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**Interdisciplinary Perspectives**

**Edited by**

**Tina Rahimy**

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**Representation, Expression and Identity:  
Interdisciplinary Insights on  
Multiculturalism, Conflict and Belonging**

# At the Interface

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**Representation, Expression and Identity:  
Interdisciplinary Insights on  
Multiculturalism, Conflict and Belonging**

Edited by

**Tina Rahimy**

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## Introduction

*Tina Rahimy*

The concept of multiculturalism aims at different forms of knowledge, disciplines and academic fields. The purpose of the congress *Multiculturalism, Belonging and Conflicts*, held from Wednesday the 3<sup>rd</sup> of September 2008 until Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of September 2008, was precisely to gather as many colleagues specializing in different areas on the matter. The goal of these reflections was not to appreciate one approach more than the other, but rather to comprehend the complexities of the concept of multiculturalism. During the congress different scientists reflected on the human urge to belong as well as on the unavoidable and avoidable conflicts between different forms of thought. The discussions in each session were critical and productive. The participants' intentions were not to overthrow the others with arguments, but rather to seek affirmative critique. These interdisciplinary conversations insisted on a form of communication based on intertwined reflection. This congress on multiculturalism was thus not only an exercise wherein the existence and value of different forms of culture were acknowledged, nor solely for the sake of a surplus of an interdisciplinary approach as a new form of science. It rather acknowledged once more the plurality of men, not only between them, but also in them as well.

This e-book contains a selection of the papers that were presented at the congress. The title of the first session, *Multiculturalism – Critical Assessments*, defines the atmosphere from the start by not opposing critical thought to affirmative attitude but rather combining the two in a new form of potentiality, just as the organisers, Rob Fisher and Alejandro Cervantes-Carson intended, it to be. The first paper by Muriel Kahane interacts on this matter. By not opposing feminism with multicultural thought, as it has been done lately, but rather by pluralizing the two concepts, she intends to break through the contradictory assumption wherein the West demands its solemn right to the rights of women. In her paper, 'The Plural Self & The Social: Some Considerations for Political Theory', Kahane elaborates on the relation between autonomy and identity in connection to a form of feminism that is not restricted by ethnicity. She emphasizes the importance of collective identities as well as personal identities, by showing different forms by which women structure their identity. Through these differentiations, Kahane resists the homogenous discourses of an ideal identity.

In the second session, *Representations*, Sunny Lam elaborates in his article, 'The Contribution of Digital Media Technologies to Cultural Representations in Digital Cinematic Productions', on the effects of the new technological developments on the representations in digital new media. Lam

argues that these processes affect global symbolic images as well as local intercourse of them. The cinematic aesthetic is rather influenced by different cultural and 'meaningless' medial layers in a 'glocalized' discourse of technologies. Lam's representation focuses on the connection between the Hollywood blockbusters and the digitalized kung fu movie productions from Hong Kong. This new discourse does not only create new forms of images but also extends to the birth of a new symbolic order. New forms of 'discontinual hyper realities' are at work instead of the old oppositions of the West and the East or local and global.

In the third session on *Nations, National Identity and Nationalism* and the fourth session on *Social Imaginary and Identity*, the relation between construction of identity, nation-states and nationalism has been discussed. These discussions were not only focused on specific social structures, as in Ireland and Nigeria, but were also analysed on the conceptual level. In 'Do People Make History?' Eleni Pavlides elaborates on the relation between people and history. The relation in this article is not only defined by the nation and its history, but also as a concept of memory and as an object of transformation. By using the reflections of two authors – Richard Flanagan in his novel *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and Raimond Gaita's memoirs, *Romulus My Father* – Pavlides shows Australian literature and political thought have altered. The two works break through the assumptions of a national identity fixated on racial purity. Pavlides shows how these works combine historical consciousness with new ways of approaching the minority, migration and displacement.

The deconstruction of a nationality as a continental phenomenon is also achieved by Theophilus Ejorh. In 'The Imagined African Community in Dublin: Identity and Identification' Ejorh analyses the problem of self-definition and political identity in the African community. While this community is viewed as a homogeneous group, according to a false assumption of blackness and cultural unity, he advocates a broader perspective wherein the plurality of the African Diaspora is included in the analysis. This analysis, with its focus on the African community in Dublin, moves beyond particular forms of 'situationist sensibilities'. His analysis of the imaginary identity of African men and women searches for differentiations, which break through the binary categories like the separation of North of Africa from the rest of Africa, as well as the assumptions, imbedded in the binary representations of skin colour.

In the fifth session, *Belonging and the Need to Belong*, the urge and the possibility to belong to a group or a nation-state is adequately seen by Ana Bravo-Moreno from different levels: the legal possibility, the cultural connection and personal feelings or affections. In 'Socio-cultural Belonging in Legal Limbo', Bravo-Moreno features her research on identity construction of immigrants. This research is a comparison between the life of

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these migrants in the United States as well as the experience of other migrants in Spain. Bravo-Moreno emphasises the influence of the politics of the 'war on terror' on the legal treatment of migrants in Europe as well as in the United States. From this perspective, Bravo-Moreno focuses on Latin-American migrants and their racial and cultural struggle with their existence in the present time so common non-place of 'immigration limbo'.

The Latin-American experience of being a migrant is also a crucial subject in Jonathan Rollins' 'Ariel Dorfman Writes Home: Literary Citizenship and Transnational Belonging'. Rollins writes within the textual experiment of a 'home' in Dorfman's literature. Dorfman, the migrant, writer, and a writer in exile par excellence, has experienced the loss of a home as a definable place. His writings are, however, an attempt to redefine the concept of a 'home'. This redefinition is never defined as a place of birth, or any other geographical determination. Instead, 'home' becomes an event through the written word wherein not a single home but rather multiple homes are created. In Rollins' article, the sense of belonging liberates itself from the legal privileges of the citizens of a nation-state and cultural homogeneities by its inter-textual abilities to create alternative communities. The possibility of these homes is a pure confrontation between the concepts of 'here' and 'there', belonging and alienation.

In 'Longing and Dreaming in Real Time: How Chagossian Children in Mauritius See the Chagos Islands', Sandra Evers is in dialogue with Chagossian Children and their conception of a home. Evers attends the reader by an elaboration on the multi-historical and multilingual characteristic of Chagossian people. Through the childish language and drawings as well as through different perspectives on the concept of a home and future, this paper maps the harsh social-economical situations of this group. The child becomes visible as a pawn on the battlefield of political and cultural (un)forged identities. The simplistic language of the child creates the possibility to sense and experience their dilemma of despair and hope. In their survival of the present, they are bound to the illusion of a cohesive past and bright future.

The sixth session, *Politics, Globalisation and Culture*, starts with the relation between literature and politics. Rob Burton elaborates on the movement of the Bandung Conference in 1955 in his article, 'The Enduring Legacies of Bandung, Non-Alignment, and Richard Wright.' In a world divided between two solutions, namely Capitalism and Communism, the participants were in search of an alternative to the political dilemmas of the twentieth century. Burton however puts the idealisation of this conference by Richard Wright in contrast to the preliminarily assembly at Bretton Woods. On the one hand, Burtons' paper is an analysis of the political and economical significance of the two conferences; on the other hand, this analysis criticizes the manner in which historians have neglected other strata of thought. History of knowledge is, in this sense, not a given objectivity, but

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rather any writing is political. In recalling the memory, Burton urges us to break through the common strata of politics wherein the world is divided by the destructive belief of them and us.

In 'Expressions of Exceptions, Exceptions of Expressions: On Fragmented Languages as Political Discourse', Tina Rahimy moves further on the political relevance of the literature. By combining the writings of Arendt, Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari, Rahimy is in search of another understanding of the minority's voice. Through the body politics of the refugee and the legal discourse of nation-states we must find other forms of politics wherein the potentiality of the other, and not his or hers shortcomings, is at issue. In the triangle of politics, life and enunciation, the analysis of the experience of the refugee is not only limited to the subject of flight, but also becomes a dialogue with the other, the non-refugee.

This session ended with Jae Seung Moons' 'The Social Construction of Grievance and its Role in Social Movements: Overseas Filipino Workers' Activism and Homeland Filipino Politics'. Moon elaborates on the significance of grievances in social movements for Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). In his analysis on the identity and participation of this group and governmental response, Moon shows the difference between reality and discourse on these workers. Because of their life-circumstances and as the result of their migration, the OFWs move between their desire to be common political members of a society and their myth of heroism because of their economical significance. Moons' analysis is an exploration of the battle between new forms of slavery in the new globalized world and the urge of citizenship in the old 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The seventh session, *Minorities and Reasonable Accommodation*, starts with Masakazu Matsumoto's paper, 'The Politics of Toleration in Contemporary Liberal Societies: Assessing the Validity of Minority Cultural Rights'. In the modern age of globalism, cultural and social diversity has become a fact. Matsumoto examines these developments by looking at liberalism as a political thought and tolerance. What are the circumstances wherein tolerance is possible? How could we conceive the rights of minorities in the modern age wherein the migration has caused not only cultural transformations, but also economical and social changes that have disrupted the old certainties? Matsumoto elaborates on these issues by contrasting Chandran Kukathas thoughts to those on liberalism and toleration by Will Kymlicka. Matsumoto's intention in this paper is to re-examine liberal concepts, such as autonomy and freedom, as well as the concept of the state as a source of power, and put them in a new perspective of the multicultural society.

The multicultural political developments, especially between western and non-western cultures, are the key elements of Alan Wong's paper 'The Winter of Our Discontent: 'Reasonable Accommodation' and the

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2007 Quebec Election'. Through the Quebec elections in 2006-2007 Wong analyses the multiplicities of racism and migration. The event of the election carries as a democratic process the ability to be undemocratic at the same time. Wong emphasises this even more by pointing out the difference between democracy and 'the will of the majority', and fearing the replacement of the first by the second. Furthermore, this majority identifies itself through the contradictory claim of understanding the *homogeneous* 'common values' of a *heterogeneous* society. Through the reality of this election, Wong illuminates the hidden structures wherein the so-called universal inclusion of the other only bases itself on the idea of an 'us' that defines the values and norms of inclusion and a 'they' that never can be included.

The eighth session is divided in two parts. The first part is ***Migrants: Culture, Politics and Inequality***. In 'Recent Chinese Migrations to South Africa: New Intersections of Race, Class and Ethnicity', **Yoon Jung Park** elaborates on the Chinese community in South Africa. While the political division in this country is often thought to be a binary relation between the black and the white race, Park focuses on other forms of racial judgment, through which the immigration of Chinese was jammed based on their race. The effects of politics on migration, for migrants as well as the inhabitants, have been analysed through the global as well as local economical and social developments. This paper reflects on the experience wherein a people demands its place in a country, demands to belong rather than to be an identity that, even after decades of migration, refers back to the country of origin. For the Chinese community, as well as for the others, a crucial question arises: "Who are the real Chinese?" In this turbulent country, with its struggle for a national identity for the sake of its diverse population, Park focuses on the reality of pluralism in the Chinese community.

Pluralism and divergence is also a crucial subject for Laura Seibokaite, Aukse Endriulaitiene and Rasa Marksaityte in their research, 'The Portrait of New Lithuanian Emigrants: Integrative Model of Psychological & Social Factors'. In this paper, globalised world migrants, either through the inhabitants of the new country or the inhabitants of the country of origin, are often seen or defined as a group with common needs and characteristics. This communality is often explained by social, political and economical variables. This paper, however, aims to focus on the individuality and the psychology of the subject, specifically the Lithuanians, as well as on the difference in the desire of the subject to emigrate and the actual act of immigration. Instead of underlining the economical advantages and disadvantages of migration, Seibokaite, Endriulaitiene and Marksaityte rather emphasise traits, such as openness, flexibility and neuroticism, to illuminate the emotional differentiation in the experience of a migrant.

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The second part of the eighth session, *Multicultural Complexities*, contains two papers. In her paper, 'National Minorities in Poland after 2001: A Political Problem or an Element of Multicultural Reality?', Iwona Jakimowicz-Ostrowska attends the reader on ethnical policy of European nations. She draws attention to the tension of foreign policy that is almost solemnly defined by terrorist threats and the global European policy toward the minorities within the European domain, focusing on Middle and Eastern Europe. Jakimowicz-Ostrowska elaborates on the transformation of policy in Poland after the Second World War, and their attitude towards the minorities, but also on the acknowledgement of minorities in Poland after the fall of the Berlin Wall. Poland struggles between the unavoidable global emigration and immigration and their belief in the non-existence of minorities and xenophobia. This fear concerns both and results in the refusal to define either as a minority.

At the end of the eighth session, Naoko Maehara focuses on the experiences of the Japanese female resident in Ireland. In her autobiographical, yet theoretical, paper, 'The Dialogical Self and Memory-Shaping Processes: Japanese Migrant Mothers in Ireland', she discusses the construction of these mothers' memories as a process of going back and forth between their past life in Japan and their new environment in Ireland. By analyzing the collective and individual recollections, Maehara shows the tension experienced by these women between their relation to their homeland and Ireland. The memories of these women are within the private realm of their thoughts and emotions. This private space, however, is always embedded in the collective manners of thoughts, as an audience reflecting on their relations with others. Maehara describes how the interviewees foresee their future through the multiple dialogues between their collective and private past memories.

In *Cultural Politics*, the ninth session, the lecturers move further on the cultural multiplicity of the European countries and the political expressions of this phenomenon. In 'Concepts of Locality, Regionality and Europeanness in European Capitals of Culture', Tuuli Lähdesmäki elaborates on the manner in which the concept of 'Capitals of Culture' creates an awareness of locality and regionality. In this narrow perspective, the city becomes an object wherein an identity of 'being a European' is defined. The ideology of Europeanness emphasises the homogeneity of identity. Lähdesmäki shows how this homogenization not only effects the art expressions, but also illuminates the political assumptions. The city, as a 'Capital of Culture', becomes an instrument of a political ideology wherein not only the inhabitants of the cities are identified as the same, but also the differentiation between diverse European cities is lost. Neither the fact of migration nor the reality of globalisation seems to affect this clear idea of Europe, the new nation.

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The concept of the cities and urban identities is further elaborated at the end of the ninth session. In 'Dream or Nightmare: The Architectural Illustration of Conflicted Cultures and Identities in Post-Communist Eastern Europe', Raluca Manoliu and Mariana Fartatescu view the rather different forms of identification struggles in the cities in Eastern Europe. The aggressions and transformations in the political and economical environment, not only in the context of war, have created confused urban identities in search of a common past and in the hope of new forms of life. Manoliu and Fartatescu analyse the development of these cities along with reflection on the works and writings of Lebbeus Woods. This multidisciplinary paper reflects on the architectural and cultural movements between intimacy and unfamiliarity wherein the past is not denied, but also has lost its privilege to be the single *signifier* of the cultural developments. Manoliu and Fartatescu state that Woods' architectural power lies in his belief to build into the future is based on the destruction of the present as an historical given. It wants to break through the segmentations rather than being passive in the redemption of the past; a healing through the confrontation with the scars.

Unfortunately, there are no papers available from the tenth session, *Ethnicity and Boundaries of Difference*. The final day of the conference started with the eleventh session, *Conflict, Identity and History*. Until now, the lecturers elaborated on the relation between identity and contemporary forms of political societies. In this session, Leone Porciani guides us back to the early Greek society and its concept of identity, colonization, culture and urbanization. In his 'Mediterranean Identities in the Ancient World', Porciani analyses the reflections on Mediterranean culture and criticizes the homogeneous assumption of the Mediterranean identity and culture. Different concepts of ethnicity in different moments of history and politics become an element in the argumentation for the plurality of identities, even in the Ancient and Hellenic time. Porciani elaborates further on this matter through the analysis of Megara Hyblaia.

There are two papers from the twelfth session, *Social Construction of Identity*. First, Margriet van der Waal focuses on literary and historical reflections of Michael Chapman and the comments on his work in and outside South Africa. In 'A Paranoia of Identity Crisis'? Recent South African Literary Historiography and the Discourse of Cultural and Political Transformation', Van der Waal places Chapman in the turbulent time where the country, known for its apartheid regime, has the urge to transform itself not only on a fundamental political level, but also on a cultural and symbolical context. Democracy, while striving for equal citizenship, is always bound to the historical context. The construction of this history is defined, however, by the system of racial distinction. Through her reflections on literature and the history of literature, Van der Waal points at the downfalls of this history and the ethical ground on which its values are based.



The aim of this paper is to define the position of literature in this political transformation and in the history where the inhabitants are segregated in ethnicities and languages.

In 'Post-Holocaust Reconstructed Identities in Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* and W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*', Catalina Botez focuses on the juvenile experiences of the Holocaust. By defining themes, such as '1.5 generation', she distinguishes these experiences radically from those of adults. The events are of severe importance for the development of their identity and their view on history. The childhood and the trauma coincide in their inability to comprehend the horrors of the Holocaust, but it is nevertheless of crucial importance in their perception of inclusion and exclusion on a local level as well as on a global level. Botez' reflections are based on the literary works of Michaels and Sebald. With her literary style, Botez transports the reader to the tensions between memory and knowledge of history, the past and the present, the childhood and the confusion of adulthood.

The thirteenth session, *Multiculturalism, Public Service and Reasonable Accommodation*, ended with the paper 'How Solidarity Works in Highly Diversified Societies: How Far Do We Get with National Liberalism?' by Patrick Loobuyck. He discusses different political positions, such as egalitarian and deliberative democracy, concerning shared values in a democracy such as liberal nationalism, constitutional patriotism and communitarianism. Is the construction of or existence of a shared national identity sufficient for the sense of belonging within a diverse and dynamic community? Do we have to share the same ideas on justice to form a community? Is a common moral ground necessary for the experience of solidarity? This paper focuses on this sense of belonging, beyond weak and strong nationalism, by emphasizing shared social practices and the importance of an active language policy. Through knowledge of the language, Loobuyck seeks for the possibility of diverse forms of political participation, or rather the possibility of a mutual trust in the course of engagement.

The sessions and the gatherings can be characterized as open and productive. After four days of high concentration, the eyes became drowsy but the participants were still enthusiastic enough to continue political and social discussions in the pub. Therefore, I want to thank Rob Fisher and Alejandro Cervantes-Carson, not only for their efforts to manage such an immense and inspiring congress, but also for their efforts in realizing this e-book. I also want to express my appreciation to all the lecturers for their moving lectures and reflections.

**Representation, Expression and Identity:  
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## **The Plural Self & the Social: Some Considerations for Political Theory**

*Muriel Kahane*

### **Abstract**

This paper explores notions of multiple identities in relation to political theory: autonomy and multiculturalism in particular. Multiple identities refer to those instances whereby agents may hold more than one societal model influencing them. Who one is and how one reflects this is at the heart of theories of autonomy: autonomy is intrinsically tied to identity. Multiculturalism posits that the social matters for individuals. Although springing from the same body of literature, intersectional theories stress what might be a conflicting view - whereas socialisation tends to focus on externalist criteria, that is, how the external world affects the individual, plural identities focuses on the individual's response to these effects: how an agent views her identity frameworks and negotiates or responds to possible conflicts amongst these. By analysing strategies used to negotiate identity, this paper will show that consideration of intersectionality is crucial in order to think about autonomy and plurality. Agents will emerge as non-homogenous and ever-changing: this is critical in order to challenge ideas about cultural authenticity and thus foster non-ethnocentric feminism. Furthermore, the analysis will also point to the difficulty in asserting that autonomy is a necessary emancipatory strategy that will lead to pre-defined political and social consequences.

**Key Words:** Intersectionality, identity, socialisation, autonomy, multiculturalism, feminism, non-essentialism.

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### **1. What is Meant by 'Multiple Identities'?**

In this paper I set out the cause for the importance of literature on multiple identities for political theorists, especially for those working on theories of identity and multiculturalism. Theories of multiculturalism have often been accused of using notions of cultures or groups too rigidly. Those working on the paradox of multicultural vulnerability often focus on the position of individuals in order to understand the problems that might arise from strict multiculturalist understandings of identity. What can be gained by using an intersectional understanding of identity?

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The same is true of theories of autonomy. These are often used to shed light on the position of women within minorities: practices are banned or allowed depending on the alleged level of autonomy present. What are the implications of holding a more plural understanding of the self for these theories of freedom?

The idea behind intersectional identities is that individuals' identities are not formed within single monolithic societal models. Within the social milieu there are a variety of cultures that intersect and prioritise values in different ways. These generate a multiplicity of life options that might not sit easily together, but might nonetheless coexist within the experiences of one individual. For example, one could hold that being Spanish or British or French is not a sufficient portrayal of an individual's identity. A person might indeed be British, but she might simultaneously be a Hindu, a sceptical labour voter, a feminist, and a bisexual. Identities are formed through a variety of life worlds, amongst which are class, ethnicity, gender, race, sexuality, nationality, region, religion, language communities and subcultures such as political beliefs, fashion, and life choices.

According to Lugones, intersectionality also reflects the possibility of contradiction in an individual's experience of certain events:

all people who have been subordinated, exploited and enslaved have been forced to travel to 'worlds' in which they animate subordinate beings. (...) The tension of being oppressed ↔ resisting oppression 'places' one *inside* the *processes* of production of multiple realities.<sup>1</sup>

Multiple identities allow for the possibility of being oppressed and at the same time resisting that oppression; it is possible to choose something that might be potentially harmful. It is here where multiple identities can complicate the role of autonomy.

## 2. Multiple Identities and the Social

Before looking at the way intersectionality affects conceptions of identity, it is necessary to briefly see how it is linked to ideas of socialisation - a characteristic that has often been taken to destabilise the idea of "true selves". Literature on multiple identities recognises and is underpinned by ideas of socialisation: the social is thought to be crucial for the formation of autonomy, for the creation of identities.

What is different is that the social appears as neither uniform nor single: instead it is plural and constantly challenged<sup>2</sup>. A crucial distinction must be made at this point: there are different *forms* of identity that need to be considered: collective and personal identities.

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Collective identities are what we mean when we talk about the influence of the social world on our identity development. It is a form of differentiation; a definition of a group of people that will contain certain characteristics that the individuals in the group might or might not follow or agree to in its totality. The precise make-up of social identities is not what is most relevant for us though. What matters is the way individuals *deal* with those identifications in personal ways. Appiah regards collective identities as similar to Hacking's 'kinds of persons'<sup>3</sup> - an idea akin to Weber's ideal types. A kind of person or an ideal type of collectivity could be considered to be a sort of summary on what we expect the members of that collectivity to be like. For example, Weber defines the ideal type of German capitalistic entrepreneurs as follows:

He avoids ostentation and unnecessary expenditure, as well as conscious enjoyment of his power, and is embarrassed by the outward signs of the social recognition he receives. His manner of life is, in other words, often (...) distinguished by a certain ascetic tendency. (...) he gets nothing out of his wealth for himself, except the irrational sense of having done his job well.<sup>4</sup>

Analogously one could say that an ideal type could be, for example, a British Modern Orthodox Jew. We will have certain expectations of what she might ideally be like. If she is a young woman from London, we might expect that she be highly educated, live around the Hendon/Golders Green area (and *not* Stamford Hill), wear fashionable clothes but not buy into particularly revealing fashions or styles; we expect she will eat Kosher, and if not available, stick to vegetarian alternatives; keep Shomer Shabbat but not necessarily frown upon after work drinks; she will be pious, keep the mitzvot and so forth.

We must not forget however that there are also personal identities. These are commonly forged *through* collective identities: the collective terminology enables individuals to pick those aspects of culture they want to follow; those that will help explain themselves to others. Values only make sense when they resonate with others. The social emerges as crucial in enabling the language, the discourse within which individuals can construct or explain their own personal story. As Appiah points out:

once labels are applied to people, ideas about people who fit the label come to have social and psychological effects. (...) These ideas shape the ways people conceive of themselves and their projects. The labels operate to mould what we may call *identification*, the process through which

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individuals shape their projects - including their plans for their own lives and their conceptions of the good life - by reference to available labels, available identities.<sup>5</sup>

These individual stories are not circumscribed to follow only one identity: there is no need for an individual to define herself only as x or y; as a woman or as a Jew. Collective identities are *ideal* types; the experience of the individual is not ideal, perfect, unified. It need not conform to all that is expected when belonging to a certain group, especially when we bear in mind that many of the social attachments that agents hold might conflict with one another.

The social is still thought to be crucial for an account of the self, but multiple identities literature reinforces notions about the *particularity* of each agent's response to this socialisation. It is through these responses that autonomy is developed, and cultural (as well as other) identification is reproduced, maintained and challenged. Ultimately, what multiple identities explores is the frequent gap between the ascribed preferences of a group (e.g. the catholic faith is opposed to the use of contraception) and an individual's personal and private endorsements (a catholic agent need not necessarily be opposed to the use of contraception, regardless of being catholic). As such, group uniformity is challenged; the individual emphasised. Intersectionality stresses individual responses to inequalities; the uniqueness that arises as a result of externalist classifications, and the possibilities of negotiating one's identity in terms of what matters to oneself.

### 3. How does Intersectionality Operate?

So far we have seen a little of where it springs from and what assumptions it disputes, but in order to fully understand how intersectionality challenges traditional theories of autonomy, it will be necessary to sketch out how it (possibly) functions and some of the strategies that operate in negotiating between conflicting demands.

Wallace has created a diagram that illustrates the different collective identities that a single (ideal) agent might hold. Her analysis is heavily reliant on Mead's distinction between the *I* and the *me*. The latter is "the self as the generalised other, that is, the self as a reflection of the whole community"<sup>6</sup>. The *I* is, instead, "the response of the individual (organism) to the attitudes of others"<sup>7</sup>. This is very similar to Appiah's idea that our identities are formed through discourse and it is collective identities that provide the terms for identification. This is not to say that individual identities are the same as the collective ones - rather, there are, in Wallace's analysis, two levels to the formation of identity: one is how we, as individuals, respond to the demands bestowed upon us through our various identifications and belongings; and the other, which is how we, ourselves, see these operating: those characteristics

we choose to endorse or not or those about which we choose to remain ambivalent. It is our particular and singularly unique way of being.

Based on Wallace's model, we could see how they operate through the following (ideal) schema<sup>8</sup>. Take the example of a young woman: an educated British Muslim. Her (extremely simplified) identities could be represented in the following way<sup>9</sup>:

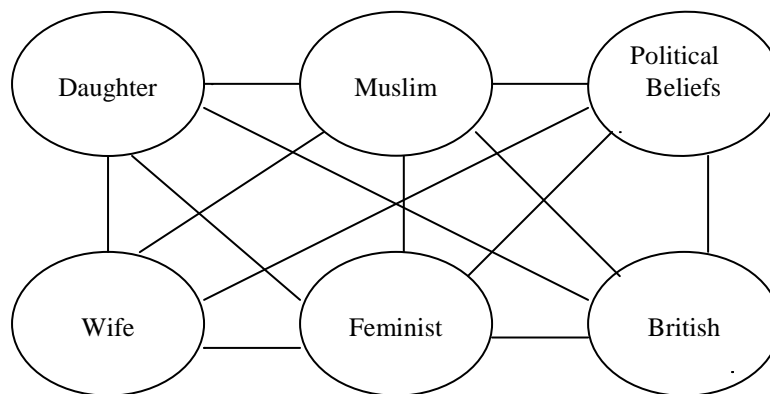


Figure 1 – Intersectional Model of Self

One way of negotiating these various identities might be what Lugones terms “world-travelling”<sup>10</sup>, whereby “the agent shifts among her different identifications from one social setting to another. This method of negotiating the plurality of one’s identities involves different identity-related meanings, values and practices being utilized in different contexts”<sup>11</sup>. For example, the above woman might find that since she is a committed Muslim and a feminist, she could (potentially) run into conflict. Perhaps, when surrounded by Muslim friends, she might defend feminism, including things about which she may not be convinced. In contrast, within the presence of feminist friends she might try to defend Islam against the charge that it does not respect women. She can move between her different identifications and prioritise them in different ways at different times.

Another way of negotiating plural identifications is through what Barvosa-Carter calls “syncretising”. Syncretising refers to

[a] hybrid set of outlooks that include an array of elements adopted whole from socially given materials and others



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created syncretically by the subject from elements created from different social sources.<sup>12</sup>

For example, it could be that this young woman considers herself to be a pious Muslim. However, there might some customs she might not agree with as a consequence of her being a feminist. She might think that raising your children to be good Muslims is indeed a requirement for women in Islam<sup>13</sup>. But as a feminist, she does not think that this duty should be exclusive to the woman: she believes that both she and her husband ought to do so. Her *me* might accept this duty as one that pertains to her, but her *I*, that is, the way she reacts to her various identifications, does not accept it as something that she would want to do. She creates her own endorsements from her various identifications: she does not need to agree with all the given characteristics of collective identity - instead she will pick those that she, as an individual, agrees with and that, to some extent, allow her to live with the plurality of her identifications; her multiple identities “are not fragmented, but an interconnected multiplicity”<sup>14</sup> that make sense to her.

Multiple identities allow for change over time - not just depending on social circumstances. It allows for the fluidity of social relations and attachments that characterises lives. This young woman might find that at different points in her life her various identities come into conflict. For instance, it could be that for a long time being a feminist and a daughter do not conflict. Her parents, although not necessarily espousing her beliefs, are happy to respect her decisions. But imagine that a few years later her parents tell her that it is not appropriate, now that she has young children, for her to pursue her career on a full-time basis. She might find, then, that her two identifications come into conflict: on the one hand she wants to please her parents, but on the other she does not believe that staying at home caring for her children is what will give her most fulfilment. It emerges that these intersectional identities might experience conflict at different times: they need not always be in opposition, but they potentially could be.

This later point is related to the idea of ambivalence. For many philosophers, conflict between various desires results in non-autonomous behaviour unless these conflicts are resolved. Multiple identity theorists refuse to accept that wholehearted espousal is a necessary characteristic of autonomy. One possible way of negotiating conflicting identities is through a strategy of ambivalence. As has just been mentioned, “...an agent need not endorse *all* aspects of her internalised identity frames”<sup>15</sup>. There might be things she completely disagrees with; however, not espousing these does not equate a rejection of that identification.

As Meyers points out, ambivalence might even have a positive effect. Subordination might mean that individuals of marginalised groups are victimised by their very identities. But in addition to harming them, these

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identities also provide an important resource for their members. Ambivalence emerges as a coping strategy, particularly useful in the case of subordination and victimisation. But it is more than that. It is also a way of enabling agents to hold onto their various identifications, to those things that matter to them without hurting those about whom they care. By being ambivalent, an agent can “clear social space for acting autonomously upon her own syncretic endorsements without simultaneously devaluing ‘abandoned’ ways of life that are still meaningful and socially important to others with whom she is closely socially related”<sup>16</sup>. Take the above example. This woman might consider herself a pious Muslim. However, she does not think that the demands of modesty need mean the wearing of a chador. She might occasionally wear the hijab in order to not upset her parents (for example, when attending Mosque or visiting her parents house), but she remains ambivalent about the necessity of this custom to her beliefs. The ambivalence “is toward aspects of her social identity group and is not the same as, and does not require, ambivalence toward her own self chosen endorsements”<sup>17</sup>.

#### **4. Implications of Multiple/Intersectional Identities**

So, what implications would adopting intersectionality as an analytical strategy have for political theory? I shall focus exclusively on two areas: multiculturalism and theories of autonomy.

One of the first issues to emerge is the fact that, despite its rootedness in theories of difference and accommodation, it makes a clear move away from the traditional multiculturalist stance according to which “people’s sense of their own identity is bound up with their sense of belonging to encompassing groups and that their self-respect is affected by the esteem in which these groups are held”<sup>18</sup>. It is then argued that cultural groups should have special rights because of the importance of culture in forging identity. Making sure that certain groups are not disadvantaged is said to be crucial in fashioning individuals with a strong sense of self; negative group stereotypes can be very damaging.

Intersectionality does not challenge this. Group rights might indeed be necessary, but, as Appiah warns, they should not be allowed to be the exclusive defining feature of egalitarian politics:

the politics of recognition, if pursued with excessive zeal, can seem to require that one’s skin colour, one’s sexual body, should be politically acknowledged in ways that make it hard for those who want to treat their skin and their sexual body as personal dimensions of the self.<sup>19</sup>

There is a need to take individuals seriously. We must be careful not to essentialise group identities to the extent where they might reify their members.

This is in turn related to ideas about cultural authenticity - a central concern for those interested in the study of minorities within minorities. Okin was heavily criticised for her essay "*Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women*". Critics claimed that Okin's interpretation was ethno-centric and unable to see the wealth of meaning intrinsic to many practices. Al-Hibri pointed out the necessity of not essentialising religions or cultures, especially when trying to advocate a feminist agenda<sup>20</sup>. Feminists must be sensitive to local contingencies and not assume that there are simple "truths" that can be dismissed. Agents must not be portrayed simply as vessels of culture but rather as active transmitters and challengers of these ideas. Culture and tradition are always a matter of interpretation and intersectionality, and its concern with individual responses reinforces these ideas.

Multiple identities also have implications for autonomy. First, it challenges the notion of individual homogeneity, bringing into question issues of authenticity. According to the *OED*, authenticity means "being in accordance with fact, as being true in substance"<sup>21</sup>. This corresponds with ideas of cultural or group authenticity. But the term can also refer to "being what it professes in origin or authorship, as being genuine; genuineness"<sup>22</sup>. Do intersectional identities challenge personal authenticity? Meyers maintains they need not: authenticity should not be considered "an all or nothing matter but [one that] allows for degrees"<sup>23</sup>. My argument here is that a better understanding of multiple identities stresses that the self, if authentic, will be constantly evolving, always challenged. This, in turn, might affect conceptions of autonomy: accounts will need to be sensitive to these variations. For example, it might mean the idea of autonomy as an all or nothing matter is precluded, but it also might mean that individuals could be more autonomous in certain aspects of their life than others.

As has been seen, through a strategy of intersectional identity, the social can retain its central position without being elevated into a static unchangeable fact. This has important consequences for emancipatory politics. Both multiculturalism and substantive theories of autonomy appear as prescriptive projects with a particular emancipatory subtext. Multiple identities are not prescriptive: it is rather a descriptive methodology that will enable the studying of oppression to become more nuanced. Within that it becomes clear that taking the intersectionality of identity seriously will mean that it will not be possible to condemn practices a priori (clarify): it is crucial that we analyse how an agent comes to view her particular attachments and the way the negotiation of these will result in certain practices.

As Hirschmann points out, "...women are important constructors of culture, and they constantly struggle to engage in this construction on their

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own terms. How they do this can be illuminating for the question of agency”<sup>24</sup>. MacLeod points out that for example “veiling is employed in a wide variety of situations, with social, economic, and nationalistic as well as sexual connotations (...). It is a subtle and evocative symbol with multiple meanings that cultural participants articulate, read and manipulate”<sup>25</sup>. In her case study in Cairo, MacLeod shows that veiling, a practice often considered to be oppressive, can also be empowering. For example, it might enable women to go out to work without being harassed. As emphasized by Hirschmann, practices might be representative of oppressions, but they are ultimately not the *causes* of them. The causes of oppression are what must be tackled; merely banning representations will not do away with inequalities. As we know, these will find their manifestation in alternative ways<sup>26</sup>.

This leads us to the question of non-ethnocentric feminism: the idea that it must be women themselves who challenge those aspects they consider harmful or patriarchal within their own cultures. As Volpp has pointed out, the point of non-ethnocentric feminism is to show that inequality is pervasive everywhere, and by creating stereotyped images of the Other, by thinking that some cultures, countries or religions simply are worse when it comes to treating women, we risk the ability to see the many ways in which inequality and patriarchy assume its forms. As feminists, we must be careful not to think that there are sites where patriarchy has been effectively abolished: this is not the case. Again, multiple identities fare well in stressing the many ways in which practices are maintained or challenged - a sure way of guaranteeing change and reflection from within.

As we have seen, the consideration of intersectionality as intrinsic part of the lived experience will have important consequences for political theorists. Through its use it is possible to avoid some of the common pitfalls that characterise the multiculturalist literature, avoiding essentialised conceptions of groups and individuals. Furthermore, it will also help in the understanding of autonomy, the tool often used by political theorists to help elucidate the limits of liberal toleration. Intersectionality as an analytical strategy shows the limitations of the more formalistic version of autonomy (often procedural and substantive) whilst retaining the centrality of the individual that is at the heart of the investigation. Only through seeing how individuals form their identities and the different ways in which they negotiate these will it be possible to have a successful setting for the study of minorities within minorities and equality at large.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> M Lugones, *Pilgrimages/Peregrinajes: Theorizing Coalition Against Multiple Oppressions*, Rowman & Littlefield, Maryland, 2003, p. 17.

<sup>2</sup> See: G Anzaldúa, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza*, Aunt Lute Books, San Francisco, 2007.

<sup>3</sup> I Hacking, 'Making up People', in *Reconstructing Individualism: Autonomy, Individuality and the Self in Western Thought*, T Heller, M Sosna and D E Wellbery (eds), Stanford University Press, Stanford, 2006.

<sup>4</sup> M Weber, *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Routledge, London, 2001, p. 33.

<sup>5</sup> K A Appiah, *The Ethics of Identity*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., p. 66.

<sup>6</sup> K Wallace, 'Autonomous 'I' of an Intersectional Self'. *The Journal of Speculative Philosophy*, vol. 17, no. 3, 2003, p. 177.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 178.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 185, figure 3. The diagram (and its contents) has been changed slightly, but the way it operates is very similar to Wallace's model.

<sup>9</sup> I take this diagram to be a highly simplified example of what is the case. Multiple identities are ever present: every single individual has a variety of attachments, and intuitively it seems fair to say that at some point these attachments might conflict. This case only comprehends some of the possible identities this young woman might have – there will be, of course, plenty of others.

<sup>10</sup> Lugones, pp. 77-78.

<sup>11</sup> E Barvosa-Carter, 'Mestiza Autonomy as Relational Autonomy: Ambivalence and the Social Character of Free Will'. *Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2007, p. 7.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> S Mahmood, *Politics of Piety*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 2005, pp. 181 – 184.

<sup>14</sup> Barvosa-Carter, p. 8.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 14.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 18.

<sup>18</sup> J Margalit and J Raz, 'National Self-Determination', in *The Rights of Minority Cultures*, W Kymlicka (ed), Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2004, p. 87.

<sup>19</sup> Appiah, p. 110.

<sup>20</sup> A Y Al-Hibri, 'Is Western Patriarchal Feminism Good for Third World/Minority Women?', in *Is Multiculturalism Bad for Women?*, S M Okin, Princeton University Press, Princeton, N.J., 1999, p. 39.

<sup>21</sup> Oxford English Dictionary Online, accessed 02/12/2008, <[http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50015045?single=1&query\\_type=word&queryword=authenticity&first=1&max\\_to\\_show=10](http://dictionary.oed.com/cgi/entry/50015045?single=1&query_type=word&queryword=authenticity&first=1&max_to_show=10)>.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Meyers, p. 174.

<sup>24</sup> N Hirschmann, 'Western Feminism, Eastern Veiling, and the Question of Free Agency'. *Constellations*, vol. 5, no. 3, 1998, p. 349.

<sup>25</sup> A E MacLeod, 'Hegemonic Relations and Gender Resistance: The New Veiling as Accommodating Protest in Cairo'. *Signs*, Vol. 17, No. 3, 1992, p. 538-9.

<sup>26</sup> See: L Duits and L van Zoonen, 'Headscarves and Porno-Chic: Disciplining Girls' Bodies in the European Multicultural Society'. *European Journal of Women's Studies*, vol. 13, no. 2, 2006.

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# **The Contribution of Digital Media Technologies to Cultural Representations in Digital Cinematic Productions**

*Sunny S. K. Lam*

## **Abstract**

Digital media technologies have tremendously affected the trend in digital cinematic productions globally, and so many previously unimaginable blockbuster movies like *Jurassic Park*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *X-men* rely on the contributions of digital effects and computer animation for their innovative, cultural representation. In Hong Kong – a highly Westernized capitalist consumer society putting more emphasis on entertainment rather than art and cultural representation - the film industry has continuously followed the traditions of the global capitalist organisational culture and digital media technologies from Hollywood. But, according to the concept of ‘glocalisation’, different aesthetic and cultural inputs by the local creative managers and symbol creators play critical roles in the process of cultural representations by means of Luhmann’s de-paradoxification. By adapting digital effects and computer animation, a new type of symbolic creativity that contributes to the sustainable development of creative and cultural industries [in terms of the manipulation of creative symbols like images and jokes for entertainment, information and perhaps even enlightenment] has, to a great extent, reinvigorated the kung fu and comedy movies in Hong Kong. This study aims to reveal the contributions of local cultural producers to some innovative digital cinematic productions like Stephen Chow’s *Shaolin Soccer*, *Kung Fu Hustle* and *CJ7* by means of the ‘glocalised’ digital effects and computer animation productions. The resulting multiple layers of cultural representations in the ‘spectrum of cultural representations’ should not be viewed and analysed separately according to the concept of the ‘aesthetics of seamlessness’.

**Key Words:** Digital effects, digital aesthetics, new media, cultural representation, de-paradoxification, glocalisation

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## **Introduction**

Since late in the twentieth century, digitalization has become the trend in media productions and, by and large, has taken an indispensable position in cinematic productions. Not only do unimaginable blockbuster SFX movies like *Jurassic Park*, *The Lord of the Rings* and *X-men* rely on global new media technologies such as digital effects and computer animation for their production of cultural representations but artistic and



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romantic movies like *Kill Bill* and *Titanic* do as well. By means of digital effects and computer animation, a new type of symbolic creativity that contributes to the sustainable development of creative and cultural industries in terms of the manipulation of creative symbols like images, songs, jokes and so on 'for the purposes of entertainment, information and perhaps even enlightenment'<sup>1</sup> has, to a great extent, reinvigorated the kung fu and comedy movies in Hong Kong. Since 2001, Stephen Chow, a generally recognized fan of kung fu culture and a renowned Hong Kong comedy film director and actor, has made three digital cinematic productions – *Shaolin Soccer* (2001), *Kung Fu Hustle* (2004) and *CJ7* (2008). These three movies, using an innumerable number of digital effects and computer animation, have initiated thoughts of the possible contributions of digital aesthetics to innovative cultural representations for the rejuvenation of the Hong Kong Film Industry. This study employs these three movies as cultural texts to demonstrate how digital media aesthetics and Stephen Chow's local 'meaningless' culture integrate in his unique digital cinematic productions of multiple-layered cultural representations of 'seamlessness'.

In Hong Kong, a highly Westernized capitalist consumer society which places more emphasis on entertainment than on art and cultural representation, the film industry has continuously followed the traditions of global capitalist organizational culture and digital media technologies from Hollywood. But, in accord with the concept of 'glocalisation'<sup>2</sup>, different artistic and cultural inputs by the local creative managers and symbol creators play critical roles in the process of cultural representations<sup>3</sup>. Luhmann's systems theory helps us understand the paradox of organisation culture encountered by cultural producers as well as creative media organizations in the Hong Kong Film Industry on the one hand<sup>4</sup>. His concept of 'de-paradoxification' reveals the contributions of the layers of digital effects and computer animation to sustain creative cultural productions in local digital cinematic productions within the rigid social system of organisation, as well as representation, on the other hand. In other words, the paradox of organisation culture leads to the production of redundant stereotypes of cultural representation within a social system of operative closure. Layers of creative digital effects and computer animation function as de-paradoxical cultural representation that I have named 'cultural de-representation' to enhance symbolic creativity as well as aesthetic values of digital cinematic productions in a process. This process includes a re-entry of the organisation into the interaction among the social and psychic systems<sup>5</sup>. In this study, how the local cultural producers of creative media organisations reshape the narrative and the narration of some innovative digital cinematic productions, like Stephen Chow's movies, using the 'glocalised' digital effects and computer animation productions will be investigated to demonstrate such a process of re-entry among different

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systems. The resultant multiple layers of cultural representations should not be viewed and analyzed separately according to the concept of the ‘aesthetics of seamlessness’.

### **1. Cultural Production and Globalisation**

As Diana Crane mentions, the term ‘globalisation’ is ‘poorly defined and difficult to research systematically’<sup>6</sup>. However, globalisation is no longer a simple one-way process from the West to the East. Use of reverse cultural flow, like Hong Kong cinematic martial art direction, to influence the Hollywood film industry is possible. Such kind of cultural hybridisation instead of homogenisation of consumer culture led by the globally expanded conglomerates should be advocated<sup>7</sup>. At the very beginning of the development of Hong Kong Film Industry, it might be regarded as a type of Westernization that Hong Kong cinema learned a lot of the media technologies and cultural production skills from the West. Stoke and Hoover explained, however, that these skills have been localised and hybridised as shown by two characteristics of Hong Kong Cinema: short production time and lack of adequate postproduction. Again, the proliferation of digital media technologies for digital cinematic productions invented by the West might be regarded as another wave of Westernization of the Hong Kong cinematic productions. Nonetheless, other than the technological dominance by the West, digital media technologies provide a means to the Hong Kong digital cinematic productions to create more diversified, high quality cultural products to the world, which is the contribution of Hong Kong cinema ‘in important ways to international aesthetic diversity and quality’<sup>8</sup> and the objectives of this study to dig out the possibility of digital cinematic productions to empower cultural hybridisation of Hong Kong cinema.

One important mechanism in the spiral of globalisation is ‘glocalisation’ that challenges the binary opposition between global and local cultures and leads to cultural hybridisation. The process of glocalisation is seldom affected by global media conglomerates, which means the local media companies possess high level of autonomy, and does not lead to global cultural homogenisation<sup>9</sup>. Robertson employs the term ‘glocalisation’ to refer to the global production of the local culture and the localization of the global culture<sup>10</sup>, which accounts for the successful development process of the glocalisation in Stephen Chow’s movies by integrating the globalised digital media technologies and the local ‘meaningless’ culture. This kind of cultural glocalisation that may not be consciously confessed by the organisations, as well as cultural producers, themselves is a complex interaction of localising and globalising tendencies<sup>11</sup>. Such process of glocalisation relies very much on creative managers and symbol creators’ contribution to and participation in establishing the temporal and spatial conditions for the harmonic cultural interaction between the local and the global – a ‘glocal context’, and the re-

entry of the organisation into the interaction among the social and psychic systems leading to the creative process of multiple-layered cultural representations in production<sup>12</sup>.

## 2. The Spectrum of Cultural Representations

In this study, the key concept of cultural representations is constructed on the basis of a number of trans-disciplinary theories of social sciences and humanities such as Luhmann's systems theory, Derrida's deconstruction, Hall's cultural studies, postmodernism and de-differentiation, and digital aesthetics of new media culture. At the very beginning of the theoretical exploration of this new model of culture and organisation studies that is entitled a 'spectrum of cultural representations', Luhmann's concepts of paradox and 'de-paradoxification' form the framework to depict the possibility, as well as impossibility, of the creative process of cultural productions and the categorisation of different cultural representations. The environments of cultural productions constitute and are constitutive of the social and psychic systems, whereas the psychic system serves as the environment of the social system and vice versa. The social system reproduces itself on the basis of organisational communications such as decision processes within creative media organizations of cultural productions. The psychic system is based on thoughts of human beings such as creative managers and symbol creators of symbolic creativity in creative and cultural industries. Although the psychic system provides a precondition for communication, it does not enter into the social system and vice versa. Both systems are separate and operatively closed. The social system does not receive any input from the external environment but merely 'irritations', which cannot determine any operations of the social system but may trigger its internal modifications. This distinction between the system and the environment forms the paradox that is the outline of the 'spectrum of cultural representations' and explains thoroughly the relationship between them as a 'trigger-causality' instead of an 'effect-causality'<sup>13</sup>. Such a paradoxical distinction may be drawn between two different social/psychic systems. For instance, the system of a novel production and the system of cinematic production by transcribing novels such as *The Lord of the Rings* as Tolkien's novels and Jackson's film trilogy respectively. The original novel is a cultural representation and the digital cinema is another cultural representation, or a 'cultural re-representation' for distinction, which constitutes the terminals of the 'spectrum of cultural representations' as shown in diagram 1.

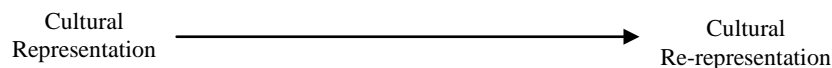


Diagram 1: The backbone of the 'spectrum of cultural representations'

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Another core concept of Luhmann's systems theory is 'de-paradoxification' which is a creative process to ensure self-reproduction of the system and thus, to prevent the paradox from leading to system paralysis<sup>14</sup>. A system's structural coupling with its environment is 'a process that is carried out over time, and is possible insofar as the system is able to deal with paradox' by means of self-organisation<sup>15</sup>. Whilst self-reproduction of the system refers to the reproduction of communicative events that is triggered, but not determined, by any environmental events, self-organisation refers to the construction of system structures that may determine the concrete processes of de-paradoxification<sup>16</sup>. It is important to our understanding of the complex relations of the process of de-paradoxification to the concepts of structures, cultural representation, deconstruction and de-differentiation.

People may query how the process of de-paradoxification can be creative and emancipatory if it is determined by structures as restricting powers like linguistics. However, we must understand that system structures and their possible mechanism of structural coupling are concerned with both semiotics and discursive practices of structuralism and post-structuralism respectively. While the semiotic approach is concerned with the 'how' of representation, with how linguistic signs produce meanings that are called the 'poetics' of representation; the discursive approach is more interested with the effects and consequences of representation as 'contingency', its 'politics'. It studies not merely how language and representation convey meaning, but also how the knowledge, which a particular 'discourse' in Foucault's perspective creates connects with power, regulates conduct, makes up or constructs identities and subjectivities, and defines the way certain things are represented, thought about, practiced and studied. The discursive approach always puts emphasis on the historical specificity of a particular form or 'regime' of representation<sup>17</sup>. It is this discursive approach of cultural studies that provides a chance to empower the interpretative ability of the term 'cultural representation'.

In Luhmann's systems theory, the operation of referring functions, like language systems, on the basis of signifying practices of observational reference in search of system stability. But reference itself is nothing, and any interpretations of a final moment of absolute truth with a particular reference are not possible. To draw a distinction between self-reference and external reference at a particular moment of the observation, the meaning-reference relationship of cultural representation can be reformulated in an innovative way. Indeed, the meaning of cultural representation as a communicative event is ultimately determined via the 'understanding' conceptualized as a selection of a particular distinction between 'information', as a repertoire of alternative possibilities, and 'utterance', as different choices of selectable forms of and reasons for a communication within a system of 'dynamic

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stability' similar to Foucault's discursive practices<sup>18</sup>. Furthermore, self-reference and external reference of the system can be encoded/decoded in different ways with regard to the observational operation of function systems of differentiation and de-differentiation, which accounts for 'discontinuities via the reorganisation of the form of differentiation of society'<sup>19</sup>. In addition, the system's self-referentiality of the characteristics of paradoxicality is itself deconstructive and can help reconstruct the system's structures in interational communications at different times and in different socio-historical contexts by means of the creative process of de-paradoxification as structural coupling among systems and environments. The interaction among the social system of organisational communications and the psychic system of perceptions in terms of trigger-causality explains the flexibility and changeability of structures of cultural representations<sup>20</sup>.

The concept of deconstruction advocates heterogeneity not multiplicity, difference and disassociation, which is absolutely inevitable for the relation to the other. This is what we need to disrupt the totality in order to achieve the condition for the relation to the other<sup>21</sup>. The other is a variant or subaltern that challenges the centrality of the dominant structure of cultural representation by means of its otherness<sup>22</sup>. The 'otherness' of the other is important to provide alternative choices of interpretations for cultural representation to people, which is the core value of the proposed 'spectrum of cultural representations'. It is also the target of deconstruction that is nourished by a dream of the invention of the other, and the relentless pursuit of the impossibility. So, the other meanings of cultural representations that are regarded as impossible are more important to the knowledge of deconstruction. From Derrida's point of view, dissociation is the condition of the relation to the other. Once one grants privilege to gathering and not to dissociating, one leaves no room for the other. However, in a dilemma, unity, some gathering and some configuration of a structure is needed. Derrida calls this structure of one relation to the other, a 'relation without relation', a paradox, and this is a relation in which the other remains absolutely transcendent with no need to destroy all forms of unity. This is called the 'experience of the impossible' of things whose possibility have to be sustained by their impossibility<sup>23</sup>. Deconstruction reminds people that other possible or impossible solutions exist and unveils a blueprint of the creative process of de-paradoxification that is looking for an impossible structure for new cultural interpretations. It is non-structure which stands for and against structure simultaneously.

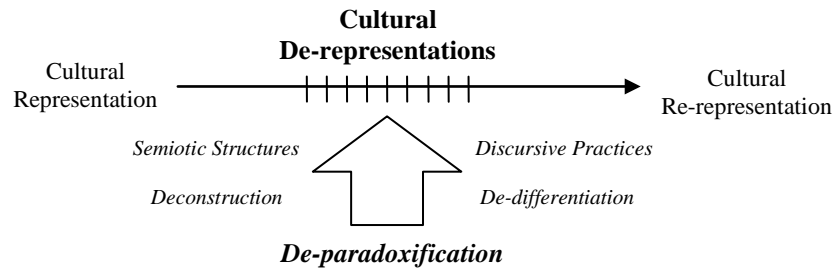


Diagram 2: The layers of cultural de-representations as the resources of symbolic creativity in the 'spectrum of cultural representations'

Differences between systems and environments provide alternative possibilities for decision making, thus enabling, as well as restricting, a re-entry of the organization into the interaction by means of the creative process of de-paradoxification, deconstruction and de-differentiation. Such a creative process is possible to the cultural representations of the spectrum whereas the rigid, traditional, organizational structures highly restrain changes. The loose structures of the intermediate layers of cultural representations more likely allow system's internal modifications triggered by external elements of the environment. These intermediate layers of cultural representations as the resources of symbolic creativity for reinvigorating cultural productions of organisations like digital cinematic productions should be envisaged and regarded as 'de-representations' or 'de-paradoxical representations' in the 'spectrum of cultural representations' as shown in the diagram 2 for their ability to motivate de-paradoxification, deconstruction and de-differentiation of the social and psychic systems. Media organisations as social systems have to make decisions to reproduce themselves. But decision as a specific form of communication is not a process but a choice among alternative possibilities. Moreover, decision communications are always paradoxical. We cannot make a decision unless there are undecidable alternative choices. All previous decisions may serve as references, or 'decision premises,' for later decisions, which refer to the structural preconditions, thus defining or creating a 'decision situation'. Within such a decision situation, the creative process of de-paradoxification, deconstruction and de-differentiation allows the interpenetration between the systems and the environments and the concept of uncertainty absorption when one decision connects to another decision. Though organisational decisions are not produced by human beings of the psychic system, their thoughts, as well as cultural representations, in the environment serve as uncertainty to trigger the modifications of decision communications in the process of de-paradoxification<sup>24</sup>. Therefore, like the

layers of cultural de-representations in the spectrum provide alternative possibilities, the layers of digital effects and computer animation for cultural producers' selection of decisions in a creative process of de-paradoxification also provide alternative possibilities under which uncertainty absorption takes place. It creates the decision situation that allows interactional communications among systems of traditional film culture and digital media culture of different aesthetics, thus leading to the formation of digital cinematic productions as a new cultural system.

### **3. Cultural Representations of Chow's Digital Cinematic Productions**

Three digital cinematic productions – *Shaolin Soccer*, *Kung Fu Hustle* and *CJ7* – by Stephen Chow are selected to demonstrate how digital media aesthetics and Chow's local 'meaningless' culture integrate in his unique cultural productions of multiple-layered cultural representations of 'seamlessness'. In most Hollywood digital cinematic productions, seamless digital effects and computer animation are employed to blend live action and digitally created images together for cultural representation. This leads to either 'realistic re-presentation,' like the smooth blending of live action of real protagonists and the historically accurate and digitally created images in *Titanic*, or 'fantastical representation' like those impossible creatures as digital illusion animated in the dream world of *The Lord of the Rings*. It is obvious that the objective of such Hollywood movies is either imitated physical reality or fantastical hyper-reality using seamless composition of filmic images, digital effects and computer animation, thus irritating audiences' sensations of cognitive realism and perceptual realism<sup>25</sup>. Nonetheless, neither real nor hyper-real are many cultural representations of Chow's seamless digital composite images in his digital cinematic productions, which is relevant to his unique aesthetics of 'meaningless' culture of a long history of development in his former cinematic productions of the late 1980s. The digitally created soccer ball of photorealistic texture mapping that is a computer animation technique to mount the photographic image of a real soccer ball onto the digital wireframe model looks realistic but is fantastically powerful enough to destroy goals and any other obstacles, and moves as well as deforms in accord with the movements of the stunt 'kung fu' actors that audiences may not recognize the authenticity of their 'kung fu' motions in *Shaolin Soccer*. Whilst Chow's 'Buddhist palm' making explosive destruction in *Kung Fu Hustle* is a fantastical representation with reference to the famous cult movie of martial arts fantasy *Buddha's Palm* (1964), many kung fu fighting scenes have digital composite layers of seamlessness to make audiences believe that they are a result of physical martial arts choreography rather than digital illusion. It is a paradox between references and differences, reality and illusion that is Black's (2002) concept

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of 'reality effects', which provides the cultural producers, as well as the audiences, the power of interpretations of the cultural meanings of the digital images of seamlessness<sup>26</sup>.

It is arguable that such cultural representations in Chow's digital cinematic productions are nothing new but just a continuation of his cultural productions of 'meaningless' culture using digital media technologies. As Frankie Chung – the former Creative Director and Head of Computer Animation of Centro Digital Pictures Limited, which is responsible for the digital effects and computer animation production of both *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle* – confesses, Chow has successfully helped globalise digital media technologies to create unique cultural representations of digital cinematic productions by integrating local 'meaningless' culture into the new media of digital aesthetics. The resultant cultural representations are innovative of heterogeneous cultural and aesthetic values by means of the globalised digital effects and computer animation, which is totally different from the cultural representation of his former movies of 'meaningless' gags and gimmicks in the 1990s. In an interview of the making of *Shaolin Soccer*<sup>27</sup>, Chow also said that he decided to produce the movie because he wanted to do something new, introducing the combination, as well as composition, of kung fu and soccer game together in an unprecedented way. As McClean mentions, Chow 'takes great advantage of DVFX for comedic value in his films *Shaolin Soccer* and *Kung Fu Hustle*' and he does enhance humour with seamless and exaggerated digital effects and computer animation in these movies<sup>28</sup>.

Traditional film production possesses its own pre-existing social and cultural sign systems for the cultural representation of local 'meaningless' culture that is, by and large, reliant on verbal scripts including both dialogue and monologue to strengthen the comedic effects of 'meaningless' gags and actions, while new media reveals different signifying systems of digital aesthetics and cultures more dependent on visual representations to exaggerate the performances of 'meaningless' culture. The re-articulation of traditional and new media sign systems in digital texts, like Chow's digital cinematic productions, is complicated and paradoxical<sup>29</sup>. Normally, media organizations, like traditional Hong Kong film conglomerates, attempt to reproduce movies using the same pre-existing social and cultural sign systems with a view of ensuring the profitability of a movie production from the experience of a previous production in accord with organization culture and routines that is a 'cultural re-representation' from a previous cultural representation. Such kind of stereotypical cultural production is paradoxical to the will of cultural producers like Chow and his creative team; nevertheless, Chow is himself paradoxical for his identities as both an organisation manager and a symbol creator in his cultural productions. For instance, the singing performance of Chow and Yat-fei Wong in *Shaolin*



*Soccer* is a typical reproduction of local 'meaningless' culture within the traditional sign system, which is more reliant on the singing scripts and dialogues than those visual impacts of the scene. However, the intermediate layers of digital effects and computer animation providing 'cultural de-representations' play a more critical role in enhancing the comedic effects of Chow's movies by a creative process of de-paradoxification, which allows the interpenetration between the systems of traditional film production and new media of digital aesthetics, thus creating new cultural and aesthetic values of digital cinematic productions. In a scene of *Kung Fu Hustle* where the female landlord, portrayed by Qiu Yuen, is preparing to fight against two blind killers, her body, especially her two breasts, and her posture while smoking, represent the local cultural image of an eccentric female landlord. These images are re-articulated by the seamless layers of digital effects and computer animation that exaggerate the increasing size of her body and the fire and smoke of the cigarette when she breathes in, thus representing her image as a landlord as well as a kung fu master with regard to the new digital cinematic aesthetics.

However, it does not mean that all seamless digital effects and computer animation are de-paradoxical. Decisions of complexity by the cultural producers within the social and cultural system define the final outcome of any digital cinematic productions that may be paradoxical and not creative, like the flying action of Dicky acted by Jiao Xu. There is a scene in *CJ7* where he steps on an eagle and sees a cloud pattern of the extraterrestrial character that is a mechanical reproduction of a similar scene in *Kung Fu Hustle* where Chow flies to the sky, steps on an eagle and sees a cloud pattern of the Buddha. All creative managers and symbol creators participating in the digital cinematic productions add complexity to the social and psychic systems of cultural productions and reduce the chance of alternative possibilities to be selected in decision communications, thus undermining symbolic creativity indeed<sup>30</sup>.

