulation, or even an active refusal of the world-norms of their age" (45-46). In the texts that I examine, Anglophone worlding takes place as a theorisation of such world-norms, instead of simply a mimesis; a disruption and a re-orientation of literary practice away from being monocultural and circumscribed by national borders while reactivating

[20] In focusing on the Anglophone in relation to the postcolonial I have chosen to work with the most relevant debates, but this is not to say that excellent work has not been done in relation to literary reading within "world" as a totalising formation, including the Warwick Research Collective (WReC)'s conceptualisation of formal 'irrealist' features historicised within the Troskyist framework of combined and uneven development in the modern world-system, and Debjani Ganguly's scholarship on a poetics of mediated witnessing in the contemporary novel as global form in *This Thing Called the World*.

residual colonial formations in conversation with the concerns of the transnational moment. What results is not postmodernist pastiche but a literary re-worlding that is internally coherent, and ontologically possible as a set of propositions that challenges the colonial origins of English.[21]

As part of a historical formalist approach, I read Anglophone worlding as an inventive endeavour that unfolds spatiality and temporality according to an emergent sense of what it means to be postcolonial half a century after political independence. Amidst the affordances of transnational circulation, Anglophone worldliness in terms of textual aesthetics speaks powerfully to the imperfect choice of literary English in the South Asian and Southeast Asian context. Refusing a return to precolonial authenticity while grappling with how postcolonial modernity unfolds through the transnational integration of a global market for literature, Anglophone world writing is of its time, while being out-of-time. In this sense, the novels, short stories and poetry under study are, as Pheng Cheah observes of literary work written "within the processes of globalisation," immanent towards such processes through "the temporal force of worlding" (*What is a World?* 17). As Cheah explains further, "to be 'immanent' is to be part of the circuits of globalisation, to subtend them as an irreducible part of their structure and to exceed them from within by drawing on what constitutes them as an effective resource for opening new worlds" (*What is a World?* 17).

The individual chapters of the thesis aim to demonstrate a hermeneutics of reading Anglophone world texts, in order to advance a further theorising of Anglophone worldliness. Though the postcolonial contexts of India, the Philippines, Malaysia and

[21] In "Diegesis and Representation," Remigius Bunia discusses the intellectual history of diegesis and makes a distinction between mimesis following Platonic philosophical thinking and its redefinition by narratologists as a matter of world semantics, following Gottfried Wilhelm Leibniz's analytic concept of a world. A fictional world may be described and communicated about as a set of propositions that assume completion and coherence (697).

Singapore are unique and non-identical, the literary works chosen illustrate how English is a site for the flashpoints of colonial history to be worked through at a temporal remove—a distant writing as opposed to a distant reading, and a distance further textured by the exigencies of the Anglophone book market. At the same time, I am fully cognisant of the immense corpus of Anglophone writing from 1990 to 2010 that could be potentially examined.[22] However, because worlding reconfigures broad sociocultural formations through the aesthetic features of a text, I have chosen to discuss specific authors and their works as symptomatic, rather than as representative, of the way in which transnational and postcolonial considerations co-mingle. In doing so, this dissertation does not aim to present an exhaustive list of interpretative approaches for the meta-genre of Anglophone world writing, only those which are most striking as an invitation to further discussion. These relate to reading worldliness at the scope of the transnational and transhistorical, to cultural exchange centred on the minor and the plural, as well as the representation of character and voice performed through an Anglophone medium resonant with other histories and futurities. By turns resistant, resentful, unforgetting or tactically forgetful, Anglophone worlding in these literary texts slips inventively across spatiotemporal scales and seeks to remain non-totalising at its widest ambit. Through counterpoint voices and plays on positionality and intersubjectivity, such writing troubles the relationship of character to nation and historical era while reframing vestigial colonial formations for the post-millennium.

The opening chapter, "The Small Human Space in the World at Large: Reading Kiran Desai in the New Millennium," features Kiran Desai, not only for her Booker Prize fame, but because her two novels, published in 1998 and 2007, bookend a period of

[22] The sole exception is Arthur Yap, whose poetry of the 1970s and 1980s is discussed as an important precursor to later work in Singlish.

transition in India when economic liberalisation made middle-class and diasporic Indians the users and consumers of global English. The aesthetics of worlding come to the forefront in her prize-winning second novel, *The Inheritance of Loss*, which follows the trajectories of the global economy in order to protest the injustices attending those who must attempt journeys across borders. Such deeply-imagined and gently satirical writing cannot be pigeonholed as auto-exoticism in its in its marshalling of multifarious histories and traditions, and its de-centring of both the nation of India as a monolithic entity and literature in English as Anglo- or US-centric. This first chapter makes a case for Anglophone world writing to be read beyond a value regime of the marginal and exotic, which commodifies national culture for the global market. World-making is at the heart of the Anglophone world text in responding to these frames of valuation, and the discussion outlines how connectedness and amplitude are textual features that showcase the relationship between *Inheritance* as diegesis and the ontic world.

Chapter Two expands the discussion of Anglophone worlding to temporality, while marking a transition to more peripheral literary communities which have been minimally visible on the world stage. Titled "Borrowing from Time: Worlding the Past in the Fiction of Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng," this chapter examines recent Anglophone writing in Malaysia in relation to the country's postcolonial ethnonationalism, with the Anglo-American publishing industry serving as a transnational and liberatory space for critique. Discussing novels by Man Asian Literary Prize winner Tan Twan Eng, and his contemporary, Preeta Samarasan, this chapter makes the case that literary forms in their work relate in particular to temporality and memory, and in their outward, transnational address, serve to re-figure race as an all-pervasive identity in Malaysia. Here the term "Anglophone" is multi-axial, indicating not only Malaysia's status as a British former colony with its localised politics of "race" as a communal structure of difference, but also

how Anglophone Malaysian writing is a particularly mobile form that reworks historical material as a capacious assemblage for a transnational audience.

Anglophone world writing as a meta-genre is thus an important site of deterritorialisation, where world-making and history-making are related to the distancing effects of being a mobile or diasporic author. "Figurations of the Filipina: *Fish-Hair Woman* and *La India* as Philippines Anglophone World Writing" proposes the notion of a world-character, who focalises the aesthetic operations of textual worlding, even as the unitary notion of character comes under the strain of insurrectionary and divergent desires. This third chapter discusses how such a personage crosses physical and temporal divides, and in the localised context of the Philippines, evinces a non-unified and spectral presence that reflects how postcoloniality is often a matter of colonial hauntings, with the state repression of successive uprisings echoing the brutality of the American colonisers. By examining the literary prose of two women writers, Merlinda Bobis and Rosario Cruz-Lucero, for whom the Filipina is a creative figure, this chapter considers the transnational Filipina as a richly imaginative trope. Their literary works comment on both class tensions and the unfinished postcolonial articulation of Filipino identity in the context of the Philippines's continued relationship with the Anglo-American sphere, with Anglophone Filipino writing being an important medium to express these ongoing negotiations.

Finally, the thesis closes by looking at the Anglophone voice within the genre of poetry, through the localised play of postcolonial cultural identities that enlarges notions of Anglophone worldliness. Having surveyed worlding as an epistemic process in the depiction of multifarious and expanded spatiotemporal terrains, the question of poetic voice in the lyric present-time of worlding elaborates on the growing ontological focus in the third chapter. The nature of one's being, as discussed in "Singlish-ing as Worlding: The Poetics and Politics of Arthur Yap, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan," is deeply related to

how literary English is reinvented, in the poem as event, to reflect a postcolonial and multilingual milieux in Singapore. In this final chapter, I explore the evolution of Singlish or colloquial Singaporean English as a distinct literary register that challenges the technocratic management of cultural identities by the postcolonial state. By tracing how poetry in Singlish began from Arthur Yap's pre-Singlish grammar games, the chapter makes a case for an oppositional Singlish poetics in the work of two young poets, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan. Through a playful mimicry of voices and counterpoint voices, their poems express a revisionist and decolonial stance towards the relationship between language and cultural identity, as well as a further minoritisation of English as a universal language.

As I have suggested in this introduction, the Anglophone world text can be apprehended through different modes of Anglophone worldliness, from the operations of memory within narrative to the Anglographic inscription of Singlish poems. Across this dissertation's four chapters, the material circuits of English as a major language comprise a pretext and a departure for discussing the intersection between localised contexts of literary English and their transnational ramifications in the long durée of the postcolonial or the globalised literary marketplace. By its multifarious nature, Anglophone world writing exceeds materialist and sociological frames of reading derived from the publishing industry as well as an Anglocentric focus on the postimperial metropole. Yet, the outward diffusion of these literary works entails a re-orientation of the postcolonial in the new millennium, especially when reimagined as literary worlds that negotiate the extended and disjunctive space-time of the transnational.

In this argument for a re-worlding of Anglophone literature, what was previously conceived as writing and reading from minor locations is now understood as pluralised relationality, intimated through the scene from *The Garden of Evening Mists* at the start of

this introduction. As Yun Ling and Aritomo discuss Shelley and the naming of a pavilion, the Muslim carpenter Mahmood and his son Rizal are deep in prayer, off-camera as it were. They “touched their heads to the ground one last time” just as Yun Ling finishes her recitation, revealing yet another worldly radius rippling outwards from the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia. Through the capacity of the literary text for reimagining worldliness, both the epistemic moorings and ontological positionings of characters, speakers and by extension, readers, are re-situated. Indeed, there is no other world within Anglophone world writing, where the otherness of the Anglophone is carried within ourselves and reterritorialised as an ongoing interrogation.

Chapter 1
The Small Human Space in the World at Large: Reading Kiran Desai in the New Millennium

One of the most famous scenes in Kiran Desai's Booker-winning second novel features seventeen-year-old Sai and a *National Geographic* Inflatable Globe that arrives by post at Cho Oyu, a bungalow wreathed around by the Himalayan mists under the imposing façade of Kanchenjunga. "Rarely was there something unexpected in the mail and never anything so beautiful," the omniscient narrator comments, with the characteristic pessimism of one who lives on the periphery of the world. The accompanying note espouses the American magazine's view of its readers as "adventure-loving individuals pushing the frontiers of knowledge," erstwhile universal and Cartesian subjects on the *terra incognita* of the globe. However, as Sai and the cook marvel at the vast terrains apparent at a glance, with its "fresh spring colours of green and yellow, the snow at the poles," earth is revealed as the home of traveling, striving individuals such as the cook's son in New York, working as an illegal kitchen hand. They immediately notice something odd in the orb's gradual rotation, where "India went first with the day, a funny back-to-front fact that didn't seem mirrored by any other circumstance involving the two nations," a reminder of the invisible hierarchies that structure the flows of capital in the global market (18). Kalimpong, where *The Inheritance of Loss* has its primary setting, is after all, a hill station established in the heyday of British imperialism at the nexus of Tibetan, Nepali and Indian cultures.

In this first chapter, I read Kiran Desai's two published novels, *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* (1998) and *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) as bookending a period of transition, during which the critical lens of the postcolonial nation is deemed secondary to concerns of migrancy, transnationalism and globalisation. Though seemingly romantic and quietist in tone, Sai's encounter with the totality of the globe in fact dilates and contextualises spatiality while sharpening the focus on the border-crossing individual. This

shift from a national mode of reading to an enlarged focus on diasporic authors takes place amidst a larger ferment within the field of postcolonial studies, which has needed to negotiate an increasing focus on the category of "world" in relation to literary reading. The globalising dimension of English, which at its most extreme would be "Globish" – an oversimplified language that facilitates cross-border exchanges – stands in contrast to the capacity of literary language for singularity and invention (Král 838). In considering the aesthetics of worlding in Desai's novels, the two modes of English are not discrete—the enlarged spatial and temporal scale of these narratives enacts an aesthetics of worlding which follows the trajectories of the global economy. *The Inheritance of Loss* (hereafter *Inheritance*) locates these transnational crossings in the charged specificity of Kalimpong and the Himalayan borderlands of India, simultaneously de-centering the nation and localising global flows.

The deeply imagined, gently satirical and cogently charged nature of *Inheritance* cannot be viewed as simply the monologic address of a western readership, with the inclusion of characters like Lola and Nola. Elderly Bengali twin sisters whose Anglophilia is consistently ironised and humanised in the same gesture, they are always "searching for a certain angled light with which to romance themselves, to locate what had been conjured only as a tale to tell before the Royal Geographic Society" (247). Despite such a measured approach, critics have charged Desai with an alienating and insensitive portrayal of Indian Nepalis and the Gorkha uprising in the Darjeeling region. Accusing Desai of siding with the Anglicised Bengali middle-class in Kalimpong, the diasporic Indian Nepali critic Satis Shroff has harsh words for her as "a supercilious brown-memsahib… in her attitude towards Gorkhalis (sic) and the downtrodden of her own country" (Shroff). These comments may come across as debilitating, but Shroff's expectation that the traditions, language and religion of Indian Nepalis be more fully depicted in Desai's Kalimpong is

not unreasonable. Interestingly, his comments conflate Anglicisation, Kalimpong's upper middle-class and Desai as a considerably more mobile member of India's diaspora.

The Anglophone nature of Desai's work could be read more critically for these slippages between a localised Anglophone cultural idiom as a matter of class and ethnicity, and the Anglo-American publishing industry as the broader field in which her novels are produced and read. Literary texts such as *Inheritance* depict a parallel between India's colonial history and its neo-imperial implication in transnational networks. The form of the novel, or, more precisely, the perspective from which its narrative is constructed, comprises an Anglophone worldliness—a stance which employs literary English in a manner that is not automatically commodified or exoticised, and which in its marshalling of multifarious histories and traditions decentres both the nation of India as a monolithic entity and literature in English as UK- or US-centric. Yet this mode of Anglophone worldliness seems to effect a further cultural and linguistic erasure due to its projection of a worldly perspective; an example being Desai's portrayal of the Indian Nepali community.

In order to elucidate the origins of this seeming contradiction at the heart of the Anglophone as a literary mode, this chapter scrutinises the formalistic and narrative pivots necessary for a continued relationality between what Desai has called in an interview "the small human space" ("Talk Asia") and the scale of the global. A close study of her two published novels yields insights into the aesthetics of worlding one of the globe's best-loved and yet overly-exoticised cultures. The discussion will show how the cultural discourse of English can be understood firstly, as a global literary language for writers from India and secondly, as a literary rendering of Indian cultural identity in the publishing industry at large. Both frames are crucial for understanding world-making in Desai's novels, which reflect and resist the larger structures that institutionalise English as a

literary language in a transnational space. By first locating Kiran Desai as a diasporic Indian writer and one of a golden generation representing her homeland to the world, the discussion traces how her first novel inflects a worlding that is limited, to a significant extent, by the priorities of circulation and transmission as a literary commodity. The chapter then turns to an examination of *Inheritance* in the context of re-Orientalism to understand the shifts that have taken place in the cultural discourse surrounding the Anglophone world text, and the persistence of cultural and linguistic erasure in Desai's representation of Indian Nepalis.

The eight years in between Desai's two novels encompass a tumultuous decade in Indian writing in English, though it remains a relatively under-theorised period during which the notions of "Indian" and "English" would be re-oriented by the country's second decade of economic liberation and increasing implication in the global economy. Her first novel, *Hullabaloo*, was published in 1998, just after India's fiftieth year of independence. Close to a decade later, *Inheritance* earned Desai the Booker Prize in 2006. Significantly, many of the most popular Indian authors during this period are also diasporic writers (Lau 579). The first decade of the twenty-first century can also be characterised by an increasing scepticism within academic circles towards the popularity of authors like these published by major presses in the Anglophone metropoles. Various critics have pointed to the commodification of exoticism (Huggan), the collusion of such authors with the exigencies of the book market (Brouillette), a construction of otherness pitched at western audiences (Meenakshi Mukherjee) and the importance of considering the dual address of the South Asian novel towards audiences at home and abroad (Tickell). While such considerations reveal literary prizes and the publication industry to be important sites of cultural production, these relays are located in the larger assemblage of Anglophone writing as a network of material circuits. Anglophone world writing, of which this chapter proposes

that Desai's novels are examples, works with and through processes of commodification and re-Orientalism as "regimes of value" (Huggan 6) to enact worlding in the literary text.

By beginning with the ever-popular and best-selling field of diasporic Indian writing in English, this chapter lays the groundwork for later chapters by delinking the Anglophone as a literary category both from a national frame of literature(s) in English and from the reduction of the Anglophone text to its materialist dimension as a commodity in circulation. In seeking to understand world-making as the core function of the Anglophone world text, a discussion of Desai's work illustrates how worlding functions as a catalyst of relational significances on an expanded scale beyond the nation. As with the other chapters in this dissertation, Anglophone is to be understood as a cognate of polyphone, to resist previous understandings of the term as Anglocentric or as a collusion with the politics of the Anglo-American aegis. In order to remain true to the spirit of postcolonial resistance, the literary value of writing in English is less about the continued effects of British imperialism and more about Anglophonic relationalities articulated by cultural heteroglossia in the globalised postcolonial nation.

India in the World; India as the World

Literary worlding for Desai is allied with her personal experience of books as worlds unto themselves. In a 2014 interview, she reflects on her childhood in Delhi, at a time before India opened up to economic globalisation ("The World Arrived in Books"). The bookshelf was a portal to the outside world and English as Desai's "reading language" played a part in making it a disproportionately international selection, as India's Anglophone publishing output at the time was minimal. For the young Kiran Desai, "the world of books seemed more vivid and magical than the actual real world." If we can take this as an expression of her understanding of literary worlding, then the poesis that occurs

in literary texts is not simply mimetic but lush epistemic theorising. In the same interview, Desai ruminates on how "the world didn't arrive in any other way other than books." In the house she shared with her parents, her mother and her "read as if we were exiles." Reading is an experience replete with notions of travel, escape and reinvention, which are also reflected in Desai's approach to worlding in *Hullabaloo* and *Inheritance*. Such propositions, in Desai's novels, are aesthetic operations which bring India into view for the general Anglophone reader, while literary worlding continues to function as a site for resistance and alternative imaginings of India's relationship to the globe.[23]

Desai's self-conception as an author writing and dreaming at a remove from the real world and by implication, the real India, runs counter to the discourse of a rising, optimistic nation in the decade between the publication of her novels. Best epitomised by "India vs. India," a video produced by the Times of India group at the start of its India Poised initiative in 2007, the two-minute monochrome clip stars Amitabh Bachchan in a business suit strolling along an unfinished multi-lane freeway stretching over the sea. Though the aim of the newspaper campaign was to celebrate India's successes on the world stage amidst an assessment of various sectors that needed improvement, the evocative rhetoric conveys the epic narrative of an India predestined for greatness at "the edge of time's precipice." "There are two Indias in this country," Bachchan observes with his signature gravitas, one "straining at the leash, eager to spring forth and live up to the adjectives that the world has recently been showering upon us" and another "the leash." Against the India that "lurks in the scepticism of our minds" is an India that "lives in the optimism of our hearts." The publication of *Inheritance* a year earlier, with its location in the borderlands of India and its poignant portrayal of a colonially-inflected township

[23] In my introduction, I have linked worlding as a epistemological project to the unfolding of a new imaginative locus.

would have seemed unpatriotic amidst the effervescent discourse of a country ready to take its place among other economic giants. That Desai's novel does not clearly belong to either India, points to the way the world-imagining of the diasporic Indian literary text in English pulls away from the centralising force of the nation, allowing for both critical distance and attention towards those excluded from the totalising rhetoric of the nation's fast-growing economy. In light of the Modi government's "one nation, one market" approach in addition to "one language, one religion, one territory (Hindi, Hindu, Hindustan) constitutive of the Hindu nationhood" (Annavaparu), *Inheritance* appears to be generously resistant in its portrayal of a range of identities and lives.

As a writer, Kiran Desai's first major outing took place, in fact, before the publication of *Hullabaloo*, with an extract from the same novel appearing in *Mirror Work: 50 Years of Indian Writing, 1947-1997*. Edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West, its publication in 1997 was meant to bring Indian literature up to date and to coincide with India's golden jubilee. In the introduction to the volume, Rushdie flamboyantly locates Desai within the family tree of Indian writing, but her positionality as an Indian writer is one that is oriented outwards towards a general Anglophone audience. Hailing her as "the daughter of Anita," he declares that her "arrival establishes the first dynasty of modern Indian fiction" and is the result of "India's encounter with the English language" which "continues to give birth to new children, endowed with lavish gifts" (*Mirrorwork* xxii). The India that Rushdie refers to here, whether he intends to or not, is non-identical with the nation-state, and instead refers to India as a diffusion of transnationally recognisable cultural signifiers. Specifically, it is a process of diffusion facilitated by English as a global literary language. What this implies is that Kiran Desai is better situated as an Indian author outside the conventional frame of the nation as a unit of literary production, and

consequently, of cultural analysis, so prompting the question of whether a supra- or sub-national scale would be more germane to reading her fiction.

Writing and publishing in the last decade before the turn into the twenty-first century, Desai is often numbered alongside Amitav Ghosh, Amit Chaudhuri, Jhumpa Lahiri and Salman Rushdie in his middle-period, as well as Aravind Adiga, Chetan Bhagat and Neel Mukherjee. They are regarded as pan-Indian authors re-working their national and cultural consciousness for the Anglophone reading public. Their literary works engage with global trajectories, not merely in a mimetic fashion, but as an aesthetic theorising of India in the globe at large, given the expected readership for Indians writing in English. The subject matter of these novels is often the implication of the individual in cross-border flows, at an expanded and transnational scale that locates India in relation to other regions. However, recent critical work has sought to distinguish between a post-Rushdie generation of Indian authors who are concerned with socioeconomic conditions in India and foreign-born Indians in the metropoles, who mostly migrated as highly skilled middle-class professionals after 1990. In *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the United States at the Turn of the Twenty-first Century*, Gita Rajan and Shailja Sharma posit those writing in-between, such as Kiran Desai, as the new cosmopolitan subject, occupying "a range of fluid subject positions, which can be trans-class, trans-local with competing value systems" (2). While being Indian in America is not without its own internally homogenising tendencies and problematic politics of wealth accumulation in the host country, India's previously localised cultural practices have come to be enacted and recognised in the contact zone that is world culture (17). Desai herself is uniquely situated at the cross-currents of these two groups of Indian writers working in English: a post-liberalisation generation of authors from the subcontinent which has been feted internationally, and members and descendants of the Indian diaspora.

Aside from her inclusion in this famed coterie, Kiran Desai is regarded as a notable Indian writer mainly due to her winning of the Booker Prize in 2006. While *Inheritance* is a finely crafted work in its own right, the prestige value of the award as well as the publicity that the shortlist and winner receive inaugurates both author and text into a superlative mode of celebrity circulation. As Anna Auguscik has discussed at length in *Prizing Debate: The Fourth Decade of the Booker Prize and the Contemporary Novel in the UK*, a study of the discourse surrounding rival pairs from shortlists in the early to mid-2000s reveals that the Booker Prize is not awarded "to the "best novel" – it creates a "best novel" by facilitating a space for debate" (15). A similar study of the Indian novel in English published by major presses in the Anglophone metropole is beyond the scope of this dissertation, but it is important to understand Desai's aesthetic techniques in the context of her novels' ability to pivot between the local and a worlding of India that is accessible to an Anglophone audience at large.

As indicated earlier, Desai's literary imaginativeness cannot be reduced to merely an assessment of cultural production as an effect of the book trade or of the symbolic economy of touristic exotica. Instead, as Ankhi Mukherjee explains in "What Is a Classic?": International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question," the "best" literary works, in their singularity "usher a polymorphous textuality that literary cultures value, and both involve criticism or interpretive traditions that contest the definition of literary value" (1092). In other words, it is in the textuality of Desai's two novels that we should look for clues that render a worldliness characteristic of Indian writing in English, broadly defined, in the decade between *Hullabaloo* and *Inheritance*. As Mukherjee further observes, master-pieces written from the perspective of "postimperial selfhood" and in "the new geomorphic empire and world literature" requires us to apprehend "not so much a canon of texts as it is a mode of circulation" (1029). How do we understand Kiran

Desai's novelistic imagination as dovetailing with the peripatetic potential of a text which multifariously locates India in its de-centred connectedness with New York and London, as well as its borderlands near the Himalayas? And how do we do so in a way that apprehends its postcolonial inheritance in the form of residual concerns with an ethics of justice and resistance?

In order to begin answering these questions, we could look to Kiran Desai's status as part of the Indian diaspora, and as a sojourner author.[24] While Desai herself would insist on a vivid and continued connection with India, this relationship is attenuated in many cases by recollections of her childhood in New Delhi and in Kalimpong. In a personal essay titled "Fatherland," published in 2011 in *The New Yorker*, Desai reflects on the moment that she received her green card, and how instead of it being an unadulterated triumph, as popular immigrant narratives would have it, her father laughs with sad scornfulness. "We brought up our children to become perfect foreigners," he remarks, "Call yourselves global citizens. Global bastards, more like!" Elsewhere she has also spoken about the deep fear she had of losing India after her father's death (Pais "Success She Wrote"). For Desai, being an Indian abroad is always troubled by a sense of a less-than-rosy picture of the costs of globalisation and a fear of losing India as an essential aspect of her identity. In a double interview with her mother, Anita Desai, Kiran describes how the two women sometimes write in New York, one upstairs and one below (Datta). There is the sense of a collective in exile, one that is formed around a literary culture of books as portals and totems. Desai is not so much displaced as continuously *recreating* a sense of place. Unsurprisingly, she describes her writing process as a slow gathering of "sentences, thoughts, landscapes and scenes," and her favourites from her mother's oeuvre

[24] Lisa Lau defines "sojourner authors" as, "writers who travel frequently from within South Asia to other countries, living and working and dividing their life and time between two or more countries" (575).

are *In Custody, Clear Light of Day* and *Baumgartner's Bombay* for their familiarity of place. Such meta-narratives indicate that Desai's writing can neither be wholly situated within the frame of Indian writing, nor categorised with other US-born authors, whose work contains more sustained depictions of life in the States. Worlding and place in Desai's novels must be seen as bringing into relation a remembered India in its rich specificity—a remembering that enfolds a diasporic worldliness and lends, in turn, scale and breadth to its mode of address.

In 1998, *Hullabaloo* appeared on the world stage amidst India's golden jubilee celebrations, a landmark moment in history that demonstrated the breadth of the nation's progress as well as its continued entanglement with Britain's imperial history. The textuality of its world-making must be seen in conjunction with India being imagined with a specific brand of worldliness, one that derives rhetorical and aesthetic value from placing Indian writing in English on the world-stage. In *The Postcolonial Exotic*, Graham Huggan's well-known cultural analysis of India's Golden Jubilee celebrations in Anglo-American outlets such as *The New Yorker* and *Granta*, makes a case for how India remains an "imaginative resource" and a depoliticised "ethnic curiosity."[25] In Huggan's account of the semiosis of India in the world, there is relatively little emphasis on India's independence, with the nation being represented as a nostalgic commodity from the British Raj. Of importance is the representation of India's literary stars as the voices effecting this cultural exchange. The *Granta* special issue features long-established Indo-Anglian writers (like Nirad Chaudhuri and Ved Mehta) looking back at their internationally fashioned literary careers, as well as a series of cross-cultural commentaries by popular historians

[25] *The Postcolonial Exotic* (2001) appears at the same moment as initial conceptualisations of world literature by David Damrosch and Franco Moretti. While Huggan describes his work as "an examination of the sociological dimensions of postcolonial studies," concerned with "the material conditions of production and consumption of postcolonial writings" (vii), this dissertation reads Huggan's work as a larger movement within postcolonial studies to grapple with the enlarged scale and increased volume of textual circulation in a transnational moment.

such as Jan Morris and William Dalrymple. More striking is the photograph of India's most prominent Anglophone authors in the Golden Jubilee issue of *The New Yorker* that includes Salman Rushdie, Arundhati Roy, Amit Chaudhuri, an "out-of-focus" Amitav Ghosh and, of course, Kiran Desai. Indian writing in English has arrived, it seems, through an odd confluence with deterritorialisation and commodification. Despite India's well-known history of resistance that feeds into its much-lauded identity as the world's largest democracy, India as a literary creation exists in the world through the efforts of a mobile coterie of Indian writers working in English.

Commentaries by Indian authors abroad have highlighted the need for literary English to be re-oriented within the body of Indian literature as a whole, while also considering the distinctive Indian experience of globalisation. In his introduction to *The Vintage Book*, published in 1997, Rushdie makes a strenuous case for "English as an Indian language." It is "twice born," first arriving during colonial times and then becoming adopted as a language of literary production.[26] As is widely known, the collection became a fractious source of debate about the centrality of Indian writing in English to Indian literature as a whole. The anthology is by now infamous for Rushdie's editorial statement concerning the paucity of quality literary writing in the Indian vernaculars, or *bhashas*. With the inclusion of only one story translated from Urdu in a collection dominated by Indian writing in English, Rushdie's comments widened the perceived gap between English as the language of global progressivism and the vernaculars as indicative of regional or nationalist myopia.

But what is more interesting is the case made for Indian writing in English being valued as literature. Dismissing criticisms of works in English as meant for the upper

[26] Rushdie's choice of expression is of course an ironic play on Meenakshi Mukherjee's well-known collection of critical essays, *The Twice Born Fiction* (1971).

middle classes of India and for being reflective of Americanisation, Rushdie observes that "so few of these criticisms are literary in the pure sense of the word" which relates to "language, voice, psychological or social insight" (xiv). But his introduction goes on to valorise Indian writing in terms of how it is esteemed worldwide, by concluding that "on the map of world literature, too, India has been undersized too long" (xxii). Rushdie insists that literature from India derives value from a worldwide reception, an economy of exchange that is enabled by English as a global language. Desai's first novel *Hullabaloo*, with its mythic and lightly sketched depiction of Shahkot as an archetypal Indian village seems emblematic of this moment, for its potential to be broadcast seamlessly to a global audience. Compared to *Inheritance*, *Hullaballoo* presents an imaginary, mythological India in the throes of modernisation, though suffused with a sense of detachment from the bullish, market-oriented mood of India in the 1990s.

The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature, edited by Amit Chaudhuri and published in 2001, attempts to correct this reliance on English for a global address by presenting a selection of Indian writing with a heavier emphasis on translations from vernacular literature, with twenty from this category and eighteen authors writing in English. Though Chaudhuri politely remarks that "this anthology is not a riposte to any other anthology" ("A Note on Selection", xxxiii), he describes each work as included for "its ability to give us a persuasive sense of the writer's work, and to reveal something new to us about the literature to which it belongs" (xxxii). The boundaries of this "literature" coincide with what is good Indian literature, a debate that is framed by two of Chaudhuri's own essays that open the volume, titled "Modernity and the Vernacular" and "The Construction of the Indian Novel in English." In the latter, Chaudhuri satirises the sadly limited exposure of western readers to Indian literature. The publication of *Midnight's Children* in 1981 created an impression that Rushdie was "the godhead from which Indian

writing in English has reportedly sprung, revivified, and a convenient shorthand for that writing" (xxiv). English is also seen as the language in which to construct the Indian novel as postcolonial novel and national epic, with assumptions relating to language-use, political stance and genre which prevents a closer engagement with the heterogeneity of Indian literature as a whole. As Chaudhuri pointedly remarks in "Modernity and the Vernacular," the only way India enters history is via colonialism.

In contrast to Rushdie's rehashing of the structural hierarchies implicit in English literature,[27] *The Picador Book* argues that English in India must be understood in the context of its ideological association with modernity and progress (xx); that the exotically dismissive image of India's "alarmingly and endlessly multifarious, confusing number of tongues" (xx) results in a lack of engagement not just with vernacular literature but with the value of writing in English *in India*. Against Rushdie's call for a lack of enmity between English and vernaculars in India as the "inexhaustible horn of plenty" (xvi), Chaudhuri is decidedly more measured. Alluding directly to Rushdie's claim that "English is now an Indian language," he observes that "English is not an Indian language in the way it is an American language; nor it is an Indian language in the way Bengali or Urdu is one" (xxii). The way in which English enters language-use in society, and the way it attains literariness, is conditioned by India's postcolonial status as well as the supranational reach of its writers.

This movement away from regarding English as Anglocentric, to one in which the literary value of an Anglophone text should be indexed by the place of English in its

[27] Ironically, in *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie has extensively critiqued the Commonwealth as a cultural category. In the essay "Commonwealth Literature does not Exist," he soberly points out that the literature of the Commonwealth is necessarily positioned below "English literature 'proper'" (121). As an entity based on the outlines of the former British empire, literary production in the Commonwealth as an eclectic category is seen as emanating from, but secondary to, the Anglocentric category of English literature. Calling "Eng. Lit." the "great sacred thing itself," Rushdie notes that it is excluded from the Commonwealth's "literary manifestation" to distinguish it from the ghetto of heterogenous works being produced by the world's younger English literatures (62).

postcolonial and millennial context, comprises the Bourdieu-esque cultural force field or "space of *literary or artistic position-takings*" in which *Inheritance* appears (30, emphasis in the original).[28] While the reception to Indian novels from 2000 was dominated by a certain scepticism towards books which seemed to be overly derivative from Rushdie's style (see Orsini 86, Shivani 3), criticism in the new millennium focuses on the effects of literary prizes and the book market as cultural institutions. *Midnight's Children*, in particular, has also come to signify a culturally hybrid literary production associated with the postmodern and the postcolonial (Jani 3), one that is associated with a cynicism towards nation-oriented politics and idealism (Jani 15). This set of traits has become so strongly conventional of the postcolonial Indian novel in the west that it has been termed Rushdie-itis (Mishra), a condition that Salman Rushdie himself jokingly cites in his introduction to the *Mirrorwork: 50 years of Indian writing* to foreground critics' dismissive valuation of his work as overtly commodified for western audiences. A decade later, Indian and South Asian writing in English is regularly featured on prize shortlists and university curricula in the UK and US, though such pedagogic attention is understood as part of the cultural politics of including non-canonical texts (Rajan and Sharma 157). Such recognition signals the acceptance that South Asian culture has gained on the world stage. Within India itself, however, there is a growing critical focus on novelistic writing in other regional languages (Anjaria 13).[29] It is as if the cultural production of Anglophone Indian

[28] This space, as Pierre Bourdieu explains, is "the structured set of the manifestations of the social agents involved in the field—literary or artistic works, of course, but also political acts or pronouncements, manifestos or polemics, —etc." The space of literary or artistic position-takings is "defined by the possession of a determinate quality of specific capital (recognition) and, at the same time, by occupation of a determinate position in the structure of distribution of this specific capital" (30).

[29] Contemporary Indian writing after the turn of the century seems to indicate that the future of the Indian novel resides in India, with writers like Chetan Bhagat and Aravind Adiga moving back to India after living for many years abroad. In relation to the contemporary moment, Ulka Anjaria observes pointedly that the good life in an upscale apartment in Mumbai or Bangalore can now rival one in the United States or in Canada. What this implies for the production and reception of Indian writing is "a de-fetishisation of the diaspora" and the beginning of other theoretical approaches for understanding the relationship of present to past (13).

writing cannot be divorced from the taint of commercialisation, making its artistry and literary merit automatically suspect. Increasingly, Anglophone novels by writers identifying as Indian are studied within either a regional South Asian frame, or as part of a diasporic literary corpus which is increasingly wary of being implicated in a touristic economy. Both frames do not always take into account the nuances of literary world-making or the Anglophone as a cultural system underlying the varying occurrence of English in India.

To date, critics who have studied Desai's oeuvre struggle to define what makes her an Indian writer, and most have explored her work in relation to questions of diaspora and the impact of globalisation on India. *Hullabaloo* has received a minimum of academic criticism, with just one peer-reviewed article in print. In "Desai's Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard as Global Literature," Erin M. Fehskens reads the imminent appearance of Coca-Cola in the novel as an allegory of globalisation and a critique of the effects of multinational companies on India's rural ecosystems. By comparison, *Inheritance* has received considerably more attention for its portrayal of social issues in the Darjeeling region, with critics commenting on the novel's portrayal of the deep divide between social classes and its celebration of seventeen year-old Sai's "diasporic consciousness" (Sabo 73).[30] Others have sought to characterise the novel's portrayal of particular forms of Indian nationalism. Writing about Desai's inclusion of a plurality of perspectives and a multiplicity of "teleological and ethical orders," Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan makes a case for how the novel aligns itself less with a Nehruvian model of identification with the west, and more with a Gandhian "comparison of a free India to a house with open windows all around so that breezes may blow in from every possible side, but there is a constraint: that

[30] Oana Sabo reads Sai as Desai's 'narrative consciousness' and an attempt to acknowledge how nations are implicated in global political and cultural structures. Ashya Viswamohan, in contrast, views Sai's final argument with Gyan, as viewed by, is an indication of the deep divide between social classes, which by the novel's end, proves insurmountable (264).

the house itself not be blown away by the force of the winds from without" (cited in Viswamohan 271). As this brief survey illustrates, Desai's body of work remains continually filtered by its locus of production in a transnationally circulated economy of Indian Anglophone writing, even as shifting critical frames reflect differing emphases on globalisation or diaspora.

That *Inheritance* was awarded the Booker Prize in 2006 certainly contributes to how critical assessments of Desai's work are mainly focused on locating her amidst global trajectories. While there is no specific research to date about Desai in relation to the Booker Prize, James F. English has discussed the new geography of prestige in relation to the production of cultural value by foreign and global diasporic artists. Their uncertain relation to the dominant cultural arena is mediated, for the most part, by awards. Focusing on the international music festival as a case study, he observes that "the prize had become a means of articulating, across the various and far-flung sites of its production, a particular category of literature that might be recognized as properly 'global,' a literature whose fields of production and of reception could be mapped—and whose individual works could be valued—only on a world scale" (304). Anglophone world texts experience this with a redoubled effect, being un-homed from a national framework and then celebrated, as with Maori author Keri Hulme in English's study, as legitimate and "world-readable" representations of indigenous culture. What is "local" and "indigenous," or subnational, becomes its own brand for global cultural renown, and secures its position in the cross-border value regimes of cultural difference. Instead of capitulating to this materialist perspective, my argument chooses to appraise the workings of locality writ large as a site of literary value—and more importantly as a porous site where the world-making of an Anglophone world text, such as Desai's, is a multi-scalar relay that re-imagines local histories in the entangled relationalities at the world scale.

World-making and Disconnectedness in *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard*

Reviews of Desai's first novel at the time of its publication praise its light-hearted creation of a magical world while also admitting to being uncertain about what exactly the novel is meant to critique. *The Spectator* describes Hullabaloo as "something distinctly hybrid" between the realism of R. K. Narayan and "Rushdie-itis," characterised by the "inherent flimsiness of fable" (Carnell). The review recognises Desai's attempt to critique the middle-class progressive mores of Sampath's father, Mr Chawla, who monetises Sampath's sagehood for family profit. Another review from *Contemporary South Asia* criticises the novel for its "lack of realism" in the form of "me-too magic realism," noting that Desai "works hard at unmasking lower-middle-class pretensions and optimism" from the distant, objectifying perspective of a cosmopolitan Indian abroad (Anandan 386). This popularised notion of India speaks more strongly to the reception of India-as-construct for an Anglo-American audience of readers, than everyday conditions in India proper, where the discourse of India as a nation is anything but homogeneous or unified.

In *Hullabaloo*, India as a cultural commodity is the structuring principle of worldliness in the text. Reading the novel's aesthetics of worlding according to the literary value of Anglophone representations of India we find the mythical self-contained world of Shahkot presented as an assemblage of easily recognisable tropes about the Indian village. Shahkot is the perfect stereotype of the sleepy Indian country-town, replete with family dramas, wreathed in haze, without any working streetlamps and in which the dropping of Red Cross aid-supply crate by mistake during the protagonist's birth causes Sampath to be hailed as a hero. The villagers believe that he is "destined for greatness, that the world, large and mysterious beyond Shahkot, had taken notice of him" (12). Later, Sampath would be inspired by a guava to retreat into the guava orchard, so becoming revered as a sage. India in Desai's first novel is worlded as distinctly ahistorical and set apart from the

extradiegetic world, with its timelessness contributing to a mythic quality. Other time markers, such as futile promises during local elections to send "Shahkot and its residents bounding into the twenty-first century" (16) and the "rumour that Coca-Cola might soon be arriving in India" (67) further reinforce the notion of an India trapped in a recursive timelessness, on the brink of modernity but never quite reaching it. To a certain extent, this depiction comprises a form of gentle satire, one that is ironically more reflective of the status of India as literary representation; as an extension of its place in the global marketplace of world culture.

This version of India could be seen as an archetypal mass-market construct, pandering to the easy exoticism of the international Anglophone book trade, where the simplifying effects of English as a global language take priority. These effects build on the place of English in India as a language unmarked by region or caste. As Meenakshi Mukherjee has put it, such "otherness is validated only if it fits into certain pre-established paradigms of expectation" ("The Local and the Global" 52). More importantly, it is a diegetic world with a distinctly bounded horizon and very faint links to the extradiegetic world. One can imagine any number of Shahkots in other parts of India, all identifiably Indian and equally non-specific in terms of geographical location or linguistic milieu. Thus, Shahkot is one in a series, which, following Benedict Anderson's notion of serialisation, locates and worlds India as an internally cohesive unit. With reference to census-taking by European colonisers in Southeast Asia, Anderson observes how the systematic quantification of ethno-racial classifications led to the understanding that each member of this category is a replica of the next in an "aggregable series" (169). Similarly, in every small town, one would expect to find the same cast of characters: a hermit-sage, pencil-pushers in the post-office, the police District Commissioner, elderly maternal figures and a young woman valiantly defending herself on a crowded bus with a hairpin.

This assumed replication derives from what Anderson sees as the totalising classificatory grid of the late colonial state, which defines peoples, territories, languages, religions or anything imagined to be under state control as units in a replicable series. The plot trajectories of the *Hullabaloo*'s characters end at the edges of the town, making for a curious lack of what Eric Hayot calls connectedness as an aspect of worldedness (74). As one of the six aspects of literary worlding in Hayot's model, connectedness refers to how the diegesis of the text is "punctuated, often with no narrative acknowledgment, by goods, people, or ideas that speak to the intensity of the connections between the local and the regional or the global," and by implication the relationship between the world of the text and the ontic world (74). Conversely, other literary works do not seem to register external events, or even the passing of historical time, such as myths and fairy tales.

The opening to *Hullabaloo*, and the entry into the novelistic world-proper for readers illustrates its brand of connectedness:

> That summer the heat had enveloped the whole of Shahkot in a murky yellow haze. The clutter of rooftops and washing lines that usually stretched all the way to the foothills at the horizon grew blurred and merged with the dust-filled sky.
>
> *'Problems have been located in the cumulus that have become overly heated,'* read Mr Chawla from the newspaper. *'It is all a result of volcanic ash thrown up in the latest spurt of activity in Tierra del Fuego.'*
>
> And a little later he reported to whomever might be listening: *'The problem lies in the currents off the West African coastline and the unexplained molecular movement observed in the polar ice-caps.'* (1, italics original)

In this first evocation of the novel's diegesis, the village comes to define the extent of lived experience. Beyond it is dust and vagueness, and intimations of the world beyond the novel's limits arrive in the form of semi-humorous news items that present the weather as the sole but entirely abstract means through which this little place is connected to the world beyond. Despite the factual tone in these reports about the weather, the incredulous nature of causality here borders on the gently absurd, and ironically serves to highlight Shahkot's disconnectedness from the wider world. This is followed by a further description of Shahkot in relation to India as a whole:

> Shahkot boasted some of highest temperatures in the country and here there were dozens of monsoon-inducing proposals. Mr Chawla himself submitted a proposal to the forestry department for the cutting and growing of vegetation in elaborate patterns; the army proposed the scattering and driving of clouds by jet planes flying in a special geometric formation; the police a frog wedding to be performed by temple priests. Vermaji of the university invented a giant fan which he hoped would attract the southern monsoon clouds by a wind tunnel moving north towards the Himalayas, and he petitioned the Electricity Supply Board for enough power to test it. Amateur scientists from Mr Barnala of Tailor Gully to Miss Raina from the Sainik Farms area attended trade fairs where they displayed instruments that emitted magnetic rays and loud buzzing sounds. Everyone in town was worried. (2)

Given that readers are already in tune with the narrative's off-kilter treatment of causality, the town's efforts to end the drought can hardly be taken seriously except as a quietly humorous mapping of the stereotypical elements of Indian officialdom as a proxy for the country at large. From amateur scientists to temple priests, and the famous Vermaji

of the university that all readers ought to know, everyone is putting forth "monsoon-inducing proposals" before these heroic and hectic efforts are quickly cut to size with a final, underwhelming observation that "everyone in town was worried." Though none of these quick character sketches can be considered as outrightly exotic elements for an assumed western audience, *Hullabaloo* endeavours to render a general, homogenised impression of the country in the unthreatening unit of the "town," without further gradations between cities, regional capitals or villages. Additionally, these attempts to induce rain seem to express the inflated self-importance of technological aspirations towards modernity, though this reads less as a critique of India than of humanity as a whole. As a series of ontological propositions, Shahkot is a world onto itself, crystallised in the same gesture as a timeless tale of affliction by the natural elements, against which human endeavour is ultimately fruitless. Yet in the choice of the weather as a topic, the narrative signals its lack of particularity, and if there is a haze that perpetually envelops Shahkot in the course of the book, it is also a dusty generality that holds the novel's worlding at arm's length from real-world circumstances. Shahkot exists, discursively, as a self-contained world, and to a large extent lacks what Thomas Pavel has defined as porosity, or openness to external data (102).

Keeping in mind this project's theorising of Anglophone world writing as contextualised by the localised institutionalisation of literary English, Desai's satire of the pursuit of modernity in small-town India reflects how the English language is mostly accessible only to the country's urban middle class. In this context, the novel arises from its materialist substrate as a commodity primarily consumed by a narrow socio-economic stratum, one privileged enough to laugh at these bumbling attempts to call down the monsoon. Assessing the status of Indian writing in English up till the 1970s in *The Twice Born Fiction*, Meenakshi Mukherjee considers Anglophone and non-Anglophone novels

together, and observes that Indo-Anglian fiction is written in a language that is not spoken by the people it is about.[31] English, albeit the version spoken in the New Delhi drawing room, is allied to urban living, and as a pan-Indian language, cuts across diverse ethnic, religious and cultural backgrounds. The Indo-Anglian novelist has to negotiate a heterogenous audience by choosing themes and situations that have "more or less the same validity all over the country" (25). This tendency for Anglophone writing in India to universalise issues such as social change or the breakdown of the large, joint family is continued by Kiran Desai, and other Indian authors who are published abroad, in the Anglophone metropoles. Anglophone writing also homogenises the depiction of characters and regions as pan-Indian, partly, as Mukherjee details extensively in a chapter titled "The Problem of Style," because writing in English does not allow nuances of tone or regional subtleties to be rendered, and partly because of the author's intent to convey a common experience. In this sense, Shahkot is a direct descendent of R. K. Narayan's fabled Malgudi, with one crucial difference—the novel's intended audience is not simply pan-Indian but English speakers in general, with the transnational circuits of the Anglophone being an important vehicle.

In this manner *Hullabaloo* exerts a normative force of homogenisation on popular imaginings of the nation derived from its worldly address, which is also curiously bounded within its own construct of fictionality, in turn derived from Desai's transborder location as a diasporic Indian. Like Kulfi's bizarre experiments with her cooking pot in the novel, during which she is constantly seeking out the rarest of ingredients from nasturtium flowers to peacocks "in a fervent crusade to bring her fantastic imaginings into being" (78), the world of *Hullabaloo* seems to be an eclectic pastiche of various cultural registers

[31] Though the term "twice born" is conventionally used to refer to the three highest Hindu castes, Mukherjee has employed it to indicate how Indo-Anglian fiction is "the product of two parent traditions" (Preface).

for a gourmet sampling of India. This has the effect of further smoothening-out cultural specificity, an authorial impulse which originates from the usage of literary English in India, rather than simply the effects of the book trade, where English has evolved from giving linguistic expression to the nation to become a transnational medium through which Indian culture is conveyed. Compared to R. K. Narayan, whose many works on Malgudi, beginning with *Swami and Friends* (1935), allowed for the comfortable Anglophone accommodation of a Tamil Brahmin boyhood despite the anti-Brahmin movement of the 1930s (George 58), Desai's Shahkot is oddly unplaced, reflecting her diasporic condition and an India imagined in mobility. While Narayan's Malgudi coalesced into "the unviolated / inviolable India of the Indian bourgeois nationalist fantasy and was replicated as such in the diasporic imagination" (George 76), the world of *Hullabaloo* cultivates an uneasily humorous and sometimes satirical distance between cultural identifiers like Kulfi's cooking pot and their claim to a cultural home in India.

As a series of propositions about India and its place in the wider world, the worlding of *Hullabaloo* is thus doubly disengaged from its original sociocultural context. Writing about the nature of the literary in fictional worlding, Debjani Ganguly explains that "world" is not a literary system analogous to the expanding global market, and neither it is a mimetic representation of the same. For Ganguly, "world" as concept can be activated as a "critical resource to understand some value-laden ascriptions attached to specific genres." Instead of "limit[ing] ourselves to thinking the world purely as extension—territorial, infrastructural, and cultural," we ought to attend to "a mode of value creation that is attuned to the actual work of language, narrative, form and genre in generating literary worlds, and not just in producing vapid equivalences of social universals such as liberal inclusiveness and cosmopolitanism" (*This Thing Called The World* 80). In the discussion of Anglophone world writing at hand, Desai's first novel

distinctly departs from the role of the earlier postcolonial Indian novel as national epic and historical allegory. But instead of worlding India at a national scale, the horizons of Desai's first novel are a closed network within Shahkot as a typical small Indian town, with vague overtures towards the larger world. It is a world, that in its attempt at totality, is marked by a distinct sense of disconnectedness angled at an intended audience for whom finer historical context may come across as tedious. By constructing the nation in a minor, mildly satirical key, Desai's aesthetics of worlding gestures not simply to the popularised mythical images of India for the west, but also perhaps the place of English language writing in India as a literature for a socially and transnationally mobile class of readers, for whom Shahkot's haze and remoteness possesses a certain quaint charm.

"World" is a term that is also repeatedly alluded to in the course of *Hullabaloo*. In comparison to the transnational journeys that heavily feature in *Inheritance*, the characters in Desai's first novel are never present elsewhere, further adding to the abstract, mythic horizon of Shahkot-as-world. However, two characters espouse a desire for a deeper and more authentic form of consumption, "a craving for an imagined world" (38). Both Sampath and his mother, Kulfi, are constantly distracted, sometimes by epicurean fantasies of food or natural beauty and, at other times, by the sheer intensity of sensations. Kulfi imagines the "deep-scented, deep-hearted world of peppercorn berries, of cinnamon bark" as a source of transcendence, which leads her to an obsessive and grotesque quest to cook all manner of flora and fauna (21). Sampath, in comparison, wishes to escape from the profit-making machinations of his father, as well as the totalitarian efforts of the local police and military bigwigs, whose greatest desire is control over the monkey-infested guava orchard. "They were invading him, claiming him, polluting the air about him," he bemoans. When the monkey catchers finally descend on the guava orchard, he picks a perfect Buddha-shaped guava, and disappears, ostensibly becoming one with it (166). The

monkeys carry him away into the depths of the wilderness, away from the town which has so troubled him.

These intimations of another, possibly transcendent plane of existence comprise the only source of magic realism in *Hullabaloo*. As Christopher Warnes explains in *Magic Realism and the Postcolonial Novel*, magic realism "utilises realism, even as it strives to extend and subvert it, and because its preferred mode of expression is the novel, magical realism, however much it may try to make the situation appear different, finds itself always already answering to the terms of causality" (11). In a detailed analysis of the origins of the genre in European medieval romance, Warnes concludes that for postcolonial writers, realism is "epistemologically allied to the kinds of reason and rationality that, by means of a productive alliance with colonialism, brought to the colonised world so much of the dark side of the Enlightenment, and so very little of its light" (40). As a rupture in causality and a naturalisation of supernatural elements, the magic realism of postcolonial novels signals their implication in sociocultural critique.

Sampath's disappearance beyond the bounds of the known world of Shahkot seems to contain an implied commentary on the profiteering, manipulative efforts of those around him. Besides setting up a devotional cottage industry around Sampath in the guava orchard, his father, Mr Chawla, constantly espouses a discourse of individualistic self-reliance. Prior to his son's pretensions to holiness, he urges him to find a job with the government for its stable income. The bourgeois concern with accruing capital and compliance with law and order is aptly demonstrated in the novel's denouement. A troop of rogue monkeys starts to harass people in the town and the pilgrims in Sampath's grove, and a coalition consisting of the town's police, army, and District Collector hatch a plan to capture the monkeys using nets. Their mission fails owing to a series of chance events: their route is inexplicably obstructed by the Chief Medical Officer's huge collection of

suitcases on the road, as he prepares to go on vacation, as well as an ice-cream van. The rambunctious monkeys can be read as an allegory of what Sampath himself desires, which is freedom from capitalist exploitation, or what he calls "using him for their own purposes" (167).

While this episode can be read as a commentary on the incompetence of state instruments and a technocratic approach to social organisation, the monkeys' escape is not entirely due to the shortcomings of this rag-tag team, with chance being a big factor. Both army and police personnel lose the chase due to the untimely appearance of an ice-cream van. This curious faithlessness in the best efforts of society implies that the novel's satire is not anchored in social critique for political action. While Sampath's devoutness is initially a sham, targeted at incredulous pilgrims, the fantastical nature of his final escape is accepted as reality within the novel's diegesis, once again re-orienting readers away from an engagement with India's socio-political realities, tenuous as this was to begin with. The romance of Sampath's final escape also falls short of an alternative basis for individual or collective identity. Prior to his disappearance, he sits contemplating the "perfect Buddha shape" of a guava, which is "unconcerned with the world," these "beautiful distant fruit…filled with an undiscovered constellation of young stars" (204). The romance of elsewhere, according to the logic of worlding in *Hullabaloo*, does not lead to a reimagining of current social conditions, and when the monkeys seize upon Sampath the guava, spiriting him to the highest mountain "without a trace" (209), it is equally an escape from real-world India into a transcendental existence that is un-representable. Much like the weather reports that began *Hullabaloo*, the scene here implies an enduring suspicion of empiricist notions of causality and the efficacy of moral choice in human sociality.

In the world-making of Desai's Shahkot, political change seems impossible amidst the timeless permanence of the small town as a social condition. By extension, the novel's worlding of India at large evinces a certain tendency towards political quietism that departs from a due consideration of postcoloniality in India. The world of Desai's first novel is a closed network within Shahkot – a typical small Indian town with vague overtures towards the larger world. It is a world that, in its attempt at totality, is marked by a distinct sense of disconnectedness. If, as discussed earlier, this is what Rushdie defines as an example of the "the most valuable contribution India has made to the world of books," then *Hullabaloo in a Guava Orchard* presents a version of India that is scrubbed clean of localising details, and which continues to exude a vague mythical valence that deprives the text of any concrete role in social critique. Perhaps, in her first effort at writing a novel while completing an MFA in Creative Writing at Columbia University, Kiran Desai was all too aware of writing for a general Anglophone audience, an anxiety that may manifest itself "in a pull towards homogenisation, a tendency to flatten out the conflicting contours, to gloss over the changing dynamics between individuals and groups in a fluid and plural society" (Mukherjee "The Local and the Global" 55). As an attempt at worlding and an escape from the pressures of realism, Desai's first novel does not quite confront the hierarchies of the Anglocentric sphere and so fails to enact a larger critique.

A useful distinction could be made between the Anglophone world text, and the Anglocentric world text through *Hullabaloo* as an example of a novel where worlding is derived from English as a homogenising force: first as a pan-Indian language, then as one that has abetted India as a cultural performance on the world stage. *Hullabaloo* presents the inhabitants of Shahkot for the world market, preferring an omniscient and gently exotic tperspective which distances them through humour and satire. At the same time, its narratological worlding does not present India in its lived richness, with the referential

density required for readers to construct a response to India's sociopolitical context. Like Sampath slipping away, first to the guava grove, then to the mountains, Desai's first novel espouses a tenuous universalism that understands India as a detached and mobile concept in the world beyond.

