

Hybridity, the uncanny and the stranger: The contemporary transcultural novel

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Declaration

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that the work contained in this research assignment/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.

Signature:

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. J. G.', written on a light-colored rectangular background.

Date: 25 November 2009

Abstract

During the past century, for a variety of reasons, more people have been crossing national and cultural borders than ever before. This, along with constantly developing communication technology, has seen to it that clear-cut distinctions, divisions and borders are no longer as easily definable as they once were. This process, now commonly referred to as ‘globalisation,’ has led to a rising trend of ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘cultural hybridity,’ terms often connected with celebratory views of our postmodern, postcolonial world as a colourful melting pot of cultures. However, what these celebratory views conveniently avoid recognising, is that the increasing occurrence of hybridity places a growing number of people in a painful space in-between identities where they are “neither just this/nor just that” (Dayal 47), “neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides” (Bhabha *Commitment* 41).

Perhaps in an effort to combat this ignorance, a new breed of authors – who have experienced the rigours of migration first-hand – are giving voice to this pain-infused space on the periphery of cultures and identities through a developing genre of transcultural literature. This literature typically deals with issues of identity closely related to globalisation and multiculturalism. In my thesis I will be looking at three such novels: Jamal Mahjoub’s *The Drift Latitudes*, Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss*, and Caryl Phillips’ *A Distant Shore*.

These authors move away from an idealistic, celebratory view of hybridity as the effortless blending of cultures to a somewhat disenchanted approach to hybridity as a complex negotiation of split subjectivity in an ever-fracturing world. All three novels lend themselves to a psychoanalytic reading, with subjects who imagine themselves to be unitary, but end up having to face their repressed fractured subjectivity in a moment of crisis. The psychoanalytic model of the split between the conscious and the unconscious, then, resonates well with the postcolonial model of the intrinsically fractured hybrid identity. However, while psychoanalysis focuses on internal processes, postcolonialism focuses on external processes.

Therefore, I will be making use of a blend of psychoanalytic and postcolonial concepts to analyse and access discursive meanings in the texts. More specifically, I

will use Homi Bhabha's concept of 'hybridity', Freud's concept of the 'uncanny', and Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'the stranger' as distinctive, yet interconnected conceptual lenses through which to view all three of these transcultural novels.

Opsomming

In die afgelope eeu het meer mense as ooit vantevore, om 'n verskeidenheid redes, lands- en kultuurgrense oorgesteek. Tesame met die voortdurende vooruitgang van kommunikasietegnologie, het dit tot gevolg dat afgebakende grense, skeidings en verskille nie meer so maklik definieerbaar is as wat hulle eens was nie. Hierdie proses, waarna in die algemeen verwys word as 'globalisering', het gelei tot die groeiende neiging van 'multikulturalisme' en 'kulturele hibriditeit'. Dit is terminologie wat dikwels in verband gebring word met feestelike beskouings van ons postmoderne, post-koloniale wêreld as 'n kleurrike smeltkroes van kulture.

Wat hierdie feestelike beskouings egter gerieflikheidshalwe verkies om te ignoreer, is die feit dat die toenemende voorkoms van hibriditeit 'n groeiende aantal mense in 'n pynlike posisie tussen identiteite plaas waar hulle nòg vis nòg vlees ("neither just this/nor just that" [Dayal 47]), nòg die Een... nòg die Ander is... maar eerder iets anders buiten.. ("neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides" [Bhabha *Commitment* 41]).

Miskien in 'n poging om hierdie onkunde die hoof te bied, is 'n nuwe geslag skrywers – wat die eise van migrasie eerstehands ervaar het – besig om met 'n ontwikkelende genre van transkulturele literatuur 'n stem te gee aan hierdie pynlike 'plek' op die periferie van kulture en identiteite. Hierdie literatuur handel tipies oor die kwessies van identiteit wat nou verwant is aan globalisering en multikulturalisme.

In my tesis kyk ek na drie sulke romans: Jamal Mahjoub se *The Drift Latitudes*, Kiran Desai se *Inheritance os Loss* en Caryl Phillips se *A Distant Shore*. Hierdie skrywers beweeg weg van die idealistiese, feestelike beskouing van hibriditeit as die moeitelose vermenging van kulture na 'n meer realistiese uitbeelding van hibriditeit as 'n ingewikkelde vergestaltung van verdeelde subjektiwiteit in 'n verbrokkelende wêreld. Al drie romans leen hulle tot die lees daarvan uit 'n psigo-analitiese oogpunt, met karakters wat hulself as eenvormig beskou, maar uiteindelik in 'n krisis-oomblik te staan kom voor die werklikheid van hul onderdrukte verbrokkelde subjektiwiteit. Die psigo-analitiese model van die breuk tussen die bewuste en die onbewuste weerklank

welluidend in die post-koloniale model van die intrinsiek verbrokkelde hibriede identiteit.

Terwyl psigo-analise egter op interne prosesse toegespits is, fokus post-kolonialisme op eksterne prosesse. Derhalwe gebruik ek 'n vermenging van psigo-analitiese en post-koloniale konsepte om uiteenlopende betekenis in die onderskeie tekste te analiseer en hulle toeganklik te maak. Meer spesifiek gebruik ek Homi Bhabha se konsep van hibriditeit, Freud se konsep van die 'geheimsinnige / onheilspellende' en Zygmunt Bauman se konsep van 'die vreemdeling' as kenmerkende, maar steeds onderling verwante konseptuele lense waardeur aldrie transkulturele romans beskou word.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

The world has undergone a shrinking process, pulling disparate peoples and places together at an accelerating rate. Sneja Gunew articulates this process not as a new trend, but as something that has been taking place for centuries, though with increasing speed as a consequence of the development of modernity in the form of large scale globalisation: “While there have always been migrations and diasporas, after two world wars and many other conflicts this century the mix of people within borders increasingly rendered traditional national models anachronistic” (23).

Although this process has created many opportunities for individuals to expand their horizons, explore, discover and seek refuge, it has also led to the blurring of communal boundaries and a rising trend of cultural hybridity. The increasing occurrence of these hybrid identities places a growing number of people in an ‘in-between’ space where they are “neither just this/nor just that” (Dayal 47), “neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides” (Bhabha *Commitment* 41).

My study aims to explore the representation of this complex space of ‘in-between’ identities in three recent novels: Jamal Mahjoub’s *The Drift Latitudes* (2006), Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss* (2006), and Caryl Phillips’ *A Distant Shore* (2003). All three novels move away from the celebration of cultural diversity joyously professed by the mass media in a tendency Jonathan Rutherford describes as “capital [falling] in love with difference” (11), which he explains as follows: “advertising thrives on selling us things that will enhance our uniqueness and individuality. It’s no longer about keeping up with the Joneses, it’s about being different from them” (11). Instead, these novels present us with another perspective on cultural difference, the discomfort caused by belonging to a space ‘in-between’ or on the periphery of cultures. They highlight the problematic of what Gunew refers to as “[m]ulticulturalism...developed as a concept by nations and other aspirants to geo-political cohesiveness who are trying to represent themselves as homogeneous in spite of their heterogeneity” (23). Drawing from this statement by Gunew, the thesis will be using multiculturalism as a term closely related to hybridity, in the sense that it raises questions about cultural identity on a national level, in the same way that hybridity brings identity into question on a personal level. By focussing on characters who, for various reasons, find themselves at odds with their surroundings - the most prominent being the

complex matter of dislocation consequent on colonialism - these novels deal with the painful negotiation of identity and the devastating reality of alienation and displacement in the disjunctive temporality of the modern world. Rutherford captures the very essence of this discomfort when he states: "In this postmodern, 'wide-open' world our bodies are bereft of those spatial and temporal co-ordinates essential for historicity, for a consciousness of our own collective and personal past. 'Not belonging', a sense of unreality, isolation and being fundamentally 'out of touch' with the world become endemic in such a culture" (24). The characters in these novels find themselves trapped between the rapid progression of modernity and their own diverse histories, and are forced to renegotiate their identities, either finding new meaning or the bleaker alternative of retreat into isolation, whether mentally, socially, or the ultimate isolation of death.

Each of the three chapters that make up the body of the thesis will be dedicated to a thorough examination and discussion of one novel, starting with Jamal Mahjoub's *The Drift Latitudes*, then moving on to Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*, and finally ending off with Caryl Phillips' *A Distant Shore*. All three novels lend themselves to a psychoanalytic reading, with subjects who imagine themselves to be unitary, but are faced with a moment of crisis which ultimately casts their imagined unity into doubt. This moment of crisis culminates in a sudden, and sometimes violent, return of the repressed, leading to a realisation of the repressed fractured subjectivity harboured within. In both *The Drift Latitudes* and *Inheritance of Loss*, this psychoanalytic process leads, if not to a reconciliation of the fractured self, then to an awareness and accommodation of this split subjectivity. *A Distant Shore*, on the other hand, takes a far more pessimistic view, as the split subjects end up fracturing even more violently. This psychoanalytic model of the split between the conscious and the unconscious resonates with the postcolonial model of the hybrid identity. However, while psychoanalysis focuses on internal processes, postcolonialism focuses on external processes. Julia Kristeva manages to capture this complex space of split subjectivity in the postcolonial world when she writes:

it is perhaps on the basis of that contemporary individualism's subversion, beginning with the moment when the citizen-individual ceases to consider himself as unitary and glorious but discovers his incoherences and

abysses, in short his ‘strangenesses’ – that the question arises again: no longer that of welcoming the foreigner within a system that obliterates him but of promoting togetherness of those foreigners that we all recognize ourselves to be. (*Strangers* 2-3)

Indeed, other theorists such as Homi Bhabha have also sought to show how these external political processes and internal psychic processes are intimately related. Insofar as conventional psychoanalytic vocabulary falls somewhat short of all the problems associated with the postcolonial split subjectivity, I will support the psychoanalytic narrative with a narrative of postcolonial dislocation theorized by the likes of Homi Bhabha and Zygmunt Bauman.

Specifically, I will be making use of Bhabha’s concept of ‘hybridity’, Freud’s concept of the ‘uncanny’, particularly reconceptualised by Bhabha through the closely related notion of the ‘unhomely’, and Zygmunt Bauman’s concept of ‘the stranger’. These constitute distinctive, yet interconnected conceptual lenses through which I shall view all three novels, with each chapter focusing specifically on one of these concepts. Although I do make use of a variety of theories surrounding hybridity, it is Bhabha’s ‘third space’ that lays the basis for much of my thesis. Through this conceptualisation of the ‘third space,’ Bhabha problematises the idea of hybridity by focusing on the actual hybrid identity and not on the “two original moments” from which it emerges. Although Bhabha is most often associated with the ‘celebratory’ approaches to hybridity that this thesis sets out to critique, it is important to note that in his conceptualisation of the ‘third space’ he does not gloss over or ignore the intrinsic split inherent to all hybrid identities, but rather sets it up as a position from which to recognise and renegotiate this deep fracture that so often defines them. The ideal outcome of this recognition and renegotiation would then be to “[enable] other positions to emerge” (*Third* 211). It is then because of his acknowledgment of the need to grapple with the painful split inherent to all hybrid identities in order for something new to emerge, instead of setting hybridity up as a joyous mixture of cultures and identities that is ‘new’ from the outset, that I choose to use his ‘third space’ as the central theoretical concept within my thesis.

It is important to note that Bhabha's conception of the 'third space' as well as his general theories around hybridity, not only correlates well with Freud's 'uncanny', but in actual fact draws from it and even appropriates it to a great extent. This is clearly seen in the way that both concepts deal, in essence, with deeply fissured subjectivities. What makes the uncanny especially applicable to discussions surrounding hybrid identities and the dislocation so often associated with them is that "the specificity of the sensation of the uncanny lies in the fact that something is frightening, not because it is unfamiliar or new, but because what used to be familiar has somehow become strange" (Masschelein 3). This corresponds closely to the way in which the hybrid identity is characterised by a deep-seated confusion over the estrangement of the familiar and the familiarisation of the strange. This blurring of the boundaries between the familiar and the strange is a theme that surfaces in all three novels as the return of long-forgotten and repressed feelings prod the various characters toward a recognition of their split subjectivities and, in certain cases, a renegotiation of these subjectivities which, in turn, 'enables other positions to emerge'. Such blurring of boundaries and the frightening return of repressed feelings invokes Zygmunt Bauman's 'stranger'. What Bauman brings to light in his discussion around strangers is the way in which their very presence blurs boundaries that once were clearly defined and creates uncertainty in those around them. The space inhabited by Bauman's 'stranger' is comparable to the space inhabited by the hybrid identity. In each of the novels under discussion, it takes an encounter with a stranger, and the surge of repressed feelings they unleash, for various characters to recognise their own strangeness, their fractured subjectivity, and to renegotiate their hybridity. It is a process that Kristeva describes as "unravelling transference" of "the major dynamics of otherness, of love/hatred for the other, of the foreign component of our psyche – that, on the basis of the other, I become reconciled with my own otherness-foreignness" (*Strangers* 182).

Importantly, I will be employing this constellation of mutually illuminating analytical concepts as heuristic tools to access discursive meanings in the three texts. My main concern does not lie with elaborating a theory, but using theoretical concepts to understand and analyse the given texts as a developing genre of writing.

In Chapter 2, I will be discussing Jamal Mahjoub's *The Drift Latitudes*, which focuses largely on the metropolitan hybrid family. The narrative shifts between the lives of

two women: Jade, a successful ‘coloured’ architect living in a suburb of London with her young daughter; and Rachel, Jade’s half-sister, who lives in Khartoum after marrying Amin, a Sudanese Muslim she meets during college. Traumatic experiences in both women’s lives bring to the surface long-repressed feelings of uncertainty and unbelonging, forcing them to question and re-examine the ‘in-between’ spaces they inhabit and ultimately to renegotiate their hybrid identities. Apart from Jade, Rachel, and their respective families, there are a number of other ‘in-between’ characters who do not feature as prominently, yet play a highly important role in the narrative, such as the vague figure of the illegal immigrant/refugee. Although these characters are hardly visible, virtually nameless, and float at the periphery of the novel – reflecting the marginal space they inhabit in reality – frequent references to them serve as an unsettling reminder of the alienation and displacement the modern city holds for those who do not belong yet have nowhere else to go.

To examine the roles of these two vastly different representations of hybridity in the novel, I will use a formulation by R. Radhakrishnan as a starting point. Radhakrishnan maintains that “[t]he crucial difference that one discerns between metropolitan versions of hybridity and ‘postcolonial’ versions is that whereas the former are characterized by an intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*, the latter are expressions of extreme pain and agonizing dislocation” (753). I will pursue this discussion of the versions of hybridity through an examination of Bhabha’s notion of the ‘third space.’ However, I will be using the concept of the uncanny as the main theoretical focus of the chapter, as the novel’s split narrative, doubling of characters, and the recurring theme of the ‘return of the repressed’ lends itself rather well to a psychoanalytic reading. Mahjoub emphasises issues of hybridity, unbelonging and displacement through the recurring imagery of architecture, the city and jazz. Their metaphorical representation of the ‘in-between’ identities of the modern cities are tied together neatly in Jade’s words: “[t]he jazz of the cities is the syncopated distillation of unexpected elements which allows us to live together: none of it makes sense, except the sense we give it” (Mahjoub 148).

In Chapter 3, I will be looking at Kiran Desai’s *Inheritance of Loss*. Whereas the hybridity presented to us in *The Drift Latitudes* is focused mainly on the hybrid family, and therefore, to some extent, on racial hybridity, *Inheritance of Loss* grapples

most clearly with cultural hybridity. The novel presents us with a three-way narrative split, relating the stories of the sixteen-year-old Sai, her bitter grandfather (both inhabit a dilapidated mansion in the higher reaches of the Himalayas) and Biju, their cook's son, who tries to make his way as an illegal migrant worker in New York. This narrative split provides us with an interesting vantage point from which to view two very different sides of the same issue, as Biju's negotiation of his identity as an illegal immigrant (a stranger) in a foreign city is contrasted with the more complex situation Sai and her grandfather find themselves in as strangers in their homeland due to their education, language and wealth. On two opposite ends of the globe, in two vastly discrepant modernities, these characters are at odds with their surroundings and effectually in similar positions of marginality and strangerhood. However, it is only with the arrival of people who are in essence 'strange' to them that a surge of repressed emotions, anger, hatred and pain forces these characters to take note of their split subjectivities as well as the deep-seated prejudices they have been harbouring as a result. The uncanny return of repressed feelings and the role of the stranger are then very closely connected in the novel and both ultimately lead to some sort of recognition and renegotiation of the characters' hybrid identities.

The manner in which Desai conceptualises this recognition of the characters' split subjectivities allows the novel to lend itself especially well to a reading using the theoretical lens of hybridity. Bhabha's notion of 'third space' surfaces exceptionally clearly as both Biju and Sai's renegotiation of their hybrid identities allow for 'other positions to emerge' and new perspectives to be brought to light. The same could not, however, be said for Sai's grandfather, as he resists any form of newness entering his subjective realm.

While in both *The Drift Latitudes* and *A Distant Shore* the characters find themselves renegotiating their hybrid identities almost by chance, as outside circumstances fall into place, *Inheritance of Loss* presents us with characters who approach their hybridity with assertiveness from the moment they become aware of their deeply split subjectivities. Because of this assertiveness and the clearly described mental processes the characters undergo in coming to terms with their hybridity, I would argue that Bhabha's 'third space' is most clearly evident in this novel. Furthermore, the characters do not only become aware of their own hybridity, but seem to come to a

greater awareness of the fractured state of the world at large, again reflecting Bhabha's words: "all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (*Third* 211) and Kristeva's notion of "the intrinsic foreignness of culture" (*Strangers* 169). Finally, Desai uses the imagery of the dilapidated mansion inhabited by Sai and her grandfather, as well as the urban underbelly Biju calls home while in New York, to emphasise not only the fractured and hybrid nature of the characters but also of the world at large.

In Chapter 4, I will be examining Caryl Phillips' *A Distant Shore*. Set in the small English village of Weston, the novel departs from the more metropolitan setting of *The Drift Latitudes* and the rural/metropolitan split of *Inheritance of Loss*. The narrative is built around the unlikely friendship that develops between Solomon, an African refugee, and Dorothy, a born-and-bred Brit, and is therefore the only one of the three novels that deals overtly with the issue of racism, one obviously experienced by many in the position of hybridity. Phillips seems to choose the setting to emphasise the severity of racism in England, as even the little town of Weston falls victim to this outrage when Solomon is brutally murdered by a band of young hooligans. With the influx of large numbers of foreigners into England, Phillips seems to suggest that much of English racism springs from the anxiety this constant influx produces in the local population. This uncertainty is presented to us from the start of the novel, as the opening lines state: "England has changed. These days it's difficult to tell who's from around here and who's not. Who belongs and who's a stranger. It's disturbing. It doesn't feel right" (3). Rutherford identifies the anxiety formulated here as "the threat of the dissolution of self that ignites the irrational hatred and hostility as the centre struggles to assert and secure its boundaries that construct self from not-self" (11).

