Image_Identity_Reality

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Edited by

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To my sons

Maksimilijan, Ksavier and Boško–the three suns in my universe.

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To begin with, I would like to thank my colleagues Ivana Trbojević and Katarina Rasulić for graciously consenting to my idea of editing this volume, but above all for having enough strength to organize the International Conference *English Language and Literature Studies: Image, Identity, Reality (ELLSIIR)*, on the occasion of the 80th Anniversary of the English Department at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade in Serbia, and to cope with the multitude of problems related to such an event.

I am particularly indebted to all the contributors to this volume, for having participated in the work of that Conference, for their extremely interesting and instructive papers, and for their support, encouragement and help during the process of editing the book you now have in front of you.

During my entire life, I have been deeply grateful to my mother Milica and my sister Mirjana who have been, and I hope will remain for a long time to come, my profoundest inspiration in all spheres of life, each of the two in her own idiosyncratic way, and this is the best place of all to express that gratitude.

And last but certainly not least, my heartfelt thanks go to my colleague and former student Goran Totović, who has been my severest critic ever since I first met him five years ago, and without whose assistance in improving the manuscript I could not have managed to complete this work to my satisfaction.

INTRODUCTION

IMAGE, IDENTITY, REALITY IN ENGLISH LANGUAGE AND LITERATURE STUDIES

BILJANA ĐORIĆ-FRANCUSKI

The International Conference *English Language and Literature Studies: Image, Identity, Reality (ELLSIIR)*, was organized by the English Department at the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia, in order to mark the 80th anniversary of the Department. The Conference, held in Belgrade from 4-6 December 2009, was the third international conference on English language and literature studies to be held at the Faculty. It followed on from *English Language and Literature Studies: Interfaces and Integrations (ELLSII 75)*, which took place in 2004 and marked the 75th anniversary of the English Department, and *English Language and Literature Studies: Structures across Cultures (ELLSSAC)*, held in 2007.

The scope of the *ELLSIIR* Conference included a whole range of topics from extremely diverse fields, which could essentially be classified into one of the following areas: theoretical linguistics, applied language studies, literature, and cultural studies. Its aim was to arouse academic interest and incite the exchange of ideas in these spheres of research among academics from all over the world.

The *ELLSIIR* Conference Proceedings, comprising a selection of papers, were published after the conference, in the same manner as the *ELLSII* and *ELLSSAC* Proceedings were published after the first two conferences. The *ELLSIIR* Conference Proceedings consist of two volumes, the first incorporating papers from the fields of theoretical and applied linguistics, and the second including those pertaining to literary and cultural studies.

This book, produced by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, comprises papers covering all four of the mentioned areas, coherently presented under three sections according to the shared topic: Image, Identity, and Reality.

The first section, which focuses on different facets of *Image*, comprises two chapters. The first belongs to the field of English language teaching,

and the second to the field of literary studies, essentially dealing with postcolonial theory. It should nevertheless be stressed that what these two papers have in common is their interdisciplinarity, since they both touch on cultural studies and their authors discuss certain aspects of cultural values and cross-cultural encounters. In her fascinating paper on the issue of methodological imperialism in ELT, "A Shattered Image–Shattered Identities: How Real Is Methodological Imperialism in English Language Teaching?", Ana Vlaisavljević from Belgrade's English Department discusses the appropriateness of this term, the ways in which methodological imperialism is implemented in ELT, and its effectiveness. She points to the fact that the Anglophone influence in teaching English as a foreign language is at times only formal, while actual methodological norms remain based on domestic cultural values. The second paper in this section, "Nameless Selves in J.M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*", is written by Arijana Luburić-Cvijanović from the English Department in Novi Sad, Serbia, who questions the issue of image and identity in postcolonial literature, more specifically in J. M. Coetzee's novel *Waiting for the Barbarians*. She discusses the author's original representation of the problem of "the constructed images of the nameless, voiceless and often demonized 'others', typical protagonists of postcolonial narratives". In their articles, both Vlaisavljević and Luburić-Cvijanović meticulously examine the influences of the colonial discourse and imperial power on the culture, tradition and history of the *Other*, be it a non-native speaker as a "culturally deficient foreign other", as in the first paper, or a former colonial subject from an actually colonized community, as in the second.