Re-orienting Re-Orientalism in *The Inheritance of Loss*

In comparison to *Hullabaloo*, which shines the spotlight on a small village and the birth and disappearance of Sampath the simpleton, *The Inheritance of Loss* spans decades of Indian history, from the Indianisation of the Civil Service to the beginning of Gorkha nationalism in the 1980s, as well as a transnational perspective on Indian migrant workers abroad in the Anglophone metropolis of New York. With her second novel, Desai vastly broadens the focus of her material, rendering it open and porous to various cultural histories which accrue in Kalimpong, an agrarian town and hill station established by the British in the early nineteenth century. Located in the north-eastern tip of the Indian state of West Bengal, and on a spit of land located betwixt Bhutan, Nepal and Tibet, the region has seen multiple tussles over territory and trading routes. *Inheritance*'s sheer breadth of material is matched by the careful particularism of Desai's style in this later novel, in which the depiction of character and setting are replete with an abundance of cultural references. If Shahkot could be likened to a precious gem, self-contained and easily traded, the worlding of *Inheritance* is a rich tapestry, interwoven with a multitude of elements that both the Indian and general Anglophone reader would be hard-pressed to identify precisely.

The Inheritance of Loss features a novelistic world defined by portrayals of injustice and inequality at both national and transnational levels. In an interview given to CNN in 2007, Desai describes how the book is set "in a world, where the power imbalance

is still intact, a world of huge power imbalance." Her concern remains with presenting poverty and the travails of immigration not as a distant occurrence but as starkly present in the glittering city of New York as much as in the faded British hill station of Kalimpong—her choice of locating India in one of its borderlands testifies to the importance of a de-centred perspective (Viswamohan 176). Against the backdrop of the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF) uprisings from 1986 to 1988, the novel follows the plot trajectories of four main characters, namely, Jemubhai Patel, a retired judge; Biju, an intrepid migrant worker in New York; sixteen-year-old Sai, convent-educated and orphaned, and the Indian-Nepali Gyan, a jobless university graduate and Sai's mathematics tutor.

Within the first few chapters of the novel its narrative arc immediately starts to transverse national boundaries and historical trajectories. Biju, also the son of Jemubhai's cook, is in New York as an illegal kitchen hand. Episodes of Biju together with "a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York" (22) are juxtaposed with Jemubhai's own journey to England to train as a judge prior to independence in India. As soon as Jemubhai reaches Cambridge, he "began immediately to study, because it was the only skill he could carry from one country to the next" (39). Both journeys depict forms of transnational human capital specific to differing historical moments. Simultaneously, we have the tale of Sai's parents as a nod to Cold War geopolitics. A Zoroastrian air force pilot and a Hindu student, the lovers meet by chance in a public park in Delhi, and are subsequently crushed by a local bus in Moscow, where Sai's father was attempting to enrol in the Soviet space programme, itself a reference to India's participation in the Cold War. Their six-year-old daughter is then sent to Cho Oyu, where her grandfather Jemubhai has relocated to live out his retirement after a career in the Indian Civil Service. In *Inheritance*, the connectedness of its diegesis is invariably textured by a long perspective. These tales of displacement

seem to create a cumulatively disparate effect on readers, who find their sympathies amplified across various scenarios of loss, which are trans-national or trans-temporal in nature. The asynchronous nature of the novel's *syuzhet* has been frequently remarked upon, which has been described as "non-linear [and] elaborately structured" (Ranasinha 132) and "fluctuating between several cultural and geographical 'homes'" (Viswamohan 261).

Unlike *Hullabaloo*, *Inheritance* actively explores India as a former colony in a transnational moment. In "Poetics and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: From Colonial to Global," Claire Joubert discusses the afterlife of the postcolonial as a discursive framework in the long twentieth century, which has seen several global orders rise and fall. In this context, the postcolonial functions as "a critical handle which works as well on the new differentials that cognitive capitalism disseminates across the world" (747). Making comparative connections, which cut across national and imperial formations, generates new critical vantage points "between the successive ages of colonialism (with their respective world geographies), and the correlative ages of anticolonial struggle across those geographies" (749). This comparative dimension is also evident in Anglophone world texts, such as *Inheritance*, which respond imaginatively through a fictional world that theorises the broad sweep of the twentieth century. One could argue that Desai's portrayal of the downtrodden invites us to make a connection between the psychological ill-effects of British colonialism and American economic imperialism. Certainly Biju's endeavour to escape India for a better-paying job abroad can be read as an allegory for priorities of neoliberal capital, as Surbhi Malik suggests. His is the inheritance of the failed project of British colonialism, which has not delivered on the promise of modernity to its subjects but only to the elites of independent India (61). Drawing a parallel between this and the sanitised cityscape of New York as a "repression of colonial violence" (62), Malik

further contends that Desai's novel results in a more plural and collectivist depiction of India in the global. Extending this line of thought, this chapter argues that the postcolonial in Desai's fiction aestheticises history in order to make these larger conglomerates apparent as part of the Anglophone world novel, in a manner which modulates the nature of the Anglophone itself.

Sai and Gyan's friendship, which quickly blossoms into puppy-love after they are barricaded indoors during the rainy season, takes the narrative forward as the rich non-Nepali middle-class of Kalimpong is displaced from their homes. Against the backdrop of increasing Gorkha nationalist violence, their relationship is marred by stark disparities in terms of class and culture.[32] Compared to the romance of the guava grove and the faraway mountains in *Hullabaloo*, there is no escape in *Inheritance* aside from Sai's resolution to leave Kalimpong, which would only mean entering a world already constituted by the same socio-economic differences. The novel also features a cast of secondary characters: the wealthy Bengali twin-sisters, Lola and Noni; Uncle Potty, a "gentleman farmer and drunk" and Father Booty, a presumably Catholic priest who runs a Swiss-style dairy (41). Their properties are seized by the Gorkha National Liberation Front towards the end of the plot, overturning social hierarchies in the once-glamorous hill station. Together with its sister town, Darjeeling, Kalimpong was once much frequented by the British colonial administrators, Europeans, Tibetan aristocracy and the upper echelons of Bengali mercantile society as a sanatorium and summer retreat (Pradhan 36).

[32] Gorkhas, as an ethnic group, arrived in the Kalimpong region in the nineteenth century as part of an agrarian labour force for British market gardens. By 1919, the original tenants, mainly Lepchas, Bhutias, and migrants from Nepal, were resettled to make space for a new upper class, often Bengalis, Anglo-Indians, and Europeans who came to enjoy the moderate climate and pleasant scenery (Viehbeck 5). In the context of these territorial displacements, the GNLF *andolan* (or movement) was by far the most visible and successful in mobilising people on identitarian lines in the 1980s (Poddar and Mealor 328).

The young couple's eventual falling-out pits Sai's sympathies with the privileged residents of the town against Gyan's new-found purpose in the fight for Gorkha nationalism. None of these plot trajectories occurs chronologically. Instead, the asynchronous juxtaposition of the judge's shame at being Indian in England with Biju's discovery of what it means to be a labourer of the global south enjoins the reader to query what being Indian means along two global circuits: the colonial journey out and return to a decolonising India, and the twenty-first century immigrants' quest for better prospects in the United States. In comparison, Sai's repugnance at the myopic violence of her home causes her to make a resolution to leave for the wider world. In Desai's own words, "there are so many parallels between immigrants wherever you are in the developing world" and "There's an immediate understanding on many levels, in terms of relating to the old colonial powers, and to modern economic relations" (Popham). Here appropriative stance of the phrase "an immediate understanding" is worrying, and the exact implications of the term will be discussed later in relation to questions of re-Orientalism and cultural erasure.

Still, what Kiran Desai is striving for is an enlarged scale with which to depict India in a manner that de-centres the nation, and which departs from the novel as the de facto form that constitutes the national history of India. Instead, all narrative trajectories in the book are shaped by displacement and emotional loss of some kind. Worlding in *Inheritance* occurs with great amplitude, not simply as a matter of geographic or historical breadth. In *Literary Worlds*, Eric Hayot defines aesthetic amplitude as "the relative spread of narrative attention across the diegesis, and particularly of the distribution of that attention relative to the narrative importance of any given object in diegetic space" (56). In other words, a typical literary text would devote more attention to certain aspects rather than others, and theoretically, a text with zero amplitude would present events as they are, as with fairy tales or parables. With neither background context nor further explication at

any point, the text creates an effect of complete foregroundedness and readers are tasked to simply accept the text on its own terms. Of greater interest is Hayot's citation of Eric Auerbach's monumental work *Mimesis*, in which amplitude is not simply understood as a description of aesthetic practices, but the historical significance of varying elements (for example God, physical surroundings, or the domestic minutiae associated with realism) being given less or more attention in different periods of literary study. *Inheritance*, this chapter argues, is unique for the texture of its amplitude—its ambition in having the wide-ranging vistas of regional history shade into a larger transnational account of India, and its dedication to tracing the ambivalent cultural origins of characters' experiences. Taken together, these strategies gesture towards the worldliness of *Inheritance* as an Anglophone novel in transnational circulation, as compared to *Hullabaloo* where the edges and limits of the novelistic world are invisible.

Leaving aside, for the moment, the criticisms that Desai has faced over the stereotypical portrayal of the Indian Nepalese in *Inheritance*, the novel's worlding expresses an ethics of perspective which demonstrates an abiding concern with the individual amidst the calamities brought about by developments at the global scale. In a world filled with "global networks of instrumental exchanges," individuals and societies in disparate locations are linked together as a unit of production on a planetary scale. Pointing to examples from the corporate world, and using data from the evolution of productivity from the 1970s to the 1990s in several first world nations, Manuel Castells makes the case for a global economy as "an historically new reality" (3). *The Inheritance of Loss* also locates its events at the borders of India, at the Himalayas, historically a region of cultural and economic exchange. The mists that swirl about the five peaks of Kanchenjunga and around the town obscure national boundaries in a "messy map" of a region caught in a geopolitical tussle between India and China, and earlier in the nineteenth century, between

England and Nepal (9). “Charging down like a dragon,” the mountainous vapours are “dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders” (9). Centred on Kalimpong as a node, cultural references and allusions to narratives pre- and post-colonial are born out of the hill station’s multifarious histories. Desai portrays India in its filamented relationality with the global economy. The average person is now the subject of multiple transnational flows in terms of information and capital, and the “small human space” is often unjustly disregarded.

The aesthetics of worlding in the novel resist this dismissal of the individual, and the *chose du texte* (or the text in its thinginess, so to speak), encompasses references as varied as Soviet Moscow and Jigme Dorji Wangchuck, third Druk Gyalpo of Bhutan, as does the menu at Glenary’s, a restaurant in Kalimpong that Sai visits with her friends, “Indian, Continental, or Chinese; sizzlers, chicken and sweet corn soup, ice cream with hot chocolate sauce” (213). Instead of a teleological narrative of place as linked to a classical alignment of terroir, nation, and statehood, Desai locates Kalimpong as an assemblage of diverse political, social and cultural origins. Narratorial attention to the domestic and mundane function less to index a globalised economy, than to position the character as individual, and the particularity of lived experiences in India in relation to an enlarged transnational scale.

Perhaps the most hopeful representation of such individuality in a transnational age occurs in the portrayal of Gyan and Sai’s budding romance. Together, an Indian-Nepali graduate and a displaced teenaged girl of Gujarati descent, represent the possibility of a shared subjectivity that gathers the multifarious historical influences that cohere in Kalimpong. Trapped in Cho Oyu due to seasonal rains, their tutoring sessions are where they “played the game of courtship,” beginning first with an “objective study” of each other’s physical features (125). When the downpour stops, they sally forth, “because new

love makes sightseers out of couples even in their own town" (140). Departing from their home-cultures, they re-position typical sights within the frame of their newfound commonality, which makes for exciting and joyful slippages between various cultural signifiers. In "their free, self-righteous, modern love," the Zang Dog Palri Fo Brang Monastery on Durpin Dara is equally alluring as the sericulture institute. They listen to the manager espouse "his dream of the future" in the form of a "super duper millennium sari" as enthusiastically as they view a red panda in the Darjeeling zoo behind "unfree and ancient bars" (141). This simultaneous gesture towards the depths of the past while catapulting into the future is indicative of the scale of temporal disjunctions that characterises world literature. In this splicing of references with the dreams of modern capital and ancient Tibetan nomenclature, there is once again a networked coding of a nascent worlding: Kalimpong as the site of histories that exceeds colonial difference and which defines the space of Sai and Gyan's co-subjectivity.

Sai and Gyan find excitement and titillation in how they are different, and in a world of heterogenous, if somewhat un-discerning historical associations. These diverse cultural codes can be read as part of a narratorial network which constitutes its temporal force of worlding. Writing about codes for world literature, Vilashini Cooppan discusses how narratives can be seen as "network fiction," which takes postmodern information and network culture as its subject matter. In such a text, linguistic units are "'combinatric,' that is, composed of semantic units that interact with one another and new units, often brought into the picture through other flows of people, culture, and words" (106). She quotes N. Katherine Hayle's study of informatics in relation to cybernetics, where "flickering signifiers" are "characterized by their tendency toward unexpected metamorphoses, attenuations, and dispersions." Cooppan further suggests that this would comprise the formal aesthetics of the "the 'world' in 'world literature'" (106). More than mere

juxtaposition or splicing, the semiotics of Gyan and Sai's romance in Kalimpong locates the reader as part of an imaginary figuration. This, in turn, comprises the representational force of a network that de-centres India as a nation as well as the magnetism of Anglo-American metropolises. In this insistent deterritorialising of cultural signifiers, Sai and Gyan find themselves charmingly defined against each other in a manner that adds to their romantic chemistry. In this Anglophone world text, their identities are cohered positively, instead of negatively, from the disjunctions between them, amongst a wide-ranging constellation of associations and traces that incorporate the scale of the transnational and reflect the rapidly pluralising character of the Anglophone in the new millennium.

Such an assemblage of codes and traces is not above accusations of re-orientalism or exoticism. A deterritorialisation of local codes may in fact lead to being recaptured within an economy of exotic or culturally marginal products. The allure of Desai's writing garners its particular power within a specific force-field of cultural capital, one that is shaped by the Booker Prize as well as the prominence of South Asian writing in the Anglophone book trade. In contrast to *Hullabaloo*, published at an earlier moment when Indian culture was jubilantly celebrated on the world stage, the critical reception of Indian writing in English in 2006 demonstrates a growing scepticism towards its sociopolitical relevance. In "Indo-Anglian fiction: the new Orientalism," Anis Shivani draws a distinction between the ironic and subversive political commentary that typifies Rushdie and his contemporaries, and more recent writing in which there is "no sense of the characters being anything more than derivative caricatures representing different parts of Indian society, helplessly engaged in a timeless struggle with no beginning, middle or end" (3).[33] In narratives featuring stock Indian characters, and a bland focus on food and

[33] In her article, Shivani singles out Amit Chaudhuri's *A New World* (2000), Pankaj Mishra's *The Romantics* (2000) and Manil Suri's *The Death of Vishnu* (2001) for engaging in relentless exoticisation of the mundane and everyday other, in the process reinforcing some of the shallowest stereotypes of the Indian character.

mundane details, de-historicisation occurs when these aspects are commodified as points of touristic interest and detached from a deeper sense of sociohistorical location.

Her concerns are extended and deepened by Lisa Lau in "Re-Orientalism," an article which theorises that in recent literary writing, Indian authors themselves construct and perpetuate orientalist fictions and images. To a large extent, writers do so as a result of their positionality in the publishing field, where some amount of orientalising is inevitable when writing for a western audience, rather than out of insidious intent. In a survey of literary fiction by South Asian women writers from 2002 to 2006, Lau also noted the disproportionate number of diasporic Indian writers who feature on this list, which of course includes Kiran Desai. Instead of viewing such writers as default spokeswomen for the cultural representation of India on the world stage, which would result in home authors being constantly relegated to a secondary status outside the Anglo-American metropolis, Lau recommends that their work be read in relation to "the balancing of hybridities and multiple realities, than as a representation of South Asia or South Asian women" (589).

These concerns were subsequently examined in a book-length collection of essays on the same topic. Titled *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics*, the editors, Lau and Ana Cristina Mendes, highlight how re-Orientalism continues to shape fragmentary visions of the East, even as authors may enact "a new non-Eurocentric mapping where Europe is but one node among many others" (8). As mentioned earlier, this is largely due to the positionality of authors like Kiran Desai, who write for a western audience, and an Anglophone and urbanised middle-class within India. This, as Lau further elaborates, is augmented by the way South Asian Anglophone writers are seen as representatives for their culture, however tenuous or inflected a connection they may have to it. Cast into the "emissary position" and with their novels regarded as containing "truth claims," the authenticity debate often obscures how the influence of long-established publishing houses

in the Anglophone metropoles re-produces a certain representation of India (27). In an article titled "India in the Mirror of World Fiction," Francesa Orsini also concludes that the west merely contemplates "its latest reinterpretation of itself" in "the florid, sensuous, inclusive, multicultural world of the post-Rushdie, postcolonial novel" (88), which is of a piece with this chapter's earlier discussion on *Hullabaloo*.

Though the concept of re-Orientalism offers important perspectives on how literary texts are disproportionately shaped by their address towards western audiences, this chapter argues that the world-making of *Inheritance* in fact works towards altering the locus of the Anglophone gaze. In Desai's humorous and satirical depiction of the anglicised Bengali middle-class in the novel, the range of Anglophone identities is expanded beyond Anglo-American metropolises. The cultural signifiers of the west no longer exist as part of a simple binary with local references, making the Anglophone a spectrum between west and non-west, while the dominant cultural perspective is now ironically attributed to Anglophiles like Lola and Noni, family friends of the Sai and her grandfather, the judge. Living in a bungalow named Mon Ami, Marks and Spencer underwear hangs from their clothes-line and Tibetan choksee tables "painted in jade and flame colors piled with books" are nestled in their library (44). With their wealth and privilege, and together with Sai and other neighbours, they celebrate Christmas in the foothills of the Himalayas, in a manner so localised that it brings to the fore other buried histories from the region, such as the cultural and economic imperialism of Tibet, as well as the mass migration of ethnic Nepalese into the Darjeeling and Kalimpong area. When Gyan later accuses Sai of "trying to be so Westernised" during one of their lovers' tiffs (174), he is slightly off-the-mark because the west itself is now part of a more complex filamentation of the Anglophone in its glocal iteration. By the narrative's own admission, this is not a conventional Christmas celebration, though it is recognisably Christian in its

lavish gift-giving and rather patronising focus on charity as presents of "knitted socks from the Tibetan refugee village" are passed around (152), itself an allusion to Chinese control of Tibet after the 1959 uprising. What is more noteworthy is the novel's satire of such behaviour amongst Sai's friends, which is likened to the misplaced pity of the western consumer for the benighted poor of less developed countries. In the wool of these socks, there were still "bits of straw and burrs that provided authenticity and aroused extra sympathy for refugees even while it irritated the toes" (152). This tongue-in-cheek reference to authenticity can be read as Desai's knowing critique of the Anglo-American publishing industry, even as she insists on unmooring the Anglophone from its association with the Anglosphere.

Despite Desai's best efforts at presenting the foibles of the Anglicised class of Kalimpong residents, *Inheritance* received a scathing reception from local readers, with a particularly strong protest coming from a review in *The Kathmandu Post* by D B Gurung. He objects to the faceless portrayal of the Indian Nepali community as filled with "crook[s], dupe[s], cheat[s] and lesser humans" (Indo-Asian News Service), which he views as an affront to the dignity of Nepalis. Ironically, Desai's novel received little attention in the region until it won the Booker – yet another example of the impact of global media, and the power of such an accolade across a wide geographical sweep.[34] The infamy of Desai's representation of the community has its roots in the long-drawn struggle of the Gorkha nationalist movement for self-determination, which began in the early twentieth century, after the resettlement of Indian Nepalis as agricultural labourers in the hill stations. Though these migrant Nepalis came from distinct caste and ethnic groups, the Nepali language became first a lingua franca, and then the basis of a "Gorkha" identity

[34] In "Kalimpong as Fiction or Ethnography? Gorkha/Nepali Sensitivities in the Himalayas," Prem Poddar and Cheralyn Mealor present a detailed overview of the reception of *Inheritance* in the Indian Nepali community.

(Wenner 206). Subsequently, Darjeeling was imagined as the geographical centre of Indian Gorkhaland and perceived as culturally and territorially distinct from the rest of West Bengal. Much of the impetus behind the Gorkha movement for autonomy, led by the Gorkha National Liberation Front (GNLF), was due to the economic and social precarity of the community, who struggled amidst the general economic decline of the region under the central Nehruvian government (Wenner 210). Coupled with the fact that Nepali was not officially recognised for use in schools, the Indian Nepali community felt it necessary to protest their continual marginalisation. After the agitation turned violent between 1986 and 1988, the establishment of the Darjeeling Gorkha Hill Council (DGHC) granted some amount of political autonomy to the movement.[35]

With this context in mind, the backlash against Desai's portrayal of Indian Nepalis in a novel representing their home region to a wider global audience is understandable, especially given the numerous references to actual places in the narrative such as the Gymkhana Club in Darjeeling, alongside precisely dated events such as the violent skirmishes in Kalimpong on 27 July 1986. While this chapter has earlier made a case for the Anglophone as a site of worldliness that exceeds the economy of exotic goods in the Anglo-American publishing industry, there is the further question of whether *Inheritance* itself is subject to certain blind-spots relating to class and ethnicity in the Indian context. Ironically and perhaps in some ways more effectively than Desai's satire of Kalimpong Anglophiles, it is the barely visible presence of ethnic Nepalis that prevents the novel from being co-opted as an Anglocentric commodity targeted at a mainly western audience.

Sai herself, with her name an obvious truncation of Desai's, represents a group of mobile, English-speaking, upwardly mobile pan-Indians. Born in Delhi, convent-educated

[35] In 2008, the GNLF was ousted from power by a rival political organisation, the Gorkha Janamukti Morcha (GJM). In 2011, it signed a treat of Gorkhaland Territorial Administration with the West Bengal government, which made only slight progress on the terms of the DGHC.

in Dehra Dun in the foothills of the Himalayas and speaking "no language but English and pidgin Hindi," the protagonist of *Inheritance* lacks the means to "converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum" (176). In relation to the narrative as a whole, this young person's external perspective on the ethno-nationalist violence is Desai's attempt to recognise the common humanity of the "small human space" across the divides of language, culture and history. Sai's somewhat naïve protestations serve as a corrective against Gyan's growing involvement in the GLNF movement, where "there is no joy like screaming victory over oppression" (260). In Gyan and Sai's final meeting, the oppositional logic between the Indian Nepalis as a marginalised community, and the modernising, Anglicised and moneyed middle-classes of India breaks down as they realise the absurdity of hurling identarian slogans at each other. "Just ordinary humans in ordinary opaque egg-boiled light," they began to giggle, "without grace, without revelation, composite of contradictions" as they fall back "into familiarity, into common ground, into the dirty grey" (259).

But this paean for a universally humanist perspective and the embracing of the "small human space" as a utopian balm is matched by an equally ahistorical condemnation of all forms of nationalistic violence in the novel. The riot and mass violence in Kalimpong on 27 July 1986 is represented telegraphically as "Bruises. Blood" (275), while the GNLF movement is depicted as part of "how history moved, the slow build, the quick burn, and in an incoherence, the leaping both backward and forward, swallowing the young into old hate" (276). This depiction of the community's effort as extremist and irrational has, as might be expected, drawn ire from Indian Nepalis. Moreover, if we are to consider *Inheritance* as an Anglophone world text, the question of the Anglophone as linked to the cultural politics of the English language in the text itself presents an additional dimension through which the faceless and alienated characterisation of Indian

Nepalis must be considered. As earlier noted, Sai herself speaks only English. Conversations between her and Gyan take place in English as well, reflecting his university education and the genteel façade he maintains when tutoring Sai or interacting with the judge. When Sai seeks out Gyan at his home, she is shocked by the shabbiness of the house, and his anger at her untimely arrival is partly fuelled by shame. For the most part however, Nepali is not present in Desai's text, either by way of dialogue or loan-words, despite the fact that the language can be heard everywhere in Kalimpong.

This unaccented and unmarked aspect of an Anglophone text contributes to the cultural and linguistic erasure of the Indian Nepali community in the novel. Given the predominance of Sai's narratorial perspective in the novel, this silence, to some extent, reflects Sai's limited linguistic competence. The further question, then, is whether an expanded range of Anglophone identities and the satire of Anglophiles such as Lola and Noni effectively dislodges the Anglocentrism contributing to the obscurity surrounding the Indian Nepali narrative. With the GNLF taking over various plots of land in Kalimpong, even the Bengali sisters are forced to admit to the existence of their Indian Nepali servants in a separate world: "The real place had eluded them," Noni thinks sadly, "Parallel lives were being led by those—Budhoo, Kesang—for whom there was no such doubleness or self-consciousness" (247). Yet despite these overtures to acknowledge the limited worldview of the Anglicised members of Kalimpong society, *Inheritance* falls short in its textualization of linguistic use. Despite the novel's best attempts at literary inventiveness, cultural differences are marked to cohere to a pan-Indian perspective that bypasses more subtle regional references. While on a restaurant outing to Glenary's, Sai and her neighbours encounter three priests, who are named "Father Peter Lingdamoo, Father Pius Marcus, and Father Bonniface D'Souza". Their Christian first-names alongside family names that are Lapcha (Lingamoo), Latin (Marcus) and Portuguese (D'Souza) in origin

signal the hybridisation and localisation of Christianity across the subcontinent. Even when Gyan and Sai launch endearments at each other, they call each other "*Kishmish*" and "*Kaju*" (140), raisin and cashew in Hindi, a language that neither would acknowledge as their mother-tongue, and which is now part of a larger metropolitan idiom that bridges differences between them.

As an Anglophone world text, *Inheritance* remains accented by the localised inflection of the Anglophone and the cultural synergism of Kalimpong. But in the linguistic tapestry of the text, which comprises an important aspect of world-making, Desai's narrative remains unmarked by Nepali. This odd silencing is a form of linguistic erasure that appears all the more starkly when we consider that it is the Nepali language that coheres the Indian Nepali community. As much as *Inheritance* exceeds re-Orientalism as a frame by inscribing the multifarious tonalities of being a member of the Anglicised middle-class in the former colonial hill station, its diegesis teeters at the edges of an Anglophone perspective, without truly entering the non-Anglophone world of Kalimpong.

Inheriting Loss in the Anglophone World Novel

Hullabaloo and *Inheritance* are emblematic of two distinct moments in recent literary history where the cultural capital of a text is determined by English as a global language. In the last decade before the turn of the millennium, the celebratory and highly visible presence of India in the Anglophone sphere suggests that novels like *Hullabaloo* ought to be considered in the context of a tendency towards the homogenisation of India as a unitary entity. The mythical, self-contained world of Shahkot is, to a large extent, shaped by its positionality within the force-field of Anglophone Indian writing, where English as a pan-Indian and global language facilitates a specific brand of fictionality as an easily consumable commodity. By contrast, *Inheritance*, published a decade later, and in the

wake of an ongoing conversation among literary critics and booksellers alike about the pitfalls of exoticism and the pressures of authenticity, is worlded with a pluri-central and deeply referential density that de-centres India as a nation.

With literary texts such as *The Inheritance of Loss*, the global is theorised as a parallel between India's colonial history and its neo-imperial implication in transnational networks, facilitated by the Anglophone book market as a material mode of textual dissemination. As with the earlier discussion of the non-presence of Nepali in *Inheritance*, Anglophone worldliness does not refer merely to the choice of language within a literary text. Instead, the Anglophone world novel coheres an aggregation of perspectives that can only arrive half a century after decolonisation, as English becomes valued otherwise as a literary language in India, as in other postcolonies and non-colonies. Such a transnationally circulating text constellates the localised inflections of the Anglophone, in tandem with an enlarged scale of world-making that resists re-Orientalism and the exotic as a frame of literary value and critical reading. The satirical portrayal of Lola and Noni as well as Sai's indeterminate place in both Kalimpong and larger geopolitical realities, evince a spectrum of responses towards the Anglophone, from Anglophilia to disillusioned deprecation.

In the Anglophone world text, worlding is also an epistemic order that expresses postcoloniality as an enduring condition, given the colonial origins of literary English. However, the affordances of Anglophone worldliness paradoxically bear the risks of an ahistorical perspective through an enlarged spatiotemporal scale, one that has led to unfortunate generalisations about the lived experiences of the Indian Nepali community. Balanced against this unwitting act of erasure is the further intimation, within the novel itself, that the tranquil, mist-filled lives of Anglicised retirees in Kalimpong are a thing of the past. Lola and Noni's comfortable fantasies of retirement filled with "sweet peas and mist, cat and books" (245), which romantically resituate Englishness within the Himalayan

foothills, are shown to be patently false when their prized garden is allocated to housing members of the Indian Nepali community. While this sense of loss cannot be conflated with a nostalgia for empire given Desai's portrayal of localised Anglophone identities, *Inheritance* does play into the contemporary politics of Kalimpong, where rampant urbanisation has led to a continual middle-class lament over the loss of heritage and charm (Ganguly-Scrase & Scrase 262). At the time of publication in 2007, *Inheritance* invoked a way of life that was already fast disappearing, through an Anglophone worldliness that recognises the necessary displacement of histories of empire and nation into the borderlands of the past.

Hence the "small human space" that Kiran Desai continually valorises is an imperfect antidote to the homogenising tendencies of the global and the universal. The individual's perspective is one increasingly contoured by the condition of displacement from one's homeland as enabled by the structures of an increasingly transnational world. As a diasporic Indian author writing in English, Kiran Desai's novels reveal how Anglophone worldliness taps into the circulatory systems of global English to access an origin which can only be worlded at a distance. *Inheritance*, in particular, negotiates transnational mobility as its postcolonial inheritance in the new millennium, though its reterritorialisation and localisation of Anglophone identities in Kalimpong is not without slippages and erasures.

Chapter 2
Borrowing from Time:
Worlding the Past in the Fiction of Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng

In contrast to the established status of Indian writing in English in the Anglosphere since the late eighties, Malaysian Anglophone novelists emerged into world literary space much later in the new millennium. The UK-based Malaysian fantasy writer Zen Cho, began her career with the regency-era *Sorcerer to the Crown* series. This was swiftly followed by *The Order of the Pure Moon Reflected in Water* (2020), a retelling of the Malayan Emergency through the *wuxia* or Chinese martial arts genre and *Black Water Sister* (2021), a fantasy located in contemporary Malaysia complete with spirit mediums and malicious deities. These later works demonstrate an intriguing transnational intersection between Malayan histories and Sinophone imaginaries in the Anglophone novel, charting new figurative territory that refuses the boundedness of a single diasporic community. Though it has been close to a decade since Cho's compatriots, Tash Aw and Tan Twan Eng, received widespread acclaim in association with the Booker, Zen Cho candidly acknowledges that she is writing her culture "from the margins" in a recent essay. "I don't think of myself as writing from the margins most of the time," she explains, "I write about the things that are important and interesting to me, and of course I am the centre of my own world, so in that sense I'm always writing from the centre" ("Writing my Culture"). Though Cho employs a centre-periphery model of cultural difference, her work exceeds Malaysia and Chinese identities, as national and ethnic formations respectively, and so generates a transnational and pluralised circuit of intersections.

The full significance of Cho's account emerges when we compare what she defines as the main struggle for the Malaysian Anglophone novelist in the new millennium to post-independence accounts from Malaysian writers seeking their place in the new nation. At a paper given at the Kongress Kebudayaan Kebangsaan or National Cultural Congress in

1971, the author and scholar Lloyd Fernando reflects on the same dilemma of writing literature in English, with a crucial difference—while "lesser writers of this kind" will "remain on the level of culture fossils from the colonial era" (142), a re-energised Malaysian English could add to a national tradition of Malaysian literatures across languages. This, in turn, "demands a highly disciplined and full response to the spirit of our multi-racial society, as well as to the main line of its tradition," that is, as Malay national literature (143), where historically there has always been a juxtaposition between Malay, Chinese and Tamil cultures, among others. "Why shouldn't local writers in English re-examine this deep and varied past and put it to fresh purposes?" Fernando opines in an earlier essay published in 1969, titled "Literary English in the Southeast Asian Tradition" (*Cultures in Conflict* 136).[36] In the term "local," the role of the Anglophone is subsumed within the historical horizon of the new Malaysian nation, shortly to be riven by ethno-nationalist conflicts. In contrast, the eclectic play of cultural signifiers in Cho's novels, dislodges the "local" from this particularly fraught national context in favour of a mobile locus, where Malaysian history itself is reinscribed through fiction with a set of transnational coordinates. As this chapter will go on to discuss, what has been celebrated as new and global Malaysian writing in English may simply be the site of a rift between older and newer forms of Malaysian writing in English, itself a divide between the Anglophone and the Anglophone world text.

Like Kiran Desai, many recently published Malaysian Anglophone novelists are part of a transnational class of mobile Malaysians who reside away from their homeland and differ from their immediate predecessors by being published in the UK and the US. Besides Zen Cho, this transnational set of writers includes Shirley Geok-lin Lim, Rani

[36] I thank Brandon K. Liew for drawing my attention to this strand of Fernando's thinking in his article "The Unquiet Dreams of Lesser Malaysian Writers: Tradition and the Global Malaysian Novel." Fernando's writings cited here are collected in *Cultures in Conflict: Essays on Literature & the English Language in South East Asia* (1986).

Manicka, Vyvyane Loh, Tash Aw, Tan Twan Eng and Balli Kaur Jaswal.[37] Unlike novels by Anglophone Malaysian writers of the 1980s, such as Lloyd Fernando, Lee Kok Liang and K. S. Maniam, their literary output registers a glocal duality, one that reflects how cultural identity in Malaysia is deeply entangled with longer processes of racialisation and politicisation from a transnational perspective. After Malaysia's independence in 1957, and prior to the watershed racial riots of 1969, the National Language Act of 1967 designated Malay as the sole national language and the exclusive basis of a national literature. Though Bahasa is rightfully the pre-colonial language of peninsula Malaysia, ethno-nationalist sentiments at this historical juncture meant that language, race and religion were perceived as synonymous. As a result, the non-Malay English language writer was increasingly marginalised. Well-known Anglophone poet Ee Tiang Hong sought to migrate because he "could no longer accept, intellectually or emotionally, the official and Malay definition of the Malaysian nation and culture" (36) while fellow poet Wong Phui Nam stopped writing all together in the 1970s, finding himself linguistically and culturally exiled in his own home. Though Malay could have potentially been a language of national inter-communication, it became a "a static, highly exclusionist expression of Melayu hegemony" (Leow 180). As an aftereffect, English language literary works from the 1980s demonstrate a focus on the ethnic community of the author and "a noticeable withdrawal from engagement with multi-ethnic and multi-religious issues" (Ng 328).

By examining the novels of Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng, two contemporary Malaysian Anglophone writers whose works feature an extensive re-historicisation of the peninsula, this chapter makes a case for the worlding of the past as a

[37] Of the authors in the list, Aw and Tan are best known for being longlisted and shortlisted respectively for the Man Booker Prize, with Tan's *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012) winning both the Man Asian literary prize and the Walter Scott Prize for Historical Fiction. In 2003, Manicka also received the 2003 Commonwealth Writers' Prize for *The Rice Mother*.

crucial feature of Anglophone world writing. Despite originating from a source context where Anglophone writing is a minor literature and English, a minoritised language, both Samarasan and Tan adopt the worldly address of international publishing to convey their historicisation of Malaysia as a locus traversed by immigrant origins and transnational trajectories. They employ a variety of literary techniques, including non-chronological and regressive narrative structures, the homodiegetic perspective of characters juxtaposing multiple pasts and presents, and the mimetic amplitude of memories in their literary worlding. As "positive articulations of diaspora identity," these literary responses "reach outside the normative territory and temporality (myth/history) of the nation-state" (Clifford 251). While this may be perceived as simply reflecting Samarasan's and Tan's status as part of the Malaysian diaspora, this chapter also makes a case for how their mobility is historically conditioned by Malaysia's preferential treatment towards the majority Malay community. Compared with the 1970s, Malaysian Anglophone world writing in the new millennium engages more extensively with a revisionist imagining of cultural memories, discussed in the dissertation introduction as a temporality structured as haunting (Cooppan "World Literature after 1989" 181), which in turn provides the diegetic force for the re-figuring of race as an overdetermined discourse in Malaysian history. As with Desai's novels, the expanded scale of world-making from the writers discussed in this chapter allows for the reworking of historical material as a capacious transnational assemblage, by tapping into the affordances of connectedness and amplitude. Building on the earlier discussion of literary worlding as a catalyst of relational significances beyond the nation, my argument now turns to the temporal aspect of world-making.

Samarasan's and Tan's novels create a sense of historical depth as part of a forceful diegesis that exceeds a narrative of Malaysia centred on Malay language and culture, while questioning the limits of race as a public identity discourse. The signifiers "Indian" and

"Chinese," though primarily referring to the sovereign nations of India and China, are simultaneously re-oriented within and away from Malaysia's long, and occasionally violent, process of ethnic self-imagining. Instead, these cultural signifiers are reterritorialised and celebrated as part of the semiotics of the peninsula's geographical formations and its ever-present tropical climate. *Evening is the Whole Day* opens by evoking the rain, as does *The Gift of Rain*, and in both cases, the deluge becomes an occasion for the dissolution of conventional time markers. In Tan's text, the rain washes the landscape into "a Chinese brush painting" (13), while Samarasan helpfully locates Malaysia for the foreign reader as a peninsula "stretching delicate as a bird's head from the thin neck of the Kra Isthmus" (1) before subverting such touristic imagery as a "springless summerless autumnless winterless land" (1). The afternoon rains cause "past and present and future [to] run together in an infinite, steaming river" in a thorough temporal disorientation before further locating the modern-day developments of Ipoh town amidst the ancient limestone hills of the area. These dramatic landscape features in the Kinta Valley, estimated to be 250-300 million years old, have been co-opted by the poorest of Malaysian Indian society as cave dwellings, and by local Chinese as the site of temples. In Tan's and Samarasan's novelistic worlds they become temporal totems for the depth of the past.

By re-imagining the arrival of Malaysian Chinese Indians and Malaysian Indians, the novels under study confront the country's investment in racial hierarchies as a necessary aspect of cultural identity. Tan's two published works, *The Gift of Rain* (2007) and *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012) exude a markedly different relationship to history in their re-orientation of "Chinese" as a racialised signifier as part of a broader East Asian aesthetic. Set in Penang and the Cameron Highlands respectively, these novels are heavily atmospheric, evoking a multitude of time periods cohering in the same geographical locale

and brought on-stage, as it were, through the recollections of two Straits Chinese protagonists: the bi-cultural Philip Hutton and retired judge Teoh Yun Ling.[38] Memorialised as a re-telling in contemporary Malaysia, the violence and pain of their experiences are brought into the present with Japanese characters as interlocuters. These deep-seated traumas are then gently laid down through a nostalgic reconciliation of the present and past, by way of an aesthetic which employs Chinese and Japanese modalities as part of a syncretic depiction of Malaysia's transnational nature. In comparison, *Evening is the Whole Day* (2007) by Preeta Samarasan is characterised by its consistent focus on the origins of a middleclass Tamil family, the Rajasekharans, as a parallel to developments in national history. The novel is set in the decades leading up to the 1969 racial riots and after, and examines the Malaysian psyche as one characterised by racial myopia. Like *The Gift of Rain*, the role of remembrance features heavily as chapters alternate between the 1960s and the 1980s to assess the continued effect of racial discrimination, while querying the limitations placed upon Malaysian identity by racial categories.[39]

Where geographical scale is the aesthetic lens that reveals the relationalities accruing in Kiran Desai's Anglophone textuality, for Samarasan's and Tan's fiction, it is memory's inherent reorientation of the past within the present that foregrounds temporality as a defining feature of Anglophone world writing. In its temporal aspect, Anglophone world writing "borrows from time" to imagine hidden contours in the past as a form of historical inscription—a meta-concept of heterotemporality adopted from a discussion

[38] The localised nature of Straits Chinese, who have settled in Malaya from as early as the seventeenth century, is often remarked upon, in relation to claiming the peninsula as home. However, the Straits Chinese were also a highly-educated and distinctly cosmopolitan class, who were keen on legislative representation while also being fiercely loyal to the British (Keong 47). There are very few diaries and letters written by Straits Chinese in the 1930s which have been preserved as first-hand records of attitudes during this time. One of these is the notebooks of cinema magnate Tan Cheng Kee, where he remarks "The real Straits-born Chinese were a community loyal to the core to its British connections, but vigorously loyal to the country where their generations were born" (Ang).

[39] Other examples of novels examining the arrival of Malaysian Chinese and Indians to the peninsula include *The Harmony Silk Factory* (2005) by Tash Aw and *Between Lives* (2011) by K. S. Maniam.

about the Japanese horticultural technique of *shakkei* in *The Garden of Evening Mists*. By first situating both authors within Malaysia's localised cultural politics, this chapter sets the stage for discussing how world-making comprises a pointed response to the institutionalisation of Anglophone literary production in the same context. Samarasan's debut novel, *Evening is the Whole Day*, is then discussed in terms of the racialised redress that shapes the work's representation of Malaysia's recent past from a diasporic remove. In the latter half of this chapter, Tan's novels are discussed in terms of a queer temporality and the effects of fictional memory-making as a prosthesis for a charged imagining of Malaysia's past. In their liminal positioning between a Malaysian audience and a more general Anglophone readership, Samarasan's and Tan's fiction reveal the challenges of writing from a minor locus within a major language. In response, their Anglophone world writing is multi-axial, indexing not only Malaysia's status as a former British colony with its localised and post-independence politics of "race," but also how Anglophone world writing from Malaysia pluralises the locus of memorialisation to comprise a renewed mode of historicisation.

World-Making from a Mobile Malaysian Perspective

While maritime Southeast Asia has been a region long characterised by migration before the arrival of western colonialisation, it was the massive influx of immigrant labour from South and East Asia during the nineteenth century that led to a sea-change in the demographic of Malaya. With the British colonial administration actively facilitating the influx of Chinese and Indian coolies, the gradual racialisation of cultural identity went hand-in-hand with the social organisation of British Malaya, which had an economic basis in tin-mining and rubber-tapping.[40] At the time of independence in 1957, ethnic Malays

[40] In "The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology", Charles Hirschman discusses how racial differences in Malaya were constructed by the economic and social framework of

constituted 49.8% of the population of peninsula Malaysia, followed by the Chinese at 37.2% and those of Indian descent at 11.3%, with the latter two comprising significant ethnic minorities (Fenandez, Hawley and Predaz, 13).

Though it is not possible to discuss Malaysia's journey to independence in detail within the scope of this dissertation, it is important to recognise that the "special position" of the Malays was part of official British policy as a form of trusteeship for indigenous institutions (Comber 13). The concept was alluded to in the decentralisation debate of the 1920s, where the Sultans and state councils were seen to be side-lined despite attempts to devolve policy-making. This became the basis for a form of Malay nationalism known as *Ketuanan Melayu*, or Malay supremacy, through which the Malay race was bound inextricably to the concept of *bumiputera* or indigenous rights (Shamsul 364). The term *bumiputera* (literally "son of the soil") thus attained a political and legal dimension in Malaysia, since it refers to a group of people construed as "native" and therefore deserving of preferential treatment, although it was already in use in colonial times (Holst 33). In contrast, the term also "foreignises" Malaysian Chinese and Malaysian Indian citizens, who are seen as "immigrants," *pendatang* (newly-arrived) or *penumpang* (transients, squatters or trespassers) (Gabriel 785–800), while the indigenous Orang Asli tribes were seen as Malay and hence *bumiputera* despite undergoing a gradual process of Malayanisation.

The present chapter employs the term "race" not merely as its popular English iteration of the Bahasa term *bangsa*, but also to highlight the ascriptive nature of communal identities which have been imposed on individuals. The bloody clashes on 13 May between Malays and Chinese in Kuala Lumpur following the release of 1969 election

---

imperialism, and the participation in different forms of waged or unwaged labour (349). For a fuller overview of ethnicisation and racial politics in colonial and post-independence Malaya, see *Ethnicisation and Identity Construction in Malaysia* (2014) by Frederik Holst.

results have been regarded as a watershed event that continues to ascribe and ethnicise the country's Malay, Chinese and Indian communities, though the national Form 5 history or Sejarah textbook, in use from 2020, includes only two paragraphs on the event in a chapter on national unity. In this complex intermingling of colonial policies amidst doctrines of nativist primacy, now equated with *Ketuanan Melayu*, and the need for co-existence in the emergent Malayan nation, race was conceptualised in public discourse as an exclusionary difference between *bumiputera* and non-*bumiputera* communities. These distinctions were later reflected in the implementation of the New Economic Policy (NEP), as well as in the National Culture Policy in 1971 which stipulated the centrality of Islam and "indigenous culture" to the nation (Holst 126).

In the wake of the marginalisation of literatures written in other languages, particularly English, a number of Malaysian writers chose to leave the country, including the novelist and scholar Shirley Lim, who later found critical acclaim in the US, and the poet Ee Tiang Hong, who migrated to Australia in 1975, and who continued to write about the 13 May race riots of 1969 until his passing in 1990 (Liew 2). In a retrospective essay published in 1988, Ee recalls the general mood just after the National Culture Policy was instituted, where Chinese and Tamil writings from Malayans were regarded as "immigrant in nature" by the Federation of the National Writers' Associations of Malaysia, despite the existence of anthologies of Malayan literature in these languages (16). English, as Ee asserts, was "not a foreign language in Malaysia" (16), being the second language of many, though the English language writer has been left to "languish on the periphery of national development" and is "excluded from participating in a politics of consensus" due to the supposedly "elite" and "colonial" nature of English usage (19).[41] After close to

[41] As briefly outlined in the opening to this chapter, Ee's bitterness mostly results from burgeoning ethnonationalist sentiments in the 1970s while earlier in the decade, Fernando advocated for a more inclusive, conciliatory role for Anglophone writing in the context of Malaysia's national imagining.

twenty years, Ee's bitterness testifies to how the out-journey of the diasporic Malaysian Anglophone writer continues to be marked by his or her exclusion from the national imaginary and recognition as a Malaysian writer. His sentiments are echoed by Shirley Lim, who describes how as a Chinese-Malaysian woman writer, she is "subject to a new colonialism in the name of nationalism" (27). Writing about the subjectivity of the Asian woman writer more generally, Lim insists on "political realism as the space for self-creation" (27). The Anglophone worldliness of the Malaysian diasporic writer is thus marked by the circumstances under which English is made foreign and alien in the Malaysian national imaginary, even as literary writers insist on the Anglophone as a necessary site of worlding their lived realities.

Despite the contemporary role that English plays in the "technological, economic, and political aspirations of the nation" (Rajadurai 54), the consumption of literary fiction in English, as a cultural import, is circumscribed by class and affluence. This is largely due to decades of Malay medium education, and Malay ethnic nationalism expressed as a strong reaction to English as representative of the colonial elite (Stephen 5). English was only employed as the language of instruction in specific private higher education institutes (Grapragasem, Krishnan, & Mansor 91). Moreover, there is limited support for a local publishing scene in English. Veteran bookseller Raman Krishnan of Silverfish Books laments how the Malaysian books market is flooded with remaindered volumes from Anglo-American publishers, while Malaysian publishers themselves struggle to sell new work in their home market, or even to neighbouring countries in Southeast Asia (Silverfish Books Blog).

For diasporic writers from a later moment, race continues to be an exclusionary state discourse mobilised as Malay ethnic nationalism. Furthermore, the notion of a "National Literature" continues to be discussed in terms of the lack of recognition

accorded to non-Malay literatures. Commenting on a national literature for a "New Malaysia" in 2018, Faisal Tehrani, a Malaysian novelist and playwright working in Bahasa, laments the "aridity" of translations between different Malaysian literatures which has resulted in "the lack of a truly Malaysian readership that spans individual ethnic communities." Literature continues to be written within and for exclusive linguistic worlds but as Faisal observes, "literature is the sense of touch, thought, knowledge and culture" and if such sentiments stem from non-Malay language writing, it would be foolish to disinherit them as "non-national literature." From the transnational perspective of writers such as Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng, to be a Malaysian Anglophone writer is to have one's literary output accented by the sectional nature of English language writing in one's home country. Seen in this light, Samarasan's and Tan's mobility as transnational Anglophone writers is equally an escape from the restrictions of their origins. Interpreted by some as a certain faithlessness, their work is perhaps better perceived as indicative of the transnational and mobile nature of Malaysian national imagining in its widest ambit.

This is also reflected in the way their novels were, for the most part, written away from Malaysia. Samarasan was born in Malaysia but moved to the United States to finish high school on a scholarship. *Evening is the Whole Day* was first begun during an MFA programme in Creative Writing at the University of Michigan and an earlier version of the novel won the Avery and Jule Hopwood Novel Award (preetasamarasan.com). Samarasan's first, and to date, only novel, was later published in 2008 by Houghton Mifflin in the US, as well as by Harper Collins' Fourth Estate in the UK. Tan likewise hails from Malaysia, and charts the same cross-border trajectory to the Anglo-American metropole. Born in Penang, a British-founded colonial town that he chose as the setting for *The Gift of Rain*, Tan studied law at the University of London. He began working on his first novel while studying for his master's degree in law in Cape Town while "missing

Malaysia" (Idar). In an interview, Tan mentions that his second prize-winning novel, *The Garden of Evening Mists*, was written while travelling and consciously uproots "a traditional, conservative, nationalistic South African," called Magnus, and locates him as the owner of a tea plantation in the Cameron Highlands of Malaysia (Idar).

However, both Samarasan and Tan identify as Malaysian writers and continue to be identified as such by their fellow Malaysians. In the same interview, Tan is content to be labelled a "Malaysian writer," though he would not want to be known as an "ambassador of Malaysian literature," as such a nationally representative term would be "dangerous" (Idar). Moreover, despite attaining international acclaim, Tan frequently visits Malaysia and remains engaged with the local literary scene. Besides winning the grand prize in the 2009 MPH short story competition, he participates regularly in the Georgetown Literary Festival and spoke on panels in 2012 and 2015. Similarly, Samarasan remains engaged with Malaysia's ongoing discourse on race and politics as an extension of the themes of her novel. In an essay published in *AGNI*, she discusses how her beginnings in Malaysia continue to imbue a sense of anxiety and fear in the way she raises her daughter in France. While Western parents encourage their children to engage in risky play to build emotional and social confidence, Samarasan recalls how her complete aversion to risk was the result of her Malaysian Indian childhood, which she locates within "zero-sum game of Malaysian racial politics," and where "the overriding lesson of [their] childhoods was to trust no one." As a final example of both Samarasan's and Tan's status as Malaysian writers, both authors were winners in the English fiction category for their first novels in The Star Reader's Choice awards in 2009, which were based on readers' votes. In addition to their

substantial readership at home, Tan and Samarasan also command fairly impressive book sales abroad.[42]

That Anglophone Malaysian literature from Samarasan and Tan is read both at home and abroad on the Anglophone circuit strongly implies that their fiction deserves recognition for its exceptional positioning as Malaysian and transnational. This is further textured by how the mobile Malaysian is a unique diasporic identity that undergirds the context of literary production. A term coined by the Malaysian sociologist Koh Sin Yee, the "mobile Malaysian" designates one who migrates abroad; such people often continue, nonetheless, to evince a strong sense of loyalty to Malaysia based on affective communal or place-based experiences (197). Typically well-educated and affluent, the mobile Malaysian Indian or Malaysian Chinese labours under racialised notions of citizenship, compounded by personal experiences of discrimination as a *non-bumiputera*. A culture of migration in search of social or economic opportunities allows mobile Malaysians to navigate structural obstacles in education, employment and opportunities for enterprise (137). Yet, as Koh elaborates, such survivalist attitudes are frequently coupled with a discourse of disloyalty to the nation when a Malaysian relocates permanently (8). Such migration overseas to more affluent nations such as Australia and Canada in the 1970s and 1980s should not be confused with Aihwa Ong's concept of flexible citizenship, where multiple citizenships are a wholly pragmatic strategy for relocation and transnational capital accumulation (19). Instead, the prevailing view from Koh's findings is that Malaysians take on a "spare" citizenship because of a deep-rooted distrust of the

[42] Nielsen Bookscan data indicates that *The Garden of Evening Mists* has sold 123,762 copies, *The Gift of Rain*, 54,278 copies, and *Evening is the Whole Day*, 9668 copies (data generated 21 May 2019). These figures represent sales to the UK, South Africa, Australia, and New Zealand, and translations into Italian and Spanish for Brazil, Mexico, Spain and Italy, the latter being a far a smaller number in terms of sales. Myrmidon Books, Tan's publisher, also identifies Malaysia and Singapore as the biggest markets for his books, outstripping Australia, New Zealand, South Africa and the EU (personal email to the author). Samarasan's agent and publisher have not responded to queries.

Malaysian government (207), thus evincing a continued racialised identification with being Malaysian Chinese or Malaysian Indian even when seeking to move abroad.

Existing scholarship on the Malaysian novel in English, however, does not fully register this crucial socio-historical context undergirding the transnational positionality of a Malaysian author, whose mobility is anchored in a racialised belonging to Malaysia, and how this context is further registered in literary representations of the past. In a historical overview of the novel in Malaysia, Andrew Hock Soon Ng queries if the international success of these novels implies that literary authenticity has been compromised—a contention that Philip Holden also highlights in his analysis of the global Malaysian novel. He singles out Tan's *The Gift of Rain* for its heavy-handed downloading of anthropological information for a global audience (50). Both Ng and Holden acknowledge that global or world Anglophone novels to some extent reprise stereotypes in their works for an Occidental audience, thereby opening themselves to the charge of exoticisation and commodification. However, both critics also see the cultural production of these novels as being irreducible to their commodity value in the global Anglophone book trade. Tellingly, Ng writes that "too much authenticity" precludes the Malaysian novel from "global critical renown" (335). Against the rather limiting perspective which equates any reliance on cultural essentialism with exoticism and political quietude, Ng and Holden indirectly imply that there is a separate affordance to the transnational dimension of novels such as those written by Samarasan and Tan.

Building on Holden and Ng's suggestion, the constraints of "authenticity" might refer to the limits of current discourse, where a significant moral majority continues to demonstrate a "passion for race" as proof of communal loyalties (Lim "Overcoming Passion for Race" 3). Conversely, *Evening is the Whole Day*, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Garden of Evening Mists* exceed such discursive restrictions as Anglophone world writing.

The transnational subject matter of these narratives depicts trans-temporal and cross-spatial trajectories beyond the narrow racialisation of cultural identities. While this may be understood in terms of the portability of the novel in its wider material circulation, the nature of worldly address in Malaysian Anglophone novels is such that mobility functions as the site of fictional memorialisation. What is understood initially as a spatial disjunction in Samarasan's and Tan's status as mobile Malaysian authors is transfigured in their literary texts as a temporal remove, and a worlding of the past according to the socio-political context of their out-journey from Malaysia. In this manner, race is located neither within the fraught context of Malaysia's recent history nor within a discourse of authenticity, with the latter at risk of being subsumed with a larger economy of marginal cultures from an Anglocentric perspective. Instead, the aesthetics of these novels function as a form of historiography, in which the nature of fictionality exerts a narrative force that imagines a nation defined by more than economic strife and insuperable cultural differences, and a Malaysia beyond the restrictive discourse of race.