The influx of strangers blurs the constructed boundaries and, in essence, makes home a strange place. However, despite feelings of uncertainty, Solomon's arrival brings for Dorothy the promise of a kindred, lonely spirit, a friend, but more importantly someone more marginal and vulnerable than herself. She finds herself associating more and more with the shunned black man and increasingly at odds with her fellow countrymen. Through the character of Dorothy, Phillips presents us with a form of psychic hybridity, as she tries to negotiate the fissure between her feelings of rejection

by English society and her overwhelming feelings of kinship with Solomon, the stranger.

The role of the stranger is, then, an extremely important one in the novel, and therefore the theoretical focus of this chapter. Dorothy first finds herself irreversibly attracted to the stranger, and through a complete collapse of her mental health finally also becomes the stranger in her own home. Both Dorothy and Solomon fall victim to what Bauman refers to as “two alternative but also complementary strategies” (47) for dealing with those who do not belong in society i.e. “*assimilation* – making the different similar... [and] *exclusion* – confining the strangers within... visible walls... expelling the strangers beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory” (48). Kristeva identifies this same tendency towards a “regressive and protectionist rage” that asks the question, “must we not stick together, remain among ourselves, expel the intruder, or at least, keep him in ‘his’ place” (*Strangers* 20). Bauman argues that these strategies are an outdated model for dealing with strangers, employed only by “the modern State” (47), but Phillips seems to negate this, showing that these things still happen in our “postmodern, ‘wide-open’ world” (Rutherford 24) despite joyous talk of multiculturalism and hybridity.

What makes the novels comparable is the fact that all three present us with problems associated with some form of hybridity, whether racial, cultural or psychic, and provide us with three different vantage points from which to view similar issues. The deep-seated issues they grapple with include that of belonging and unbelonging, different forms of displacement and strangerhood associated with all peoples who find themselves in-between or on the periphery of clearly constructed boundaries. In this thesis I aim to explore these novels as a developing genre of modern writing that does not celebrate hybridity so much as present it as a complex space of ‘in-between’ identities, a space of alienation, displacement, pain and violence, but also possibly a fertile place of opportunity and becoming.

All three novels are relatively recent, and therefore it has been almost impossible to find critical works against which to measure my own analysis. As far as secondary sources go, I have been informed mainly by interviews with the authors, especially in the case of Desai, who won the Booker Prize with *Inheritance of Loss*, and Phillips

who is a well-established and highly acclaimed novelist. Furthermore, reviews published by reliable sources, have proved invaluable, as they have served to provide a somewhat critical view and to broaden my own views on the novels.

Chapter 2: Uncanny spaces: Jamal Mahjoub's *Drift Latitudes*

“We thought... that there would be room in this new world for people like us, people who did not quite fit into the picture. We thought the world was growing wider, more inclusive. And now it seems it was actually drifting in the other direction” (Mahjoub 69). With these words Rachel, one of the main characters in Jamal Mahjoub's *The Drift Latitudes*, captures the essence of the issues of belonging, displacement, and alienation that the novel sets out to address. Mahjoub builds his story around a core of hybrid and marginalised identities who find themselves negotiating their fractured selves within three modern cityscapes: focussing mostly on London, but also including Liverpool and Khartoum. The characters who inhabit the novel and these cities continually find themselves 'in-between' and on the periphery due to a variety of reasons, including race, ethnicity, religion, and even sexuality. However, the most prominent reason could be related back to the large-scale postcolonial diasporic displacement of the past hundred years or so, captured in Sneja Gunew's words: “after two world wars and many other conflicts this century the mix of people within borders increasingly rendered traditional national models anachronistic” (*Postcolonialism* 23). In this ongoing process of migration – forced or chosen – the world is continually undergoing a shrinking process, a contraction, leaving certain people to fall through the cracks and inhabit those spaces 'in-between'. These marginal spaces become the only spaces where they belong, yet also do not and certainly cannot inhabit in complete comfort.

A popular concept in hybridity theory suggests that there are two clearly discernable types. This idea divides hybrid identities into the more privileged space of the “cosmopolitan intellectual” (Dayal 49) on the one hand, and the struggle-infused space of the migrant/refugee/exile on the other. Whereas the “cosmopolitan[s]” (49) typically seem to be greeted with welcoming curiosity, the migrants/refugees/exiles are often denigrated to the position of Bauman's “strangers” (46). These strangers typically “do not fit the cognitive, moral or aesthetic map of the world... make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be... straightforward,” and finally end up “gestat[ing] uncertainty” (46) in those whose spaces they 'infiltrate' (46). Agreeing with this to some extent, Dayal notes: “The cosmopolitan doesn't share the same cultural location as the refugee or the exile... for some

diasporics the condition is not as empowering as it is for other relatively cosmopolitan intellectuals” (49). Pnina Werbner also draws this distinction between two different forms of hybridity rather clearly. She refers to the migrant/refugee/exile as the “transnational[s]” and proceeds to suggest:

Cosmopolitans... are multilingual gourmet tasters who travel among global cultures, savouring cultural differences as they flit with consummate ease between social worlds. Such gorgeous butterflies in the greenhouse of global culture are a quite different social species from the transnational bees and ants who build new hives and nests in foreign lands. Transnationals are people who move, often in great swarms, in order to create collective ‘homes’ around them wherever they happen to land (*Introduction* 11-12)

Similarly, R. Radhakrishnan draws his own distinction between two clearly discernable types of hybridity and sets up a definition central to my argument: “The crucial difference that one discerns between metropolitan versions of hybridity and ‘postcolonial’ versions is that, whereas the former are characterized by an intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*, the latter are expressions of extreme pain and agonizing dislocation” (*Postcoloniality* 753). In this chapter I propose to explore the way in which Mahjoub’s *The Drift Latitudes* seems to suggest that the extreme pain and agonizing dislocation’ of the ‘postcolonial’ hybrid identity is, in fact, firmly lodged within all hybrid identities. Through the various characters’ experiences, the novel shows how repressed feelings of unbelonging lie dormant until some traumatic experience or crisis triggers their return in an uncanny moment.

Bearing this in mind, I will put forward Bhabha’s concept of the ‘third space’ as an appropriate lens through which to view the novel. He suggests that hybridity is not so much a convergence of two original identities into a new transcendent one, but rather that the hybrid identity will always be intrinsically split. He states: “the importance of hybridity is not to be able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather hybridity to me is the ‘third space’ which enables other positions to emerge” (*Third* 211). Dayal’s conceptualisation of ‘double consciousness’ embroiders

on Bhabha's 'third space' to some extent and provides us with a slightly more accessible understanding of the hybrid identity's fractured self. He states:

Doubleness as I am conceptualising it is less a 'both/and' and more a 'neither just this/nor just that.' My attempt here is to conceive doubleness negatively, to explode the positive and equilibristic constructions of diaspora around the desire for belonging ideally to two or more places or cultures. That 'doubleness' is often laced with nostalgia...Doubleness is more productively conceived as the interstitiality of entering (or leaving) and destabilizing the border zones of cultures, as fracturings of the subject that resist falsely comforting identifications and reifications. (Dayal 47-48)

More often than not a moment of crisis or trauma forces the metropolitan hybrid identity to a realisation that his/her celebrated doubleness is actually "laced with nostalgia" (Dayal 47) and underscored by a chronic case of intrinsic fracture that he/she has chosen to ignore. This realisation then brings to the surface the 'extreme pain and agonizing dislocation' normally associated with 'postcolonial' hybridity, the 'transnational', or the 'stranger'. It is this realisation of the painful internal fracture or split identity which Mahjoub seems to explore through the characters of Jade and, to some extent, Rachel in *The Drift Latitudes*.

The resurfacing of buried feelings and repressed memories importantly brings us to Freud's 'uncanny,' which Mahjoub manages to employ subtly, yet powerfully throughout the novel. Anneleen Masschelein unpacks the concept of the uncanny or, in Freud's original German, "Das Unheimliche" (1), and inadvertently, manages to highlight its usefulness in discussing the awkward position of the metropolitan hybrid identity. She writes:

Un-heimlich is the negation of the adjective heimlich, derived from the semantic core of Heim, home. Except, it turns out that heimlich has two meanings. The first sense is the most literal: domestic, familiar, intimate.

The second meaning departs from the positive, literal sense to the more negative metaphorical sense of hidden, secret, clandestine, furtive...[I]n the positive sense, heimlich takes the inside-perspective of the intimacy of the home. In the negative sense, by contrast, the walls of the house shield the interior and in the eyes of the outsider, the secludedness of the inner circle is associated with secrecy and conspiracy. Unheimlich in the sense of strange, unfamiliar, uncanny, eerie, sinister... is then clearly the negation of only the first meaning of heimlich and as such, it almost coincides with the second, negative meaning of heimlich. This peculiar etymology runs counter to the intuition and already complicates the straightforward scheme of familiar versus strange and hence frightening (2-3)

Already in the word's complicated and "peculiar etymology" (Masschelein 3) we see some reflection of the complicated and peculiar space the hybrid identity – especially the metropolitan hybrid identity – inhabits, hanging awkwardly in-between, both contrasting and coinciding with certain aspects of what would be considered its opposite. However, the concept's connection with the metropolitan hybrid identity only really starts to make sense once we consider the following observation:

the sensation of the uncanny lies in the fact that something is frightening, not because it is unfamiliar or new, but because what used to be familiar has somehow become strange. [Freud] quotes a phrase by Schelling which formulates precisely this relation: 'unheimlich is that what ought to have remained hidden, but has nonetheless come to light'...[He] relates the idea of the familiar which has become strange to the psychoanalytic notion of repression. What is frightening is the return of the repressed (Masschelein 3)

As we've established, what sets the metropolitan hybrid identity apart from the postcolonial version, is the ease with which metropolitan subjects seem to negotiate, to use Dayal's term, their "[d]oubleness" (47). However, this euphoric state of having

various identities to choose from is easily interrupted when some crisis, trauma, or interaction allows long repressed feelings of uncertainty to rise to the surface. Unsurprisingly, the intense anxiety, pain and confusion this causes forces these subjects to investigate aspects of their identity which “used to be familiar,” but “[have] somehow become strange” (Masschelein 3).

In the novel we see this very situation playing itself out in both Jade and Rachel’s lives, culminating in a recognition and renegotiation of their intrinsically split, hybrid identities. Mahjoub makes use of doubling, a device closely associated with the uncanny, to emphasise the painful process both women find themselves going through. By juxtaposing Rachel’s letters with Jade’s narrative, he sets up a mirror image of sorts between the two women mutually reflecting their respective struggles. It could be suggested that Rachel functions, in a sense, as an uncanny double to Jade. This process of mirroring is extended even further when Jade finds herself identifying with the unfortunate Thursday and Rachel with silent refugees she sees passing by her house every afternoon. In both cases the women recognise something of themselves within these marginal characters who come to represent the struggles of the ‘postcolonial’ hybrid identity, the ‘transnational’, or the ‘stranger’. Finally, Freud’s concept of the uncanny works extraordinarily well in discussions on hybridity and dislocation. Because, as Masschelein puts it, the concept “remains as *abseitig*, as marginal a topic as it was when Freud first wrote on it” (30), it occupies the very liminal position occupied by the hybrid identity.

The novel is rife with characters inhabiting spaces ‘in-between’. The idea of hybridity is perhaps illustrated most clearly by the intricate family constructions presented to us. All of the most prominent characters form part of ‘hybrid families’ comprising complicated blends of race, religion and ethnicity. Jade, the protagonist and focaliser of the novel, is a prime example of this, as she is the illegitimate daughter of Ernst, a German inventor and First World War U-boat soldier, and Miranda, a black jazz singer and daughter of Caribbean diasporics who settle in Liverpool. As an adult Jade continues in this hybrid ‘tradition’ as she marries Etienne, a white French photographer, and they have a daughter called Maya. However, their

relationship soon turns sour and they get divorced when Maya is still rather young. In a similar situation to her own daughter, much of Jade's youth is spent without her father around, as Ernst's responsibilities lie with his wife Edith, a middle-class English woman, and their children, Rachel and Matthew. Rachel, in turn, also finds herself continuing the tradition of cultural hybridity, as she meets Amin, a Sudanese Muslim, during her studies, and proceeds to marry and have two sons with him. She gives up her life in England to live in the Sudanese capital Khartoum and converts to Islam. The success of Mahjoub's novel hinges largely on the phenomenon of the extended hybrid family, as this is ultimately what connects Jade with Rachel, the half-sister she knows exists, but has never met, and whose letters play a central role in Jade's rediscovery of her split identity.

While there is this prominent presence of the 'hybrid family' within the novel, the fleeting references to nameless, silent and silenced migrants and refugees introduce us to another set of characters who do not quite belong, yet have nowhere else to go. These characters are what Radhakrishnan refers to as 'postcolonial versions of hybridity', Werbner as 'transnational[s]', and Bauman as 'strangers'. In contrast to the 'metropolitan' hybrid or the 'cosmopolitan', such as Jade, Rachel and their families, these characters are rendered completely marginal and voiceless from the start of the novel. It is only through the vague observations and experiences of socially more privileged hybrid identities that we are introduced to these marginal characters. Mahjoub seems to write them into the edges, the periphery of the novel, mirroring the space they inhabit in the modern city. Importantly, it is in these vague figures, floating at the peripheries of the cities they inhabit, that Jade and Rachel recognise something of their own fractured, marginal identities. It is in these "strangers" that the two women recognise for the first time the way their own identities also "make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be... straightforward... befog and eclipse the boundary lines that ought to be clearly seen" (Bauman 46).

It is especially through Jade that we experience most acutely the pain and dislocation not originally connected with, yet clearly embedded within Radhakrishnan's 'metropolitan' version of hybridity. Initially she seems to fall squarely into this category with its "immanent sense of jouissance" (753), as she is a highly successful

architect at a prominent London firm and manages to support herself and her daughter with little financial strain. However, deeply buried feelings of unbelonging start to surface when the arch of a building she designs collapses on top of an illegal migrant worker called Thursday – who has no choice but to sleep on the construction site where he works – and kills him. Importantly Mahjoub already hints at the battle Jade has to wage with her fragmented self in the early stages of the novel when he writes: “[I]t had struck Jade early on that her whole life was a random collection of fragments that made no sense whichever way you arranged them” (8). This split subjectivity becomes the driving force behind her overpowering desire to escape her circumstances and create a niche for herself in a world that seemed to be ultimately hostile to those, such as herself, who found themselves floating somewhere in-between clearly constructed boundaries of identity. As a young woman she leaves Liverpool, Miranda and the void left by Ernst, to study architecture in London, and in the process “[tries] to get as far away from her own life story... [by] even [lying] about who she was and where she came from” (118). As a grown woman she revisits this initial effort to escape and recognises the deep-seated fear of her fractured subjectivity:

It seemed absurd to think about now, and the fact was that she had not thought about that time for years, but it was true... She lied in an effort to consolidate an image of herself as someone able to succeed, capable of crossing into a world she had not been born into. Quite simply she told people her parents had passed away, that she had been brought up in an orphanage, that she had been adopted as a child. The places she came from, the school she went to, all of it was erased, as though one fragment of that story might bring her crashing down to earth. (118)

Mahjoub’s choice of words illustrates Jade’s youthful desire to transcend the boundaries of her fragmented identity and metamorphose into a “Cosmopolitan... [a] gorgeous butterfl[y] in the greenhouse of global culture” (Werbner *Introduction* 12), Radhakrishnan’s *jouissance*-filled ‘metropolitan’ version of hybridity. She starts to realise her dreams of transcendence and metamorphosis when she finds herself

“cross[ing] yet another river and slip[ping] further into the trees of anonymity” (119) when she moves to France to further her studies in architecture. It seems as though her metamorphosis reaches its pinnacle when she manages to secure a job with GSW, a well established architecture firm in London, as a “junior draftsman” (29) at the age of twenty-eight, and works her way ever upwards, “taking on greater responsibility, more decisions” (28), and finally “virtually running the company” (28) alongside her friend, colleague, and later, boss Kyle Waverly.

Jade’s choice of profession is an important one, as Mahjoub reveals that “she dreamed of transforming the world she came from, the world she was born in, which yet seemed to have no space for her” (119). Mahjoub makes significant use of architecture as an image throughout the novel to emphasise certain aspects of Jade’s journey in acknowledging and accepting her split subjectivity, and therefore it is highly important that the arch that collapses and kills Thursday is her construction. Not only does this traumatic event change her high standing at work, but it comes to represent her failed attempts at “transforming the world” (119). Despite this, there is a positive outcome, as her failure becomes the catalyst in a very important process of renegotiating the more painful side of her own hybrid identity that she tries to suppress as a young woman and avoids dealing with as an adult. It is during the initial moments of discovery and investigation on the construction site that Jade starts to sense something of the enormous affect this accident would have on her life, as she begins to “[feel] as though [it] was pulling her back, stopping her from moving on” (17).

During this time she is forced to take stock of her history at GSW and, looking back, she realises “there were times, particularly in the beginning under Edmund Waverly, when she wondered if they saw her as some kind of trophy, a colourful addition to the company profile” (33). She starts to recognise the implications of her hybrid identity, and despite her best efforts to escape, the pain and confusion have caught up with her. She comes to the sudden awareness that this accident could provide “Kyle, ever conscious of appearances... [with] an opportune moment to ditch” her and bring in someone more suited to the company profile (33). She is constantly confronted with

the terrible notion that the accident, and ultimately Thursday's death, brings with it change and dislocation, as it suddenly seems to her as "though everything had... been knocked out of shape" and thrown "off balance" (33). Her familiar desire to escape returns when she finds herself "long[ing]... to be away from [there], away from all of [that]" (33), but importantly, this time, she does not give in. Instead, she finds herself getting more involved as she becomes strangely fascinated by Thursday and starts to delve deeper into his story in an effort to unveil the mystery surrounding him: "She didn't know why it was important to retrace Thursday's steps. She only knew that she needed to try" (103). This retracing of Thursday's steps marks the beginning of her journey towards the painful uncovering of a split subjectivity that she has been trying to evade for most of her life.