Digital effects and computer animation as 'cultural de-representations' in the spectrum contribute to reshape the narrative of local 'meaningless' culture by referring to knowledge and recognition of reality, as well as hyper-reality, and enhance the narration of digital aesthetic and theoretical values by exceeding the mimetics of cultural representation in Chow's digital cinematic productions<sup>31</sup>. As mentioned before, many images and actions of protagonists in his digital cinematic productions are digitally manipulated, exaggerated and composited, thus reshaping the narrative of the final composite images with regard to knowledge and recognition of local 'meaningless' and other reinvented cultures, thus empowering the narration by integrating digital aesthetics of new media into traditional film production. In other words, these movies are reinvigorated narratives of Chow's 'meaningless' cultural representation and the narration of a newly invented

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digital cinematic aesthetics – the ‘aesthetics of seamlessness’. In *Shaolin Soccer*, Chow kicks the ball to hit a gang after being insulted at the karaoke bar. His motion is frozen and digitally manipulated with the ball’s digital animation, and the background plate is shot by motion control camera<sup>32</sup> in multiple layers. This stretches the time and space of the motion and allows creative inputs from computer animators, thus reshaping the narrative with reference to knowledge and recognition of kung fu and soccer, as well as local gang fighting culture - exaggerating the comedic effects of the ‘meaningless’ kung-fu-soccer-fighting. Similarly, in *Kung Fu Hustle*, a chasing fight game between Chow and the female landlord is produced of cartoon-style motions in accord with the classical cartoon series of *Wile E. Coyote and Road Runner* by shooting their movements and gestures in front of a blue screen and then animating and compositing the acquired motion sequence layers with other digital images. The reinvigorated narrative and narration by adapting cartoonish motions show the diversity of cultural representations in Chow’s digital cinematic productions. Nevertheless, such newly invented ‘meaningless’ cultural representation may not satisfy audiences of different discursive practices. *CJ7* may not be an attractive digital cinematic production to many old fans of Chow’s ‘meaningless’ movie culture, but his attempt to explore the alternative possibilities of digital cinematic productions concerning the interplay among different global, as well as glocalised, cultures and aesthetics, such as the cultural life of working class in mainland China, science fiction and kid movies, should be envisaged. Such exploration of cultural representations in the creative process of de-paradoxification is critical to the sustainable development of the Hong Kong Film Industry in the local, as well as global, film market by irritating internal modifications of systems of organisation and representation.

### **Conclusion**

The model of a ‘spectrum of cultural representations’ aims at providing an overview of the complexity of the social and psychic systems and their interaction that explains the paradoxical as well as de-paradoxical mechanisms of operations leading to cultural production and reproduction by creative managers and symbol creators of symbolic creativity in creative and cultural industries. Digital cinematic productions, integrating traditional film culture and digital aesthetics of new media, depict the concept of ‘aesthetics of seamlessness’, and the corresponding separate layers of cultural representations, especially the digital layers of cultural ‘de-representations’, reveal the alternative possibilities for creative productions within a system. On the one hand, media organisation of the social system tends to make decisions for stability, as well as profitability, in cultural productions, which leads to mechanical reproduction; on the other, creative managers and symbol creators look for creative cultural productions in a de-paradoxical

process that allows a re-entry of the differences between system and environment into the system, thus facilitating dynamic stability on the basis of instability. Such a creative process of de-paradoxification requests media organisation and its cultural producers to make decision communications by handling and understanding complex information and utterance in the systems, thus leading to an internal requirement of discontinuity and newness of interpretations of cultural representations<sup>33</sup>.

New digital media technologies, like digital effects and computer animation, provide a new signifying system of discursive practices that facilitates deconstruction and de-differentiation of the traditional film, signifying structures and reconstruction, as well as re-articulation, of a newly invented representational system accomplished by embedding digital aesthetics into digital cinematic productions<sup>34</sup>. As the analysis of Stephen Chow's digital cinematic productions demonstrates, the seamless layers of digital effects and computer animation of digital media aesthetics give cultural producers alternative possibilities to rejuvenate local cinematic productions by integrating the local 'meaningless' culture and the global new media culture. Such kind of reformation of the traditional media in the face of the challenge from new media is inevitable, and the power of digital aesthetics of new media technologies that is the seamless, exaggerative and fantastical characteristics of 'reality effect' enhances symbolic creativity to reform cultural representations of local 'meaningless' culture in a new way<sup>35</sup>. The contribution of digital effects and computer animation to the rejuvenation of local cinematic productions is observable, but the final outcome depends very much on the attitudes and performances of media organizations and their cultural producers.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> David Hesmondhalgh, *The Cultural Industries*, SAGE, London, 2002, p.4.

<sup>2</sup> Mike Featherstone, Scott Lash and Roland Robertson, *Global Modernities*, Sage Publications, London, 1995.

<sup>3</sup> Hesmondhalgh, op. cit.

<sup>4</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Social Systems*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 1995.

<sup>5</sup> Niklas Luhmann, *Theories of Distinction: Redescribing the Descriptions of Modernity*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2002; David Seidl and Kai Helge Becker, *Niklas Luhmann and Organization Studies*, Liber & Copenhagen Business School Press, Malmö, 2005.

<sup>6</sup> Diana Crane, Nobuko Kawashima and Ken'ichi Kawasaki, *Global Culture: Media, Arts, Policy, and Globalization*, Routledge, New York, 2002, p.1.

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- <sup>7</sup> Joseph M Chan and Bryce T McIntyre, *In Search of Boundaries: Communication, Nation-States and Cultural Identities*, Ablex Publishing, Westport, Connecticut, 2002.
- <sup>8</sup> Hesmondhalgh, op. cit., p.193.
- <sup>9</sup> Crane, Kawashima and Kawasaki, op. cit.
- <sup>10</sup> Featherstone, Lash and Robertson, op. cit.
- <sup>11</sup> Chan and McIntyre, op. cit.
- <sup>12</sup> Luhmann, op. cit., 2002; Seidl and Becker, op. cit.
- <sup>13</sup> Seidl and Becker, op. cit., p.23.
- <sup>14</sup> *ibid.*
- <sup>15</sup> Emilio González-Díaz, 'Paradox, Time, and De-Paradoxication in Luhmann: No Easy Way Out'. *World Futures: The Journal of General Evolution*, vol. 60, no. 1, 2004, p.16.
- <sup>16</sup> Seidl and Becker, op. cit.
- <sup>17</sup> Stuart Hall, *Representation: Cultural Representations and Signifying Practices*, SAGE Publications, London, 1997.
- <sup>18</sup> Seidl and Becker, op. cit.
- <sup>19</sup> Luhmann, op. cit., 2002, pp.66-67
- <sup>20</sup> *ibid.*; Seidl and Becker, op. cit.
- <sup>21</sup> John D. Caputo, *Deconstruction in a Nutshell: A Conversation with Jacques Derrida*, Fordham University Press, New York, 1997.
- <sup>22</sup> George Hartley, *The Abyss of Representation: Marxism and the Postmodern Sublime*, Duke University Press, Durham [N.C.], 2003.
- <sup>23</sup> Caputo, op. cit.
- <sup>24</sup> Seidl and Becker, op. cit.
- <sup>25</sup> Shilo T. McClean, *Digital Storytelling: The Narrative Power of Visual Effects in Film*, MIT Press, Cambridge, Mass., 2007.
- <sup>26</sup> Joel Black, *The Reality Effect: Film Culture and the Graphic Imperative*, Routledge, New York, 2002.
- <sup>27</sup> It is an interview of Stephen Chow recorded in the DVD of *Shaolin Soccer* published by Universal Laser & Video Co. Limited.
- <sup>28</sup> McClean, op. cit., p.85.
- <sup>29</sup> Anna Everett, 'Digitextuality and Click Theory: Theses on Convergence Media in the Digital Age', in *New Media: Theories and Practices of Digitextuality*, Anna Everett and John T Caldwell (eds), Routledge, New York, 2003, pp.3-28.
- <sup>30</sup> Seidl and Becker, op. cit.
- <sup>31</sup> Louis Marin, *On Representation*, Stanford University Press, Stanford, California, 2001.
- <sup>32</sup> Motion control camera is used to shoot a scene of the same movement in different takes for digital compositing. Normally, at least, two shots of the

same camera motion are made to separate an actor from the background, but more complicated manipulation of motion control camera can produce more layers for complex digital compositing effects.

<sup>33</sup> Seidl and Becker, *op. cit.*

<sup>34</sup> Everett, *op. cit.*

<sup>35</sup> P David Marshall, *New Media Culture*, Oxford University Press, London/Arnold, New York, 2004; McClean, *op. cit.*

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## Do People Make History?

*Eleni Pavlides*

### **Abstract**

“Do people make history? What is the relationship between people and historical forces?”<sup>1</sup> These questions are posed to author Richard Flanagan during an interview, and Flanagan has no ready answer. He responds that he has written two novels trying to address this issue, which for him is ‘the big one’.<sup>2</sup> In addition to Flanagan’s *The Sound of One Hand Clapping*, this paper also examines another literary text published in Australia in the 1990s - Raimond Gaita’s *Romulus My Father*. Where Flanagan writes fiction, Gaita writes memoir. Motivated by a common desire to answer the questions posed to Flanagan, both writers address the post war European exodus to Australia which ultimately brought about the country’s multicultural policies in the 1970s. Within the public sphere, the possibility of multiculturalism co-existing with Australianness has been vehemently debated since the late 1980s. Opponents to multiculturalism saw diversity as antagonistic to social cohesion. Positions became further entrenched when the Howard conservative government was elected to office in 1996. Yet, in spite of the many criticisms of multiculturalism, *Romulus My Father* and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* both proposed a different post war synthesis for Australia. Ostensibly books about Australia in the 1950s, these texts responded to the global need to ‘rethink the politics of identity’.<sup>3</sup> Flanagan’s and Gaita’s literary interventions linked the national conversation to urgent global questions that arose at the end of the twentieth century regarding who was entitled to claim the rights of citizenship and national belonging.

**Key Words:** Multiculturalism, Richard Flanagan, Raimond Gaita, Australia.

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### **1. Origins and Beginnings**

Displacement is both a condition of migrancy and colonisation. More than two centuries ago under British imperial mandate, the Australian landmass became the site of displacement for both its white and aboriginal people. In 1788, British convicts were expatriated to Australian shores to become the continent’s first white settlers. Eventually, British settlement led to the dispossession of the continent’s indigenous people. Prior to this, Australia’s aboriginal people had occupied the land for durations, variously claimed by anthropologists and historians, between 35,000 to 60,000 years.



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Thousands of years of history could not shield Australia's aboriginal population from the power of imperial will. But then, 'Aborigine' itself was a legal concept introduced by the settlers for people who would not have named themselves in this way.<sup>4</sup>

If you look closely at a map of Australia you will see the island of Tasmania situated south of the continental landmass. Replicating the mainland island in miniature, Tasmania or Van Diemen's Land, as it was known in colonial times, serves as an unhappy testament to colonial power, both in the brutality meted out to the British convicts housed there and in the treatment of its aboriginal people. Two hundred years ago, it was thought that some 4000-5000 indigenous people lived on the island. By the end of the 1870s, not one full-blooded aboriginal person remained alive. Accordingly, the island is often alleged to be the site of genocide but, within the realm of Australian history, this is a disputed point which hinges on the question of this paper. Do people make history? And if they do, what are the conditions that allow them to do so?<sup>5</sup>

Certainly, the men who led Australia's six colonies to nationhood and Federation in 1901 deemed that they were making history. "A nation for a continent and a continent for a nation"<sup>6</sup> was the proud proclamation of Edmund Barton, Australia's first Prime Minister. As the Empire's remotest outpost, Australia was to be a white, sovereign, modern European state and Australians looked to their new government to exclude inferior races by law. Therefore, the new nation's constitution denied citizenship, franchise and the right to serve in the armed forces to Africans, Asians, and Aboriginal people. In 1901, the first act passed by the Australian Federal Parliament was the *Commonwealth Immigration Restriction Act*, which came to be known as the White Australia policy.<sup>7</sup> Under this policy, undesirable races were excluded from Australia by means of a dictation test administered in a European language.<sup>8</sup>

The discourse of racial purity has often eclipsed a parallel anxiety for Australia's nation builders, mainly, the need for population growth to preserve the continent for its colonisers.<sup>9</sup> Consequently, the Second World War proved to be a defining moment in Australia's immigration history. Post war, the country found that they had lost a higher percentage of young soldiers than any other allied country. Production was crippled and the economy was on its knees.<sup>10</sup> As a result, Australia's ambitious post war immigration program was launched, with the Immigration Minister –Arthur Calwell - anticipating that for "every foreign migrant there would be 10 people from the United Kingdom".<sup>11</sup> However, to sustain this rate, Australia had to accept more 'foreign' migrants than they sought from the displaced persons camps in Europe. Therefore, the definition of 'white' as administered by the White Australia policy evolved accordingly. Initially aligned with British migration and then with Protestant and Nordic migration,

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the category of 'white' moved eastwards across Europe to include Greeks, Italians, Maltese and other non-Nordic World War II European refugees.<sup>12</sup>

As the Australian state sought to populate the continent and strengthen its economic enterprise, it also needed to allay the concerns of its citizens of this sudden influx of foreigners. Therefore, the Aliens Act was passed in 1947 to come into effect on the first of January 1949. In addition to working for two years, as directed by the Commonwealth, all aliens over sixteen also needed to register and to notify the Department of Immigration of any change of name, address or occupation. Concurrently, the identity of the Australian citizen also came into being with the introduction of the *Nationality and Citizenship Act* of 1948; prior to this all Australians had been British subjects. Australia's post war identity became predicated on the symbolic separation that could be drawn between alien and citizen. The Migration Act did not replace 'alien' with 'non-citizen' until 1983. What was unforeseen and largely underestimated was the subsequent social and cultural change that the post war 'aliens' would bring to the Australia. Thus, the post war "Displaced Persons intake laid the foundations for multicultural Australia".<sup>13</sup>

## **2. Border Crossings and Literary and Filmic Interventions**

Two books published by Australians in the 1990s address the story of Australia's post war immigrants. One of them is Richard Flanagan's *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and the other is Raimond Gaita's *Romulus My Father*. During an interview about his novel, questions such as: "Do people make history?" and "What is the relationship between people and historical forces?" are posed to author Richard Flanagan. Motivated by a common desire to answer these questions, both Gaita and Flanagan foreground the human cost of the post war European exodus to Australia. Yet, where Flanagan writes fiction, Gaita writes memoir. In addition to being published internationally, both authors had their books adapted to film. Equally, the two films achieved worldwide distribution and mainstream release. Positioning themselves within cultural nationalisms of fin de siècle Australia; Gaita's and Flanagan's texts arrived without the fanfare and the occasional controversy which greeted the publication of multicultural literature from the 1980s to early 1990s.<sup>14</sup>

Somehow, these books and their film adaptations managed to straddle a position that was both 'multicultural' and Australian at the same time. Flanagan, who is married to a Slovenian and is the son of Irish Australian settlers, and Gaita, born in Germany but growing up in Australia as the son of European refugees, spoke in new ways about the essential Australianness of the post-war immigrant experience. Ostensibly writing texts about Australia in the 1950s, these two authors linked the national conversation, to urgent global questions that arose at the end of the twentieth

century, about who was entitled to claim the rights of citizenship and national belonging.

Igor Maver credits *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* with bringing the post war European migrant experience (particularly the Slovene experience) into Australian mainstream literature.<sup>15</sup> Elizabeth McMahon also acknowledges Flanagan for presenting “a world which has had some, though not extensive, coverage in Australian fiction, but very little in film. The all too obvious reason for this is that such a topic conflicts with long-held ideas about the opposite themes and subjects of Australian fiction.”<sup>16</sup> Thus, some fifty years after it began, the post-war migrant experience freed itself from a category sometimes ghettoised as Australian multicultural literature, and a denied discourse came into majority acceptance within Australian consciousness. As a subset of Australian literature, and a product of the positive discrimination policies of the 80s, multicultural literature had, at times, been derided as lacking literary merit.<sup>17</sup>

Perhaps, due in part to Flanagan’s status as an established author, his narrative was readily accepted and the novel slipped easily into the category of Australian literary fiction. Flanagan also scripted and directed the film version, realising his cinematic vision of Tasmania with the release of *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1998). Likewise, McMahon recognises the film’s debt to the national literary inheritance: “Readers and viewers of *My Brilliant Career* are aware that the film [*The Sound of One Hand Clapping*] is, in part, a response to the position Franklin’s (should be Flanagan’s?) novel occupies in the Australian literary tradition”.<sup>18</sup> By establishing these linkages, Flanagan’s treatment of the culture and articulation of the Australian world, albeit from an immigrant European perspective, appeared acceptable to the society wherein it was conceived. Imaginatively situating the post-war aliens, wogs and reffos in his fiction, Flanagan’s effort to rehabilitate them into the story of the Australian nation was successful. Even though some reviews were unsympathetic, ultimately both the book and film garnered cultural capital: the film was well received within Australia and at the Berlin film festival (1999), but did not pull off a US release. In addition to being short listed for the Miles Franklin Award in 1998, the book won the Victorian Premier’s Literary Award and the Vince Palmer Prize for Fiction for that same year. The novel was also set as a text on the Tasmanian school curriculum.

As a moral philosopher of international renown and a Professor at King’s College, Raimond Gaita also bought considerable prior prestige to the publication of his memoir. Gaita’s story of growing up in Australia as the son of traumatised post-war immigrants won the 1998 Victorian Premier’s Literary Award, and became a set text for the Victorian Year 12 curriculum.

The written work and the subsequent film - *Romulus My Father* (2007) were both widely praised. Reviewers saw correlations to longstanding Australian narrative traditions in both the book and film. *Quadrant*, the conservative journal enthused: “*Romulus, My Father* approaches the success of the book it has already been compared to, the best-selling *A Fortunate Life*”<sup>19</sup>. Yet another review in *Screen Education*, linked the book imaginatively to another classic Australian text - Henry Handel Richardson’s *The End of a Childhood*. In the same review, the film’s genealogy was traced to other significant Australian films such as: *The Getting of Wisdom* (1977), and *The Man from Snowy River* (1982).<sup>20</sup> All films which tell the stories of Australian children coming of age in rural landscapes.

As texts of the 1990s, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* and *Romulus My Father* not only bridged the gap between mainstream and multicultural, but also the perceived divide between high and popular culture. Both narratives operated as literary texts with privileged aesthetic merit in the realm of ‘high’ culture. Equally, both films were well received within the wider realms of circulation attributed to Australian ‘popular’ culture. Both projects challenged the primacy of the literary text, occupying a ‘post modern’ space that encouraged intertextual and reflexive readings between film and book. For curriculum study, the texts also presented as ‘modern’ and up-to-date in the sense in that they could be studied within a number of disciplinary boundaries: Media Studies, Cultural Studies, English and Australian Studies. As a result, in the public imagination, the two texts could be intertwined or dealt with independently. You could read the novel but not see the film and vice versa, but the dialogue that had been set up between the two mediums could not be ignored nor the challenge that it presented to the literary paradigm.

Reaching international audiences, the films also moved on from stereotypical representations of Australianness that prevailed in the first decade of the revival of the Australian film industry (1973-1983), in films such as *My Brilliant Career* (1979) and *The Man from Snowy River* (1982). At the same time, *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1998) and *Romulus My Father* (2007) managed to demonstrate their continuity with the earlier nationalist film tradition, whilst proposing a more hybridised Australian identity “negotiating its forms and its meanings across grids of ethnic and cultural diversity”<sup>21</sup>. Grids of meaning were also established internationally. A Czech/English screenwriter and an international cast were used for *Romulus My Father* (2007). In contrast to Flanagan, Gaita did not write the screenplay adaptation of his memoir. The task was assigned to Nick Drake, a poet, playwright and novelist in his own right; which led Gaita to ponder: “How, though, could an Englishman with a Czech father, who had never visited Australia, write a screenplay in which the Central Victorian landscape was a major character rather than just a beautiful backdrop?”<sup>22</sup>. *The Sound of*

*One Hand Clapping* (1998) was shown on Slovene TV as well as the Berlin Film Festival.

Both literary texts were translated: *Romulus My Father* was published in England and translated into Spanish, German and Dutch; *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* was published in New York and London and translated into German, Dutch and French. By using 'wog' narratives the films managed to be both distinctively Australian and international at the same time. With their strong emphasis on setting, both projects also linked to a long tradition of depicting life in an Australian context as determined by landscape. Furthermore, the texts, with their strong emphasis on regional settings, also foreshadowed localism as the countervailing force to globalisation with their emphasis on the local and the regional. *Romulus My Father* (2007) lyrically depicted Central Victoria and *The Sound of One Hand Clapping* (1998) fore-grounded Tasmania.

Flanagan and Gaita, with their aesthetic successes, challenged the authorised, official, British biased and monocultural memory of the nation that was being strongly promoted at the time by the conservative government. Monocultural memory was being reinvented to shore up the nation against the gremlins of globalisation and to ensure social cohesion. At the same time, this approach marginalised a number of groups within the nation: amongst them being 'wogs and women'. Instead of employing a monocultural nationalism invoking tired, old Australian legends of the laconic Aussie male of Anzac legend, or reverting back to colonial stories of settlement, Flanagan and Gaita documented counter memories for the nation wherein wogs and women played a central role. The motif of the absent, traumatised, European mother drives both authors' work. Responding to political needs in the present which remained unaddressed or disavowed within the public sphere, Flanagan and Gaita updated Australian literary narrative genres and rules to suggest new possibilities for Australian narratives for the future.

Consequently, Flanagan's and Gaita's texts can be studied as a case in point wherein Australian aesthetic production in the late 1990s became emblematic of Raymond Williams 'structures of feeling' - where dominant, residual and emergent cultural elements, in dynamic interrelationships, contested and sought to reform the nation's cultural system.<sup>23</sup> Post-war immigrants now had permission to 'make history' for Australia. Half a century on, the national story could now be updated to include accounts of Australia's non British, or 'other European' settlers.

### 3. Futures and Conclusions

Since 1945, 6.8 million people have migrated to Australia. Commonly understood to be people of 'ethnic' or 'non English speaking background' (NESB), many of these migrants are not of British descent. As a consequence, from 1973 onward, multiculturalism was adopted as a guiding

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principle by both government parties to address the needs of immigrants who were predominantly considered as 'other European'. Nonetheless, in 1988, the year of the Australian bicentenary, bipartisan government support for multiculturalism broke down.

Small as they were, levels of Asian immigration to Australia became the flashpoint for a political turn to the right. On the basis of deep-seated and long standing fears directed toward Asia, multicultural policies stalled at the first hurdle.<sup>24</sup> In the decades after the bicentenary, fuelled by, amongst other things: the September 11 terrorist attacks in the United States, aboriginal riots in Redfern, ethnic riots in Cronulla and a series of vindictively administered asylum seeker incidents, Australian multiculturalism reverted to what Hodge and O'Carroll call 'bad new regressive policies' of the White Australia policy.<sup>25</sup>

During the bicentennial year, major protests also occurred in the cause of aboriginal reconciliation.<sup>26</sup> In the 1990s, for the first time in Australian history, the Mabo and Wik decisions by the High Court of Australia recognised the existence of Native Title over both water and land. As Indigenous issues became more and more politically and ethically charged, an uneasy conversation continued to exist between multicultural, white settler and indigenous agendas.<sup>27</sup> In 1999, on the eve of the new millennium, Australians rejected the idea of becoming a republic. Australia chose instead to remain identified with Britain. Today, the British Queen still remains as Australia's Queen, which links the country to the baggage of colonialism within its own geographic region.<sup>28</sup>

Thus, Australia entered the new millennium as a conflicted and unreconciled nation, vigorously engaged in defending its geographic and symbolic territory, within which its own people were divided about how they had made their history to date, as well as how they would make their future. Although important and significant in their own right, Flanagan's and Gaita's literary interventions only addressed a small part of complex national puzzle as to how and under what conditions, Australia's people would 'make history' in the new century.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For the full text of the interview see <http://edition.cnn.com/chat/transcripts/2000/4/flanagan> accessed 15 Jan. 2008

<sup>2</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>3</sup> N Papastergiadis, *The Turbulence of Migration: Globalisation, Deterritorialization and Hybridity*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2000, p. 2.

<sup>4</sup> Department of Education, Science and Training 2006, *The Australian History Summit*, Transcript of Proceedings, 17 Aug 2006 p. 40, viewed 20 Jan 2008, [http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/5B7E6762-18E9-4D98-A08E-6BCAA7C1B1DE/13788/history\\_summit\\_transcript1.pdf](http://www.dest.gov.au/NR/rdonlyres/5B7E6762-18E9-4D98-A08E-6BCAA7C1B1DE/13788/history_summit_transcript1.pdf)

<sup>5</sup> S Macintyre, *A Concise History of Australia*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004.

<sup>6</sup> J Jupp, *From White Australia to Woomera: The Story of Australian Immigration*, 2nd edition, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2007, p. 11.

<sup>7</sup> D Carter, *Dispossession, Dreams and Diversity: Issues in Australian Studies*, Pearson Education Australia, Sydney, 2006, pp.312-319.

<sup>8</sup> G Tavan, *The Long, Slow Death of White Australia*, Scribe Publications, Melbourne, 2005.

<sup>9</sup> Jupp, 2007, op. cit., p. 11.

<sup>10</sup> Carter, op. cit., pp. 319-322.

<sup>11</sup> J Jupp, *The Australian People: An Encyclopaedia of the Nation, Its People and Their Origins*, Cambridge University Press, Melbourne, 2001, p. 62.

<sup>12</sup> Jupp, 2007, op. cit., p. 13.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> G Huggan, *Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2007, pp.116-122.

<sup>15</sup> I Maver, 'Four Recent Slovene Migrant Novels in English', in *Contemporary Australian Literature between Europe and Australia*, I. Maver (ed), Sydney Association of Studies in Society and Culture, Sydney, 1999, pp.75-84.

<sup>16</sup> E McMahon, 'Points of Origin'. *Island*, 75, 1997, p. 94.

<sup>17</sup> R Dessaix, 'Nice Work If You Can Get It'. *Australian Book Review*, vol. 128, 1991, pp. 22-28.

<sup>18</sup> McMahon, op. cit., p. 91.

<sup>19</sup> quoted in R Gaita, *Romulus, My Father*, Text Publishing, Melbourne, 1998, p. ii.

<sup>20</sup> B McFarlane, 'Romulus, My Father: Scenes from a Childhood'. *Screen Education*, Issue 46, 2007, pp.10-16.

<sup>21</sup> G Turner, 'Whatever happened to National Identity? Film and the Nation in the 1990s'. *Metro Magazine* 100, Summer 1994/95, p. 32.

<sup>22</sup> R Gaita, 'Romulus, My Father: From Book to Screenplay to Film', in *Romulus, My Father: Screenplay by Nick Drake*, Currency Press, Sydney, 2007, p. xix.

<sup>23</sup> R Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1977, pp. 121-135.

<sup>24</sup> D Walker, *Anxious Nation: Australia and the Rise of Asia 1850-1939*, University of Queensland Press, Brisbane, 1999.

<sup>25</sup> B Hodge and J O'Carroll, *Borderwork in Multicultural Australia*, Allen & Unwin, Sydney, 2006, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Carter, op. cit., pp. 100-102.

<sup>27</sup> A Curthoys, 'An Uneasy Conversation: The Multicultural and Indigenous', in *Race, Colour and Identity in Australia and New Zealand*, J Docker and G Fischer (eds), University of New South Wales, Sydney, 2000, pp. 21-36.

<sup>28</sup> G J Jones, 'White Australia, National Identity and Population Change', in *Legacies of White Australia: Race, Culture and Nation*, L Jayasuriya, D Walker and J Gothard, University of Western Australia, Perth, 2003, p. 126.

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## **The Imagined African Community in Dublin: Identity and Identification<sup>1</sup>**

*Theophilus Ejorh*

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on the conjuncture of the diasporic identity and identification of African immigrants in Dublin. African peoples face a particular existential challenge in the Western world, which is the demand by history that they define themselves. While this problem of self-definition has remained a principal and recurrent subject in African studies, the politicization of African identity is primarily embodied in the ideological disconnection of North Africans and other racial constellations from belonging to the African continent, and the essentialisation of African identity around a common notion of blackness and cultural unity. Essentially, such narrow and hegemonic constructions of African identity/identities are subverted by existing reality that confirms the ethnic, racial and cultural complexities of African peoples. This paper thus examines the ways in which the complex dynamics of diasporic identities or identity coalesce with those of African immigrant identities, and their identifications as a “community” (though imagined) as complex identities are constructed in the contexts of the host society, leading both to convergences and divergences, primordial and situational identification among immigrants from Africa. The aim of this paper, therefore, is to problematise the commonsense homogenisation and racialisation of both African and diasporic African identities, and to demonstrate instead how the interplay of modern globalisation and multiculturalist forces in the diasporic context engenders the construction, negotiation and re-negotiation of plural diasporic identities by African immigrants in Dublin. Drawing on extant literature and findings from my doctoral research, this paper argues thus that the diasporic African community in Dublin is basically an ‘imagined community’ on the basis of the historical and situational differentiation and racial and ethno-cultural multidimensionality that define its members, even though current efforts by community activists and organisations to mobilize members aim to construct a viable political community that still remains ethnically, culturally, nationally and racially heterogeneous.

**Key Words:** African immigrants, diasporic African identities, identification, belonging, diversity, difference.

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### Introduction

African peoples face a major existential challenge. Robert Cummings describes this as the demand by history that Africans define themselves.<sup>2</sup> This challenge of self-definition has remained dominant in the history of Africa and the diasporic African experience as European imperialism, according to Terence Ranger, perpetuated a hegemony of distortion that forced 'Africans into distorting' and insular identities.<sup>3</sup> Historical antecedents indicate "a Western insistence on setting criteria for what should constitute African identity"<sup>4</sup> whereby blacks had been constructed as racially inferior to whites and as the natural inhabitants of Africa. As Elliott Skinner has suggested, many black people succumbed to "this hegemonic, paradigmatic control" by accepting "notions of the existential superiority of the West."<sup>5</sup>

The politicisation of African identity is also embodied in the ideological disconnection of North Africa from the African continent, and its insertion in a Mid-Eastern, pan-Arabist, Muslim civilization and culture through the invocation of the myth of the Great Sahara Divide.<sup>6</sup> As a result, Africa denoted sub-Saharan Africa, and by this very fact African identity became essentialized around an imposed notion of blackness and ethno-cultural insularity.<sup>7</sup> Latest editions of Seligman's *Races of Africa* even classify North Africans as 'European' even though they all are not white. The book's earlier editions had defined North Africans as 'Hamites' and superior to 'Blacks'.<sup>8</sup> This appropriation of taxonomy and colour schemes in the construction of African identity poses a problem of belonging for North Africans who have been native to Africa for thousands of years, but who are caught up in an ideological dichotomy of belonging to two differentiated worlds.<sup>9</sup>

This paper looks at the intersections of identity and self-identification among Africans in Dublin and how these play out in their constructions and expressions of community in the Irish diasporic space. It problematises the simplistic homogenisation and racialisation of African identity, and argues instead that the globalisation of migrations and multicultural processes in the diasporic space engender plural identities for African immigrants. Drawing on empirical evidence from my research, the paper argues that while diasporic African identity in Ireland is varied rather than unitary, the African community in Dublin is an 'imagined community'<sup>10</sup>, in the sense of its complexity and the racial and ethno-cultural multidimensionality that defines its members. Also, processes of identity formation have become so complexified in the modern 'age of migration' that African immigrants forge multiple identities, choose what to identify with and where to belong. While some of the immigrants may sustain genealogical notions of identity, in pragmatic terms their lives paradoxically reveal circumstantialist orientations. This contradiction fundamentally

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challenges the historical attempt to perpetuate the hegemony of a uniform diasporic African identity and belonging.

### **1. Unpacking a Historical Puzzle: Who is an African?**

The contestation over who is African, what is African and what embodies 'being African' foregrounds an ontological question, which is whether being a member of the African Diaspora implies being the same or being black? The early phase of Pan-Africanism, and recently Afro-centrism, accentuated "the centrality of Africa in the identity and outlook of Blacks in Western society".<sup>11</sup> Though early pan-Africanism articulated a diasporic African identity that recognized solely black people, it later redefined this identity and incorporated peoples from North Africa based on the logic of a common origin. Likewise, while recognizing the Afro-centrist concern about reclaiming and expressing the 'African consciousness', its continued association of this consciousness with being black or a uniform cultural sensibility negates the differentiated identities that have historically defined African peoples. The unitary depiction of the African ontology through the application of a mono-racial parameter forces other African peoples into a limbo of 'unbelonging', as it perpetuates the classical anthropological binarist contrivance of oppositional frameworks that constructed Africa and African identities as the natural antitheses of Europe and European identities.<sup>12</sup>

Scholars of African history suggest that, prior to colonialism, African communities had been organized on the basis of the genealogical elements of kinship ties and shared language and customs rather than colour. Also, while pre-nineteenth century European settlers in Africa recognized physical and cultural differences between them and the native populations, they did not attach much significance to these differences.<sup>13</sup> Originally, white settlers had asserted their superiority solely on the basis of their Christian religion rather than colour.<sup>14</sup> In fact, it was when the British came to Southern Africa in the nineteenth century that the element of race was introduced in the region.<sup>15</sup> During this period, race was emerging in Northern Europe as a bridge between science and anthropology, and there were attempts to consider it as a biological concept rather than one of taxonomy. In modern vocabulary, this implies that "Africa belongs to the Black race."<sup>16</sup>

### **2. Methodology**

The project adopted an interpretative framework. This approach offered ample opportunities to seek and explore individual perceptions about the issues and situations investigated. The study largely engaged the perspective of subjects; so the interpretative approach provided freedom from logico-deductive constraints.<sup>17</sup> Dublin City was chosen as the research context for two reasons: first, it has the highest concentration of African

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populations in Ireland and, second, it commands the largest presence of African community organizations and groups.<sup>18</sup>

Data was obtained through a triangulation of methods, namely: face-to-face semi-structured interviews, informal conversational interviews, participant observations, focus groups, roundtables and records from African community organizations. A semi-structured approach was employed for the interviews to enable comparison of data across a wide range of respondents. This entailed asking participants follow-up questions where responses required further elaboration or clarification or “to follow up on stories or events that were unique to a particular interviewee.”<sup>19</sup> Sometimes, an informal, open-ended interview approach was adopted, which gave the conversation some flexibility, while keeping in mind the project’s key concerns.<sup>20</sup> Data was also obtained from my participation in numerous intercultural occasions and colloquia, and as a native researcher, I was reflexive – always self-searching and self-perceptive – and conscious of my perspective, identity and voice and the perspective, identity and voices of the subjects.<sup>21</sup>

Overall, 52 individuals participated in the study over a period of two years. Of this number, there were 49 Africans from 16 countries and three Irish persons. Two of the Irish participants had worked with a leading African community organization and their participation was aimed to compare their perspectives on the African community with the views of Africans themselves. Twenty-four participants responded to interviews while the remaining 28 participated in focus groups and roundtables. In all, two focus groups and two roundtables were conducted. Respondents were purposively selected from the five African sub-regions and this was intended to give the data sets a reasonable diversity.

### **3. African Immigrants Negotiating Identities**

The first question posed to participants was how they would like to identify themselves or wished to be identified by others. Responses to this question varied. While some would like to be identified as African, for many others identification on the basis of ethnicity, nationality and religious affiliation came first. Most individuals felt it was necessary to distinguish among Africans in Dublin as a way of counteracting the monolithic identity that has been imposed on them. For example, the Ethnicity and Cultural Section (Question 14) in the Irish census of 2006 categorized Africans as black, implying that all Africans living in Ireland “share characteristics which bond them as an ethnic group” even when no clear evidence exists that they “share such a sense of fellowship.”<sup>22</sup>

Such a racialized classification tends to render non-black Africans invisible or strip them of their legitimate membership of the African immigrant community. It can also cause them not to relate well with co-

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Africans, foregrounding the old ontological question: Whether being African must mean being the same or being black? A respondent from Zimbabwe commented that many Europeans 'tend to think that Africa is one big country, Nigeria, with many cities such as Zimbabwe, Uganda and Egypt' (Melody). An Ethiopian participant reinforced this observation, noting: "When they see a black man or woman... they call them Nigerian... They should know that we are different people, even though we come from the same region." Other respondents made efforts to accentuate Africa's heterogeneity and also challenge common ontological assumptions about sub-Saharan African physiognomic similitude. One respondent, for instance, commented:

You cannot classify us all together... We don't look alike. I'm different from others, just like the Masai... are different from the Zulu or the Yoruba. So, first, I'm a Nigerian; you can even say West African... before you can say I'm African.

The issue of defining one's African identity on the basis of colour was projected in the debate. While most believe that the use of colour frames in constructing African identity is old-fashioned in the present age, few others insist that colour really matters. In those few cases, the adoption of colour has an exclusionary bent as it acknowledges blacks as the only natural and authentic Africans. One woman, Amaka, exemplifies this exclusivism: "We don't consider white people as true Africans. Being African is based on ancestry. We don't have a common ancestry as white Africans." Such exclusivist understanding of African identity can pose a problem of identification and recognition for present-day white Africans like Margaret in their bid to assert their legitimate claim to African identity:

The fact remains that I would like to be seen as an African but sadly I am not. Even though my ancestors were in South Africa since 1652, and as they went into the interior they were met by the Xhosa who arrived in the Eastern Cape around the same time. We have been Africans for many generations but will never be seen as Africans.

Margaret's feeling of alienation and racial hatred from the black South African population runs deep and might have inspired her to view the African community in Dublin with circumspection. When asked her opinion about the community and if she identifies with it, she says she considers herself an outsider, because she feels it is largely a mono-racial arrangement: "I would not see myself as part of the community as black people in Africa



do not regard white Africans as African... I doubt if that community includes white Africans." Another respondent from South Africa, Zuma, stresses the touchiness of race as a standard for determining identity and belonging in the post-apartheid society:

Blackness and whiteness are very sensitive subjects in South Africa. From the white South African point of view, equating the African identity with blackness is sensitive and offensive. It makes them not to feel belonged as Africans. White South Africans don't like being told that they are not African just because they are white. This shows how far things have changed in Africa. These days to be African you don't necessarily need to be black.

While Margaret's situation may reflect the thoughts and feelings of many modern-day white South Africans, feelings of exclusivism among sections of the black population might be a sort of post-apartheid backlash. For instance, Michael Macdonald suggests that apartheid has been dismantled only in principle, because structures of inequalities and social injustices between whites and blacks remain firmly entrenched in the new democratic establishment, as most black people find themselves still trapped in the tangle of poverty and structural oppression.<sup>23</sup>

The study shows that respondents hold multiple identities that often serve as grounds for association. In most cases, individuals sustain a primordial notion of identity based on genealogical ties, while in practical life they maintain a circumstantialist sense of identification that can be either political or religious. For example, among Ghanaian immigrants, there is a tendency to maintain solidarity on the basis of ethno-political affiliations. According to Anowa from Ghana, Ghanaian immigrants have transplanted ethnic divisions and political differences from the home country to Ireland, and such shared political and ethnic identities serve as the basis upon which various Ghanaian immigrant groups are formed:

I have a particular place that I do go; the guys there will welcome you if you share the same political sentiments with them... You are more likely to see people being organized based on either ethnic or political loyalties... Incidentally, these parties in Ghana are organized along ethnic lines.

Like ethnicity and politics, religious affinity can also determine patterns of relationships among African immigrants. Individuals who share the same religious faith tend to bond more than they do with non-members.

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This helps in the forging of social capital amongst members in terms of provision of information and assistance in relation to finding one's feet. For example, Margaret, who belongs to the Charismatic Movement, got a lot of support from fellow members in adapting to life in Dublin when she newly emigrated. The church helped to assuage her sense of distress and feeling of alienation from the African community. Becoming, for her, an important field or site for self-identification, the church provided her an opportunity to negotiate new relationships with different individuals from disparate backgrounds.

Like Margaret, Amaka who is a member of the Pentecostal group, The Mountain of Fire Ministry, identifies more with co-faithfuls than she does with others. As she explains, "You simply can't avoid relating with your own brethren, because they are the people you meet with most of the time." For her, religion can bring a serious strain to an ethno-cultural community, despite one's sense of primordial attachment to one's ethnic group. In situations where her Igbo tradition clashes with her Christian ethos, Amaka prefers to give her allegiance to her Christian faith rather than fulfil what she views as the ethno-cultural expectations of paganism. For instance, she states that she will never participate in the annual Igbo New Yam Festival celebrated by the Igbo community in Dublin and Cork, due to certain pagan rituals that go with it.

What can be gleaned from these expositions is that, in contrast to respondents' essentialist and primordial notions of African identity, experientially, their lives orientate towards a situationist sensibility. Margaret, for example, feels excluded from the African community in Dublin because blacks in her native South Africa do not consider the white population of that country as African. Yet within the context of the religious practice in the diaspora, she has been able to negotiate a new identity that provides her a sense of belonging and acceptance through interactions with individuals from different backgrounds. Similarly, whereas Amaka makes a lot of assumptions about the genealogical character of her Igbo ethnicity, in practice, she identifies with her Pentecostal faith when it conflicts with certain cultural demands of her Igbo ethnic community. This reflects Hall's contention that diasporic identity choices are "more associational and less ascribed", as race, ethnicity, gender, religion or class can operate as the primary mode of identification and sometimes two or more of these variables interweave to determine one's belonging.<sup>24</sup>

Similarly, old assumptions about fellow Africans often result in aloofness from "others" and more bonding with one's co-ethnics, co-nationals or co-faithfuls. Respondents suggested that this internal tension is largely provoked by mutual suspicions, distrusts and antagonisms that have been transplanted from Africa to Ireland. However, such divisions and distrusts do not foreclose the possibility of developing a sense of fellowship

based on the sense of a shared origin and mutual experiences of systematic discrimination in Ireland, and translating this comradeship into group consciousness.<sup>25</sup> Zack-Williams and Mohan reinforce this view, acknowledging that certain conditions, such as recurrent experiences of racism and other forms of systematic discrimination, can unite people of African descent because “certain identities are not ‘negotiable’” and such identities can become “important axes of political and cultural belonging”.<sup>26</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> This paper is part of a recently completed PhD thesis on the African immigrant transition from diaspora to community in Ireland.

<sup>2</sup> R Cummings, ‘Africa Between the Ages’. *African Studies Review*, vol. 29, no. 3, September 1986, p. 1.

<sup>3</sup> T Ranger, ‘Postscript: Colonial and postcolonial identities’, in *Post-colonial identities in Africa*, R Werbner and T Ranger (eds), Zed Books, London and New York, 1996, p. 273.

<sup>4</sup> L Anise, ‘The African Redefined: The Problems of Collective Black Identity’. *Issue: A Journal of Opinion*, vol. 4, no. 4, 1974, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> E P Skinner, ‘The Restoration of African Identity for a New Millennium’, in *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, I Okpewho, C B Davies and A A Mazrui (eds), Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, p. 11.

<sup>6</sup> Anise, op. cit., p. 27.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>8</sup> C G Seligman, *Races of Africa*, Oxford University Press, London, 1930/1957; cited in J G Fage, *A History of Africa*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, p. 7.

<sup>9</sup> Fage, op. cit., p. 7

<sup>10</sup> B Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Revised Edition, Verso, London and New York, 1996, pp. 6-7.

<sup>11</sup> M K Asante, *Afrocentricity: The Theory of Social Change*, African American Images, Chicago, 2003, p. 2; M J C Echeruo, ‘The African Diaspora: The Ontological Project’, in *The African Diaspora: African Origins and New World Identities*, I Okpewho, C B Davies and A A Mazrui (eds), Indiana University Press, Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1999, pp. 14-16.

<sup>12</sup> M MacDonald, *Why Race Matters in South Africa*, University of Kwa-Zulu Natal Press, Scottsville, South Africa, 2006, p. 42.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., p. 33.

<sup>14</sup> H Giliomee, *The Afrikaners: Biography of a People*, University of Virginia Press, Charlottesville, 2003, cited in MacDonald, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

<sup>15</sup> Macdonald, op. cit.

<sup>16</sup> Anise, op. cit., p. 28.

<sup>17</sup> M Hammersley and P Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in Practice*, 2<sup>nd</sup> edition, Routledge, London and New York, 1995, pp. 3-6.

<sup>18</sup> Central Statistics Office, *Census 2006, Vol. 5- Ethnic or Cultural Background (Including the Irish traveller Community)*, Stationery Office, Dublin, 2007, p. 11.

<sup>19</sup> A Feldman, M Gilmartin, S Loyal and B Migge, *Getting On: From Migration to Integration – Chinese, Indian, Lithuanian and Nigerian Migrants' Experiences in Ireland*, Immigrant Council of Ireland, Dublin, 2008, p. 8.

<sup>20</sup> M Q Patton, *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edition, Sage Publications, Thousand Oaks, London and New Delhi, 2002, pp. 285-288.

<sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 65.

<sup>22</sup> M Cadogan, 'Fixity and Whiteness in the Ethnicity Question of Irish Census 2006'. *Translocations: The Irish Migration, Race and Social Transformation Review*, vol. 3, no. 1, Summer 2008, p. 10.

<sup>23</sup> Macdonald, op. cit., pp. 49-63.

<sup>24</sup> S Hall, 'Conclusion: the multicultural question', in *Un/settled Multiculturalisms: Diasporas, Entanglements 'Transruptions'*, B Hesse (ed), Zed Books, London, 2000, p. 220.

<sup>25</sup> Cadogan, op. cit.

<sup>26</sup> A B Zack-Williams and G Mohan, 'Africa, the African Diaspora and Development'. *Review of African Political Economy*, vol. 29, no. 92, 2002, p. 206.

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## **Socio-cultural Belonging in Legal Limbo**

*Ana Bravo-Moreno*

### **Abstract**

This paper is based on a research project that examines the impact of migration policies on Latin American immigrants in Miami (USA) and in Madrid (Spain). One of the aims of this study is to examine the families of Colombian, Ecuadorian, Dominican and Peruvian immigrants as an arena of social relations organised along generational, gender and kinship lines and influenced by their legal status. This paper will focus on how legal status shapes the cultural identifications of children of undocumented parents from the perspectives of the actors themselves. It also looks at the challenges that transnational mobilities pose to ideas of cultural homogeneity and feelings of belonging.

**Key Words:** Identity construction, belonging, migration policies, citizenship.

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### **1. Globalisation and Migration**

According to many analysts, globalisation has led to the accumulation of wealth in the hands of only a few on a national and international level. As a consequence, many countries are unable to meet the needs of a great part of their citizens. These last often become migrants in search of better living conditions (Stiglitz 2002). In the case of the United States, it has been a traditional country of immigration, and the majority of Americans can trace their family origins to a country other than the United States. In the case of Spain around six million Spaniards emigrated in the 20th century to the Americas and to Northern Europe. Yet today Spain has one of the fastest growing immigrant populations in the European Union and one of the highest in OECD countries with an average annual increase of 13 percent.<sup>1</sup> Their number rose from 500,000 in 1996 to 4.5 million in 2006. Both the USA and Europe are in the midst of social changes, triggered partly by new migration patterns, which put established conceptions of national citizenship under extraordinary strain.<sup>2</sup> These matters are made still more controversial by the economic necessity of a sharp increase in immigration to the US and many European member states in the next fifteen years.<sup>1</sup>



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## 2. Immigration in the USA

Throughout the last generation annual immigration flows have tripled with more immigrants entering the US during the 1990s than any other decade. Not only has the number of immigrants increased substantially, but the share of the total US population that the foreign-born represent – now roughly 13 percent – has almost doubled since 1970. That said, the share remains below the 15 percent that the foreign-born represented at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The national origins of immigration flows have changed, dramatically shifting from primarily European to Asian and Latin American sources. In 2003,<sup>3</sup> among the foreign-born, 53 percent were born in Latin America, 25 percent in Asia and 14 percent in Europe. One important characteristic that distinguishes contemporary immigration from previous waves of immigration is the presence of significant numbers of irregular<sup>4</sup> immigrants<sup>5</sup>. In 1994, 13 percent of the US foreign-born population was irregular<sup>6</sup>. According to the 2000 Census, that share rose to 28 percent which exceeded the highest estimates of the population's size before the legalization program that took place in 1986<sup>7</sup>. Furthermore, it is estimated that anywhere from a quarter to a third of the current annual immigration flow is irregular. There were an estimated 12 million irregular immigrants residing in the USA before January, 2007.

Congress has been debating whether to legalise these irregular immigrants, as well as putting in place stricter border and workplace enforcement. Mostly left out of this debate are the more than 5 million children living in families where at least one of the parents is an irregular immigrant and, who, like their parents, would be greatly affected by the result of this debate<sup>8</sup>. Under current law, these young people generally derive their immigration status solely from their parents, and if their parents are irregular or in immigration limbo<sup>9</sup>, most have no mechanism to obtain legal residency even if they have lived most of their lives in the US. Moreover, between 1993 and 2004, the border enforcement budget grew from \$740 million to \$3.8 billion and the size of the Border Patrol nearly tripled, yet the number of irregular immigrants doubled during that time<sup>10</sup>. One of the reasons for the increase of irregular population is the large difference between the current and prior policy contexts; that is, the new restrictions imposed on irregular immigrants' ability to adjust status following the Illegal Immigration Reform. As a result, the number of the irregular population may well grow faster than in the past as fewer irregular immigrants are able to become regularised. Greater focus on this topic is also appropriate because of the reform of immigrant policy since the strikingly anti-immigrant period of the mid-1990s and the aftermath of the terrorist attack of September the 9<sup>th</sup>, 2001. According to Little and Klarreich:

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President Bush's War on Terror has transgressed into a War on Immigrants including those asylum seekers fleeing terror. [I]mmigrants and advocates also complain about increased sweeps by Border Patrol agents, who they claim engage in racial profiling<sup>11</sup>

### 3. Immigration in Spain

In the 20<sup>th</sup> century around six million Spaniards emigrated; until the 1930s, 80 percent left for the Americas. From the 1950s to the mid-1970s, 75 percent emigrated to northern Europe (Bravo-Moreno 2006). At the end of the 20th century, Spain evolved from its traditional role as a sending country and, increasingly, a transit country for migrants heading north, to become a receiving country for foreign workers, mostly from Latin America, Northern Africa, and from the European Union, mainly from Britain<sup>12</sup> Germany<sup>13</sup> and Romania<sup>14</sup>. Today immigration of Third Country Nationals<sup>15</sup> (TCN) in Spain has become one of the most contested issues in the media, and the second most important 'national' issue for Spaniards after ETA<sup>16</sup> terrorism. This is due to the sharp increase in the number of immigrants in the last 15 years. In 2007 immigration represented 11 percent of the total population. Spain has experienced the fastest rate of immigration in the EU<sup>17</sup>. The largest country sources of immigration are Morocco and Ecuador, both countries with colonial links. However south and East Asian countries are also important sources particularly China, which has contributed nearly half of all Asian immigrants.

Different Spanish governments (PP and PSOE)<sup>18</sup> continue to push forward with an agenda of focusing on border protection and limiting the entry to non-Europeans (quota system) that goes parallel to a demand for workers in specific labour niches. The focus on control of immigrant access to the labour market hindered family reunification and proved to be an obstacle to a stable residency of non-EU foreigners. New policies required that migrants seek work visas and residency permits only after a job offer and, further, made it exceedingly difficult to renew required permits. As a result, many immigrants ended up in an irregular legal status. This resulted in the creation of an increasing number of irregular immigrants with a 23 percent increase in immigration in 2002. The number of work permit holders grew by 40% as a result of a regularisation campaign in 2005. Data derived from municipal registries<sup>19</sup> suggested that the actual number of foreigners residing in Spain was considerably greater. According to these records as of 1 January 2005, 3.73 million foreigners were registered with the municipalities, compared with 1.98 million valid residency permits, revealing a difference of 1.75 million. This difference could serve as an indicator of irregular residency.<sup>20</sup>

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#### **4. Criminalization of Irregular Migration**

The European Union and the USA have focussed on three common migration policy responses: prevention, detention and deportation. The focus on a policy of prevention undermines the dignity of irregular migrants in receiving countries to the extent that it is very difficult to seriously talk about the rights of irregular migrants. The EU supports the criminalization of irregular migration by penalising irregular migrants on entry Article 3 (2) of the 1990 Convention implementing the Schengen Agreement which is now part of the Community Law that obliges participant Member States “to introduce penalties for the unauthorised crossing of external borders...”<sup>21</sup> Indeed many states consider it entirely reasonable to impose criminal penalties including imprisonment on persons who cross their borders without authorisation. In a number of European countries the penalties imposed for irregular entry range from a few days to two years imprisonment and/or a fine. However, punishing irregular migrants and equating them to criminals, particularly if their only ‘offence’ is to seek a better life for themselves and their families, is problematic from a human rights standpoint. The use of the term ‘illegal migration’ represents a threat to the respect of human rights and dignity of irregular immigrants since they are excluded of legal protection. The term ‘illegal’ also refers to connotations relating migrants with criminality, unemployment and social pathology. The fact that recently the term ‘illegal’ has been substituted by the term ‘irregular’ does not affect the way migrants are treated by governments.

In the case of the USA, the ‘criminalization’ of immigrants means that millions of immigrant men, women, and children would be treated as lawbreakers who live in the country. HR 4437 is anti-immigrant legislation that passed the U.S. House of Representatives on the 16<sup>th</sup> of December, 2005. It would make it a crime for immigrants to be in the US in violation of immigration laws or regulations. Immigrants convicted of this crime could be punished by imprisonment for a year and a day and/or a fine. Under current law, unlawful presence is a civil, not a criminal, violation of immigration law. Section 201 of HR 4437 would make conviction for presence in violation of immigration laws an aggravated crime. This carries devastating consequences: automatic deportation, as well as ineligibility for asylum, cancellation of removal, voluntary departure, or practically any legal status in the future<sup>22</sup>.

#### **5. Identity and belonging**

This framework is the backdrop of the experiences of immigrant families interviewed for this study that migrated to the US or to Spain in search of a better future for their children. Most of them had tourist visas when they entered the country and a few had business visas. All of them overstayed their visa permits and became irregular immigrants. In the case of

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immigrants in the USA, the interviewees migrated with their families which were generally composed of 3 to 4 children, with these children having arrived in the US when they were below the age of 16. All of them have been in the US for more than 10 years so far. And in the case of Spain, the interviewees had been living in Spain for approximately 2 to 6 years at the time of the interviews. The accounts of these children at the time they entered the US and now as young adults manifest the contradictions of positioning themselves as Americans without legal status to reside in the US, the country where they have spent most of their lives. These accounts also bear colonial discourses regarding the self-perceptions of calling themselves black, mixed or white. One of the interviewees, Juan,<sup>23</sup> a 24 year old from Perú, arrived in the US when he was 12 with his parents and siblings who became irregular immigrants after their tourist visa expired. Juan epitomises what most young interviewees expressed.

That is, they considered themselves from Miami; they felt they belonged to American culture and to Miami in particular. They insisted that Miami was different from the rest of the US because of the high proportion of Latino immigrants and the climate which was very similar to their countries of origin. They considered themselves global Latin-Americans. Global Latin-American was defined, in their view, as a mixture of all Latin-American nations in Miami. This identification may follow different tendencies, Juan claimed: young Latin-Americans may construct an identity that imitates what they perceive as Anglo-culture. This involves 'whitening oneself' by taking whitening tablets for the skin, straightening and lightening their hair, wearing light colour contact lenses, changing dress style and using a particular jargon to assimilate to 'Anglo' culture.

A second tendency for Latino youth is negating their ethnic identity as Incas or any other ethnic group their ancestors belonged to favouring a pan-ethnic and colonial identity such as 'Latino'. They acknowledged it was essentialising but politically convenient. Finally, there is a third tendency followed by those who wanted to imitate 'Black American culture'. This was defined as 'being cool', listening to reggae music, smoking marijuana and a particular dress style as well as the use of a specific jargon. This 'black' identity was opposed, they argued, to Haitian black identity. Haitians were viewed as poor and 'wetbacks'.<sup>24</sup>

Thus, there are layers of identifications; some of them are socio-culturally rooted in the host society despite these irregular immigrants being excluded from legal residency and citizenship. These young immigrants enjoyed a legal inclusion in primary and secondary school which is compulsory for all residents in the USA and in Spain, regardless of their legal status. However, as adults with an irregular legal status they cannot access higher education and, therefore, they were situated outside of the nation-state. Skin colour, facial traits and accented English or Spanish in the case of

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immigrants in Spain were an issue. These aspects may be perceived by the host society as not 'true' American or European. In fact, plastic surgeons in Spain are reporting numerous requests from Ecuadorians and Colombians living in Madrid wanting to undergo plastic surgery to make themselves look 'more European'. According to doctors, approximately 2500 immigrants submit themselves to different procedures to modify their faces. "What they want is for people not to recognize them as foreigners and go unnoticed," explains plastic surgeon José M. Palacín<sup>25</sup>.

Furthermore, there are conflicting categories that need to be analysed in order to define what it means to be of mixed race in the Dominican Republic, for example, as opposed to the US. Thus, one of the questions driving this study was: how does colonial ideology shape identity formations? Adela, born in the Dominican Republic to a Dominican father and a Cuban mother, migrated to the USA with her mother when she was 18. At the time of the interview she was 34 and she comments the following on the issue of 'race':

Straight hair in the Dominican Republic is very important; it takes away a person's blackness. The texture of the hair determines the whiteness of a person. Curly hair is bad hair. A *jabao* is a white person with bad hair like the one of an African, irrespective of whether it's red or blonde hair. We call a black person light Indian or dark Indian; although there were no Indians after the Spaniards left the island. The term Indian is a colour invented by the Dominicans. It doesn't refer to a race but a colour instead, because there are no races, only different colours. For us [Dominicans] Haitians are blacks.

For most Caribbean immigrants in the US, race and colour have played a crucial role in the formation of their cultural identities. Two different models of racial hegemony are juxtaposed in the process of moving from the Caribbean to the US. On the one hand, Caribbean migrants, especially those coming from the Spanish speaking countries of Cuba, the Dominican Republic and Puerto Rico, tend to use racial categories such as mixed, black and white based primarily on skin colour and other physical characteristics such as hair texture and facial features<sup>26</sup>. On the other hand, the dominant system of racial classification in the US emphasises a clear cut division between whites and non-whites deriving from the rule of hypodescent – the assignment of the children of mixed races to the subordinate group<sup>27</sup>. This clear-cut opposition between two cultural conceptions of racial identity is ripe for social and psychological conflict among Caribbean migrants, many of whom are of African or mixed background and are, thus,

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defined as black or coloured in the US<sup>28</sup>. This racial discourse is a system of statements within which the world can be known. It is also in such a discourse that speakers and hearers come to an understanding about themselves, their relationship to each other and their place in the world. It is the complex of symbols and practices which organises social existence and social reproduction. Eurocentric discourse, or the discourse of modernity, is a system of statements that can be made about the world that involve certain assumptions, prejudices, blindness and insights, all of which have a historical provenance which exclude other valid statements. All these statements and all that can be included within the discourse thus become protected by the assertion of 'truth'<sup>29</sup>. An example of discourse is the hierarchical division of races and ethnicities whereby the colonisers essentialised the colonised. The permanence of prejudices and stereotypes, long after and beyond the existence of colonial domination, and despite the conscious rejection of those prejudices by the interviewees, remain. This is the case of Enrique, an Ecuadorian, who entered the USA on a tourist visa with his wife and 4 children who then became irregular immigrants when his visa expired 14 years ago. He described his identity, in an interview conducted for this study, as follows:

I am a *cholo* from the *Sierra*, *cholo* means mixed race. My wife is white with green eyes of Spanish origin; this kind of marriage is very uncommon. I feel inferior because of my mixed race. I frequently ask my wife why did you marry a *cholo* like me instead of a white guy like you?... You know, the majority of prime ministers in Ecuador have been white, we haven't had a black or a mixed race prime minister so far, and the majority of the population is *cholo* over there!

Another interviewee, Clara from Colombia who considers herself black, arrived in Madrid 4 years ago and comments on the issue of race:

The problem with blacks in my country is that when they reach a professional level, let's say they become doctors, and start wearing a white coat they become knowledgeable. Blackness fades away... the white coat confers whiteness to blacks over there. However, when you arrive in Spain, you are black regardless, you are viewed as black or Indian... nothing takes away the colour of your skin or your physical traits. Spaniards do not perceive you as one of them. As a Latin-American migrant you think that your mother land, Spain, is going to receive you with open arms,

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as we are part of Spain. We are descendants of Spaniards,  
but they don't see us that way...

Racial hierarchies and their psycho-social mechanisms can be seen in Enrique and Clara's words. They identify themselves as descendants of black slaves, Indian and Spanish colonisers. There is a racial hierarchy in Latin-America whereby 'whites', those of Spanish origin and others (such as Anglo-Saxons), are at the top of the pyramid, followed by combinations of mixed race descendants composed by Spaniards and indigenes (*mestizos*), Spaniards and blacks (*mulatos*) and indigenes and blacks (*zambos*). In the case of Ecuador, this racial categorisation is also intersected by a clear regional rivalry between the *serranos*, those from the mountains (*Sierra*), and the *costeños*, those living in the big cities by the sea. This rivalry goes back to the time prior to the Spanish colonisation when there were two enemy tribes: the Incas living in the Quito area and the Gucanicas in the area of Guayaquil. Other countries, like Colombia, have similar divisions between *costeño* and *andino* or *paisa* (those living in the area of the Andes). The constructed rather than essential or fixed nature of the boundaries of 'colour', culture and ethnicity needs to be incorporated into the analysis. Different markers may be used to define the boundaries. This is raised, for example, by the debates on the pan-ethnic category of 'black', and the shift from seeing it as incorporating African-Americans, Haitians and West Indians who speak English with a British accent and dress and behave differently<sup>30</sup> than Black Caribbeans, from former Spanish colonies who speak Spanish and reject customs from Black Americans<sup>31</sup>. The four groups are clearly differentiated by the interviewees.

