



OXFORD JOURNALS
OXFORD UNIVERSITY PRESS

Mapping Identities: Literature, Nationalism, Colonialism

Author(s): Timothy J. Reiss

Source: *American Literary History*, Winter, 1992, Vol. 4, No. 4 (Winter, 1992), pp. 649-677

Published by: Oxford University Press

Stable URL: <https://www.jstor.org/stable/489790>

JSTOR is a not-for-profit service that helps scholars, researchers, and students discover, use, and build upon a wide range of content in a trusted digital archive. We use information technology and tools to increase productivity and facilitate new forms of scholarship. For more information about JSTOR, please contact support@jstor.org.

Your use of the JSTOR archive indicates your acceptance of the Terms & Conditions of Use, available at <https://about.jstor.org/terms>



Oxford University Press is collaborating with JSTOR to digitize, preserve and extend access to *American Literary History*

JSTOR

Mapping Identities: Literature, Nationalism, Colonialism

Timothy J. Reiss

For those who publicly consider relations between literature and nation, between poetics and imperialism, and associated matters, the temptation to adopt some high ground of rectitude is matched only by the danger of binary extremism. To have been born and raised in a European “metropolitan” culture is to wear a mantle of guilt or carry the torch of civilization. Not to have been is to wear an aureole of glory or carry a duty to acquire universal values. Those who still uphold the latter positions believe they argue the good of a common humanity. Those adopting the former assert they argue an actual pluralism of humanity that their antagonists deny and crush beneath a self-serving oppression. For them, to dwell in the centers of high capitalism is to have to find a way to go “all the way through” its foundational practices “and out the other side.” So Terry Eagleton puts the matter in his contribution to *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* (23). To be sure, those born in evil must traverse “the very metaphysical [and social] categories” they hope “finally to abolish” and cannot “live sheer irreducible difference *now*” (23–24). Still, although “we have as yet no proper names” (24) for what that “other” may be, its existence as the bright future of changed humanity is a fulfillable dream. It may not be “*now*,” but it definitely has a when.

To think of cultural difference as the “other” of metropolitan practices is a problem for all commentators on these topics, however they try to resolve it. And resolve it they must. Otherwise they repeat the colonizing gesture they criticize. In one sense, Eagleton notes, that is simply because the tools of our critical craft have largely been developed “on a terrain already mapped out by [the] antagonists” in question (24). That is so whether the commentator is by origin “metropolitan” or not: for Homi K. Bhabha, Sylvia Molloy, Edward

Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature
By Terry Eagleton,
Fredric Jameson, and
Edward W. Said
Introduced by
Seamus Deane
University of
Minnesota Press, 1990

Nation and Narration
Edited by Homi K.
Bhabha
Routledge, 1990

Ideology: An Introduction
By Terry Eagleton
Verso, 1991

Belated Modernity and Aesthetic Culture: Inventing National Literature
By Gregory Jusdanis
University of
Minnesota Press, 1991

At Face Value: Autobiographical Writing in Spanish America
By Sylvia Molloy
Cambridge University
Press, 1991

*The Poetics of
Imperialism:
Translation and
Colonization from The
Tempest to Tarzan*
By Eric Cheyfitz
Oxford University
Press, 1991

W. Said, and Gregory Jusdanis (who claims for modern Greece a “marginal” status), no less than for Eric Cheyfitz, Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and the vast majority of authors in *Nation and Narration*. For the latter, at least, there is a further complexity at issue: one to which some are blinder than others. It has to do with learning to listen, precisely, to differences; with trying to understand them in their own terms as wholes, before absorbing them as “our” “other”; with knowing that diverse cultural processes *do* exist, binding people in different kinds of relations and different understandings of being (for example), and that these must change our ideas of literature and criticism just because they question the claim of any culture to centrality or universality. “To be incapable of seeing that Nature has more than one face, that humans have a variety of ideas and interests,” wrote José Enrique Rodó a century ago, “is to live in a shadowy dreamworld penetrated by a single ray of light” (*Ariel* 42).

This is not to denigrate the achievements of metropolitan cultures. It is to open up others and to open them up *to* those others. To do so requires many tasks. The history of the invention of metropolitan cultures has to be explored, both to understand their own mechanisms and their relation with other cultures, as Jusdanis tries to do for the modern Greek case. The ways in which different cultural arenas function and can take up processes found elsewhere is a subject addressed by Molloy and, to some extent, by Cheyfitz. Too, the manner of such relations needs explaining. Most of the other writers discussed here want to do this. Almost without exception, they assume cultural antagonisms that take the form of oppressor and oppressed, of colonizer and colonized. It is important to understand the mechanisms of dispossession, of internalized oppression, of identity bereft, of how cultural territory is mapped (a much-worked concept), but the similarities of explanation and vocabulary tend to be slightly depressing. Further, seen through such spectacles, cultural territories inevitably fall into here and there, self and other. As an explanatory tool, the device may not be unhelpful. As an instrument of change—and that is what *all* these writers want (quite rightly, I think)—it is less so. Such conflictual separations, such neat boxes of explanation, correspond neither to the reality of cultural meetings nor to the complexity of their creation.

Said argues in “Yeats and Decolonization” that imperialism means a loss of the colonized place by its own natives as colonizers “map” it, “chart” it for themselves (*Nationalism,*

Colonialism, and Literature 77). The place acquires a “second nature.” Once so mapped, it no longer seems a colonial creation. To recover the place, the “anti-imperialist nationalist” has to “remap” it, people it with myths and religion, as well as find a language, by “an almost magically inspired, quasi-alchemical redevelopment of the native language” (79). Such finding, such remapping, has to use the “second nature” made by previous mappers at the same time as it draws on other cultural memories. What is so made has much to do with conflict; it has nothing to do with simple polarities. (Said avers that Yeats never got beyond nativism, accepting imperialism’s own defining gloss on the human—in terms of negritude, Irishness, Islam, or whatever [89].)

Cultural categories mingle and float. “Borders” are more than just porous. Cultures are mutually defining. The fault of European culture was to believe that they are not, that the burden of definition lay wholly on it—Rodó’s “single ray of light.” The challenge for contemporary critics working from within that arena is to avoid the trap of that belief. Simplified binarisms will not do it.

“Tell me, Askar,” asks that protagonist’s Uncle Hilaal in Nuruddin Farah’s novel *Maps*, “do you find truth in the maps you draw?” Answered by silence, Hilaal clarifies his question: “[D]o you carve out of your soul the invented truth of the maps you draw? Or does the daily truth match, for you, the reality you draw and the maps others draw?” A pause ensues before Askar replies “with the confidence of one who’s regained possession of a mislaid identity”:

“Sometimes,” I began to say, “I identify *a* truth in the maps which I draw. When I identify *this* truth, I label it as such, pickle it as though I were to share it with you, and Salaado. I hope, as dreamers do, that the dreamt dream will match the dreamt reality—that is, the invented truth of one’s imagination. My maps invent nothing. They copy a given reality, they map out the roads a dreamer has walked, they identify a notional truth.” (216)

In fact, Askar is mapping a Somalia that includes the Ogaden region and the lands for which the Western Somali Liberation Front is fighting against Ethiopia. His “notional truth” could become a “third nature,” no less real than the present one. The creation of such national territory depends on people identifying it as such—and no less does their identity depend on it.

But the maps with which Askar must perform start, whether Mercator or decimal, are European in origin.

