Adventuring in the Englishes

Adventuring in the Englishes: Language and Literature in a Postcolonial Globalized World

Edited by

Ikram Ahmed Elsherif and Piers Michael Smith

CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS PUBLISHING

Adventuring in the Englishes: Language and Literature in a Postcolonial Globalized World,
Edited by Ikram Ahmed Elsherif and Piers Michael Smith

This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN (10): 1-4438-4801-8, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4801-5

TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

We would like to thank GUST Bookstore and Growmore General Trading Co., Wataniya Telecom, KFAS (Kuwait Foundation for the Advancement of Sciences), CACR (Center of Alumni and Corporate Relations) and Arabian Advanced Systems without whose support and assistance this book could not have been produced. We would also like to thank CTheory: An International Journal of Theory, Technology and Culture for allowing us to reprint a revised version of "Liquid Grammar, Liquid Style: On the East-Asian Way of Using English," which was originally published in its April 2006 issue. We would also like to thank Rodopi publications for allowing us to reprint Robert J. C. Young's essay, which, in an earlier version, appeared as 'English in the Languages of Cultural Encounters', in Literature for Our Times: Postcolonial Studies in the Twenty-First Century, eds. Bill Ashcroft, Ranjini Mendis, Julie McGonegal, and Arun Mukherjee, Amsterdam/New York, NY: Rodopi, 2012, 165-84.

We would also like to thank all the scholars and writers who contributed to this book, with a special note for Fadia Faqir for allowing us to include the text of the lecture she gave at the 2012 GELL (GUST English Language and Literature) First International Conference in Kuwait. Our deep gratitude also goes to GUST administration and our colleagues in the English Department for their support and assistance.

A special thank you for Hiba Kaouri for her valuable assistance in the editing of the manuscript of this book.

INTRODUCTION

Where Goethe could speak of World Literature (*Weltliteratur*) in translation in the early nineteenth century, we can now speak of World literatures in English. Today we are aware of the spread, as much as the distribution, of the English language, of the growth of regional Englishes, and correspondingly of multiple literatures in English.

English, even as the lingua franca of business and diplomacy, is not quite the universal hegemonic discourse it looked like becoming at the end of the last century, nor is it the standardized homogenous medium philologists thought it would become during the nineteenth century. Of course, it was ever thus, English being little more than a stew of other languages from earliest times. But in the past, certainly until very recently, it was associated with a culture and a national origin; it was the marker and standard-bearer of cultural difference. In the era of twenty-first century internet culture and information flows, we are much more aware of English and its literature as not only inter-mingled and hypertrophic but as supranational and global.

In postcolonial terms, English has become the language of 'others' and its literatures are no longer derived from a common metropolitan centre and heritage. Different forms of English continually adapt and break ranks, becoming Englishes. If the literatures can be inflected with anxieties about using English, of one kind or another, as opposed to a native language (as in the novels of Chinua Achebe), they can also be jubilantly re-written with diglossic passages and the unembarrassed use of un-English words (as in the fictions of Timothy Mo or Ken Saro-Wiwa). English is morphing into Englishes at a fantastic rate, through creolization and what Robert Young, in his essay below, calls self-hybridization. There are 1600 languages currently in use on the Internet, where there was only one in the 1980s. If these are in near-continuous contact and dialogue, and if English maintains its hold as the dominant tool of information, as many predict, then we can imagine Englishes endlessly at play, endlessly reproducing, even as they retain a core intelligibility. Not babble or Babel, but Singlish, Chinglish, Manglish, Spanglish, Arablish, etc., code-switching elevated to a global discourse—a speakings in tongue.

Beginnings

The initial idea for this book began with a conversation in which we were discussing the language our students use in writing their essays. Our students are non-native users of English, yet many of them speak the language fluently. Writing, however, is a totally different matter. The use of slang, chat-room language, symbols and abbreviations, non-grammatical and informal expressions are some of the more frequent problematic features of their written work; interference of mother tongue expressions is another. Nevertheless, their essays remain fairly comprehensible, and they are generally able to communicate their ideas well. The question, then, was, to what extent is linguistic 'correctness' important? And is it essential for communication to insist on the use of 'standard' English? This question led to other equally important questions. How can we define 'good, standard' English? After all, in this expanding, increasingly complex globalized world the English language has grown and transformed, and there are many Englishes spoken and written around the world. Must we insist on the BBC variety of English?

The discussion extended to literature, since there is also the debate over the merits of teaching/reading standard canonized texts as opposed to more contemporary literary texts which experiment with both language and literary techniques. Writers whose mother languages are not English have infused and enriched the English language with the words, expressions and thematic and cultural concerns of their mother tongues. Many of those writers are already considered canonical authors of 'English' literature. However, the discussion was further complicated by considering the fact that even canonical texts written by native speakers sometimes used the vernacular non-standard English. Has this impaired the communicative aspect of the texts? It is already established that the use of the vernacular increases rather than decreases the realistic literary merit of texts.

In *Discourse on the Method for Reasoning Well and for Seeking Truth*, Rene Descartes argues that the difference between human beings and animals is that we "are […] capable of putting together different words and creating out of them a conversation" through which we can make our "thoughts known". The statement highlights and emphasizes the use of language for the purpose of communication. But, do the 'different words' in our 'conversation' (written or spoken) have to be of the same language to guarantee communication? And, does the use of 'hybrid' English impair communication? Or, on a more basic level, does the hybridization of English, which defies the traditional attempt at standardization, cripple or enrich it? To answer these questions we sought the views and expertise and

experiences of other scholars, creative writers, and practitioners of the English language and its literature. The result is the collection of articles in this book. The articles are heterogeneous, approaching the topic from different angles, literary, creative, linguistic and instructional. They represent different perspectives, offering different answers to the questions already posed, as well as posing new ones.