In its temporal dimension of world-making, the Anglophone world novel can be situated in relation to scholarship on memory studies, which has increasingly moved away from a national methodology in approaching cultural memory (Erll 7). Memories travel transnationally, along with post-national individuals. From such memorialisation emerges "a desire to move forward towards a new national imaginary stimulated by ongoing local and global reconfigurations" (Assmann 547). What distinguishes Samarasan's and Tan's novelistic worlding from such historical scholarship is that literary signification takes the place of actual memorialisation, reflecting the break with Malayan cultural memory through Anglophone writing. In his extensive discussion of postcolonial literature as world literature, Pheng Cheah seeks to bridge the temporal unfolding of literary worldliness with newly imagined perspectives on the external world. Worlding is essentially an "opening

that puts all beings into relation" and so generates significatory value anew (9). With novels that seek "to have a worldly causality in contemporary globalisation" (13), such world-making is achieved not through the imagining of multiple temporalities, though this is important in itself, but through a temporal force that "is immanent to globalisation and constitutes a real power that resists and undermines it, thereby opening different temporalities and worlds" (17). Cheah makes a case for literary form as a "critical mimesis" which deploys "various forms of realism, allegory and symbolism" to contest "(neo)colonial and capitalist cartographies of the world" (18). As our subsequent discussion of novels by both Malaysian authors will show, the narrative strategies of these Anglophone world novels suture past and present to effect a transnational memorialisation–itself a process of worlding that re-historicises the cultural imaginaries undergirding the national literature of Malaysia. Escaping the sectional and marginal role attributed to English within the nation, the Anglophone worldliness of Samarasan's and Tan's fiction travels on broader trajectories to generate an expanded cultural imaginary of Malaysia.

Transnational Memorialisation in *Evening Is the Whole Day*

In an interview with *Fiction Writers Review*, Preeta Samarasan says of her debut novel, "I wanted to write a Midnight's Children for Malaysia – yet I wanted also to make a book that was in some ways more female than Rushdie's" (Stamekhin). *Evening Is the Whole Day* is Samarasan's attempt to capture the troubled history of postcolonial Malaysia's divisive and pervasive discourse concerning race, by establishing an allegorical connection between the public sphere of the nation and the origins of a middle-class Malaysian Indian family, the Rajasekharans. Written at the distance of half a century after Malaya's independence in 1957 and the watershed racial riots of 1969, the novel is a revisionist

presentation of the country's national history as well as an attempt, in Samarasan's own words, to "reveal that history…through individual lives" (Stamekhin). In order to depict the psychological and emotional toll exacted by Malaysia's continued exclusion of non-*bumiputera* communities through the lens of a Tamil household, the novel employs literary techniques that have become associated with Anglophone postcolonial writing, such as intertextual allusions to a broader western canon, allegory and a non-linear chronology. By re-orienting these techniques towards a depiction of Malaysian history from this period, *Evening Is the Whole Day* re-historicises the recent past for an international audience, as a critique of racial discrimination that is aligned with the perpetuation of injustice along other social axes, such as class, caste and gender within the Malaysian Indian community.

This process of transnational memorialisation arises firstly, from the context of the novel's production and publication for the US and UK book markets. Blurbs of Samarasan's debut novel by other literary authors positioned her work in relation to established Indian authors of the international set, with Peter Ho Davies describing *Evening Is the Whole Day* as "a magical, exuberant tragic-comic vision of post-colonial Malaysia reminiscent of Rushdie and Roy" and Ali Smith judging it to be as "furious, controlled, cool and urgent as Aravind Adiga's White Tiger" ("Evening Is the Whole Day."). In an author interview, Samarasan also highlights this affiliation when she alludes to the epigraph of *The God of Small Things*, itself a quote from John Berger, that "never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one," so drawing an aesthetic connection between the fragmented and multiple histories of Roy's debut novel and her own (Stamekhin). Elaborating further, Samarasan lays claim to a longer tradition of English letters, specifically Charles Dickens's *Bleak House* for its focus on class and justice, and explains how she is influenced by the "big 19th-century narrator, the unapologetic prolixity, the somewhat formal, yet playful, diction." By articulating these

connections to a broader canon of Anglophone letters, Samarasan is tracing a genealogy of literary influence to underscore both affiliation and dis-affiliation in her adaption of the historical epic to Malaysia. Implicit in this is a certain expansive and deterritorialising circuitry of reading the Anglophone which considers Samarasan's Malaysia as worthy of inclusion in such a canon. This underscores the positioning of Samarasan as a transnationally mobile author who can be read in relation to literary giants, and for whom Malaysia remains a seemingly distant source of inspiration, a multi-scalar gambit that constellates the cultural periphery in relation to the larger Anglophone canon.

However, memorialisation in Samarasan's debut novel is further contextualised by her own status as a mobile Malaysian author who left the country due to social and economic barriers. Born in 1976, and growing up in the early eighties, Preeta Samarasan would have experienced the political and social rubric of the NEP as racial discrimination, combining political and cultural marginalisation of her ethnic group in the public sphere with policies that presented barriers to social and economic mobility. The exit strategies of non-*bumiputera* during this period are well-documented, such as through higher education (Brooks and Waters 33), while the notion of "transnational exit" was present in everyday discourse (Nonini 248). In an autobiographical essay, Samarasan describes how she grew up as a member of the aspirational middle-class in Malaysia in the late 1970s and early 1980s, with the keen awareness that non-Malays "would always be second-class citizens under the New Economic Policy (NEP)" (Samarasan "Malaysian Writer Preeta Samarasan").[43] Her mother "took on the responsibility of making sure [she] would get out

[43] The stated rationale of the NEP was to address imbalances in terms of income, employment and the ownership of assets, through the eradication of rural poverty and removing the association of ethnicity with economic function (Andaya and Andaya 310). Nevertheless, the policy featured priority admission to educational institutions and legislation for increasing *bumiputera* ownership of corporate assets, and came to be perceived as prejudicial to non-indigenous communities (Abdul Aziz 32; Koh 133). One of the most contentious effects of the NEP is its failure to equitably distribute economic wealth among the races. Malaysian Indians have become the country's most disadvantaged group, without the privileges of the Malays (The Economist 50).

of Malaysia" and pushed Samarasan to excel academically to earn a scholarship, since the family was not affluent. When Samarasan finally left for pre-university in the US, it was with a distinct sense of bitterness at the "institutionalised racism that had shaped [her] life" while continuing to feel strongly that she "had a stake in Malaysia's destiny," one that she expresses in her literary work as an extended critique of Malaysia's continued discrimination of *non-bumiputera*. Folded within such mobility is Samarasan's inheritance of the marginal status of English, subsequently transformed through her novelistic worlding as a transnationally inscribed politics of protest intended for a larger Anglophone readership beyond Malaysia.

In *Evening Is the Whole Day*, Samarasan's literary project is to critique Malaysia as a nation where racialised identities are politically and economically mobilised. The plot of the novel centres on Chellam, a servant-girl from the rubber plantations who goes up to the Big House, and who is subsequently framed for the death of the elderly Paati,[44] when it is the paranoid selfishness of all other family members that results in a toxic atmosphere of indifference. Against the triumphantly progressive narrative of the first- and second-generation Rajasekharans arrival into Malaysia, and their subsequent building of the Big House as a reflection of their increased wealth and status, Samarasan's portrayal of this middle-class family is an allegory for the birth of independent Malaysia and the "selfish materialism" that resulted from a discourse of economic survivalism and inter-racial competition (Samarasan "The Deepest Wounds" 15). Race, gender and caste divisions intersect and Samarasan's novel highlights how the truly voiceless, like Chellam, bear the brunt of the hegemonic imposition of fixed identities.

In the public sphere, the experience of alienation and exclusion from the newly formed nation is focalised through Raju Rajasekharan. The eldest son of third generation

[44] "Grandmother" in Tamil

Tamil immigrants to Malaysia, he is the grandson of a shipping company magnate and the head of the family at the peacock-blue Big House. Returning from Oxford to the town of Ipoh in the Malay peninsula, which had "begun to split its thin colonial skin" (23), Raju is something of a cowboy figure, pondering "his place in the newborn nation" (28) amidst the fervour of the time for *Merdeka* or independence. While many Indians in Malaysia still regarded India as their homeland during this period and chose to return there (Vadivella Belle 282), others like Raju believed in the ideal of a "Malaya for all Malayans": a place where each Malaysian is a true citizen, regardless of race (44). After the 1969 racial riots, Raju's idealism becomes untenable and he falls into depression, "wondering if his life was over" (135). He is also especially incensed at Article 153 of the Malaysian federal constitution of 1957, which safeguards the special position of the Malays and acknowledges Malaysia as Tanah Melayu or Malay land, making them, as he points out, "the masters" as opposed to Malaysian Indians who call it home (134). By tracing the story of the Rajasekharan family from their arrival in the peninsula in 1899 to their eldest daughter's departure in 1980 to attend university in the US, *Evening Is the Whole Day* can be understood as portraying the psychic and social aftereffects on Malaysians Indians of Malaysia's public discourse on race. Such racial ascription, nevertheless, also obscures the internal heterogeneity and varied origins of these communities, with the Indian community, for instance, comprising not just Tamils as the majority, but Malayalees and Telegus resettled through the *kangany* system, as well as Bengalis and Punjabis (Ongkili 7).

However, current criticism does not examine how Samarasan's work is simultaneously shaped by her transnational positioning as an Anglophone novelist and the racialised politics of protest which informs her writing. Scholars have read *Evening Is the Whole Day* as a diasporic critique of national consciousness, which testifies to how

"anticolonial nationalism has not so much failed as it has not been given a chance to succeed or properly take shape" because colonial racial differences persist as a residue in terms of social and economic inequalities (Gui 182). The novel's oscillation between different decades has also been understood against the figure of Walter Benjamin's Angel of History. His fixation on "lost potentials that disallow the amelioration of conventional narrative closure" points, in turn, to the inadequacy of cosmopolitical mobility, since the character Uma's departure from Malaysia does not effectively protest against the power politics of her home (Erwin 215). While acknowledging the importance of Samarasan's transnational context, these critiques do not discuss how being a Malaysian author has shaped the nature of such mobility.

In the popular press, commentators do recognise that Samarasan's debut deals squarely with the racial politics of her home country, but what emerges distinctly is a continuous likening of Samarasan to major Indian writers in the international arena, as part of a growing cross-cultural canon of literary fiction. Reviews of *Evening Is the Whole Day* in the international press praise the novel for its richly-realized and multi-layered presentation of Malaysian history, conveyed with an emotionally-charged depiction of character and situation. *The New York Times* lauds Samarasan for "her ambitious spiralling plot, her richly embroidered prose, her sense of place" while asserting that readers will "immediately compare her to Kiran Desai" (Goodman), and *The Independent* notes that her publicists continually compare Samarasan's *Evening Is the Whole Day* to both Desai's and Arundhati Roy's first novels "as if being a young, photogenic woman of Indian origin, she shares something with them" (Tripathi). Curiously, reviews in the Malaysian newspapers have criticised *Evening Is the Whole Day* for its stock characters and stereotypical plot ("Oh Such Drama" 13), while another proudly reports that the novel has been well-received abroad, and notes that the lack of a glossary for untranslated Malay and

Tamil terms would result in an inaccurate understanding of local nuances (Mehta 62). Both sets of responses point to an assumed responsibility towards cultural and national representation, one that is further complicated by the perception, in the international press, that Samarasan's novel is part of "the quiet emergence of new Malaysian writing" into the world (Tripathi).

Against this earlier reception of *Evening Is the Whole Day*, this chapter argues that the process of memorialisation in the novel is constructed from an important transnational locus that brings together the material contexts of the publishing industry as well as Samarasan's racialised and diasporic belonging to her homeland. On the wider Anglophone book circuit, Samarasan's literary representation is equated with the making of a truth-claim to a new audience about the racialised injustice encountered by Malaysian Indians throughout the years. But her work, as this chapter has earlier discussed, ought to be equally subtended by a longer tradition of Malaysian literature in English, which includes diasporic Anglophone writers whose work has been vitally shaped by their out-journeys. This glocal address is present in several stylistic allusions that pay homage to the broader anglophone canon, while marshalling these literary techniques in service of an intergenerational tale about the Rajasekharans. In its account of the Tamil immigrant's in-journey and the loss of cultural identity amidst independent Malaysia's first years of economic development, Samarasan's novel continues in the tradition of K.S. Maniam's classic trilogy of *The Return* (1981), *In a Far Country* (1993) and *Between Lives* (2003).

Unlike Maniam's work, however, *Evening Is the Whole Day* is made accessible to a broader audience through strikingly recognisable tropes from the Anglophone canon, with the Big House of the Rajasekharans a parallel to the Caribbean plantation house and the English country mansion. Individual chapter titles, such as "After Great Expectations" situate class concerns of marrying-up in Samarasan's novel within a Dickensian frame,

while “What Aasha Saw” alludes to Henry James’s *What Maisie Knew*, as a further intertext featuring a precocious girl growing up amidst her parents’ failing marriage. Though Samarasan would not see Malaysian Anglophone writing as a descendent of Indian writing in English, given their distinct national contexts, she has also cited *Midnight’s Children* as a “big influence” (Stamekhin) and her debut novel evidently taps on the earlier work’s hyperbolic depiction of a nation’s birth amidst a dazzlingly erratic chronology, to make a claim to representing Malaysia’s birth, not as the moment of political independence in 1957, but as the crisis of May 13, 1969, where aspirations to racial equality were stifled. In Malaysia, public discourse on the event remains divided between deliberate amnesia and renewed calls for further conversation, with 87% of respondents to a 50th anniversary poll in 2019 agreeing they would like to “understand the May 13 tragedy better” (“Many Want a Better Understanding of May 13”)

In the chapter “Power Struggles,” the events of that evening are depicted as equivalent to the birth of Malaysia as a nation defined by racial grievance. During the violence, Suresh, the second child of the Rajasekharans, is born “wet with the brave blood of life and hope, while so near and yet so far away the heroes of Malay Land soared through the skies, soaked with a seamier blood,” flowing from both Chinese and Indian victims of ongoing racial clashes in the streets (133). When Suresh’s mother goes into labour on “that night of bloodshed and bedlam, of dreams sent up in flames and ideals abandoned in dirty back alleys,” her sister and brother-in-law attempt to take her to the hospital in a taxi, but their way is blocked by armed Malay rioters (133). They are spared from further violence because they are “Orang Keling” and “mere bloody Indians” rather than the Chinese, who are being targeted that night (132). The boy is born in the backseat of the car, in full view of a disintegrating society where “Rumour and Fact fornicated openly” (127). Unlike Rushdie’s Saleem Sinai, who is born at the stroke of midnight when

India became independent, and whose mistaken identity is an occasion to trace the "excess of intertwined lives events miracles places rumours" and the "consumed multitudes" celebrated as part of the India's multifarious genealogies (*Midnight's Children* 9), Suresh was born into his racialised identity as a Malaysian Indian, who is inscribed through an act of fearful submission to Malay ethno-nationalism.

By orienting a famously allegorical scene away from *Midnight's Children* towards a depiction of the injurious racial grievances of Malaysian Indians, *Evening Is the Whole Day* can be usefully considered a form of multidirectional memory constructed from Samarasan's transnational position, which exists in competition and dialogue with public discourses on race within Malaysia's national space. Though originally theorised by Michael Rothberg in the context of the Holocaust, multidirectional memory is "subject to ongoing negotiation, cross-referencing, and borrowing; as productive and not privative" (3), and builds on Jan Assmann and John Czaplicka's distinction between two types of cultural memory, the fluidity and intimacy of everyday communicative memory and the external objectification of collective memory in its temporal distance (129). As discussed above, a scene filled with the bloodied screams of rioters and the ventriloquising of the crudest anti-*bumiputera* views in phrases such as "No means please shaddup your mouth" and "Go back where you came from" (134) is powerfully vivid, and therefore can be seen as exercising the immediacy of communicative memory through stylistic techniques. The literary text therefore, becomes a site of vibrant memorialisation, evincing a temporal depth that writes with and through collective memory to re-imagine the enunciative frame of race as in Malaysia.

Racialised Memorialisation and Regressive Temporality

Despite the complexities of representing Malaysia's cultural politics via a transnational address, *Evening Is the Whole Day* can nonetheless be read as a trenchant critique of race in Malaysia, one all the more striking when historical progress, rendered as a movement towards egalitarianism and away from the claustrophobic discourse of race, and other hegemonic identity discourses, such as class, caste and gender, is presented as well-nigh impossible. Samarasan's novel is distinctive for its non-chronological structuration, which shuttles between the 1960s and the 1980s as separate time periods, while the narrative progresses in a deceptive forward movement towards Uma's departure from Malaysia for university. A transnational exit from Malaysia, as implied by the narrative's insistence on the home country as a setting, does not mean leaving one's origins behind and the novel's temporally regressive structure reflects both an indictment of Malaysia's non-progress on issues of race, and how Samarasan's umbilical connection to her homeland requires a sad acceptance of her racialised exclusion as a non-*bumiputera*. For Samarasan as a mobile Malaysian author, the outward journey from her country is negated by the all-consuming need to return, via a historically revisionist perspective, to the root causes of racial discrimination.

In a 2018 interview, Samarasan speaks about her process of arriving at the "Now story backwards," as alternating between two time-lines would allow readers to focus on the "why and how" after hearing about the plot-ending at the start (Raymer). After first learning about Paati's death in the first chapter, readers experience the continued splicing of episodes contrasting the younger and happier Rajasekharans with their disillusioned and older selves. This results in a slow revealing of the psychological processes which have led to the entire household demonising Chellam. At the same time, this narrative technique of juxtaposing past and present junctures from public history makes readers feel keenly how the aspirations of multiracial Malaysia have been side-lined by racist attitudes and

individualistic and unprincipled ambitions. As an anti-national allegory, the novel enacts the process of false progress as a critique of Malaysia's growing material prosperity, while Malaysian Indians, especially the displaced working classes on the rubber plantations, continue to be excluded from full participation in the Malaysian national imaginary and a more equitable distribution of wealth. The last two chapters in the novel, titled "The Golden Descent of Chellam, the Bringer of Succor" (dated chronologically before Paati's death) and "The Glorious Ascent of Uma the Oldest-Eldest" (dated after) offer the illusion of hope by presenting characters analeptically before the tragedy, and just as Uma is about to leave Malaysia, pitting the mythic register of these chapters against the novel's investment in critiquing but also portraying race, class and gender in Malaysia as deeply rooted social discourses.

While none of the novel's characters break free from the historical events which have inexorably limited and shaped their lives, much of the unwarranted violence in the novel is directed against Chellam, a term of endearment in Tamil, meaning "darling," which serves to ironically underscore both her namelessness and how she receives little affection from either her drunken, exploitative father or her employer's family. A lower-caste servant-girl from the rubber plantations who goes up to the Big House, Chellam is subsequently framed for the death of the elderly Paati, the grandmother of the Rajasekharans and Raju's mother. Predictably, most of the abuse that she receives is at the hands of Raju. As soon as Aasha identifies Chellam as the cause of Paati's death, he unleashes a vitriolic outburst, calling her a "shameless prostitute" and a "killer" (163). While his own story showcases the racial discrimination experienced by a Malaysian Indian despite the privileges of education and wealth, his actions foreground a further intersectional alignment of such discrimination with the way he treats a female Indian from a lower socio-economic class. Dashini Jeyathurai reads Chellam's labouring self as also

the female body exposed and abused. Her broken English and unsanitary habits, which the Rajasekharan children make fun of, are not merely markers of class and caste differences but also of "disturbing cultural and national narratives that many wish to forget" (311). In particular, Chellam is a living embodiment of Malaysia's failed decolonisation, which has kept the economic apparatus of the British plantation system intact, forming an underclass of Indian rubber tapper families who remain resident on these estates in a cycle of impoverishment.

The non-chronological temporality of *Evening Is the Whole Day* fills Chellam's tale with added poignancy, when her return from the Big House to her abusive father is contrasted against the flashback to her hopeful arrival at a new place of work in the book's second-last chapter. Only Aasha's morbid and vague speculations permit the presence of "Chellam Future" as a suicide, "her eyes wild as she screams to them from her funeral pyre … whole bitter planets orbiting at the back of her gaping mouth" (9). Implausible as these fantasies may seem, such fiery and vivid imagery nonetheless expresses the injustice of omitting such narratives from Malaysia's history. These references to ghosts in the first pages of the novel foretell the tragedies to come, while functioning as a récit to highlight the arrested futurities implied by ghosts. Their continued haunting hints at a deep mourning over the lack of political action that makes Chellam a subaltern-victim (Spivak 80) at the intersecting discourses of violence of race and class. "Life will go on as it did before Chellam ever arrived," the omniscient narrator observes with barely concealed sarcasm, "or even better, except there'll be new ghosts in the house" (9). As a story of arrested social mobility, Chellam's trajectory might be first understood as the tragic counterpoint to Uma's outwards journey, except that her doomed "golden descent" into the Rajasekharan household, chronicled against Uma's "glorious ascent," reads as an ominous foreboding about this second, new beginning.

A further effect of this continuous retreat into the past, despite Uma's departure, is to present the notion of transnational exit as only a temporary departure from the country's hold on one's origins. Uma never writes back to her family, and the only scenes that depict her newfound freedom in America are present in the narrative through Raju's imaginary tales about his eldest daughter and the fantasies of Aasha, his youngest child, who is pining for Uma's affection. The closing pages of the novel feature Raju in the home of his Chinese mistress and surrounded by his mixed-race children, where he dreams out loud about the "Ghost of Uma Future" in a country where "you can go there a nobody, a no-name orphan, and tomorrow find yourself a United States senator" (339). The visual fantasy of Uma striding down New York's pavements in a stylish trench coat embodies Raju's own deep desire to reinvent himself outside race as a historically entrenched category. This unrealistic aspiration is described further as a fairy tale "Happily Ever After in which Appa's Chindian children, and his awestruck mistress, and Appa himself, can believe" (339). Likewise, Aasha's fantasies about her sister's new life are equally nebulous and function as an intense envisioning of life outside Malaysia's restrictive subject positions for a Malaysian Indian woman. "With a psychic's clarity," Aasha sees how the "Ghost of Uma Future" will be "many different someone elses" including Uma as "an American girl buying hot dogs from a stand" (326). Dressed, like any other girl, according to the changing seasons in New York, "her head [is] held high, because emptied of old faces, it's lighter than anyone else's" (326). These visions haunt a novel exclusively anchored in Malaysia's chronotope, which Mikhail Bakhtin defines as an organising centre "for the fundamental narrative events of the novel" (250), and convey a strong yearning for an identity free from the historical inheritance of racialised categories – a yearning that is never fulfilled, though amply expressed through Aasha's imagination. With neither Uma nor Chellam able to transcend their beginnings, *Evening Is the Whole Day* in its regressive

temporality rejects the possibility of growth or change, and by extension, the viability of an alternative future.

This continuous return to the past in order to examine the roots of Malaysia's race politics is also evident in the postscripts to the novel's main narrative, which comprise an interview with the Samarasan titled "Only the Past Has It" and a reflective essay by Samarasan herself on contemporary Malaysia, "The Deepest Wounds." The pernicious effects of racial discourse in Malaysia are again brought to the attention of an international audience by these paratexts that question the dominance of Malay interests. Reminiscent of the supplementary content of many novels that ply the international arena, these paratexts frame the text for readers less familiar with Malaysia and set out not only the basics of Malaysian culture and history but also a clear oppositional stance to general attitudes towards race in Malaysia, which Samarasan terms "legalised racism" ("The Deepest Wounds" 15). It is impossible for an Anglophone reader experiencing Malaysian writing for the first time to read the novel apolitically, without a sense of the country's troubled inheritance of racial identities, including those that minoritise the Indian community. In his assessment of a renewed tendency towards realist fiction in world literature, Hamish Dalley calls this this assemblage of extra-diegetic material the "archive," otherwise "the corpus of 'evidence' constructed as the foundation upon which a novel's claim to plausibility stands" (640). Yet it is worth querying further if the transnational locus from which Samarasan writes, might lead to certain distortions of historical understanding that hinder a more transformative critique of race.

In "The Deepest Wounds," Samarasan singles out "apathy" as her "country's most insidious epidemic" – the metaphor of disease underscoring her accusation (12). She draws a connection between the materialism and self-absorption of Malaysia in the 1980s and the structure of racial difference inaugurated by the 1969 riots. Traced across the generations,

the fate of the Rajasekharan family is a microcosm of events in the nation. “Quietly, at home,” Samarasan elaborates,

> we teach our children that we have to step on others to rise, the Malays on the Indians and Chinese, the Chinese on the Indians, and the Indians, to whom is left the smallest piece of the pie, even on each other. (15)

However, against the gradual emergence of Malaysia’s racialised appellations, it appears that Samarasan has inherited, and is in turn reinforcing the homogenised racial identities which have been perpetuated since the Alliance of 1953. In the lead-up to independence in 1957, racialised political parties representing the largest ethnic groups, namely the Malaysian Chinese Association (MCA) and the Malaysian Indian Congress (MIC), became part of an electoral coalition with the United Malays National Organisation (UMNO). Known as the Alliance, it was an expedient bargain to ensure a political majority and has for the most part succeeded in doing so since the country’s municipal elections in 1952. Frederik Holst has discussed extensively how the Alliance resulted in a further a manifestation of homogenised “Malay,” “Chinese” and “Indian” racial identities, which became further polarised following the 13 May incident in 1969, thus allowing the Alliance, later re-named the Barisan Nasional (BN) in 1973, to solidify its role as an arbitrator of racial relations. By viewing race relations as occurring between the ascriptive identities of “Malay,” “Chinese” and “Indian,” and according to a rather simplified hierarchy of one racialised group trampling upon another, Samarasan’s commentary obscures the complex processes by which racialisation intersected with political and economic formations of the time. Additionally, the varied composition of these racial communities is erased. In the course of *Evening Is the Whole Day*, the story of upwardly

mobile Tamil immigrants, albeit refracted by caste distinctions within their community, such as the denigration of Chellamservant for her rubber-estate origins and Amma for her dark skin (91), is taken as representative of the Malaysian Indian experience without mention of other minority Indian communities such as the Gujaratis or Assamese. Ironically, Samarasan's narrative reinforces external views on the Malaysian Indian community as Tamilian, further evinced in the novel when an overly friendly Malay man addresses young Uma in the train as "thanggachi" or Tamil for "little sister" (116).

A similarly problematic attempt at a transnational address occurs when Samarasan describes the New Economic Policy (NEP) of 1970 as "apartheid with a tarted-up face" ("The Deepest Wounds" 15), in an attempt to translate Malaysia's racial discrimination into a larger cultural idiom. However, by comparing the NEP with apartheid in South Africa, Samarasan equates its pro-*bumiputera* stance with the disproportionate ownership and domination of economic and social assets by South Africa's white minority, thus effacing earlier developments under the British administration, which had effectively kept many ethnic Malays from acquiring capital and participating in a modern industrial economy (Comber 6). A further context that would be apparent to contemporary Anglophone readers is the role of South Africa's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) in re-framing the history of apartheid's brutal segregationist policies as part of the country's transition to democratic constitutionalism. Beginning in 1994, the task of the Commission was to "foster and repair what its report refers to variously as 'national memory,' 'public memory,' and 'social memory'" (Sanders 36). At the heart of the TRC was a process of mournful witnessing and memorialisation through the act of confession, as part of a larger effort to "redeem that suffering in its telling and in the contribution of that truth to the production of a new moral order" (Posel 128). As a literary text, *Evening Is the Whole Day* is engaged in a parallel, though not identical effort, as an act of

imaginative witnessing. The novel is an attempt to redress the grievances of Malaysian Indian community but, unlike the TRC, offers little reconciliation by way of depicting what more egalitarian Malaysia might be like, except in allusions to a Malaysian Malaysia, articulated through Raju's failed political ambitions.

On the whole, Samarasan's re-memorialisation of Malaysia's formative years through a transnational address is heavily invested in re-orienting a narrative of racialised non-*bumiputera* exclusion towards a broader audience beyond Malaysia and as part of a longer Anglophone literary tradition. Yet in facilitating the narrative's cross-border circulation, Samarasan does simplify the complex historical origins of race and racialised hierarchies in Malaysia. Her novel paradoxically relies on race as an essentialising category while critiquing it as the cause of disempowerment for non-*bumiputera* in Malaysia. According to Samarasan herself, there was never "a *substantial* post-Malaysia section" (Stamekhin, emphasis in original), which points, in turn, to the regressive temporality of race that is threaded through Malaysia's postcolonial present.

To be sure, *Evening is the Whole Day* contains a forceful worlding of the past to expose the sorry effects of Malaysia's partisan policies on its Malaysian Indian minority. But despite effecting a rememorialisation of the postcolony's recent history through a number of narrative techniques, including intertextual allusions and allegory, the novel's unwavering focus on righteous redress ironically partakes of the divisive politics of its home country. Though Samarasan's debut may be seen as an example of the Malaysian novel as "a uniquely disembedded literary form" that is easily transported across geographies (Holden 52), the claims being made upon the canon of English letters are subsumed in the unresolved and ongoing critique of the racial discrimination faced by Malaysian Indians. Despite presenting a transnational imaginary that is trenchantly localised by the depth of Samarasan's relationship to Malaysia, *Evening is the Whole*

Day's revisionist treatment of history remains totalising and teleological in its logic. The expanded temporal scale of an Anglophone world novel like Samarasan's does entail the re-scripting of diasporic mobility as a revisioning of history, but also suggests a centrifugal rubric in engaging with the longue durée, one that inevitably reverts to moments of crisis in imagining the postcolonial nation. Whether this is a necessary outcome of the aesthetics of the Anglophone world novel will be further explored in the next section, in a discussion of queer temporality and fictive memory in Tan Twan Eng's novels.

Queer Temporality and the Oneness of the Hyphen in *The Gift of Rain*

In an interview with *Asymptote* just after winning the Man Asian Literary Prize in 2012, Tan Twan Eng is asked about his views on the co-existence of aesthetic refinement with war atrocities as a theme common to his depiction of Japanese culture in both his novels, with the suggestion that such aestheticization would merely obscure the presentation of historical truths. In response, Tan observes that the Japanese are not unique in this respect, despite how popular narratives in Malaysia remember the Occupation, the Germans being another example of how great wartime cruelty transpires despite civilisational refinement. He goes on to make a case for the duality of culture as an analogy for the different facets of human nature, one that Tan himself attempts to "channel" in his fiction into "something permanent and good" because "great beauty" should not be feared (Idar). The role of literature as spiritual and moral salvation carries Arnoldian echoes, which sit uneasily with the positioning of Tan as a Malaysian Anglophone author whose work would be regarded as part of a longer postcolonial tradition of writing in English, where the politics of engaging with the western canon can overshadow any aesthetic exchange between precursor and emerging traditions.

Unsurprisingly, the multiple and shifting contexts of Tan's literary production have made any reading of his novels in relation to Malaysia's socio-political situation at best a discussion of these frames in their mediatory role and at worst, an extended critique of its fictional liberties and historical inaccuracies. Notwithstanding Tan's own keen interest in the history of his home country, the popular reception of *The Gift of Rain* has highlighted the novel's reliance on an exotic image of the East, with reviews variously describing the book as "a Merchant Ivory film with lots of martial arts" (Jordinson) or as "visual and racy, episodic plotting [which] might have been more naturally realised in a decent Manga production" (Lake). The novel came in for some harsh criticism by fellow Penang-ite and writer, Kee Thuan Chye, who provides his views on why Tan's novel was not shortlisted for Best First Book category in the Commonwealth Writers Prize. A judge and a regional chair for the same prize, though in a later year, Kee accuses Tan of having "skewed the novel towards the Western medium he is mainly writing for" and considers Tan's descriptions of Chinese and Japanese to be exotica. Kee's main contention, however, is that the progress of the narrative is hindered by the prevalence of such 'cultural morsel[s] or travel guide tidbit[s]" and with a final flourish, describes it as "a practice that is demeaning, somewhat akin to harlotry" (Kee 33).

Indeed, as evinced by the scholarly response to both *The Gift of Rain* (2007) and *The Garden of Evening Mists* (2012), Tan's fiction is frequently critiqued for undermining its stated commitment to a cross-cultural, anti-parochial agency with its reliance on culturally-specific aesthetic practices as important moments of self-transformation. In his second novel, for instance, the stalwartly independent Malaysian Chinese protagonist, Yun Ling, only fulfils her lifelong wish to locate her sister's resting place after she recognises the sophisticated *horimono* on her back as part of a map. Tattooed by the Japanese emperor's former gardener, the intricate artwork on her skin makes "her aestheticisation by

Aritomo complete" (Poon 199). *The Gift of Rain*, in comparison, features a bi-cultural British-Chinese protagonist, Philip Hutton, whose homoerotic romance with his aikido master, Endo-san, has been understood as less about queer love and more about the agentic reach of imperial Japan. When read against the Edo Period in Japan's history, their relationship may not be historically transcendent or exceptional for its time, and instead "is a reiteration of the hegemonic male–male erotic relationship structured according to the power principles of *nanshoku*," which serves to "Nipponize" Philip in a time of war, and allows him to serve effectively as an agent for the Japanese (Lim "Agency and the Pedagogy of Japanese Colonialism" 239). That Tan's fictional worlds rely on an assemblage of civilisations and cultures in a vividly imagined version of the past seems to open his novels to the criticism of insufficient engagement with its historical provenance.

If the allure of Tan's work does not seem to be sufficiently addressed by reading his portrayal of cultural aesthetics against a more accurate understanding of their historical and social provenance, this is perhaps due to a certain incommensurability between the processes of memory at play in his novelistic worlds, and the claims being made in tandem with the historical and ontic reality of Malaysia where cultural identity is deeply entangled with long term processes of racialisation and politicisation. Even with Tan's better-studied second novel, *The Garden of Evening Mists*, there has been little attempt to consider the effects of temporality and memory generated from triply interlocking time-periods and multiply embedded recounts. The narrative structure in *The Gift of Rain* is considerably simpler. The narrative as a whole shuttles between the present and the past, and begins with an aging Philip in contemporary Penang. Here the community regards him variously as a war hero who stole intelligence from the Japanese invaders, or a turncoat who worked as an interpreter. Philip's reverie at the start of the novel is disrupted by the arrival of Michiko, his sensei's lover in pre-war years. Her visit is prompted by the belated delivery

of Endo-san's letter to her, sent from Penang, just before the war ends. At her gentle insistence, he narrates the events of the past half a century after they have taken place, and the interlocutory space between Philip as a Malaysian-born person of indeterminate cultural origins, with Michiko as a reminder of the Japanese Occupation, becomes transmuted as an alternative, if overly liberal, historicisation of Malaysia's past.

The bridge between the inner and outer diegeses of *The Gift of Rain* is intricately and multiply constituted through Philip Hutton as a homodiegetic character, as he recounts the many hurts and losses experienced during the world war. Philip's act of remembrance would be incomplete without Michiko as an interlocutor. She arrives in Penang with Endo-san's Nagamitsu sword, Illumination, which forms a pair with Philip's, ritually named Cloud. Through successive evenings of Philip's tale-telling, she displays an uncanny sense for unearthing artifacts that Philip himself had long thought were lost to the past, such as his father's collection of Malay ritual daggers or *keris*. The expanded geographical and temporal scale accrued by the presence and circulation of these artifacts adds an additional dimension to the mobilities at play—one's perspective may travel across spatial and temporal divides via memory or the imagination, but remembrance and recollection are equally provoked by the absence or presence of significant objects that exceed and disrupt notions of cultural essentialism. As Philip's recount of the past unfolds, a parallel development occurs in the outer frame as Michiko stands in for a reader who, with the benefit of hindsight and contemporary sensitivities, gently and retrospectively witnesses Philip's struggle to reconcile himself with his hybridised cultural and racial origins.

The son of a wealthy British tradesman and a Straits-Chinese mother, whose relationship is frowned upon by both Europeans and local Chinese, Philip's bi-cultural background and freely chosen apprenticeship under a Japanese aikido master set the stage for a confrontation between ethnonationalist loyalties and friendships that persist despite

such communal prejudices. The central dynamic of Book One is Philip's gradual reconciliation with both his British father and Chinese grandfather, both of whom have been estranged from Philip since his mother's early death. This is where Tan perhaps exercises too free a hand with ethnographic detail as readers travel with Philip to a multitude of settings to learn about colonial life, Chinese festivals and Japanese cultural practices. From Endo-san's island house replete with photographs and memories of Japan, to the streets of Penang where "one could easily lose one's identity and acquire another just by going for a stroll" (78), the ornate and claustrophobic interior of the Snake Temple and the grounds of the Hutton residence, the reader is taken on a whirl-wind tour of cultures not usually considered central to the Malayan peninsula. Philip's grandfather also tells the tale of how he was once the tutor of Wenzhu, the chosen heir to China's last emperor, who took his life in the chaos which followed the collapse of dynastic rule. His subsequent escape to Malaya as a labourer or coolie, and his further accounts about clans, festivals and traditions paint a detailed portrait of Chinese society in Malaya.

While this barrage of information seems at times to be an indulgent assemblage for the benefit of the non-Malaysian reader, these are also digressions into temporalities and spatial orders which richly implicate Penang as a Malaysian locale in a larger East Asian imagining. More importantly these evocations of different cultural settings serve as a backdrop to the gradual emergence of Philip's hybridised identity. As he transforms from a surly youth into a young man whom his father is proud to identity as a Hutton worthy of inheriting the family business, Philip Arminius Khoo-Hutton finds himself pivoting between multiple genealogies. Though this can be understood on one level as a formulaic multiculturalism, Philip's self-understanding is inflected through the embedded accounts that locate him amidst parallel but asymptotic temporalities. Upon realising that Philip was coming under the tutelage and influence of Endo-san, Grandfather Khoo offers his own

story of flight from the Forbidden City in order to remind his grandson that he has "a long tradition" behind him and that he does not "have to chase after a tradition that is not [his]" (136). He also takes Philip to visit the ancestral hall of the Khoos, with "the tiers of tablets rising up to the darkened ceiling, generations of our blood, filtered down through [his] grandfather to [him]" (239). Yet in this important scene, the inclusion of an entry bearing the name Khoo-Hutton causes Philip to experience "a shifting feeling of being brought apart and then placed back together again, all by the single stroke of a hyphen," which he concurrently realises is similar to the ideogram for 'one' in both Japanese and Chinese (239). This significant three-way translation melds together popular notions of cultural hybridity and notions of oneness without collapsing their differences. As Pheng Cheah suggests, if we understand cultural hybridity as constructed through the process of discourse or signification, we depart from notions of "culture as a self-identical and knowable entity, norm, or subject" and "articulate a political theory of culture as a process or production in language" ("Given Culture" 293). Though Grandfather Khoo subsequently reminds his grandson that if he ever feels lost "in this world or on the continent of time," to remember how "these people were all you, and you are them," it is clear to the reader that Philip understands this oneness as referring to all the significant figures in his life, Chinese or not.

The notion of contiguous but non-intersecting temporalities is furthered through a romantic reincarnation plot between Philip and Endo-san. In many ways the emotional heart of *The Gift of Rain*, the queer relationship between Philip and his sensei persists despite the overwhelming demands made by the war for each man to serve the nation that he is affiliated to by culture and genealogy. By its sheer incommensurability with external events, the homoerotic romance between Endo-san and Philip stands outside historical time and occurs in a queer temporality of its own, one that is linked to a recurring cycle of

violence in their past lives where the older man ends up killing the younger out of a misplaced sense of duty to a higher authority. As Endo-san reminds Philip when it is clear that the Japanese are about to invade, “remember always that I love you, and have loved you for a long, long time” (230). Later, this knowledge of their past lives comes to comes to Philip in a mystical vision as he is rowing his boat across to Endo-san’s island, located off the coast of Penang, so that the geographic and temporal coordinates of Malaysia are subverted and expanded, an impression bolstered by how Endo-san has built an exact replica of a guest cottage from his family estate in Japan. Philip’s crossing represents how the palimpsestic confluence of temporalities in a moment of recall has the capacity to bridge places and lives—

> I rowed to Endo-san’s island beneath the fading sun and the multiplying stars, enjoying the pull and yield of the oars. For once the trip felt unending, as though I were rowing in a viscous dream, all movement slowed. Part of me realised I had entered the deepest state of zazen and that I was not holding the oars anymore. (317)

The rhythmic physicality of Philip’s experience forms the prelude for taking leave of individuated experience to enter the state of *zazen*, a form of meditation he previously learned from Endo-san. Accompanied by this is an expansion of consciousness as chronological time ceases. Equilibrium is restored after Endo-san requests Philip to ritually behead him at the end of the war in Penang, thus putting an end to both his life as a Japanese war criminal and the larger violence as accruing from multiple lives and deaths.

The capacity of Philip and Endo-san’s relationship to persist outside the frames of national loyalty and cultural affiliation points to the importance of a queering of temporal

coordinates in *The Gift of Rain*, as a basis for resisting the collapse of one's identity into pre-existing categories. In contrast to a model of genealogical accounting, where cultural identity is located by tracing one's ancestry to provide "a distinguishing past to the person or community" (Quayson 148), queerness serves as a source of "alternative temporalities: because participants imagine their futures outside the logics and paradigmatic markers of life experience—namely, birth, marriage, reproduction, and death" (Halberstam 14). However, the crucial distinction to be made is that the queerness of Philip and Endo-san's romance occurs against the logic of ethnonational loyalties, as exacerbated by the war, rather as a deviance from heteronormativity. As Kelly Yin Nga Tse observes, their relationship resonates with the Buddhist principles of non-attachment to nationalistic desire, and non-aversion to the other, and gains its truth-value and normative force from a Buddhist ethics of reconciliation occurring within an East Asian cosmology (11).

Such queer temporality, as folded into the subject matter of Tan's writing, urges a divergent view of self-identity outside the temporality of nationhood or cultural origins, one which richly implicates Penang as a Malaysian locale in a larger cross-border imagining. Reminiscent of the earlier discussion on amplitude in *Inheritance*, where both transnational trajectories and the particularity of individual lives are given equal attention, amplitude in Tan's diegesis works similarly to foreground character in relation to temporal and historical mobility. The 'I' of Philip's vision transcends not merely his already hybrid cultural identity, but the boundedness of a life lived in a one historical moment. In this respect, *The Gift of Rain* has been understood as advancing a literary intervention into Malaysia's cultural nationalism from a queer diasporic perspective, which deterritorialises the hegemonic state. In his discussion of the relationship between Endo-san and Philip, Weihsin Gui notes that Philip's love for Endo-san "inverts the dominant perception in Malaysia and Singapore of the Japanese as militaristic sadists during World War II" in

terms of the slippages it affords between national, familial and romantic loyalties, and may be classified as belonging to a category of works about the Japanese occupation which presents a more human face of the invaders (193). Drawing links to the larger framework of critical nationality, Gui understands Philip as embodying "the multi-ethnic and polyglot admixture of peoples and cultures that make up colonial and postcolonial Malaysia" (193).

Both queer temporality and the hyphen as a visual pun in translation are ways in which Tan's narrative resists the seeming automaticity of cultural categories, providing a counter-balance to current critiques of *The Gift of Rain* for its seeming reliance on essentialist tropes in the depiction of pre-independence Penang. Additionally, these divergent temporal and translational orientations suggest that Tan's work is transmuting the minor status of Malaysian literature in English into minoritisation as a form of dialogue with the larger body of world Anglophone writing. Unlike Samarasan's reworking of the racialised minoritisation of Malaysian Indians as a politics of redress from an external and diasporic locus, Tan's novel infuses a pluralising perspective into the way cultural identities are organised in space and time through literary worlding as an aesthetic response. The temporal and spatial mobility that undergirds Philip's self-understanding, and his romance with Endo-san valorise mobility to comprise a capacious basis for cultural identity in Malaysia. Where "race" was once given a seminal theorisation by the social anthropologist Fredrik Barth as based on a "continuing dichotomization between members and outsiders [which] allows us to specify the nature of continuity, and investigate the changing cultural form and content," such "signals or emblems of difference" (14) become in *The Gift of Rain* heterogenous and expansive trajectories that resist the xenophobic and nativist regard of Malaysians with immigrant origins. Yet despite such a movingly imagined diegesis, Tan's novel remains a work of fiction, whose capacity for socio-political intervention depends on wider material and discursive circuits.

Fictive Memorialisation as Historical Inscription in *The Garden of Evening Mists*

With this important caveat about fictionality, we turn to *The Garden of Evening Mists*, in which nostalgia entails more than the historical re-writing of Chinese cultural signifiers amidst larger efforts at reconciliation with the past. Instead, Tan's second novel renders the limits of memory itself as part of the narrative experience for the reader, with the experience providing a mimetic and hence self-reifying sense of the histories being imagined. When this occurs at the scale of the world, this fictionalisation of memory at the widest ambit results in an extensive reworking of deep-seated histories. Unlike *The Gift of Rain*, Tan's second novel is narrated in first-person and in the voice of Yun Ling, which allows for the nuanced exploration of remembrance as a theme in relation to the unreliability of memory. Readers first meet her as a retired judge who returns to Yugiri, which she has inherited from Aritomo, a former gardener to the Emperor of Japan, who resettled in the Cameron Highlands before the war. The story of their friendship, which eventually grows into a romance, is revealed in a series of nested narratives: the arrival of a historian from Japan in the present-day prompts Yun Ling to set down, in writing, how she first sought out Aritomo in 1949. She does so in order to learn the art of Japanese horticulture and to build a Japanese-style garden for her dead sister, Yun Hong. This interdiegesis in turn contains the kernel of Yun Ling's most traumatic war memories, which she reveals to Aritomo, and to readers at the same time. During the Japanese Occupation of Malaya, she is interned in the Golden Lily prisoner camp along with her sister. Beaten and abused, she is the only one to escape alive, with no idea of where Yun Hong's resting place is. After the war, she makes three promises to her sister: to escape and live on, to find the remains of the camp, thereby freeing Yun Hong's spirit and to build a Japanese-style garden in Yun Hong's memory, as it was their shared memories of a trip to Kyoto that sustained them during their imprisonment.

Much of *The Garden of Evening Mists* attempts an incomplete recollection of the past by way of an extended meditation on the nature of remembrance. With the elderly Yun Ling suffering from Primary Progressive Aphasia, the unfolding of the story is a race against the encroachments of time. Hence while memory is depicted as theme and subject matter when Yun Ling reminiscences about the past, the frame of the outer diegesis functions as a meta-commentary on the workings of memory as narrative and the inherent fallibilities in reconstructing the past. Mid-way through the novel, during her apprenticeship to Aritomo, the younger Yun Ling observes how "a garden borrows from the earth, the sky, and everything around it" (153). In doing so, she alludes to the Japanese horticultural technique of borrowed scenery or *shakkei*. In the artfully concealed approach to a water feature, or the glimpses of the hills through a well-placed gap in the hedge, a garden cultivates perspective and locates the viewer in the same move. With Aritomo's hometown recently destroyed during the American bombing in 1945, Yun Ling attempts to comfort her sensei. She muses about how "memories are a form of *shakkei* too" (153). Amidst the cool, verdant surroundings of the garden they call Yugiri, Yun Ling tells Aritomo that memories "borrow from time" and ought "to make life less empty…but they will always be out of reach" (153).

In portraying two dislocated characters in a narrative heavily textured by Japanese cultural aesthetics, amidst the troubled non-belonging of the Chinese community to the Malaysian nation and the lingering memories of the second world war, *The Garden of Evening Mists* effects a *shakkei* of its own as Anglophone world writing that extends the cultural imaginary of Malaysia beyond Malay ethno-nationalism, from its positioning within the transborder currents of Anglophone literary production and circulation. So artfully evocative is the notion of *shakkei* that it reads as an overarching concept for Anglophone world literature, as this dissertation has begun to theorise it, in terms of

networks of re-framing and re-coding, except that the notion of *shakkei* itself suggests that the curation of such meta-critical perspectives is subject to the tenuous boundary between illusion and reality. Itself a Ming import into nineteen century Japanese horticultural aesthetics, the term *shakkei* is properly understood as a landscape "captured alive," where despite the re-framing, every element remains as animated "just as it was before it was captured" (Itō and Kuzunishi 15). Therefore, the shift in perspective results less from borrowing as a matter of indebtedness, with the garden as it were, drawing upon the life of the earth and the sky, but a deeply appreciative eye for each living element present in a renewed composition of the landscape. The worlding of the past in Anglophone world writing, especially in Tan's novels, is structured by a principle of re-framing that harbours the logic of return, which leads to no less than a continuous unsettling of histories in this movement between past and present. Such worlding, as the ensuing discussion will show, is intrinsically linked to temporality as an aspect of fictionality.

Returning specifically to *The Garden of Evening Mists*, *shakkei* bears a curious conceptual resonance with nostalgia as an affective operation that frames the past in the light of the present. More than a psychological process, or a means of theorising Malaysia's present status in relation to racial discourse, nostalgia is part of the narrative experience for Tan's readers, with the novel's unfolding mimicking the operations of memory. As Svetlana Boym adroitly observes in *The Future of Nostalgia*, nostalgia mourns a home that no longer exists, has never existed or is impossible to return to—a home that may exist in the past or elsewhere. Associated with the condition of spatial or temporal displacement, nostalgia is an affective state sustained by the inability as well as the fantasy of return (41). Boym's study of nostalgia takes place in the context of Russian immigration to America in the early twentieth century, but her reflections on the nature of nostalgic temporality are wholly relevant to Tan's fiction, and Anglophone world writing

with its distinctive expansion of spatiotemporal scale. In the course of the twentieth century, the rapid pace of industrialisation and modernisation was accompanied by physical and spiritual dislocation, from country to town, and then across borders as new nations were formed, while others dissolved. In the state of migration or diaspora, "nostalgia was not merely an expression of local longing, but a result of a new understanding of time and space that made the division into 'local' and 'universal' possible." Instead of "aspiring for the universal and the progressive," the "nostalgic creature…looks backwards and yearns for the particular" (11). Boym stresses that this desire is not for the recovery of a distinct past, but is itself the projection of "an absolute, a home that is both physical and spiritual, the edenic unity of time and space before entry into history" (8). In *The Garden of Evening Mists*, *shakkei* can be understood as an extension of Boym's conceptualisation of nostalgia—memorialisation in the present reframes the past through a deep sense of loss that is equally desirous of recovery and wholeness for a capacious imaginary of Malaysia.

Shakkei, however, is merely an artful illusion, through which the edifice of memory, as with the aesthetics of fiction, effects a reconciliation in the present with the injurious experiences of the past. Healing, as Yun Ling discovers, requires a conscientiously historical witnessing, which is less about righteous vengeance, but "a commitment to truth, in a dialogic context and with an authentic listener" (Felman and Laub 91). Moreover, it is a truth that can only be accessed in the space of an insuperable difference between present and past; between a world that is lost and a present in which one accepts that one's promises will never be fulfilled (Felman and Laub 91). Memory-work is therefore an interlocutory site where Yun Ling is in dialogue with her younger self. In numerous scenes, the depth of her hatred for all Japanese is amply expressed when she lashes out at the arrival of a delegation from The Association to Bring Home the

Emperor's Fallen Warriors, and even against Aritomo himself. As the novel progresses, the temporality of historical inscription works in counter-point by setting Yun Ling's unfolding narrative about her fear and anger during the war against the forward dynamic of her learning to forgive Aritomo, and all Japanese in the present-day. While at Yugiri with Aritomo, she thinks to herself:

> Walking in the garden that I had heard about almost half a lifetime ago, I wished Yun Hong were here with me. She would have enjoyed it more than me. I wondered what I was doing here, living a life that should have been my sister's. (94)

Here in the garden, Yun Ling's presence is displaced by two separate trajectories: the first being memory, the second, imagined doubling as an expression of her continued mourning for Yun Hong. In the "should have been" emerges the gap between the present, and what has been irreparably lost. Coupled with this is Yun Ling's initial sense of failure at being unable to master the minute intricacies of Japanese horticulture. In response to her frustration, Aritomo counsels that "the garden will remember it for you" (93). In other words, the gardener must accept the garden as an organic extension of himself—that who we are is premised on what we cannot yet know, except through memory as a "borrowing from time" (153) or *shakkei*, just as the garden borrows artfully from its surroundings. Note the intricate temporality at work here: the garden in fact has no consciousness of its own. Instead, the place serves as a touchstone, awaiting the moment when the beholder is ready to re-assess his or her past, with the inevitable conclusion that the past remains at a distance, making possible a distinct but contiguous future. In other words, the past is never attained in its pristine form, but requires an acknowledgement in the present that

remembrance itself is essentially an act of narratological reframing, which is fictional to a large extent.

Far from equating fiction with falsity, this chapter considers how fictionality itself contains the capacity for a liberated and imaginative discharge of the past and its grievous hurts. Nostalgia as *shakkei* exercises a fictive re-worlding of the past by imbuing it with a separate life, an afterlife in which the past is returned to present remembrance through an image or experience that recognises loss but removes from it the charge of guilt and sorrow. As the novel concludes, Frederik, the South African nephew of a neighbouring tea plantation owner, and Yun Ling's suitor in her youth, emerges as the only constant presence throughout all phases of her tale. In response to her anguished remark that a Japanese garden was never successfully built for Yun Hong, he points out that for forty years, a little hut in Yugiri has been named the Pavilion of Heaven, an allusion to her sister's favourite poem, "The Cloud" by Percy Bysshe Shelley. To a shocked Yun Ling, he insists, "the garden for her already exists" (343). At this moment, readers will recall an earlier scene in the inner diegesis where Yun Ling recites part of Shelley's poem, which was discussed at the beginning of this dissertation. All is silent except for a concatenation of affective associations that unsettles an English poem into a Malaysian novel and releases a lifetime's sorrow from an injurious history. They join hands, Yun Ling refusing to let go while Frederik describes them both as "the last two leaves still clinging on the branch, waiting to fall. Waiting for the wind to sweep us into the sky" (343).

Nostalgia, in this enlarged conceptualisation by way of Tan's fiction as *shakkei*, is a powerful means of re-framing history. By spanning vast chronological divides through the mournful yet cathartic resonance of particular moments, nostalgia can be understood as a fictional operation in its own right. Produced from within the structures of memory, nostalgic fictionalisation could also be understood as underpinning the narrative structure

of *The Garden of Evening Mists*, which creates a readerly experience where different moments "borrow" from each other to create a tightly woven network of allusions internal to the book. A heron in the pond, spotted by the now-elderly Yun Ling, appears two hundred pages later in Yugiri of the 1950s; a bottle of Constantia red from South Africa, opened during dinner with the South African owners of the neighbouring tea plantation, evokes the phrase "the wine of exiles," uttered by Aritomo thirty years earlier. These, among other various other internal allusions, or what in narratology is termed "repeating analepses" (Genette 54), have no bearing at all on plot or causality. Instead they leave the audience struggling to recall the previous allusion in the narrative after lengthy durations of reading, so mimicking the workings of memory, while foregrounding the reader's own limits in recalling such internal memories in the text.

The conscientious reader who traces the allusions to their sources is rewarded with the filaments of transnational journeys made across time: the heron's second appearance in the text occurs when Yun Ling queries Aritomo as to its name, which he gives in Japanese as "Aosagi." The creature is beautifully described as a "halo over the pond," as it doubles itself "with its own image" (189) and they speculate whether it has migrated from Mongolia, leaving the reader to ponder the permanence of place and the reliability of memory. Whether or not the allusions are traced to their source, the reader experiences an uncanny moment of recollection akin to Yun Ling's. The general reader is left with a beauteous sense of nostalgia for the lost world of Yun Ling and Aritomo, but also a corresponding belief in its existence because of the *shakkei* of temporal depth and veracity. The fictionality of Tan's work is thus concealed as an affective technology of memory, and the novel in its imaginative worlding exhibits the force of authenticity, one which inscribes the narrative of a Straits Chinese woman as part of Malaysia's national history during the world war and the Malayan Communist Emergency.

The temporalities of readerly experience as *shakkei* in this novel render intersubjectively the role of memorialisation, as process rather than thetic discourse, in exceeding the racialisation of cultural identities in Malaysia. The fallacy of memory as well as its capacity to juxtapose different temporal junctures allows these analeptic, time-vaulting moments to be a transnational mapping of the losses encountered by various characters who have settled in Malaysia. Yun Ling's long-time neighbours are of Boer descent, and proudly fly the Transvaal flag in defiance of the British, even in this faraway colony. To drink the "wine of exiles" brings Aritomo's exile from Japan into an equivalence with Magnus's distance from his native South Africa. Both homelands have been the site of violent occupations: with American soldiers in Japanese cities after 1945 and the internment of Afrikaans-speaking South Africans in concentration camps during the Anglo-Boer War.[45] These South-South connections stand in opposition to the typical routing of cultural identities via the Anglophone metropole of London.