Initially she identifies Thursday as a prime example of a "transnational" or "postcolonial version of hybridity," connecting him to the various hardships they have to endure:

Thursday, if that was his real name, belonged to that species of fleeting spirit that had been engaged in building this city for centuries. They used to be Irish in the old days. Now they were from anywhere and everywhere... then like a sleight of hand, they vanished, not to be found on any wage slips, or social security forms. No papers, numbers, tax returns, National Insurance premiums, nothing. Just an empty building, soon to be filled with voices, light, urgency, life, none of which had any inkling of their existence. (19)

By placing him firmly within the category of nameless "fleeting spirit[s]" (19), who silently engage in constructing the modern city but are not allowed to partake in the fruits of their labour, she is distancing herself from him, drawing a border between her own situation and his. However, as the novel progresses, there is an uncanny transposition of this external boundary between Jade and the unknown man named Thursday to an internal boundary in the realisation of her fractured self. This realisation begins to manifest in the haunting feelings of guilt Jade endures soon after

the accident. Even in the comfort of her own home and her daughter's company, Jade's thoughts continually return to the construction site as she obsessively wonders whether "it [was] possible that somewhere in the process of turning charcoal into steel she had made a mistake, an error in her calculations which caused the whole fragile structure, suspended in her imagination to come crashing down" (24). Inevitably, in this process her thoughts turn to the victim: "Thursday. A nobody – he didn't even have a proper name. A non-person. A ghost. Her ghost. Was it her fault? Was there a flaw?" (24). In this moment of anxiety Thursday's "ghost" (24) suddenly becomes "[h]er ghost" (24), heralding the start of Jade's rediscovery of her own pain-infused hybrid identity, the identity she tries to escape throughout her young life.

However, it is only at the very end of the novel that Jade's recognition of her own painful hybridity in the figure of Thursday comes full circle. She finds her way into the "Temple of the New Dawn" (195), a type of New Age congregation or "spiritual centre" (196) in the back streets of Liverpool, just in time to witness the commencement of a service. As the place starts to fill up she is struck by the type of people who seem to find refuge and comfort here:

Just then the big front door swung open behind her and she turned to watch a lone man enter. His clothes looked worn-out and ruffled, as though he had slept in them. His eyes darted left and right as he looked about the room, at the rows of chairs. Then he settled on a spot on the left-hand side of the room, close to the long table....They came in twos and threes. Young men for the most part, the occasional woman among them. People who had come a long way. Solitary characters filing past....They crossed the floor with their eyes to seek out a place in the rows of chairs set facing the altar. As they entered their heads inevitably turned towards the long trestle table placed by the swing doors, covered now by a white cloth with stains on it. A pile of paper plates was stacked at one end, a hint of what was to come. (198)

Inevitably, in the desolateness of their appearance, she is again reminded of Thursday and the unfruitful investigation into his life: “She realised with guilt that she had not thought of the accident for some time. The detective she had engaged... had come up with little. Thursday had lived an almost invisible life. No fixed address and few friends” (198). The connection between Thursday and the people she observes in the service is drawn clearly when Mahjoub writes: “here, now, she sensed she was in the midst of that floating world, among people who lived their lives in the interstices, between margins, lost in the lines between shadows and light. Their stories remaining untold” (198). It is highly symbolic, then, that she finds herself in their “midst” (198). It is in this space and this moment that she comes to a complete realisation of her own fissured identity, as she is part of this in-between group, yet still discerns a clear border between herself and them: “She watched one of the men crouched over a plate shovelling food into his mouth with a plastic spoon. I am Thursday, he seemed to say, for I was born on that day when I landed in this country. Before that, as far as you are concerned, I was nothing... You draw the arch which falls and kills me. You are free. You are not free” (199). Her identification with Thursday is brought into a larger context in this moment, as her focus suddenly shifts from him, as a person, to him as representative of an entire group of marginalized figures, one she identifies with, yet to which she does not quite belong. In the identification of the external border between them and her, she becomes aware of the border within herself, the split subjectivity, the fissured identity. The words “You are free. You are not free” (199) come to represent the marginal space she inhabits.

Jade’s negotiation of her split subjectivity is encouraged even further when her stepfather, Ben, happens to give Jade a pack of letters addressed to her, which had arrived at her childhood address (the house her mother and Ben share), roughly at the time of first finding out about the construction site accident. She notes “[t]he most recent was dated three months ago, the oldest had been posted more than a year ago” (9). It is only much later on in the novel that the mystery about the letters is solved for the reader. Jade takes the afternoon off work to consider her future: “It felt like her time with GSW was coming to an end sooner than she thought. Where do I go from here? She wondered” (72). She proceeds to find the letters instead of “the packet [of cigarettes] she sometimes carried for emergencies” (72) while fumbling through her

bag. This takes place at a crucial moment as she is sitting in a wine bar “feeding her self-pity with cold sweet Chardonnay, feeling the fury seethe inside her” (72). These letters come to serve a greater purpose in Jade’s life than a mere unnecessary distraction:

At first she had regarded the letters as another unwanted burden. A half-sister she knew nothing about, had not thought about since her teenage years: why was she writing to her now? What did she want? But now, her head thumping to the beat of surging alcohol and bitterness, Jade perceived, in the despair underlying the distracted, sometimes confused voice in the letters, an echo of her own state of mind. (72)

In a sense these letters hold up a mirror to Jade as she sees her own disjointed reflection in the pained and confused representations of Rachel, another woman, half the world away, negotiating the fractured nature of her own identity, trying to make sense of a constructed world tumbling down around her. Mahjoub captures this notion poignantly in the words: “There was a pleading note, a vulnerability in Rachel’s letters which set off a tremoring echo deep in Jade’s memory, a buried mirror that she had cast away from herself long ago” (118). On another level these letters also provide Jade with the first step towards a means of overcoming the difficulties she faces by delving deeper into her past, the past she had always been trying to escape: “Everything in her life seemed to have been leading her up to this point. The accident, the falling arch, the dead man, the letters from Rachel. All of it suggested that she had reached a point of no return. Rachel’s letters provided a line of escape that led away from the chaos of the present into the labyrinth of her past” (118).

Finally, on a more tangible level, while leading Jade into the labyrinth of her past, Rachel’s letters also lead her towards a concrete solution for her impending joblessness. In one of the letters, Rachel mentions the name of their deceased father’s closest friend: “Waldo Schmidt is the only person alive who might have more details [about their father’s life], but heaven knows if he is willing to share them” (42). She also provides Jade with a number where she could reach him in an effort to unlock

some of the secrets of the mysterious Ernst Frager's life. Jade grabs hold of the opportunity, paying the reclusive old man a visit immediately after reading the letter. At this first visit Jade is struck by the architectural genius of Waldo Schmidt's house: "For a long time, Jade just stood there trying to make sense of the curiously hybrid structure. There was an element of gothic revivalism in the mock ramparts and buttresses. But then this vanished into some rather impressive Japanese-type gabling under the roof. Looked like rather a lot of space for one old man" (73). The visit soon turns into a regular appointment and Jade starts "using a dictaphone machine... to record their conversations" (184) about her father's life. Waldo's colourful and compassionate telling of her father's life story provides her with longed-for explanations about the void he left in hers, making the rediscovery of her fissured identity more bearable. Inevitably, these conversations about her father come to forge a strong bond between Jade and the old man and she is rewarded with the declaration that "[he] wanted her to have the big house" (193). This is made even more appropriate with the revelation that "[i]t was virtually hers anyway... Ernst had designed most of it and he couldn't bear the thought of selling it to one of those dreaded property developers" (193). This generous gift gives her the opportunity to start afresh, as "there would never be a better moment to branch out, to start her own studio" (193). With this fresh start she does not seem to be running away from, but rather acknowledging and accepting her fissured self. She looks back and realises that "in her haste to get to the top she had forgotten why she had wanted to become an architect in the first place...She wanted to get back to an architecture that was about how people inhabit cities" (193). Mahjoub once again makes use of architecture as an image to emphasise Jade's rediscovery and – negotiation of her split subjectivity, as she happily comes to inhabit "the hybrid structure" (73) of Waldo's home, reflecting acceptance of and peace with her hybrid identity. Furthermore, it is also hinted at that this "hybrid structure" (73) will provide Jade with the right kind of structure in terms of which to cultivate her youthful dreams of "transforming the world she came from, the world she was born in, which yet seemed to have no space for her" (119).

Importantly, it is not only Jade that benefits from these letters, but also Rachel herself, as they serve a cathartic purpose, a means to work through painful circumstances at home which also force her to delve into the past and renegotiate her own split

subjectivity. From her letters we glean that Rachel's life, as she knows it, is in a similar state of disintegration to Jade's. The critical moment that heralds this disintegration is the tragic death of her son, Sayf. Rachel states in one of her letters: "I suppose that the beginning of it all was the day my son came home and announced that he had joined the army.... He wanted to help, he said, to fight the ignorance that filled the world. He felt it his duty to go to the south" (128). She goes on to explain the war to Jade: "[T]his is an endless kind of war. A fruitless struggle that neither side can win; everyone loses.... It seems hopeless but the government describes it enthusiastically as jihad, a holy war against the unbelievers, which makes it sound nice and simple" (128). Throughout the letter we can gather that both Rachel and Amin are opposed to Sayf's fundamentalist inclinations and she ends off with the words:

We thought the world would change, that our children would grow up to embrace difference, not reject it. Sayf found the remedy for his confusion in the mosque. I suddenly felt very old... I sometimes wonder whether in an earthquake, say, or a shipwreck, the most unsettling thing might not be the slow realisation of what is happening to you, knowing that it is too late to do anything about it. (133)

However, it is only with the news of Sayf's violent death that Rachel's world finally comes tumbling down. In her home life she starts to feel the same sense of alienation that Jade does at her workplace. When she first arrives in Khartoum as Amin's young, English wife she is accepted with open arms by his family. She recalls in her letter to Jade: "Not one of them made me feel anything less than welcome. I was one of *them*; a woman, a wife, a sister" (65) and everything seems to flourish around them. The peace they have in the home at this time is reflected in the political climate of the country, as she writes about those early days:

There was an air of great endeavour and optimism. Oh, I'm not saying there weren't problems, but the country was united in its determination to overcome the burdens of the past and find a way for itself in the newly

independent world. Everything was alive and vital to the diversity which makes this country unique. They were trying to turn that vast assembly of different peoples, herded together in colonial times, into a nation. (66)

With Sayf's death things change drastically in her relationship with Amin and she starts to see through the illusion of 'metropolitan hybridity', the illusion of *jouissance*, as she makes the statement: "It has not been easy for either of us. I think it is in moments of crisis or despair that our true nature reveals itself" (67). She says about Amin: "He is not the man I married thirty years ago.... time and circumstance have taken their toll.... Sometimes I think of us as two separate planets with thousands of leagues of darkness between us. Both vaguely aware of one another's existence across the numb void, but unable to draw nearer or pull away" (11). The reason for this marital collapse is only given in a later letter: "Amin, whom I hope you will eventually meet, has turned towards Mecca for comfort. Turned back to the old ways, as if all the time in between was nothing but a temporary amusement.... [he] has found his place among his elders. And if it feels like a betrayal of our love, that is only because I am not able to follow him.... After we lost Sayf we went our separate ways" (67). It is Sayf's return to Islam, to the old ways that makes "Amin ask himself some hard questions about what he had done with his life" (68), directing him onto the path of religious piety that excludes Rachel. Now the disruption and fracture in the home is reflected in the country's politics:

Where we had hope we now have colossal debt. Honesty has been overtaken by corruption. Instead of dignity we now have cruelty. Slavery has made a comeback. We had religion, now we have hypocrisy. We had socialism, women's rights, now we have dogmatism and torture, ignorance where we had education. We have famine where we used to have irrigation schemes, and genocide where once there was hope of equality". (66)

Rachel ends her description of the country's collapse with the striking words: "Time not only stands still, it can also be made to walk backwards" (67).

It is during this painful time that Rachel discovers a “creased and worn letter from a young woman of about fourteen years old” (38) while sorting through her late mother’s personal belongings. This is a letter Jade secretly writes Edith as a young woman in a rebellious effort to discover more about Edith’s husband and her father, Ernst. The existence of her illegitimate half-sister takes Rachel by surprise, but she decides to respond to, what seems to her, a divine coincidence, by writing Jade a series of letters. They become a means for her to work through the sudden and painful realisation of her own marginality. In the first letter presented to us in the novel, Rachel shares with Jade her fascination with the “[f]rail, desiccated figures slipping across the periphery of [her] world” (12). She notes that they hint at “distant perturbation” (12), from which we can deduce that they are exiles or refugees escaping their “homelands... to the south” (201). In a similar way to Jade’s uncanny identification with the marginal figure of Thursday and the mystery surrounding him, Rachel’s fascination with these figures goes deeper than a mere observation. She writes: “I suppose that I am drawn to them because I see something of myself in their predicament... we are bound together by the fact of our displacement” (11). In these ‘strangers’, ‘transnationals’, or ‘postcolonial versions of hybridity’, she finds a reflection of her own ‘extreme pain and agonizing dislocation’. Like Jade and the unnamed Thursdays she encounters in the Temple of the New Dawn, her identification with these refugees is not complete, as she renders the border between herself and them quite clearly: “I am not romanticising their life. I am glad for the iron gate which still stands, however symbolically, between my world and theirs” (202). As with Jade, then, the identification of this external border becomes a recognition of the split within her own identity.

Rachel’s letters communicate a poignant sense of nostalgia. Gunew draws a connection between nostalgia and the uncanny when she suggests: “In Freud the closest term to nostalgia is *Heimweh*, a pregnant term containing the home, the mother, sickness *for* but also sickness *of* the home. The term also relates to *Heimlich*, secrecy, and *unheimlich*, the uncanny” (*Framing* 116). As we have seen, this element of the uncanny presents itself throughout the novel in various forms: the doubling of Jade and Rachel, the recognition of their own split subjectivities in the figures of

Thursday and the Sudanese refugees, and ultimately in the return of both Jade and Rachel's suppressed true hybrid identities. The very narrative structure emphasises the idea of the split subjectivity and also the uncanny doubling of Jade and Rachel, as it is divided between Jade's unfolding story and extracts from Rachel's letters. It is in this connection between the two women that we begin to see Bhabha's 'third space' at work most clearly, one that brings about "something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation" (*Third* 211) in both Jade and Rachel's lives. Drawing on Bhabha's formulation, we might say that this "new alliance... demand[s] that [they]... translate [their] principles, rethink them, extend them" (*Third* 216), leading finally to a working through of and a coming to terms with the agonising reality of split subjectivity.

In her work on nostalgia, Gunew turns to the symbolic power of the photograph: "As well as illustrating the unified self, photographs may also signify the return of the dead, the uncanny, the monstrous return of something familiar" (*Framing* 112). We find this sort of uncanny recognition when Jade sorts through some of the 'things' from her youth gathering dust in Miranda and Ben's garage. In the sorting of these things she is constantly confronted with a 'self' she no longer was and had chosen to suppress: "She picked out the once familiar shape of a canvas kitbag purchased at an army surplus store, so long ago she could not see herself as the person who had bought it.... It was like rediscovering a portion of her life she had finished with, a part of herself she no longer remembered. Objects that had fallen through a rip in the fabric of time" (60). In essence, these 'things' present her with a self, something that ought to be familiar, but is unrecognisable and unfamiliar. This uncanny failure to recognise herself in her belongings culminates in the discovery of her favourite book, Jean Rhys' *Wide Sargasso Sea*, and an old photograph "tucked away inside" (60). The rediscovery of this book reveals much about Jade's painful negotiation of her hybrid identity as a young woman. Mahjoub writes: "Was it ambiguity that drew her to Jean Rhys, the fact that the author seemed to be neither of this world nor of that? Was it because as a child Jade had never really been sure if she was black or white. She knew less about what she was than what she was not" (61). The book and the photograph within leave Jade with the uncanny feeling that she is "meeting her younger self across the span of years" (61). This 'meeting' draws her further into the realisation of

her split subjectivity, the process that Thursday's death and Rachel's letters put into motion. She describes the photograph as an "apparition of herself aged sixteen" and goes on to describe "the girl in the picture":

She wore a faded green combat jacket and had her hair plaited in long rat tails which she tucked up into a knitted cap. A tea-cosy, her mother called it. It was layered in red, yellow and green. Green for the ganja we smoke, red for the blood of Africa that was spilled and yellow for the gold that was stolen from us... Hands in pockets, eyes and nose watery and red.
(62)

The discovery of this photograph becomes a visible representation of the split subjectivity Jade tries to avoid facing as an adult. As Gunew writes: "The photograph, that mechanical repetition of identity, may paradoxically serve to undo the concept of the unique and unitary self" (*Framing* 115). Although, in Jade's case, it is not only the photograph that symbolises the split identity, but also the other things she discovers that were once familiar in her youth and are now rendered entirely alien through her adult eyes. The painful disjuncture in her identity is probably communicated most clearly in this confrontation with her unfamiliar younger self.

However, the combination of Rachel's letters, Thursday's death, and the confrontation with her younger self, encourages Jade to deal with this internal fissure, moving towards a point of acceptance. The first moments of acceptance are shown when she browses through an alternative music store, more specifically the jazz section, and she thinks: "It is the music of displacement... Music for people like you and me, the in-betweens" (148). In this moment of identification with the internalised sense of displacement found in the unpredictability of jazz, she seems to be coming to terms with her 'in-betweenness.' In a sense she seems to be including herself in a category she has always been trying to evade. Some of Jade's identification with this particular genre of music is further explained when Mahjoub writes: "[I]t breaks all logic, breaks down the idea of progress because it breaks up linear notions of time. Time stands still, it moves in circles, it takes unpredictable leaps. Jazz doesn't repeat the

same phrase the same way every time, it improvises” (148). Mahjoub uses Jade’s further musings on jazz to emphasize the liminal spaces all hybrid identities have to inhabit within modern cityscapes, especially when he writes: “The great cities, like jazz, she thought, were composed of thousands of discordant notes that come together at times to create harmony. The jazz of cities is the syncopated distillation of unexpected elements which allows us to live together: none of it makes sense, except the sense we give it” (148). In Jade’s musings, Mahjoub reveals a connection between the liminality jazz represents and Jade’s own preoccupation with architecture and “transforming the world she came from” (119) when he writes:

[Jade] had always wondered if it didn’t have something to do with buildings.... From the country roads of Huddie Leadbetter and John Lee Hooker the blues turned in towards the city, to find Kansas and Chicago. T-Bone Walker and Stormy Monday. The story of jazz was born in basements and dubious establishments, neighbourhoods where children play in the streets and the baby in the next flat is always crying. People play music because there is nowhere else to go. (148)

For Jade, jazz becomes an expression of her own frustration with the way modern cities seem to be constructed to embrace some people and exclude others. Thus, in a way, it almost becomes an intangible reflection of Jade’s own desire to “transform... the world she was born in, which yet seemed to have no space for her” (119) and those like her through the creation of spaces through architecture. Furthermore, her sudden attraction to jazz also transports her back in time in a similar way the photograph and ‘things’ from her youth do:

She was listening to Nina Simone when it struck her why she felt comforted by this music, because she had always associated it with her mother. Miranda used to listen to jazz records when Jade was very small, and she used to sing along, too. When did her mother stop doing that? And why? Jade’s life at this moment seemed to be receding, a train flying away from her along a sequence of disjointed points on a line. (149)

It is this loss of control of her own life that allows Jade to renegotiate her disjointed identity. The process is finally completed in an almost spiritual experience when, in the Temple of the New Dawn, “among people who lived their lives in the interstices, between margins” (198), people somewhat like herself, but not quite, she envisions her father “running through the pines, beneath the crystal cathedrals of the icy alpine peaks. She sees him, feels the sound of his breath on her neck, his heart beating against hers.... Ernst Frager is running. Away from the stone walls of the monastery behind him, towards her” (199). In this vision of Ernst Frager running away from his homeland towards her, she recovers the relationship she could never have with her father, and in the music of Nina Simone, she finds herself at peace with the mother she had cut herself loose from as a young woman leaving home. These moments of personal reconciliation with her parents – in essence the genetic cause of her hybrid identity and the figures towards whom she initially directs her anger – come at two different points in the novel, and once again emphasise the disjuncture in Jade’s identity, yet they also represent the joyous culmination of her journey towards accepting and coming to terms with this fissured self.