Endings

The book is divided into three main parts. Part I consists of four chapters which examine the concept of globalization and attempt to determine whether it is a new phenomenon or a phenomenon as old as civilization, one that has always been a characteristic of the ever changing, overlapping cultures which have constantly poured into each other over the ages. Robert Young's "English literature in Its Encounter with Other Languages" discusses the spread of English from past to present, and place to place, exploring its encounters with other languages and analyzing its subsequent self-fashioning. While noting tensions arising from contemporary authors' decisions to write in English as opposed to their native languages, he considers the aesthetic, social and political implications, concluding with an account of the possibilities in other major languages, such as Arabic, in their own related encounters, and how each responds to a new global dynamic. The Egyptian novelist Sahar El Mougy in "Globalization as Inspiration" expands on Young's argument, taking it a step further back in time as she explores the ancient civilizations of Greece, Rome and Egypt and their global influences. She also explores the possibilities and challenges modern globalization, the internet and cyber space open up for contemporary writers, and the humility the influx of information imposes, as well as the empowerment. Marianna Torgovnick's "Adventures in Digital Land" takes this latter idea a step further, including personal encounters with digital realities, along with accounts of the speed of publication and the circulation of ideas today, the state of the printed book, the differences between Classical narratives and modern internet-driven stories, and concluding with a defence, against the grain, of canonical writing and what, in particular, 'Englished' Greek epics can still teach us. Finally, in this section, taking up a thread in Young's and El Mougy's essays, Ikram Elsherif's "English Literature or Literature in English" surveys the ways in which English was and is appropriated, transformed and used by the previously colonized to write back at the centre. However, she also challenges the notion of 'writing back', arguing that in postcolonial times English is employed as a liberating medium of cultural expression.

Part II consists of five chapters which move from the general to the specific, exploring the influence of globalization in particular parts or locales. In "The Caribbean in the Metropolitan Imagination", the Trinidadian creative writer Raymond Ramcharitar examines how the Caribbean is figured in and outside the popular metropolitan imagination. He goes on to undermine the stereotypes of, particularly, the European imagination by holding up a locally manufactured lens to the fictive Caribbeans of V. S. Naipaul, Wilson Harris and Derek Walcott. A more intimate approach to English Literature and its encounters with otherness is taken by the Jordanian-British novelist Fadia Faqir, who addresses, in "Granada: Migration, Hybridity and Transcultural Encounters", her relationship, as an "'*expatriarch'*, a woman who left her country because of domestic, political, and intellectual policing," to the English language and English culture. She describes her development as an individual and as a novelist, focusing on cross-cultural encounters, representation and the personal and literary hybridity which allowed her to write English literary works using an "Arabised" English. In "Liquid Grammar, Liquid Style: On the East-Asian Way of Using English or The Phenomenon of 'Linguistic Air-Guitars'", Thorsten Botz-Bornstein takes up the case of what he calls 'East Asian English', distinguishing its (to Anglophone ears) curiosities of diction and address from the communicative limits of pidgin or creole and finding, at least in its allegorical content, its liquid grammar, in Japanese (Engrish), Chinese (Chinglish) and Korean (Konglish) advertisements, magazine headings and slogans, a new aesthetics beyond the bounds of straightforward English commercial language play. In "Global Shakespeare", Piers Michael Smith considers Shakespeare as both icon (and iconic) of British Literature and appropriated vehicle of un-British expression, exploring instances of transcultural adaptations in Canada, Thailand and Kuwait and noting their tendency not only to critique but to elude canonical metropolitan models of containment. Finally, in this section, Yasmina Djafri explores the challenges of teaching canonical English or 'Englished' literary texts to Algerian university students, and offers the results of an empirical experiment she conducted to test Algerian students' degree of literary appreciation of canonical and non-canonical English texts.

Part III of the book focuses on case studies and is divided into two sections: Literature and Language and Linguistics. The first consists of two chapters which examine the work of specific writers. In the first chapter, Andrew James analyzes the fictional works of two contemporary Trinidadian writers, their treatment and portrayal of their culturally hybrid characters, and the multiplicity of truths and thematic concerns in a modern, postcolonial Trinidadian society concerned about its future. In the second

chapter, using the evolution of the detective story in English circumstantially and in London paradigmatically as a metropolitan template, Martin Rosenstock analyzes Peter Ackroyd's anti-detective novel *Hawksmoor* as a case not just of that genre's attempt to subvert the detective story's conventional enlightenment modes of scientific analysis but of western modernity's suspicion of rational inquiry, or distrust of reasoned discourse altogether—one legacy of decolonization and the subsequent spread and fusion of knowledges elsewhere.

The second section of Part III consists of three chapters focusing on language and linguistic studies. In the first chapter, Smail Bemmoussat and Omar Azzoug argue for the necessity of developing ESP programs to cope with the demands of an increasingly globalized world where English has become the language of commerce, science and technology. In the second chapter, Nur Soliman investigates the sociolinguistic dynamics of signage in Kuwait, a country noted for its multi-ethnic and multi-national population, where street signs signify an expression of various social identities. Marta Maria Tryzna in the last chapter attempts to define 'Standard' English and argues for the necessity of teaching formal grammatical rules to non-native speakers of the language at the same time as she analyzes first language interference, particularly in the case of non-native speakers in Kuwait.