On the other hand, Enrique talks about the impact of having an irregular legal status for the past 14 years in the USA:

This legal situation has affected my four children, my wife and I in very important ways: first of all, we cannot travel to see our families in Ecuador due to our status. Secondly, my wife has been kicked out from her job as a nurse assistant after 12 years because migration policies became stricter on undocumented migrants after the 9/11. My eldest daughters couldn't continue their education at university as they were undocumented, my other two children are still attending high school but after their student visa expires they'll become illegal aliens. We feel we live on a limb. Any police officer can stop us on the street and start our deportation. We live in fear.

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Lucía, a Peruvian who migrated to Madrid in 2001, corroborates Enrique's statements. At the time of the interview in 2007 Lucía was in the process of getting her legal residency, that is, she had been an irregular immigrant for 6 years. This meant that she could not travel to see her three children in all those years as well as living in fear of being caught by the police:

My life was about working 14 hours a day and going to my flat after work and staying there as if I were in a prison. I was scared to go out. Some of my friends were asked for their IDs by the police on the tube, and since they didn't have *los papeles* (a regular status) they arrested them on the spot and sent them back to Perú. I learned about this because one of them called me from Perú. I remember that whenever a police officer passed by near me I started to tremble.

Having an irregular legal status imposes yet another layer of identification as non-belonging to the nation-state being American or Spanish, not taken into account as a resident of the country: invisible for labour rights, health systems, higher education and voting rights. Nevertheless irregular immigrants are visible to banks as senders of remittances and holders of credit cards, to shops and supermarkets as consumers of goods, to letting agencies as a new target market who buy and rent properties and, indeed as tax-payers to the state.

Therefore a national group may be defined, at different times, in terms of culture, place of origin, legal status or colour. For example, some Ecuadorians may be seen as Latinos, as 'illegal' immigrants, as *costeños*, as *cholos*. These are labels as well as claims that are mobilised in the affirmation, contestation and negotiation over social positioning and political identity. Moreover 'race', ethnicity and legal status involve the allocation of hierarchies of value, inferiorisation, as well as economic resources. In order to understand processes of identification it is important to concentrate on social structures looking at shifting combinations of ideas about fear, threat, otherness, rejection and how groups who are targeted may react to these challenges. Race, ethnicity and legal status need to be treated within a broader ideological and political framework and as a catalyst for thinking about social democratisation, equality and citizenship.

### **Conclusion**

Spanish rule the Law of the Indies and the Black Codes of Spanish America<sup>32</sup> determined the manner in which Indian and black population assimilation would aid the colonization of the State. Likewise the United



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States federal and state laws were used to manipulate racial hierarchy so that Anglo-Americans achieved the greatest benefits in the state. Both Spanish colonisers and Anglo-American settlers used a racial caste system to their advantage; both saw colonised peoples as a means of exploitable labour or scapegoats. The exploitation of labour continues helping the economy and the social welfare of the host countries. In the USA, most immigrants and their children from Latin America, Southern Europe and Asia faced considerable discrimination that, as late as the 1930s, meant that more than four fifths of all immigrant workers were relegated to manual labour as cooks, cleaners, waiters and laundry-workers. In the case of Spain, today most TCN immigrants work in the areas of construction, catering, agriculture, domestic service and retail; as many as 74.5 percent of all immigrants are concentrated in these five sectors of activity<sup>33</sup>.

The heavy stress on immigration control<sup>34</sup> in the EU and in the USA in combination with the increase in number of immigrants has intensified stigma of immigrants in society. Segregation of Latinos, Asians, African Americans and others in the United States and of Latinos, Moroccans and Black Africans in Spain may generate a feeling of inferiority as to their status in the community and of domestic minorities who share a similar racial, ethnical and national origin background. A case in point is California, in which the 1990s legislation and ballot initiatives enshrined English as a state's official language, denying non-citizens access to public services and implementing punitive measures against irregular immigrants.

Research indicated that these initiatives were perceived by a significant share of Latinos as outbursts of racial hostility directed at them as a group (Álvarez and Butterfield 2000) and these perceptions were subsequently shown to have significant and tangible implications. More recently, proposed legislation known as HR 4437, which would raise penalties for irregular immigration and classify unauthorized immigrants and anyone who helped them enter or remain in the US as criminals, provoked large-scale demonstrations of Latino immigrants and other marginalised segments of American society in the spring of 2006. The unprecedented efforts to create a fortress Europe and to seal the US border combined with the increased efforts to deport irregular immigrants<sup>35</sup> tell much about how a majority of society perceives immigrants and suggests to what lengths society might go, if authorized under law, to free itself of minorities. In this way, immigration has proven to be a battlefield for status among Anglos and others in the United States and 'indigenous' and the TCN immigrant population as well as their descendants in the European Union.

Therefore, there are important contradictions contained in the integration policies of host countries. It is a question of having the power to define the basis for integration. The 'equal opportunity' aspect of the integration policy overlooks some central points in relation to the distribution

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of resources, cultural capital and legal status. Millions of immigrants in the EU and in the USA never get to the point where they are in a position to make use of the equal opportunities. The question of integration is essential for the continuous nation-building process, and the host countries are therefore forced to re-examine their distinctiveness as a nation. Yet citizenship has to do with membership in a nation-state and as such engenders the duality of 'us/them' thinking. Furthermore, integration is necessary to make the economy function and to make people identify with forces beyond themselves and their closest community in order to create a society where individual contributions harmonise with the larger group, which is constituted as the nation.

However, what can appropriately be demanded in the way of integration of future citizens whose formative experience is discriminatory towards their parents and themselves? As Brubaker underlines, state interests cannot be demarcated solely in terms of economic, demographic, and military considerations. Interests are also mediated by cultural terms, through self-understanding, and by ways of 'thinking and talking about nationhood'<sup>36</sup>. Then again, how can contemporary immigrant populations think and talk about nationhood when significant portions of these communities are growing up as formal outsiders to the nation-state? Viewed from the perspective of the nation-state, migration can be seen as a disturbing factor in the nation-building process. The idea of the nation as historically and culturally distinct with the state as its 'natural' political and territorial framework stresses cultural or ethnic homogeneity. Nevertheless, today the magnitude of immigrants in the EU and in the USA seems to have an ambiguous function. It is a major cause for anxiety which serves to foster the European Union and American need for cohesion: 'we' need to keep 'them' out through conjoint efforts.

In the end, the impact of exclusionary immigration policies does more than just stigmatise immigration and domestic minorities. Exclusion in the immigration laws must be considered as an integral part of a larger mosaic of discrimination in the European and in the American society. If the democratic states do not succeed in integrating immigrants into the regular society, they run the risk of having ethnic and social segregation. This is already the case to varying degrees in the European Union and in the USA and poses significant challenges to the democratic systems of these societies. Minority groups implicitly understand the link between racial, ethnical and political exclusions and their place in the racial and ethnical hierarchy and the legal system in the EU and in the USA.

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### Notes

<sup>3</sup> According to the U.S. Census Bureau Current Population Survey, 2003, Annual Social and Economic Supplement.

<sup>4</sup> The term irregular refers, in this article, to those immigrants who arrive by legal or illegal means in a host country and work, which they are forbidden to do. Babar Senekalde from Senegal, a country where many migrants risk their lives by reaching the coastal Spanish waters by boat, states on the issue of 'illegality' the following: "I consider myself legal because I have never committed a crime and documented because I have documents that establish my identity." (cited in A Fraerman, 'Picking and Choosing the Favoured Few', October 1, Inter Press Service, Street News Service: [www.street-papers.org](http://www.street-papers.org), 2007.)

<sup>5</sup> J S Passel, 'Undocumented Immigration'. *The Annals*, 487, September 1986.

<sup>6</sup> M Fix and J S Passel, *Immigration and Immigrants: Setting the Record Straight*, Urban Institute Press, Washington, DC., 1994.

<sup>7</sup> 'Immigration Reform and Control Act', <http://www.uscis.gov/portal/site/uscis>

<sup>8</sup> R Capps and K Fortuny, *Immigration and child and family policy*, The Urban Institute, Washington, DC., 2006.

<sup>9</sup> The Centre on Migration Policy and Society, University of Oxford, states that "Contemporary public debate and policy thinking on migration has a particular focus on those falling outside of regular status. While popularly depicted as 'illegal immigrants', in practice understanding this phenomenon requires an analysis of immigration status as a spectrum, rather than an illegal/legal dichotomy. For example, many people who are working illegally may be legally resident". <http://www.compas.ox.ac.uk/research/Irregular>, 2007.

<sup>10</sup> W A Ewing, 'From denial to acceptance: effectively regulating immigration to the United States'. *Immigration Policy in Focus*, Vol. 3, Issue 5, 2004, pp. 302-332.

<sup>11</sup> C Little and K Klarreich, *Securing our borders. Post 9/11 scapegoating of immigrants*, Florida Immigrant Advocacy Center, Florida, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> Instituto Nacional de Estadística. Evolution of the foreign population in Spain since 1998.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid.

<sup>15</sup> The term Third Country National refers to any person who is not a national or a citizen of a European Union Member State.

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- <sup>16</sup> Basque Homeland and Liberty: a terrorist group that demands Basque independence.
- <sup>17</sup> D Rodríguez García, *From emigration to immigration: changing trends in international migration in Europe and the case of Spain*, Joint Centre for Research on Immigration and Settlement, Toronto, 2005.
- <sup>18</sup> PP: conservative party and PSOE: socialist party.
- <sup>19</sup> Ministerio de Trabajo y Asuntos Sociales, Instituto Nacional de Estadística, Padrón Municipal 1975-2005.
- <sup>20</sup> A Kreienbrink, *Focus Migration. Country Profile, Spain*, Hamburg Institute of International Economics (HWWI), vol. 6, 2006.
- <sup>21</sup> European Parliament. Committee on Petitions, [http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/cm](http://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/cm)
- <sup>22</sup> National Immigration Law Center, 'How HR 4437 would criminalize immigrants', <http://www.nilc.org>. 2006.
- <sup>23</sup> All interviewees' names are pseudonyms.
- <sup>24</sup> A pejorative term for a person that has entered the United States illegally based on the assumption that the migrant swam to get into the US getting his or her back wet in the process.
- <sup>25</sup> B Castrillo, *20 Minutos Newspaper*, 25 July, 2008.
- <sup>26</sup> E Seda Bonilla, 'Ser es hacer: el problema de identidad de los descendientes de inmigrantes puertorriqueños en Estados Unidos', *Réquiem para una cultura*, Río Piedras, Ediciones Bayoán, Puerto Rico, 1980.
- <sup>27</sup> A K Ho and J Sidanius, 'Implications of Hypodescent for the Assimilation of Asian Americans and 'Black Exceptionalism'', Paper presented at the annual meeting of the ISPP 31st Annual Scientific Meeting, Sciences Po, [http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p256458\\_index.html](http://www.allacademic.com/meta/p256458_index.html). Paris, 2008.
- <sup>28</sup> P Kasinitz, *Caribbean New York: Black Immigrants and the Politics of Race*, Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1992.
- <sup>29</sup> B L Marshall, *Engendering modernity. Feminism, social theory and social change*, Cambridge Polity Press, 1994.
- <sup>30</sup> M C Waters, *Black Identities. West Indian Immigrant Dreams and American Realities*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1999.
- <sup>31</sup> C Hoffman, *Middle-class immigrant identities: Dominican-Americans in South Florida*, Thesis (PhD) Florida International University, 2002.
- <sup>32</sup> M Salmoral Lucena, *Los códigos negros de la América española*, Ediciones UNESCO, Universidad de Alcalá de Henares, Madrid, 1996.
- <sup>33</sup> CC.OO. (2003). Trabajadores extranjeros y acción sindical. Madrid. *Cuadernos de Información Sindical*, nº 46.
- <sup>34</sup> European and American emphasis on control does not stop them from accessing these same people as cheap labour. For example, the EU has created a special trade zone in North African countries similar to the free

trade zones the USA created in Mexico (Schmid 2007; Global Trade Watch 2007, The NAFTA Index; Mexican Labor News and Analysis, 3/2/1999, vol.4, no.4).

<sup>35</sup> Spanish Prime Minister Mr Rodríguez-Zapatero and French President Mr Sarkozy agreed on the 10th of January, 2008 to start conjoint programs of repatriation of irregular migrants. Both agreed that irregular immigration ‘has no room’ in Spain or in France (10th of January, El País Newspaper, 2008). More recently, on the 21st of May 2008, the Italian, government presented plans to tighten up its immigration policy, which include making the residence in Italy without permission a criminal offence punishable by jail. (E Vucheva, ‘Italy in major anti-immigration push’, <http://euobserver.com/22/26198,2008>.)

<sup>37</sup> R Brubaker, *Citizenship and Nationhood in France and Germany*, Harvard University Press, Harvard, 1992.

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## **Ariel Dorfman Writes Home: Literary Citizenship and Transnational Belonging**

*Jonathan Rollins*

### **Abstract**

In an April 2008 interview, Chilean writer-in-exile, Ariel Dorfman, declared that 'home' - a particularly fraught term for him, given the repeated loss of home in his family's history - is multiple, and potentially anywhere. He mused that this manifold experience of home must be the case for many, if not most, writers and not simply for those writing so-called exile and (im)migrant literature. Dorfman, whose own life has been characterised by a kind of serial exile, suggested that we belong to multiple overlapping communities and that where they meet, where we are most comfortable or feel a sense of belonging in those overlapping spaces - that's where 'home' is. Moreover, those home-places aren't necessarily physical, nor can they be easily mapped. While home for Dorfman has alternately been Argentina, Chile, the Netherlands, and the United States, it has also been constituted as a transnational place located in the texts that he has read and written. These various textual homelands, or (inter)textual communities, provide a sense of belonging to individual readers and writers and transgress or defy the physical limits of national borders. Using the transcript of my interview with Dorfman, I explore the hypothesis that the texts read and written by displaced individuals often function as surrogate homelands or a portable patria. This paper also examines the relationship between Dorfman's nationally and textually oriented identities and allegiances, and considers the conflicts that arise between them.

**Key Words:** Cross-cultural, exile, home, liminal, literary citizenship, textual community, transnational.

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In an April 2008 interview, Ariel Dorfman talked about celebrating his grandson's 7<sup>th</sup> birthday and what an important event it was in his 'Russian' (Moldavian) Jewish Argentine Chilean American family's extended history. It was the first time in several generations that a Dorfman had reached that age without having experienced exile. Early in the 20<sup>th</sup> century, his grandparents had fled Europe escaping violent pogroms (and the more mundane details of economic hardship). In the 1940s, he and his parents had been forced to leave their native Argentina for the United States,



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escaping the Argentine government's persecution of the Left. Then, a decade later, McCarthyism drove the Dorfman family from the United States into yet another political exile, this time in Chile. Fast forward to September 11, 1973 ("the *other* 9-11"), and Ariel Dorfman, as cultural attaché to the Marxist government of Salvador Allende, flees his adopted patria as a result of General Pinochet's coup d'état. Reflecting on this multigenerational serial displacement in his 1998 memoir, *Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey* and in his 2007 documentary, *A Promise to the Dead*, Dorfman raises important questions on the nature of home and belonging: *where* is home and *what* is it? In the absence of a physical homeland, in the separation from the familiar, what provides the exile, the migrant, the wanderer with a sense of stability and belonging? And to what extent can text substitute for a lost home or homeland? Possible answers can be found in Dorfman's memoir, in his novels and plays, in his documentary, and more recently, in the interview I conducted with him in April 2008 prior to a public screening of *A Promise to the Dead*. How, then, does Ariel Dorfman write home?

As a boy and as a young man, Dorfman is repeatedly confronted with the complexity or ambivalence inherent in the matters of home and exile and the relationship between them. Yet, at the time, he does not seem to acknowledge this complexity; instead, he imagines his experience as a series of binaries of either/or: either English-speaking or Spanish-speaking; either American or Chilean; either here or there. However, in his own experience, both Chile and the United States have been simultaneously homeland and alien territory. As Trinh T. Minh-ha reminds us, "the experience of exile is never simple binary" but, rather, a question of liminal "quivering"<sup>1</sup> in what Zygmunt Bauman calls the exilic elsewhere, or a kind of interstitial third space that is neither here nor there and defies binary thinking.<sup>2</sup> Of course, the mature Dorfman recognizes that questions such as, 'who am I?' 'where is home?' 'where do I belong?' and 'what is the nature of my exile?' cannot be answered using an all-or-nothing, either/or formula. The construction of identity and belonging is a negotiation or, to use Dorfman's word, a "dance" conducted in the liminal spaces that Bauman and others describe. Leaving Chile, Dorfman as liminal/exile wanders with his family from Buenos Aires to Paris, then to Amsterdam, and finally to the United States - that elsewhere that he had once embraced as home, then rejected, now re-enters ambivalently given the role the U.S. played in the Chilean coup d'état of 1973 that has uprooted him. Eventually, the dictatorship in Chile ends, democracy is restored, and Dorfman returns 'home' only to find (like so many other exiles have found) that home is no longer there waiting for him. Home is elsewhere - a place that can't be mapped easily if at all.

Katarzyna Marciniak's description of a similar exilic liminality in Julia Alvarez's work is germane to Dorfman's case: "We begin to see how

[the exile's] liminal position unmoors her sense of belonging to one nation and are invited to question the assumed natural connection between a person and her place of birth. [...] the space of home can be as unfamiliar and strange as the place of exile."<sup>3</sup> Gradually, serially exiled Dorfman realizes what many others in similar interstitial, displaced circumstances have also realized: that the liminal - the individual in the "in-between space" - occupies a transnational "elsewhere." At best, this knowledge leads to what Marciniak calls the experience of a "multiplicity of national belongings"<sup>4</sup> but at its worst, it leads to a despairing, alienated disconnection, part of what Salman Rushdie calls a "double unbelonging"<sup>5</sup> but without benefits. It is the latter that bell hooks, cited by Rosemary George in *The Politics of Home*, seems to have in mind when she asserts, "At times home is nowhere. At times one only knows extreme estrangement and alienation. Then home is no longer just one place. It is locations."<sup>6</sup> Dorfman's position is more hopeful than that, and yet it has in common with hooks this notion that home is not one place but 'locations'. He is certainly more optimistic than Eva Hoffman, for example, who, in *Lost in Translation*, suggests that her fragmented exilic 'I' "will never belong comfortably anyplace" - always stuck "in some betwixt and between place."<sup>7</sup> The alternative, posited by Dorfman and others, suggests that the exilic 'I' can belong many places, even if it must remain liminal and 'dance and jump' back and forth across what Hoffman calls the gap that cannot be fully closed.<sup>8</sup> Dorfman's idea of multiple belonging is not simply the pose or performance of "acting *as if* one were at home wherever one happens to be" that Edward Said calls the exile's particular achievement<sup>9</sup> but, rather, a genuine sense of fitting in. In interview, Dorfman asserts that we belong to multiple overlapping communities and that where those communities meet, where we are most comfortable or feel a sense of belonging in those overlapping spaces - that's where 'home' is. His description of home bears a marked similarity to Homi Bhabha's articulation of the extra-territorial and cross-cultural conditions of 'unhomeliness'.<sup>10</sup> That is say that to be 'unhomed' is to be displaced and decentred in a transnational condition but it is certainly not to be cut off entirely beyond any possibility of belonging.

Echoing Bhabha's remarks, I would emphasise here the de-territorialised nature of Dorfman's unhomely belonging by clarifying that those home-places to which he turns for refuge aren't necessarily physical. Home can be constituted as a transnational place located in the blurred interstices and overlaps between cultures and languages, as well as in the texts that he reads and writes. I would group these various textual homelands under the aegis of textual or even intertextual communities. These communities are intertextual, just as they are intersubjective, in so far as they are constituted as idiosyncratic networks of connection and meaning. They function as communities because the texts provide a sense of belonging to

readers and writers - to individual readers finding a kindred voice, to authors writing to a real or imagined community of readers, and to those finding a sense of community in a shared engagement with text. Such textual communities may transgress, defy, and conflict with the physical limits of national communities. Moreover, textual communities seem to operate in two related but distinct ways. To cite Benedict Anderson and Salman Rushdie, they are the 'imagined communities' or 'imaginary homelands' constructed, re-constructed, and maintained through narrative;<sup>11</sup> or alternatively, they are a set of 'cosmopolitan contact zones' (according to James Clifford and David Morley) that lie beyond or transgress the limits of nation or of some other geographical, linguistic, ethnic, religious, or familial collective.<sup>12</sup> With Dorfman, we see both variations of textual communities at work; the narrative *of* home and narrative *as* home (that cosmopolitan contact zone).

Dorfman's memoir sheds light on the role of the textual community as a transnational or extra-territorial contact zone and on the importance it will have in his life. As a young boy, he accompanies his mother and father on a voyage by ship to Europe. In that liminal Trans-Atlantic space, sailing between continents, cultures, languages, histories (between his family's various 'homelands' in Europe and the Americas), on the very ship carrying the writer Thomas Mann home to Germany after a long exile, Dorfman has an epiphany. He sees that literature or the reading and writing of text can function as an alternative to home: that is, text as portable, pocket-sized patria or the homeland one carries within oneself. He begins to discern a connection between text and community independent of geography. While he discusses this moment in his memoir,<sup>13</sup> in our interview Dorfman explains this epiphany in even greater detail:

The intuition was that you are able to travel with this language of yours and you would be able to write it and the writing would travel in a different way than the hand that wrote it or the eye that saw it or the brain that formed it. That is what begins the process. As I start reading more and writing in English in Chile, I realize that there's really no audience for me at all in Santiago apart from the few people who might be able read my stuff [his parents would read what he wrote, for example] but there was this sense that my stories are written in a language that doesn't fit here and yet it fits elsewhere.<sup>14</sup>

He understands that the sense of 'belonging' he feels is a product of textual or literary citizenship rather than national citizenship.

At the time, he is reading the *New York Review of Books*, and anthologies of English literature, and Beckett, Oscar Wilde, Conrad, and

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Nabokov. It is significant that much of what he's reading and connecting with has been written by those who have gone elsewhere and are writing in a language other than their mother tongue. This reading forms part of the foundation of his sense of belonging to a textual community. He explains: "I begin to find the kindred spirits both in the authors I was reading but also [significantly] in their audience - in later years, in discussion of these readings - and we found ourselves able to communicate."<sup>15</sup> This is the textual community that Brian Stock articulates in his examination of the rise of medieval literacy and the reform and heretic movements of the 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> centuries.<sup>16</sup> Stock examines the parallel use of texts by groups of readers in the High Middle Ages and the sense of "solidarity against the outside world" that such shared readings gave them.<sup>17</sup> These communities constitute the medieval antecedent to Clifford's contemporary cosmopolitan contact zones.

Dorfman's own literacy - his reading and writing - place him in such zones of contact. He explains these connections as acts of community building and solidarity:

I found there was a sense that there were people who had been there before and who were able to become this *place* where I met - I met the author, but I met other readers as well. [Note his use of a territorial language to describe the process that is beyond place; emphasis my own] [...] I found more and more I was attracted to those; let's call them transnational intellectuals, very strongly. [...] I was very attracted to the idea that you could work in a different language than your own, than the one that you were surrounded with and that that could give you some sort of advantage.<sup>18</sup>

Thus, for Dorfman and many others like him, the importance of literature in a discussion of home and exile lies in the fact that literature is "foundationally interstitial - it begins in the overlap and travels beyond the specific places/spaces/cultures that produce it."<sup>19</sup> By extension, his sense of belonging in the world is very much a product of his textual or literary citizenship, that which makes him part of one or more textual communities.

There are two significant moments in his life in which this literary citizenship comes into conflict with, competes with, or challenges his national citizenship. The first comes shortly after the 1973 coup d'état, when he and approximately 1000 other political refugees take shelter in the Argentine embassy in Santiago, hoping (often in vain) to escape their country now that it has turned against them. It seems that having been born in Buenos Aires (and, therefore, an Argentine by birth) is not enough to get him past those policing the Chilean national border. Rather, it is his status as a recently

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published novelist, published in Argentina, which gets him to freedom in Buenos Aires. The Argentine government works this angle with Chilean authorities in order to obtain the necessary exit visa for him (that is, “are you really going to execute this famous ‘Argentine’ writer?”). The textual community is more than just an abstraction in this case. Belonging to what he calls that “elite class of people who understand each other and who’ve read each other and who read similar texts together”<sup>20</sup> means life instead of death. If privilege is inherent in a discussion of those exiled individuals who find membership in such a community, then clearly the escape from a death sentence in Santiago is one of the privileges of membership he enjoys in this instance. Of course, there are no guarantees that being a writer or an artist exempts one from the effects of tyranny or puts one beyond the reach of an antagonistic national community, the examples of which are too numerous to list. However, Nigerian novelist Wole Soyinka’s incarceration comes to mind, as do the Jewish writers, artists, and musicians whose “cultural prominence” served only to postpone their deaths temporarily at Theresienstadt.

The second incident that stands out as a moment of conflict between literary and national citizenship and which has great significance for Dorfman’s sense of belonging and of ‘home’ occurs almost two full decades after the one in the Argentine embassy. It takes place shortly after the Chilean debut of his play, *Death and the Maiden*. It is the year after General Pinochet has stepped down as dictator, and at a time when a great many Chileans seem to want only to forget the past and move forward. The play attempts to address Chile’s troubled past and to ‘rebuild’ the country (re-write home) through literature. With it, Dorfman effectively seeks to open a discussion of issues that had been silenced either through censorship or a general unwillingness to talk about an unhealed wound in the tortured body politic. However, while the play is enormously successful abroad, it is panned ‘at home’ in Chile, even by sympathetic parties. It seems no one (at least no one publishing theatre reviews and editorials) wants to hear what he has to say about the country and its past or, rather, about his country and his version of its past. One senses that the two (the Chile he remembers and writes into his play and the one he returns to from his American exile) may have become divergent in his absence, as so often happens to home that is lost and re-created in exile. Not to say that he doesn’t remember the past accurately, but that he has become a kind of ghost in the present, or an embodiment of the past in the present tense. The visual imagery at this point in *A Promise to the Dead* reinforces this ghost-like status by depicting him as a still image in a Santiago sped-up-through-time-lapse cinematography. In the accompanying narrative, he dwells on of the conflict between his two homelands (the physical Chile and its textual counterpart represented in and by the play). This conflict comes to a head in the Chilean critical reception of

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*Death and the Maiden*, which is so demoralizing that he exclaims, "I grabbed my play and I grabbed my family and left the country."<sup>21</sup> Faced with a choice between the national community and textual community, he chooses the latter. However, 'leaving the country' in this instance is more than just getting on a flight to the United States and never looking back. He does not turn his back on Chile in a moment of absolute rejection similar to his rejection of the United States as an idealistic student at Berkeley in the 1960s. He has returned 'home' again and again, and continues to spend time in Chile, yet insists that in order to write about home, he had to leave home.

Duke University, then, and before that, universities in Maryland and Paris and Amsterdam, function as remote, safe, textually oriented elsewherees from which to write about home from a critical distance. One might argue he lives not in countries but in academia, at Duke University, for example, rather than in Durham, North Carolina - a kind of 'gown and town' distinction. Dorfman might deny this or argue (convincingly) that he is a part of the larger community beyond the university. Nevertheless, he made a telling confession during the Q&A session following the screening of his documentary: he said that in spite of all the years spent in the United States, that he doesn't really feel 'American'.<sup>22</sup> Whether the focus is on Chile as home or the United States as home, his allegiance seems to be to the writing or the textual community, not the place delineated by the political community.

To return, then, to the initial question: what is home and how does text (or literature) factor in its definition? Rosemary George sums up the relationship between the two by suggesting that all fiction is homesickness.<sup>23</sup> Or, in other words, that literature is a product of some universal nostalgic longing for home and a search for connection (re-connection) and belonging. Alan Bennett describes this longing for connection to a textual community in terms of great moments in reading when it is as if a hand has reached out of the text and taken hold of yours.<sup>24</sup> For Dorfman, home is many places and, as he says, you straddle borders, and "jump and dance between one side and the other."<sup>25</sup> Literature facilitates this interstitial negotiation of hopping across those borders and between cultures and languages. Like other displaced and culturally entangled writers, Dorfman uses text and his sense of transnational, or extra-national, belonging in textual communities to address the anxious liminality of being simultaneously in and out of a number of places, homes, exilic refuges ... 'elsewheres'. He uses text to map out a home that does not exist on any physical map.<sup>26</sup> Thus, when Dorfman writes home, sometimes that means writing about Chile or the United States or the intersections and gaps between those geographies. But more significantly, writing home means finding a home in the writing, whatever the subject.

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**Notes**

<sup>1</sup> T T Minh-ha, 'Other Than Myself/ My Other Self', in *Travellers' Tales: Narrative of Home and Displacement*, George Robertson et al. (eds), Routledge, London and New York, 1994, pp.13, 17.

<sup>2</sup> Z Bauman, 'Assimilation into Exile: The Jew as a Polish Writer', in *Exile and Creativity: Signposts, Travelers, Outsiders, Backward Glances*, Susan Rubin Suleiman (ed), Duke University Press, Durham and London, 1998, p. 321.

<sup>3</sup> K Marciniak, *Alienhood: Citizenship, Exile, and the Logic of Difference*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis, 2006, p.68.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73.

<sup>5</sup> S Rushdie, *East, West*, Vintage, Toronto, 1996, p.141.

<sup>6</sup> b hooks, qtd. in R George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth-Century Fiction*, University of California Press, London, Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1996, p.1.

<sup>7</sup> E Hoffman, *Lost in Translation*, Penguin, Toronto, 1989, p. 216, 274.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> E Said, 'Reflections on Exile', in *Altogether Elsewhere: Writers on Exile*, Marc Robinson (ed), Boston and London, Faber and Faber, 1994, p. 148; emphasis my own.

<sup>10</sup> H Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge, London and New York, 1994, p.9.

<sup>11</sup> B Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*, Verso, London and New York, 1991, p. 6; S Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands: Essays and Criticism 1981-1991*, Granata Books, London, 1991, p.10.

<sup>12</sup> D Morley, *Home Territories: Media, Mobility and Identity*, Routledge, Abingdon and New York, 2000, p. 9.

<sup>13</sup> A Dorfman, *Heading South, Looking North: A Bilingual Journey*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, New York, 1998, p. 84.

<sup>14</sup> A Dorfman, Personal interview, 6 September, 2008.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> B Stock, *The Implications of Literacy: Written Language and Models of Interpretation in the Eleventh and Twelfth Centuries*, Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1983, p.88-151.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>18</sup> Dorfman, Personal interview.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>21</sup> A Dorfman, *A Promise to the Dead: The Exile Journey of Ariel Dorfman*, Peter Raymont (dir), White Pine Pictures, 2007.

<sup>22</sup> Comment taken from the Q&A period following the screening of *A Promise to the Dead* at the *Full Frame Documentary Film Festival*, Durham, NC, April 6, 2008.

<sup>23</sup> George, p. 1.

<sup>24</sup> A Bennett, *The History Boys*, Faber and Faber, London, 2004, p. 56.

<sup>25</sup> Dorfman, Personal interview.

<sup>26</sup> J Alvarez, *Something to Declare*, Algonquin, Chapel Hill, NC, 1998, p. 173; Marciniak, p. 61.

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## **Longing and Dreaming in Real Time: How Chagossian Children in Mauritius See the Chagos Islands**

*S.J.T.M. Evers*

### **Abstract**

This paper focuses on how Chagossian children attending primary school integrate their current living conditions in Port Louis with their perceptions of their ancestral homeland. Since their forced expulsion from the Chagos archipelago, Chagossians have been engaged in a campaign advocating their right of return, largely driven by high profile litigation before the British Courts. However, due to the length of their exile, the displaced generation may never see the day of the longed-for homecoming. The memory of the past and the dream to return has now been transmitted through two generations to the grandchildren of those forced to relocate. This paper discusses perceptions and representations of these children by using reflexive drawing techniques and other methodologies. These ideas will be measured against their integration into present-day Mauritian society, and how they see themselves in relation to their peers from other ethnic origins. The study examines these findings within the practical framework of day-to-day survival and hopes for the future entertained by the children.

**Key Words:** Chagos, forced migration, children's notions of homeland, marginalisation, primary school.

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### **Introduction<sup>1</sup>**

The English have taken the land from the Chagossians and made it a dependency of Mauritius. Then the English took Chagos back and the Chagossians came here. The Chagossians were unhappy. That was because their land was pulled away from them. They were not adapted to Mauritius because they did not know anybody. They did not have much money and no work. Afterwards they almost all died, two or three went to England. Because the English allowed it. And maybe they are also dead. Now the children follow this example and go to England. I will also go there... (Jean, ten years old)<sup>2</sup>

With the exception of French and British plantation owners, the initial settlers of the Chagos islands originated from the African continent

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and Madagascar. They arrived in the archipelago during the eighteenth century as slaves to perform forced labour on private copra plantations. After the abolition of slavery (1835), these ex-slaves continued working for their former masters.<sup>3</sup>

Their expulsion resulted from secret negotiations between the American and British governments, when Chagos formed part of British colonial Mauritius. The British - whose strategic hegemony in the Indian Ocean was on the wane, agreed to make Diego Garcia (the largest of the Chagos islands) available to the Americans as a military base. When the Mauritians came to negotiate their independence in 1965, the British demanded surrender of the Chagos islands territory in exchange for a three million pound indemnity. This transaction allowed the British to complete the transfer of Diego Garcia to the U.S., and triggered the forced clearance of the entire population of approximately 2,000 people, plantation owners and workers alike, to the Seychelles (also a British colony at the time) and Mauritius.<sup>4</sup>

This paper focuses on the Chagossians who were relocated to Mauritius, where they dwell in the outskirts of Port Louis. The Republic of Mauritius is situated in the Southwest Indian Ocean approximately 2,000 kilometres from the South East coast of Africa, and approximately 900 kilometres East of Madagascar. Arab traders probably already knew of its existence by the 10th century, but it was officially 'discovered' in 1505 by Portuguese sailors and successively claimed by the Dutch (who arrived in 1598 and named it Mauritius in honour of Prince Maurice of Nassau), the French and later the British. Slaves were principally brought in from Madagascar and Mozambique to toil on the sugar plantations. After the abolition of slavery in 1835, followed by a four year 'apprenticeship', they were freed and survived through fishing and other activities. Their descendants are referred to as Creoles.

The Creoles form about 28% of the current population of Mauritius. They generally belong to the poorer segments of Mauritian society. Most of them are Roman Catholics. Mauritians consider the Chagossians to be Creoles as well. Interestingly enough, the Creoles form, together with the descendants of the former French Colonial rulers, the administrative category 'general population'. These so called Franco-Muritians represent about 2% of the population. The other ethnic groups are Hindus (descendants of former indentured labourers who replaced the slaves on the sugar plantations, 52%), Muslims (15%) and Sino-Muritians (3%). Mauritius counts about 1.2 million inhabitants. This is quite substantial for a country that measures only 1865 square kilometres. English is the official language of Mauritius, principally spoken in the political administration and the education system whereas French is dominant in the private sector economy and Mauritian media. Mauritian Creole is the vehicle of communication in everyday life.<sup>5</sup>

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Besides these languages, many ancestral languages are spoken including Hindi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu, Arabic, Marathi and Mandarin. The Chagossians speak their own original Creole, which is linguistically very close to Mauritian Creole.

This research is part of a larger cognitive anthropological study currently being carried on by the undersigned and her research collaborator, Marry Kooy, a Masters student in Social and Cultural Anthropology at the VU University Amsterdam, investigating perceptions of kinship and family history held by primary school children between the ages of nine and twelve.<sup>6</sup> Fieldwork for this research was conducted from August 2007 until April 2008. Methodologies were adapted to the children and consisted of participant observation, home visits, photo elicitation, cognitive tests, and reflexive drawing exercises in which children creatively expressed their views. In all, more than 250 drawings of pupils with different family backgrounds were collected and discussed. The forty one Chagossian children (21 girls and 19 boys) pursuing grades five and six, or forming part of the 'repeaters class' (pupils who failed the primary school exam), are at the heart of this paper and represent about 90% of all Chagossian children attending these classes. We shall begin by introducing two of these children and their ideas of themselves, kinship and Chagos. The conversation below followed one of the exercises, where children were asked to draw the place where 'the grandparents of their grandparents' originally come from:

Lilli is a skinny, shy girl with a dark complexion. She has just turned twelve and is in grade six of primary school. She has been drawing with great care and seems eager to discuss her work.

That is the place where my grandparents come from. It is beautiful there. The sun always shines and there are many birds in the sky. They are so free flying around. There is sugar cane, water, fruits on the trees, fish in the sea and always food on the fire. You know people cook with wood there. The houses are made of wood and have grass on the roofs. See that is me looking through the window. I am going to live in Chagos one day. You see, I am all happy there. My father is also happy. Now he is a prisoner and, you know, he will be so happy to come with my mother and me to Chagos. You see, there are no prisons in Chagos. My mother goes and gets the water and then carries it on her head. That is what my grandmother did there so mum will have to learn that as well. Oh, I guess I will have to practise that also. I have no idea how to do that.



SE: Who else will go to Chagos with you?

My grandfather is already dead but my grandmother will come. She is there as well on the drawing, but you cannot see her. She is resting inside. You see, grandma is very old and cannot walk very well. Now she lays on the bed in our house in Roche Bois, but our house is not as nice as the houses in Chagos. If it rains we all get wet. Grandma will be so much happier in Chagos. Then, eh let me think... I have two brothers as well. But they won't come with us. One is in England. He worked with my father until he had enough money to go there. I am not sure what he is doing there. My other brother is now doing the work my father used to do. He works at night but I have no idea what kind of work he does. He also wants to go to England. He says Chagos is boring. I tell him he can swim there. But he says he can swim anywhere. I tell him how happy he will be in Chagos. Now he is always angry. He likes beer...a lot.

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SE: What will you do in Chagos?

I will be doing all kind of important things. Things I cannot do here. My teacher says I am hopeless. I cannot pass the exam. So this will be my last year in school. Then I will have to work. And I will take care of my mother and grandma. They need me. I always feel bad when I go to school. Mum is also sick a lot and then I need to help her. That is why I do not go to school very often. I cannot pass the exam anyway, so it does not really matter.

A few weeks after this interview, I meet Lilli with her friend Anne at the public beach of Pereybère, although I must confess I did not immediately recognise her:

Hi, do you not know who I am? You came to my school and I made a drawing for you.

SE: Oh yes, I remember. You look so different now that you are not wearing your school uniform.

You, mean that I look sexy. (She is wearing a red bikini with pink flowers and a mini skirt that accentuates her small waist.)

SE: Yes, I guess that is it. You came all the way from Roche Bois?

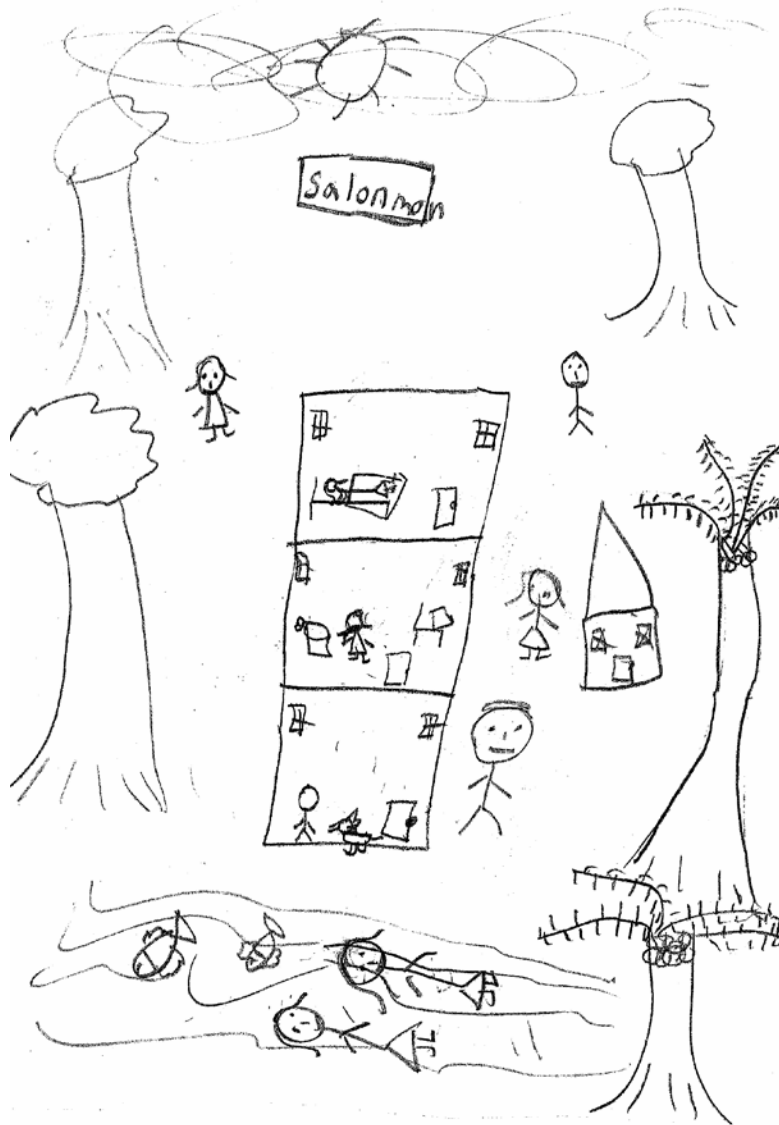
Yes, by bus. A friend paid for me. He is over there.

She is pointing toward a man, who looks to be well into his mid-twenties, her senior by more than ten years:

His friend paid for Anne. Anne and I like the beach.

Anne is one year younger than Lilli and is in grade five. Anne places the origins of her grandparents on Salomon, part of the Chagos islands. During one session, she described her drawing as follows:

This is where my family comes from and where I will live when I am older. I will be very happy there. Here I am swimming in the sea with my friend. There are lots of fish in the sea to eat and lots of fruits in the trees. Look, here are the trees with the coconuts. If we are thirsty we drink



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the water inside. I think that the friends of my mother also will go with us to Salomon that is why I have put them everywhere. They always come to our house. We all sit outside together. Our house in Roche Bois is of iron and is too small for us all. It only has one room. But in Salomon we will have lots of space. You know... what you see is a *bâtiment en étage*. People are building this for us right now. It will be beautiful when we go there. I have never been in such a building. But I am sure they make it very strong. We will have proper tables, chairs and beds there. And you know what? We will even have a television. I will have a dog that stands in front of the door to check whether people are allowed to come in.

SE: What will you do when you live there?

Swim, I would just swim every day. There is no school. There is no need for it. We will find everything we need right there. That seems so nice. Now my mother always complains we do not have enough money. My dad has no work. She sometimes goes away and then comes back with some money. We buy food for it together. But that does not make her happy. She does not like to work. It makes her sad. So she can also swim the whole day once we are there. We can rest on the beach together. She will not be tired anymore. At night we will sleep in nice beds and when it gets cold, we will have blankets.

SE: It sounds like a nice place.

Yes, I cannot wait until I can go. I will not have to go to school and not think about getting money for my mother. I will be so happy. Here we cannot be happy. We have nothing and I think people do not even like us. We are too poor.

The analysis of this case and the data of the other Chagossian children will form the nexus of this paper. The concept of Chagossian children refers to children who claim to have at least one (great) grandparent who dwelled in the Chagos archipelago.

Due to lack of space, we, unfortunately, cannot integrate more drawings or contextual information of the study. It is important to note, however, that Mauritius is a compartmentalised society, where ethnicity is



the principal organiser of social life.<sup>7</sup> Eriksen identifies kinship and religion as the most important criteria of ethnicity.<sup>8</sup> Although he sees a trend towards more inter-ethnic marriages, many families in Mauritius, particularly the Franco-Mauritians and Indians, continue to follow principles of ethnic endogamy.<sup>9</sup>

### 1. Social Casting of Chagossians as Creoles

Many Mauritians entertain essentialised visions about the Creoles: they are people with curly hair, who live in poverty and have social problems, a condition which is seen as a “primordial element of Creole personality”, so in public discussion people tend to emphasise that Creole “are bound to participate in negative social behaviour” because “it is in their nature” to do so, instead of looking to causes like colonialism or unemployment.<sup>10</sup>

Chagossians are also popularly classified as members of the Creole category. Vine speaks about a ‘double exclusion’ as they represent ‘the bottom of the bottom’: “first, as Chagossians who gave up their homeland so the rest of Mauritius could have its independence, and second, as members of the minority Afro-Mauritian Creole population.”<sup>11</sup>

Boswell, however, stresses that Chagossians can be distinguished from the other Creoles, whose ancestors toiled in Mauritius, by their cultural traditions and practices, which they “regularly invoke by coming together to share a meal dance or reminisce about life in the Chagos archipelago”.<sup>12</sup> Johannessen underlines the importance of these narratives as they strengthen notions of belonging.<sup>13</sup> In the narratives of Chagossians, words such as *sagren* (defined by them as ‘miserable abject poverty’), *latristes* (‘profound sorrow’) and *lamizer* (‘misery’) are often used. Johannessen sees these concepts, which refer to different personal experiences, as constituting “an interconnected vocabulary generally agreed upon and possibly communicable”.<sup>14</sup> In her study, ‘How a plantation became paradise’, Jeffery speaks about “a standardized mythic-historical narrative” which, when expressed in songs, represents the romanticized collective imagination that is so crucial to the current collective identification as Chagossians.<sup>15</sup>

Islands and village ties that existed on the Chagos islands, “were severely ruptured” when they were deported.<sup>16</sup> People who originally lived on a scattered archipelago converted their self-image to “an extended group-consciousness in exile”.<sup>17</sup> This process was catalysed by the pending litigation, which seeks financial compensation and a right of return to the Chagos, against the British and US governments. For these legal proceedings to succeed, it is crucial that Chagossians exist as a definable entity derived from a common ancestry and culture. The British and American governments countered this staking out of an ontological turf by underlining that their ancestors were merely copra workers whose contracts were terminated for the

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simple reason that their services were no longer required. The successful rebuttal of this line of argument naturally hinges upon not melting away into a more generic Creole category. Their recognition as a people is a linchpin in this. However, these essentialised claims of identity paradoxically serve the further reification by other groups in Mauritius, which hinders their integration in Mauritius and confirms their 'natural' appointed state living on the margins of Mauritian society.

## **2. Imagining Chagos**

The narratives of parents and grandparents about Chagos as paradise are echoed in the representations of Chagos by the children and confirmed in their drawings. None of the children drew or made mention of the former copra plantations on Chagos. For them, Chagos is a quiet and beautiful place where flowers, fruit trees, vegetables, water, animals (particularly birds) and fish are abundant.

All children drew houses, but life was principally portrayed outdoors in a rural setting. There were no shops, no offices and no cars. Only one child mentioned that there was a city in Chagos. Most children relate that there were animals in Chagos, such as birds, fish, chickens, cows, donkeys, sheep, goats and dogs. Some depict them as well, but others find it difficult to draw animals and stick with the birds and fish which they claim are much easier to get on paper. Physical aspects of imagined Chagos, all representing the good life, like the idyllic environment, the animals, trees and food, are central in the drawings and conversations about Chagos. The children, however, also link Chagos directly to kinship. This is very significant to them, as will be argued later in the paper.

## **3. The Harsh Reality of Life in Mauritius**

The drawings of life in Chagos strongly contrast with the contemporary living conditions of the children. About 3,800 Chagossians live in the poor neighbourhoods of Port Louis and surroundings: Cassis, Roche Bois, Pointe aux Sables and Baie du Tombeau. These areas are generally considered to be dangerous.<sup>18</sup> They principally live in ramshackle houses of ill-fitting corrugated metal sheets. Forty percent of households lack indoor plumbing and there is no running water in 26% of the houses.<sup>19</sup>

Upon their arrival in Mauritius, Chagossians encountered a society already struggling with unemployment. Job security on the plantations, to cite only one example, was no longer a given. In the sugar industry, additional workers were not needed. There was no copra industry to work in, and competition in fishing was high. The Mauritian economy was being diversified with manufactures in new Export Processing Zones and increasing tourism, but jobs in these sectors demanded more educational background than the majority of Chagossians had.<sup>20</sup> According to a survey of

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Vine, just over a third of the first generation and less than two-thirds of the second generation was working in 2002/2003, most of them in manual labor jobs, as dockers, domestics, casual construction workers and factory workers. Vine points out that Chagossians are chronically indebted, which incites many to resort to crime, particularly petty theft, drug trafficking and prostitution. "Prostitution appears as an ongoing employment opportunity of last resort for Chagossians with relatively few other opportunities," Vine states.<sup>21</sup>

Children feel the impact of this poverty and their broken family units. Our study disclosed that a majority of them live in matrifocal families where particularly grandmothers, mothers and aunts act as the household authority figures. Chagossian children rarely reside with both natural parents. The father had left the house often when they were still very young and the mother typically is supported by her sisters and mother. Virtually all children mentioned the important role of their grandmother, not only as caregiver but also as principal interlocutor where it concerned the passing on of the narratives of the Chagossian fate. We will return to this aspect toward the end of this paper during the discussion of how the Chagossian children view their future.

#### **4. The Challenges of Chagossian Children in Primary School**

Most Chagossian children attend primary school, although their teachers say that they are often absent for days on end. School, nevertheless, is a place where they encounter children with various family histories and, therefore, plays an important role in identity formation processes.

From the age of five, children receive six years of free tuition to primary school which terminates with the Certificate of Primary Education Examination (CPE exam). In 1980, 47, 3% passed, in 1990, 60, 31%.<sup>22</sup> In 2003, the national average pass rate was 62% and in the last decade figures stabilised between 65-70%.<sup>23</sup> Primary schools can be divided into two broad categories, schools where more than 40% of pupils pass the CPE exam and schools where less than 40% of the children succeed in doing so. The latter category of schools is referred to as ZEP schools (*Zones d'Education Prioritaires*). In 2007, there were 30 ZEP schools out of 289 primary schools. Not surprisingly, the ZEP schools feature prominently in the poorer quarters of Port Louis. They are principally frequented by Creole children.

Children in ZEP schools feel stigmatised by the label 'ZEP pupils' which they consider to be a confirmation of their negative self image, as one Chagossian girl (ten years old) pointed out so strikingly:

I have a real problem. Nobody wants me, not at home and not at school. I am at a ZEP school. That is a special school for stupid children like me.

While working in these schools, we were confronted on a daily basis with the challenges that the teachers face in their class rooms. Children seem to have never learned how to settle differences with words; regularly children jumped on each other and started hitting. Violence seemed to be their principle avenue of communication, boys and girls alike. As a teacher remarked, “If I turn my head for a second, somebody will be wounded.” Teachers, therefore, are busier keeping the children under control than actually being able to teach course content. As another teacher confirmed, “We learned how to teach the programme, but not how to deal with these children. They come from disturbed homes.” Many teachers mentioned that they fear their own pupils and their social environment.<sup>24</sup>

This vision of ZEP schools and their pupils appears to be held by an overwhelming majority of teachers, and is further confirmed by a 2008 Observatoire des Droits de l’Enfant de la Région de l’Océan Indien (ODEROI) report about the ZEP schools. The report discloses that most children live in very low income households and only 76.7% of them received daily breakfast prior to attending school.<sup>25</sup> The level of education of the caregivers is minimal: among father/male guardians, 14% did not finish primary school and 45% had completed six or fewer years of education; 40% of the children received little or no help with their homework.<sup>26</sup> Teachers provided the following additional explanations for poor performance of their pupils: automatic promotion of pupils (this refers to the system that children always pass to the next year even if they do not have the competences for this class), curriculum not adapted to the pupils, absenteeism, pupils’ lack of interest in their studies, and classes conducted in English where more than 90% of pupils do not speak this language at home.<sup>27</sup> This makes understanding the teacher a major challenge. Against this backdrop, it is not surprising that 62, 2%, of the teachers in the ZEP schools have expressed the desire to be transferred to a non-ZEP school.<sup>28</sup>

There is no specially designed educational policy for Chagossian pupils as they are deemed to share the poor school performances with their ‘fellow’ Creoles. Neither Chagossians, nor their history, appear in the teaching manuals of the pupils. In this regard, we were struck by the fact that it was not uncommon for teachers to be unaware of the Chagossian origin of children in their own classes. As one remarked after a drawing session with the pupils, “I had no idea that they came from Chagos - that they are intelligent enough to understand the assignment and to make such beautiful drawings.”

## **5. Self image, Longing and Belonging**

Narratives about Chagos principally come through the children via their female kin. Grandmothers, with whom many children live, are crucial in this regard. Indeed, it was a group of grandmothers who first drew attention

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to the harsh socio-economic circumstances of the Chagossians, when eight Chagossian women engaged in a hunger strike in Port Louis during March 1981. They were supported in their cause by hundreds, principally female, of demonstrators.<sup>29</sup> These women succeeded in placing the Chagossian fate both nationally and internationally on the political agenda. Although these grandmothers are no longer in the limelight, behind the screens they have remained important in keeping the Chagossian struggle alive and in passing it on to their grandchildren. Currently, the preeminent high profile activist leading the Chagossian cause is Olivier Bancoult (he is the son of Rita Bancoult who was an activist of the first hour). Many children know of Olivier Bancoult and see him as a father figure. As one girl remarked, "Bancoult told us that we will have to go back to Chagos. So if he tells us the time has come, we will go."

Most Chagossian children see themselves as part of a bigger group of Chagossians, and this concept is important to their self-identification. They derive a certain pride from being Chagossian, and not merely Creole. As one girl explained, "Everybody thinks that I am just an ordinary Creole, but I am not, I am Chagossian." They also have an inkling of the destiny of their grandparents and are able to recount the tale about British and American soldiers who wrenched them away from Chagos. The majority of children mentioned the American and British, a war or army in sentences like: "there was danger, they were attacked by the army", or: "the British came, they said they could not stay there, a military base came there", or: "the Americans came to fight for the island". One child said: "they speak a bit English there." When relating these stories, children often imagined themselves as active agents, as if they were in Chagos themselves.<sup>30</sup> One girl drew herself in Chagos and another said she had been in Chagos herself and closed her eyes while explaining what she saw: "a coconut tree, the sea, a house and American people, wearing military clothes and having kind manners." Their drawings and narratives, past, present and future, merge into one imagined Chagos which reserves a place for them where they are positively valued. They can live there in unity and harmony with their families. It is a place where they belong, a position that they long for in Mauritius.

In addition, the majority of Chagossian children refer to the sadness of their grandparents. They deem it as essential that they return to Chagos in the near future. In this respect, two key concepts recur in virtually all conversations with the children: Happiness (*boner*) and Togetherness (*ansam*). It is impressive to witness how well children can piece together the core elements of the socio-economic position of their kin. The eviction from Chagos is described as the breaking apart of the kin groups. The eventual return to Chagos by their grandparents, parents, uncles and aunts (now dispersed between Mauritius, 3,800 people, the Seychelles, 500, and the UK,

600)<sup>31</sup> is envisaged as a family reunion. In Chagos they will all live happily together.

Thus, the children's' drawings are permeated with the longing for lost relatives. They miss their fathers, but also family members who live far away from them: "I have never seen my grandmother from my father's side; she lives in the Seychelles." Statements like this were common. Family unity is symbolised by the many drawings where the family members all live under one roof. The importance of kinship was further underlined in cognitive tests. For example, when children had to pick two cards from a pile of cards depicting various images, half the children chose a card with kinship images. In photo elicitation exercises they principally photographed family members.

### **Conclusion: Gendered Future Perspectives and the Prospect of Going 'Home'**

Chagossian children refer to Chagos as '*mo pei*', 'my country'. The conclusions they derive from this are very different between boys and girls. Girls feel a tremendous responsibility for the wellbeing of their family. They have heavy tasks at home, and as Lilli also refers to in the opening case, they have to deal with feelings of guilt when they leave their family to go to school. Both Lilli and Anne also allude to the weight they feel to eventually find a way to make money for their family. The girls find solace in each other's company. On several occasions, the researchers saw Chagossian girls begging in the streets of Port Louis where begging is exceptional. Actually, it was a boy who translated life in Mauritius in a drawing that clearly described the difficulties Chagossians encounter: a person with a sad face who has to beg for money and food.

Life in Mauritius is hard and reflected by a feeling of sadness often expressed by Chagossians, which can even be observed in the demeanour of the children. They portray existence in Chagos as the opposite, which is described in idyllic terms. Particularly the girls cling to the prospect of living there one day, which makes that they present their stories with happy smiles. Despite the very real constraints to their agency, the girls



do find ways to develop their own coping strategies in conclave with each other, and they derive a certain amount of pleasure from attending school and their leisure time. When life becomes too difficult to deal with, they can daydream about Chagos.

Boys on the other hand, seldom imagine themselves living in Chagos as they prefer copying the ambitions of their brothers or other male family members. They see money as the solution to their problems, opening the door to the acquisition of material wealth. As one boy remarked:

Many went to England, I will follow this example. First I will make lots of money, buy many things like a motorcycle and a mobile phone. People will think I am important then. When I am really grown up, then I can go to Britain and join my older brother there. That will be a good life.

This routing is an option for the Chagossians as they do qualify for both the Mauritian and the British nationality.

Boys and girls share the idea that currently Chagos is prepared for them (cf. case of Anne and her drawing). They are unable to say who exactly is building houses and roads for them but all seem to entertain the possibility of an imminent return. In March 2008, the *Let them Return Campaign* was launched in London by the Chagos Refugees Group and the UK Chagos Support Association.<sup>32</sup> On October 22, 2008, a House of Lords judgment struck down the principle of right of return, crushing the Chagossians' long cherished hope for their homecoming.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> We express our appreciation to the Mauritian Ministry of Education & Human Resources and the Government Teachers Union (GTU) for their assistance during the research. We are grateful to teachers, children, their families and everybody else who participated in this study.

<sup>2</sup> To protect the privacy of the children, their names are pseudonyms.

<sup>3</sup> R Scott, *Limuria: The Lesser Dependencies of Mauritius*, Greenwood Press, Westport, CT, 1976 [1961], p. 23; E Powe, *The Lore and Lure of the British Indian Ocean Territory*, n.p.: Dan Aiki Publishers, 1996, p. 640; I Walker, *Zaffer Pe Sanze: Ethnic Identity and Social Change among the Ilois in Mauritius*, KMLI, Vacoas, Mauritius, 1986, p. 9; S Winchester, *The Sun Never Sets: Travels to the Remaining Outposts of the British Empire*, Prentice Hall Press, New York, 1985, p. 39.

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- <sup>4</sup> H Marimootoo, 'Diego files'. *Week End [Mauritius]*, serial, May-September 1997; D Vine, *Empire's footprint: Expulsion and the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia*, Dissertation, City University New York, Graduate Faculty in Anthropology, 2006, pp. 137, 161, 167.
- <sup>5</sup> P Eisenlohr, *Little India: Diaspora, time, and ethnolinguistic belonging in Hindu Mauritius*, University of California Press, Berkeley etc., 2006, p. 30.
- <sup>6</sup> M Kooy, *Piecing Together Utopia: The Case of the Chagossian Children in Mauritius*, MA Thesis VU University Amsterdam, 2008.
- <sup>7</sup> Cf. P Eisenlohr, *Little India: Diaspora, time, and ethnolinguistic belonging in Hindu Mauritius*, University of California Press, Berkeley etc., 2006 & T H Eriksen, *Common Denominators: Ethnicity, Nation-Building and Compromise in Mauritius*, Berg, Oxford/New York, 1998.
- <sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 49, 122.
- <sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 122.
- <sup>10</sup> R Boswell, *Le Malaise Créole: Ethnic Identity in Mauritius*, Berghahn Books, New York/Oxford, 2006, p. 159.
- <sup>11</sup> D Vine, *Empire's footprint: Expulsion and the U.S. military base on Diego Garcia*, Dissertation, City University New York, Graduate Faculty in Anthropology, 2006, pp. 227, 233. - Cf. T H Eriksen, 'Creole culture and social change'. *Journal of Mauritian Studies*, vol. 1, issue 2, 1986, (Moka, Mauritius, MGI.), p. 59.
- <sup>12</sup> Boswell, p. 54.
- <sup>13</sup> S Johannessen, *Contested Roots: The contemporary exile of the Chagossian community in Mauritius*, MA Thesis University of Oslo in Norway, 2005, pp. 6, 54.
- <sup>14</sup> Johannessen, p. 30. - Cf. Vine, pp. 252-255.
- <sup>15</sup> L Jeffery, 'How a plantation became paradise: changing representations of the homeland among displaced Chagos islanders'. *Journal of the Royal Anthropological Institute*, vol. 13, issue 4, 2007, p. 951.
- <sup>16</sup> Vine, p. 215.
- <sup>17</sup> Johannessen, p. 22.
- <sup>18</sup> Cf. Boswell, p. 140.
- <sup>19</sup> Vine, p. 240.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 217, 223, 231.
- <sup>21</sup> Vine, p. 224. - Cf. Johannessen, p. 22.
- <sup>22</sup> Mauritius Examination Syndicate (MES), *Determinants of Performance in Primary Schools with Special Reference to Failures at CPE Level*, Unicef Funded Research Project, Réduit, April 1991, p. 10.
- <sup>23</sup> Cf. O Hollup, *Educational policies, reforms and the role of teachers unions in Mauritius*, Telemark University College, Porsgrunn, 2004, p. 30.
- <sup>24</sup> Cf. Hollup, p. 31.



<sup>25</sup> ODEROI, p. 16.

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 19.

<sup>27</sup> Cf. Hollup, p. 7.

<sup>28</sup> ODEROI, p. 33.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Vine, p. 299.

<sup>30</sup> This appears to be a common practice among Chagossians: “Chagossian narrators incorporated events experienced by other people into their own experiences and recounted events in the first person even when they had not themselves been a part of them”, L Jeffery, ‘Historical Narrative and Legal Evidence: Judging Chagossians’ High Court Testimonies’. *PoLAR: Political and Legal Anthropology Review*, vol. 29, issue 2, 2006, p. 231.