Similarly, Rachel comes to a point of reconciliation and acceptance only after allowing herself to let go of the things that she discovered were holding her back. This process starts when she decides to turn to a “healer” (151) in an effort to rid herself of a “malignant spirit [that] was poisoning [her] from the inside” (150). In one of her letters to Jade she writes about a ritual she attends called a “zar” (151), describing it in detail as follows:

a kind of celebration that women perform alone, no men allowed, which of course only adds to the air of mystery and makes it seem all the more illicit and intriguing. Where exactly it stems from I couldn’t tell you. There is some Islam mixed in but its roots really stretch much further back in time.... The women gather in the house of one person or another, usually outside in the yard under the stars. For the most part it is just an informal get-together, what you might call a girls’ night. The women just

let themselves go, do all the things that convention prevents them from doing most of the time. They drink and smoke and play music and they sing, for hours and hours, all through the night. (151)

Importantly, she adds “[a]t the heart of this revelry, however, there is a purpose” (151), being “to draw [*zar*] spirits out from within and allow them to be entertained, to enjoy themselves so that they might withdraw and leave the person they usually occupy in peace” (153). It is during one of these meetings that Rachel finally manages to let go of her son and the heavy burden of grief his death caused. She writes: “This djinn had entered me after my poor boy left this world, the Sheikha said, having found a hole in my spirit made by the grief. And now they were going to set him free and I could not stop them. I tried to... I didn’t want them to set him free. I didn’t want to lose him” (155). However, the ritual is finally completed and Rachel finds herself “feeling drained and at the same time strangely fulfilled” (156). She returns home to an extremely worried Amin who, she writes, “instead of ranting and raving as he might normally have done... opened the gates and simply put his arms around me without saying a word. There in the street where everyone could see us” (156). Importantly, this moment of reconciliation can only take place after she partakes in the *zar* ritual, in other words, after she allows herself to let go. Like Jade, Rachel’s painful process of coming to terms with her fractured and hybrid identity comes to a peaceful end in a moment of reconciliation, manifesting itself in the tender affection she shares with her husband for the first time in many months.

Through Jade and Rachel’s rediscovery of their split subjectivities and renegotiation of their hybrid identities in *The Drift Latitudes*, Mahjoub manages to break down boundaries between ‘metropolitan’ and ‘postcolonial’ versions of hybridity, between ‘cosmopolitans’ and ‘transnationals’, suggesting that perhaps these boundaries are not as clear cut as many hybridity theories would propose. Both these women initially seem to belong to a fortunate minority who have abundant reason to celebrate their hybridity in contrast to marginalized characters in the novel, such as Thursday and the Sudanese refugees, who only ever suffer ‘extreme pain and agonizing dislocation’ because of their hybrid identities. Moments of crisis wrench these women out of the

false comfort of their constructed realities and force them to recognise the fissure in their own identities in the reflection each offers the other as well as the 'transnationals' they separately encounter. A painful recognition and renegotiation of the hybrid identities they had been trying to suppress send them on a journey of self-discovery that ultimately culminates in reconciliation with and acceptance of not only a self they had long since forgotten existed, but also of those around them directly connected to their experiences of 'agonizing dislocation'.

Chapter 3: Hybrid modernities: Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Biju, a young Indian man desperately trying to make his way in New York, observes in Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss*: "Confusion was rampant among the 'haalf 'n' haf' crowd, the Indian students coming in with American friends, one accent on one side of the mouth, another the other side; muddling it up, wobbling then, downgrading sometimes all the way to Hindi to show one another. Who? No, no, it was not they pretending to be other than who and what they were. They weren't the ones turning their back on the greatest culture the world has ever seen" (148). In this observation he manages to capture the very essence of the complicated process of identity negotiation among most people in the contemporary globalised world, but especially those who find themselves separated from their cultures and countries of origin. This second novel by Desai delves into deep-seated issues of "globalisation, multiculturalism, inequality" (Pryor 1) and the personal repercussions of these events suffered by her characters, such as: displacement, marginality and falling into the painful cracks between identities.

The novel takes the form of a split narrative that plays off in two vastly different settings. The one setting is Kalimpong, an Indian village nestled in the foothills of the Himalayas and subjected to great political tension with a sudden outburst of Nepali nationalism. The other setting is the bustling urban underbelly of New York. Much of the Kalimpong section of the novel revolves around Sai, a young girl in her mid-teens who falls in love with her mathematics tutor despite their vast caste, political and ethnic differences, and her grandfather, Jemubhai, a retired judge who finds himself embittered by his tumultuous past. They live in the sparsely furnished, crumbling and dilapidated remnants of an old colonial mansion with the judge's only remaining servant, an elderly cook whose life revolves around sporadic contact with his son, Biju, who in turn seems to be living every young Indian's 'American Dream.' Meanwhile on the other side of the globe, Biju's American experience is not as dreamy as the letters to his father profess, and is certainly a far cry from what he had hoped to encounter on leaving his peaceful village life in India to find fortune, if not fame, in the cosmopolitan hive of New York.

Although these characters are seemingly separated by language barriers, generations and even oceans, Pankaj Mishra notes that “[w]hat binds these seemingly disparate characters is a shared historical legacy and a common experience of impotence and humiliation” (1). Desai manages to express this mutual impotence and humiliation rather successfully in her split narrative, balancing and reflecting the different characters’ experiences back to one another, in a similar way Mahjoub does with Jade and Rachel. Furthermore, Desai also employs this stylistic split to symbolise the fissured nature of the modern, globalised society we inhabit, a world fraught with discrepancies and seemingly irreconcilable differences. The discrepancies inherent to modernity are a central issue in Desai’s novel, and the two divergent yet connected sides of the narrative come to highlight the difficult navigation of identity in a divided world. Through the experiences of her different characters, Desai seems to grapple with painful questions regarding the space filled by those who are “neither just this/nor just that” (Dayal 47), “neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides” (Bhabha *Commitment* 4). Due to the discrepant modernities they inhabit, all the characters, for one reason or another, either find themselves completely marginalized by society or located between cultural conventions, where they occupy a space ‘in-between,’ a space of cultural hybridity. In this hybridising process the characters are ultimately rendered strangers, whether abroad or in the safety of their own homes.

Bauman connects those who are rendered strangers by society to those who disrupt the accepted ‘norms,’ and therefore ultimately to those in a position of hybridity. He argues that “[a]ll societies produce strangers, but each kind of society produces its own kind of strangers... produces them in its own inimitable way” (46). He goes on to say:

If the strangers are the people who do not fit the cognitive, moral or aesthetic map of the world... if they, therefore, by their sheer presence, make obscure what ought to be transparent, confuse what ought to be a straightforward recipe for action... pollute the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit alluring; if in other words, they befog and eclipse the boundary lines which ought to be clearly seen; if... they

gestate uncertainty, which in its turn breeds the discomfort of feeling lost – then each society produces such strangers; while drawing its borders and charting its... maps, it cannot but gestate people who conceal borderlines deemed crucial to its orderly and/or meaningful life. (46)

Bauman's premise around stranger-making provides a meaningful theoretical lens through which to read the novel's commentary on the modern phenomenon of cultural hybridity. It is useful, moreover, to read Desai's 'strangers' with Freud's 'uncanny' in mind, as essentially it is those who are rendered strange in the novel whose presence tends to force to the surface the repressed memories and emotions of characters with whom they interact. Furthermore, the novel's inherently split nature lends itself quite readily to a psychoanalytic reading. Freud conceptualises the uncanny by suggesting that "the specificity of the sensation... lies in the fact that something is frightening, not because it is unfamiliar or new, but because what used to be familiar has somehow become strange" (Masschelein 3). The space of cultural hybridity is ultimately an uncanny one, as those things that are supposed to be familiar become strange and, indeed, that which is supposed to be strange becomes familiar.

Bhabha captures the essence of this uncomfortable space in his formulation of the unhomely: "the border between home and the world becomes confused: and, uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (*The World* 141). Closely related to both of these concepts, then, is the psychoanalytic notion of repression, as that which is found frightening in the uncanny/unhomely is "the return of the repressed" (Masschelein 3). I would argue that the dynamics of the uncanny and the unhomely play a central role in *The Inheritance of Loss*, as the characters battle with the hybridity they have been trying to repress. Much of the novel plays off in a house that is physically rendered less and less homely through the invasion of nature and politics. Within Cho Oyu, the dilapidated mansion inhabited by Sai, her grandfather and the cook, it is possible, to borrow a formulation from Bhabha, to "hear... the deep stirring of the 'unhomely'" (*The World* 141) as rats rummage in the pipes and termites chew through the furniture. The mansion, then, becomes the tangible symbol of its inhabitants' battle with their own uncertain identities.

The conceptual matrix I have described above resonates rather well with Samir Dayal's notion of double consciousness, with "[d]oubleness... productively conceived as the interstitiality of entering (or leaving) and destabilizing the border zones of cultures, as fracturings of the subject" (*Diaspora* 48). The notion of double consciousness is especially useful in analysing the sections dealing with Biju as illegal Indian immigrant in New York. However, it is of course Bhabha's revolutionary view of cultural hybridity as 'the third space' that lays the theoretical foundation for my thesis as a whole and – specifically in this chapter – that enables us to see Desai's novel less as a celebration, than as a critical reading of the process of multiculturalism and cultural hybridisation. Mishra picks up on this, when he writes: "Desai takes a sceptical view of the West's consumer-driven multiculturalism.... At such moments, [she] seems far from writers like Zadie Smith and Hari Kunzru, whose fiction takes a generally optimistic view of what Salman Rusdie has called 'hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs'" (1). The crux of Bhabha's argument lies in "not [being] able to trace two original moments from which the third emerges, rather [to see] hybridity... [as] the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge" (*Third* 211).

Perhaps the best place to start looking at aspects of cultural hybridity in the novel would be in the presentation of Biju's experience as an illegal migrant worker in New York. Insofar as he "[falls], again and again, through the cracks in the system" (75) he comes to represent the struggles of the "shadow class" (102), a whole class of illegal 'third world' diasporics trying to make a living in the wealthiest modern cities across the globe, yet experiencing poverty and discomfort on par with, if not worse than, what they have tried to escape. Biju's life in New York is characterised by constant tension in his constantly changing workplaces (mostly due to his legal status) and intense discomfort at 'home'. Desai's descriptions of Biju's life, while mostly humorous, have the uneasy sense of the urban underbelly hanging about them. Our very first encounter with Biju takes us down below, into the hot and humid kitchens of New York's finest (and sometimes not quite so fine) food establishments:

Biju at the Baby Bistro. Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani. Biju at Le Colonial for the authentic colonial experience. On top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Colombian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian. On to the Stars and Stripes Diner. All American flag on top, all Guatemalan flag below. Plus one Indian flag when Biju arrived. (21)

As Desai suggests; “[t]here was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York” (22), and Biju, who on leaving India three years prior believes himself to be “[t]he luckiest boy in the world” (187), now inadvertently finds himself navigating his way through the shadowy realms of the ‘illegals’. The split identity of the various restaurants where Biju works, projects the split identity of the hybrid character of Biju. The external split of above and below is suggestive of the internal psychic split, not only of different cultural identities, but also of the conscious and unconscious divide of the subject. After long hours at work, he “[returns] home to the basement of a building at the bottom of Harlem” (51) where, as Desai describes it, he joins a “shifting population of men” living wherever they find a space for themselves:

camping out near the fuse box, behind the boiler, in the cubby holes, and in odd-shaped corners that once were pantries, maids’ rooms, laundry rooms, and storage rooms at the bottom of what had been a single-family home, the entrance still adorned with a scrap of colored mosaic in the shape of a star. (51)

In a city associated with wealth and modernity, Biju, at work and at home, continually finds himself marginalized to locations of extreme poverty and ‘backwardness.’ Although he is living in a city where, in many ways, borrowing from Dayal, “history is... presumed to have come to an end, fulfilled in [a] so-called ‘free’ capitalist [democracy]” (55), he still finds himself in the exact position one assumes he would have left behind in India; “lagging behind in a race toward modernity that has already been run and won” (55).

Crucially, it is in this fractured space between Western modernity and non-Western 'backwardness,' between 'first-world' wealth and 'third-world' poverty, that Biju starts to negotiate his own fractured identity. At first he falls effortlessly into the dictum "America, where every nationality [confirms] its stereotype" (23) when all his moral fibres bristle at having to work in close proximity to a Pakistani. In the basement kitchen of a New York eatery, the two enemies take up their ancestors' "old war, best war" (23) in a flurry of hateful comments flung to and fro. Despite the brawl's anachronistic setting their "words flow with an ease that [comes] from centuries of practice" (23), and in the heat of the battle it is as though the "spirit[s] of [their] father[s], [their] grandfather[s], rise from the dead" (23). This patriotic fray costs Biju, not to mention his Pakistani counterpart, his only means of income, forcing him to move on to the next basement kitchen. It is at "the Queen of Tarts bakery" (53), one of his many successive workplaces, that Biju meets Saeed Saeed, a black, Zanzibari Muslim, and starts to rethink the social, racial and religious prejudices he has lugged with him all the way from India. These prejudices surface in the manner of Freud's return of the repressed, as Biju only really becomes aware of them once he is faced with the problems they may cause in his friendship with Saeed. The charismatic Zanzibari soon "[becomes] the man [Biju] [admires] most in the United States of America" (53), and he finds himself "overcome by the desire to be his friend, because Saeed Saeed wasn't drowning, he was bobbing in the tides" (76). This charm, however seems to spill over, affecting more than just Biju, as Desai explains:

a large number of people wished to cling to him like a plank during a shipwreck – not only fellow Zanzibaris and fellow illegals but Americans, too; overweight confidence-leached citizens he teased when they lunched alone on a pizza slice; lonely middle-aged office workers who came by for conversation after nights of lying awake wondering if in America – in *America!* – they were really getting the best of what was on offer. (76)

It is essentially Biju's contact with this extraordinary fellow illegal – who, in this situation, falls squarely into the bracket of Bauman's 'stranger' as he ultimately "befog[s] and eclipse[s] the boundary lines" (46) that Biju has drawn so neatly around

himself – and the consequent surfacing of repressed prejudices, that prods him to re-evaluate his cultural points of view, of those he considers other to himself, but importantly also of himself. Biju finds himself effortlessly liking and respecting Saeed, whom, for all intents and purposes, he should be shunning due to religious beliefs, and starts to dissect his hereditary prejudices:

Saeed was kind and he was not Paki. Therefore he was OK? The cow was not an Indian cow; therefore it was not holy? Therefore he liked Muslims and hated only Pakis? Therefore he liked Saeed, but hated the general lot of Muslims? Therefore he liked Muslims and Pakis and India should see it was all wrong and hand over Kashmir? (76)

His dilemma is complicated even further by Saeed's ethnicity, as "[h]e remembered what they said about black people at home... 'Be careful of the *hubshi*. Ha ha, in their own country they live like monkeys in trees'" (76). He goes through the same analytic process he goes through with their religious differences:

Therefore he hated all black people but liked Saeed? Therefore there was nothing wrong with black people and Saeed? Or Mexicans, Chinese, Japanese, or anyone else...?? (76)

Through these intensive deliberations, Biju finally comes to the realisation that a "habit of hate had accompanied [him], and he found that he possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done India great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to India" (77). This realisation forces him into taking stock of his own self-righteous Indian-ness and he starts to take note of the prejudice others may have toward him. He recognizes that "[p]resumably Saeed Saeed had encountered the same dilemma regarding [him]" (77) as he recalls from previous conversations about Indians abroad:

In Tanzania, if they could, they would throw them out like they did in Uganda. In Madagascar, if they could, they would throw them out. In Nigeria, if they could, they would throw them out. In Fiji, if they could, they would throw them out. In China, they hate them. In Hong Kong. In Germany. In Italy. In Japan. In Guam. In Singapore. Burma. South Africa. They don't like them. In Guadeloupe – they love us there? No. (77)

His encounter with Saeed provides him with an opportunity to critique his own preconceived ideas about himself, others and eventually also about the capitalist-driven country he finds himself in. At first fits into the easily occupied space of what Dayal calls “the righteous and sinned-against subaltern in the Western metropole” (*Diaspora* 56), but soon finds himself “realizing the critical potential of the diaspora perspective to ‘expose and illuminate the sheer heterogeneity of the diverse social forces always repressed into the margin by the monologism of dominant discourses’” (56). Ultimately he sees himself and his situation slightly differently through his interaction with Saeed. In some sense his friendship with Saeed allows him to recognise himself through different eyes and, to borrow from Dayal’s formulations, in this “recognition mediated by double consciousness” (56), he experiences a moment of “self-recognition in a *global* mirror” (56).

As an illegal Indian diasporic subaltern trying to make ends meet in New York, Biju is constantly put into the position of Bauman’s ‘stranger.’ However, despite being rendered a stranger and knowing the discomfort it causes, Biju in turn continues rendering strange those who do not fall comfortably into his own preconceived cultural ideas. It is only in coming into contact with Saeed’s all-encompassing empathy that Biju, in a sense, starts to question cultural norms and becomes aware of his own fractured identity. In essence Biju starts to view things that “used to be familiar” (Masschelein 3) as exceedingly strange. Through his self-analysis he grapples with the very essence of his subjectivity, finds himself “[displacing] the histories that [constitute] it” (Bhabha *Third* 211) and begins to negotiate his identity within the realm of Bhabha’s “third space” (*Third* 211). Saeed’s intervention in Biju’s life seems to accord with the process Bhabha describes as “[giving] rise to something

different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (*Third* 211) within Biju’s cultural framework.

In contrast to Biju who finds himself struggling to survive in the economic capital of the world, Sai, her grandfather and those they associate with are living an illusion of colonial luxury and wealth in the midst of poverty-stricken, politically-tense northern India. Both Sai and her grandfather are products of the colonial education system. Sai had been schooled in an English convent in Dhera Dun up to the point of her parents’ untimely death, and the judge had received an ICS scholarship to study law at Cambridge. On first meeting his granddaughter, the judge immediately sees this similarity between them:

There was something familiar about her; she had the same accent and manners. She was a westernised Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. The journey he had started so long ago had continued in his descendants. (210)

Therefore it is no surprise that both of them, born and bred in India, find themselves practicing a hybridised form of English colonial culture within their own home country.