In terms of its decentred cartography, as well as its presentation of temporal scale amounting to centuries, *The Garden of Evening Mists* sets up a dialectic between sites outside the centrifugal logic of the imperial metropole. Again and again, readers are challenged to draw unexpected connections through these entangled trajectories, which are given psychic and affective resonance as acts of remembrance. Here in *The Garden of Evening Mists*, the network of analeptic allusions focalises the effect of cumulation across different transnational circulations. The world of Malaysia is re-imagined in an Anglophone world novel as one with varied and unlikely origins, which in turn resists hegemonically and nationally imposed categories of identity. Nostalgia, especially, functions as historiography by foregrounding the production of memory as subject to

[45] Writing about Magnus as a Boer figure, and as an expatriate subject, Daniel Mckay draws a link between South Africa and Malaysia as halfway houses in the transnational circuits of empire (51).

failure, and therefore open to new vistas and reinterpretations. Unlike *Hullabaloo*, where the universal scale of Shahkot is located in an unbounded diegesis with unclear borders, Tan's second novel fictionalises the limits of memory by reinventing distant remembrances as an immersive realignment of historical coordinates. Through a narratological worlding that insists on pluralising the past through the *shakkei* of present memory, *The Garden of Evening Mists* augments a logic of temporalising that is open to yet another re-framing in the next moment.

The Anglophone World Novel in Malaysia

In this discussion of Samarasan's and Tan's novels, world-making at a transnational scale is revealed to exercise a temporal aspect that re-frames colonial and postcolonial contexts in an era of global flows. By writing and publishing within the wider ambit of the Anglo-American book industry, their fiction adopts a worldly address by marshalling literary techniques and intertextual allusions to a broader Anglophone canon, while expanding this literary space to include Malaysian Anglophone writing. However, as mobile Malaysian authors who remain deeply invested in the historicisation of Malaysia as their homeland, the worldliness of Samarasan's and Tan's writing reflects the exigencies of writing in English in Malaysia amidst the racialisation of language-use and cultural production. As Anglophone world writing, *Evening is the Whole Day*, *The Gift of Rain* and *The Garden of Evening Mists* interrogate the localised sociohistorical conditions of their source contexts by simultaneously reterritorialising the immigrant experiences of Malaysian Indians and Malaysian Chinese in a transnationally imagined diegesis. While circuits of material and symbolic transmission are often understood spatially, as border-crossing and regional formations, the diasporic positionality of the novels in this chapter refract scale as a

temporal circuit between past and present, in order to return an altered understanding of history to contemporary imaginaries. Extending the meta-language of Tan's novel, this borrowing from time relies crucially on the capacity of narrative to incorporate temporality into the readerly experience, whether as regressive temporality or fictive memory-making. Hence, unlike the making of actual historical memory, literary worlding exercises a singular ability to reinvent received narratives about the past and to augurate new temporal openings.

The supra-national aspect of such Malaysian Anglophone world writing must be emphasised as affording a certain largesse of representation, not least because Malaysia's Internal Security Act (1960) has allowed for the detainment without trial of individuals whose actions are seen as endangering social harmony by violating racial and religious taboos. Together with the Printing Presses and Publications Act (1984), this had the effect of fostering fear and self-censorship amongst writers (Quayum 307). Despite his acerbic dismissal of Tan's first novel, Kee Thuan Chye has himself reflected on the dilemma a Malaysian writer faces in the struggle between pragmatism and idealism in addressing the nation on matters of race. In an essay published in 1990, Kee notes how "we do not have yet a developed Malaysian consciousness to which a writer can address his views with sanguinity," adding that "the consciousness of race subverts such a covenant between writer and audience" (70). While the committed idealist in Kee continues to attempt to tackle such issues, the pragmatist in him recognises how the Malaysian middle class, "lured by the temptations of an easy, comfortable and complacent life," will refuse to engage with race as an issue that detracts from the economic and social status quo. In a more recent commentary on Malaysian English writing, published in 2019, the novelist and journalist Dipika Mukherjee notes the persistence of "a numbing self-censorship" among authors working on identity politics ("Malaysian English Writing Today").

By writing and publishing outside Malaysia, Samarasan and Tan are situated differently in relation to the "covenant" of racial relations that governs literary representation in Malaysia's national space. As members of the mobile Malaysian diaspora, the expanded temporal scale of their fiction also expresses their liberation, to some extent, from the expectations of a localised Malaysian audience. In their fiction, the aesthetics of literary worlding constitutes an affective economy relating to their diasporic condition, which is also "an instrument of mobilisation [that] serve[s] to define terms for the diasporic population" (Quayson 147). Certainly, this is the case with Samarasan, for whom the experience of racial minoritisation as a Malaysian Indian forms an indispensable pre-story to her novel's mode of grievous redress from a transnational locus. By comparison, the affect of both of Tan's novels is noticeably more wistful and gentle in coming to terms with loss as a means of transplanting, hybridising and re-framing racialised identities and received histories. Both authors, nevertheless, utilise spatial and temporal scale as a means of resisting and disrupting race as a localised site of historical memory. In its diffusive and perambulatory nature, the Anglophone world novel embodies a writing out and away from history, in place of an agonistic writing back within the nation. Reflecting on their own practice as transnational Malaysian writers in a recent article in the *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, Jason Eng Hun Lee and Sreedhevi Iyer confront how they "neither 'write back' to the former colonial centre, nor can [they] 'write back' to the attendant language politics, cultural baggage, and problems of self-censorship that have affected writers of sectional literature in the Malaysian national literary canon" (3). While acknowledging their implication in "a capitalist mode of production that raises [their] transnational profile," their creative work "projects [their] cultural differences in opposition to the British colonial or Malaysian national centre" (3). As they explain later, the vernacular and dialogic textures of their writing foreground a "deterritorialised

cosmopolitanism" that gestures "towards future possibilities for postcolonial literary agency in the new millennium" (4).

Ironically, Anglophone world writing such as Samarasan's and Tan's circulates beyond the limitations of the Malaysian publishing and soars free into an imaginative terrain that pluralises the nature of the Anglophone itself, while returning as a commodity to its originating literary scene. In response, independent Malaysian publishers like Cloud Projects are in a race to reach the reader, anywhere in the world. Besides advertising their first book, provocatively titled *Banned in KL, Astro Boy Rides the Great Wave to Sky Kingdom* on Shoppee, an e-commerce platform where one can also pick up the day's groceries, they have made their gorgeously illustrated, Bahasa-English volume fully downloadable for free. They declare: "we believe in pirating our own books - here is the pdf. buy it, use it, break it, fix it, trash it, change it, mail, upgrade it."

Chapter 3
Figurations of the Filipina:
Fish-Hair Woman and *La India* as Philippines Anglophone World Writing

In one of the opening chapters of *Fish-Hair Woman* (2012) by the Filipino-Australian novelist Merlinda Bobis, the unnamed female narrator approaches the river in Iraya. "Hair undone like a net," she descends into the water to "trawl another victim of our senseless war" with her magical twelve-metre tresses. At this point in the novel, and indeed for most of the narrative, it is unclear which specific instance of guerrilla warfare is being alluded to in the mountainous *barrio*. The scene of the whole village, with "all hearts marking time on the riverbank," is deeply historical while being iconic and timeless, as they wait in desperate hope of seeing their son's, husband's or brother's body again. "Our disappeared, ay, so many of them," mourns the Fish-Hair woman, even as they come back "through the water's door from the darkness into light." But for the duration that the body is submerged and unfound, the river water changes into brine "like fresh blood, something that remained in the tongue" (8). So entrenched and cyclical are these waves of internecine violence in Filipino history that remembrance takes on a visceral and telluric quality. Addressing the reader at the end of the chapter, the Fish-Hair woman says, "may you never know the kinship between fishing for the dead and killing" in the "art of forgetting" (10).

Of the three Southeast Asian countries with a presence in Anglophone letters, the Philippines stands out for being colonised twice, once by the Spanish with the arrival of Miguel López de Legazpi's expedition from Mexico in in 1565, and again by the Americans in 1898, who arrived after the Philippines became an American territory after the Spanish-American war. Yet the term "colonisation," like many historical accounts penned from the perspective of the imperial metropole, both obscures seismic assertions of Filipino sovereignty such as the Philippines-American war (1899-1902) and reinstates a binary logic that neglects the persistence of colonialist formations after the Philippines

attained political independence in 1946. As Charlie Samuya Veric has discussed at length, the first two decades of decolonisation were "contaminated" by associations with American foreign policy during the Cold War, amounting to a "reorder of the historical world wherein American interests covertly *and* actively shaped postcolonial acts of Filipino becoming" (193, italics original). During the Marcos era from 1965 to 1986, the collusion of the authoritarian government with foreign and, in particular, American interests, bolstered the presence of well-heeled political and economic elites, based for the most part, in metro Manila. The implementation of martial law in 1972, the radicalisation of university students and the brutal suppression of armed insurgents from the communist New People's Army are the latest in a series of what Vincente L. Rafael calls "colonial contractions." The national history of the Philippines has been textured by the "dialectical movement of empires" ("Colonial Contractions" 1) where successive colonial and neocolonial regimes spawn forms of social life that rebel against authoritarian control.

Where worlding was discussed primarily in terms of cartographic scale in relation to Desai, and in relation to memorialisation for Samarasan and Tan, this chapter focuses on theorising characterisation in an Anglophone world text from the perspective of the Philippines and specifically, through the fiction of Merlinda Bobis and Rosario Cruz-Lucero. Taking as its point of departure, the greatly valorised figure of the Filipina in her various transnational guises as the *balikbayan*[46] author and the Overseas Contract Worker (OCW), our discussion examines how the dilatory and unfinished anti-colonial insurrections of the past hundred years are condensed in the literary characterisation of the Filipina. As an Anglophone world character, her presence in the diegesis as narrative voice and allegorical figure establishes how the worlding of the Philippines Anglophone text

[46] A term denoting the Filipino diaspora, usually in the United States, who return periodically to visit the Philippines.

confronts a troubled history of collusion with colonisers, even as English is increasingly reimagined as a Filipino literary medium. Though it is not possible to draw general conclusions about characterisation in world literature from this chapter's discussion, the myriad figurations of the Filipina, coupled with the vertiginous nature of modern Philippine history over the centuries, allow us to interestingly consider fictional characters amidst the greatly expanded scale of world-making. In the literary texts discussed in this chapter, the transnational Filipina embodies the spectral nature of the postcolonial Philippines by narrating across spatial and temporal disjunctions, even as she invites readers to step outside totalising notions of authorship and historical inscription.

The tradition of Anglophone letters in the Philippines is long and distinguished. Dating from the 1920s, the first generation of poets and novelists were quick to attempt literary expression in a language that they sought to redefine according to a Filipino sensibility. As with the first two chapters of the dissertation, the historical circumstances under which English was institutionalised for cultural expression are crucial to understanding the nature of Filipino literature in English as Anglophone world writing. Contemporary Anglophone writing from the Philippines, which this chapter treats as including both works published in the Philippines and abroad by self-identified members of the diaspora, has frequently engaged with the traumatically incomplete remembrance of troubled historical periods. State brutality, whether enacted by the Marcos regime or the current Duterte administration, is perceived as an extension of the colonialist project begun by the Spanish. With the continual sense that the country remains dependent on America geopolitically and culturally, as well as economically on other receiving countries for Filipino talent, the work of decolonisation remains an ongoing effort. Instead of a progressive history of development, where the struggle against colonial domination triumphantly leads to national sovereignty, Vincente L. Rafael observes in *White Love* that

such official nationalism remains at odds with a history of collusion with a range of colonial powers. The Spanish-speaking elites of the late nineteenth century Manila, known as the *Ilustrados*, were responsible for the first Philippine revolution of 1896, as much as they were for laying down arms in return for large sums of money and safe passage from the Spaniards in 1897 (10).

This ambivalence at the heart of Philippine nationalism, Rafael explains, can be understood as colonial traces in the term "Filipino." Employed initially to denote the children of Spanish parents born in *las islas Filipinos*, or the Philippine archipelago, it asserted the racial and class superiority of a Hispanic elite, as distinguished from the agricultural *indio*, the mercantile *Sangleys*, and the highly educated mestizos of both Spanish and Chinese extraction.[47] From the 1880s, revolutionary stirrings meant a swift collapse of social hierarchies as "Filipino" came to refer to anyone who professed a sense of national loyalty to the Philippines. As Rafael elaborates, the "Filipino" identity retains colonial traces and uneasy memories of a "ambivalent fit between the name of a place and the name of a people," given that the islands were so named for more than three centuries without a corresponding national imaginary. In seeking an appropriate narrative genre for Philippines history, Rafael observes that it is not the historical epic that is the best vehicle but the essay with its "'minor' style of episodic narrative," which indents "recurring motifs and recalcitrant obsessions" (4). Temporality in Philippines historiography is compressed as much as subject to episodic digressions that convey how Filipino nationhood constantly "linger(s) on the threshold of meanings" (4).

Building on Rafael's account, I suggest that Anglophone writing in the Philippines, which was the result of educational institutionalisation during the American period, is a

[47] A Spanish colonial term for an unbaptised indigenous person, "indio" was later used to refer to any indigenous person in the provinces, with the feminised version being "india". *Sangleys* refer to traders in the Chinese community, which had a permanent presence in Manila.

literary medium through which Filipino writers confront the entangled roots of their national imaginary. When writ large at the scale of the world, such entanglements animate vast swathes of geography and time to reflect the transnational terrain of these texts. In "The Haunting of the Filipino Writer," the Cebuano historian and essayist Resil B. Mojares observes that "colonialism is the trauma of Philippine literature" (300). Being too admiring of the excesses of modern development, and of an identity disproportionately defined by its colonial and Hispanic origins, the Filipino nation has never quite discovered its own locus, whether this be Asiatic or Malay in origin. For Mojares, the Philippines was "startled, nay, assaulted before this common soul could grow into place" (301). National literature, however problematic the term "nation" may be, can be a site and source of healing, because the writer necessarily confronts the historical losses that haunt the present and in doing so remakes the soul in the mould of Malay animism or the Tagalog "loob," which is not a fixed entity but "dialectical and dynamic" (306). The Filipino cultural historian Elmo Gonzaga has also conceptualised at length what a reterritorialisation of hegemonic identity-discourse would look like in the context of a globalised Philippines, where so much of the individual's living labour is totalised within capitalist production, which is often exported. In response, the masses must move away from being a subjugated group to being a subject group by understanding how they can engage in "collective and creative expression of productive capacities that are blocked or hidden" (58). In "Decolonising Knowledges: Asian American Studies, Carlos Bulosan, and Insurgent Filipino Diasporic Imagination," Jeffrey Cabusao discusses political organisation by Filipinos both at home and in the US as a mutually reinforcing conduit of collective action. He cites the work of the US-based Critical Filipina and Filipino Studies Collective and their efforts to integrate critical perspectives on the legacies of US imperialism with parallel work on the Philippines. Cabusao views such transnational solidarity as directly

descended from Bulosan's earlier work in labour organisation in the US, even as his most famous literary writing, such as *America is in the Heart* (1946), were read within an Asian American tradition and separately from developments in the Philippines. "Grassroots struggles for racial and economic justice in the United States and the struggle for Philippines national sovereignty" are "inextricably connected and central to the process of 'Becoming Filipino'—of creating forms of collective Filipino subjectivity" (132).

In the Philippines, literary English survived a nationalistic revival of writing in Filipino and other local languages during the language debates of the 1960s. Despite the mass appeal of graphic novels in Tagalog, known as *komiks*, Filipino writers working in English remain greatly esteemed, both as diasporic writers abroad and as National Artists. Nevertheless, Philippine Anglophone writing remains contoured by an unfinished process of decolonisation, that accrues in English as both the language of the political and economic elite, and as a commodity valued by the Filipino migrant worker as a means to employment overseas. What was initially a debate between aestheticism and broader social participation in the 1940s became recast during language debates in the 1960s, somewhat simplistically, as a struggle along the lines of language and class divides, with English representing the inheritance of an elite, mestizo aesthetic.[48] Concurrently, and under pressure from non-Tagalog regions, the language war concerning the designation of Tagalog-based Filipino as a national language led to an inconclusive outcome in 1973. The Philippines continues to debate the place of Tagalog as a national language despite its official designation as Pilipino in 1987. As Andrew Gonzalez points out in a more recent survey in 2004, the dominant position of English over Filipino has entrenched perceptions

[48] This was despite an earlier debate amongst Filipino Anglophone writers concerning writing *from* English as opposed to *in* English, as a reinvention of the language, which will be discussed at length later in this chapter.

of how the Philippines remains unable to articulate itself as a nation, given its reliance on an "indigenised variety of a post-imperialistic language" ("Social Dimensions" 12).

While it is beyond the scope of this dissertation to present a fuller account of postcolonial thinking in the Philippines, this chapter argues that postcoloniality in the Philippines necessary includes a transnational dimension in the form of the Filipina diaspora.[49] By focusing on figurations of the Filipina within the framework of Anglophone world writing that my argument seeks to develop, worlding as an integral aspect of narrative is explored through the development of a world-character. Such a personage traverses physical and temporal borders, as well as exercises a non-unified and spectral presence who is at home as much as she is abroad. In the context of the widening trade deficit of the Philippines, the figure of the Filipina as the OCW abroad has come to most strongly signify the hollowing out of the Philippine economy under the auspices of globalisation.[50] While such overseas foreign workers remain in exile, and generate revenue for the home-nation in the form of remittances, the personal cost of such labour is sublimated in the popular discourse that celebrates the Filipina as a national hero, while obscuring how the Philippine government has failed to correct the country's economic deficits (Gonzalez "The History of English in the Philippines" 35-36). While OCWs have been considered transnationals or transmigrants, E. San Juan reads this as paradoxical, since "the putative 'Filipino' nation is in the process of formation in the neocolony and

[49] The long and varied tradition of postcolonial thinking in the Philippines began in the context of mass political action during the Marcos regime, and a linguistic and historical turn towards recovering an indigenous perspective that would enable the masses to speak in unity (Hau, "Necessary Fictions" 127). Reynaldo Ileto's seminal work *Pasyon and Revolution: Popular Movements in the Philippines, 1840–1910* (1979) is illustrative of this moment in intellectual history. For a more recent survey of important Filipino postcolonial thinkers, refer to *Children of the Postcolony: Filipino Intellectuals and Decolonization, 1946-1972* (2020) by Charlie Samuya Veric.

[50] In *The Philippines: Mobilities, Identities, Globalization*, James A. Tyner observes that in a country with huge social disparities in terms of wealth, overseas employment provides many from poorer backgrounds with the hope of a better life. The Philippines government facilitates this through the Philippine Overseas Employment Administration (POEA) and in 2019, the agency recorded that over 2.2 million Filipinos are deployed to work around the world of which 56% are female (Philippine Statistics Authority).

abroad," making the "trans" prefix "chimerical" (19). Though their labour power generates surplus value, such profits are not equitably shared in the transnational economy, and do not enhance the personhood of the Filipina OCW. In an extensive study of Filipina feminist literature in Tagalog and English, Neferti Tadiar reads the Filipino overseas worker as "objectified, abstracted, estranged from its naturalised social referents" (79). This figuration of the Filipina, or *babae*, "becomes visible as a representation standing in for a subject who does not exist" and yet it is precisely because of "this alienated state of the commodity, fully in the realm of representation, that *babae* can serve as a new means of subjectification" (79).[51] Therefore the transnational and labouring female body of the Filipina, evacuated as pure signifier, can also be revitalised as a source from which to narrate the postcolonial Philippines in the age of global capital. While cognisant that literature can only directly construct an imaginary position to speak from, the Filipina as subject nevertheless arises from a nexus of historical circumstances: the Philippines' deep investment in the global economy as a continuation of its long history of coloniality, from which its political formations, economic production and cultural discourse are generated and modulated.[52]

This chapter considers the transnational Filipina as a richly imaginative trope within literary works that comments on both class tensions and the unfinished articulation of the Filipino as a postcolonial people in the context of the Philippines' continued relationship with the Anglo-American sphere, with Anglophone Filipino writing being an important medium to express these ongoing negotiations. For the Fish-Hair woman, the act of salvaging her countrymen's corpses from the river is equally an act of remembrance

---

[51] Tagalog for "woman." Tadiar employs this term to discuss its specific linguistic and cultural associations.
[52] A substantial body of scholarship exists on the discourse of the Filipina in relation to the Filipino nation, which examines how late nineteenth century notions of the sacrificial *illustrado* woman, on the archetype of Clara from Rizal's *Noli Me Tángere*, came to shape more contemporary expectations in relation to the role of women. See *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina* (2012) by Denise Cruz, for a comprehensive survey and critique.

enacted through her magical abilities. At once the narrator of the Anglophone world text and a frighteningly arcane figure in the eyes of the villagers, her liminal positioning is central to articulating the worldliness of Bobis's novel. Additionally, this chapter also discusses a short story collection, *La India, or Island of the Disappeared* (2012) by Rosario Cruz-Lucero, where the Filipina is portrayed as a creative figure who refuses instrumentalist and mimetic attitudes towards language, and exceeds a unitary discourse of knowledge and knowing. Across her many guises and locations, she evokes a cumulative and pluricentric relationality between readers and the text. Instead of considering the Filipina as a "rounded character" whose modern subjectivity corresponds to an individualised consciousness (Watt 14), I venture the argument that the character in Anglophone world writing is an interpretative threshold. The mimetic aspect of character-as-person occupies the same symbolic space as an invocation of feminine postcolonial authorship. Centred on a feminine and bodily semiotics, the Filipina as a figure expresses an artistic vision through an embodied pre- or alter-language, which departs from the instrumentalism of global English and recuperates the significatory power of language from mere associations with class or capital.

This chapter begins by situating Bobis and Cruz-Lucero within the larger Filipino tradition of women's writing amidst the politics of English, before discussing Bobis's *Fish-Hair Woman* (2012) as a novelistic rendering of the oral performance as invocation, and a destabilising of conceits concerning the romantic objectification of the Filipina as a proxy for the Filipino nation, or as victim-at-large of the warm body trade with Australia. The titular figure, Estrella, is a magical character whose twelve-metre-long hair grows whenever violent historical memories are recounted—the same hair is what she uses to fish out victims of the government's militia from the river. Vilified by these soldiers for her white Australian lover and the target of sexualised insults, her mythical powers become a

means of repelling these representatives of state brutality as the narrative dips into the mode of magic realism. By the end of the book, it is revealed that Estrella is the fictional creation of another Filipina, Stella, the illegitimate daughter of a corrupt local mayor, who has returned from Hawaii to address the injustices begun by her father. As diasporic authoress, she has written the Fish-Hair woman into existence in order to access the humble home she is estranged from as a matter of privilege and class.

In the second part of this chapter, I turn to Cruz-Lucero's *La India, or Island of the Disappeared* (2012) to examine her presentation of the Filipina as the pre-colonial India, a feminised form of indio, as a time-travelling, culture-bending trope that pivots between the island's assimilation into the Spanish colonial order and the modern global economy. Comprising ten short stories, Cruz-Lucero's second collection telescopes the downfall of the Carol-An tribe in distant times with the contemporary forgery of historical relics that were presumed lost; the predilections of a contemporary Filipino and Catholic girlhood with the unrecorded spiritual trials of Sor Juana de Sanct Antonio, formerly Sina, an accomplished Carol-An healer. For both Bobis and Cruz-Lucero, the Filipina as a trope is more than symbol or subject position; she is a site of epistemological re-orientation, achieved by working through linguistic vestiges of a colonial past, where English as the language of metropolitan Manila is reterritorialised as a literary medium for regional narratives. As Anglophone world writing, both texts explore the relationship the Philippines has with literary English as a colonial and class formation, and through the Filipina, posit an alternate postcolonial worlding amidst the entanglements of a transnational moment.

The Anglophone Worlding of Filipino Women's Writing

In *Filipino Women Writers in English: Their Story 1905-2002*, Edna Zapanta-Manlapaz traces the origin of the Filipino women's writing tradition to the American colonial period. At the end of the Spanish-American war in 1898, the new administration put in place a system of public education in English, and in between 1903 and 1935, the literacy rate increased from five to sixty-five percent. Zapanta-Manlapaz, however, equally credits Filipinos themselves for their receptivity to the new language, a crucial point that meant that women writers were never disadvantaged in their access to and mastery of English compared to male authors, given the co-educational system. In contrast to the genealogy of women's writing in other well-known literary traditions, such as Britain's, the first generation of Filipina writers did not suffer from an "anxiety of authorship" (Gilbert and Gubar, quoted in Zapanta-Manlapaz 16) and well-known poets such as Angela Manalang-Gloria and Trinidad Tarrosa-Subido were at the forefront of writing and establishing a tradition of Filipino Anglophone poetry as much as their male compatriots. Subido, in particular, wrote the much-anthologised and cited poem "Muted Cry," which was composed in the late 1930s to protest how the Americans "took away the language of (her) blood" (Abad and Zapanta-Manlapaz, "Man of Earth" 114-115). Crafted in stanzaic verse, the irony of the poem's aesthetic form and linguistic choice is apparent to any reader. Dubbing herself a "muted god," the speaker of the poem opines "Ah, could I speak the language of my blood/ I, too, would free the poetry in me." The paradox is that she cannot speak her "own" language, at least for the purposes of literary expression, which adds to the charged nature of her imploration. Unlike postcolonial societies elsewhere, English in the Philippines would remain a literary language, albeit increasingly critiqued and problematised by its own authors and readers for its linkages to an elite and metropolitan class.

However, despite such early calls for English to be reinvented in terms of a Filipino sensibility, the first women writers, working in the 1930s, traced their literary lineage to British and American poets like Elizabeth Barrett Browning, Emily Dickinson and Edna St. Vincent Millay (Zapanta-Manlapaz, "Their Story" 17). Throughout the period of the American occupation, which ended in 1946 with the Philippines attaining independence, a debate raged between Filipino writers committed to the formalism of American New Criticism, and those who believed that literature had a social responsibility to speak for the masses (Hidalgo 298). The first camp was represented by Jose Garcia Villa, widely known for his aestheticism and an important figure at the University of the Philippines. In the pre-war years he found his perspectives on the importance of art for art's sake challenged by a group of young writers whose insistence on socially committed writing was given full expression by Salvador P. Lopez in his essay "Literature and Society" (1940). Women writers of the period can be seen part of the effort to define the nature of literary writing.

One of the most prominent tastemakers of Philippines Anglophone writing in the 1970s was Edith Tiempo, who together with her husband Edilberto, founded the Silliman National Writers Workshop on the model of the Iowa Writers' Workshop in 1962. She is remembered not only for her finely crafted poetry and fiction, but for her association with New Criticism and a formalist approach to literary composition. Her definition of a "successful story" was one that demonstrated organic unity and a universality of theme (cited in Hidalgo 301). Though Tiempo's critical work does discuss how contextual concerns could be registered in the integrity of poetic form (Veric 84), the Villa-Lopez debate would continue to shape conversations about Filipino literature, with Anglophone writing becoming closely associated with an effete and upper-class origin, which in turn constitutes an important fault-line along which to understand the tradition of Anglophone women's writing in the Philippines.

This Anglophone worlding of Filipino women writers—worlding within English as a literary medium and as a Filipino-specific site of relationalities—derives from a larger dialogue within Philippine letters of writing *from* English as opposed to *in* English, as a reinvention of the sensibilities associated with a Filipino locus. In the introduction to *Man of Earth*, the anthology of Filipino verse in English that would canonise its first half-century of Anglophone poetry from 1905 to 1955, the editors Gemino Abad and Edna Manlapaz draw attention to a poetic English with a Filipino sensibility that is distinct from the "imperial tongue" (2). Readers of Filipino writing owe a debt to the poets collected in the volume for "having cleared the poetic ground and reinvented the English language for the Filipino's own inner speaking" (5). Possessing language in one's own way, as "the language of one's blood" (to invoke Subido's poem again) is to allow for more than grammatical or syntactic innovation, but an "an ontological slip" (9). The anthology editors provide the example of gender as ingrained in the English word-pair of brother and sister, whereas in Tagalog the word "kapatid" could mean either brother or sister, and is literally translated as fellow-cut, or cut according to the same pattern.

Though a feminist movement in the Philippines can be traced to the founding of the Asociación Feminista Filipina in 1905, it was not till the advent of mass political activism during the Marcos era that a distinctive Filipina voice was raised to cohere a model of sovereign subjectivity for women, which was related to, but separate from the national struggle of the masses for a more genuine democracy (Tadiar 73). The feminist Tagalog writing of the 1970s resisted the depiction of women as the symbol of male-led liberation struggles and strove to present female characters as fully grounded in their humanity (Tadiar 74). Likewise, women writers working in English made bold attempts to widen their subject matter despite working in a morally conservative environment, with an increasing emphasis on a female perspectives in relation to sexuality (Zapanta-Manlapaz

96).[53] Women activist-writers were also imprisoned for opposing the excesses of the Marcos regime, with poet Mila Aguilar arrested and detained twice, and fictionist Ninotchka Rosca detained at Camp Crame in 1973 (Zapanta-Manlapaz 86). Both women would re-emerge undaunted with new material for their craft.

The figure of the Filipina itself is anchored in these elite beginnings, exhibiting a form of *mestizaje* through a long history of cultural contact with American as cosmopolitan tourists, students in US universities and as doctors, lawyers, writers and teachers. As Denise Cruz explains in her extensive cultural study of the Filipina in *Transpacific Femininities*, the modern Filipina is defined against the *barrio* or village girls outside Manila, as well as the *babaylans* or female indigenous shamans, as representatives of "Oriental or indigenous femininity" (6). Filipinas are "imagined as the mouthpieces of conflict and resolution, the agents of resistance and the means of rethinking the Philippines as a modern, independent nation" by men and women alike (6). At the same time, these imaginaries of the Filipina "reinforce dominant versions of normativity" which "relegate indigenous and rural peoples to the margins" (6). Filipina writers themselves have negotiated this range of positionalities by moving between languages in their work, and producing multilingual works in some cases to reflect the linguistic complexity of their environment and of the Philippines. For example, poet Marra Lanot began writing exclusively in English as the accepted literary language of her time. But amidst the anti-Marcos civil unrest of the First Quarter Storm in 1970, newly acute conversations were held about the role of the writer and their choice of linguistic medium as reflecting their relationship to society. Nevertheless, Lanot, as with other writers, were not willing to

[53] Kerima Polotan's *Stories* (1968) as well as Ophelia Dimlanta's love poems of the 1970s would have startled contemporary readers for their directness (Manlapaz "Their Story" 96).

resort to monolingualism as an ethical choice, and her later poetry collection, *Witch's Dance* (2000), is trilingual with poems in English, Tagalog and Spanish.

This attempt by women writers to speak against the repressive formations of successive administrations is part of a larger effort to decolonise the nation's cultural discourse. Both Merlinda Bobis (b. 1959) and Rosario Cruz-Lucero (b. 1949) spent their formative years in the Philippines in this cultural milieu, and their status as Anglophone Filipino writers in a transnational moment demands to be read in terms of the social and cultural fissures that texture literary English in the archipelago. Both Bobis and Cruz-Lucero grew up outside metro Manila, with Bobis hailing from the province of Albay in the Bikol-speaking region, and Cruz-Lucero calling the island province of Negros home, in the Visayas that make up the central region of the country.[54] With published work in English, Bikol and Tagalog, Bobis is a trilingual poet, novelist and playwright whose "three tongues constantly argue in [her] head" ("Border Lover" 118). Her choice of literary language dynamically engages with the context of her creative production. After teaching in universities in metro Manila for a decade, she published her first poetry collection, *Rituals* (1990), while her second collection was the result of translating poems originally written in English into Filipino, which were retranslated back into English. *Ang Lipad ay Awit sa Apat na Hangin* (1993) was the result: a collection of thirty-nine Filipino poems with English translations. From this, Bobis drew inspiration for the creative portion of her doctorate of creative arts at the University of Wollongong in Australia, which she left the Philippines in 1991 to pursue. The work that she is best known for, from this period, is the bilingual epic poem *Kantada ng Babaing Mandirigma (Daragang Magayon)* or *Cantata of the Warrior Woman (Daragang Magayon)*, which she has performed excerpts of before

[54] Negros is the official and locally used name for this Visayan island and originates from a Spanish reference to darker-skinned inhabitants.

audiences in different parts of the world (Zapanta-Manlapaz 142).[55] Since then, Bobis has identified herself as an Australian-Filipino writer. Even within her monolingual and Anglophone works such as *Fish-Hair Woman*, Bobis uses an interlinguistic awareness to interrogate the cultural border and examine transnational entanglements between the Philippines and the broader Anglosphere.

Like Bobis, Cruz-Lucero is prolific outside the sphere of creative writing, and her scholarship as a cultural anthropologist of the West Visayas and Mindano provides a crucial context with which to further interpret the creative and political stakes of her fictional work in English. Having attended the University of the Philippines during the student protests of the 1960s and 1970s, Cruz-Lucero is regarded as an important Marxist feminist commentator whose first book-length literary publication, *Herstory*, is a collection of short stories centred on experiences common to Filipino women of varying class backgrounds and phases in life. In the foreword to the same volume, she describes how, at the age of thirty-four, and as a wage earner, wife and mother, she rediscovered the creative impulse that had lapsed since girlhood (i). Published by the Babaylan Women's Publishing Collective of the Institute of Women's Studies in Manila, a collective which, inspired directly by the dynamism of the Philippine women's movement of the 1980s, named itself after the pre-colonial figures of powerful women in Filipino communities: the *babaylans* (Evasco 32), Cruz-Lucero's first fictional work portrays friendships among women during the Marcos dictatorship and the new democratic space under the Aquino government and points to the importance of a female subject position as a personal perspective on the resistance, particularly in the titular piece "1967-87: A Herstory." In the foreword to the same collection, she also attests to the deep sense of class critique nurtured

[55] As with *Ang Lipad ay Awit sa Apat na Hangin*, the *Cantata of the Warrior Woman (Daragang Magayon)* was composed interlingually, with many of the phrases modified and refined after re-translation between English and Filipino, the result being a "re-languaging" as an expression of how a cross-cultural writer composes her work ("Scaling Daragang Magayon" 62).

by her parents of the *haciendero* or landowning system in her home island of Negros Occidental, which is also conveyed in the stories titled "Comedia" and to a lesser extent, "The Beheading." All these factors set the stage for Cruz-Lucero's determined approach to unearthing a literary tradition anchored in a recovery of precolonial myths, while harbouring the potential for a worldly address and wider circulation—a topic she has written about extensively, notably in the essays collected in *The Nation Beyond Manila* (2007).

The literary works of Bobis and Cruz-Lucero from a later period in their writing careers are indicative of distinctive tendencies in negotiating the postcolonial project of the Philippines. Whether it is through the idiom of the transnational, as with the inclusion of an Australian connection in *Fish-Hair Woman* to further inflect the novel's critique of the Philippines government's war on its people; or in Cruz-Lucero's recovering of a Filipino origin for magic realism and self-reflexive story-telling from its oral tradition in the short story collection *La India, Or the Island of the Disappeared*, both writers are extending the engagement of Filipino-Anglophone writing with the longue durée of Filipino history. At the heart of this endeavour is Bobis's and Cruz-Lucero's refiguration of the Filipina as an Anglophone world character, who is a narratorial voice and source of epistemic orientation within their literary work. Her mobility across cultural, geographical and temporal divides is an integral part of the connectedness and amplitude of the literary worlding of Anglophone world writing, as discussed in the dissertation thus far. Within the broader tradition of Philippines Anglophone writing, Bobis's and Cruz-Lucero's representation of the Filipina inherits the turn to marvellous realism and postmodernism in the Philippine Anglophone novels of the nineties, as well as the imaginaries of diasporic Filipino-

American or "Fil-Am" writing from an immigrant and transnational perspective.[56] Authors such as Jennifer Hagedorn of *Dogeaters* (1990) and *Dream Jungle* (2003) fame, and Gina Apostol, whose deconstructionist novel epic *Insurrecto* (2018) explores how the Philippines-American war remains traumatically excised from history, continue to present literary works that disrupt notions of the Philippines as an exotic and lightweight tourist destination. The various figurations of the Filipina in the work of Bobis and Cruz-Lucero reterritorialise the transnational circulation of Philippines Anglophone writing as a renewed source of worlding within the unfinished decolonisation of the Philippines—one that retains a worldly address beyond the nation.

In a more recent retrospective on Filipino writing published in 2004, Abad reprises the literary history behind the Filipino reinvention of literary English, from the western-derived allegories and sentimentalism of the Romantic period (1920s to 1940s), to the formalism under the influence of American New Criticism (1950s to 1960s) and through to what he calls the "open clearing" of the 1970s. Amidst the heady political movements of the period and renewed calls for the elite and Anglophone literary writing to be socially responsible, all aesthetic constraints were thrown off. The resulting self-reflexivity of the 1980s was post-structuralist to a certain extent, but more importantly, marked by an awareness of textuality as a "double forgery—a forgery from language which itself is already a fiction of reality, and a forgery in one's own consciousness from the reality outside language" ("Filipino Poetry" 172). Dwelling on Abad's evocative notion of the "forgery," this attention to the artifice of Anglophone literary writing could equally be

[56] Beginning with the Kundiman Retreat in New York from 2000, Filipino-American or "Fil-Am" writing gained increasing visibility as part of the reception to Asian-American writing. Founded by the American-Filipino poets Sarah Gambito and Joseph O. Legaspi, the prestigious Kundiman Retreat welcomes Asian American writers of any cultural background, but arose from the founders' own conversations over the challenges they faced as students and writers. The term "Kundiman" alludes to a nineteenth century form of the love-song in the Philippines but carries a double meaning of being a classical form in the colonialist perspective, and an expression of undying dedication to one's beloved as one's country, which attains a diasporic and subversive valence in the context of the Retreat (Kundiman.org).

interpreted as the self-alienation of the middle-class, often cosmopolitan, Anglophone intellectual, who remains a minority cultural worker in relation to Tagalog mass media (Hau "The Filipino Novel" 321).[57]

For Bobis and Cruz-Lucero, however, writing in English is a means of reworking such alienation as renewed relationality, in their respective literary invocations of the Filipina. Whether as a source of precolonial knowledge in *La India*, or in the complex persona of the *Fish-Hair Woman* later revealed as the fictional alter-ego of a diasporic female author, the Filipina as a subject position is a means of redefining the epistemological assumptions underpinning Anglophone writing as monocultural, elite and neocolonial in orientation. As we will discuss further in the upcoming sections, the figuration of the Filipina as Anglophone world character draws upon western narrative modes of *écriture feminine* as well as magic realism, while anchoring these in a specific Philippines worldliness to differently inflect the nature of Anglophone writing. More than simply insisting on the right of the Filipina to speak her story, the texts under study in this chapter present a semiotics of embodiment. In the evocation of the somatic as a source of meaning and signification outside conventional language systems, *Fish-Hair Woman* and *La India* unyoke language from predetermined cultural identities, thereby distancing the association of literary English with an Anglocentric locus. At the same time, the Filipina is a figure conceived in mobility, where identity is unmoored from a single geographic origin. In an essay on Filipino diasporic literature in English, Alfred Yuson remarks with characteristic panache that "now that the Filipino is everywhere the Filipino chronicler has also become a global feature" (349). It would seem now that English itself is a site of literary poesis where Filipino postcolonial history will be reimagined with a worldly

[57] As a paradigmatic figure, the author-as-character has been flamboyantly and self-reflexively evoked by Miguel Syjuco in his debut novel as "a modern-day member of the *illustrados*—a potentiality owned by every expatriate today, a precedent granted by those first Enlightened Ones of the late nineteenth century" (56). *Ilustrado* won the Man Asian literary prize in 2008.

audience in mind. The Filipina's voice and symbolism, in the broader Anglophone cultural system, makes her presence felt as a world character.

Fish-Hair Woman: the Story-Making Body as World Character

The titular character of *Fish-Hair Woman* (2012), Merlinda Bobis's third novel, is Estrella, a woman born bald until a fall from a tree in her girlhood causes her hair to grow to twelve thick black metres in length. "I am Filipina" Estrella says, "tiny and dark as a coconut husk, but what red fires glint on my head" (3). At a time of Total War against the New People's Army, the armed insurgency movement by the Communist Party of the Philippines, unauthorised and tragic killings abound and each time Estrella recalls a memory that unsettles her heart, her hair grows by a handspan. In the opening pages of the book, it becomes clear that it is historical remembering that hurts the most. "Remembering," she explains, "is always a bleeding out of memory, like pulling thread from a vein in the heart, a coagulation so fine, miles of it stretching upwards to the scalp then sprouting there into the longest strand of red hair" (3). The visceral nature of remembering pain and its further transmutation through the body of the Filipina is the source of a complex and extended symbolism, which in turn serves as a key to an imaginative re-orientation of how we come to speak of, and through history. This leads to the broader question of the function of character in a novelistic worlding which actively attempts to unsettle a historical consensus. When victims of the government's extrajudicial killings are dumped into the river passing through the village of Iraya, thereby defiling the water, it is Estrella's task to fish out the corpses with her hair, and restore it to its original state. While she receives the adulation of the villagers—complete with the Catholic-style invocation "Hair of Estrella, have mercy on us!"—Estrella views such faux-worship as the invention of a "present face" (3) and a denial of the locale's own painful history. She

declares “I will not allow you to invent me, you who read this, so I will tell you everything” (4).

The Fish-Hair woman’s narratorial voice is a key source of world-making in the opening chapters of the novel. But despite this, Bobis’s portrayal of Estrella is poised between two important tensions: that Estrella as the Fish-Hair Woman is in fact a fictional creation, a novella-within-the-novel, and that the author of this text is Stella, Estrella’s real-life persona, a member of the wealthy political elite. Despite the veracity of her first-person narrative that opens the novel and the aura of worship that surrounds her, Estrella is a fictional character who exists in two manuscripts. Titled “Beloved” and “Iraya,” these are now in the hands of Luke McIntyre, an Australian teenager who has been lured to the Philippines in search of his estranged father, whom readers first meet as Estrella’s lover. Intriguingly, the true author of these accounts is Stella, the previous lover of Luke’s father, Tony, as well as the illegitimate daughter of Francisco ‘Kiko’ Estrada, the mayor of Iraya. Both father and daughter have recently returned from Hawaii and represent the well-heeled Filipino diasporic elite, whose wealth derives from a combination of big business and political corruption. In the second half of the novel, it becomes clear that the Fish-Hair woman is meant as a substitute for what Stella herself has lost, in leaving the village. Accompanying the cross-border movements of *balikbayan* like Stella is a parallel circulation of these fictional texts, that bring to life the Fish-Hair woman and her world, while evoking how such textual transmission allows Philippine Anglophone texts to travel into the wider Anglosphere.

This transnational Filipino-Australian element of the text is developed amidst the novel’s emphasis on an aesthetics of self-reflexivity and a destabilisation of national frames for interpretation. Working together with the literary trope of language-use as centred in the sublingual and the somatic, the metatextual and the embodied both present

an other-perspective on national and cultural affiliations. Luke growls and howls like a dog in his sleep as the result of a traumatic childhood experience, an occurrence that worsens when he finds himself a house-prisoner of Mayor Estrada, after his arrival in Iraya. Among the denizens of the Estrada mansion is Adora, a speech-impaired girl whose scarred body and eloquent non-sign language gestures are a means for Luke to begin understanding the troubled histories of his surroundings. As a parallel to the somatic nature of Estrella's memories through the magical growth of her hair, *Fish-Hair Woman* advances an orientation towards language and knowing that requires due apprehension through silence, incongruity and an undoing of existing epistemologies through deep-seated bodily hurt. This, in turn, allows the novel to imagine anew forms of relationality that unmoor the Filipino fascination with the Anglo-American sphere.

The existing body of criticism on *Fish-Hair Woman* situates Bobis's novel as a response to the bloody aftermath of the government crackdown on communist insurgents, and by extension, a redress for the victims from this period. As Bobis herself notes in her essay "Storying: Dream and Deployment," the counterinsurgency war of 1987-1989 carries the echoes of earlier campaigns against the Filipino people by the Spanish, the Americans and the Japanese during the Occupation (86). Through a broad invocation of the Philippines's violent colonial history, Bobis's novel charts a hopeful and humane discourse by reimagining its postimperial struggle. Published in 2012, but written over the course of fifteen years, *Fish-Hair Woman* can also be seen as rebuking the global discourse on terrorism and its valorisation of counterterrorism as heroism, as Kit Ying Lye observes in her critique of the novel as a magic realist account of history (205). That the Philippines government has not succeeded in monopolising narratives about the Total War allows Bobis's magic realist historical representation to intervene. Lye draws a further connection between the soft authoritarianism of South-East Asian state governance that

dampens social discourse about uncomfortable pasts, and the need to employ the rich but indirect symbolism of the Fish-Hair Woman's magic as a literary aesthetic (216). Drawing on the indigenous myths that have informed Bobis's earlier oeuvre, this can be understood in contrast to the realist mode predominant in Philippine Anglophone fiction until the 1970s. Likewise, Dolores Herrero sees Bobis's third novel as inviting readers to "to undertake a palimpsestuous [sic] reading" (616) in its various destabilising juxtapositions of history and fiction, and therefore to apprehend "the various systems of subjection that constitute history as a violent and repeated palimpsestuous [sic] play of dominations and forces" (616). Additionally, Herrero further understands *Fish-Hair Woman* to be an attempt at redefining Asian Australianness with an Asian orientation and an undoing of Australia's partly racialised parochialism, which has seen the country hold itself apart from the Asia Pacific sphere where it is located.

Building on these previous discussions, this section examines the Fish-Hair woman as a refiguration of the Filipina. She occupies a liminal role between her objectification as a mythical being and her role as a first-person narrator. For the initial chapters of Bobis's novel, Estrella's voice establishes for readers the epistemological boundaries of the rural village of Iraya as well as the symbolic codes of history as filtered through the remembrance of pain and sorrow, which she experiences as physical sensations. Speaking in English, and as we find out later, as a character in an Anglophone literary text, Estrella in her deity-like guise can be read as the obverse of the Filipina as an Overseas Contract Worker (OCW). Since the Marcos administration, the Philippines economy has been export-oriented for economic development, retaining from the nineties a capitalist rhetoric of English for global competitiveness (Tupas 99). Popularly regarded as sacrificial heroines, the remittances of Filipinas abroad play an important role in supporting the Philippines economy. Similarly, the bodily powers of Estella and their ensuing utility

structure her relationships with local militia and villagers alike, when the soldiers harass Estella to fish with her hair for yet another corpse, or when the villagers invoke her as a saint after the river is restored, but otherwise ostracise her. However, unlike the OCW, for whom English is commodified as a skill-set, Estrella's Anglophone narratorial voice reclaims the Fish-Hair woman as a locus of historicisation. What simply transpires as magic realist events within the diegesis become, when reconsidered against Estrella's narrating voice as creative labour in progress, magic realism as a mode of history-making which reterritorialises the Anglophone within a distinctly Philippine worldview.[58]

Writing about magic realism in Canadian Anglophone writing, Stephen Slemon observes how as an aesthetic approach, it involves a "structure of perception—if only in literary critical registers" (408). Despite the initial association of magic realism with marvellous realism in the Latin American tradition, as a "socially symbolic contract" it is a mobile aesthetic that "carries a residuum of resistance toward the imperial center and to its totalising systems of generic classification" (408). Magic realist narratives disrupt the "realist contract" exerted by colonial systems by exerting a compressed temporality that "metaphorically contains the long process of colonisation and its aftermath" while foregrounding "gaps, absences, and silences produced by the colonial encounter" (411). Estrella as the Fish-Hair woman reclaims the Filipina as a narratorial and historical voice, one that revokes the objectification of the Filipina as a proxy for national sacrifice. As one of the common folk of the *barrio*, her account presents a fuller expression of the suffering experienced as the result of many killings or "salvagings." As Slemon elaborates, a magic realist mode of narration leads to "a dialectic between 'codes of recognition' inherent within the inherited language and those imagined, utopian, and future-oriented codes that

[58] A fuller account of magic realism in Philippine writing is presented in the next section, on Cruz-Lucero, where it is pertinent to her artistic vision.

aspire toward a language of expressive, local realism, and a set of 'original relations' with the world" (411).

I propose that we trace more closely the beginnings of the Fish-Hair woman as world-making voice, by using Bobis's own critical work as creative praxis and as companion texts to understand the self-reflexive aesthetics of *Fish-Hair Woman* and its employment of the semiotics of embodiment. Instead of reading only for historical and cultural allegories within a national methodology, though these are crucial in framing the text, this chapter suggests that we attend to the intricate positioning of the reader amidst Bobis's transcultural and pluricentric aesthetics, and a somatic register that disrupts readers' expectations about language. As a fictional character, but also an important narrative locus, Estrella straddles not only the border between fiction and a self-reflexive discourse on fiction-making, but also the divide between the Philippines and Australia, due to her liminal status as the Anglophone narrator in a Philippines text addressed to a wider audience.

In "The Asian Conspiracy," Bobis deals frankly with the exotic visibility of the Asian body, and the framing of Filipino culture as consumable, in much the same fashion. For fifteen years, *Fish-Hair Woman* was rejected numerous times by publishers and at the time of Bobis writing this essay in 2010, remained unpublished. Bobis attributes her continual disappointment to the gatekeeping and policing functions of the Australian publishing industry, which accepts a migrant story only if it contributes to a national narrative with the Asian-Australian as the representative other (7). As a transnational story centred in the Philippines with Australian characters who are themselves disabused of the archipelago's Orientalist exoticism, *Fish-Hair Woman*, Bobis admits, was probably too alien for an Australian audience. In response, she counters this with "deployment strategies" (10) of her own, that both mimic and subvert "how this Otherness is

legitimised, packaged and consumed within the Australian nation" (3). Bobis's literary aesthetics is centred on a "collisioncollaboration": the term derives from her abiding concern with a relational empathy that will transverse cultural hierarchies between Australia and the Philippines, as much as it will heal the rift that the contemporary Philippines has with its past.

In comparison to the slick marketing of postcolonial author personalities that has been generated by the Anglo-American publishing industry,[59] Bobis intimately inscribes her authorial presence through her many performances of the *Kantada ng Babaing Mandirigma*, with her own body deploying "a story about war while interrogating the construction of the female body by a masculinist framework" (12). Her earlier novels, *Banana Heart Summer* (2005) and *The Solemn Lantern Maker* (2009), were written to extend this strategic situation of Merlinda Bobis as a brand, in the form of an author-as-performer, to counter the ubiquitous sexual politics of "Asia as Product." In doing so, she prepared the way for *Fish-Hair Woman* to first appear, as *River River* (2009), a pre-publication adaptation of the novel as a radio and later, one-woman stage play. The result of this cross-genre practice, Bobis further observes, is that "the sheer presence of live bodies in the theatre" creates a space where "we play against fixed cultural borders as our presences commingle" (14). Wherever the play is performed, Bobis becomes a "transnational story-maker" whose Asian presence is not externally defined as an invasion of the Australian national body but an Asia-and-Australia conspiracy as a deliberate collusion, and as an "unapologetic fairytale" (14) for a global community in a marked departure from the discourse of exoticism and re-Orientalism.

[59] *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Marketplace* by Sarah Brouillette is, of course, crucial in establishing how the industry operates in this respect.

Of importance in the development of Bobis's artistic manifesto at this point is the constant semiotic frame of the body that she employs and the notion of a "conspiracy." In a theatre setting, the story as performance is a site for the meeting of bodies with an undeniable presence, one that exerts a force of un-wording and un-worlding, but also re-worlding. Bobis views story-making as a visceral negotiation of semiotic systems that readers hold dear, language-use in the first instance, but more substantially for *Fish-Hair Woman*, the less-visible cultural hierarchies that pervade an Anglophone text about the Philippines with a foothold in Australia. Character is in the first instance, a body in its fullness of embodiment, before being located, which offers corporeality as an enabling, rather than hegemonic universalism. Suggesting that the dramatisation of *River River* might be a "body to body knowing" (17), Bobis's performance of story in effect inserts "the creative process, the story-making body, into the literary discourse" (17).[60] When re-translated into the act of reading literature:

> the ultimate pleasure is that delicious tongue-ear conspiracy between writer and reader, when both bodies are not only infiltrated by the other's story but also implicated in the story-making. When both sides give-and-lose a story. Giving losing is the unspoken contract, a gift to each other. The writer gives a story in his / her book, and the story of its making; the reader enters the book with his / her own history of reading. So the writer inevitably loses control over the story, while the reader loses the purity or fixedness of his / her history of reading and of apprehending story. As there is the death of the author, there must be a death of the reader. In both instances, it is the death of authority over the story, the voice. (5)

[60] In a separate essay titled "'Voice-Niche-Brand': Marketing Asian-Australianness," Bobis more precisely defines the body-to-body encounter as "bringing to my audience the body with the text" where they "'tune' their ear to [her] tongue in a direct and immediate process" (121).

The story-making body that disrupts readers' "fixedness" of apprehending story is that of the Fish-Hair Woman. Within the embedded novellas of "Beloved" and "Iraya," Estrella's first person narrative pushes back against the mythologisation of her magical guise, and the often violent way in which she is coerced to fish for corpses with her hair. What was previously simply labour to restore the river to its illusory state of normality becomes transformed through Estrella's account as a mapping of the many mingled histories that her scalp, her heart and her hair have witnessed at a somatic level of pain as "strands that would not stop growing into story after story, into all that I remember of my village in 1987" (136). It is important to recognise the radicality of Bobis's refiguration of the Filipina as a story-making body, which itself is a reworking of character within the tradition of the modern realist novel. Estrella's mythical qualities, her intense psycho-somatic responses to the suffering of others and her shadowy nature as a fictional creation stand in direct contrast to Ian Watt's seminal and much-referenced account of the modern character as "completely individualised entities" situated within the spacetime particularism of formal realism (14). In contrast to novel writing in eighteenth century Britain, where the particularising of character is related to the social and economic specialisation of modern capitalism, the worldliness of Bobis's textuality generalises Estrella's bodily experience to signify across class and national distinctions.

The pervasive language of embodiment also requires further discussion in terms of its effects in the readerly processing of the text. While the concept of embodiment in Bobis's novel can be equally regarded as a trope or a theme, the effects of novelistic worlding are achieved when the energies of literary representation re-orient readers' epistemic assumptions. Though writing about embodiment in eighteenth century women's fiction, Karin Kukkonen discusses how the language of embodiment in literary texts is a "lifeworld technology" that brings about an "emergent realism" which deviates from the

developmental narrative that views eighteenth century novels as precursors to their nineteenth century cousins (3). Drawing on previous scholarship in cognitive narratology, Kukkonen devises a schema of embodied engagement in the text, by differentiating between "individualised intentionality" (the sensory and imagistic register of the individual character's body), "joint intentionality" (this same register generated together with another perspective, such as the narrator's or another character's) and "collective intentionality," where readers view such embodiment against a broader rubric of cultural protocols.

I argue that a similar process is at work in *Fish-Hair Woman* when Bobis's language of embodiment galvanises important moments of joint and collective intentionality in the text. Addressing her lover Tony McIntyre as a journalist with an orientalist conquest complex, Estrella insists that she wants him to "know the heart of terror and grief, of love—not yours, but theirs" (136). Tony gets to learn about the Total War at a most visceral level and when he catches sight of a female body with its nipples cut off, he suffers a breakdown. Such individual intentionality is relocated in the joint intentionality of Estrella's comment, which positions Tony as a witness to the horrors of Total War as much as it dethrones him from his hitherto romanticised views of Filipino women. However, Estrella does not automatically take sides against a westerner (in fact, he is briefly her lover) and neither does she demonise the local militia, who in many cases, are village boys, like her childhood friend Bolodoy. The Filipina as world character is a translational, relativising figure, which deactivates the exoticising and orientalist frames surrounding the Philippines.