Farah writes of a quest for national and personal identity, the recovery of things of which one has been dispossessed. But his narrator, a voice switching continually between second, first, and third person, traverses frontiers that move, gazes on seas that acquire changing meanings, delves into the divers tales of his and others' pasts, explores the varieties of culture—why, for example, a long-lived written culture may have no “single . . . genius of a poet,” while one that has had a script for less than a century may have “many hundreds of major poets”—and wonders whether these very varieties may let one rank cultures (201). These questions, including the last ethnocentric one (as Hilaal accuses), are those of all the present writers. For Farah, writing in 1986 from an unsettled place of struggle, these many issues could only be matter for telling and retelling: “[I]n the process he became the defendant. He was, at one and the same time, the plaintiff and the juror. Finally, allowing for his different personae to act as judge, as audience and as witness, Askar told it to himself” (246). These tellings, as this last sentence of the novel indicates, can never escape forensic inquiry. No judgment is at hand. The teller never gets beyond queries, however he and they cry for resolution. He has nowhere to fix the bounds of an answer, nowhere from whence to project the songlines of an ordered cartography, no “self” to give a source for the survey: “[N]o one has ever explained how to read maps, you see, and I have difficulty deciphering all the messages” (111).

Our many commentators rarely admit to such perplexities. Evidently, if you perceive cultures as oppressors and victims, as sites of historical conflict between takers and producers, as neatly bounded spaces of difference, matters do become simpler. In itself, that neither invalidates the arguments nor makes them not worth repeating. It may, however, limit their import. Introducing the anthology *Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature*, Seamus Deane (like two of his three authors) thus takes a rather uncomplicated view of Irish culture and its relation to British nationalism. He notes how revisionist Irish history, by seeing Irish-English relations in wholly localized terms, and so too complex for systematic explanation, tends to play the game of the conqueror by occluding the effects of conquest and denying they can be at all analyzed. The Field Day Theatre Company's view, he writes of the group whose projects include this anthology, is that culture can be analyzed as a whole and that the imperial-

ist role of Britain is essential to that analysis. (However simplified the arguments of this collection may often become, they do have precise import and intention: to intervene in the politics of [Northern] Irish culture, both practically and theoretically.)

Deane, like his colleagues and everyone else in the volumes discussed here, rejects any view that claims (a particular) art as universal: it is a “specific activity indeed, but one in which the whole history of a culture is deeply inscribed. The interpretation of culture is not predicated on the notion that there is some universal quality or essence that culture alone can successfully pursue and capture. That is itself a political idea that has played a crucial role in Irish experience” (7). Just those universalist claims allowed one national culture to impose itself on another, the latter then necessarily being modeled on the imposing culture (7–8). “At its most powerful, colonialism is a process of racial dispossession. A colonized people is without a specific history and even, as in Ireland and other cases, without a specific language” (10). As we saw Said remark in the same collection, a first step will thus be to regain a language of culture. The process will perforce be a communal one, however it may be lived in individual cases, and it “often begins with the demolition of the false stereotypes within which it has been entrapped. This is an intricate process, since the stereotypes are successful precisely because they have been interiorized” (12). It is one way a hegemonic system “continues to exert,” avers Eagleton here, “an implacable political force” (24).

For Eagleton agrees that the victim is forced to struggle in terms supplied by the oppressor (not so simple, Farah suggests). The fight, therefore, “will demand a difficult, perhaps ultimately impossible double optic, at once fighting on terrain already mapped out by its antagonists and seeking even now to prefigure within that mundane strategy styles of being and identity for which we have as yet no proper names” (24). Eagleton calls this double optic “irony.” It may be that Joyce’s *Ulysses* and *Finnegans Wake* perform just that. What they do, he asserts, is render a kind of sardonic “aesthetic totalization” of the Enlightenment “opposition” between aesthetic particularity and abstract understanding: Dublin becomes at once an iteration of imperial centers and “an expression of the rootless conditions of an international monopoly capitalism” (35). Ireland there is given a center that is not a center (34–37). Like Said’s Yeats, Eagleton’s Joyce reaches a threshold he cannot cross, for colonialism “is a *relation*,” and a “nation cannot

live on as some corporate self-identical entity once those political relations have been dismantled” (Eagleton 28).

The point is well taken, but because both Deane and Eagleton have started with just the thought of bounded entities in conflict, matters end there. Matters end there as well in Jameson’s piece in the collection, which analyzes “varieties of imperialism” in writers such as E. M. Forster and, again, Joyce. *Howards End* is taken to show imperialism as “bad” infinity: an endless effort of movement that is “the bad opposite of place itself”—“cosmopolitanism, London, the nomadic, the stench of motorcars, antibilious pills, all begin to coalesce as a single historical tendency” (57). In Forster this acquires the name of “Empire,” a place of ultimately meaningless and continuous motion. To Jameson such lack of meaning marks the disjunction between a metropolis and the colonies that make its life possible, while remaining invisible to it. For the very operation of Empire is hidden from its metropolitan beneficiaries (50–51). In Dublin, however, Joyce finds place: enclosed, always already “told,” since it repeats, in minor key, the habitation of an older imperial dispensation (60)—where encounters and conversations evince “an older urban life,” a totalizing map that turns “the great imperial space of the Mediterranean” into the closed “space of the colonial city” (64). The view—and the opposition—is akin to Eagleton’s and Deane’s.

This view is also akin to that of the authors of many of the essays in Bhabha’s collection—which are indeed so many and varied as rather to impede commentary: I surely belittle many subtleties of argument in reducing them to a place in my present one. They include efforts to suggest that (even) in the West’s past, some forms of patriotism have offered a civic arena of debate akin to Habermas’s public sphere, quite different from post-eighteenth-century nationalism, and opened ways to “otherness” blocked by these later developments (Simon During, John Barrell). Such views may have shared much with Rousseau’s offering narration as an escape from nation-as-nature, release from its violence, and a rediscovery of nature before violence: true nation (Geoffrey Bennington). Claims about historical binarisms are repeated, with more or less nuance, of nineteenth-century North American writing (David Simpson, Rachel Bowlby), twentieth-century English writing and criticism (Francis Mulhern, Gillian Beer), and current criticism in Australia, where it is argued that hegemonic tendencies can be and are countered by formation of a supposedly “counter-public sphere” (Sneja Gunew 99).

Although I am being reductively unjust to some of the authors, binary claims overwhelm the reader. They point to flaws widespread in this writing. These have to do with neglecting the complications of history, with taking parts for wholes and so thinking narrow argument to be broadly validated, with confusing words and things, allowing for a certain ease of dogmatic assertion. Something of all these practices has already been at least suggested. Let me quickly take three cases—probably unfair to the overall arguments advanced by their authors, but indicative with regard to the issues I want to raise about discussions of literature, colonialism, nationalism, and such other major bogeys of contemporary academic debate as multiculturalism, pluralism, and the canon.

For the first—skimming historical complexity—I take issue with a claim made in Timothy Brennan's essay in Bhabha's anthology, not because it is central to his argument here but because it has become an article of faith in discussion about the relation between metropolitan literature and nationalism/colonialism (Brennan himself furnishes names with which to conjure: Mikhail Bakhtin, Eric Hobsbawm, and Benedict Anderson). It is that the novel is most especially associated with the creation of the myth of the nation and with divers secondary(?) myths sustaining it. Because the novel is thought a creation of the European eighteenth century, the association meshes happily with asserted implications of a dialectic of Enlightenment and a destruction of Reason. The claim merrily fits those of Bennington, Barrell, Dering, and others about a generosity of debate having been lost in the eighteenth century. But the force of the association depends wholly, Brennan rightly sees, on the claim of novelty (the overall assertion seeks to tie capitalism, nationalism, imperialism, and colonialism to new European cultural forms—so many eighteenth-century "deviations").