<sup>31</sup> Chagos Refugee Group/UK Chagos Support Association, *Returning Home : A Proposal for the Resettlement of the Chagos Islands*, ([www.letthemreturn.com](http://www.letthemreturn.com)) 2008, p. 12.

<sup>32</sup> Cf., Ibid.

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## The Enduring Legacies of Bandung, Non-Alignment, and Richard Wright

*Rob Burton*

### **Abstract**

Five decades after the 1955 Bandung Conference (the meeting of delegates from 29 Asian and African countries that helped to spawn the Non-Aligned Movement as an alternative to the bi-polar Communist-Capitalist axis in post-World War Two politics), what are its enduring legacies? In particular, how has it helped to shape the politics, economics, and culture of the participating nations as well as those other nations that were not in attendance? The African-American writer, Richard Wright, famously commented: “Bandung was a decisive moment in the consciousness of 65 percent of the human race, and that moment meant: how shall the human race be organized?” (*The Color Curtain*, 207-208). Despite Richard Wright’s widely-shared idealism about the conference, it is more realistic to conclude that the trajectory of globalisation in the last five decades has been steered not so much by Bandung as its predecessor conference at Bretton Woods (New Hampshire) which helped to establish the economic foundations for contemporary globalisation: the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank (later renamed the World Bank), and various mechanisms for encouraging international free trade and increasingly unregulated market economies. In this paper, I am interested in putting these two conferences—Bretton Woods and Bandung—in productive dialogue with one another. Two questions will be raised initially and then briefly examined: What happens when you implicate “the one-in-the-other” (to adapt Homi Bhabha’s phrase), rather than treat them as discrete conferences with separate agendas? To what extent do the enduring political, economic, and cultural legacies of Bandung inform and shape thinking and practice in a contemporary context so heavily indebted to Bretton Woods?

**Key Words:** Multiculturalism, Bretton Woods, Bandung Conference, Richard Wright.

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From April 18-24, 1955, an historic meeting of world leaders took place in the capital city of West Java (Indonesia), although you’d have to look hard to find mention of it in contemporary history books. The Bandung Conference brought together high-profile delegations from 29 nations,

mainly African and Asian. The aim was two-fold: to exercise an independent voice for those nation states—such as India, Pakistan, Indonesia, and Sudan—that had been recently freed of colonial domination and, secondly, to foster a vision that could offer a viable alternative to Cold War rhetoric that was beginning to heat up and divide the world dangerously into polarised camps: good guys and bad guys, capitalists and communists, us and them.

Of course, in the mid 1950s, at the height of the Cold War, if you earnestly sought an alternative to capitalist or imperialist ideologies, or communist ideologies for that matter, you risked being quickly branded as an enemy of the state. A roll-call of leaders present at Bandung reads like a version of the CIA's most wanted list, topped by Chou-en lai of China, Nehru of India, Nkrumah of Sudan, Nasser of Egypt, Sihanouk of Cambodia, and Ho Chi Minh of Vietnam. In their own countries, they were nonetheless hailed as nationalist leaders and patriots, often as heroes. Even today, over 50 years later, it seems difficult for western historians to look upon these figures as anything other than rogues. This probably explains why the conference has been largely ignored, glossed over, elided, and deemed largely irrelevant. I certainly hadn't heard of the conference until three years ago when Professor Armrijit Singh of Ohio University presented a paper about the importance of Bandung for writers like Richard Wright and Chinua Achebe, who took inspiration from the week-long meeting. In short, it's simply not a narrative that we in the west seem interested in telling, let alone understanding.

Looking back now, 50 years later, in hindsight, now that the world has become once more divided, polarised, albeit in different ways, and for different reasons, it's easy to glamorise and idealise the noble goals of the conference. The tone of the conference was established in the Welcome and Opening Address, delivered by Indonesia's President Sukarno, who boldly declared: "This is the first intercontinental conference of coloured peoples in the history of mankind." A few minutes later, he made an equally ambitious claim: "We can mobilize the entire spiritual, all the moral, all the political strength of Asia and Africa on the side of peace." At its closing ceremony, three days later, a joint communiqué was released which became known as The Declaration of Ten Principles—a document that affirms territorial integrity of nation-states, mutual non-aggression, equality of races, and endorses the 1945 Charter of the United Nations.

I am not naïve enough to think that if these utopian goals had seeped into western thinking, then all would be well with the world. Nor am I arguing that the conference was a model of perfect harmony and anti-colonial unity. In fact, there were serious disagreements voiced between delegates and participants about the issues of Kashmir, Korea, and Palestine, all trouble spots at the time. Moreover, the presence of the charismatic Chinese leader, Chou En-Lai, provoked misgivings amongst the less glamorous delegation

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from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, I am asking why this historic moment continues to be largely forgotten in our collective memory, and can't help but notice that, 50 years later, we find ourselves locked into a world mindset polarized along similar lines to that of the Cold War era (you're either for us or against us, freedom-lovers versus hate-mongers, civilisation versus terrorism). Perhaps there is now a greater urgency than ever to resurrect the spirit that informed the Bandung Conference, to revisit and renew those (few) narratives that have circumscribed it, and to reframe our understanding of the conference's importance for contemporary times.

The sobering truth, after all, is that we live in a world whose political and economic agenda is still driven by another international conference with a markedly different economic and political agenda. The 1944 Bretton Woods Conference in New Hampshire established the economic foundations for contemporary globalisation: the International Monetary Fund, the International Bank (later renamed the World Bank), and various mechanisms for encouraging international free trade and unregulated market economies.

I believe that two influential postcolonial critics, Homi Bhabha and Edward Said, offer theoretical frameworks that can help us to understand the legacy of Bandung, particularly in the shadow of Bretton Woods. Drawing from the psychological theories of Franz Fanon, Bhabha warns of the dangers posed by the binary trap of pure versus impure, us versus them, self versus other. Instead, he urges a sliding between categories, an oscillation between subject and object, here and there, local and global. He calls this a theory of "the one-in-the-other, not a relation of 'two' but a doubling relation."<sup>1</sup> It might be useful, therefore, if we were to explore the extent to which Bretton Woods and Bandung implicate one another, and how this might in turn complicate our understanding and practice of the politics, economics, and culture of contemporary globalisation.

In a similar vein, Edward Said points out that when a dominant paradigm asserts itself, there are always powerful counter discourses. In *Culture and Imperialism* he examines the cultural forms and practices that make imperialism possible and allow it to flourish. Importantly, he also pays tribute to the creative energies that offer a 'contrapuntal' reading of the dominant discourses. These are the narratives that help to unyoke us from absolutes and simplistic polarities. These are the histories that help to reframe our understanding of the world and our role in it.

My approach here therefore is to see the Bandung Conference as offering an important contrapuntal reading of Bretton Woods; of somehow being implicated in it, therefore to reintroduce it as an evolving contemporary narrative.

The legacy of Bretton Woods is plain to see all around us. But what has been the legacy of Bandung? With the exception of various institutions

that would subsequently emerge after 1955 (such as the Non-Aligned Movement and the World Social Forum), it is probably safe to say that the 'spirit of Bandung' has failed to make a telling impact on the world scene, especially in the fields of politics and economics. The Declaration of Ten Principles, adopted unanimously by the delegates, urged a political agenda that was strongly internationalist in scope and an economic agenda that was vigorously protectionist in nature, particularly for those nations newly freed from colonial domination. For better or for worse, neither agenda has flourished in the last 50 years. Instead of the multipolar world imagined by the Bandung delegates, we seem to have moved from various forms of bipolarity (West-East during the Cold War, North-South in the post-Soviet era) to the current unipolar framework (whereby the United States is undisputedly the world's leading power and would certainly like to keep it that way).

What can we draw from eyewitness accounts that attempted to frame the Bandung Conference? And what lasting legacy survives from their work? I would like to spend the last part of my paper on Richard Wright, one of the few westerners who saw the need to attend the 1955 Conference. He sensed that something crucially important would come out of the meeting. As he wrote in his eye-witness account, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*:

The despised, the insulted, the hurt, the dispossessed—in short, the underdogs of the human race were meeting. Here were class and racial and religious consciousness on a global scale....This meeting of the rejected was in itself a kind of judgment upon that western world!<sup>2</sup>

What disappointed and amazed him was that the world's media – particularly from the western world—either ignored the moment altogether or saw the Conference as yet another manifestation of dangerous Communist meddling on a global scale. "I soon realized that American newsmen had at least two grave disabilities in trying to grasp what was happening [in Bandung]," he wrote. "One, they had no philosophy of history with which to understand Bandung; two, they were trying to understand actions initiated by someone else and they could not quite grasp the nature of the terms in which those actions were being projected."<sup>3</sup> In other words, they were not prepared to listen or enter into dialogue with those who were deemed 'other' or 'dangerously different.'

As an interesting footnote, the U.S. Congressman from Harlem, Adam Clayton Powell, was even discouraged from attending on the advice of the Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, and the CIA Director, Allen Dulles, who were both heavily suspicious of China's role at the conference.

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To understand Richard Wright's enthusiasm for engaging in serious dialogue with the Bandung delegates, you have to go back 15 years earlier to his groundbreaking novel, *Native Son*. There is an important scene in the middle of the novel where Wright first uses the 'curtain' metaphor that will, of course, be developed and fleshed out more thoroughly in his Bandung book. Bigger Thomas is in jail for the murder of the young heiress, Mary Dalton. He is coming to terms with a brutal killing that arose out of a combustible combination of anger and fear, complicated by issues of race and class. Into Bigger's jail cell walks Mary Dalton's fiancé, Jan, who offers to help Bigger (not only with a humanitarian embrace of friendship and understanding but also with the offer of help from a lawyer friend). This is how Wright describes the scene from Bigger's point of view:

Suddenly, this white man had come up to him, flung aside the curtain and walked into the room of his life. . . . For the first time in his life a white man became a human being to him; and the reality of Jan's humanity came in a stab of remorse: he had killed what this man loved and had hurt him.<sup>4</sup>

It is an epiphany born out of compassion and empathy, what in South Africa is called 'Ubuntu' (this is the Zulu concept that underscored the Truth and Reconciliation process in the post-apartheid era and that roughly translates as "My humanity is strengthened by embracing your humanity"). To Richard Wright, it was the moral responsibility of all people and of all nations to fling aside the curtains that separated their humanity, not just the colour curtain as he put it, but also the iron curtains that had affected political dialogue since Winston Churchill had first adopted the metaphor in his 'Sineus of Peace Speech' in 1946. What Wright saw in Bandung, I believe, was a universalised version of what he dramatised in Bigger's prison cell.

Interestingly, Richard Wright, like Homi Bhabha, was heavily influenced by Frantz Fanon's theories. According to Fanon, the psychological trauma enacted by colonialism did not only apply to the victim but also to the victimizer. Both colonizer and colonized were implicated in a doubling act of psychological and physical violence. All three writers share the same dynamic impulse to look beyond binaries, beyond a static understanding of black and white, embracing instead a model of one-in-the-other. As Richard Wright succinctly comments in his hardest-hitting book, *White Man Listen*: "Too long has Africa been made into a psychological garbage heap where white men dumped that part of themselves that they did not like."<sup>5</sup>



So, to return to a question I posed at the beginning of my paper: What happens when you implicate the two conferences of Bandung and Bretton Woods? Free market globalisation has been relatively good to the 45 allied nations attending Bretton Woods, but less good to the 29 nations attending Bandung. In 1960, the per capita GDP in richest 20 countries was 18 times than poorest 20 countries; by 1995, this had widened to 37 times (from *The Darker Nations* p. 277). The disparity was noted by Julius Nyerere, the president of Tanzania, at the 1986 summit of the Non-Aligned Movement in Harare, Zimbabwe, when he described the Non-Alignment Movement in 5 words: “growth and hope—then disillusionment.”

Yet the Bandung vision and spirit do still exist as important contrapuntal readings of Bretton Woods. For example, the annual World Social Forum is undoubtedly a descendant of Bandung, as are prominent Non Governmental Organisations such as Oxfam (founded right here in Oxford in 1942) or Amnesty International.

As for the legacy of Richard Wright, it is fitting that an anthology of his three non-fiction books, including his report of the Bandung Conference, *The Color Curtain*, were republished earlier this year as part of the Richard Wright Centennial of his birth in 1908. The book, entitled *Black Power*, features an introduction by Cornel West whose generous assessment of Richard Wright offers a forceful conclusion to my paper. West writes: “The time is ripe to return to [the] vision and voice [of Richard Wright] in the face of our contemporary catastrophes and hearken to his relentless commitment to freedom and justice for all.”<sup>6</sup>

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Homi Bhabha, ‘Minority Maneuvers and Unsettled Negotiations’. *Critical Inquiry*, 23, 1997, p. 453.

<sup>2</sup> Richard Wright, *The Color Curtain: A Report on the Bandung Conference*, University of Mississippi Press, Jackson, Mississippi, 1956, p.12.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.* p. 82.

<sup>4</sup> Richard Wright, *Native Son*, Harper and Row, New York, 1940, p. 268.

<sup>5</sup> Richard Wright, *White Man Listen!*, Doubleday, New York, 1957, p.165.

<sup>6</sup> Cornel West, ‘Introduction’, in *Black Power*, Harper Perennial, New York, 2008, p. xiii.

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## **Expressions of Exceptions, Exceptions of Expressions: On Fragmented Languages as Political Discourse**

*Tina Rahimy*

### **Abstract**

The treatment of refugees is one of the most problematic issues of global politics. Although the political refugee is a minority compared to victims of war and poverty, as a modern concept it plays a crucial role in political discussions. Pro-refugee advocates remind democratic countries of their ethical duty to help political refugees, while the anti-refugee lobby emphasizes the economical and cultural risks of hosting them. Both, however, are in agreement on one point: refugees are the objects of discussion, hardly subjects able to speak for themselves. Geopolitical discourse is about them. They are not yet participating in this discourse, let alone transforming it. My goal is to enhance this participation by developing discursive tools, i.e. concepts that fit the interiority of the refugee. In this paper I compare different political theories that elaborate these concepts, taking into account the ambiguous political position of refugees. I refer to Arendt's *The Human Condition* and *The Jew as Pariah*, Agamben's *Homo Sacer* and *Means without End* and to Deleuze and Guattari's *A Thousand Plateaus*. To end the fairy tale of current democracy one must distinguish between becoming of a human and becoming of a citizen or a nation. This human being is no longer defined by fixed identities. Arendt pleads for speech in-between political spaces. Agamben enriches Arendt's political speech with the recognition of the excluded bare life. This excluded political speech finds its space by changing the strata of thought, as advocated by Deleuze and Guattari, seeing life as a becoming, a potentiality. How to speak when speech is broken during flight? Is the broken speech of the migrant only a shortcoming or does it, rather, carry in itself the potentiality to break through the strata of thought?

**Key Words:** Arendt, Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari, refugee, expression, philosophy, politics.

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### **1. On the Relationship of Life, Politics and Enunciation**

What do politics entail? How do we define an issue as being political? What is the domain of politics, its borders, and its limits? The vastness of these questions has dazzled my mind. Politics seem to be everywhere and nowhere. In my recent research, I wrongfully assumed that I could reduce the domain of politics to clear characteristics by focusing on

refugees and their reflections in and on art, language and politics. This focus did not restrict the essence of politics to a clear area; it enlarged its scope even more.

For refugees, life has become political in every aspect, even beyond the French distinction between 'la politique' and 'le politique', the first referring to the daily order of politics, the latter to the principles that constitute a political community. Politics touches upon the emotional, affective, psychological, social and global aspects of individual life. As such it has become the domain of contradictions, in the sense that the banishment of refugees, their loss of a daily way of life, thought and speech has on the one hand been caused by political repression and injustice but also has been raised by their political hope for a better way of life. Politics for them implies different forms of violence in their homeland as well as in the refugium. But it is also a potentiality, the power of individuals to change the course of their history. So politics is hated and loved, feared and hoped in a contradictory effective field of forces. For the refugee there are no apolitical spaces. All forms of discourse of this mobile life have become political. Every form of enunciation expresses the political exceptionality of life. This exceptionality is always an expression of a politicalised life. This forms a triangle: life, politics and enunciation. *Life* as the biological fact of being able to breathe; *politics* the way in which people discursively interact; and *enunciation* its comprehensible uttering, in which life collectively is reflected.

Many thinkers, writers and artists have reflected on the relation between life, politics and their specific intellectual and artistic expression. I will restrict myself to the works of four philosophers: Hannah Arendt, Giorgio Agamben, Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari. Connections between their respective reflections might allow me to sketch the contours of an answer as to how refugees experience and express their exceptional political lives. Arendt's thoughts on totalitarianism marks the end of politics based on the different forms of exclusion and destruction of differences between men. She bases this on the history of the Jewish people. The end of the Second World War, however, did not bring back the political interaction. Agamben's writings on politics are based on Arendt's criticism of politics. His thoughts bring out the bodily aspect of the modern forms of exclusion through the description of the modern forms of camps. In contrast to the political horrors mentioned by Arendt and Agamben, Deleuze and Guattari seem to come from another world. Through Kafka they seem to rather focus on the productive power of being a minority. Minority's expressions are for them the ability to de-territorialise the common ways of life. In my research, however, I am searching for a common ground wherein the horrors as well as the productivity are mentioned in the description of refugees or other forms of minor expressions.

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## 2. Political Speech

Arendt's view in this matter is not only interesting from the point of view of political thought, but evidently, also because of her life story, as she puts it. As a German Jewish non-citizen, her flight from Germany during the Second World War has influenced her reflections on politics, or better, shaped her political views decisively. Being an outsider, a minority and, finally, a refugee made Arendt realize the demands of a political life of a 'conscious pariah'.<sup>1</sup> In 1951, after many years of formal statelessness, Arendt publishes *The Origins of Totalitarianism*.<sup>2</sup> Her analysis is divided in three main chapters: Antisemitism, Imperialism and Totalitarianism. Through the analyses of totalitarianism, Arendt describes the era of her life as a lonely place wherein individuals as uniformed atoms of the masses must exactly look alike, wherein critical thought, speech and reflection are violently silenced, and daily life is exposed to torture and even death. Totalitarianism is the desire to eliminate any form of difference and in doing so declaring the end of politics as she defines it.

Arendt's analysis of totalitarianism is a testimony of the death of politics in the modern age. But what do politics entail in Arendt's view? Politics<sup>3</sup> is, for her, a principally open space, public space, wherein the inherent difference in man is not denied or destructed but rather enhanced. Politics is, first and foremost, the domain of action and speech and cannot even survive without the continuous expression of differences and disagreements. Contradiction is a given. Political action and speech are potentialities wherein new interactions become possible. Arendt speaks of natality, a second birth in the public domain of respect, friendship and forgiveness. However, in contrast to the promises of ideology and politics in Arendt's view guarantees nothing. It is not a given, as an existing world *in* men, but a movement *between* men, literally inter-est, *being in between*, interactions and interspeeches. Because of this, Arendt argues, politics focuses beyond the clear identities of his actors, the what-ness of a person, as she calls it. Politics is, rather, interested in the who-ness of an actor, their life-stories that change, differentiate and now and then even contradict one another. This is the expression of the exceptionality of each human being.

As you can see, in the triangle of life, politics and expression, Arendt combines the last two. Life, the presence of a pure body, has a contradictory status in her works. In *The Human Condition*, Arendt argues that physical needs like eating and drinking, as well as physical experiences such as pain, cannot and must not intervene in the domain of politics, because of their private character. In *The Jew as Pariah*, Arendt goes even further, she doubts even the political status of the refugees, because of the fact that their flight is not caused by a political action but through an instinctive reaction to exclusion.

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we became witnesses and victims of worse terrors than death – without having been able to discover a higher ideal than life.<sup>4</sup>

While the beginning of politics is born through the inclusion of almost bodiless actors in public space, the end of politics is based on the excluded body. In a world where persons are deprived of their citizenships and have lost any claim on their human rights, human beings lose their humanity. Illegality of refugees not only implies them being non-citizens, but also defines them as non-human in the bureaucratic no-man's-land.

Once they had left their homeland they remained homeless, once they left their state they became stateless; once they had been deprived of their human rights they were rightless, the scum of the earth.<sup>5</sup>

They are deprived of 'publicity'; they have no public life and are enclosed in non expressible privacy. In denying men their political status, the plurality of men is betrayed and thereby humanity itself is sacrificed. The increase of violence is an indication for the abolishment of the people's political power. Violence and torture do not belong to politics; these exclusions only remind us of the political limits and the destruction of politics.<sup>6</sup>

### 3. **Speechless Political Bodies**

The consequences of Arendt's political theory are drawn further by Giorgio Agamben. He, however, redefines the excluded body in political terms.<sup>7</sup> Combining Arendt's critique on human rights and totalitarianism and Foucault's reflection on bio politics, Agamben elaborates on the distinction between *zoē* and *bios*.<sup>8</sup> *Zoē* refers to naked life, the biological fact of life. *Bios* refers to a form of life. Through this distinction he speaks of the lives that are banished from the community, withdrawn from their form of life and have become pure life, naked life. He does not only refer to illegal persons and refugees but also to the depoliticized prisoners in Guantanamo Bay.<sup>9</sup> Their lives have become purely naked, stripped of all rights. This however does not make their lives apolitical. For Agamben it rather makes them *the* political beings of (post)modern times. Their banishment from public space and political interactions mirrors the current political state of being within a globalised world, disillusioning our hopes for the existence of a safe law. This excluded other is a (post)modern form of the ancient Roman *homo sacer*. As this outlawed figure was banned from human community the current *homo sacer* is trapped in camps, as once where the victims of the German Nazis. Agamben's analysis focuses on the contradictory status of the

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Law that is *lawfully* suspended in the state of exception: “*The camp is the space that opens up when the state of exception starts to become the rule.*”<sup>10</sup>

Governments appeal to the necessity of exceptional laws, legitimized by exceptional actions in exceptional times. States of exceptions are installed wherein potentially everyone could be deprived of their claims to any form of right. Using democratic fear for safety’s sake, issued for collective survival, national and international laws have created spaces outside themselves as a place of absence of these very laws.<sup>11</sup> In this way Agamben shows that, the increasing naked life – *zoē* – which is positioned outside the lawful order is not beyond us. Camps have become the model reflecting in and on each and every one of us. In a globalized world every citizen is potentially terrorized from the outside in. What has Agamben’s rigid political theory nevertheless to offer? Arendt, too, argues for a political life as in-between plural man. This ‘form-of-life’ is, however, not based on the distinction between the body and politics. It is beyond the binary opposition of *zoē* and *bios*. “A life that cannot be separated from its form is a life for which what is at stake in its way of living is living itself.”<sup>12</sup>

This form-of-life is not per se restricted to basic needs but rather expands the possibilities of life wherein life itself and happiness are at stake.<sup>13</sup> This life as an experience of plurality, community and communication, is for Agamben not instrumental, no mean(s) to an end. Community and communication in politics are rather pure medialities, and as such possibilities of politics. When language is not constructed by the state of history, it becomes an event, a political experience.

What is in question in political experience is not a higher end but being-into-language itself as pure mediality, being-into-a-mean as an irreducible condition of human beings. *Politics is the exhibition of mediality: it is the act of making a means visible as such.*<sup>14</sup>

A means can be rephrased as a medium reflecting upon the possibility of communication. But is the triangle – life, politics and enunciation - restored in Agamben’s reflections as *zoē*, *bios* and language in a symbiosis? If so, then it is still not applicable to refugees. For Arendt only conscious pariahs are politically active, in Agamben’s text camps and its inhabitants remain silent. Is it, however, possible to reflect upon the enunciation of the state of exception as the exceptional expression of the expressions of exceptions? I will now explicate the focus of my paper: can the experience of interaction and interspeech of the politics of the flight be voiced, and if so, in what domain?



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#### 4. The Minor Speech of Political Bodies

Flight implies more than Arendt suggests. It is a revelation of an illusion, the illusion of any coherent understanding, identity and language. The expression of the flight is an expression of a deterritorialization as Deleuze and Guattari put it. It is an activity, even in its so called passive and silent mode. Arendt seems to acknowledge this by stating:

Whenever the relevance of speech is at stake, matters become political by definition, for speech is what makes man a political being.<sup>15</sup>

But she also argues that speech which is not brought up into the public space, speech which is not memorized and materialized, will vanish without a trace once it stops.<sup>16</sup> I hope that the concept ‘minor literature’, developed by Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*<sup>17</sup>, can be helpful. Minor literature has three characteristics.<sup>18</sup> Firstly it is *affected with a high coefficient of deterritorialization*. This literature bears witness to contradictions of writing and not writing at the same time, i.e. of using and subverting a major language at the same time. The disciplining force, inherent to enunciations of a hegemonial discourse, denies access to those that do not conform. Furthermore minor literature paradoxically enunciates and subverts its oppression and is therefore, *in its expression, immediately political*. Finally, in its inevitable reference to political realities, this type of literature is always a *collective* enunciation. How individually it may be, it always refers to a community in which an artist is rooted. In its solidarity, this literature is a deterritorializing force, creating a space for another “possibility to express another possible community and forges the means for another consciousness and another sensibility”.<sup>19</sup> According to Deleuze and Guattari in its *collective assemblages of enunciation* it reaches beyond the binary opposition between the *subject of enunciation* and the *subject of a statement*; but also beyond the binary opposition of correct and incorrect usage of a language. The correctness of a language always is a reference to an adequate meaning, and adequate truth. Incorrectness also implies a reference to a specific body with clear identifying language.<sup>20</sup>

In short, this mode of writing is a sound which is physical and political by definition. For them the work of Kafka is exemplary. His writing, as micro politics, is an experimental practice that subverts the hegemonial discourse. Micro politics is performed in the arts, in philosophy and experienced through meaningful forces, intensities, affects, and desires. Bodily interactions gain meaning through assemblages of enunciations. Unformed contents gather sense in being expressed. These expressions can be anything but conventional as long as they connect. Ongoing connectivity is the issue. The politics of Kafka, minor literature, is in this sense, according

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to Deleuze and Guattari, not symbolic, imaginative or metaphorical but rather rhizomatic. One can become a beetle when one awakes in the morning. A rhizome is a network: it does not refer to something outside itself to explain its purpose, but it is a reality wherein every point on the map of life and politics can be connected to another without a purpose or destination. No teleology, no finality, just means without end. Of course, every connection wants to be sensed, aims at sensibility and gains sense. But a rhizome is neither a one way road nor one manner of causation or interpretation; it has many entrances, lines of escape and lines of segmentations. Instead of being a rusty territory, predetermined by rules, the rhizomatic space is a playground of forces and intensities, that constantly territorialize, deterritorialize and reterritorialize.

##### **5. The Minority of an *I...uh***

These reflections of Deleuze and Guattari enable me to bring the refugee of camps and the dehumanized groups of totalitarianism back to life by hearing their silent voice; the sound of a voice as a whispering effort to communicate something else. But this unformed expression does not exclusively belong to those conscious pariahs, who are the masters of the language. The effect of what is unjustly called a fragmented language or shortcoming speech – stuttering Deleuze and Guattari call it - goes further than the skilful writing of Kafka and the sobriety of his speech. It is hesitation, blockage, stuttering. Some refugees even had to be healed from an illusion: the illusion of mastering a major language in their country of origin. It is obvious that art practices are Deleuze and Guattari's most favoured examples for these rhizomatic connections. But also in philosophy the thinking can be rhizomatic. For my focus it is insightful to realize that rhizomatic thinking helps us to talk in different ways about escaping. Escape becomes possible, not as liberation opposed to captivity, but as moving beyond any reference to new territory. It is a becoming, becoming a girl, becoming an animal, becoming a minority. However, the concept 'minor' must not be confused as minority opposing a majority, it rather moves beyond this opposition. Nor can it be seen as minority language, like Kurdish in countries like Turkey. The minority "constructs within a major language".<sup>21</sup> So it is rather what a Kurdish speaking Turkish citizen enunciates in Turkish.

The physical flight caused by political conflict does not only move the refugee's body through space. It moreover deterritorializes the image of freedom that is searched for. Neither the liberation of a repressive regime, nor the acceptance in the refugium as a citizen, does bring about the escape from rusted territories. The past life is not over because we just leave the building. And in this sense being a refugee is never the same as becoming a refugee, neither is this becoming limited to the refugee itself. This becoming reveals

itself in a manner of speech. The major language does not only limit itself to one or two countries, but rather all languages form a battlefield against refugee's forms of speech. Through the amnesia of the mother tongue and the everlasting stuttered speech of new languages, a new form of speech arises, the speech of hesitation, a speech of not knowing how to utter one's thoughts and desires. The language of the stranger, conscious or unconscious of its political effect and intensities, is overflowing with *huhs*. The physical body experiment of life threatening situations has raised doubts, an intensity of an impossibility to say 'I am'. A foreigner is often mocked because of his pronunciation of an 'I', saying 'I...uh'. *Not* realizing that this 'I...uh' brings about the unity of the triangle of life, politics and enunciation. The person is there, trembling physically, caused by a political relevance of its existence. 'I...uh' expresses the hesitation about his belonging or the possibilities of deportation and death. It never however refers to his specificity, to his individuality. 'I...uh' is what he shares with its community, community of men and women who legally do not belong to any community. 'I...uh' is deprived from its I-ness, from its We-ness, without loyalty.

In Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*<sup>22</sup> this hesitation is uttered not only in words but also in images. She hesitates as a child, as a woman, a becoming through the development of the language and pictures. She is not one; she is many, many stories, a girl, a God, a fighter, a scared teenager, deterritorialization and reterritorialization, a European and a typical Iranian female, a virgin and a lover. An example of an 'I...uh', I and hhh, enunciates the intense desire to refer to an I and the comprehension of the impossibility of this reference, the meaninglessness of its meaning; a de-territorialisation of the concept of an I without neglecting the desire to indicate oneself. I just want to say me, myself and I, but have forgotten how to cry. The politics of silent speech, just listen to the sound.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Arendt distinguishes three forms of attitude towards the dominant society. A *pariah* withdraws himself from the general society and lives, in a form of brotherhood, within his own community. The *parvenu* on the other hand assimilates totally within the dominant culture and ignores his past and inheritance. A *conscious pariah* however is always aware of his own inevitable peripheral position. He reflects critically upon his own community as well as on the dominant culture. He is from this world. See: Hannah Arendt, *The Jew as Pariah: Jewish Identity and Politics in the Modern Age*, Grove Press, Inc., New York, 1978.

<sup>2</sup> Hannah, Arendt, *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, A Harvest Book/Harcourt Inc., San Diego/New York/London, 1976.

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- <sup>3</sup> Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 175-247; Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Schocken Books, New York, 2005, pp. 93-200.
- <sup>4</sup> Arendt, *Jew as Pariah*, p. 57/8.
- <sup>5</sup> Arendt, *On Totalitarianism*, p. 267.
- <sup>6</sup> Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, Harcourt Brace & Company, San Diego/New York/London, 1970.
- <sup>7</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer, Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1998; Giorgio Agamben, *State of Exception*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago/London, 2005.
- <sup>8</sup> Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, pp. 1- 3.
- <sup>9</sup> Agamben, *State of Exception*, pp. 3- 4.
- <sup>10</sup> Giorgio Agamben, *Means without End, Notes on Politics*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London, 2000, p. 39.
- <sup>11</sup> Agamben, *State of Exception*, p. 38.
- <sup>12</sup> Agamben, *Means without End*, p. 4.
- <sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.
- <sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 116/7.
- <sup>15</sup> Arendt, *Human Condition*, p. 3.
- <sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.
- <sup>17</sup> Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *Kafka, Toward a Minor Literature*, University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London, 1986; Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus, Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, Athlone Press, London, 1988.
- <sup>18</sup> Deleuze & Guattari, *Kafka*, pp. 16-17.
- <sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 17.
- <sup>20</sup> *Ibid.* pp. 16-27.
- <sup>21</sup> *Ibid.* p. 16.
- <sup>22</sup> Marjane Satrapi, *Persepolis*, Pantheon, 2007.

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# **The Social Construction of Grievance and its Role in Social Movements: Overseas Filipino Workers Activism and Homeland Filipino Politics**

*Jae Seung Moon*

## **Abstract**

While studies of political opportunity and framing efforts have received a great amount of attention in recent social movement literature, studies on grievance are largely lacking. Both framing perspective and resource mobilization theory take grievance for granted, assuming that it always exists in aggrieved actors. The purpose of this paper is to challenge the existing perspectives and highlight the importance of grievances, particularly socially constructed grievances in social movement. Specifically, this paper traces embeddedness of constructed grievance in Overseas Filipino Workers (OFWs). First, I will look at how the discourse of the Philippines 'national hero' is perceived by OFWs. By juxtaposing the discourse of national hero in the Philippines and the status of OFWs, who are hailed as 'modern-day heroes', this analysis provides a mechanism of the generation of social grievances from constructed discourses. For highlighting the discrepancy between discourse and reality, I will trace OFW life, collecting their thoughts and sentiments from related written materials. Second, I will examine how this constructed grievance empowers them to exert a successful influence on both chambers in the Congress regarding the passage of the Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) bill in 2003. Through the examination, this paper will argue that perception of relative deprivation from constructed grievances lead OFWs to participate in worldwide lobbying for the passage of the OAV bill. This paper will make a contribution to studies on identity in social movement literature. In contrast to risk-benefit calculus of the rational model, this paper argues that identity of a social movement group such as constructed grievances can be the driving force for actors to participate the social movements.

**Key Words:** Overseas Filipino workers, overseas absentee voting law, grievance, social movement

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## **1. Eruption of Grievances**

In 2003, the Philippine Congress passed a landmark bill for Overseas Filipino Workers (hereafter OFWs): the Overseas Absentee Voting (OAV) Act of 2003. The law is a significant stepping stone for OFWs in that

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it empowers OFWs politically by granting them the voting right. The passage of the law was not made by Congress' favor. It was a long overdue political reform since the 1987 Constitution mandates Congress to "provide... a system for absentee voting by qualified Filipinos abroad" (Section 2, Article 5).

The passage of the law was a result of longstanding struggle by the OFWs. For more than a decade, an array of OFW groups emerged to push for the passage of the law. Along with Philippine-based nongovernmental organisations (NGOs), an international network of OFW groups – International Coalition for Overseas Filipinos' Rights (ICOFVR) – was formed and they have forged demonstrations all over the world and send delegates to the Philippines in an effort to convince legislators that OFWs were highly interested in their political right.

Then where do all the grievances come from? For analysis, let us take a look at a statement issued by the Global Coalition for the Political Empowerment of Overseas Filipinos in 2001.

Our role as economic saviours, or according to the government as 'modern-day heroes', should be enough reason to entitle us to political rights as basic as suffrage. But we are not asserting our right to vote only in the context of our economic value and as a matter of political quid pro quo. Beneath the simmer of our resentment is a raging desire to be recognized and treated as full-fledged Filipino citizens, not as an apolitical constituency easily made giddy by patronizing labels and by the welcome-home-modern-day-hero drama at NAIA (Global Coalition 2001)?

In the statement, it raises two reasons why overseas Filipinos should have the voting rights. First, it is enough to say that 'modern-day heroes' are entitled to have basic rights. Second, OFWs have a 'raging desire' to be treated as citizens not as an empty label, heroes. The two reasons tell us how OFWs feel about this issue. First of all, OFWs see themselves in a deep relative deprivation between high expectation (entitlement of heroes) and dire reality ('basic' right). They also perceive and use the hero discourse regardless of their consent on whether they are qualified to be called heroes (the statement posits that OFWs are heroes, but this assumption is readily changed in the next paragraph that heroes are just 'patronising labels' by the government).

The purpose of this paper is to challenge the existing perspectives and highlight the importance of grievances, particularly socially constructed grievances in social movement. When explaining political violence in his book, *Why Men Rebel*, Gurr<sup>1</sup> puts more emphasis on the intensity and scope

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of relative deprivation than on societal conditions. Concurring in his insights, this paper will prove a coincidence between increasing discontents and fervent participation into the Overseas Absentee Voting law (OAV) campaign in 2003 and further argue that a discrepancy between high expectations and limited capabilities of overseas Filipinos plays a crucial role in mobilising and sustaining the campaign.

## **2. National Heroes in the Philippines**

In the process of nation-building, an invention of national heroes plays an inevitable part in uniting newly born nation-states. The Philippines is not an exception to make its own effort to discover and even re-create national heroes. More than one of examples, making of national heroes and its persistent feature in laymen's life in the Philippines are rather considered as an unusual phenomenon. In the Philippine history, heroes and their martyrdom continue to inspire the mass, thereby making much headway in diverse aspect of their lives.

Philippines' religious context – the imposition of the Christianity by Spain – also helped to boost the hagiographic biography in the archipelago so that Filipinos could shape and accept the image of heroes in their minds. Among many scholars focusing on the combination of national heroes and their Jesus-like stories, Reynaldo Iletto (1998) articulates the popular appeal of national heroes to the masses by employing discourse analysis. He shows that how the life of Jose Rizal, a figure considered as a topmost national hero, is perceived as that of Jesus Christ: prodigious boyhood, healing power, and Christ-like death.<sup>2</sup> Especially the very Christ-like death or martyrdom made him the national hero and is a running theme of heroes' life in the Philippines. For example, Jose Burgos, the first priest under Spanish rule, was executed by garrote, leaving a word to executioners that "I forgive you my son"<sup>3</sup>

## **3. Making of Modern-day Heroes**

In the dire economic situation of the Philippines, economic contribution of OFWs to the national economy was essential for the government therefore the government needed to laud overseas workers as heroes to attract more money from them. For the Philippine government, which oftentimes admits its incapacity to intervene plights of overseas Filipino workers in host countries, it is better to praise them as heroes than to recognise them as Philippine citizens<sup>4</sup>. Calling overseas Filipino workers heroes is an easy choice for the government; for heroes are supposed to either overcome difficulties or remain as martyrs without asking any help.

Since the Aquino administration, the government has taken concrete steps for the making of 'new heroes'. First of all, the government began with a lip service by calling overseas Filipinos heroes. Aquino praised them as



‘unsung heroes’<sup>5</sup>. Ramos described them as ‘heroic overseas workers’<sup>6</sup>, Estrada emphasized self-sacrifice of ‘modern-day heroes’<sup>7</sup> and the incumbent president, Arroyo hailed them as ‘new heroes’<sup>8</sup>.

Among the activities mentioned above, it is noteworthy that every year the Philippine government has conferred tens of OFWs an award called ‘Bagong bayani award’, meaning ‘new hero award’. It was started in 1983 aligned with the impetus of labour migration policy under the Marcos administration. Despite the fact that the ceremony was put on a hold for three years after the People Power in 1986, democratic government revitalized it in 1989 again. Since that time the Philippine government has searched for OFWs who ‘displayed heroic deeds for their fellow men’ as well as who showed outstanding performance in their fields<sup>9</sup>.

Making of new hero was not just conducted in high-profile level. In a daily life, many symbols and events prop up the new hero discourse. Among places of daily life, the arrival hall of airport in the Philippines is a good place to see how OFWs are greeted and praised. Since the arrival hall is the first place where returning OFWs encounter after their long time of physical and mental absence, experience in the first place of mother country, be it positive or negative, should be deeply entrenched.

Once they get off airplane, OFWs encounter exclusive express counters in customs and immigration lanes for OFWs set up to process OFWs without any hassle. This express counter has been operational since 1998. If the arrival date is around the Christmas holiday, they would meet president and receive a gift package and grand welcome ceremony with red carpet, Christmas carol and fanfare. This grand welcoming ceremony was started from 1993. At least during this short moment, OFWs feel that they are treated like national heroes<sup>10</sup>.

#### **4. Modern-day Heroes or Modern-day Slaves?**

Do overseas Filipino workers think of themselves as modern-day heroes? Many overseas Filipinos give negative answers with cynical smiles to the question. Satirising the hero label, they even call themselves ‘modern-day slaves’, ‘new milking cows’ and ‘Bagong Biktima ng Hold-Up (new victims of hold-up)’. The reason why Philippine government endeavours to praise OFWs as new heroes by using symbols and terms is that the government cannot really tackle all hardships OFWs confront in all over the world. Without addressing problems in a long term perspective, as a stop-gap measure the government just requests OFWs to sacrifice their life for the country as other national heroes did.

Apart from the incapacity of the government in addressing problems abroad, mistreatment in the Philippine territory makes OFWs even more disgruntled. Since overseas Filipino workers have a high expectation, reality they face in the Philippines is perceived as more miserable than that of local

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Filipinos in the Philippines and therefore intensity of relative deprivation that OFWs have is far above than the locals. Then how do OFWs perceive the dire realities in the Philippines? Why does the same reality play a different role in the minds of OFWs? Regarding the questions this paper argues that all the difference comes out of the embedded hero discourse.

These internal and external occurrences of relative deprivation finally led to a counter-attack from 'new heroes'. Realising that they are economically contributing to the country but with no return, OFWs begin to request real hero treatment to the government. In return, what the government responded was not the hero treatment, but back-off policy, saying that OFWs are sacrificing themselves for the country. It is a little wonder that the latter was adopted because it is almost impossible for the government to meet increasing requirement from OFWs. Therefore a choice left for the government is to take a step back from the hero compliment and justify the situation of increasing labour migration as a personal choice that the government cannot deal with. The government started its de-regulation policy on labour migration program.

Hence, from 1995 the government attempts to make a discursive turn so that it does not bear the bulk of the blame for plights of OFWs. By looking at working abroad as self-fulfilment, the government denies to recognise OFWs as heroes. Then do OFWs change their perception of themselves as new heroes from the moment? The answer is sceptical. The attempt turns out to be a failure. The first and foremost reason for the failure is attributed to the fact that the state is not a unitary actor with coherence between state agencies. As Timothy Mitchell<sup>11</sup> argues, there are always conflicts and different opinions between government agencies. The multi-dimensional features of the state can provide us with a new approach to the state. If we follow his understanding of the state, our analysis on social movements does not need to fixate on contrasting dynamics between state and society. State actors, ranging from politicians to administrative executives, are not always hostile to the claims of social movements.

Apart from the fact that there is a conflict between state actors, it should be indicated as another reason that the discursive turn did not accompany non-discursive turn. This discrepancy between discursive and non-discursive turn play a role in the failure of discursive turn. Non-discursive turn refers to changing organisation of space, movement and position, what Michel Foucault<sup>12</sup> describes as an individuality where discipline creates out of. As Foucault emphasizes that disciplined powers can be generated out of state apparatus, remaining organizations for boosting morale of OFWs have been blocking OFWs from absorbing the discursive turn the government initiated. For instance, the Bagong bayani foundation Inc. was created in 1990 to specialize in searching for qualified OFWs for the Bagong bayani award. The Bagong bayani foundation as a concrete

organization enables OFWs to be disciplined by its activities such as selection of awardees and official awarding ceremonies every year.

The non-discursive legacy of new heroes also can be seen in the airport. Exclusive customs and immigration lanes for OFWs still remain in arrival hall so that OFWs can 'see' how they are treated. A variety of events – Pamasakong Handog (Christmas gift-giving) and welcoming of the president – happening around Christmas also make OFWs feel like being treated as heroes. In summary, despite all the nuisances in the airport and discursive turn of hero discourse, we can see how non-discursive legacies are remained to serve as an obstacle to the discursive turn.

### **Conclusion**

Grievances are still important in contentious politics. To substantiate the statement, this article began by tracking down how Philippine national heroes are constructed and perceived by Filipinos. Thanks to the unique religious context of the Philippines, two features among national heroes, namely martyrdom and pilgrimage, become a kernel of national heroes when Filipinos define them. In the early 1980s, the Philippine state made another type of national hero: Bagong bayani (new heroes), OFWs. This article argues that making of the Bagong bayani was successfully embedded in the mindset of OFWs because of the very similarity between the kernel of national heroes and Bagong bayani: martyrdom and pilgrimage.

Relative deprivation of OFWs between their expectation of being treated like heroes and harsh maltreatment in reality became more intensive through the 1990s. There are two reasons for explaining the intensive relative deprivation. First, democratization in the late 1980s raised a bar of expectation. Second, the government's two contrasting policy orientations (discursive turn and remaining non-discursive legacy) provoked relative deprivation of OFWs in a rigorous way.

In the case study of the OAV issue, this article found a fact that intensified grievances of OFWs are coincided with the eruption of OAV campaign. Despite the fact that the OAV issue needs to be examined with a more comprehensive social movement framework of analysis, the case study of OAV issue gives us some insights into the role of grievances in contentious politics. First, this article argues that extensive and eager participation of OFWs in the OAV issue shows that deep grievances played a crucial role in the process of civil movements which aim to achieve public rights. Second, tracing intensity and extent of grievances can help scholars analyse when the grievances can be converted into collective action.

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### Notes

- <sup>1</sup> T Gurr, *Why men rebel*, Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1970, p. 15.
- <sup>2</sup> R Iletto, *Filipinos and their Revolution: Event, Discourse, and Historiography*, Ateneo De Manila University Press, Quezon City, 1998, pp. 62-78.
- <sup>3</sup> M Nael and D Rivas, *Rizal and Other Philippine Heroes & Heroines: A Primer and Teaching Strategies*, S.U.G Publishing House Inc., City of San Jose del Monte, Bulacan Philippines, 2007, p. 151.
- <sup>4</sup> For example, see 'Ramos admits helpless vs Saudi'. *PDI*, 1994 Nov 2, The reason of the government's helplessness is explained below.
- <sup>5</sup> 'Positive steps overdue for RP workers abroad'. *Philippine Daily Inquirer*, Editorial, 1990 June 24.
- <sup>6</sup> F Lobo, *Fidel Valdez Ramos: The Centennial President: Vision, Action & Stewardship*, The Manila Bulletin, Manila, Philippines, 1998, p. 199.
- <sup>7</sup> *Manila Bulletin* [hereafter *MB*], 2000 Mar 1.
- <sup>8</sup> *PDI*, 2001 Jun 8.
- <sup>9</sup> Philippine Overseas Employment Administration, *1998 POEA Annual Report*. Mandaluyong City, Philippines, 1998, p. 5.
- <sup>10</sup> An overseas Filipino worker describes "'heroes' greetings for OCWS" as "the happiest part of the OCWs' life and that of their families" (*Tinig Filipino*, 1994, p. 17).
- <sup>11</sup> T Mitchell, 'The Limits of the State: Beyond Statist Approaches and Their Critics'. *The American Political Science Review*, 1991, vol.85, no.1, p. 90.
- <sup>12</sup> M Foucault, *Discipline and Punish – The Birth of the Prison*, Translated from the French by Alan Sheridan, Vintage Books, New York, 1979, p. 167.

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# **The Politics of Toleration in Contemporary Liberal Societies: Assessing the Validity of Minority Cultural Rights**

*Masakazu Matsumoto*

## **Abstract**

This paper attempts to re-examine the relation between liberalism and toleration under the conditions of contemporary cultural diversity. Since the 1990s, there has been a big controversy in liberal political theory over the rightness or wrongness of supporting minority cultural rights. Will Kymlicka is the guiding figure who affirms the validity of supporting minority cultural rights, according to his argument that the stability and prosperity of a minority culture constitute a necessary condition for fulfilling the members' personal autonomy. Chandran Kukathas criticises Kymlicka's case for minority cultural rights, arguing as follows: 1) at the core of modern liberalism lies the idea of toleration, not autonomy. 2) The liberal idea of toleration is accompanied by individuals' freedoms of conscience and association. 3) Cultural communities should be understood as private associations. 4) A minority culture is not entitled to minority cultural rights as external protections. And 5) it is entitled to minority cultural rights as internal restrictions. After reviewing the debate between Kymlicka and Kukathas, this paper turns to discuss two objections raised against Kukathas' 'liberalism of toleration.' Finally, this paper explores Peter Jones' recent argument on 'indirect recognition' and suggests its possible effectiveness for a politics of cultural toleration in contemporary liberal societies.

**Key Words:** Liberalism, multiculturalism, toleration, cultural rights, Kymlicka, Kukathas, Jones.

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## **Introduction**

As John Rawls states that "the historical origin of political liberalism (and of liberalism more generally) is the Reformation and its aftermath, with the long controversies over religious toleration in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,"<sup>1</sup> the history of liberalism and that of toleration have for centuries been inextricably bound up with each other. This paper is an attempt to re-examine the relation between liberalism and toleration under the conditions of contemporary cultural diversity.

Like various other problems regarding justice, problems of toleration emerge under specific historical and social conditions. I shall call these the 'circumstances of toleration' following Susan Mendus. The

circumstances Mendus specifies are the situation where “the nature of the diversity is such as to give rise to disapproval, dislike, or disgust” (*the existence of diversity*) and “the tolerator should have the power to interfere with, influence, or remove the offending practice, but refrain from using that power” (*the disproportion of power*).<sup>2</sup> Issues of religious toleration were prominent in sixteenth and seventeenth century Europe, because its social and historical conditions included these two circumstances.

Now, what are the ‘circumstances of toleration’ that should be paid attention to when the relation between liberalism and toleration is re-examined under contemporary settings? First, there is the existence of *cultural* diversity in society. This is caused by varying phenomena such as the growing voice of indigenous people, the continuous immigration of people from poor to rich countries, the rapid development of globalisation and so on. Secondly, there is the disproportion of power among cultural groups. Even in a liberal society, cultural minorities are daily exposed to the pressure to assimilate to the majority through the processes of nation building like citizenship policy, language laws, education policy, public service employment, national media, symbols or holidays and so on.<sup>3</sup>

How should we approach the issue of toleration under the above-mentioned social and historical conditions? In this paper, I shall consider this from the viewpoint of the rightness or wrongness of minority cultural rights. Minority cultural rights are now being introduced in many liberal societies to ensure the survival and prosperity of minority cultures.<sup>4</sup> I shall approach this topic by examining especially the debate between Kymlicka and Kukathas, each of whom is considered a liberal but makes a quite different argument from each other on the issue of minority cultural rights.

### **1. Liberalism and the Vindication of Minority Cultural Rights: the Case of Kymlicka**

Minority cultural rights are generally vindicated under the rubric of multiculturalism. Will Kymlicka is the guiding figure who affirms the validity of supporting minority cultural rights, arguing that there is no inherent contradiction in being a liberal and pursuing the goal of multicultural accommodation.

His argument is essentially that respect for personal autonomy constitutes the philosophical foundation of liberalism, and that it can be used to strengthen, rather than weaken, the legitimacy of minority cultural rights. Autonomy is the ability to determine the goals of one’s own life. Liberals have traditionally stressed the importance of securing freedom of speech and association, educational opportunities etc. to secure the conditions for the development of this ability. Kymlicka, however, thinks that enhancing the survival and prosperity of the culture that a person belongs to is *also* necessary, for her to behave autonomously.

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The reason why the survival and prosperity of one's own culture are needed for her personal autonomy is that it constitutes her 'context of choice.' Now she must have some meaningful choices available in order for those choices to be significant for her autonomy. Culture as the 'context of choice,' according to Kymlicka, provides each member with those choices which are significant to her life. Thus minority cultural rights are needed to protect and support the 'context of choice' of cultural minorities, when it is under the threat of disappearance. In this sense, liberals' respect for personal autonomy is entirely consistent with multiculturalists' concern for minority cultural rights.

How should we, then, deal with cultural customs that may suppress the members' personal autonomy? For instance, some cultural customs offer only restricted educational opportunities for women or children.<sup>5</sup> The answer Kymlicka proposes to these kinds of customs is simple and clear: a minority culture that doesn't value the members' personal autonomy is not worth protection or support. According to him,

It is clear that some kinds of minority rights would undermine, rather than support, individual autonomy. [...] A crucial task facing liberal defenders of multiculturalism, therefore, is to distinguish the 'bad' minority rights that involve *restricting* individual rights from the 'good' minority rights that can be seen as *supplementing* individual rights.<sup>6</sup>

To make this distinction, Kymlicka classifies minority cultural rights into the following two categories.<sup>7</sup>

*External protections:* rights designed to protect the group from the impact of *external* pressures (e.g. the economic or political decisions of the larger society).

*Internal restrictions:* rights designed to protect the group from the destabilising impact of *internal* dissent (e.g. the decision of individual members not to follow traditional practices or customs).

While both rights may serve the survival and prosperity of minority cultures, the latter, 'bad' cultural rights should be rejected because they are directly incompatible with liberals' respect for personal autonomy. "Given the commitment to individual autonomy, I [i.e. Kymlicka] believe that liberals should be sceptical of claims to internal restrictions."<sup>8</sup> On the other hand, Kymlicka strongly supports the validity of multicultural accommodation as long as it is limited to the range of the former, 'good' cultural rights.



## 2. **Back to the Classical Liberal Idea of Toleration: Kukathas' 'Liberal Archipelago' Model**

As outlined above, Kymlicka thinks that the idea of autonomy lies at the heart of modern liberalism, and proposes a vindication of (specific) minority cultural rights. Chandran Kukathas, one of the defenders of contemporary liberalism, expressly challenges this argument. Kukathas starts, unlike Kymlicka, justifying minority cultural rights by appealing to the idea not of autonomy but of toleration. And, as we will see later, this difference has an important effect on the very content of minority cultural rights that they try to justify. Kukathas' argument rests on the following logic:

### A. *At the Core of Modern Liberalism Lies the Idea of Toleration, not Autonomy*

Like Rawls quoted in the beginning, Kukathas traces the emergence of modern European liberalism to the experiences of the Reformation and the following religious wars in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. In this respect, he is not sympathetic to the liberalism of autonomy that rather traces it to the eighteenth and nineteenth century enlightenment thoughts (Kant, Humboldt, and Mill). "The value which is fundamental to liberalism is toleration,"<sup>9</sup> according to him, and the source of liberalism in this meaning can typically be found in Locke's *Letter Concerning Toleration* (1685) and Bayle's *Philosophical Commentary* (1687).<sup>10</sup>

Kukathas stresses the importance of the idea of toleration in this manner, because he thinks that the idea of personal autonomy does not fit well with diversity and pluralism that characterise contemporary liberal societies.<sup>11</sup> In his view, the idea of autonomy is extremely culturally specific, and if defined in term of this culturally specific idea, then liberalism may have the effect of excluding too many existing minority cultures. Liberal thought first and foremost takes the fact of social diversity and pluralism seriously, and this is most often accomplished by putting the idea of toleration at the core of its philosophy. Kukathas makes clear this conception of liberalism by calling the liberalism of autonomy 'comprehensive liberalism' and the liberalism of toleration 'political liberalism,' following Rawls' terminology.<sup>12</sup>

### B. *The Liberal Idea of Toleration is Accompanied by Individuals' Freedoms of Conscience and Association*

How, then, will a society based on the idea of toleration be like? First, it is a society that maximises individuals' freedom of conscience. "It is the value of liberty of conscience which lies at the core of the liberal ideal of toleration."<sup>13</sup> The important point here is that Kukathas makes a clear distinction between the idea of autonomy and freedom of conscience. The former is not at all implied in the latter, because it is perfectly possible that

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one is following her conscience without using the ability to reflect on the existing self and create a new self. “A free society [...] is not a society of choosers. [...] inner freedom is not autonomy or self-direction. It is liberty of conscience.”<sup>14</sup>

Secondly, freedom of conscience is institutionalised as freedom of association. People have different, and sometimes conflicting, consciences. So to lead a social life, they need to enjoy the freedom to unite with those who have a similar conscience as their own without being interfered by outside parties. And once an association is established between those people, the larger society is not permitted to interfere in it. A society that respects freedom of conscience is a society that respects freedom of association.

C. *Cultural Communities Should be Understood as Private Associations Based on Individuals’ Freedoms of Conscience and Association*

As mentioned above, the liberal idea of toleration is realised through securing individuals’ freedoms of conscience and association. In this respect, Kukathas regards cultural communities - regardless of whether they are the majority’s or the minority’s - as private associations based on the members’ freedom of conscience. “Cultural communities may be regarded as voluntary associations to the extent that members recognise as legitimate the terms of association and the authority that upholds them.”<sup>15</sup>

Since cultural communities are regarded as private associations, their survival and prosperity depend entirely on how many people they can detain in the associations. As long as freedom of association interpreted as the freedom to dissociate is secured to each, a further introduction of minority rights is not needed.<sup>16</sup> Thus, in contrast with Kymlicka who supports the validity of external protections in terms of the liberal idea of autonomy, Kukathas does not recognise the legitimacy of such a state-oriented preservation of minority cultures. “The state should not be in the business of trying to determine which cultures will prevail, which will die, and which will be transformed.”<sup>17</sup>

D. *A Minority Culture is not Entitled to Minority Cultural Rights as External Protections*

For the reason stated above, Kukathas does not think that the minority cultural rights designed to protect the group from the impact of external pressures (i.e. external protections) are necessary in any sense. The role of the state is to secure individuals’ freedoms of conscience and association and to maintain peace among different associations, and not to decide which association is worth survival and prosperity. This is a neutral state emanated from the liberal idea of toleration.

Thus the liberalism of toleration is characterised by the “politics of indifference” that is contrasted to the politics of difference: “liberalism is indifferent to the groups of which individuals may be members.”<sup>18</sup> Persons in a liberal society are free to form private associations, and they are free to decide whether to maintain the relation with those associations they belong to or not. As for their cultural preferences, their state should be in a neutral position: “free to go their own way. But it does not provide any group with any assurance of success.”<sup>19</sup>

E. *A Minority Culture is Entitled to Minority Cultural Rights as Internal Restrictions*

In contrast to the case of external protections, the rights designed to protect the group from the destabilising impact of internal dissent (i.e. internal restrictions) should be admitted if and only if they are required as part of individuals’ freedoms of conscience and association. That is, it is not appropriate for the larger society to interfere in a minority culture that involves the coercion of the members’ personal autonomy, when it is based on their freedoms of conscience and association. “Under the institutions of liberal society, [...] ways of life that disvalue autonomy or individuality may still flourish.”<sup>20</sup> That is, “liberal societies should tolerate illiberalism in their midst.”<sup>21</sup> In short, it is not logically inconsistent to be a liberal (i.e. tolerant) society and to involve illiberal (i.e. autonomy-insensitive) minority cultures within it.

Such minority cultures, however, must at least recognise the right to exit for each member, for the legitimacy of internal restrictions is ultimately drawn from each individual’s exercise of the freedoms of conscience and association. If the members whose personal autonomy is being oppressed have a substantive right to exit and still decide to stay in their culture, then the larger society does not have any right to force them to respect the liberal idea of autonomy. “If an individual continues to live in a community and according to ways that (in the judgment of the wider society) treat her unjustly, even though she is free to leave, then our concern about the injustice diminishes.”<sup>22</sup>

**3. Problems of Cultural Toleration in Contemporary Liberal Societies**

So far, this paper has attempted a quick sketch of the controversy between Kymlicka and Kukathas concerning the validity of minority

	External protections	Internal restrictions
Liberalism of autonomy (Kymlicka)	accepts	rejects
Liberalism of toleration (Kukathas)	rejects	accepts

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cultural rights. Kymlicka's liberalism of autonomy accepts rights as external protections, but rejects rights as internal restrictions. Kukathas' liberalism of toleration, by contrast, rejects external protections while accepting internal restrictions.

In this section, I shall deal with two problems which revolve around adopting the politics of toleration *à la* Kukathas in contemporary societies. They roughly correspond to the two characteristics of the liberalism of toleration: A. it rejects external protections while B. accepting internal restrictions.

A. *Toleration Less than Recognition*

First, Kukathas rejects the politics of recognition as a result of valuing the liberal idea of toleration: "liberalism's counsel is to resist the demand for recognition."<sup>23</sup> The reason why Kukathas does so is that the politics of recognition may very well lead to the conflict between the larger society and minority cultures or between minority cultures. "Attempting to grant recognition to those who demand it [...] is almost always dangerous. This is because demands for recognition are often in conflict with other similar demands, or other interests."<sup>24</sup> The politics of recognition can increase, rather than reduce, the risk of multicultural conflict, especially when combined with the diversity that gives rise to "disapproval, dislike, or disgust" (the first circumstance of toleration). Thus Kukathas recommends sticking to the politics of indifference to maintain peaceful coexistence among diverse ways of life.

Is it, however, true that adopting the politics of indifference always leads to the peaceful coexistence of various cultures? It may be the case that the unequal result of laws and public policies may well intensify the collision between groups, as Matthew Festenstein points out.<sup>25</sup> The circumstances of toleration include the disproportion of power in addition to the existence of diversity, as described in the beginning. For instance, contemporary liberal societies are unavoidably committed to the creation and reproduction of a specific - usually the majority's - culture through the state-oriented business of nation building. In short, it is substantially impossible for a modern state to be 'indifferent' to all the cultures whether they are the majority's or the minority's.<sup>26</sup>

Kukathas simply ignores this fact, saying that it is "the result of accident and history, not policy and justice,"<sup>27</sup> but this does not at all guarantee that the politics of indifference may better serve peaceful coexistence among cultural groups than the politics of recognition. Kukathas seems here not to take seriously the problems that emerge out of the 'disproportion of power', being too much concerned with the 'existence of diversity'.