As Bobis mentions in her essay: "When both sides give-and-lose a story. Giving losing is the unspoken contract, a gift to each other." In the novel, the bodies are dumped in the river in quick succession: Bolodoy's, in revenge for a cadre he gunned down; a

premature infant delivered when his mother, Kumander Pilar, is tortured; Adora's mother, accused of aiding the insurgents, while Adora herself barely survives a drive-by shooting by Mayor Estrada's henchmen. Like the tangled but empathetic threads of Estrella's hair, lives criss-cross uneasy binaries between the operatives of the Filipino state and the New People's Army, and the narrative reveals the shared Filipino humanity centred in suffering. With the collective intentionality that emerges through the relentless listing of the names of the dead, history is invoked as full-bodied deep weeping in the Bikol word *Paghaya*. Literally meaning grief with sound, it is unleased as a wail and near-scream "*Pag-haaaa-ya*" where "always the breath travels the full distance from the groin to the gut, welling up to the throat…it has a history as long as the distance covered by that breath" (137). Through such bodily semiotics, and by translating verbal into non-verbal language, Estrella goes beneath and beyond the polarisation of class, politics and nationality to powerfully convey the importance of a shared narrative.[61] Significantly, when Estrella descends into the river for the last time at the close of her account, her oration transforms the Bikol names for fishes into the sensation of her tongue being teased to recite the names of all who have been "salvaged," the litany of syllables foregrounding again, the role of the prelingual body in unmooring assumptions of cultural and national affiliation that contextualise literary story-telling.

This somatic register forms a bridge between the inner and outer narratives of Bobis's novel, where the fictional nature of Estrella as the Fish-Hair Woman, paradoxically, serves to strengthen the transnational and intranational ethics of empathy because she is not dissimilar from the fictional author who wrote her into being. Where the reader might have, in Bobis's terminology, lost "the purity or fixedness of his / her history

[61] In "Linguistic Aspects of Translation," Roman Jakobson terms this as intersemiotic translation, or transmutation is an interpretation of verbal signs by means of signs of nonverbal sign systems. Meaning is the result of further translation into "some further, alternative sign" (261).

of reading and of apprehending story" as the result of reading the novellas "Beloved" and "Iraya," there remains the class inequalities which plague the creation of an Anglophone literary text in the context of the Philippines sociocultural scene. Can the privileged voice of Stella Estrada, whisked away to the US by her biological father, and sheltered from the violence of the Total War in Iraya, have any claim to representing the sorrows of the village? The novel projects this critique through the voice of Inez Carillo, the widow of a human rights activist who is murdered and dumped in the river for his investigation of the extrajudicial killings in Iraya. Dismissing the novellas as written from "her safe paradise, addressed to a white man," Inez revels in her scorn for Filipino expatriate writers who "return as vultures to feed on our despair" by "eroticising violence, making our grief literary" (225). She specifically accuses Stella of having no right to produce a narrative where "she has written herself into our history from which she abdicated long ago" (224). Aside from the irony of Inez's own social standing as a university professor herself, the praxis of Bobis's text addresses this in full. In order to destabilise the reader's position in relation to the monologic of national and cultural loyalties, the twin deaths of Mayor Estrada and Stella signify the "death of authority over the story" that Inez is so keen to advance (224). In turn, the kindred mortality of their bodies points towards the larger message of overcoming class and cultural divides in generating a narrative about the postcolonial Philippines.

After bequeathing the manuscripts of "Beloved" and "Iraya" to young Luke, the full extent of Stella's ire for the injustices perpetuated by her father is revealed when she guns him down in cold blood. Stella herself is killed by government agents after the funeral. The scene of the mayor's wake functions as a role-reversal and a cathartic release of the brutality incurred by the common people of Iraya over the years. Laid out in a coffin of bare wood, and clothed in nothing but white briefs, Mayor Estrada is naked and

infantilised, while the villagers arrive at the old mansion to curse and defile the corpse with their spittle. It is a symbolic murder of authority, matched by the slumped figure of Stella in the next room; she is indifferent and dressed outrageously in red. However, the dynamic of revenge is disrupted by the claustrophobic odours in the room, with the mingled notes of wilting flowers, beer, and the "smell of spit on a body turning to earth," resulting in a "stench so pure, undeniably human and overwhelming" (279). Amidst the injunctions of the gravedigger, Pay Ino, to accord a modicum of respect to the dead, it becomes clear that all bodies co-mingle. The villagers are at a loss as to where the smell is coming from. "Is it *it*, is it them, is it us?" (257) they ask, as individualised intentionality broadens into a horrified realisation that everyone is implicated in the same embodied collective. Once again, as with Estrella's hair, the physicality of the body becomes an un-worlding, at a somatic level, of entrenched positions inscribed by class or political affiliation. The source of narration is no longer the particularised voice of an individuated character but emanates beyond. Like the stench of a rotting body, this worlding unsettles the parochiality of identity formations limited by cultural and national origins—a visceral truth that departs from earlier suspicions of English as leading to a "double forgery" in a writer's consciousness.

Harking back to Vincente Rafael's thinking about the "Filipino" as an imaginary collective, which inevitably contains traces of collusion between the local elites and foreign powers, the Filipino Anglophone literary text bears the weight of a similar ambivalence. As Rafael elaborates in *White Love*, the use of English for the well-educated and the wealthy is "a way of marking themselves off from the masses, yet positioning themselves as their 'enlightened' representatives" (199). The class identity of the Filipino middle classes derives from this "structural uncertainty of being simultaneously part of yet apart from the 'people'" (199). In *Fish-Hair Woman*, the generation of creative work in

literary English receives a meta-critical treatment in the uncanny twinning of Stella and Estrella as Filipina authoresses. Through a focus on the semiotics of the body, the mystical and almost martyr-like suffering of the Fish-Hair Woman is doubled in the final image of Stella, unwashed, dishevelled and lying against the wall at her father's wake. As an Anglophone world character, the figure of the Filipina circulates between these mutually imbricated contexts, being both the diasporic modern Filipina and the personification of her nation's historical suffering. Within the broadened idiom of embodied, transnational empathy, the transnational Filipina inscribes and relieves the violence of a once-colonising language like English.

The Filipina as world character transposes Hélène Cixous's notion of *écriture feminine* into the significatory circuits of the postcolonial Philippines. In her seminal work *The Laugh of the Medusa* (1975), Cixous incites women to "Write your self" because "your body must be heard" (2043). The presence of the body in writing disrupts the conventional encoding of language, as the female body asserts its signification as *écriture* and so re-orients the relationships structuring the presence and subjectivity of the feminine voice in a text. Cixous made her argument in order to critique the phallocentrism inherent in the psychoanalytic discourse of sexuality, at the height of the Women's Liberation movement in France. By contrast, Bobis works in the long history of postcoloniality as a Filipino project, which is further extended, via the outflow of diasporic Filipinos, to the transnational scale. As an Anglophone world text, *Fish-Hair Woman* mediates the commodifying force of transborder capital so that both the Filipina as Overseas Contract Worker, and English as a communicative skillset, become transfigured as the semiotics of the Filipina body in its re-presentation of the Total War of 1987. As a "story-making body," the embodiment of the Fish-Hair woman subverts the verticality of class distinctions between the diasporic and wealthy Filipino elite, while disrupting the cycle of

righteous victimhood ascribed to the villagers of Iraya, preferring instead to posit the comingling of bodies as an imagining of a Filipino collective. Moreover, in granting Luke and Adora a happy ending, Bobis indicates the limitations of a national frame—Filipino postcoloniality must also be addressed by bravely stepping outside the limitations of race and exoticism as necessary lenses with which to regard transnational relationships.

From portraying the world character as expressing Philippines postcoloniality in the long durée to advancing a somatic register as a commentary on the limits of national or cultural distinctions, the diegesis of a novel like *Fish-Hair Woman* is an invitation to readers to participate in the unmooring and the determined reinvention of an Anglophone text as world writing. Moreover, world characters like the Fish-Hair woman in their slippage between individualised entities, mythicised beings and diasporic avatars amidst a self-reflexive discourse about fictionality foreground the circuitry of Anglophone writing in different cultural, geographical and temporal spaces. In Bobis's novel, however, this does not lead to the creation of another elite or centralising perspective. By employing a semiotics of feminine ècriture and the somatic, the narrative leads to a re-coding of these western discourses within a Filipino literary worlding. In such world-making, plurality and empathetic relationality are emphasised as exceeding the class and cultural structures implicit in English usage, which is also an intervention into the entrenched hierarchies generated by the Philippines' many colonial and decolonial engagements. In our next section, this chapter turns to *La India, or the Island of the Disappeared* by Rosario Cruz-Lucero to see how precolonial narrative forms are aesthetically transformed within an Anglophone text to extend a postcolonial critique of the Philippines.

"Remembering What We Never Knew": *La India* and the Limits of History-Making

In a keynote lecture delivered during the opening of the Davao Writers workshop in 2015, titled "Fiction Making and History in the Era of the Selfie," Rosario Cruz-Lucero takes issue with global writing trends, which drive writers towards an obsession with the personal. Instead, it is the duty of the writer to interpret history through "the creative distance provided by metaphor and allegory" (5). The first half of her lecture consists of a retelling of a Subanon myth in which Kingfisher, the *bekaka*, sings an *inadung* for Monkey, who understands the epic poem as none-too-subtle portrayal of him as a rice thief hovering about the paddy fields.[62] Yet the story-within-a-story device lends itself to shifting frames of historical reference, where Monkey could be likened to an invader who harvests the rice and leaves none for the farmer, or interpreted as an allegory for the Muslim invasion in the thirteenth century, because Monkey's dragging tail recalls the depiction, in Mindanao literary tradition, of a horde of invading apes with tails shaped like scythes. The poem's final image of "then the monkey perches on a stump," presumably to survey the paddy as loot, lends itself additionally to deeply significant readings of the stump as a symbol of foreboding, or even, as Cruz-Lucero suggests, an allegory for modern-day illegal logging.

The lecture provides a crucial insight into Cruz-Lucero's own creative methodology in the short story collection *La India, of the Island of the Disappeared* where supposedly postmodern and European narrative devices such as metatextuality, magic realism, and frame narratives can and should be alternatively traced to a Philippine provenance. While magic realism, as it is understood within the postcolonial canon, is typically traced to Latin American writers such as Alejo Carpentier and Gabriel Garcia Márquez, who employ a mythic idiom to reclaim a space of difference, the narrative mode

[62] The Subanon people live in the mountainous areas of Zamboanga del Sur and Misamis Occidental of Mindanao Island.

has been further decried as an overly vague aesthetic applied to literary texts from a wide array of national and historical contexts (Warnes 7). Though no extensive study of magic realism in Philippines Anglophone writing has been carried out to date, Victor Fernando R. Ocampo has noted the prominence of the magic realist short story within the broader tradition of Filipino speculative fiction. Many of these stories draw upon Christian and mythic themes, while incorporating "fabulations, meta-fiction, surrealism and post-modern writing techniques" to reveal "the magical in our existing world in a uniquely Philippine way" by employing "Philippine elements and markers of identity" (22). Important writers who have used magic realist elements in their short fiction include Nick Joaquin and Carlos Bulosan.[63] Cruz-Lucero's address to her fellow writers could be seen as coming in a similar vein, as she exhorts them to identify the vestigial elements of indigenous myth as local history and a counter history to national metanarrative. At the end of the lecture, Cruz-Lucero herself identifies the following as part of a Filipino literary tradition: "1) a powerful oral tradition; 2) a half-lost language; 3) the necessary stratagems of irony, collusion and misdirection of a colonized culture; and 4) a characteristic Filipino mode: the story within the story" (6).

Despite this call for Filipino writers to acknowledge their cultural roots, Cruz-Lucero acknowledges that there is no recovering or restoring a precolonial authenticity. By setting aside the modern production of empirical knowledge, literary imagining becomes the site of a diligent remembering, a "transfiguring wonder tale" where "to remember what we never knew—is what, finally, will restore us to our mythological pedigree" (6). The third of Lucero's three collections of the short stories, *La India or Island of the Disappeared* (2012) extends Cruz-Lucero's deep imagining of place-based mythologies in

[63] As Ocampo further notes, Joaquin and Bulosan are contemporaries of the influential "magic-realist" short stories of Venezuelan writer Arturo Uslar-Pietri (27). However, to date, there is no scholarly work which investigates the possible influence on Filipino writers by Latin American magic realists.

her earlier collection, *Feast and Famine: Stories of Negros* (2003), as well as recuperates lost precolonial memories amidst a playfully self-reflexive critique of the construction of historical narratives. Unlike her previous collections, however, the figure of La India anchors history-making in this newest volume. In the feminine iconography of the Philippines, the India is coded as darker-skinned, indigenous, primitive and innocent as opposed to the fairer, modern but also somewhat snobbish mestiza Filipina (Cruz 5). Cruz-Lucero inverts this class and racial hierarchy in order to refigure La India as a Filipina locus of history-making. That said, she has set herself the much more arduous task of recovering the Filipina from a pre-colonial past with few archaeological traces. Far from championing the recovery of a pre-colonial origin, the figure of La India in Cruz-Lucero's later collection is a time-travelling, culture-bending trope that pivots between the island's assimilation into the Spanish colonial order and the modern global economy, amidst the vestiges of the Negrense precolonial world.

La India dramatises many instances of mistaken attribution in the authorship of histories or guides to the Philippines in order to critique the limitations of a colonial epistemology. Across the collection, there are references to the first map made of Negros by Diego Lope Povedano, which through its presumption of an omniscient perspective from above, established its boot-shaped outline as iconic. However, what is essentially an epistemic endeavour in the worlding of precolonial Negros is revealed to be part of the conquistador's effort in subdividing the island into *encomenderos* in order to maximise the collection of taxes. In "Inventing Datu Calantiao and His Code," the entire colonial enterprise of mapmaking is satirically turned on its head when a latter-day indio descendent, Jose E. Marco, sells a flagrantly forged map of Negros to an American academic "for the sake of digging up his glorious past" (75). Dr Robertson's palaeography skills are also revealed to be laughably deficient when he declares the map to be 341 years

old on the basis of an old Latin inscription of the year 1572, when the capital city marked on it would not have been founded till 1813. It is clear that the truth will never be recovered but the text prevaricates in favour of a deliciously playful metaphor in relation to the map's botched rendering as an "overfed paramecium" rather than a boot, the latter being "the island's primary claim to identity among thousands of others, the exact number of which is that of angels dancing on the head of a pin, the ballpark figure being 7,100" (80). In this delightfully satirical portrayal of the vast margin of error inherent even in empirical approaches to modern knowledge generation, *La India* raises the question of what happens when Filipino writers claim a local origin in full awareness of a wider and more worldly address. Implicit in this vignette are trajectories of trade and translation, where the object in question becomes profitably indexed according to its supposed age and authenticity, though these are subverted as part of the text's ironic perspective.

Therefore Cruz-Lucero's pointed invitation to Filipino writers in her 2015 lecture is meant not to lead them into historical anthropology proper, but a creative negotiation in their writerly craft that insists on a distinctive Filipino literary tradition that is nonetheless mobile enough to circulate beyond the nation. In order to write "narratives of Philippine history, rather than variants of international models," authors must "weave personal experience and local history into an apparently logical and self-referencing construction." I read this as Lucero's understanding of accruing literary capital to the Filipino text in the larger field of Anglophone world literature by making its cultural origins visible and legible. A metafictional mode, as we have seen with the earlier discussion of Bobis's semiotics of embodiment, as well as with Tan's horticultural aesthetics, is able to activate and exceed prevailing cultural frames related to the reading of Anglophone texts. The figure of La India in Lucero's collection, by comparison, is situated in the larger temporal terrain and metonymically references Filipinas across the longue durée in order to generate

a historical locus for "remembering what we never knew." By projecting its subject matter back into the distant precolonial past, Cruz-Lucero's work evinces a desire to step outside the limitations of modern epistemology, represented in large part by the modern Philippine nation as Manila-centric and dominated by the Anglophone mestiza elite. In *La India*, this imaginative restoration takes the form of a hermeneutics generated by precolonial female healers of *La India* in their naming and understanding of the natural and human world.

The complicating factor at hand, it must be noted, concerns the nature of the Anglophone world text as one that is able, by its very choice of linguistic medium, to be read by an audience with a range of subjectivities both within and beyond the Philippines. For such readers, the claim to authenticity runs the risk of being a mere gesture or by-word, especially when so little of the precolonial Filipino past remains knowable, except as presented through contemporary knowledge discourses. Thus the distinction between remembering and reinventing is fluid, but this does not prevent Cruz-Lucero arguing for Filipino writers to be responsibly aware of the richness of their indigenous narrative traditions as a literary resource. Much of her thinking is contained in essay collection *The Nation Beyond Manila* (2007), which showcases Cruz-Lucero's attempt to bridge her twin research interests in literary criticism and cultural anthropology, with the latter focused on the West Visayas and Mindano.[64]

Cruz-Lucero's writing often goes beyond an analysis of literary discourse and cultural performance to reflect on the positionality of her as critic and anthropologist. In "Singer on the Mango Tree," she discusses the archetypes of Visayan myths to elucidate the origins of Pilandok as a trickster figure in the context of political protest, the

[64] The volume contains celebrated and well-known pieces, such as "The 'Nation' in Vicente Sotto's Literary Imagination," a study of early twentieth century Cebuano writing where existing literary criticism has typically focused on the Ilustrados of the period, and "Judas and His Phallus, the Carnivalesque Narratives of Holy Week," where she traces the origins of this unusual feast-day parade to a communal excess beyond Holy Week and colonialist oppression, with Judas' male member pointing an accusatory finger at the Church.

persistence of epic heroes called Buyung in children's stories, and narrative arcs such as the flight from a tsunami. But at the end of the chapter, Cruz-Lucero details her own departure as a visitor from a Visayan coastal town. Her attempt to "travel back in time" (11) to attain an indio's perspective has failed, given how contemporary tribespeople "were continually reinventing themselves and the world" (20). In place of this, she advocates not the recovery of archaic forms, but due recognition of how "indigenous roots are living and dynamic traditions" by creative writers who should be "speakers for our people's daily lives, mediated by historical consciousness, and rooted in our indigenous concept of our cosmos and its laws" (7). At the same time, Cruz-Lucero is aware that during a transnational era, one's identity is established in the eyes of the world, and "artists and writers who credit their native traditions for their accomplishments take pride in the fact that they have stamped their identity onto the world by allowing their native roots to diffuse themselves into the world" (9). Unlike earlier historical scholarship, notably Reynaldo Ileto's *Pasyon and Revolution* (1986), which sought to devise a separate ontological frame altogether to describe the decolonising and mythic discourse of revolutionary groups, Cruz-Lucero is arguably making a rather radical claim that Anglophone writing from the Philippines can also claim to be indigenised and reterritorialised literature. The litmus test of its Filipino nature is the persistence and visibility of indigenous literary features in its mobility beyond the nation, as part of a world literary imagining.

If we consider *La India* in the context of Cruz-Lucero's own scholarship, there is scope to understand the richly layered diegesis of her short story collection as a tracing or otherwise imaginative construction of an other-history focalised through the India as historicising locus and method. Within the Anglophone world text, this other-history is presented as fissures within the modern enterprise of empirical knowledge, so destabilising

a a referential relation to reality. By activating residual mythic references amidst a general instability of the epistemological frame, *La India* steps outside the instrumentalist and communicative use of English to depict the continuing postcolonial project of the Philippines. Over the first seven stories set in precolonial Negros, indigenous forms of belief are depicted as resisting the Spanish presence. For instance, when the men and boys of Guinhalaran run away to the mountains, they tie *anitos* or animist figurines to a tree in the town centre, in an allusion to how the *bayanes* or ritual keepers of these were previously hung upside down from these trees and set on fire. When the Spanish guardia try to cut these down, they fall from broken branches or miss, "but the anitos only gyrated even more wildly" (18), as an example of Pilandok-style humour where one grimaces and grins in the same moment.

More significant is the doubled origin of the *Flora de Filipinas*, which is revealed to be an act of mistranslation from the indigenous knowledge of India healers. In *La India*, there are in fact two versions of the *Flora de Filipinas*,[65] a comprehensive horticultural guide to the archipelago, with two separate women in different stories presented as "a fountainhead of knowledge on all the island's flora" (59). In "Inventing Datu Calantiao and His Code," the botanist Diego is engaged in a bifurcated act of scripting. While flagrantly distorting the datu's code as he renders it into script, he is also hard at work transcribing Lunay's dictations. The datu's favourite daughter, Lunay's deep understanding of horticulture does not objectify each plant for its medicinal effects and her oral recounts include what Diego disparagingly calls "many ululating spells and enchantments" (102). Such scepticism disables the exoticisation of indigenous knowledge and reveals the power relations at play in Diego's transcription. Lunay's medicinal

[65] The historical *Flora De Filipinas* was originally published in 1837 and attributed to Father Francisco Manuel Maria Blanco, who employed twelve Filipino and five Spanish artists to create its botanical colour plates.

knowledge, in comparison, presents a fuller context of healing as linked to emotions and customs, such as when the herb Tagilubai has the ability to soothe the listener's feelings when a sprig is carried in the speaker's mouth. As a re-imagining of this history of transcription, Lunay's articulations remain legible in Cruz-Lucero's story. Estrella, the other ghostwriter of the Flora De Filipinas, shares her storied herbal lore with Fray Montano. After being tangentially involved in the killing of her family, the friar raises her to adulthood and gives her fertile *haciendero* land in return, making her the only indio landowner on the island in "The Courtship of Estrella". Unsurprisingly, she evades all her suitors.

Where Bobis employs the aesthetics of embodiment, Cruz-Lucero has recourse to doubling and satire, which critique the continued objectification of the Filipina within dominant discourses while revealing La India to be a generative site for an alternative epistemology. While such imaginative "remembering [of] what we do not know" cannot be simplistically identified as a third world feminist perspective, its oppositional structure as arising from the long material histories of the postcolonial Philippines resonates with the methodological ethics of Chandra Talpade Mohanty's famous essay "Under Western Eyes." As Mohanty explains, overarching discursive frames employed by researchers, such as gender difference, may impose western cultural rubrics in a universal fashion, and as a historical subject, and "this connection between women as historical subjects and the re-presentation of Woman produced by hegemonic discourses is not a relation of direct identity" (53). Instead Mohanty advocates for due attention to be given to the specific historical and material realities of third world women which generate their own hermeneutics.

Centred on the figure of La India, these short stories are imagined histories of how indigenous knowledge has been mistranslated into the colonial and totalising matrix of

modern print technology, which can be read in turn as a meta-commentary on the genre of Anglophone literary writing in the Philippines. Unlike the novel, the short story collection exhibits a "tension between autonomy and dependency" (Griffiths 2) among the individual stories. This leads to a reading experience more akin to the anthology as a genre, where the break between separate entries "punctuated the narrative, interrupted the time of reading, and forced readers to surface periodically from the self-indulgent pleasures of mimesis to a higher, less particularised, more disinterested plane" (Price 7). As a whole, Cruz-Lucero's short story collection functions as an assemblage of doubled and echoing tales, many of them *mise en abyme* in design, which engenders an approach to literary English that resists its instrumentalisation. If *La India* is read more popularly in the Philippines and beyond as an Anglophone world text, its mobility would be premised on its own terms, as the satire of the broad effects of colonisation and as part of a larger transnational history of empire. In the context of the commodification of English alongside the mobility of Filipino labour for export, such literary expression insists on enriching Anglophone writing beyond its capitulation as a global language that abets the priorities of multinational capital. While the first six stories play with myth and historical account as literary modes to convey the ironies of accessing the precolonial past from a contemporary perspective, the last three are set in late twentieth century Philippines and written in the manner of social realism. "Papa's Field," "A Stain of Blackberries" and "A Living Will" bring up the rear of the collection and feature La India as the modern Filipino woman who is now subject to the moral strictures of a Catholic Philippines, as much she seeks to travel beyond the confines of her original situation.

Though one may argue that the inclusion of these stories is simply meant to anthologise Cruz-Lucero's more recent prize-winning pieces— "Papa's Field" won first prize at the Nick Joaquin Literary Awards in 2009 and was published in *Philippine*

Graphic Magazine, and "A Stain of Blackberries" was awarded third prize at the Palanca Memorial Awards, 2011, and is published on the awards website—reading the collection as a whole prompts larger considerations about how the figure of La India lives on in a critique of contemporary discourses that neglect the erasure of local and indigenous histories. In "Papa's Field," Zeny returns from Manila to her childhood home in Negros with newly acquired liberal attitudes and with her socialist boyfriend, Mario, in tow. Focalised through the perspective of her estranged older sister, Blanca, who is scandalised that they choose to share a room, the narrative depicts how they gradually renew their familial affections. In the course of doing so, Mario's casual talk about local history, which he jocularly calls the "social volcano" triggers Blanca's long-suppressed memories of her father's death amidst the "Negros Nine" insurgency movement of six island towns under Martial Law (122). While Zeny departs at the end of her story to resume her job as a vet in Manila, Blanca remains unlikely to leave her childhood home, her static life expressing her inability to do more with these new perspectives, which she grasps dimly and emotively. In the characters of Blanca and Zeny, the present-day India once again expresses the tension between historical forgetting and remembering as played out against regional tensions between city and country, and the bourgeois desire to be upwardly mobile. On the metatextual level, this parallels the mobility of the Anglophone Filipino text, and reveals the need to scrutinise its linguistic provenance as part of the long entanglements of the postcolonial Philippines with its colonial past.

In comparison, "A Stain of Blackberries" is a coming-of-age story in which the narrator, Dolores, is a nondescript and conservative preteen girl whose best friend is Zenaida. With her Aeta heritage, Zenaida is ostracised and yet treated as an ornamental signifier in school "by simply being herself" (149) when she is tasked to lead a band of

pygmies during a history play as "an authentic museum piece" (148).[66] While Zenaida's voice is never heard within the story's first-person narration, Dolores is sufficiently disturbed by their failed friendship to question the proper behaviour expected of Catholic girls. The story as a whole reveals the Catholic school as a cultural institution that objectifies indigenous identities as historical pageantry, while valorising feminine acquiescence. Read against the earlier stories in *La India*, this exoticisation of indigenous elements in Filipino society conveys a critique of the co-option of local histories into the centralised and dominant discourse of the nation. Though Cruz-Lucero's fictional work cannot be equated with the political action and social formations of women's groups in the Philippines, it makes an important contribution to such creative expression by portraying the figure of La India as a destabilising zone where longer histories of suppression are articulated in the recovery of the Filipina as subject.

As with Bobis's portrayal of Estrella and Stella in *Fish-Hair Woman*, to be La India is to be an embodied site of suffering that troubles the referentiality of everyday usages of English in its semiosis. In her collection of short stories, Cruz-Lucero amply depicts the cruelty of the Spanish conquistador and the resulting process of religious and cultural assimilation. Despite profiting off Lunay's horticultural expertise, Diego warns her that if she persists with her "black magic" (103), she will end up like Sor Juana, an Indio nun who drowned in her convent's dungeon, and whose notebooks were burnt for heresy. As yet another uncanny echo across the stories in the collection, readers will know Sor Juana as Sina of "the great gift" from the tale titled "The White Lady of the Forest," descended from a long line of babaylans who "had poured all their visions into her" (36). These imagistic, oral, unrecorded texts become Sor Juana's handwritten treatises

[66] The Aeta is a collective term for several indigenous communities in the northern island of Luzon, making the closing story of *La India* the only one to be set outside of Negros, perhaps to allude to how the island can function as a synecdoche for the Philippines.

"explaining why women were the vessels of Christ's blood, eternally flowing from His crucified body into and through them" (43), their agony the price to pay for their honoured place in Christ. This mistranslation of Sina's own menstrual pains into a perverse acceptance of pain as part of feminine experience is a necessary counterpart to the postcolonial scripting that is enacted through the due recognition of Lunay and Estrella as female progenitors. Such *écriture féminine*, to transfigure Cixous's term into a Philippine postcolonial context, would at once reconstruct the violence of colonisation but also enable an other-thinking as provoked by Sina-Sor Juana's anguished alternative history. As readers reconstruct Sina's trajectory across the different temporal phases in various stories, what emerges is a larger collage of La India's gradual assimilation to the social order of colonial Philippines, and the sublimation of precolonial systems of signification into Hispanic registers. To quote Datu Calantiao's words to his daughter Lunay, her education of the botanist Diego, and by extension, the neoliberal elite of the Philippines today in the collection's contemporary mode of address, will perhaps allow indios to "plant something of ourselves in their heart" (104). This, in turn, seeks to return the Philippines to itself, by adding another layer to the postcolonial articulation of being Filipino.

"Narrative after Narrative": La Filipina as an Anglophone World Character

Towards the end of her first-person recount, the Fish-Hair woman recalls the recent violence with bitterness, her hair growing a hand-span with each memory. Gathering the fast-growing strands, she watches them "lengthening into narrative after narrative and [her] perpetual interrogation of [her] place in each of them" (177). Even if these tales were elevated to "the noble act of communal salvation," she ruminates, it is a "private urge" that "fuels our feet" to cover the "short distance between *our* and *mine*" (176). This tension between the communal and the individual lies at the heart of most fictional narratives,

particularly with the modern Anglophone novel as a product of and for the bourgeois middle-classes. As alluded to earlier in the chapter, Ian Watt views the individualised particularity of characters as one of the key aspects of the modern novel, with the world view of such a text centred on social relationships between secular, autonomous individuals in eighteenth century Britain (87). Intriguingly, Watt connects the rise of private enterprise, in *The Rise of the Novel*, with the function of the proper name. In epics and earlier prose writing, a character's name was non-particular, or unrealistic, in carrying religious or foreign allusions, such as Christian of *The Pilgrim's Progress* or Duke Basilius of *Arcadia*.

Conversely, with the figurations of the Filipina discussed in this chapter, there is no return to a precolonial ahistoricity. Names such as the Fish-Hair woman and La India encompass deeply realised characters as much as their mythical counterparts and doubles throughout the text, as an expression of Anglophone world writing in an uncanny and postcolonial mode that decentres modern and rationalised modes of being. This synecdochic function in the refiguring of La Filipina is what endows her with the qualities of an Anglophone world character, one whose identifiably individual nature nonetheless harbours slippages and manifestations across vast temporal and spatial divides. In her embodied nature, La Filipina leads to an epistemological unmooring of cultural and historical coordinates, away from the nationalist and compulsory study of José Rizal's novels in schools where, in English translation, "the act of reading literature [was] an act of (re)discovering the nation's origins in ideals embodied by the life and works of the nation's heroes" (Hau *Necessary Fictions* 2).[67] In contrast, Anglophone world writing

[67] In 1956, a national bill was passed to make the novel *Noli Me Tángere* and its sequel *El Filibusterismo*, a compulsory part of the school curriculum. Written by national hero and Philippines founding father José Rizal, these portrayed the unseemly behaviour of Spanish friars during the Hispanic period and the bill resulted in strong opposition from the Roman Catholic church in the Philippines.

harbours a reflexively multi-scalar capacity for destabilising the centrifugal and teleological tendencies of the nation.

Where previous chapters in my dissertation have sought to theorise an aesthetics of expanded geographical scale and historical temporalisation as aspects of Anglophone world writing, I conclude this chapter with a further suggestion to re-consider the distinct function of character in postcolonial literary works written in transnational moment. Though it would be hasty to draw general conclusions about the Anglophone world character, there is much in Bobis's and Cruz-Lucero's work that is richly suggestive about the Filipina refigured as one. With Estrella as the Fish-Hair woman and localised mythical double of Stella the diasporic Filipina, and Zenaida a school-going India being a latter-day inversion of Lunay's teacherly imparting of herbal lore, the Filipina as Anglophone world character metonymically invokes histories both postcolonial and precolonial. Moreover, characters such as Sina of "the great gift" and Stella the *balikbayan* author are important loci of worlding the Anglophone text according to Filipino sensibilities. Attention to creative or epistemological endeavours seems to be necessary for world-characters, to enable a metatextual commentary on the process of worlding. In their capacity to erect and unveil fictional worlds and forms of knowledge, literary English is localised in the ongoing project of Filipino decolonisation, even as such writing is deterritorialised to audiences beyond.

In the specific context of the Philippines, the commodified, feminine body of the Overseas Contract Worker is refigured in the exuberant world-making of Merlinda Bobis and Rosario Cruz-Lucero to condense histories of oppression by colonial and neocolonial regimes. Their various figurations of the Filipina resist the instrumentalist usage of English and the resulting commodification of Filipino English users as export labour. At its widest temporal and historical ambit, the Filipina inherits her precolonial identity from a localised

"mythic pedigree" in Cruz-Lucero's literary diegesis, where inventive remembrance becomes a form of historical knowing. As an act of fictionalising, the Filipina as character demonstrates a semiotic mobility between the real and the imaginative. Speaking both for herself and as a "transitional object" (Iser 7) in an Anglophone world text, La Filipina activates the circuits of referentiality into a pointed reimagining of how literary English must reckon with its colonial origins amidst the ongoing postcolonial effort to redefine the Anglophone.

Chapter 4
Singlish-ing as Worlding:
The Poetics and Politics of Arthur Yap, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan

In 1991, Singaporeans woke up to Singlish rap playing on the radio. Titled "Why U So Like Dat?" it was composed by veteran musician Siva Choy, a member of the band Kopi Kat Clan. The comedy music album of the same name sold 50 000 copies, but the raucous laughter in response to the island's beloved patois was undercut by a certain anxiety over such "bad English" on the airwaves. Surely, after thirty-five years of independence, English-medium schooling and rapid industrialisation, Singaporeans could speak English, at a standard which justified the city-state's aspirations to become one of the global hubs of Southeast Asia? The title –and the refrain—of Choy's catchy feel-good melody "Why U So Like Dat" which broadly equates to "Why do you behave this way?" functions almost as a metacommentary on the style of the speaker's language use. Ostensibly in the voice of a young schoolboy berating his peer for copying his homework and stealing his sweets, the entire track is rapped by cheerily uncouth and fully grown men, complete with loud spitting at one point in the background. The missing verb "are," the voiceless dental fricative th- deliberately dropped into the voiced d- and the abbreviated spelling are typical of a certain class of Singaporean English users. Performing such a voice would expel any shame attached to "Singaporean" as connoting a less-than-perfect mastery of English, in the humorous frisson of using an English that is recognisably within and yet without the Anglosphere.

However, letters to the forum section of *The Straits Times*, the nation's main broadsheet, registered their stentorian disapproval of Singlish in advertisements and media. In the same year, a particularly heated exchange led to the Singapore Broadcasting

Corporation[68] issuing a statement that only standard English would be spoken, albeit with a local accent (H. Tan). These were linked to concerns that Singlish would be a negative influence upon the younger generation's English-speaking capabilities, if children were condoned for speaking in the unrefined manner of Choy's hit soundtrack. The use of Singlish in the media was also seen as mocking Singaporeans' poor language abilities ("Kodak Ad").[69] But the fourth verse of "Why U So Like Dat?" contains a less-noticed account of language politics in Singapore:

> You always talk in dialect
> And when I ask you "Why"?
> You scold in Hokkien very loud:

Instead of the expected swear phrases in Singapore's most commonly spoken Chinese dialect,[70] the audience is treated to a quick drum tattoo, followed by bursts of laughter in the background. Radio content guidelines aside, there is the further irony of expressing disapproval of a non-English dialect in Singlish, itself arguably a dialectal variety of English which has evolved in localised and multilingual contexts. This ingrained preference for standardised language usage, coupled with an official multiculturalism that views ethnicity as necessarily yoked to one's mother tongue, provides the backdrop to this chapter's exploration of the development of Singlish as a distinctive literary register in the Anglophone poetry of Singapore.

---

[68] Singapore's corporatised national television company, which was subsequently privatised in 1994 and is now known as Mediacorp.

[69] The use of Singlish, in fact, does not preclude the learning of standard English, and as Lionel Wee notes, reflects a prejudice against non-standard varieties among educational researchers (113).

[70] As a community with primarily immigrant origins dating from the nineteenth century, Singaporean Chinese belong to dialect groups, with the most common being Hokkien, Teochew, Cantonese, and Hakka, many of which are mutually unintelligible (Tan "Mandarinising Singapore" 122).

In this final chapter, I consider the Anglophone world text in the genre of poetry, paying particular attention to the performative affordances of the poetic voice in enacting an interrogation of standard English. While the earlier chapters in this dissertation have been primarily concerned with fiction as an expansive and powerful mode of imaginative diegesis, which reworks the Anglophone and the worldly in terms of the long postcoloniality of specific loci, the genre of poetry requires that the ontology of the Anglophone be radically reconfigured at the moment of voicing. As we have briefly seen with "Why U So Like Dat?" even the orthography of lyrics in print signals variance in the form of pronunciation and syntax, with the orality of the linguistic fabric itself registering the politics of localised Anglophone identities. The very nature of speech and the corresponding positions of both speaker and intended audience are performatively shaped by the cultural tensions in such versifying, making a poetics of Singlish an ontological exercise in being. This stands in contrast to the work of Kiran Desai, Preeta Samarasan and Tan Twan Eng, in which literary worlding exercises a mimetic function to inscribe the scale of the global or to re-imagine the past outside an ethno-nationalist historiography. Like poetry in Singlish, the notion of a world-character also suggests that in Anglophone world writing, the basis of one's identity is significantly shaped by the cultural system of English usage. When conveyed in a first-person narrative like the Fish-Hair woman's, the ontological counterpart to an epistemology at the world scale is the traversing of spatial and temporal divides in a single character perspective. What the Filipina as world-character expresses through metonymic slippage is cohered in the moment of poetic enunciation for poetry of non-standard English or Singlish. Instead of a mimetic relationship between the ontic world and the text as diegesis, Singlish as a literary text is "a separate staging of language" where a conscious choice is made to "approach translingualism in literature as singular language events" (Helgesson and Kullberg 138).

By radically unsettling the ontology of standard English within the Singaporean socio-political context, poetry in Singlish prompts an Anglophone worldliness which is simultaneously postcolonial.

Anglophone poetry in Singapore, especially verse written in non-standard English, resists the disproportionate influence of the state in its neo-colonial management of cultural identities, and its continuous attempt to equate English use with communicative competence. In the effusive, dramatic performance of Singlish as poetic voice, the seemingly universal and neutral medium of global English is reterritorialised locally, as an energetically divergent literary register. Poetry in Singlish draws upon cultural and linguistic resources beyond English and from Singapore's multilingual milieu in order to exuberantly exceed pervasive ideologies of language standardisation and cultural essentialism. Thinking about poetic genres in relation to worlding, Eric Hayot observes that the performative nature of such poems entails that they "locate themselves fundamentally in our world and orient themselves toward the actually existing world rather than some imaginary one, even when they include fictional elements" ("Does Poetry Make Worlds? 206). Alluding to Jonathan Culler's theorising on the lyric, Hayot makes a distinction between the historical remove of the epic and the immediacy of the poem as a voiced entity. "The lyric world-concept" he explains, "does not so much, therefore, represent a world as generate a world in real time as a function of the relation between the poetic text and the moment of its enunciation" when it is activated during "reading in the real" ("Does Poetry Make Worlds? 207). Poetry in Singlish, as this chapter will discuss further, activates non-Anglophone linguistic and cultural material as part of this new literary register, in order to reckon with both the colonial provenance of literary English and its postcolonial transmutation.

In this ontology of the Singlish voice, standard English is also revealed as part of the developmentalist trajectory of Singapore, where economic growth is reliant on transnational flows of capital. Where previous chapters have discussed the supra-textual and material circuits of the international book market, which prompt a worldly address that anticipates a wider audience, this chapter attends to how poetry in Singlish refutes the transparency of standard English in its energetic poetics of locality. In tussling with the limits of what literature in English can be, linguistically and culturally, a Singlish poetics both condenses and critiques the institutionalisation of English in postcolonial Singapore through thematic and aesthetic expression. Yet given its status as the creation and plaything of the Anglophone elite in Singapore, Singlish poetics is an uncanny obverse of global English. Despite re-territorialising and localising its universalising aspects, as a literary register Singlish in fact perpetuates distinctions in class.

This is not to imply that Singaporean writers, particularly novelists, have not engaged with other entangled processes of transnational address and self-exoticisation as discussed in previous chapters, as Anglophone world writing. Like their Malaysian peers, Singapore writers are subject to the challenges of a limited reading public for locally produced literature, while publishers like Epigram Books attempt to market Singapore and Southeast Asian work to the UK.[71] However, in the new millennium, there was a distinct flourishing of grassroots Anglophone poetry publishing, with support from newly established and older publishing houses such as Squircle Line Press, Math Paper Press and Ethos Books. This has led to a growing number of single author collections and anthologies being published by first-time poets and veterans.[72] The swelling number of

[71] Unfortunately, Epigram Books has closed their UK office, owing to the economic pressures of the pandemic (Ho).

[72] There were 245 new poetry publications in English from 2000-2017, averaging 9.7 per year in the 2000s and 18.5 per year in the 2010s. Data derived from annual bibliographies published in *the Journal of Commonwealth Literature* and *Singapore literature in English: An Annotated Bibliography*.

print publications corresponded to a democratisation of poetry writing in virtual communities, where established poetic voices engaged with first-time writers and even readers of Anglophone poetry in Singapore, and added to the creative discourse surrounding the genre. One such forum is the annual Singapore Poetry Writing Month (SingPoWriMo for short), which has been hosted via a public Facebook group since 2014.[73] Recent poetic discourse evinces a new porousness to social critique, inflecting issues of the day and often with attention to inscribing an Asian, if not Singaporean origin to Anglophone literary expression. Against founding prime minister Lee Kuan Yew's infamous 1968 declaration, that "Poetry is a luxury we cannot afford" (T. Koh 303), the Anglophone poetry scene challenges the national rubric of pragmatic survivalism. Seen in this light, poetry in Singlish grows out of the long aftermath of postcoloniality as expressed through literary English, at a moment where local literature in English is being read more broadly.

English was enshrined in the constitution of newly independent Singapore in 1965 as one of four official languages. While Malay in the Romanised script was recognised as the national language to acknowledge the indigenous status of Malay peoples, English became the main language used in government, education and commerce as a lingua franca. Additionally, Malay, Chinese and Tamil were selected as the languages that best represented the ethnic composition of a new nation founded on democratic principles of equality and progress.[74] The national pledge, recited by school children since August 1966, invokes "one united people, regardless of race, language or religion." Utopian as this may

[73] During SingPoWriMo, poetry prompts are issued once a day for a period of thirty days, the primary challenge being to post a poem within twenty-four hours. The instantaneity of social media publishing meant that both the subject matter and craft of writing was highly visible, and exceeded the more typically constricted circles of the literati, an aspect enhanced by the presence of moderators who would comment and encourage revision.

[74] Official statistics list Singapore's population as 75.9% Chinese, 15.0% Malay, 7.5% Indian and 1.6% Others (Population in Brief 2020).

seem, English in Singapore remains contextualised by the country's unceremonious separation from Malaysia amidst the rise of Malay cultural nationalism, as well as the economic precarity of its first years of independence. In later decades, developmentalist language policies leveraged on the exogenous orientation of English towards the westernised First World, while the other official languages were designated in Singapore's bilingual education policy as mother tongues and repositories of Asian cultural values. Despite the enduring prestige of an English medium education, English as a literary mode in the new life of the nation is triply evacuated for writers in Singapore. Circumscribed as being foreign to Asian cultures, and administered as a culturally neutral language, the widespread use of English in Singapore is also technocratically harnessed to attract foreign capital under the political censorship of a semi-authoritarian and neoliberal government. As C. J. Wan-ling Wee notes in *The Asian Modern*, "democratic impulses and cultural difference and historico-racialist 'irrationalities' were suppressed, homogenised or sanitised in the name of industrial-capitalist modernity's pure truths" (6). The result is a "bland, multicultural utopianism," one in which culture is less about the manifestation of identity and more about the pragmatic drive towards economic development (6).

Almost every Singaporean would claim to use the local English dialect to some degree, making its essence both spontaneously malleable and subjective to a certain extent. The rise of Singlish as a self-identified medium of literary expression requires a closer scrutiny of the politics of non-standard English as reworked through the poetics of an Anglophone poem. Incorporating the phraseology of and terms from Chinese dialects, particularly Hokkien, as well as the lexis and grammar of Malay and Tamil, the origins of Singlish reside in interlingual borrowings between different cultural groups in early Singapore, as part of a socio-economic lingua franca (Goh 748). While Singlish has been described in linguistic scholarship as Colloquial Singapore English, "Singlish" is in fact

not a stable language entity but a variety on a continuum, and is not a term preferred by linguists due to its negative connotations (Fong et al. 21). The first academic studies of the colloquial variety appeared in the 1970s,[75] but the term "Singlish" was not widely used in popular discourse until the 1980s. First codified in written form with the appropriate punctuation by humourist Sylvia Toh Paik Choo in the books *Eh Goondu* (1982) and *Lagi Goondu* (1984), the colloquial variety was employed initially for comedic effect, resulting from a slightly scandalised recognition of the everyday patois being reproduced for a mass audience. However, it was not until the death of Arthur Yap in 2006 that "Singlish" was regularly employed as a descriptor of a poetic register among the literary community, in relation to the much-celebrated grammatical play of his writing from the 1970s to 1990s, which this chapter periodises as pre-Singlish poetry.

Poetry in Singlish both reflects and extends this plurilingual, comedic and wryly oppositional provenance for larger aesthetic goals that are distinct from the cultural valence of everyday Singlish. At this point, a distinction must be made between the communicative usage of Singlish, and Singlish as an aesthetic modality for a literary text, which is the focus of this chapter. Unlike *The Coxford Singlish Dictionary*, a crowd-sourced reference to the vernacular, and *Spiaking Singlish: A Companion to How Singaporeans Communicate*, poetry that purports to be in Singlish actively engages the cultural hierarchies of the Anglophone as a literary medium. The rich play of poetic voice in terms of pronunciation, mimicry, word borrowings, compressed syntax and famously emotive particles like "lah" and "leh" leads to a distinction between English as an Anglocentric cultural institution employed by the English speaker and English-ing as a

[75] Published in Anthropological Linguistics in 1975, "The Singapore English speech continuum and its basilect 'Singlish' as a 'creoloid'" by J. T. Platt was one of the first attempts to define Singlish grammar within an objectivist orientation. Singlish continues to be a well-researched topic in the field of linguistics, and many scholars have conducted structural analyses and sociological studies. For an overview, refer to *The Singlish Controversy: Language, Culture and Identity in a Globalizing World* (2018) by Lionel Wee.

means by which a speaking subject refuses the identity formations and histories linked to English usage.[76]

Focusing on the work of two poets, Joshua Ip and Hamid Roslan, who are well-known for their employment of alternative registers of English in *Sonnets from the Singlish* (2012) and *parsetreeforestfir*e (2019) respectively, I discuss their work within the contours of Singapore's burgeoning Anglophone poetry scene with a focus on the decade of their publication. In doing so, this chapter elucidates how both poets are responding to a specific sociocultural moment in the island-nation, where ideologies of standard English-usage are increasingly perceived as part of the state's pragmatic and hegemonic governance of cultural identities, amidst the gentrification of Singlish as literary language. This occurs alongside a more rigorous critique of the ontological basis of language as world-making in the context of Singapore's English language and mother tongue policies, which have homogenised ethnic identities and cut off longer cultural memories from the pre-independence era. Such endeavours in the literary scene are of a piece with revisionist perspectives on Singapore's typically monolithic narrative of national progress, which have come to the fore as a result of the country's fiftieth anniversary of independence in 2015, known as SG50, and its more fractiously commemorated Bicentennial in 2019, which marks two centuries from the island's "discovery" by the British East India Company.

Ip and Hamid[77] themselves are part of the longer trajectory of Anglophone writing which engages with the state's project of nation building in postcolonial Singapore. In the next section, we will contextualise Singlish as a literary medium that arose from an organic

[76] I engage more closely with Rey Chow's thinking on the postcolonial scene of language-ing in the next section.
[77] As Malay-Muslim names follow patronymic naming conventions, Hamid Roslan is referred to as "Hamid."

public response and which embraced the language variety as part of Singaporean identity, despite efforts by the government to downplay such perspectives. This chapter will also discuss, by way of tracing the evolution of Singlish as a literary medium, Arthur Yap's reception as the first poet who was posthumously described as writing in Singlish, though he never explicitly associated himself with the language variety, making his work pre-Singlish not just in its poetics but in relation to the broader recognition of Singlish as literary register. In his general poetic method, Yap employs grammar games and non-standard English in order to provide an other-perspective on the supposed transparency of language-usage. By paving the way for a poetics of language variation, and by extension, a further negotiation with English as the non-neutral, locally energised category of the Anglophone, Yap prepares the way for poetry to be identified as and written in Singlish.

Ip and Hamid both inherit and extend Yap's pre-Singlish poetics, but inflect differences from standard English to reflect a more distinctly agonistic relationship with national language policies. Their works exercise a further critical function by eschewing any naturalised relationship between language and cultural identity, in favour of plurilingual and performative language-play that reveals the Anglophone as an accumulation of asymmetrical and uneasy cultural relations. The poetics of Singlish-ing functions as an aesthetic medium that challenges and resists the neoliberal construction of the Singaporean as embodied capital through standard English—itself the expression of a particular sociocultural moment in Singapore's recent history amidst the maturation of the Anglophone poetry scene.

Singlish-ing as Worlding: Singapore's Anglophone Poetic Tradition

While Ip's *Sonnets from the Singlish* is a playful repartee to the genteel nature of literary versification in the sonnet form, Hamid's *parsetreeforestfire* is a tour de force and a

performative heteroglossia of English, Singlish, Malay and other Chinese dialects, where even the "I" of the speaker is shown to be unable to transcend the "faulty language" imposed by a pervasive Eurocentric logic of modern language usage. Neither present Singlish for the purposes of authentic or mimetic reproduction, but as Jonathan Culler has theorised in relation to lyric poetry, performative language constitutes its own event, as one that "can take its place among performative linguistic practices that bring into being that to which they refer or accomplish that of which they speak—creative and world-changing modes of language" (125). Instead of reading verse as reflective of real-world linguistic utterances, which would mistake lyric poetry for fiction or "normalising novelising," Culler draws attention to dimensions of lyric poetry that include "the effects of presentness of lyric utterance, the materiality of lyric language that makes itself felt as something other than signs of a character and plot, and the rich texture of intertextual relations that relates it to other poems rather than to worldly events" (119). Reading Culler's understanding of the lyric against Ip's and Hamid's linguistic poetics, the sheer exuberance, even aberrance of their writing constitutes a moment of voiced enunciation in real-time that is "nonmimetic and nonfictive" (105) in performing the possibility of poetry in Singlish. It is a twofold accomplishment, and their poetry christens Singlish as a literary medium while interrogating the positioning of the Anglophone reader in terms of cultural and linguistic propositions.

Ip's collection, *Sonnets from the Singlish*, employs Singlish as a linguistic and literary medium that transforms a seeming deficiency in signification into an excess of poetic meaning that extends the conventions of the sonnet tradition to non-standard English. Beginning as a reluctant reader and writer of poetry, he started by writing parodies and joke songs in his teenage years before enrolling in a creative writing minor during his undergraduate degree. After taking a class called 'Uncreative Writing' by

Kenneth Goldsmith, and another by Charles Bernstein, Ip found that postmodern techniques of found or Google poems "annihilated [his] idea of the author for quite a long time, ten years to be exact, before [he] found my way back" (Balbuena). The slipper-wearing speakers of Ip's sonnets are perhaps extensions of his real-life persona in this effort to re-centre his poetic voice. They are male civil servants, frequenting coffeeshops and karaoke lounges as part of a slightly louche middle-class lifestyle peppered with satirical takes on Singapore's bureaucratic-speak and marriage market. More than simply a humorous invocation of Singlish as a colloquial medium, Ip deploys the vernacular at the level of rhyme, metre and cadence, as much as he unpacks slang terms such as "cheena" and "cmi" (equating to "overly Chinese" and "cannot make it", respectively) as richly connotative avenues to depict the inter-cultural conundrums of being an ethnically Chinese speaker of acrolectal English. Combined with the tones and lexis of Singlish, the formal requirements of the sonnet in rhythm and rhyme occasion the worlding of Anglophone writing on an expanded spectrum of English-ing. This, in turn, can be additionally read as an attempt to subvert any necessary association between standard English and literary English in Singapore.

Hamid, by contrast, delves deeper into the historical basis of language use as a matter of Singapore's colonial history and the later implementation of educational and language policies that resulted in both language standardisation and the hardening of cultural identities along the language-race axis. Coming seven years after Ip's collection, *parsetreeforestfire* (2019) was written in a moment where Singlish has attained general acceptance as cultural and literary capital. Much of the collection is set in the common spaces of modern urban Singapore and consists of performative responses to the manicured monologic of the country as a rule-bound garden city helmed in by the ideology of "must spik proply" (26). In the third section of the collection, titled "forest," Hamid

demonstrates how Singlish is not a utopian intermingling of Singapore's various races and cultures. Structured as a debate between the main text in English, and footnotes in Singlish in the now-time of the poetic enunciation, the speaker evacuates the possibility of any stable position to speak amidst the growing Sinicisation of Singlish by Singapore's majority Chinese population, and the impossibility of recovering Bahasa Malay as a precolonial language given its further Anglicisation into roman script from Jawi. As Hamid mentions at the launch of *parsetreeforestfire*:

> "I think when you read this collection, you find yourself where you know the languages that you know. And of the ones that you don't know well, too bad. And that will mark you off as being a very specific kind of reader who understands very specific things." (Hu)

In the raw performative relationality of Hamid's texts, representational politics is ultimately shown to be limiting, and it is the poetics of speaking in Singlish that undermines the nativist equivalence between language and culture. As with Ip's *Sonnets*, the poetic voice enunciates a worldliness that pluralises the Anglophone as literary medium.

My argument about the impact of Singlish-ing draws directly from Rey Chow's notion of languag-ing in the postcolonial scene. Writing in the context of Hong Kong, where both English and Mandarin Chinese are major languages alienated from the organic, everyday experience of Cantonese, Chow playfully puns on the term xenophobic with the coinage "xenophone." The logic of language as a stable entity employed by a distinct and bordered community is necessarily xenophobic, but additionally the monolingual is a language user who is invisible and unmarked by her usage of her native tongue. Referring

to Jacques Derrida's *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin*, Chow deftly analyses how he performs a postcolonial ethics by foregrounding his discomfort with French as a French Algerian, despite being monolingual in the language. Similarly, in the postcolonial scene of languaging, a colonial subject (for our purposes, a citizen of the postcolonial nation) uses a language that is never only theirs. In place of a model of dispossession, Chow advocates that this emergent languaging domain be seen as a site of linguistic creativity, replete with the found accents and associations of once-colonial languages re-oriented away from their standard or "proper" forms—the "xenophone."

Chow's contribution lies in her perceptive observation that the "xenophone" is also an epistemic break with history. "A native speaker becomes audible or discernible only when there are non-native speakers present" Chow observes, "when more than one language is already in play, explicitly or implicitly, as a murmur and an interference" (58-59). No longer can the English speaker be seen as equivalent to being culturally or nationally English, and the celebration of such creative discontinuities makes both the colonialised subject and the monolingual speaker equally visible, and indeed the two are not mutually exclusive, so dislocating the latter from her place as a subject whose sovereignty of speech is equated to a nation's unbroken line of history from time immemorial. Returning to our discussion of Ip and Roslan, a Singlish poetics emerges precisely from such a breakage, which derives from Singapore's status as a former British colony enmeshed in the deterritorialised flows of global English. Though Chow's theorising refers to the xenophone as real-world speech, poetic enunciation in Singlish, as this chapter will discuss, creates a worlding of its own in response to the cultural and linguistic histories of Singapore.

Compared to Hong Kong, the English speaker in Singapore is relatively less alienated from English as a colonial language, though the language is triply evacuated

from cultural and literary usages, as discussed earlier. With the widespread localised usage of English for half a century, many Singaporeans perceive themselves to be first language users of English, though this may not be accompanied with a native sense of language ownership (Lim, Pakir and Wee 144). This sense of confidence implies that Anglophone writers in Singapore respond less to English as representing an external, colonising influence, and more to how the language has been locally institutionalised within the postcolonial and developmental matrix of the independent city-state. English has been pragmatically instrumentalised by Singapore's ruling party since independence, leading many to believe that the language "could be stripped of its values or cultural content and instrumentalised as a scientific / business language" (Wee "The Indigenised West" 193). Since the island's independence, Singapore's English language policy has been premised on the pragmatic need for global economic competitiveness and as a neutral inter-ethnic common language in a society which has inherited and further reified racial identities derived from the colonial census (Stroud and Wee 256). English then, as now, is a prestige language deriving its cultural capital from the political and economic formations of its time and has been the primary medium of education (Tong and Pakir 179). In Singapore, good English is equated with global English as defined by international intelligibility (Bokhorst-Heng et al. 139).[78] The result was an emphasis on exogenous western standards and a strong underlying ideology of language standardisation in terms of accuracy and grammar alongside the creation of an Anglophone elite class (Lim et al. 10).

