

**Borrowing Identities: A Study of Identity and Ambivalence in
Four Canonical English Texts and the Literary Responses each
Invokes**

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this thesis is my own original work and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it at any university for a degree.

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Abstract

The notion that the post-colonial text stands in direct opposition to the canonical European text, and thus acts as a kind of *counter*-discourse, is generally accepted within post-colonial theory. In fact, this concept is so fashionable that Salman Rushdie's assertion that 'the Empire writes back to the Centre' has been adopted as a maxim within the field of post-colonial studies, simultaneously a mission statement and a summative description of the entire field. In its role as a 'response' to a dominant European literary tradition, the post-colonial text is often regarded as resorting to a strategy of subversion through inversion, in essence, telling the 'other side of the story'. The post-colonial text, then, seeks to address the ways in which the western literary tradition has marginalised, misrepresented and silenced its others by providing a platform for these dissenting voices.

While such a view rightly points to the post-colonial text's concern with alterity and oppression, it also points to the agonistic nature of the genre. That is, within post-colonial theory, the literature of Empire does not emerge as autonomous and self-determining, but is restricted to the role of *counter*-discourse, forever placed in direct opposition (or in response) to a *unified* dominant social order. Post-colonial theory's continued classification of the literature of Empire as a reaction to a normative, dominant discourse against which all others must be weighed and found wanting serves to strengthen the binary order which polarises centre and periphery.

This study is concerned with 'rewritten' post-colonial texts, such as J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Marina Warner's *Indigo, or, Mapping the Waters* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, and suggests that these revised texts exceed such narrow definition. Although often characterised by a concern with 'political' issues, the revised text surpasses the romantic notion of 'speaking back' by pointing to a more complex

entanglement between post-colonial and canonical, self and other. These texts signal the collapse of binary order and the emergence of a new literary landscape in which there can be no dialogue between the clearly demarcated sites of Empire and Centre, but rather a global conversation that exceeds geographical location.

It would seem as if the dependent texts in question resist offering mere pluralistic subversions of the logic of their pretexts. The desire to challenge the assumptions of a Eurocentric literary tradition is overshadowed by a distinct sense of disquiet or unease with the matrix text. This sense of unease is read as a response to an *exaggerated* iterability within the original text, which in turn stems from the matrix text's inability to negotiate its own *aporia*.

The aim of this study, then, is not to uncover the ways in which the post-colonial rewrite challenges the assumptions of its literary pretext, but rather to establish how certain elements of instability and subversion *already* present within the colonial pretext allows for such a return.

Opsomming

Die idee dat die postkoloniale teks direk teenoor die gekanoniseerde Europese teks staan, en dus as 'n tipe kontradiskoers optree, word allerweë in die postkoloniale teorie aanvaar. Hierdie konsep is selfs so gewild dat Salman Rushdie se stelling dat die 'Gekolonialiseerdes terugskryf na die Sentrum' ('the Empire writes back to the Centre') in die postkoloniale studieveld as 'n slagspreuk dien, en tegelykertyd as 'n missiestelling en bondige kensketsing van die hele veld. In sy rol as 'n reaksie op die dominante Europese literêre tradisie, word die postkoloniale teks dikwels beskou as diskoers wat hom verlaat op 'n strategie van ondermyning by wyse van omkering, deur die 'ander kant van die verhaal' te vertel. Die postkoloniale teks spreek gevolglik die wyses aan waarop die westerse literêre tradisie sy 'andere' gemarginaliseer, wanvoorgestel en stilgemaak het, deur aan hierdie alternatiewe stemme 'n podium te bied.

Terwyl só 'n siening tereg dui op die postkoloniale teks se hantering van alteriteit en onderdrukking, dui dit ook op die strydvlugtige aard van die genre. Dit wil sê, binne die postkoloniale teorie verskyn die literatuur van die Gekolonialiseerde nie as selfstandig en selfbepalend nie, maar word dit beperk tot die rol van 'n kontradiskoers, en staan dit altyd in opposisie tot (of as reaksie teen) 'n verenigde, dominante sosiale orde. Die postkoloniale teorie se volgehoue klassifisering van die literatuur van die Gekolonialiseerde as 'n reaksie teen 'n normatiewe, dominante diskoers, waarteen alle ander opgeweeg en te lig bevind moet word, dien as 'n versterking van die binêre orde wat die sentrum en periferie polariseer.

Hierdie studie handel oor die herskryfde postkoloniale teks, soos J.M. Coetzee se *Foe*, Jean Rhys se *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Marina Warner se *Indigo*, of *Mapping the Waters* en Aimé Césaire se *A Tempest*, en stel voor dat hierdie herskrywings sulke verskralende definisies oorskry. Alhoewel 'politieke' kwessies dikwels die herskryfde teks kenmerk, oorskry hierdie tekste die romantiese idee van 'terugpraat' deur te wys op 'n meer

ingewikkelde verweefdheid tussen die postkoloniale en koloniale, die self, en die ander. Hierdie tekste kondig die ineenstorting van 'n binêre orde aan, asook die ontstaan van 'n nuwe literêre landskap waar daar geen dialoog tussen die duidelik afgebakende terreine van die Gekolonialiseerde en die Sentrum kan wees nie, maar eerder 'n globale gesprek wat geografiese verwysings oorskry.

Dit wil voorkom asof die onderhawige tekste 'n bloot pluralistiese ondermyning van die logika van hul voorgangers weerstaan. Die begeerte om die veronderstelling van 'n Eurosentriese literêre tradisie te bevraagteken, word oorskadu deur 'n duidelike gevoel van onrus of ongemak met die moederteks. Hierdie gevoel van onbehae word beskou as 'n reaksie op 'n *oordrewe* herhaalbaarheid in die oorspronklike teks, wat weer voortvloei uit die moederteks se onvermoë om sy eie *aporia* te onderhandel.

Die doel van hierdie studie is dus nie om die wyses bloot te lê waarop die postkoloniale herskrywing die aannames van sy literêre voorgangers bevraagteken nie, maar eerder om vas te stel hoe sekere onstabiele en ondermynende elemente wat alreeds in die koloniale voorveronderstelling teenwoordig is, só 'n terugkeer bemiddel.

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INTRODUCTION

In his “The Rise of English”, Terry Eagleton suggests that

To speak of ‘literature and ideology’ as two separate phenomena which can be interrelated is...in one sense quite unnecessary. Literature, in the meaning of the word we have inherited, *is* an ideology. It has the most intimate relations to questions of social power.

(Eagleton 22)

While Eagleton’s assertion that literature is intimately connected with the messy business of politics may evoke some grumbling from the few Bloomian scholars still waiting for “all the moralizing to subside”, it would seem as if the remaining “academic lemmings” have returned “An Elegy for the Canon” to the bookshelf and are acknowledging that literary criticism can no longer proclaim itself a transcendental discipline, capable of divesting itself of all political responsibility by retreating, as Bloom recommends, to an “aesthetic underground” (Bloom 15).

Antony Easthope’s design for the emergence of a “fresh paradigm” in the field of literary studies which would signify the demise of pure literary study and the birth of a “kind of ‘unified field theory’ for the combined study of literary texts and those from popular culture”¹ has indeed been realised, and this paradigm shift has resulted in the emergence of a plethora of diverse approaches to literary criticism (Easthope 5). The rise of movements such as Marxism, Feminism, New Historicism and Cultural Materialism has forever changed the face of English literary studies, and theorists are ever more concerned with the issues of plurality, alterity and authority. In this new politicised paradigm there certainly is an entanglement between literature and ideology, or what Easthope views as simply ‘a return of the repressed’:

¹ Posited in his “Constructing the Literary Object”.

One way to understand the paradigm shift away from literary study might be to view it as just a return of the repressed, accompanied by a radical politics and concern with other oppressions (gender, race) besides those enforced through class.

(Easthope 7)

This shift within literary criticism has not only kindled an interest in marginalised or dissenting discourses, but has also engendered suspicion towards any discursive, social or political system which proclaims itself normative or authoritative. Such a preoccupation with issues of alterity and authority is especially prevalent within the field of post-colonial studies.

Post-colonial theory is concerned with the *dissident* nature of literature on the margins of Empire, locating it as a genre that not only reflects the experiences of those previously colonised by European powers, but also the tensions existing between the imperial centre and its former colonies. In this view, the post-colonial text is necessarily politically charged, characterised by a desire to challenge 'normative' European notions of power by giving voice to the marginalised, misrepresented and silenced other. The literature of Empire, then, responds or 'speaks back to' the colonial centre, specifically in order to critique an oppressive, hegemonic discourse.

The notion that the post-colonial text stands in direct opposition to the canonical European text, and thus acts as a kind of *counter*-discourse, is generally accepted within post-colonial theory. In fact, this concept is so fashionable that Salman Rushdie's assertion that 'the Empire writes back to the Centre' has been adopted as a maxim within the field of post-colonial studies, simultaneously a mission statement and a summative description of the entire field. In its role as a 'response' to a dominant European literary tradition, the post-colonial text is often regarded as resorting to a strategy of subversion through inversion: in essence, telling the 'other side of the story'. The post-colonial text, then, seeks to address the ways in which the western literary tradition has marginalised, misrepresented and silenced its others by providing a platform for these dissenting voices.

Post-colonial theory rightly points to an integral aspect of post-colonial literature: a concern with alterity and oppression. While not disputing the fact that post-colonial texts are characterised by what Eastwood dubs “a radical politics and concern with...oppressions” (7), this study will illustrate that post-colonial theory’s continued preoccupation with the ways in which the literature of Empire ‘speaks back’ to the European canon can play a restrictive and even impoverishing role. This assertion is perhaps best explained with a return to Rushdie’s catchphrase, which has already been established as a kind of dictum for the field of post-colonial studies.

Although Rushdie’s slogan essentially points to post-colonial literature’s estimable concern with alterity and oppression, it also points to its *agonistic* nature, making it by definition *relative* to Empire. In addition, the implicit binary opposition (Empire/Centre) inevitably depends on the very ‘hierarchization’² it seeks to depose. For there exists a generally accepted rule regarding binary opposites: one of the two extremities takes precedence over the other. If male trumps female, and light darkness, having a hegemonic centre in hand guarantees a royal (or shall we say an imperial) flush. In her “Sorties”, Hélène Cixous alerts us to the ways in which thought is related to binary privileging (for Cixous, this privileging tends both to work in the service of and to conceal patriarchal power):

Thought has always worked by opposition,
Speech/Writing
High/Low
By dual, *hierarchized* oppositions. Superior/Inferior. Myths, legends,
books. Philosophical systems. Wherever an ordering intervenes, a law
organizes the thinkable by (dual, irreconcilable; or mitigable, dialectical)
oppositions.

(Cixous “Sorties” 90-91)

Consequently, for all its noble intentions, the notion of ‘writing back’ implies the existence of a unified colonial core. Despite its many complexities, post-colonial theory is ultimately built on the binary opposites implicit in Rushdie’s catchphrase. That is,

² A neologism attributed to Hélène Cixous.

within post-colonial theory, the literature of Empire does not emerge as autonomous and self-determining, but is restricted to the role of *counter*-discourse, forever placed in direct opposition (or in response) to a *unified* dominant social order. In this view, post-colonial literature must resort to skirmish tactics, patiently chipping away at the defences of a far more powerful and organised army, scoring small victories only to lose the greater war. Post-colonial theory's continued classification of the literature of Empire as a reaction to a normative, dominant discourse against which all others must be weighed and found wanting serves to strengthen the binary order which polarises centre and periphery. For, even in the inversion of a *dominant* discourse one finds acknowledgement and repetition of a restrictive binary order, and therefore, to use Hélène Cixous's turn of phrase, can easily "confer upon it an irremovability equivalent to destiny" (Cixous "Medusa" 347).

Here many theorists are likely to argue that the literature of Empire places itself in direct opposition to the imperial centre *exactly* in order to assert difference and autonomy, and to undermine a worldview in which the colonised other can be relegated to a marginal position. In *The Empire Writes Back*, authors Bill Ashcroft, Helen Tiffin and Gareth Griffiths adopt such a stance:

Directly and indirectly, in Salman Rushdie's phrase, the 'Empire writes back' to the imperial 'centre', not only through nationalist assertion, proclaiming itself central and self-determining, but even more radically by questioning the bases of European and British metaphysics, challenging the world-view that can polarise centre and periphery in the first place.

(Ashcroft et al 32)

This position is of course informed by the notion that the 'Centre cannot hold', the equally popular extension to Rushdie's catchphrase; a notion originally used by W.B. Yeats and later appropriated by Achebe in *Things Fall Apart*. It is here that a moment of tension can be identified within post-colonial theory. Despite the assertion that post-colonial literature challenges the "world-view that can polarise centre and periphery in the first place" (Ashcroft et al 32), the (unequal) distinction between the literature of

Empire and a dominant western literary tradition all too often still holds. Prior to proclaiming post-colonial literature “central” and “self-determining” (Ashcroft et al 32), the authors of *The Empire Writes Back* find it necessary to lament the post-colonial text’s continued status as an ‘off-shoot’ of the dominant English literary tradition:

[T]hrough the literary canon, the body of British texts which all too frequently still acts as a touchstone of taste and value, and through RS-English (Received Standard English), which asserts the English of south-east England as a universal norm, the weight of antiquity continues to dominate cultural production in much of the post-colonial world. This cultural hegemony has been maintained through canonical assumptions about literary activity, and through attitudes to post-colonial literatures which identify them as isolated national off-shoots of English literature, and which therefore relegate them to marginal and subordinate positions.

(Ashcroft et al 7)

It may be argued that marginality is at once a site of discontent and resentment, a position to be bemoaned, and a favoured location from which to launch a critique of oppressive and totalising forces. For bell hooks, marginality is not only a site of resistance, but also a position from which to envision “alternatives”:

Marginality [is a] central location for the production of a counter-hegemonic discourse that is not just found in words but in habits of being and the way one lives... [Marginality is] a site one stays in, clings to even, because it nourishes one’s capacity to resist. It offers the possibility of radical perspectives from which to see and create, to imagine alternatives, new worlds.

(hooks 341)

Although one would clearly not contest hooks’ assertion that the marginal space can be reclaimed and recast as a site of liberation from oppression, it is necessary to point to the fact that such a strategy of resistance is only valid *in relation to* a central, dominant position.

The post-colonial text itself exceeds such narrow definition. Although often characterised by a concern with ‘political’ issues, the literature of Empire surpasses the romantic notion of ‘speaking back’ by pointing to a more complex entanglement between post-colonial and canonical, self and other. The post-colonial text signals the collapse of binary order and the emergence of a new literary landscape in which there can be no dialogue between the clearly demarcated sites of Empire and Centre, but rather a global conversation that exceeds geographical location.

In the aptly titled collection of essays, *Imaginary Homelands*, Rushdie himself alerts us to the fact that those boundaries that separate margin and centre are, in fact, ‘imaginary’. In his essay, “‘Commonwealth literature’ does not exist”, Rushdie resists representing post-colonial literature as a genre that continues to be marginalised by a system that favours the English literary canon and RS-English. Here post-colonial literature does not simply appropriate English, but also reshapes it, rejecting the possibility of a ‘normative’ standard of usage. These texts then take on an active role in eradicating the binary order which polarises standard- and non-standard English:

What seems to me to be happening is that those peoples who were once colonised by the language are now rapidly remaking it, domesticating it, becoming more and more relaxed about the way they use it – assisted by the English language’s enormous flexibility and size, they are carving out large territories for themselves within its frontiers.

(Rushdie 64)

Here, Rushdie not only points to the imaginary nature of those boundaries which separate ‘Commonwealth’ literature and the canon, but also suggests that the very language which has for so long served as a tool of oppression *allows* for such a dismantling of binary oppositions. ‘Commonwealth’ literature now takes on a deconstructive role, not only undermining a logocentric literary tradition and its division of the world into binary categories, but also pointing to the fact that the colonial text is already engaged in a process of self-contradiction or, as Jacques Derrida would put it, *self-deconstruction*.

Here, Derridian theory proves valuable insofar as its questioning of the metaphysics of Western philosophy and its acknowledgement of elements of undecidability and iterability within the dominant discourse, can be utilised to expose certain instabilities within the Western literary tradition. The authority of colonial discourse,³ much like that of the Western philosophical tradition, is dependent on the disavowal of alterity, and therefore the preservation of a certain interiority. Derrida's deconstructive method holds that alterity is always already implied, even in its absence, in any structure that seeks to exclude or bracket otherness. The notion of language as iterable signals the impossibility of true interiority or a 'private' space to which the other cannot gain access. If language (and here Derrida suggests *all* language, including the privileged system of speech) is iterable, or repeatable with difference, it necessarily allows for alterity. In his *Jacques Derrida: Live Theory*, an exhaustive text which traces a concern with alterity throughout Derrida's corpus, James Smith offers a useful synopsis of the ways in which Derrida's *The Postcard* questions the possibility of a 'private language':

'Envois' is a collection of notes, post cards, or love letters, sent to an anonymous lover; and yet here we have this private correspondence, published, for all to see. As we saw earlier, with this genre Derrida problematises the public/private distinction – but in doing so, points to something fundamental about language: as soon as there is language, there is publicity, a way in which even intimate expressions put into language are necessarily inserted into public space, capable of being read by others, for such legibility (or 'iterability') is an essential feature of language. ...In this sense, every missive is like a post card: lacking the privacy and (en)closure of an envelope, it can be read by just anyone, in very different contexts, and thus could generate an almost endless number of readings and speculations.

(Smith 59)

³ Here the conflation of a general Western literary tradition and the monological idea of a discourse of colonialism is problematic. While not suggesting that these two discourses are interlocked, normative extensions of one another, it does however hold true that the Western literary tradition has been appropriated in the service of colonialism. For the purpose of this dissertation, any reference to a 'discourse of colonialism' should be read as suggesting any discursive system that seeks to proclaim itself normative or authoritative.

The iterability of language, then, holds that there is always an element of intersubjectivity at play, not only between the sender and the *intended* receiver, but also between the sender and innumerable other receivers with a vast number of different interpretations of the text. Alterity then is always already implicit in language, as it allows for the interpretation of another – an other.

Derridian theory not only questions the possibility of an enclosed, private discourse in which the other is entirely excluded, but also the very possibility of an enclosed subject or consciousness. In his *Speech and Phenomena*, Derrida offers a critique of the phonocentrism inherent in Husserl's *Logical Investigations*. Husserl makes a distinction between expression (signs which express or 'mean' something) and indication (signs which do not express or 'mean' anything), and suggests that true expression can only be found in 'solitary mental life'. This retreat into interiority is based on the notion that indication is always implicit in *communicative* speech, which is based on an intersubjective relationship between sender and receiver. Derrida points to the impossibility of maintaining true interiority and self-presence and suggests that there is always a *Verflechtung* or entanglement between indication and expression. By conceding that a certain kind of speech occurs even in the insularity of the private sphere of consciousness, that "one of course speaks, in a certain sense, even in soliloquy", Husserl necessarily allows for a certain alterity or intersubjectivity. The very public or communal nature of language and speech dictates that alterity can never be excluded, and therefore an entirely 'solitary' consciousness can never be achieved. This notion is reiterated in one of Derrida's later works, *A Taste for the Secret*. He suggests:

[t]he other is in me before me: the ego...implies alterity as its own condition. There is no 'I' that ethically makes room for the other; but rather an 'I' that is structured by the alterity within it, an 'I' that itself in a state of self-deconstruction, of dislocation.

(Derrida 84)

When we bring some of these ideas to bear on the study of colonial discourse, it is evident that its authority is based only on the *semblance* of solidarity and insularity.

Despite its best efforts to renounce and exclude all that is perceived as an external threat, all that is other, alterity is always already present at the very heart of any discourse that seeks to proclaim itself 'dominant'. The role of post-colonial literature is not to mobilise skirmish attacks on a unified and stable dominant discourse, but rather to point to the fact that colonial discourse is already in a state of self –deconstruction, in danger of collapsing in on itself.

The notion that post-colonial texts serve to subvert and invert *hegemonic* colonial notions of power (and here the binary opposition counter-discourse/ discourse is once again implicit) is especially prominent in studies exploring the trend that sees certain Commonwealth authors revisiting and rewriting canonical English texts. This is reflected in the fact that rewritten post-colonial texts often establish marginal characters from canonical texts as protagonists, seemingly entering into a direct dialogue with their colonial pre-texts. Here, *The Empire Writes Back* proves useful in pointing to the fact that such a narrow classification of the rewritten post-colonial text cannot hold:

Writers such as J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, V. S. Naipaul, George Lamming, Patrick White, Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood, and Jean Rhys have all rewritten particular works from the English 'canon' with a view to restructuring European 'realities' in post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchical order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based.

(Ashcroft et al 32)

While this assertion rightly points to the fact that the rewritten post-colonial text takes on a deconstructive role, it fails to recognise the ways in which the colonial pretext takes part in its own deconstruction. It is precisely the self-deconstructive aspect of the colonial pretext that forms the central preoccupation of this dissertation.

In particular, this dissertation is concerned with 'rewritten' post-colonial texts, such as J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*, Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Marina Warner's *Indigo, or,*

Mapping the Waters and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*⁴, and specifically the ways in which the colonial pretext plays a role in its own deconstruction. Here, the aim is not to uncover the ways in which the post-colonial rewrite challenges the assumptions of its literary pretext, but rather to establish how certain elements of instability and subversion already present within the colonial pretext allow for such a return. While not contesting the notion that *all* texts are characterised by iterability, inevitably involved in a process of self-deconstruction, this study will also suggest that certain canonical texts emerge as more popular choices for rewriting, and are thus more likely to be repeated (with difference) than others. In her *Tempests After Shakespeare*, a text which explores the various rewritings of William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Chantal Zabus identifies several "interpellative dream-texts", that is, texts that stand out as popular pretexts:

Each century has its own interpellative dream-text: *The Tempest* for the seventeenth century; *Robinson Crusoe* for the Eighteenth century; *Jane Eyre* for the nineteenth century; *Heart of Darkness* for the turn of the twentieth century. Such texts serve as pre-texts to others and underwrite them.

(Zabus 1)

Coincidentally, this list of 'interpellative dream-texts', with the exception of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, coincides with the pretexts of the post-colonial rewrites chosen for this study. Zabus's suggestion that these canonical texts constitute a literary tradition of *repeatable* pretexts strengthens the notion that certain works of literature stand out as more alluring to rewriters.