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B. *The Limits of Toleration*

In the second case of internal restrictions, in contrast, Kukathas seems not to take seriously the problems that emerge out of the ‘existence of diversity’, being too much concerned with the ‘disproportion of power’. As previously mentioned, he admits the oppression of personal autonomy in a minority culture. This is because he thinks that external interference in illiberal customs may run the risk of undermining the members’ freedoms of conscience and association: “the threat of oppression is as likely to come from outside the minority community as it is from within”.<sup>28</sup> Thus admitting the oppressive customs of a minority culture is, for him, the necessary evil to avoid the more widespread oppressive use of state power.<sup>29</sup>

This argument faces a serious problem: how far should we tolerate minorities’ oppressive cultural customs? What if, following the list Kukathas himself places,<sup>30</sup> they restrict the opportunities of women? What if they reject conventional medical treatments to the members, mandate operations which are physically harmful (such as clitoridectomy and ritual scarring), involve the use of animals in ways which could be regarded as cruel or distasteful, or maintain punishments which might be regarded as cruel and inhumane? If Kukathas stubbornly admitted all these - partly prohibited in most contemporary liberal societies - customs, then, as Brian Barry says, public tolerance that Kukathas envisions would become “a formula for creating a lot of private hells”.<sup>31</sup>

This criticism, however, is immediately invalidated by Kukathas’ own words, because, in the end, he does add the proviso concerning the limits of toleration, that every private association must abide by “liberal norms forbidding slavery and physical coercion,” namely the “liberal prohibitions on ‘cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment’”.<sup>32</sup> But where on earth does this proviso come from? It does not come from the appeal to the liberal idea of toleration; far from this, the idea of toleration itself is insufficient for justifying such prohibitions. Kukathas does not provide a full explanation of how and why illiberal cultural minorities should abide by those ‘liberal’ restrictions.

The liberalism of toleration Kukathas defends is open to the above-mentioned difficulties. To tackle them, I shall from now very briefly explore Peter Jones’ recent argument on ‘indirect recognition’,<sup>33</sup> and suggest its possible effectiveness for a politics of cultural toleration in contemporary liberal societies.

Certainly, as Kukathas recognises, it seems at first sight problematic to promote the politics of recognition under the circumstances of toleration, for while the circumstances involve the diversity that gives rise to “disapproval, dislike, or disgust,” the politics of recognition aims at the “symbolic change to [...] positively value cultural diversity”.<sup>34</sup> In the end, what does it mean to “positively value cultural diversity” that gives rise to

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“disapproval, dislike, or disgust?” Namely, “how can we simultaneously tolerate and recognise?”<sup>35</sup>

To solve the difficulty, Jones separates the object of toleration from the object of recognition. The reason why we should tolerate the *cultural identity* of a member of a minority culture is that we should recognise her *personal identity*. In this case, “our recognition is directed first and foremost not at the specific identity but at a more general identity and it is the generality of that recognition that gives us reason to tolerate the specific identity of which we disapprove”.<sup>36</sup> The important point here is that in this indirect recognition model our positive evaluation is directed not toward the intrinsic value of culture but toward the instrumental value it may have for members.<sup>37</sup>

By taking this indirect route of recognition, we can obtain some useful suggestions regarding the possibility of cultural toleration in contemporary liberal societies. First, there is no need to abandon the politics of recognition and withdraw to the politics of indifference even under the circumstances of toleration. To put it more precisely, states can be indifferent to the intrinsic value of culture while not indifferent to its instrumental value. Let us grant Kukathas’ claim that a state be neutral to every cultural community. Even so, as Jones points out, the role of the neutral state is not to do anything but to establish some institutional framework to protect minorities from the majority’s arbitrary exercise of power.<sup>38</sup> The indirect recognition model presents a compelling way to mitigate the ‘disproportion of power’ while being aware of the ‘existence of diversity’, by way of distinguishing the instrumental value from the intrinsic value of cultural survival and prosperity.

Secondly, it presents a liberal idea that is necessary when setting the limits of toleration. As we have seen before, Kukathas fails to explain why every cultural community must abide by the “liberal prohibitions on ‘cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment’”. Now the toleration of cultural identity is a derivative of the recognition of personal identity. In other words, we tolerate the instrumental value of culture because we recognise the intrinsic value of the members’ personality. “Cruel, inhuman or degrading treatment” directly violates this intrinsic value. Thus we can look for a theoretical base that sets both the aims and limits of cultural toleration, by redefining the significance of the politics of toleration in this indirect way.

### **Concluding Remarks**

The overall conclusion I have just reached may seem to be quite similar to Kymlicka’s position, in the sense that it admits the legitimacy of some external protections while it denies the legitimacy of some internal restrictions. So finally, it would be good to clarify the difference between the liberalism of autonomy Kymlicka defends and the indirect recognition model

Jones proposes. First, the idea of personality is not necessarily accompanied by the Kantian connotation of autonomy.<sup>39</sup> Thus, secondly, the indirect recognition model is likely to tolerate a wider range of cultural customs than Kymlicka does. Finally, and as the result of this, it may reduce the risk of interfering in minorities' cultural customs when compared to Kymlicka's liberalism of autonomy. These are the subjects I shall deal with more fully in the future.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> J Rawls, *Political Liberalism*, paperback ed, Columbia University Press, New York, 1996, p. xxvi.

<sup>2</sup> S Mendus, *Toleration and the Limits of Liberalism*, Macmillan, Basingstoke, 1989, pp. 8-9.

<sup>3</sup> W Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy: An Introduction*, 2nd ed, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2002, p. 364.

<sup>4</sup> Minority cultural rights include exemptions from laws which penalise or burden cultural practices; assistance to do those things the majority can do unassisted; self-government for ethnic, cultural, or 'national' minorities; external rules restricting non-members' liberty to protect members' culture; internal rules for members' conduct enforced by ostracism, excommunication; recognition/enforcement of traditional legal code by the dominant legal system; representation of minorities in government bodies; symbolic claims to acknowledge the worth, status, or existence of various groups. For a more detailed explanation of these, see J T Levy, *The Multiculturalism of Fear*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2000, ch. 5.

<sup>5</sup> Examples of oppressive cultural customs Kymlicka mentions include the Canadian Hutterite colony which refused the ex-members' demand for their share of assets (W Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship: A Liberal Theory of Minority Rights*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1995, pp. 161-2; W Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 237-8); the United States Amish community whose family wanted to withdraw their children from school before the age of 16 (*Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 162; *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 238); the tribal government of the Pueblo Indians discriminating against those members of the tribe who reject the traditional religion of the group (*Multicultural Citizenship*, pp. 40, 153, 165); the Coast Salish community whose members forced other members to take an initiation ritual (*Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 44).

<sup>6</sup> Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 340.

<sup>7</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, ch. 3 sec. 1; *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ch. 8 sec. 2.

<sup>8</sup> Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 342.

<sup>9</sup> C Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago: A Theory of Diversity and Freedom*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2003, p. 23.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 39, 262. Kymlicka tries to rebut this argument by referring to the example of illiberal toleration under the Ottoman Millet system. “What distinguishes *liberal* tolerance is precisely its commitment to autonomy - that is, the idea that individuals should be free to assess and potentially revise their existing ends” (Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*, p. 158; *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, pp. 231-2). But this rebuttal seems to me to miss the point. This is simply because declaring that “what distinguishes *liberal* tolerance is precisely its commitment to autonomy” would commit the fallacy of presumption where the primary question is whether liberalism necessarily contains the idea of autonomy or not.

<sup>11</sup> Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, pp. 56-64.

<sup>12</sup> Kukathas, ‘Cultural Rights Again: A Rejoinder to Kymlicka’. *Political Theory*, vol. 20, 1992, p. 680; *The Liberal Archipelago*, pp. 16-17, 182, 262-3, 265.

<sup>13</sup> Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 25.

<sup>14</sup> *ibid.*, p. 113.

<sup>15</sup> C Kukathas, ‘Are There Any Cultural Rights?’. *Political Theory*, vol. 20, 1992, p. 116.

<sup>16</sup> Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 96.

<sup>17</sup> *ibid.*, p. 252.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*, p. 249.

<sup>19</sup> *ibid.*, p. 107.

<sup>20</sup> C Kukathas, ‘Liberalism and Multiculturalism: The Politics of Indifference’. *Political Theory*, vol. 26, 1998, p. 696.

<sup>21</sup> Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 120.

<sup>22</sup> Kukathas, ‘Are There Any Cultural Rights?’. p. 133. Of course, an important question here is about the cost which arises from the right to exit. For instance, people may be forced to stay in their association because the cost to leave is too high. Kukathas’ answer to the question is frankly to say that we can ignore the cost. “The reply to this objection [...] is not to deny that exit can be extremely costly. It is simply to acknowledge that exit may, indeed, be costly; but the individual may still be free to decide whether or not to bear the cost. The magnitude of the cost does not affect the freedom”. (Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 107).

<sup>23</sup> Kukathas, ‘Liberalism and Multiculturalism’. p. 687.

<sup>24</sup> Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, pp. 250-1.

<sup>25</sup> M Festenstein, *Negotiating Diversity: Culture, Deliberation, Trust*, Polity Press, Cambridge, 2005, p. 99.



<sup>26</sup> Kymlicka, *Multicultural Citizenship*. ch. 4 sec. 4; *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, ch. 8 sec. 3.

<sup>27</sup> Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 246.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 135-6.

<sup>29</sup> He makes mention of the example of the Australian policy, which once carried out the forced assimilation of Aborigines under the pretext of defending their children's personal autonomy (C Kukathas, 'Is Feminism Bad for Multiculturalism?'. *Public Affairs Quarterly*, vol. 15, 2001, p. 96; *The Liberal Archipelago*. p. 146).

<sup>30</sup> C Kukathas, 'Cultural Toleration', in *Ethnicity and Group Rights: Nomos XXXIX*, W Kymlicka and I Shapiro (eds), New York University Press, New York, 1997, p. 70.

<sup>31</sup> Quoted in Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 140.

<sup>32</sup> Kukathas, 'Are There Any Cultural Rights?'. p. 128.

<sup>33</sup> P Jones, 'Equality, Recognition and Difference'. *Critical Review of International Social and Political Philosophy*, vol. 9, 2006, pp. 30-2; P Jones, 'Toleration, Recognition and Identity'. *The Journal of Political Philosophy*, vol. 14, 2006, pp. 133-5.

<sup>34</sup> Kymlicka, *Contemporary Political Philosophy*, p. 333.

<sup>35</sup> Jones, 'Toleration, Recognition and Identity'. p. 128.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 139.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*, p. 138. It should be noted that both Kymlicka and Kukathas also make the same distinction between the intrinsic and instrumental values of cultural survival and prosperity. "It is the instrumental, not the intrinsic, value of culture that grounds claims for political powers and resources in my liberal theory" (W Kymlicka, *Politics in the Vernacular: Nationalism, Multiculturalism, and Citizenship*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 2001, p. 62). And, "because culture and the particular historical forms that human life has taken are ephemeral, they are of no value in themselves. What matters is man, who creates culture, and whom culture serves" (Kukathas, *The Liberal Archipelago*, p. 42). So the primary contrast lies in whether to attach importance to the value of personal autonomy, to that of freedom of conscience, or to that of personality. See also concluding remarks below.

<sup>38</sup> Jones, 'Toleration, Recognition and Identity'. pp. 129-30.

<sup>39</sup> Jones, 'Equality, Recognition and Difference'. pp. 30-1.

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## **The Winter of Our Discontent: ‘Reasonable Accommodation’ and the 2007 Quebec Election**

*Alan Wong*

### **Abstract**

This paper addresses the ‘reasonable accommodation’ controversy in Quebec, Canada. The ‘accommodation’ of different cultures, traditions, and practices has touched off a firestorm of debate in Quebec in recent years. While originating as a legal principle devised to address issues of inequality within the workplace, this concept has now moved beyond the courtrooms and into the culture at-large, becoming what Monika Kin Gagnon terms a ‘social discourse’. From banning headscarves on the soccer pitch during matches to establishing new rules of conduct for immigrants in one rural township, Quebec has attracted a flurry of attention from all over the world with respect to this topic. Indeed, many Western countries, in particular, have claimed to identify with this fear that the expansion of rights for newcomers has reached such an extreme that it has stretched the limits of reason, leading to the erosion of Quebecois values and identity. Dubbed the ‘reasonable accommodation’ debate by the news media, this dispute has seen responses ranging from accusations of racism to outright support for the assimilation of non-Westerners into Quebecois culture. Much of the blame for the fervency of this discussion lies with those involved in the Quebec election and the campaigns leading up to it during the winter of 2006-2007, when reasonable was adopted as a key issue. This paper provides an analysis of that period, revealing how the news media and the leaders of the major political parties were complicit in transforming a few minor incidents and events into a larger threat endangering the very fabric of Quebec society. By constructing an idealized citizen that I call ‘the reasonable Quebecois’, these interlocutors in the debate managed to foster intolerance in the region for parochial purposes, giving rise to a devaluation of citizenship among non-European immigrants and refugees and their descendants in Quebec.

**Key Words:** Quebec, immigrants, racism, xenophobia, reasonable accommodation, nationalism, media, citizenship, religion.

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### **Introduction**

The years following the Quiet Revolution in Quebec have seen a tremendous push for what Charles Taylor terms ‘the new nationalism’, which has historically

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reflected the widespread identification of the new intelligentsia as French Canadians over and against the North American norm... [leading AW] to a strong desire for...reforms that would make French Canada an economically dynamic...progressive...and fully democratic society.<sup>1</sup>

This desire greatly influenced the tone of the 2007 provincial election. With three political parties vying for power, a series of seemingly small and insignificant incidents in the province in the months leading up to election day suddenly changed the course of the candidates' campaigns. These incidents, involving several permissions or allowances being granted—or not granted, in some instances—to individuals characterized as 'immigrants',<sup>2</sup> became top news stories in Quebec's media, and immediately congealed into *the* issue at the top of every politician's agenda. That issue became known as 'reasonable accommodation'.

Indeed, 'reasonable accommodation' was on the tongues of many in Quebec during the autumn and winter of 2006-2007. What should have been a civilized discussion on strategies of inclusion and the dynamics of power relations in Quebec, however, instead developed into an ugly war of words over the 'special' privileges accorded to 'immigrants'. With provocative headlines leaping out from local newspapers and party leaders angrily denouncing each other's views on immigration and Quebec identity, those of non-European heritage living in the province found themselves rendered silent and powerless, suffering through the devaluation of their citizenship and identities. This controversy, then, begs the question: How did the legal principle of reasonable accommodation, enshrined in the Canadian Charter, transform into "a social discourse in Québec", as Monika Kin Gagnon,<sup>3</sup> paraphrasing Pearl Eliadis, puts it?

### 1. The 2007 Quebec Election: A Brief Overview

'Reasonable accommodation' first reared its contentious head in Quebec on March 2, 2006 with a judgement by the Supreme Court of Canada allowing a young Sikh student in Montreal "to wear his ceremonial dagger", known as a kirpan, to school.<sup>4</sup> This was quickly followed by a ruling from the Quebec Human Rights Commission on March 22<sup>nd</sup> ordering a Montreal university to "accommodate Muslim students who [wanted AW] a prayer room".<sup>5</sup> While these decisions received some mention in the press, it was not until fall later that year that the issue emerged as the locus of a political and media firestorm. On September 24<sup>th</sup>, it was reported that a number of conflicts had arisen between Quebec hospitals and pregnant Muslim women concerned about being seen by male doctors.<sup>6</sup> Then, in November, a complaint launched by members of a Montreal-area YMCA regarding the

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installation of frosted glass windows “so a local Hasidic congregation [would AW] not see women exercising” touched off a frenzy in the press.<sup>7</sup> The situation was exacerbated by a Montreal health clinic’s decision to offer, “[i]n deference to their Sikh, Hindu and Muslim clientele...prenatal classes for women only”.<sup>8</sup> It was at this point that the politicians decided to wade into the fray.

First, on November 18, 2006, Mario Dumont of the right wing *l'Action démocratique du Québec* inveighed against the decision of the health clinic, asserting that reasonable accommodation in Quebec had gone too far and stating that for

equality between communities, the cohesion of society, there is great danger in ignoring this issue. When we listen to comments from different people in the province, we realize that there is much frustration among the population here. To establish clear rules...we must pay attention to everyone.<sup>9</sup>

Insisting that ‘our common values’ had to be respected Dumont added, “Quebec is exemplary in its generosity, tolerance, and the equality of its citizens.”<sup>10</sup> Subsequently, ‘our common values’ formed the foundation of Dumont's platform for the rest of his campaign.

For his part, André Boisclair of the separatist Parti Québécois told a group of journalists that there were “things in the [Quebec Charter AW] I would sweep out”.<sup>11</sup> In elaborating on this, he said, “When you read the Charter and you see the way it treats the integration of immigrants, I sometimes have the impression that we're looking at a vision of multiculturalism that isn't my vision of things”.<sup>12</sup> Later, Boisclair spoke of “the secularization<sup>13</sup> of our educational structures”,<sup>14</sup> a theme that he incorporated into his campaign. More codes became evident when he argued that “the sexist or discriminatory behaviour of a group should never be the object of a reasonable accommodation by our institutions, even if it is considered a historic or cultural trait of that group”,<sup>15</sup> inferring that ‘immigrant’ groups were the primary source of “sexist or discriminatory behaviour” in Quebec. He ended by entreating the Quebec populace to partake in “a moral contract by which all people in Quebec engage in building the Quebec of tomorrow”,<sup>16</sup> bringing to mind Dumont's “common values”. Thus, Boisclair’s position on reasonable accommodation was ultimately the same as his rival’s.

Quebec premier and Liberal Party leader Jean Charest’s own supremacist attitude were revealed during a news conference at which he accepted a large monetary gift to Quebec City from the Government of France. In response to France's generosity, Charest remarked, “North

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America belongs to the French. And we want it back".<sup>17</sup> This speaks to Charest's mentality at a time when the reasonable accommodation debate was reaching fever pitch. *Québécois* 'values' were promoted as being superior to all others; to make room for 'other' values was to dilute the French Canadian way of life.

Following these initial comments by these party leaders, more incidents occurred in Quebec that further stoked the fires of the debate. These include a resolution passed by the town council of Hérouxville that established a list of 'norms' by which new immigrants were expected to abide, the most egregious being the rejection of 'burning women alive' as a disciplinary measure<sup>18</sup>; the ejection of a young Muslim female soccer player from a match because she refused to remove her hijab<sup>19</sup>; and condemnations levied against Quebec's Chief Electoral Officer for permitting women wearing niqabs to keep their faces covered at polling stations when voting.<sup>20</sup> During these months, it seemed as if vehement attacks against reasonable accommodation were all the rage, with journalists, politicians, and others taking part in the melee.

The debate appeared to resonate with much of the public, as well, if the election results are any indication. The final ballot count saw Charest and his party win a minority government, with Dumont and the ADQ making a dramatic leap from four seats to thirty-seven, thereby gaining official opposition status, while Boisclair and the PQ dropped in popularity, lagging behind in third place. Although all three party leaders were critical of the excessive turn that reasonable accommodation was perceived to have taken, it was Dumont who had been its most vocally ardent opponent for the longest period of time. His party's success points to a much deeper rift in Quebec society, one that runs through identities of place, gender, race, ethnicity, and religion. Yet what is striking is how much of the animosity has depended on—as well as fed into—an utter misconception of reasonable accommodation.

## 2. Dissecting Reasonable Accommodation

According to Bernatchez and Bourgeault, the concept of reasonable accommodation in Canadian law has its base in the Canadian Charter. As they note, "Supreme Court judges refer to Article 1 in the Canadian Charter in establishing the 'acceptable and reasonable limits', which can be applied to rights and liberties 'in a free and democratic society'".<sup>21</sup> With the authority to determine what rights are 'reasonable', judges also have some flexibility in deciding what counts as discrimination. This decision-making power was first put to the test in 1985 in a landmark case concerning Jewish employees of Simpson Sears who were denied flexible working hours so that they could respect the Sabbath. Ruling in favour of the employees, the Supreme Court of Canada introduced two key legal innovations that had a profound bearing on

the rights and privileges of marginalized cultures and religions in Canada. First, a legal distinction was made between direct and indirect discrimination. As Bernatchez and Bourgeault explain, “There is a direct discrimination and blatant violation of the law when, for example, an employer refuses to hire...a black man because he is...black”.<sup>22</sup> Indirect discrimination, on the other hand, is “defined and described as ‘discrimination that has a prejudicial effect’”.<sup>23</sup> Thus, an employer who adopts certain rules or norms that apply to everyone, yet which may have a negative effect on individual or a group of employees to whom such norms do not necessarily apply, could be found to be discriminating against them; consequently, the employer has an ‘obligation of accommodation’.<sup>24</sup> Following from this, the Court also recognized that certain limits needed to be instituted in situations where the accommodation requested placed “an ‘excessive constraint’” on the employer, such as, for example, an excessive cost to the latter, a violation of the rights of other employees, or a hindrance to the running of the business.<sup>25</sup> Thus, the second innovation, the concept of ‘reasonable accommodation’, was born. While this ruling applied specifically to the employment sector, subsequent decisions have expanded the parameters of the law to include the “the provision of goods and services to the public”.<sup>26</sup>

Despite its constitutional origins, reasonable accommodation as a *social* discourse has spun out of control, refusing to replant itself into firm legal ground. If it continues to exist discursively in this racist form, then we must dissect it and learn exactly what it is we are dealing with in order to develop appropriate strategies to nullify its impact on immigrants and others in the margins of Quebec society. We must begin such a dissection with an examination of the word ‘reasonable’, for its interpretation has been the primary site of tension in the debate. To David Theo Goldberg, ‘reason’, has been constructed in Western cultures “as embodying historical and universal principles and standards of thought, and by implication as committing the ‘Man of Reason’ to objective, neutral, impartial, and universally valid socio-political and moral values”.<sup>27</sup> It is through Reason, he says, that we are able to ‘make sense’ of things<sup>28</sup>; however, he continues, we cannot “insist on Reason’s universality,” for

this insistence...denies or refuses to acknowledge the particularistic cultural embodiment necessary to reason if it is to make sense or convince within a form of social life. In this denial or refusal, ‘universalist’ Reason veils its capacity to dominate, to repress, and to exclude.<sup>29</sup>

As a result, Goldberg deduces, “in spite—indeed, in the very name—of its universality, Reason expresses racialized exclusion.”<sup>30</sup>



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We can see this contradiction between ‘universality’ and ‘racialized exclusion’ demonstrated in some of the rhetoric of Quebec’s politicians, particularly Dumont’s comments on defining ‘our common values’. Those who do not adhere to or fit in with this construction of reason shall be regarded as ‘irrational’ by the majority population, according to this logic. However, Goldberg notes,

the claim that racially characterized non-Westerners or those of purportedly non-Western origin are irrational...is the insistence that they fail to exhibit the values, metaphysical attitudes, epistemological principles, or cognitive style of ‘white males’.<sup>31</sup>

Because “racially characterized non-Westerners or those of purportedly non-Western origin” are considered inherently irrational, then, “we may think it reasonable to restrict the freedom of [these] others for their own well-being”,<sup>32</sup> as well as for ours. In Quebec, these restrictions have manifested themselves in, for example, the resolution passed by Hérouxville.

In the end, it is those wielding institutional power that dictate who counts as reasonable and who does not. Indeed, for a colonial power such as Quebec, there is a preferred type when it comes to the immigrants it accepts within its borders. Such immigrants are selected according to a particular discursive construction of Reason, as Yasmin Jiwani observes:

The preferred immigrant fits the mould of the reasonable person.... [T]he preferred immigrant...believes in the system, adhering to the same liberal beliefs as those of the reasonable person. [...] The preferred immigrant leaves her or his culture behind or retains only those aspects of it that are not problematic or that can be periodically celebrated outside the closet of family and community or kept within it. He or she is the model minority.<sup>33</sup>

The reasonable person ‘makes sense’ and, thus, so should the preferred immigrant. When the preferred immigrant makes an ‘unreasonable’ demand, however, the preferred immigrant is no longer preferred. He or she loses status as a citizen. In the hands of ‘reasonable people’ such as Dumont, then, reasonable accommodation not only becomes a social discourse, but, as Jiwani would call it, a ‘discourse of domination’; as such, it structuralizes “formations of racialized and gendered violence”,<sup>34</sup> as evidenced by the series of conflicts that occurred during the Quebec election. Considering this, it would be instructive to interrogate and scrutinize the key processes involved in the construction of the reasonable person in Quebec—the

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*reasonable Québécois*—which, in turn, has led us to the current dilemma over reasonable accommodation and, hence, the violence.

### 3. Constructing the Reasonable Québécois

The most appropriate starting point for such an analysis is, of course, identity. According to Stuart Hall, identity offers people a sense of stability and some clarity about their lives; its logic “is the logic of something like a ‘true self’,”<sup>35</sup> which has “an element of continuity.”<sup>36</sup> Moreover, one’s identity is helpful in relating to other human beings through a process of identification, which, Hall says, “is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal, and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation.”<sup>37</sup>

For example, to identify oneself as *Québécois* is to identify oneself with a particular set of values. Charest remarked that Quebec “has values, solid values, including the equality of women and men; the primacy of French; the separation between state and religion. These values are fundamental.”<sup>38</sup> Boisclair, contradicting his earlier statements, was more specific about where those values could be found, saying, “There is only one anchor that holds. It is the one of the Quebec Charter of Rights and Freedoms.”<sup>39</sup> Dumont and the ADQ, meanwhile, proposed that Quebec create its own constitution “in order to reinforce the already existing common values.”<sup>40</sup>

Defining any individual or collective identity, however, is contingent upon its “articulation with a discourse of difference”, according to Avtar Brah<sup>41</sup>; that is, an identity gains its meaning through a process of differentiation that positions it within a given social relation according to the specific “economic, cultural and political discourses and institutional practices” informing it.<sup>42</sup> Inherent to this process are “systems of power underlying structures of class, racism, gender and sexuality, and so on”.<sup>43</sup> In this light, ‘difference’ — as it pertains to identities and identification — is always already hegemonic”.<sup>44</sup>

In the context of the Quebec election, where the focus was on the reasonable accommodation debate, difference was constructed around the idea of who was a reasonable person and who was not—the former being the ‘pure wool’ *Québécois* with their common values and collective history, and the latter being the ‘immigrants’ who could not adapt to *Québécois* culture. Dumont *et al* convinced themselves and many voters that the difference of non-Western ‘immigrants’ gave the *Québécois* license to push these ‘minorities’ and their apparently sexist and anti-democratic way of life to the margins. As André Drouin, the town councillor who instigated the resolution in Hérouxville, declared, “We have to make sure that the people who come

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here want to live like us”.<sup>45</sup> In short, difference itself was unreasonable, and therefore had to be curtailed.

In separating the same from the different, the reasonable from the unreasonable, race and culture were mitigating and immanent factors. From these two concepts emerged two processes that served to differentiate immigrants from the ‘mainstream’ *Québécois* population: racialization and culturalization. According to Jiwani, “In its simplest term, racialization refers to the process whereby groups are marked on the basis of some kind of real or putative difference—whether this is skin colour, culture, religion, language, or nationality”.<sup>46</sup> As such, “racialization is a dialectic process. It rests on the centrality of Whiteness”. Reason in Western culture is bound up in Whiteness, and so is factored into the racialization process. As a mode of differentiation, racialization arbitrarily takes perceived attributes of a select group of people in order to mark them and distinguish them racially from white people. The Hérouxville resolution exemplifies this process perfectly, with its insinuations of Muslims as oppressors and torturers of women and as veiled threats, all racialized markers of their unreasonableness.

Intertwined with this process of racialization is that of culturalization, which Sherene Razack describes as a strategy whereby white society deploys a discourse of culture to mask its racism and sexism<sup>47</sup>, ‘culture’ here being “the values, beliefs, knowledge, and customs that exist in a timeless and unchangeable vacuum outside of patriarchy, racism, imperialism, and colonialism”.<sup>48</sup> As a justificatory mechanism, culturalization allows people like Drouin to “speak more of cultural and ethnic differences and less of race and class exploitation and oppression”.<sup>49</sup> Thus, culturalization is a technology of power, a device used to inferiorize the unreasonable immigrants who find themselves outside the norms of White culture.

We saw this strategy surface throughout the Quebec election, where the debate on reasonable accommodation was always framed in terms of immigration; where the conflict was constantly described in terms of culture clash; where religion was presented as the greatest danger to Quebec’s ‘secular’ culture. In effect, what was being practiced was what Jiwani has termed ‘cultural racism’, which is a form of “racism that is expressed and directed at groups seen to be culturally different. Within such a framework, cultural practices become the target of inferiorization, though, by association, so does the group in question”.<sup>50</sup> When people draw attention to their cultural traditions by, for instance, wearing a hijab or kirpan, this “is construed as a sign reflecting a lack of progress”.<sup>51</sup>

Thusly racialized and culturalized, the newly-defined identities imposed upon unreasonable ‘immigrants’ in Quebec were subsequently essentialized. According to Radha Jhappan, essentialism is an approach to identity construction that treats “knowledge, truth and wisdom almost as if

they were external, immutable universals just waiting to be discovered”.<sup>52</sup> Accordingly, both ‘immigrants’ and the white French Canadian population became essentialized categories during the election after undergoing their respective processes of racialization and culturalization, with the former group characterized as innately backward, primitive, oppressive, and unreasonable, while the latter were viewed as the very model of reason, morality, and modernity.

The most prominent essentialized feature of the reasonable *Québécois* is his or her commitment to embracing Quebec as a nation. Imbricating the nationalist cause with race further delimits how the reasonable *Québécois* is signified. Paul Gilroy's term for this phenomenon is ‘the new racism’. Gilroy maintains that

[t]he new racism is primarily concerned with mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion. It specifies who may legitimately belong to the national community and simultaneously advances reasons for the segregation or banishment of those whose ‘origin, sentiment, or citizenship’ assigns them elsewhere.<sup>53</sup>

We can see how the new racism played out during the election debate over reasonable accommodation in Quebec, with each leader interpellating his national identity as a *Québécois* in a way that distinguished it from those of ‘immigrants’.

The construction of the reasonable *Québécois* is finally burned into the public consciousness through a process of ‘mediatisation’ — the way in which certain representations of social and cultural identities are concretized through their depictions in the media. The media’s ‘messages and constructions’ tend to be ‘ideologically grounded’, according to Jiwani, and are operationalized to fulfil a variety of goals.<sup>54</sup> Such goals may include the rendering of “a symbolic image of the nation”<sup>55</sup>; indeed, the infatuation with the ‘integrity’ of the nation has a profound influence on what news items are selected for coverage. As Jiwani argues, “[D]ifference that is unusual or threatening is likely to be...worthy of reportage.”<sup>56</sup> Thus, relatively minor disagreements over what constitutes a reasonable request for accommodating measures, for example, are appropriated by the press and sensationalized because in volatile nationalist societies such as Quebec, the news media know that cultural conflicts can ignite the passions of members of the majority population. To the media, this makes such conflicts newsworthy.

The media's involvement in the mediatisation of essentialized identities is never done passively; it is always an active presence, driven by the desire to gain more readers, listeners, and viewers. Thus, says Jiwani, “it would seem that news accounts are intended for the reasonable person, the

ideal typical Canadian who shares the dominant perspectives by and large”.<sup>57</sup> This is as true for the reasonable *Québécois* as it is for the reasonable person in Canada. A product of the discourse of the new racism, the reasonable *Québécois*, in his or her current construction, will most certainly continue to exclude and marginalize ‘immigrants’ as long as the media and politicians have something to gain by involving themselves in the reasonable accommodation debate.

### Conclusion

Manufacturing reason according to Western principles and conceptions of modernity and then universalizing and deploying the resulting construction establishes criteria for achieving citizenship that ‘immigrants’ ultimately can never satisfy. At the same time, the reasonable accommodation debate will persist and remain a divisive force in Quebec society so long as Quebec chooses to be part of this world, since, Seyla Benhabib asserts, “globalisation draws the administrative-material functions of the state into increasingly volatile contexts that far exceed any one state’s capacities to influence decisions and outcomes”,<sup>58</sup> including those concerning immigration. Therefore, the very notion of citizenship itself becomes unsustainable in light of Quebec’s interpretation of reasonable accommodation.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> C Taylor, *Reconciling the Solitudes: Essays on Canadian Federalism and Nationalism*, McGill-Queen’s University Press, Montreal, 1993, p. 14.

<sup>2</sup> I have placed quotation marks around this word to indicate the conflation in Quebec/Canadian society of both recent settlers and their Canadian/Quebec-born descendents as ‘immigrants’. I will be employing this device throughout the rest of the article. This terminological decision was inspired by Himani Bannerji, who remarks, “Expressions such as ‘ethnics’ and ‘immigrants’ and ‘new Canadians’...encode the ‘us’ and ‘them’ with regard to political and social claims, signifying uprootedness and the pressure of assimilation or core cultural apprenticeship. The irony compounds when one discovers that all white people, no matter when they immigrate to Canada or as carriers of which European ethnicity, become invisible and hold a dual membership in Canada, while other remain immigrants generations later.” H Bannerji, *The Dark Side of the Nation: Essays on Multiculturalism, Nationalism and Gender*, Canadian Scholars’ Press, Toronto, 2000, p. 112.

<sup>3</sup> M Kin Gagnon, ‘Making (Non)Sense of l’Affaire Hérouxville’. *R.A.C.E. link*, Spring 2007, p. 5.

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<sup>4</sup> L Ferguson, 'A one-year chronology of the province's "reasonable accommodation" controversy'. *The Gazette*, February 3, 2007, p. A9.

<sup>5</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>7</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>9</sup> Translated by me from the original French, quoted in R Dutrisac, 'Accommodement raisonnable: Charest doit fixer une limite, dit Dumont'. *Le Devoir*, November 18, 2006, p. A3.

<sup>10</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>11</sup> Quoted in D MacPherson, 'Exploiting ethnic tensions'. *The Gazette*, November 21, 2006, p. A23.

<sup>12</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> 'Secularization' is loosely translated from the French term '*laïcisation*'. While not entirely equal in meaning—the latter is notoriously difficult to translate directly—the former nevertheless comes closest to the spirit of the concept.

<sup>14</sup> Translated by me from the original French. A Boisclair, 'Libre-Opinion: Pour une plus grande participation de tous'. *Le Devoir*, November 22, 2006, p. A8.

<sup>15</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>17</sup> Quoted in K Dougherty, 'North America belongs to the French. We want it back'. *The Gazette*, February 14, 2007, p. A10.

<sup>18</sup> Hérouxville Town Council, 'Municipalité Hérouxville: Publication of Standards', in *Municipalité Hérouxville*, February 2007, viewed on 1 July, 2007, <<http://municipalite.herouxville.qc.ca/Standards.pdf>>.

<sup>19</sup> J Ravensbergen et al. 'Charest applauds hijab call'. *The Gazette*, February 27, 2007, p. A1.

<sup>20</sup> P Authier et al, 'Covered heads at poll booths queried'. *The Gazette*, March 23, 2007, p. A11.

<sup>21</sup> Translated by me from the original French. S Bernatchez and G Bourgeault, 'La prise en compte de la diversité culturelle et religieuse à l'école publique et "l'obligation d'accommodement" — Aperçu des législations et des jurisprudences au Canada, aux États-Unis, en France et en Grande Bretagne'. *Canadian Ethnic Studies*, vol. 31, no. 1, 1999, p. 162.

<sup>22</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>23</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>24</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>25</sup> *ibid.*, p. 163.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>27</sup> D T Goldberg, *Racist Culture: Philosophy and the Politics of Meaning*, Blackwell Publishers, Cambridge, MA and Oxford, 1993, p. 118.

<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 118-119.

<sup>30</sup> *ibid.*, p. 119.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>33</sup> Y Jiwani, *Discourses of Denial: Mediations of Race, Gender, and Violence*, UBC Press, Vancouver and Toronto, 2006, p. xiv.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 209.

<sup>35</sup> S Hall, 'Ethnicity: Identity and Difference', in *Becoming National: A Reader*, G Eley and R G Suny (eds). Oxford University Press, New York, 1996, p. 339.

<sup>36</sup> *ibid.*, p. 340.

<sup>37</sup> S Hall, 'Introduction: Who Needs "Identity"?', in *Questions of Cultural Identity*, S Hall and Paul du Gay (eds), Sage, London and Thousand Oaks, CA, 1996, p. 3.

<sup>38</sup> Quoted in K Dougherty, 'Charest enters the fray'. *The Gazette*, February 9, 2007, p. A1.

<sup>39</sup> Quoted in P Authier, 'Boisclair unveils new stance'. *The Gazette*. March 24, 2007, p. A11.

<sup>40</sup> Translated by me from the original French, quoted in K Lévesque, 'Mario Dumont attache le grelot des accommodements raisonnables'. *Le Devoir*, February 22., 2007, p. A3.

<sup>41</sup> A Brah, *Cartographies of Diaspora*, Routledge, London and New York, 1996. p. 125.

<sup>42</sup> *ibid.*, p. 117.

<sup>43</sup> *ibid.*, p. 88.

<sup>44</sup> *ibid.*, p. 90.

<sup>45</sup> Quoted in Editorial, 'Town tests the limits of accommodation'. *The Gazette*, January 30, 2007, p. A20.

<sup>46</sup> Jiwani, *op. cit.*, p. 6.

<sup>47</sup> S Razack, *Looking White People in the Eye: Gender, Race, and Culture in Courtrooms and Classrooms*, University of Toronto Press, Toronto, 1998, p. 60.

<sup>48</sup> *ibid.*, p. 58.

<sup>49</sup> *ibid.*, p. 60.

<sup>50</sup> Jiwani, *op. cit.*, p. 114.

<sup>51</sup> *ibid.*, p. 115.

<sup>52</sup> R Jhappan, 'Race and Gender Essentialism'. *Studies in Political Economy: A Socialist Review*, vol. 51, 1996, p. 19.

<sup>53</sup> P Gilroy, *There Ain't No Black in the Union Jack: The Cultural Politics of Race and Nation*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1991, p. 45.

<sup>54</sup> Jiwani, op. cit., p. 38.

<sup>55</sup> *ibid.*, p. 37.

<sup>56</sup> *ibid.*, p. 39.

<sup>57</sup> *ibid.*, p. 38.

<sup>58</sup> S Benhabib, *The Rights of Others: Aliens, Residents and Citizens*. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, UK, 2004, p.4.

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## **Recent Chinese Migrations to South Africa New Intersections of Race, Class and Ethnicity**

*Yoon Jung Park*

### **Abstract**

The Chinese population in South Africa has experienced considerable growth in the past two decades. Boasting the African continent's largest Chinese population, there are approximately 250,000 to 350,000 Chinese from 'three distinct Chinas' ranging from wealthy Taiwanese industrialists, to educated middle managers from Beijing and Shanghai, poor migrants from rural Fujian province, and a mostly professional class of local second-, third-, and fourth-generation Chinese South Africans. While most South Africans conflate these various groups of Chinese into one, there are myriad intersecting lines of distinction and division which separate them, including: generation, culture and ethnicity, language, legal status, education, residential space, class, occupation, and identity. Research has revealed simmering social and political tensions between the various Chinese communities as well as between Chinese and South African communities. Even notions of Chineseness are contested. However, recent fears of xenophobic attacks and increasing crime against Chinese, together with pride in an increasingly powerful China, periodically serve to bring these disparate communities together. This paper explores the contestations and alliances. Further, it attempts to position the various Chinese communities within a still-racially divided democratic South Africa and identify key concerns, including: the Chinese and affirmative action; Chinese as targets of bribery attempts, economic crimes and violence; and growing anti-Chinese sentiment.

**Key Words:** Chinese, overseas, Chineseness, South Africa, migrants, racism, class, ethnicity, xenophobia.

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### **Introduction**

South Africa has the largest population of Chinese on the African continent. It is also home to one of the few multi-generational local Chinese communities in the region, with others in Mauritius, Reunion, and Madagascar. That which is often viewed, from the outside, as one Chinese community, however, is actually several different Chinese communities. This paper explores the various phases of Chinese migration to South Africa, the myriad concerns of the different communities, as well as alliances and contestation between communities. In the context of a history of exclusion

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and a post-apartheid South Africa still struggling to construct a unifying national identity, address highly controversial policies of redress, and deal with outbursts of xenophobic violence, the paper attempts to position the various communities of Chinese, both South African and immigrant.

### **1. Chinese Migration to South Africa**

The earliest Chinese in South Africa included convicts and company slaves of the Dutch East India Company who controlled the Cape in the mid- to late 17th century, a small number of contract labourers and artisans who came to South Africa in the early and mid-1800s, and over 63,000 contract miners imported to (and later exported from) South Africa between 1904-1910. While these histories are significant in terms of understanding the context into which free Chinese migrants entered South Africa, their numbers were small and most were eventually repatriated to China or they gradually mixed into South Africa's mixed race population.<sup>1</sup>

The ancestors of the 'local' Chinese or SABCs (South African-born Chinese) began arriving in South Africa in small but significant numbers from the late 1870s. Today this segment of the Chinese in South Africa numbers approximately 10,000.<sup>2</sup> From their first arrival in the late-1800s and for nearly a century discrimination and racist legislation kept their numbers low, restricted further immigration, and placed controls on the existing Chinese community.<sup>3</sup> According to census data, in 1891 there was a total of 413 Chinese in South Africa; by 1904, these numbers increased five-fold but remained, relative to the total population, quite small, at 2,556.<sup>4</sup> While the numbers were tiny, both in real and relative terms, the reaction was unduly harsh: Chinese throughout the various colonies and states of early South Africa met with fear and hatred based primarily on race.

Until the apartheid years, their numbers grew slowly but steadily. Barriers to Chinese immigration in North America were lowered during and after World War II, but in South Africa, after an initial increase between 1949 and 1953 comprised mostly of new brides brought from China, the door to South Africa was virtually shut by the Immigrants Regulation Amendment Act 43 of 1953. There are only a few isolated cases of Chinese entering South Africa between 1953 and the late 1970s; these include a few qualified Chinese chefs who were permitted entry on temporary permits and a small number of illegal immigrants who persisted in their attempts to join family members in South Africa.<sup>5</sup>

Then, during the 1970s, due to increasingly close ties between the apartheid government in South Africa and the Republic of China/Taiwan, small numbers of Taiwanese industrialists were enticed to make investments in remote areas of South Africa, part of a larger plan to staunch the flow of black Africans from the 'homelands' into urban areas. A small but steady influx of Taiwanese industrialists into South Africa during this period formed

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the first wave of new Chinese immigration to South Africa. Generous South African government incentives (including relocation costs, subsidised wages for seven years and subsidised rent for ten years, cheap transport of goods to urban areas, and housing loans) and favourable exchange rates encouraged the immigration of investors and their families from Taiwan and Hong Kong.<sup>6</sup>

Throughout the late 1980s and into the 1990s, the numbers of these industrialists continued to grow. At first these early Taiwanese experienced some difficulties with housing and schooling for their children as they settled in conservative towns surrounding the former homelands. These Taiwanese immigrants initially were accommodated by permit-based exemptions to existing apartheid laws. Eventually, however, South Africa's long-standing prohibition of non-white immigration was waived in order to accommodate them and in the Free State Province laws were overturned to permit Chinese residence in the province.

In the 1990s, a second wave of new Chinese immigration started. On the heels of the industrialists, many other immigrants from Taiwan and Hong Kong entered South Africa. They came in as entrepreneurs opening import/export firms, restaurants, other small businesses, and as students.<sup>7</sup> While the industrialists were based primarily in or near the former homelands, these newer arrivals settled in South Africa's larger cities. By the end of 1994, there were approximately 300 such businesses and hundreds of Chinese students in South Africa.<sup>8</sup>

However, it should be noted that this was not a permanent uni-directional migration. As with many transnational migrations, some of these new migrants were opportunistic capitalists; they took advantage of incentive schemes and moved on when conditions for business worsened.<sup>9</sup> Still, for about a decade the number of Taiwanese migrants grew steadily. Then, in the late 1990s and into the early 2000s, many of these Taiwanese took leave of South Africa, their departure hastened by South Africa's official recognition of the People's Republic of China (PRC), difficulties with South Africa's labour regulations, and stiff competition from the entry of cheap imports brought in directly from China. Crime and security as well as concerns about political and economic stability were also major concerns in during this period, when the interest rate increased that the South African Rand depreciated to a record low of R13: US \$1. From a high of approximately 30,000 in the mid-1990s, there are currently approximately 6,000 Taiwanese in South Africa, and their numbers continue to drop.<sup>10</sup>

The third wave of new Chinese migration, which overlaps with the second and continues today, is immigration primarily from the PRC. Starting in the late 1980s and picking up pace in the period leading up to South Africa's recognition of the PRC January 1998, significant numbers of both legal and illegal immigrants have entered South Africa from mainland China,

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dwarfing the existing South African-born Chinese community and the Taiwanese. These numbers have increased even more dramatically in the past five to seven years. In terms of this third wave of immigration, mostly from mainland China, Anna Ying Chen identifies three distinct periods: the first from the late 1980s to the mid-1990s; a second from the mid- to late 1990s; and a third - larger and ongoing - wave which began in the early 2000s.<sup>11</sup>

The earliest of these new Chinese immigrants from mainland China arrived in South Africa in the late 1980s. Many landed in South Africa between 1989 and 1992. We speculate that many of these immigrants arrived along two primary routes: the first group arrived via Lesotho and the second via Hungary<sup>12</sup> through the Ivory Coast. The majority of this group came to South Africa with little and started up small businesses. Those that came via Lesotho initially began as employees for Taiwanese businesses. After years of hard work, by late 1990s, many of these earliest immigrants from mainland China became quite successful, owning established and profitable business, mostly as importers and wholesalers of Chinese products and as owners of their own factories. However, like many of the early Taiwanese industrialists, as many as half of these earliest Chinese immigrants have recently left South Africa due to security and other family concerns; some have returned to China<sup>13</sup> while others have re-migrated to the Canada, Australia, and other developed Western countries.

The second inflow of mainland Chinese into South Africa took place in the mid- to late 1990s, in the period immediately following the first democratic elections and as South Africa ended its relationship with Taiwan and established diplomatic relationship with the PRC. These early Chinese businesses, some state-owned enterprises (SOEs) and others private, typically sent between two to ten Chinese nationals to staff their operations. At the end of their two- to three-year contract periods, some of these Chinese employees - from across China - decided to stay on in South Africa. Those who chose to remain were largely well-educated professionals, many with international work experience and capital. They have since established extensive business networks in Southern Africa and in China. Many have expanded beyond their initial trading businesses into other industrial fields, including mining, manufacturing, and property development.

Others in this second cohort hail from Jiangsu and Zhejiang provinces, two of the most affluent regions in China which benefited from the Chinese open door economic policy. Entrepreneurs from these regions identified the business opportunities in Africa and saw South Africa as their entry point to other neighbouring African countries. They came with both capital and other business resources. Most of these immigrants are linked by both family and other close social networks to factories in China. With these resources and competitive advantages, their first business choice is import, wholesale, and distribution. Some of the mainland Chinese of this second

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cohort have also moved on to other countries in southern Africa, again, usually as wholesalers / distributors of Chinese imports.<sup>14</sup>

The last and ongoing wave of Chinese immigrants began arriving in South Africa in the new millennium. They are made up of small traders and peasants<sup>15</sup> primarily from Fujian province. Many entered the country illegally via neighbouring countries; due to their limited English, limited education, and less extensive business networks, they tend to run small shops in the remote towns all across South Africa.

Unfortunately, there are no accurate statistics regarding the total population of Chinese in South Africa. As mentioned, there are currently fewer than 10,000 Chinese South Africans (South African-born or local Chinese) and approximately 6,000 Taiwanese in the country, but in terms of the overall numbers, these are more difficult to ascertain. The Chinese embassy reports that while they do not have any official figures, they estimate that there are about 200,000 Chinese in South Africa. In news broadcasting by CCTV and other news agencies, the figure rises to 300,000; we estimate that there are between 300,000 - 350,000.<sup>16</sup> Due to large numbers of illegal migrants, poor record-keeping and corruption in the Department of Home Affairs, as well as continued flows of migrants and workers, it is impossible to come to any exact accounting of the total number of people of Chinese descent in South Africa.

## **2. Multiple Forms of Chineseness in South Africa**

As evidenced in the above description, there are, today, various communities of Chinese in the country. Local Chinese or Chinese South Africans are comprised of second-, third-, and fourth-generation South Africans of Chinese descent. Many speak no Chinese languages, but fluent Afrikaans and English. Most have never travelled to China. Yet they maintain a distinct Chinese South African identity, forged by apartheid-era challenges and a tight hold on their Chinese heritage linked to an increasingly mythical China. They claim that although they may no longer speak Chinese, they have retained their Chinese values and some of their traditions in ways that the newer Chinese immigrants seem to have forgotten.

Many of the Taiwanese who once made their homes in South Africa have, after taking South African citizenship, left the country. They form a segment of the transnational overseas Chinese - fluidly moving across borders. Those Taiwanese who remain have become, in their distinct way, South Africans. Amongst them there are prominent business people as well as four members of the South African parliament. Many have now been in South Africa for over two decades, have children who were born or who grew up in South Africa, and count themselves as South Africans.

Amongst the newer immigrants from the PRC, there are further differences of class, region, and even language. Some amongst these have



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also become transnational, flitting between China and several African countries, effecting transfers of capital and carrying out businesses across borders. Others, like the most recently arrived from Fujian province, are rural peasants who are repeating typical first generation migrant patterns as shopkeepers in small towns across South Africa. They speak their local dialects, little English, and retain and sojourner mentality about life in South Africa.

Each of these different communities of Chinese has different identities and they are contesting local conceptions of 'Chineseness'. Many of the local Chinese viewed their constructed Chinese identity - law-abiding, apolitical, quiet, honest, industrious, low-key, and conservative - as *essentially* Chinese. Chinese immigrants viewed the local traditions as quaint and out-dated, also arguing that their lack of Chinese language prevented local Chinese from being 'real Chinese'. As the contest over "Who are the *real* Chinese?" or "Who is *more* Chinese?" heated up it became clear that both groups held differing, yet essentialist, views of Chineseness. Repeatedly people spoke of 'very Chinese' or more or less Chinese. Local Chinese questioned the authenticity of their own culture or they felt their values and behaviours to be more truly Chinese than those of the new immigrants.

South African-born Chinese, for over a hundred years, have viewed themselves and been identified by other South Africans as Chinese. Within the harsh apartheid terrain, they found solace in that identity. Able to retain some semblance of Chinese cultural practice, and set apart racially by apartheid laws, they could comfortably assert it. A senior Chinese scholar commented, "Many mirrors, some less distorting than others, intervene when a Chinese living abroad constructs his composite image of what it means to be Chinese".<sup>17</sup> All the mirrors, until recently, projected images of non-Chinese that were sufficiently different from themselves to let them construct their Chinese identity without outside challenge. Now, with the influx of many new Chinese immigrants to South Africa, for the first time in almost forty years they find their Chineseness questioned. The new immigrants place before them a different mirror, one that reflects other ways of being Chinese; the new reflection challenges their established, constructed notions of their Chineseness.

The tensions between the various groups of Chinese in South Africa today clearly point to the fact that ethnicity is constructed and contested as well as positional and relative.<sup>18</sup> Existing notions of 'Chinese South African' will have to become more fluid and incorporate the new immigrants.<sup>19</sup> In the meantime, several ongoing processes ensure that the meaning of 'Chinese South African' will continue to change in coming years: more and more immigrants continue to arrive from mainland China, while other Chinese, South African-born and Taiwanese continue to emigrate.

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In addition to contestations around Chineseness, there have been periodic clashes between groups. For example, in the months leading up to the first democratic elections in 1994, Taiwanese industrialists made very public overtures to the ANC; the local Chinese community protested, arguing that they have never been public about their politics due to potential negative ramifications and that the Taiwanese could always leave if things do not work out for them, whereas they have nowhere to go. Local Chinese also complained in the late 1990s that new immigrants made efforts to take over the leadership in local Chinese associations.

Conflicts between new immigrants from the PRC and local hawkers on the streets of Johannesburg; the involvement of Chinese triads in abalone and rhino-horn smuggling, as well as gun-running and drug trafficking; and the establishment of a second 'Chinatown' in Johannesburg where new immigrants could be seen in their vests and slops, squatting on the sidewalks and spitting in public were all seen as embarrassing by the local Chinese. Adverse media attention created tensions between the local Chinese and the new immigrants. A marked 'us' and 'them' attitude developed in the late 1990s, and the South African-born Chinese grew increasingly frustrated that most other South Africans could not differentiate between them.

These new Chinese pose challenges to the carefully constructed identity of Chinese South Africans as a law-abiding, quiet, civilised, conscientious, and apolitical people. Andrew K, 63, was distressed:

I don't agree with many actions of the new immigrants. I hate when I see a lot of the behaviour is bringing down the reputation of the Chinese in Pretoria. Before, in Pretoria, I guess elsewhere as well, the credibility of the Chinese, the credit worthiness, as well, was very high. Today, it's not so. We are being questioned because of all the - call it fraudulent - dealings that have happened, and all this has come about because of the new immigrants . . . They ruined the good reputation of the local Chinese who were here . . . the fact that they are Chinese makes me even more unhappy that Chinese could behave in that way . . . so the unlawful elements . . . they have pulled down the general reputation of the Chinese in South Africa.

### **3. Key Issues & Concerns**

While most South Africans have difficulties differentiating between these various groups of Chinese in South Africa, there are, in fact, numerous differences. Amongst these are the various issues which affect different communities of Chinese.

A. *Language and Culture*

One of the key issues for newer immigrants is their lack of English language skills. Language barriers have created communication difficulties, strained labour relations, and exacerbated their isolation. One of the biggest challenges for new Chinese immigrants, particularly those with little or no education, is communicating with locals. Although most of those interviewed recently expressed an interest in learning English and/or other local languages, particularly to assist in running their businesses, they have limited resources and little time for formal language learning.

Both language and cultural differences make it more challenging to integrate with local people. Most of them communicate with the local customers using local staff as interpreters; it is, however, questionable whether their staff can indeed understand their single words, body language, and facial expressions. Associated with the lack of language skills, newer immigrants also reported social isolation, boredom and loneliness. Lack of English skills also jeopardises their healthcare.

B. *Racial Profiling: Crime and Corruption*

Many of the new immigrants also expressed concerns about corrupt South African government officials from Home Affairs, the Revenue Service (SARS), and the Labour Department, as well as the local police. Chinese across the country are often targeted for extortion attempts by corrupt officials because of their difficulty with English, their general ignorance about national and local laws, and rumours about their illegal status in South Africa and about large quantities of cash stored in their shops and their homes.

The biggest challenge regarding life in South Africa, however, is crime. Anecdotal evidence suggests that most Chinese immigrants have fallen victim at least once or twice to break-ins and armed robberies. During the course of recent interviews with new Chinese immigrants, every single person mentioned at least one such incident. The fact that all of these new immigrants were engaged in some sort of small retail business and dealt in some quantities of cash, makes them soft targets for South Africa's criminal element.

In Johannesburg there are repeated incidents of car hijacking, kidnapping, and armed break-ins. It appears that there are several crime 'syndicates' specifically targeting Chinese, often following cars home from the new Chinatown. The inability of these criminals to distinguish between various groups of Chinese has meant that local Chinese as well as Taiwanese have suffered together with newer immigrants from the PRC. Crime and corruption is so high that the Chinese Consul-General in Johannesburg has held several high level meetings with the provincial minister of safety and

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security and the various communities have created a joint local taskforce to address these problems.

C. *Chinese and Affirmative Action Legislation*

Despite ample evidence of past discrimination against the Chinese South African community, the post-1994 Employment Equity (EE) and Broad-based Black Economic Empowerment (BBBEE) legislation excluded Chinese South Africans from the explicit definition of who should be regarded as previously disadvantaged. Both the 1998 EE Act and the 2003 BBBEE Act refer to 'designated groups' which include "black people, women and people with disabilities". The term 'black people' is further defined as "a generic term which means Africans, Coloureds and Indians".<sup>20</sup> Some of the confusion about Chinese South Africans was exacerbated by the ambiguity of the legislation since, even if it were acknowledged that the Chinese had been classified as Coloured during apartheid, the current BEE legislation simply states "Africans, Coloureds and Indians" rather than Africans, Coloureds and Indians *as classified during apartheid*. It was therefore unclear whether the legislation was intended to include those who *were* classified as such during apartheid, or those who are currently believed to belong to categories or to have belonged to these in the past.

Since May 2000, five months after the commencement of the 1998 Employment Equity Act, the Chinese Association of South African (CASA) has repeatedly engaged with government to seek clarification on the position of the Chinese South Africans in the EE and BBBEE legislation.<sup>21</sup> In December 2007 CASA launched a court application as final recourse after an eight-year long process to seek clarity on the position of Chinese South Africans in South African society. On the 18<sup>th</sup> of June 2008 the Pretoria high court handed down an order that the Chinese South Africans fall within the definition of 'black people' contained in the Employment Equity Act 55 of 1998 and the Broad-Based Black Economic Empowerment Act 53 of 2003.

This court order has unleashed an alarming backlash in the media. Some black business and professional organizations have referred to the ruling as "surprising, irrational, shallow, opportunistic and inexplicable".<sup>22</sup> The Labour Minister, who ironically was one of the respondents who did not oppose CASA's application, also made baffling and racist statements, conflating the local Chinese (the only beneficiaries to the court ruling) with Taiwanese industrialists criticised for their poor labour practices and new immigrants derided for pretending not to understand English. The CASA case and the highly publicized and negative reactions to the court ruling bring into stark relief the continued significance of race and racial classifications, the ongoing tensions between policies of redress and the construction of inclusive notions of citizenship, and the continued confusion about the place and position of Chinese communities of South Africa.

**Conclusion**

South Africa, fourteen years after its first democratic elections, is still struggling to construct a unifying national identity. At the same time, inequalities of the past have worsened and the need for policies of redress are perhaps more urgent. However, tensions between the nation-building project and ways in which redress policies are implemented have resulted in the increased salience of racial difference. While the constitution guarantees rights for all its residents, social and political perceptions of the Chinese as evidenced in the recent public statements by the Labour Minister and black business raise more questions about where the Chinese fit in.

The recent spate of xenophobic attacks in South Africa primarily targeted immigrants from other African countries. However, amongst the many victims were two Chinese nationals, an Indian immigrant, and a few Pakistani and Bangladeshi immigrants. The day after the attacks began in Alexandra township rumours spread throughout various immigrant communities. In Cyrildene (the new Chinatown in Johannesburg) and at several of the Chinese wholesale/distribution centres outside the city centre, rumours that armed mobs were descending upon them were passed on from shop to shop, stall to stall. Local community members urged shop and restaurant owners to close up; the consul-general sent messages to Chinese in other provinces warning them to maintain a low profile throughout the disturbances. Fears of potential persecution by impoverished and angry mobs combined with ongoing racial profiling by the country's criminal element and corrupt officials have caused great harm to race relations and general confidence in South Africa. Continued media representations of China's 'invasion' and 'neo-colonisation' of Africa also contribute to a negative climate for all Chinese on the continent.

Only time will tell if the newest Chinese migrants to South Africa will choose to settle. Much depends on their reception as well as their business successes (or failures). Thus far, despite the challenges, new Chinese migration to South Africa continues apace, and few of those here appear to be leaving. The impact of recent Chinese immigration on the constructed Chinese South African identities has been significant. Perhaps time and political circumstances will encourage the eventual construction of a pan-Chinese, multi-generational, multi-group Chinese South African identity<sup>23</sup> that will usefully serve all these people who share both a belief in the myth of a once great China and residence in South Africa. Whether or not this occurs, the influx of the overlapping waves of Chinese immigration into South Africa since the late 1970s has had an indelible impact both on local Chinese and on South African society. And, without a doubt, the large numbers of legal and illegal Chinese immigrants from mainland China will continue to change the South African social, economic, and political landscape as well as Chinese South African identities.

Where they fit in a post-apartheid, post-Polokwane South Africa depends on many factors. The negative reaction to the CASA court case together with recent xenophobic attacks reveals the darker side of South African society. Broader-thinking members of the society defend the constitution and the provisions it makes for all residents of the nation. However, the question remains: Can the Chinese ever truly be considered South African? Will they ever truly fit in?

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> For more detail on these early histories see M Yap and D Man, *Colour, Confusion and Concessions. The History of Chinese in South Africa*, University of Hong Kong Press, Hong Kong, 1996; Y J Park, 'Sojourners to Settlers: Early Constructions of Chinese Identity in South Africa, 1879-1949'. *African Studies*, vol. 65, no. 2, December 2006, pp 201-231; K L Harris, 'The Chinese "South Africans": An interstitial community', in *The Chinese Diaspora: Selected essays Volume 2*, L Wang and G Wang (eds.), Times Academic, Singapore, 1998a; and K L Harris, 'The Chinese in South Africa: A historical study of a cultural minority', unpublished paper, 1998b.

<sup>2</sup> This figure is based on June 2008 press release of the Chinese Association of South Africa.

<sup>3</sup> Yap and Man, 1996, pp. 62, 76-84; L N Smedley, 'A Sociological Analysis of Some Aspects of the Life of South Africa's Chinese Community', Unpublished DLitt et Phil thesis, University of South Africa, Pretoria, 1980, pp. 20-21; Harris, 1998a, 1998b.

<sup>4</sup> Yap and Man, 1996, p. 62.

<sup>5</sup> Yap and Man, 1996, pp. 350-351.

<sup>6</sup> Hart explains that at the same time, large numbers of small-scale industrialists in Taiwan came under enormous pressure to leave the country due to rising wages, escalating exchange rates, and high rents. Ironically, these conditions, she says, were created by the stunning pace of their industrial investment and export drive. G Hart, *Disabling Globalization: Places of power in post-apartheid South Africa*, University of Natal Press, Pietermaritzburg, 2002, p. 2.

