

HOW NEWNESS ENTERS THE WORLD

Postmodern space, postcolonial times and the trials of cultural translation

Translation passes through *continua* of transformation, not abstract ideas of identity and similarity.

Walter Benjamin, 'On language as such and the language of man'

I NEW WORLD BORDERS

It is radical perversity, not sage political wisdom, that drives the intriguing will to knowledge of postcolonial discourse. Why else do you think the long shadow of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* falls on so many texts of the postcolonial pedagogy?¹ Marlow has much in him of the anti-foundationalist, the metropolitan ironist who believes that the neo-pragmatic universe is best preserved by keeping the conversation of humankind going. And so he does, in that intricate end-game that is best known to readers of the novel as the 'lie' to the Intended. Although the African wilderness has followed him into the lofty drawing-room of Europe, with its spectral, monumental whiteness, despite the dusk that menacingly whispers 'the Horror, the Horror', Marlow's narrative keeps faith with the gendered conventions of a civil discourse where women are blinded because they see too much reality, and novels end because they cannot bear too much fictionality. Marlow keeps the conversation going, suppresses the horror, gives history the lie – the white lie – and waits for the heavens to fall. But, as he says, the heavens do not fall for such a trifle.

The global link between colony and metropolis, so central to the ideology of imperialism, is articulated in Kurtz's emblematic words – 'the Horror, the Horror!' The unreadability of these Conradian runes has attracted much interpretive attention, precisely because their depths contain no truth that is not perfectly visible on the 'outside, enveloping the tale which brought it out only as a glow brings out a haze.'² Marlow does not merely repress the 'truth' – however multivocal and multivalent it may be – as much as he enacts a poetics of translation that

(be)sets the boundary between the colony and the metropolis. In taking the name of a woman – the Intended – to mask the daemonic ‘being’ of colonialism, Marlow turns the brooding geography of political disaster – the heart of darkness – into a melancholic memorial to romantic love and historic memory. Between the silent truth of Africa and the salient lie to the metropolitan woman, Marlow returns to his initiating insight: the experience of colonialism is the problem of living in the ‘midst of the incomprehensible’.³

It is this incomprehensibility in the midst of the locations of colonization, that echoes with Toni Morrison’s insight into the ‘chaos’⁴ that afflicts the signification of psychic and historical narratives in racialized societies. It resonates, too, with Wilson Harris’s evocation, in the Caribbean context, of ‘a certain void of misgiving attending every assimilation of contraries . . . an alien territory and wilderness [that] has become a necessity for one’s reason or salvation’.⁵ Is this acknowledgement of a necessary anxiety in constructing a transformative, postcolonial knowledge of the ‘global’ – at the metropolitan site – a salutary warning against travelling theory? For as the dusk gathers in that drawing-room of Europe, and Marlow attempts to create a narrative that would link the life of the Intended and Kurtz’s dark heart, caught in a split truth or a double frame, he can only tell the infamous, intended lie: yes, Kurtz died with the name of his Intended on his lips. The horror may be averted in the decorum of words – ‘It would have been too dark – too dark altogether’⁶ – but it avenges the structure of the narrative itself.

Marlow’s inward gaze now beholds the everyday reality of the Western metropolis through the veil of the colonial fantasm; the local story of love and its domestic memory can only be told between the lines of history’s tragic repressions. The white woman, the Intended, becomes the shadow of the African woman; the street of tall houses takes on the profile of the tribal skulls on staves; the percussive pounding of a heart echoes the deep beat of drums – ‘the heart of a conquering darkness’. When this discourse of a daemonic doubling emerges at the very centre of metropolitan life, then the familiar things of everyday life and letters are marked by an irresistible sense of their genealogical difference, a ‘postcolonial’ provenance.