The heterogeneity of the topics and interests discussed in the different chapters parallels the ever-growing numbers of the Englishes spoken around the world. Interestingly, too, it reflects the heterogeneity of the contributors who may be described as cosmopolitan, both as individuals and as a group. They are mostly professors of English who have cross-cultural teaching experiences and who live or have lived and worked in both Anglophone and non-Anglophone countries. To many of them English is their dominant language, but not the mother tongue. All of them are bilingual or even trilingual. Thus their scholarly investigations are flavoured with their personal experiences or "adventures" with the language and its users. It is the heterogeneity and the personal flavour, we hope, that will make *Adventuring in the Englishes* appeal to the multi-national, multi-cultural, and multi-lingual community of a world where English has become the most recognizable sign of globalization.

PART I

GLOBALIZATION: HISTORY AND OVERVIEW

CHAPTER ONE

ENGLISH LITERATURE IN ITS ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHER LANGUAGES

ROBERT J.C. YOUNG

I want to consider the idea of the cultural encounter between English and other languages, while at the same time also thinking about English *as* a language of cultural encounter, as a language that in some sense is in transition and *in* translation, and then compare the situation of English today to that of other literatures and languages. The idea of English as a language and literature of cultural encounter offers a rather different perspective from the ways in which English literature has traditionally been marked even in such categories as world literatures in English, Anglophone, postcolonial, or Commonwealth literature(s). All these ways of describing literatures in English written outside Britain have particular implications, but the general assumption, as with 'English Literature', is that they are written, or read, in English.

But what exactly, we might ask, is the English of English literature? In order to answer this question, I thought I would start at an obvious place, with a few examples from canonical authors of English literature, drawn from those I studied when I was 'reading', as they say, for my BA in 'English Language and Literature' at Oxford University—surely the place, if anywhere, that represents the heartland of English, of pure English English and English Literature proper.

My first example is a poem I was given to read in my very first term, on arrival in Oxford.

Oft him anhaga are gebideð
Metudes miltse þeah þe modcearig
geond lagulade longe sceolde
hreran mid hondumhrimcealde sæ,
wadan wræclastas: wyrd bið ful aræd!
Swa cwæð eardstapa…

So here, it seems, is authentic English Literature, straight from my Oxford BA course on English Language and Literature. You might object, though, that the claim by Anglo-Saxonists to call their object of study 'Old English' rather than Anglo-Saxon forms part of a particular, now historical ideology about the origins of English culture generally in Anglo-Saxonism. So let us look at something more recent. I could cite some Chaucer, whose language resembles modern English a little more than the poet of *The Wanderer*, but I thought John Donne might be fairer as a more comparatively recent canonical figure of English literature:

Qvot dos haec Linguists perfetti Disticha feront,
Tot cuerdos Statesmen, hic livre fara tunc.
Es sat a mi l'honneur d'être hic inteso; Car I leave
L'honra de personne n'être creduto tibi.

This curious macaronic poem by John Donne written in five languages is perhaps the 17th century equivalent of the famous singing waiter's song at the end of Chaplin's film *Modern Times* (1936) when the up till then silent hero, having lost the shirt cuff on which he had written down the words of his song, resorts ingeniously to singing it in an incomprehensible multilingual composite of foreign words while he mimes the meaning with exquisite and provocative gestures. You might argue, though, that the Renaissance is in some sense different from more modern literature. So let us move right up to the nineteenth century. The Dorset dialect poet, William Barnes, would perhaps be too easy an example, so let's take his contemporary, the more urban, and urbane, the Pre-Raphaelite Dante Gabriel Rossetti:

Per carità,
  Mostrami amore:
  Mi punge il cuore,
Ma non si sa
  Dove è amore.
Chi mi fa
La bella età,
Sè no si sa
Come amerà?
  Ahi me solingo!
  Il cuor mi stringo!
  Non più ramingo,
Per carità!
'Barcarola'

Perhaps though, you might argue, that Dante Gabriel Rossetti is hardly a central canonical figure of English Literature. So let us take the Poet Laureate of the Victorian era, Alfred Lord Tennyson, writing here in a poem called 'The Northern Farmer: New Style' (1864):

> Me an' thy muther, Sammy, 'as beän a-talkin' o' thee;
> Thou's beän talkin' to muther, an' she beän a tellin' it me.
> Thou'll not marry for munny---thou's sweet upo' parson's lass---
> Noä---thou'll marry for luvv---an' we boäth on us thinks tha an ass.
>
> Seeä'd her todaäy goä by---Saäint's-daäy---they was ringing the bells.
> She's a beauty thou thinks---an' soä is scoors o› gells,
> Them as ‹as munny an› all---wot›s a beauty?---the flower as blaws.
> But proputty, proputty sticks, an› proputty, proputty graws.
>
> Do›ant be stunt: taäke time: I knaws what maäkes tha sa mad.
> Warn›t I craäzed fur the lasses mysén when I wur a lad?
> But I knaw›d a Quaäker feller as often ‹as towd ma this:
> Doänt thou marry for munny, but goä wheer munny is!›

My final example is taken from the doyen of both British and American literature, T.S. Eliot, the modernist imitated by generations of those all around the world in the twentieth century who aspired to write poetry in English. Here is part of a poem of Eliot's, written shortly after the *Waste Land*, in 1925:

> Le garçon délabré qui n'a rien à faire
> Que de se gratter les doigts et se pencher sur mon épaule:
> Dans mon pays il fera temps pluvieux,
> Du vent, du grand soleil, et de la pluie;
> C'est ce qu'on appelle le jour de lessive des gueux.'