The suggestion that certain texts emerge as more likely to be repeatable with difference has far-reaching implications. The existence of such a tradition of repeatable pretexts suggests that certain texts somehow function at a higher level of iterability. This can perhaps be attributed to the fact that these texts are often acutely aware of their own slippage, the moments in which they must compensate for the lapse in their logic. Thus,

⁴ These texts revisit, respectively, Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, Brontë's *Jane Eyre* and Shakespeare's *The Tempest*.

these texts are often characterised by moments of self-conscious ambivalence. The phenomenon of the repeatable text also further undermines the assumption that the process of rewriting stems merely from a desire to invert the unequal power relations presented in the original canonical texts.

Although it is evident that the dependent post-colonial text is concerned with unequal power relations within the colonial pretext, the existence of a tradition of more alluring and repeatable pretexts cannot be attributed to the mere existence of such tensions. It stands to reason that any text that propagates the dominant discourses of colonialism and patriarchy would serve as fodder for pluralistic post-colonial rewriters, yet certain texts provoke more subversive responses than others. This study, then, argues that rewriters are compelled to return to these specific pretexts, not only because they allow for the imposition of a post-colonial or feminist framework, but also due to a reaction to an *exaggerated* iterability, elements of ambivalence, instability and subversion already present in these texts.

Indeed, it may be argued that the dependent texts in question resist offering mere pluralistic subversions of the logic of their pretexts. The desire to challenge the assumptions of a Eurocentric literary tradition is overshadowed by a distinct sense of disquiet or unease with the matrix text. This sense of discomfort and the resistance of the strategy of subversion through inversion stems from an intuitive knowledge that that which is to be subverted is conscious of its own slippage, unable to compensate for the fact that it is either inherently unstable and on the verge of collapsing in on itself or already inadvertently challenging the very system it professes to propagate.

Those canonical texts that emerge as repeatable ostensibly strengthen the dominant discourses of colonialism and patriarchy by establishing and justifying unequal power relations. However, this dissertation attempts to demonstrate that the same canonical texts in fact also signal the collapse of the logic of such totalising systems. These texts tend to orchestrate an encounter between self and other in order to assert the superiority and authority of the colonial self. Consequently, a sense of identity and self is only

established through the production and subsequent disavowal of an inferior and unruly other. This notion is largely informed by the theories posited by Paul Brown in his essay, “*The Tempest and the Discourse of Colonialism*”. Brown suggests:

[C]olonialist discourse voices a demand both for order and disorder, producing a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the coloniser. Yet that production is itself evidence of a struggle to restrict the other’s disruptiveness to that role. Colonialist discourse does not simply announce a triumph for civility, it must continuously *produce* it, and this work involves struggle and risk.

(Brown 58)

Despite the obvious need to oppress and disavow this disruptive element, the other also holds a certain allure and fascination. This fascination stems from the notion that that which is interpreted as an external threat to colonial authority is also frighteningly familiar, a ‘dark double’ generated from within the self. For, as Derrida (84) suggests in his *The Taste for the Secret*, “the ego...implies alterity as its own condition”. In other words, alterity is always already implicit within the sphere of consciousness, which means that the other becomes a threat at the level of identity itself. A sense of unease emerges when an encounter with alterity threatens to uncover the impossibility of maintaining the closed sense of self on which colonial identity is hinged.

The repeatable colonial text attempts to negotiate its failure to contain the internal threat of otherness by establishing a utopian exit in which the other takes on a performative role, usually professing his or her acceptance of the coloniser’s rule in a manner that immediately comes across as a supplement that serves to arrest the troubling play of meaning. Caliban’s ultimate acceptance of Prospero’s authority and Friday’s assertion that Crusoe’s teachings should be disseminated amongst his people both signal a moment where colonial discourse can no longer contend with the other as ‘wholly’ other and must appropriate alterity. This attempt at disguising a collapse of the logic of the dominant discourse by appropriating the other results in unsettling moments in the pretext, a sense of unease that necessitates a return in the form of rewriting.

The unsettling effect of this moment of appropriation stems from its ambiguity, a notion explored by Homi K. Bhabha in his “Of Mimicry and Man”. Bhabha suggests that colonial mimicry or appropriation stems from the desire for “a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha 122). It is the partial nature of this appropriation that results in ambivalence, for “in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha 122). Bhabha suggests:

Mimicry is, thus the sign of a double articulation; a complex strategy of reform, regulation and discipline, which ‘appropriates’ the Other as it visualises power. Mimicry is also the sign of the inappropriate, however, a difference or recalcitrance which coheres the dominant strategic function of colonial power, intensifies surveillance, and poses an immanent threat to both ‘normalised’ knowledges and disciplinary powers.

(Bhabha 122)

Consequently, colonial discourse compensates for its own slippage, its inability to contain the disruptive other, by producing yet another moment of undecidability. Here, we witness the collapse of the metaphysics of presence on which the authority of colonial discourse rests. The desire for a ‘reformed recognizable Other’ signals a moment where alterity must (if only partially) be allowed into the ‘sphere of the Same’. That which fails to strip itself of all otherness and refuses to make itself present can no longer be disavowed, but can also only be appropriated if it *fails* to divest itself of all otherness, if it continues to assert its *difference*.

The repeatable pretext, then, is characterised by an awareness of its own slippage, by moments in which it has to compensate for its own undecidability by producing still more ambivalence. Consequently, these texts are *doubly* self-deconstructive, and it is this *exaggerated* iterability that compels rewriters to return to them. It is evident that the post-colonial preoccupation with ‘writing back’ to the centre cannot merely be attributed to the existence of unequal power relations within the canonical pretexts, but rather

signals acknowledgement of a more complex entanglement between self and other. Here, the binary order on which the romantic notion of 'writing back' is hinged becomes cloudy, as the European canon is itself engaged in a process of deconstruction or 'rewriting'.

Rewriters, then, are compelled to return to certain texts because they recognise certain *inconsistencies* within them, moments in which these texts cease to persuade and can only produce ambivalence or gaping silences. Although Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* has not been included for discussion in this dissertation, Atwood's introduction to this novel proves useful in illustrating the ways in which subsequent authors respond to ambivalent moments within certain texts. Atwood rewrites Homer's *The Odyssey* from the perspective of Penelope and her ill-fated maids and suggests that she was moved by irregularities within the original text:

I've chosen to give telling of the story to Penelope and to the twelve hanged maids. The maids form a chanting and singing Chorus which focuses on two questions that must pose themselves after any close reading of *The Odyssey*: what led to the hanging of the maids, and what was Penelope really up to? The story as told in *The Odyssey* doesn't hold water: there are too many inconsistencies. I've always been haunted by the hanged maids; and, in *The Penelopiad*, so is Penelope herself.

(Atwood xxi)

The twelve hanged maids become representative of the haunting silences within *The Odyssey* and their accusatory chorus echoes throughout the novel:

You should have buried us properly. You should have poured wine over us. You should have prayed for our forgiveness. Now you can't get rid of us, wherever you go: in your life or your afterlife or any of your other lives. ... Why did you murder us? What had we done to you that required our deaths? You never answered that.

(Atwood 192-193)

The rewritten post-colonial texts chosen for the purpose of this study also respond to such inconsistencies in their pretexts, acting as the haunting chorus that poses questions that have been left unanswered by the original text.

If Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* compensates for the threat of Friday's otherness by relegating him to the performative position of 'mimic man', that which is "*almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha 122), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* points to the impossibility of partial assimilation. Coetzee resists subverting the logic of *Robinson Crusoe* by merely inverting its hierarchical structure and in fact removes any such possibility by deliberately mutilating and muting Friday. Susan Barton, an Englishwoman who supposedly spent a year with Cruso on his island, is introduced as narrator. Although her survival is dependent on her successful retelling of both Cruso and Friday's stories, her narrative is not only hampered by Friday's inability to speak, but also by other obstacles deliberately produced by Coetzee himself. By refusing to allow his narrator to ever fully know or understand Friday, Coetzee suggests something about the metaphysics of presence: if the other is to be partially appropriated into the 'sphere of the Same', he must to some extent make himself *known* or present (while of course still asserting his difference). That is, the other must relinquish a portion of his otherness in order to appear *almost* the same. For Coetzee, the other is always potentially wholly other, and any encounter between self and other is necessarily mediated. Paradoxically, it is only when one accepts the other as entirely other that one can begin to dismantle the binary oppositions that polarise self and other. Here we find an echo of Derrida's (*Gift of Death* 79) assertion that we are all infinitely responsible to "*every other (one) as every (bit) other (toute autre est tout autre)*".

In the case of *Jane Eyre*, it is the failure to restrict the disruptive other, Bertha Mason, to the role of external threat that informs Rhys's refusal to overtly challenge the logic of Brontë's pretext. Bertha Mason emerges as an uncanny figure precisely because her otherness is not entirely unambiguous. She remains in some sense English, deeply implicated in the system of imperialism as a member of the West Indian slave-owning

plantocracy. Furthermore, readings that situate Bertha as representative of Jane Eyre's suppressed feminine rage problematise the disavowal of this other.

It is not only this ambiguity, but also *Jane Eyre's* status as a revolutionary text that challenges Victorian notions of class and gender that temper the rewriter's desire to wholly subvert the pretext. If Brontë's *Jane Eyre* is an example of the ways in which female authors manage "the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards" (Gilbert and Gubar 73), then Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* achieves the kind of "writing that inscribes femininity" envisioned by Hélène Cixous (349) in her "The Laugh of the Medusa." Rhys's text, then, can be seen as a continuation of a radical project already launched in its pretext: the founding of a female literary tradition *outside of* the confines of patriarchal and phallogocentric literary conventions.

Similarly, both Marina Warner's *Indigo* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* are less motivated by a simple pluralistic desire to subvert the unequal power dynamic existent in the original text than by a response to a subversive element or *exaggerated* iterability already present in the matrix text. Warner stages a return to the colonised space in order to highlight the effects of colonialism on both the colonised and the descendants of the coloniser. *Indigo* attempts to negotiate its unease with the ambiguities present in *The Tempest*, in particular the unsettling outcome of the play, which hinges on an unsatisfactory and unconvincing reconciliation between the feuding characters. Warner proposes a radical rejection of any political agenda, and in doing so repeats the very strategy that evoked her sense of unease in the first place: *Indigo* establishes a utopian exit of its own.

While *A Tempest* advocates distinct anti-colonial sentiments, it is surprisingly similar to *The Tempest* in terms of plot and form, emerging as an inflected reading of its literary precursor rather than a radical subversion of the logic of its pretext. The text seems to draw its impact from the ambiguity and sense of unease evoked by Shakespeare's

original text; its radical critique of colonialism is dependent on making explicit that which is already implied in its pretext.

Finally, this dissertation will introduce a rather unorthodox text, which cannot be categorised as post-colonial text: Terry Pratchett's *Wyrld Sisters*, a satirical response to Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. This text has been included in order to illustrate that while the process of narrative return has been appropriated in the service of national politics, it can also not be reduced exclusively to this role. Pratchett's *Wyrld Sisters* holds no claim to marginality and, in fact, the notion of a dialogic relationship between separate but interrelated realms is already evident at a taxonomical level in this text. Despite its lack of overt political agenda, the text draws on tensions present within *Macbeth*, harnessing the subversive energy of its pretext in order to explore the concepts of identity, subjectivity and narrative return. This chapter illustrates that the process of rewriting is a result of a *structural* necessity to return that underpins narrative itself, and proposes that it would impoverish our study of literature if we were to reduce the process of rewriting solely to spatial politics.

CHAPTER ONE

The Crusoe Myth

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* and J.M. Coetzee's *Foe*

In her *Tempests After Shakespeare*, Chantal Zabus cites Daniel Defoe's *The Life and Adventures of Robinson Crusoe* as the "interpellative dream-text" of the Eighteenth century, suggesting that Defoe's classic castaway tale belongs to a tradition of *repeatable* master narratives which "serve as pre-texts to others and underwrite them" (Zabus 1). The introduction to this dissertation suggests that the existence of such a tradition of repeatable pretexts can be attributed to the notion that these texts somehow function at a higher level of iterability. That is, these texts necessitate a (subversive) return because they are already characterised by self-reflexive moments in which they must negotiate their own slippage. The notion that the repeatable pretext is already engaged in a process of self-deconstruction undermines the assumption that (re)writers return to canonical European texts simply in order to challenge a stable, unified literary tradition that serves to legitimise and naturalise European imperialism.

It seems inevitable that the task of refuting the existence of a stable "discourse of colonialism" would eventually lead one to Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*, a novel which many regard as the ultimate imperialist text, the seemingly unconquerable champion of the colonial literary army. Since its publication in 1719, *Robinson Crusoe* has captured the imagination of generations of readers and has indeed, as Zabus suggests, become an "interpellative dream-text", or template text, which "serve[s] as [a] pre-text to others and underwrite[s] them" (Zabus 1). In his *Mapping Men and Empire: A Geography of Adventure*, Richard Phillips asserts that "[a]mong the books of travel and discovery published in the modern period none has made a greater impression on geographical imaginations than *Robinson Crusoe*, the single most famous, representative and influential adventure story of the time" (Phillips 22). So great was the impact of

Robinson Crusoe on eighteenth-century Britain that the novel was rapidly “transformed and redefined, with many different editions, abridgements, imitations and readings” (Phillips 22). These “imitations” or Robinsonades, subsequent adventure tales modelled on Defoe’s original text, served to further legitimise and naturalise European imperial expansion. In fact, Phillips suggests that Victorian Robinsonades, such as Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, were even more direct in their promotion of British colonialism than their pretext:

The Coral Island mapped the British Victorian world, and it did so in uncompromisingly bold colours. Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island* is a lively tale of three boys’ adventures among cannibals, pirates and exotic islands in the South Pacific. What *Robinson Crusoe* seemed only to suggest to Victorian Britons, *The Coral Island* spelled out. It was more arrogantly ethnocentric, more fervently religious, more exuberantly adventurous, more optimistic and more racist than its predecessor.

(Phillips 36)

Here, it may seem as if the fact that a great many of the adaptations of *Robinson Crusoe* serve to propagate, and even amplify, the Eurocentric assumptions of the original text undermines the notion that the act of rewriting is closely related to faultlines and moments of slippage within the pretext. In fact, the existence of such imperial “imitations” does not exclude the possibility of an inherently self-deconstructive master text, but rather serves to expose the ways in which the colonial authority of *Robinson Crusoe* is based on the construction of myth. That is, these imperial adaptations seem less based on Daniel Defoe’s original version of *Robinson Crusoe*, with all its ambiguity and self-reflexive moments, than what has been established as the *myth* of *Robinson Crusoe*.

The notion that Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* has been elevated to the status of myth can be found in Ian Watt’s *Myths of Modern Individualism: Faust, Don Quixote, Don Juan, Robinson Crusoe*. In the introduction to this work, Watt suggests that although “none of the four quite fits Malinowski’s description of myth... Faustus, Don Quixote, Don Juan, and Robinson Crusoe all exist in a kind of limbo where they are seen not as actual

historical persons but not merely as invented fictions either” (Watt xv). Watt, then, presents his readers with a reworked and personalised definition of “myth”:

My working definition of myth, then, as this book begins, is ‘a traditional story that is exceptionally widely known throughout the culture, that is credited with a historical or quasi-historical belief, and that embodies or symbolizes some of the most basic values of a society’.

(Watt xvi)

Ian Watt further suggests that the appropriation of Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* (by the likes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Karl Marx) to further certain ideological ideals “played an essential part in securing the continued popularity of Crusoe as a mythical figure in the nineteenth century” (Watt 180). In fact, all four of Watt’s “myths of modern individualism” owe, to some degree, their mythological status to such appropriation:

Faust and *Don Juan* were actually rewritten to give an individualist message a new originality, authority, and approval; Rousseau and Marx, as we have seen, reinterpreted *Robinson Crusoe* towards the same end; Dostoevsky did the same for Cervantes. All four myths were thus transformed to give them a significance beyond anything their original authors could have conceived.

(Watt 192)

It may be argued then that the myth “embodies or symbolizes some of the most basic values of a society” (Watt xvi), and in fact attains the status of myth, only after a rigorous process of rewriting, reinterpreting and adaptation. In other words, the ideological authority of the myth hinges on its status as myth, which is in turn dependent on adaptation and the bracketing of all elements that do not adhere to that particular interpretation. An example of such bracketing of undesired elements can be found in Watt’s account of Jean-Jacques Rousseau’s appropriation of *Robinson Crusoe*:

The island solitude is the real essence of what Rousseau preaches in *Emile*...[S]ince only the desert island section of the novel deals with the isolated individual, Rousseau wants the Crusoe text – as he writes, contemptuously – to be “stripped of all its odds and ends {*fatras*}”; it should begin with the shipwreck and end with the rescue.

(Watt 175)

As suggested earlier, a similar dynamic can be identified with regard to imperial Robinsonades, such as Ballantyne’s *The Coral Island*, which are both influenced by and responsible for the construction of the Crusoe myth. That is, these “imitations”, along with the overwhelming amount of “unoriginal” copies of Defoe’s original text, have not only contributed to *Robinson Crusoe*’s status as imperialist myth through the very process of adaptation, appropriation and bracketing of undesired elements identified by Ian Watt, but their apparent repetition of what is commonly accepted as “the colonial logic” of *Robinson Crusoe* is also *dependent* on the original text’s status as imperial myth.

The notion that Robinsonades such as *The Coral Island* “spelled out” what Defoe’s pretext “seemed only to suggest to Victorian Britons” (Phillips 36), then, does not suggest the mere amplification and repetition of racist, colonial assumptions prevalent in the original text, but rather the reshaping of *Robinson Crusoe* to adhere to the ideology of British imperialism. Here, all elements of equivocation within the original text are made explicit, and in the process *Robinson Crusoe* is divested of all its complexities and ambiguities and reduced to a simple tale of colonial triumph and expansion. It may be argued, then, that the true *Robinson Crusoe* has become lost in translation, and all that remains are various Crusoe myths that can easily be appropriated in the service of many different ideological ideals. Few readers are familiar with the intricacies of Defoe’s original novel. In *Myths of Modern Individualism*, Ian Watt finds it necessary to introduce his section on *Robinson Crusoe* by providing a brief overview of the plot, stating that “since the idea of a man stuck all alone on a desert island for a long time may be all that can be assumed to remain in the reader’s memory of the story, I shall rehearse its bare bones here” (Watt 141).

Richard Phillips also points to the fact that the original Crusoe has become lost to us:

With the publication of many pirated, edited, abridged, imitated and otherwise modified *Robinson Crusoes*, there is no ‘truly definitive’ version of the story once told by Defoe...Most who have read *Robinson Crusoe* have read a one- or two-hundred-page abridgement of some description. Many have read a children’s, perhaps a boy’s edition, shortened and simplified for the juvenile market, typically undated and anonymous, attributed neither to Defoe nor to the editor (who abridged and/or adapted the story).

(Phillips 27)

Consequently, the tale of Robinson Crusoe has been distorted, simplified and appropriated into the service of British imperialism. It appears as if even those who acknowledge this process of distortion and appropriation continue to propagate the Crusoe myth that establishes the text as the ultimate symbol of imperial expansion. Despite a lengthy exploration of the ways in which *Robinson Crusoe* has been appropriated as imperialist myth, Richard Phillips establishes the text as instrumental in mapping British constructions of race, class, gender, religion and language in relation to marginal localities:

Robinson Crusoe and other adventure stories mapped many aspects of Britain (‘home’) in relation to the island. They mapped a world view that placed Britain at the (imperial) centre and colonies like Crusoe’s island at the margins. They mapped British constructions of race (roughly speaking, white Crusoe in relation to non-white ‘savages’), its class system (Crusoe as master, Friday as slave), its gender (Crusoe as masculine, nature as feminine), religion (Crusoe as Christian, ‘savages’ as non-Christians) and language (Crusoe has spoken and written command of the English language, Friday is relatively mute).

(Phillips 17)

This “colonial” myth proves particularly useful to those scholars intent on opposing or “writing back” to what has been categorised as an oppressive, hegemonic discourse of colonialism. The figure of Robinson Crusoe has become a convenient scapegoat for the evils of the colonial text, yet such criticism is rarely supported by comprehensive

knowledge of the original text. Consider, for example, James Joyce's assertion (here cited by Watt) that Robinson Crusoe is "the true prototype of the British colonist":

The true symbol of the British conquest is Robinson Crusoe, who, cast away on a desert island, in his pocket a knife and a pipe, becomes an architect, a carpenter, a knife grinder, an astronomer, a baker, a shipwright, a potter, a saddler, a farmer, a tailor, an umbrella-maker, and a clergyman. He is the true prototype of the British colonist, as Friday (the trusty savage who arrives on an unlucky day) is the symbol of the subject races. The whole Anglo-Saxon spirit is in Crusoe: the manly independence; the unconscious cruelty; the persistence; the slow yet efficient intelligence; the sexual apathy; the practical, well-balanced religiousness; the calculating taciturnity.

(Watt 171)

Here, it becomes blatantly obvious that Joyce's objections to the text are based on only a vague knowledge of *Robinson Crusoe*, most likely clouded by the pervasive imperial Crusoe myth. Robinson Crusoe certainly does not have a pipe in his pocket on his arrival on the island. In fact, he goes to some lengths to fashion himself one only *after* he succeeds in growing tobacco. The myth of *Robinson Crusoe*, then, has influenced subsequent readings of the text to such an extent that even those materialist critics who return to the text with the aim of uncovering the ways in which literature serves to propagate dominant social orders, and perhaps even with the (ostensibly) laudable aim of "writing back" to the apparent colonial logic of Defoe's novel, have failed to recognise those disquieting, self-deconstructive moments within *Robinson Crusoe*. These moments of slippage reveal that the purported champion of the colonial literary army is in fact nothing more than an Achilles-figure; one slight stab to the heel is all that is necessary to topple this giant.