In the next section, the authors consider particular aspects of the notion of *Identity*, from the viewpoints of philosophy, or more precisely hermeneutics, literary studies, cross-cultural studies, and research of national stereotypes. In his article "A Narrative Structure of the Subject and the Hermeneutical Rest from Identity", Želimir Vukašinović, a Lecturer in Philosophy at the Faculty of Philology in Belgrade, gives a rather original interpretation of the thought of Heidegger, Ricoeur and Derrida (especially Derrida's reading of Joyce's *Ulysses*). With this, he reaches a new hermeneutical definition of the subject, in light of postmodernist deconstruction, ontological neutralization of the subject, and its recognition "beyond the cultural politics of identity, as much as beyond a scientifically constellated objectivism and historicism." The issue of identity is further analyzed by Frédéric Dumas, an Assistant Professor at Grenoble University in France, in his inspiring article "America as a Spectacle: Nelson Algren's *Walk on the Wild Side*", in which the author examines the national identity crisis in America, and

concludes that: "To Algren, the Great Depression was mostly a crisis of identity: since former values have become obsolete, new ones have yet to be found." In an effort to peel the *culture onion* in her paper "Anglo-Serbian Cultural and Literary Relations: Whose Bus Is It?", Biljana Đorić-Francuski, an Assistant Professor at Belgrade's English Department, attempts to show that the Serbs and the British are not as different as they apparently seem to be despite research showing significant discrepancies in values. Through tracing the development of Anglo-Serbian cultural and literary relations since their beginnings, she advocates the need for their further study and improvement. Steve Buckledee from the University of Cagliari, Italy, investigates the language used in several British tabloids in his outstanding article "British Tabloid Newspapers and National Identity: Reporting Reality or Fabricating a Myth?". He outlines the links between the idea of *Britishness* and the real national identity, reflected by shared cultural values and beliefs, through an intricate intertextual web of bonds between the selected texts and their readers. Thus, the papers in this section consider the issue of identity in its various forms: beginning with its theoretical concept in hermeneutics, followed by an examination of a national identity crisis in America, and of complex cross-cultural relations between two national identities, British and Serbian, and finally an original in-depth study of the former.

While the second section is primarily oriented towards literary and cultural studies, the third is devoted to linguistics and translation studies, hence its title–*Reality*. It consists of four papers, two of which are devoted to issues from the field of theoretical linguistics, one is about teaching English for Specific Purposes, and the fourth deals with translation studies. In the first chapter "English as *the* Nativized Foreign Language Revisited: Some Glocal Implications", Tvrtko Prćić, a Professor of English Language and Linguistics at Novi Sad's Department of English, discusses the differences between English as the nativized foreign language (ENFL) and all other foreign languages. He offers a review of the basic properties of ENFL, as well as an appraisal of some *glocal* ("i.e. observable globally but realized locally") implications of its unique status. In their joint paper "Incorporating Intercultural Communicative Competence in ESP Courses: Design of Materials and Activities for the Students of Economics, Finance and Trade", Ljiljana Marković, a Full Professor and Vice-Dean at Belgrade's Faculty of Philology, and Zorica Prnjat from the Faculty of Trade and Banking explore the possibilities for incorporating intercultural training into an ESP course, designed for students of economics, finance and trade, with special emphasis on authentic materials and specific activities which should be provided to learners in order to enable them to