So there we have 'English' literature. It turns out that in fact English Literature is written in many languages. One of the most interesting features of Eliot's *The Waste Land* (1922) in fact is that it is a poem written in seven languages (Latin, Greek, French, German, English, including Cockney English, Italian, Sanskrit). In that sense, *The Waste Land* demonstrates a characteristic that brings it close to the particular defining feature of what used to be called Commonwealth Literature: while all the different countries of the Commonwealth have a legal link to English, the official language of the Commonwealth, on the other hand, English, is situated at each place in polyglot environments; this means that it never marks the boundary of language or of writing—just as English

literature, as my examples show, has never been wholly written in standard English or even English at all. So the contemporary phenomenon of English literature being written out of and into the frame of other literatures, languages and cultures is not something new as is often suggested but intrinsic to its identity. The difference is only in the way that it is presented—as English literature or literature in English.

However wide the spread of the English language today, in most if not every country English is surrounded by other languages. Postcolonial societies are multilingual. So although it does not get reflected in much postcolonial criticism, one of the distinctive things that emerges in any study of postcolonial literature is the degree to which postcolonial societies, and the writers in them, operate in a multilingual environment. To write in English is not the same all over the world as it is as if you were writing in England—though having said that, in fact if you walk through the streets of London, you will hear almost every language on earth, and certainly plenty of Arabic. In most countries where writers are writing in English, English is surrounded *and* permeated by other languages. At every site, every language zone, rhizomatic contact occurs, transforming the languages in the process.

How is English affected by these cultural encounters around the world? By what different situations of production and reception? Let us take India as an example. 'Indian English' is now possibly the most widely spoken form of English on earth—or so David Crystal somewhat improbably claims. So those who complain about the globalization of English perhaps should start with India, except that they need to remember that there the language locks inexorably into a Hindi which is itself spattered with English and 'chalta hai'! English has shifted. Hinglish has reached. Let's prepone this talk!

Perhaps it is not so much that English has been globalized, overpowering all other languages, as that it has a constant facility of self-hybridisation, mixing with other languages in a recurring make-nice. English has long been a lingua franca, ever since it came into being, as Sir Walter Scott put it in *Ivanhoe,* as 'the … mixed language, in which the Norman and Saxon races conversed with each other'. English, you might say, is at least suited to be a global language since it is already a hybrid compound of the languages of Europe: just as with Conrad's Kurtz, all Europe went into the making of it—and indeed well beyond Europe, for let's not forget Kurtz's bungalow, coffee, mattress, pajamas, shampoo, and veranda or the haphazard way he breaks European taboos. Now English is merging even more quickly with other languages of the world, picking up not just

individual words but developing new hybridised forms—Banglish, Chinglish, Punglish, Singhlish, Spanglish, Hinglish …

> That Flintoff, yaar—he's too good, innit?
> Hey Bhai, did you ask that rasmolai on a date or what?
> That boy is a good for nothing badmash!

These phrases are taken from Baljinder J. Mahal's *The Queen's Hinglish: How to Speak Pukka* (2006). It's a sort of modern Hobson-Jobson, the difference being that while Hobson-Jobson charted the dialect of the British in India, and the development of Babu English–'*We are happy to inform you that your request has been rejected*'—the *Queen's Hinglish* charts the ways in which South Asians in Britain are blending English with Hindi, Urdu and Punjabi in England itself, changing the language in a way that is already apparent in contemporary literary works such as Suhayl Saadi's *Psychoraag* (2004), Gautam Malkani's *Londonstani* (2006), or Daljit Nagra's collection, *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* (2007). Is there something about English that facilitates this kind of absorption of other languages? Mahal writes:

> English is and always has been a greedy language. Throughout the centuries it has been gathering exotic words from other tongues like a wildly successful gambler hording chips … its relentless appetite for the new, making it at once the largest and most versatile of all the world's languages.

English, it seems, has always been voracious, and far from trying to keep itself pure, has languished in a constant state of desire for other languages. So English and English Literature alike are engaged in a constant practice of mixture, absorbing other languages and dialects, a process that has provided the context for much writing in the Caribbean, as in the work of Sam Selvon, Erna Brodber or even Derek Walcott or V.S. Naipaul, who move across different registers between standard English and multilingual creoles, or, in a different way, in West Africa, in books such as Ken Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English* (1985). But this absorptive quality is also why English will never, strictly speaking, become a global language. It keeps getting more and more mixed.

This idea of languages as essentially mixed, as engines for producing mixture, constantly transgressing all forms of fixity and purity, is the very opposite of the way in which language has generally been thought of for the past two or three hundred years. A predominant idea in England, starting in the nineteenth century, was to try to remove the later encrustations of French and scholarly Latin and restore English to its purer plain Anglo-Saxon forms, a strategy endorsed by many from Hazlitt to

Hopkins to Herbert Spencer, from George Eliot to George Orwell. This sort of linguistic eugenics was also the basis of the creation of modern Turkish with a romanized script in the 1920s, in which Kemal Attaturk's linguists at the same time attempted to remove all trace of Persian and Arabic words from Turkish (where this was impossible, they simply claimed that the Iranians or Arabs had taken over words that were originally Turkic). A similar kind of linguistic eugenics, propelled by political and communal interests, has also driven the creation over the past two hundred years of the literary and even spoken forms of Hindi and Urdu, whereby one language was divided into two, with two scripts, Perso-Arabic or Nagari, with each trying to rid itself of words associated with the wrong influence—Persian or Sanskrit. The intense history of the language politics of South Asia means that there the choice of language can never be separated from cultural, religious and class or caste issues. I used to think that language was truly a demotic force, a matter of the power of people, that those at the top could not control the shifting modalities of language that the people produced. But it is much more complicated than that, as these examples show. What we often see is a tension between those at the top, seeking to preserve and maintain a pure or purified language, and the uncontrollable demotic transgressive elements below, a power struggle between the classes—as described so memorably in Bakhtin or Voloshinov's accounts of what they call the struggle for the sign. Bakhtin was writing about this to remind us of how relations between language, literatures and nations since the 19th century have to a degree been coercive, a succession of attempts to move language, literatures, and nations into synchrony with each other. This was the basis of linguistic nationalism which, as I will argue in a minute, was based on the ideologies of the vernacular and the mother tongue. What we are seeing today in some respects is a movement in the opposite direction. It is no longer the case that we necessarily associate particular languages with particular nations. By the same token, literature is becoming something that we increasingly have to conceive of in transnational terms.