In order adequately to point to the faultlines present in *Robinson Crusoe* it is necessary to return to ideas touched on in the introduction to this dissertation. It has already been asserted that the colonial text often stages an encounter between self and other in order to assert the authority of the colonial self in opposition to an inferior and disruptive other. Colonial authority, then, hinges on the disavowal of alterity and the preservation of an

enclosed subject. Jacques Derrida, however, alerts us to the impossibility of an entirely solitary consciousness, suggesting in his *A Taste for the Secret* that “[t]he other is in me before me: the ego...implies alterity as its own condition” (Derrida 84). Thus, there exists a complex entanglement between self and other, and the colonial text inevitably fails to maintain its semblance of solidarity. When alterity can no longer be bracketed as an external threat, and indeed threatens the colonial subject at the very level of identity, the colonial text must compensate by assimilating all that is other. This assimilation is, of course, never complete, as there exists, as Bhabha suggests in his “Of Mimicry and Man”, the desire for “a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*” (Bhabha 122). The colonial text, then, produces moments of ambiguity when it fails to negotiate the conflicting need for both a wholly disruptive and alien other and a “mimic man” that is “almost the same, but not quite” (Bhabha 122).

Richard Phillips’ aforementioned assertion that *Robinson Crusoe* maps British constructions of race, class, gender and religion in relation to marginal localities is not entirely without merit. Crusoe’s authority and superiority is indeed largely dependent on the distinction between his Calvinistic civility and the “barbaric” traditions of the native inhabitants of the island region. The figure of Robinson Crusoe is only representative of Enlightenment individualism and the ideal of enclosed consciousness insofar as he is able to separate himself from, and assert his superiority over, a wholly inferior and disruptive other. That is, Crusoe (as representative of the colonial self) must continue to disavow and demonise alterity in order to maintain the insularity on which colonial authority is predicated. Thus, the ideological authority of the “colonial” Crusoe myth is dependent on the preservation of a delicate equilibrium between self-recognition and disavowal, an unsustainable tension that must inevitably result in moments of slippage.

The impossibility of maintaining such a fine balancing act has largely been ignored or dismissed by those post-colonial theorists who have acknowledged an entanglement between self and other. Such a peculiar dismissal can be found in Firdous Azim’s *The Colonial Rise of the Novel*, a text that purportedly “make[s] clear how the novel as genre

silenced and excluded both women and people of colour.” Azim, here drawing on theories posited by Homi K. Bhabha and the notion of the Lacanian mirror image, suggests that the “eighteenth century constructed the concept of the sovereignty of the human individual in opposition to other subject-positions”, a “process of definition” which is directly related to the colonial encounter (Azim 36). Here, Azim acknowledges that this process of self-definition through the disavowal of other subject-positions is disturbed by an element of self-recognition or identification, the unsettling notion that, as Derrida (*Secret* 84) suggests, “the other is in me before me”:

However, the confrontation with the Other subject did not easily, or naturally, result in these opposing positions – it was always disturbed and hovered on the edge of identification, or of a recognition of self. The separation between the Other and self is forced, as self and Other are bound in a dialectical relationship.

(Azim 36)

Despite this assertion, which seemingly precludes the possibility of a sovereign homogeneous subject and the complete renunciation of alterity, Azim proceeds by suggesting that the novel, a genre which she views as “the discourse of this homogeneous subject” is based on the dismissal or elimination of the other subject:

It is not surprising that many histories of the novel have alighted on *Robinson Crusoe* as the starting point for the genre... It is because the discourse of the novel is based on the notion of a sovereign subject, and the position of that subject is determined within a confrontation with its Other, that the novel of adventure occupies such a significant place in the annals of the English novel...The notion of a sovereign, transcendent, unified homogeneous subject rests on the obliteration or neglect of factors that disturb such a concept...The novel as the discursive form that accompanies this notion rests on a similar process. The central subject who weaves the narrative is also based on the forceful negation of other elements, deliberately ignoring other subject-positions. This purpose is served by an invocation of the Other and its subsequent dismissal. Thus the novel is an imperialist project, based on the forceful eradication and obliteration of the Other.

(Azim 37)

Therefore, the sovereignty of the narrative subject of the novel is dependent on the notion that self and other can be un-entwined, un-*Verflechtung*. Here we find an error in logic which points to the irreducibility of the interweaving between self and other. In order to dismiss and eliminate alterity, the other must first be *invoked* or made *present*. This “invocation” of alterity suggests that the other is briefly allowed into the sphere of the Same. Such assimilation is, of course, only possible once that which is other has divested itself of all alterity. However, “in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (Bhabha 122). A measure of this “excess” or alterity must then penetrate to the insular realm of the sovereign narrative subject, signalling the collapse of the metaphysics of presence which allows that which cannot be assimilated into the sphere of the Same to be disavowed. The subsequent disavowal of the other, then, cannot be seen as complete. Something of the otherness that has been invoked must remain in the private interior of the self, irrevocably interweaving itself with the seemingly homogeneous narrative subject.

The novel, then, emerges not as an “imperialist project” based on the successful elimination of alterity, but rather as a site of ambivalence. Here, the ostensible dismissal of alterity is merely symptomatic of an ill-disguised desire to (over) compensate for the process of self-deconstruction already at work at the very heart of the genre. Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe* is once again cited as an example of how self-definition is achieved through the disavowal of other subject positions. Although *Robinson Crusoe* certainly explores this process of colonial self-definition, it also points to the impossibility of maintaining such an enclosed consciousness, such an un-*Verflechtung* of self and other.

Due to the numerous adaptations, abridgements and editions of *Robinson Crusoe* in existence, it is likely that many readers will remember Robinson Crusoe only as a man who, after being shipwrecked on a desert island, encounters a tribe of cannibalistic savages, acquires one named Friday as his loyal slave and either kills or converts the rest of the “heathens”. However, no such clear-cut demarcations between self and other, coloniser and colonised, and master and slave can be found in Defoe’s original text. In

fact, *Robinson Crusoe* is permeated with self-reflexive moments; moments in which the text is aware of its own failure to present the ideal sovereign colonial subject in opposition to an inferior other.

When Crusoe, who had hitherto considered himself the only human occupant of the island, discovers a man's footprint in the sand, he immediately interprets this sign of human activity as threatening to his insular way of life and proclaims himself "terrified to the last degree" (Defoe 172). Here, the possibility of a colonial encounter is frightening, because it is not interpreted as an opportunity to strengthen the colonial identity in opposition to an other, but rather points to the unravelling of the colonial heterogeneous subject. Immediately after stumbling across the feasting site of the cannibals, Crusoe goes to some lengths to secure his isolation and prohibit the other from entering his inner "circle" of consciousness:

Yet I entertained such an abhorrence of the savage wretches that I have been speaking of, and of the wretched inhuman custom of their devouring and eating one another up, that I continued pensive and sad, and *kept within my own circle* for almost two years after this...

(Defoe 183 my italics)

During this time of isolation, Robinson Crusoe fervently plots the destruction of the cannibals, a reaction that would point to, as Azim (37) suggests, the "forceful eradication and obliteration of the other". A sense of unease does, however, arise when Crusoe begins to question the ethical implications of such an attack. Although horrified by his neighbours' appetite for human flesh, Crusoe struggles to justify an assault on the native inhabitants of the region, arguing that he is in no position to judge their customs as evil or sinful:

...I began, with cooler and calmer thoughts, to consider what I was going to engage in; what authority or call I had to pretend to be judge and executioner upon these men as criminals, whom Heaven had thought fit, for so many ages, to suffer, unpunished, to go on, and to be, as it were, the executioners of His judgments one upon another; how far these people

were offenders against me, and what right I had to engage in the quarrel of that blood which they shed promiscuously upon one another... When I considered this a little, it followed necessarily that I was certainly in the wrong; that these people were not murderers, in the sense that I had before condemned them in my thoughts, any more than those Christians were murderers who often put to death the prisoners taken in battle; or more frequently, upon many occasions, put whole troops of men to the sword, without giving quarter, though they threw down their arms, and submitted...

(Defoe 189-190)

Here we find a moment where alterity can no longer be bracketed as an external threat, where Crusoe, the colonial self, must acknowledge that the otherness that so frightens him is not so unfamiliar. His comparison between the cannibals' devouring of prisoners and the way in which Christians often execute their unarmed captives points to the notion that alterity (and even that which is seen as the barbarism of the other) is already present within the self.

Crusoe's acknowledgement of a difference that is not necessarily inferior or evil is reminiscent of Derrida's notion of infinite responsibility, a concept which is related to Levinas's assertion that any encounter with alterity is accompanied by a sense of obligation to that other. Crusoe's hesitance, then, can be read as an aporetic moment, or moment of undecidability, which Derrida perceives as vital to justice.

For Derrida, undecidability is the condition for justice and responsibility. In "Force of Law", he points to the aporia of responsibility, a position without (*a-*) a "way out" (*poros*). The absolutely responsible and ethical decision must be made from a position both within and outside of knowledge, the law or a premiss:

[F]or a decision to be just and responsible, it must, in its proper moment if there is one, be both regulated and without regulation: it must conserve the law and also destroy it or suspend it enough to have to reinvent it in each case.

(Derrida "Law" 23)

In “Hospitality, Justice, and Responsibility”, Derrida expands on this notion:

[A] decision has to go through some impossibility in order for it to be a decision. If we knew what to do, if I knew in terms of knowledge what I have to do before the decision, then the decision would not be a decision. It would simply be the application of a rule, the consequence of a premiss, and there would be no problem, there would be no decision. Ethics and politics, therefore, start with undecidability.

(Derrida “Hosp” 66)

The aporia of responsibility is also explored in Derrida’s *Gift Of Death*, in which he offers an expansive discussion of Kierkegaard’s Abraham. For Derrida, Abraham’s willingness to sacrifice Isaac, an act of murder “guided neither by reason nor by an ethics justifiable before men or before the law of some universal tribunal” (77), is a response to the call of the *absolute* other, in this case God. Abraham’s decision to sacrifice his son is an absolutely responsible decision, made from a position outside of knowledge:

Abraham is thus at the same time the most moral and the most immoral, the most responsible and the most irresponsible of men, absolutely irresponsible because he is absolutely responsible, absolutely irresponsible in the face of men and his family, and in the face of the ethical, because he responds to absolute duty, disinterestedly and without hoping for a reward, without knowing why yet keeping it secret; answering to God and before God.

(Derrida *GD* 72)

Derrida suggests that infinite responsibility resides within a response to the call of the wholly other and every other is wholly other (*toute autre est tout autre*). As “God, as the wholly other, is to be found everywhere there is something of the wholly other” (Derrida 78), every one of us are in the situation of Abraham, infinitely responsible to “*every other (one) as every (bit) other*”:

Through its paradox it speaks of the responsibility required at every moment for every man and every woman. At the same time, there is no longer any ethical generality that does not fall prey to the paradox of Abraham. At the instant of every decision and through the relation to *every other (one) as every (bit) other*, every one else asks us at every moment to behave like knights of faith.

(Derrida *GD* 78-79)

This *Verflechtung* between self and other can also be extended to the relationship between Friday and Robinson Crusoe. The figure of Friday can be read as Bhabha's "reformed recognizable Other", a mimic man that is "almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). As mentioned in the introduction to this dissertation, the process of appropriation emerges as a site of ambivalence, as mimicry is only successful if it "continually produce[s] its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha 122). The appropriated other, then, is partially allowed into the 'sphere of the Same', but since mimicry dictates that the other must continue to assert his/her difference, alterity must necessarily find its way into the private realm of consciousness.

The relationship between Robinson Crusoe and Friday, then, cannot be viewed in terms of a simple master/slave dichotomy. When considering the fact that Crusoe was himself once a slave to a Moor in Sallee, the distinction between Friday, the slave and Crusoe, the master, becomes even more unclear. The matter is even further complicated by the fact that these two cross the boundaries between self and other in terms of their appearance. Crusoe takes on the appearance of the other, when he fashions himself a moustache similar to those of the Turks in Sallee:

My beard I had once suffered to grow till it was about a quarter of a yard long; but as I had both scissors and razors sufficient, I had cut it pretty short, except what grew on my upper lip, which I had trimmed into a large pair of Mahometan whiskers, such as I had seen worn by some Turks at Sallee, for the Moors did not wear such, though the Turks did; of these moustachios, or whiskers, I will not say they were long enough to hang my hat upon them, but they were of a length and shape monstrous enough, and such as in England would have passed for frightful.

(Defoe 169)

Furthermore, Crusoe dresses Friday in attire similar to his own, creating a “double”. The copy of *Robinson Crusoe* used for the purpose of this dissertation, printed in 1945, sports “fifty-two illustrations by J.D. Watson”, one of which depicts Crusoe dressing Friday. In this illustration it is difficult to distinguish between Friday and Crusoe: both look distinctly European and are dressed similarly.

It is these aporetic moments within Defoe’s novel that serve as a catalyst for J.M Coetzee’s *Foe*, a text commonly located as a subversive post-colonial rewrite of *Robinson Crusoe*. Coetzee’s adaptation of Defoe’s text explicitly illustrates the ways in which a post-colonial return can exceed mere narrow political concern (the assumption that the rewritten text merely responds to the existence of unequal power relations in the original work) in order to explore a broader range of issues.

Much of Coetzee’s work is characterised by a concern with alterity and frequently relies on the device of staging an encounter between self and other. In his *Waiting for the Barbarians*, Coetzee’s Magistrate is forced to come to terms with his own complicity in a violent and inhumane Empire when he becomes involved with a young barbarian girl; the enemy. Imprisoned by his own regime for his sympathetic relationship with their victims of torture, the Magistrate begins to doubt who the real threat is: “‘We are at peace here,’ I say, ‘we have no enemies.’ There is a silence. ‘Unless I make a mistake,’ I say. ‘Unless we are the enemy.’” (Coetzee *Barbarians* 85)

This preoccupation with the *Verflechtung* between self and other is continued in *Foe*, which proves an extremely complex and self-reflexive text. Coetzee’s return to *Robinson Crusoe* is less concerned with ‘writing back’ to or subverting the supposed colonial logic of its pretext than with illustrating the impossibility of reducing Defoe’s novel to mere imperialist propaganda.

Foe returns to something of the complexity of the colonial encounter, acknowledging that such problematisation is already evident in Defoe's text, but has been obscured by the various and pervasive Crusoe myths. That is, Coetzee's *Foe* can be read as a response to not only the aporetic moments within *Robinson Crusoe*, but also to the ways in which the novel has been appropriated in the service of colonialism through the formation of myth. Furthermore, the novel is also concerned with the very process of rewriting itself, and self-consciously dramatises the anxieties associated with literary return. Coetzee, then, returns to *Robinson Crusoe* in order to problematise the notions of autonomy and authorship.

Let us firstly consider the ways in which Coetzee responds to *Robinson Crusoe*'s appropriation as colonial myth. In many ways, *Foe* emerges as the antithesis to the imperial Robinsonade. It has already been established that imperial imitations of *Robinson Crusoe*, such as Ballantyne's *The Coral Island*, rely on the bracketing of all elements of equivocation in order to reshape the text in adherence to the ideology of British imperialism. Coetzee's rewrite of Defoe's novel is dependent on a similar process of adaptation and interpretation. In *Foe*, however, we find the elimination of all elements that contribute to the creation of the colonial Crusoe myth: the element of adventure, the triumph of Enlightenment reason and Calvinistic work ethic, and the ideal of an enclosed sovereign narrative subject. In short, Coetzee removes some of the romance of *Robinson Crusoe* and suggests that those elements that have been valorised and exaggerated in colonial discourse are in fact dysfunctional.

Foe reintroduces Robinson Crusoe as Robinson Cruso, a variation that points to the distinction between Defoe's Enlightenment individual and Coetzee's postmodern narrative subject. Whilst Defoe's Crusoe is characterised by an almost insatiable desire to better his living conditions, fervently creating shelters, furniture, earthenware, umbrellas, canoes and much more with the many tools he retrieved from his ship's wreckage, Coetzee's Cruso possesses only a knife and creates only the bare necessities, such as a bed and shelter. The Calvinistic work ethic that so appealed to Victorian readers is exposed as futile. Cruso's terraces, which he toils over on a daily basis, are built in the

hope that future castaways will cultivate them, for (unlike Crusoe) he is not fortunate enough to accidentally sow a few cobs of corn. Susan Barton, a female castaway who joins Cruso and Friday on their island, is perplexed by this fruitless labour:

When I passed the terraces and saw this man, no longer young, labouring in the heat of the day to lift a great stone out of the earth or patiently chopping at the grass, while he waited year after year for some saviour castaway to arrive in a boat with a sack of corn at his feet, I found it a foolish kind of agriculture. It seemed to me he might occupy his time as well in digging for gold, or digging graves first for himself and Friday and then if he wished for all the castaways of the future history of the island, and for me too.

(Coetzee 34)

Similarly, Crusoe's reliance on Enlightenment logic and reason, which results in meticulous list making, the keeping of a remarkably accurate calendar and regular journal entries, is also disregarded. Cruso refuses to keep any written account of his island solitude, stubbornly insisting that "[n]othing is forgotten" and that nothing he has "forgotten is worth the remembering" (Coetzee 17). Once again, Susan Barton is baffled by this refusal:

Cruso kept no journal, perhaps because he lacked paper and ink, but more likely, I now believe, because he lacked the inclination to keep one, or, if he ever possessed the inclination, had lost it. I searched the poles that supported the roof, and the legs of the bed, but found no carvings, not even notches to indicate that he counted the years of his banishment or the cycles of the moon.

(Coetzee 17)

Furthermore, Coetzee challenges the sexual apathy of Robinson Crusoe, an apparent lack of interest in women that Ian Watt (169) sees as "an extreme inhibition of ... normal human feelings":

Crusoe's attitude to women is also marked by an extreme inhibition of what we now consider to be normal human feelings. There are, of course, no women on the island, and their absence is not deplored. When Crusoe does notice lack of "society", he prays for the company only of a male slave. With Friday he is fully satisfied by an idyll without benefit of woman.

(Watt 169)

Coetzee's Cruso, however, practically rapes Susan Barton, who does not resist, stating that "[h]e has not known a woman for fifteen years, why should he not have his desire?" (Coetzee 30) *Foe*, then, suggests that Crusoe's sexual apathy, which Joyce locates as symptomatic of the "Anglo-Saxon spirit", must inevitably be released as a sexual violation.

Even the island solitude, which has been positively interpreted as the possibility of an entirely sovereign, enclosed subject and valorised by Rousseau in *Emile*, is exposed as resulting in a-social behaviour reminiscent of autism. In fact, Cruso meets enough of the diagnostic criteria outlined in the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* to be considered autistic, scoring at least two from category one and one each from category two and three. His symptoms include: "a lack of spontaneous seeking to share enjoyment, interests, or achievements with other people", "lack of social or emotional reciprocity", "marked impairment in the ability to initiate or sustain a conversation with others" and, bearing in mind his incessant terrace building, "encompassing preoccupation with one or more stereotyped and restricted patterns of interest that is abnormal either in intensity or focus" (DSM 75).

Cruso's lack of social reciprocity is evident in his strained relationship with Susan Barton. Since Coetzee's Friday is mute, Cruso has toiled on his island in relative silence for fifteen years. Yet, when he is finally granted the opportunity to converse with Susan, he does not appear to be open to conversation. Susan remarks:

I would have told him more about myself too, about my quest for my stolen daughter, about the mutiny. But he asked nothing, gazing out instead into the setting sun, nodding to himself as though a voice spoke privately inside him that he was listening to.

(Coetzee 13)

Cruso's isolation has also resulted in a sort of dementia. He is unable to recall his past and his stories are so "various, and so hard to reconcile one with another" that Susan is "driven to conclude that age and isolation had taken their toll on his memory, and he no longer knew for sure what was truth, what fancy" (Coetzee 12). At times Cruso's ramblings seem to coincide with the events of the original *Robinson Crusoe*. This can be seen as a direct response to the formation of myth, as the tale of *Robinson Crusoe* has also become distorted to the extent that we can no longer separate "truth" from "fancy". Cruso appears to be particularly confused about the manner in which Friday came to be his servant:

Sometimes he would say he had dwelt on his island the past fifteen years, he and Friday, none but they having been spared when their ship went down. "Was Friday then a child, when the ship went down?" I asked. "Aye, a child, a mere child, a little slave-boy," replied Cruso. Yet at other times, as for instance when he was in the grip of the fever (and should we not believe that in fever as in drunkenness the truth speaks itself willy-nilly?) he would tell stories of cannibals, of how Friday was a cannibal whom he had saved from being roasted and devoured by fellow-cannibals.

(Coetzee 12)

Foe also suggests that fifteen years on a desert island would take its toll on one's appearance. Whilst Defoe's Crusoe cuts his beard short, having "both scissors and razors sufficient" and declares that his skin is "not so mulatto like as one might expect from a man not at all careful of it" (Defoe 169), Coetzee repeatedly points to the fact that his Cruso's beard was never cut, and he is described as a rather grubby man with rotting teeth:

For so far had his teeth decayed that it had grown a habit with him to grind them together constantly, those that were left, to still the ache. Indeed, it was no pretty sight to see him take his food in his unwashed hands and gnaw at it on his left side, where it hurt him less.

(Coetzee 19)

In short, Coetzee suggests that island solitude itself is “no pretty sight”, and by highlighting the harsh reality of life without conveniences manages to erase some of the charm and romance that has contributed to the myth of *Robinson Crusoe*. *Foe* suggests that the Crusoe myth has succeeded in hiding something of the ideology of the text, and in removing the romantic elements which allow for myth formation Coetzee succeeds in laying bare this ideological structure.

Coetzee’s narrator, Susan Barton, appears to be influenced by an almost arcane knowledge of the adventurous, mythical tale of *Robinson Crusoe*, and expresses disappointment when her expectations are not met:

It seemed a great pity that from the wreck Cruso should have brought away no more than a knife. For had he rescued even the simplest of carpenter’s tools, and some spikes and bars and suchlike, he might have fashioned better tools, and with better tools contrived a less laborious life, or even built a boat and escaped to civilization.

(Coetzee 16)

She often questions Cruso about this lack of adherence to the mythical adventure, and seems particularly concerned about the fact that the real (rather uninteresting) tale of their island isolation will not satisfy the people in England:

‘Cruso,’ I say..., ‘is there not someone you have forgotten in Brazil? Is there not a sister awaiting your return on your Brazilian estates, and a faithful steward keeping the accounts?...’

(Coetzee 44)

And:

...[W]hy was it that so little of the island could be called extraordinary? Why were there no strange fruits, no serpents, no lions? Why did the cannibals never come? What will we tell folk in England when they ask us to divert them?