So, Brennan holds, the novel's ancestor, epic, was (unlike the novel) never addressed "to or for one's contemporaries" (50). This is patently false, whether of the *Aeneid*, the *Divine Comedy*, the *Lusiads*, *Orlando Furioso*, the *Franciade*, *Gerusalemme Liberata*, the *Faerie Queene*, the *Pucelle*, or even *Paradise Lost*: all addressed contemporaries in very particular ways, and most meant specifically to elaborate myths of national origin and achievement. As far as literature, at least, is the question, the story *has* to be complicated. Bhabha and his contributors, Deane and his colleagues, Jusdanis and many others, want to fix nation making basically in the European nineteenth century. History will not allow this—not, at

least, with regard to the cultural narrations that develop the idea (and wider activities, including, as I have tried to show in *The Meaning of Literature*, the invention of literature itself). Epics were not just “ritualistic reaffirmations of a people” (50). They may not have sought to “create a people” (50); they most assuredly sought regularly to establish a dynastic legitimacy for a people. Some sense of “national identity,” of a localizable, differentiated community with which one could (and did) identify, with its own myths and tales, long preexisted the European nineteenth century (as did its modern understanding of literature).

How much does this matter? For one thing it queries the many blindnesses hidden behind Bruce Robbins’s recalling, in the same collection, a question put to Raymond Williams by the editors of *New Left Review* and which have to do with my second issue: narrow parts confused for broad wholes. The editors noted that (Williams’s) literary criticism did not cope with the Irish famine or the 1848 revolutions, asserting that there was thus no way of getting from texts to structures of feeling, to real experience, and thence to social structures (the editors’ main reference here for their bizarre positivism must be Williams’s *Marxism and Literature*) (213). Williams replied with the case of Dickens. Robbins does not query this reply. Both are emblematic. For while the *New Left Review* may be able to make the assertion of a novel, it cannot be meaningful to make it of the novel: from Edgeworth and Austen to Balzac and Sue, from La Roche and the Brontës to Turgenev and Tolstoy, from Sand and Eliot to Melville and Hawthorne, from Manzoni and Galdos to Chernychevsky and Dickens and others considered in Bhabha’s collection—not to mention their many seventeenth- and eighteenth-century ancestors. The failure—by everyone involved—is again of the historical imagination (or worse). Somehow, unself-consciously, all have taken the English case as not just exemplary but all-embracing. Long ago I wrote of the odd reinscription in Eagleton’s *Criticism and Ideology* of familiar, but excoriated, Great Tradition categories in its explanation of nineteenth-century (English) novels (now in *Uncertainty of Analysis* 192–94). Jusdanis finds a like blindness in Eagleton’s *Function of Criticism*, which “assumes the existence of a homogeneous criticism and deems it unnecessary to mention that its real subject is English criticism” (*Belated Modernity* 6).

The blindness of critics to their own historical situation and to the historical determinants of their chosen cultural object is not accidental. It is a factor of the very nationalism

wherein they operate, at least if we are to believe Ernest Renan—translated in Bhabha’s collection. “Forgetting, I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation, which is why progress in historical studies often constitutes a danger for [the principle of] nationality” (11). For Renan, of course, nation was a good thing (indeed a foundation for ranking peoples [12–14]). That the national idea is the result of a particular *story* must therefore be forgotten (18–19). Only so can it come to seem natural (the “second nature” of which Said writes). The forgetting of the story of origins at the same time lays a base for creating “a rich legacy of memories,” a storied tradition that allows present consent to the heritage (19).

This is why a certain obfuscation is necessary on the part of dogmatic metropolitan critics. Claims undermining their “rich legacy,” their Great Tradition, and arguments suggesting how their metropolis is established simultaneously with the forgetting of that establishment are to be denied. Their own comprehension of other cultural traditions needs somehow a stability of cultural distinctness (at very least to enable an apprehension of contrast). My third issue about binary claims has to do with this. For it is, I think, to save the possibility of such claims, even as he seeks to discuss, abstractly, their sociopolitical establishment, that Eagleton continues in *Ideology: An Introduction* his attacks on Foucault and others. The overt aim of this work is to analyze the meanings of the word and idea of “ideology,” and to pursue its history from the eighteenth century to the twentieth. Implicitly, Eagleton also explores the arguments enabling the establishment of his own cultural space (my immediate interest here). Indeed, his focus of debate, setting aside “ideology”’s establishment, is almost wholly within the contemporary British Left.

That Eagleton should virtually start by attacking Foucault’s arguments about the ubiquity of power, on grounds that the claim is so broad as to be useless as an analytical tool, is distinctly revealing (7). For there is much difference between saying that all signifying practices involve relations of power and specifying the nature of the relations. The first is an axiom to ground projects exploring the second. “Foucault and his followers” do not “effectively abandon the concept of ideology altogether” (8). Rather, they suggest a way to understand what enables *all* social relations of any kind, at the same time as they make us aware of what lies within them. The clue to what is behind Eagleton’s criticism is his claim that this view of “power” is too capacious: “For a term to have mean-

ing, it must be possible to specify what, in particular circumstances, would count as the other of it" (7). He believes he is qualifying his assertion by acknowledging that that "other" need not, however, be "*always and everywhere* the other of" the term (7).

Foucault's point is precisely to qualify that very notion of "other." Societies, the ordered and meaningful relations composing them, do not, he says, *have* such an "other." The idea of ordered signifying practices is the *ground* of any and all understanding. So it is of societies, which are to be understood in the intermeshing organization of their multiple signifying practices, *not* in any putative contrast to other societies. "Nature," for example, is always "nurture" in some way—the problem is to understand, as Said and Farah propose, different mappings of nature. So "ideology" can well be a way of understanding different *functionings* of power: it has to do not with whether power is present, but with its "how."

Eagleton's argument is not unlike Joan Wallach Scott's odd assertion, which I have discussed elsewhere, that if consciousness is always part and parcel of a changing social environment (just as different functionings of power will be) it means that "political differences among women cannot be explained as false consciousness" (4). Of course it means nothing of the sort. Consciousness, experience, identity may change, but in given times and places they are constrained by specifiable conditions. It is, I observed, in relation to such conditions that we speak of "false consciousness," thereby signifying the internalization of a self-understanding that actually betrays the subject's own interests: whether of gender, class, race, or whatever. As such, it is nonsense to oppose it to "consciousness," whether fixed or in flux ("History, Criticism, and Theory" 149–50). This is, indeed, one of Eagleton's understandings of ideology. In both cases, two different levels of analysis have been conflated. Like "false consciousness," "ideology" signals different orders of power and different relations of power within an overall social environment usefully understood in terms of signifying practices. These last impose certain obligatory forms of activity, but their precise nature will vary from society to society.

Human consciousness may have been different in ancient Greece from its "counterpart" in modern Europe, among the Hopi, or in contemporary China, but within each environment no analytical difficulty is involved in grasping oppositional functions and practices. One understands, for instance, that in most or all American Indian cultures, autobiography (as a

continuous story of a contained and possessive self) has not been possible. This is because individual consciousness did not precede community or make a possession of its “self”—it has not been a bounded and enclosed place or entity. But that hardly meant there could be no process internal to such cultures playing on that “communal” comprehension in conflictual ways, maybe organizing it in terms of some dominant (or subordinate) interest. We would need to understand the process within unfamiliar (to us) parameters, but that is a quite different issue. Since all social order necessarily involves inclusions and exclusions, there is, however, no doubt that such processes exist. Foucault’s point is that we need first to try and grasp wholes in their own particular forms of functioning. Where societies and cultures are concerned, we can best do so by seeing them as ways of organizing events, meanings, and activities, ways always imbricated in relations of power, titles of interest. Eagleton wants rather to know them, first, from *here*, and then what “second” is possible?