II

I was recently asked to participate at a seminar on the newly-emergent and quite modish topic of the medieval postcolonial. Naturally I was intrigued. As people spoke at the seminar, I was struck by the degree to which the European Medieval world was also multilingual—often as in England with separate languages for the aristocracy and peasantry, with all spoken vernacular languages separate from the written (Latin). Latin

operated as a universal language across the whole of medieval Europe, which means that much so-called French or English Literature of that period is in fact written in Latin, while for two hundred years after 1066 French was the official language of England. People often forget today that English was not always the official language of England. Like all romance languages, of course, French too is also but a creole vernacular version of Latin. Much medieval French literature was in fact written in England, even though it now is seen as an integral part of 'French' literature. Meanwhile, even after English was re-instituted as the official language of England, the dominant language of English literature in its broad sense of writing on all topics (the modern narrow sense of literature is a nineteenth-century invention) remained Latin—there is a huge amount of, now largely unread, 'English' literature in Latin. Latin and French were very gradually abandoned with the reformation and the rise of mother-tongue ideology, and the attachment of the vernacular or locally spoken language to notions of authenticity. In general in Europe we now assume this linguistic framework as natural—that is, that your mother tongue, the one you speak first and at home, is the most authentic form of expression and therefore that the vernacular should be the language of the national literature. Except that national literatures tend to specify one language only, whereas no nation on earth operates with a single uniform language.

All such ideas of national or regional literatures are based on the Protestant ideology of identifying a necessary connection between the oral and the written that produces authenticity—remember Cordelia's words at the beginning of *King Lear*: 'I cannot heave my heart into my mouth'. But is there any particular reason for literatures to conform to the dictates of seventeenth-century Christian Protestant linguistic ideology? Why should we necessarily need to write in the same language that we speak? Especially since the language that we write rarely corresponds very closely to the language that we speak, even when it is ostensibly the same language, and nowhere is this more true than in the realms of postcolonial theory. The Protestant mother-tongue ideology was an important factor in the development of ideas of nationalism. As historical philology in the early nineteenth century developed identifications of race, or nation, with language, so races, languages, and literatures came to be seen as discrete entities conceived according to the dominant hierarchical model of linguistic evolution, specifically August Schleicher's *Stammbaum* theory of the family tree of languages according to which all languages had a genetic relationship on the model of biological descent. Some languages formed part of one family and were related, others were not. One of the interesting effects of the family tree model of the origination of languages was that it created

bonds of invisible sympathy between people who had previously never imagined that they had any particular connection—e.g. between Sanskrit and European languages, including English, or with Celtic, which produced the invention of the 'Celtic' peoples, as well as divorcing peoples who had historically been connected for centuries—the most notorious example of which would be that of the Germans and the Jews, who spoke a form of German, Yiddish—cf modern Turkish German. The identification of language and nation or race (words that were used synonymously in the nineteenth century) soon moved into a populist conception producing pan-German, pan-Slavic, pan-Hellenic, pan-Turkic, pan-Arab and other nationalist movements based on affiliation through language. Because of the tree/filiation model, an idea of nations developed in which it was assumed they should be a sealed homogeneous unit, ideally of a single race, comparable to a bounded language, with the corollary that the nation should have a single language with borders as clearly marked as those of the state on the map. The idea of linguistic nationalism correlates with the Protestant idea of the authenticity of the vernacular, that speakers of a particular language, or version of the language, should find their political identity there. What that means in practice is that it encourages the proliferation of more and more languages as the basis for cultural and political identification.

In this context, I want now to contrast the situation in South Asia to that in the Middle East. To write in English in South Asia particularly is to submit to a multilingual world of language rivalries. The situation in South Asia has changed dramatically from the time when Sanskrit made up the universal written form, or even the later situation which continued to the mid-nineteenth century when that role was fulfilled by Persian. When the British Governor William Bentinck changed the language of the courts and of Indian education from Persian to English around 1830, he also introduced a version of European vernacular and mother tongue language politics in India which would lead to the rise of language nationalism. Today the English literature of Indian literature in English is always part of something else—being written in a country with as many as 800 languages, 2000 dialects, 23 official languages and major written literatures in twelve or more of them. For any Indian in India, writing in English involves the exercise of a choice which includes an implicit relation to other local languages. What is English's relationship to them, beyond its historical identity as the language of the former coloniser?