Writing of the notion of the ‘self in moral space’, in his recent book *Sources of the Self*, Charles Taylor sets temporal limits to the problem of personhood: ‘the supposition that I could be two temporally succeeding selves is either an overdramatized image, or quite false. It runs against the structural features of a self as a being who exists in a space of concerns.’⁷ Such ‘overdramatized’ images are precisely my concern as I attempt to negotiate narratives where double-lives are led in the postcolonial world, with its journeys of migration and its dwellings of the diasporic. These subjects of study require the experience of anxiety to

be incorporated into the analytic construction of the object of critical attention: narratives of the borderline conditions of cultures and disciplines. For anxiety is the affective address of 'a world [that] reveals itself as caught up in the space between frames; a doubled frame or one that is split',⁸ as Samuel Weber describes the symbolic structure of psychic anxiety itself. And the long shadow cast by *Heart of Darkness* on the world of postcolonial studies is itself a double symptom of pedagogical anxiety: a necessary caution against generalizing the contingencies and contours of local circumstance, at the very moment at which a transnational, 'migrant' knowledge of the world is most urgently needed.

Any discussion of cultural theory in the context of globalization would be incomplete without a reading of Fredric Jameson's brilliant, if unruly essay, 'Secondary elaborations',⁹ the conclusion to his collected volume *Postmodernism Or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism*. No other Marxist critic has so dauntlessly redirected the movement of the materialist dialectic, away from its centralization in the State and its idealized aesthetic and disciplinary categories, towards the wayward, uncharted spaces of the cityscape, allegorized in its media images and its vernacular visions. This has led Jameson to suggest that the demographic and phenomenological impact of minorities and migrants within the West may be crucial in conceiving of the transnational character of contemporary culture.

The 'postmodern', for Jameson, is a doubly inscribed designation. As the naming of a historical event – late multinational capitalism – postmodernity provides the periodizing narrative of the global transformations of capital. But this developmental schema is radically disrupted by the postmodern as an aesthetic-ideological process of signifying the 'subject' of the historical event. Jameson uses the language of psychoanalysis (the breakdown of the signifying chain in psychosis) to provide a genealogy for the subject of postmodern cultural fragmentation. Inverting the influential Althusserian edict on the 'imaginary' ideological capture of the subject, Jameson insists that it is the schizoid or 'split' subject that articulates, with the greatest intensity, the disjunction of time and being that characterizes the social syntax of the post-modern condition:

the breakdown of temporality [that] suddenly releases this present of time from all the activities and intentionalities that might focus it and make it a space of praxis ... engulf[ing] the subject with undescribable vividness, a materiality of perception properly overwhelming. ... This present of the world or material signifier comes before the subject with heightened intensity, bearing a mys-

terious charge or affect . . . which one could just as well imagine in the positive terms of euphoria, a high, an intoxicator. (p. 27)

This central passage from an earlier essay, 'The cultural logic of late capitalism',¹⁰ is exemplary amongst Marxist readings of poststructuralism for transforming the 'schizophrenic disjunction' (p. 29) of cultural style, into a politically effective discursive space. The recourse to psychoanalysis has implications that go beyond Jameson's suggestive, metaphorical linkages. Psychoanalytic temporality, I would argue, invests the utterance of the 'present' – its displaced times, its affective intensities – with cultural and political value. Placed in the scenario of the unconscious, the 'present' is neither the mimetic sign of historical contemporaneity (the immediacy of experience), nor is it the visible terminus of the historical past (the teleology of tradition). Jameson repeatedly attempts to turn rhetorical and temporal disjunction into a poetics of praxis. His reading of a poem, 'China', illustrates what it means to establish 'a primacy of the present sentence in time, ruthlessly disintegrat[ing] the narrative fabric that attempts to reform around it' (p. 28). Even a brief fragment of the poem will convey this sense of the 'signifier of the present' wresting the movement of history to represent the struggle of its making:

We live on the third world from the sun. Number three. Nobody tells us what to do.

The people who taught us how to count were being very kind.

It's always time to leave.

If it rains, you either have your umbrella or you don't.