Eagleton’s repeated attack on Foucault’s reminder of Marxism’s embedding in nineteenth-century argument (*Nationalism, Colonialism, and Literature* 27) also has a kind of ironic poignancy. Elsewhere, too, I have noted that the reminder itself, if its import is to be thoroughly understood and put to work, needs grasping in its own political context (“History, Criticism, and Theory” 141). Foucault, as what I have just been saying must make clear, always accepted this need to work through the “presentness” of one’s own discursive practice (qtd. in Jusdanis xv). Eagleton himself notes, we saw, that hegemonies have to be lived and worked through, although the peculiarly abstract language of his “coming out on the other side,” as though ideology and hegemony were reified places, rooms through which one can pass, gives pause. For the fact seems to be that Eagleton, like others here, suffers from a particular blind spot, an inability to do that working through, fixed in an opposition of self and other.

That is surely why he reestablished categories of a familiar (English) Great Tradition and why, as Jusdanis again observes, when he writes an essay on “Literature’s Romantic Era,” the titular universalism turns out to lie entirely within “the boundaries of England” (6). In his *Function of Criticism* (123), his eye lighting on Habermas, Eagleton calls for an idea of criticism as “a counter-public sphere.” The thought is used by Gunew in her contribution to *Nation and Narration*, although she also admits that it has been criticized as meaningless in Habermas’s terms: the “counter” is already in his

public sphere. The point is that the public sphere is, precisely, *not* a place but a practice: once again Eagleton is caught in the trap—trope—of his “other.”

Eagleton’s reiterated criticisms of Foucault’s reminder may be thought of as his scratching at a symptomatic itch. Foucault’s not very hidden intent (his taking aim at the analyses behind the Stalinist excesses of the French Communist party aside) was at least twofold. First, that Marx had analyzed a particular socioeconomic order at a particular moment of development. Second, that it was nonetheless taken (by Marx and his successors) as universally valid. The first means that new analyses are continually needed and that they are themselves an aspect of the issues they analyze and a part of the solution of their impasses: we analyze our own practices from within—as Cheyfitz carefully observes in his introduction to *The Poetics of Imperialism*.

The second should act as a warning: to beware of belief, not in totalizing analyses (inasmuch as they do not, per se, exclude difference) but in the universal validity of any one topical analysis. Historical materialism rested on the analysis of a specific moment in a particular industrial society. In *Marxism and Literature*, Williams explored in some detail both the processes of its foundation and some ways of extending and adjusting them to an understanding of cultural practices in different times and places. The inevitable fluidity and even vagueness of the result are consequences Eagleton, and others, resist (see *Uncertainty of Analysis* 179–203). His bent is for more foursquare analysis: he knows where he is, he wants a clarity of outcome. He may have doubts as to what precisely he may find when he opens the door on the other side of the room we (Europeans) now, and everyone will, occupy. He has no doubts about the room, or that it has familiar-looking doors, or that when he finally steps through the *right* one (that with the “proper name”) there will be another room probably not *so very* different—its form already predicated by the analysis and the material of the room which *had* to precede it in the narrow house trailer of time. You speak, as many have said, from where you live, but that is a far cry from saying everyone else should—or should want to—live there too (which is what *Ideology* is ostensibly all about, entirely polemically so).

This may be ever-so-slightly parodic and less than just. But Eagleton’s figure, and his figuring, are so ubiquitous in these debates (not least because of the ready analysis and answer he is taken to provide) as to require some observation

*You speak, as many
have said, from where
you live, but that is a
far cry from saying
everyone else should—
or should want to—live
there too*

of their danger. And it is real. For these blindnesses reinscribe the very processes they claim to question. What is the function of criticism? To query the dominant claims of cultural hegemonies? Or to maintain them? To make a “counter”-public sphere? Or rest within the same? The questions and choices are hardly without a familiar grounding. That is not the point. The irascible inability to question the grounding is. Eagleton stands in here as the figuring of peril just because his work has proven so seductive. Yet to use his name in this way would be gratuitously idle and ungracious were the peril not, I have sought to show, general: that of making one culture central, of deriving (as it were) all cultures from that one, of valorizing universally a given standard of taste, analysis of worth, and imperative of order, without either adequately determining the grounds and sources of the valorization or marking the limits, not necessarily of application but of the grounds of application. The danger is not that one speaks from within “the formative places of Enlightenment”—one has no choice in *that* matter. Rather it is that without knowing the very grounds of the practices from within which we speak, we may do so without being able, as Günter Grass has put it, to tell the “old story . . . altogether differently” (qtd. in Reiss, *Meaning of Literature* 347).

The object, really, of all the works examined here is to try and find ways of carrying out Grass’s suggestion to tell an old story differently, to rework ways of seeing, and to open up a Western enclosure. I put it that way because most analyze cultural relations of power within that enclosure and want to change them, although they perforce do so from a position, as it were, “on top”: most of the authors work in major metropolitan universities; they are published by metropolitan presses (Cambridge, Oxford, Routledge, Verso, Minnesota) for a chiefly academic audience. That, again, is why I have allowed myself to use Eagleton as an emblem of the dangers of enclosure.

One of the major ways to start telling the tale differently is of course to examine the construction of the enclosure. That is what Jusdanis seeks to do in *Belated Modernity*. The case of modern Greece that he takes is an especially interesting one. Having been marginalized from a Western European sphere more or less after Hellenistic times, Greek culture had a quite separate development throughout the Byzantine period and was absorbed, after 1453, into the Ottoman Empire. Earlier Western indifference became something akin to willful ignorance (15). At the same time, Western European cultures were

busy building old Greece into one of their two foundational pillars. By the late eighteenth century, many Greek intellectuals were aware of this, and as they began to conceive “the idea of a national community distinguished by language” (25), they turned to this West for cultural aid, making unabashed use of its nostalgia for the grandeur of antiquity. By the time of the 1821 revolts (33), a Westernizing intellectual establishment was already publishing both newspapers and literary works abroad, mostly in the German-speaking lands.

Jusdanis argues that modern Greek literature sought to constitute itself a bulwark, indeed the very seal and guarantor of a nation-state being established in the struggle against the Ottoman Empire, by deliberately modeling itself on the metropolitan cultures of which I have been speaking. Already complicated by argument over the several varieties of Greek language, however, relations with Western models were further confused by the fact that whereas in Western cases it could be argued that modern literature was associated with “bourgeois individualism,” in Greece the association of literary culture with the 1821 revolts against the Ottoman Empire made it a buttress of Greek “feudalism,” however different “clientelistic” relations between “the oligarchy of landlords and military men” and the peasants may have been from an older Western European dispensation (32–33). In modern times, Jusdanis suggests, this has given a cast to Greek literature quite different from that of its Western European counterparts: not some “compensatory” practice offering “a space of deliverance from the consequences of social fragmentation” (103) but a cultural product resisting “autonomization” until very late in the twentieth century and, in its efforts to remain a part of “social and political life,” offering a critique of “modernity” (113–21).

With regard to how a national literature may be established, the case is a fascinating one, and Jusdanis seems quite right to believe it holds lessons for many other cultural centers: not least in the play of metropolis and “margin,” of how the last may change the first in using it, of how indeed unfamiliar forms of analysis may be needed to interpret texts and understand their functioning.