It is, however, interesting to note the difference between Sai’s postcolonial cultural hybridity and the judge’s colonially-rooted hybridity. The judge’s hybridisation occurs abruptly when he leaves India to study law at Cambridge as a young man. Sai’s process of hybridisation takes place more gradually as, from birth, she grows into an English-Indian culture and knows nothing else. Even when she leaves the convent and takes up a new life in the more rural area of Kalimpong, this culture is perpetuated not only through her grandfather but also through the people she finds herself befriending. At home Sai reads her grandfather’s *National Geographic* collection “bound in leather with the years in gold lettering” (7). They partake in high tea every afternoon, her grandfather insisting that the tea table has – in true English

style – “[s]omething sweet and something salty” (3), and if this proves impossible, something of lesser sensory value, yet still harping back to trustworthy English ‘class’, such as “Marie and Delight biscuits” (3). This colonial-tinged home culture is continued with the schooling Sai receives from Noni, a spinster who lives with her widowed sister Lola. As wealthy, English-speaking Indians, they fall into the same class as Sai and the judge. They also partake in an afternoon ritual of tea and cakes; “[t]heir washing line [sags] under a load of Marks and Spencer panties” (44); their pantry is “stuffed with Marmite, Oxo bouillon cubes, Knorr soup packs, After Eights” (46), among a myriad other English staples; and they religiously listen to BBC radio every night, partly because “Pixie, Lola’s daughter, [is] a BBC reporter” (46). The extent of Sai’s social interaction also takes place mostly under Lola and Noni’s supervision, leaving little leeway for meaningful socialisation with any outside the borders of their hybridised minority, aside, that is, from the servants. It is safe to say that Sai’s hybridity is characterised by a peaceful ignorance, which she only starts to question and ultimately defend on meeting and falling in love with Gyan, her mathematics-tutor-turned-Nepali revolutionary.

It is only in the emotions associated with Sai’s passionate, yet volatile romance with Gyan that we are exposed to a flicker of what one may call the negotiation of her hybrid identity. In the aftermath of Gyan turning down the cosy comfort of their love in favour of the heroic road to revolution, she muses over an article she reads in a *National Geographic*: “No human had ever seen an adult giant squid alive, and though they had eyes as big as apples to scope the dark of the ocean, theirs was a solitude so profound they might never encounter another of their tribe” (2). The connection she draws between the giant squid’s lonely existence and the deep solitude of her own life is made clear when Desai states: “The melancholy of this situation washed over Sai” (2). Her utter loneliness and complete alienation from the life of a normal teenage girl is further emphasised through Cho Oyo, the unhomely house that she and her grandfather inhabit. Desai outlines the dilapidated remnants of Cho Oyo rather aptly when she writes: “Time might have died in the house that sat on the mountain ledge, its lines grown indistinct with moss, its roof loaded with ferns” (18). This natural invasion of the home does not stop on the outside, but importantly

extends itself into the very living spaces of the characters, as Desai draws our attention to it time and again:

a leak dripping into the toilet played honky-tonk, until it was interrupted by Sai, who held an umbrella over herself when she went inside the bathroom. Condensation fogged the glass of clocks, and clothes hanging to dry in the attic remained wet for a week. A white scurf sifted down from the beams, a fungus spun a shaggy age over everything. Bits of color, though, defined this muffled scene: insects flew in carnival gear; bread, in a day, turned green as grass; Sai, pulling open her underwear drawer, found a bright pink jelly scalloping the layers of dreary cotton. (106)

She continues these descriptions at various intervals, hinting at the true discomfort Sai and the judge have to negotiate within, what should be, their comfort zone: “Rainy season beetles flew by in many colors. From each hole in the floor came a mouse as if tailored for size, tiny mice from the tiny holes, big mice from big holes, and the termites came teeming forth from the furniture, so many that when you looked, the furniture, the floor, the ceiling, all seemed to be wobbling” (115). But perhaps Desai manages to emphasise the utter discomfort of this unhomely space most clearly in the judge’s reaction: “[I]t made a mockery of him, his ideals. When he looked about he saw he was not in charge: mold in his toothbrush, snakes slithering unafraid right over the patio, furniture gaining weight, and Cho Oyo also soaking up water, crumbling like a mealy loaf. With each storm’s bashing, less of it was habitable” (110). In a sense, the dilapidated state of the mansion reflects the judge’s desperate, and unsuccessful attempts to keep alive the crumbling and outdated dreams of a colonial past in which he once flourished. Inadvertently, he ensnares his young granddaughter in this unfortunate trap and, in so doing, stunts her ability to live a normal life, especially after she falls in love with Gyan. The constant invasion of nature as well as an unexpected incursion of young Nepali insurgents into Cho Oyo are tangible reminders of the vulnerability of the people who inhabit it. Although these threats are ultimately physical, Desai uses this imagery of unhomeliness to symbolise the

awkward cultural positions in which the characters find themselves. In displacing these natural/public moments into the private realm of the home, Desai seems to be staging Bhabha's words: "the border between home and the world becomes confused; and uncannily, the private and the public become part of each other, forcing upon us a vision that is as divided as it is disorienting" (141). In his formulation, Bhabha suggests that "[t]he unhomely moment relates the traumatic ambivalences of a personal, psychic history to the wider disjunctions of political existence" (144), and this is exactly what happens in Desai's novel.

We can gather that it is essentially in the encounter with her first love, Gyan, someone whose situation is so vastly different to her own, that, on a physical level, Sai starts to recognise the walls of Cho Oyo as a sort of prison, and on a psychological level, starts to realise the true extent of her own hybridity. Reminiscent of the teaching of psychoanalysis, this heightened sense of self-awareness brought about by their romance is perhaps best illustrated by Sai's obsession with her own mirror image – the discovery, loss and negotiation of her own beauty:

She sometimes thought herself pretty, but as she began to make a proper investigation, she found it was a changeable thing, beauty. No sooner did she locate it than it slipped from her grasp; instead of disciplining it, she was unable to refrain from exploiting its flexibility. She stuck her tongue out at herself and rolled her eyes, then smiled beguilingly. She transformed her expression from demon to queen. When she brushed her teeth, she noticed her breasts jiggle like two jellies being rushed to the table.... She looked again and found her face tinged with sadness, and the image seemed faraway. (74)

Sai's unsatisfactory search for a true reflection in the mirror speaks of her initial inability to comprehend the fractured nature of her identity. She "[finds] herself continually obsessed with her own face, aware that she was meanwhile whetting her appetite for something else" (74). Although Desai is obviously referring to the

intimacy Sai comes to share with Gyan, this could also be read as the imminent acceptance of her in-between identity. The process continues in and around the home:

[s]he searched in the stainless-steel pots, in the polished gompa butter lamps, in the merchants' vessels in the bazaar, in the images proffered by the spoons and knives on the dining table, in the green surface of the pond. Round and fat she was in the spoons, long and thin in the knives, pocked by insects and tiddlers in the pond; golden in one light, ashen in another; back then to the mirror; but the mirror fickle as ever, showed one thing, then another and left her, as usual, without an answer. (74)

Ultimately, the familiarity of Sai's reflection is uncannily rendered "strange", as she tries to interpret her beauty with Gyan's "gaze" (74) in mind. This search for and interpretation of beauty, then, can be read as Sai's desperate attempts at coming to a fuller understanding of her own identity. It is important that many of these changeable reflections are caught in household objects, as it echoes once again the restrictions the unhomely space of Cho Oyo, and ultimately what it stands for, places on her. Desai leaves this search for a true reflection unsatisfied with Sai, suggesting that the deep subjective fracture cannot and will not ultimately be reconciled.

Like Biju's friendship with Saeed Saeed, Sai's romance with Gyan is the catalyst that affects a loss of cultural innocence and finally opens Sai's eyes, and also Gyan's eyes, to the reality of not only her hybrid identity, but the general hybridised state of the world at large. Like many other youthful romances, Sai's and Gyan's is characterised by blissful indifference to the world around them, especially those unpleasant things which might ruin the "indolent afternoons spent together, [when] [they] would... [melt] into each other like pats of butter" (129). However, this changes rather abruptly when Gyan is accidentally swept up into the hysteria of a Nepali protest march. Loyalty to his cultural roots instantly flares up and his romance with Sai falls by the wayside. He experiences a distinct "feeling of history being wrought, its wheels churning under him... [looking] on the scene already from the angle of nostalgia, the position of a revolutionary" (157). The Nepali fight for justice becomes Gyan's cause,

making him aware of the selfish nature of his life, especially the frivolous emptiness of his romance with Sai. When he joins the Gorkha National Liberation Front, Gyan is overwhelmed by the distinctly “masculine atmosphere” (161), and he finds himself denigrating his love for Sai to shameful memories of “tea parties... on the veranda... cheese toast, queen cakes from the baker, and even worse, the small warm space they inhabited together, the nursery talk” (161). It is, then, through Gyan’s eyes that Sai is ultimately turned into the disruptive ‘stranger’ who blurs those boundaries that should have remained safely and securely in check.

While Sai goes through a brief process of self-discovery when she first becomes aware of Gyan’s gaze, it is really Gyan who goes through a similar process to Biju in trying to navigate the complicated nature of a hybrid identity. He lists the things about Sai that define her as a stranger in Bauman’s terms, someone who “confuse[s] what ought to be... straightforward” (46) and “pollutes the joy with anxiety while making the forbidden fruit alluring” (46):

She... could speak no language but English and pidgin Hindi, she... could not converse with anyone outside her tiny social stratum. She... could not eat with her hands; could not squat down on the ground on her haunches to wait for a bus... [she] felt happier with so-called English vegetables, snap peas, French beans spring onions, and feared – *feared!* – *loki, tinda, kathal, kaddu, patrel*, and the local *saag* in the market. Eating together they had always felt embarrassed – he unsettled by her finickiness and her curbed enjoyment, and she revolted by his energy and his fingers working the dal, his slurps and smacks. (176)

When Sai tells Gyan about their Christmas festivities, he is quick to point out what he labels the problems of her particular type of hybridity: “Don’t you have any pride? Trying to be so Westernized. They don’t want you!!! Go there and see if they will welcome you with open arms. You will be trying to clean their toilets and even then they won’t want you” (174). Although there is much truth in Gyan’s outburst, especially when considering Biju’s plight in New York and the English hostility that

the judge faces as a student, Sai does not back down and accepting Gyan's criticism as ultimate truth. Instead she defends her choices and the hybrid nature of her identity:

What on earth was wrong with an excuse for a party? After all, one could then logically continue the argument and make a case against speaking English, as well, or eating a patty at the Hasty Tasty – all matters against which Gyan could hardly defend himself. (175)

In this self-defence, Sai shows a remarkable acceptance of her in-between identity and an acute understanding of the general hybrid state of the globalised world. She seems to become aware of the fact that the lines that she once thought to be clearly defined are in actual fact blurred and hazy, and that essentially no culture could ever be pristinely pure, confirming Bhabha's observation "that all forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity" (*Third* 211). Although Desai does not grant Sai, or any of the other characters for that matter, an easy solution to her condition of fractured identity, she does trace Sai's painful process of recognition of it. Pankaj Mishra suggests that "Desai offers her characters no possibility of growth or redemption. Though relieved by much humor, 'the Inheritance of Loss' may strike many readers as offering an unrelentingly bitter view" (2), however, I have to disagree. While the possibility for redemption is minimal, both Sai and Biju go through a major growth process during which they, do not mindlessly accept and celebrate their painful space of hybridity, but at least recognise and come to terms with it as their reality. Also, I would suggest that Desai manages to steer clear of unrelenting bitterness, instead offering an alternative of a cautious depiction of what the world is like for many. It could be argued that, through this painful process of falling in love with a 'stranger' and seeking her own, true reflection in the mirror, she recognises her naturalised state of hybridity and so doing manages to see beyond her individual points of origin, instead concentrating on the reality of her position within the 'third space.'

While postcolonial hybridisation is most often connected with diaspora living in the colonial metropole, Sai and the judge present us with another form of cultural

hybridity. They are living in their home country, yet are nonetheless rendered strange by those who do not share their wealth and colonial education. However, there is a big difference between the way Sai comes to recognise and negotiate her hybridity and the way in which the judge falls victim to his. Even though Sai has never left India and can therefore rightfully claim her Indian heritage, her colonial upbringing, the language she speaks, and the people she associates with, she is still rendered 'strange' by those outside of her wealthy, English-speaking social circle. Teenage characteristics of naivety, and self-involvement prevent Sai from seeing this divide between herself and those outside of her social circle as anything other than natural at first. However, on meeting and falling in love with Gyan, she is suddenly faced with the collapse of these once 'natural' boundaries between familiar and strange, rich and poor, English and Indian and she has to go through a rigorous process to come to some form of understanding of her awkward situation in-between. Although Desai offers us no specific resolution of Sai's situation, we can gather that this process allows her to grow and question the societal norms she finds herself trapped in. It is only once she recognises this fracture that she is in fact in a space that allows for new perspectives and interpretations of the world, perhaps something close to what Bhabha has in mind with the 'third space.'

The judge, on the other hand, although aware of his fractured subjectivity, seems to be in denial about it, sheltering himself behind a crust of esteem, wealth and a remarkably short temper. Unlike Sai, his process of hybridisation is forced upon him when he leaves his rural, poverty-stricken life in India to study law in Cambridge. After his term of study, he returns to India embittered and angered by his experiences of alienation in England, importantly distorting this painful experience into an obsession with appearing highly westernised and an acute aversion to the rural Indian way of life. During his time in England we gather that he is continually rendered the stranger due to his skin-colour, accent and culture. On his return he chooses to reject these hateful things in those he encounters – which is ultimately everyone he had left behind. This rejection of his family and former friends becomes a complicated form of projecting and stranger-making, as it is closely related to his own experience of being rendered strange. In Jemubhai's case we find a confirmation of Bauman's description of the stranger in the modern, global world:

[s]trangers are no longer authoritatively preselected, defined and set apart, as they used to be... They are now unsteady and protean as one's own identity; as poorly founded, as erratic and volatile. (54)

Through the return of the judge's repressed memories, we soon find that his anger is merely a front for the pain and confusion he has been trying to forget. It is with Sai's arrival that he starts to experience the overwhelming flood of memories, and is forced to face the painful reality of his hybrid identity. Due to the fact that Sai is a direct descendent of the judge, but also estranged, she comes to fill the uncanny position of the familiar stranger who heralds a painful return of the repressed. The process starts when on the evening of his granddaughter's half-unexpected arrival, he starts "thinking of his own journeys, his own arrivals and departures, from places far in his past" (35). Lying in his bed, unable to fall asleep, the image of Sai's trunk "with white letters on the black tin [reading]: 'Miss S. Mistry, St. Augustine's Convent'" (8) awakens memories that he had thought successfully buried:

He had first left home at the age of twenty, with a black tin trunk just like the one Sai had arrived with, on which white letters read 'Mr. J. P. Patel, SS *Strathnaver*.' The year was 1939. The town he had left was his ancestral home of Piphit. From there he had journeyed to the Bombay dock and then sailed to Liverpool, and from Liverpool he had gone to Cambridge. Many years had passed, and yet the day returned to him vividly, cruelly. (34)

From this moment, relatively early on in the novel, the judge goes through the uncomfortable and largely uncalled for process of dealing with his pain-infused past and ultimately the deeply fractured nature of his identity. He is introduced to us as a cold, stern, yet dignified retired judge, but through his repressed memories he is revealed to once have been an insecure and confused young Indian man, rejected by those he encounters in England, and in turn rejecting those he encounters on his return

home, especially the young bride he had left behind. It is through the memories of his marriage that the fracture in his identity is perhaps revealed most clearly.

Again it is Sai who drudges up the unwanted memories of this failed relationship when she confronts the judge with the question: “Who was my grandmother?” (88). This question stems from her own search for identity through her love affair with Gyan. Desai states: “When Sai became interested in love, she became interested in other people’s love affairs” (87). Importantly, her first questions about this relationship are directed at the cook, who sketches a beautifully romantic picture. He tells her: “When I joined the household, all the old servants told me that the death of your grandmother made a cruel man out of your grandfather. She was a great lady.... How much he loved her” (87). However, the cook’s love story soon proves to be a complete figment of his imagination, as the judge’s repressed memories reveal the true and tragic tale.

We find out that at the age of eighteen, before leaving for England, Jemubhai Patel marries fourteen-year-old “Bela, [the] most beautiful daughter” (90) of a local Piphit merchant. Along with her marital status, Bela’s name also undergoes a change, and she becomes Nimi, a name “chosen by Jemubhai’s family” (91). Both young people experience the arranged marriage as extremely untimely and awkward, and the wedding night as frightening, leaving their marriage unconsummated till Jemubhai’s return from England a number of years later. They share the sole romantic moment of their relationship just before his departure for England, when he takes her for a spin on his father’s “Hercules cycle” (92), and recognises her beauty for the very first time on “catching quick sight of her eyes” (93), thinking “oh, no man had eyes like these or looked out on the world this way” (93).

Significantly, further romance is stunted by his departure to England, and finally killed off by an irrational violence sprung from projected anger and hatred when he returns. He admits to having “forgotten [that] he had a wife” (166), and finds himself faced with his uncanny reality. His wife, who should be familiar, has become strange. Unable to rationalise this frightening blurring of boundaries, he aligns himself with

Englishness and denigrates his Indian wife to the position of the threatening, disgusting stranger. Despite this, their marriage is consummated soon after he returns, but quite suitably, in the most violent and degrading of manners. The pivotal moment takes place when he discovers that, not only had Nimi intruded on his new-found westernised privacy by searching through his precious possessions, but that she had actually ‘stolen’ the most prized among them, his “powder puff” (166), the one item that comes close to physically transforming him into an English gentleman. It is also with this discovery that he truly looks at his wife for the first time again and the process of stranger-making is completed:

He did not like [her] face, searched for his hatred, found beauty, dismissed it. Once it had been a terrifying beckoning thing that had made his heart turn to water, but now it seemed beside the point. An Indian girl could never be as beautiful as an English one. (168)

Her unattractive Indian-ness, what he has come to identify as her strangeness, reminds him of his own horrible strangeness, the cause of the alienation and rejection he experiences in England. This recognition brings to the surface a surge of repressed feelings of anger and hatred towards those who shunned him, but instead projects onto his wife, who stands for everything he is and, by uncanny extension, everything he hates. He gives in to the projected hatred and, among the pastel-coloured contents of his now-broken powder puff container, he “[tussles] [Nimi] to the floor [and]... in a dense frustration of lust and fury... [stuffs] his way ungracefully into her” (169). He manages to “disguise his inexperience, his crudity, with hatred and fury” (169), and it becomes a “trick that would serve him well throughout his life in a variety of areas” (169). The rape of his wife unleashes the emotional detachment that characterises him, as he realises that hate and fury serve the best disguise for the insecurity and pain associated with his fractured self. In his mind his relationship with Nimi is denigrated to “[u]ndignified love, Indian love, stinking, unaesthetic love” (38).