gain intercultural communicative competence and to communicate across cultures. The paper "Morphological Features of Slavicisms in English", written by Nenad Tomović, an Assistant Professor at Belgrade's English Department, explores morphological features and the adaptation of Slavicisms in the English language, based on a corpus comprising 695 loanwords originating from Slavic languages, including such issues as transmorphemization, irregular plurals, and the use of Slavic affixes. In the last chapter, "Ezra Pound's *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* in Serbo-Croatian translations", Vera Savić and Ilijana Čutura from the Faculty of Education in Jagodina, University of Kragujevac, deal with a comparative analysis of Ezra Pound's long poem *Hugh Selwyn Mauberley* and three translations of this poem into Serbian, Croatian and Bosnian (which are basically the same language spoken in different cultural areas of former Yugoslavia). The authors assess the translators' creativity by the degree to which *phanopoeia, logopoeia* and *melopoeia* are preserved in their translations, on the basis of Pound's translation theory which calls for linguistic precision, but at the same time also evaluating the originality of each poetic translation.

The book *Image_Identity_Reality* contains a wealth of knowledge, firmly grounded in arguments and theory, and this combined with its interdisciplinarity and the fascinating topic of showing how image is reflected in identity and how they are then both perceived in reality, ensures that it will be very useful for various kinds of academic study related to the issues it covers and a valuable resource in understanding the range of subjects included in its three sections. The anthology will be highly relevant not only to those experts interested in scholarly research of theory and practice regarding the selected themes from the broad area of English language and literature studies, on which the insightful authors of the papers provide their original views, but also to the general reading public, as a reliable and trustworthy source of information and thoughts.

SECTION I:

IMAGE

CHAPTER ONE

A SHATTERED IMAGE–SHATTERED IDENTITIES: HOW REAL IS METHODOLOGICAL IMPERIALISM IN ELT?

ANA VLAISAVLJEVIĆ

Introduction

The concepts of linguistic, methodological and cultural imperialism are increasingly used in English Language Teaching (ELT) professional discourse[1] to refer to the domination of the Anglophone West over non-native speaker communities[2]. The first pertains to the global dominance of the English language, the second to the imposition of instructional norms, while the third, in this context, is achieved through the first two and involves the imposition of behavioural patterns and cultural values. Although the focus of the paper will be on methodological imperialism in particular, it is important to note that the three forms are inextricably linked and could be understood as progressive stages of one and the same process.

While aiming to determine the scope of western influence in the field and the ways in which methodological imperialism is perpetuated, the paper also sets out to address the question of its effectiveness. Namely, while much has been written on the impact of the imposition of western

[1] Phillipson 1992, 2001; Canagarajah 1999; Pennycook 1994; Brown 2000; Holliday 2007; Modiano 2000; Waters 2007

[2] Although "Anglophone" generally denotes "English-speaking", "Anglophone West" here is taken from Waters 2007 to refer mainly to Great Britain and the US as the most dominant forces behind methodological imperialism. Other terms used to the same purpose include "the West", "western" or "native speaker (NS) communities" and the "centre" as opposed to "non-native speaker (NNS)" or "local communities" and the "periphery" referring to developing countries.

instructional norms on existing ELT practices worldwide (Canagarajah 1999; Brown 2000; Modiano 2000; Phillipson 1992), the idea here is to consider the factors which impede the adoption of these practices, most notably, differences in cultural values between the Anglophone West and local communities with special reference to Serbia. In other words, we will look into the matter from the perspective of the periphery rather than the centre which is a reversal of the usual pattern.

However, before we investigate the nature of methodological imperialism it would be useful to examine the meaning of the term appropriated from literature on the theory and history of empires and to compare it with a similar concept: that of hegemony. While the latter involves a rule-bound form of supremacy within a group of formally equal parties, imperiality entails an asymmetric relationship in which the dominant power does not feel bound by any rules (Münkler 2007, 42). The juxtaposition between the two should serve to determine the appropriateness of the expression "imperialism" translated to the field of applied linguistics.