(Coetzee 43)

Despite these expectations, Susan is adamant that only the truth should be told about her (mis)adventure. When the captain of the *John Hobart* suggests that Susan should write and offer the story of her island isolation to booksellers, she insists that “[a] liveliness is lost in the writing down which must be supplied by art, and I have no art.” (Coetzee 40) When Captain Smith suggests that the booksellers will employ someone to “put in a dash of colour”, Susan is immediately defensive, stating that she “will not have any lies told” (Coetzee 40):

“If I cannot come forward, as author, and swear to the truth of my tale, what will be the worth of it? I might as well have dreamed it in a snug bed in Chichester.”

(Coetzee 40)

It is with this exchange between Susan and Captain Smith that we can progress to a discussion of the ways in which Coetzee’s *Foe* can be read as a response to the aporetic moments within *Robinson Crusoe*, as well as a dramatisation of the anxieties associated with the act of rewriting. A separate discussion on each of these two concerns proves difficult, as they are concurrently explored in Coetzee’s representation of Susan Barton’s inability to write an account of her island isolation.

The discussion between Susan Barton and the captain of the *John Hobart* not only reveals Susan's apprehension regarding the prospect of assuming the position of author (the assertion that she has no "art"), but also the *ethical* dilemma associated with such an endeavour. Here, Susan's unease is attributed to an unwillingness to embellish the tale of Crusoe and the island, but this will later be extended to the prospect of having to represent the silenced other, Friday.

It is at this moment on board the *John Hobart*, when the notion of writing an account of the island adventure first begins to take shape, that Susan Barton and Friday's fates become irrevocably intertwined. Susan, who initially pays Friday "little more attention than [she] would have given any house-slave in Brazil" (Coetzee 24), now feels a certain sense of obligation towards him. She cannot abandon him in London "because he is helpless" (Coetzee 128) and she becomes his protector.

During the course of the novel, Susan Barton becomes increasingly immersed in her role as representative of the silenced other, at times displaying remarkable insight into Friday's plight and coming to some profound conclusions regarding her own complicity in his oppression. Coetzee allows for such insights by not only staging an encounter between self and other, but also by meticulously steering his narrator from a privileged, central position to a position closer to the marginal one occupied by Friday in order to establish an intimate connection between the two.

On their return to England, a destitute Susan now occupies a marginal position. Her only hope of survival lies with the successful retelling of the story of the island and she is eventually forced to acknowledge that her failure to tell Crusoe's story is directly linked to her disregard for Friday's past. The realisation that Friday's lost history is a gaping hole in her narrative results in some critical reflection on his life, history and the construction of his identity.

Despite Susan's new devotion to uncovering Friday's true story, resulting from her shift from a privileged position to a more marginal one, her efforts are necessarily hampered by Friday's inability to speak, the fact that his tongue has been quite literally cut out. Her failure to give voice to Friday now results in introspective musings regarding her own involvement in his misrepresentation:

Friday has no command of words and therefore no defence against being re-shaped day by day in conformity with the desires of others... No matter what he is to himself...what he is to the world is what I make of him.
(Coetzee 121-122)

Susan also acknowledges the role she plays in Friday's oppression, admitting to using language to gain power over him:

I tell myself I talk to Friday to educate him out of darkness and silence. But is that the truth? There are times when benevolence deserts me and I use words only as the shortest way to subject him to my will... I understand, that is to say, why a man will choose to be a slaveowner.
(Coetzee 60)

Susan's re-evaluation of her own position, then, stems from her increasing frustration with Friday's inability to communicate. Susan's failure to represent Friday can also be seen as a kind of success, as the endeavour results in some profound insights into her own complicity in his oppression.

Coetzee establishes an intimate connection between Susan Barton and Friday. Susan's struggle to uncover Friday's true story, and their consequent entanglement, allows Coetzee to engage with an unsettling moment within Defoe's original text: the notion that there is "a silence surrounding Friday" (Coetzee 142) that demands a return. Coetzee suggests that "in every story there is a silence, some sight concealed, some word unspoken" and "[t]ill we have spoken the unspoken we have not come to the heart of the story." (Coetzee 141) *Foe* attempts to "speak" the moments of hesitation and

undecidability in its pretext, and does so by staging an intimate relationship or *Verflechtung* between self and other, an entanglement that is already at “the heart of the story” (Coetzee 141) of Robinson Crusoe.

Susan’s struggle to write the story of the island also serves to dramatise the problems associated with the rewritten post-colonial text. As a writer attempting to represent or *rewrite* the silenced other, Susan can also be closely linked to the post-colonial author. The obstacles she encounters in her attempts to write the story of Friday thus mirror, in an exaggerated form, those encountered by the post-colonial author during the process of rewriting. Susan’s narrative is not only impeded by her inability to uncover Friday’s true story, or rather her inability to represent him accurately, but also the fact that her position as *female* narrator leaves her vulnerable to certain anxieties of influence. These obstacles will be shown to reflect the concerns of the dependent post-colonial text.

As a *female* coming to writing, Susan is confronted with a question posed in Gilbert and Gubar’s “Infection in the Sentence”: “What does it mean to be a woman writer in a culture whose fundamental definitions of literary authority are... both overtly and covertly patriarchal?” (Gilbert and Gubar 45-46). During the time in which Daniel Defoe is forced into hideout due to unpaid debts, Susan not only takes up residence in his house, but also usurps the position of storyteller. As a woman coming to writing, an art form that has always, as Hélène Cixous suggests in her “The Laugh of the Medusa”, “been one with the phallogocentric tradition”, Susan is necessarily hampered by certain anxieties of influence. She is acutely aware of the fact that she is intruding on traditionally masculine territory, and that the tools she uses were not originally hers:

I sat at your bureau this morning (it is afternoon now, I sit at the same bureau, I have sat here all day) and took out a clean sheet of paper and dipped pen in ink – *your* pen, *your* ink, I know, but somehow the pen becomes mine when I write with it, as though growing out of my hand...
(Coetzee 66-67, my italics)

Despite her assertion that she has somehow made the pen, and by implication writing, her own, Susan is never comfortable about her new position as storyteller. In fact, she seems to resent the fact that the burden has been placed on her shoulders:

I must go, Friday. You thought that carrying stones was the hardest of labours. But when you see me at Mr Foe's desk making marks with the quill think of each mark as a stone, and think of the paper as the island, and imagine that I must disperse the stones over the face of the island, and when that is done and the taskmaster is not satisfied (was Cruso ever satisfied with your labours?) must pick them up again (which, in the figure, is scoring out the marks) and dispose them according to another scheme, and so forth, day after day; all of this because Mr Foe has run away from his debts. Sometimes I believe it is I who have become the slave.

(Coetzee 87)

Thus, the task of assuming the masculine role of storyteller is seen not only as a burden, but also as a task that is *overseen*. The 'taskmaster' then is the male literary precursor, a looming and sinister patriarchal presence that restricts the female writer. Female writing also becomes a futile activity, continuously hampered by anxieties of influence and thus as pointless as Cruso's incessant terrace building. The notion that an unseen, masculine 'taskmaster' is somehow controlling Susan's narrative is prevalent throughout the text. Susan becomes conscious of the fact that she is not in command of her own narrative:

In the beginning I thought I would tell you the story of the island and, being done with that, return to my former life. But now all my life grows to be a story and there is nothing of my own left to me. I thought I was myself and this girl a creature from another order speaking words you made up for her. But now I am full of doubt. Nothing is left to me but doubt. I am doubt itself. Who is speaking me? Am I a phantom too? To what order do I belong? And you: who are you?

(Coetzee 133)

Susan's anxieties of influence and her fear of somehow being controlled by external forces can be said to mirror the concerns of the rewritten post-colonial text, which also

frequently displays an acute awareness of the fact that it is a *dependent* text, inextricably linked to and confined by the matrix text. This self-conscious element seems to manifest as a constant anxiety of being subsumed by the ideology of the matrix text. Thus, the rewritten text becomes pre-occupied with its struggle to negotiate its dependency on the original text, while desperately attempting to maintain its original aim of subversion.

In the light of this connection, the masculine taskmaster can also be seen as the western literary tradition as a force that restricts the post-colonial narrative. Susan's question, "And you: who are you?" (Coetzee 133), then, acquires several layers of meaning. This question is not only directed at Daniel Defoe the character, but also at the people who are 'speaking' her: Daniel Defoe the author and Coetzee himself. In view of this ambiguity, the passage becomes self-reflexive. It is now no longer only Susan Barton who questions her position as autonomous narrator, but also the author himself. *Foe*, then, seems to be exploring the anxieties of influence experienced by the post-colonial author, who, like Susan, usurps the position of storyteller and the art of writing itself.

Post-colonial theory often extols the virtues of the textual strategy that sees post-colonial authors appropriating the English language and the western art of writing in order to undermine the hegemony of the western literary centre. In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin suggest:

The seizing of the means of communication and the liberation of post-colonial writing by the appropriation of the written word become crucial features of the process of self-assertion and of the ability to reconstruct the world as an unfolding historical process.

(Ashcroft et al 81)

Coetzee problematises this strategy through his portrayal of Susan's failure to successfully appropriate the masculine art of writing. He further dramatises the problems associated with post-colonial literature's appropriation of writing by allowing not only the representative of the other (Susan), but also the other himself (Friday) to experience difficulties during the process of appropriating writing. Susan attempts to teach Friday how to write not only so that he has access to a tool that might allow him to liberate

himself from an endless cycle of misrepresentation, but also to ensure the success of her own writing process. However, Friday does not seem capable of learning:

While Foe and I spoke, Friday had settled himself on his mat with the slate. Glancing over his shoulder, I saw he was filling it with a design of, as it seemed, leaves and flowers. But when I came closer I saw the leaves were eyes, open eyes, each set upon a human foot: row upon row of eyes upon feet: walking eyes.

(Coetzee 147)

When considering Friday's drawings as not eyes set on human feet, but as "I's" set on *human* feet it appears that his scribbling is an attempt at self-assertion: I, the self stands on human feet. I am and I am human. However, the eyes could also suggest the eyes of others; the fact that Friday will always be subjected to and defined by the gaze of those that speak him. For Coetzee, our experience of the other is necessarily mediated and Friday remains a silence not only in his own narrative, but also in Daniel Defoe's original text. *Foe* suggests:

Friday's is "properly not a story but a puzzle or hole in the narrative", a "buttonhole, carefully cross-stitched around, but empty, waiting for the button".

(Coetzee 121)

This analogy can be extended to Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, in which there is a 'silence surrounding' Caliban, a gaping 'hole in the narrative' that must inevitably allow for a return. This will be explored in further detail in the following chapter, which explores Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest* and Marina Warner's *Indigo* in relation to *The Tempest*.

CHAPTER TWO

Prospero Under Siege

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, Marina Warner's *Indigo* and Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*

The emergence of new historicism and cultural materialism as critical practices in the field of Early Modern studies in the 1970s and 1980s contributed to what Jonathan Dollimore, in the foreword to his *Political Shakespeare*, deems the “break-up of traditional assumptions about the values and goals of literary criticism” (vii). Literary critics became increasingly conscious of the fact that the study of the socio-political and historical context within which a text operates can serve to expose the ways in which that particular text represents and validates notions of power. Dollimore (6-7) suggests that materialist criticism is concerned with the ways in which certain cultural and literary forms, here placing particular emphasis on Elizabethan and Jacobean culture, serve to legitimise and naturalise the dominant social order and work “to efface the fact of social contradiction, dissent and struggle” by interpreting “the very conflicts which the existing order generates from within itself ... as attempts to subvert it from without”. Dollimore further suggests that the tactic that sees the strengthening of a dominant discourse through a process of naturalisation and legitimisation is characteristic of the work of William Shakespeare:

This combined emphasis on universal interests, society as a ‘reflection’ of the ‘natural’ order of things, history as a ‘lawful’ development leading up to and justifying the present, the demonizing of dissent and otherness, was central to the age of Shakespeare.

(Dollimore 7)

The new emphasis on materialist criticism gave rise to readings of Shakespeare that undermined the commonly held belief that Shakespeare's work possesses a unique universal quality that exceeds historical, political and cultural constraints. Early materialist critics now began to identify connections between the works of Shakespeare, colonialism, patriarchy, and issues of power and subversion. Paul Brown's essay, "*The Tempest and the Discourse of Colonialism*", became one of the first to acknowledge and trace the "connection between a class discourse (masterlessness), a race discourse (savagism) and a courtly and politicised discourse on sexuality" (51) in Shakespeare's *The Tempest*. Brown's analysis of *The Tempest* in relation to the discourse of colonialism also raises questions as to what extent colonial authority is both beleaguered by and reliant on its own construction of the other as simultaneously inferior and threatening. Brown's study, which is largely informed by Edward Said's views on orientalism and the work of Homi K. Bhabha, suggests:

[C]olonialist discourse voices a demand both for order and disorder, producing a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the coloniser. Yet that production is itself evidence of a struggle to restrict the other's disruptiveness to that role. Colonialist discourse does not simply announce a triumph for civility, it must continuously *produce* it, and this work involves struggle and risk.

(Brown 58)

This study, then, not only exposes the definite historical and political links between *The Tempest* and the British imperial project, but also points to an inherent instability in the discourse of colonialism, and proposes that Shakespeare's *The Tempest* not only serves to strengthen the dominant discourse of colonialism through a process of legitimisation, naturalisation and the demonising of the other, but also signals the collapse of the logic of imperialism.

This chapter will argue that it is this ambiguity at the centre of Shakespeare's great 'castaway' narrative that has resulted in a continuous fascination with and return to the text. In her *Tempests After Shakespeare*, a text which maps a range of rewritings of

William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* over the last four decades and various geographical and cultural locations, Chantal Zabus identifies *The Tempest* as the "the interpellative dream-text" of the seventeenth century, and suggests that its impact, which persists nearly four hundred years after its inception, far surpasses that of later 'dream-texts':

Each century has its own interpellative dream-text: *The Tempest* for the seventeenth century; *Robinson Crusoe* for the Eighteenth century; *Jane Eyre* for the nineteenth century; *Heart of Darkness* for the turn of the twentieth century. Such texts serve as pre-texts to others and underwrite them. Yet, in its nearly four centuries of existence, *The Tempest* has most endured of any text and, through its rewritings, has helped shape three contemporaneous movements – postcoloniality, postfeminism or postpatriarchy and postmodernism – from the 1960s to the present.

(Zabus 1)

The staggering inventory of *Tempest* rewrites contained in *Tempests After Shakespeare* certainly attests to the enduring nature of the play, and Zabus succeeds in identifying the ways in which the rewritings of *The Tempest* can be used to trace the development of the movements of postcoloniality, feminism and postmodernism. However, the text falls short in its explanation for the continuous use of *The Tempest* as pre-text for rewritings. Zabus suggests that the text's popularity as pre-text can be attributed to the emergence of a more pluralistic approach to hierarchical structures in the twenty-first century:

In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare meant Prospero, Caliban, and Miranda to be unequal partners locked in a power relationship...Possibly because the outset of the twenty-first century holds that every voice should be heard, (re)writers have dismantled this hierarchy and given equal importance to these *Tempest*-protagonists, who have thus become contestants disputing a territorial niche in the larger critiques of representation.

(Zabus 2)

In the conclusion to her text, Zabus further attempts to give an explanation for the popularity of *Tempest* rewrites by drawing on theories posited in zoologist Richard Dawkins' s *The Selfish Gene*. Zabus claims that the urge to offer rewritings of existing

texts can be related to Dawkins's concept of 'memes': units of cultural transmission which "propagate themselves in a meme pool, the way genes do in the gene pool by a process of 'imitation'" (267). The process of rewriting, then, becomes a compulsion, an act as involuntary and necessary as the propagation of genes within a gene pool. In a review of Zabus's *Tempests After Shakespeare*, Jonathan Gil Harris expresses doubt regarding the viability of such a conclusion:

[T]his decidedly conservative concept...sits uneasily with the more radical political commitments of a good many of the re-writers whom Zabus studies. At best, the analogy acknowledges the fact of cultural reproduction without explaining 'why' *The Tempest*, let alone the repeated compulsion to revise rather than simply reproduce the play – a compulsion that arguably observes the logic not of *même* but of *différance*.

(Gil Harris 3)

Zabus, then, seemingly wavers from her initial assertion that the compulsion to rewrite and revise arises from postmodernism's emphasis on *différance* and plurality, in order to liken the process of rewriting to an 'instinctive' biological process of imitation. It is precisely this uncertainty regarding the motivation behind the compulsion to return to 'interpellative dream texts' such as *The Tempest* that underpins the central tenet of this dissertation. The conclusion that rewriters continue to return to *The Tempest* nearly four decades after its inception simply due to the fact that the play presents an unequal hierarchical structure is clearly unsatisfactory.

While it is evident that rewriters take advantage of the fact that Prospero and his island companions are locked in an unequal power dynamic that can easily be related to the oppressive systems of colonialism and patriarchy, the mere existence of such tensions within the play does not entirely explain the *overwhelming* response to this particular text. There is no reason to believe that *The Tempest*, when read as a defence and reflection of the dominant discourse of imperialism, would provoke more subversive responses than any other text of the era which propagates similar ideological concepts.

However, when considering the play as a text which not only strengthens and supports the dominant discourse of colonialism, but also signals, as Brown suggests, the collapse of the logic of imperialism, it becomes evident that there is an element of ambiguity at the centre of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, an element of subversion which allows for a return in the form of rewriting or revision.

Written around 1611, *The Tempest* was informed by increasing public interest in and support for Britain's imperial expansions, and in particular by reports of colonial vessels that had been shipwrecked on deserted islands en route to colonies. According to the historical background provided in the introduction to the Penguin Popular Classics edition of the play (15), *The Tempest* was seemingly intended for the royal court. One of the first performances of *The Tempest* (1 November, 1611) was before the king at Whitehall. The play was again performed at Whitehall as part of the celebratory activities at Princess Elizabeth's wedding to the Elector Palatine in 1613. These royal performances seemingly suggest that the play was intended as a tribute to the English royal court and its colonial endeavours.

Here, it should be added that certain critics, such as Jerry Brotton, are in disagreement with this assertion, arguing that the connection between *The Tempest* and the British colonisation of the 'New World' has been overemphasised. In his "'This Tunis, sir, was Carthage': Contesting colonialism in *The Tempest*", Brotton suggests that the play is as "crucially inflected with English involvement in the trade and diplomacy of the Mediterranean world" (24) as it is with references to colonial expansion in the Americas. Brotton offers a specific exchange between Gonzalo and his companions, in which the Italian noblemen are involved in a dispute concerning Tunis and ancient Carthage, in support of this claim:

Gonzalo: Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Afric, at the marriage of the King's fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis.

Sebastian: 'Twas a sweet marriage, and we prosper well in our return.

Adrian: Tunis was never grac'd before with such a paragon to their Queen.

Gonzalo: Not since widow Dido's time.

Antonio: Widow? A pox o' that: how came that widow in? Widow Dido!

Sebastian: What if he had said widower Aeneas too? Good Lord, how you take it?

Adrian: Widow Dido said you? You make me study of that: she was of Carthage, not of Tunis.

Gonzalo: This Tunis sir was Carthage.

Adrian: Carthage?

Gonzalo: I assure you Carthage.

(2.1: 68-84)

For Brotton, this confusion surrounding the Widow Dido, ancient Carthage and contemporary Tunis reads as a Mediterranean reference that has all too easily been dismissed by critical readings of *The Tempest* which “insist on the validity of claiming a direct relation between what it terms early English colonialist discourse and the play itself” (25). The presence of “Old World” geography, then, excludes the possibility of reading the play as a “seamless representation of nascent colonial power and authority” (Brotton 29). Brotton suggests:

...I would argue that the play is precisely situated at the *geopolitical bifurcation* between the Old World and the New, at the point at which the English realized both the compromised and subordinated position within which they found themselves in the Mediterranean, and the possibility of pursuing a significantly different commercial and maritime initiative in the Americas.

(Brotton 37)

While not necessarily agreeing with Brotton's argument that the dismissal of the Mediterranean geography present within *The Tempest* has resulted in anachronistic colonial readings of the text, this claim, whether valid or not, points to an element of ambiguity at the centre of the play, even at the basic level of its setting. Writers are

compelled to return to *The Tempest* precisely because these uncertainties in fact define the play.

This sense of unease is not dispelled when the text is read through the lens of “New World” colonialism. Let us, with apologies to Jerry Brotton, set aside the Mediterranean references (which, in any case, do not preclude reading the play as a meditation on the nature and vicissitudes of power) and concede that Shakespeare’s magical island can indeed be read as the backdrop against which the ultimate colonial triumph plays out. Prospero, when read as coloniser and patriarch of the island, is seemingly exceptionally successful in his civilizing mission. He does not only succeed in gaining authority over the inhabitants of the island, but his mastery of this ‘colony’ is also made all the more natural by his control over the elements.

A few years prior to the inception of *The Tempest*, Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* had presented Jacobean audiences with the notion that order and harmony in the natural world was inextricably linked to imperial authority. Macbeth’s bloody and unnatural ascent of the Scottish throne results in a disruption of the natural order. This is illustrated in Lennox’s account of strange occurrences on the night of Duncan’s murder:

The night has been unruly. Where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i’ th’ air, strange screams of death,
And prophesying, with accents terrible,
Of dire combustion and confus’d events
New hatch’d to th’ woeful time; the obscure bird
Clamour’d the livelong night. Some say the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

(2.3: 52-58)

In view of this intimate connection between natural harmony and imperial rule, Prospero’s ability to raise storms, induce sleep, and manipulate the natural spirits of the island serves to establish his (colonial) rule as ‘natural’ and ‘lawful’. Caliban, the

“Abhorred slave, / Which any print of goodness wilt not take,” (1.2: 351-352) threatens the ‘natural’ harmony of Prospero’s colonial utopia, but is easily thwarted both in his plan to rape Miranda and in his effort to stage a coup with the help of Stephano the ‘drunken butler’ and Trinculo the ‘jester’.

Trinculo and Stephano’s involvement in Caliban’s scheme to overthrow Prospero is indicative of the ways in which, as Dollimore suggests, *The Tempest* strengthens the *status quo* by interpreting dissent that has been generated from within the dominant social order as attempts to undermine it from without. As lower class servants, Stephano and Trinculo are both products of and disavowed by the dominant order. For Brown (50), Trinculo and Stephano are representative of the ‘masterless’, those “wandering or unfixed and unsupervised elements located in the internal margins of civil society”. Although their collaboration with the ‘savage’ Caliban can be read as suggestive of an element of dissent present within the margins of the dominant social order, this rebellion also serves to strengthen the dominant discourse.