In the nineteenth century, Indian intellectuals were certainly influenced by the tree/filiation *stammbaum* model of languages developed by European historical philologists, which produced the idea that nations and races

should be sealed homogeneous units comparable to a language, with the corollary that the nation should have a single language with national borders and that writers should write in their native language. Although the emphasis in the post-independence era usually gets placed on communalism and religion, language politics are at least as important in the recent history of South Asia. Pakistan's decision to make Urdu the national (but not official) language of the state was the primary catalyst to the Bangla movement in East Pakistan in the 1950s and its eventual secession into Bangladesh. Sri Lanka continues to suffer from the after-effects of a Civil War whose origins are generally traced back to the Sinhala Only Language Act of 1956. So here are two secessionist civil wars that were partly produced by language policies derived from ideas of nineteenth century European philology. It was while he was in England where he heard about the language politics of Welsh nationalism that Gandhi decided to switch from writing in English to Gujarati. Intimately linked both to the independence movement and the events of Partition, India has its own complex history of language movements particularly with respect to the development of Hindi as a national language, which, as with Urdu in Pakistan, also produced a counter-reaction from other language groups, above all from Bengalis in the East and those from the Indian South. The language movements were the primary catalyst for the reorganisation of the Indian states from the provinces of British India to their modern form according to languages spoken in 1956 and they were also instrumental in preventing Hindi from becoming the single national language as Gandhi had envisaged—with the result that it shares that position today with English.

Since 1956, Indian literature or literatures has been duly required to reflect these paradigms of state/language formations—rather like the languages that are printed on the Indian banknote. But should it be assumed that every regional language must have its own written literature? The literature/state/language ideology also assumes a monolingualism of both the state and the writer, and neatly divides the different languages up as if they never interact, cross or interfere with each other in everyday life. As a writer, you are supposed to choose just one, and certainly not move between languages, even if that is often the way people speak. In fact for many middle-class Indians, educated in English-medium schools, there is no necessary correlation between the language which they speak at home and the language in which they write—a situation comparable to Latin in medieval Europe (for Bapsi Sidwa, Gujarati/Urdu; for Amit Chaudhuri, English/Bengali). But, whereas some early writers in English such as Mulk Raj Anand were regarded as provocative pioneers, today writing in the

indigenous so-called regional, or *basha* language, is customarily considered to be more authentic, with the corollary that those who write in English find themselves being accused of somehow betraying their nation and its many mother tongues (here Hindi functions as both a national and regional language). The debate about language choice in a formerly colonial country is often associated in the English speaking world with the names of Ngugi wa Thiong'o and Chinua Achebe. Ngugi famously advocates writing in your own native language, even a minority one such as Kikuyu. Achebe argues that English is in its own way an African language, and follows James Joyce's example by Africanising English into a distinctive idiom. This second possibility has been followed by many writers, including Salman Rushdie and even Vikram Seth. What it means is that in some sense the globalisation of English is in fact being simultaneously countermined by taking over the old English idea of speaking and writing in the vernacular. So at the level of literature, global English becomes almost unreadable—think of Joyce's *Ulysses,* Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, Saro-Wiwa's *Sozaboy* or any of the novels of Erna Brodber. The irony of global English literature is that much of it is hardly written in English.

The situation in South Asia is markedly different from the Middle East. The situation in Arabic speaking countries is distinct from any of those that I have described so far. For aside from having two forms of written language, classical and modern, the diglossic situation of the division between literary and spoken Arabic (to say nothing of the difference between standard Arabic and local dialects) to some degree offers a situation comparable to that of medieval Europe, or to the situation in China, in which the written form is universally legible, while the spoken forms can be distinct enough to be mutually unintelligible (cf also Hindi and Urdu, or Italian) and could technically be called another language. Despite some examples such as Driss Ben Hamed Charhadi's *A Life Full of Holes* (1964), which was transcribed and translated from Moghrebi Arabic by Paul Bowles, the European emphasis on the need for literature to reflect the authenticity of vernacular speech does not obtain in the same way. This was at least in part the result of the way in which printing was introduced after 1821 and exploited by Nahda (Revival) movement which developed the written form of modern Arabic. The result today is that, as Abdelfattah Kilito puts it:

> As is well known, written Arabic, unlike spoken Arabic, has undergone only slight and secondary changes throughout its history, so that whoever today can read Nizar Qabbani can read al-'Abbas ibn al-Ahnaf, and those who can read Salah 'Abd al-Sabur can read Salih ibn 'Abd al-Quddus, and

> whoever reads *Midaq Alley* can also read *The Book of the Misers.* This is a strange and amazing phenomenon, rarely encountered in other cultures.

We might contrast the situation in Turkey, where because of the language reforms of the 1920s, few Turks can read books written in Turkish before that date. The unique position of Arabic can help us to understand why nationalist language politics has not had the same importance in this part of the world as in South Asia. What this means of course is that as well as having avoided some of the negative consequences of these language movements, literature in Arabic is always already more fundamentally transnational than other literatures, and this has meant that the Arabic speaking world has maintained a rare cultural unity, sustained by the unique link between the language, especially in its written form, and Islam.

This has meant that, with some exceptions, the fundamental postcolonial question of language choice has not been such an issue for Arab writers. However, this question is not absent, even in the Arab world, particularly for writers from the Maghreb, the more multilingual environment of *le maghreb pluriel* where the possibility of choosing between local languages such as Arabic and Berber, and the colonial languages of French and Spanish, has placed writers such as Assia Djebar, Tahar Ben Jelloun, or Abdelkabir Khatibi in a position comparable to the classic formulations of the problem of what language a writer in a multilingual, formerly colonial environment should choose to write in in the English-speaking world. In the Mahgreb in particular, it is often the idea of writing in French that produces similar problems to those in Africa or India who write in English.

The question of language choice will always have to be made, but whatever language they choose, many postcolonial writers nevertheless retain a certain anxiety in their relation to the particular language in which they write, the more so if this is a major European language such as English or French. This is one reason, for example, which makes the Algerian-French philosopher Jacques Derrida in certain respects a "postcolonial writer", as he shared a marked sense of being estranged within his own language. Derrida's situation is essentially the same as that of James Joyce: as he puts it in *Monolingualism of the Other*, 'You see, never will this language be mine. And truth to tell, it never was'.