Although it is debatable whether the term used is fully appropriate in the context, I argue that methodological imperialism understood as the hegemonic supremacy of the Anglophone West over non-native speaker communities is very much a reality in ELT. It is sustained both through manifest practices, but also more covertly by projecting an image of superiority and shrouding the real nature of the domination in culturally neutral terms and concepts likely to be more acceptable to the periphery. However, although readily adopted in theory, new instructional practices remain heavily reliant on the original methodologies thoroughly grounded in the specific cultural values of local communities.

Native speaker vs. non-native speaker

The nature of native speaker (NS)–non-native speaker (NNS) dichotomy in ELT as described by various authors (Holliday 2007; Phillipson 1992; Brown 2000) suggests the hegemonic position of the former. Holliday (2007, 364) for example defines the relationship as that of a "provider of knowledge, wisdom and expertise" who assumes superiority over a "culturally deficient foreign other". The very formulation of the binary is reminiscent of the power relations in traditional empires and the colonial construction of the "other" and therefore justifies the use of the term "imperialism" in this context, even if metaphorically rather than literally. He provides various examples of what he sees as cultural chauvinism against non-native speakers in ELT and claims that its professional discourse "hides ideology by projecting technical superiority through

constructing its beliefs as neutral" (364). The question of cultural integrity is also addressed by Modiano (2000, 340) who argues that in the case of the prescription of culture-specific instructional norms or insistence on near-native proficiency ELT becomes an "imperial structure" which "Anglo-Americanizes" the non-native speaker. Waters (2007, 354) on the other hand believes that the extent to which both NSs actually exercise hegemony over NNSs, and the extent to which they are perceived by NNSs to do so are exaggerated and that the prevailing ideology in the professionally dominant Anglophone West is that of political correctness (PC). Its influence on ELT is reflected in the numerous calls for the development of a context-sensitive "appropriate methodology" as a means of countering "methodological imperialism"; for new models of English based on non-native speaker norms (e.g. English as an International Language) and in the promotion of a learner-centred approach in order to "democratise" EFL teaching methods. Despite its avowed aims to the contrary, the PC-based ELT perspective paradoxically imposes an ideological power-structure of its own. As Holliday (2007, 360) asserts this hegemonic political correctness may be more deeply rooted in English-speaking Western ELT's established desire to "liberate non-native speakers who do not need liberating, than in acting against chauvinistic attitudes towards them". This comment evokes the idea of *mission civilisatrice,* central in particular to French imperial ideology, which was used as a pretext for imperial expansion and whose task was to bring the benefits of French culture, religion and language to the "unenlightened races of the earth" (Young 2001, 30). A convenient concept soon adopted by other imperial powers seems to be at work even now in the postcolonial world, though, as will be shown, in a much subtler and obscured way.

The commercial and political role of methodological imperialism

Methodological imperialism is not only a matter of theoretical debate among scholars, but also one of facts and numbers. The supremacy of the Anglophone West is most easily visible in their practises of exporting educational materials, operating language schools, organising ELT conferences and English language examinations worldwide, establishing university degrees and various scholarship schemes related to ELT, providing support for university departments and ELT research and offering teacher training courses, all through the network of the representative bodies in local communities aimed at extending their sphere of influence. When it comes to Britain, the key agency for this is the

British Council. Beneath some of the idealistic rhetoric about the mission of the Council to increase "cultural understanding", there is constant recognition of its commercial and political role. As the Director-General to the British Council stated in the Council's 1987/88 Annual Report, "Britain's real black gold is not North Sea oil, but the English language. The challenge facing us is to exploit it to the full." (quoted in Phillipson 1992, 48-49). The reports about the English teaching industry being worth 6 billion pounds to the British economy in the 1980s (Phillipson 2001, 191), and probably much more in recent times, are therefore not surprising.