<sup>7</sup> At the University of the Witwatersrand the number of first-year foreign students from ROC/Taiwan, mainland China, and Hong Kong, rose steadily from the mid-1980s through the 1990s, from 17 in 1986 to a high of 141 in 1997, and then declining slowly to 53 in 2004. It is also worth noting that between the mid-1980s until the late 1990s there were also large numbers of South African students who reported that they spoke Chinese as a first language. For example, in 1986 there were 45 of these students and in 1997 there were 83. Findings of Park's research on Chinese South African

identities indicated limited Chinese language abilities second- and third-generation Chinese South Africans; it is therefore quite likely that these numbers are inclusive of foreign-born Chinese who had become naturalized South African citizens. If this is the case, then numbers of (likely) foreign-born Chinese students at Wits exceeded 200 in 1997 and has remained between 215 and 230 ever since. Y J Park, 'Shifting Chinese South African Identities in Apartheid and Post-apartheid South Africa', unpublished PhD thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 2005.

<sup>8</sup> Yap and Man, 1996, p. 423.

<sup>9</sup> See Park 2005, chapter 7 for discussion.

<sup>10</sup> These numbers were originally based on an 'off the record' comment by a former staff member of the Taipei Liaison Office; however, the figure seems to be regularly quoted by the Chinese language press in South Africa.

<sup>11</sup> Y J Park and A Y Chen, 'Intersections of race, class and power: Chinese in post-apartheid Free State', unpublished paper presented at the South African Sociological Association Congress, Stellenbosch, July 2008.

<sup>12</sup> At the time, because Hungary was also a communist nation, Chinese did not need visas to enter. Upon discovering that there were limited business opportunities there, they moved on to look for other opportunities. Africa was one of the obvious choices, again due to the porous borders of many African nations.

<sup>13</sup> While many of these earliest Chinese immigrants left South Africa, quite a few of them maintain business linkages to the country. Some have left their South African business interests in the hands of newer Chinese immigrants. Others have set up related businesses, such as factories, in China.

<sup>14</sup> See G Dobler, 'South-South business relations in practice: Chinese merchants in Oshikango, Namibia', unpublished paper, 2005, on Chinese wholesale merchants engaged in cross-border trade in Oshikango, Namibia.

<sup>15</sup> In the early 1980s part of economic reforms in China allowed families to occupy and farm a piece of land; however the land is still owned by the government. Each village has rights to some portion of land; this land is then divided equally amongst the families that live in the village. The individual families farm the land and then sell some portion of their produce back to the government, after taking a small share for themselves. These are not farmers in the commercial sense; rather the Chinese 'peasants' are similar to sharecroppers, with the Chinese state as the landowners.

<sup>16</sup> Park, 2005.

<sup>17</sup> G Wang, 'Among Non-Chinese', in *The Living Tree: The changing meaning of being Chinese today*, W Tu (ed), Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1994, p. 128.

<sup>18</sup> J Nagel, 'The Political Construction of Ethnicity', in *Competitive Ethnic Relations*, S Olzak and J Nagel (eds), Academic Press, Orlando FL, 1986; M Nash, *The Cauldron of Ethnicity in the Modern World*, The University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1986; H Wiberg, 'Identity, Ethnicity, Conflict', in *Racism, Xenophobia and Ethnic Conflict*, S Bekkar and D Carlton (eds), Indicator, Durban, 1996; A Brah, 'Difference, Diversity and Differentiation', in *Race, Culture and Difference*, J Donald and A Rattansi (eds), Sage, in association with the Open University, London, 1992.

<sup>19</sup> W Tu (ed), *The Living Tree: The changing meaning of being Chinese today*, Stanford University Press, Stanford CA, 1994, discusses the fluidity of identities.

<sup>20</sup> Republic of South Africa 1998 Chapter 1, Section 1; Republic of South Africa 2003.

<sup>21</sup> Edward Nathan Sonnenberg Inc. *Chinese Association of South Africa: Chronological Timeline*, 2008; see also Y J Park, 2005; Y J Park, 'Under the shoe tip. Chinese and affirmative action'. *South African Labour Bulletin*, vol. 31, no. 3, July/August 2007, pp. 37-39; and Y J Park 'State, Myth, and Agency in the Construction of Chinese South African Identities, 1948-1994'. *Journal of Chinese Overseas*, vol. 4, no. 1, May 2008, pp. 69-90.

<sup>22</sup> L Chilwane, 'Black business fury at Chinese ruling'. *Business Day*, 4 July 2008.

<sup>23</sup> See Padilla 'Latino Ethnicity in the City of Chicago', in Olzak and Nagel (eds), 1986; R Tajima, 'Site-seeing through Asian America: On the Making of Fortune Cookies', in *Mapping Multiculturalism*, A F Gordon and C Newfield (eds), University of Minnesota Press, Minneapolis/London, 1996, pp. 263-294; L Grueso, C Rosero and A Escobar, 'The Process of Black Community Organizing in the South Pacific Coast Region of Colombia', in *Cultures of Politics and Politics of Culture: Re-visioning Latin American social movements*, S E Alvarez, E Dagnino and A Escobar (eds), Westview, Boulder CO and Oxford, 1998; O M Gomes da Cunha, 'Black Movements and the "Politics of Identity" in Brazil', in Alvarez, Dagnino, and Escobar (eds), 1998; and Brah, 1992, in association with the Open University, London, 1992, for discussions on political identity construction.

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## **The Portrait of New Lithuanian Emigrants: Integrative Model of Psychological & Social Factors**

*Laura Seibokaite, Aukse Endriulaitiene & Rasa Marksaityte*

### **Abstract**

This study explores the individual differences of new Lithuanian emigrants. We argue that there must be migration favouring factors related to individual and hypothesize that new Lithuanian emigrant has different personality profile than those who stay to live in their home country. Big Five personality traits, values, risk taking propensity and social factors were investigated in three groups of participants using cross-sectional survey: Lithuanians who want to live in their country of origin (N=101), Lithuanians who want to emigrate (N=41) and Lithuanian emigrants living in Ireland (N=124). Results indicated that new Lithuanian emigrants tend to be more extroversive, more open to experience and have higher emotional stability. No differences in value orientation were revealed. Consciousness, neuroticism and extraversion were predictive in the group of women. Emigrants have lower education, lower satisfaction with quality of social welfare. The revealed differences in personality profiles suggest further explorations not only of migrant personality, but also of citizens who express intention to emigrate. Risk taking propensity differed between non-emigrants and people with intention to emigrate; emotional stability and openness to experience more differentiated group of emigrants and non-emigrants. The results show that explaining emigration solely by social, cultural, economical and political variables is inadequate.

**Key Words:** Emigration, Lithuanian emigrant characteristics, personality traits.

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### **Introduction**

Estimates from the United Nations suggest that worldwide citizens who were not living in their country of birth had risen from 75 million to 120 million in the quarter of a century after 1965, and in the decade from 1990-2000 the figure was close to 150 million.<sup>1</sup> These migration rates are the result of globalisation<sup>2</sup> and Lithuania's problems of emigration are not the exception.

According to the official statistics, 447 thousand people emigrated from Lithuania from 1990 that constitutes more than a fifth of working class

citizens. More than 25 percent of citizens express the intention to emigrate.<sup>3</sup> It is suspected that unofficial emigration rates might be even few times higher. This enormous expansion of 'new emigration' flows has resulted in poor demographic indicators, threats to national identity, instability in labour market and has prompted government, international organizations, and researchers to look for ways to control these flows and their effects.<sup>4</sup> Recent prognoses of the Lithuanian Statistical Department indicate, that intensive emigration process may continue up to year 2010.<sup>5</sup> Authors suggest that recent emigration rates in Lithuania are somewhat unique, when comparing them with other Post-soviet countries and cannot be explained only by economic reasons.<sup>6</sup>

Emigrants from the countries with medium level of economic development, not below medium, choose to live in the developed countries.<sup>7</sup> Some studies fail to find direct and clear relationship between emigration and economic conditions of a country.<sup>8</sup> This means that economic, social, and political factors do not clarify the phenomenon of emigration - these factors account for 75 percent of emigration.<sup>9</sup> The causes for emigration of the rest 25 percent remain unclear. And these causes might be related more to the individual than to economy. Boneva and Frieze stated that not all people in economically disadvantaged countries want to leave for countries with better economic conditions.<sup>10</sup> Research indicates that those who want to emigrate are not necessarily among the poorest in their country of origin. They argue that unfavourable economies in country of origin, emigration and immigration policies, network support in the receiving country, and other environmental factors create the conditions for wanting to leave, but desires to do so are based in the personality of those who make the choice.<sup>11</sup> Therefore, explanation of emigration solely by social, cultural, economical and political variables is inadequate. In such a case the initial subject of emigration decision - the emigrating individual - is ignored. We argue that there must be migration favouring factors related to individual and hypothesize that new Lithuanian emigrant has different personality profile than those who stay to live in their home country. The main objective of this study is to find the integrative model of psychological and social factors that might be related to emigration from Lithuania.

Although the research on individual differences of emigrants is scarce there are some findings that point to some hypotheses about the portrait of new Lithuanian emigrant. Some research indirectly supports empirically the idea that some individuals are 'predisposed' to migrate. For example, individuals who have once migrated have been found to be more willing to migrate again, as compared to those who have never migrated. This would suggest that emigrants are not just responding to a particular set of economic conditions and that there is something specific about the personality of those who desire to move or emigrate.<sup>12</sup> Kosinski and Prothero

differentiated four groups of emigrants according to their social and psychological characteristics: (1) emigrants who are looking for independent activity and self-actualisation, as well as better economic status; (2) emigrants who are not satisfied with their social status, roles, who have problems and conflicts at work and family; (3) the largest group – emigrants who are highly motivated by economic motives and seek better financial life; (4) emigrants who are satisfied with the process of their functioning, work and social relations, but are not satisfied with the results of these areas (for example, salary).<sup>13</sup> These individual differences might be related to the adjustment in the new culture and physical or mental health.<sup>14</sup>

Analysing the literature it can be stated that there are some evidence that emigrants and those who intend to emigrate might have different personality traits than those who want to live in their country of origin, but there is no clear answer what exact personality traits might be important and predictive. The theory of selective recruitment in migration and the results of Cochrane and Stopes-Roe argue that in the emigration flow there are involved two groups of people - those who are very motivated by economic needs, active, having high striving towards financial welfare, high achievement motivation, and the second group - those who have difficulties in their identity and who expect that emigration will solve their inner psychological problems.<sup>15</sup> Other researchers conclude that work and family values,<sup>16</sup> achievement and power motivation,<sup>17</sup> locus of control or risk propensity,<sup>18</sup> emotional stability and extraversion<sup>19</sup> might be important features which differentiate emigrants from people living in the country of origin. Anyway the data about personality of emigrants is incomplete, insufficient, and have little empirical verification in different cultures.

We propose that a study of personality would extend the dimensions that might predict possible emigration. Based on the literature we have chosen the Five Factor Model as the overarching representatives of personality characteristics. This model has demonstrated its utility in both clinical and modern research settings.<sup>20</sup> The traits we used in our investigation were: (1) Neuroticism (i.e. tendency to experience negative effect, tension and anxiety, frequent change of emotions); (2) Extraversion (i.e. warmth, excitement – seeking, sociability); (3) Agreeableness (i.e. helpfulness, trust); (4) Conscientiousness (i.e. dependability, responsibility, self-discipline); (5) Openness (i.e. adventurousness, broad-mindedness).<sup>21</sup> We made the presumptions based on the results of Sümer, Lajunen and Ozkan,<sup>22</sup> Bogg and Roberts,<sup>23</sup> Borman, Penner, Allen and Motowidlo,<sup>24</sup> Neuman and Kickul<sup>25</sup> who revealed that traits agreeability and conscientiousness both are positively linked to organizational citizenship behaviour, low health risk behaviours, following rules and procedures, order and responsibility. So we expected that emigrants have lower levels of agreeableness and conscientiousness. In line with the results of Harmz<sup>26</sup> and

Smits and Boeck<sup>27</sup> we expected lower levels of neuroticism, higher levels of extraversion and openness among emigrants comparing them to non-emigrants.

Also we propose that risk taking propensity and values might be important in prediction of emigration. Emigration is an important life transition that may involve risk (uncertainty), financial costs, transaction costs (e.g. moving) and psychological costs (e.g. loss of significant social relationships).<sup>28</sup> Some individuals may be more prone to take risks associated with emigration than others. We hypothesize that emigrants have more expressed risk-taking propensity than non-emigrants.

A priori, since the study is exploratory and there is no clear evidence from other investigations, the nature of specific relationships among values and emigration is not predicted. We made the only one presumption based on the results of Boneva and Frieze that non-emigrants place more importance on social values than emigrants.<sup>29</sup>

Also investigations give no clear answers about the place of demographic and social factors in the portrait of new Lithuanian emigrant. Researchers usually do not find gender differences among emigrants,<sup>30</sup> but some of them argue that emigrants have lower education, are single and young.<sup>31</sup> It is possible that personality differences are more important than demographic or social factors for migratory behaviour. The results are equivocal and need further investigations. Our prediction in this investigation was the following: there are no differences in gender, but emigrants are single, have lower education and lower satisfaction with life and social welfare.

## **1. Method**

### **A. Sample**

A cross-sectional survey with self-administered questionnaire was conducted in a sample of Lithuanian adults living in a small urban region of Lithuania (165 subjects: 40 males and 125 females) and in a small urban region of Ireland (101 subjects: 35 males and 66 females). Total sample was 266 subjects (mean age 31.69, SD=9.89) (see Table 1 for more detailed information about Lithuanian emigrants in Ireland). We first gathered data in Ireland (using 'snowball' method), and then tried to find the Lithuanian sample as identical as possible to our Irish subjects. All participants were blue-collar workers in food industry. In order to examine potential biases due to the socio-demographic differences of our subjects, we checked the differences between respondents on various characteristics (age, gender, etc). So there were no statistically significant age, gender and education differences in our samples. Also there were no gender differences in personality traits. Ireland was selected as the prevalent country where Lithuanian citizens emigrate.

Table 1. Socio-demographics of new Lithuanian emigrant in Ireland.

	Number of subjects (101)
Mean age, SD	30.36, 8.91
<i>Education</i>	
Primary school	12
High school	29
College	42
University	17
<i>Family status</i>	
Married	68
Single	20
Divorced	11
Widower	1
Have children	58
Work per day	8.55 hrs
Mean time in emigration	2.8 years
<i>Reasons for emigration</i>	
Low salary	52
Friends or family members invited	24
Others emigrated so did I	17
Wanted challenges at work	16
Unemployment	15

The sample of this study consists of two main groups of participants: Lithuanian emigrants living in Ireland (N=124) and Lithuanians who live in Lithuania (N=142). In order to control the effect of intention to emigrate group of people living in Lithuania is divided to two subgroups: Lithuanians who want to resettle in another country (N=41), and Lithuanians who want to live in their country of origin (N=101).

The study was funded by Lithuanian State Science and Studies Foundation, Award number T-09/08.

**B. Instruments**

We used Big Five personality questionnaire<sup>32</sup> (BFI, 44 items, extraversion - Cronbach alpha 0.67, neuroticism - Cronbach alpha 0.65, agreeableness - Cronbach alpha 0.61, openness - Cronbach alpha 0.62, conscientiousness - Cronbach alpha 0.71), Jacksons risk taking scale (20 items, Cronbach alpha 0.71), values<sup>33</sup> (8 items - family, health, financial welfare, friendship, satisfaction, interesting life, achievement, altruism/feeling beneficial to society - grouped into social values and egocentric values), satisfaction with life scale<sup>34</sup> (5 items, Cronbach alpha



0.73). All instruments used a Likert-scale, except Jackson risk taking scale and value scale. Social factors were tapped by socio-demographic questions.

## 2. Results

### A. *Psychological Factors in the Portrait of New Lithuanian Emigrant*

In order to find out what personality traits can differentiate emigrants from non-emigrants we compared the means of personality scales with the help of Student's *t* and conducted one-way ANOVA separately for men and women (see Table 2).

Table 2. Means and standard deviations of personality scales of Lithuanian emigrants and non-emigrants

<b>Men</b>						
	<i>Emigrants</i>		<i>Non-emigrants</i>			
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F (1,67)</i>	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	26.34	5.06	25.64	3.46	0.46	0.50
Neuroticism	23.53	4.75	24.43	5.63	0.51	0.48
Agreeableness	29.97	6.27	30.67	4.75	0.27	0.60
Openness	33.09	6.14	31.40	5.10	1.52	0.22
Conscientiousness	31.19	7.20	32.08	5.42	0.35	0.56
Risk taking propensity	7.07	3.28	8.55	3.52	3.17	0.08
<b>Women</b>						
	<i>Emigrants</i>		<i>Non-emigrants</i>			
	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>Mean</i>	<i>SD</i>	<i>F(1,159)</i>	<i>p</i>
Extraversion	28.02	5.73	25.86	5.03	5.94	<b>0.02</b>
Neuroticism	22.09	5.69	25.65	5.16	15.74	<b>0.001</b>
Agreeableness	33.13	5.07	32.19	5.04	1.23	0.27
Openness	32.43	5.53	30.79	5.30	3.30	0.07
Conscientiousness	34.00	6.26	31.50	4.73	8.05	<b>0.01</b>
Risk taking propensity	5.94	3.48	5.16	3.08	2.05	0.11

General comparisons of means (men and women in one group) showed that new Lithuanian emigrants tend to be more extroverted (*M* (emigrants)=27.39, *M* (non-emigrant)=25.80, *t*=2.31, *p*=0.02), more open to experience (*M* (emigrants)=32.68, *M* (non-emigrant)=30.94, *t*=2.34, *p*=0.02) and have lower neuroticism (*M* (emigrants)=22.64, *M* (non-emigrant)=25.34, *t*=-3.71, *p*=0.001) than non-emigrant Lithuanians. There were no significant differences in risk taking, conscientiousness and agreeableness. But these differences were revealed mainly because of the female group. The results of Table 2 showed that contrary to our expectations there were no significant

differences in the group of men. But the traits of extraversion, neuroticism and conscientiousness were predictive in the group of women. Emigrant women have higher levels of extraversion and conscientiousness, but lower levels of neuroticism, also they tend to be slightly more risk taking and open to experience (statistical tendency,  $p=0.10$ ).

One of the hypotheses of our research was that emigrants and non-emigrants are orientated by different values. One-way ANOVA showed no statistical difference in value orientation ( $F(1,144) = 0.08$ ,  $p=0.78$  for egocentric values and  $F(1,144) = 0.37$ ,  $p=0.54$  for social values). Both groups of participants placed more importance upon egocentric values than upon social values (paired samples  $t$  test in the group of emigrants revealed significant differences  $t(53) = 7.22$ ,  $p=0.001$  as well as in the group of non-emigrants  $t(90) = 10.74$ ,  $p=0.001$ ). Contrary to the expectations, no differences in value orientation were revealed between emigrant and non-emigrant Lithuanians, but the importance of value orientation in the portrait of new Lithuanian emigrant might be discussed. New Lithuanian emigrant is motivated by egocentric values more than by social values.

The revealed differences in personality profiles encouraged us to further explorations not only of migrant personality, but also of citizens who express intention to emigrate. We found interesting results analysing the personality profiles of three participant groups (Lithuanian migrants, intended to emigrate and non-emigrants) using analyses of variances. One-way ANOVA and paired comparisons according to Bonferroni criterion showed that different personality traits might be important considering the intentions to emigrate and real emigration (see Figure 1).

Three personality traits differentiated between Lithuanian emigrants, intended to emigrate and non-emigrants (risk taking propensity -  $F(2,220) = 3.204$ ,  $p=0.04$ ; neuroticism -  $F(2,228) = 7.20$ ,  $p=0.001$ ; openness -  $F(2,226) = 3.50$ ,  $p=0.03$ ). Risk taking propensity differed especially between non-emigrants and persons with intention to emigrate ( $p<0.05$ ), while emotional stability and openness to experience more differentiated group of emigrants and non-emigrants ( $p<0.05$ ). Persons with intention to emigrate have highest risk taking propensity; emigrants have lowest neuroticism and highest openness to experience.

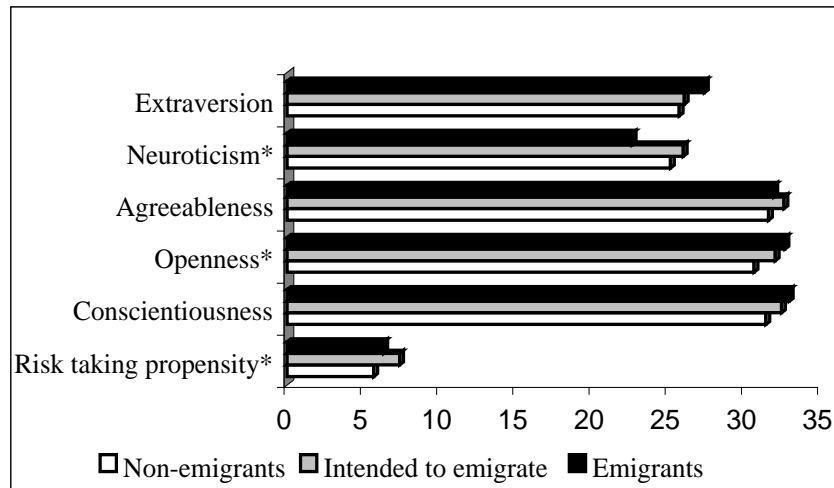


Figure 1. Mean differences in personality traits among Lithuanian emigrants, intended to emigrate and non-emigrants.

With regard to gender differences, again more personality trait differences were found in the female group. ANOVA showed that risk taking propensity is the only important differentiating trait among emigrants, non-emigrants and intended to emigrate in the male group ( $F(2,68)=3.87$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), whereas risk taking propensity ( $F(2,160)=3.26$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), conscientiousness ( $F(2,160)=4.25$ ,  $p<0.05$ ), neuroticism ( $F(2,160)=9.92$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and openness ( $F(2,160)=3.73$ ,  $p<0.05$ ) were important in the female group.

#### B. *Social Factors in the Portrait of New Lithuanian Emigrant*

In order to find out what social factors might be important for the functioning and adjustment of new Lithuanian emigrant we analysed education and family status differences, mean differences of satisfaction with life and with social welfare using ANOVA in three groups of subjects (see Table 3).

Table 3. Means and standard deviations of social factors among Lithuanian emigrants, intended to emigrate and non-emigrant citizens

General satisfaction with life				
	Mean	SD	F(2,265)	p
Emigrants	22.88	5.62	4.74	0.01
Intended to emigrate	19.83	5.00		
Non-emigrants	20.97	6.03		

<b>Satisfaction with social welfare</b>				
	Mean	SD	F(2,265)	p
Emigrants	1.93	0.77	14,12	0.001
Intended to emigrate	2.41	0.67		
Non-emigrants	2.42	0.71		

The results in Table 3 show contradictory results - emigrants have lowest levels of satisfaction with social welfare, but highest levels of general satisfaction with life.

As it was mentioned before the main groups of our sample don't differ in age, marital status, and educational level. When the subgroups are included in the analysis, interesting results revealed. Results show that people with lower education are tend to emigrate or express wish to live abroad (12% of emigrants have secondary education, while only 1.6% of non-emigrants and 4.9% of intended to emigrate have secondary education, chi-square = 16.55, df=6, p<0.01). Lithuanians with emigrational intentions are more likely to be single than emigrants or non-emigrants (20% of emigrants in Ireland were single, 46.3% of persons who want to emigrate from Lithuania were single and 26% of Lithuanian non-emigrants were not married, chi-square = 18.55, df=6, p<0.01).

The final integrative research issue concerned the possibility to predict emigration and intention to emigrate from psychological and social correlates. The linear regression analysis was conducted using emigration status (non-emigrant, intended to emigrate, emigrant) as the dependent variable. The first regression model included only personality measures and could explain 31 percent of variance of emigration status. Social factors were not very predictive (R square=0.23). The results showed that the greatest part of variance (37%) of emigration status was predicted from personality traits, general satisfaction with life, age, and family status - integrated model of social and psychological variables. But further investigations have to address this issue, as the number of subjects in our investigation was too small for very exact regression analysis. So the results are only preliminary and should be treated cautiously.

**Discussion and Conclusions**

The present study investigated personality and social differences of Lithuanian emigrants in Ireland and Lithuanian citizens in order to find out what are the characteristics of new Lithuanian emigrants. Data based on self-report of emigrants and non-emigrants was studied. The use of results of this study might be two-fold. On the one hand, knowing the specific personal dispositions and values of emigrants can contribute to understanding their

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behaviour in receiving country, to studying emigrant responses to the frustration or fulfilment of their expectations in the social and political environment.<sup>35</sup> Psychological characteristics specific to those who choose to or only express the wish to emigrate, could also contribute to the way emigrants feel, think and behave in the receiving country. Understanding psychosocial portrait of emigrant can help to develop political, social, and psychological interventions to facilitate immigrants' adjustment and positive well-being in the new socio-cultural environment.<sup>36</sup> On the other hand, understanding possible underlying psychosocial causes that encourage emigration from the origin country could contribute to the control and prevention of high emigration rates. This might be of crucial importance to nationality of small countries, such as Lithuania. So the results of this study might contribute to the development of the preventive actions.

The findings of our investigation let us to draw some conclusions. We found that personality traits have more predictive value in emigration context for women than for men. Contrary to the expectations we did not find significant differences in the male group between emigrants and non-emigrants according to personality traits, but female emigrants had higher levels of extraversion, emotional stability (or lower levels of neuroticism) and conscientiousness. According to these results women who emigrate from Lithuania can be described as socially orientated, goal oriented, organized and likely to plan objectives and prioritise, able to balance in emotional challenging situations. These results lead to the conclusion that psychological portrait of new Lithuanian emigrant might be different for a man and a woman. These results match in part current research findings and theories, according to which emigration is related to certain personality traits,<sup>37</sup> but are unexpected and contradictory in case of gender differences. So, male group of Lithuanian emigrants has to be studied further. One explanation for this might be the smaller number of male participants in our study that was insufficient to reveal statistically significant differences. Another explanation - personality traits other than those investigated could be more differentiating in the male group. On the other hand, Remmnick reported findings of Soviet migrants to Israel that revealed gender differences.<sup>38</sup> Overwhelmed by the problems of employment, linguistic and cultural adjustment, some men became depressed and dysfunctional, while women in many cases turned out to be stronger, more flexible and adaptable to the new reality. This might prove that personality traits and their importance in women's functioning that was found in our study also help them in emigration and differentiate them from men.

The results of the study confirmed our presumptions based on Allen, Weeks, and Moffitt<sup>39</sup> that different personality profiles might be related to intentions and real behaviour. We found that risk taking propensity differed especially between non-emigrants and persons with intention to emigrate,

while emotional stability and openness to experience more differentiated group of emigrants and non-emigrants. Persons with intention to emigrate have highest risk taking propensity; emigrants have lowest neuroticism and highest openness to experience. These results correspond to the findings of Harmz<sup>40</sup> and Allen et al.<sup>41</sup> The same tendency in gender differences as in the case of two participants groups (emigrants and non-emigrants) was revealed - personality traits were more predictive for men than for women. The importance of risk taking propensity in intentions to emigrate confirm the ideas of Allen et al.<sup>42</sup> that this trait might be very important mediating variable in the relation between intentions and behaviour. It is possible that risk taking propensity is more important in the relation between intention and real emigration, so not necessarily is very predictive when intention and emigration is measured in different groups. These ideas need further consideration in future investigations with longitudinal methodology.

No significant differences were found in value orientation of emigrants and non-emigrants. These results contradict the results of other researchers, for example Boneva, Frieze,<sup>43</sup> Van Eecke, Chope and Emmelkamp.<sup>44</sup> Values might have had not the significance in case of our results because there was too small sample of emigrants or our subjects lived in quite similar (having in mind value orientation) culture, as in their country of origin. But the results let us draw the conclusion that in the portrait of new Lithuanian emigrant egocentric values are more important than social values and these results are in line with findings of other researchers - the main motive and value why persons choose to emigrate is financial welfare.<sup>45</sup>

As it was predicted, the results of our study confirmed that explaining emigration solely by social, cultural, economical and political variables is inadequate. Both psychological and social factors in emigrants' portrait are important and have significant predictive value. Our findings revealed a little bit contradictory results - emigrants have had lowest levels of satisfaction with social welfare, but highest levels of general satisfaction with life. Higher levels of general satisfaction with life prove the salutogenic model of Antonovsky<sup>46</sup> arguing that emigration is a positive challenge and stress, having positive psychological outcomes; it means personal advancement, improved economic well-being, better overall opportunities.<sup>47</sup> On the other hand, the question is why the satisfaction with social welfare is low among emigrants. This might be some kind of reaction toward their difficulties in the receiving country (for example, language, longing for home country or possible discrimination). It is possible that general satisfaction with life is more related to better living conditions in Ireland, while satisfaction with social welfare is more related to psychological or emotional state of being emigrant in host country. But these presumptions must be tested in future investigations.

Our study has certain limitations. First of all, they are related to the cross-sectional methodology. The design of this investigation does not allow making causal statements. Mere existence of a difference in the mean value between two groups does not say anything conclusive the direction of the relationship. Having in mind our results we have to admit that the best methodology in emigration research is longitudinal methodology. In addition, the investigation was conducted with quite small sample that may be not representative. We have only one country where emigrants live, so one should be careful to make generalizations to other populations and interpretation of results. A larger sample size would help in the robustness of the findings and possibility to use more sophisticated data analysis methods (for example, cluster analysis, structural equation modelling, etc.). Some limitations of this study are related to the overreliance on self-report data and no verification of socially desirable responses in completing questionnaires. Reporting bias because of social desirability effects was not studied here. Therefore, the study of other personality traits that might be related to emigration status should be addressed in future research in order to determine whether other personality traits (especially in among males) could predict emigration, and expand the list of individual differences of emigrants.

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## **National Minorities in Poland after 2001 A Political Problem or an Element of Multicultural Reality?**

*Iwona Jakimowicz-Ostrowska*

### **Abstract**

The politics in Poland on the international arena becomes at times the source of disagreements and conflicts, which influence the level of security perceptible by the common citizen. The terrorist attack of September 11th 2001, but also the riots in France in 2004 revealed the source of the threat for the modern Europe - the lack of understanding between the representatives of different cultures and civilisations. The current political situation, i.e. the increase of international tensions, raises concern in European societies and creates an essential problem in the internal politics of European countries towards the minorities. This conflict is also present in Poland. The increase of radical actions by the youth, postulating xenophobic slogans by some of the media and the rebirth of nationalistic tendencies in some of the representatives of the opinion-forming communities, is a result of cultural transformations in the Middle and Eastern Europe. The political situation in this part of Europe during the early 1990s was an impulse to a much braver manifestation of national subjectivity by its inhabitants and also revealed the necessity of regulating the legal and institutional conditions of its functioning. The change, naturally, was not immediate and even today one can witness attempts at marginalisation and discrimination towards minorities in the political and social life. The article dwells on national *minorities in Poland*. It presents the problem of accepting cultural differences of the representatives of different nationalities, who are currently inhabitants of this area, as well as obstacles, upon the notion of adaptation of selected which the modern reality puts before *the increasingly heterogeneous ethnic community in Poland*. The author shall attempt to explain the reasons behind the revival of nationalistic tendencies in certain spheres of the Polish society.

**Key Words:** National minorities, Poland.

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Global changes in the modern political reality, which also take place in Poland, result in new challenges, confronting governments and their citizens around the world. The multicultural quality of European countries has become a clear sign of globalisation processes taking place in this part of the globe.



In the days before World Wars, Poland was one of those European countries, in which the percentage of inhabitants of foreign origin was especially high. Throughout the years, Polish citizens, who gave shelter to people persecuted in other parts of Europe, have gained a reputation of being tolerant towards all ethnic and religious differences. Experiences of the 2nd World War, the tragedy of holocaust, and political decisions after the war changed not only the borders of Poland, but also the national structure of the inhabitants of this region. Activities carried out by national groups were quelled after 1945, in Poland as well as in other Middle-Eastern European countries, their needs and aspirations ignored. Furthermore the attempts at unifying whole societies have successfully blocked any further actions on behalf of those groups. At that time, the authorities had occasionally allowed some selected organisations representing national minorities to function, however this activity was under strict control and was intended to serve certain purposes of the governments<sup>1</sup>. The communist propaganda and educational efforts of the authorities after 1945 were aimed at developing a feeling among Polish citizens that the problems which are connected to the presence of national minorities were fully solved after the war. Many Poles of this generation believe even to this day that there are no people in Poland, whose roots are other than Polish.

It was only in the 1990s that the political situation became an impulse which sparked various manifestations of national roles of this generation level the activities of autoages before

\_\_\_\_\_ subjectivity of these groups and revealed the necessity of regulating the legal and institutional conditions of their functioning. The modern world and Europe, being influenced by processes of globalisation, are changing towards a multicultural reality, in which there should also be a place for national minorities reborn.

Political transformations also influenced the approach of the authorities towards internal politics of the country, including the question of minorities residing on the territory of Poland. The existence of many minorities' organisations and societies was officially acknowledged for the first time; free discussion was allowed on the subject of their political, cultural, religious and legal status in Poland. While after 1945 the political actions aimed at minorities were dictated mostly by the government and dependence of Poland on the Soviet Union, the developments in Polish legislation after 1989 were influenced by the change in standards of protecting the laws of those groups in other European countries. The system was to be based on the legal text 1989 the developments of Polish legal guidelines

specified by regulations and declarations appearing in international legislation.

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It therefore appears that, from today's point of view, the question of the role and significance of national minorities in Poland is without doubt a vital matter. On the one hand, the after-war political experiences have shaped a mentality in a large percentage of Polish society, according to which representatives belonging to national minorities do not exist and that their possible appearance constitutes a political, cultural as well as a social problem. On the second hand however, the increasing mobility of the inhabitants of the world, many of whom migrated to other countries, helped create multicultural societies almost effortlessly.

Of course the change was not immediate and we can still witness attempts at marginalisation and discrimination of the role of minorities in political and social life.<sup>2</sup> The current political situation, i.e. the increase of international tensions caused by more and more frequent terrorist attacks spreading fear in European societies, have recently caused the internal politics of European countries towards its inhabitants, who are representatives of minorities, to become a point of utmost importance. The conflict, caused by the presence of national and ethnic minorities in European countries, is also visible in Poland. The increase of radical behaviour among young people, the spreading of xenophobic messages by some of the media and the rebirth of nationalistic tendencies among the representatives of opinion-forming circles, is the result of cultural changes in the Middle and Eastern Europe, and in Poland as well.

It is not only the attack of September 11th 2001, but also the general census conducted during the first years by soe it cos of than still meet with attempts at marginalisation and discrimination of the rol]p of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, which automatically enforced censorship on the analysis of modern political events. This includes mainly the problems of religious and national minorities in Europe, as well as the whole world. The riots in France, which took place in 2004, revealed one of the potential threats to the modern Europe – the lack of understanding between representatives of different cultures and civilisations, who inhabit together one area. The lack of action on behalf of the European governments towards solving the problems, which are caused by representatives of different cultures and nations who are forced to coexist on a daily basis, does not allow for a quick resolution to the problem.

Poland is rarely seen as an arena of potential conflicts on religious or national grounds. This problem however has to be addressed, also in the context of local political and social transformations. The people of this region, as well as the inhabitants of the rest of Europe, are influenced by processes of globalisation and the consequences connected with them. Even though Poland is still perceived as a country which is homogenous in terms of ethnicity, nation and religion, a census conducted in 2002 shows that still only 3% of the citizens admit to their foreign roots<sup>3</sup>. For the first time in many years, the issues connected to the presence of representatives of

national minorities are mentioned by the media. Judging by the statistics published after the census results were calculated, Poland is an ethnically homogenous country. According to reports and opinions within the minorities' societies, the real number of their representatives is slightly higher. What is characteristic for the people of the region is that some of them deliberately refuse to admit their true origin. They do it for many reasons: some people were not asked about their roots, because the person conducting the survey filled this category on the basis of declared citizenship<sup>4</sup>, while others – taught by earlier historical and political experiences – preferred not to reveal their true identity<sup>5</sup>.

Breakdown of national and ethnic minorities in Poland

<b>Criterion</b>	<b>Number of representatives according to national survey (in thousands)</b>	<b>Percentage of citizens of Poland</b>
Total number of Polish citizens	38.230,1	100.00
Minorities total	268,85	0.7
German	152,9	0.40
Byelorussian	48,7	0.13
Ukrainian	31	0.08
Roma	12,9	0.03
Russian	6,1	0.02
Lemko	5,9	0.02
Lithuanian	5,8	0.02
Slovakian	2	0.01
Jewish	1,1	0.00
Armenian	1,1	0.00
Czech	0,8	0.00

Tatar	0,5	0.00
Karaim	0,05	0.00

Source: statistical data collected by the Central Statistical Office of Poland<sup>6</sup>

The results of the census did not take into account the people of different origins, who have lived in Poland for many years and who – for some reason –, managed or were forced to retain the citizenship of their country of origin. The data presented do not show the numerousness of citizen groups of e.g. the people of Armenian, Turkish or Vietnamese origin. The members of these communities, who are migrating to the European countries (including Poland) in greater numbers, begin to create new groups of representatives of national minorities.

In Poland, the legal act regulating the notions concerned with functioning of national and ethnic minorities was prepared only in 2005<sup>7</sup>. The considerable amount of time it took to complete the act is not only proof of how complex the matter is it influences, but it also speaks volumes about the approach towards the problem. It would seem that the notion of representatives of national and ethnic minorities inhabiting Poland is regarded by some as insignificant. To this day, all legal acts concerning the problem, including various declarations, refer rather to the rights and freedoms of the society, treating the members of minorities as regular citizens. The act mentioned contains the first definition of ethnic and national minorities, along with a set of precise conditions such a group should fulfil<sup>8</sup>. Article 2 of the act mentions the following national minorities in Poland: Byelorussian, Czech, Lithuanian, German, Armenian, Russian, Slovakian, Ukrainian and Jewish. It also mentions ethnic minorities: Karaim, Lemko, Roma and Tatar. The criterion used, which raised much controversy, is the condition that “the ancestors of representatives of minorities had to be residents of the present territory of the Republic of Poland for at least 100 years.” This excludes groups such as e.g. Greek and Macedonian, Turkish and Vietnamese citizens, who constitute rather large groups, when taking into account Polish conditions. Article 4 also stresses the freedom of citizens to describe their minority. The next article explicitly forbids conducting any actions aimed at forced assimilation of those people and changes in proportion on the areas inhabited by these groups<sup>9</sup>. There are also detailed regulations functioning in Poland, concerning the access to education in the language of a given minority<sup>10</sup>, as well as to political and social activities<sup>11</sup>.

Of equal importance is the group of documents which are concerned with the status of the foreign citizens<sup>12</sup> who reside in Poland. They can be divided into two categories: 1) relating to those citizens of other countries, who reside in Poland only temporary, and 2) to those, who plan a permanent

stay<sup>13</sup>. According to current legal regulations, these groups are not included as representatives of minorities, even though some individuals inhabiting Poland from birth till death. What is more, Polish citizenship does not constitute a guarantee of granting the rights reserved for minorities. This issue raises many problems, because the increase of the so-called economic migration<sup>14</sup> phenomenon is connected with immigrants who create large groups, which very often do not assimilate fully with the local society. In Poland, the Vietnamese citizens are an example of such a group.

Legal regulations concerning religious minorities in Poland constitute a separate issue, which is problematic due to several important reasons. The main problem is the separation of the question of ethnicity and religious affiliation. Usually, representatives of denominations other than catholic are thought of as members of certain ethnic or national groups. Another issue is the lack of precise definition of rights of religious minorities in international legal systems, which would give basis and a model for creating similar legal acts in Poland<sup>15</sup>. A further factor complicating legislator's work in this respect is the increasing secularisation of the country, which means that matters concerning religion are an element of the private sphere of life of its citizens. The country therefore refrains from regulations directly touching upon religion, replacing them with legal guarantees of freedom of faith. Current legal documents do not define the notion of 'religious minority' at all, referring only to 'churches' and 'religious groups'. Due to being legal entities, religious minorities are also subject to the regulations of the legal system<sup>16</sup>.

With reference to the issues of freedom of conscience and faith, the act of greatest legal rank is the article 25 of the constitution of RP. Its supplement is comprised of individual agreements between Poland and churches, and religious groups. Acts concerning all religious groups residing on the territory of RP and other sources of law are also contained in international deals.

Through the provisions of the *Guarantee of freedom of conscience and faith*<sup>17</sup> (*O gwarancji wolności sumienia i wyznania*) act, representatives of denominations other than catholic have the right to be off work and school during their holidays, if such days are not officially recognised as holidays by current law (this rule does not concern holidays celebrated every week). What is more, the act protects the right to celebrate ones faith in the army, through the possibility of creating military ordinariates (ordinances?).

The modern political system of the Republic of Poland provided an impulse for creating national institutions, which are concerned with matters of minorities. On the national level, such functions are being carried out by the Parliamentary Commission on National and Ethnic Minorities in the Sejm, and special commissions. Moreover, relevant government departments (e.g. the Ministry of National Education, the Ministry of Culture and National

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Heritage or the Ministry of Interior and Administration) create special structures responsible for researching the issues connected with functioning of minorities. The Team on National Minorities, acting as part of the government administration, was created on February 6<sup>th</sup> 2002 and functions as an advisory body<sup>18</sup>. Among its main tasks are researching actions to facilitate proper and consistent politics of the Council of Ministers towards the minorities, coordinating the actions of individual organs of the government administration, preparing legal projects concerning the problems mentioned and spreading the knowledge about these issues, e.g. through initiating scientific research.

Democratisation of the social life, the appearance of economic problems and radical approaches in certain political strata in Poland caused the past and new antagonisms to resurface, because of national or ethnic reasons. Revival of stereotypes is often the effect of frustration of those spheres in Poland, which cannot adapt to the new reality, blaming active minorities' circles. Such feelings are unfortunately very often used by politicians. Ignorance and lack of education on cultural diversity, as well as using only partial knowledge concerning this aspect of the Polish history for the past 50 years, makes it easier to manipulate some parts of public opinion. During the last 15 years there appeared a number of conflicts on national and ethnic level, e.g. anti-Roma protests on the south of Poland, commercial availability of anti-Jewish publications, quarrels over the righteousness of relocating of German citizens from the Pomeranian region, or the anti-Muslim movements, which have increased after the attacks of 2001 (the attack on Mosque in Gdansk).

On the other hand, during that time a large number of vital initiatives were put forth, which brought these largely unknown societies to the attention of the public and helped spread the knowledge of their customs and traditions, e.g. the Ukrainian Culture Festival in Gdansk, Jewish Culture Festival in Krakow, different exhibitions or items referring to multicultural aspect of our country on display in universities, etc.

It is not out of place to recall here the popular statement that the knowledge about societies living on one area, their cultural, religious, and linguistic differences, helps counteract the emergence of antagonisms. There's no greater cause for fear and aggression than the unknown, and problems are very often presented – for simplicity's sake – on a scale totally different from reality.

However, it is still difficult to explicitly present the position of national minorities within the political conditions in Poland, which undergo constant changes. This problem is regarded through the point of view of historical, social and economical factors. Also, the economic situation of a given region, as well as its demographical structure, is not without influence here. Representatives of different national groups are perceived differently by

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the societies living on the borderlands and the people of formerly German areas. The first group, despite the after-war activity of communist authorities, still functions in a multinational reality, and their families are very often a mix of national or religious elements. The second group, usually comprised of immigrants, perceive multiculturalism as a threat to economics<sup>19</sup>. Contemporary national or religious stereotypes towards the minorities are also of considerable influence<sup>20</sup>, as well as the age and individual experiences of the people. This is a crucial factor, which heavily influences the problem presented in the article.

Contemporary changes in Europe and Poland itself force the citizens to accept the situation, in which their new closest neighbours represent different cultural circles. European authorities, including the Polish government, should promptly prepare programs for strengthening adaptation and cooperation between the citizens of a given country and the representatives of increasingly numerous national groups inhabiting their territory. It is no doubt a challenge for the modern world, including the Polish society.

Due to formal restraints and the complexity of subject matter, the author has chosen only the most important and easily recognisable aspects of political changes towards the national minorities in Poland in the last decade. The current intensive processes of global integration are resulting in new conditions for nation states and at the same time changing their European identity. The new conditions result in a new understanding of nations such as individuality, community and nationalism. The united Europe and Poland should be considered as a form of new collective identity within which the multicultural integration would be enabled.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> E Mironowicz, *Polityka narodowościowa PRL*, Białoruskie Towarzystwo Historyczne Press, Białystok, 2000.

<sup>2</sup> Evidence of this is – for instance - the length of work on the act of national and ethnic minorities, which have ended only in 2005.

<sup>3</sup> The results of national census of 2002.

<sup>4</sup> Many Poles regard origins and having a citizenship as a same thing. It is a result of political after-war education and experiences of parts of people, who for their own safety never revealed their true origin, admitting only to their citizenship.

<sup>5</sup> These are very frequent complaints by people who answered my survey – no matter the age, education or nationality. They also pointed to the fact that the people conducting surveys sometimes refused to correct the nationality

information entered by themselves. Frequent appearance of this information during conversations led me to believe that the scale of this phenomenon does not fit into the statistical error margin.

<sup>6</sup> *Raport z wyników Narodowego Spisu Powszechnego Ludności i Mieszkań 2002*, Główny Urząd Statystyczny, Warszawa, 2003.

<sup>7</sup> The act dated 6th of January 2005, on national and ethnic minorities and regional languages, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 17, point 141.

<sup>8</sup> Act dated 6th of January 2005, article 2.

<sup>9</sup> This is a confirmation of earlier decisions made on the basis of the provisions of Helsinki Declaration Summit of 9th of July 1999.

<sup>10</sup> Directive issued by the Minister of National Education of 3rd of June 1992, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 48, point 219, 1992.

<sup>11</sup> Act dated 5th July 1990 – Rights of assembly, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 51, point 297, act dated 7th April 1989 – Rights of association, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 20, point 104 with later changes, act dated 28th of July 1990 on political parties, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 54, point 312,

<sup>12</sup> The notion of foreigners refers to people having a citizenship in another country, as well as to stateless persons.

<sup>13</sup> Examples of such legal acts: act dated 13th of June 2003 on foreigners, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 128, point 1175, and act dated 13th of June 2003 on offering foreigners protection on the territory of RP, see: *Journal of Laws*, no. 128, point 1176, Both acts refer to the questions concerning temporary and full-time stay on the territory of Poland by foreigners.

<sup>14</sup> M Ząbka (ed), *Między piekłem a rajem. Problemy adaptacji kulturowej uchodźców i imigrantów w Polsce*, Trio Press, Warszawa 2002.

<sup>15</sup> There exists the so-called religious law of a given country, however its characteristics are unique to each civilization; it is usually dominated by the influence of religion prevalent on a given territory. The point of reference for existing acts is rather the Charter of Fundamental Rights and Freedoms and acts counteracting discrimination; see: M Pietrzak, *Prawo wyznaniowe*, PWN Press, Warszaw, 1995.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-13.

<sup>17</sup> Act dated 17th of May 1989, see: *Journal of Laws* 2000, no. 26, point 319

<sup>18</sup> Composed on the basis of information collected from the employees of the Department.

<sup>19</sup> *Mniejszości narodowe w Gdyni w latach 1944-2005*, Verdi causa Press, Gdynia, 2008. What these people fear the most, is the possible return of former land and house owners, who - as representatives of different national communities – were forced by after-war authorities to leave Poland. This fear is very often exaggerated and fueled by certain political groups.



<sup>20</sup> An example of such stereotype, appearing after 2001, was identifying all followers of Islam as terrorists.

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# **The Dialogical Self and Memory-Shaping Processes: Japanese Migrant Mothers in Ireland**

*Naoko Maehara*

## **Abstract**

Drawing upon ethnographic research among Japanese migrant mothers in Ireland and auto-ethnographic work of my own experience, this paper focuses on the relationship between collective memory and individual memory: how do Japanese migrant mothers reconstruct collective memories of their husbands' places and their own homelands to establish their sense of self and their relationships with others?, and; how are their individual memories navigated through a heterogeneous set of collective memories in which they often participate? In particular, their memories and imaginations of family life are examined, since I acknowledge that, in the case of Japanese migrant mothers, their sense of selves are largely shaped through their emotional involvement with families in Ireland and in Japan. Applying a dialogical perspective of self, I argue that remembering is an act of internal dialogue and interaction with 'private audiences'. For Japanese migrant mothers, their private audiences include their husbands, children, in-laws, and friends in Ireland, and their own family and friends in Japan. In the attempt to create interpersonal bonds internally with private audiences, they participate in collective memories that navigate what they remember and how they remember. A different set of collective memories, in which they often participate, evoke multiple, often ambivalent, individual memories and imaginations. A dialogical perspective of remembering suggests how individual memories are organized through the internalization of cultural values, schemas, and narratives. Remembering, like other cognitive processes (e.g., perceiving, feeling, or thinking), is an important dimension of transnational cultural interlacing of contemporary life.

**Key Words:** The dialogical self, memory, transnational family, Japanese migrant, Ireland.

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## **Introduction**

In this paper, I explore memory-shaping processes in the context of migration and intermarriage<sup>1</sup>. Cognitive psychologists and psychological anthropologists have acknowledged the dynamic complexities of memory processes that are influenced by socio-cultural and emotional factors<sup>2</sup>. However, few studies have directly focused on how memory operates in the

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minds of people who are embedded in multiple cultures and transnational space<sup>3</sup>. Drawing upon ethnographic research among Japanese migrant mothers in Ireland and auto-ethnographic work of my own experience, this paper focuses on the relationship between ‘collective memory’ and ‘individual memory’: how do Japanese migrant mothers reconstruct collective memories of their husbands’ places and their own homelands to establish their sense of self and their relationships with others?, and; how are their individual memories navigated through a heterogeneous set of collective memories in which they often participate? In particular, their memories and imaginations of family life are examined, since I acknowledge that, in the case of Japanese migrant mothers, their sense of selves are largely shaped through their emotional involvement with families in Ireland and in Japan.

**1. Navigating Individual Memories: Imagined Contrasts between Japanese and Irish Family Life**

Through interviews with and participant observation among Japanese migrant mothers, I have observed that many of the women I met emphasize the positive image of Irish family life. For example, one of my research participants, in her mid 30s, says:

Irish families are tight, which is good, isn't it? The best thing in Ireland I thought was that people prioritize their families. I used to wonder whether Japanese men are better or which nationalities are better. But after all, Brendan was a good person, and there is no doubt that he treats his family members, including me, very well. So, I thought I could live here calmly, mentally, and also there's no great materialism here... which is in great contrast to Japan.

Some of the women focus on how their husbands are much better than Japanese ones, in terms of sharing housework and childrearing. Others mention the lack of adequate housing and green spaces for children in Japan. They also talk about how stressful it would be living in Japan as a mother/wife, with the bothersome relationships with other Japanese mothers and with in-laws. In emphasizing the contrasts between Japanese and Irish family life, it seems that, each woman brings all the other dialogues to a conclusion that she is happy enough to live here where the quality of life is better for her and her family rather than in Japan. This voice often dominates other voices, for example, those of frustration and dissatisfaction with the lack of work opportunities, the health care system, the education system, racial discrimination, the weather, etc.

When Japanese migrant women contrast images of Ireland and Japan, they often depend on ‘collective memory’<sup>4</sup>. Collective memory of

idealized Irish family life and problematic Japanese family life is generally shared among many Japanese migrant women, particularly among the young and middle aged. Individual memory of episodic experiences is also navigated through collective memory, and it becomes part of the autobiographical memory to form a narrative structure that gives personal and cultural meaning to an individual's lived experiences<sup>5</sup>. For example, another woman, in her late 40s, brings her second hand memory of a Japanese husband to compare with her Irish husband who, she thinks is, unlike his Japanese counterparts, very supportive and family-oriented.

I remember that I was watching TV when I was young in Japan. They were talking about how Japanese family is ok without a father. Japanese husbands would be away for work all the time, but they would bring home money, which was the only contribution he made to the family. But I couldn't do with such a family. My husband cares a lot about our children...although sometimes he doesn't come back from the pub until late...He is a typical Irish man...

A different woman in her late 40s also expresses a similar view, however, using quite an extreme second hand memory:

Paul...he does house work well... prepares the dinner, for example. He is a very good person, that's why I can live in a foreign place, I think. I heard recently about one terrible Japanese husband who kicked his wife just after she had a third baby, to wake her up and get her to prepare the dinner, shouting 'why are you sleeping when I come back from work!' ...I am really glad not to have married such a person...

In imagining contrasts between Irish and Japanese family lives, they create a positive understanding and representation of their life in Ireland. In a dialogical perspective of self, such a dominated position, or voice, is addressing private audiences of significant others<sup>6</sup>. Inspired by the work of symbolic interactionists, social psychologists demonstrate that most people respond at different times to different significant others who represent distinct ways of evaluating the self<sup>7</sup>. A sense of self is experienced in relation to 'private audiences', "whether it is of people who are present or only imagined, specific or generalized, actual or fantasized"<sup>8</sup>. In the case of Japanese migrant mothers, their significant others include their husbands, children, friends and families in Ireland and Japan. Since migrating, they have developed family and friend relationships in Ireland, while, in many

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cases, keeping close ties with their home place. Their roles as mothers and wives in Ireland have also provided them with meaningful social fields and a sense of responsibility which significantly affected their orientation of the self in the present circumstances. In such a social context, their private audiences are often dominated by their immediate family members and close friends in Ireland, over families and friends in Japan. Their voices are shaped through the attempt to maintain a sense of being accepted by their private audiences in Ireland.

For Japanese migrant women, remembering is an act of internal dialogue with their private audiences<sup>9</sup>. Their collective memories of Japan are often unfamiliar to their Irish husbands and other significant others in Ireland. They struggle to create a sense of shared history with the private audiences in various ways. One way to achieve this is through the process of participating in the collective memories of Ireland, which bring their positive and reassuring evaluations of the life experiences with their audiences. Through such joint remembering, or reminiscing, internally, they create interpersonal bonds: as Fivush, Haden, and Reese note “reminiscing is a fundamental process for establishing our sense of self and our relationships with others”<sup>10</sup>.

However, such retrieved memories may be temporal reconstructions only in particular time for particular voices with particular audiences. The organization of private audiences and the ways in which the individual talks to the audience involves dynamic socio-cultural and emotional processes<sup>11</sup>. In relation to different private audiences, different aspects of ‘family life’ memory would emerge in other narratives. For example, when these same women at different times talk about negative aspects of the present life (e.g., how mixed family life is full of problems; how they are worried about the future), they reconstruct a rather different content of autobiographical memory.

## **2. Ambivalent Voices and Remembrances: Transnational Family Reunion**

The next case study focuses on private audience dynamics which trigger different memories and voices. Drawing upon my own experience of family reunion, I examine how I-positions within the dialogical self are shaped and reshaped through emotional involvements with families ‘here’ and ‘there’. While I had always kept in touch with my parents by telephone and e-mail, the immediacy of co-presence produced a physical directness and perceptual richness which was hard to accomplish when communicating from a distance<sup>12</sup>. The dynamics of direct communication with my parents through co-presence shape my identification with them (especially my mother), who become primed as salient private audiences. The following description was extracted from my field diary which was written during the first week of my parents’ visit.



On the evening of 6th July 2007, my parents arrived at Feeny, Northern Ireland. It was the second visit for them — the first was for the wedding. Their main purpose was to see their new-born granddaughter and to help look after the older grandson. When I saw them standing at the front door, I had a bit of an uncomfortable feeling. I was looking forward to seeing them so much long before the summer, and an appropriate response would have been to welcome them with innocent happiness. I was off course glad to see them. But when I saw my parents outside my house in Feeny, they just looked so out of place with the landscape behind them — sheep and cows in green fields and little hills under a cloudy sky. My father was in a colourful shirt and my mother in a thin layer of clothes, which would have been the normal style for an Okinawan summer. They also looked very small, although they are not smaller than the average Japanese person. I felt a bit confused.

During the first week of my parents' visit, I was feeling more tired than enjoying it. My husband was also present in the house, and I had to help them communicate with each other all the time. It was exhausting. The difficult thing was not translation between English and Japanese, but translation and explanation between different attitudes and values and lifestyles. My mother had brought lots of Japanese ingredients for me, but I felt a bit worried about the reaction of my husband who might not like eating it every day. I was worried about my husband who might feel his space, his wife and his children were being taken over, and feel uncomfortable with all these Japanese things surrounding him all the time. My father is disabled and found it hard to adjust to the new space in my house. While looking after my new born baby, I worried about his condition every day. I couldn't sleep well a couple of nights, being worried about him. He is older than my mother, and less adaptable to a new environment.

When my husband went back to work, we were able to have our private time together. Little by little, I felt accustomed to my parents, and they also looked adjusted to this new environment in Northern Ireland. We had some good time together with my small children. It was nice to

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be able to put my new born baby into my father's arms. And I liked looking at my son playing with my mother who spoke Japanese to him. I sometimes felt like we're in Okinawa, using the Japanese language, and eating the Japanese food which they had brought. It reminded me that it wasn't because I disliked my parents that I came to such a faraway place. And I thought that I couldn't give them practical help unless I'd live back home in Okinawa. And it is good to be able to help each other.

My mother complained about the weather every day. Being a typical Irish summer, the weather was often miserable and cold. One day, I heard her asking my friend who was visiting my house: "Didn't you change your personality because of such terrible weather?" She also complained about our shower room which was smaller than the standard Japanese bathroom, and Towels which were too big...etc. Although she appreciated the good view from our garden, she is not really a countryside lover either. For her, the location of our house was just impractical. One time, during lunch when my husband was away, she said to me "Nakagusuku is the best place" (Nakagusuku is where they live and where I was brought up). I pretended not to hear her. I was silently opposing her complains about life here. It was strange, because I had always been complaining to my husband about the Irish weather and many other things. But I didn't like my mother complaining. I felt the weather was not too bad, and there is a good aspect to country life, particularly for the kids. To be honest, I thought that I didn't want to go back to such a small, closed island like Okinawa, although I didn't say anything to them. I pretended not to hear her complaints. I was very nervous about what they felt about life here.

However, four or five days later, I started to feel more relaxed and comfortable with them. I hoped they had good time here. I imagined, after they went back to Japan, how my life would be very boring — spending time with my mother-in-law, a time of loneliness, speaking only English, and everyday eating western food. I was feeling very natural that I love to speak my own language, to meet Japanese people, and to eat Japanese food.

The emotional dynamics of this first week of my parents' visit reflect the processes in which multiple identifications are organized, and how the self responds to a different set of private audiences in various ways. Through the diary fragments, I notice that, my husband and people whom I had known in Northern Ireland had become my salient private audiences. The memory of what is here and now, and the identification with the present, had become dominant over the past. In such a process, I experienced the inconsistency between my habitual body memories of Irish landscape and of my parents. My confusion, uncomfortable feelings, tiredness, and nervousness of this first week arose from multiple identification processes in which the emotional engagements with my parents (particularly my mother) expanded a different set of my private audiences. The identification with my husband (and also people I have known in Northern Ireland) evokes a relatively positive memory of life in this country, intensifying negative memory of life in my homeland. However, as the identification with my parents becomes stronger, my memory of life in Northern Ireland becomes colourless, and a colourful memory of the homeland comes back. The following extract also shows how different 'voices' and memories shape the experience of uncertainty in the future imaginations.

(5<sup>th</sup> September, 2007)

Hiromi came to see us in Feeny with her baby. Between preparing for dinner and playing with the kids, we were talking about the future, one of the common topics among Japanese migrant women: what are we going to do if our husbands die. I said to her if my husband died, I'm not sure if I would want to live here by myself. She agreed with me, saying that she doesn't have a reason to stay here unless her husband is alive. I hesitated at saying to her that I want to live in Japan in the future. She was not sure about her future yet. Her father-in-law has very severe Alzheimer's disease, and her husband wants to stay in Ireland for a while.

Although I haven't been able to tell my husband, I want to go back to Japan if I have a chance. After spending time with my parents, I started to think in such a way. I have received lot of help from my mother. In return I want to help them, as they are getting older, living nearby them. For the first time since I got married, I start to think about moving to Japan concretely: my work opportunities, children's international schools, my husband's job, where to live, life styles and holidays. I also thought about my

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husband's family, particularly my mother-in-law who would miss him and her grandchildren. It's very hard to see the future perspective. I wonder what we're going to do if happiness doesn't mean the same to me and my husband (or my mother-in-law). I always feel anxious about it.

(12<sup>th</sup> September, 2007)

On the day before my parents went back to Japan, my father gave a little greeting to my husband. He said: "When I heard about 'Dekichatta kon' (pregnancy before engagement) I lost my words. I was wondering what I should say to my daughter 'Congratulations' or 'Bakayaro' (Are you stupid). But I came here and saw you and my daughter, living in such a beautiful house, in the nice countryside, I thought I don't have to be anxious about her. So, I will spend the rest of my life in Okinawa peacefully." My husband said to him "Thank you. We enjoyed your visit and so did Malachy.....Please come to see us again, and we will off course visit you..." My mother's eyes were watery, and my son was smiling on my knee. I felt glad to hear his positive impression of my life here. However, at the same time, I felt a bit sad about his image of preparing for his old age without me.

(13<sup>th</sup> September, 2007)

Very early morning, even before the kids woke up, they flew back to Japan. My husband gave them a lift to the airport. I just said few things — "thank you for coming, have a good journey back home" — and quickly shook hands on the door steps. I didn't want to be emotional and didn't want them to be either. After they left, I went back to bed and cried. My poor son got up and looked for them around the house. I felt very depressed. I've never had such homesickness since I came to Ireland.