Trinculo and Stephano’s cries of dissent are quickly stifled and dismissed as mere comic relief, the drunken antics of incompetent, ridiculous and greedy buffoons. This is particularly evident towards the end of the play when Trinculo and Stephano are easily distracted from their assassination plans by the sight of Prospero’s wardrobe. Their greed and foolishness results not only in the failure of their coup, but also rebuke and derision. The play’s feuding aristocrats are united in their suppression of these characters’ insurrection, and thus this incident serves to highlight the “necessity for a solidarity among the ruling class in the face of such a threat” and “the masterless therefore function to bind the rulers together in hegemony.” (Brown 53)

It would then seem as if *The Tempest* indeed utilises the tactic identified by Dollimore: strengthening the dominant social order through the process of naturalisation, legitimisation and the oppression and ridicule of otherness and dissent. Ostensibly, that which threatens the *status quo* is miraculously deflected and suppressed and a utopian exit is established. Despite this seemingly effortless suppression of dissent and the

magical reconciliation towards the end of the play, Prospero's island remains a frightening utopia. The themes of love and forgiveness are destabilised by the underlying threats of rape, violence, slavery and loss of autonomy. Order is maintain only through the constant suppression of dissent and otherness, and thus disorder is always brimming underneath the surface, threatening to subsume colonial authority. *The Tempest*, as Brown suggests, indeed produces "a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the coloniser" only to "struggle to restrict the other's disruptiveness to that role" (58).

The villainous Caliban proves to be a 'disruptive' other that is not easily constrained. His remains a dissenting voice that refuses to be silenced. The character is afforded the second most lines in the play, and the eloquence, rationality and passion with which he delivers these, cursing his master and asserting himself as rightful ruler of the island, seem irreconcilable with his later portrayal as an incompetent, drunk slave seeking pardon for his indiscretions. Compare the venom with which he initially curses Prospero to his final speech:

You taught me language, and my profit on't
Is, I know how to curse: the red plague rid you
For learning me your language.

(1.2: 363-364)

As opposed to:

Ay that I will: and I'll be wise hereafter,
And seek for grace: what a thrice-double ass
Was I to take this drunkard for a god?
And worship this dull fool?

(5.1: 294-295)

This discrepancy is only one of several which render the reconciliation established towards the end of the play problematic. The final scene of the play, and especially

Prospero's epilogue, is radically ambiguous. Throughout the play, Prospero's authority has been established as natural and lawful only in opposition to Caliban's *unnatural* otherness. Now it would seem as if the newly reinstated duke of Milan equates himself with his "poisonous slave", Caliban, when he declares: "This thing of darkness, I / Acknowledge mine" (5.1: 275-276). The ambiguity inherent in this statement points to Paul Brown's notion that an encounter with the non-civil results in the unwinding of the self (the civil subject):

This characteristically produces an encounter with the other involving the coloniser's attempts to dominate, restrict, and exploit the other even as that other offers allurements which might erode the order obtaining within the civil subject or the body politic. This encounter is truly a labyrinth situation, offering the affirmation or *ravelling up* of the civil subject even as it raises the possibility of its undoing, its erosion, its *unravelling*.

(Brown, 51)

In his epilogue, Prospero draws attention to the fact that he too is a prisoner of the island, in exile, and thus occupying a space on the inner margins of the dominant social order. He pleads with the audience to release him from his confinement on the island:

I must be here confin'd by you,
Or sent to Naples; let me not
Since I have my Dukedom got,
And pardon'd the deceiver, dwell
In this bare Island by your spell,
But release me from my bands
With the help of your good hands.

(Epilogue 4-10)

This reminder of Prospero's own position as 'masterless' man serves to further problematise readings which place him as the unbridled mouthpiece of colonialism and patriarchy. When considering Prospero as a character that has been disavowed by the dominant order, the simple master/ slave dichotomy, which critics such as Chantal Zabus

uphold as one of the motivations for pluralistic rewritings of *The Tempest*, proves far more complex. Prospero's 'unravelling' or 'erosion' as a civil subject then stems not from a failure to deflect the onslaughts of a 'disruptive' other, but rather from a collapse within the dominant discourse itself.

Furthermore, while Prospero's skills as a white magician seemingly enable him to maintain authority over the island, his magical abilities also render him a very problematic figure in terms of Renaissance orthodoxy. In her "Demonizing Magic: Patterns of Power in *Doctor Faustus*", Emily C. Bartels (117) suggests that the sixteenth century, the age of the witch craze, saw an upsurge in texts criminalising and demonising magic, such as Jean Bodin's *De la demonomanie des sorciers* (1580) and James I' *Daemonologie* (1597). During this period, Bartels further suggests, the magician play too gained popularity, with productions such as Robert Greene's *Friar Bacon and Friar Bungay*, Anthony Munday's *John a Kent and John a Cumber*, Shakespeare's *The Tempest* and Jonson's *The Alchemist* introducing audiences to protagonists who dabbled in white magic.

For Bartels (118), the Renaissance magician emerges as "one of the least well-defined" subjects of the period, as magic was not only "separated into black and white", but "also divided into learned and unlearned practices", an imprecise distinction which problematised the magician's position. Bartels suggests:

Yet despite, if not because of, the slippery liminality and legitimacy of 'white' and popular practices, magic was given its clearest and most prominent form as it was demonized and criminalized, especially during the mid-sixteenth to late seventeenth centuries, the period of the witch craze. Black magicians and witches, distinguished inconsistently (if at all) from each other, were repeatedly invoked as the dark side of safe practices, which therefore seemed destined to go astray...Yet while these incriminations treated magic as if it were a matter of black and white, they simultaneously reinforced the slipperiness of its legitimacy, making clear that at any moment natural magic could become unnatural, divine pursuits become demonism, and white become black.

(Bartels 118)

In view of the “slippery liminality and legitimacy” (Bartels 118) of white magic, then, Prospero emerges as an even more ambiguous protagonist. His (colonial) authority is reliant on an ill-defined magical ability, the ‘naturalness’ of his reign always threatening to become unnatural or even demonic. It is clear then that there is something other about Prospero even when he is exercising power and agency, therefore rendering the self/other binary imposed by those critics too eager to declare Prospero coloniser even more problematic.

Despite his reintegration into the aristocratic inner circle, Prospero remains painfully aware of the fact that he needs to seek pardon for perpetuating a system that has failed both him and those subjected to its authority. His final couplet suggests that he is conscious of the fact that he has committed certain ‘crimes’ during the play:

As you from crimes would pardon’d be,
Let your indulgence set me free.

(Epilogue 19-20)

It is then evident that the magical reconciliation achieved in the final scene and epilogue of *The Tempest* is both ambiguous and implausible. The thin veneer of order and accord does little to disguise the underlying chaos and unease, and it is perhaps this unsatisfactory conclusion that compels re-writers to continuously return to Prospero’s restless island.

For the purpose of this chapter, two subversive rewrites of *The Tempest*, Marina Warner’s *Indigo, or, Mapping the Waters* and Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*, will be explored in order to illustrate that these rewrites are less motivated by a simple pluralistic desire to subvert the unequal power dynamic existent in the original text than by a response to a subversive element or *exaggerated* iterability already present in the matrix text.

In her *Indigo*, Marina Warner offers an adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest* which draws on both post-colonial and feminist readings of the original text. It may be argued that Warner's novel is motivated by a desire to exploit and subvert the unequal power dynamic existent in *The Tempest* through the imposition of such theoretical frameworks. Shakespeare's unnamed magical island re-emerges as the Caribbean island of *Enfant-Béate*, and several of the original cast members of *The Tempest* are refashioned in order to play their part in a renewed struggle between coloniser and colonised. Spanning over three centuries, the novel not only exposes the effects of colonialism on the original native inhabitants of *Enfant-Béate*, the sorceress Sycorax and her adopted family, Ariel the Arawak orphan girl and the African castaway, Dulé, but also the ways in which the descendants of Kit Everard, the first European to settle on the island, must come to terms with their Caribbean heritage.

The inclusion of sections which deal with the first encounter between the seventeenth century buccaneer, Kit Everard, and Sycorax's family, allows Warner the opportunity to offer an indictment of imperialism by exposing the immediate effects of colonisation on the native inhabitants of *Enfant-Béate*, and especially the ways in which colonial authority is established through the erasure of cultural heritage and the enslavement, demonising and silencing of the other. It appears that Marina Warner stages an encounter between coloniser and colonised in order to challenge the 'colonial' logic of *The Tempest*.

From the moment Kit Everard arrives on the island, the inhabitants gradually begin to lose their independence, identities and voices until all hope is finally lost with their defeat in the battle for *Enfant-Béate*. The horrifying effects of Everard's victory on the islanders are particularly evident in the requests they bring to Sycorax's grave:

The slaves pressing their tin tacks into the tree whisper:

- their love of a man, their love of a woman
- their love of a child
- their hopes to reprieve from punishment
- their thanks for surviving punishment
- their fear of being burned alive on a barbecue like the young slave who ran away last week and was caught and tried and sentenced to death by this method
- their terror of having a foot chopped off for stealing (some of them have been stealing)

(Warner 207)

These prayers, presumably brought to Sycorax's tree no more than a century after her death, not only expose the tyranny of slavery, but also suggest how rapidly the erasure of cultural heritage is achieved. The islanders remember little of Sycorax and her powers and even pray to Christian divinities:

They remember that the guardians of the tree run back through time to the one who only sang and never spoke, who used to keep vigil by the tree, where the sorceress Sycorax (but they have forgotten her name) lay deep with her grave goods...Beyond them they can see other mighty divinities –Jesusmaryandallthesaints, Peterandpaul, Matthewmarklukeandjohn.

(Warner 207)

The ways in which colonial authority is established through the demonising of otherness are exposed in Kit Everard's letters to his father-in-law, Lord Clovelly. In a letter in which he informs Clovelly of the outcome of the battle for *Enfant-Béate*, Everard explains how *Dulé* was transformed into the monstrous *Caliban*. This report offers remarkable insight into the inner workings of colonialism, and suggests that *Caliban's* deformity and monstrousness is in fact created or 'conjured' by colonial discourse:

By due process of law we have sentenced him to be slit in the hamstrings to be an example to those who would follow him and make him a hero to the people... The aforesaid captain I shall endeavour to keep beside me as my bondsman; hobbled and under my eye, he cannot do me injury. He is a mordant wit, 'tis plain, and it diverts me to teach him our language as he serves me. He has already learnt how to curse. Some of our men call him 'cannibal', seeking to undo the power of his monstrousness by naming it, like to conjuring. 'Tis to my mind a false notion, and I prefer the lispng usage of the children, Caliban.

(Warner 198-199)

Finally, the process through which colonial authority renders the other voiceless is illustrated through the self-imposed muteness of Ariel, the Arawak girl who bears Kit Everard's child. Forced to learn English in order to serve the British settlers, Ariel, unlike Dulé, does not choose to use the language of oppression to curse her masters, but instead ceases to speak altogether, and becomes the embodiment of the silenced other:

Ariel herself made almost no sound; she choked on speech, for nobody could return an answer. Sycorax would not reply except to rasp her curses. Kit's language was bitter in her mouth. She sometimes pulled herself into a corner of the cabin with Roukoubé across her knees on her stomach and patted out a tune softly as she rubbed his back after feeding him, but she no longer made up words; she had no more words, indeed it seemed to her she no longer owned a voice, but only a hollow drum for a head on which others beat their summons.

(Warner 173)

Although these historical sections offer an indictment of colonial oppression and authority, and serve to challenge the colonial logic of *The Tempest*, it must be added that *Indigo* is also destined to repeat the logic of its pre-text at times. This repetition is evident in the 'past' chapters, as Warner draws on a theme that has been established in

The Tempest. Warner too utilises the notion that natural harmony is linked to authority and rule, and suggests that the islanders' loss of independence is not only a result of colonisation, but also linked to the death of Sycorax, the natural and lawful matriarch of the island. Upon dying, Sycorax becomes one with the island, and her laments, which echo throughout the novel, become the mourning of the exploited and battered *Enfant-Béate*:

She and the island have become one; its hopes come to her in the wind bending the palm fronds on the beach, making the halyards sing against the masts in the bay, in the tree frogs' piping, the rattle of the fleshy leaves of the shaman. She breathes her lament into the earth filling her mouth...

(Warner 209)

Although this repetition is intended as a reversal of the logic which sees the naturalisation of colonial authority through the exploitation of the theme of natural harmony, it becomes problematic in the 'present' sections of the novel. In these chapters, Warner explores the precarious position of the descendants of the colonial father, Kit Everard. Their struggle to come to terms with their (post)colonial guilt, hybridity and Caribbean heritage leads them to return to the island of *Enfant-Béate*.

Through this return of her characters to the colony of their forefather, Warner essentially returns to the colonial space of her literary forefather. This dual return to *The Tempest* signals an uneasiness with the pre-text that could not be exorcised by her attempts to subvert its logic through the staging of an encounter between self and other. Warner chooses to negotiate this dis-ease by staging a confrontation between islanders and the descendants of its coloniser. Miranda, who wears her hybridity as a fashion statement, must now confront those whose otherness is not trendy. When Xanthe and Miranda break away from the Flinders Stockade in order to bathe in the natural sulphur pools, they are attacked by the children of Iqbar Malik, an opposition leader who propagates the

expulsion of all colonial influences on the island. The confrontation leads Miranda to consider her presence on the island as an imposition:

She felt the full weight of the man's contempt, for no anger like Xanthe's rose to protect her against it; she felt now she had polluted him and his family. His displeasure and his scorn had scalded her, as she saw him in her mind's eye again, turning on his heel in silence and leaving them loftily to disappear into the canebrakes, following the children.

(Warner 319)

The antagonism between Malik's Shining Purity group and the pro-colonial government of *Enfant-Béate* finally culminates in a full-blown revolution. Through violent rebellion natural order is restored on the island and its new leader, Atala Seacole, asserts that the island will no longer be dependent on foreign investments. Warner's Miranda falls in love with and marries not Ferdinand, but her own Caliban, the black activist George Felix. Their union and hybrid child seems to signal a dismantling of the binary opposition of self /other and coloniser/colonised. Thus, *Indigo* negotiates its sense of unease regarding its pre- text by proposing a dramatic depoliticisation. This is illustrated in George's final disavowal of all things political:

"...Forget ACTION." – he plucked again at the T-shirt. "Forget the Middle East, forget AIDS, forget famine, the war, the hole in the ozone, torture, death, rape and murder. Forget South Africa, even, forget the mean-spirited eighties – I'm starting to forget right now, from this minute, even as I wear this. Because I'm so tired, as the poet said, of your fucking guilt and our fucking envy.

(Warner 373)

This radical conclusion suggests a refusal to continue with the initial exploration of the politics of colonialism. Warner chooses to establish a utopian exit, in which all past sins are erased and a new space, which transcends politics, is created. This abrupt shift once again suggests the failure to exorcise the colonial demons of *The Tempest* through simple

subversion. It would indeed seem as if Warner's compulsion to return to Shakespeare's castaway narrative stems from a sense of dissatisfaction with the outcome of the play. Miranda rejects the possibility of a 'magical reconciliation':

It was absurd, this rush to the head of romance; if she were a character in a novel, she might find that someone like George or Shaka or whatever it was he was called now was available, free, no longer married, a real widower even. But this could hardly happen in her life. She wasn't living inside one of Shakespeare's sweet-tempered comedies, nor in one of his late plays with their magical reconciliations, their truces and appeasements and surcease of pain. No garland of marriages at the fall of the curtain would draw her into its charmed circle. In her world, which was the real world of the end of the century, breakage and disconnection were the only possible outcome.

(Warner 370)

Despite this rejection, Warner does in fact establish a magical reconciliation towards the end of the novel. In her efforts to subvert the logic of *The Tempest* and even in her final abandonment of this process of subversion, she is destined to repeat the logic of Shakespeare's play by continuously drawing on themes already present in the original text: the notions of natural harmony and magical reconciliation. It is evident that Warner's attempts at challenging *The Tempest* also results in self-conscious exploration of an unsettling presence within the pre-text.

Aimé Césaire's 1969 adaptation of Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, *Une Tempête* (*A Tempest*) is obviously politically motivated. Césaire is both poet and politician and, as Robin D.G. Kelley suggests in his introductory essay to the play, his work illustrates "that poetry can be the motor of political imagination, a potent weapon in any movement that claims freedom as its primary goal" (Kelley vii). Césaire has been politically active in his native Martinique, having held the position of mayor of Fort-de-France and deputy to the French National Assembly as member of the Communist Party. This poet/politician is also considered instrumental in the founding of the concept of Negritude and is well known for his propagation of Surrealism as a political weapon, as well as his involvement

in anticolonial and Pan-African movements. As editor of the journal *Tropiques*, Césaire (despite heavy censorship) opposed the fascist Vichy regime that controlled major French colonies during the Second World War. Kelley asserts:

Vichy officials censored and interdicted all literature they deemed subversive, thus forcing *Tropique's* editors to camouflage their publication as a journal of West Indian folklore. Yet, despite the repressions and the ruses, *Tropiques* survived the war as a major voice for Surrealism and a critical forum for the evolution of a sophisticated anticolonial stance as well as a vision of a postcolonial future.

(Kelley ix)

Césaire also put forward anticolonial sentiments in his seminal *Discourse on Colonialism*, in which he suggests that colonialism serves to dehumanise the coloniser. Kelley suggests:

In fine Hegelian fashion, Césaire argues that colonialism works to “decivilize” the colonizer: torture, violence, race hatred and immorality constitute a dead weight on the so-called civilized, pulling the master class deeper and deeper into the abyss of barbarism. The instruments of colonial power rely on barbaric, brutal violence and intimidation, and the end result is the degradation of Europe itself.

(Kelley xi)

In view of his radical anticolonial stance, it is clear that Césaire reads Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as influenced by English involvement in colonial expansion in both the Americas and Africa. *A Tempest* explores the relationship between the coloniser, Prospero, and his colonial subjects, Ariel and Caliban, locating Caliban as a black slave and Ariel as a mulatto slave. While this text advocates distinct anti-colonial sentiments, it is surprisingly similar to *The Tempest* in terms of plot and form, emerging as an inflected reading of its literary precursor rather than a radical subversion of the logic of its pretext. In fact, Césaire's text seemingly echoes Shakespeare's at the very level of linguistics, as Richard Miller suggests in his translator's note:

Although Césaire has denied attempting any linguistic echo of Shakespeare, the transposition of his play into English inevitably calls up such echoes, for the literate English/American playgoer cannot help but “hear”, behind the language of the play, the original text resounding in all its well-known beauty, its familiarity. For the translator, therefore, the temptation to quote the Ariel song, for example, or to paraphrase them, was strong. When Césaire has his Ariel sing of something ‘proche et étrange,’ for example, Shakespeare’s “rich and strange” must, inevitably, sound in the translator’s mind.

(Miller 1)

Césaire’s *A Tempest* does not only echo *The Tempest* in terms of style, plot and form, but also seems to draw its impact from the ambiguity and sense of unease evoked by Shakespeare’s original text; its radical critique of colonialism is dependent on making explicit that which is already implied in its pretext.

This is especially evident in Césaire’s interpretation of the relationship between Caliban, the black slave and Prospero, the coloniser. Here the distinction between self and other, which is already a site of contention within the original text, is problematised even further. On numerous occasions, Caliban and his master are explicitly conflated. Consider, for example, the following exchange between Caliban and Prospero:

CALIBAN: It’s this: I’ve decided I don’t want to be called Caliban any longer.

PROSPERO: What kind of rot is that? I don’t understand.

CALIBAN: Put it this way: I’m *telling* you that from now on I don’t answer to the name Caliban.

PROSPERO: Where did you get that idea?

CALIBAN: Well, because Caliban *isn’t* my name. It’s as simple as that.

PROSPERO: *Oh, I suppose it’s mine!*

(Césaire 20, my italics)

Here, Prospero’s exclamation, “Oh, I suppose it’s mine!” is reminiscent of the original Prospero’s assertion: “This thing of darkness, I / Acknowledge mine”. In Césaire’s interpretation, this conflation between Prospero and Caliban is far less ambiguous and

will finally be driven home in the last monologue of the play (a moment which I discuss in more detail below).

It has already been stated that (the original) Prospero's position as magician renders him a problematic character, as his "natural" practices threaten to become unnatural and demonic. Césaire's Prospero is no longer balancing the fine line between white and black magic, as he is deemed a heretic by the authorities of Milan. We learn this through a flashback in which Prospero is informed by a friar of "the Holy Inquisition for the preservation and integrity of the Faith and the pursuit of heretical perversion", convinced of his heresy due to indiscretions such as his "notorious use both by night and day of Arabic calculations and scribblings in Hebrew, Syrian and other demonic tongues", that he is to be stripped of his titles and taken into custody. (Césaire 14)

Césaire's Prospero, then, has lost all legitimacy and ceases to convince all but himself of his "natural" authority. In the last moments of the play, Prospero, who seems to be suffering from paranoia and dementia, is still convinced that he must "protect civilization", although it has become blatantly obvious that he has lost his ability to manipulate the natural order on the island. Consider his final monologue:

(Time passes, symbolized by the curtain's being lowered halfway and reraised. In semi-darkness Prospero appears, aged and weary. His gestures are jerky and automatic, his speech weak, toneless, trite.)

Odd, but for some time now we seem to be overrun with opossums. They're everywhere. Peccarys, wild boar, all this unclean nature! But mainly opossums. Those eyes! The vile grins they have! It is as though the jungle was laying siege to the cave...But I shall stand firm...I shall not let my work perish! *(Shouting)* I shall protect civilization! *(He fires in all directions)* They're done for! Now, this way I'll be able to have some peace and quiet for a while. But it's cold. Odd how the climate's changed. Cold on this island...Have to think about making a fire...Well, Caliban, old fellow, it's just us two now, here on the island...only you and me. You and me. You-me...me-you! What in the hell is he up to? *(Shouting)* Caliban!

(Césaire 65-66)

In this last scene, Césaire erases what is perhaps the source of most of the unease generated by Shakespeare's *The Tempest*: the magical reconciliation which sees Caliban's penance and Prospero's reintegration into the Italian aristocracy. In this version of the play, both Caliban and Prospero remain on the island in order to wage war against each other. It is apparent that Caliban is the victor in this scenario as he is free to proclaim "FREEDOM HI-DAY! FREEDOM HI-DAY!", while Prospero descends into a madness in which he can no longer distinguish between himself and his "other": "You and me. You-me...me-you!" (Césaire 66).