Cultural imperialism

While Phillipson (2001, 185) looks at the western domination in ELT from a macro-social perspective as a "post-imperial, but essentially capitalist agenda", one of the more widely voiced concerns is whether such an imposition of teaching techniques verges on cultural imperialism. The manner in which the Anglophone West counters such claims is indicative of the more covert ways in which methodological imperialism is sustained. Imported teaching materials, for example, are often criticised on the grounds of containing native speaker norms which project a culture-specific worldview and threaten to influence learners' cultural behaviour and values. Phillipson (2001, 194-95) lists several PhD studies which through critical discourse analysis show that the language pedagogy of English teaching textbooks used in Singapore and the two Koreas has its origins in a western vision of the world and is irredeemably Eurocentric (e.g. the glamorisation of western life-style). Indeed, many authors (Byram et al. 1994; Lessard-Clouston 1997; Robinson 1985) agree that by teaching a language one is inevitably already teaching culture implicitly:

> When we try to adopt new speech patterns, we are to some extent giving up the markers of our own identity in order to adopt those of another cultural group. In some respects, too, we are accepting another culture's way of perceiving the world. If we are agreeable to this process, it can enrich us and liberate us.
> (Littlewood quoted in Byram et al. 1994, 6)

On the other hand, while admitting that it is impossible to learn a foreign language without being influenced ideologically, politically and culturally, there have been calls for the teaching of a "neutral" form of English, perceived as a language of wider communication and not the possession of native speakers (Modiano 2000, 344). This idea of English as a "practical language, divorced from its cultural history" was taken up

enthusiastically by the early promoters of English as an International Language (EIL) associated with the British Council in the 1930s and 1940s (Kayman 2004, 10). However, it could be contended that the adoption of such a liberal line represents just another example of political correctness in ELT aimed at masking the issue of culture in order to secure supremacy without "hurting the feelings" of the periphery.

Methodological imperialism and the periphery

How is methodological imperialism seen through the eyes of the periphery? Is it externally imposed, passively accepted or even enthusiastically embraced? Countries in the postcolonial world seem to be caught between the need for a global medium and the awareness that such a medium is not culturally or ideologically neutral. Kovačević's study (2004) about the attitudes towards English among recent Serbian expatriates in the United States shows just how prominent the first factor is. Despite the American and British involvement in the wars in the Balkans which was seen as anti-Serbian and resulted in opposition to these countries' values, no correlation was found between this and opinions about the English language. In fact, their attitudes to the global popularity of English were overwhelmingly positive and showed that the command of the language was considered most favourably as a pragmatic asset. This stands in stark contrast to numerous nationalistic attempts in former British and American colonies to revive local, regional and national languages (e.g. Tamil and Hindi in India) in order to counter the power of English which can be attributed to the collective recollection of past subjugation and language imposition. However, even in these settings the spread of English is now "related more to their [former colonies'] engagement in the modern world economy than to any efforts derived from their colonial masters" (Fishman quoted in Phillipson 2001, 192). On the other hand, the positive attitude to the English language in Serbia largely extends to the western-devised teaching methodology and pervades much of the ELT professional community. The native speaker (British or American) is seen as the target of English language learning and an ideal teacher of English too. ELT conferences organised by the British Council are very well-attended and any kind of professional guidance from the West is most welcome.[3] With this in mind, it is easy to see how "the

[3] Based on personal experience as a junior member of the English Department of the Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University, which is the largest body responsible for the education and training of English language teachers in Serbia.

knowledge capitalism of professional imperialism subjugates people more imperceptibly than and as effectively as international finance and weaponry" (Illich quoted in Phillipson 2001, 194). Indeed, as a result of the process of self-affirmation as one of the salient features of Euro-Americanism and its particular emphasis on the "universalist power of Western reason, thought and reflection" (Slater 2004, 12) there seems to be no real need for the *imposition* of Anglophone methodological norms as these are readily accepted in non-western ELT professional circles.