And yet there are problems. One concerns a kind of ethnocentrism. For a good century and a half, and with sufficient geographic reason, the German lands were the major cultural reference for Greek intellectuals. Jusdanis has thus taken their development of literary culture as somehow exemplary. From

Lessing and Schiller, Goethe and Hegel, it is not hard to develop a thought that literature in Western modernity has been a cultural practice compensating for “social fragmentation.” But the German case (different from, but no less than, the Greek) was also one of “belated modernity.” For a diversity of reasons, so were the Russian, the Spanish, and the Italian. (However much the latter had been the originator of concepts of literary modernism in the sixteenth century, there was a kind of subsequent dispersal: occasional peaks, but little sustained depth of production until much later, maybe later even than the Greek. Perhaps the nation-state has a constitutional relation with literature.)

Very different, however, was the case of the models taken by the eighteenth-century German-speaking writers, those of England and France. Here (and they after all did become models, directly or indirectly, as angel or demon, for a multitude of later establishments), literature was emphatically not compensatory. It was one way of overcoming a sense of disaster and justifying the establishment of new social and political certainties. In its original establishment, modern literature was so far from being compensatory of society’s incapacities as to assure its stabilizing benefits. When German thinkers took over these claims a century later, they did so (at first, anyway) in terms enabling establishment, not those compensating for its failures. To misread German establishment, therefore, may also be to misread Greek. For it literature *always* played an establishing role in “social and political life”; how then are we to understand its differences? The issue, again, has to do with Renan’s (and Eagleton’s) forgetting. We have to make every effort to know the details of history.

We must also avoid confusing words and things. That the word *nation* was not used in its modern sense until the nineteenth century does *not* mean its referent was not yet at issue; that the word *literature* did not obtain its modern nuances until Johnson’s *Dictionary*, say, does *not* mean its familiar practice did not exist. Part of the problem in Jusdanis’s work is that although he deals extensively with critics, there is virtually no study of “literary” works. One needs some sense of a fit between what is said and what is done. This is a flaw I want to try to avoid in this essay. An occasional problem also arises from using secondary sources: pace Habermas (185n8), the term *public* was used in England and France in a quite modern sense well before the mid- or late seventeenth century. This matters because it is taken (rightly) to be at issue in the establishment of literary culture.

The case Jusdanis probes is of special interest because it raises issues of the relation between metropolis and “margin,” literature and national identity, possession and variety, of a kind that most of these critics should find particularly fruitful. Modern Greece confronted and adopted Western European cultural forms. At the same time, it is a bridge for those forms and their practitioners both to *their* adopted past and to wholly unfamiliar cultures. With Aimé Césaire, one must “admit that it is a good thing to place different civilizations in contact with each other; that it is an excellent thing to blend different worlds; that whatever its own particular genius may be, a civilization that withdraws into itself atrophies; that for civilizations, exchange is oxygen” (*Discourse on Colonialism* 11). For metropolitan critics, the Greek case offers a special sort of unfamiliar familiarity.

There is another way to tell different stories. Simply by starting with the knowledge that one is in a place with its own interests and concerns or even in a place somehow relieved of local entanglement, one can avoid catching oneself in traps of self and other. In the modern world, one may be caught in the webs of powerful cultural hegemonies, but one’s adoption of elements from another (metropolitan) culture remains just that, an adoption. Jusdanis tries to show how a developing Greek aesthetic culture played ambivalently off Western Europe to elaborate its own national cultural character. Molloy, astutely using centrally problematic tales of personal identity, shows how autobiographical stories can be ambiguous establishments of *political* actuality.

I earlier mentioned that the very idea of autobiography is no easy one for some cultures (here, American Indian). This has been much less an issue for Latin American writers, at least insofar as personal identity is concerned. What is, however, matter for arduous debate is the tie between person and political role, between individual and community. It is by no means accidental that the majority of autobiographical writers discussed by Molloy in *At Face Value* are more or less considerable political or cultural figures in various (by majority, Argentinean) new sociopolitical establishments. Ambivalent as particular writers may be, individual identity is always constituted by way of political institution. This is so different from the “norms” of Western European establishments of identity as hardly to need comment. At least since the seventeenth century, such identity was established in terms of some idea of a self whose independent rights were owed entirely to the individual. It would be hard to find a modern European

In the modern world, one may be caught in the webs of powerful cultural hegemonies, but one’s adoption of elements from another (metropolitan) culture remains just that, an adoption.

autobiography that did not make such an assumption, even when seeking to muddy the waters (André Malraux, for instance).

Molloy's persons, even when they are not major political figures, can think themselves only in the communal political arena. This is no less true of Argentina's founding paternal figure, Domingo Faustino Sarmiento, than it is of the Cuban slave Juan Francisco Manzano; the Argentinean journalist (and more) Victoria Ocampo; the Cuban exile, the Condesa de Merlin; the Venezuelan Mariano Picón Salas; the Argentineans Norah Lange and Lucio Victorio Mansilla; or the Mexican José Vasconcelos. Almost all give a kind of genealogy to their (written) identities by reference to their reading of European books. But all, without exception, establish their current sense of stable identity by embedding it, however often tentatively and ambivalently, in a national story—one they have actually created (Sarmiento or Vasconcelos) or one they see as defining the persona worthy of autobiography. Making identity by catching it in the books of Europe and the places of Latin America, identity that is at once personal and national, echoes all that I have been saying: that the frontier between metropolitan artifact and elsewhere is treacherous. These identities may be compared to Said's establishments of different "natures." Like Farah, they use known maps in a territory whose nature and boundaries will be made by someone other than their first makers.

The very idea of personal identity, as created, for example, in Western autobiography, is thus altered, once taken within different cultures, thoughts that Molloy has also explored in fiction. Just as the mostly public figures of her scholarly work fix their being by binding it in recorded political annals, so the more private characters of *Certificate of Absence* seek to grasp a sense of themselves in small acts of mutual violence. Only in such communal antagonisms, grand political confrontation reduced to a minor key, can a protagonist find being: "What she writes does not constitute, and will never constitute, an autobiography: rather, it tries to reproduce a disjointed series of acts of violence that befell her, that also befell others" (49). The historical figures explored in *At Face Value* had to fuse the artifacts of metropolitan cultures with the constitutions of their own history in order to establish their identity. The persons of *Certificate of Absence*, displaced as they are from the arena of that constitution, trace something like the failure of such an establishment. They remain "ill at ease in [their] skin" (5, 70), simulacra of containment that

show themselves tired efforts to fit one's "own order on what [one] transcribes" (8), fitful bids "to correct the image, or perhaps to restore some kind of order" (8). "Order is what she wants to impose whenever she feels the threat of a shared vagueness, of an emptiness invading her emptiness" (10).

Like Farah, Molloy tracks the attempt to establish a sort of cartography of identity. Here, too, it can be essayed only in fugitive tellings: "Her words, herself: broken up, pieced together. . . . Her body and her phrase will tear again, but not at the old scars: they will split open in a different way, revealing new fractures. She accepts this future violence as something not necessarily negative, as a sign, perhaps, of a secret order" (48). Yet words that "imply an order . . . also lead astray" (48). One is caught between a need for maps and tales that may always, somehow, belong already to others and a need for one's own place of customary habit. For one requires "the support of others" in familiarity (76). Whatever the small local violences, it is they who help "define [one's] existence" (95): "I wanted all of you—mother, sister, lovers—to be here, I live only in you" (116). The unending need to write is an effort somehow to make oneself into the safely continuous place of history. But "how to bring forth violence, how to write it down?" (86). As words escape, so does continuity: in the present ("[S]he feels divided, wavering, suspended before a choice she does not control" [71]); of the past ("How can one return to what one has already seen, what one thought one already knew, and look at it afresh?" [70]).