It is clear then that Césaire's *A Tempest* returns to Shakespeare's *The Tempest* not only in order to propagate anti-colonial sentiments, but also to suggest that such subversion is already present at the very centre of the original play.

This notion that the rewritten text resists offering a complete subversion of the logic of its pretext, and at times even echoes the original text in terms of style, plot and form is continued in the following chapter, which explores Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* in relation to Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre*.

CHAPTER THREE

“Qui est là?”

Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* and Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*.

Post-colonial theory is concerned with the ways in which imperialism has not only succeeded in defining its others in colonial terms, but has also established its authority through a process of naturalisation. As a result of this legitimisation, the colonised are liable to internalise European notions of otherness and adopt a distorted perception of self. In *Decolonising Fictions*, Helen Tiffin and Diane Brydon explore the ways in which imperialism “inscribes the world of ‘the other’”:

Imperialism has always sought to control not just battlefields, trade routes and economies, but minds and visions. Denying the validity or even the existence of other world views, it initially inscribes the world of ‘the other’ both within and from its own archives, and then perpetuates this view through the whole range of educational and cultural institutions at its disposal. Its authority, its inscription of the world, presented as axiomatic or ‘universal’ creates or recreates reality and self-perception for the colonised.

(Tiffin and Brydon 105)

The European text has served as a formidable weapon in this imperialist pursuit of “creat[ing] or recrea[ting] reality and self-perception for the colonised” (Tiffin and Brydon 105), often offering distorted, Eurocentric readings of the colonised other. Post-colonial literature has responded in turn by challenging such Eurocentric literary assumptions through the rewriting of western canonical texts.

It may be argued that Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, a response to Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, is such a rewrite; a text that sets out to challenge the ‘normative’ European conceptions propagated by its literary precursor. When Rhys discovers the spectral

Bertha Mason in the garret of Thornfield Hall, she identifies her as a marginalised, silenced character that has been wholly misrepresented by the colonial text. Perhaps moved by the fact that she herself is of West Indian descent, born in Dominica and the daughter of a white Creole mother, Rhys liberates Bertha Mason from Brontë's wintry attic and establishes her as Antoinette Cosway, a beautiful and deeply troubled Creole heiress. The novel exposes the ways in which Antoinette/Bertha has been defined and incarcerated by the colonial pretext and seeks escape from such inscription by attempting to grant the ghost-like Bertha a substantial history, voice and, perhaps most of all, an identity.

Bertha Mason, Rochester's "bad, mad and embruted partner" (Brontë 290), is the epitome of animalistic degeneracy; depicted as insane, monstrous and sexually depraved. This is especially evident in Jane's first truly detailed description of the first Mrs Rochester:

In the deep shade, at the farther end of the room, a figure ran backwards and forwards. What it was, whether beast or human being, one could not, at first sight tell: it grovelled, seemingly, on all fours; it snatched and growled like some strange wild animal: but it was covered with clothing, and a quantity of dark, grizzled hair, wild as a mane, hid its head and face.

(Brontë 291)

Bertha's madness is in part attributed to her Caribbean heritage, an insanity brought about by indulgence in the 'excesses' of exotic otherness. Her animalistic wantonness is seemingly in direct opposition to Jane Eyre's unambiguous morality, a distinction drawn upon by Edward Rochester in an attempt to justify his near bigamy:

'That is my *wife*,' said he... 'And this is what I wish to have' (laying his hand on my shoulder.) 'this young girl, who stands so grave and quiet at the mouth of hell, looking collectedly at the gambols of a demon... Wood and Briggs, look at the difference! Compare these clear eyes with the red balls yonder – this face with that mask – this form with that bulk; then judge me...

(Brontë 292)

It is this seemingly unambiguous differentiation between Jane's unmistakable Englishness and Bertha's fiendish exoticism that has allowed for readings that locate Bertha as a member of the colonised. In her *Allegories of Empire: The Figure of Woman in the Colonial Text*, Jenny Sharpe suggests that similarities between Brontë's Bertha Mason and Shakespeare's "abhorred slave" (1.2: 351-352), Caliban, support such interpretations:

Bertha Mason is a Calibanesque figure – a cannibalistic beast who chews her brother's flesh to the bone, a fiend who spews forth obscenities, and a monster who cannot control her sexual appetites. The resemblance between Bertha and Shakespeare's monstrous figuration of the Carib native have caused some readers to identify her as a member of the colonized.

(Sharpe 45)

However, the location of Bertha Mason as colonised other is somewhat problematic. Mason emerges as an uncanny figure precisely because her otherness is not entirely unambiguous. Despite the temptation to locate her as the West Indian other, and therefore as a representative of the colonised, Bertha remains, in some sense, English. Due to her European lineage and position as a member of the West Indian slave-owning plantocracy, Bertha Mason is, in fact, deeply implicated in the system of imperialism.⁵

In view of this fact, the differentiation between Mason and Jane Eyre, so eagerly drawn on by Rochester, becomes less clear-cut. Furthermore, Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar point to a far more intimate connection between these two characters in *The Madwoman in the Attic*. Here it is suggested that Bertha Mason is Jane Eyre's "truest and darkest double" (Gilbert and Gubar 359-360). Bertha, then, becomes a part of Jane's psyche; representative of the docile Victorian heroine's suppressed feminine rage.

⁵Here it should be added that *The Tempest*'s Caliban too emerges as a disquieting figure which seems to demand a literary return, an issue that is explored in more detail in chapter two.

It is evident that Bertha Mason emerges as a deeply unsettling presence in *Jane Eyre*. Her otherness is at once frightening and deeply familiar. The implication that Bertha's madness is less an external threat to Victorian English morality than an affliction generated from *within* threatens to collapse the carefully constructed binary opposition of self and other which serves as justification for her incarceration.

Bertha Mason, then, represents an aporetic moment within Brontë's *Jane Eyre*. Her position as disruptive other remains questionable, and Brontë's seemingly blatant disregard for her sanity, past and humanity is radically irreconcilable with the subversive aspects of the novel: its questioning of class and gender inequalities in Victorian society.

It is this disquieting ambiguity at the very centre of *Jane Eyre* which invites a return in the form of a subversive rewrite. Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* attempts to correct Brontë's distorted reading of the mad Bertha Mason, but in doing so also participates in the logic of *Jane Eyre*. By acknowledging the radically ambiguous nature of the Creole heiress and resisting a reading that places Bertha/Antoinette as a member of the colonised, Rhys is also making explicit a tension *already present* within the original text. *Wide Sargasso Sea* draws on the very element which renders Brontë's Bertha Mason such an uncanny figure, her hybrid identity, in order to problematise her inscription as disruptive other.

The Cosway family occupies a precarious social position following the 1833 Emancipation Act in the British West Indies. Scorned by both the native black people and the 'new' English settlers, those who settled in the Caribbean after the abolition of slavery, Antoinette's family does not seem to belong anywhere. Due to their association with slavery and their dire financial position, they are ostracised by the European community. Antoinette notes: "They say when trouble comes close ranks, and so the white people did. But we were not in their ranks." (Rhys 15)

Antoinette's string of coloured relatives further invalidates any claims to racial purity or 'Englishness' and she seems to associate more closely with the black inhabitants of the island, particularly Christophine and Tia. However, it is soon apparent that Antoinette's

attempt to establish an identity through association with the black community of the island is not without complications. Her friendship with Tia comes to an end when they quarrel over a few new pennies. Tia is quick to point out that Antoinette's family cannot be considered 'real' white people:

Real white people, they got gold money. They didn't look at us, nobody see them come near us. Old time white people nothing but nigger now, and black nigger better than white nigger

(Rhys 21)

During this argument, Tia steals Antoinette's dress, forcing her to go home in the stained frock of a black servant girl. The sight of Antoinette in Tia's dirty dress propels Annette, her mother, into action. She sells the last of her jewellery in order to buy yards of muslin for a new dress for Antoinette, transforming her daughter into a proper English girl. Shortly after this incident, Annette marries Mr Mason, a wealthy English gentleman. Coulibri is restored to its former glory, the Cosway family is wealthier than ever and Antoinette is finally afforded the right to Englishness.

Here, Antoinette's physical transformation from an unkempt child in a borrowed dress to a respectable young lady reveals the constructedness of her newly acquired English identity. Despite the arbitrary nature of this transformation, Antoinette's new status as stepdaughter of a wealthy Englishman brings about subtle changes in her attitude towards Coulibri's servants, and especially towards Christophine. For the first time, she allows herself to be alarmed by rumours that Christophine practiced obeah. Although Antoinette "knew [Christophine's] room so well" (Rhys 26), she finds herself suddenly terrified of what she might find there:

Yet one day when I was sitting there I was suddenly very much afraid... I was certain that hidden in the room (behind the old black press?) there was a dead man's dried hand, white chicken feathers, a cock with its throat cut, dying slowly, slowly... No one had ever spoken to me about obeah – but I knew what I would find if I dared to look. Then Christophine came in smiling and pleased to see me. Nothing alarming ever happened and I forgot, or told myself I had forgotten.

(Rhys 26-27)

It appears that Antoinette's shift to a more English lifestyle and social position results in feelings of distrust and fear towards the servant with whom she once shared an intimate bond, further severing associations with the native inhabitants of the island. Yet Antoinette struggles to fully embrace Englishness, yearning for a time before the imposition of an 'English' lifestyle and diet: "I was glad to be like an English girl, but I missed the taste of Christophine's cooking." (Rhys 30)

However, Antoinette gradually becomes more accepting of her new English lifestyle, and finally obtains a cultural image on which to base her own identity: the portrait of 'The Miller's Daughter', a figure that embodies all the qualities a proper English girl should possess. Antoinette comes to admire Mr Mason for being so undeniably English, so secure in his own identity and heritage. It is worth noting that Antoinette looks away from the solemn servant Myra and her talk of hell towards the *image* of English domesticity:

So I looked away from her at my favourite picture, 'The Miller's Daughter', a lovely English girl with brown curls and blue eyes and a dress slipping off her shoulders. Then I looked across the white tablecloth and the vase of yellow roses at Mr Mason, so sure of himself, so without a doubt English. And at my mother, so without a doubt not English, but no white nigger either... Yes she would have died, I thought, if she had not met him. And for the first time I was grateful and liked him.

(Rhys 30)

Antoinette's acceptance of her new English stepfather brings her the sense of self and security that had eluded her for so long. She asserts: "There are more ways than one of being happy, better perhaps to be peaceful and contented and protected..." (Rhys 30) It is interesting to note that it is the substitute *father* figure that affords such protection. Antoinette's English identity is as much constructed by a patriarchal system as her ultimate inscription as disruptive other (an issue which I discuss in further detail below).

However, Antoinette's secure position within the English ranks is short-lived. Coulibri is burnt to the ground and with it Antoinette's sense of self and security. The destruction of Coulibri, symbol of both English dominance and the untamed beauty and power of the Caribbean island, plunges Antoinette into uncertainty. The possibility of a life spent in quiet (English) domesticity is destroyed along with the painting of 'The Miller's Daughter', as the fire takes the life of her brother, Pierre, and thrusts her mother into madness. The night of Coulibri's destruction also further severs Antoinette's association with the native inhabitants of the island. She is confronted with her Caribbean self, Tia, who finally rejects her by throwing a stone at her:

As I ran, I thought, I will live with Tia and I will be like her...When I was close I saw the jagged stone in her hand but I did not see her throw it. I did not feel it either, only something wet, running down my face. I looked at her and I saw her face crumple up as she began to cry. We stared at each other, blood on my face, tears on hers. It was as if I saw myself. Like in a looking-glass.

(Rhys 38)

The burning of Coulibri effectively eradicates any hope of establishing either an English or Caribbean identity. The event ultimately results in her forced marriage to Rochester, which in turn plunges her into a downward spiral of hatred, deceit and jealousy that will eventually lead to her tragic end as the raging, spectral Bertha Mason. Robbed of the setting that anchored both aspects of her identity, Antoinette is left adrift. She attempts to

explain her position to Rochester, perhaps exacerbating his misgivings about their marriage:

‘It was a song about a white cockroach. That’s me. That’s what they call all of us who were here before their own people in Africa sold them to the slave traders. And I’ve heard English women call us white niggers. So between you I often wonder who I am and where is my country and where do I belong and why was I ever born at all.’

(Rhys 85)

Consequently, Rhys presents Antoinette Cosway as occupying a space between the fixed binaries of coloniser/colonised. Antoinette oscillates between forming associations with the native inhabitants of her Caribbean home and the ‘new’ English settlers who occupy the island, and is finally left adrift between these fixed identities. Antoinette’s position as a member of the disavowed West Indian plantocracy is reminiscent of what Paul Brown identifies as the ‘masterless’ class in his “*The Tempest and the Discourse of Colonialism*”: those “wandering or unfixed and unsupervised elements located in the internal margins of civil society.” (Brown 50)

Here, the suggestion that Antoinette can be located as representative of the masterless, and is at once disavowed by and deeply implicated in the system of colonialism, points to an instability within the discourse of imperialism. Rhys’s critique reveals the ways in which colonial authority interprets dissent that has been generated from *within* as an external threat. As mentioned earlier, this tension is *already present* within the original text. It may be argued that the colonial pretext anticipates its return and ultimate deconstruction, and even invites it. In this sense, then, Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea* addresses certain misrepresentations in Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, but also draws on an unsettling ambiguity within the pretext, Bertha Mason’s precarious positionality, in order to do so.

Rhys resists offering a purely subversive reading *against* Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, but rather participates in the logic of its pretext in order to make explicit that blatant silence which

demands a return to the original text, that is, the misrepresentation of Bertha Mason. *Wide Sargasso Sea* meticulously chronicles the events leading to Bertha's 'madness' and incarceration: her precarious social position as white Creole living on a divided West Indian island, her forced marriage to the cruel Edward Rochester, the loss of her mother and brother, and finally Rochester's betrayal and infidelity. The novel, then, can be read as exposing the ways in which Antoinette is disavowed and inscribed as other by the very system that has produced her and offers insight into her past, potentially evoking sympathy for the betrayed, manipulated heiress.

The figure of Rochester becomes representative of the imposition of colonial discourse, and it is with his arrival in Jamaica that Rhys begins her meticulous account of Antoinette's transformation into Bertha Mason. In his "Edward Rochester and the Margins of Masculinity in *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*", Robert Kendrick locates Rochester as "the immediate manifestation and enforcer of the network of patriarchal codes (sexism, colonialism, the English Law, and the 'law' which demarcates sanity and insanity) that imprisons Antoinette Cosway" (Kendrick 235).

Antoinette's inscription as unruly other, then, much like her momentary protection as the English daughter, is imposed by a complex and pervasive patriarchal system. Edward Rochester, too, emerges as victim of these patriarchal codes. As the youngest son, Rochester is totally reliant on Antoinette's dowry for financial independence from his father. His father and elder brother's involvement in the arrangement of his loveless marriage to Antoinette is explored in *Jane Eyre*. An embittered Rochester informs Jane that his father and his brother Rowland were aware of the fact that his marriage to Antoinette Cosway could only end in disaster, but "they thought only of the thirty thousand pounds, and joined in the plot against [him]." (Brontë 303) Rochester asserts:

[I]t was [my father's] resolution to keep the property together; he could not bear the idea of dividing his estate and leaving me a fair portion: all, he resolved, should go to my brother, Rowland. Yet as little could he endure that a son of his should be a poor man. I must be provided for by a wealthy marriage...

(Brontë 302)

Edward Rochester propagates the very system of which he is a victim, imprisoning Antoinette Cosway through the imposition of colonial language. *Wide Sargasso Sea* acknowledges the power language can wield over an individual, its ability to shape and destroy identities. For Rhys, language is a tool of oppression, a notion echoed in Ashcroft, Griffith and Tiffin's *The Empire Writes Back*:

One of the main features of imperial oppression is control over language...Language becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of 'truth', 'order', and 'reality' become established. Such power is rejected in the emergence of an effective post-colonial voice.

(Ashcroft et al 7)

Language does indeed become the medium through which Rochester exercises control over his new bride. He brutally renames Antoinette, calling her Antoinetta, Marionetta and, finally, Bertha. Through this process of renaming, Edward Rochester not only manages to erase Antoinette (the thinking, feeling, speaking person), but also succeeds in constructing the puppet-like madwoman, Bertha Mason. Although powerless to prevent it, Antoinette is aware of the fact that the names imposed on her will ultimately destroy her:

'Bertha is not my name. You are trying to make me into someone else, calling me by another name. I know, that's obeah too.'

(Rhys 121)

And:

'Names matter, like when he wouldn't call me Antoinette, and I saw Antoinette drifting out of the window with her scents, her pretty clothes and her looking-glass...'

(Rhys 147)

Ironically, this reshaping of Antoinette's identity is initiated not by Rochester, but by Daniel Cosway, Antoinette's half brother, who writes a letter to Rochester in which he warns that there is madness in the Cosway family. As Old Cosway's illegitimate child by a coloured woman, Daniel also occupies a strange interstitial position in Rhys's colonial world. His mimicking of the very discourse which victimises him points to the notion that colonial authority is not merely established through the imposition of an unequal hierarchical structure in which the coloniser oppresses the colonised, but rather as a complex, dispersed web of power that permeates all human relationships.

Daniel Cosway's warning letter to Rochester ultimately results in Antoinette's incarceration as Bertha Mason, for the power of Daniel Cosway's written words alters the way in which Rochester views his new wife. It sows the seeds of doubt within him, and soon he is so seduced by Cosway's letter that he decides to use the power of words to do some reshaping of his own.

Having robbed Antoinette of her true name, Rochester now begins his meticulous planning of her imprisonment. He is aware of the fact that Antoinette will be so severely altered that she will never again find pleasure in, or even recognise, her own mirror-image. He asserts: "She'll not laugh in the sun again. She'll not dress up and smile at herself in that damnable looking-glass. So pleased, so satisfied." (Rhys 136) Rochester also seems to be intuitively aware of the fact that Bertha Mason, the madwoman in the attic, will only exist in the whispered rumours of the servants of Thornfield Hall. She is destined to become a lie:

I too can wait- for the day when she is only a memory to be avoided,
locked away, and like all memories a legend. Or a lie...

(Rhys 142)

Rochester's predictions do indeed come true in the last part of the novel; he had willed them into being. While wandering the corridors of Thornfield Hall, Antoinette does not recognise her mirror image as herself:

I went into the hall again with the tall candle in my hand. It was then that I saw her – the ghost. The woman with streaming hair. She was surrounded by a gilt frame but I knew her.

(Rhys 154)

Even before her imprisonment in Thornfield Hall, Antoinette instinctively knows that the face in her mirror is someone else, someone she is destined to become in a different world. Her identity remains fragmented and will soon be lost altogether:

There is no looking-glass here and I don't know what I am like now. I remember watching myself brush my hair and how my eyes looked back at me. The girl I saw was myself yet not quite myself. Long ago when I was a child and very lonely I tried to kiss her. But the glass was between us – hard cold and misted over with my breath. Now they have taken everything away. What am I doing in this place and who am I?

(Rhys 147)

The inherently pessimistic nature of Rhys's critique is revealed in the sense of predetermination which permeates *Wide Sargasso Sea*. Rhys's novel sets out to reclaim the silenced Bertha Mason from Brontë's attic and indeed succeeds in humanising *Jane Eyre*'s "clothed hyena" (Brontë 291), transforming the snatching and growling "strange

wild animal” (Brontë 291) into a thinking, feeling person. However, Antoinette’s transformation from maniac to intelligent (and intelligible) human being cannot be maintained. She is irrevocably tied to the pages of *Jane Eyre*, doomed to die as a raging lunatic in Brontë’s ‘cardboard’ England. As a result, the characters of *Wide Sargasso Sea* seem to be cursed with pre-cognition, intuitively aware of the fact that their destinies have already been decided.

Restricted by the outcome of Brontë’s text, Rhys cannot present a valid alternative to Antoinette’s oppression and inevitable incarceration. Escape from colonial inscription through the founding of an alternative, differentiated identity proves impossible for Antoinette. She is destined to die in another author’s English mansion as the insane, spectral Bertha Mason, and Rhys can do little but reveal how this tragedy comes to pass.

When we consider *Wide Sargasso Sea* as a novel restricted by its colonial precursor, it appears that the subversive impact of the text is drawn into question. Rhys’s last novel has long been viewed as one of the few truly revolutionary post-colonial texts, and yet it does not seem to offer a viable alternative to an order in which colonial authority is capable of ‘inscribing the world’ of its others. By stressing the power colonial discourse has over not only the colonised other, but also those like Edward Rochester, who stand in the service of imperialism, Rhys presents colonial inscription as unchangeable and even predestined.

However, Rhys’s refusal to break with the outcome of Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* is also an acknowledgement of radically subversive elements within the original text. If Brontë challenges many of the patriarchal conventions of her time, she does so only by maintaining a certain degree of compliance and engagement with such conventions. In their “Infection in the Sentence” Gilbert and Gubar suggest:

[Female authors] may have attempted to transcend their anxiety of authorship by *revising* male genres, using them to record their own dreams and their own stories *in disguise*... Thus these authors managed the difficult task of achieving true female literary authority by simultaneously conforming to and subverting patriarchal literary standards.

(Gilbert and Gubar 73)

Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea*, on the other hand, is one step closer to achieving the kind of "writing that inscribes femininity" envisioned by Hélène Cixous (349) in "The Laugh of the Medusa":

Woman must write herself: must write about women and bring women to writing, from which they have been driven away as violently as from their bodies-for the same reasons, by the same law, with the same fatal goal. Woman must put herself into the text - as into the world and into the history - by her own movement.