The effectiveness of methodological imperialism: the case of Serbia

Even if we agree that methodological imperialism is embraced rather than imposed, the question remains as to whether the same instructional patterns can be implemented across cultures. According to Brown (2000, 227) many changes in language teaching over the past twenty years, characterized primarily by a shift from a form-focused, or structural approach, to a meaning-focused, or communicative approach, are western in nature and unsuited to other contexts. Evidence of differences in cultural values between the British and the Serbs (Vlaisavljević 2005) will serve here to prove this point and explain some of the obstacles in the implementation of western pedagogy in non-western contexts. For example, learner autonomy as one of the new buzzwords of ELT seems to be thoroughly grounded in individualist cultures such as Great Britain and therefore incompatible with the collectivist nature of the Serbian society. Indeed, experience from the classroom[4] shows that students tend to be over-dependent on teachers and find it normal to engage in modes of learning which are teacher-centred and in which they receive knowledge rather than interpret it. This is closely related to the cultural dimension of power distance defined by Hofstede (2001, 98) in terms of the stress cultures place on hierarchy as opposed to equality. In a high power distance country such as Serbia the question of who speaks from the position of leadership or power is highly dependent upon age or status. As a consequence, students appear to be less willing to "stand out" by expressing their views or raising questions, particularly if this might be perceived as expressing public disagreement. In fact, questioning a teacher

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See also Phillipson (2001) on support schemes for English teaching in post-communist European countries.

[4] Based on personal experience as an English language instructor at Belgrade University.

has been traditionally viewed as questioning competence and unfortunately many teachers in Serbia are still trying to reinforce such beliefs. As a result of these cultural expectations of the appropriate roles of teachers and learners, in which the former is seen as a provider of knowledge, the shift to a learner-centred approach propagated by the West is rather difficult to achieve. High uncertainty avoidance in Serbia (Hofstede 2001; Vlaisavljević 2005) which suggests little tolerance of ambiguity is reflected in many commonly encountered classroom situations. Namely, Serbian students do not feel comfortable with multiple correct answers; they tend to prefer a clearly structured curriculum and are likely to follow the teacher's guidelines to the letter, demanding detailed information about how they should go about their tasks. Similarly, they do not feel comfortable when making guesses or taking risks in conversations. However, since language learning requires the student to cope with information gaps, unexpected language and situations, new cultural norms, and substantial uncertainty, such tolerance of ambiguity more valued in Great Britain is crucial to success in language learning aimed at real communicative use. This is just one of the examples which show the possible advantages of western intervention. Non-native English teachers, therefore, should not automatically dismiss it as the imposition of instructional norms or correction of cultural behaviour, but rather see these techniques as a new pool of options to be tested in the classroom and used to our students' benefit. Personal experience shows that while some innovations need sensitive modification in order to be accepted with effect, there is also evidence from the classroom that learners will readily stretch their learning styles if novel approaches are seen to be interesting and potentially useful. Moreover, such teaching can have a significant role in developing young people's critical awareness not only of other cultures, but of their own society as well and help them understand the perspectives of others and reflect on their own worldview.

Conclusion

While on a theoretical level the Anglophone West has succeeded in projecting their instructional norms as an ideal, what actually happens in the English language classroom in local communities does not always reflect the proclaimed aspirations. The main impediment to methodological imperialism is not the conscious resistance of the periphery, but rather the relative stability of cultural values which direct behaviour and make old pedagogical habits difficult to eliminate. This is not to say that culturally conditioned original methodological patterns should be eradicated, or that

the new imported ones should be opposed, but simply that cultural differences should be taken into account if the outcome of the teaching is to match expectations. At the same time it is important to develop a critical understanding of the issues surrounding methodological imperialism especially with future English language teachers and thus enable them to successfully deal with the conflicting realities of the profession. Only then will "imperialism" truly give way to autonomy for they will have the power to decide on the extent to which western methodological authority should play a part in *their* professional reality.