If world literature consists of literary works that successfully circulate internationally beyond the confines of their own borders by typically wearing their own original cultural context 'rather lightly' as David Damrosch has argued, any work of postcolonial literature will always be riven by its own context, since it will be the literature of a culture forcibly internationalised by the impact of foreign cultures and languages from

beyond that were imposed on that culture without choice. Perhaps the best example of that would be the Palestinian writer Anton Shammas's decision to write his novel *Arabesques* in Hebrew, provocatively inserting a Palestinian voice forever within the domain of Israeli literature. Encounters between languages are never neutral and literature can never escape the cultural conditions of the politics of language—which means that it will always be marked by the presence, or absence, of other dominant or repressed languages that operate within its own specific local environment.

We could say that in general terms, world literature is prized for aesthetic value while postcolonial literature is valued for the degree to which it explores the effects upon subjective and social experience of the historical residues of colonialism, including language itself. For postcolonial literatures, the questions of language, language choice and translation, are central. In this respect, we may contrast the situation of world literature, which, though it might acknowledge the uneven relation between literatures and their respective languages, is not always concerned directly with issues of language choice and translation. Whereas world literature is generally approached in terms of individual writers expressing themselves in their own language, which we may however read in translation and which may require the mediating role of the critic, this assumption is never simply a given for the postcolonial writer, who very often exists in a state of anxiety with respect to the language in which he or she writes. Language anxiety is fundamental to postcolonial writing.

A writer's relation to language is always at the same time a relation to history. A third strategy in the face of language anxiety can involve just deciding to write in another language altogether, as was the case in the decision by Samuel Beckett to write in French. For Beckett, French was not a problematic colonial language as it was for Dejebar, but rather offered the possibility of a neutral language that allowed him to escape from the Scylla and Charybdis of nationalist Irish, Joycean 'Girlic' and colonial English. In a similar way, it is also the case that more recently, as English has become a global language, it has also to some extent become an unmarked medium by means of which writers can mediate their own cultures and their own experiences of cultural difference. English has proved particularly attractive for diasporic writers, such as the Jordanian-British author Fadia Faqir, Leila Aboulela, originally from Sudan, as is Jamal Mahjoub, the British-Egyptian writer Ahdaf Soueif, or the Pakistani-British writer Nadeem Aslam. Although Arab writing in English does not usually figure in postcolonial accounts of 'The Language of Postcolonial Literatures', such as the book on that topic by Ismail Talib, I would argue that as Indian writing in English becomes more normative

and at times repetitive or predictable, Arab writing in English, in which we could also include writers such as Edward Said, as well as the presence of widely translated writers such as Tayeb Salih, Ghassan Kanafani, Mourid Barghouti and Nawal el Saadawi, has become one of the most exciting fields of international writing in English or translated into English today. Here we might note that Arab writing in English has emerged in a context in which literatures have become simultaneously both transnational and multi-national, so that diaspora writers can be considered in different ways as part of the literature in which they write, and the culture from which they write, though it probably remains the case that diaspora writers offer more interest to the cultures of the language in which they write than those of the region from which they originated (Edward Said would be an interesting case here: his critical writings have provoked a good deal less interest in the Middle East than his political writings). Rather than disconnecting literatures altogether into the realm of world literature, it makes sense today to think of literatures not so much as national or transnational as regional—either in geographical or linguistic terms or both. The literatures of the world are connected in a way that we have never experienced before by virtue of the languages that they are written in, a situation which perhaps resembles earlier regional linguistic structures such as the ways in which Persian dominated the literary field from modern Turkey across Iran to Afghanistan to Northern India, or the situation of Arabic.

The return of this transnational operation and understanding of the literary field is one reason I think why there has in the last decade been a burst of new interest in Goethe's idea of a World Literature. But World Literature is, I think, too broad a category to be altogether useful, and perhaps at the same time, as a largely Western concept, too narrow—the only Arabic literature discussed in the recent 500 page *Routledge Companion to World Literature* edited by Theo D'haen, David Damrosch, and Djelal Kadir, is the *Thousand and One Nights,* the first written text of which of course appeared in French. It is more productive, in my view, to think of literatures involving linguistic, regional and cultural fields that operate in relation to each other. Literatures now make up something that could perhaps be described best by invoking Michel Foucault's concept of a *dispositif.* This discursive concept maintains the more politicised and power relations that also distinguish postcolonial from World Literature, particularly with respect to language. Arabic literature, which contains individual national literatures such as Egyptian literature, but which at the same time forms a larger unit, in some degree provides the best model for the ways in which the literatures of the world are being reformed as

transnational units around particular languages, not universal in the sense of world literature which at some level tends to make all literatures submit into translation into English, but still cohering as units defined by being written in particular languages. Some writing from the Maghreb and the Middle East can be related to the postcolonial condition of language anxiety, particularly that written in English and French, while much literature in Arabic cannot. That disjunction is precisely what makes Arabic literature so uniquely interesting. For today writing in Arabic finds itself at a critical point, where its unique universality as a written form across the Arab world is being mediated by the decision of some writers to write in English or French, or even in vernacular forms of Arabic, particularly when writing on the internet rather than in book form. The future for written Arabic and Arab writers stands poised on the balance.

Works Cited

Bakhtin, M.M. (1981) *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, trans. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist (Austin: University of Texas Press)

Charhadi, Driss Ben Hamed (1999) *A Life Full of Holes* (1964]. Introduction by Paul Bowles. (Edinburgh: Rebel Inc)

Crystal, David (2005), 'Mother-tongue India', Talk for Lingua Franca (ABC, Australia) January 2005. 17 March 2011 <http://www.davidcrystal.com/DC_articles/English5.pdf>

D'haen, Theo, Damrosch, David and Kadir, Djelal (2012),*Routledge Companion to World Literature* (New York: Routldge)

Damrosch, David (2003), *What is World Literature?* (Princeton: Princeton University Press).