This preference for language usage in its official, standardised form can be traced to the British colonial administration in Malaya, which established Singapore as a plural society governed according to "Malay," "Chinese" and "Indian" concerns as a means of

[78] In 2000, the Speak Good English Movement (SGEM) in Singapore was initiated in response to fears that Singlish was gaining acceptance. The government's employment of foreign language experts for the movement highlighted "the state's inability to free itself of the hegemony of the native speaker ideology" (Lim et al. 10).

governing and containing the linguistic diversity of a polyglot society (Leow 24). This led to a sharpening and reifying of communal differences along ethnic and cultural lines, as a marked departure from the dynamic linguistic, religious and cultural pluralisms which previously characterised Southeast Asia as a region (Leow 5). In the wake of Malay nationalism, the Riau-Johor dialect was selected to be the basis of a Standard Malay that became Bahasa sekola, the language of education in schools (Abdullah and Ayyub 186). While the political and historical developments of the intervening years are too extensive to recount at length, independent and contemporary Singapore adopts an official multiculturalism which recognises four official languages, namely English, Malay, Chinese and Tamil, with the latter three corresponding to ethnic classifications that tend to homogenise cultural pluralities within these communities.[79] Such cultural governance is most visibly exercised through the education system with a bilingual policy beginning in 1956, where each child would learn a "mother tongue" in a standard form, as constitutive of his or her local and Asian identity as opposed to English as the culturally neutral medium of access to the global economy (Lim et al. 6). Singapore's language technocracy is further manifested through public campaigns, such as the Speak Mandarin Campaign from 1979, which discouraged the usage of Chinese dialects in favour of *putonghua* as the standard that reflects a cohesive Chinese cultural heritage (Teo 125). Of importance here is the construction of the Singaporean as a culturally authentic subject within an ahistorical frame, with the timelessness of the brave young nation anchored by a state-generated civilisational discourse of Asian values aligned with its commitment to developmentalism and global capital (Chong "Manufacturing Authenticity" 890).

[79] As a further clarification, while Singlish is discussed as a distinct and identifiable linguistic medium, it stands in contrast to the essentialism and norm-governed usage of standard languages owing to its nature as a primarily spoken medium which is reflected in the marked oral cues of Ip and Hamid's works.

The aesthetic quest to articulate the new nation to itself was taken up by the first generation of poets who, prior to the separation of Singapore from Malaysia, called for the formation of a Malayan literature to reflect a multilingual, multiracial and multicultural Malayan nation (Thumboo 258). Subsequently, with the hardening of cultural identity along ethnic lines in both countries, and the relative impermeability of language communities, Malay, Tamil and Chinese literatures were also produced and read within these separate communities of usage. Anglophone literary writing found itself without a distinct community to represent, and became a minor literature in Malaysia where the predominant language is Bahasa Melayu (Ng 325), whereas in Singapore, English became a lingua franca and a common language. The earliest major poets of the 1970s, Edwin Thumboo most prominently, saw the historical role of Anglophone poetry as "explaining the formation of the nation to its people" (Patke 294). Thumboo's retrospective account of his early search for style and theme links his aesthetics to the historicity of decolonial years in searching for an idiom for "the promise of a rich cultural amalgam" (261). "Domesticating English" requires a recognition of the Greek and Latin antecedents of the English literary tradition, which can be extended further in a localised fissuring of the monolithic nature of English (261). As demonstrated in his second and third poetry collections, *Gods Can Die* (1977) and *Ulysses by the Merlion* (1979), Thumboo's own poetic practice delves into myths from the region as an alternative source of iconography. Arguably Thumboo's most famous poem, "Ulysses by the Merlion" imagines an encounter between the Greek sojourner and the merlion in Singapore. "Half-beast, half-fish", this "lion of the sea/ This image of themselves" is Singapore's entry in the fabled halls of universal symbology.

Yet beyond the circle of Anglophone poets at the University of Singapore, other Singapore writers resisted the necessary linkage of their literary practice with overt nation-

building. By the 1990s, the rapid modernisation of Singapore's downtown, coupled with the largescale urbanisation of the island for public housing, led to many poets writing about the loss of heritage and nature spaces amidst concerns about the erasure of history. Published in 2000, the anthology *No Other City* gathers many of these poems. With well-known entries juxtaposed against unknown and newer voices, a clear continuum of concerns emerges in reaction to urban redevelopment while mourning the destruction of historic edifices. Boey Kim Cheng's "The Planners" laments the sanitisation of the past through the meta-discourse of ceaseless building in Singapore, where "history is new again" and "the drilling goes right through/the fossils of last century" (37). Arthur Yap's "old house at ang siang hill" and Lee Tzu Pheng's "Amoy Street Houses" are juxtaposed with Terence Heng's "Postcards from Chinatown" and Koh Buck Song's ironic "A Brief History of Toh Payoh" – the last depicts the new public housing estate's lack of historicity. Writing about the foreclosed futurities of decolonisation in Southeast Asia, Jini Kim Watson theorises how the overriding priority of pragmatic survival became the sole historical, in fact national, narrative presented by the ruling People's Action Party. Though the communist purges that she discusses occur in the sixties, the enduring effect was that "the risk of a socialist future—or any future which did not see the nation-state as the articulation point with the global economic order—was no future at all" ("Cold War Reckonings" 113).

As the new millennium drew near, Anglophone poetry, if not always directly critical of the state, increasingly reflected what Holden et al. call "the politics of creative dissonance" (364-5). Increasingly, literary writing and publishing featured themes and concerns that centre on Singapore's political climate and the paternalistic nature of its government. The increased presence of the poet as activist—and literature as activism—implies that the worlding of Anglophone poetry is charged with more explicit articulation

and critique of social formations, and the hierarchies that result. One of the most exciting poetic voices to emerge during this moment was Alfian Sa'at, whose collections *One Fierce Hour* (1998) and *A History of Amnesia* (2001) electrified the poetry scene with its strident disillusionment with Singapore's relentless pace of development and imagistic play with the country's national symbols. The epigraph to Alfian's later collection takes aim at "the patient, born in 1965, [who] suffers from a history of amnesia of unknown onset and duration" and for "whom the prognosis is uncertain." Though both collections are written in standard English, except where dialogue is indicated, his poems are significant for inaugurating the presence of an Anglophone poetic voice that powerfully articulates the desire for historical and cultural imaginaries beyond the success narrative of state-managed modernity. Featuring legendary precolonial figures such as Sang Nila and Badang, pro-communist detainee Chia Thye Poh as well as everyday voices from the Malay-Muslim ethnic minority, Alfian lays claim to these wayward remembrances as a tense lyrical reimagining of the nation and its Anglophone literary idiom. In the poem "Singapore You're Not My Country," from *One Fierce Hour*, he addresses an overly commercialised and rigidly regulated Singapore as an "island of walls" on which "truth is graffiti" (38). Having "lost a country to images" (ironically perhaps the very images that Thumboo employs to celebrate Singapore as an entrepot), he concludes that:

> This will not do; we must stand aside and let the Lion
> crash through a madness of cymbals back to that dark
> jungle heart
> when eyes were still embers waiting for a crownless
> Prince of Palembang. (41)

Rousing as this conclusion is, references to the "dark jungle" of a lost precolonial history and the "crownless/ Prince of Palembang" suggest a somewhat simplistic and essentialist response to the historical amnesia of postcolonial Singapore. At this same moment, however, and outside the poetry scene, other voices in mainstream media highlighted the experiences of those who did not uniformly benefit from the young nation's newfound wealth. Despite the opprobrium attached to non-standard language usage, Singaporeans flocked to movies featuring a multi-hued spectrum of Singlish, Mandarin Chinese and other Chinese dialects such as Jack Neo's *Money No Enough* (1998) and *I Not Stupid* (2002), while English sitcoms such as *Phua Chu Kang Pte Ltd* (1998-2003) remained hugely popular throughout its eight seasons. Neo's movie outings, in particular, take aim at the English-speaking managerial class, who are seen as unempathetic towards the struggles of fellow Singaporeans striving for material comfort in the form of the 5Cs, namely: cash, a car, credit cards, a condominium and a country club membership. In *I Not Stupid*, this competitive streak is mirrored in Singapore's famously rigorous education system, where young pupils are hot-housed by *kiasu* parents to perform well at national exams as a ticket to better schools and well-paying jobs.[80]

Though not yet recognised as a literary medium worthy of poetry as an elevated art form, Singlish was already, by the early 2000s, the patois that coheres the lived experiences of those struggling to recognise this gleaming, ultra-modern metropolis as home. As a linguistic register marked by class, the use of Singlish condenses anxieties of social and economic marginalisation. Government officials have expressed fears that if Singlish were to become an accepted medium of communication, Singaporeans from a lower socio-economic class would be limited in terms of job opportunities and career progression, while others continue to be able to code-switch when necessary between

[80] *Kiasu* is a Singlish word of Hokkien origin, meaning "scared to lose."

acrolectal English and Singlish. More importantly, Singlish was later appropriated by the Anglophone elite as a mode of discourse that erases its working-class origins as "a politicised construction" and a "earthy basolect strongly associated with bodily meanings" (Goh 750). Minister Vivian Balakrishnan calls the public celebration of Singlish a "pet project" by "linguistic elites" that reveals a certain "intellectual snobbery" towards those who can only speak the colloquial variety ("Minister Balakrishnan Cautions against Promoting Use of Singlish"). Gwee Li Sui, a noted poet, critic and champion of Singlish, has also observed how "Singlish seems to thrive on codifying political resistance" with terms like "prata" implying a critique of the government's flip-flop approach to certain policies, after the method of flipping the South Indian flatbread on a hotplate ("Do you speak Singlish?"). When employed as part of an Anglophone poetics, Singlish augments this critical role in relation to the state, while these poems themselves remain, somewhat problematically, as part of a specialised and elite literary project to both construct and de-construct Singapore as a pluricultural community.

Ip and Hamid thus inherit a poetic tradition that is agonistically positioned in relation to Singapore as a state-led developmentalist project, amidst a wider zeitgeist where Anglophone discourse in Singapore is itself stratified along the lines of class. No longer would English appear to be a transparent medium, even when it attempts to communicate social commentary. The ideologies of the English language as culturally neutral, instrumentalist and globalising would be called into question through Singlish as a literary medium, which in turn activates the ontological pluralities that correspond to the heteroglossia of language varieties in play. As will be clear from our subsequent discussion, Singapore Anglophone poetry in Singlish delves reflexively into the cultural politics of writing in English and resists the technocratic management of cultural, racial

and linguistic differences by the political elite as a means of disciplining the nation's citizenry (Purushotam 33).

Arthur Yap and the Beginnings of a Poetic Tradition in Singlish

Arthur Yap (1943 - 2006) was a poet, painter and academic who received his PhD from the National University of Singapore, where he also taught from 1979 to 1988. During his writing career, he published four collections of poetry. Many of his poems deal with lived and mundane experiences, as signalled by the titles of the collections which established his reputation, *Only Lines* (1971), *Commonplace* (1977) and *Down the Line* (1980). His work remains deeply influential for younger Singaporean poets, and he was awarded the Cultural Medallion for Literature (Singapore's highest award for artistic accomplishment) in 1983. Despite the subtlety of Yap's considered and defamiliarising deployment of language, later Anglophone poets remember him posthumously as an early gay writer and bold purveyor of Singlish in the popular understanding of the term. A critical scrutiny of Arthur Yap's work enables a discussion of non-standard English as a pre-Singlish poetics, especially since many of his poems disavow the totalising homogeneity of standard English to activate the energies of the incongruous. Though he employs a colloquial, recognisably Singlish register in specific poems, most famously "2 mothers in a h d b playground," Yap's poetics of non-standard English includes syntactical and morphological contortions that lead to a defamiliarisation of the poem's subject matter. This metalinguistic awareness signals both a modernist concern with the ways language structures and determines epistemic access to reality, and a postmodern scepticism regarding any naturalised relationship between semiotic systems and historical and political identity.

Yap himself did not learn English until he started school and though it is not his first language, he feels he "function[s] best in it" out of several (Brewster 105). This implies a certain creative remove from the monolingual's assumption of being born into a first language. For our purposes, Yap's employment of multiple linguistic registers gives voice to a poetic practice of incongruity and asymmetry: language de-forms and re-forms at the interstices between private and public spaces and systems. Though Yap does not noticeably adopt a colloquial register in his first two collections, the poem "Tones" from *Commonplace* (1977) demonstrates a reflexive commentary on linguistic manoeuvres in the public domain:

> a dark night:
> tone hones tone.
> when exasperated, darkness still operates
> in residue. a curfew on direct speech.
> reporting makes us careful,
> trading performatives for passives.
> listening makes us deaf.
> deafness has always, if you will, no hard-hearing aid. (163)[81]

It is unclear, from the elliptical manner of the stanza, if Yap is referring to any specific instance of state censorship, though the suppression of socialist and Marxist activists by the ruling party during this period is well-known. What is more significant is Yap's implied criticism on the limits of subjecthood in Singapore's common space, with "a curfew on direct speech." The act of "reporting" requires "passives," the word being a pun

[81] All poems quoted in this chapter are found in the Appendix of this dissertation.

on passive sentence constructions and the passivity of a populace. By giving up "performatives" in their language, the "us" of the poem refuses an active role in language and becomes "deaf" as a result, with the awkward verb phrase of the last line "has always, if you will" drawing attention to the disjunction between the grammatically correct and the semantically needful.

This intense scrutiny of the parts of speech as a self-reflexive poetics in English is unprecedented in Anglophone poetry in Singapore. A trained scholar in linguistics, Yap's own academic monograph, titled *Thematic Structure in Poetic Discourse* (1987), is a structuralist analysis of theme in the selected poems of five modernist poets. In the introduction, he states that "poetic language is not to be considered as a special or deviant form of a normal language," but is to be treated as belonging to a general semiotics with a full range of communicative potentialities (6). When asked, in an earlier interview, about his attitudes towards linguistic possibilities that are unique to Singapore and Malaysia, Yap observes that lexical items and phrasal expressions deriving from Malay might give writing in English a localised flavour, but stops short of claiming that an entire poem needs to be written in a wholly localised idiom unless its subject matter calls for it (Sullivan 17). In contrast to later attempts to codify Singlish as an identifiable literary medium, Yap prefers to understand localised English through the lens of a linguist studying language change, and as "a kind of Singapore English" rather than a distinct variety (Sullivan 5). This, in turn, constitutes a certain hermeneutical suspicion to being typecast as a poet by the politics of his chosen linguistic medium, which this chapter defines as a pre-Singlish stance. Certainly Yap did not identify himself to be writing in Singlish and so his writing illustrates how pre-Singlish poetry arose from a need to preserve poetic expression as an intellectual and emotionally capacious act, which also refuses a direct equation between

English as the common language of nation-building and the Anglophone as a literary medium.

By then regarded as one of Singapore's foremost poets, Yap also famously remarked in an interview, "I don't think it's a poet's business to be a spokesman of any kind." Responding to a question on the relationship between a poet and his community, he believes "a writer's commitment is to his writing" as much as he writes as a member of society, and that it is not necessary for a poet to always assume the public voice on behalf of Singaporeans (Sullivan 8). This does not mean that Yap's work has no bearing upon social or political issues, only that the terms of engagement are such that language is neither discursively national nor representational in intent. As the poet himself would elaborate in a later interview in 1996, the writer's contribution is to "observe" in language, to render an essential and abstract meaning beyond "representational basis" (Brewster 99), which is also "commenting on what one is observing" (Brewster 102). Literary critics initially contrasted Yap's poetic persona to the public voice of Edwin Thumboo. In place of a unifying mythology and declamatory tone, Yap's attention to the ordinary and commonplace has been described as a "combination of highly individualised zaniness, vivid local observations, and indeterminate yet resonant and provocative emotional timbre" (Holden et al. 176). Many of his poems deal with the vicissitudes of mundane life, including still-life depictions of urban spaces and neighbourhood parks, close studies of children and teenagers and wry satires on family relationships. His later collections feature work written about his travels to Japan as well as heavily surrealist meditations upon the spiritual. More recent studies of Yap's oeuvre would further elaborate on the linguistic interface of his object aesthetics, linking his writing with an implicit commentary on the common spaces and community narratives (Gui *Common Lines and City Spaces* 16).

Yap's signature play with the limits of grammar and perspectival defamiliarisation invites the reader to examine their cultural positioning through language as a non-transparent and unreliable medium. Most pronounced in his third collection *Down the Line* (1980), the heftiest of his volumes features an exuberant, almost perverse fascination with puns and sound-play to accompany its word-play. In the poem "shipwreck," the speaker describes how the titular image obtains different meanings, from the "salted treasure" of early boyhood against "an island background" to later lessons at school that enabled the speaker to expound on metrological and engineering reasons for ships running aground. The last stanza of the poem, however, contains a radical shift to allegory, where the shipwreck is "a tall shore of humanity." Here on "sand, dry inland," the wreckage comes to stand for floundered and estranged connections in an urban setting, where "wrecked captains" and "pirates marinated in seasonable winds" washed up dead and cold "to a harbour where eyes obtain like sardines." Most startling are the puns that signal this shift into allegorical mode:

> nowadays teems with more themes.
>
> sheepwreck: (as i imagine) in animate collision.
> each impact cushioned. do i say to you:
> let us not pull wool over each other's eyes
> (& other civilities)? (86)

Ostensibly referring to the speaker's maturing awareness of interpersonal relationships where he lives, the lazily chosen temporal signifier "nowadays" and the cringe-worthy full-rhyme pun between "teems" and "themes" is classic Yap. Whether one finds it humorously bad or subtly clever in its deflationary exposé of a poem having themes, the

reader obtains an off-kilter perspective that in its lightness conveys the superficiality of everyday interactions, which may also be a critique of the passivity of Singaporeans under a technocratic and paternalistic government. The next pun "sheepwreck" generates an image of the woolly creatures in "animate collision," which would be comic if it were not so sharply juxtaposed to a shipwreck as a tragic occurrence. By refusing to communicate the truth, the "impact" is "cushioned," but these interlocutors as sheep remain fuzzily trapped in their "civilities" as they "pull wool over each other's eyes." The typographical aspects of the poem, with its text in lower-case, its generous use of parentheses and the ampersand, which are staple features in all of Yap's poems, add to the impression that we are meant to distance ourselves from the immediate decoding of language to ponder the obfuscation of daily interactions. Yet as is clear from the speaker's "i imagine" and the rhetorical "do i say to you," which indicates the speaker's woolly reticence while disclaiming it in the next clause beginning "let us not," he is also complicit in the falsity of such mundane pleasantries.

"Shipwreck" is an example of how Yap's poetics works by distancing readers from the habitual functioning of language, in a manner that is not easily co-opted into the expressiveness of the lyric. Though this particular poem reads as standard English, Yap consciously resists habitual turns of phrase such as "to pull the wool over one's eyes" by reinventing wooliness as a metaphor for excessive courtesy—a soft, noiseless, fibrous wreckage, the "sheepwreck," which in the closing lines of the poem is revealed as the image of a ship run aground where "it can be seen in the city, daily, neatly." Here clarity of self-knowledge is obtained from language functioning aberrantly and in estrangement from itself. This particular aspect of Yap's work seems to prefigure Ip's and Hamid's poetics in its employment of the difference between standard English, and an anti-English, and is aligned with the later poets' focus on a reinvention of idiom through Singlish.

Many other poems in *Down the Line* exude this non-denotational dimension of language as nonsense-sounds, or as a revelation about the repressed subtexts of bureaucratic jargon, which may be read as critiquing the instrumentalist orientation of Singapore's language policies. In "medium," a village chicken is an anthropomorphic satire of hot-button gossip and disposable information, as it "pimps for every ring / & prinks properly over every prime prize ping" (87). This tongue-twisting alliteration conveys the chicken's over-enthusiasm, as much as it mocks and interferes with language as a "medium" for communication. "statement," by contrast, is spoken in the voice of a work superior, who is, quite absurdly, asking his subordinate to re-consider killing himself, because he has not sought approval from a higher authority. As each line unfolds, readers confront each conventional statement, re-framed in this new context, with growing horror at the continual side-lining of the would-be suicide:

> so if you say, please may I jump
> off the ledge? & go on to add
> this work is really killing,
> you will be told: start jumping.
> no one is in any way
> narrow-minded anymore these days.
> It is that everyone likes to know
> these things way beforehand. (88)

The sting of the universal and propositional verb clause "it is that" (as opposed to the conventional "it's because") only serves to highlight how easily syntax can be adjusted to signal a universal truth by eliding the relevant particulars.

Other poems specifically foreground the grammar of English, and Yap's technique in manoeuvring grammatical rules to expose the foibles of culture. In "a lesson on the definite article," a Chinese national with "bank-teller's eyes" demonstrates that "she had arrived, / gone the places, reached the it, / made the it, confirmed she was the" (97), with the poem ending on an article so definite, it requires no noun. On the next page is "the grammar of a dinner," where Yap jubilantly plays with the John, chicken and dinner as subject, object and predicate in a variety of permutations to conclude that "taxonomic John isn't to eat deliciously" (98), since the clause is missing an object. A language patrolled too closely for grammar, Yap seems to suggest, is devoid of sense and sensation.

Published in 1980, *Down the Line* would not have had Singlish as a ready cultural category to frame the collection's witty reformulations of standard English as poetically deviant from conventional grammar. But colloquial Singapore English was by then already an object of study in linguistics classes at the National University of Singapore (Gwee "Spiaking" 18), where Yap was later appointed a lecturer from 1979. Given his profession, Yap would have been aware of these first attempts to describe the grammar of Singlish and perceived them in relation to his own grammatical innovations in poetry. Significantly, the poem "2 mothers in a h d b playground," which established Yap's reputation as a poet working in Singlish, is also included in this collection. The two-page poem is a dialogue between two young Chinese mothers of Singapore's lower-to-middle class. As the title indicates, they live in Housing Development Board (HDB) flats, which despite popular notions of public housing in the west as being poorly designed and unsanitary, is where more than seventy percent of middle and working class Singaporeans reside, comfortably for the most part.[82] The women chat about their young sons, Ah Beng and Kim Cheong, and a not-too-subtle rivalry begins to emerge as they compare their children's performance

[82] In 2020, 78.6% of Singaporeans live in an HDB apartment ("Population in Brief").

at school, the effectiveness of nutritional supplements and how they are refurbishing their apartments with “terrazzo” and superior furniture from the European-style Diethelm. Singapore’s developmentalist outlook in the 1970s is reflected in the private space of this dialogue, where social mobility is an ongoing preoccupation of the middle class.

While “2 mothers in an h d b playground” is noteworthy as a social document of its time, the poem’s reputation is built on how it is written entirely in a colloquial register of Singapore English as its most distinctive feature, which is spoken entirely by the two women. The opening of the poem offers a flavour of this conversational idiom before Singlish was first acknowledged as a poetic idiom:

> ah beng is so smart,
> already he can watch tv & know the whole story.
> your kim cheong is also quite smart,
> what boy is he in the exam?
> this playground is not too bad, but i’m always
> so worried, car here, car there.
>
> at exam time, it’s worse.
> because you know why?
> kim cheong eats so little. (126)

To the ear of later readers, the text contains several colloquial features which are identifiably Singlish, such as the use of compressed, deictic clauses “car here, car there” to evoke busy traffic, and the not entirely accurate use of verbs like “know” for “understand.” Throughout the rest of poem, word borrowings from other languages also signal the

multilingual milieu from which colloquial Singapore English emerges in speech. Kim Cheong is described as wasting money for not eating his vitamins, which is as good as "throwing money/ into the jamban" or toilet in Malay, and his father wants to take him "chya-hong in new motor car," which means to go for a spin, "chya-hong" meaning to "eat the wind" in Hokkien.

While Singlish is sometimes employed in mass media to satirise the speaker's ineptitude, here the dialogue is presented with dignified verisimilitude. The poem portrays the typically petit bourgeois concerns of lower middle-class Singaporeans as these mothers engage in a restrained tit-for-tat over their sons' educational efforts, new mosaic flooring and sewing machines. Amidst the dialogue, there is the evocation of everyday spaces such as the playground and the humble public housing neighbourhood, as well as the theme of urban building and rebuilding in references to cars, roads and domestic refurbishment. Also present is the trope of consumption, not just as the act of eating, but as a signifier of surfeit, since Kim Cheong's poor appetite ironically indicates that his family has more than enough on the table. But the poem's true radicality resides in the insistent vernacularisation of the young nation's developmental and modernising aspirations, embodied through an English medium education and an English-speaking workforce. The artfulness of naturalised Singlish speech holds up a mirror to Singapore Anglophone readers who would not have previously encountered this linguistic dimension of themselves in literary work.

Earlier critics of "2 mothers in a h d b playground" have noted the rarity of poems that "make use of the resources of local, idiomatic English" which, by contrast, constitutes much of the delight of the poem (Lim "Arthur Yap" 30). Still, the poem is not entirely Singlish, and Ismail Talib notes as a "major problem" of consistency how the text actually contains several distinct syntactical levels, with the inclusion of more complex cause and

effect clauses such as “we also got new furniture, bought from diethelm./ the sofa is so soft. i dare not sit” (“The Language of Singapore poetry” 123). What I wish to observe, however, is the significance of Yap’s poem as a *written* rendering of colloquial Singapore English, and its central role in shifting the cultural field towards accepting non-standard English as poetry in Singapore. The poem’s acrolectal features can be seen as mediating between the lack of direct readerly address, on which spoken varieties depend, and its transition to Singlish as a literary medium replete with its terse cadence and limited lexis, apart from references to commercial brands. Moreover, the lack of an other-space to the linguistic world of the two mothers in the poem removes the evaluative function of standard English, and suggests that Singlish, as it was spoken in the late 1970s, is of sufficient linguistic richness for sustained poetic expression. Therefore, while Yap’s text cannot be said to be wholly mimetic, that it is recognisably Singlish enables a new latitude in the use of English-es in Singapore Anglophone poetry.

What is striking in the later reception of Yap’s work is the assumed centrality of Singlish to his poetics, which is retrospectively assigned. Upon his passing in 2006, an obituary in *The Straits Times* described “2 mothers in a h d b playground” as “the first Singapore work to crack the puzzle of how to write in Singlish” (S. Ong 2). Fellow writers paid homage to the economy and tautness of Yap’s writing, with novelist Suchen Christine Lim remarking that “he made poetry out of Singaporean speech” while Alfian Sa’at described Yap as “iconic” for having “found a solution to using Singlish” (“Remembering Arthur Yap”). Poets a generation later would continue to eulogise this association between Yap and poetry in the local creole, with Boey Kim Cheng reminiscing about how, whilst in conversation with “Arthur” at a coffeeshop, the older poet was “delighted by the hybrid language, the Hokkien, Malay, the Singlish that his linguistic ear has transcribed into his own distinctive and inimitable poetic diction” (“Brief Notes”). Poet Cyril Wong observes,

in an essay about uncertainty and skepticism in Yap's work, that the usage of Singlish "as an indigenous variety of English is also given more dignity for being incorporated into a national literature," which in turn establishes Singapore poetry as distinctive from others. In an interview about liminal spaces in Singapore writing, Alvin Pang, who is from the same generation of poets as Wong, connects his own attempts to write in Singlish with Yap's achievements in rendering "particular forms of English" (Teo "An Interview" 60). Pang further views this ability to write authentic poetry in Singlish as a matter of activating one's postcolonial consciousness.

Though Yap deserves to be credited for the nuanced vernacularisation of poetry in colloquial Singapore English, it is important to note that his stature as a poet of naturalised, mimetic Singlish reflects a very small percentage of his complete body of work. His reputation in this regard derives more from later efforts to champion Singlish as an organic and emergent cultural discourse in opposition to the state's attempts to clamp down on the language variety through the Speak Good English Campaign from 2000. In terms of the cultural contours of Singapore's poetry scene, the oppositional politics of Singlish dovetails with the increasingly activist tone of many new poetic voices. In the wake of Yap's pre-Singlish poetics, Ip and Hamid's work reads as a postcolonial valorisation of non-standard English, which takes aim, ironically, at the policies of the postcolonial state.

Sonnets in Singlish: Interrogating Anglophone Elitism

In the context of Singapore's Anglophone poetic tradition, Joshua Ip's experiments with the sonnet form register a different imaginary, one that both celebrates the power of language to unmask political rhetoric as disaffected jargon, while being critical of the task of the Singaporean poet to use the English language as a unifying and neutral register for the nation. In *Sonnets from the Singlish*, Ip positions Singlish as being both deficient and

excessive: a colloquial medium that departs from the standard with its penchant for compression and directness, with these very same forms of language serving as a source of rhyme, rhythm and witty allusion within the larger tradition of the sonnet. Ip's Singlish is not simply a language variety in its sociolinguistic and everyday usage, but an aesthetic register achieved in the moment of voicing. As poetic and performative utterance, his verse constellates and exceeds its initial working-class associations through an exploration of the Singapore Chinese male subject caught between his ethnic origins and the forms of an English literary tradition, the latter representing the Singaporean Anglophone elite, who would have been well-schooled in the English canon through the educational curriculum.

Such a bold assertion about the literary capital of Singapore's favourite language variety is easily detected in the title of Ip's debut collection, *Sonnets from the Singlish*. Published in 2012 by Math Paper Press, itself a fledging operation by independent bookstore BooksActually, it was one of many works printed in support of local voices at the time.[83] Ironically, Singlish occurs as a noticeable language variety in only five out of the forty-four poems in the collection's first edition, while the volume's title references Elizabeth Barrett Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* (1850). Thus, the volume implicitly posits a certain elite reader who certainly knows English in addition to Singlish—one familiar enough with the tradition of English letters to recognise the allusion but who also enjoys the subject matter of popular culture as centred on karaoke singing, and everyday dining at coffeeshops, as well as the premium placed on technocratic efficiency by civil servants, which has come to be associated with the telegraphic and utilitarian nature of Singlish. Sonnets such as "the civil servant's picnic" humorously satirise administrative-speak by exposing the absurdity of habitual jargon,

[83] The initial range of titles published by Math Paper Press include *Love is an Empty Barstool* (2013) by Pooja Nansi, *Spectre* (2012) by Verena Tay, and *Tender Delirium* (2013) by Tania de Rozario, among others. While some titles and their authors have gone on to become classics in the local literary scene, there were other endeavours that were less commercially successful such as the out-of-print zine Twenty-Four Flavours.

after Yap's "statement." In this poem's "big picture / only vampires quail at stakeholder engagement," while we "leave firefighting to the firemen" and "let cashiers run change management" (54).[84] Other pieces such as "homebuilding" and "the old builder complains to the new town planner" lament Singapore's focus on development at the expense of community and heritage, in the tradition of earlier poets like Lee Tzu Pheng, while the theme of romantic love amidst the transactional pragmatism of the marriage market appears in poems such as "the ballad of prince adam (the beast)" and "bridezilla." Ip's poetic voice is distinctive for its witty, clipped rhythms that elevate the messy mundanity of everyday interactions and the collection's sometimes juvenile focus on the scatological. The collection's forty-four poems adhere strictly to the formal requirements of either the Shakespearean or Petrarchan sonnet, and in the history of Anglophone poetry in Singapore, represents the sharpest challenge to literary convention through Singlish as an aesthetic mode.

Ip himself can be considered a member of Singapore's cultural elite and would have received such an education in his earlier years at Raffles Junior College, and as a two-time participant of the highly selective Creative Arts Programme, an annual residential seminar aimed at nurturing young Anglophone literary voices from Singapore's top schools. Citing Robert Frost, Wendy Cope, Philip Larkin and W.B. Yeats as poetic influences, as well as Singaporean poets Arthur Yap and Gwee Li Sui, Ip also mentions in the same interview that *Sonnets* was written in a period of thirty days when his superior at work was on leave (Balbuena). This image of poetic creation as embodied and frenetic efficiency borders on both the absurd and the heroic, and is part of Ip's identification as a Singaporean civil servant, which he recognises as part-essence and part-caricature.

[84] "Firefighting" is a conventional term that refers to reactive responses during an ongoing crisis. "Change management," in corporate jargon, refers to getting an organisation ready for institutional transformation.

Deliberately writing under timed pressure was a modus operandi that he also employed for his second collection, *Making Love with Scrabble Tiles* (2014), with a kind of overbearing, rationalised efficacy that transmutes Singlish into the creative process. *Sonnets* is also immersed in aspects of Singapore culture that one would typically consider outside the polite boundaries of literary practice, and in a separate interview, Ip gleefully agrees with a reviewer who describes his subjects as "crass and unbefitting of the sonnet form" ("Conversations with Joshua Ip"). Thus Singlish functions less a linguistic medium for the actual literary text, and more as a performative register for a culturally located Anglophone voice. Singlish-ing expands the ambit of literary subject matter, presenting the humdrum lowlife of Singapore experiences articulated in the slang-talk of military servicemen and Chinese drama serial characters. Despite references to western forms such as the ballad in a series of fairy tale poems, *Sonnets* ebulliently dispenses with the high culture of English letters even as the sonnet's sonic requirements hark back to its long evolution from the Romance vernacular lyric (Culler 67).

An example of such a challenge occurs in the opening poem of the collection, titled "entry" (15). Though seemingly written in standard English, the entire piece is in lower case, as is the rest of the collection, which orthographically suggests a minor voice, as with Yap's poetry. It begins by declaring "this poem comes with intentions and directions clearly labelled / this poem has been vetted, cleared, and given the once-over," before quite anxiously reassuring its audience that the poem has been "tabled / ably to all appropriate approving fora." In short, as the sonnet hastens to add, "this poem has surrendered its identity." Though this might possibly be read as a Beckettian gesture towards the innate absurdity of all speech acts, the effusiveness of the poem's opening lines ironically expresses an overly earnest attempt to mean precisely what it says. References to bureaucratic processes such as vetting and clearance, as well as approvals at committee

meetings, usually so inimical to poetic creation, are obstacles that "entry," the poem, has survived, almost as an illustration of Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest. This functions as a satire of the survivalist and pragmatist mindset that typifies the Singaporean approach to national policy. The poem, therefore, stubbornly remains a poem, despite proclaiming that its "identity" has been "surrendered," and particularly so in its last six lines, after the conventional *volta* in the Petrarchan sonnet, where it shows itself to be capable of more self-discipline than the most compliant of civil servants. Describing the verse on the page as "tucked-in, clean-shaved, and iron-creased" after the manner of a military serviceman reporting for duty, the poem shrieks "inspect me" while being utterly confident of being "so shiny [that] you can see your face inside." This last Singlish clause is significant, not just for being a laugh-out-loud moment of deviation from standard English, but because in denoting that the poem reflects the reader most clearly when Singlish first appears, Ip wittily implies that his collection is entered by a critical reflection on multiple Englishes.

Ip's employment of Singlish and English as contrasting linguistic mediums in his poetry locates the reader in between, in order to reveal class tensions and divergent origins in Anglophone literary writing. Worlding, as part of Ip's poesis, is achieved in the immediacy of voicing the varied tonalities of the Anglophone, which stands in tension with the state's management of cultural identity through language. As a mode of counter-discourse, poetry in Singlish enacts a distinctive relationship between Singaporean poetry and cultural modernity. Positioning Singapore's experience of technocratic modernisation as being radically different from other countries with a postcolonial legacy of resistance, Jini Kim Watson persuasively demonstrates that in the case of Singapore, "the subject of postcolonial national freedom or independence is shifted away from a national people to the "setting-free" of its productive powers" ("The Way Ahead" 697). For Watson, the

logic of cultural identity in the Singaporean context cannot therefore be cleanly mapped onto theories of postcolonial nationalism for the reason that the task of nation-building in the wake of independence takes on a relentless economic imperative instead of ideological inflections or negotiations. Given this argumentative focus, Watson proceeds to read Edwin Thumboo's lyric voice as performing a "narrativi[sation of] a people's relationship to this hinterland in a way precisely determined by the developmental revolution" ("The Way Ahead" 699). In other words, Thumboo's poetry harnesses emotive affect in order to reinscribe the space of poetry onto the materiality of modernity – the world-building potentialities of language accrue vatic significance through the poet channelling the impetuses of developmental progress.

In contrast, Ip's collection *Sonnets from the Singlish* (2012) takes disequilibrium as aesthetic impulse, and as discussed earlier in the survey of Singapore's Anglophone tradition, is part of a later development where poets resist their supposed role in representing the nation. Instead, the poetics and presence of Singlish, in what still reads as an Anglophone text, refract the teleological narrative of modern progress by demonstrating how a more contemporary mode requires the playful performance of charged intra-lingual identities. As Stephen Burt argues, the sonnet mediates between tradition and modernity, enfolding a rigorous adherence to formal requirements within the spontaneity of poetic expression attuned to the contemporary. By working through the constraints of form, poets point out "the distance between their own backgrounds, their own brands of English, and the white, privileged, European or male backgrounds that the most famous earlier writers of sonnets had" (Burt 246). However, Ip's *Sonnets from the Singlish* has as its specific object of interrogation, an elite Anglophone register that derives from the state's insistent promotion of standard English for inter-cultural communication and economic

survivalism, which he playfully exceeds through the polyvalence of multiple English-es—the performance of such constituting, more often than not, each poem's main contention.

Ip's poetics can be framed in relation to the longer history of inter-linguistic mingling in Malaya and Southeast Asia more generally. In *Taming Babel*, Rachel Leow observes that in pre-colonial times, "the sociolinguistic meeting of the Chinese and Malay language ecotones, creolisation, and proliferation were the order (and in colonial eyes, the disorder) of the day" (9). Though the postcolonial states of Malaysia and Singapore sought to essentialise and reify these cultural and linguistic markers as racialised identities, the fluid praxis of everyday interactions, Leow further notes, recalls most closely the theorising of Mikhail Bakhtin on the dialogic energies of language as speech acts. Quoting from *The Dialogic Imagination*, Leow draws a parallel between this "looseness" and Mikhail Bakhtin's famed conceptualisation of heteroglossia, in which: the diversity of varieties, a centrifugal proliferation of styles, accents registers, languages – is ubiquitous, the ordinary condition of linguistic life" (9). But Ip does more than simply employ heteroglossia in poetry as a nostalgic return to the fluid interlingualism that precedes the colonial and later neocolonial patrolling of ethnic and cultural identities. Instead, his work interrogates the seeming neutrality of standard English through a poetics anchored in Singlish as hetero-English.

Writing earlier about Bakhtin in *Marxism and Literature* (1977), though concurrently with the social progressivism and economic instability of 1970s Britain, Raymond Williams observes, with deep acuity, that the linguistic sign exists not merely in its formal object-element but also through "the relations between the people who in actually using it, in practical language, make it a sign" (39). Bakhtin's contribution, in *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, was to highlight how language was "multi-accentual" with "an effective nucleus of meaning but in practice it has a variable range,

corresponding to the endless variety of situations within which it is actively used" (39). Despite its material production in social processes, each occasion of language use presents an additional mediation. Standard English in the Singapore context is produced within a capitalist-industrial framework stemming from its own developmental trajectory in the 1970s, which the praxis of poetic Singlish resists. Ip's use of the sonnet as a formal vehicle mobilises a dialectic of difference between an acrolectal Anglophone literary tradition representing Singapore's ascent into developmental sophistication and a groundswell of other linguistic influences that unveil the hidden complexities of the Singapore Chinese subject performing his ethnic identity in English.

Tapping into the capacities of the lyric for indirect address, Ip's sonnets performatively reorient the relationship between culture and language through English-ing in public spaces. His poem, "overheard at al-azhar," is set in a Malay-Muslim coffee shop, and unravels debates about the national curriculum in the rollicking, déclassé dialogue between two Singapore Chinese speakers. The two unnamed men are discussing how the ability to speak Mandarin supposedly offers them an economic and cultural advantage in mainland China over ang-mohs, or white people, who are unable to master the right accent with "their words correct, but accent cmi" (52).[85] Significantly, such a conclusion is arrived at in Singlish, with the first quatrain setting up colloquial Singlish expressions such as "teh si/siu dai" and "milo peng" as phrases that express communicative rapport between the two speakers who frequent the coffee shop.[86] Learning to speak and write in Mandarin turns out to also be a "lifelong challenge" for our two interlocutors, and they jokingly evoke the rote learning of their childhood days as the only solution for the ang-moh:

[85] "Cmi" is an abbreviation for "cannot make it".
[86] "teh si/siu dai" translates as tea with milk and less sugar; "milo peng" is an iced malted chocolate drink.

next time, they also start from primary one

then do the ting xie zhao ju zuo wen shit

then everybody also mother tongue

but still got years before they can make it (52, italics original)

in the future, they will start in primary school

with silly spelling, sentence construction and composition exercises

that's how everyone gains a mother tongue

though it will be years before they are proficient[87]

The representation of Chinese words and tones in anglicised hanyu pinyin script as "*do the ting xie zhao ju zuo wen shit*," amidst the wholesale italicisation that does not distinguish between foreign and English terms, demonstrates how a Singlish text both marks an affective and intellectual distance from Chinese while accommodating its vocabulary and semantic connotations. "*ting xie zhao ju zuo wen"* refer to sometimes mechanical exercises of Chinese language classes, but the quick addition of "*shit*" expresses the half-instinctive aversion to their childhood learning experiences. The Anglicised Chinese Singaporeans of the poem evince no love lost for their ascribed ethnic identity and relate fairly cynically to their supposed mother tongue. Moreover, the heteroglossia of the stanza openly mocks the essentialism of the mother tongue as a cultural and linguistic concept, while insisting on how even white people can attain a similar proficiency through systematic learning. Apart from debunking nativist attitudes towards language learning, these lines also satirise the

[87] A standard English version of Ip's Singlish poems is provided after each quoted stanza.

state's instrumentalist approach towards cultural identities in Singapore, since white people are equally capable of acquiring a new "mother tongue."[88]

Ip's playfulness with Singlish in this poem suitably delivers an ironic affirmation of the developmental underpinnings of Singapore's cultural modernity, one which can be further interpreted in terms of the state's bilingual policy that recommends first language proficiency English for reasons of economic competitiveness, and one other official ethnic language, known as the mother tongue, as a cultural anchor (Gopinathan 21). In the case of the Chinese community, the enforcement of standard Mandarin through the schooling system and the Speak Mandarin Campaign since 1979 effectively led to most Chinese Singaporeans being unable to speak the Chinese dialects of their forebears within a decade (Pakir 59). Therefore, what Ip's poem reveals is that Singaporean Chinese are no more authentic than "ang-mohs" in their usage of their supposed mother tongue, which in turn forms part of the sonnet's larger indictment of cultural loss in Singapore. The coda reaffirms such a critique by mentioning how no one is bothered that the speakers are served by a "prc",[89] a slang term for a mainland Chinese migrant worker, as long as the dish is delicious—itself an additional erasure of the Malay-Muslim subject in a restaurant selling such cuisine. Read thematically, Singlish is both a disfiguring and a transformation of English and Chinese, which in turn signals how the island-nation's place in the world is relativised through the imperfect imprinting of cultural heritage and the contingency of contemporary transcultural flows.

To reiterate the argument we have been making, Ip's Singlish updates the sonnet by forging a homology between the contemporary appropriation of the form and what linguists have noted about Singlish, where spontaneous interaction between speakers of

---

[88] Ip's most recent collection of poems, *Translations to the Tanglish* (2021), are a similar attempt to exceed the imposed normativity of Chinese identity, through transcreations of Tang era poetry into a contemporary Singapore and Covid-19 frame.

[89] An acronym for the People's Republic of China.

different languages over time has resulted in structural innovations (Ooi and Tan 229), while joyfully revelling in the mix (Singaporeans would say "rojak") of languages and lexis that perform such sentiments. These sonnets from the Singlish are indicative of how the enunciative power of poetry can reposition the high culture of English letters in relation to organic identity formations in a charged re-assessment of postmillennial Anglophone worldliness. If the sonnet as contemporary form is both "closed as object, and yet, open as process, potentially forming forever" (Sheppard 58), then the formal economy of each of Ip's sonnets that purports to be in Singlish signifies the expansion of the Anglophone to include the vocabulary and grammar of other linguistic terrains, in a manner that cheerily destabilises Singapore's inordinate pride in speaking good English. By refusing to acknowledge the origins of literary English in high culture or the English canon, as transmitted through the local curriculum, *Sonnets from the Singlish* performs and highlights the Anglophone as a site of class, cultural and linguistic fissures as opposed to a universal or transparent medium.

Given Singapore's distinct identity as a colonial-capitalist creation, albeit transformed by later circumstances into an independent nation whose exponential economic growth was sustained by openness to foreign investments and the sheer drive towards technological modernisation, Ip's Singlish-ing is reminiscent of Édouard Glissant's thinking on forced poetics and the place of French in Martinique. Like Singapore, the French territory derives its linguistic makeup from its beginnings in the colonial period, with plantation capitalism giving rise to a French-based creole. Though the language variety is no longer suppressed, Glissant observes in "Cross-cultural Politics" that "in the historical circumstances that gave rise to Creole, we can locate a forced poetics that is both an awareness of the restrictive presence of French as a linguistic background and the deliberate attempt to reject French, that is, a conceptual system from which

expression can be derived" (*Caribbean Discourse* 126). The result is a "deliberate craftiness" in the Creole language that remains locked into its role within the world of plantations as a language of defiance. Because Creole does not extend into a different historical dimension, its everyday usage remains "destructively non-functional," characterised by a counter-poetics of delirium and neurosis (*Caribbean Discourse* 128). While the sociohistorical intricacies of the Caribbean cannot be directly mapped onto Southeast Asia, Glissant's model helps illuminate Ip's poetics of Singlish. English in Singapore is employed across social classes and ethnicities with far more autonomy and confidence than French in Martinique, but its overwhelmingly technological role within economic growth as a national priority exerts a historically regressive pull. Singlish-ing, as discussed in this section in relation to *Sonnets*, playfully rebukes the neutrality and pragmatism of standard English, while giving literary expression to Anglicised and Chinese Singaporeans, whose eclectic patois embodies their complex relationship with their ethnic identity.

Glissant would later develop his thinking on forced poetics by comparison with creole as a revitalised natural poetics in a multilingual locale. In *Poetics of Relation*, Glissant celebrates the fluid relationality of the interlingual, which exerts a "force of opacity" against the "reductive transparency" of standardised language and cultural puritanism, which is "no longer the opacity that enveloped and reactivated the mystery of filiation but another, considerate of all the threatened and delicious things joining one another (without conjoining, that is, without merging) in the expanse of Relation" (62). Instead, creolisation is "a propagation of the dialects that compose it, each extending toward the other" as a poetics of relation which "senses, assumes, opens, gathers, scatters, continues, and transforms the thought of these elements, these forms, and this motion" (94). Ip's poetics of Singlish animates the cultural politics of speaking English as a

Singaporean Chinese, while subverting any attempt to hypostatise cultural identity. In the example of "overheard at al-azhar," Singlish speech reveals language learning to be a matter of acquisition and practice, thus revealing and unsettling the unspoken racialisation of the native speaker construct. More interestingly, the Singlish speech of the poem's interlocutors makes Anglophone poetry in Singapore a site where Chinese ethnic identity is also dynamically unpacked as a construct, since these men have painfully mastered their mother tongue by rote learning. Hence the nature of Anglophone textuality in Ip's text is suffused with a charged relationality that restores not only the finer distinctions inherent in being Singaporean Chinese, but the myriad positionalities from which English-es can be voiced as part of the inventive worlding of the collection.

The first quatrain of the poem "conversaytion" furthers illustrates how Singlish, as a primarily oral medium with frequent deixis, provides an opportunity for a comedic scrutiny of who exactly can be blamed for starting a conversation:

> *"not say i want to say, but then this one*
> *who say one?" "i say one lor, arbuden."*
> *"this one you say one? liedat also can?*
> *Today you say ho say, later bueh gum* (56, italics original).[90]

> "I didn't want to mention it this way, but in this case
> who first said it this way?" "Of course it's me, who else?"
> "So it's you? Why did you have to say it, first?"
> Today you're good with it, and later you won't be.

[90] The Singlish term "arbuden" is a mangled contraction of "Ah, but then" but means "needless to say". "Ho say" and "buay gum" are Hokkien phrases, meaning "that's good" and "not satisfied", respectively.

The aptly titled poem revolves around finding as many ways to say something about saying nothing at all, centred on the unanswered question “Who say one?” as well as the instability of a claim to the ur-statement, which is never directly mentioned. In this quatrain, the absurd conversation continually shifts its referential basis, as blame is deflected from one interlocutor to another. In lines which putatively follow the abba rhyme scheme of the Petrarchan sonnet, Ip playfully forges off-rhymes between a Hokkien construction (“bueh gum”) and a Singlish one (“this one”). The cadences of Singlish are thus forged in dissonance, as Ip pursues the intent at rhyme with non-Anglophone vowel sounds. Indeed, what the quatrain demonstrates is how Ip’s sonnet creatively reinvents the English tradition to establish its own locus of sayability – the poem performs a productive de-centering of English poetic tradition, by foregrounding the incongruity of Singlish sounds and expressions within the totality of the sonnet, while maintaining the integrity of the sonnet form.

In “conversaytion” linguistic variation is an asymptotic poetics, which has the potential to re-frame the cultural field of Anglophone poetry in Singapore. The poem, rather than inheriting the English language along with a tradition of literature in English, however localised in theme or content, can be seen as an ontologising effort through Singlish as a variety that changes standard English, even as it circulates through English as a major language. Ip’s desire to inscribe an alternative and localised origin to Singapore’s Anglophone poetry tradition can also be seen in his subsequent invention of the liwuli for SingPoWriMo 2014 with an illustrious but bogus history evoked as “an ancient and esoteric poetic form originating in south-east asia” (Ang et al.137). The term liwuli is in fact a portmanteau of three surnames corresponding to Singapore's three Prime Ministers to date since it achieved self-rule in 1959, with the number of syllables in each of the poem’s three stanzas corresponding to the years each statesman held the position (Pang

122).[91] Ip's resolve to invent an origin in subtle mockery of the state and in flagrant rejection of the western literary tradition speaks to self-reflexive scrutiny of his participation in Singapore's Anglophone poetic idiom.

In Ip's work, Singlish is both the subject of performance and object of scrutiny, functioning neither as an objective framework through which meaning is uncritically conveyed, nor as an idealised utopian expression for multicultural Singapore. Instead, *Sonnets from the Singlish* is voiced by a spectrum of middle-class Singapore Chinese males who are more at home with the clipped rhythms of bureaucratic jargon in English than Mandarin Chinese as their assumed mother tongue. By performing Singlish as a poetics of manifold cultural and class identities, the speakers of these sonnets enunciate their own place amidst an Anglophone worldliness which interrupts the homogenisation of language and culture in Singapore's multicultural framework. With the sonnet as song, Ip makes a joyful noise out of Singapore's technocratic drive towards a cultural modernity. Bearing certain similarities to the experiments of the Glaswegian writers John Kelman and Tom Leonard with denaturalised versions of literary Scots (Gilmour 40), Ip's Singlish-ing furthers the ongoing postcolonial insurgency against literary English as a culturally elite and monolingual space. Even though English is here to stay as Singapore's most commonly used language, the reader is allowed the "possibility of a momentary defamiliarisation in the present that opens up a space for questions" (Holden "Postcolonial Desire" 354).

"This Language is Still Faulty": the Cultural Politics of English-ing

While Hamid Roslan adopts a similar approach to Ip by refusing to recognise standard English as the literary language of Anglophone writing, his debut collection

[91] Lee-Goh-Lee, with Wu being the Mandarin version of Goh, which is Hokkien in origin.

parsetreeforestfire (2019) engages more closely with the provenance of contemporary ethnic identities in Singapore. The volume deconstructs English as a coherent semiotic system in juxtaposition with texts in Singlish, and strives to displace the reader from his or her habitual relationship with the standard variety, as part of a larger postcolonial project to reveal the reader's ontological locatedness by way of language use. If *Sonnets* gave voice to the manifold identities of the middle-class Chinese male, *parsetreeforestfire*, by contrast, refuses even the stability of a gendered, classed and ethnic subject, by relentlessly and reflexively scrutinising the first-person "I."

A work of great formal innovation, *parsetreeforestfire* playfully features lexical borrowings and grammatical rules from Bahasa Malay, Mandarin Chinese and Chinese dialects as well as constructions found in contemporary usages of Singlish as the speaker journeys through the collection. Ostensibly in search of an appropriate tongue from the minority viewpoint of an ethnic Malay, the poetic performance itself hypotheses an eclectic mode of speech as an Anglophone worlding. Aside from such interlinguistic juxtaposition, the voicing of Hamid's verse expresses a dissonance from print language in its deliberate distortion of spelling, font and punctuation. More than oral cues or satirical mimicry of actual Singlish speech, this glyph-like dimension of Hamid's poetry unsettles readers into meta-textual awareness of poesis in speech and writing. This in turn enhances *parsetreeforestfire*'s performative reorientation of language use and its metacommentary on cultural identity in Singapore.

The collection features four sections that correspond to the nouns in the title, each with its own organising principle. While "parse" and "tree" contain separate English and Singlish texts on facing pages, none of the individual verses are titled, which bespeaks the collection's underlying intent to cast a wry, humorous eye on the politics of proper naming. These first two sections read as a topsy-turvy excursion into the lingo of mundane

experiences from eating breakfast to military service days. Described by the publisher as "a bilingual book of poetry in which poems in Singlish occupy one side of the book, and poems in English on the other" ("parsetreeforestfire"), the reader is likely to find departures and variances rather than the equivalences that are conventionally expected of interlingual translation. The third section "forest" comprises eighty-one brief statements in standard English about the impossibility of speaking as a universal and unified "I," with matching footnotes in Singlish that add to a riotous dialogue about Cartesian self-knowledge. The collection concludes with "fire," a five-page monologue in which the un-named speaker melds the varying voices fighting within him for speech as a flourishing chorus of linguistic and typographical riffs. In working against what Lawrence Venuti has called "the dominance of transparency" and the emphasis on "immediate intelligibility and the appearance of factuality" (5), the collection as a whole performs the crisis of signification in a language which represents both Singapore's colonial provenance as well as the technocratic and neocolonial impositions of the nation's Anglophone elite.

parsetreeforestfire reworks the cultural politics of English in contemporary Singapore, as part of a new and broader conversation of the place of the young nation in relation to its colonial history. At the start of 2019, calls to commemorate the bicentennial of the city state's "founding" by Sir Stamford Raffles in 1819 invited queries as to why the young nation was commemorating British colonialism more than half a century from independence (T. Tan). While Singapore does not have a strong history of resistance against British governance, with anti-colonial nationalism in earlier years being primarily framed within a Malayan consciousness, there were calls to re-assess Singapore's history beyond Britain's colonial influence. Consequently, there was new public and academic attention to neglected histories and the non-Anglocentric perspectives of various migrant and resident communities, with special attention to Singapore's early history in Nusantara

or the Malay world (Kotwani). While Singapore's SG50 or golden jubilee celebrations showcased the nation's remarkable progress in terms of economic development and the maintenance of inter-racial and religious harmony, the Bicentennial takes place in a geopolitically distinct moment with a dominant China in South East Asia, and can be understood as an attempt to stress the importance of regionalism and Singapore's shared history in the Malay world, a cultural heritage shared by several countries including Malaysia, Indonesia and the Philippines since the fourteen century (Chong "Bicentennial Commemoration" 330).