I am reminded of no novel so much as of Witold Gombrowicz's *Cosmos*, which also tracks something like a dissolution of identity and of telling, not seldom in language almost identical. *Cosmos*, also written by an exile (who passed through Molloy's own homeland of Argentina before coming, like her, to France), ends in banality (see "The *Cosmos* Rag"). *Certificate of Absence* ends in an airport: "She is alone: she is very frightened" (125). But I am reminded, too, of a novel some of our commentators have seen as addressing rather more bluntly—and from the metropolitan side—issues of national culture, colonialism, and identity: Rudyard Kipling's *Kim*. My own view is that far from being blunt, the novel approaches the sorts of puzzles just addressed, avoiding precisely any simplistic snare of self and other.

In the essay on which I commented before, Jameson, opposing *Howards End* to *Passage to India*, makes a useful point about the different ways the "colonizer" inhabits a home world and a colonized one. Introducing *Kim*, Said echoes the

point by means of a comparison between Dorothea Brooke's "reawakening" to the world at the end of *Middlemarch* and Kim's at the end of his story (20). Where the first feels herself part of an "involuntary, palpitating life," the second's "wheels" of being "lock up anew on the world without": "roads were meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and women to be talked to. They were all real and true—solidly planted upon the feet—perfectly comprehensible—clay of his clay, neither more nor less" (*Kim* 331).

"For the European or American women in Europe," writes Said (who has spoken too of James's *Portrait of a Lady*), "the world is to be discovered anew; it requires no one in particular to direct it, or to exert sovereignty over it. [Molloy might well adjust this idea.] This is not the case in India, which would pass into chaos or insurrection unless roads were walked upon properly, houses lived in in the right way, men and women talked to in correct tones" (introduction 21). But it is Said who adds "properly," "the right way," and "in correct tones," and that surely, as far as *Kim* is concerned, puts him in the wrong. It reduces the tale, as so often, to a mere opposition of Empire and victim. First, to accept Said's own terms, Kim's reawakening is no more voluntary than Dorothea Brooke's or Isabel Archer's: "He *did not want to cry—had never felt less like crying* in his life—but of a sudden easy, *stupid* tears trickled down his nose, and with an almost audible click *he felt* the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without" (331; emphasis added).

In fact, Kim, contrary to what Said asserts, is, *was always, both* native and nonnative: far more the former than the latter. Furthermore, his place in Empire would be ambivalent even were that not so: his father, after all, was Irish; his own name is "Kimball O'Hara." Not by chance does a turning point in Kim's bildungsroman occur in the high Himalayas in the company of his Tibetan spiritual guide, near and at the very Irish-sounding "Shamlegh-midden" (ch. 14). Kim's willfulness always regards, we learn at the start (51), the pleasures of the game, not the interests of politics. That is why it is *not* ludicrous for him to combine the (Buddhist) Way and the Great Game of imperial intelligence: both are forms of mapping. One has the lama's chart; the other has a surveyor's mensuration. This may be, as Said opines, "ahistorical" (introduction 22), but one can hardly bypass that difficulty in the novel by changing Kim. If we read him as a sign of a moment when "India was already well into the dynamic of outright

opposition to British rule” (Said, introduction 10), his ambivalence may be the more revealing. He embodies the struggle Eagleton calls “ironic,” the struggle neither Joyce nor Yeats, according to Said and Jameson, ever got out of.

This is not the place to elaborate a reading of *Kim*, but some indications may serve at least to highlight elements suggesting that even writers from “the formative places of Enlightenment” may begin to tell the story differently, to touch hands, as it were, with such as Farah, Molloy, and so many others. This matters because it already undermines the choice of unambiguous opposition. For *Kim* too deals with maps of identity. Traveling the Great Trunk Road with the Buddhist abbot, Kim finds himself part of the teeming colors of India, not, pace Said, potential chaos, but ordered “left and right,” composed of villagers purposefully dispersing “by twos and threes across the level plain. Kim felt these things, though he could not give tongue to his feelings” (111). “Who is Kim?” is a constantly reiterated question, from the time he feels himself as one “insignificant person in all this roaring whirl of India” (166). And he is, it is true, caught here between the uncharted free places of his native life (and land, for he *is* native)—unmade no doubt by colonization—and something else. Those places were, for him, a game until *threatened*, and it is indeed so presented in the novel, by its heavy-handed opposite: imperialist militarism, religion, and education at their most brutally oppressive. But Kim slides away from that opposition toward some new making.

His chosen heroes are precisely those who reject simplicities. Neither Mahbub Ali nor Colonel Creighton is quite Pathan or Sahib. Each plays a wholly ambiguous role in the “confrontation” between oppressor and oppressed. Mahbub works for imperial order (inasmuch as divers imperial powers confront one another on Indian soil), but his dealing lies in the life and welfare of the bazar. Creighton works for imperial order, but he is utterly absorbed in the life of India. The insurgent nationalism of the (“correct”) Pathans (introduction 26) has its precise counter in the brutal colonization of the regiment of Mavericks and its red bull ensign. Mahbub and Creighton play quite different roles, something approaching Kim’s eventual “middle way,” which is why Kim and Mahbub can use the “oppositional” terms “Sahib,” “black man,” and “Pathan” to each other as mockingly affectionate “insults.” In irony the very words lose their colonizing bite. Like the words Molloy’s protagonists use or the maps put in Askar’s hands,

the colonizers' epithets acquire some changed meaning. To be sure, much of Kim's instruction will now be in how to measure, map, and order place on behalf of the rulers of the Great Game—so much so that Kim's search for personal identity *does* become caught up in mapping territory.

Likewise, the lama's quest for enlightenment requires he draw in "clearest, severest outline" a chart of the "Great Wheel" (240). The angry tearing of this chart by the Russian agent results in the "collapse of their Great Game," brought about not by any "craft" or "contrivance" of their opponents but "simply, beautifully, and inevitably" (297)—words earlier ascribed to India itself: "[I]t was beautiful to behold" (111). There is an obvious lesson in this as there is, too, in the abbot's discovery that he no longer needs his chart, when he tells a "fantastic piled narrative of bewitchment and miracles that set Shamlegh a-gasping" (307) and ultimately finds that he "has reached Knowledge" (333). There is a lesson, too, in the fact that Kim now hears tales of the Sahibs from the Indians' viewpoint, "every detail lighted from behind" (306), and has thrown the fine surveyor's instruments that would have been so useful for him over the 2000-foot cliff of Shamlegh-midden.

We may adopt Said's suggestion that the museum keeper's gift of spectacles to the lama to help him see better at the beginning of the novel (60) symbolizes "Britain's benevolent sway" (introduction 15)—not to mention an arrogant assumption that their eye problem is the same—but we must then attend to what follows at the end: "[E]ven his spectacles do not make my eyes see" (320). Similarly, Said avers that the lama's living on Kim's "strength as an old tree lives on the lime of a new wall" (321) signals his dependence on Empire. He neglects not only Kim's ambiguous role, but his answer: "Thou leanest on me in the body, Holy One, but I lean on thee for some other things" (321), spiritual growth and maybe the very changes we are tracing. It is not surprising that the lama closes the novel: "[H]e crossed his hands on his lap and smiled, as a man may who has won salvation for himself and his beloved" (338). This is the abbot's victory, not the Raj's. The "colonial system" may have "acquired the status of a fact of nature," from whose colonizing side Kipling inevitably wrote (Said, introduction 10), but its interests seem finally the lesser.