Das Gupta, Jyotirindra (1970) *Language Conflict and National Development: Group Politics and National Language Policy in India* (Berkeley: University of California Press)

Derrida, Jacques (1998) *Monolingualism of the Other, or the Prosthesis of Origin* [1996], trans. Patrick Mensah (Stanford: Stanford University Press)

Kilito, Abdelfattah 2008. *Thou Shalt Not Speak My Language*. Translated by Waïl S. Hassan. (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press).

Mahal, Baljinder K. (2006) *The Queen's Hinglish: How to Speak Pukka* (Glasgow: HarperCollins Publishers)

Malkani, Gautam (2006) *Londonstani* (London: Fourth Estate)

Nagra, Daljit (2007) *Look We Have Coming to Dover!* (London: Faber)

Rushdie, Salman (2006) *Midnight's Children* [1981] (London: Vintage)

Saadi, Suhayl (2004) *Psychoraag* (Edinburgh : Black & White)

Saro-Wiwa, Ken (1985) *Sozaboy: A Novel in Rotten English* (Port Harcourt, Nigeria: Saros)
Voloshinov, V.N. (1973) *Marxism and the Philosophy of Language*, trans. Ladislav Matejka and I.R. Titunik (New York: Seminar Press)

CHAPTER TWO

GLOBALIZATION AS INSPIRATION

SAHAR EL MOUGY

Is globalization a new phenomenon? I would like to start with this question. If globalization is a new phenomenon specific to the last twenty five years, how are we supposed to perceive many stories? What about the story of Baibars, *(al-Malik al-Zahir Rukn al-Din Baibars al-Bunduqdari*), nicknamed Abu al-Futuh (Arabic: أبو الفتوح) (1223 – 1277)? Baibars was a Mamluk Sultan of Egypt. He was one of the commanders of the forces which inflicted a devastating defeat on the Seventh Crusade of King Louis IX of France. He led the vanguard of the Egyptian army at the Battle of Ain Jalut in 1260, which marked the first substantial defeat of the Mongol army and is considered a turning point in history. His reign marked the start of an age of Mamluk dominance in the Eastern Mediterranean and solidified the durability of their military system. He managed to pave the way for the end of the Crusader presence in Syria and to unite Egypt and Syria into one powerful state that was able to fend off threats from both Crusaders and Mongols. Born in the Crimea, Baibars was a Kipchak Turk (Kazakh Turk). It was said that he was captured by the Mongols on the Kipchak steppe and sold as a slave, ending up in Syria. Baibars was quickly sold to a Mamluk officer and sent to Egypt, where he became a bodyguard to the Ayyubid ruler As-Salih Ayyub. And from bodyguard to Sultan he rose. Baibars is still seen as a "national" hero in Egypt and Syria.

What about Muhammad Ali Pasha, the Khedive of Egypt who did not speak the Arabic language? Ali (1769–1849) was an Albanian commander in the Ottoman army, who became Wāli and self declared Khedive of Egypt and Sudan. Though not a modern nationalist, he is regarded as the founder of modern Egypt because of the dramatic reforms in the military, economic and cultural spheres that he instituted. He also ruled the Levantine territories outside Egypt. The dynasty that he established ruled Egypt and Sudan until the Egyptian Revolution of 1952.

How are we supposed to perceive Alexander III of Macedon (356-323 BC), commonly known as Alexander the Great? By the age of thirty, he had created one of the largest empires of the ancient world, stretching from the Ionian Sea to the Himalayas. He is well known as a commander undefeated in battle. But his legacy of cultural diffusion was also immense. He founded some twenty cities that bore his name, most notably Alexandria in Egypt. Alexander's settlement of Greek colonists and the resulting spread of Greek culture in the east resulted in a new Hellenistic civilization, aspects of which were still evident in the traditions of the Byzantine Empire in the mid-15th century. Alexander became legendary as a classical hero in the mold of Achilles, and he features prominently in the history and myth of Greek and non-Greek cultures.

The Ancient Library of Alexandria, is it far fetched to perceive it as a globalized intellectual hub? The largest and most significant library of the ancient world, it flourished under the patronage of the Ptolemaic dynasty and functioned as a major centre of scholarship from its construction in the 3rd century BC until the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC. The first known library of its kind to gather a serious collection of books from beyond its country's borders, the Library at Alexandria was charged with collecting the world's knowledge. It did so through an aggressive and well-funded royal mandate involving trips to the book fairs of Rhodes and Athens, and a policy of pulling the books off every ship that came into port. They kept the original texts and made copies to send back to their owners. Alexandria, which welcomed trade from the East and West, soon found itself the international hub for trade, as well as the leading producer of papyrus and, soon enough, books. Other than collecting works from the past, the library was also home to a host of international scholars, patronized by the Ptolemaic dynasty with travel, lodging and stipends for their whole families. As a research institution, the library filled its stacks with new works in mathematics, astronomy, physics, natural sciences and other subjects.

Is it possible to think of Plato and Pythagoras as the great Greek philosophers we know them to be without acknowledging that they have been taught in Egypt? Obviously, it is possible since Western schools, until a few decades ago, taught that the Western civilization is a child of Greece, thus ignoring the cultural achievements and influence of Egypt and Sumer. Thus, history is being written as if Greece just happened to exist as a great civilization without the more ancient cultures which fertilized and paved the way for it. Despite the allegation that Egyptian civilization was "primitive" when compared to the cultural and specifically