Jemubhai’s anger is continually fuelled by his wife’s seeming lack of dignity, something he recognises, before his term in England, as also having once been his

own lack of dignity. This projected anger leads to a rapid increase of violence in their relationship, so much so that “he [could] barely contain his outrage” (173) when “[o]ne day he [found] footprints on the toilet seat” (173) and realised that “*she [had been] squatting on it!*” (173). He proceeds to “[take] her head and [push] it into the toilet bowl” (173), one of many injustices that finally causes “Nimi, made invalid by her misery, [to grow] very dull” (173). This violence finally culminates in the judge kicking Nimi out of his house, “[buying] her a ticket and [returning] her back to Gujarat” (305) when “[h]e could bear her face no longer” (305). The judge is indifferent to the shame his wife suffers, disregards the daughter she bears him, and does not seem the slightest bit moved when he receives the telegram informing him of his wife’s death: “[a] woman [who] had caught fire over a stove” (307). He chooses to live a selfish life in the comfortable misery of being misunderstood and socially shunned by all around him. He specifically chooses the dilapidated mansion of Cho Oyu as his retirement abode, thinking that “[he] could live [there], in [a] shell, [a] skull, with the solace of being a foreigner in his own country, for this time he would not learn the language” (29). Once Jemubhai gets rid of Nimi, who is the constant reminder of his repressed, undignified Indian-ness, and moves into the dilapidated colonial mansion “built long ago by a Scotsman” (12) in the higher reaches of the Himalayas, he can finally inhabit his illusion of dignified Englishness in peace.

However, it is within the crumbling structure of this lonely dwelling that this colonial illusion starts to crumble as well. The arrival of his granddaughter, in whom he recognises something of himself, affects another, even more powerful, flood of repressed memories, which exposes the painful, uncomfortable inherently fractured nature of his identity. However, it is only when he loses Mutt, his beloved dog, his one obsession, the only being worthy of his affection, that the hatred he once projected on his wife is turned into a aching cry of remorse: “He shouted all the language that was between Mutt and himself, sending nursery words of love flying over the Himalayas... ‘forgive me, my little dog’” (292). The desperate search for Mutt allows the judge to give voice to a flood of repressed emotions. Nevertheless, this remorse is rather short-lived, and soon gives way once again to projected self-hatred, and finally ends in violence as the judge beats the cook for losing his beloved pet (which is not truly the case).

Ultimately, the judge goes through a similar process to both Biju and Sai, as he is forced into taking account of the uncomfortable truth of his inherently fractured subjectivity. As with Biju and Sai, this process is put into motion through his encounter with a ‘stranger,’ in his case, firstly with his forgotten wife, Nimi, and later with estranged granddaughter, Sai. In a similar fashion to Biju’s analytic re-evaluation of his preconceived cultural ideas, and Sai’s intense search for a reflection of a whole, true self, the judge suffers a flood of once-repressed memories that bring to the surface a deep and painful split. However, unlike the younger characters, he refuses to allow himself to come to terms with his hybrid identity. Instead of negotiating the idiosyncrasies of his fractured self, he chooses to continue repressing all parts that do not fit into the dignified picture of an English gentleman. In the process he becomes the ridicule of both the English and his fellow Indians, alienating himself entirely from those around him. In the end, the timidly surfacing feelings of remorse are once again buried in anger and hatred as he gives in to the cook’s request to beat him.

The last we see of the judge in the novel is when “[t]he cook [hobbles] back to his quarter – and [t]he judge [returns] to his room” (323) after the beating. Through this imagery Desai seems to suggest that, for the judge, nothing will change, he will never manage to come to terms with his fractured identity. Ultimately he does not allow himself to complete what Bhabha calls the “process of cultural hybridity”, which “gives rise to something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation” (*Third* 211), but prefers to stay in the embittered, painful place in-between with his mansion crumbling around him.

In *The Inheritance of Loss*, Kiran Desai seems to explore both the potential and the pitfalls of the modern hybrid identity, making it quite clear, however, that no form of cultural hybridity is ever characterised by “an intransitive and immanent sense of *jouissance*” (Rhadhakrishnan 753). In Bauman’s conception of ‘the stranger’, he suggests the following:

that difference which sets the self apart from the non-self and ‘us’ from ‘them’, is no longer determined by the preordained shape of the world, nor by command from on high. It needs to be constructed, and reconstructed, and constructed once more, and reconstructed again... [t]oday’s strangers are by-products, but also the means of production, in the incessant – because never conclusive – process of identity building. (54)

In a similar way to Mahjoub, Desai taps into the idea of the stranger as catalyst in the process of identity building, more specifically, the process of dealing with the inherently split nature of a hybrid identity. Through the experiences of Sai, Biju and the judge, she suggests that a process of hybridisation only comes full circle when one’s own repressed differences are brought to the surface by the reflection of the self in the ‘stranger.’ She highlights the fact that this process is not one taken lightly or dealt with easily, and that there truly is no possibility of reconciliation within the hybrid identity, but that it can only be successfully negotiated through ongoing uncomfortable confrontation with the self.

Chapter 4: Strangers at home and abroad: Caryl Phillips' *A Distant Shore*

The opening lines of Caryl Phillips' novel *A Distant Shore* provide a rather succinct summary of the core issues of belonging and displacement the book sets out to address: "England has changed. These days it's difficult to tell who's from around here and who's not. Who belongs and who's a stranger. It's disturbing. It doesn't feel right" (3). The novel revolves around the unlikely friendship that develops between Dorothy – a middle-aged, white divorcee who suffers from severe depression and has spent her entire life in England – and Solomon – an African refugee in his early thirties who flees his war-torn country for the supposed safety and security of the United Kingdom. Both Dorothy and Solomon inhabit Stoneleigh, a brand new development on the outskirts of Weston, a village in northern England, and inevitably find themselves living intensely lonely lives in the midst of English small-town bliss. Solomon is ostracised by the community from the start because of his racial difference, and meets his tragic end due to racism when he is brutally murdered by young English 'hooligans.' Dorothy, on the other hand, experiences a gradual process of exclusion, due originally to her habit of keeping to herself, but later intensifying when she strikes up a friendship with Solomon.

The book is divided into five chapters which alternate between the stories of these two characters. The first, middle and last chapters are dedicated to Dorothy, whose narrative wavers between present observations and past recollections. Despite Dorothy's calm and seemingly reasonable voice, the narrative grows increasingly disrupted and disconnected from reality as the book progresses, reflecting the decline in her mental health. The chapters dedicated to Solomon also waver between present and past as he recalls his traumatic journey to England and his attempts to establish a new life there, but contrary to Dorothy's sections, the narrative voice has an almost academic and clinical clarity to it, perhaps reflecting the speaker's foreignness to the English language.

As in the previous chapter on *The Inheritance of Loss*, I will again employ Zygmunt Bauman's concept of 'the stranger,' taking somewhat of a different stance however. In *The Inheritance of Loss*, the stranger's ability to blur boundaries that once seemed clearly drawn, leads to certain characters recognising the general hybridised state of

the world around them, and ultimately renegotiating the uncanny space they inhabit due to their own hybrid identities. In *A Distant Shore*, however, Solomon and, to a lesser extent, Dorothy become “the strangers” (47) who, as Bauman claims, “[exude] uncertainty, where certainty and clarity should... rule” (47), and are alienated without the slightest glimmer of hope for the renegotiation of identity, much less a recognition of the hybridised state of the world at large. This hints at the hostile territory of contemporary England, suggesting that “there [is] no room – for ‘neither-nors’, for those who [sit] astride, for the cognitively ambivalent” (47), as Bauman puts it. As Alan Davis so aptly points out, the novel seems to suggest that “[s]uch is England... in the new century. Everyone is a stranger to everyone else” (313). Excerpts from Julia Kristeva’s *Strangers to Ourselves* provide further insight into the complex space of the stranger in the postmodern world.

In his discussion around the “modern State” (47) and “the modern strangers [who are] the reverse of the State’s ordering zeal” (47), Bauman highlights two “alternative but also complementary strategies” (47) to deal effectively with the threatening ‘stranger’. Firstly, there is the option of assimilation, which Bauman explains as “annihilating the strangers by *devouring* them... making the different similar, smothering cultural or linguistic distinctions; forbidding all traditions and loyalties except those meant to encourage conformity to the new and all-embracing order” (47). The second option is that of exclusion: “*vomiting* the strangers, banishing them from the limits of the orderly world and barring all communication with those inside... confining the strangers within the visible walls of the ghettos... expelling the strangers beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory” (47-48). Importantly, Bauman brings to light a third, more violating and violent option, in cases where “neither of these two measures are feasible” (48), that is, “destroying them physically” (48). Although Bauman writes in the past tense and clearly connects these actions to the ‘modern state,’ we see this very “war of attrition [being] waged against the strangers and the strange” (47) in *A Distant Shore*, suggesting perhaps that despite joyous talk of ‘multiculturalism’ and celebrations of hybridity, much of the ‘postmodern’, largely western world is still unreceptive to those who “make obscure what ought to be transparent” (46).

Although *A Distant Shore* explores similar themes of displacement, racial inequality, class, and migrancy brought about by globalisation, themes that we find in *Drift Latitudes* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, Phillips seems to take a much graver stance than Mahjoub and Desai do. Whereas the preceding two novels leave the curtains slightly ajar for some form of hope to shimmer through, *A Distant Shore* seems to communicate something of the hopelessness of those who are “neither the One... nor the Other... but something else besides” (*Commitment* 41). I will be paying close attention to the way Phillips explores deep-seated issues of “strangerhood” (54) and unbelonging in an ever-unwelcoming world through Solomon and Dorothy’s experiences of loneliness and abandonment. This “formal focus on the individual”, as Jenny Sharpe puts it, presents

a reflection of Phillips’s more general attitude toward the problems faced by displaced peoples: he is sceptical of facile solutions to the deep and pervasive problems left by history, but he holds out the possibility that, even beset by tragedy, one can and should meet these challenges open-eyed and with courage. (Phillips and Sharpe 155)

Using Bauman’s notion of “strangerhood” (54) as a theoretical framework, along with Kristeva’s insights and taking into consideration literature dealing with Phillips’s own volatile relationship with Europe, and especially England, this chapter aims to understand Phillips’s conceptions of hybridity, dislocation and belonging in “the time we live in now, in our part of the world” (49) in relation to Solomon and Dorothy’s individual experiences of alienation, exclusion and finally destruction.

In Sharpe’s interview with Phillips, she highlights the fact that “[t]he first-person narratives of white women that [he] give[s] are particularly powerful” (159). In response, he reveals: “[l]inking questions of class and gender with the whole question of race has always been important to me.... Those sorts of questions and connections are much clearer in Britain, I suspect” (159). Phillips goes on to explain his use of the white woman’s voice in his earlier novel, *Cambridge*: “I was interested in exploring the parallel situations that a woman might find herself in and that black people were definitely in in Britain at the turn of the nineteenth century” (159). Although set in a

different time period, in many ways the same could be said about *A Distant Shore*, as we are presented with a prominent, though not necessarily powerful, female voice, that of Dorothy. Her narrative voice is characterised by an uneasy sense of calm that, at first, seems to divert the reader's attention away from, but soon draws the reader into, the reality of her ever-decreasing mental health. More than half of the novel is dedicated to the telling of her story and the presentation of her point of view. Importantly, her story runs parallel to that of Solomon's, providing, in true Phillips style, an almost uncanny reflection of the situations of loneliness and abandonment in which the white female native and the black male refugee find themselves.

Throughout, we are reminded at various intervals that Dorothy has spent her entire life in England. Perhaps the full extent of this is made clear when Solomon poses the question whether she likes England and she answers: "I really don't know anything else, do I? I mean, this is where I'm from, and I've not got anything to compare it to. Except France. I once went there on a day trip" (36). She ends by saying, "I suppose it seems a bit pathetic to you, doesn't it?" (36). What makes this situation even more "pathetic" (36) is the fact that she spends a great deal of this time living in the town in which she grew up. Although she leaves home to study music in Manchester after school, and moves to Birmingham shortly after finishing her degree and getting married, she finds herself "running home when her... life... collapse[s]" (184) in the wake of her husband's unexpected act of abandonment. She finds herself leaving 'home' again when an affair with a teaching colleague turns ugly, importantly only moving a mere five miles away to the village of Weston.

In this regard she follows closely in the footsteps of her parents who, as she tells a colleague, "were born in this town, and they lived and died here. They are both buried in the local cemetery, side by side" (202). However, unlike her parents, whom we find out "had neither the means nor, in the case of her father, the desire to escape their working class lives" (202), Dorothy seems to have a strong yearning for something that "existed beyond the narrow scope of her own predictable world" (193). In a sense, this yearning becomes the driving force behind her attraction to strangers, men who live on the periphery of her normal English existence, her aversion to average social interaction with people who fall squarely into this mundane life, the resulting

loneliness, and finally her exclusion from society. This vicious cycle of sorts might be best explored through the prism of abandonment and rejection she suffers in her various relationships: her tumultuous family life, her failed marriage, her disastrous affairs with married men, and finally her doomed friendship with Solomon.

We are told that Dorothy is one of two sisters and that “as the eldest, she was expected to set an example... much to the annoyance of her younger sister” (181). As a young woman, this desire to be the exemplary eldest child serves her well, as she is unexpectedly “accepted to read music at Manchester” (181), despite her “not regard[ing] university as a viable option” (181). She tells us that her father “never went to university and although he claimed to be glad that he had been spared the upheaval of leaving his home town, [she] never really believed him” (10). Thus, she states: “When I finally went off to university at eighteen, I could see how proud he was, but he never said anything to me” (10). Dorothy’s relationship with her father is, then, a complicated one where “he tried to treat [her] like the son he’d never had” (9), in contrast to the doting affection he lavishes on Sheila, her younger sister. Dorothy seems to see this as a love triangle of sorts and explains it as follows:

Unfortunately, while I seemed to get on with Dad, Sheila barely spoke to him. To begin with they used to get on. I may have been the ‘son,’ but she was definitely the much-loved daughter. I was actually jealous of her for he used to dote on her, and take her to the allotments, and buy her presents, so much so that I used to call her ‘Daddy’s little pet.’ But as she got older, and grew to know her own mind, Dad seemed to change towards her. (10)

The truth about her father and sister’s volatile relationship is revealed in sporadic recollections Dorothy has of the day the seventeen-year-old Sheila “ran away from home... and showed up penniless” (24) at her university dorm room. During this overnight visit Sheila informs her sister about the abuse she had been suffering at the hands of their father, a topic Dorothy tries to avoid at all costs. Sheila reads Dorothy’s reluctance to engage and lack of moral support as a sign of doubt. However, we soon

find out that the true reason for Dorothy's unwillingness to hear her sister out stems from a deep-seated sense of betrayal and rejection, revealed only when she states:

The problem, of course, was that I did believe her. I knew she was right when she said that the fact that it had stopped now didn't make it any better, but underneath it all the real question that I wanted answered was how come I escaped his attention? Did he love her more than me? I knew that he loved me more than he loved Mum, but why take Sheila down to the allotments with him? (61)

Dorothy finds herself strangely devastated by the thought of her father "lov[ing]" (61) Sheila more, and in effect experiences the bitterness of rejection for the first time. Adding to this, the conversation ends with Dorothy's realisation that she had "failed [Sheila]" (61) and that "something had changed between [them]" (61-62), leading to a deep fissure in the sisters's relationship – an even more profound abandonment. This fracture is healed to some extent when they are reunited by Sheila's deathbed and Dorothy makes use of the opportunity to win back her sister's trust. However, Sheila's passing also brings about Dorothy's total and ultimate abandonment by her family: separation through death. She attempts to curb the pain she feels in the wake of this desertion through regular visits to the cemetery where her parents lie, and the imaginary conversations she conducts with them. Furthermore, with regards to Sheila, she states:

After Sheila died I wrote to myself and pretended it was her doing the writing. It was all I had left of her. My imaginary Sheila who likes me and still needs my help. But my cowardice had lost me my real sister. My poor, grieving Sheila. Daddy's little pet (62)

These attempts at connection and closure are futile, however, as they blur the boundaries between present and past, reality and imaginary, simply seeming to drag her even further away from societal norms and into the unstable mental state in which she finds herself. We can assume that much of Dorothy's decline in mental health can

be related back to her relationship with Sheila. The helplessness and complicity Dorothy feels in Sheila's painful experiences with their father drive her to a near-madness and her calm, but slightly unnerving narrative voice seems to speak of something similar perhaps to a form of post-traumatic stress disorder. This mental disorder causes a psychic fracture that she, at first, tries to suppress, but is increasingly confronted with in her different relationships as the novel progresses. However, it is only after Solomon's death that these feelings of helplessness and complicity rise to the surface with renewed intensity, rendering her completely unstable and driving her and into a mental institution.

The second of Dorothy's relationships that calls for attention is her mundane and safe marriage to Brian. We are told that "Dorothy met Brian during her first year at university" (181), and that her attraction to him lay very much in the fact that he was "[a] public schoolboy, he had a posh accent and confidence, two things that she knew she could never acquire, no matter how long she searched for them" (181). Their relationship is characterised by a conventional blandness throughout their university careers:

For three years he protected her as she struggled with her degree in music, while he seemed to breeze through his course in mathematics, which he regarded as an unwelcome distraction from his passion for beer and rugby. As the time drew near for them to be unleashed upon the world, it was clear to their small group of friends that Brian would propose and they would be married, which, within a few weeks of graduation, they were.
(182)

Unsurprisingly, this blandness continues into their married life. They move to Birmingham "where Brian was brought up" (182) and where he manages to secure himself a "job in the city-centre merchant bank" (182). Dorothy finds a job as a music teacher, and their lives proceed uneventfully as they are unable even to produce children. In retrospect, Dorothy contemplates the lack of emotion that characterised her and Brian's relationship: "Joy was an emotion that soared on wings, which suggested transcendence, but her life with Brian was firmly anchored. No joy" (180). After Brian leaves her for a younger woman and moves to Spain, she comes to the

realisation that her marriage, though safe and anchored, denied her the essential quality of joy, something she only recognises her desire for much later. This desire for joy translates itself into a tendency towards short-lived and unstable relationships, especially with married men, strangers who provide an alternative to the safe, but disappointing boundaries she was restricted to in her marriage. In a way, Brian's abandonment serves as a sort of liberation, as it ultimately grants her the opportunity to explore what lies beyond the boundaries of her comfortable feminine, English identity. Despite this liberation, which turns out to be a kind of escapism, the trauma she experiences in first finding out about her father's shameful relationship with her sister, which she has sought to repress, intensifies after her and Brian's marriage fails and the fissure in her psychic state starts to grow wider.