What Jameson finds in these 'sentence(s) in free standing isolation', athwart the disarticulate spaces that utter the present, each time again and anew, is

the reemergence here across these disjointed sentences of some more unified global meaning. . . . [It] does seem to capture something of the excitement of the immense, *unfinished* social experiment of the New China – unparalleled in world history – the *unexpected* emergence between the two superpowers of 'number three' . . . ; the signal event, above all, of a collectivity which has become a new 'subject of history' and which, after the long subjection of feudalism and imperialism, again speaks in its own voice, for itself, as if for the first time. (p. 29)

The Horror! the Horror! Almost a century after *Heart of Darkness* we have returned to that act of living in the midst of the 'incomprehensible', that Conrad associated with the production of transcultural narratives

in the colonial world. From these disjointed postimperial sentences, that bear the anxiety of reference and representation – ‘undescribable vividness ... a materiality of perception, properly overwhelming’ – there emerges the need for a global analysis of culture. Jameson perceives a new international culture in the perplexed passing of modernity into postmodernity, emphasizing the transnational attenuation of ‘local’ space.

I take such spatial peculiarities as symptoms and expressions of a new and historically original dilemma, one that involves our insertion as individual subjects into a multidimensional set of radical discontinuous realities, whose frames range from the still surviving spaces of bourgeois private life all the way to the unimaginable decentring of global capital itself ... the so-called death of the subject ... the fragmented and schizophrenic decentring [of the Self], ... the crisis of socialist internationalism, and the enormous tactical difficulties of coordinating local ... political actions with national or international ones, such urgent political dilemmas are all immediately functions of the new international space in question. (p. 413)

My rendition of Jameson, edited with ellipses that create a Conradian foreboding, reveals the anxiety of enjoining the global and the local; the dilemma of projecting an international space on the trace of a decentred, fragmented subject. Cultural globality is figured in the *in-between* spaces of double-frames: its historical originality marked by a cognitive obscurity; its decentred ‘subject’ signified in the nervous temporality of the transitional, or the emergent provisionality of the ‘present’. The turning of the globe into a theoretical project splits and doubles the analytic discourse in which it is embedded, as the developmental narrative of late capitalism encounters its fragmented postmodern persona, and the materialist identity of Marxism is uncannily rearticulated in the psychic non-identities of psychoanalysis. Jameson is, indeed, a kind of Marlow in search of the aura of Ernest Mandel, stumbling upon, not Towson’s Almanac, but Lefebvre, Baudrillard and Kevin Lynch. The architecture of Jameson’s argument is like a theme-park of an imperilled post-Althusserian phenomenological Marxism of which he is both the master-builder and the most brilliant *bricoleur*, the heroic saviour and the savvy salvage merchant.

Whether it is the emergence of new historical subjects in China or, somewhat later, the new international space in question, the argument moves intriguingly beyond the ken of Jameson’s theoretical description of the sign of the ‘present’. The radical discontinuity that exists between bourgeois private life and the ‘unimaginable’ decentring of global capital does not find its scheme of representation in the *spatial position* or the

representational visibility of the free-standing, disjoined sentences, to which Jameson insistently draws our attention. What must be mapped as a new international space of discontinuous historical realities is, in fact, the problem of signifying the interstitial passages and processes of cultural difference that are inscribed in the 'in-between', in the temporal break-up that weaves the 'global' text. It is, ironically, the disintegrative moment, even movement, of enunciation – that sudden disjunction of the present – that makes possible the rendering of culture's global reach. And, paradoxically, it is only through a structure of splitting and displacement – 'the fragmented and schizophrenic decentring of the self' – that the architecture of the new historical subject emerges at the limits of representation itself, 'to enable a situational representation on the part of the individual to that vaster and *unrepresentable* totality which is the ensemble of society's structures as a whole' (my emphasis) (p. 51).