(Cixous "Medusa" 347)

Rhys's novel points to the possibility of founding a female literary tradition *outside of* the confines of patriarchal and phallogentric literary conventions. The text can be seen as a continuation of the Brontë's earlier effort to "exorcise the sentences which bred her infection in the first place" (Gilbert & Gubar 74). In this sense, Rhys does not place *Wide Sargasso Sea* in radical opposition to its pretext, but rather responds to a task initiated by her literary precursor: to return to the body that has been taken from her so violently and begin "scoring [her] feats in written and oral language" (Cixous 351)

It appears that Rhys's Antoinette does indeed see her tragic demise as 'destined' and is so resigned to her transformation into the puppet-like Bertha that she resists any alternative solution. In a precognitive dream, Antoinette foresees that her marriage to Rochester will lead to her demise and that she will do nothing to prevent the tragedy:

Again I have left the house at Coulibri. It is still night and I am walking towards the forest. I am wearing a long dress and thin slippers, so I walk with difficulty, following the man who is with me and holding up the skirt of my dress. It is white and beautiful and I don't wish to get it soiled. I follow him, sick with fear, but I make no effort to save myself; if anyone were to try to save me, I would refuse. *This must happen.*

(Rhys 50, my italics)

Antoinette's quiet resignation to her fate is baffling, especially considering the ferocity with which she initially pursues a sense of autonomy and identity. Antoinette becomes a contradictory figure, overtly conscious of the fact that her sense of self is the one thing that will save her from Rochester's control and simultaneously nonchalant about her loss of identity. Colette Lindroth acknowledges this contradiction, suggesting that although Rhys's characters are often 'adrift' and not in command of their own destinies, they have a strong sense of self:

In the maelstrom of their lives, one constant remains: themselves. This sense of identity, of a self which can be relied on when nothing else can be, provides Rhys with some of her most powerful metaphors. Swept along by the maelstrom, her characters stop to look, not at the chaos around them, but into mirrors – at themselves... Even Antoinette, in a nightmarish image in which she sees 'two enormous rats as big as cats' looking at her in her room, can stare them down when she sees herself 'in the looking glass [on] the other side of the room'.

(Lindroth 89-90)

Yet the novel also suggests that Rochester's effortless conquest of Antoinette does not necessarily indicate the complete loss of a sense of self. *Wide Sargasso Sea* hints at the possibility of establishing an identity outside of the constraints of colonial discourse. Due to Rhys's adherence to the outcome of Brontë's *Jane Eyre*, Antoinette's attempts to establish an alternative identity must necessarily fail. In order to be seduced and manipulated by the power of Rochester's rhetoric, she must lose her ties with both her English heritage and her West Indian identity. Despite the fact that Antoinette is seemingly 'adrift' in a setting where identity is necessarily fragmented, she maintains a certain connection with the Caribbean self.

Antoinette and Rochester's arrival at Granbois, "a small estate which had belonged to Antoinette's mother" (Rhys 56), heralds a change in Antoinette. She is no longer the

confused, drifting hybrid, but a true native of the West Indian island. Granbois is her West Indian heritage, a piece of the land that is her own. Antoinette displays an intense connection with the setting, taking great pleasure in ‘educating’ Rochester in the ways of the land, urging him to taste the clean mountain water, pointing out the redness of the earth and introducing him to the locals. She confidently declares: “This is my place and everything is on our side.” (Rhys 62) It is here at Granbois that Antoinette first actively takes control of her own life. When it becomes apparent that Rochester’s affection for her is waning, she takes steps to ensure his love. She turns to Christophine for an *obeah* potion, placing her trust in a uniquely Caribbean practice.

Ironically, it is also at Granbois that Antoinette refuses her West Indian roots by refusing to accept Christophine’s offer of freedom. Christophine offers Antoinette a way out of a loveless marriage, incarceration and death. She suggests that Antoinette should ask for a portion of her dowry, “pick up [her] skirt and walk out” (Rhys 91). As foreseen, Antoinette does not accept Christophine’s help, stating: “But I cannot go. He is my husband after all.” (Rhys 91).

In her “ ‘Women must have Spunks’”, Lucy Wilson suggests that Antoinette adopts the “attitudes” and “rhetoric” of imperialism in her refusal to accept Christophine’s counsel. For the first time, she defines Christophine in colonial terms, branding her as an “ignorant, obstinate old negro woman” (Rhys 93). Wilson suggests:

...The ultimate betrayal in *Wide Sargasso Sea* is not Edward Rochester’s agreeing to a loveless marriage for monetary gain, or even his infidelity with the servant girl Amelie; it is Antoinette’s betrayal of her own heritage, the submersion of her West Indian identity in the rhetoric and attitudes of imperialism.

(Wilson 71)

Despite this ‘betrayal’, Antoinette discovers her rightful place and identity during this visit to Christophine. She comes to realise that she at home with Christophine and comforted by her smell, that of “clean cotton” (89) and other Negro women:

She smelled too, of their smell, so warm and comforting to me (but he does not like it). The sky was dark blue through the dark green mango leaves, and I thought, 'This is my place and this is where I belong and this is where I wish to stay'.

(Rhys 90)

Antoinette may have discovered her true place in life, but is bound by the outcome of the colonial pretext to forsake her heritage in order to become the ghost of Thornfield Hall. It is only when her destiny has been fulfilled, when she has set fire to Thornfield Hall, purified Rochester and secured the domestic bliss of Brontë's Victorian heroine, that Antoinette can finally identify entirely with the Caribbean self. In yet another prophetic dream, Antoinette foresees her death; she must fling herself from the balcony of her prison and, in death, discover her true self:

The wind caught my hair and it streamed out like wings. It might bear me up, I thought, if I jump to those hard stones. But when I looked over the edge I saw the pool at Coulibri. Tia was there. She beckoned to me and when I hesitated, she laughed. I heard her say, You frightened? ... Someone screamed and I thought, *Why did I scream?* I called 'Tia!' and jumped and woke.

(Rhys 155)

Antoinette awakes, now certain that she can only gain freedom in death: "Now at last I know why I was brought here and what I have to do." (Rhys 156). Through the suggestion that Antoinette's freedom can only be secured through self-sacrifice Rhys recasts Antoinette Cosway as a *tragic* figure.

It is apparent that the process of literary return allows for tragic inflection, and such an interpretation can also be found in Aimé Césaire's *A Tempest*, which eliminates the

comic elements of *The Tempest* in order to propagate anticolonial sentiments. The following chapter, which explores Terry Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters* in relation to William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, will suggest that the rewritten text may also respond to its literary precursor by offering a comic interpretation of a tragic element within the original text.

CHAPTER FOUR

“Bugger Destiny”

William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth* and Terry Pratchett’s *Wyrd Sisters*

Although this study has hitherto focused primarily on the ways in which the *post-colonial* rewritten text responds to its canonical pretext, this chapter introduces a revised text of a wholly different nature: Terry Pratchett’s *Wyrd Sisters*, a postmodern fantasy novel which satirises William Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. This rather unorthodox text has been included in order to illustrate that the notion of a literary return cannot be reduced to mere spatial politics, with the rewritten text existing only as a counter to an authoritative western literary tradition. *Wyrd Sisters* holds no claims to marginality and in fact occupies a very central position due to both the geo-political position of its British author and the fact that the Discworld series is deeply imbedded in western popular culture. Here, it will once again be suggested that the process of rewriting is largely motivated by a certain tension already present within the original text.

Throughout this study, it has been suggested that the act of narrative return points to the possibility of a more complex relationship between the rewritten text and its literary precursor that exceeds the romantic notion of ‘writing back’ to an oppressive, hegemonic discourse. In Pratchett’s *Wyrd Sisters*, this notion of a dialogic relationship between separate but interrelated realms is already evident at a taxonomical level. Pratchett’s Discworld series is generally viewed as belonging to the genre of fantasy or ‘the fantastic’, on the basis that these texts often deal with ‘magical’ characters and settings. This proves to be a rather general categorisation. These Discworld ‘fantasies’ are typically interlaced with elements of satire, allowing Pratchett to comment, often rather biting, on the state of the modern world through the construction of an entirely different, fantastical realm.

The convergence of fantasy and satire is not an uncommon phenomenon, and is found already in foundational satirical works such as Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*. These separate genres are such comfortable bedfellows because of their shared referential nature. For both the satirist and the author of fantasy have a license to comment on the 'real' world outside the text, albeit only allegorically. In his *Satire: A Critical Reintroduction*, Dustin Griffin (132) asserts that "[t]he excitement of satire (its bite) is based on our knowledge (or just our suspicion) that the victims are "real", even if we can't always identify them." This notion is echoed in David Nokes' study of eighteenth century satire, *Raillery and Rage*, which suggests that "satire is pre-eminently a social genre" (Nokes 3):

[S]atire always has its object and validation in external reality. Satire must always have an object to satirise and hence exists in a direct critical relationship with the society which produces it. As a genre it is teleological rather than ontological, finding its own full meaning only in relation to meanings outside itself.

(Nokes 3)

Despite its construction of a seemingly alien world, the genre of fantasy has a similar "critical relationship with the society which produces it" (Nokes 3). In her *Fantasy: The Literature of Subversion*, Rosemary Jackson asserts:

[M]arvellous narratives have a tangential relation to the 'real', interrogating its values only retrospectively or allegorically... They build up *another* universe of elements of this one, according to dystopian fears and utopian desires, rather like Swift's satirical methods in *Gulliver's Travels*. Their other world, however new or strange, is linked to the real through an allegorical association, as an exemplification of a possibility to be avoided or embraced.

(Jackson 43)

In Pratchett's Discworld series we find an intersection between two distinct literary sites, facilitated by a shared characteristic. At a very level of structure, then, Pratchett's satirical fantasies already exemplify the possibility of a collapse of those imaginary boundaries that separate discourses. Moreover, to expand on this structural analysis of

Pratchett's Discworld novels, we find that the genre of fantasy itself is subject to taxonomical difficulties, characterised by undecidability and hesitation. In *The Fantastic: A Structural Approach to a Literary Genre*, Tzvetan Todorov points to this relationship between uncertainty and the genre of the fantastic. Todorov (25) suggests that whenever an event occurs which cannot be explained by the laws of nature the person who is experiencing this event must decide between two explanations: either the event is an illusion (and the laws of nature remain intact) or the event has indeed taken place (and is governed by laws unknown to us). Todorov (25) suggests:

The fantastic occupies the duration of this uncertainty. Once we choose one answer or the other, we leave the fantastic for a neighboring genre, the uncanny or the marvelous. The fantastic is that hesitation experienced by a person who knows only the laws of nature, confronting an apparently supernatural event.

(Todorov 25)

When the hesitation characteristic of the fantastic is no longer sustained, "a transitory sub-genre appears: between the fantastic and the uncanny on the one hand and, between the fantastic and the marvelous on the other hand" (Todorov 44). In the sub-genre of the fantastic-uncanny, supernatural events are explained rationally towards the end of the narrative. In contrast to this, the sub-genre of the fantastic-marvellous sees an acceptance of supernatural events towards the end of the narrative. Todorov (53) also suggests that the marvellous can exist in a 'pure' state. The marvellous narrative is linked to that of the fairy tale, and in this genre "supernatural elements provoke no particular reaction either in the characters or the implicit reader" (Todorov 54).

It would seem, then, as if Pratchett's Discworld novels can be categorised as 'marvellous' narratives, as both the characters and the implicit reader readily accept, and even expect, the supernatural elements in these texts. However, once the satirical elements of these novels are taken into account, the 'purity' of the genre is threatened. This results in another area of uncertainty, in which we must arrive at a more specific classification of the text: marvellous narrative that traverses satire. It is precisely those elements which

make Pratchett's Discworld series such a taxonomical conundrum that serve as a catalyst for the process of rewriting: undecidability, fluidity and resistance to rigid classification.

Let us now consider to what extent Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters* is motivated by the presence of such tensions within Shakespeare's *Macbeth*. Here, Jonathan Dollimore's reflections on the radical aspects of Jacobean theatre prove invaluable, and will be discussed at length. In his *Radical Tragedy: Religion, Ideology and Power in the Drama of Shakespeare and his Contemporaries*, Dollimore points to a tension within Jacobean drama pertaining specifically to the issue of human subjectivity. Dollimore locates the Renaissance as a transitional period in terms of intellectual and philosophical process, arguing that during this time "the essentialist conception of man was in a vulnerable state of transition being, roughly speaking, between its Christian/metaphysical formulations and the later secular/Enlightenment mutation of these..." (Dollimore 155) That is, during this historical period we find a tension between enduring medieval belief in a divine, teleological design in which identity is inextricably linked to the individual's place in a preordained social hierarchy and the emergence of a form of individualism – an individuality that Dollimore (158) associates with "new social and geographical mobility", in which identity is viewed as related to the individual's actions and decisions.

Although the disintegration of the notion of identity as rooted in the metaphysical would ultimately lead to the form of essentialist humanism characteristic of the Enlightenment, Dollimore (158) suggests that in the interim, the Renaissance, the displacement of "older ideas of the universe and of society as functioning on a metaphysical principle of hierarchy and interdependence" resulted in the "decentring of man". Here, the relationship between the universal and the particular is problematised to such an extent that the demystification of the former results in the destabilising of the latter:

But we should not underestimate just how difficult it was, then and subsequently, to make the particular signify independently of the universal. Nowhere was this more so than with regard to human subjectivity... Perhaps the most fundamental error of idealist criticism is to assume that with the ultimate deconstruction of metaphysics (God) the particular (Individual) was foregrounded in all its intrinsic uniqueness... [B]ecause the particular had for so long been constructed as a binary function of the universal, any independent foregrounding of it had to be problematic, arguably impossible: because of this binary relationship the particular is not simply foregrounded by the destabilising of the universal, but is itself destabilised.

(Dollimore 159)

One of the consequences of this “decentring of man” was increased “emphasis on the extent to which subjectivity was to be socially identified.” (Dollimore 155) For Dollimore, the Jacobean drama explores the ways in which socio-historical conditions impact on human subjectivity and, in doing so, these plays disclose “the mechanisms of state, of ideology and of power”. (Dollimore 161) Despite the Jacobean tragedy’s propensity for “penetrating social and political realism” (Dollimore 161), the notion of a metaphysical hierarchy “survived in significant and complex ways – that is as an amalgam of religious belief, aesthetic idealism and ideological myth” (Dollimore 6) and thus “the drama may incorporate the contradictions it explores” (Dollimore 8).

Such tensions can also be found in Shakespeare’s *Macbeth*. In many ways, the play reads as a cautionary tale, warning against ‘unnatural’ ambition that threatens to destabilise the Elizabethan World Picture in which identity and sovereignty are metaphysically derived. Upon his first meeting with the witches, Macbeth struggles to negotiate his faith in a divine, teleological design and his desire to accelerate the process through his own murderous actions. He declares, “If chance will have me/ King, why, chance may crown me, / Without my stir (1. 4:143-145). However, this sentiment is swiftly discarded and Macbeth soon ascends a bloody throne. Here, royal ambition requires the denunciation of one’s very nature, and Macbeth, who is once described by his wife as “too full o’ th’ milk of human kindness” (1.5:14), undergoes such a drastic change in personality that Macduff is moved to declare, “Not in the legions/ Of horrid hell can come a devil more

damn'd/ In evils to top Macbeth.” (4.3:55-57). Similarly, Lady Macbeth actively seeks out the quelling of her own “human kindness”:

... Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here;
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty. Make thick my blood,
Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctious visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose nor keep peace between
Th' effect and it...

(1.5: 37-44)

Such unnatural ambitions are, of course, not without consequence. The murder of Duncan, the rightful king of Scotland, results in a disruption in the natural order. This is illustrated in Lennox's account of strange occurrences on the night of Macbeth's first bloody act:

The night has been unruly. Where we lay,
Our chimneys were blown down; and, as they say,
Lamentings heard i' th' air, strange screams of death,
And prophesying, with accents terrible,
Of dire combustion and confus'd events
New hatch'd to th' woeful time; the obscure bird
Clamour'd the livelong night. Some say the earth
Was feverous and did shake.

(2.3: 52-58)

Those responsible for this disruption do not go unpunished. Despite Lady Macbeth's appeal to the spirits to “[s]top up th' access and passage to remorse” (1.5: 41), her involvement in Duncan's murder results in madness and, ultimately, suicide. Similarly, Macbeth's tyrannical reign is short-lived, as he is defeated by Macduff, and natural order is restored to the kingdom. *Macbeth*, then, at once challenges the concept of a

metaphysical hierarchy, introducing the concept of social mobility that allows the ambitious and resourceful individual to gain power through his own actions, *and* participates in the logic of order and predetermination. The play, then, indeed “incorporate[s] the contradictions it explores” (Dollimore 8), but in doing so also exposes the “mechanisms of state, of ideology and of power” (Dollimore 161).

Macbeth’s disregard for the natural order of succession, and the suggestion that his rise to power may have been preordained by some unnatural and foul metaphysical force (the witches), indicates critical reflection on the contradictions inherent in the Elizabethan World Picture, a notion ultimately propagated in order to ensure loyalty to those ‘naturally’ and ‘rightfully’ in power.

Shakespeare’s critical eye penetrates to the very foundation of power and ideology: the manipulation and exploitation of discourse. Through the weird sisters’ equivocal predictions we are made aware of the fact that power is often dependent on misrepresentation and misinterpretation, that identity is not only rooted in social and historical context, but also in the very narrative that shapes a society.

Despite Banquo’s warning that “The instruments of darkness tell us truths, /Win us with honest trifles, to betray’s/ In deepest consequence-” (1.4:124-126), Macbeth allows the witches’ half truths to shape his very identity, to catapult him not only onto the throne, but also into the role of merciless tyrant. His misinterpretation of the predictions and apparitions is guided in part by his own desire for power, an already deeply seated ‘foulness’ that needed only to be stirred. For Terry Eagleton, Shakespeare’s witches play a deconstructive role, their equivocal predictions exposing the Jacobean political order for what it is:

The witches are the heroines of the piece...they...by releasing ambitious thoughts in Macbeth, expose [the] hierarchical social order for what it is...the pious self-deception of a society based on routine oppression and incessant warfare...Their riddling, ambiguous speech...promises to subvert this structure: their teasing word-play infiltrates and undermines Macbeth from within, revealing in him a lack which hollows his being to desire...The witches figure as the ‘unconscious’ of the drama, that which must be exiled and repressed as dangerous but which is always likely to return with a vengeance...The witches inhabit an anarchic, richly ambiguous zone both in and out of official society...But official society can only ever imagine its radical ‘other’ as chaos rather than creativity... Foulness – a political order which thrives on bloodshed – believes itself fair, whereas the witches do not so much invert this opposition as deconstruct it.

(Eagleton *William Shakespeare 2*)

It is precisely this tension within Macbeth that serves as a catalyst for *Wyrd Sisters*. Pratchett locates his postmodern fiction in a recognisable late medieval setting, and invokes Shakespeare in order to harness a proportion of the subversive energy associated with Jacobean theatre for his own self-conscious exploration of the concepts of identity, subjectivity and narrative return.

In Pratchett’s rendition of *Macbeth*, a tragic element in Jacobean drama, the crisis of the human subjectivity, is translated as humorous and even absurd. The characters are seemingly ensnared in a chain of events belonging to a preceding narrative, wittingly or unwittingly fulfilling their designated roles in a narrative that is destined to unfold. Like Stoppard’s Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, they are moving “idly towards eternity, without possibility of reprieve or hope of explanation” (Stoppard 112). Here, the Bergsonian comedy is evoked, the players becoming clockwork mechanisms teetering dangerously close to the precipice, constantly at risk of being subsumed by a narrative that is not their own.

This comic interpretation of a radical aspect of Jacobean theatre is possible simply because Pratchett, as a contemporary author, maintains a certain ideological distance from the concerns which characterised the long departed Jacobean era. For, as Stephen

Greenblatt suggests in his “Invisible Bullets: Renaissance authority and its subversion, *Henry IV* and *Henry V*”, “we locate as ‘subversive’ in the past precisely those things that are not subversive to ourselves, that pose no threat to the order by which we live and allocate resources” (Greenblatt 29).

Here, Greenblatt, like Dollimore, recognises in Shakespeare’s drama what he first identifies in Thomas Harriot’s *A Brief and True Report* as “ a relation between orthodoxy and subversion that seems, in the same interpretive moment, to be perfectly stable and dangerously volatile” (Greenblatt 25). And it is only because the passage of time protects us from immersion in such concerns that we can disinterestedly pursue them:

It is precisely because of the English form of absolutist theatricality that Shakespeare’s drama, written for a theatre subject to State censorship, can be so relentlessly subversive: the form itself, as a primary expression of Renaissance power, contains the radical doubts it continually provokes...And we are free to locate and pay homage to the plays’ doubts only because they no longer threaten us. There is subversion, no end of subversion, only not for us.

(Greenblatt 45)

While not contesting Greenblatt’s assertion that subversion is often appreciated only once a certain ideological distance is attained, Pratchett’s exploration of political tension within Jacobean theatre cannot be dismissed as detached intertextuality, utilised only for the sake of slapstick comedy. *Wyrd Sisters*’ problematisation of the concepts of identity and subjectivity does not merely serve as a nod to the woes of a bygone era, but rather points to critical engagement with very real contemporary concerns regarding the issues of individual and textual authority.

In fact, there exists an empirical connection between the two seemingly distinct worlds of William Shakespeare and Terry Pratchett. Like the Jacobean dramatists before him, Pratchett occupies a transitional historical period, witness to the dislocation of Enlightenment conceptions of essentialist humanism and established views on the issues of agency and identity.

For Pratchett, this crisis of authority is translated as self-reflexive preoccupation with the very structure of narrative itself and the problematics of a literary return. Subjectivity, then, is inextricably linked to authorship. *Wyrd Sisters* invokes not only Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, but also draws on the traditional fairytale, a genre closely related to oral tradition, its impact often dependent on repetition. Pratchett participates in this logic of repetition in order to suggest that literary return is, in fact, a fundamental aspect of narrative. The text, however, remains acutely aware of the fact that it is itself a repetition, and must negotiate its own dependency on its literary precursors. Much of the humour of the novel is based on this tension between the notion of a clockwork universe in which the players must fulfil pre-destined roles and a more humanist view in which each character is responsible for his or her own destiny. Consequently, Pratchett's anxieties of influence are extended to his characters' struggle for autonomy.

Pratchett's witches, who are at once guided in their actions by the laws of Order and resistant to the notion of 'tradition', exemplify this tension most clearly. Being metaphysically inclined, the witches are of course aware of their own struggle against destiny, a state of affairs that mimic the self-reflexive nature of the novel itself. Although in many ways bound by occult tradition, the three witches are not afraid to improvise when it comes to such matters. Consider the following extract, in which the witches, being a bit short on traditional occult artefacts, attempt to summon a demon using only everyday household items:

'I always say you can't go wrong with a good Invocation,' said Nanny.

'Haven't done one for years.'