Dorothy finds respite from Brian's abandonment, but more importantly the bland boredom that has characterised her life until this point, by pursuing two affairs with married men in rapid succession of one another. But her neediness in both is infantile. She disregards herself and lets go of all dignity in her efforts to secure relationships with these men, but in both cases, this debasement and neediness becomes abject and the men reject her. Although this desperate desire for relationship could be read as a much needed affirmation of her femininity and desirability after her and Brian's divorce, on a much deeper level, it can be related back to Dorothy's thwarted desire for her father's love. These feelings of unworthiness remain suppressed till well after her traumatic divorce, but resurface in the abject neediness she displays in the two affairs she pursues.

The first and more interesting of the two, is the arrangement she has with Mahmood, "a doe-eyed Indian man" (185), a complete stranger and the complete opposite of Brian's average English persona, who owns the corner shop in her hometown. She notices him one morning while buying her *Daily Mail* and decides to seduce him. To her great surprise this seduction pays off leading to a lover's tryst that takes place "every Thursday at 7 p.m. precisely" (174). During these visits their conversations revolve mostly around Mahmood and his immigrant experience, as "Dorothy says very little about her own life, being concerned to make sure that the dominant narrative is male" (180). However, the true reason for Dorothy's silence is locked in

the fact that “his story involve[d] passion, betrayal, migration, sacrifice and ultimately triumph. Mahmood [was] a success” (180), in contrast to “her story [that] containe[d] the single word, abandonment” (180). Dorothy finds herself in an almost uncanny position of envying Mahmood, the ‘stranger,’ his turbulent and troubled life, finding it far more attractive than the boredom that prevails in hers. Her relationship with him, and the conversations they share, give her a taste of something outside of the ordinary, something that “existed beyond the narrow scope of her own predictable world” (193). The birth of Mahmood’s daughter heralds the end of their affair, and Dorothy finds herself abandoned yet again. This third great abandonment is yet another traumatic experience in Dorothy’s life, and the yet unperceived psychic fracture grows ever wider. Dorothy’s slow decent into a form of madness becomes ever clearer with every abandonment, and in the case of Mahmood we see it clearly when, in an attempt to patch things up, she calls him one night “when she imagines [his wife] would have gone to sleep” (191). Unsurprisingly the conversation ends with outright rejection:

There is a silence that is clearly informed by his exasperation. And then he speaks. ‘You must buy your newspaper somewhere else. I do not wish to know you.’ He puts down the phone. (191)

Although their affair is rather short-lived and inevitably ends in rejection and abandonment, much could be said about Dorothy’s attraction to a foreigner, or phrased differently, a stranger. In Yi-Fu Tuan’s journal article ‘Strangers and Strangeness,’ he discusses the double role strangers play in our society, suggesting that although “[t]hey are strange [and] vaguely threatening... they are [also] out of the ordinary – extraordinary... carry[ing] an aura of mystery and hint at the existence of the superhuman or of a grace beyond the good as ordinarily conceived” (11). Instead of dismissing Mahmood as a “threatening” (Tuan 11) stranger, as many others would, Dorothy finds herself fascinated by and strangely attracted to him. This unlikely attraction may very well spring from the fact that he is different from anything Dorothy has known. As Tuan suggests: “the familiar can be suffocating. People seek liberation from the common routines of life” (12). Therefore, through her affair with Mahmood, Dorothy seeks excitement and some sort of relief from the blandness that characterises her life. She finds, in Tuan’s words, that “[Mahmood] offers not only

excitement but also, paradoxically, intimacy” (13), both through sexual intercourse and conversation. However, once their arrangement has run its course, she finds herself abandoned and devoid of what she calls this “stimulating confusion” (193).

This new-found promise of a thrilling, but also deeply problematic, intimacy is perhaps what nudges her into a next affair with teaching colleague, Geoff Waverly. Although he is not foreign, there is still a slight whiff of strangeness about him. He is a well-travelled relief teacher who shows up in Dorothy’s town in an attempt to give his wife’s “affair with the squash player” (196) a chance to “[burn] itself out” (196). Although Dorothy’s affair with Waverly is even more brief than the one with Mahmood, its repercussions are a lot larger and more serious. Dorothy starts “to [feel] the sap of rejection [rising] in her throat” (104) at the first signs of Waverly’s imminent abandonment, and does everything in her power to keep it at bay. The psychic fracture that finds its roots in her failed relationship with Sheila and extends with each abandonment that follows, comes to the surface yet again when she suspects Waverly’s impending rejection. As in the case of Mahmood, her obsessive tendencies rise to the surface yet again, and she has no scruples invading Waverly’s privacy. She expels her own sense of impending abandonment and projects it onto Waverly’s wife when she calls her to raise her suspicions before writing Waverly a letter:

She reminds him that abandonment is a state that is not alien to man. That throughout the ages people have voluntarily or involuntarily left behind people in their lives and gone on to higher and better things. There is nothing unusual about this... She is making a plea for him to see himself in a bigger context and move on. She does not say who he should move on to, but... this is implied (208)

These daring actions have the opposite effect on Waverly and in a similar vein to Mahmood, he ends their relationship with the words “[y]ou and I are finished. I want you out of my life” (208). However, this time round Dorothy does not only lose intimacy and companionship, but also her job and her dignity. Reminiscent of the decision she makes after her and Brian’s divorce, she decides to pack up and leave her hometown for the quiet village of Weston. In both cases Dorothy seems to seek out

the abandonment she fears by moving beyond the boundaries of respect and decency. In a sense, she enacts the drama of abandonment through her choices, in a sort of repetition compulsion where she repeats the traumatic scenario she fears most deeply, time and again.

It is then in Weston that Dorothy finds the first real promise of companionship in the equally lonely figure of Solomon, but also meets her final and ultimate abandonment, her exclusion from society through the complete collapse of her mental health. In the very first few pages of the novel Dorothy sketches a picture of Weston as something of a backwater village that appears to be stuck in time. Living in the new development of Stoneleigh, she seems to be aware of the social incongruence that reigns when she states, “our village is divided into two” (4), and elaborates:

I see everybody all the time... you can't help it. You go for a walk, or you go to get a paper, or you wait by the bus stop, and there they all are, the cast of the village acting out their assigned roles. Those of us from Stoneleigh, the small groups of extras who live up the hill, have yet to be given our parts. We're still strangers to each other, let alone to the other villagers. (12)

This sense of being out of place and unwelcome is heightened when she mentions how “[d]oors were propped wide open, presumably because of the heat” (6) and then goes on to say “but I didn't get the impression that the open doors were indicative of friendliness. People stared at me like I had the mark of Cain on my forehead” (6). The clear sense of paranoia in Dorothy's tone, however, casts us into doubt about her perceptions and one can read these descriptions of the unwelcoming town as a projection of her own fear of abandonment. In the midst of her attempts at familiarising herself with the town, Solomon draws her attention as “[t]he somewhat undernourished coloured man in the small bungalow next door [who] is the only one [she] sees regularly” (12). The loneliness they recognise in one another seems to draw them together and a friendship is soon forged when Solomon volunteers as a driver at the local medical centre and starts driving her to her doctor's appointments in town. Although the friendship they forge seems rather solid and genuine, this tendency to

seek out the stranger could be related back to her state of paranoia. Julia Kristeva writes, “[t]he foreigners friends, aside from bleeding hearts who feel obliged to do good, could only be those who feel foreign to themselves.... the paternalists, paranoid and perverse people, who each have the foreigner of their choice” (*Strangers* 23). She goes on to explain the paranoid person’s attraction to the foreigner as follows:

Paranoid persons: no one is more excluded than they are and, in order to demonstrate that fact, they choose as backdrop to their delirium a basic outcast, the ordinary foreigner, who will be the chosen confidant of the persecutions they themselves suffer even more than he does – until they ‘discover’ in this foreigner in the proper sense of the term a usurper and one of the causes of their misfortune, for if the world does not understand them it is precisely because ‘foreigners now monopolize public opinion’s concern’ (*Strangers* 23)

Although Dorothy does recognise something of her own loneliness in Solomon, it is primarily the fact that he is a foreigner and therefore in a more marginal position to herself, that she seeks him out. The almost selfish comfort she finds in Solomon is also perhaps best displayed in her description of his driving:

I like the way he corners the car. He always holds the wheel in two hands and he pushes and pulls it gently, as though he’s making something, rather than spinning it around as though he’s gambling. He also wears driving gloves, which I like... I like this about his driving. It’s neat and careful, and it makes me feel safe (14)

Dorothy describes it, not so much as an everyday activity, but rather as an art form and seems to focus primarily on the stability and calmness with which he does it. In her slow descent into madness and depression, these are two traits that Dorothy lacks and desires most, and finds amply in the almost ritualised act of Solomon’s driving. Importantly her relationship with Solomon is purely platonic and never passes into the awkward and often-turbulent realm of sexual relations, setting this relationship apart from the destructive affairs she has with Mahmood and Geoff Waverly. Yet, being

accustomed to rejection and abandonment, she expects the same from Solomon, and tries to pre-empt this with an abandonment of her own. She leaves Weston for an overnight trip to the seaside with the sole purpose of testing Solomon's commitment, as Dorothy realises that this friendship grants her the opportunity to have the upper hand for once and not to fall victim to rejection yet again. In her constantly-degenerating mental state, she rationalises as follows:

I wanted Solomon to understand that he wasn't going to be able to just take me for granted... I would wait a few weeks and then disappear again. Lonely Solomon. I wanted to keep him on his toes until he realised for himself that he really didn't like it if I wasn't around all of the time. Then he would want me. (61)

Her plan goes awry as she returns home to the news of Solomon's death, and finds herself abandoned after all, with no hope of reconciliation. In a sense Solomon's death becomes the final blow to her ever-widening psychic fracture and also becomes the catalyst in her final exclusion from society, as she starts to notice the inconsistencies, injustices and degenerate people around her more clearly than before.

This heightened sense of morality is ushered in with Dorothy's first visit to Solomon's house. He takes her into his confidence and shows her the hate mail he receives from villagers who do not feel comfortable with a black man in their midst. Solomon tells Dorothy how he normally opens his letters by hand, but in one case decides to use a knife, only to find that "somebody had sewn razor blades into a sheet of paper and carefully turned the page over so that [he] would... have [his] fingers sliced off" (37). Solomon ends with the understatement: "This is not very kind" (37). In this encounter, Dorothy's eyes are suddenly opened to the reality of racism in England, and along with that, the decadence that seems to reign over English society. In a sense the psychic fracture that increases with each abandonment she suffers, starts to manifest itself in a dichotomising process where she distances herself from English society and increasingly identifies with the stranger, Solomon. In her identification with Solomon, at the cost of her loyalty to England, she seems to be going through a process documented by Kristeva: "Living with the other, with the foreigner, confronts us with the possibility or not of *being an other*. It is not simply – humanistically – a matter of

being able to accept the other, but of *being in his place*, and this means to imagine and make oneself other for oneself” (*Strangers* 113). In the light of this it is interesting to return to Dorothy’s opening words and discover that the ‘disturbing changes’ she notices are perhaps not due to the people who are strange, but rather those who are familiar.

She starts to notice the unsavoury characters who seem to be rife within English society and her observations range from a waitress in a seaside café whom she describes with disgust as “[a] young pregnant girl... who [is] clearly stupid with confidence,... [ashes] her cigarette into a tea cup... [and] [gyrates] to imaginary pop music” (59), to the “slovenly youngsters, with their barrack-room language” (7) outside the local pub, “who toss beer at each other, and then shriek with phlegmy laughter of hardened smokers” (6), to the way one of her former piano students is “done up like a promiscuous little so-and-so” (27) for a night out. In the light of her friendship with Solomon, whom she describes as “a proper gentleman” (56), these seemingly everyday occurrences now become glaring proof of the degenerate state of English society. Her act of distancing herself becomes more pronounced after Solomon’s brutal murder, and she systematically constructs a clear dichotomy of ‘them/they’ versus ‘me.’ In her fragile mental state, she becomes increasingly paranoid, so much so, that she blames the entire village, if not all of English society, for Solomon’s death. She states at one point: “At the bottom of the hill I see a few of the villagers, but I ignore them. Especially now, after what they’ve done” (53), even though she knows that the crime was committed by four delinquent youths, not the entire village. This tendency to alienate herself is repeated when she takes on the late Solomon’s task of polishing his car, and notices the way her neighbours react:

I suppose it’s when I see them standing in the street and just staring at me that I know something is wrong. I have to ask myself, is it that fascinating watching me trying to keep Solomon’s car clean? Don’t they wash their own cars? Of course they do, and I don’t come and stand and look at them, so I don’t see the point of this communal gawping. Not everybody has come out, but there’s enough of them to make me feel awkward and so I stop. (55)

Dorothy's tendency to alienate herself is perhaps shown most clearly in the dichotomising language she starts using shortly after Solomon's death. She sets up a clear divide between them/they/everybody and me/myself/I, suggesting that she no longer belongs to this society. Dorothy's tendency to dichotomise becomes most pronounced in her observations of the homeless people who "seem to be everywhere" (11) in Weston. In the first few pages of the novel she describes them "living beneath the underpass in boxes that used to hold fridges or big colour television sets, with their matted hair and their bottles of meths" (11). Her problem with them exceeds mere disgust, however, as she dissects the massive social predicament they cause:

[i]t looks to me like they'll always be around as long as the church is happy to give them plastic cups of sweet tea and change their ulcerated bandages, without holding them accountable for anything....It's just wilful waste, that's all, and I believe most of them are doing it on purpose because they're lazy and they want sympathy, but they never get it from me. (11)

She goes on to say, "[w]hen I refuse to give them money they scream at me, and I often feel scorn when I walk past them" (11). Her aversion to them builds up after Solomon's death and her descriptions become more scornful:

I see a few of them. They are staring as though there's something the matter with me, but I try to ignore them. Really they should be ashamed of themselves with their hands out, begging for decent people's money when there's no reason at all why they shouldn't be working and earning their own... They're disgusting, dragging themselves and the country down like this. (57)

This scorn culminates in a scrap between Dorothy and one of these homeless women, whom she describes as "look[ing] and sound[ing] like a gypsy, with her black hair, and her black eyes, and her grimy black hands" (57). The woman spits at Dorothy.

We are not told what exactly transpires we are not told, but Dorothy finds herself bruised and bleeding at a police station. In a conversation with her psychiatrist, Dr Williams, he tells her how she had been “shouting and brawling with homeless people” (58), and her memories start returning: “I remember something now. She spat and I spat back, and then the shouting started, and then I struck her, and the police arrived” (58). This scrap ultimately leads to her final abandonment, her exclusion from society. In this moment of blind anger, the last control Dorothy has over her life dissolves and she descends into a final and seemingly permanent state of psychic fracture. This madness places her in the position of the threatening stranger who has to be contained and she is taken to a home to convalesce. Ultimately, then, she conforms to Bauman’s stranger, who is “banish[ed]... from the limits of the orderly world and... confin[ed]... within the visible walls... expell[ed]... beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory” (47-48). The novel ends with Dorothy ‘safely’ shut away behind the walls of the mental home and her haunting words: “My heart remains a desert, but I tried. I had a feeling that Solomon understood me. This is not my home... I will ease myself out of this bed and proceed to put on my day face” (277).

Although Dorothy, by no means, falls into any category of hybridity discussed thus far in the chapters on *The Drift Latitudes* and *Inheritance of Loss* that deal largely with cultural and racial hybridity, her fractured psyche places her in a somewhat different form of hybridity. It could be argued that her ‘hybridity’ is in actual fact nothing more than the manifestation of the psychic split between conscious and unconscious that psychoanalysis suggests all subjects to have. However, the fact that this split is finally brought to the surface by her realisation of changing cultural circumstances in the wake of postcolonialism and globalisation, puts her in line with the split subjectivities discussed in the previous chapters. This fracture starts to manifest itself when she falls into a state of trauma following her inability to support Sheila when she tells Dorothy about the years of sexual abuse she suffered at the hands of their father. Although she finds refuge in her safe and mundane marriage to Brian, their traumatic divorce causes feelings of guilt and complicity to emerge again for the first time since Sheila’s revelation. Dorothy re-enacts the trauma of loss and guilt in her subsequent relationships and her psychic fracture grows increasingly worse as these relationships fail one after the other, and she finds herself constantly

rejected and abandoned. Her ever-fracturing psyche finally manifests itself most clearly in her friendship with Solomon, the complete stranger. As she becomes increasingly paranoid and suspicious of her society, she finds herself attracted to the Solomon, someone who is even more on the fringes of society than she is herself. As their friendship develops she increasingly finds herself associating with Solomon and distancing herself from her society. In the village of Weston, Dorothy starts to see only him as approachable and the rest of the villagers as uncivilised and sub-standard. She starts to renegotiate her own identity within society according to this and so doing alienates herself completely. Dorothy seems to conform to Tuan's observation that "[t]he truly good [could not] come from the local and familiar" (12). Her psychic fracture and identification with Solomon, the absolute stranger, is so close that she starts to "make [her]self other for [her]self" (*Strangers* 13) to such an extent that she becomes an absolute stranger in her society. As a result she transgresses social decorum and has to be contained.

Whereas Phillips uses the rejection and abandonment in Dorothy's story to communicate something of the attitude modern England has towards those who do not quite fit in, he uses Solomon's narrative to represent the experience faced by a great many immigrants/refugees once they arrive on the 'sacred shores' of Europe. In contrast to Dorothy's rather sprawling narrative in which very little takes place, Solomon's traumatic flight, exhausting journey, and struggle to adjust to England are all comprised in a brief two chapters. By doing this, Phillips seems to suggest something of the restrictive space immigrants and refugees are often forced to inhabit. Through the character of Solomon, we are invited to see England as an increasingly decadent and hostile society which is hardly any safer or more accommodating than the war-torn African country from which he hails. Ultimately, England is sketched as a highly unkind place, stuck in its own myths of purity and nationalism that, as Mousavizadeh puts it, define "immigrants from Asia and Africa as *foreigners*, not immigrants, not new and energetic and hard-working members of society" (Mousavizadeh 135).

Importantly, in the first chapter of Solomon's narrative we are introduced to him as Gabriel, his real name. His tragic journey starts in his own war-ravaged country when he loses his position as "leader of a brigade" (126) of rebel soldiers and has to walk

back to his home in the capital city to protect his family from an imminent violent attack by the national army. However, he gets there only just in time to witness his mother and father being slain and his sisters raped and then brutally killed. After witnessing the killing of his family he states that “[this] is not my home any more” (79). With these words he immediately cuts all bonds with Africa. He immediately makes arrangements with an uncle whom he knows performs covert operations transporting people to Europe and joins one of these groups of refugees set to leave before the break of dawn. In an effort to provide the payment for the trip he commits one last brutal act of violence by killing his former employer, - and friend - stealing his life savings, and ultimately leaving the man’s wife and child abandoned and penniless. This cold-blooded and selfish act perhaps shows most clearly Gabriel’s final severance from that which he used to call ‘home’.