As a Malay writer working in English, Hamid's work necessarily engages with the complex positioning of the Malay community within Singapore as an ethnic minority whose claims to being the original precolonial people of the region are attenuated by the subsequent migration of Malay ethnic groups into Singapore. Following the exodus of Malay scholars, writers and artists after Singapore's separation from Malaysia in 1965, and the adoption of romanised instead of Jawi script for the teaching of Bahasa in Singapore, there were concerns that the Singapore Malay community was being westernised alongside the loss of their traditions and values, intrinsically linked to the usage of Bahasa as embodying "the nature and spirit of being a Malay" (Abdullah and Ayyub 187). The community, which comprises about 15% of the population in a majority Chinese country, with English as the predominant language of education and work, has a complex self-concept of their regional indigeneity. To date, other writers and scholars have sought to understand Singapore Malay writers as indignantly mourning a lost village or kampung hinterland, itself a nostalgic construction of past traditions which have been subjected to the state's attempts to reinscribe an alternative hinterland in the form of Singapore's suburban heartland (Bahrawi 511; Sa'at "Hinterland" 42). While studies have pointed to the systematic and structural imbalances that have impacted Malay Singaporeans as a

minority community, these have created the perception that Malays are "the least able to cope with demands of modernity and progress" (Bahrawi 505). Though the issue of Malay modernity in the Singapore context is too extensive to discuss at length, for Hamid, recourse to nativism is as self-defeating as acquiescence to the state's official multiculturalism. Either would require an erasure of precolonial and pre-independence Malay identity as a cosmopolitan and heterogenous assemblage of influences from across maritime Southeast Asia.

The reception towards Malay writers working in English is a case in point. As Faris Joraimi notes in his survey of Malay literature in Singapore, Malay authors are often defined by their own community as those writing in Bahasa, despite the fact that contemporary writers are often bilingual and are not limited in theme or subject matter by the concerns of the Malay community. In other words, one's linguistic medium should not pose a constraint on literary expression or the cultural identity of the author, and Joraimi cites Hamid as an example of the "the Malay Singaporean who has always existed across multiple speech communities." Reflecting on his Malay-ness in an essay titled "Saya orang dibawah angin / I, under the monsoon," Hamid queries how "a person identified as Malay, might think himself out of the current, common-sense conceptions of 'Malayness'—*keluar* Melayu."[92] Against the more conventional notion of "masuk Melayu" or entering Malay identity in terms of language, culture and the Islamic faith, Hamid presents a "Letter of Resignation from 'Malayness.'" Such deeply-felt ambivalence about Malay-ness as an imposition, despite its minority status extends to *parsetreeforestfire*, where the question of the Malay writer's language, for Hamid, goes beyond the issue of Malay identity in Singapore. His collection claims that the use of any language needs to be interrogated and cross-pollinated with the other languages in the act of voicing-as-worlding. One of these

[92] Keluar is Bahasa for "exit."

languages is Singlish, which symbolises both efforts to subvert English and a questioning of the means by which we derive our authority for the language of literary writing.

The opening section "parse," as its title suggests, aims to parse but also "pass" as English, while establishing the collection's central theme of poeticising English in its Anglophonic and Singlish excess. Consisting of a collage of exclamations and declamations relating to everyday experiences in Singapore, from reciting the national pledge to swatting mosquitos, Hamid's verse leaps off the page with its syncopated rhythms and raw dissection of meaning-making in language. "Breath is beat & words/ are only allowed an exhale into" closes one of the poems, highlighting the deeply visceral nature of being-in-language, where we cannot help but breathe life into the identities that our linguistic choices foist upon us. One of the untitled pieces in "parse" is a full-page monologue, which depicts this angst-ridden entanglement with a language that constantly exceeds individual intent. Made up of a single sentence broken up into multiple clauses, which are separated by commas, each clause begins with a declarative "I", which is breathlessly succeeded and superseded by the next to reveal another facet of self-identity, even if the missing verb "am" ironises the efficacy of enunciation. A brief extract demonstrates how this attempt to parse standard English at first lapses into platitudes that echo state rhetoric:

> I hawker center spontaneous queuing, I discount
> homesick airfare ticket, I tour guide friendly half half
> only, I community building in-fighting, I sandbox
> playground makeover, I face mask kiasu & kiasi,
> I cosmopolitan minus four season, I fail safe migrant
> assimilation, I on-the-spot birth cert & I/C, I saga seed

> secret collection, I KPI cannot decide, I innovation
> cum smart nation, I transracial regulate framework,
> I spontaneous common spaces, I sudden flora hai shi
> fauna, I immortal kampung spirit (18)

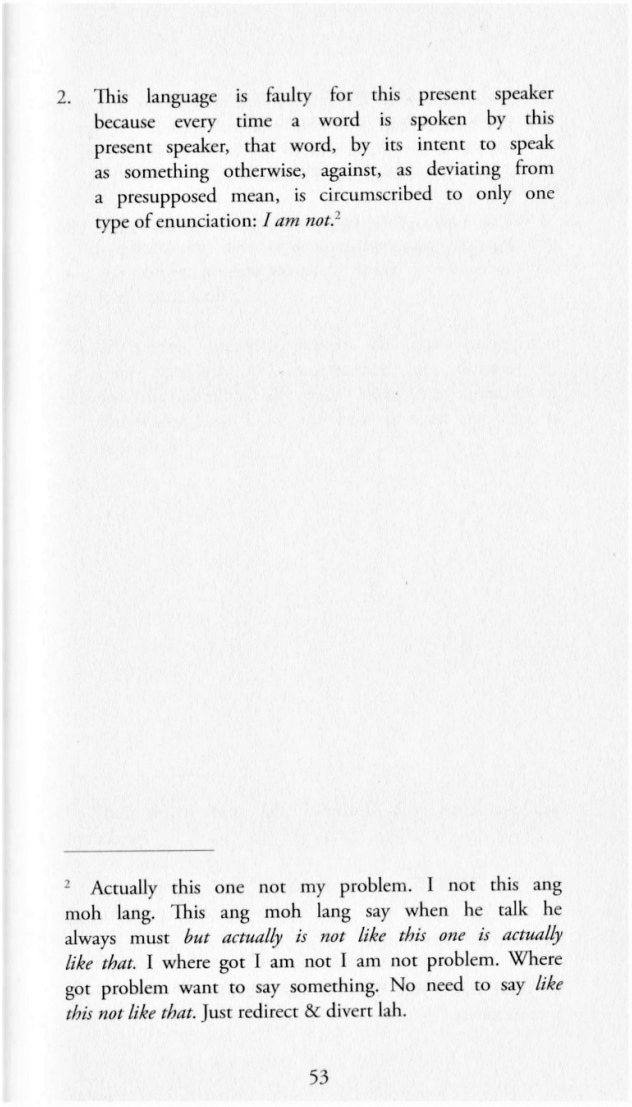
Despite the speaker's "homesick" longing, his return from abroad must be purchased in line with the mindset of price rationalisation in a discounted airfare ticket. Singapore is a place where the phrase "community building" is revealed to be necessary due to "in-fighting" in the next full rhyme, leading to individuals falling back on neoliberal protectionism behind the "face mask" by being "kiasu & kiasi," which are accepted stereotypes of Singaporeans as "scared to lose" and "scared to die." So adept is the "I" at survivalism that he gives up all due sense of historicity in "failsafe migrant assimilation" to be an "immortal kampung spirit" via documents such as a birth certification and identity card ("I/C" for short) that co-opt him into the state's regulated framework of cultural identities. In this manner, the idiom of Singapore's neutrally multicultural common spaces is revealed to be the empty idealism of the "innovation cum nation" and "transracial regulate framework, which gives way in the second half of the monologue to a barely concealed rage against the historical amnesia of the "I", who speaks himself as "I multilingual breakdown solution" and "I turn out turn out every subtext, I signified cardiac arrest, I patois circuit training, I big bang pidgin, I creole crystal clear." Singlish itself, which is ostensibly the patois indicated here, is insufficient to contain the multitudes harboured in the speaker's tongue, and he ends up stuttering "I I I I I lor" in infantile futility. Perhaps this may be treated even as a meta-comment on the lyric "I" in Culler's understanding of poetic discourse as voicing its own worlding.

With Singlish itself evacuated from its conventional utopian associations, Hamid's critique of the naturalised connection between cultural identity and language use occurs at an elemental level where any language can be regarded as a prosthesis upon one's already constructed identity. Where Ip employs linguistic variation to disrupt assumed connections between standard English and literary Singlish , thereby deconstructing the essentialism of Singapore's official ethnocultural categories, for Hamid, the Bakhtinian heteroglossia present in literary Singlish represents an engagement with contemporary sociocultural identities as an aftereffect of earlier histories. To read *parsetreeforestfire* with its confrontational first-person speakers and manifold cultural allusions is to experience the non-transparency of language as one scrambles for purchase, while coming to understand that the limits of linguistic intelligibility. As with the explosive, rapid-fire phrases quoted above, to speak is an endeavour both anguished and impassioned, because there is no detaching of the embodied self from the linguistic dimension of voice even in its pauses and elisions. Whether read (or heard) as mimicry, or a hysterical soliloquy, the speaker enacts what Gilles Deleuze has called a stuttering as an "affective and intensive language" (107) *in Essays Critical and Clinical* (1998). When "stuttering no longer affects preexisting words, but itself produces the words it affects," this new language itself indicates how the language sustem is "in perpetual disequilibrium or bifurcation" where "each of its terms continually passes through a zone of continuous variation" (108). Deleuze likens this to the "minor mode" in music with its "dynamic combinations in perpetual disequilibrium" (109). In writing, as with Hamid's, this stuttering as vibrato invents "a minor use of the major language within which they express themselves entirely" (109), recalling this dissertation's claim that Anglophone world writing espouses a minoritising logic. Instead of amplitude or connectedness as aspects of a fictional setting or history, as discussed earlier in relation to Desai and Tan, building on Deleuze's

theorising, I propose that worlding in poetic speech results from sonic and glyphic connections and disjunctions corresponding to what is voiced and unvoiced.

To return to Rey Chow's thinking on postcolonial "languaging" (45), the production of speech itself is constantly interfered with by other forms of speaking and writing. Such interference exceeds the speaker himself to suggest an ontology of language that is larger than proprietary selfhood or the sovereign subject within the nation. An awareness of language as carrying the echoes of heterogenous traces exposes, by contrast, the fantasy of the native speaker, who inhabits enunciation in a wholly naturalised way. Chow reframes the énoncé (what was said) as a "kind of quotation with the quotation marks removed because the voice of the speaking subject behind it has, over the duration of time, merged into the anonymity of collectivity" (55). For a speaker who inhabits a language, like English, through a postcolonial history, however, he or she is never fully anonymous, being marked by exclusion and loss from this larger, supposedly natural collective. The acquisition of a colonial language implies a temporal delay and a cultural disjunction. Chow turns this model of historical deficiency on its head by volunteering how estrangement from language, rather than being a deficiency, can be a "creative domain of language emerging, a domain that draws its sustenance from mimicry and adaptation and bears in its accents the murmur, the passage, of diverse found speeches" (59). Language itself is not transparent or neutral and its history "needs to be reconceptualised in the form of an untotalisable field of disjointed discourse events" (55). As a result, language use would be oriented towards a "shifting series of transitions among different levels of deposits, remains, excavations, and adaptations" as "temporally cumulative" (57). As Chow asserts, the assumed alienation of postcolonial languaging in fact allows for an emergent, eclectic enunciation that opens it to the fullness of contemporary experience.

parsetreeforestfire can be seen as an example of such postcolonial languaging in action, though the affective tenor of the collection's refusal to practice standard English (or even Singlish) derives from the specific historical contours of languaging in a Singapore context. "forest" is the section most pertinent to our discussion of how Hamid re-orients the reader's historical relationship to languaging and throughout its thirty pages the refrain "this language is faulty" is dissected performatively to illustrate how the faultiness of language-ing in Singapore is a historical aftereffect. This is also enacted in visual form, which consists of eighty-one numbered points in standard English, each answered by a footnote in Singlish. Here it is the rhetorical structure of the footnoted text that creates the expectation of dialogue. For Jonathan Culler, this ability of lyric address to displace narrative creates "the "now" in which, for readers, a poetic event can repeatedly occur" (226). In Hamid's case, it is perhaps more accurate to say it conjures the process of sub-voicing as narrative.



2. This language is faulty for this present speaker because every time a word is spoken by this present speaker, that word, by its intent to speak as something otherwise, against, as deviating from a presupposed mean, is circumscribed to only one type of enunciation: *I am not*.[2]

[2] Actually this one not my problem. I not this ang moh lang. This ang moh lang say when he talk he always must *but actually is not like this one is actually like that*. I where got I am not I am not problem. Where got problem want to say something. No need to say *like this not like that*. Just redirect & divert lah.

53

Fig. 1. *parsetreeforestfire* by Hamid Roslan (Singapore: Ethos Books, 2019)

As seen above, the voice in English ruminates upon the metaphysical basis for his existence, given that he can only express himself in this "faulty language," which is problematic because of "what accrues before the speaking," a "centre" which the language derives from. By employing the trope of Descartes's Latin philosophical formulation *cogito ergo sum*, which is abjured for belonging, as the Singlish voice puts it, to an "ang moh" (or white person's) tradition, Hamid exposes the use of English in Singapore to a "radical doubt" (63). The solution, the voice in English declares, is to evacuate the

language of pronouns and of what he calls "the line," a binary opposition between the West and the Orient that is "projected backwards" even by scholarly works that consider the Malay community as dispossessed by the British colonial administration (74).

The Singlish voice provides a rejoinder and point of exuberant departure for performing English-ing outside the boundaries of both Anglocentricity and proprietary ideologies of language. Where "parse" features themes of rebellion against the regulated spaces and practices of the Singaporean every day, "Forest" mainly reads as an earnest rumination by a philosophical bibliophile who subjects "I" to a rigorous ontological scrutiny in language. He goes to great lengths to trace the scholarly provenance behind the evacuation and restoration of the Malay speaker as subject, wondering if "this present speaker" will ever fill out an Anglicised and ethnic Malay "I" whose other language, Bahasa, has since been romanised. His alter-ego, however, is a crass, derisive presence, matching each numbered statement with a footnote that insists on "how to Singlish" (69), while pointing out the first speaker's failures of logic: "Anyhow go & twist himself until mouth talk salah already" (81).[93] By mocking the voice in English as "sotong" (dense, a reference to the effect of squid ink clouds) or "angmoh lang" (like a white person), and by providing snide elaborations, the repartee between English and Singlish enacts the collection's intent to transcend the binary between English and non-English, and in fact worlds the enunciative possibility of destabilising linguistic boundaries as a whole. As a point of clarification, the speaker of English never acknowledges that he hears the other voice, and the Singlish voice is starkly aware of this when he states "Two people talk always got one line. Can use English if you want work, use Singlish if you want friend" (67), but swiftly goes beyond to reflect on the discourse of being a "no body," especially as a Malay, especially when conventional historical narratives that represent the majority

[93] "Salah" is Bahasa for "wrongly."

Chinese perspective insist that "that one so long ago that one not Singapore" (62). Folded within the poetics of linguistic destabilisation is an unearthing of buried linguistic nuances, and the cultural politics of being an ethnic minority even as a multiplicity of linguistic origins is being deployed. Despite the many languages at play, asymmetrical assumptions of intelligibility still persist when Chinese Singaporeans "jiang hua yu forget their subtitle put where" (56).[94]

However, instead of asserting the recovery of a lost and unitary master-language in the form of either English or Bahasa as a common space, the colloquial English variety assumes a fruitful fissuring that dogs standard and global English as its alter-ego, recognisably English but not fully intelligible. While the voice in English is able to declare "the present speaker is the present speaker" (76), being assured of his presence in at least one language, the speaker of Singlish scoffs "Ya you got one body not many body not no body. Not like me. I no body" (76). The irony, of course, is that this is negative presencing by way of the Singlish declarative "I no body," with its characteristically missing verb. In moving towards a non-hegemonic model of language use, where the boundaries between different languages are porous, the text advocates a different stance towards linguistic speech and presence. Bearing the impress of other languages, such a fluid inhabiting of different English-es refutes multilingualism and bilingualism as forms of cultural management that align essentialised identities with standardised language use. Hamid's poetics is perhaps better described as "postmonolingual," which the linguist Yasemin Yildiz defines as related "to the unfolding of the effects of the monolingual and not to its successful overcoming or transcendence" of monolingualism as a paradigm (4). However, the "prefix 'post' also has a critical function, where it refers to the opposition to the term that it qualifies and to a potential break with it, as in some notions of postmodernism" (4).

[94] "jiang hua yu" translates to speaking Mandarin Chinese.

By xenophonically and self-reflexively providing an "outside" to any instance of language usage, "forest" subverts notions of the literary text as inherently monolingual with a playfulness that is akin to the painful rediscovery of a second childhood.

In "forest," Hamid also delves into the ways language has been constructed by colonial and neocolonial ideologies, as a means of historical revisionism. Using Bahasa as an example, one of the section's entries features an extract from *History, Culture and Region in Southeast Asian Perspectives* (1982) by the historian O. W. Walters, who describes the Malay region as the recipient of "Indian materials" which "tended to be fractured & restated & therefore drained of their original significance by a process which I shall refer to as localisation" (74). As the poem indignantly points out, Walters's book took no heed of the prior work of Edward Said's *Orientalism* (1978) and Syed Hussein Alatas's *The Myth of the Lazy Native* (1977), both of which exposed the imperial machinery at work in constructing the Malay as a civilisational inferior. This ignorance of decolonial thinking implies the discontinuation of a postcolonial intellectual tradition, as "the line would be forever obscured" and "projected backwards onto what was heard, instead of allowing the speaking to happen" (74). Yet, as is typical of the collection's refusal to be pinned down by a single origin, it turns the logic of this disinheritance into an inventive xenophone register by insisting how any language, especially Bahasa Malay is "faulty." Statements seventy-two to seventy-five describe how the Malay language today is written in the Latin Alphabet and yet has a phonology derived from Singapore's surrounding islands, while being subject to localisation as an ironic process of forgetting. As the speaker cannily implies, a nativist return to an original language risks repeating the same purist and oppositional logic, which repeatedly consigns the Malay language to a secondary position marked by its disinheritance.

Fittingly, “forest” ends with both English and Singlish voices in consonance, with the former saying “the present speaker is the present speaker” and the latter exhorting him to “just talk,” ushering in the last section “fire,” a five-page tour de force where English and Singlish are used in the same text, melding into each other in a spoken crescendo. On the last page of the collection, the speaker enacts interruption and impossibility as the necessary condition of speech in his particular historical condition:

> a sock, sharply English—this this
> this is the found interrup— this is
> —ted finally allowed to wallow,
> smother—winning divine bet:
> mastering past loquacious
> throat, securing future: YANG
> DI-PERTUAN NEGARA a mat
> significant, I’m-possible (91).

The scripted pauses amidst this acutely embodied struggle point to the acceptance of a body as the seat of a necessarily fragmented subjectivity, however displaced by criss-crossing historical and linguistic trajectories. Here the biosemiotics of speech recall the intimacy of multiple languages as part of the speaker’s being, even as they remain ill-fitting and alien for his sense of self—a marked departure from Alfian’s mythological image of a return to the jungle, as earlier discussed in this chapter. The turn to the multilingual “is not a simple, harmless act, but harbors new insights about the self that might force a rethinking of the subject, its communities, and its modes of belonging” (Yildiz 141). By acknowledging one’s necessary vulnerability in the multi-layered pun

"I'm-possible" in any linguistic utterance, this verse allows for the possibility of connective filamentations to Singapore's minoritised voices and histories. Using himself as an example, the speaker of "fire" abjures any pretence at claiming to be the superlative "YANG DI-PERTUAN NEGARA" or head of state in Bahasa, preferring the diminutive slang term for a working-class Malay chap, "a mat" (pronounced "maht").

Taken altogether, *parsetreeforestfire* enacts a process of worlding where a reader's linguistic profile is not a proxy for cultural identification, as demonstrated by the varying degrees of comprehensibility within *parsetreeforestfire* that correspond to the reader's relativised and historicised location within the full spectrum of English-ing. It is in the speaking voice that the sonic and semantic edges of the language chafe at each other to perform the impossibility of being a unified cultural personage. Invariably, given the disjunctive nature and sprawling number of cultural references in the collection, the reader will still find the text only partially intelligible. Therefore, Hamid's collection invites readers to come as they are by accepting their inability to read. This challenges the assumption that language is meant to communicate, and that language users must master its usage, by way of accruing the cultural capital that is part and parcel of language learning. Such resistance to Singapore's technological and utilitarian language policies is not achieved as a thetic statement in *parsetreeforestfire*, but arises through the reader's implication in an impossible text. Coming face to face with the unknowability of other languages, *parsetreeforestfire* suggests, ought to be part and parcel of routine language experiences. To speak this "faulty language" truthfully, one must subject English itself to the way other languages have been "fractured & restated & therefore drained of their original significance," and in doing so one must have recognised that one's cultural identity exceeds English as representative of the normative state narratives of national

progress (81). In the lyrical worlding of *parsetreeforestfire*, the vaunted rationality of communication is revealed as the illusion of perfect intelligibility.

Anglophone Worlding at the Moment of Voicing

By tracing the development of a poetics of non-standard English, beginning with Arthur Yap's "eccentricities of punctuation and typography" (Lim "Arthur Yap" 26) and culminating in the self-identification of recent poetry collections as Singlish, this account of Singlish-ing in the contemporary poetry scene in Singapore emphasises an exuberant poetics of voicing the "I." Through inscribing Singlish as literary and constitutive of a charged poetics of variance from standard English, Ip and Hamid have moved the language variety away from its beginnings as a mainly comedic medium, which is sometimes derisively employed to portray its users as uneducated and working class. Heteroglossia, an expanded multilingual lexis and jubilant departures from standard language-in-print through aberrant spelling and glyphic cues on the page signal how the Singlish poem is, in many ways, the recalcitrant inverse of the Anglophone world writing discussed earlier as a corollary of expanded geographical and temporal circuits. Reflecting perhaps, a Singaporean predilection for compression and efficiency, Singlish as poetic medium engages with the cultural and historical rubrics underpinning English at the moment of voicing to inscribe an ontological broadening of Anglophone worlding. As this chapter has argued, poetry in Singlish effects a postcolonial unfurling of linguistic and literary practices in response to the state's neocolonial management of cultural and ethnic identities, notably through its language policies in relation to standard English, and officially recognised mother tongues.

Though poetry claiming to be written in Singlish comprises a small fraction of the larger body of Anglophone verse produced by contemporary poets in Singapore, Singlish-

ing is particularly symptomatic of the anxieties and aspirations represented by global English, with its lingering associations with coloniality, prestige and the foreign. In an era of transnational capital flows, where western culture is generalised and globally disseminated, a "cosmopolitan Anglo-Asian multiculture" may be perceived as the indigenisation of relevant aspects of the west (Wee "The Indigenised West 189). While the notion of indigeneity remains inherently problematic in a postcolony like Singapore, which has been situated at the crossroads of cultures since precolonial times, and where notions of cultural identity have been repeatedly reconstructed by the groundswell of independence movements, Singlish poetry insists on the reading of Anglophone textuality within a localised frame. Such localisation resituates English as a free-floating signifier within the unfinished postcolonial project of modernity and cultural self-imagining in Singapore. At a moment where Anglophone literature in Singapore and in Southeast Asia continues to expand under the twin pressures of professionalisation and commodification, the divergent verve of Singlish-ing is a reminder that Anglophone world writing begins with an ontology of the "I" in relation to English, amidst sounds and silences. The closing image of "parse" in Hamid's collection returns to the merlion that Edwin Thumboo mythologised a half-century ago:

> The Merlion isn't spitting.
> It is showing that
>
> there are as many ways to speak
> as the mouth is able to
> haunt itself.

Look: it has

sliced off its tongue

to show you how (31).

Coda: "The Discomfort of Her Levelling Gaze"

Banned in KL is a hybrid volume of fifteen postcard entries, one of which features an illustration from a three-volume manuscript of Malay metrical poetry, the Syair Ghayat Al-Muna.[95] Though this poetic narrative is set in the faraway Himalayas, the focus of the postcard's brief exposition in this eclectic, mixed media publication is not the Syair, but a further recounting of how this poetic tale in print found great popularity through Bangsawan Theatre, a Malay operatic form typically incorporating music and dance (S. Tan 233). Troupes typically performed a repertoire of stories with Islamic, Indian, Thai, Chinese and Western sources, with *Hamlet*, *The Merchant of Venice* and *Othello* being the most popular in the last category. True to Bangsawan style, the actors would "play havoc with the texts" by taking the basic plot and building on it (Yousof 15). This bold, free-handed spirit is echoed in the illustrations in this edition of the Syair Ghayat Al-Muna, which are cut-out illustrations from western magazines with portions coloured in or drawn over. For this particular portrait, as shown below, the author adds a crown as well as a white ornament that protrudes from the image's frame, in cheeky defiance of the original layout (Fig.2).

As with the other postcards in this independently published volume, each visual is accompanied with a writeup that begins with a material and historical analysis of the artifact, which grows ever more interpretative and speculative towards the end, generating, in turn, an interpretative and at times, fictional afterlife that further mediates the source contexts for each postcard. This particular postcard on the Syair evocatively describes the image as the outcome of "cosmopolitan collisions" amidst the "experiment of modernity." The afterlife of this image as Bangsawan costume might have "created an image of the

[95] The original is held in the Raja Hamzah Yunus Collection at the Balai Maklumat Kebudayaan Melayu Riau at the British Library.

modern monarch" adopted by Malay sultans in their dress. Against conventional notions about "the tide of fetishistic orientalism," this narrative posits "an inverse curiosity about the West." Here in this fictional postcard, a mimesis of circulation leads to the further diffusion of imaginary trajectories to overturn western-centricity in the colonial archive.



Fig. 2: Illustration from Syair Ghayat Al-Muna, reproduced in *Banned in KL*

Like many of the literary works discussed in this dissertation, *Banned in KL* can be read as an Anglophone world text, emerging from a substrate where mobility and circulation allow for the further reinvention of worldliness in the interstices of major languages and cultures. Whether imagined or factual, the trajectories of the travelling texts, artifacts or characters in cross-border travel expand the imaginaries of Anglophone writing while functioning to re-orient worldliness from a locus outside London as a postimperial metropole. From the mysterious reunion of the Nagamitsu swords in *The Gift of Rain* by Tan Twan Eng to the invented codes and forged maps of *La India* by Rosario Cruz-Lucero, worlding is shown to be an epistemological enterprise in foregrounding hitherto

peripheral histories as part of a reterritorialisation of the Anglophone as an overarching and deterritorialised cultural system. At the same time, Anglophone writing is revealed as a porous medium that departs from the homogenising tendencies of global English, when Anglophone world texts unfurl historical, cultural and linguistic modes that resist the tautological equation between language, nation and state. While English will remain a universal language for the foreseeable future, literary English that is textured by a reenergised Anglophone worldliness is distinctive in advocating for the plural as the structuring impulse of the universal.

In this conclusion to the dissertation, I return to an illustrated book briefly alluded to at the end of the second chapter to further elucidate the Anglophone as a cultural and historical medium in tandem with literary worlding. At the same time, I read this short hybrid text in order to gesture towards more general epistemological and ontological aspects of Anglophone worldliness arising from the four preceding chapters. *Banned in KL, Astro Boy Rides the Wave to Sky Kingdom on a Grasshopper* (2021) is a collaborative publication by the Malaysian Design Archive and Cloud Projects, both based in Kuala Lumpur, or KL for short. The title pertly alludes to Malaysia's laws governing the freedom of speech and press, while being a portmanteau of the names of various historical prints curated as postcards within the book, each accompanied by a short exposition on their origins and contemporary relevance.[96] *Banned in KL* therefore playfully undercuts its title through fifteen postcards arranged chronologically, which are chosen mostly for their relevance to forgotten or suppressed histories in the Malaysian popular imaginary. Each is titled after a significant artifact, some of which are alluded to in the title, such as the grasshopper beater and an ice cream wrapper with a cartoon of Astro Boy. For instance,

[96] The laws which impact freedom of speech and press in Malaysia are the Sedition Act, the Printing Presses and Publications Act 1984 (PPPA) and the Official Secrets Act (OSA). For an overview of the effects of these laws and the question of self-censorship among Malaysian writers, see "The Anxieties of Authorship in Malaysian and Singaporean Writings in English" by Grace V. S. Chin.

the Sky Kingdom in the title alludes to a religiously syncretic spiritual sect led by Ayah Pin in Besut, Terengganu, which had its earthly manifestation as monuments built by its followers. These included a giant teapot, with the "water-of-life" spilling out from its spout into an adjacent blue vase and a house-sized yellow umbrella, offering shelter to anyone in need. Such multireligious pastiche did not sit well with mainstream and governmental approaches, which are defined by strict ethno-religious distinctions, and anchored by a Malay-Muslim majority. In 2005, the Sky Kingdom was demolished by state officials. Underlying this all-too-modern impulse to regulate linguistic and cultural identities, perhaps, is an unfortunate postcolonial and Asian cringe towards the organicity of pre-national customs and beliefs, now resurrected as the post- or supra-national.

Hence *Banned in KL* functions as a renegade archive of sorts, negotiating the by-ways of Malaysia's contemporary imaginaries. Presented first in English, then in Malay or Bahasa, with the Bahasa title, Malaysia Melalui Lima Belas Poskad (1886 -2019) translating more neutrally as "Malaysia through Fifteen Postcards," the text adroitly navigates the language politics of a country where a majority speak Bahasa, while English remains the language of a well-educated, often transnationally mobile elite. That *Banned in KL* is an Anglophone text that resolutely puts colonial and postcolonial artifacts into broader circulation, while allowing the Anglophone to be contoured by translingual tensions, makes it an apt example of Anglophone worldliness. Here the juxtaposition of English and Bahasa does not signal distinct civilisational or epistemic origins, but an invitation to consider the importance of a bi- or multi-lingual stance in the reading of literary texts, which leads more broadly to the recalibration of authorial presence in the international canon, as not always conjoined to national or monolingual priorities.

At once colonial residue in the long durée and the deterritorialised linguistic medium of neoliberal capital, Anglophone world writing does more than simply

reterritorialise in literary sensemaking. In fact, localisation occurs in tandem with renewed mobility, putting peripheral histories and cultures into semiotic play with the Anglophone as a cultural circuit of broadened exchange and pluralisation. By way of alluding to Derek Attridge's seminal book, *The Singularity of Literature*, the singularity of such writing, "in constituting the entity (as it exists in a particular time and place), [goes] beyond the possibilities pre-programmed by a culture's norms, the norms with which its members are familiar and through which most cultural products are understood" (63). Instead of being impermeable to change, the singularity of the Anglophone world text is "constitutively impure, always open to contamination, grafting, accidents, reinterpretation, and recontextualisation" (63). As a meta-genre, Anglophone world writing is immanently shaped by literary English as it is institutionalised across a sliding scale, from the wide-ranging ambit of an international reading public to moments of inter-linguistic play at the level of word or line.

From the performative immediacy of the poetic voice to the sprawling vistas of migrant journeys on postimperial trajectories, my argument has sought to theorise Anglophone world writing as an object of reading and Anglophone worldliness as a framework for literary critique. The four chapters which comprise the body of my dissertation recognise equally the sociohistorical minutiae underlying a period of study that is postcolonial and transnational, and the capacity of the literary text for imaginative reinvention. By reading the material and structural circuits of Anglophone writing as anchored in various South and Southeast Asian postcolonial loci, from Desai's Kalimpong to Ip's coffeeshops, I make a larger case for reading in-between the influence of the Anglo-American publishing industry and the distinct valences of writing *in situ*. This insistence on a catalytic space, between local literary scenes and the transnational, refuses a recentring of literary reading in the former colony as a national methodology, given that

the nation itself is the repository of unfinished colonial formations amidst the ongoing project of postcolonial modernity.

Whether mimetic or performative in generating a diegesis, Anglophone world texts are also structured and organised according to their engagement with literary genre, particularly where Anglophone writing itself enlists a further postcolonial response. Each of my chapters discusses the novel, the short story collection and the poem as it interacts with discursive conventions of literary reading, which are themselves the result of a dynamic confluence of localised mores, inherited traditions and the ever-growing transnational Anglophone canon. While the Anglophone novel has historically been a "travelling genre" (Cohen 482), it remains an imminently portable form marketed as the paradigmatic unit of literary reading in the Anglo-American book market. Yet, a chief concern of my discussion resides in how Anglophone world novelists work with the limits of genre to foreground the relevance of minor histories and cultures, while writing against the homogenising pressures of an international reading public and their originating contexts. The second chapter of this dissertation discusses how Preeta Samarasan consciously positioned *Evening is the Whole Day* in relation to a diasporic body of Indian writing in English as well as the tone and subject matter of the Victorian novel. By contrast, in *Fish-Hair Woman*, Merlinda Bobis playfully dissects the figure of the *balikbayan* or diasporic Filipino authoress, as a meta-textual critique of the pretensions of communicating a commentary about the postcolonial Philippines in English. These engagements with genre also extend to short story collections such as *La India*, where the break between stories prompts a degree of disjunctive reassessment as well as poems, with verse in Singlish being an example of performative potentialities through voicing.

More importantly, the structuration of the Anglophone world text itself leads to a poetics of worldliness, a contention which has been borne out at length across this

dissertation, ranging from discussions about fictional memory in Tan's *Garden of Evening Mists* to with the aberrant typography of Hamid Roslan's poems, which signal pauses and a deep ambivalence underlying any attempt at speech. Worlding, as temporal formations in narrative and the plosive, declamatory rhythms of verse, warp and weave spatiotemporal continuities and disjunctions. As an Anglophone world text, *Banned in KL* similarly reinvents the conventions of reading a book through the form of the postcard, which promises movement and travel through the mail and so exerts the requirements of brevity and a striking visual. Playing on the conventions of the holiday postcard, which typically offers a snapshot of a distant and exotic location, each of the fifteen postcards from the print book can indeed be mailed out, except that it is a journey into the recesses of Malaysian history that results. As can be seen in Figure 3, the layout of the Anglophone side of the card titled "A Malay Woman" mediates between the text and the anonymous portrait, while the inverse of the same contains the Bahasa translation and the postcard format, as shown in Figure 4. Cutting across fact and fiction, as well as across languages and spatiotemporal divides, the poetics of this postcard condenses, as a further stage in its circulation, an argument for the continued importance of this pictured woman beyond ethnographic type and gender. "A figure lost to the present," she nevertheless insists on her subjectivity through "the discomfort of her levelling gaze." In her refusal to posture for the camera, "we must read her on her own terms" and "sit with the ensuing unease."

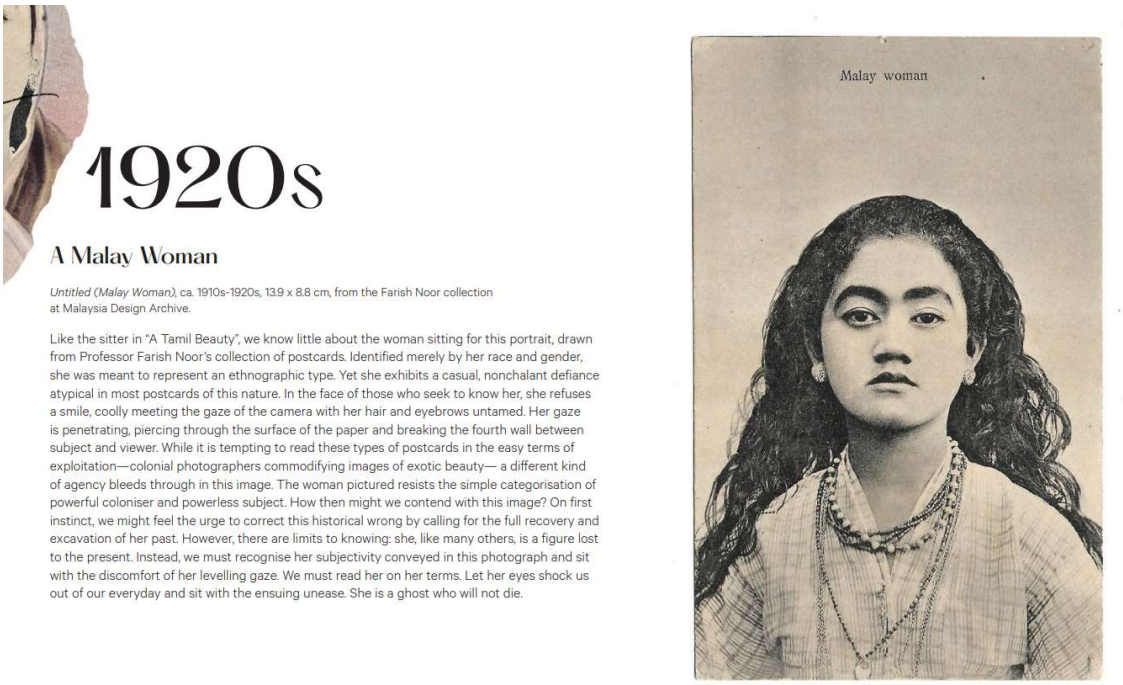


Fig. 3: Front of a postcard from the 1920s, titled "A Malay Woman"

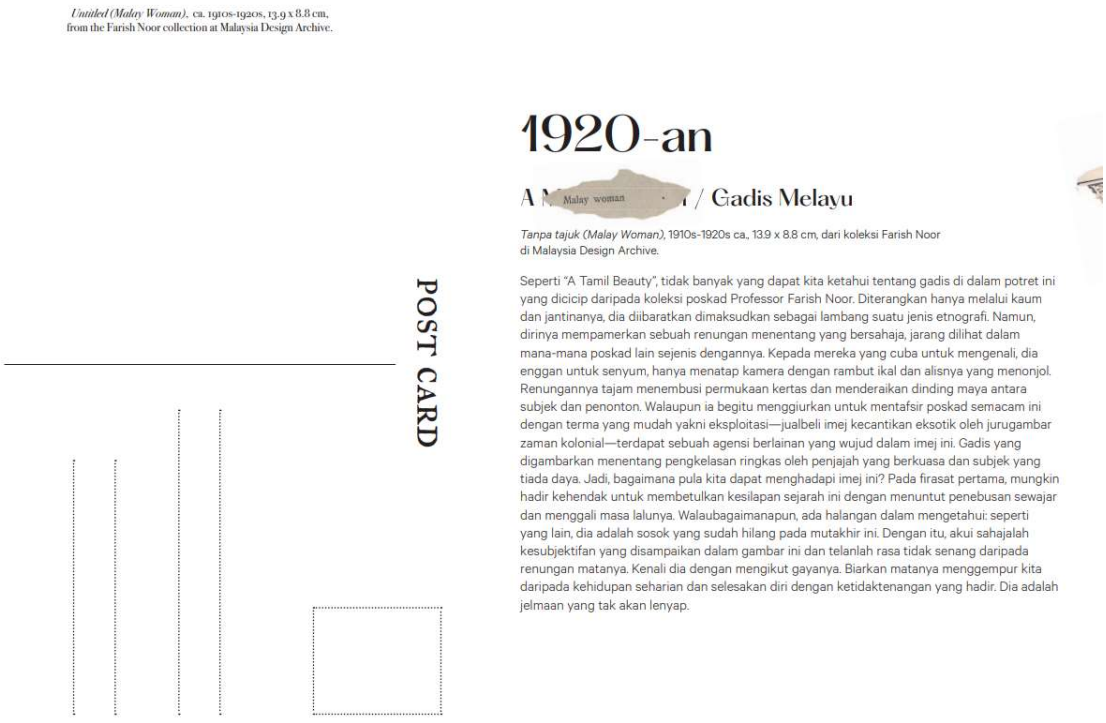


Fig. 4: Inverse of a postcard from the 1920s, titled "A Malay Woman"

As much as the structural and rhetorical play on genre is an important aspect of the Anglophone world text, its significance lies in the epistemological reconfiguration of literary reading as an intervention into the Anglophone cultural system. Instead of simply presenting an alternative diegesis that reimagines the material and cultural circuits, this postcard exhibits an all-too-permeable divide between historical context and contextual re-historicisation on the plane of re-presentation. "A Malay Woman" is at once an untitled print "ca. 1910s-1920s, 13.9 x 8.8 cm, from the Farish Noor collection at Malaysia Design Archive" and the trans-medial frisson that results from the unsmiling stare of the seated woman, which the writeup describes as "resist[ing] the simple categorisation of powerful coloniser and powerless subject." The exact identity and origins of this fairly famous, and to some, iconic image of "A Malay Woman" are unknown, making the interpretation of her gaze at once entirely subjective and infused with the magnetism of anonymity.[97] This tendency towards overreading and misreading perhaps points to slippages in signification as yet another means by which the worldly text circulates.

Yet the text also points out that there are limits to "the full recovery and excavation of her past," by choosing to interpret her visage as a repartee to Malaysia's sometimes extreme reliance on ethnoreligious essentialism. The process of worlding in "A Malay Woman" relies on a semiotic play between different linguistic and cultural codes, expressed textually and visually. Such Anglophone worldliness exceeds not only the bounds of colonial and state-inscribed histories but also the supposed purity of the English language itself. The unnamed Malay girl "is a ghost who will not die," which in the Bahasa translation, is rendered with marked spiritual overtones as "dia adalah jelmaan yang tak akan lenyap," which translates literally as "this is an apparition which will not

[97] According to the authors of *Banned in KL*, the photograph was likely to have been taken in a studio in Penang or Singapore but no further details could be discovered about the image (personal email communication).

dissipate." As prompted by the trans-lingual structure of the text, the Anglophone acquires a further layer of meaning in its afterlife in Bahasa, with a poignancy most apparent to Malaysian speakers who negotiate both languages daily.

However, the Anglophone world text is equally an ontological query into the nature of character and speaker. Unlike epistemological processes of worlding, which are more concerned with spatiotemporal markers in relation to the cultural and social organisation of knowledge, an Anglophone world ontology suggests that being itself may be pluralised and relativised amidst the entanglements of the postcolonial and the transnational. The third and fourth chapters reflect this shift in emphasis through discussions about the Filipina as a world-character and the invention of Singlish as a poetic register. The spectral nature of the postcolonial Philippines is reflected in the disjunctive persona of Merlinda Bobis's titular Fish-Hair Woman, who experiences the deaths of insurgents and innocent villagers alike as embodied pain. Readers later find out that she is the fictional creation of Stella Estrada, the illegitimate daughter of the local mayor and newly returned from Hawaii, for whom the tale is a form of catharsis for the forced abandonment of her childhood neighbours and friends. As a result, the notion of character as operating within the set boundaries of a fictional world transgresses its diegetic parameters to express the creative futility of a unified postcolonial self in the Philippines, where so much of its national imagining is tied to a diasporic outflow of Filipinos. In the last chapter, the personae of both Joshua Ip's and Hamid Roslan's Singlish poems perform an altered English replete with the syntax and lexis of a local lingo which has evolved in-place from a multilingual environment. In doing so, the very nature of the Anglophone subject is altered to express the complexity of overlapping cultural and ethnic identities in contemporary Singapore.

It is possible to trace this emphasis on disjunction within the literary character as a corollary of an ontology defined by the ramifications of the postcolonial in the long durée, amidst the compressed spacetime of global capital flows. Returning to the anonymous portrait of "A Malay Woman," with her unyielding eyes, the question of character-as-identity expands into a broader question related to the nature of being, that is, the ontology of the Anglophone world text. As discussed earlier, the structural play between the different visual and textual components of the fictional postcard unsettles various epistemological frames, both historical and speculative, that contextualise our reception of her appearance. However, the notion of character, as linked to the Lockean notion of personhood as "the same thinking being in all times and places" (225), is radically overturned by the sheer unknowability of this woman as measured against the strength of her gaze. As Shu-mei Shih observes astutely in *Visuality and Identity*, an intellectual discussion of the unified subject should not automatically conclude with the poststructuralist notion of subjectivity as a continued "high modernist fetishization of alienation" (21) to provide the basis for individuation. Shih elaborates, "the critique against the poststructuralist notion of subjectivity is then twofold: (1) by universalising a class-determined experience of alienation, it has made the notions of subjectivity and identity unusable for those who need them; (2) its project has been an "in-house" struggle against another fantastic construction, that of unified subjectivity in Western philosophy" (22). Instead, a usable praxis of global identity politics would advocate "transformative identity [as] a form of affirmation of subjectivity" in place of the narrative of "the poststructuralist subject mired in fragmentation and rendered powerless in the face of transnational corporations" (22). In the concept of Anglophone worldliness advanced by this dissertation, identity is an imaginative practice that operates to extend the postcolonial

dynamics of meaning-making, however variously delineated by specific loci, alongside the contours of transnational circulation.

Richly unfurling new worldly indices of the Filipina, the Singlish speaker, the Kalimpong resident and the mobile Malaysian, these literary texts have animated a hermeneutics of Anglophone world writing as a literary category. This meta-genre arises from a relay between sociohistorical contexts and the material and structural pressures of the publishing industry in which literary English is both a border with the past and a spatiotemporal circuit in the post millennium. While earlier genre criticism tends to be descriptive and structuralist in nature, more recent discussions conceptualise it as a historical and social institution that nonetheless travels across established differences in literary period. As Bruce Robbins notes in the Afterword to the 2007 *PMLA* special issue, "one virtue of taking genre seriously is that it permits us to indulge in some momentary alienation from these familiar historical commitments" which may in turn lead to "ambitiously wide-ranging and unpredictable sorts of metanarrative that might be encouraged by period-bridging continuities of genre" (1645). For my argument, the aesthetics of worlding in the novels, short stories and poems featured in this dissertation occasion the further theorising of Anglophone world writing and Anglophone worldliness, across entrenched divides between national and colonial writing, and between different nations as discrete literary traditions.

However, by highlighting the importance of a worldly address, my discussion inevitably runs up against the place of literary reading in the sphere of public discourse, whether within the local ecologies of the postcolonies under study or more broadly on the world stage for Anglophone writing. These renewed imaginings of the Anglophone as literary medium or of the mobile yet postcolonial subject are, in many ways, distinct from the arena of political change. Writing about the concept of literature from the perspective

of radical populism in *Marxism and Literature* (1977), Raymond Williams views arguments from theoretical and historical perspectives as a "powerful and often forbidding system of abstraction in which the concept of 'literature' becomes actively ideological" (45). While Williams writes from an acute sense of class and materialist constraints on literary reading, his observations resonate with literary English in a postcolonial context, where the elevation of culture expressed through the concept of literature enfolds deeply ingrained linguistic and socioeconomic divides, and submerges these from view. In order to counter such abstraction, Williams advances the notion of literature as praxis within language. Thus "literature is the process and result of formal composition within the social and formal properties of language" (46). The "extraordinary ideological feat" of literature is the process by which the details of lived experience are seen as "less particular and immediate" compared to when they are represented in literary works—high praise for the imaginative interventions of literary works. Yet literary study is complicit in what Williams terms the disappearance of literary composition itself as process, which has been displaced onto the aesthetic forms and tools of critique.

The invisibility that Williams alludes to can also be attributed to the popular discourse of Anglophone world writing as anchored by the prize culture and global media flows dominated by Anglo-American outlets. Frameworks for literary study, within the university or otherwise, are to some degree, inevitably shaped by the challenges in the distribution and circulation of texts from minor literary locations, much less the lack of an established canon or tradition of reading. Ironically, for writers from South Asia or Southeast Asia who are not published by the "big four," namely Penguin Random House, Macmillan, Hachette Book Group, and HarperCollins, being read within their region presents a challenge and not least because the literary republics in these younger nations have had a shorter runway to develop corresponding practices in literary reading and

criticism. That said, who can blame the Anglophone writers of South Asia and Southeast Asia for seeking a wider audience, when the number of readers of Anglophone literary works in their home countries is relatively smaller, if no less enthusiastic? The aspiration to be part of a universal canon cannot always be seen as a betrayal of a writer's origins because to acquiesce in this perspective is to concede to a monologic of cultural absolutism—the alternative, I propose, is to reinvent English as the Anglophone, a self-reflexive set of parameters in which the linguistically varied, the spatiotemporally disjunctive, and the postcolonial in a relentlessly transnational era, are critical touchstones.

For the most part, the Anglophone book trade remains routed through the west, without established trade networks between local publishers, especially within Southeast Asia. Commenting on the pressures in developing a Malaysian shelf in Malaysian bookstores, Raman Krishnan of Silverfish Books, a respected independent publisher, laments how the mass import of books results in "deep discounting, dumping and domination of shelf space." Meanwhile book trade and cultural exchange within what Krishnan calls Sundaland, or maritime Southeast Asia, remain minimal, given that bookstores must pay a premium to bring in books directly from neighbouring countries. Kenny Leck, the previous owner of Singapore's first independent bookshop, BooksActually, points to how major retail chains order from a distributor that consolidates multiple publishers, usually from the west, and maintain larger stocklists (Leck). Smaller or independent Southeast Asian publishers do not print in sufficient volume, with the result that book titles, if they are indeed picked up by larger shopfronts, will be more expensive. These material and structural conditions indirectly limit the frameworks of Anglophone world writing – an asymmetry of critique that requires a conscious attentiveness to what is submerged and made invisible within Anglophone world writing as literature in English.

Against these challenges the study of Anglophone world writing is all the more important with a revitalised theorisation of how the Anglophone inherits colonial histories in a complex and further entanglement with the transnational trajectories of the new millennium. The formation of reading publics goes beyond questions of literacy and effective communication, as the twin outcomes of a technological orientation towards language-use. While questions of educational curricula have been extensively discussed in relation to decolonisation, the circulation of reading pedagogies beyond the classroom, the book club and the literary world deserves further attention for their role in adding to what John Guillory calls the "pedagogic imaginary" (59). Could Anglophone world texts be conceived as public pedagogy, not necessarily within local or national spaces of protest, but in their capacity to reimagine cultural codifications for extended audiences, while reconfiguring the terms of their reception? Like the postcards of *Banned in KL*, they circulate beyond the measure of nation and the current moment, drawing broadened histories and imaginaries into their ambit. Certainly, the novelists, short story writers and poets whose works and worlds have emerged as part of postcolonial Anglophone writing in the new millennium tread a fine line between the ethics of who they are and what they stand for. Thus Anglophone world writing remains in motion, a dialectic that continually works with and through notions of worldliness to ground literary English in the substrate of pluri-locality.

Appendix: Poems in Chapter 4

tones

still one-eared, a concentrated outpouring of
blurred recodes.
the listener remains peripheral to the monologue.
listening has always, if you will,
its hard-hearing edge.
the speaker is like every weather, structured in
rubrics:

a cool nebulous morning.
it is not the illusion of truth
nor the reality of falsity.
nothing is said, we are welcome
to what is not on parade.

a hot afternoon.
listening makes us careless.
scorching words on the ear
& our ears' quick-grasped replies:
the spitting & the swallowing,
as it were, in one gulp.
replying makes us careless.

a dark night:
tone hones tone.
when exasperated, darkness still operates
in residue. a curfew on direct speech.
reporting makes us careful,
trading performatives for passives.
listening makes us deaf.
deafness has always, if you will, no hard-hearing aid.

--from *Commonplace* (1977) by Arthur Yap

shipwreck

shipwreck: I've written about it, & more, before.
with an island background, it had only been composed
upon in school. splendid shipwrecks, salted treasure
as easily scooped, a misgrounded fly from an ink-bottle.
the scope of fluent ignorance, my pen raced, at that age
i chased themes that were totally mine, weren't dreams.
it was a duty owed more myself than the pen.

about shipwrecks: were i in school now, i'm better able
to write on the velocity of wind, oscillations of tides,
the extent of salvage insurance companies need underwrite,
the structural implications on shocked timber.
can't i?

nowadays teems with more themes.

sheepwreck: (as i imagine) in animate collision,
each impact cushioned. do i say to you:
let us not pull wool over each other's eyes
(& other civilities)?
over to the ships' wrecked captains where it seemed
to have begun & definitely ended,
to pirates marinated in seasonal winds,
to a harbour where eyes obtain like sardines:
a shipwreck is a tall shore of humanity.
with an island background, it had been composed
on sand, dry inland, crafted by hand.
it can be seen in the city, daily,
neatly.

--from *Down the Line* (1980) by Arthur Yap

statement

of course your work comes forsy.
after that, you may go for a walk,
visit friends but, all the same,
it is always correct to ask
before you do anything else.

so if you say: please may i jump
off the ledge? & go on to add
this work is really killing,
you will be told: start jumping.
no one is in any way
narrow-minded anymore these days.
It is that everyone likes to know
these things way beforehand.
but if you state: i'm going now,
jumping off the ledge
most probably they will say nothing
thinking should it legally, morally,
departmentally, be yes/no/perhaps.
or if it's not too late:
why don't you come along? we shall bring
this matter up to a higher level.

--from *Down the Line* (1980) by Arthur Yap

2 mothers in a h d b playground

ah beng is so smart,
already he can watch tv & know the whole story.
your kim cheong is also quite smart,
what boy is he in the exam?
this playground is not too bad, but i'm always
so worried, car here, car there.

at exam time, it's worse.

because you know why?

kim cheong eats so little.

give him some complan. my ah beng was like that,
now he's different. if you give him anything
he's sure to finish it all up.

sure, sure. cheong's father buys him
vitamins but he keeps it inside his mouth
& later gives it to the cat.
i scold like mad but what for?
if i don't see it, how can i scold?

on Saturday, tv showed a new type,
special for children. why don't you call
his father buy some? maybe they are better.

money's no problem. it's not that
we want to save. if we buy it
& he doesn't eat it, throwing money
into the jamban is the same.
ah beng's father spends so much,
takes out the mosaic floor & wants
to make terazzo or what.

we also got new furniture, bought from diethelm.
the sofa is so soft. i dare not sit. they all
sit like don't want to get up. so expensive.
nearly two thousand dollars, sure must be good.

that you can't say. my toa-soh
bought an expensive sewing machine,
after 6 months, it is already spoilt.
she took it back but … beng,
come here, come, don't play the fool.
your tuition teacher is coming.
wah! kim cheong, now you're quite big.

come, cheong, quick go home & bathe,
ah pah wants to take you chya-hong in new motor-car.

--from *Down the Line* (1980) by Arthur Yap

entry

this poem comes with intentions and directions clearly labelled
this poem has been vetted, cleared, and given the once-over
twice-over, overlooked with oversight. it has been tabled
ably to all appropriate approving fora.

this poem solemnly declares and swears it does not keep
in its possession any media. this poem is free
of any image-capturing device. it does not beep
a beep. this poem has surrendered its identity.

this poem is tucked-in, clean-shaved, and iron-creased, each last
cock-hair shaved off and burnt and tweezed with a mother's pride,
screaming "inspect me" from each seam, no dirt, no dust—
this poem is so shiny you can see your face inside.

submitted, for approval, please—i'm willing to refine it.
or let me write it in your book-in book, and maybe sign it.

--from *sonnets from the singlish* (2012) by Joshua Ip

overheard at al-azhar

“one egg, one kosong.” “same.” “then drinks?” “teh si
siu dai.” “ one milo peng.” “eh, work mainland
good ornot?” like that lor. luckily
last time got bia chena, then now still can.

you got hear ang moh speak chinese before?
the words correct, but accent cmi
then how to win someone from singapore?
lifelong challenge, maciam lky.

next time, they also start from primary one
then do the ting xie zhao ju zuo wen shit
then everybody also mother tongue
but still got years before they can make it.”

the prata is served by a prc.
no one notices, since it’s crispy.

--from *sonnets from the singlish* (2012) by Joshua Ip

conversaytion

“not say i want to say, but then this one
who say one?” “i say one lor, arbuthen.”
“this one you say one? liedat also can??
today you say ho say, later bueh gum

then you say i saw who confirm?” “you say
what what lor. anyway i say one thing
is one thing one. not like you everything
also say people like mm sam mm say.”

“you say some more?” “you say first one ma.” “wan
to come outside say? say louder?” “dun wan.
ok la, i say wrongly, ho say bo?
take it i never say la.” “then say so!
your mouth damn suey. you dun wan me to say
then dun say me—not say i want to say.”