These diary fragments show how various individual memories and imaginations are directed through a heterogeneous set of collective memories, of their husbands' and their own places. Emotional attachment with my parents brings positive future perspectives of life in Okinawa, organizing the collective memories of Okinawa dominantly. On the other hand, the private audiences of my friend, my husband, and family-in-law bring the collective memories of Ireland to the fore, which restrict such future perspectives. Through a different set of collective memories, a migrant

cannot always selectively identify personal histories and memories, and cannot experience a sense of continuity and wholeness<sup>13</sup>. This multiplicity within the self is experienced, as seen in my diary fragments, as emotional uncertainty, sometimes insecurity and anxiety.

### **Conclusion**

This paper has explored memory-processes in the context of migration and intermarriages, focusing on the influence of internally represented significant relationships on the experience of self. As the examples of Japanese migrant women and my diary fragments have shown, remembering is a dialogical process in which *I*-position, or voices are shaped and reshaped in dialogues with different private audiences. Social dominance organizes private audiences, and the ways in which individuals talk to their audiences<sup>14</sup>. Their emotional engagements with significant others also shape the identification processes in which others become primed as salient private audiences. Through remembering, migrants establish their relationships with significant others. In the attempt to create interpersonal bonds internally with private audiences, they participate in collective memories that navigate their individual memories and imaginations. Through selective identifications with memories, migrants also create a coherent narrative that links the past with the present and the future. As a 'resource', memory is used variably by individuals in integrating continuities and discontinuities<sup>15</sup>. However, in the context of migration and intermarriages, the intercultural process leads to a heterogeneous set of audiences to which the self responds in various ways<sup>16</sup>. Accordingly, migrants often participate in a different set of collective memories of their new country and home place, which evoke multiple, often ambivalent, individual memories and imaginations.

A dialogical perspective of remembering also suggests how individual memory is organized through the internalization of cultural values, schemas, and narratives. In this regard, collective memory can be considered as cultural forms, or 'generally shared cultural understandings' which mediate the interpretation of on-going experiences, shape the reconstruction of individual memories, and also set forth goals and desires<sup>17</sup>. In the case of intermarriages, migrants often live in multiple cultural forms that navigate what they remember and how they remember. A focus on remembering can yield insights into the dynamic complexities of internalization processes that are shaped by intrapersonal, interpersonal, and socio-cultural factors<sup>18</sup>. Remembering, like other cognitive processes (e.g., perceiving, feeling, or thinking), is an important dimension of transnational cultural interlacing of contemporary life. Although this paper has mainly focused on the relationship between collective memory and individual memory, other types of memories will also need to be acknowledged as part of the psycho-cultural processes. Through focusing on conflicting and ambivalent remembrances in

different types of memories (e.g., semantic, episodic, procedural, external, autobiographical), we can approach a better understanding of human mobility and subjectivity<sup>19</sup>.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup>The data comes from on-going ethnographic research among Japanese migrant mothers in Ireland and Northern Ireland and auto-ethnographic work. As part of my doctoral project, since 2007, I have conducted interviews with and participant observations among about 30 Japanese migrant women who are married to Irish husbands. As the Japanese migrant wife of an Irish spouse, a mother of two young children, I have shared not only language but also many similar experiences with my research participants. Part of my own experiences is reflectively examined in auto-ethnographic work in this paper. I am grateful to the research participants for generously sharing their life experiences with me. I also thank my supervisor, Maruška Svašek, for her encouragement and helpful comments during the research and writing process.

<sup>2</sup> For example, L C Garro, 'Remembering What One Knows and the Construction of the Past: A Comparison of Cultural Consensus Theory and Cultural Schema Theory'. *Ethos*, vol. 28 (3), 2000, pp. 275-319; L C Garro, 'The remembered past in a culturally meaningful life: remembering as cultural, social, and cognitive process', in *The Psychology of Cultural Experience*, C C Moore and H Mathews (eds), Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2001, pp. 105-147; R W Schrauf, '¡Costalero Quiero Ser! Autobiographical Memory and the Oral Story of a Holy Week Brother in Southern Spain'. *Ethos*, vol. 25 (4), 1997, 428-453; and G Becker, Y Beyene, and P Ken, 'Memory, Trauma, and Embodied Distress: The Management of Disruption in the Stories of Cambodians in Exile'. *Ethos*, vol. 28 (3), 2000, pp. 320-345.

<sup>3</sup> M Chamberlain and S Leydesdorff, 'Transnational families: memories and narratives'. *Global Networks*, vol. 4 (3), 2004, pp. 227-241; S S Lee, 'Disappearing Tongues and Bodily Memories: The Aging of First-Generation Resident Koreans in Japan'. *Ethos*, vol. 28 (2), 2000, pp. 198-223.

<sup>4</sup> M Halbwachses, *On Collective Memory*, A A Coser (ed. and trans.), University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1992.

<sup>5</sup> For the studies on autobiographical memory, see D C Rubin (ed), *Remembering Our Past: Studies in Autobiographical Memory*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1995, and Garro, 'The remembered past'.

<sup>6</sup> H J M Hermans and G Dimaggio, 'Self, Identity, and Globalization in Times of Uncertainty: A Dialogical Analysis'. *Review of General Psychology*, vol. 11 (1), 2006, pp. 31-61. Hermans and Dimaggio suggest

that a dialogical approach to private audiences will yield insights into the process of globalization which implies the introduction of a heterogeneous set of audiences to the self to which the self can respond in various ways (ibid., p. 20).

<sup>7</sup> M W Baldwin and J Holmes, 'Salient Private Audiences and Awareness of the Self'. *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, vol. 52 (6), 1987, p. 1089.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid., p. 1088.

<sup>9</sup> For the discussion on conversational remembering, see also W Hirst and D Manier, 'Remembering as communication: A family recounts its past', in Rubin, *Remembering Our Past*, pp. 271-289.

<sup>10</sup> R Fivush, C Haden and E Reese, 'Remembering, recounting, and reminiscing: The development of autobiographical memory in social context', in Rubin, *Remembering Our Past*, pp. 341-359.

<sup>11</sup> Hermans and Dimaggio, op.cit., pp. 38-9.

<sup>12</sup> M Svašek, 'Moving Bodies, Emotional Dynamics and Multi-Sensorial Engagement', Paper presented at a departmental research seminar at the University of Sussex, 27 November 2007.

<sup>13</sup> K P Ewing, 'The Illusion of Wholeness: Culture, Self, and the Experience of Inconsistency'. *Ethos*, vol. 18 (3), 1990, p. 273.

<sup>14</sup> Hermans and Dimaggio, op.cit., p. 38.

<sup>15</sup> Becker, Beyene and Ken, op.cit., pp. 320-345 and Garro, 'Remembering What One Knows and the Construction of the Past'. p. 276.

<sup>16</sup> Hermans and Dimaggio, op.cit., p. 51.

<sup>17</sup> Garro, 'Remembering What One Knows and the Construction of the Past'. p. 276.

<sup>18</sup> C J Throop, 'On Crafting a Cultural Mind: A Comparative Assessment of Some Recent Theories of 'Internalization' in Psychological Anthropology'. *Transcultural Psychiatry*, vol. 40 (1), 2003, pp. 109-139.

<sup>19</sup> For the discussion on different types of memory and psycho-cultural processes, see ibid., pp. 128-9.

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# Concepts of Locality, Regionality and Europeanness in European Capitals of Culture

*Tuuli Lähdesmäki*

## **Abstract**

Since 1985, the European Union has nominated cities as European Cities of Culture or European Capitals of Culture. For the chosen cities the nomination creates a possibility to promote the city, region and their characteristics, people and identity. However, the European Capital of Culture program is an ideological construction, which gets profoundly political content not only on the local and regional level but also in the EU. Thus, the program produces and promotes consciously and unconsciously 'Europeanness' or European identities. The concepts of locality, regionality and Europeanness seem to intertwine in the European Capital of Culture program in a complex way. In my article I will analyze the contents of these concepts in application books of four forthcoming European Capitals of Culture: Istanbul, Pécs, Tallinn and Turku. Despite their differences, all the cities follow the same instructions and criteria formulated by the EU in order to apply for the title of the European Capitals of Culture. Following the same pattern have an influence on the discussions, definition and depictions on identities in the cities. Particularly, the application books of the cities seem to follow an ideology of the interplay between the regions and Europe in construction of their identities.

**Key Words:** Locality, regionality, Europeanness, European Capitals of Culture, European Union, identity.

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## **1. Celebrating the European Capitals of Culture**

Since 1985, the European Union has nominated cities as European Cities of Culture in order to "highlight the richness and diversity of European cultures and the features they share, as well as to promote greater mutual acquaintance between European citizens".<sup>1</sup> Since 1999, the chosen cities have been called European Capitals of Culture. For the chosen cities, the nomination creates a possibility to promote the city, its region and characteristics, people, culture and identity. Locality and regionality, as identities of the place and its citizens, are being described and produced in the European Capitals of Culture in different kinds of texts and materialized and visualized through art and cultural products and events. Representing and performing locality and regionality through art and culture requires conscious

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selection of certain art forms, artists, works of art and cultural products to the focus. The selection strengthens some forms of culture or culture of some groups in the city or region, and in turn, other forms or other cultures are pushed towards the margins. Representations and descriptions of locality and regionality are also formed unconsciously in texts and in the production and use of art and culture in the nominated cities.

However, the celebrations of the European Capital of Culture events are not just about the promotion of locality and regionality. The European Capital of Culture program is an ideological construction, which comprises profoundly political content also on the EU level. The recent past of the European Union has been characterized by discussions on growth and further unification of the member states. Through the European Capital of Culture program, art and culture are also being considered as a unification factor in the rhetoric and ideology of the European Union. Thus, besides the locality and regionality, the European Capital of Culture program consciously and unconsciously produces and promotes 'Europeanness', and European culture and identity.

In this article I will focus to the concepts of locality, regionality and Europeanness and discuss how these concepts are used and defined in four forthcoming European Capitals of Culture in discussions on art and culture. I will also discuss what kind of culture and whose culture is presented and produced as local, regional, and European, and what kind of ideological and political power mechanisms influence the production of these concepts.

Concepts of locality, regionality and Europeanness seem in a complex way, to be intertwining in the European Capital of Culture programs. This comes very clear when analyzing the application books of the following forthcoming European Capitals of Culture: Istanbul (in Turkey) and Pécs (in Hungary), which have been nominated as European Capitals of Culture for the year 2010, and Tallinn (in Estonia) and Turku (in Finland), which have been chosen to celebrate their cultural year in 2011. Despite their differences, all the cities have followed the same instructions and criteria formulated by the EU in order to apply for the title. Thus, discussions, definitions and depictions of the identities of the four cities also follow a similar pattern. Additionally, the application books clearly indicate how cultural and regional policy, as well as identity politics merge and influence each other both on the local and EU levels.

## **2. Discursive Production of Europeanness in the Cultural Policy of the European Union**

An essential factor influencing the contents of the concepts of locality, regionality and Europeanness in the European Capitals of Culture is the cultural policy of the European Union. The EU's decisions, instructions and evaluation and selection criteria of the European Capitals of Culture have

an effect on the language, plans and programs of the cities applying for and obtaining the title. Thus, the application books, as well as all official or promotion material of the cities, reflect the rhetoric of the EU, sometimes even in detail, because it is a prerequisite for a successful application. This prerequisite makes the application books quite similar in their views on locality, regionality and Europeanness.

EU's rhetoric used in discussing culture and identity in the European Capital of Culture system is in itself profoundly ideological. In the decision of the European Parliament and Council 1419/1999/EC the initiative on setting up the European Capital of Culture program is seen as "important both for strengthening local and regional identity and for fostering European integration". Promoting and encouraging locality and regionality is being paralleled with the integration process of Europe. Interestingly, nationality is not invoked in the text - fostering European integration occurs via strengthening locality and regionality. In the decision, 'local and regional identity' is written in singular form, which expresses it as a coherent and unproblematic entity. 'European cultures' are discussed in the decision in a plural form. However, the plurality of them is not written in terms of multiple national or regional cultures, but as 'European'. Even though, the text emphasizes the plurality of European cultures, it still points out common features in them.

EU's instructions to the candidate cities give also interesting views on the issues and qualities appreciated by the EU when nominating European Capitals of Culture. Candidate cities are requested to specify how the city intends to "highlight artistic movements and styles shared by Europeans which it has inspired or to which it has made a significant contribution". The instructions include an ideological presupposition that common European contents exist in movements and styles of art. Furthermore, there is the presumption that some European cities can inspire or make a significant contribution to art common to Europeans. Again, the rhetoric of locality intertwines into the rhetoric of Europeanness.

The question about cultures and identities is also presented in the request which directs the candidate cities "to promote dialogue between European cultures and those from other parts of the world". In the request the European cultures are seen as distinguished from cultures outside Europe. The possibility for cultural dialogue presumes an existing cultural distinction and presupposition that 'European cultures' are limited to the borders of Europe. Thus, the decision creates an impression that the cultures of 'other parts of the world' or cultures of outsiders (like immigrants) are not a part of European cultures. It also evokes an idea of pure cultures, not mixed with others. Multiculturalism and globalism do not belong to the vocabulary of the decision.

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### **3. Production of Locality, Regionality and Europeanness in the Application Books of the Cities**

How are the contents and meanings of locality, regionality and Europeanness formed in the application books of Istanbul, Pécs, Tallinn and Turku? First of all, in the application books the contents and meanings of locality, regionality and Europeanness are characterized by the self-evidence of the concepts. From the obviousness of the concepts follows the undefined character of the contents. The texts in the books refer constantly to 'local culture', 'local identity', 'regionality', 'European culture', 'European heritage' and 'common European identity', but as being well-known the expressions seem not to need any specification.

However, undefined concepts have their tacit contents. The contents and meanings of obvious and self-evident cultural phenomena seem to rely on cultural, historical and artistic canons. These canons and the values they comprise have been established through decades and centuries of history writing and media. As background information and basic cultural knowledge, they form a starting point for cultural discourses in the western world. These canons also define the contents of locality, regionality and Europeanness in the application books. In the books, European culture is seen manifested in those works of art and cultural sites which are valued (written valuable masterpieces) in western art and cultural history. For example, the application book of Pécs emphasizes the strength and specificity of the city by explaining that "with the exception of Budapest, there is no other city in the country which can boast artistic achievements of European standard".<sup>2</sup> The artistic achievements of the city are being compared in the text to a 'European standard', which seems to assure its significance. In the application books the local and regional works of art and cultural sites are seen to form parallels with general artistic movements in western countries, in other words, the canon is paralleled. This means that the local and regional cultures are often seen in a profoundly official sense and in the frames of high culture.

The second common feature recurring in the four application books is how the cities are being stressed as a kind of borderland, in which different kinds of cultural features meet and merge. Being a borderland or a gate-way-city in regards to the text means being a cultural meeting point, where several ethnic, national and religious cultures are present. The rhetoric of cultural diversity and being an open-minded meeting place of people is usually argued as referring to the historical layers of the city. This kind of perspective of cultural variety and of being both an active present-day and historical meeting point of different kinds of people is a strategy for producing the place as a significant European city. Rather than just being a peripheral locality, the city is represented as having connections to other, even more well-known European nationalities and cultural identities. These views

follow the ideals of EU cultural policy by stressing ideas of cultural dialogue, interaction and, even in some sense, unification.

Because the discourse of multiculturalism is at the moment very current and even trendy cultural discourse, it seems that the cities in question try to represent themselves even a bit more multicultural than what they are in practice and on the institutional level. However, in the discourse of multiculturalism some groups or cultures seem to be more important than others: only some cultures and groups are promoted in the discourse. Also the discourse itself is often produced from the power position of some majority group or culture. In the application books, the concept of multiculturalism is often understood narrowly mainly in reference to nationality, ethnicity or religion, not emphasizing as much for example social class, age or sexual identity.

#### **4. The European Capital of Culture System in the Ideology of 'Europe of Regions'**

In regard of the concepts of regionality and Europeanness, the application books seem to follow an ideology of the interplay between the regions and Europe in the construction of their identities. In recent years, several studies have referred to this process as the 'localisation of Europe' or 'Europeanisation of the local'.<sup>3</sup> Scholars have used the concept of the 'Europe of regions' to describe the phenomena, where nations and nationalities seem to lose their previous position while regions are gaining new importance.<sup>4</sup> EU based funding for regions and regional EU policy has established a situation, where regions and cities have to compare themselves not only with other national areas and cities, but also with other regions within the boundaries of other nation states.<sup>5</sup>

In the ideology of 'Europe of regions' European identity and European culture are seen being constructed from localities and regionalities. In fact, emphasis on locality and regionality additionally occurs in contemporary culture and societies on a global scale.<sup>6</sup> In discussions on cultural globalism, scholars have stressed the confrontation between the global and the particularity and originality of places, cultures and communities. Cultural phenomena, which are depicted as global, are often formed from the globalization of the particular, ethnic and local. Thus, the strong interest in local, which exists alongside global influence, can be understood as a phenomenon included in the logic of globalization.<sup>7</sup>

The homogenisation of cultures is often seen as a threat in the process of the globalisation of cultural phenomena. Globalisation is seen as flattening the particularity and originality of cultures while it recycles selected features of them. This threat includes negative views on the unwanted blurring of cultural characteristics and original cultural phenomena. The interest in localities and regionalities can be interpreted as a

defensive reaction to views of a lack of control over globalisation and increasing cultural change.<sup>8</sup> Similar processes which stress the local and regional may also determine ideas and practices in European Capitals of Culture. Emphasising the local and regional is a global phenomenon inside the logic of global, aiming at diminishing its homogenising effects.

To conclude, the concept of the 'Europe of regions' seems to fit the ideology, practices and politics of the European Capital of Culture. In the application books, Europeanness is manifested both in the canons of European art, culture and history writing and in the cultural diversity of the regions. Europe and its identity, as well as regional and local identities, are political and ideological, and above all, discursive constructions which receive contents through regional and local cultural practices such as the celebrations of the European Capitals of Culture.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Decision 1419/1999/EC of the European Parliament and of the Council of 25 May 1999, EUR-Lex, viewed on 19 September 2008, <<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/LexUriServ/LexUriServ.do?uri=CONSLEG:1999D1419:20040501:EN:PDF>>.

<sup>2</sup> J Takáts, *Pécs, Borderless City. European Capital of Culture - Pécs, 2010*, Pécs 2010 Application Centre, Pécs, 2005, p. 11.

<sup>3</sup> R Johler, 'Local Europe. The Production of Cultural Heritage and the Europeanisation of Places'. *Ethnologia Europaea*, vol. 32:2, 2002, p. 9.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., op.cit., pp. 7-18; R. Johler, 'Volkskunde und Europa. Zum Beispiel: das "Europa der Regionen"'. *Schweizerisches Archiv für Volkskunde*, vol. 102:2, 2006, pp. 147-162; U Kockel, *Regional Culture and Economic Development. Explorations in European Ethnology*, Aldershot, Ashgate, 2002.

<sup>5</sup> K Hansen, 'Festivals, Spatiality and the New Europe', in *Ethnologia Europaea*, 2002, vol. 32:2, p. 20; S Perko, 'Kulttuurikaupunki ja Helsingin ulkopoliittikka', in *Mitä oli kulttuurivuosi? Kirjoituksia Euroopan kulttuuripääkaupunkivuodesta Helsingissä*, T Cantell and H Schulman (eds), Helsingin kaupungin tietokeskus, Helsinki, 2001, p. 44.

<sup>6</sup> J Friedman, 'Being in the world: globalization and localization', in *Global culture. Nationalism, globalization and modernity*, M Featherstone (ed), Sage Publications, London, 1990, p. 311; S Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Modernity and Its Futures*, S Hall, D Held and T McGrew (eds), Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 304-305.

<sup>7</sup> S Hall, 'The Question of Cultural Identity', in *Modernity and Its Futures*, S Hall, D Held and T McGrew (eds), Polity Press, Cambridge, 1992, pp. 304-305.



<sup>8</sup> S Hall, 'New Cultures for the Old', in *A Place in the World? Places, Cultures, and Globalization*, D Massey and P Jess (eds), Open University Press, Oxford, 1996, pp. 175-214.

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## **Dream or Nightmare: The Architectural Illustration of Conflicted Cultures and Identities in Post-Communist Eastern Europe**

*Raluca Manoliu & Mariana Fartatescu*

### **Abstract**

The paper aims at critically presenting the ways in which artistic representations and media – mainly architectural drawings- express ideas and solutions for bringing back from the ashes shattered cultural identities. The discussion refers to the Eastern post-socialist and post-communist Europe, which is facing paradigmatic economical and political shifts. Wars and other types of aggressions change the face of cities and countries. These changes go as deep as affecting or even mutating cultural and personal identities. The paper has as a starting point the work of Lebbeus Woods, with its highly provocative and radical solution for traumatized cities and cultures. From there, it shall try to understand the best way for a culture to keep its memory and identity - the mimetic reconstruction, the radical change, or a solution in between. It will be a dialogue between the loss of equilibrium and the state of peace, between history annihilation and history preservation, a dialogue situated at the brink of an abyss between two worlds, the old and the new. National and individual identities have always been embedded in architecture; therefore it is by looking at its mutations, that the artist and architect can make an accurate diagnosis of the state of cultural identity.

**Key Words:** Identity, conflict, city, memory, crisis, ideology, heterarchy, architecture.

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The ‘fall of communism’, symbolised by the tearing down of the Berlin Wall, has been proclaimed not merely as the triumph of the Western powers over the East, but as the victory of the Western way of life. Post-communist countries are among the places where actualities of the dominant culture are confronted, and from which new ideas, essential to the growth of a new culture, can emerge.

Imagine the architectural drawings of Lebbeus Woods as a manifesto. Woods would then be the contemporary revolutionary and visionary architect, following the tradition of the Modernist avant-gardists, and his architecture would be the proclamation for a new beginning, a new ethics in building and living, a new style, even. Something new yet rooted in the past, an architecture for those countries coming out from the ashes of the

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Communist bloc and shredded by multi-ethnic conflicts and national divergences.

Imagine the modern architect as a militant; his drawings become posters and flyers. They are extremist statements, proposing a better suited environment for our times, adaptive, fluid spaces for our new buildings, and solutions allowing our identities to heal and evolve. If architecture was an underground movement, than Lebbeus Woods would be, as he himself states, an anarchist, fighting for a world in which destroyed presents make history, and searching for redemption in the past is not an option:

Draw. Drawing is the tool of the architect on the move, on the run, the architect who is first of all a citizen of the stricken city and the new, dynamic stability. Pen, pencil and paper can be used anywhere, and if necessary, concealed. Drawings, too, can be easily hidden or they can be exhibited, published, filmed, digitized, and therefore widely disseminated, when the architect is ready to place them in the public domain. Until that time, the architect is freed by drawing's inherent intimacy to explore the unfamiliar and the forbidden, to break the old rules and invent new ones.<sup>1</sup>

The art of Lebbeus Woods is meant to raise the awareness on radical sites, methods and new notions of ethics and morality. Cities modified by conflicts are one of the radical sites Woods works on. The building of new tissues where the old ones have been shredded is a challenge for both the architect, and the sociologist. Yet, their response – as well as their respective position towards the problem - might be different. Architecture is the place in which memory and matter meet and become the same. It is natural to feel the need to replace the old and meaningful places destroyed in an urbicide<sup>2</sup>, of whatever nature that might be. Some former communist countries adopted this solution and debates whether it was ethical or not will probably never cease. Instead of restoration, which he perceives as an ideological instrument, Woods believes in 'radical reconstruction', in letting the city reshape its spaces and slowly rebuilt its lost, pre-communist heterarchies. Although Woods' drawings make mainstream architects think of words like 'deconstruction', 'chaos' and 'anarchy', the philosophy behind them is very different from the post-structuralist one. Deconstructivism denies all tradition and previous meaning; it is all about the *tabula rasa*. Woods' 'radical reconstruction', on the other hand, proposes alternate solutions for the war-inflicted city and its inhabitants. His architecture, as illustrated, may seem anarchic and ground-breaking in extremis. But the thesis behind the dramatic

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images is humane and anti-ideological: out of destruction and war often comes great inspiration and inventions, as Goethe once said<sup>3</sup>, and as history teaches us; new artistic and architectural styles might emerge, hence new ways of living. Though looking as shattered shapes and spaces, his architecture wants to be fundamentally regenerative and transformative, but in an integrative way, not cutting ties with the past or radically modifying the face of the city, but allowing tradition and identity to evolve and react to its time, to the event. Like Deconstructivism, but in a much more meaningful way, Lebbeus Woods' architecture revolves around the Event. Unlike the former, it is an architecture that resists change, even if flowing from it, struggling to be eternal, although it is broken and scattered, an architecture that wants to make history, while giving way to the necessity of the moment. Or, as the architect himself says:

a barbaric architecture, rough and insolent in its vitality and pride - architecture that destroys, but only with the coldness of profound respect - architecture that transmits the feeling of movements and shifts, resonating with every force applied to it, because it both resists and gives way - architecture that insults politicians, because they cannot claim it as their own - architecture whose forms and spaces are the causes of rebellion, against them, against the world that brought them into being - architecture drawn as though it were already built - architecture built as though it had never been drawn.<sup>4</sup>

The second principle of any ideology, after restoration, is to erase the memories of recent tragedy and loss, allowing it to claim the future: "The enemy's memory must be erased, its bodies - built or breathing - humiliated."<sup>5</sup>

That has been the way of every political revolution, of every war seeking to annihilate the memory of a place, of a social classification or of a nation.

But the erasure of cities in order to build better ones is by now a discredited concept. Out of a new era must emerge a new principle. Woods affirms the need to keep the traces, the scars of the war, the memory of the past. Revolutions and wars have shattered the organically organized spatial and conceptual order of old cities. Within the urban degradation, as paradoxical as it might seem, lays the promise and the origin for a new type of urban fabric. Restoration is not the only answer in keeping a city's - and implicitly its people's - identity. In their uniqueness, ragged structures created by tanks and explosions offer complex configurations, overflowing

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with stories, lessons and significance. Violence transforms the face of the city, so in turn, the city must learn to transform violence and integrate it into its history in a meaningful way.

It has been objected that Woods' illustrations look like an architecture of death, though their creator intends them to portray an architecture of survival and hope, of life. But scars are never beautiful, so the natural stages of the healing of a city cannot be, objectively speaking, aesthetically pleasing. But, like in Berlin before Sarajevo, scars enrich the history of the city and, paradoxically, where there was once a disruption of identity; new elements become a part of the face of the city, of the memories of its dwellers. Destruction becomes art, as art becomes life. Scars don't make compromises. Scars do not serve political regimes. As Woods believes, "The scar is a mark of pride and of honour, both for what has been lost and what has been gained."<sup>6</sup>

In Sarajevo, like in many other cities whose essence has been targeted, in order to be destroyed, the affected buildings were the representative ones, mosques, the great library, and the university, places symbolizing reason, culture, civilization and the cosmopolitan nature. Like in Romania during the revolution of 1989, the targets were not only stones, but the identity of the people who built them: their beliefs and their inner self. By destroying architecture, the structure of nations and the core of the nations' people can be successfully broken.

Sarajevo, the so-called 'first city of the twenty-first century', brings forth uncomfortable truths about architecture and the life of the city, and raises fundamental questions to which all our previous answers are clearly inadequate.

Woods' drawings are not meant to be taken literally. He does not mean for people to live in the contorted, crashed-plane-like structures. His visions are nightmarish, like the reality they portray; the dreams behind them are not. His drawings are the direct response to a dramatic event; they are scenarios, scenes arising in landscapes populated by violent processes. Destruction has brought them into being. War disrupted the old ways and the old times; it interrupted the functioning of those institutions responsible for protecting the life of the city, as well as those levels the history of architecture never takes into account, the dwelling areas, and the spaces of individual shelter.

As negative and unwanted as it might be destruction always brings the new by putting an end to conformity. So what is the best solution for insuring continuity after a major conflictual event, be it natural or political? When it comes to cities and their identity, continuity can be broken by either passive or active means. Passive ways imply the abandonment of old structures, usually out of economic or ideological reasons. Buildings or parts

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of the city become derelict and inhabited, frightening ghosts staining the urban image, influencing people's urban behaviour. Active ways mean wars, insurrections, revolutions - and their aftermath. Added to these are the big displacements of people, the issue of immigration, which shall be discussed.

When critical destruction of the urban tissue occurs, what is the right thing to do? Rebuild the old, as if nothing ever happened, erasing all signs of the pain and humiliation inflicted on the city and its inhabitants? Leave empty spaces, as vivid memories of the recently occurred, and build mausoleums and monuments, documenting past terrors in stone, for posterity? Or would it be right to clean the wound and build something new and totally different from the previous inorganic organism that functioned as one of the city's many time capsules?

Lebbeus Woods has chosen the natural way: cuts in the city must be allowed to heal and leave scars, for scars mark the wound without erasing it, allowing healing without forgetting. But scars remain in all the places which once witnessed turmoil, as the examples drawn from the post-communist countries will reveal.

Synthesizing the urban behaviour of the eastern European major cities, patterns easily appear, as it seems that some prefer to keep their identity by going back to the old, reconstructing what has been destroyed, like in the case of Poland, others choose to build anew, following the Western trends in architecture, like Serbia, while some, like Romania, are in limbo, in a state of illogical and unregulated urban and suburban boom.

Poland, like Hungary, Slovenia, Latvia and the Czech Republic<sup>7</sup> has a long tradition in preserving and restoring the country's historic architectural monuments. The Old Towns of Warsaw and Gdansk were reconstructed after the destruction of the Second World War. The measure was heavily criticized at the time, yet now the old city of Warsaw is part of UNESCO's World Heritage list, and not because of its preservation, but because of its reconstruction.

Unlike the other Eastern countries, Serbia had to cope with political turmoil which slowed down its transition to capitalist society. Having been marked by communist architecture, Serbian architecture has made efforts to regain its national identity, being fully aware of the contemporary mainstream; thus, it felt it should make up for the gap between its architecture and that of the neighbouring countries. Just like the Phoenix, it rises from its own ashes and tries to put up with the past and discover its contemporary identity.

After a long period of cyclical discontinuity of destruction and reconstruction, Belgrade is the hubbub of various reconstruction attempts to weave back the existing urban space and build a new urban centre in the New Belgrade. Contemporary tendencies in Serbian architecture struggle between

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the pressures of reality and the desire to reach Western standards and methodologies. It is time for Belgrade, Serbian architects say, to reveal its final form. In the group of thoughts formed in 'Project Belgrade', the city of Belgrade is generating its future centre and its final spatial distribution. The dominant merit is in its discontinuity, formed in a border of different cultures and influences. That is the nature of great-potential cities: to transform the structural bias into the multiple reflections so that they look open to each input. An interesting aspect of the project is in its branding aspect: the city of Belgrade is a 'new brand', one that will, hopefully, foster a new cultural revolution.

In Romania, the revolution of December 1989 not only scared the face of the city, but it also profoundly marked the future development of the major cities in the country. Before the communist regime, urban identity was one of the main concerns of town planning and master plans.

One could say that the identity of a city is, ultimately, formed by defining elements coming from deep within its structure, as well as from newly created ones. Identity is also forged by the way external influences are assimilated. The process is different for each case in particular - because the influences come from different areas and the reaction of the population and of the city life to these external impulses varies. Identity doesn't include only cultural aspects, since the preference for certain fields of activity also depends on it. It is obvious that identity is rooted in the past. To a major extent, the image of cities like Iasi, Timisoara, Cluj or Bucuresti depend on the quality conferred to them by their neighbouring influences, by the cultural codes that resulted from local experiences and, last but certainly not least, by their building regulations.

The communist regime has destroyed the unity of the fabric of Romanian cities. It destroyed the famous 'sweetness' of Iasi, which was mainly due to the urban codes, as well as the 'Belle-Époque' aura of Bucharest, which was once called the 'Little Paris'. While cities in countries like Bosnia and Serbia suffer from war, Romanian cities, although not afflicted by the same magnitude of violence, present similar signs of urban disruption. It is the passive destruction showing its face, making its way through years of communist constant and conscious destruction of the old and meaningful and, subsequently, through decades of post-revolutionary, urban-wise chaotic and uninterested government. For ideological reasons, the restoration was never possible in Romania, and an impressive amount of history and urban tradition has been lost without any hope or retrieval. Like Sarajevo, but for different reasons, Bucharest presents a shredded urban tissue. And, while foreign visitors openly express their opinion about the lack of identity the Romanian capital is afflicted by, its inhabitants believe the city has a multiplicity of identities, with what remains of the old city and its Parisian perfume, the interminable constructivist living apartment blocks



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with their oppressive, bleak aura, and the almost omnipresent oriental feeling, given mostly by people themselves.

Romanian urban identity is in a true crisis. With its pre-communist past erased by the regime, its communist colossal buildings left in a state of degradation, with no real urban regulations and no consistent architectural style, the urban chaos is reflected upon people. In the architectural field, students claim a loss of identity, not of the perceived identity, but of the one linking spaces. Romania is one of the countries who fell under the mirage of the West, importing postmodernism without critical judgement. But postmodernism reveals the multicultural, the multi-identity features that may as well mask a loss of identity and the fact that difference can no longer be perceived, leading to uniformity and globalization. Romania has traded its communist uniform with the gray, plain and soulless glass-façade of postmodernism.

When talking about identification, one inevitably refers to that relationship among individuals, community, and identity. Space does have an identity, a certain quality. Identity is fully perceived only if the relation of identification takes place, a process through which the individual appropriates that space; hence, architects' preoccupation with identity and the importance of space identity in the life of the individual and community within the territory. Identity is a process, a product of accumulation. When a space is created rapidly, its identity lags behind, and there are but a few cases when it does acquire identity promptly. Romania wants to acquire an identity which is not proper to it.

Speaking about invention and identity, Jean Baudrillard<sup>8</sup> once said that identity was an absurd and pathetic dream, by that meaning that invention was a long sought after goal today. Postmodernism has set the ball rolling, though it hasn't had any definite program: it opposed functionalism and appealed to the formal elements of the past. Postmodernism has sought to impose again or to remake an identity through such elements, which sometimes led to invention. The person who commissioned a house to some famous architect, known for his postmodern language, was in search of identity. Postmodernism exacerbated this side, taking advantage of this kind of search of identity. It was so, because 25 years ago, under the conditions of that society that could achieve whatever it chose, there was that phenomenon called landmark that justified this pursuit meaning to give legitimacy through a certain identity. And the process still continues.

Similarly, communism sought to invent and impose an identity to certain communities. In fact, even if things were different in practice, the idea of the civic centre, quite fashionable in the 1970's in our country, reflected this very search of a new identity, mostly spurious. So, it is a case of invented identity. Invention is possible in the making of identity, since initially any identity is invented, taken over, yet it involves a great risk today. Many of the

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very old identities of the human societies were invented and turned into habits. They were acquired. Yet in the modern age we have this identity forced upon and which results in a false identity in many ways. In France, in the 1970's it was fashionable to reproduce Italian spaces in the resorts. A false identity generated by a commercial interest. Such identities are not assimilated, they just crumble with time.

Apparently, Antaeus' legend is still viable. Each generation attains power by touching the goddess Gaea and so returns to some data of their personality development that participate into this special blend: identity. And this is done through culture.

Culture brings us back to Sarajevo and to a form of active aggression, other than war: massive human migrations. Large influxes of people affect places and structures in ways that are very much analogous with wars. Urban fabrics are often destroyed by population surges. This was the case of Sarajevo, affected by the influx of refugees from eastern Bosnia, and this is the case with every city, region or country receiving large number of foreign groups into their previously ordered and organised structure. Present migration studies, as well as the reality of some of United States' major cities, generously offer study material for what is one of the most interesting ways of uricide.

In this case, the force depends on the number of the population, but also on the various structures within the population. Structures depend on custom, culture, and the goods the group brings or lacks. Their culture and their traditions will set the pattern for the future use of the spaces they occupy. New relations will be drawn by or for them.

When a group of people, be they refugees, immigrants, seasonal foreign workers, or part of a subculture, dwells differently than the dominant group, the dynamic of the city changes, because the relations among the spaces and structures shift. New alignments still arise in the reordering of existing elements since the functional possibilities change with a change in the relational dynamic. In this case, what makes the difference between adaptation and enrichment of the newly inhabited place and its destruction is the cultural nature of the immigrant/refugee. Under Moorish invasion, Spain flourished and refined its identity. The new influences were beneficial to architecture, science, philosophy, to the life of the city in general. At the other extreme, and hundreds of years later, in Sarajevo or San Francisco, the new kind of 'invaders' affect the urban tissue to such an extent, so that the imagination of an architect like Lebbeus Woods is set in motion, providing conceptual ideas for the city's rebirth.

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### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Lebbeus Woods quoted in A Wagner & M Menser, *Radical Reconstruction. Lebbeus Woods*, Princeton Architectural Press, Princeton, 1997, p. 32.

<sup>2</sup> The term appears in R Koolhaas, *Content AMOMA*, Taschen, Köln, 2004, p. 16.

<sup>3</sup> “The best part of history is that it inspires”, quoted in M Menser, ‘We still do not know what a building can do’, in *Radical Reconstruction. Lebbeus Wood*, p. 160.

<sup>4</sup> Wagner and Menser, *Radical Reconstruction*, p. 156.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid*, p. 125.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid*.

<sup>7</sup> Milan Kundera, Czech writer, used to say that “the degree of slowness is directly proportional to the intensity of memory; the degree of speed is directly proportional to the intensity of forgetting.” In M Kundera, *Slowness*, Harper Collins, London, 1996.

<sup>8</sup> Jean Baudrillard, *Paroxysm: Interviews with Philippe Petit*, Verso, New York, 1998.

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## Mediterranean Identities in the Ancient World

*Leone Porciani*

### **Abstract**

Some recent approaches to the relationship between ancient cultures in the frame of the Mediterranean aim at recalibrating the notion of identity for the early stages of historical development. Archaic Greece is a case in point: a traditional view highlights the role of early Greek ‘colonization’ (8th-7th centuries B.C.) in forging a sense of Greek identity, that would have been elicited by contacts/contrasts with other Mediterranean populations (the inhabitants of the places where the Greeks established their colonies). Today, new perspectives emphasise phenomena like ‘hybridity’ (the emergence of new identities in colonial contexts) and peaceful interactions, so that Hellenic identity *per se* does not hold as a historical category any longer. This paper explores the possibility to refresh this notion and to exploit it in the study of archaeological evidence for ancient town planning (Megara Hyblaia, Sicily, 8th century B.C.).

**Key Words:** Mediterranean, archaic, identity, violence, material culture, colonization, city, urban structure.

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The recent birth of a Union for the Mediterranean, planned by France with the involvement of all European states in July 2008, is a major political aspect of a widespread contemporary interest in the Mediterranean Sea. Today, historians write abundantly on both the Mediterranean and ‘Mediterraneanism’, i.e., the tendency to see peculiar characters shared through time by Mediterranean cultures.<sup>1</sup> One of the most influential books on the topic is *The Corrupting Sea* by Horden and Purcell, who aim at offering a history *of* the Mediterranean (as distinct from a history *in* the Mediterranean, like Braudel’s masterpiece on the Mediterranean world in the age of Philip II) from the prehistoric times up to modern age.<sup>2</sup> Horden and Purcell think that the peculiarity of Mediterranean history is an extreme variety and fragmentation of landscapes and micro-regions, and a “frequency of change from year to year, in both production and distribution”.<sup>3</sup> from which arises the unity given by a huge ‘connectivity’, an unparalleled network of maritime connections covering all the sea, and always existing since at least the second millennium B.C. as an offset against risk and spatial fragmentation. The Mediterranean is in this perspective an ecological unity. But the true question is: to what extent can we properly speak of a *cultural*

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unity? Connectivity is not sufficient *per se* to account for such a kind of unity, and no specific Mediterranean identity (if identity entails unity) clearly emerges from evidence, not even for antiquity. The common cultural traits - vendetta, honour - are too vague to be really significant.<sup>4</sup>

So apparently we must consider no single identity, but a plurality of identities. Identity, ethnicity, culture are frequently overlapping notions. If we focus on antiquity, and especially on studies about ancient Greece, the confusion is not less striking than in other disciplines, so that the conceptual frame betrays a degree of weakness. The reference of an expression like 'cultural identity' runs the gamut from political identity - in various senses, for every Greek belonged to a specific *polis*, but this *polis* could share some 'kinship' ties with other *poleis* - to language, customs, rituals, and of course *mentalités*. On a more historical level, another problem is posed by the nature of the relationship between ancient cultures in the frame of the Mediterranean. A traditional view highlights the age of the so-called Greek colonization (8th-6th centuries B.C.: the archaic period in Greek history), when contacts between Greeks and barbarians became more and more intense. In this period, according to the historiographic vulgate, a strong feeling of belonging to a specific community developed in the conscience of the Greeks, and ultimately a sense of Greek identity was forged and elicited by the contacts with the inhabitants of the places where the Greeks established their colonies - contacts that often consisted of violent contrasts which normally led to the extermination or the expulsion of the natives (Jonathan Hall still admits that "Establishing a settlement overseas was, no doubt, a violent business").<sup>5</sup>

Nowadays, in Greek history, there are few topics as much debated as the role of colonisation in shaping an awareness of Hellenic identity: in general this role is far from being taken for granted. Also the violent nature of the contacts with the natives is much disputed; and there is undoubtedly a *fil rouge* connecting the theories of Greek identity and those of violent contacts. Recent patterns tend to be different, and include, among the most influential positions, hybridity (from a cultural standpoint) and what could be called Greek archaic un-ethnicity, that is the absence of a Hellenic consciousness in early Greece, and in particular in Western Greece (Sicily and Southern Italy, the areas interested by Greek colonization during mainly the 8th-7th centuries B.C.). The first approach, hybridity (brought forward by Carla Antonaccio), points out the emergence of new identities in colonial contexts: not simply Greek, nor Sikel, for instance, but "new, hybrid forms that redefine both identities".<sup>6</sup> Local potters, in Sicily, produced objects that combine elements from indigenous and Greek repertoire, and this is seen as a marker of a peculiar attitude toward partaking in two different cultures.<sup>7</sup> Another influential approach (Jonathan Hall) emphasises the concept of

*ethnic* identity: here the core is the sense of being bound by ties of kinship, which apparently does not develop in Greece before the end of the 7th century B.C.<sup>8</sup> From which follows that early colonisation (8th-7th century B.C.) did not affect the formation of Greek ethnicity and archaic Hellenic identity, which seems accomplished only around 600 B.C. (another important watershed is the 5th century with the Greek reaction against Persian invaders, but that is a further step).

These interpretative trends, of course, posit themselves within a post-colonial perspective, which has its effects in many fields of contemporary historical research. A criticism of the old concept of 'colonisation' is implied in recent approaches:

Greek colonies were not put into place to claim territory for a distant ruler or state, or to secure resources for the same, or with any of the other justifications of imperial expansion in history.<sup>9</sup>

The assumption is the well-known fact that colony is a word endowed with strong 'statist' and imperialistic connotations, and indeed the analogy with modern European colonialism and imperialism has often been active in traditional accounts of archaic Greek colonization.<sup>10</sup> While of course sharing this view, one cannot avoid adding a much-needed qualification: the new assessments of the relationships between Greeks and natives, pointing out hybridity and peaceful contacts without ethnocentric overtones,<sup>11</sup> do not of course escape cultural conditioning - the one exercised by our post-colonial age, with the dismantlement of old colonial powers and the solid growth of a new polycentric world order. I think to Paul Veyne's 'Enlightenment in reverse': we do not impose reason upon others, but it is their model that fosters us to rethink ourselves in a frame in which there is no longer a privileged paradigm.<sup>12</sup>

The same conditioning, I think, provides the context for a new image of archaic Greek settlements in the West. Historians used not to challenge that these were solemn State enterprises, implying a decision to send settlers to a chosen site, for agrarian or commercial ends. But the traditional view does not hold any longer, and today a number of scholars looks with great interest at an interpretation (suggested in particular by Robin Osborne) which sets out to eradicate the concept itself of colonization for the 8th and 7th centuries, tracing the Greek 'colonies' back to the gradual settlement of relatively small groups on the Mediterranean shores: the so-called 'colonies', in this perspective, are not Greek cities from the beginning, but *become* Greek cities; there is a gradual process. At the beginning we have a broad context (the well-tested Mediterranean connectivity) and, in this mobility context, some individuals and small groups who evaluate

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opportunities of “more or less permanent settlement on foreign shores” and then come to choose a site<sup>13</sup>. There is no colonial planning, no state organization behind a settlement, no consultation of the Delphic oracle, no foundation at all (though all these elements are very present in the ancient literary tradition); instead, there would be “evidence for co-existence with a native population”.<sup>14</sup>

This scenario results in a low degree of Greek identity in early colonial settlements. The key notion is the ‘co-existence’ of the Greeks with the native populations: what kind of evidence supports this hypothesis? Archaeological evidence, namely pottery and tombs; for instance, at Metaponto (Basilicata) the early stages of the ‘colonial’ settlement show a mixed record of native and Greek pottery; other sites yield evidence of non-Greek, or not only Greek, burial rites, and apparently this points to a ‘multicultural’ context that sees Greeks and local populations living side-by-side. This is certainly true in some cases; but it would be dangerous and delusive as well, to infer any conclusion about the cultural identity of the first Greek communities in the West and of the Greeks in the archaic period. Mixed pottery does reveal contacts,<sup>15</sup> and sharing the same burial grounds does reveal co-existence; but this will not allow for any comprehensive inference about identity, or identities.<sup>16</sup> Let us consider the presence of Chinese vessels, and of imitation porcelain, in eighteenth century Europe: it is of course a strand of culture, perhaps a significant element, but it will appear simply un-useful in order to settle the issue of the cultural identity of modern Europe, and certainly it will not allow us to speak of ‘hybrid culture’. Why should things have been different in Magna Graecia? The example of Chinese vessels may look far-fetched and off the point, because the cultures here involved are bound by very loose ties, and are far from being in close contacts as Greek and natives were on the shores of Sicily and Southern Italy. But it is enough to show that material data may look prominent while having in fact a very limited significance. It is the complex of cultural factors that has to be globally considered.

Cultural identity entails a reference to a common network of cultural features that are subsumed by collective conscience under specific, if fluid and changing over time, categories. It is certainly true that “what people do is as important as what they say”,<sup>17</sup> but the ideal method would be combining, whenever possible, evidence from material culture with explicit statements (we can draw them only from written texts, but they were part of the living memory of the Greeks in the archaic age): archaeology is silent, whereas explicit statements help to perceive states of consciousness behind material data. This is precisely what I would like to put forward in the following.

There are factors omitted here that could certainly deserve to be at the forefront when dealing with ancient, and not only ancient, identities, such as language. I will also abstain from discussing the abandonment of



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indigenous sites at the same time as the Greeks planted their settlements (this is what might be concluded for the territory of Sybaris, for instance), or the change in the use of pottery in local communities after the arrival of the Greeks: issues that are both relevant to the topic under discussion, but too controversial to be rapidly settled. Besides, these events occur in a setting of violence, with the destruction of indigenous houses and the superimposition of Greek buildings and sanctuaries. In such a frame of adversarial interactions, the emergence of some identity consciousness is easy and nearly predictable.

Here I focus on a famous and ‘not-violent’ colonial case, that of Megara Hyblaia. According to Thucydides (6.4), the city was founded on the eastern coast of Sicily in 728 B.C. in a peaceful, and all the more interesting, climate of *entente* with a local population: the land was yielded by the Sikel king Hyblon. Megara is famous because it preserves an original and regular town planning, which “shows a high degree of sophistication, a firm grasp of the situation, and a bold and concentrated effort - in other words, a ‘foundation’”.<sup>18</sup> There is much debate about the concept of foundation: is it appropriate to describe the archaeological situation of archaic Megara or not? We do not need to answer this question. Let us be content to admire the undisputable regularity of the plan: we have a quasi-grid structure, though not perfectly orthogonal. The area is intersected by streets in order to achieve a division of land into equal lots. Why did not the planners follow a simply orthogonal system? One of the reasons, detected by archaeologists, comes out if we look at the roads which frame the central ‘square’, the *agora*: they lead to the north, and ultimately to the port.<sup>19</sup> A perfectly orthogonal grid would have entailed significant differences in the distance from the houses to the port. By contrast the system they chose improved the connection between the port and the *agora*, and the houses and buildings on both its eastern and western sides. It also allowed the inhabitants to have in turn equal access to a means of reaching the port.

The indigenous sites did not have anything similar to such a carefully planned urban structure. This is the first given that should be taken into account with regard to the identity issue: shaping an urban space is simultaneously a way of conceiving the relationship with what is outside the group, and this requires an active identity consciousness as a precondition. Urban structure is both an element of material culture on a grand scale, and an expression of collective consciousness.

We should only be sure that a town planning like the one carried out at Megara Hyblaia at the end of the 8th century B.C. is something that could be felt as specifically Greek. I think that a comparison with a passage from the *Odyssey* could bring new insights into this open question. It is the description of the Phaeacians’ city made by Nausikaa to Odysseus. She has told him to get up, she is going to show the way to the town, and she

describes it (6.262-269): there is a ‘beautiful harbour’; people haul up the ships to their stations, along a road where everyone has a place to deposit his boat. Then there is a square (*agora*), where people are busy fixing the nautical equipment (moorings, sails, oars). What we have here is a selection of the main elements constituting a town: the port, and the *agora*; two public spaces, belonging to the community. Some details leave no doubt on the Greek character of the whole structure: the cult of Poseidon, the use itself of the word *agora*. The passage is of high interest, for us, on account of the connection it shows between the port and the *agora*. The link is of both spatial and functional nature: the *agora* is ‘there’, near the port, forming a sort of system with it, and is the setting where an array of activities related to sailing and ships occurs.

Homer’s poems are well-known as the charter of Greek cultural unity and distinctiveness in the archaic period. They are a sort of identity vehicle. In the *Odyssey*, the ‘city’ is one of the main thematic foci (1.3 “he saw the cities [*astea*] of many people and he learnt their ways”); therefore, what the poet says about this topic is of particular significance. The foundation, or early phases, of Megara Hyblaia are approximately contemporary with the composition of Homer’s *Odyssey*. The spatial structure of the town as exhibited by the ground of Megara is similar to the one shown and sanctioned by some Homeric verses. I think that this parallel can strengthen the hypothesis of a distinctive Greek character of the settlement on the Sicilian shores - a settlement, therefore, characterized by strong identity features.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Cf. W V Harris, ‘The Mediterranean and Ancient History’, in *Rethinking the Mediterranean*, W V Harris (ed), OUP, Oxford, 2005, pp. 1-42; M Herzfeld, ‘Practical Mediterraneanism: Excuses for Everything, from Epistemology to Eating’, *ibid.*, pp. 45-63.

<sup>2</sup> P Horden and N Purcell, *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History*, Blackwell, Oxford, 2000.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 74; cf. 287, etc.; 65-74, 101 (fragmentation).

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Harris, pp. 26-29.

<sup>5</sup> J Hall, ‘How ‘Greek’ Were the Early Western Greeks?’, in *Greek Identity in the Western Mediterranean: Papers in Honour of Brian Shefton*, K Lomas (ed), Brill, Leiden and Boston, 2004, p. 39.

<sup>6</sup> C M Antonaccio, ‘Siculo-Geometric and the Sikels: Ceramics and Identity in Eastern Sicily’, in *Greek Identity*, Lomas (ed), p. 79.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid., pp. 55-81; C M Antonaccio, 'Excavating Colonization', in *Ancient Colonizations: Analogy, Similarity and Difference*, H Hurst and S Owen (eds), Duckworth, London, 2005, pp. 97-113.

<sup>8</sup> J Hall, *Hellenicity: Between Ethnicity and Culture*, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 2002; Hall, 'How 'Greek' Were the Early Western Greeks?', pp. 35-38.

<sup>9</sup> C M Antonaccio, 'Colonization: Greece on the Move, 900-480', in *The Cambridge Companion to Archaic Greece*, H A Shapiro (ed), CUP, Cambridge, 2007, p. 205.

<sup>10</sup> Cf. R Osborne, 'Early Greek Colonization? The Nature of Greek Settlement in the West', in *Archaic Greece: New Approaches and New Evidence*, N Fisher and H van Wees (eds), Duckworth with The Classical Press of Wales, London and Swansea, 1998, pp. 251-252; S Owen, 'Analogy, Archaeology and Archaic Greek Colonization', in Hurst and Owen, pp. 9-18.

<sup>11</sup> For this aspect cf. e.g. Hall, 'How 'Greek' Were the Early Western Greeks?', p. 40.

<sup>12</sup> P Veyne, 'Le renouveau de l'histoire ancienne prépare-t-il un nouveau siècle des Lumières?', in *Les Grecs, les Romains et nous. L'Antiquité est-elle moderne? Deuxième Forum Le Monde Le Mans*, R -P Droit (ed), Le Monde, Paris, 1991, p. 444.

<sup>13</sup> Osborne, p. 268.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 265.

<sup>15</sup> In the sense elucidated by I Malkin, 'Exploring the Validity of the Concept of 'Foundation': A Visit to Megara Hyblaia', in *Oikistes: Studies in Constitutions, Colonies, and Military Power in the Ancient World. Offered in Honor of A. J. Graham*, V B Gorman and E W Robinson (eds), Brill, Leiden, 2002, pp. 219-220.

<sup>16</sup> As actually implied by Antonaccio in some works of hers ('Excavating Colonization', 'Siculo-Geometric and the Sikels'), though she is of course well aware of the problem ('Colonization: Greece on the Move, 900-480', pp. 217-218); cf. N Purcell, 'Colonization and Mediterranean History', in Hurst and Owen, p. 133. By contrast Osborne is very cautious in this respect (but "Becoming a Greek settlement, on this showing, may often have been a gradual process", p. 264, has transparent identity overtones).

<sup>17</sup> Antonaccio, 'Excavating Colonization', p. 107; cf. 'Siculo-Geometric and the Sikels', p. 65: material culture "cannot be disembedded from social meaning" (quoting M Schiffer).

<sup>18</sup> Malkin, p. 197.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. H Tréziny, 'Urbanisme et voirie dans les colonies grecques archaïques de Sicile orientale'. *Pallas*, vol. 58, 2002, pp. 267-271.

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## **A 'Paranoia of Identity Crisis'? Recent South African Literary Historiography and the Discourse of Cultural and Political Transformation**

*Margriet van der Waal*

### **Abstract**

Using Michael Chapman's recently published (2003) literary history, *Southern African Literatures* as point of departure, this contribution considers the process of cultural transformation in South Africa: from a society characterised by the racially and ethnically divisive ideology of apartheid to a constitutional democracy characterized by an ideology of inclusion and multiculturalism. Departing from a literary sociological point of view, I will focus on the complexity of the South African literary field, where different competing processes of constructing literary value exist, which are indicative of struggles about cultural value within a context of contested ideological power, which ultimately underlies identity formation and politics. I will argue, for example, that Chapman's literary history constructs an alternative (multi)cultural identity in line with a newly dominant political ideology that has redrawn the lines of socio-cultural inclusion and exclusion. During a period when authority, ownership and control over matters of cultural production and cultural identity were placed under severe scrutiny, it was to be expected that the choices and selections made by Chapman would be criticized, and I therefore also take into consideration reactions on Chapman's literary history, representing different position-takings on the issue of aesthetics in the transfer of cultural values and the construction of cultural identity/identities and national/cultural loyalties.

**Key Words:** South African literature, concepts of literature, post-apartheid, literary historiography, cultural identity.

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### **Introduction**

A strong call for cultural transformation accompanied the South African political transformation of the 1990s - a project of building a non-racial, non-sexist and democratic society. This call can also be found in the discourse on literary historiography. The lived-experience of South African scholars regarding the ideological effects of institutional processes such as education, canon formation and research priorities created an explicit awareness that literary histories never simply represent the past, but always offer a presentation, or construction invested with specific interests:

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If language and literature departments at (segregated) schools and universities played their part in interpellating ethnically divided subjects, then it would seem that a key element in the educational re-structuring of post-apartheid South Africa would involve the construction of an integrated national literary history manifesting itself in school and tertiary syllabuses.<sup>1</sup>

It is however, exactly the notion of 'national literary history' that causes a glitch. In the case of South Africa, where cultural identities were brokered against the background of an ideology based on racial and ethnic differentiation, literary histories contributed to the symbolic construction of particular cultural identities by constituting language-based canons which marked cultural boundaries along ethnic and racial lines.

In this, literary histories are not unique. The whole of the South African literary field displayed the effects of a political and ideological system constructed along racial and ethnic lines, and even today, the field as such continues to display the effect of this systematic and structural division.

### **1. The South African Literary Field**

Using Bourdieu's conceptual frame of the literary field to scrutinize literary and cultural activity during and after apartheid in South Africa reveals a highly complex situation.<sup>2</sup> The Bourdieuan literary field is "a continuously changing field of power relations between the differing literary institutions that are involved in the production, distribution and consumption of fiction, especially of texts that are considered to be of literary value."<sup>3</sup> Investigations into the literary field take differing power relations that exist within this field in consideration, and examine how value judgements in the field are made, while also trying to uncover the underlying conceptions of literature that inform these value judgements. The different institutions and actors situated within the literary field include the material producers of literature (writers, publishers, literary journals, etc.), the distributors (bookshops, libraries, etc.) as well as the symbolic producers of literature (literary criticism, literature education, prizes, festivals, and literary histories).<sup>4</sup>

Many of the problems inflicting South African society in general also persist in the sphere of cultural and symbolic production. For example, the material divide, being one of the most obvious problems South Africans face, hinder access to certain infrastructural resources which in turn seriously hamper participation in the literary field - access to internet being one such problem, and another being access to books, be it in book shops - almost exclusively located in the more affluent parts of larger cities and town<sup>5</sup> -, or



libraries, which have been through terrible times as a result of restructuring in subsidy systems and financing.<sup>6</sup>

The functioning of the South African literary field shows the extent to which identity constructing categories, such as race and ethnicity, have been productive in the country with a large number of similar institutions catering to the needs of various groups who define themselves as socio-culturally significantly different from each other. Thus one finds in the literary field professional (writers') organizations, literary journals, publishers, and literary prizes, which all catered for the demands of these 'different' social groups, mostly defined politically (conservative or liberal, which in South Africa was usually translated as pro- or contra apartheid), but also linguistically (Afrikaans or English, or the combined 'African languages'), and racially ('white' or 'black').

If South African society was predominantly defined by categories of race and ethnicity during apartheid, the question arises of course about the situation after the birth of the 'rainbow nation', with its intimations of recognized and celebrated multiculturalism. As sociologist Peter Alexander explains, South African identities currently seem to be constructed in either of two ways: as being fluid and hybrid, or as being stable and built on older identities based predominantly on categories such as race and ethnicity.<sup>7</sup> By keeping this dual possibility in mind, I will now pay closer attention to a specific area of the literary field, namely literary historiography. Falling in the area of symbolic production of literature, it is one of the places where issues of literary value and the symbolic meaning of literature are negotiated. By turning to literary historiography, I will focus specifically on a particular case, namely the work by Michael Chapman, *Southern African Literatures*, and the literary field responses to it, in attempting to understand the relation between the transfer of cultural values and identity formation and politics.

## 2. Literary Historiography in South Africa

The available literary histories produced in South Africa show that a tradition of inclusive literary historiography is not well established in the country. The main reason, as some South African scholars have explained already, is the linguistic diversity in South Africa: "Anthologists and writers of general histories of South African literature, because of the contingencies of publishing, markets, and marketing, tend to work within one language and to write for particular audiences".<sup>8</sup> It is, however, certainly not only a matter of the country's linguistic diversity which is the cause for this phenomenon, but rather a complex social system of classification according to race and ethnicity (which includes language as categorizing principle).<sup>9</sup>

As a result, different literary histories were written on the literary production in the various 'cultural groups', running parallel to the languages spoken in South Africa. The historical dominance of Afrikaans under

Apartheid (in the sense of it being a majority language - see the contribution by Reine Meylaerts) is clearly evident in the fact that most literary histories were written about Afrikaans literature, which historically has produced the largest literary output under Apartheid.<sup>10</sup> But next to the literary histories about Afrikaans literature,<sup>11</sup> histories were also produced on the literatures written in various (other) African languages (usually combined literary histories)<sup>12</sup> and South African English literature.<sup>13</sup>

Apart from these language-based efforts, a number of studies were produced in which the scope stretched beyond the borders of particular languages. Interestingly enough it is the earliest attempts at describing South African literature, which display this inclusive feature.<sup>14</sup> This inclusive approach was taken up again by the 1980s, when the Centre for South African Literary Research (CENSAL) started publishing annual surveys to provide "an overview of South African literature".<sup>15</sup> The most recent South African effort to write an inclusive literary history has been Chapman's *Southern African Literatures* and in the following section I will consider some key aspects of this effort, as well as the field reactions to it.<sup>16</sup>

### 3. Michael Chapman's *Southern African Literatures*

In 1988, South African English literature scholar, Michael Chapman, was asked by the British publisher Longman to write a literary history on South African literature to form part of their 'Literature in English Series' on Anglophone literature across the world. The efforts of Chapman's lauded labour were published in 1996 as *Southern African Literatures* which was republished under the same title by a South African publisher in 2003.<sup>17</sup> (Incidentally, this order of things is symptomatic of the relation between the imperial centre (England) and its margin, South Africa in this case, where until the 1980s almost all South African English texts were published by English publishers.) Chapman's text, the first comprehensive and inclusive effort to map South African literature in almost a century, and the first book-length literary history in the new, post-apartheid era, elicited quite a debate in South African academic circles when it was published in 1996.<sup>18</sup>

Chapman's much discussed history focuses not only on South Africa's literature, but - in five different parts - includes literature from the rest of southern Africa, i.e. Malawi, Zambia, Angola, Mozambique, Zimbabwe and Namibia, with minor references to literature from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. Nonetheless, the core of the book deals with literature produced in South Africa, because, says Chapman, the country has, comparatively speaking, the most viable and institutionally best developed literary culture in the region.<sup>19</sup> But perhaps another reason can be attributed to Chapman himself being a scholar of South African English literature, and not a specialist of other literatures in the region.