On his exodus Gabriel befriends an enthusiastic younger man named Bright who tells him of a plan to jump ship across from France to England and delivers a compelling plea:

It is either this or Paris. But I am an Englishman. Only the white man respects us, for we do not respect ourselves. If you cut my heart open you will find it stamped with the word ‘England.’ I speak the language, therefore I am going to England to claim my house and my stipend... I know we have all been afflicted, but I, this man, cannot go back ever. I hate it. I want to forget Africa and those people. I am an Englishman now. I am English and nobody will stop me from going home. Not you, not these people, nobody. (119)

The abyss left by his rejection of Africa as ‘home’ encourages Gabriel to identify with Bright’s misplaced patriotic feelings towards England and gives in to his plea. They make the dangerous passage across to England, clinging to the side of a ship. In this hopeful moment Bright and Gabriel share, Phillips seems to touch on something Kristeva writes about the space of the migrant/refugee: “In crossing a border (... or two) the foreigner has changed his discomforts into a base of resistance, a citadel of life. Moreover, had he stayed home, he might perhaps have become a dropout, and invalid, an outlaw” (*Strangers* 8). Ironically, Gabriel experiences his first taste of

abandonment in England soon after they land on the English coast when Bright deserts him to go to London alone. His already-ill fate starts to take a turn for the worse when he meets Denise, a young English girl who inadvertently introduces him to, what he sees as, an underlying lack of civility and civilisation in England.

Phillips frames Denise as a rather neglected young girl who flees her broken home and drunk father, using the dilapidated house Gabriel shelters in as her place of refuge. Strangely she comes to accept Gabriel quite soon, attempts to befriend him, and even brings him food. Despite her kindness, Gabriel finds himself vexed by Denise's frivolity and neglected appearance. As Phillips writes: "Gabriel studies this girl, who appears to be younger than his own sisters, and who wears her school uniform with neither pride nor dignity. The skirt is too short and it rides up one leg so that half of the girl's thigh is exposed" (142). This feeling of distaste extends beyond her appearance, however, as we later see how Gabriel "bristles with anger at the way [the] girl [speaks] to him" (162). He tries to "control these feelings and to recognise that the girl has been generous... with food" (162), but to no avail as "he finds her manner irritating, and her appearance, with her dirty, unwashed blonde hair, and her skirt riding up her thigh, is unacceptable" (162).

In this encounter between Gabriel and Denise, Phillips seems to adorn Gabriel with a misplaced sense of dignity. As the novel progresses we see Gabriel/Solomon evermore appalled by the English society. For example, when he finally reaches London after many trials and tribulations, Gabriel finds himself in a park littered with rubbish and used condoms, some of which were "hanging in the branches like discarded rubber fruit" (150), and one of which was "filleted and opened like a cleaned fish" (150). In this park he comes across a "filthy" (151) homeless man named Jimmy who, in a similar vein to Denise, identifies and accepts him straight away as "one of those refugees" (150). Gabriel is mystified by the man's nonchalant attitude toward being homeless, going against Gabriel's own ideas of dignity and uprightness. In the light of the atrocities that he was sure to have witnessed, not to mention committed in his own country during his time as a rebel soldier, Gabriel's dignity could almost be read as a misplaced over-reaction to minor signs of degeneration of English society. Reading it this way, we can almost see his dignity as a type of defence mechanism sprung from a similar kind of traumatic disorder to

Dorothy's. His complicity in gruesome crimes of war back home and the psychological fracture that caused, encourages him to veer in the other direction, toward the persona of a rather uptight and inapproachable hermit. This correlates well with Kristeva's notion of the foreigner/stranger's peculiar aloofness. She states:

Indifference is the foreigner's shield. Insensitive, aloof, he seems, deep down, beyond the reach of attacks and rejections that he nevertheless experiences with the vulnerability of a medusa. This is because his being kept apart corresponds to his remaining aloof, as he pulls back into the painless core of what is called a soul.... There, soured of mawkishness, but of sensitivity as well, he takes pride in holding a truth that is perhaps simply a certainty – the ability to reveal the crudest aspects of human relationships when seduction fades out and proprieties give way.... For the foreigner, from the height of an autonomy that he is the only one to have chosen when the others prudently remain 'between themselves,' paradoxically confronts everyone with an asymbolia that rejects civility
(*Strangers* 7)

Reading the character of Gabriel/Solomon this way, one could say that by the very virtue of his foreignness, he places himself on a moral high ground to compensate for the attacks and rejections he has to experience.

Gabriel's disgust with English society grows ever worse, as he is confronted with more and more decadence as he moves from place to place, but later on this disgust starts to dissipate, as he grudgingly admits to becoming accustomed to what English society has to offer while in the safety Mr and Mrs Anderson's boarding house:

Soon I was watching the television programmes, and to my eyes England was becoming less of a mystery. It no longer surprised me when I heard women using foul and abusive language in the streets.... However, it did continue to confuse me why so many of the English newspapers displayed little more than pictures of women in their underwear. (253)

Although he becomes familiar with these less than savoury scenes playing themselves out around him, he does not allow himself to be completely swallowed by them. His strong, though perhaps misplaced, sense of dignity is shown most clearly when he is harassed by four young men (presumably the four who are later responsible for his murder), and instead of engaging in a brawl, decides to turn away to avoid them. He justifies this seeming act of cowardice when he says:

They do not know who I am. I am the son of an elder, a man who decided disputes and punished crimes. I am a man who travelled a very considerable distance south and then returned to the bosom of my doomed family, always moving at night, and eating berries and drinking water from streams. I am a man who has arrived, and I would rather die like a free man than suffer my blood to be drawn like a slave's. (251)

Once again we see how Gabriel/Solomon's memories of a more dignified past life, in fact the very thing that makes him a foreigner and a stranger, provides him with a thread, though tenuous, of dignity to cling to in his confrontation with the native inhabitants. Of course, this passage is thick with dramatic irony, as we know that it is these men who capture him and 'draw his blood' only a matter of weeks later. It is perhaps this misplaced dignity that makes Gabriel/Solomon's stay in England even more difficult, as he experiences the inevitable processes of assimilation and/or exclusion far more deeply. The first encounter with exclusion he suffers takes place when Denise's father discovers their 'friendship' and falsely accuses him of raping his daughter, leading to Gabriel's imprisonment. Denise's father places unthinking blame on the 'stranger,' as Gabriel does not fit into the well-preserved, age-old structures of his English small town life and therefore can only be up to no good. This father lives in what Bauman identifies as "an atmosphere of *ambient* fear" (51) consequent on the fast-changing, ever-shrinking world, what Bauman refers to as "[t]he new world disorder" (51), and finds the stranger the easiest target for his feelings of disquiet and uncertainty. Not only is Gabriel the stranger, but he also fills the residual colonial mould of the virile, threatening African male. Gabriel/Solomon repeatedly encounters these feelings of disquiet, uncertainty and the resulting negativity during his stay in England, supporting Bauman's view of the contemporary world:

[t]he dominant sentiment is the feeling of uncertainty – about the future shape of the world, about the right way of living in it, and about the criteria by which to judge the rights and wrongs of one's way of living. Uncertainty is not exactly a newcomer in the modern world, with its past. What is new, however, is that it is no longer seen as a mere temporary nuisance which, with due effort may be either mitigated or completely overcome. The postmodern world is bracing itself for life under a condition of uncertainty which is permanent and irreducible. (50)

Phillips demonstrates that often the easiest way to get rid of these unpleasant feelings is through excluding the stranger from what Bauman calls the “limits of the orderly world” (47), by “confining [him] within the visible walls of the [prison]... expelling [him] beyond the frontiers of the managed and manageable territory” (47-48). However, even within these walls, we see this uncertainty playing itself out severely when a fellow inmate calls Gabriel a “[f]ucking noisy cannibal” (73) and a “fucking animal” (85). Surprisingly the rape charges are dropped, Gabriel is set free, and he flees to the north, changing his name to Solomon on the way. This flight to the north and act of renaming could be seen as a form of assimilation, as African Gabriel is ultimately “*devoured*” (Bauman 47) by the restrictions placed on him by English society and he is forced to become the more acceptable Solomon.

Solomon takes up residence in a boarding house where his only friend Mike lives, but despite this relative comfort, finds himself struggling to come to terms with his new identity. This struggle with his increasingly split subjectivity starts when Solomon catches a glimpse of himself in a bathroom mirror during a brief stopover on his way to the north and he is greeted by the uncanny realisation that he is no longer Gabriel, but someone entirely different. He states: “A tired man's face stared back at me... England had changed me, but was this not the very reason that I had come to England? I desired change” (245). This state of unfamiliarity with himself increases and perhaps culminates in the realisation that “[his] language was drying up in [his] mouth” (253). These words reflect, quite strikingly, Kristeva's musings around the problems of language in a foreign country:

Not speaking one's mother tongue. Living with resonances and reasoning that are cut off from the body's nocturnal memory, from the bittersweet slumber of childhood. Bearing within oneself like a secret vault, or like a handicapped child – cherished and useless – that language of the past withers without ever leaving you (*Silence* 15)

Without consciously meaning to do so, Solomon finds himself being assimilated into his new surroundings most strikingly through the withering of his own language and the taking up of English, the foreign language, as his own. Kristeva embroiders further on this process of taking up the foreign language as one's own when she writes:

You improve your ability with another instrument, as one expresses oneself with algebra or the violin. You can become a virtuoso with this new device that moreover gives you a new body, just as artificial and sublimated – some say sublime. You have a feeling that the new language is a resurrection: new skin, new sex. But the illusion bursts when you hear, upon listening to a recording, for instance, that the melody of your voice comes back to you as a peculiar sound, out of nowhere. (*Silence* 15)

Although we do not know whether Solomon ever experiences the uncanny rendering of his own voice as strange in the foreign language, Phillips does communicate something of this in the way Solomon's sections of the novel are narrated. The chapters dedicated to him are characterised by an almost severe and awkward precision and formality, reflecting something of the speaker's unfamiliarity with the English language. Interestingly, this is directly contrasted with Dorothy's more homely, almost colloquial narrative.

Despite these voluntary and involuntary acts of assimilation, Solomon still finds himself raising alarm and spreading uncertainty among the local people, and is greeted with insulting words "painted on the wall of Mr. and Mrs. Anderson's [boarding] house" (254-255). Similar acts of vandalism take place when "somebody [introduces] dog mess through [his] letter box" (266) in Stoneleigh and bombards him with a steady flow of hate mail. In an important conversation, Mike tries to explain

these “savage” (266) actions to Solomon as springing from uncertainty and fear. He states:

I’m an old traditionalist, Solomon. I want fish and chips, not curry and chips. I’m not prejudiced, but we’ll soon be living in a foreign country unless somebody puts an end to all this immigration. These Indians.... I mean, they’re peasants. They come from the countryside and most of them have never seen a flush toilet or a light switch. It’s too much for them. And for us.... It’s these kinds of people that cause others to have bad attitudes.... I’m not saying they’re right, because they’re not.... You see, you’re in a different situation, Solomon. You’re escaping oppression and that’s different.... I mean, you’re working. You’re no scrounger. But they don’t know that. (258)

Mike’s words present us with the central problem posed by Solomon’s narrative. Despite being a good person, attempting to improve his circumstances, he is judged on appearances alone. Soon after this Mike is killed in an accident and Mr. and Mrs. Anderson find Solomon a job as night watchman in Stoneleigh development before relocating to Scotland. We know that Solomon befriends Dorothy and also that she abandons him on the very night that he is killed. He is rendered entirely vulnerable, as he finds himself abandoned by all those who could possibly protect him, and the negativity he becomes accustomed to finally culminates in the ultimate act of savagery when he is brutally murdered and his body dumped in Weston’s canal. Through this Phillips seems to suggest that often neither assimilation nor exclusion are satisfactory outcomes in dealing with strangers, therefore “destroying them physically” (48) is the only option left to the threatened natives.

Phillips’s highly critical view of the European tendency towards racism comes out strongly in many of his works of fiction and non-fiction. In *A Distant Shore* he seems to highlight the fact that “European societies are and are not multicultural” (134). He explores the possibility that “at the heart of Europe’s crisis of identity, [lies] a deafening dissonance between the *reality* of European society – one that increasingly must be described as a multiethnic and multicultural mosaic – and the *ideal* in the minds of many Europeans of an ethnically pure, almost organic entity” (134). In this

struggle to come to terms with a growing multicultural identity “the African, the Asian, the Muslim – will remain... an alien whose presence must be tolerated but never accepted as permanent” (134) within European societies. Bauman suggests an alternative view:

[t]he age of anthropophagic [assimilation] and anthropoemic [exclusion] strategies is over. The question is no longer how to get rid of the strangers and the strange, but how to live with them – daily and permanently.

Whatever realistic strategy of coping with the unknown, the uncertain and the confusing can be thought of, it must start from recognising this fact (Bauman 55),

Phillips presents us with the exact opposite. When Dorothy aligns herself with the lonely and marginalized Solomon and distances herself from the English society she ‘belongs’ to, she finds herself outside of societal norms and is immediately excluded from normal life. Solomon, on the other hand, experiences both painful processes of assimilation and exclusion, so much so that he does not recognise himself as the man he used to be. However, his fate is sealed in the violent act of murder, as his difference can only be resolved by being “[destroyed]... physically” (48). *A Distant Shore* “ends not with a bang but a whimper” (313), suggesting something of the hopelessness of those who find themselves continually falling between the cracks of the globalised world. Through the narratives of Dorothy and Solomon, Phillips paints a harsh picture of the “seemingly intractable problem” (136) that “modernity has left us with[:] reconciling the need for belonging, for a permanence of home, with the reality that our lives are mobile, migratory, even mongrelized” (136), suggesting that – for the hybrid identity, the stranger, those who do not belong – if the future does not hold death or some form of insanity, it most definitely does hold a painful loss of identity.

Chapter 5: Conclusion

In the narratives of Jamal Mahjoub's *Drift Latitudes*, Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* and Caryl Phillips' *A Distant Shore*, we are presented with three different outlooks on the ever-growing occurrence of hybrid identities in the postmodern world. Although the three novels concentrate on three different types of hybridity – racial hybridity and the hybrid family in *The Drift Latitudes*, cultural hybridity in *Inheritance of Loss* and psychic hybridity in *A Distant Shore* – all three challenge the view that simply celebrates hybridity. In all three novels, the various characters go through painful processes of recognition and renegotiation of their fissured subjectivity, though some make it through more easily than others. These novels reflect something of Kristeva's notion that "we are for the first time in history, confronted with the following situation: we must live with different people while relying on our own personal moral codes, without the assistance of a set that would include our particularities while transcending them" (*Strangers* 195).

Both *The Drift Latitudes* and *Inheritance of Loss*, although by no means celebratory of the position of hybridity, highlight the fact that the promise and hope of the hybrid identity lies in the rise of what Bhabha calls "something different, something new and unrecognisable, a new era of negotiation of meaning and representation" (*Third* 211). Bhabha proceeds to explain that "when a new situation, a new alliance formulates itself, it may demand that you should translate your principles, rethink them, extend them" (*Third* 216). *A Distant Shore*, on the other hand, is less hopeful, suggesting that it is inevitable, when in the position of hybridity, to experience almost constant loneliness and pain. Through the tragic outcomes of his characters, Phillips seems to suggest that the only alternative, and perhaps viable outcome to the pain and dislocation of the hybrid identity, is through a retreat into the isolation of death or madness.

What makes these three novels comparable, above and beyond the fact that they deal with similar issues, is the fact that each of the authors speak from a place of authority on questions of cultural hybridity, dislocation, immigration and belonging/unbelonging, as they have all undergone these gruelling processes and experiences. Born in London in 1960, Mahjoub has since lived in Sudan, Denmark,

France, Spain and, at various times, the UK. Desai spent her developing years in India, moving between New Delhi and Kalimpong, after which, at age fourteen, she and her family relocated to England. She now calls the USA home, but returns to India on annual visits. Phillips' life has also been characterised by a series of dislocations, starting when he was only a few days old, when his family left the Caribbean island of St. Kitts for the English port of Liverpool. He received his education in the UK, has travelled widely, and now moves between the USA, the Caribbean and the UK. Each of the writers seem to display a need to return to the homeland, not with sentimental nostalgia, but with a desire to explore the significance of the transcultural experience to which they have been exposed in their lives.

In Jamal Mahjoub's 1997 speech on 'The Writer and Globalism', he comments on a rising trend of black writers in England at the time: "Their direct experience of encountering one culture while simultaneously inheriting another has long since been ignored and now seems to be coming to the fore, and it is emerging as literature" (*Writer* 4). More than ten years later, the same thing could be said about Mahjoub himself, as well as Desai and Phillips, as their novels "expand and illuminate the deficiencies, the exclusions.... speak up on behalf of those who had been left out, misrepresented or ignored.... engage and expand the dialogue" (*Writer* 4), as Mahjoub had put it. It seems, then, that a new genre of writing has developed, perhaps finding its roots in the genre of writing back to the Empire (*Writer* 3), exemplified by Salman Rushdie, Michael Ondaatje and Timothy Mo. These novels are characterised by a somewhat disenchanted approach to globalisation, moving away from the tendency to celebrate the multicultural, wide open, postcolonial world we live in, arriving at what Kristeva refers to as a "paradoxical community.... emerging, made up of foreigners who are reconciled with themselves to the extent that they recognize themselves as foreigners" (*Strangers* 195).

There seems to be an ever-growing appetite, among readers for novels that deal with the difficult issues of hybridity, foreignness and cultural difference, issues that are becoming more and more prevalent in the global world. In his musings over the writer's role in this new world, Mahjoub comes to the following conclusion:

The growing populations of immigrants and refugees testify to the changing balance of numbers in the world, and with them comes the need to adjust, on both sides. In terms of immediacy, literature cannot compete with the new technology, but it is still valid on its own premises. It provides a means of reflective expression and communication which requires our vital support, and can link the diverse cultures which are now, for better or worse, stuck with one another, and whose encounter now defines the world we live in. If for no other reason, then this is why literature is and will remain so essential to us all, now and for a long time to come. (*Writers 6*)

On the basis of this formulation, we could almost suggest that what writers such as Mahjoub, Desai and Phillips envision is a literature that projects not a pleasant picture of multicultural success, but rather the painful negotiations that accompany any form of border crossings, whether they be cultural, racial, psychic or national. Their aim seems not to erase the boundaries between cultures, but rather to draw the lines more clearly, not as boundaries of exclusion but as contact zones between cultures, creating in the process, a new literature, a transcultural genre of writing.

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