--from *sonnets from the singlish* (2012) by Joshua Ip

Excerpt from “Parse”

I traffic rule hantam color color wheel, I white marker
garland feeder bus back seat, I potted plant plate
lupa water disposal, I tug-of-war afternoon shower,
I hawker center spontaneous queuing, I discount
homesick airfare ticket, I tour guide friendly half half
only, I community building in-fighting, I sandbox
playground makeover, I face mask kiasu & kiasi,
I cosmopolitan minus four season, I fail safe migrant
assimilation, I on-the-spot birth cert & I/C, I saga seed
secret collection, I KPI cannot decide, I innovation
cum smart nation, I transracial regulate framework,
I spontaneous common spaces, I sudden flora hai shi
fauna, I immortal kampung spirit, I sign sembarang
make Saussure faint, I grammar rage potong jalan
syntax expressway, I lowest common subject verb
agreement, I multilingual breakdown solution, I sui
bian diction tone construction, I exile prepostition make
fugitive, I Google translate before Google translate,
I parse partridge paring talk talk tree, I haggle talking
shortcut meaning, I kan chiong forget oral practice,
I turn out turn out every subtext, I signified cardiac
arrest, I patois circuit training, I big bang pidgin, I creole
crystal clear, I syntax forward looking, I tongue internet
preinstall, I quantum see all possible word, I on-going
rule-break rebellion, I speak anyhow so can also am,
is speech lah, speech lah, specch lah, is I I I I I lor.

--from *parsetreeforestfire* (2019) by Hamid Roslan

Works Cited

Primary Works

Bobis, Merlinda. *Fish-Hair Woman.* Spinifex Press, 2012.

Cruz-Lucerio, Rosario. *La India or Island of the Disappeared.* The University of Philippines Press, 2012.

Desai, Kiran. *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard.* Faber, 1998.

---. *The Inheritance of Loss.* Penguin Books, 2007.

Ip, Joshua. *Sonnets from the Singlish.* Math Paper Press, 2012.

Roslan, Hamid. *Parsetreeforestfire.* Ethos Books, 2019.

Samarasan, Preeta. *Evening Is the Whole Day.* Fourth Estate, 2009.

Tan, Twan Eng. *The Garden of Evening Mists.* Myrmidon, 2012.

---. *The Gift of Rain.* Myrmidon Books, 2007.

Yap, Arthur. *The Collected Poems of Arthur Yap* NUS Press, 2013.

Secondary Works

"Asia: Failing to Spread the Wealth: Race in Malaysia." *The Economist*, vol. 376, no. 8441, 2005, p. 50.

"Conversations with Joshua Ip." *BooksActually*. https://booksactually.tumblr.com/post/97881567382/q-first-of-all-i-think-many-people-would-like-to.

"Evening Is the Whole Day." *HarperCollins*. https://harpercollins.co.uk/products/evening-is-the-whole-day-preeta-samarasan?variant=32545076576334. Accessed 10 April 2021.

"Kodak Ad So Funny Lah but Not Too Much Please. " *The Straits Times*, Singapore Press Holdings, 18 November 1991 1991.

" 'Languages Constantly Crackling in the Air': A Conversation with Jessica Hagedorn." *Words Without Borders*. https://www.wordswithoutborders.org/article/languages-constantly-crackling-in-the-air-a-conversation-with-jessica-haged. Accessed 24 September 2020.

"Many Want a Better Understanding of May 13, Survey Shows." *Malaysiakini*, 15 May 2019. https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/476152https://www.malaysiakini.com/news/476152.

"Minister Balakrishnan Cautions against Promoting Use of Singlish" *Channel News Asia*, MediaCorp News Pte Ltd, 27 May 2008 2008.

"Oh Such Drama." *New Straits Times*, New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad., 2008, p. 13.

"Parsetreeforestfire." *Ethos Books*. https://www.ethosbooks.com.sg/products/parsetreeforestfire-hamid-roslan. Accessed 9 July 2020.

"Population in Brief 2020." edited by Singapore Department of Statistics, National Population and Talent Division, Strategy Group, Prime Minister's Office, 2020.

"Preeta Samarasan. " http://preetasamarasan.com/. Accessed 14 September 2019.

"Remembering Arthur Yap." *The Straits Times*, 21/06/2006 2006, p. 2, Life!

"Singlish: Can or Not?" *The Straits Times*, Singapore Press Holdings, 14/05/1993 1993, p. 34, Commentary / Analysis.

"What Is Kundiman?" http://www.kundiman.org/what-is-kundiman.

Abad, Gémino H. “Filipino Poetry in English: A Native Clearing.” *World Englishes*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2004, pp. 169-181, doi:10.1111/j.1467-971X.2004.00342.x.

Abad, Gémino H. and Edna Zapanta-Manlapaz. *Man of Earth: An Anthology of Filipino Poetry and Verse from English, 1905 to the Mid-50s.* Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1989.

Abdullah, Kamsiah and Bibi Jan Ayyub. “Malay Language Trends and Issues.” *Language, Society and Education in Singapore: Issues and Trends*, edited by Saravanan Gopinathan et al., 2nd ed. edition, Times Academic Press, 1998, pp. 179-190.

Alfian, Sa'at. *A History of Amnesia: Poems* Ethos Books, 2001.

---. “Hinterland, Heartland, Home: Affective Topography in Singapore Films.” *Southeast Asian Independent Cinema [Electronic Resource] : Essays, Documents, Interviews*, edited by Tilman Baumgärtel, Hong Kong University Press, 2012, pp. 34-52.

---. *One Fierce Hour.* Landmarks Books, 1998.

Anam, Nasia. “Introduction: Forms of the Global Anglophone.” *Post45*. Yale University http://post45.research.yale.edu/2019/02/introduction-forms-of-the-global-anglophone/. Accessed 21 April 2019.

Anandan, Prathima and Prathima Anandan. “Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard.” *Contemporary South Asia*, vol. 8, no. 3, 1999, pp. 386-387, Social Science Premium Collection.

Andaya, Barbara Watson and Leonard Y. Andaya. *A History of Malaysia.* 2nd edition, Palgrave, 2001.

Anderson, Benedict R. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism.* Rev. edition, Verso, 2006. *Acls Humanities E-Book*.

Ang, Ann. "Not the Emperor's, Not the King's, but the Straits Chinese." *New Mandala: Perspectives on the Past*. Australian National University https://www.newmandala.org/the-straits-chinese. Accessed 7 November 2019.

Ang, Ann et al. *Singpowrimo: The Anthology* Math Paper Press, 2014.

Anjaria, Ulka. *A History of the Indian Novel in English.* Cambridge University Press, 2015.

Annavarapu, Sneha "Hope and Capital: Talking India with Ravinder Kaur." *Public Books*, 2021, https://www.publicbooks.org/hope-and-capital-talking-india-with-ravinder-kaur/.

Appadurai, Arjun. "Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy." *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 7, no. 2-3, 1990, pp. 295-310, doi:10.1177/026327690007002017.

Apter, Emily S. *Against World Literature: On the Politics of Untranslatability.* Verso, 2013.

Arac, Jonathan. "Anglo-Globalism?" *New Left Review*, no. 16, 2002, pp. 35-45.

Ashcroft, Bill et al. *The Empire Writes Back : Theory and Practice in Post-Colonial Literatures.* 2nd edition, Routledge, 2002. *New Accents (Routledge (Firm))*.

Assmann, Aleida. "Transnational Memories." *European Review*, vol. 22, no. 4, 2014, pp. 546-556, doi:10.1017/S1062798714000337.

Assmann, Jan and John Czaplicka. "Collective Memory and Cultural Identity." *New German Critique*, no. 65, 1995, pp. 125-133, JSTOR, doi:10.2307/488538.

Attridge, Derek. *The Singularity of Literature.* Routledge, 2017. *Routledge Classics*.

Auguscik, Anna. *Prizing Debate : The Fourth Decade of the Booker Prize and the Contemporary Novel in the Uk.* Transcript-Verlag, 2017. *Edition Kulturwissenschaft*.

Aziz, Rahimah Abdul. "New Economic Policy and the Malaysian Multiethnic Middle Class." *Asian Ethnicity*, vol. 13, no. 1, 2012, pp. 29-46, doi:10.1080/14631369.2012.625692.

Bahrawi, Nazry. "Rindu Rustic: Singapore Nostalgias in Modern Malay Prose." *Journal of Intercultural Studies*, vol. 40, no. 4, 2019, pp. 504-520, doi:10.1080/07256868.2019.1628722.

Bakar, Sharon. "Malaysian Writing in English Is Dead!" Bibliobibuli 16 October 2009 http://thebookaholic.blogspot.com/2009/10/malaysian-writing-in-english-is-dead.html. Accessed 23 September 2021.

Bakhtin, M. M. et al. *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays.* University of Texas Press, 1981. *University of Texas Press Slavic Series*.

Balbuena, Myko. " 'I Was in an Ah Beng Half-Life/Counterstrike Clan for Most of Jc': An Interview with Poet Joshua Ip." Raffles Institution https://rafflesiantimes.wordpress.com/2015/02/12/i-was-in-an-ah-beng-half-lifecounterstrike-clan-for-most-of-jc-an-interview-with-poet-joshua-ip-2/.

Barth, Fredrik. *Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference.* Universitetsforlaget, 1969.

Bassnett, Susan. "Anglophone World Literatures and Translation " *Handbook of Anglophone World Literatures*, edited by Stefan Helgesson et al., De Gruyter, 2020, pp. 149-160. *Handbooks of English and American Studies*.

Bilbija, Marina. "What's in a Name?: The Global Anglophone, the Anglosphere, and the English-Speaking Peoples." *Post45*, no. Forms of the Global Anglophone, 2019, https://post45.org/2019/02/whats-in-a-name-the-global-anglophone-the-anglosphere-and-the-english-speaking-peoples/.

Bobis, Merlinda. “The Asian Conspiracy: Deploying Voice/Deploying Story.” *Australian Literary Studies*, 2010, doi:10.20314/als.390973263e.

---.“‘Voice-Niche-Brand’: Marketing Asian-Australianness.” *Australian Humanities Review*, vol. 45, 2008, pp. 119-125.

---. “Border Lover.” *Not Home, but Here: Writing from the Filipino Diaspora* edited by Merlinda C. Bobis and Luisa A. Igloria, Anvil Publishing, 2003, pp. 118-137. /z-wcorg/.

---. “Scaling Daragang Magayon: The Bilingual Poet Translating Herself.” *Asian Voices in English / Edited by Mimi Chan & Roy Harris*, edited by Mimi Chan and Roy Harris, Hong Kong University Press, 1991, pp. 55-64.

---. “Storying: Dream and Deployment.” *Social Identities*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2009, pp. 85-94, doi:10.1080/13504630802693141.

Boehmer, Elleke. *Postcolonial Poetics : 21st-Century Critical Readings.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2018.

Boey, Kim Cheng. “ ‘Where Memory Is Too Much, One Turns to the Eye’: Brief Notes on Arthur Yap.” http://www.poetry.sg/arthur-yap-intro. Accessed 28 April 2021.

Bokhorst-Heng, Wendy D. et al. *Whose English? Language Ownership in Singapore’s English Language Debates.* Hong Kong University Press, 2010.

Bourdieu, Pierre and Randal Johnson. *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature.* Cambridge : Polity Press, 1993., 1993.

Boym, Svetlana. *The Future of Nostalgia.* Basic Books, 2001.

Brewster, Anne. “An Interview with Arthur Yap.” *Asiatic: IIUM Journal of English Language and Literature*, vol. 2, no. 1, 2008, pp. 97-108.

Brooks, Rachel and Johanna L. Waters. *Student Mobilities, Migration and the Internationalization of Higher Education.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Brouillette, Sarah. *Postcolonial Writers in the Global Literary Marketplace.* New edition, Palgrave Macmillan, 2011.

Bunia, Remigius. “Diegesis and Representation: Beyond the Fictional World, on the Margins of Story and Narrative.” *Poetics Today*, vol. 31, no. 4, 2010, pp. 679-720, doi:10.1215/03335372-2010-010.

Burt, Stephen. “The Contemporary Sonnet.” *The Cambridge Companion to the Sonnet*, edited by A.D. Cousins and Peter Howarth, 2011, pp. 245-266.

Cabusao, Jeffrey. "Decolonizing Knowledges: Asian American Studies, Carlos Bulosan, and Insurgent Filipino Diasporic Imagination." 2011, pp. 122-144.

Canagarajah, A. Suresh. *Translingual Practice [Electronic Resource] : Global Englishes and Cosmopolitan Relations.* Routledge, 2012. *Taylor & Francis Ebooks*.

Carnell, Simon. “Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard by Kiran Desai (Book Review).” *The Spectator*, vol. 280, no. 8860, 1998, p. 34, Periodicals Archive Online; Periodicals Index Online.

Casanova, Pascale and M. B. DeBevoise. *The World Republic of Letters.* Harvard University Press, 2004. *Convergences (Cambridge, Mass.)*.

Castells, Manuel. *The Rise of the Network Society.* 2nd edition, Blackwell, 2000. *Castells, Manuel, 1942- Information Age ; V. 1*.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh. *Provincializing Europe.* Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2007.

Chaudhuri, Amit. *The Picador Book of Modern Indian Literature.* Picador, 2001. *Modern Indian Literature*.

Cheah, Pheng. “Given Culture: Rethinking Cosmopolitan Freedom in Transnationalism.” *Cosmopolitics : Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation*, edited by Pheng Cheah and Bruce Robbins, University of Minnesota Press, 1998, pp. 290-328.

---. *What Is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature.* Duke University Press, 2016.

Chin, Grace V. S. "The Anxieties of Authorship on Malaysian and Singaporean Writings in English: Locating the English Language Writer and the Question of Freedom in the Postcolonial Era." *Postcolonial text*, vol. 2, no. 4, 2006.

Chin, Y. Z. "People with My Kind of Upbringing Were Not Destined to Be Writers." Electric Lit 3 September 2019 https://electricliterature.com/tash-aw-we-the-survivors-novel/. Accessed 23 September 2021.

Chong, Terence. "The Bicentennial Commemoration: Imagining and Re-Imagining Singapore's History." *Southeast asian Affairs*, vol. 2020 no. 1, 2020, pp. 323-333, doi:muse.jhu.edu/article/754753.

---. "Manufacturing Authenticity: The Cultural Production of National Identities in Singapore." *Mod. Asian Stud.*, vol. 45, no. 4, 2011, pp. 877-897, doi:10.1017/S0026749X09000158.

Chow, Rey. *Not Like a Native Speaker: On Languaging as a Postcolonial Experience.* Columbia University Press, 2014.

Cixous, Hélène "The Laugh of the Medusa." *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*
edited by Vincent B. Leitch, Norton, 2001, pp. 2039-2056.

Clifford, James. *Routes: Travel and Translation in the Late Twentieth Century.* Harvard University Press, 1997.

Cohen, Margaret. "Traveling Genres." *New Literary History*, vol. 34, no. 3, 2003, pp. 481-499, doi:10.1353/nlh.2003.0040.

Comber, Leon. *13 May 1969: The Darkest Day in Malaysian History.* Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2009.

Cooppan, Vilashini. “Codes for World Literature: Network Theory and the Field Imaginary.” *Approaches to World Literature*, edited by Joachim Küpper, Akademie Verlag, 2013, pp. 103-120.

---. “World Literature after 1989: Revolutions in Motion.” *The Cambridge History of World Literature.* , edited by Debjani Ganguly, vol. I and II, Cambridge University Press, 2021, p. 180 to 198.

Cruz-Lucero, Rosario. “Fiction Making and History in the Era of the Selfie.” *Davao Writers Workshop* 2015.

---. *Herstory.* Babaylan Women's Publishing Collective (BWCP), 1991.

---. *The Nation Beyond Manila.* Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2007.

Cruz, Denise. *Transpacific Femininities: The Making of the Modern Filipina.* 2012.

Crystal, David. *English as a Global Language.* Second edition, Cambridge University Press, 2003. *Ebook Central*.

Culler, Jonathan D. *Theory of the Lyric.* Harvard University Press, 2015.

Dalley, Hamish “The Return of Realism in the World Novel.” *The Cambridge History of World Literature.* , edited by Debjani Ganguly, vol. I and II, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 636-652.

Damrosch, David. *What Is World Literature?* Princeton University Press, 2003. *Translation/Transnation*.

Datta, Sudipta. “Two Alone, Two Together.” The Hindu https://www.thehindu.com/books/Two-alone-two-together/article17194613.ece. Accessed 28 April 2020.

Deckard, Sharae, et al, editors. *Combined and Uneven Development: Towards a New Theory of World-Literature.* Liverpool University Press, 2015. *Postcolonialism across the Disciplines ; 17*.

Deckard, Sharae and Stephen A. Shapiro. *World Literature, Neoliberalism, and the Culture of Discontent.* 1st ed. 2019. edition, Springer International Publishing : Imprint: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019. *New Comparisons in World Literature*.

Deleuze, Gilles. *Essays Critical and Clinical.* Verso, 1998.

Deleuze, Gilles and Felix Guattari. *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* translated by Dana Polan, Univ. of Minnesota Press, 1997.

Desai, Kiran. "Fatherland." *The New Yorker*, 2011, https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2011/04/18/fatherland.

---. "Kiran Desai Interview: The World Arrived in Books." Interview by Marc-Christoph Wagner, Louisiana Literature festival, Lousiana Channel, 2014, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=B56ZXn-hKHs&t=135s.

---. "Kiran Desai Talk Asia Interview." Interview by Anjali Rao, CNN Talk Asia, CNN, 2007, http://edition.cnn.com/2007/WORLD/asiapcf/04/23/talkasia.desai/index.html.

Dorothy Z. Fenandez, Amos H. Hawley, Silvia Predaz. "The Population of Malaysia." edited by C.I.C.R.E.D., 1975.

Ee, Tiang Hong. "Literature and Liberation: The Price of Freedom." *Literature and Liberation : Five Essays from Southeast Asia*, edited by Edwin Thumboo, Solidaridad Pub. House, 1988, pp. 11-42. *Solidarity Translation Series*

English, James F. *The Economy of Prestige: Prizes, Awards, and the Circulation of Cultural Value.* Harvard University Press, 2005.

Erll, Astrid. "Travelling Memory." *Parallax*, vol. 17, no. 4, 2011, pp. 4-18, doi:10.1080/13534645.2011.605570.

Erwin, Lee. "Class and the Time of the Nation in Preeta Samarasan's Evening Is the Whole Day." *Ariel*, vol. 45, no. 1, 2014, pp. 195-220, doi:10.1353/ari.2014.0002.

Evasco, Marjorie. “Coming on Her Own into Her Country: Philippine Women's Self-Referential Writing, 1970-1990.” *Review of Japanese Culture and Society*, vol. 4, 1991, pp. 31-36, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/42800107.

Fehskens, Erin M. “Desai's Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard as Global Literature.” *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2013, p. 13, doi:10.7771/1481-4374.2366.

Felman, Shoshana and Dori Laub. *Testimony : Crises of Witnessing in Literature, Psychoanalysis, and History.* Routledge, 1992.

Fernando, Lloyd. *Cultures in Conflict: Essays on Literature & the English Language in South East Asia.* G. Brash, 1986.

---. “English, Literature and Bilingualism in South East Asia.” *Cultures in Conflict: Essays on Literature & the English Language in South East Asia* G. Brash, 1986, pp. 83-110.

---. “Re-Defining the Self in Southeast Asia.” *Westerly*, vol. 29, no. 4, 1984, pp. 25-31.

Fong, Vivienne et al. “‘Singlish’: Used and Abused.” *Asian Englishes*, vol. 5, no. 1, 2002, pp. 18-39, doi:10.1080/13488678.2002.10801087.

Frow, John. *Genre.* Routledge, 2006. *New Critical Idiom*.

Gabriel, Sharmani P. “The Meaning of Race in Malaysia: Colonial, Post-Colonial and Possible New Conjunctures.” *Ethnicities*, vol. 15, no. 6, 2015, pp. 782-809, doi:10.1177/1468796815570347.

Gandhi, Leela. *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction.* Columbia University Press, 2019. *Ebook Central*.

Ganguly-Scrase, Ruchira and Timothy J. Scrase. “Darjeeling Re-Made: The Cultural Politics of Charm and Heritage.” *South Asia: Journal of South Asian Studies*, vol. 38, no. 2, 2015, pp. 1-17, doi:10.1080/00856401.2015.1031203.

Ganguly, Debjani. *The Cambridge History of World Literature. Volume I and Ii.* Cambridge University Press, 2021. *Cambridge Core*.

---. *This Thing Called the World: The Contemporary Novel as Global Form.* Duke University Press, 2016.

Genette, Gérard and Jane E. Lewin. *Narrative Discourse: An Essay in Method.* Cornell University Press, 1980.

George, Rosemary Marangoly. *Indian English and the Fiction of National Literature.* Cambridge University Press, 2013.

Gikandi, Simon. *Maps of Englishness: Writing Identity in the Culture of Colonialism.* Columbia niversity Press, 1996.

Gilmour, Rachael. *Bad English: Literature, Multilingualism, and the Politics of Language in Contemporary Britain.* Manchester University Press, 2020.

Glissant, Édouard. *Caribbean Discourse: Selected Essays.* University Press of Virginia, 1999. *Caraf Books*.

---. *Poetics of Relation.* University of Michigan Press, 1997.

Goh, Robbie B. H. "The Anatomy of Singlish: Globalisation, Multiculturalism and the Construction of the 'Local' in Singapore." *Journal of Multilingual and Multicultural Development*, vol. 37, no. 8, 2016, pp. 748-758, doi:10.1080/01434632.2015.1133628.

Gonzaga, Elmo. *Globalization and Becoming-Nation: Subjectivity, Nationhood and Narrative in the Period of Global Capitalism.* Quezon city Ateneo de Manila University, 2011.

Gonzalez, Andrew. "The History of English in the Philippines." *English Is an Asian Language : The Philippine Context : Proceedings of the Conference Held in*

Manila on August 2-3, 1996 edited by Maria Lourdes S. Bautista, Macquarie Library, 1997, pp. 25-40.

---. "Language, Nation and Development in the Philippines." *Language, Nation and Development in Southeast Asia*, edited by Hock Guan Lee and Leo Suryadinata, Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2007, pp. 7-16.

---. *Language and Nationalism: The Philippine Experience Thus Far* Ateneo de Manila University Press, 1980.

---. "The Social Dimensions of Philippine English." *World Englishes*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2004, pp. 7-16, doi:10.1111/j.1467-971X.2004.00331.x.

Goodman, Allegra. "What Aasha Saw." The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2008/07/27/books/review/Goodman-t.html. Accessed 10 April 2021.

Gopal, Priyamvada. *The Indian English Novel: Nation, History, and Narration.* Oxford University Press, 2009. *Oxford Studies in Postcolonial Literatures in English*.

Gopinathan, Saravanan. "Language Policy Changes 1979-1997: Politics and Pedagogy." *Language, Society and Education in Singapore: Issues and Trends* edited by Saravanan Gopinathan et al., 2nd ed. edition, Times Academic Press, 1998, pp. 19-44.

Grapragasem, Selvaraj et al. "Current Trends in Malaysian Higher Education and the Effect on Education Policy and Practice: An Overview " *International Journal of Higher Education*, vol. 3, no. 1, 2014, pp. 85-93.

Griffiths, Michael R. "Form, Frame and Allegory in Recent Transnational Short Fictions." *Australian Humanities Review*, no. 62, 2017, Literature Online; Publicly Available Content Database.

Gui, Weihsin. *Common Lines and City Spaces: A Critical Anthology of Arthur Yap* Institute of Southeast Asian Studies, 2014.

---. *National Consciousness and Literary Cosmopolitics: Postcolonial Literature in a Global Moment.* Columbus, Ohio : Ohio State University Press, c2013., 2013. *Transoceanic Studies*.

Guillory, John. *Cultural Capital: The Problem of Literary Canon Formation.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993. *Acls Humanities E-Book*.

Gupta, R. S. and Kapil Kapoor. *English in India: Issues and Problems.* Academic Foundation, 1991.

Gupta, Suman. *Globalization and Literature.* Polity, 2009.

Gwee, Li Sui. "Do You Speak Singlish?" The New York Times https://www.nytimes.com/2016/05/14/opinion/do-you-speak-singlish.html. Accessed 28 April 2021.

---. *Spiaking Singlish: A Companion to How Singaporeans Communicate* Marshall Cavendish Editions, 2018. *Companion to How Singaporeans Communicate*.

Hamid Roslan. "Saya Orang Dibawah Angin / I, under the Monsoon." *Journal of Practice, Research & Tangential Activities (PR&TA)*, no. 1, 2021, https://www.pratajournal.com/saya-orang-dibawah-angin.

Halberstam, Jack. *In a Queer Time and Place: Transgender Bodies, Subcultural Lives.* New York University Press, 2005. *Ebook Central*.

Hall, Stuart. "The Local and the Global." *Culture, Globalization, and the World-System : Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*, edited by Anthony D. King, University of Minnesota Press, 2000, pp. 19-39.

Harlow, Barbara. *Resistance Literature.* Methuen, 1987.

Hau, Caroline S. “The Filipino Novel in English.” *Philippine English : Linguistic and Literary Perspectives*, edited by Lourdes S. Bautista and Kingsley Bolton, Hong Kong University Press, 2008, pp. 317-336.

---. *Necessary Fictions: Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980* Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2000. *Philippine Literature and the Nation, 1946-1980*.

Hayot, Eric. “Does Poetry Make Worlds?” *The Cambridge History of World Literature*, edited by Debjani Ganguly, vol. I and II, Cambridge University Press, 2021, pp. 201-214.

---. *On Literary Worlds.* Oxford University Press, 2012. *Oxford Scholarship Online*.

Helgesson, Stefan and Christina Kullberg. “Translingual Events: World Literature and the Making of Language.” *Journal of World Literature*, vol. 3, no. 2, 2018, p. 136, doi:10.1163/24056480-00302002.

Helgesson, Stefan et al. *Handbook of Anglophone World Literatures.* De Gruyter, 2020. *Handbooks of English and American Studies*.

Herrero, Dolores. “Merlinda Bobis’s Fish-Hair Woman: Showcasing Asian Australianness, Putting the Question of Justice in Its Place.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 52, no. 5, 2016, pp. 610-621, doi:10.1080/17449855.2016.1202562.

Hidalgo, Cristina Pantoja. “The Story of the Philippine Short Story in English.” *Modern Short Fiction of Southeast Asia: A Literary History*, edited by Teri Shaffer Yamada, vol. 1, Association for Asian Studies, Inc., 2009, pp. 293-320. *Asia Past & Present*

Hirschman, Charles. “The Making of Race in Colonial Malaya: Political Economy and Racial Ideology.” *Official Journal of the Eastern Sociological Society*, vol. 1, no. 2, 1986, pp. 330-361, doi:10.1007/BF01115742.

Ho, Olivia. “Singapore's Epigram Books to Stop Publishing in the UK.” *The Straits Times*, Singapore Press Holdings, 11 January 2021 2021. https://www.straitstimes.com/life/arts/epigram-books-to-stop-publishing-in-the-uk

Holden, Philip. “Global Malaysian Novels: Prospects and Possibilities.” *Kajian Malaysia: Journal of Malaysian Studies*, vol. 30, 2012, pp. 47-59, a9h, https://login.libproxy.nie.edu.sg/login?url=http://search.ebscohost.com/login.aspx?direct=true&db=a9h&AN=82578583&site=eds-live.

---. “Postcolonial Desire: Placing Singapore.” *Postcolonial Studies*, vol. 11, no. 3, 2008, pp. 345-361, doi:10.1080/13688790802226736.

Holst, Frederik. *Ethnicization and Identity Construction in Malaysia.* Routledge, 2014.

Hu, Bettina. “ ‘It Gets a Bit Crazy Lah’—the Launch of Parsetreeforestfire by Hamid Roslan.” Ethos Books https://www.ethosbooks.com.sg/blogs/news/parsetreeforestfire-launch.

Huggan, Graham. *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins.* London, Routledge, 2001.

Idar, Nicole. “An Interview with Tan Twan Eng.” *Asymptote*. Asymptote https://www.asymptotejournal.com/interview/an-interview-with-tan-twan-eng/. Accessed 14 September 2019.

Indo-Asian News Service. “Inheritance Irks Nepali Readers.” Hindustan Times https://www.hindustantimes.com/india/inheritance-irks-nepali-readers/story-KwzmG7VPG38kDPCT72hn5L.html. Accessed 14 November 2018.

Iser, Wolfgang. *The Fictive and the Imaginary: Charting Literary Anthropology.* Johns Hopkins University Press, 1993.

Itō, Teiji and Sōsei Kuzunishi. *Space and Illusion in the Japanese Garden.* 1st English edition, Weatherhill, 1973.

Jani, Pranav. *Decentering Rushdie: Cosmopolitanism and the Indian Novel in English.* Ohio State University Press, 2010.

Jeyathurai, Dashini. "Labouring Bodies, Labouring Histories: The Malaysian-Indian Estate Girl." *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2012, pp. 303-323, doi:10.1177/0021989412450703.

Joraimi, Faris. " 'A New World Is Being Created': A Brief History of Malay Literature in Singapore." *No Man's Land*, no. 47, 2021, http://www.heath.tw/nml-article/a-new-world-is-being-created-a-brief-history-of-malay-literature-in-singapore/?lang=en.

Jordinson, Sam. "Booker Club: The Gift of Rain by Tan Twan Eng." *The Guardian Books Blog*. 31 August 2007 https://www.theguardian.com/books/booksblog/2007/aug/31/bookerclubthegiftofrain. Accessed 15 May 2018.

Joubert, Claire. "Poetics and the Geopolitics of Knowledge: From Colonial to Global." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, vol. 55, no. 6, 2019, pp. 743-754, doi:10.1080/17449855.2019.1680146.

Kachru, Braj B. *Asian Englishes: Beyond the Canon.* Hong Kong University Press, 2005. *Asian Englishes Today*.

Kee, Thuan Chye. "Dilemma of a Dog Barking at a Mountain: Pragmatist-Idealist Dialectic and the Writer in Malaysia." *Malaysian Literature in English: A Critical Reader* edited by A. Quayum Mohammad and Peter C. Wicks, Longman, 2001, pp. 67-73.

---. "In Search of Good Penang Fiction." *Penang Economic Monthly*, 2010, pp. 32-33.

Keong, Neil Khor Jin "A History of the Anglophone Straits Chinese and Their Literature." *Sharing Borders: Studies in Contemporary Singaporean-Malaysian Literature I*, edited by Mohammad A. Quayum et al., National Library Board in partnership

with the National Arts Council, Singapore, 2009, pp. 36-57. *Writing Asia: The Literatures in Englishes*.

Koh, Sin Yee. *Race, Education, and Citizenship: Mobile Malaysians, British Colonial Legacies, and a Culture of Migration.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2017. *Migration, Diasporas and Citizenship*.

Koh, Tai Ann. "The Singapore Experience: Cultural Development in the Global Village." *Southeast asian Affairs*, vol. 1980, 1980, pp. 292-307.

Kotwani, Monica. "Singapore's Bicentennial Commemoration in 2019: A Time to Reflect on Its Rich History." CNA 01 Jan 2018 https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/singapore-s-bicentennial-commemoration-in-2019-a-time-to-reflect-9823248. Accessed 9 July 2020.

Král, Françoise. "Polyglossing in English: The Diasporic Trajectories of the English Language." *Journal of Postcolonial Writing: Special Issue: Diasporic Trajectories: Charting new critical perspectives*, vol. 55, no. 6, 2019, pp. 836-849, doi:10.1080/17449855.2019.1680163.

Krishnan, Raman. "Sundaland Publishing - We Too Can't Breathe." Silverfish Books 1 October 2020 https://silverfishbooks.com/blogs/news-1/sunda-publishing-we-too-can-t-breathe. Accessed 24 September 2021.

Kukkonen, Karin. *4e Cognition and Eighteenth-Century Fiction: How the Novel Found Its Feet.* Oxford University Press, 2019. *Cognition and Poetics*.

Lake, Ed. "Man Booker 2007 Prize: The Gift of Rain." *Fiction Reviews*. The Telegraph https://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/fictionreviews/3667300/Man-Booker-2007-Prize-The-Gift-of-Rain.html. Accessed 15 May 2018.

Lama, Wendy Brewer et al. *Sikkim, Darjeeling & Kalimpong.* APA GeoCenter International U.K. [distributor], 1993. *Insight Pocket Guides*.

Lau, Lisa. “Re-Orientalism: The Perpetration and Development of Orientalism by Orientals.” *Modern Asian Studies*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2009, pp. 571-590, doi:10.1017/S0026749X07003058.

Lau, Lisa and Ana Cristina Mendes. *Re-Orientalism and South Asian Identity Politics: The Oriental Other Within.* Routledge, 2011. *Routledge Contemporary South Asia Series*.

Lazarus, Neil. *The Postcolonial Unconscious.* Cambridge University Press, 2011.

Leck, Kenny. "Nature Books: A Bookselling Idea." edited by Ann Ang, Email, 9 November 2020.

Lee, Aaron and Alvin Pang. *No Other City: The Ethos Anthology of Urban Poetry.* Ethos Books, 2000.

Lee, Jason Eng Hun and Sreedhevi Iyer. “On Not Writing Back: Cosmopolitan Paradoxes in New Diasporic Malaysian Writing Today.” *Journal of Postcolonial Writing*, 2021, pp. 1-15, doi:10.1080/17449855.2021.1975408.

Leow, Rachel. *Taming Babel: Language in the Making of Malaysia.* Cambridge University Press, 2016.

Liew, Brandon. *Engmalchin and the Plural Imaginings of Malaysia; or, the 'Arty-Crafty Dodgers of Reality'.* 2018.

---. “The Unquiet Dreams of Lesser Malaysian Writers: Tradition and the Global Malaysian Novel.” *Archiv orientální*, vol. 89, no. 2, 2021, pp. 283-310, doi:https://doi.org/10.47979/aror.j.89.2.283-310.

Lim, David C. L. “Agency and the Pedagogy of Japanese Colonialism in Tan Twan Eng's the Gift of Rain.” *Critique: Studies in Contemporary Fiction*, vol. 52, no. 2, 2011, pp. 233-247, doi:10.1080/00111610903380162.

---. *Overcoming Passion for Race in Malaysia Cultural Studies.* Brill, 2008. *Social Sciences in Asia*.

Lim, Lisa et al. *English in Singapore:Modernity and Management.* NUS Press, 2010.

Lim, Sheau Yun et al. *Banned in Kl, Astroboy Rides the Wave to Sky Kingdom on a Grasshopper* Cloud Projects Enterprise, 2021.

Lim, Shirley. "Arthur Yap: Two Mothers in a Hdb Playground." *Critical Engagements: Singapore Poems in Focus*, edited by Kirpal Singh, Heinemann Asia, 1986, pp. 25-30.

---. *Writing S.E/Asia in English : Against the Grain, Focus on Asian English-Language Literature.* Skoob Books Pub., 1994. *Writing South East/Asia in English*.

Lim, Shirley Geok-Lin et al. "Asian Literatures in English." *The Handbook of Asian Englishes*, edited by Kingsley Bolton et al., John Wiley & Sons, 2020, pp. 787-811.

Lionnet, Françoise and Shumei Shi. *Minor Transnationalism.* Duke University Press, 2005.

Locke, John. *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding.* 27th ed., with the author's last additions. edition, Lond., 1836.

Lye, Kit Ying. "Merlinda Bobis's 'Fish-Hair' Woman: A Magical Rendering of History." *Philippine Studies: Historical and Ethnographic Viewpoints*, vol. 65, no. 2, 2017, pp. 201-225.

Malik, Surbhi. "Homelessness as Metaphor and Metonym: Transatlantic Geopolitics in Jhumpa Lahiri's Fiction and Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of Loss." *South Asian Review*, vol. 37, no. 2, 2016, pp. 47-70, doi:10.1080/02759527.2016.11933061.

Mani, B. Venkat. *Recoding World Literature : Libraries, Print Culture, and Germany's Pact with Books.* Fordham University Press, 2016.

McKay, Daniel. “Don’t Hate the British: Old Boer Wisdom in Tan Twan Eng’s the Garden of Evening Mists.” *Wasafiri*, vol. 30, no. 3, 2015, pp. 50-56, doi:10.1080/02690055.2015.1044787.

Mehta, Manik “Putting Malaysia on the World Literary Map “ *Malaysia Business*, New Straits Times Press (Malaysia) Berhad, 2008, p. 62.

Mishra, Pankaj. “Midnight's Grandchildren.” Prospect Magazine https://www.prospectmagazine.co.uk/magazine/midnightsgrandchildren. Accessed 22 January 2020.

Mizumura, Minae. *The Fall of Language in the Age of English.* New York: Columbia University Press, 2015.

Mojares, Resil B. *Waiting for Mariang Makiling: Essays in Philippine Cultural History.* ADMU, 2002.

Moretti, Franco. “Conjectures on World Literature.” *New Left Review*, vol. 1, 2000, p. 54.

Mufti, Aamir. *Forget English! : Orientalisms and World Literatures.* Harvard University Press, 2016.

Mukherjee, Ankhi. *What Is a Classic? [Electronic Resource] : Postcolonial Rewriting and Invention of the Canon.* Stanford University Press, 2014. *Cultural Memory in the Present*.

---. “ ‘What Is a Classic?’: International Literary Criticism and the Classic Question.” *PMLA*, vol. 125, no. 4, 2010, pp. 1026-1042, doi:10.1632/pmla.2010.125.4.1026.

Mukherjee, Dipika. “Malaysian English Writing Today.” World Literature Today 16 April 2019 https://www.worldliteraturetoday.org/blog/cultural-cross-sections/malaysian-english-writing-today-dipika-mukherjee. Accessed 15 October 2021.

Mukherjee, Meenakshi. "The Local and the Global: Literary Implications in India." *English Studies in Africa*, vol. 43, no. 2, 2000, pp. 47-56, doi:10.1080/00138390008691294.

---. *The Twice Born Fiction : Themes and Techniques of the Indian Novel in English.* Heinemann [Educational Books, 1971.

Nancy, Jean-Luc. *The Creation of the World, or, Globalization.* State University of New York Press, 2007. *Creation of the World*.

Ng Soon Hock, Andrew. "The Novel of Malaysia." *The Novel in South and South East Asia since 1945*, edited by Alex Tickell, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 321-336. *Oxford History of the Novel in English*.

Ngũgĩ wa, Thiong'o. *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature.* James Currey Heinemann, 1986.

Nonini, Donald Macon. *Getting By: Class and State Formation among Chinese in Malaysia.* Cornell University Press, 2015. *Ebook Central*.

O'Neill, Michael et al. *Oxford Handbook of Percy Bysshe Shelley.* Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2012. *Oxford Handbooks*.

Ocampo, Victor Fernando R. "Mapping New Stars." *Mapping New Stars*, edited by Gabriela D. Lee and Anna Felicia Sanchez, UP Press, Pre-publication, pp. 1-31.

Ong, Aihwa. *Flexible Citizenship: The Cultural Logics of Transnationality.* Duke University Press, 1999.

Ong, Ike. *S.E. Asia Writes Back!* Skoob Books, 1993. *Skoob Pacifica Series ; No. 2000*.

Ong, Sor Fen. "A Man of Few Words." *The Straits Times*, Singapore Press Holdings, 21 June 2006, Life.

Ongkili, James P. *Nation-Building in Malaysia 1946-1974* Oxford University Press, 1985.

Ooi, Vincent and Peter Tan. "Facebook, Linguistic Identity and Hybridity in Singapore." *The Global-Local Interface and Hybridity: Exploring Language and Identity*, edited by Rani Rubdy and Lubna Alsagoff, Multilingual Matters, 2014.

Orsini, Francesa. "India in the Mirror of World Fiction." *New Left Review*, no. 13, 2002, pp. 75-88.

Pais, Arthur. "Success She Wrote." *India Abroad*, 05/10/2013 May 10 2013, p. 1. Ethnic NewsWatch.

Pakir, Anne. "Education and Invisible Language Planning: The Case of the English Language in Singapore." *Language, Society and Education in Singapore: Issues and Trends*, edited by Jason Tan et al., Prentice Hall, 1997, pp. 57-74.

Pang, Alvin. "Writing the Multiple: From Chapalang to Confluence." *School of Media and Communication*, vol. Degree of Doctor of Philosophy, RMIT, 2020.

Parks, Tim. "The Dull New Global Novel." The New York Review of Books https://www.nybooks.com/daily/2010/02/09/the-dull-new-global-novel/. Accessed 27 February 2019.

Patke, Rajeev S. "Poetry in English from Singapore." *World Literature Today*, vol. 74, no. 2, 2000, pp. 293-299, doi:10.2307/40155573.

---. "Prolegomena to a Literary History of English in Southeast Asia." *From the Inside : Asia Pacific Literature in Englishes* edited by Edwin Thumboo and Rex Ian Sayson, vol. 1, Ethos Books, 2007, pp. 89-100. *From the Inside : Asia Pacific Literatures in Englishes*.

Pavel, Thomas G. *Fictional Worlds.* Harvard University Press, 1986.

Pennycook, Alastair. *The Cultural Politics of English as an International Language.* Longman, 1994. *Language in Social Life Series*.

Phillipson, Robert. *Linguistic Imperialism Continued.* Routledge, 2009. *Taylor & Francis Ebooks*.

Philippines Statistics Authority, "Survey on Overseas Filipinos." General, National Statistician and Civil Registrar, 2020. https://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinoshttps://psa.gov.ph/statistics/survey/labor-and-employment/survey-overseas-filipinos.

Poddar, Prem and Cheralyn Mealor. "Kalimpong as Fiction or Ethnography? Gorkha/Nepali Sensitivities in the Himalayas." *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands: Kalimpong as a* "*Contact Zone"* edited by Markus Viehbeck, Heidelberg University Publishing, 2017, pp. 321-346.

Poon, Angelia. "Transcultural Aesthetics and Postcolonial Memory: The Practices and Politics of Remembering in Tan Twan Eng's the Garden of Evening Mists." *The Cambridge Journal of Postcolonial Literary Inquiry*, vol. 3, no. 02, 2016, pp. 185-201, doi:10.1017/pli.2016.4.

Poon, Angelia et al. *Writing Singapore: An Historical Anthology of Singapore Literature.* NUS Press, 2009.

Popham, Peter. "Under Fire, but India Is in My Blood." The Independent https://www.independent.co.uk/news/world/under-fire-but-india-is-in-my-blood-1240454.html. Accessed 1 March 2020.

Posel, Deborah. "History as Confession: The Case of the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission." *Public Culture*, vol. 20, no. 1, 2008, pp. 119-141, doi:10.1215/08992363-2007-019.

Pradhan, Queeny. “Empire in the Hills: The Making of Hill Stations in Colonial India.” *Studies in History*, vol. 23, no. 1, 2007, pp. 33-91, doi:10.1177/025764300602300102.

Price, Leah. *The Anthology and the Rise of the Novel: From Richardson to George Eliot.* Cambridge University Press, 2000. *Ebook Central*.

Purushotam, Nirmala Srirekam. *Negotiating Multiculturalism: Disciplining Difference in Singapore.* Reprint 2012 edition, De Gruyter Mouton, 2012.

Quayson, Ato. “Postcolonialism and the Diasporic Imaginary.” *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, edited by Ato Quayson and Girish Daswani, 1st edition, John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013, pp. 139-159. *Blackwell Companions in Cultural Studies*.

Quayson, Ato and Girish Daswani, editors. *A Companion to Diaspora and Transnationalism*, 1st edition. John Wiley & Sons, Incorporated, 2013.

Quayum, Mohammad A. *Peninsular Muse: Interviews with Modern Malaysian and Singaporean Poets, Novelists, and Dramatists.* Peter Lang, 2007.

Rafael, Vicente L. “Colonial Contractions: The Making of the Modern Philippines, 1565–1946.” *Oxford Research Encyclopedia of Asian History*, Oxford University Press, 2018.

---. *White Love and Other Events in Filipino History* Duke University Press, 2000. *American Encounters/Global Interactions*.

Ranasinha, Ruvani. *Contemporary Diasporic South Asian Women's Fiction: Gender, Narration and Globalisation.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Rajadurai, Joanne. “The Faces and Facets of English in Malaysia.” *English Today*, vol. 20, no. 4, 2004, pp. 54-58, doi:10.1017/S0266078404004109.

Rajan, Gita and Shailja Sharma. *New Cosmopolitanisms: South Asians in the Us.* Stanford University Press, 2006. *Asian America*.

Bruce, Robbins. "Afterword." *PMLA: Publications of the Modern Language Association of America*, vol. 122, no. 5, 2007, pp. 1644 -1651.

Rothberg, Michael. *Multidirectional Memory: Remembering the Holocaust in the Age of Decolonization.* Stanford University Press, 2009. *Cultural Memory in the Present*.

Rushdie, Salman. *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991.* Granta Books 1991.

---. *Midnight's Children.* Vintage, 2005.

Rushdie, Salman and Elizabeth West. *Mirrorwork: 50 Years of Indian Writing, 1947-1997.* 1st edition, H. Holt & Co., 1997.

Sabo, Oana. “Disjunctures and Diaspora in Kiran Desai’s the Inheritance of Loss.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 47, no. 3, 2012, pp. 375-392, doi:10.1177/0021989412450697.

Samad, Daizal Rafeek. “A Heritage of Fragments: An Interview with Wong Phui Nam.” *Manoa*, vol. 11, no. 1, 1999, pp. 98-109, JSTOR, http://www.jstor.org/stable/4229741.

Samarasan, Preeta. “The Deepest Wounds.” *Evening Is the Whole Day*, Fourth Estate, 2008, pp. 12-16.

---. “Malaysian Writer Preeta Samarasan on How Her Country’s Systemic Racism Forced Her to Move Abroad and How She Still Mourns the Loss of the Nation Which Never Quite Accepted Her.” *The Culture Review Mag*, 2020, https://theculturereviewmag.com/2020/04/23/malaysian-writer-preeta-samarasan-on-her-countrys-systemic-racism-why-she-moved-abroad-and-how-she-still-mourns-the-loss-of-her-country-who-never-quite-accepted-her/.

---. “Robert Raymer Chats with French-Based Malaysian Writer Preeta Samarasan.” Interview by Robert Raymer, 2018, http://borneoexpatwriter.blogspot.com/2018/01/interview-preeta-samarasan-robert.html.

---. “Wagers.” *AGNI*, no. 93, 2021, https://agnionline.bu.edu/essay/wagers.

Sanders, Mark. *Ambiguities of Witnessing: Law and Literature in the Time of a Truth Commission.* Stanford University Press, 2007.

San Juan, E. "Contemporary Global Capitalism and the Challenge of the Filipino Diaspora." *Global society : journal of interdisciplinary international relations*, vol. 25, no. 1, 2011, pp. 7-27, doi:10.1080/13600826.2010.522983.

Schaub, Michael. “The Big Five Become the Big Four.” Kirkus 25 November 2020 https://www.kirkusreviews.com/news-and-features/articles/the-big-five-become-the-big-four/. Accessed 2 November 2021.

Shamsul, Amri Baharuddin. “A History of an Identity, an Identity of a History: The Idea and Practice of Malayness in Malaysia Reconsidered.” *Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, vol. 32, no. 3, 2001, pp. 355-366, doi:10.1017/S0022463401000194.

Sheppard, Robert. *The Meaning of Form in Contemporary Innovative Poetry.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2016.

Shih, Shumei. *Visuality and Identity: Sinophone Articulations across the Pacific.* University of California Press, 2007. *University Press Scholarship Online*.

Shivani, Anis. “Indo-Anglian Fiction: The New Orientalism.” *Race & Class*, vol. 47, no. 4, 2006, pp. 1-25, doi:10.1177/0306396806063855.

Shroff, Satis. “Kathmandu Blues: The Inheritance of Loss and Intercultural Competence.” Boloji 10 February 2007 https://www.boloji.com/articles/4020/kathmandu-blues-the-inheritance-of-loss-and-intercultural-competence. Accessed 1 October 2021.

Slemon, Stephen. “Magic Realism as Postcolonial Discourse “ *Magical Realism: Theory, History, Community*, edited by Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy B. Faris, Duke University Press, 1995, pp. 407-426.

Spivak, Gayatri Chakravorty. *Can the Subaltern Speak?* Macmillan, 1988.

Srinivasa Iyengar, K. R. *Indian Writing in English.* Asia Pub. House, 1962.

Srinivasan, Ragini Tharoor. “Introduction: South Asia from Postcolonial to World Anglophone.” *Interventions*, vol. 20, no. 3, 2018, pp. 309-316, doi:10.1080/1369801X.2018.1446840.

Stamekhin, Anne. “Interview with Preeta Samarasan, Evening Is the Whole Day.” Fiction Writers Review https://fictionwritersreview.com/interview/preeta-samarasan-evening-is-the-whole-day/. Accessed 5 November 2019.

Stephen, Jeannet. “English in Malaysia: A Case of the Past That Never Really Went Away?” *English Today*, vol. 29, no. 2, 2013, pp. 3-8, doi:10.1017/S0266078413000084.

Stroud, Christopher and Lionel Wee. “Consuming Identities: Language Planning and Policy in Singaporean Late Modernity.” *Language Policy*, vol. 6, no. 2, 2007, pp. 253-279, doi:10.1007/s10993-007-9047-6.

Sullivan, Ken. “Achievement: The Poet with an Artist's Touch, Arthur Yap Talks with Ken Sullivan.” *Southeast Asian Review of English*, vol. 8, no. June 1984, 1984, pp. 3-20.

Tadiar, Neferti X. M. *Things Fall Away: Philippine Historical Experience and the Makings of Globalization.* Quezon city Ateneo de Manila University, 2011.

Talib, Ismail “The Language of Singapore Poetry.” *Interlogue: Studies in Singapore Literature* edited by Kirpal Singh and Ronald D. Klein, vol. 2: Poetry, Ethos Books, 1999, pp. 119-130.

Talib, Ismail S. “Malaysia and Singapore.” *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, vol. 54, no. 4, 2019, pp. 643-660, doi:10.1177/0021989419877064.

Tan, Hseuh Yun. “Sbc Cans Singlish on Tv but Says Ok to Local Accent.” *The Straits Times*, 10 July 1993 1993, Home.

Tan, Sooi-Beng. “From Popular to “Traditional” Theater: The Dynamics of Change in Bangsawan of Malaysia.” *Ethnomusicology*, vol. 33, no. 2, 1989, pp. 229-274, doi:10.2307/924397.

Tan, Tai Yong. “Commentary: Bicentennial Can Be a Worthwhile Endeavour.” CNA 23 Dec 2018 https://www.channelnewsasia.com/news/commentary/understanding-the-ambivalence-about-the-bicentennial-11039360. Accessed 9 July 2020.

Tehrani, Faisal “The Problem with Literature in New Malaysia.” Arts Equator https://artsequator.com/masalah-sastera-en/. Accessed 14 October 2021.

Teo, Peter. “Mandarinising Singapore: A Critical Analysis of Slogans in Singapore's 'Speak Mandarin' Campaign.” *Critical discourse studies*, vol. 2, no. 2, 2005, pp. 121-142, doi:10.1080/17405900500283565.

Teo, Yugin. “An Interview with Alvin Pang.” *Wasafiri*, vol. 31, no. 3, 2016, pp. 59-65, doi:10.1080/02690055.2016.1182280.

Thumboo, Edwin. *Literature and Liberation: Five Essays from Southeast Asia* Solidaridad Pub. House, 1988. *Solidarity Translation Series*.

---. “The Search for Style and Theme: A Personal Account.” *Singapore Literature in English: A Critical Reader*, edited by Mohammed A. Quayum & Peter Wicks, UPM Press, 2002, pp. 255-265.

Tickell, Alex. *The Novel in South and South East Asia since 1945.* Oxford University Press, 2019. *Oxford History of the Novel in English*.

Tong, Chee Kiong and Anne Pakir. "The Making of a National Culture in Singapore." *Cultures in Asean and the 21st Century*, edited by Edwin Thumboo, Published by UniPress, Centre for the Arts, National University of Singapore for ASEAN-COCI, 1996, pp. 174-188.

Tope, Lily Rose. "Language Policy, Publishing and Book History in South East Asia." *The Novel in South and South East Asia since 1945*, edited by Alex Tickell, Oxford University Press, 2019, pp. 365-378. *Oxford History of the Novel in English*.

Tripathi, Salil. "Evening Is the Whole Day, by Preeta Samarasan." The Independent https://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/books/reviews/evening-is-the-whole-day-by-preeta-samarasan-846082.html. Accessed 10 April 2021.

Tse, Kelly Yin Nga. "Queering Imperial History: The Ethics of Reconciliation in Tan Twan Eng's the Gift of Rain." *Journal of Commonwealth literature*, 2018, doi:10.1177/0021989418769447.

Tupas, T. Ruanni F. "Anatomies of Linguistic Commodification: The Case of English in the Philippines Vis-À-Vis Other Languages in the Multilingual Marketplace." *Language as Commodity: Global Structures, Local Marketplaces*, edited by Rani Rubdy and Peter K. W. Tan, Continuum, 2008, pp. 89-105.

Tyner, James A. *The Philippines: Mobilities, Identities, Globalization.* Quezon city Ateneo de Manila University, 2011.

Vadivella Belle, Carl. *Tragic Orphans: Indians in Malaysia.* ISEAS Publishing, 2014.

Veloo, Ravi. "Singlish." *The Straits Times*, Singapore Press Holdings, 09/08/1994 1994, pp. 3SS8 - 3SS9.

Venuti, Lawrence. *The Translator's Invisibility: A History of Translation.* Routledge, 1995. *Translation Studies (London, England)*.

Veric, Charlie Samuya *Children of the Postcolony: Filipino Intellectuals and Decolonization, 1946-1972.* Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2020.

Viehbeck, Markus. *Transcultural Encounters in the Himalayan Borderlands : Kalimpong as a "Contact Zone".* Heidelberg University Publishing, 2017. *Heidelberg Studies on Transculturality*.

Viswamohan, Aysha. "Home, Immigration, and Fractured Identities in Kiran Desai's the Inheritance of Loss." *South Asian Review*, vol. 32, no. 2, 2011, pp. 259-273, doi:10.1080/02759527.2011.11932839.

Viswanathan, Gauri. *Masks of Conquest: Literary Study and British Rule in India.* Twenty-fifth anniversary edition, Columbia University Press, 2015. *Ebook Central*.

Walkowitz, Rebecca. *Born Translated*. Columbia University Press, 2015.

Warnes, Christopher. *Magical Realism and the Postcolonial Novel: Between Faith and Irreverence.* Palgrave Macmillan, 2009.

Watson, Jini Kim. *Cold War Reckonings: Authoritarianism and the Genres of Decolonization.* Fordham University Press, 2021.

---. "The Way Ahead: The Politics and Poetics of Singapore's Developmental Landscape." *Contemporary literature*, vol. 49, no. 4, 2008, pp. 683-711, doi:10.1353/cli.0.0038.

Watson, Jini Kim and Gary Wilder. *The Postcolonial Contemporary: Political Imaginaries for the Global Present.* Fordham University Press, 2018.

Watt, Ian. *The Rise of the Novel: Studies in Defoe, Richardson and Fielding.* Hogarth, 1987.

Wee, C. J. Wan-ling. *The Asian Modern: Culture, Capitalist Development, Singapore.* Hong Kong University Press, 2007.

---. "The Indigenized West in Asian Multicultures." *Interventions*, vol. 10, no. 2, 2008, pp. 188-206, doi:10.1080/13698010802145101.

Wee, Lionel. *The Singlish Controversy: Language, Culture and Identity in a Globalizing World.* 2018.

Wenner, Miriam. "Challenging the State by Reproducing Its Principles. The Demand for "Gorkhaland" between Regional Autonomy and the National Belonging." 2013.

Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature* Oxford University Press, 1977. *Marxist Introductions*.

Yap, Arthur. *Thematic Structure in Poetic Discourse* Copinter Publishing, 1987.

Yildiz, Yasemin. *Beyond the Mother Tongue: The Postmonolingual Condition.* First edition, Fordham University Press, 2012.

Young, Robert. *Postcolonialism : An Historical Introduction.* Blackwell Publishers, 2001.

Yousof, Ghulam-Sarwar. "Bangsawan: The Malay Opera." *Tenggara*, vol. 20, 1987, pp. 3-20.

Yuson, Alfred A. "Filipino Diasporic Literature." *Philippine English : Linguistic and Literary Perspectives / Edited by Maria Lourdes S. Bautista and Kingsley Bolton* edited by Maria Lourdes S. Bautista and Kingsley Bolton, Hong Kong University Press, 2008, pp. 337-355. *Asian Englishes Today*.

Zapanta-Manlapaz, Edna. *Filipino Women Writers in English: Their Story: 1905-2002.* Ateneo de Manila University Press, 2003.