Granny Weatherwax frowned. Magrat said, 'Oh, but you can't. Not here. You need a cauldron, and a magic sword. And an octogram. And spices, and all sorts of stuff.'...

'You just use whatever you've got,' [Granny Weatherwax] said...

'*We conjure and abjure thee by means of this-*' Granny hardly paused – 'sharp and terrible copper stick.'

The waters in the boiler rippled gently.

'*See how we scatter -*' Magrat sighed – 'rather old washing soda and some extremely hard soap flakes in thy honour. Really, Nanny, I don't think –'

‘Silence! Now you, Gytha.’

‘*And I invoke and bind thee* with the balding scrubbing brush of Art and the washboard of Protection,’ said Nanny, waving it. The wringer attachment fell off.

‘Honesty is all very well,’ whispered Magrat wretchedly, ‘but somehow it isn’t the same.’

(Pratchett 105-106)

It is through the witches and their almost stubborn individualism that Pratchett’s humanism becomes apparent. Throughout the novel, these three characters are constantly testing the boundaries of their clockwork universe, bending the rules and even attempting to break them on occasion. Despite the “fundamental rule of magic” which dictates that “[i]t always goes wrong if you meddle in politics” (Pratchett 185), the witches decide to interfere by sending the entire kingdom to sleep for fifteen years. Just long enough for the rightful heir to the throne to outgrow his diapers:

I said, what about this rule about not meddling?’ said Magrat.

‘Ah,’ said Nanny. She took the girl’s arm. ‘The thing is,’ she explained, ‘as you progress in the Craft, you’ll learn there is another rule. Esme’s obeyed it all her life.’

‘And what’s that?’

‘When you break rules, break ‘em good and hard,’ said Nanny, and grinned a set of gums that were more menacing than teeth.

(Pratchett 190)

However, this plan to depose Duke Felmet is based on the exploits of one Black Aliss, a legendary witch whose many accomplishments include turning a pumpkin into a royal coach, sending a palace to sleep for a hundred years and casting spells involving spinning wheels, rosebushes, glass slippers and frog princes. It is therefore evident that by recreating Black Aliss’ time distortion spell in order to break the rules, the witches are unwittingly participating in the logic of repetition, re-enacting a scene from the traditional fairytale.

As Terry Eagleton suggests of *Macbeth*'s weird sisters, Pratchett's witches occupy a site of ambiguity, playing not so much a subversive role as a deconstructive one. They precariously balance tradition (dictated by preceding narratives) and good common sense, and in doing so suggest that power is ultimately produced through performance. But here, Pratchett is also doing something very distinct from Shakespeare's radical deliberations on the issues of human subjectivity and agency.

While there indeed exists an empirical connection between Shakespeare's world and Pratchett's own chaotic postmodern one, and *Wyrd Sisters* indeed draws on the subversive energy of its matrix text in order to explore a related issue, the very real ideological and contextual differences between Pratchett and Shakespeare cannot be ignored. In many ways, Pratchett's view on the issue of agency is far less ambiguous and complex than Shakespeare's.

This is possible simply because Pratchett has an array of theoretical frameworks at his disposal that Shakespeare and his contemporaries only began to conceive of, and in turn the radical Jacobean dramatists were immersed in philosophical processes now quite foreign to the modern thinker. Pratchett's weird sisters can test the boundaries of tradition almost to breaking point, because they exist in a world where, as Jean-François Lyotard asserts in *The Postmodern Condition*, "the grand narrative has lost its credibility" (Lyotard 37), a notion that has been assimilated by postmodern theorists such as Dominic Strinati⁶:

Postmodernism is skeptical of any absolute, universal and all-embracing claim to knowledge and argues that theories or doctrines which make such claims are increasingly open to criticism, contestation and doubt. It is thus becoming increasingly difficult for people to organise and interpret their lives in the light of 'metanarratives'. Postmodernism is particularly critical of the 'metanarrative' of Marxism and the claims it makes to absolute truth, as it is of any theory that tries to read a pattern of progress into history, but other 'metanarratives' which can be cited include religion and science, or what we might like to call 'Big Science'.

(Strinati 431)

⁶ In his "Postmodernism and Popular Culture"

The Lancre witches' wilful individualism is also made possible by Pratchett's utilisation of feminist theory, which is in many ways compatible with the pluralistic aspect of postmodernism. In her "From Here to Modernity: Feminism and Postmodernism", Barbara Creed draws on the work of Craig Owen in order to investigate the possibility of an "intersection between feminist theory and postmodern theory" (Creed 369). Although Creed suggests that Owen's argument is problematic in many ways, she concedes that "he is correct to argue that there is a common ground shared by feminism and postmodernism" (Creed 370). Creed puts forward some of Owens' thoughts on the connection between feminism and postmodernism:

According to Owens there are many areas where feminism is not only compatible with, but also an instance of postmodern thought': both feminism and postmodernism endorse Lyotard's argument that there is a crisis in the legitimizing function of narrative, that the *grands récits* or Great Narratives of the West have lost credibility; both present a critique of representation, that 'system of power that authorizes certain representations while blocking, prohibiting or invalidating others'; both agree that the 'representational systems of the West admit only one vision – that of the constitutive male subject'; both present a critique of binarism, that is, thinking by means of oppositions; both insist on the importance of 'difference and incommensurability'...

(Creed 369)

It is with this theoretical basis that Pratchett can suggest that narrative and authority are inextricably linked, but also endow his characters with the knowledge that language and power are ultimately only performative, totalising forces which are subject to scepticism and scrutiny. Duke Felmet, through the guidance of the Fool, recognises the power of rhetoric and attempts to preserve his usurped throne by commissioning a play in which he is portrayed as a righteous king. The Fool proves to be an expert on the exploitation of language and its powerful effects, remaining acutely aware of the performative aspect of rhetoric and propaganda:

‘In – in the Guild,’ said the Fool, ‘we learned that words can be more powerful even than magic.’

‘Clown!’ said the duke. ‘Words are just words. Brief syllables. Sticks and stones may break my bones-’ he paused, savouring the thought –‘but words can never hurt me.’

‘My lord, there are such words that can,’ said the Fool. ‘Liar! Usurper! Murderer!’

The duke jerked back and gripped the arms of the throne, wincing.

‘Such words have no truth,’ said the Fool, hurriedly. ‘But they can spread like fire underground, breaking out to burn-’

‘It’s true! It’s true!’ screamed the duke. ‘I hear them, all the time!’ He leaned forward. ‘It’s the witches!’ he hissed.

‘Then, then, then they can be fought with other words,’ said the Fool.

‘Words can fight even witches.’

‘What words?’ said the duchess, thoughtfully.

The Fool shrugged. ‘Crone. Evil eye. Stupid old woman.’

(Pratchett 98-99)

And:

‘Exactly how,’ [the duchess] said, eventually, ‘does one go about knocking over the houses of people one does not like?’

‘Urban clearance,’ said the Fool.

‘I was thinking of burning them down.’

‘*Hygienic* urban clearance,’ the Fool added promptly.

(Pratchett 193)

The Fool’s manipulation of language in order to justify political violence is reminiscent of George Orwell’s assertion in his “Politics and the English Language” that

...[i]n our time, political speech and writing are largely the defense of the indefensible. Things like the continuance of British rule in India, the Russian purges and deportations, the dropping of the atom bombs on Japan, can indeed be defended, but only by arguments which are too brutal for most people to face, and which do not square with the professed aims of the political parties. Thus political language has to consist largely of euphemism, question-begging and sheer cloudy vagueness.

(Orwell 6)

For Pratchett, as for Orwell, propaganda blinds us to the very real horror of societal and political oppression. Pratchett, however, suggests that ultimately we can wade through the murky waters of tradition and performance in order to see the world for what it is.

Like the Fool, Pratchett's witches display remarkable insight into this relation between power and performance. Their power lies not in dazzling magical feats, like the wizards of Pratchett's Unseen University, but in their ability to penetrate to the very core of things, to see things for what they are, and not what they pretend to be. It is through their lessons to Magrat, the apprentice witch, that we too learn the secrets of true witchcraft. Magrat, who was trained by Goodie Whemper, a witch with a fondness for grandiose magical rituals, must learn that appearances can indeed be deceiving. When she comes across the crown of the true king of Lancre, Magrat declares that the fake crowns she had seen used by travelling Thespians looked 'realler' than the actual object. Granny Weatherwax's rather cryptic assertion that "[t]hings that try to look like things often do look more like things than things" (Pratchett 43) becomes clear only once Magrat learns to look at things *properly*. Her budding romance with the court jester is a source of embarrassment until Gytha Ogg urges her to take a deeper look:

They stared at one another again, their minds racing.

Magrat thought: Nanny said look at him properly. I'm looking at him. He just looks the same. A sad thin little man in a ridiculous jester's outfit, he's practically a hunchback.

Then, in the same way that a few random bulges in a cloud can suddenly become a galleon or a whale in the eye of the beholder, Magrat realized that the Fool was not a little man. He was at least of average height, but he *made* himself small, by hunching his shoulders, bandying his legs and walking in a half-crouch that made him appear as though he was capering on the spot.

I wonder what else Gytha Ogg noticed? She thought, intrigued.

(Pratchett 213-214)

The witches' ability to see things for what they are serves as an excellent defence against Duke Felmet's plans to manipulate the people of Lancre through theatrical performance and political language. Despite their apparent inability to grasp the finer nuances of political manipulation, they intuitively deconstruct this form of oppression. Consider Granny Weatherwax's reaction upon her first visit to the theatre. Having not yet quite mastered the concept of suspension of disbelief, the old witch is profound in her ignorance, instinctively exposing the play for what it is, an elaborate performance:

'I wonder how they get all them kings and lords to come here and do this?' said Granny, totally unabashed. 'I'd have thought they'd be too busy. Ruling and similar.'

'No,' said Magrat, wearily. 'I still don't think you quite understand.'

'Well, I'm going to get to the bottom of it,' snapped Granny. She got back on to the stage and pulled aside the sacking curtains.

'You!' she shouted. 'You're dead!'

The luckless former corpse, who was eating a ham sandwich to calm his nerves, fell backwards off his stool.

Granny kicked a bush. Her boot went right through it.

'See?' she said to the world in general in a strangely satisfied voice.

'Nothing's real! It's all just paint, and sticks and paper at the back.'

(Pratchett 49)

Through his portrayal of the three witches, then, Terry Pratchett, much like Jacobean dramatists before him, explores the tension between the notion of a clockwork universe in which identity is preordained and the more humanist view in which independent action is possible. Yet, for Pratchett this issue is far less problematic than for Shakespeare and his contemporaries, for whom the deconstruction of metaphysics essentially meant the decentring of man. He is allowed an element of play because postmodern and feminist theories dictate the decline of metanarratives, essentially heralding an era in which totalising forces are subject to criticism and scrutiny. While Pratchett clearly suggests that identity and subjectivity are still very much shaped by narrative, and that narrative itself is, at a structural level, subject to repetition, he also has the freedom to suggest that

such performative totalising forces can ultimately be outweighed by a good dose of common sense, to proclaim “bugger destiny”:

Magrat knew she had lost. You always lost against Granny Weatherwax, the only interest was in seeing exactly how. ‘But I’m surprised at the two of you, I really am,’ she said. ‘You’re witches. That means you have to care about things like truth and tradition and destiny, don’t you?’ ‘That’s where you’ve been getting it all wrong,’ said Granny. ‘Destiny is important, see, but people go wrong when they think it controls them. It’s the other way around.’ ‘Bugger destiny,’ agreed Nanny.

(Pratchett 364)

The notion that destiny or fate can in some way be cheated is one that the Discworld series returns to with some frequency. Pratchett introduces his *Interesting Times* by suggesting:

This is where the gods play games with the lives of men, on a board which is *at one and the same time* a simple playing area and the whole world. And Fate always wins. Fate always wins. Most of the gods throw dice but Fate plays chess, and you don’t find out until too late that he’s been using two queens all along. ...Fate always wins... At least when people stick to the rules.

(Pratchett *Interesting Times* 9-12)

In conclusion, it is necessary to reiterate that this chapter, and the inclusion of a central, popular text such as Pratchett’s *Wyrd Sisters*, illustrates that the process of rewriting is a result of a *structural* necessity to return that underpins narrative itself, in large motivated by moments of undecidability and tension within the original text rather than merely an overtly political agenda. While not contesting that the act of rewriting has been very successfully appropriated in the service of politics, this dissertation suggests that it would

greatly impoverish our study of literature if we were to reduce the process of rewriting solely to the politics of colonialism.

CONCLUSION

Initially, this study was conceived as an exploration of the process of writing back, specifically in order to highlight what was believed to be a limitation of the post-colonial endeavour of “writing back to the Centre”. To this end, J.M. Coetzee’s *Foe*, Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Marina Warner’s *Indigo* and Aimé Césaire’s *A Tempest*⁷ were selected as primary sources. From the outset this study was founded on the assumption that post-colonial literature’s penchant for revision represents a positive move towards self-assertion, allowing the (re)writer to question the Eurocentric assumptions of the canonical pretext and expose the ways in which the “dominant” western literary tradition has succeeded in misrepresenting the colonised other. The post-colonial rewrite, then, was regarded as a means of undermining the “discourse of colonialism” from within.

While the supposed hegemonic nature of the western literary tradition was not drawn into question in the early stages of research, a sense of unease regarding the possibility of subversion through a literary return persisted. This sense of disquiet was attributed to the perceived limitation of the post-colonial return: the belief that the rewritten texts in question all display an acute awareness of the fact that they are *dependent* texts, inextricably linked to and confined by the matrix texts. This self-conscious element was interpreted as anxiety of potentially being subsumed by the ideology of the pretext. Thus, I concluded, the rewritten text becomes pre-occupied with its struggle to negotiate its dependency on the original text, while desperately attempting to maintain its original aim of subversion.

Believing it necessary for the rewritten text to overcome this anxiety before it can successfully strike at the foundations of the hegemonic literary centre, this study intended to demonstrate that certain post-colonial returns negotiate their dependency on the matrix

⁷ These texts revisit, respectively, Defoe’s *Robinson Crusoe*, Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* and Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*.

text more effectively than others. Thus, it was suggested that some revised texts emerge as more successful in their efforts to subvert the colonial logic of their pretexts.

The task of providing evidence for such a theory proved to be nearly impossible, as it involves a completely subjective value judgement of the texts in question. Although this concern was significant enough to jeopardise the validity of the entire study, it was certainly not the only source of apprehension. The categorisation of the post-colonial rewrite as an instrument of subversion, a means of challenging the authority of a “dominant” discourse, necessitated the relegation of pretexts such as Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre* to the position of instrument of imperialism. Such rigid classification would of course be to deny all subversive elements in the original novel, to disregard the fact that *Jane Eyre* remains a radical text which questions many of the assumptions of its time, including class and gender inequalities in Victorian society.

Hitherto the research study had focused primarily on the revised post-colonial text and the ways in which it challenges the assumptions of its pretext, or rather the assumed assumptions of the original text, for I believed myself to be so familiar with these classics that they warranted no more than a quick re-reading. However, it became increasingly apparent that these pre-texts indeed demand a thorough return, for even those with only a vague recollection of these texts, gleaned perhaps from long-forgotten undergraduate classes, must experience a measure of discomfort at the prospect of reducing such radical and enduring works of literature to mere tools of British imperialism.

The subsequent return to the original texts revealed that these colonial pretexts not only resist such narrow classification and polarisation, but are also permeated with moments of ambiguity and undecidability. Furthermore, the rewritten post-colonial text seems to resist challenging the logic of its pretext entirely, often echoing many of the subversive textual strategies already present in the original text. It now became apparent that the urge to return to matrix texts could not merely be attributed to their position as colonial texts. These texts actively allow for a return, and I believed this to be directly linked to the sense of unease evoked in their readers.

This revelation resulted in a radical shift in the study. It now became necessary to re-examine the entire process of writing back, for if the colonial pretext could no longer be contained as the simple propagation of imperialist ideals, the notion of subversion through return became problematic. Hitherto I had paid little attention to the motivation behind the act of rewriting, assuming it to be a direct result of the existence of unequal power relations within the original text. I now came to realise that although such concerns certainly contribute to the desire to return, there is an element at work that far exceeds narrow political concerns.

It was only when I turned to the work of Homi K. Bhabha and Jacques Derrida that this suspicion began to take form as a compelling theory. Bhabha's assertion⁸ that the discovery of the English book results in an "ambivalent text of authority" first alerted me to the possibility that what I had previously viewed as a unified, dominant discourse of colonialism is, in fact, inherently unstable. Bhabha suggests that

[T]he colonial presence is always ambivalent, split between its appearance as original and authoritative and its articulation as repetition and difference. It is a disjunction produced within the act of enunciation as a specifically colonial articulation of those two disproportionate sites of colonial discourse and power: the colonial scene as the invention of historicity, mastery, mimesis or as the 'other scene' of *Entstellung*, displacement, fantasy, psychic defence, and 'open' textuality.

(Bhabha "Signs"1)

Here, Bhabha establishes a connection between the dissemination of European literature throughout the colonised world and the propagation of the imperial mission, suggesting that the European text emerges as an "insignia of colonial authority and a signifier of colonial desire and discipline" (Bhabha 102). However, the presence of the English book within the colonial space must also produce an aperture in the discourse of colonialism,

⁸ Posited in his "Signs taken for wonders: Questions of ambivalence and authority under a tree outside Delhi, May 1817".

or that which Bhabha refers to as “the other scene” of “*Entstellung*” and “open textuality”. The European text is displaced, distorted and repeated in the colonial sphere, a process that must inevitably result in ambivalence and undecidability.

Although Bhabha implies that this process of distortion can only be achieved through the displacement and subsequent appropriation of the European text, the concept of an “ambivalent text of authority” moved me to consider the possibility of confusion between cause and effect. In other words, does the European text emerge as a site of ambivalence due to the process of distortion and appropriation that occurs within the colonial space, or is it the inherently ambivalent nature of the English text that allows for such “open textuality” and interpretation? This is of course a moot question, similar to the proverbial chicken and egg quandary. Nonetheless, the significance of this particular dilemma does not reside in its unresolvedness, but rather in the fact that the very act of asking such an impossible question points to distrust in what can only be described as the *myth* of a stable, unified discourse of colonialism.

Derridian theory proved an invaluable aid in articulating this notion of an inherently unstable and ambivalent pretext. Derrida’s questioning of the metaphysics of the western philosophical tradition, a discourse which has itself been considered “dominant” and “authoritative”, held such powerful resonance that much of my own argument is underpinned by Derridian thought.

The notion that alterity is always already present in any structure that aims to bracket or exclude otherness, and that iterability and undecidability are essential features of language is central to this study. For, this would suggest that all texts are characterised by an “open textuality” and must inevitably arrive at a moment when they cease to persuade. The imperial pretext is no exception.

I now concluded that the existence of such aporetic moments within the original colonial text accounted for much of the unease I experienced when first attempting to bracket pretexts such as *Jane Eyre* as mere tools of imperialism. It seemed clear that these

elements of iterability and undecidability, rather than the mere presence of unequal power relations, necessitate a return to the colonial pretext. However, this theory could not adequately explain the fact that only certain texts emerge as popular pretexts for others. In her *Tempests before Shakespeare*, Chantal Zabus suggests that there exists a tradition of “interpellative dream texts” that “serve as pre-texts to others and underwrite them” (Zabus 1). Zabus’s suggestion that certain texts emerge as more repeatable than others led me to reconsider the earlier assumption that the process of rewriting is motivated by elements of iterability and undecidability within the pretext. For if, as Derridian theory maintains, these elements are present in *all* texts, it follows that there must be some additional factor that results in an exaggerated iterability, and ultimately in a tradition of more popular pretexts.

I now believed this additional factor to be related to the way in which certain pretexts negotiate these inevitable moments of slippage. The authority of the imperial text hinges on its ability to disavow and persuade, and it must compensate for the lapse in its own logic in order to maintain a semblance of solidarity. This results in a self-conscious ambivalence. The imperial pretext, then, is involved in a process of self-deconstruction, constantly attempting to compensate for its inherent undecidability by producing even more ambivalence. It is this self-reflexive element that results in an exaggerated iterability, as the pretext’s obvious inability to maintain its colonial authority evokes a sense of disquiet, which ultimately necessitates a return.

This element of self-conscious ambivalence is particularly apparent in the pretext’s representation of the relationship between self and other. The colonial text often stages an encounter between self and other in order to assert the superiority of the colonising “master”, but such a process of self-assertion in opposition to an other must inevitably result in ambivalence. Here, the work of Paul Brown and Homi. K.Bhabha proved invaluable. Both these theorists point to the fact that colonial discourse calls for both a wholly, “disruptive” other and a certain degree of mimicry. Brown suggests that

...colonialist discourse voices a demand both for order and disorder, producing a disruptive other in order to assert the superiority of the coloniser. Yet that production is itself evidence of a struggle to restrict the other's disruptiveness to that role. Colonialist discourse does not simply announce a triumph for civility, it must continuously *produce* it, and this work involves struggle and risk.

(Brown 58)

Similarly, Bhabha's "Of Mimicry and Man" suggests that colonial mimicry stems from a desire for "a reformed recognizable Other, *as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite*" (Bhabha "Mimicry" 122). Here ambivalence is produced, for "in order to be effective, mimicry must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference" (Bhabha "Mimicry" 122).

The colonial pretext, then, must constantly negotiate its contradictory desire for "both order and disorder" (Brown 58), a conflict that must necessarily result in unsettling ambiguity, which in turn allows for literary return.

The text that is seemingly at odds with the conclusions drawn in the above discussion is Terry Pratchett's *Wyrd Sisters*. This rather unorthodox text cannot be classified as post-colonial or even marginal, as it is deeply imbedded in western popular culture. However, the novel, which returns to William Shakespeare's *Macbeth*, has been included to illustrate that the process of rewriting is a result of a *structural* necessity to return that underpins narrative itself, largely motivated by moments of undecidability and tension within the original text rather than (only) a political agenda.

This dissertation, then, does not attempt to contest the fact that the process of rewriting has been successfully appropriated in the service of national politics, but rather suggests that the rewritten text exceeds such narrow political concerns. These texts resist subverting the logic of their pretexts entirely in order to address a range of issues not

necessarily related to the politics of space. It would, in fact, greatly impoverish our study of literature if we were to reduce the process of rewriting solely to the politics of colonialism.

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