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CHAPTER TWO

NAMELESS SELVES IN J. M. COETZEE'S *WAITING FOR THE BARBARIANS*

ARIJANA LUBURIĆ-CVIJANOVIĆ

> Are they really the same flesh as yourself? Do they even have names? Or are they merely a kind of undifferentiated brown stuff, about as individual as bees or coral insects? They arise out of the earth, they sweat and starve for a few years, and then they sink back into the nameless mounds of the graveyard and nobody notices that they are gone. And even the graves themselves soon fade back into the soil.
> —George Orwell, "Marrakech"

(Re)constructed Identities

As one of the central concerns of both colonial and postcolonial fiction, as well as contemporary literature in general, identity plays a key role in the understanding of the intricate power relations at work. Colonial and postcolonial narratives abound in constructed images, (mis)representations or deformations of the "other", produced by a complex interplay of social, economic and psychological factors, and enforced by a whole body of scientific works and theories which turned prejudice into "objective" truth.[1] The discourse and sheer authority of such works denied, for centuries, the very possibility of questioning the objectivity of the images provided. Postcolonial literature largely tests and undermines the allegedly accurate representations of the (former) colonial subject.

[1] The idea is taken from Edward Said's *Orientalism*. Although Orientalist works and the Orientalist discourse predominantly deal with the representations of Arabs, Said's observations are applicable, to a considerable extent, to any (post)colonial context.

It is common knowledge that the concept of "the Empire writing back"[2] is only a part of the widespread trend in contemporary literature of margins moving towards and indeed becoming the centre, which challenges the sovereignty of the dominant western, white, male, heterosexual or colonial consciousness. Like women's writing or queer literature, for instance, postcolonial literature empowers the powerless and gives voice to the voiceless or, more precisely, the muted. In other words, the "others" are offered a chance to speak for and depict themselves, instead of being spoken for and depicted. Narrating from their own point of view, they rewrite, restore and re-imagine their (hi)stories, using the oppressor's tools, his medium–writing, and his language. In doing so, they do not merely purport to tell the other side of the story of oppression, thus enforcing the traditional binary oppositions such as east/west or black/white from a different angle. Instead, they participate in a search for self-definition or a re-definition of the self, disrupting the existing stereotypical images of the inferior and therefore marginalized along the way. The need for a restored or rebuilt identity may have features characteristic of a particular social, cultural and political context–the experience of slavery in the New World is certainly different from the form of oppression experienced in colonial India–but its essence is everywhere the same. The oppressors, who invariably thought of themselves as superior, imposed on the native populations their norms, rules, cultures, traditions, languages, versions of history,[3] and views of the world, erasing those of the natives and abusing the Darwinian law of the strongest even before its advent. Part of it meant the imposition of their impressions of the "inferior" or "lesser" peoples, frequently based on no actual encounter with them, as Said notes, which passed as not only opinions but facts.

The commonest stereotypes were of the "others" as lazy, lecherous, half-witted, incapable of logical thinking, primitive, dirty, treacherous, barbaric, etc.[4] The "barbarians" were often explicitly or implicitly

[2] The phrase was originally used by Salman Rushdie in an article which he wrote for *The Times*.

[3] An interesting point in case can be found in Jamaica Kincaid's essays "A Small Place" and "On Seeing England for the First Time", in which she recounts the process of erasing native history and imposing one's own, and contrasts incongruous versions of history, which present the same people as heroes or criminals.

[4] This is, of course, where traditional binary oppositions are implied. West/white/male is associated with what is normal, familiar, rational, logical, superior, powerful, moral, strong, knowledgeable, articulate and intelligent,

compared with animals, a perfect example of which is the vocabulary used in the portrayal of black slaves in Caryl Phillips's novel *Cambridge*, as they are referred to as "apes", or "black bugs", and their houses are described as "lairs" and "nests". In the process of the so-called "thingification" (Loomba 1998, 114), "barbarians" are even seen as property and stock, that is, as objects. Such generalizations, generated by a lack of (the wish for) understanding of and for what is different from us, formed what Said calls "collective identities", which never account for individuals but present people only in terms of masses.[5]