In some sense, of course, that makes no difference on the ground actually mapped out by and for those interests. In

objective economic and political terms the lama's gesture is one of withdrawal: power, wealth, and advantage are the colonizers'. To see all that as "illusion" is to yield any alternative hold on it. Kim's own quest, you might say, now additionally buttressed by the lama's assurance, remains that of colonial adventurism, a game of "glory" that has, in some sense beyond ambivalence, co-opted the way of the other. (What does it *mean* that Kim, not unlike the Buddha, awakes to spiritual renewal from a sleep under "a young banyan tree"? [332].) Still, the Teshoo Lama is certainly not dispossessed of his Way, even if he symbolizes all other dispossession: his chart destroyed, his body beaten, with no worldly belongings—religion as satisfying opiate. But *that* interpretation turns the novel into a critique of everything British India stood for. So does Kim's wending a path between the Game and the Way, West and East, reason and spirit. Whatever others may do, Kim himself idolizes Lurgan (no European), Creighton, Mahbub, the Babu, and above all the lama. The first four inhabit a twilight world of ambivalent mappings. The last we have seen. For the reader, it is Kim's judgment, eponymous hero as he is, that finally sets interpretation.

A novel cannot change the objective realities of economic and political relations. It can elaborate their patterns. It may not only make us aware of differences of life, custom, culture, and language, but provide—require, it may be—some sort of access to them. An admired eighteenth-century predecessor of Kipling had long since, and no less ambiguously, proposed something similar:

An Iroquois work, even were it full of absurdities, would be an invaluable treasure; it would offer an unique specimen of the workings of the human mind, when placed in circumstances which we have never experienced, and influenced by manners and religious opinions entirely contrary to our own. We should be sometimes astonished and instructed by the contrariety of ideas thus produced; we should investigate the causes of their existence; and should trace the progress of the mind from one error to another. Sometimes, also, we should be delighted at recognizing our own principles recurring, but discovered in other ways, and almost always modified and altered. We should there learn not only to own, but also to feel the power of prejudices, not to be astonished at what appears most absurd, and often to distrust what seems best estab-

lished. (Edward Gibbon, *An Essay on the Study of Literature* 654)

In such commentary, to be sure, there may be much of Kipling's own "What do they know of England, / Who only England know?": the thought that even unfamiliar customs, practices, and artifacts are there to be turned to the service of metropolitan culture. Yet whatever someone like Gibbon may have come to think in later and more conservative work, here, at least, in this youthful *Essai* (first written and published in French in 1761), he surely suggests that real contact with other cultures must change our views of our own, must make us "distrust" many of our clearest certainties. We learn "the power of prejudice" precisely by not remaining in our "monologue," as Césaire put it. The self/other opposition is a form of that monologue, a continuation of the "colonial enterprise."

"The truth is," Césaire went on, "that this policy *cannot but bring about the ruin of Europe itself*, and that Europe, if it is not careful, will perish from the void it has created around itself. They thought they were only slaughtering Indians, or Hindus, or South Sea Islanders, or Africans. They have in fact overthrown, one after another, the ramparts behind which European civilization could have developed freely" (*Discourse on Colonialism* 57–58). Gibbon's astonishment, delight, and instruction, his demand that we investigate "contrarities," modifications, alterations, and differences should not be belittled, any more than the new patterns woven in *Kim*.

Cultural meetings produce as much a questioning of familiar traditions as an exploration of different ones. Or they may produce some quite new hybrid, a second, a third nature. Of course, such hybrids may signal some cultural imposition, as Cheyfitz argues they were and are in the official documents of English and American imperialisms, incapable of the effort of understanding indigenous peoples "as integral, different entities" (11). But these sorts of documents have their own imaginative interest. Their imperial work demands reduction. Indeed, this work may do so just because of a recognition that difference is irreducible. You make blank silhouettes or demons of those whose place you wish to occupy because you know they have rights like yours, because they must not be granted the right to do unto you the same, and because to make the effort to apprehend difference in detail would be to acknowledge the first and deny your wish: "[I]n dealing with

this subject, the commonest curse is to be the dupe in good faith of a collective hypocrisy that clearly misrepresents problems, the better to legitimize the hateful solutions provided for them” (Césaire, *Discourse* 10).

Cheyfitz’s imperial documents are instruments that come after the actions they justify. For colonization is not

evangelization, nor a philanthropic enterprise, nor a desire to push back the frontiers of ignorance, disease, and tyranny, nor an attempt to extend the rule of law. . . . The decisive actors here are the adventurer and the pirate, the wholesale grocer and the ship owner, the gold digger and the merchant. . . . I find that hypocrisy is of recent date; that neither Cortez discovering Mexico from the top of the great teocalli, nor Pizzaro before Cusco (much less Marco Polo before Cambaluc), claims that he is the harbinger of a superior order; that they kill; that they plunder; that they have helmets, lances, cupidities; that the slaving apologists come later. (Césaire, *Discourse* 10–11)

The imperial justifying documents still show an awareness that the critics of otherness find a way to obfuscate (not, it may be, altogether innocently). The documents make no secret of their denial or of its reasons. The critics seek to assimilate difference to their own perception of legitimacy. But a Gikuyu or a Nez Percé is not some “other” of European claim: a constituent of a benign *Gemeinschaft* “alternative” to malignant *Gesellschaft*, an ecohuman reply to the stripped reason of Enlightenment.

In 1971, Roberto Fernández Retamar published his now-classic essay, “Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America.” It does not, I think, demean Cheyfitz’s work to say that it turns these “notes” into a book (although he actually mentions Retamar only once). His is indeed in many ways a long, profitable gloss on “Caliban,” from Shakespeare, *Tarzan*, and colonialism to Montaigne, cannibals, and the force of translation. Taking off from Retamar’s suggestions, Cheyfitz’s *Poetics* is to a great extent an exploration, with *The Tempest* as sounding board, of how European literature made the “different” of imperial expansion (foretold in Gibbon?) into the “other” of aesthetic and political imagining. The one is brute imposition. (It may be Kipling’s perception of *that* that makes *Kim* a poor object for critical othering.) The second, whether in *Tarzan*, James Fenimore Cooper’s *The Pio-*

Taking off from Retamar’s suggestions, Cheyfitz’s Poetics is to a great extent an exploration, with The Tempest as sounding board, of how European literature made the “different” of imperial expansion (foretold in Gibbon?) into the “other” of aesthetic and political imagining. The one is brute imposition.

neers, or *The Tempest*, sets out “to rationalize the policy of dispossession” (14).

It has, to this end, at least two handy philosophical tools. The first has to do with a notion of translation and metaphor brought from antiquity, predicated on *translatio* as making the familiar foreign and as working (*specifically* since Aristotle and the subsequent Western tradition) on the play between them. The figurative is the foreign; the proper is the national and the normal (36: vide Eagleton). Throughout the tradition, as Cheyfitz examines it, translation was perceived and explicated as “an act of violence”—in the explanatory texts themselves, that is to say (37). Not for naught were they whose language one did not know called barbarians. The theory and politics of translation were those of deprivation. So, for example, “this process of translation . . . prepares the way for and is forever involved in the dispossession by which Native American land was *translated* (the term is used in English common law to refer to transfers of real estate) into the European identity of *property*” (43).

The second tool was of more recent vintage but directly linked to this last aspect. Making property the mark of political citizenship as of civilized humanity itself, as Locke did in the *Second Treatise* (55), made those who had no such concept of alienable property (as all Native Americans, for instance [8]) or those who were deprived of it (European lower classes) automatically not just precivilized but indeed not yet wholly human—for to be that one had to have gone through the civil contract, to have passed from the monstrous state of nature into the rational order of civil society. The terms of the Lockean guarantee of property, therefore, simultaneously served the needs of a domestic social hierarchy and justified the hierarchical relations of colonialism. “The failure of dialogue, figured as a genetic inability in the other, rather than as a problem of cultural difference” (16), was thus given a double explanation and alibi. The one, concerned with property, justified a claim of ontological inferiority as well as political disablement. The other, concerned with language, legitimated a violent imposition of right speech.