Chapman's history is not so much a study on how literature has been read as a response to the socio-political context in which it is created, but rather an ethical exercise in reading literature as a contribution to forging a 'common citizenry' as basis of 'communal identification'.<sup>20</sup> The central concern of the book, namely "what might constitute a literary culture in a challenging political milieu,"<sup>21</sup> is staked out by postcolonial parameters namely: "conditions of extreme differentiation in the same social, economic and expressive space".<sup>22</sup>

#### 4. Ubuntu

Trying to deal with this extreme differentiation, Chapman investigates the "social contract between writer and citizen that is humanising and democratising in its obligations".<sup>23</sup> In southern Africa, Chapman claims, the construction of such a civil society implies "a humanism of reconstruction"<sup>24</sup>: the reparation of human dignity that was erased by pernicious systems of discrimination and oppression. This human dignity is, specifically, to be found in the praxis of a central philosophy of Africanism, namely *ubuntu* (see also the contribution by Rob Burton), which indicates a manner of being that concerns both the individual and society, or in Chapman's words: "The concept of society is not the socialist one of a collection of individuals, but the communal one of unity at the centre of people's beings."<sup>25</sup> Translated from Zulu, *ubuntu* refers to 'humanity,' 'humanness' or 'humaneness' and is taken from the maxim: *umuntu ngumuntu ngabantu*, or "a person is a person through other persons".<sup>26</sup>

Although not of a recent invention, the concept of *ubuntu* has become vastly popular in post-apartheid South Africa as a buzzword in many different contexts ranging from business ethics to South African tourism, all tapping into the mystical, spiritual, ethical and ethnic connotations of the concept.<sup>27</sup> In South Africa, it was originally used in Black Christianity as a tool to mediate relationships between missionaries and converts.<sup>28</sup> In a study on ethical responsibility and the role of intellectuals during apartheid, Mark Sanders explains how the term qualifies 'selfhood' as a relation to the other, "Ubuntu captures how the relation to the other is prior to the selfhood of the self, how that relation is a condition of possibility for the selfhood of the self."<sup>29</sup> Sanders also argues that one of the concept's crucial functions is its potential to ensure a sense of stability during periods of transition, as well as its ability to "stage recovery at a time of loss".<sup>30</sup> (This functioning of the concept is very movingly described in the book *A Human being died that night* in which the black psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela describes the process of forgiveness and transformation she undergoes in her therapy sessions with the Vlakplaas police officer Eugene de Kock, who was responsible for countless murders of political 'undesired' people during the 1980s). Ubuntu can be employed as an instrument of invention - inventing

cultural memory, for example - and possibility: "It stands as an example of how, when the past is understood as invented, it can yield a structure of ongoing responsibility rather than a remedy meant to work once and for all."<sup>31</sup>

Chapman, in the 'Introduction' to *SAL*, explains his own basis of what engages him as critic:

It [the critic] is concerned with justice not only in the comprehensive sense of *what it is to be human*, but in its capacity in southern Africa to extend liberties and contribute to the creation of a civil society.<sup>32</sup>

Whereas Sanders's interpretation of *ubuntu* emphasises invention, possibility, and openness, Chapman's use appears more restrictive: he seems to know with certainty 'what it is to be human', and pitches literature representing this humanity against those texts he deems as failing to contribute to a 'humanism of reconstruction'.<sup>33</sup> Chapman's unproblematic use of the concept suggests an essentialist employment of it, which provides no guarantee against misinterpretation and abuse in the manner that other complex concepts have been misinterpreted and reduced to simplexes in politically opportunistic discourses, which have coined seemingly unproblematic concepts such as 'the new South Africa' and 'truth and reconciliation'.<sup>34</sup>

I will not go into a more in-depth discussion of Chapman's aesthetics, which is itself a very interesting issue, considering the way he attempts to combine politics and art, an act that clearly defies the dominant aesthetic paradigm of literary autonomy.<sup>35</sup> Rather, I will now turn to some of the reactions to Chapman's effort, not only from inside South Africa, but also some 'outsider' perspectives.

## 5. Reception of *Southern African Literatures*

In a time frame of social and political upheaval, when authority, ownership and control over matters of cultural production and cultural identity were placed under severe scrutiny, a critical reaction to *SAL* was to be expected. The critical tenor in the reception was so evident that some of the criticism was even experienced by Chapman as oriented not towards his book, but towards his person.<sup>36</sup> Also, the criticism against his clear political aesthetics was to be expected: previous publications by Chapman already elicited comments about his particular conception of literature and art as political acts rather than autonomous ends in themselves.<sup>37</sup>

Local reviewers were generally rather critical in their appraisal of the study,<sup>38</sup> while overseas reviewers praised the book for attempting an

inclusive literary history for South Africa, and were generally - as were, this needs to be said, some South African critics - enthusiastic and positive about the 'multicultural' approach of the text.<sup>39</sup>

Important criticism was raised from a poststructuralist perspective against the fixing, stabilising nature of Chapman's master narrative.<sup>40</sup> Chapman was criticized for having produced a 'single account' of an 'arguably discontinuous history', where difference is undermined in favour of 'progressive humanism', to use Chapman's term. The elision of difference results in a totalisation of experiences and identities which are in fact incommensurable. Chapman's bent on producing a narrative of social cohesion as a result of political liberation can perhaps best be explained by what David Perkins has called 'present criteria of plausibility'. At the time when Chapman started writing this text South Africa was officially under a state of emergency - the second half of the 1980s - and KwaZulu-Natal, the province where Chapman lives, suffered prolonged violent clashes between Inkatha and ANC fractions until the late 1990s. The violent and destructive character of the situation in which Chapman himself was situated, explains to some degree the very particular tasks (how to read literature in order to construct a common humanity) he set for literary historiography.

Other points of criticism brought in against Chapman were his treatment of the literatures in the different South African languages. Initially, the text was advertised by the publisher as 'Southern African Literature in English'.<sup>41</sup> In the final title the qualifier, 'in English', was omitted, and the singular 'literature' was changed into a plural 'literatures'. Given that the original pitch was to write a literary history on English literature in the region, it is not surprising that the emphasis of the book is on literature written in English. Nevertheless, commentators challenged the study's pretension to give a representative overview of all the literatures written in South Africa. A significant number of critics critiqued the subordinate position given to Afrikaans literature and the negative manner in which most of it was represented,<sup>42</sup> the very slight treatment of literatures in African languages,<sup>43</sup> and the dominant position that English language literature takes in the study.<sup>44</sup>

More instructive for our purpose here is the manner in which the reactions to Chapman indicate a sense of appropriation and identity construction. Telling in this regard is the use of possessive pronouns in discussions of Chapman's text. One reviewer asked: "How can I trust this author with Xhosa- or African literature when the mistakes about *my* literature are so ludicrous and blatant?"<sup>45</sup> Another, in questioning the even greater lack of representation of literature in African languages, demanded to know: "On what grounds have *our* literatures been left out?"<sup>46</sup> Chapman himself responded to such reactions by interpreting them as signals of

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“paranoia of identity crisis,”<sup>47</sup> brought about by the radical political changes of the early 1990s.<sup>48</sup>

Claiming ownership of a literature and patrolling its boundaries clearly show that there are different claims at stake for different interest groups in the literary field. Compare, for instance, the different ways in which Afrikaans critics read Chapman’s treatment of Afrikaans literature and how it was read by international commentators. Afrikaans critics interpreted Chapman’s mostly negative interpretation and description of Afrikaans literature as contradictory to the reconciliatory position he subscribed to himself. In general, they expressed dissatisfaction with the manner in which revered Afrikaans canonical authors were treated, the many spelling and factual mistakes in the text and the negative interpretations of Afrikaans literature and Afrikaans culture according to Chapman’s master narrative. Evidently, such ideological differences in the evaluation of Afrikaans literature and authors, appropriated by Afrikaans-speaking literary critics as ‘our literature’, and ‘our authors,’ suggest a view of Chapman as an outsider who tried to sneak into a terrain where he holds no authority. This is quite a different reading of Chapman’s text than that of an international reviewer of *SAL*, who saw in Chapman’s effort the willingness to read in Afrikaans literature – regarded as “official literature of the Apartheid state” – a tradition of talking back by putting forward “more liberal voices that question the central tenets of racial inequality in South Africa”.<sup>49</sup> I think part of the frustration of some Afrikaans authors is due to the fact that such a staid opinion is often held about Afrikaans literature by non-Afrikaans literary critics. I sense that many local, English-speaking, and foreign critics are rather ignorant of moments of rebellion against Apartheid ideology in Afrikaans literature. At the same time, the comments made by the Afrikaans critics are indicative of the problematic and difficult process of confronting issues pertaining to the complicity of Afrikaans literature and literary institutions with apartheid ideology and white superiority in the country.

### Conclusion

To conclude, two observations can be made. The first is that the critical reception of *SAL* indicates dissent among the commentators about the existence of a cultural object that can be labelled ‘South African literature’.<sup>50</sup> This in itself, although not a new phenomenon, is a telling outcome, because it leads us to a valuable observation. Manuel Castells reminds us in *The Power of Identity* that “ethnicity, religion, language, territory, *per se*, do not suffice to build nations, and induce nationalism”, or senses of communal belonging and responsibility.<sup>51</sup> It is rather, he says, shared experience which should be credited for constructing shared identification.

This insight holds relevance on two levels: on the first level it is about how such a shared experience will be transferred culturally. It holds, therefore, implications for literature education at school and canon formation in general. The second level contains the question whether literature - and culture in a large sense - produced in South Africa will be studied under 'ethnic studies', as the separate cultural output of 'different' cultural groups, or under area studies,<sup>52</sup> which implies not only a regional perspective, but a thoroughly interdisciplinary one too with transnational possibilities that extends beyond the textuality of texts to include their relation with material aspects, such as "economy, ecology and technology".<sup>53</sup>

The second observation concerns the reactions of notably Afrikaans literary scholars against 'outside' efforts of producing (challenging and competing) interpretations of 'their' literature suggests a dominant conception on their side that there is a stable, correct interpretation of what Afrikaans literature should mean. Such a reaction can be read as tasking literature with transferring a stable set of values and meaning to its readers - across changing contexts. Chapman's notion of *ubuntu* also suggests stability and moral correctness in his project of 'human regeneration'.

In this sense, both Chapman, and his critics ascribe to essentialist understandings of literature itself and the functioning of it. Clearly, the imagined communities that both 'camps' represent through their involvement and use of this literature more closely resemble identities that is based on stable categories, rather than fluid and hybrid ones. The question is of course to see what the new, post-apartheid generation of intellectuals and academics are going to do with 'their' literary heritage.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> J-P Wade, 'Cultural transformation in South Africa: the role of literary studies'. *Alternation*, vol. 2(1), 1995, p. 46.

<sup>2</sup> See P Bourdieu, *The Rules of Art*, trans. Susan Emanuel, Stanford University Press, Stanford, 1996 [1992] and P Bourdieu and R Johnson, *The Field of Cultural Production: Essays on Art and Literature*, Polity, Cambridge, 1993 for a basic description of the concept of the literary field. Bourdieu's concept has been worked out extensively in various forms, resulting in, among others, the institutional approach to literature. See, for example, K van Rees and G J Dorleijn, 'The eighteenth-century literary field in Western Europe: the interdependence of material and symbolic production and consumption'. *Poetics*, vol. 28 (5/6), March 2001. The journal *Poetics* carries further examples of this institutional and sociological approach.

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<sup>3</sup> C J van Rees and G J Dorleijn, *De impact van literatuuropvattingen in het literaire veld*, Stichting Literatuurwetenschap, Den Haag, 1993, p. 13. Translation my own.

<sup>4</sup> Elsewhere I have more extensively mapped the South African literary field. See M van der Waal, *The Battle over the Books*, University of Groningen, Groningen, 2006.

<sup>5</sup> See for example K Kgotsitsile, 'Apprenticed in the art of eloquence'. *This Day*, 11 February 2004.

<sup>6</sup> S Duguid, 'Public libraries strapped for cash'. *Mail and Guardian*, 11 April 2002.

<sup>7</sup> P Alexander, 'Globalisation and new social identities: a jigsaw puzzle from Johannesburg', in *Globalisation & new identities: a view from the middle*, Peter Alexander, Marcelle C Dawson and Meera Ichharam (ed), Jacana, Johannesburg, 2006, p. 13.

<sup>8</sup> L de Kock, 'South Africa in the global imaginary: an introduction'. *Poetics Today*, vol. 22 (2), Summer 2001, p. 264.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. a recent remark that has been made about the foundations of identity construction in South Africa: "apartheid-defined ethnic identities, generally regarded as four 'races' may be giving way to new ethnic identities based, in particular, on language and religion." (Alexander, 'Globalisation and new social identities: a jigsaw puzzle from Johannesburg', p. 46.)

<sup>10</sup> A Oliphant, 'From colonialism to democracy: writers and publishing in South Africa', in *The Politics of Publishing in South Africa*, Nicholas Evans and Monica Seeber (eds), Holger Ehling Publishing and University of Natal Press, London and Scottsville, 2000; F Galloway and R M Venter, 'A Research Framework to Map the Transition of the South African Book Publishing Industry'. *Publishing Research Quarterly*, vol. 20 (4), 2005.

<sup>11</sup> G Dekker, *Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* (12th edition), Nasionale Boekhandel, Cape Town, 1972 [1935]; R Antonissen, *Die Afrikaanse Letterkunde van Aanvang tot Hede* (3rd edition), NASOU, Cape Town, 1965 [1955]; J C Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur I* (2nd revised and updated edition), Academica, Pretoria, 1984 [1978]; J C Kannemeyer, *Geskiedenis van die Afrikaanse Literatuur II*, Academica, Pretoria, 1983; T T Cloete (ed), *Die Afrikaanse Literatuur Sedert Sestig*, NASOU, Goodwood, 1980; A Coetzee, *Letterkunde en Krisis: 'n Honderd Jaar Afrikaanse Letterkunde en Afrikaner-Nasionalisme*, Taurus, Johannesburg, 1990; H P van Coller (ed), *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* (Volume 1), J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1998; H P van Coller (ed), *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* (Volume 2), J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 1999 and H P



van Coller (ed), *Perspektief en Profiel: 'n Afrikaanse Literatuurgeskiedenis* (Volume 3), J.L. van Schaik, Pretoria, 2005.

<sup>12</sup> A S Gérard, *Four African Literatures: Xhosa, Sotho, Zulu and Amharic*, University of California Press, Berkeley, 1971; C F Swanepoel (ed), *Comparative Literature and African Literatures* (2nd revised edition), Via Afrika, Pretoria, 1993 [1983] and D B Ntuli and C F Swanepoel, *Southern African Literature in African Languages: A Concise Historical Perspective*, Acacia, Pretoria, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> S Gray, *Southern African Literature: An Introduction*, David Phillip, Cape Town, 1979. It should be mentioned that this study does not only deal with English language literature, as Gray also makes references to the wider South African literary situation, although the emphasis is clearly on texts produced in English - and M van Wyk Smith, *Grounds of Contest: A Survey of South African English Literature*, Jutalit, Kenwyn, 1990.

<sup>14</sup> G Besselaar, *Zuid-Afrika in de Letterkunde*, De Bussy, Amsterdam, 1914 and M Nathan, *South African Literature: A General Survey*, Juta, Cape Town, 1925.

<sup>15</sup> K P Prinsloo, 'Preface/Voorwoord', in *SA Literature/SA Literatuur 1980. Annual Literary Survey Series*, Francis Galloway (ed), Ad Donker, Johannesburg, 1982, p. 7. Six annual surveys were published in total (1980 - 1985). Each survey contains three sections: English literature, African language literatures and Afrikaans literature.

<sup>16</sup> I have been able to trace three more publications that were produced after Chapman's text was published. The fact that all three have been produced outside of South Africa indicates a strong international academic interest for South African literature. The first is an English attempt on South African literature by an 'expat' South African (C Heywood, *A History of South African Literature*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 2004). The second study is a Dutch overview of modern South African literature, but contains a strong emphasis on Afrikaans texts (E Francken and L Renders, *Skrywers in die Strydperk. Krachtlijnen in de Zuid-Afrikaanse Letterkunde*, Bert Bakker, Amsterdam, 2005). The third text is written in Polish for students of Afrikaans literature in Poland and gives an overview of Afrikaans literature from 1652-1900 (J Koch, *Historia literatury poludniowoafrykańskiej: Literatura Afrikan XVII-XIX wiek*, Dialog, Warsaw, 2004).

<sup>17</sup> In 1998 Chapman received the University Book Prize for *SAL*, followed by the Bill Venter Award in 1999. (N.N., 'Professor honoured'. *The Daily News*, 24 February 2000). In 2003 Chapman was classified as an 'A-category' researcher by the South African National Research Foundation (NRF), an official and prestigious institution consecration of Chapman as world-leader

in his particular research area (M von Klemperer, 'African letters'. *Natal Witness*, 13 November 2003).

<sup>18</sup> Using Bourdieuan terminology one could say that Chapman's study was quickly consecrated, albeit also highly disputed, in the literary field as a result of the high volume of institutional attention paid to it. Apart from many reviews and discussions of the text, the University of South Africa organized a conference on the topic of 'Literary Studies at the Crossroads', the proceedings of which were published in a literary journal, *Journal of Literary Studies* (vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997).

<sup>19</sup> M Chapman, *Southern African Literatures*, University of Natal Press, Scottsville, 2003, p. xix.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 407.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. x-xi.

<sup>23</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 430.

<sup>24</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>25</sup> M Chapman, 'The South African story: identities at the crossroads (panel discussion)'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997, p. 219.

<sup>26</sup> D J Louw, 'Ubuntu and the challenges of multiculturalism in post-apartheid South Africa'. *Quest*, vol. 15 (1/2), 2001, p. 15.

<sup>27</sup> To cite an example: during the World Summit on Sustainable Development held in Johannesburg in 2002, an 'Ubuntu Village' was created for the event, and hosted, according to the official website of the city of Johannesburg, "good African crafts, much of it better than you'll have seen before [...]. Interesting examples of alternative technologies [...], exotic cuisine, concerts galore". [N.N., 'City of Johannesburg'. accessed 29 August 2005. <[http://www.joburg.org.za/aug\\_2002/ubuntu\\_tips.stm](http://www.joburg.org.za/aug_2002/ubuntu_tips.stm)>.] For a critical discussion of the ideological use of *ubuntu* in the current, post-apartheid discourse on South African nation building, see C Marx, 'Ubu and ubuntu: on the dialectics of apartheid and nation building'. *Politikon*, vol. 29 (1), 2002.

<sup>28</sup> M Sanders, *Complicities: The Intellectual and Apartheid*, Duke University Press, Durham, 2002, p. 120.

<sup>29</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 126.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 121.

<sup>31</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 127.

<sup>32</sup> Chapman, *Southern African Literatures*, p. 4. Emphasis added, MvdW.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 5.

<sup>34</sup> For a discussion of the functioning of similar essentialist concepts in current South Africa, see K van der Waal, 'Essentialism in a South African discussion of language and culture', in *Power, politics and identity in South African media*, Adrian Hadland et al. (eds), HSRC Press, Cape Town, 2008.

<sup>35</sup> Chapman admits that his conception of aesthetics is highly disputable: in a running up study to *SAL* he relates an invitation that was extended to him by the editors of the *Oxford Encyclopedia of Aesthetics* to contribute an entry on the 'aesthetics of liberation'. His contribution was ultimately rejected by the editors because of conflicting readers' reports on his conception of aesthetics (M Chapman, 'The aesthetics of liberation: reflections from a southern perspective'. *Current Writing*, vol. 10 (1), 1998, p.1).

<sup>36</sup> Chapman talks about the 'meanest attack' that came from Stewart Crehan, who reviewed *Southern African Literatures* very negatively, and who "could not resist lecturing me on grammatical correctness while simultaneously getting into a state of excitation – I felt I had somehow personally insulted him [...]. Professor Crehan found [humanism] lacking not only in my study, but in my person". (Chapman, 'The South African story'. p. 211.)

<sup>37</sup> See note 35.

<sup>38</sup> A Coetzee, 'Oorgangsliteratuurgeskiedenis: die illusie van 'n nasionale Suid-Afrikaanse letterkunde'. *Literator*, vol. 18 (3), November 1996; A Coetzee, 'Southern African Literatures'. *Alternation*, vol. 3 (2), 1996; S Crehan, 'Broken English'. *Southern African Review of Books*, July/August 1996; G Olivier, 'n Luide 'demokratiese' stem'. *Insig*, September 1996; S de Waal, 'Are we liberated yet?'. *Mail and Guardian*, 18 October 1996; M Green, 'South African literary history: the mark between the 'and' and 'or'', in *South African Literary History: Totality and, or Fragment*, Erhard Reckwitz, Karin Reitner, and Lucia Vennarini (eds), Die Blaue Eule, Essen, 1997; M de Jong, 'The morality of historiography and the immorality of the Sestigters (panel discussion)'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997; L de Kock, 'An impossible history'. *English in Africa*, vol. 24 (1), May 1997; L de Kock, 'Becoming different from ourselves (panel discussion)'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997; J Nel, 'n Knap oorsig oor SA letterkunde'. *Beeld*, 24 February 1997; S M Serudu, 'South African vernacular literatures and Chapman's *Southern African Literatures* (panel discussion)'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997; H van Vuuren, 'No title (panel discussion)'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997; H van Vuuren, 'Southern African Literatures'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997; H van Vuuren, 'Teorie trek skeef in nuwe omvattende literêre opgaaf'. *Die Burger*, 2 July 1997; J van Wyk, 'No title (panel discussion)'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 13 (1/2), June 1997; S Gray, 'Opening Southern African studies post-apartheid'. *English in Africa*, vol. 26 (1), May 1999; D Medalie, 'Keeping history open: studies in South African literary history'. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, vol. 25 (2), June 1999; J Hambidge, 'Vas teen die muur van foute, veralgemenings'. *Die Burger*, 29 September 2003; P John, 'Uitdagende begrip van literatuur'.

*Beeld*, 29 September 2003; H Mackie, 'Southern African Literatures'. *Business Day*, 28 July 2003 and K Bentley, 'How SA writers dealt with political situation'. *The Eastern Province Herald*, 4 February 2004.

<sup>39</sup> L Chrisman, 'New literary histories for the new South Africa'. *Current Writing*, vol. 8 (2), 1996; G Davis, 'Southern African Literatures'. *European Journal of English Studies*, vol. 2 (1), April 1998; J McLeod, 'Usable pasts'. *English*, vol. 46 (185), 1997 and V Nemoianu, 'Michael Chapman'. *The Comparatist*, vol. 21, 1997.

<sup>40</sup> L de Kock, 'The central South African story, or many stories? A response to 'Red People and School People from Ntsikana to Mandela''. *English Academy Review*, 10 (December 1993) and de Kock, 'An impossible history'.

<sup>41</sup> M Chapman, 'African literature, African literatures: cultural practice or art practice?'. *Research in African Literatures*, vol. 34 (1), Spring 2003, p. 1.

<sup>42</sup> Coetzee, 'Oorgangsliteratuurgeskiedenis'. p. 50; Coetzee, 'Southern African Literatures'. p. 234-235; van Vuuren, 'Teorie trek skeef in nuwe omvattende literêre opgaaf'; Hambidge, 'Vas teen die muur van foute, veralgemenings'.

<sup>43</sup> Serudu, 'South African vernacular literatures' and Chapman's *Southern African Literatures*.

<sup>44</sup> Coetzee, 'Oorgangsliteratuurgeskiedenis'. p. 44-45.

<sup>45</sup> Hambidge, 'Vas teen die muur van foute, veralgemenings'. Emphasis in original.

<sup>46</sup> Serudu, 'South African vernacular literatures and Chapman's *Southern African Literatures*'. p. 244-245. Emphasis added, MvdW.

<sup>47</sup> M Chapman, 'Response to a non-existent South African poet'. (updated 26 March 2004), accessed 20 June 2005,

<<http://www.oulitnet.co.za/seminarroom/chapman01.asp>>.

<sup>48</sup> M Chapman, 'The problem of identity: South Africa, storytelling, and literary history'. *New Literary History*, 29/1 (1998), p. 86.

<sup>49</sup> McLeod, 'Usable pasts'. p. 180.

<sup>50</sup> The question whether there is in fact anything such as a 'South African literature' has often been discussed in South Africa, although never to a concluding end. It has even been suggested that the institutionalization of democracy eroded the political necessity to conceive of a shared object such as 'South African literature': "(Was) the idea of a South African literature comprising texts in Afrikaans, English, Xhosa, Zulu, etc. a form of resistance to the partitions imposed on society and culture by apartheid, and (is) the need for such a concept disappearing now that a constitutional agreement for a non-racial society has been reached?" (G Olivier, 'Afrikaans and South African literature'. *Journal of Literary Studies*, vol. 11 (2), June 1995, p. 39-40.)

<sup>51</sup> M Castells, *The power of identity*, Blackwell, Malden, 1997, p. 32.

<sup>52</sup> The differentiation between the two has been used by Gayatri Spivak in her discussion of the future of comparative literary studies within a new multicultural, interdisciplinary, cultural studies paradigm (G Spivak, *Death of a discipline*, Columbia University Press, New York, 2003).

<sup>53</sup> S Nuttall, 'A politics of the emergent: Cultural Studies in South Africa'. *Theory, Culture & Society*, vol. 23 (7/8), 2006, p. 267.

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## Post-Holocaust Reconstructed Identities in Anne Michaels' *Fugitive Pieces* and W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*

Catalina Botez

### Abstract

This paper takes up a comparative view on individual identity as featured in two literary works that deal with traumatised Jewish youths in the aftermath of the Holocaust: Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* and W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz*. As I intend to show, the trauma of the Holocaust forces an arbitrary process of identity deconstruction upon the juvenile protagonists' incompletely developed selves, which triggers in their adult lives a need for self-reconstruction, essentially experienced against thoroughly altered cultural, historical and geographical backgrounds. These characters' initial flight for their lives and their transgression of various national borders will be regarded as complex steps towards mapping a geographical trajectory associated with profound inner change. In both novels, the initial journeys of survival are traced back in old age, and their subsequent re-mapping will be read here as an attempt at recreating and reconciling with an original identity. I will also show that forceful migration engenders a break with former patterns of selfhood by re-shifting such elements of identity as the cultural, ethnic, national, psychological and geographical. In the particular case of post-war Jewishness, the emphasis falls onto the ethnic-racial element. Negatively charged by the Holocaust, this element becomes the lens through which the characters perceive their changing identity at a particular time and within a certain space. Concomitantly, their manifest interest in literary and architectural discourses symptomises a fundamental need to assume and incorporate this change. The question that follows is whether these destinies may be interpreted as striking a balance between localism and cosmopolitanism, exclusion and inclusion, alterity and sameness. All in all, this is an exploration of the distance between the deconstructed and reconstructed types of Jewishness as embodied by two fictional characters, with an emphasis on the uniqueness of their physical and mental path back to their more or less recognisable selves.

**Key Words:** (Jewish) identity, trans-national, cross-cultural, alienation, (childhood) trauma, memory, cosmopolitanism, border.

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Child survivors of the Holocaust were categorised until fairly recently alongside first generation survivors, however in 2002 Susan Rubin

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Suleiman drew a necessary dividing line between adult and child survivorship in an article quite provocatively entitled 'The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child Survivors and the Holocaust.' The decimal point refers to the intermediate position of Jewish children exposed to the Holocaust, whose memories differ fundamentally from those of adult (i.e. first generation) survivors on the one hand, and their offspring born immediately after the war and known as the second-generation, on the other. The decisive element that justifies the autonomy of this coinage is, according to Suleiman, 'premature' age, understood as psychological inability for an adult understanding of events, doubled in most cases by a lack of a 'conscious sense of self' and no 'stable identity'<sup>1</sup> at the moment of trauma occurrence. The traumatic assault on incompletely developed identities, enhanced by displacement, loss of families and forceful migration are dominant similarities within the otherwise heterogeneous group of child survivors, two fictional representatives of which I would like to bring to the fore in this comparative study.

In both Anne Michaels's novel *Fugitive Pieces* (1996) and W. G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* (2002) the trauma of the Holocaust is shown to force an arbitrary process of identity deconstruction<sup>2</sup> upon the juvenile characters' sense of self, which triggers in their post-war adult lives a need for self-reconstruction, essentially experienced against thoroughly altered cultural, historical and geographical backgrounds. The protagonists' flight from persecution and their transgression of various national borders are steps towards mapping a geographical trajectory inextricably linked with profound identity shifts.

On these premises I will argue that these characters' sense of self is pivotally space and language-based, which is to say that their spatial refuge and consequent cultural encounters as immigrants are of crucial importance in the extent to which their trauma is eventually localised and alleviated. Itinerant destinies as they are, they face the conundrum of constantly renegotiating a broken Jewish identity, by superimposing layers in a palimpsest fashion.

In W.G. Sebald's *Austerlitz* the title character's tormented life story is contingent on the European history of violence and wars. After a lifetime dedicated to the suppression of childhood memories, Jacques Austerlitz succumbs to a strong urge to discover his roots. At the end of a sorrowful quest for traces of memory spread across Europe, he is able to reconstruct the puzzle of his identity. The realisation of the mistake he has made by voluntarily erasing every vestige of his past is just as painful as the later revelation that his parents' history is at one with that of the massacred Jews of Europe.

His life odyssey began with the Kindertransport of 1939 that took him to Great Britain by train and separated him from his Czech parents

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forever. The first memory of his buried pre-war life is sparked while listening to a radio interview during which the map of his estrangement is redrawn in his mind:

They mentioned a number of cities –Vienna, Munich, Danzig, Bratislava, Berlin – but only when one of the couple said that her transport, after two days of travelling through the German Reich and the Netherlands [...] had finally [crossed] the North Sea to Harwich, only then did I know [...] that these fragments of memory were part of my own life as well.<sup>3</sup>

Since the age of four when extricated from his familiar environment, Austerlitz has negotiated loss and absence. The assimilating efforts of his Welsh foster parents who took away his travel backpack, changed his name and reared him in complete oblivion of his descent is an impairment he has further increased by undertaking a wilful obliteration of his past until late in life: “I knew nothing about the conquest of Europe by the Germans [...] and nothing about the persecution I had escaped [...] I did not read newspapers because [...] I feared unwelcome revelations [...] I was always refining my defence reactions, creating a kind of quarantine or immune system.”<sup>4</sup>

The dimension and duration of Jacques’ self-censorship is distressing. His insulation from truth is symptomatic of his fragility, pointing to the very core of his destabilised self, for which such confined spaces and bordered foundations as the fortifications of Antwerp, the fortress of Breendock, and the Nazi prisons and labour camps are appropriate metaphors. Likewise, frequent images of zoos and bestiariums, where birds live their internment in surreal slow motion, are deployed to suggest Jacques’ precarious isolation.

As a student in Paris and a professor of architectural history in London, Jacques wanders about Europe restlessly in search of cultural landmarks and a sense of belonging. Significantly, his unconventional view of history and time reflects a need to come to terms with the crisis of non-identity: time is not a measurable linear sequence to Jacques, but more an arbitrary notion, something that “moves in eddies [and] recurs in ever-changing form.”<sup>5</sup> He develops a lasting aversion to clocks and their ‘mendacious’ nature, preferring to think of time as reversible and concurrent: “time will not pass away [...] I can turn back and [...] find that all moments of time have coexisted simultaneously.”<sup>6</sup> This uncanny sense of time as sign of trauma is both recuperative of lost memories and identity, as it is indicative of a major psychological crisis that Jacques is unable to comprehend, let alone resolve until late in life.

The leitmotif of train tracks and platforms is both entrapping and liberating. Their dual connotation is obvious in a passage where, on his return to Czechoslovakia, passing a dense forest between Würzburg and Frankfurt, Austerlitz welcomes resuscitated memories of his initial trip to Britain: “it dawned upon me [...] that what I now was going past [...] was the original of the images that had haunted me for so many years.”<sup>7</sup> This fragment is a symbolic undoing of his childhood journey into the unknown. The borderless landscape, perceived as such by Jacques the child in 1939, has by comparison more clearly defined contours now, and the idea of boundary gains a positive connotation as related to clarity and emergence from confusion.

Furthermore, the issue of border is ontologised as he visits Teresín, a labour camp in former Czechoslovakia along with the fortification of Willenbroek and Kaunas in Lithuania, in search for traces of his late mother Agáta. In places like these, “the border between life and death is less impenetrable than we commonly think [...] there [is] only this dividing line, with ordinary life on one side and its unimaginable opposite on the other.”<sup>8</sup>

The anguish of anonymity that drove him to investigate his origins is progressively replaced by an even more unsettling feeling: that of horror at discovering the atrocious fate of his people. The closer he gets to the truth, though, the bigger the gap that opens between himself and his juvenile double. This moment of self-splitting is brilliantly captured in the scene where his former nanny Vera shows to the now aged Austerlitz a photo of himself taken only 6 months before his leaving Prague in 1939, at the age of four:

hard as I tried [...] I could not recollect myself in the part [...] All memory was extinguished in me [...] I always felt the piercing, inquiring gaze of the page boy who had come to demand his dues, who was waiting [...] for me to [...] avert the misfortune lying ahead of him.<sup>9</sup>

This specular confrontation is tragic, as the two hypostases of Jacques’ selfhood are far too alienated to cohere. They will be eternally separated by boundaries of history, time, life and death, on the fringe of memory and forgetting.

The question that rises at the end of Jacques’ odyssey is how much of a Czech, a Brit or a Jew could he argue to be in the light of the recent revelations and to what extent can he identify with the tribulations of the European Jewry? Are the boundaries of his layered identity clearly defined? Obviously, his solitary journey around the history-imbued landmarks of Europe contribute to a partial recuperation of memory and to a probable activation of his ethnic and personal awareness, but the extent to which this realisation is perceived as a substantial or just an abstract acknowledgement is debatable. More certain is the fact that the geographic trajectory back to his



homeland did not help recover the full memory of his childhood, and thereby it increased his sense of alterity when confronted with printed, remembered or dreamt images of his kin. Their persecution and violent deaths remain issues hard to cope with in old age, while his fear of confronting the image of his younger alter ego may be rooted in the profound guilt to have fled for survival.

Just as important to consider is the issue of age gap between the child and the adult Austerlitz in assessing the chances for identity coherence and the justifiability of such classifications as the '1.5 generation'. How keen is a four-year old refugee's sense of racial and ethnic identity and how well is it preserved in a foreign context utterly different from his country of origin? Jacques' confusion when faced with the secrecy surrounding his origin develops into clinical signs of traumatic disorder (anxiety, panic attacks and hysterical epilepsy). When his already troubled mind is waking to childhood memories prompted by chance and his quest for truth presents him with the advent of the Holocaust, his precarious sense of self, already shaken by the premature separation from his parents, is further destabilised. It could therefore be argued that his "extreme [...] trauma"<sup>10</sup> triggered at a very early age led to what Suleiman calls "'delayed' generational consciousness"<sup>11</sup> late in life affecting, like in most cases of 1.5 generation survivors, the formation and evolution of his personal identity.

Another destiny emerging from Europe's troubled war time is that of Polish poet Jakob Beer, the protagonist of Anne Michaels's novel *Fugitive Pieces*. Saved by the Greek archaeologist Athos Roussos around the flooded ruins of the ancient city of Polish Biskupin in 1937, Jakob is brought to the Mediterranean island of Zakynthos, where he is hidden to escape deportation, and taught geology and world civilisation. After the war, Jakob and Athos travel to Toronto, where the latter teaches geography at university. To counteract the memory of his parents' massacre at the hands of the Nazis and his sister Bella's disappearance during the war, Jakob develops a passion for poetry, his necessary means to exorcise pain. In his older years, he returns to the Greek island of Idhra with his Canadian wife, Michaela, who he dies tragically with in a car accident in Athens.

Michaels ushers her eponymous character in as the 'bog-boy' haunting the muddy streets of Biskupin, after witnessing his parents' bloody execution by the SS. His emergence from the mud coincides with his first encounter with Athos and marks a first major break from the past:

I limped towards him, stiff as a golem, clay tight behind my knees [...] I screamed into the silence the only phrase I knew in more than one language, I screamed it in Polish and German and Yiddish, thumping my fists on my own chest: dirty Jew, dirty Jew, dirty Jew.<sup>12</sup>

This potent scene of rebirth has a mythological touch to it: a golem is a legendary Jewish creature born by miracle from clay. Though I would not go so far as to assert, as have Sander Gilman and Alan Rosen,<sup>13</sup> that this is a case of self-hatred, I would argue that it marks both the outbreak of trauma and Jakob's beginning to deal with it: the linguistic dissipation into three idioms is his first acknowledgement of identity dismantlement, but also a preview of his later rehabilitation through languages other than his own.

A fugitive, like many Jewish children in the history of the Holocaust, Jakob experiences symptoms of trauma from an early stage in the form of the deceased's omnipresence among the living. To him it seems as though the symbiosis between the two worlds reverberates across generations, through a sinister process of memory transfer:

When the prisoners were forced to dig up the mass graves, the dead entered them through their pores and were carried through their bloodstream to their brains and hearts. And through their blood into another generation.<sup>14</sup>

The memory of the dead articulates itself in ways similar to the process of fossil formation, with limestone fossils, polar ice, flooded ruins and ravines employed as metaphors of counter-history: "Athos had a special affection for limestone-that crushed reef of memory [...] organic history squeezed into massive mountain tombs."<sup>15</sup> His stories of polar expeditions, geologic times, and paleo-botany give Jakob's survival a meaning while putting life and death in a cosmic perspective. Unlike Austerlitz, raised by cold, uninspired foster parents, Jakob is reared in the spirit of a deep understanding of life's potential to subsist and metamorphose, and therefore his self awareness is more acute than Jacques's:

Even as a child [...] I understood that if I were strong enough to accept it, I was being offered a second history [...] The great mystery of wood is not that it burns, but that it floats.<sup>16</sup>

Concurrently, the child's individuality is insured a space to regenerate and expand through Athos' narratives of extinguished civilisations, into which Jakob reads a pattern of renewal and diversity. By providing him with cultural knowledge, Athos enlarged his scope, at a historical time that allowed no room for the average Jew:

While I hid in the luxury of a room, thousands were stuffed into baking stoves, sewers, garbage bins. [...] While I was

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learning Greek and English, [...] geology, geography, and poetry, Jews were filling the corners and cracks of Europe.<sup>17</sup>

Unlike Jakob, though, Austerlitz had the space, but lacked the scope. The horizontal perspective of space mingles with the vertical topography of selfhood. The characters move around the geographical tract along plane courses (linear or convoluted), but their sense of self wanders up and down a vertical scale, surfacing the conscious and exploring the subconscious. The network of ancient fortresses and drowned ruins that populate the novel are symbolic of other emotional ruins and counter-histories preserved in the characters' memory<sup>18</sup>. Be it the flooded city of Biskupin, the Aegean Sea where the Corfu Jews were thrown during the war or dozens of other Meozoic swamps and ancient ravines in Canada, they all stand for a vertical conception of time and space: packed at the bottom of history, they subsist as sites of counter history, lifted by the incessant and painstaking geological movements. By the same principles of vertical motility, the layers of Jakob's identity are permanently shifted by the return of the repressed through nightmares and flashbacks.

What Athos teaches his apprentice both on Zakynthos and in Toronto, is a cultural way of dealing with the past through geologic excursions into official or hidden histories. When Athos dies in Toronto, he leaves Jakob a precious legacy: anthropo-geology and an integrative, universal view on human identity viewed pan-historically and cross-culturally. In doing so, he succeeds in restoring purpose and meaning to an existence rendered futile by the Holocaust.

In Canada, Jakob also learns to transgress linguistic borders and finds in English, just like in Greek during the war, the means to forget: "The English language was food [...] with each mouthful the past was further silenced."<sup>19</sup> Similarly to a palimpsest script, English erases Yiddish and is superimposed on the past<sup>20</sup>. Paradoxically, though, recording his memoirs and poetry in English is also a tool of disremembering: "it was a revelation. English could protect me: an alphabet without memory."<sup>21</sup> While suggesting that Yiddish is the language of anamnesis and English, that of amnesia, Alan Rosen draws on the significance of subjective vs. objective in the process of identity reconstruction through writing because, he explains, "the less intimate the connection, the greater the possibility of eloquence."<sup>22</sup>

In conclusion, for both Austerlitz and Jakob, Jewishness could be interpreted as an acquired identity: they both flee persecution and become émigrés at an early age, taking distance from a collective identity that they later reconnect with in documented sources. While Austerlitz experiences the whole truth about the Holocaust somewhat suddenly at a mature age and with devastating consequences, Jakob is, by contrast, helped to cope with the

shock gradually by Athos. And while emigration delays revelation for Austerlitz, keeping him trapped in a clarified, yet unresolved past, on the other hand it increases Jakob's self-awareness and accelerates his healing.

Both Jacques and Jakob's profiles stand out as hyphenated identities categorised as the '1.5 generation'. Before and during the war, their sense of Jewishness undergoes a premature deconstruction, long before adult self-awareness is reached. In the absence of Jewish parents, their post-war identity is a collage of minimal collective memories, framed by personal traumatic experiences whose effects are still manifest in their confused sense of national and individual belonging. Their status of Holocaust refugees turned into survivors and eventually immigrants marks, one could argue, a transition from total exclusion to a problematic state of inclusion.

### Notes

<sup>1</sup> Susan Rubin Suleiman, 'The 1.5 Generation: Thinking About Child survivors and the Holocaust'. *American Imago*, vol. 59, Fall 2002, p. 277.

<sup>2</sup> The process of identity formation or deconstruction is understood as referenced in Michael A. Mayer's book called *Jewish Identity in the Modern World*, University of Washington Press, Seattle & London, 1990, pp.5-6. Both analysts argue that the process of Jewish identity formation is based primarily on the child's sense of continuity between the pre-adult values instilled within the nurturing family and the adolescent's later encounter with society: "Such crisis is especially likely to occur when there is a profound discontinuity between the earlier identifications, made within the more intimate family setting, and conflicting values that the individual encounters when moving beyond family into society." The Holocaust with its brutal illogicality induces a sense of profound discontinuity in the orphans' hierarchy of values and thereby it engenders trauma.

<sup>3</sup> W G Sebald, *Austerlitz*, Penguin Books, London, 2002, p. 200. All quotes will refer back to this edition.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 197-8.

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 143.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 144.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 316.

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 395/414.

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

<sup>10</sup> Suleiman, p. 289.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 286.

<sup>12</sup> A Michaels, *Fugitive Pieces*, Bloomsbury Publishing Plc., London, 1988, pp. 12-3. All quotes will refer back to this edition.

<sup>13</sup> In *Sounds of Defiance*, University of Nebraska Press, Lincoln and London, 2005, p. 178, Alan Rosen strengthens Sander Gilman's view on Jewish self-hatred as relevant to this scene. The self-hatred thesis does simply not hold within the context of Jakob's later development and ultimate self-discovery.

<sup>14</sup> Michaels, p.52.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, p.32.

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 20/28.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>18</sup> This is actually a case of what Meredith Cringlinton dubs 'counter-memory', i.e. those hidden aspects of history left out of the official discourse: "Counter-memory looks to the past for the hidden histories excluded from dominant narratives." M Cringlinton, 'The City as a Site of Counter-Memory in Anne Michaels's *Fugitive Pieces* and Michael Ondaatje's *In the Skin of a Lion*'. *Canadian Literature*, vol. 81, 2004, p.131.

<sup>19</sup> Michaels, p. 92.

<sup>20</sup> In this respect, I concur with Alan Rosen's association of Yiddish with silence: "What obliterates Yiddish is not the palliative stories that Athos tells but 'silence', presumably the cultural silence, the absence of any Yiddish voice." in Rosen, *op. cit.*, p. 180.

<sup>21</sup> Michaels, p. 101.

<sup>22</sup> Rosen, p. 184.

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# How Solidarity Works in Highly Diversified Societies How Far Do We Get with National Liberalism?

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## **Abstract**

Like the liberal nationalists and unlike the defenders of constitutional patriotism, we insist that a sense of belonging together is necessary for the practice of an egalitarian and deliberative democracy. Therefore, we can take a shared national identity as one of the building blocks of democracy. However, we argue that a shared national identity cannot be a necessary condition for this sense of belonging together. The mere fact of co-operation and common participation in shared activities and projects can create a sense of belonging together, regardless of whether the participants do share a national identity or not. Governments of diversified societies can try to establish a shared national culture, but even more important is their task to create a sense of belonging together by virtue of co-operation and shared participation.

**Key Words:** Liberal nationalism, multiculturalism, shared identity, solidarity.

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## **1. Solidarity and Community**

Some communitarians have criticized egalitarian liberalism for neglecting the social conditions required for the effective fulfilment of its interests. For communitarians, the liberal model, as described by Dworkin and Rawls, is sociologically naïve because solidarity and trust, as conditions for a sustainable policy of social justice, cannot exist in a community of strangers. The fact that people share similar beliefs about justice may be a necessary condition for social unity, and solidarity. But shared political principles are not sufficient; more is required than a voluntary association of people who share the same principles of justice. Communitarians argue that distributive justice is only possible in a society with a high degree of pre-political solidarity between encumbered selves who share a strong sense of community and belonging together.<sup>1</sup>

Many liberals do not deny this 'social thesis'. They tacitly presuppose that the principles of justice are to operate in the context of a (national) community whose members acknowledge ties of solidarity. But they have seldom addressed this issue explicitly.<sup>2</sup> Rawls for example assumed that the boundaries of his ideas about justice "are given by the

notion of a self-contained national community". And Dworkin mentioned that questions of justice and fairness are always questions of what would be fair or just *within* a particular political community.<sup>3</sup> Therefore, liberals have to treat community as prior to justice and fairness.

Some communitarians suggest, however, that the sense of belonging together, as a necessary condition for the practice of solidarity, requires liberals to abandon the idea of a 'neutral state'. Taylor argues that a neutral government "would reflect a society so deeply demoralized as to be close to dissolution" and in that case "the prospects for liberal democracy would not be rosy".<sup>4</sup> Strong communities whose citizens feel moral obligations of solidarity to each other can only exist when the members share a common form of life. This is only possible when the idea of the neutral state is replaced by a non-neutral politics of the common good.

## 2. The Liberal Accommodation of the Communitarian Critique

Liberal nationalists (like Y. Tamir, D. Miller, J. Spinner, A. Margalit, J. Raz and W. Kymlicka) reflect a sincere attempt to accommodate this communitarian critique. They reject both the traditional liberal view that solidarity is sustained by shared beliefs in universal principles of justice, *and* the communitarian view that solidarity is sustained by shared beliefs in a particularistic conception of the good. The liberal-nationalist approach to social unity is something in between: it requires that citizens share more than simply political principles, but less than a shared conception of the good life.

What provides the motivational basis for solidarity and social integration is a common but 'thin' national identity. To create this shared nationhood, states can use a wide range of nation-building policies. Of course, nation-building can take a communitarian form, but this is not necessary. Nation-building need not take the form of promoting a particular conception of the good life. The liberal basis of a common national identity is thinner and more diffuse than ethnic and communitarian versions of it.<sup>5</sup>

Liberal nationalists take liberalism as their starting-point, and emphasize that their form of nationalism is not a defensive reaction to modernity and enlightenment. A national community need not require oppressive intolerance and coercive assimilation. On the contrary, liberal nationalism is open, inclusive, peaceful, democratic and multicultural. Within one liberal nation there is place for cultural and religious pluralism, and for different ethnic identities.<sup>6</sup>

## 3. The Strong and Weak Nationalist Thesis

The idea of liberal nationalism is quite successful. Kymlicka argues that the liberal-nationalist approach to social unity is the approach which most real-world liberal democracies have adopted. And Tamir writes that



except for some cosmopolitans and radical anarchists, most liberals are liberal nationalists nowadays.<sup>7</sup>

The last thesis of Tamir is right - to such an extent that almost no liberal will deny that a common national identity provides indeed a source of social unity, trust and solidarity, and that a shared nationhood provides an important basis for the achievement of liberal ideals of justice, liberty and (deliberative) democracy.

However, there is no consensus on the idea that a shared national identity is a *necessary* condition for these liberal interests. We can make a distinction here between the strong and the weak nationalist thesis. The strong thesis holds that the community-like nature of the nation-state is the *necessary* matrix to create a sense of belonging together. A shared national identity is functionally indispensable to the viability of liberal democracy, because “without a common national identity, there is nothing to hold citizens together”.<sup>8</sup> Among large aggregates of different people, only a common nationality could provide solidarity and trust to sustain democracy and social justice. According to this strong liberal nationalist account, every entity that aims at providing the framework of a liberal-democratic welfare state *needs* this kind of communal spirit to be effective.<sup>9</sup> This position echoes Mill’s conclusion in *Considerations on Representative Government*:

Free institutions are next to impossible in a country made up of different nationalities. Among a people without fellow-feeling, especially if they read and speak different languages, the united public opinion, necessary to the working of representative government, cannot exist.<sup>10</sup>

The weak nationalist thesis holds that a shared national culture is particularly well suited as condition for solidarity and trust, but it is not a *conditio sine qua non*. Of course, a shared national identity may reduce some of the costs liberal egalitarian democratic societies incur, but a sense of belonging together as the condition for solidarity and trust, is not impossible without a common national identity.

Sociological and empirical facts show that the strong thesis is implausible. It is not the case that the basis of social integration and solidarity must be uniformly nationalist.<sup>11</sup> There are many examples of solidarity in contexts without a shared national identity. We can think of multinational states such as Belgium, Suisse or Canada, and political constructions as the European Union, but also of the solidarity *within* multiethnic states in which people do not always share the same national identity. Miller seems to acknowledge that solidarity with co-citizens of another national identity is possible, but he suggests that this kind of situation would be unstable and could only be tolerated if the number of non-nationals is fairly small.<sup>12</sup>

#### 4. The Post-Nationalist Alternative

The liberal attention for nationhood was quite daring because it has been negatively linked with ethnocentrism, racism, xenophobia, forced assimilation and authoritarianism. Hence, for many people, nationalism has been an unmitigated evil.<sup>13</sup>

As a reaction to these potentially dangerous tendencies of nationalism, some authors try to minimize the impact of national identities and the function of nationhood as a battery for the working of liberal democracies. Moreover globalisation and immigration challenge the traditional role of modern nation-states. Defenders of cosmopolitan governance, like David Held (1995, 1999), argue that in our time “democratic political agency must transcend the level of nations if citizens are to have any meaningful say over the circumstances of their lives”. The problem, however, is that this cosmopolitan model does not resolve the problem how to create the necessary trust and sense of belonging together to make democracy work. Moreover this model is “for the most part silent on questions of collective identity and social justices”.<sup>14</sup>

Another way to get round the potential difficulties of nationalism has been called *Verfassungspatriotismus* or constitutional patriotism.<sup>15</sup> According to this post-nationalist thesis, social unity and integration do not require a special ‘sense of belonging together’, it requires only a ‘sense of belonging to a polity’.<sup>16</sup> Sometimes this is also called ‘civic nationalism’ or ‘cosmopolitan (republican) nationalism’. They emphasize that a shared nationality may not implies something more than a ‘civic tie’.<sup>17</sup>

However, many authors overlook the fact that ‘civic nationalism’ has also a cultural component. Kymlicka argues that is obviously false to say that membership in civic nations as France or the U.S. is not based on culture, but only on allegiance to certain constitutional principles. French and American nationalism has been concerned not only with promoting freedom, equality and political principles; they were also concerned with creating a common identity and promoting a common language.<sup>18</sup>

In the end, all these post-national ideas add nothing new to what was already present in Rawlsian, procedural liberalism. It believes that “public agreement on questions of political and social justice supports ties of civic friendship and secures the bonds of association”.<sup>19</sup> With civic nationalism and constitutional patriotism we are back at our starting-point. It learned nothing of the communitarian critique that argues rightly that this abstract model of social unity and civic friendship is sociologically naive.

#### 5. Nation-Building Policies: Their Scope and Limits

There is discussion about the concept of a national identity, but it cannot be denied that a national identity at a certain historical moment has some substantive content. It has to do with overlapping cultural

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characteristics - language, a common history, territory and media, acknowledging the same political authority, knowing the same famous people (politicians, sportsmen, musicians, pop stars), identification with national symbols and institutions, and the presence of a degree of national consciousness.<sup>20</sup>

Liberal nationalists are right when they argue that 'neutrality' is an unattainable ideal. The state decides which languages are the official ones; it makes decisions about public holidays, state symbols, and subsidies for media and culture. A full separation between state and (national) culture is impossible.<sup>21</sup> However, in a liberal society there is no room for a form of paternalistic politics of the common good. Therefore, liberal (nation-) states have to promote the national identity "not in order to promote a particular conception of the good life, but rather to increase the likelihood that citizens will fulfil their obligations of justice".<sup>22</sup>

However, all this does not mean that a state can compulsorily impose a national identity. From a liberal perspective, only a minimal concept of citizenship can be compelled. It has been argued that loyalty to the nationhood and a form of patriotism are also important civic virtues.<sup>23</sup> However, this can only be collectively and actively *promoted*, not compulsorily *compelled*. The latter is not only illiberal but also impossible. It is a contradiction to ask somebody to change his (national) identity against his will. A Turkish immigrant who lives in Belgium can officially change his nationality, but nobody can ask or force him to feel like a Belgian. It is also impossible to force immigrants to throw away all their trans-national bindings. The government can promote that citizens watch Belgian television, but cannot forbid them to watch Aljazeera or Turkish television; and the government can ask people to speak the official language because it is good for their opportunities in the guest society, but it cannot force them to abandon their own language.

So, nation-building policies are important, but their scope and aim is limited. Especially in a context of immigration societies, liberal nation-building projects may not overestimate themselves. The (Westphalian) idea that we can (re)organize the political community in a world wherein all states fall together with a homogeneous national public culture is an illusion. There will always be residents with trans-national bindings and/or little affinity with the country they live in. This is so, because some people develop professional trans-national activities, but also because all newcomers need some time – and some groups need clearly more time than others – to assimilate to their new national culture. Deplorable or not, this is the social reality we have to work with.<sup>24</sup>

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**6. A Sense of Belonging Together Beyond Nationality**

In what follows, we will only give attention to the problem of national diversity within (nation-) states *as a result of immigration*, and will not cope with the problem of the 'surprising' solidarity in democratic pluri- and supra-national political constructions.<sup>25</sup>

Our starting-point is double. First, we take in account that the strong nationalist thesis is implausible and not always efficient because there is the empirical fact that not all residents of a nation-state identify themselves with the national identity of the majority and not all residents feel recognized in the national public culture. Second, we agree with the thesis of the liberal nationalists and communitarians that the practice of solidarity presupposes more than an exclusively civic tie between people. This urges us to look for other mechanisms to create solidarity and a sense of belonging together. The question is thus: how can people affectively identify with each other (as a precondition for solidarity) despite they are not sharing a single national culture and identity?<sup>26</sup> What can constitute the necessary sense of belonging together in a context of 'deep diversity'?<sup>27</sup>

It is our thesis that the precondition for solidarity can be sought in the idea of *citizenship by shared participation*. Citizens with different national and cultural identities, with different social backgrounds, and even with different native languages can recognize each other as co-citizens because they meet each other at work, they have children in the same school, they live in the same street, etc. Maybe, the metaphor of the lifeboat, rejected by Miller, can be useful. The occupants of a lifeboat are being thrown together in a random way, but "they must treat one another decently, they must work together to keep their craft afloat, and so forth". This form of quasi-accidental connectedness can be the basis for a sense of belonging together and mutual commitment to each other.<sup>28</sup>

Diversity in our societies does not make solidarity easier, but based on the idea of citizenship by shared participation and co-operation in common projects, solidarity and mutual trust seems not impossible. What we need at the most basic level is not only a broadly shared national identity, but also a shared engagement of all citizens to undertake common societal projects. It is possible that this project is a national one, but it is also possible on other, more basic, levels, such as those of the city, neighbourhood, school community, or business. Whether people feel like Belgian-Moroccans, Moroccans who live in Brussels, or Americans who live in Europe, is of minor importance as long as people are really engaged to live together in the same neighbourhood, city, country and Europe. When people act together, meet each other and participate in concrete activities, solidarity and a sense of belonging together can evolve even if there is no common national identity.

## 7. Some Practical Implications

### A. *Citoyenneté de Residence and Social Mix*

Because the national homogeneous state is an illusion in a context of globalisation and immigration, it could be wise to organise citizenship independently of the nationality issue. The fact that people live together in the same territory for a long time and participate in the same economical, social and political context can be a sufficient basis of citizenship. Nationality itself should not be a criterion.<sup>29</sup> In a society of immigration there is a growing number of 'non-nationals' with an interest in the guest society they live in (and the other way around: the society has also a great interest in this group of immigrants). These 'denizens', especially those foreigners with a permanent resident status, must be able to exercise their rights and to participate maximally in our society otherwise we create forms of undesirable inequality and dual-citizenship.<sup>30</sup>

However, *la reconnaissance d'une citoyenneté de residence* does not exclude that the liberal democratic state can/must sponsor cultural nation-building projects. Civil rights and duties are not enough to create a real sense of belonging together. A shared national culture makes it easier to live together in solidarity, and nation-building programmes can do a lot. There are several liberal opportunities to establish a particular national consciousness. Education, media, official holidays and national symbols can do their job. From this perspective it is also reasonable that naturalisation is not something futile. It can get some official and ceremonial attention, as is the case in Canada, the U.S. and recently in the Netherlands.

But as we have seen, nation-building policies are limited in their scope and therefore the state must also stimulate the idea of 'citizenship by shared participation'. To realise this idea in a deeply diversified society, it is particularly important that people can meet each other. In the hope of 'spreading' trust, institutions must be designed in such a way as to encourage inter-group collaboration and it seems sensible to multiply initiatives bringing people of different social, ethnic, cultural or religious groups together in different areas.<sup>31</sup> Because contact and shared participation is one of the most basic and essential conditions for mutual identification, social integration, trust and solidarity, governments can stimulate shared participation in several activities and legitimately promote policies of social mix in education, neighbourhoods, employment and civil society. As Estlund remarks: even hierarchically organised, non-union workplaces, where diverse people are bound to work together, can foster social ties and civic skills that are essential in a diverse democratic society.<sup>32</sup> Affirmative action and special (multicultural) measures for more equal participation are therefore not only in the individual interest of the migrants, but also in the interest of the (cohesion of the) whole society.

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**B. *Language Policy***

Next to self-empowerment, this idea of ‘identification by shared participation’ is also one of the main reasons to develop an active language policy. Active policies on language acquisition are important for practical reasons, and have nothing to do with the intrinsic worth of the new or the native language. Therefore, an active language policy is also compatible with respect for, and even the protection of the languages spoken by ethnic minorities.<sup>33</sup> An attitude of neutrality or laissez-faire is not an option for a diversified society, and governments must ensure that all citizens (can) learn the language. It is not against the ideas of liberalism to expect newcomers to learn (one of) the official language(s) because “this knowledge is not only indispensable if they are to make a place for themselves in a complex society, it is also needed if they are to contribute towards continuing it and – if so desired – changing it”.<sup>34</sup> As such, Miller is right when he argues that language is one of the most important elements for the practice of (deliberative and egalitarian) democracy.<sup>35</sup>

But, promoting a common language is not the same as promoting a shared nationhood and it is definitely not the same as insisting on full assimilation. Turkish immigrants in the Netherlands can speak Dutch, while keeping the Turkish nationality, keeping trans-national ties, being a Muslim and reading Turkish newspapers. Of course a language policy is an important element for nation-building and partial cultural assimilation. Although it is not the main purpose of language policy, we can expect some cultural integration through language. Moreover we can also expect that in some time or over some generations a shared national identity will evolve between newcomers and the older residents. This (partly) new common identity – an identity that is more hospitable to the minorities than the old one – can only be forged when newcomers and immigrants are engaged in dialogue with the host community. And again, the requirement of knowledge of the language is a necessary condition for this process of ‘the reproduction of citizenship’.<sup>36</sup>

**Conclusion**

Like the liberal nationalists and unlike the defenders of constitutional patriotism, we insist that a sense of belonging together is necessary for the practice of an egalitarian and deliberative democracy. Therefore, we can take a shared national identity as one of the building blocks of democracy. However, we argued that a shared national identity can not be a necessary condition for this sense of belonging together. The mere fact of co-operation and common participation in shared activities and projects can create a sense of belonging together, regardless of whether the participants do share a national identity or not. Governments of diversified societies can try (within the liberal bounds) to establish a shared national culture, but even more important is their task to create a sense of belonging

together by co-operation and shared participation. Therefore, governments can develop an active language policy. Governments can also promote (again within the liberal bounds) the idea of social mix because for the creation of the needed sense of belonging together it is particularly important that people can meet each other. The discussion what steps the state may legitimately take to promote this, need to continue, and more empirical research on this theme is wishful.

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<sup>4</sup> Taylor, 'Cross-purposes', p. 203.

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<sup>8</sup> D Miller, *Market, state and community*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989, p. 245.

<sup>9</sup> Kymlicka, *Politics in the vernacular*, p. 239; Miller, *On nationality*, p. 98; Canovan, *Nationhood and political theory*, pp. 87, 101-2; Tamir, *Liberal nationalism*, pp. 117, 121 .

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<sup>26</sup> A Abizadeh, 'Does liberal democracy presuppose a cultural nation? Four arguments'. *American Political Science Review*, 96, 2002, 3, pp. 495-509.

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