The origins of attributing to "others" characteristics seen as inferior can be traced not in colonialism but further back in the past. If one takes into account the biblical associations of blackness with the forces of evil (Loomba 1998, 92) or the clashes between Christians and heathens in the Middle Ages, it becomes obvious that generalizations based on race, gender, religion or class have always existed and the colonial era merely intensified, or as Ania Loomba says, "calcified" them. Early colonial discourse, however, distinguishes between "infidels" and "savages" (Loomba 1998, 94). Constructed images of "others" also shifted in accordance with changes in the political situation, so the initial image of the meekness of the Aboriginal population in Australia turned into savagery when they rebelled against working as manual labourers (Loomba 1998, 98).

As many have noted, such stereotypes provided a basis and justification for exploitation, and sometimes extermination, disguised as "civilizing" missions. Civilizing natives also meant turning them into yet another set of stereotypes, "converted heathens" or "educated natives",[6] which actually undermined scientific theories of race, as there was no point in "improvement by social means" (Loomba 1998, 101-2) if savagery had a biological basis. Furthermore, if savagery and inferiority of any kind were inherent and natural, why did natives have to be forced into the inferior position? The contradictions between the perceived and constructed images were also mirrored in the coexistence of the white man's *fear* of contamination through the white woman's contact with the

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whereas east/non-white/female stands for abnormal, strange, irrational, illogical, inferior, powerless, immoral (and/or amoral), weak, ignorant, inarticulate and dim.

[5] Quoting Frantz Fanon, Homi Bhabha points out that both the oppressor and the oppressed are caught up in the intricate play of power relations. "The Negro enslaved by his inferiority, the white man enslaved by his superiority alike behave in accordance with a neurotic orientation" (Bhabha, 43).

[6] An illustrative example can again be found in *Cambridge* where the title character embodies both stereotypes.

male "other", and the white man's *desire* for the female "other" which, instead of contaminating the superior race, would in fact purify the inferior one. The related and once common images in literature of white men as saviours of non-white women, as well as those of non-white women desiring white men were mere projections of the white man's fantasies. This is where the notion of literal and cultural hybridity enters the stage.[7]

In their attempt to "civilize" "others", oppressors would also re-name them. Deprived of their homelands and sometimes families, they were also robbed of one of the most basic marks of their identities, their names. Colonial and postcolonial realities and literatures were and are inhabited by countless "others" whose Christian or European names signal an erasure of their cultures, traditions and histories, as well as the dislocation or displacement of their sense of self. Literature also describes the opposite tendency, that of assigning no names to those the white man considered equal to objects. One of the most frequently discussed works of postcolonial fiction, J. M. Coetzee's *Waiting for the Barbarians*, provides a deeply moving account of nameless selves.

At the Interface of the Skin

> Why not the quite simple attempt to touch the other, to feel the other, to explain the other to myself?
> —Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks*

Coetzee's third novel, *Waiting for the Barbarians*, "about the impact of the torture chamber on the life of a man of conscience" (Coetzee 1986, 2), the torturer being the state–Empire of the white man, is also about complicity, personal responsibility and awakening, the questionability of morality and justice and the provisional nature of truth and objectivity.[8] The setting is an unspecified Empire, which enables the author to both engage with and distance himself from the political context of South Africa (Head 1998, 48). Opinions vary as to the purpose of not pinpointing the setting and thus making it universal. While some see the novel as a "political fable of South Africa" (Howe) or an allegory of the "treatment of political prisoners in South Africa" (Gallagher), others consider it a "universal allegory of imperialism" (Head) applicable to any colonial

[7] As is known, in postcolonial literature, and contemporary literature at large, hybrid identities are related to notions of instability, in-betweeness and fragmentation.

[8] This final theme is not the sole property of postcolonial literature as a lot of contemporary literature deals with it, as well.