These tools still lie behind the happy binaries of critical seizures of cultural difference. In some complexity of detail, Cheyfitz displays throughout his work, but especially at the end, how *The Tempest* used or predicted these strategies of property and dispossession (157–72). He also suggests, in a pretty discussion of Montaigne’s “Des cannibales,” how these very terms could be made equivocal. Bereft of its violence,

translation became problematic. Talking with an Indian Montaigne found he needed “a translator to translate between himself and the translator” (153). Yet he somehow “understands” the Indian to whom he “speaks” as possessing a language and culture somehow essentially “democratic,” where property, possession, and exploitation are literally inexpressible (155–56). By some curious leap of imagination, Cheyfitz implies, Montaigne grasped not simply the violence *translatio* did to its victims but the very difference it sought to conceal. “Indian people,” writes Paula Gunn Allen in a passage used earlier by Cheyfitz as a chapter epigraph (22), “don’t believe in metaphor. Very few of us even understand what that term means.”

Metaphor, *translatio*, is the absorbing of the other in the one. Somehow Montaigne would have grasped that multiplying places and levels of translation denies such possession (to elide the meaning of that dispersion with a critique of later colonialisms is at the very least anachronistic, and one suspects a *Gemeinschaft* myth in this reading of Montaigne, but no matter). In his essay in *Nation and Narration*, James Snead makes a similar point regarding contemporary African and African-American writers by speaking of “a certain linguistic and cultural eclecticism or *miscegenation*,” of something “hybrid” (232, 234). Cheyfitz cites Walter Benjamin (133–36) explaining how all languages “supplement” one another by expressing different “intentions.” In a “Letter to the author” before Gibbon’s *Essay* I quoted before, M. Maty long since denied “the unsociable genius of different languages” and argued that while “every language, when complete within itself, is limited,” they are all “enriched” by “admixtures”: “Like those lakes whose waters grow purer and clearer by mixture and agitation with those they receive from neighbouring rivers, so modern tongues can only live by intercommunication, and I might venture to say, by their reciprocal clashings” (629–30).

Less traditional, it would seem, was Augustin Cournot’s lament, a century ago, for our inability “to arrange all spoken languages to suit . . . the need of the moment.” Not much later, Victoria Welby wrote that “what we do want is a really plastic language,” one that could somehow “store up all our precious means of mutual speaking” and enable us to “master the many dialects of thought” (qtd. in Reiss, *Uncertainty* 34). These are closer perhaps to Snead’s thought in *Nation and Narration*. And in the same collection, Brennan reminds us of Salman Rushdie’s argument that the English language has

been deeply altered and adjusted by “those whom it once colonized” (48). These hopes (are they more?) reflect the desperate need to escape imposing ideas of otherness and not only to come to terms with difference (yet in self-protective guise) but to welcome the hybrid. As Carlos Fuentes puts it, after Césaire, maybe: “One of the wonders of our menaced globe is the variety of its experiences, its memories, and its desire. Any attempt to impose a uniform politics on this diversity is like a prelude to death” (“A Harvard Commencement” 199).

One thinks of Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s bid to make a Gikuyu literature on the back of a Western model in the language of and from the store of his own culture’s tales; of Kamau Brathwaite’s efforts to make an identity (*X/Self*) from within a history of the voice that recognizes its colonized and its autonomous past, as well as its multiple present. This may not always be welcomed: “[T]he fifth world had become entangled with European names: the names of the rivers, the hills, the names of the animals and the plants—all of creation suddenly had two names: an Indian name and a white name” (Silko 68). Only rather recently have instabilities of the sort come to matter to those (of us) who write from within so-called metropolitan spaces. Only too many readily fall back on familiar sources of response, on habitual ideas of frontier, on known schema of conflict. For Farah, for Molloy, for Leslie Marmon Silko, for so many others in a world whose order was (once thought to be) constructed by outsiders, things have fallen, are falling, apart, have no ready means of repair. The local models are no longer at hand, only second natures that exist on someone else’s maps (on an outsider’s dream). Indeed, they who would repair them have yet fully to identify themselves. Questions of power remain unresolved where you have neither identity nor a way of knowing what “identity” might be.

Fear of the other is no less real in one culture than another. “They are afraid, Tayo,” says the Mexican dancer in Silko’s *Ceremony*. “They feel something happening, they can see something happening around them, and it scares them. Indians or Mexicans or whites—most people are afraid of change. . . . They are fools. They blame us, the ones who look different. That way they don’t have to think about what has happened inside themselves” (99–100). The ones who look different are, needless to say, those who are already hybrid, the crossbloods. And of them, perhaps something like an archetype is found in Gerald Vizenor’s *Griever*: already elsewhere, frontiers down. The trickster does not slide along an

Questions of power remain unresolved where you have neither identity nor a way of knowing what “identity” might be.

East/West border, a white/Native American boundary. He weaves a web knowing no such different places, elaborating some new space of action. Proper metropolitan critics could do some learning here. Of course, just as in *Kim*, to do it in fiction is somewhat different from doing it on the ground.

Works Cited

- Césaire, Aimé. *Discourse on Colonialism*. Trans. Joan Pinkham. New York and London: Monthly Review P, 1972. Trans. of *Discours sur le colonialisme*. 1955.
- Eagleton, Terry. *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory*. London: NLB, 1976.
- . *The Function of Criticism: From the Spectator to Post-Structuralism*. London: Verso, 1984.
- Farah, Nuruddin. *Maps*. New York: Pantheon, 1986.
- Fuentes, Carlos. "A Harvard Commencement." *Myself with Others: Selected Essays*. New York: Farrar, 1988. 199–214.
- Gibbon, Edward. "An Essay on the Study of Literature." *The Miscellaneous Works. . . . With Memoirs of His Life and Writings, Composed by Himself; Illustrated from His Letters, with Occasional Notes and Narrative*, by John, Lord Sheffield. London, 1837. 631–70.
- Kipling, Rudyard. *Kim*. Ed. Edward W. Said. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987.
- Maty, M. "Letter to the Author." Gibbon 627–31.
- Molloy, Sylvia. *Certificate of Absence*. Trans. Daniel Balderston and Sylvia Molloy. Texas Pan American Series. Austin: U of Texas P, 1989.
- Reiss, Timothy J. "The Cosmos Rag, or: How Mean Can You Be?" *Discours social/Social Discourse* 4.1–2 (1992): 117–46.
- . "History, Criticism, and Theory: Fact and Fantasy." *Canadian Review of Comparative Literature* 16 (1989): 136–53.
- . *The Meaning of Literature*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1992.
- . *The Uncertainty of Analysis: Problems in Truth, Meaning, and Culture*. Ithaca: Cornell UP, 1988.
- Retamar, Roberto Fernández. "Caliban: Notes Toward a Discussion of Culture in Our America." Trans. Lynn Garafola, David Arthur MacMurray, and Roberto Marquez. *Caliban and Other Essays*. Trans. Edward Baker. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1989. 3–45.
- Rodó, José Enrique. *Ariel*. Trans. Margaret Sayers Peden. Foreword James W. Symington. Prologue Carlos Fuentes. 1988. Austin: U of Texas P, 1989.
- Said, Edward W. Introduction. *Kim*. By Rudyard Kipling. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1987. 7–46.
- Scott, Joan Wallach. *Gender and the Politics of History*. New York: Columbia UP, 1988.

- Silko, Leslie Marmon. *Ceremony*. 1977. Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1986.
- Vizenor, Gerald. *Griever: An American Monkey King in China*. Normal: Illinois State U; New York: Fiction Collective, 1987.
- Williams, Raymond. *Marxism and Literature*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1977.