In exploring this relation to the 'unrepresentable' as a domain of social causality and cultural difference, one is led to question the enclosures and exclusions of Jameson's 'third space'. The space of 'thirdness' in postmodern politics opens up an area of 'interfection' (to use Jameson's term) where the newness of cultural practices and historical narratives are registered in 'generic discordance', 'unexpected juxtaposition', 'the semiautomization of reality', 'postmodern schizo-fragmentation as opposed to modern or modernist anxieties or hysterias' (pp. 371–2). Figured in the disjoined signifier of the present, this supplementary third space introduces a structure of ambivalence into the very construction of Jameson's internationalism. There is, on the one hand, a recognition of the interstitial, disjunctive spaces and signs crucial for the emergence of the new historical subjects of the transnational phase of late capitalism. However, having located the image of the historical present in the signifier of a 'disintegrative' narrative, Jameson disavows the temporality of displacement which is, quite literally, its medium of communication. For Jameson, the possibility of becoming historical demands a containment of this disjunctive social time.

Let me describe what I consider to be the ambivalence that structures both the invention and the interdiction of Jameson's thought, by returning to the primal fantasy of late capitalism that he has located in downtown Los Angeles. The *mise-en-scène* of the subject's relation to an unrepresentable social totality – the germ of an entire generation of scholarly essays – is to be found in the carnivalesque description of that postmodern panopticon, the Bonaventure Hotel. In a trope that echoes the disorientation of language and location that accompanies Marlow's journey up the Congo, Jameson shoots the rapids in the elevator-gondola and lands in the milling confusion of the lobby. Here, in the hotel's hyperspace, you lose your bearings entirely. This is the dramatic

moment when we are faced with the incapacity of our minds to 'map the great global multinational network and decentred communicational network' (p. 44). In this encounter with the global dialectic of the unrepresentable, there is an underlying, prosthetic injunction 'something like an imperative to grow new organs, to expand our sensorium and our body to some new, yet unimaginable, perhaps impossible, dimensions' (p. 39). What might this cyborg be?

In his concluding meditation on the subject, 'Secondary elaborations', Jameson elaborates this enhanced perceptual capacity as a

kind of incommensurability-vision that does not pull the eyes back into focus but provisionally entertains the tension of their multiple coordinates. . . . It is their *spatial separation* that is strongly felt as such. Different moments in historical or existential time are here simply filed in different places; the attempt to combine them even locally does not slide up and down a temporal scale . . . but jumps back and forth across a game board that we conceptualize in terms of *distance*. (My emphasis) (pp. 372-3)

Although Jameson commences by elaborating the 'sensorium' of the decentred, multinational network as existing somewhere beyond our perceptual, mappable experience, he can only envisage the representation of global 'difference' by making a renewed appeal to the mimetic visual faculty - this time in the name of an 'incommensurability-vision'. What is manifestly new about this version of international space and its social (in)visibility, is its temporal measure - 'different moments in historical time . . . jumps back and forth'. The non-synchronous temporality of global and national cultures opens up a cultural space - a third space - where the negotiation of incommensurable differences creates a tension peculiar to borderline existences. In 'The new world (b)order', Guillermo Gomez-Pefia, the performance artist who lives between Mexico City and New York, plays with our incommensurability-vision and extends our senses towards the new transnational world and its hybrid names:

This new society is characterized by mass migrations and bizarre interracial relations. As a result new hybrid and transitional identities are emerging. . . . Such is the case of the crazy *Chica-riricuas*, who are the products of the Puertorican-mullato and Chicano-mestizo parents. . . . When a *Chica-riricua* marries a Hassidic Jew their child is called *Hassidicvato loco*. . . .

The bankrupt notion of the melting pot has been replaced by a model that is more germane to the times, that of the *menudo chowder*. According to this model, most of the ingredients do melt,

but some stubborn chunks are condemned merely to float. Vergi-gratia!"

Such fantastic renamings of the subjects of cultural difference "do not derive their discursive authority from anterior causes - be it human nature or historical necessity - which, in a secondary move, articulate essential and *expressive* identities between cultural differences in the contemporary world. The problem is not of an ontological cast, where differences are effects of some more totalizing, transcendent identity to be found in the past' or the future. Hybrid **hyphenations** emphasize the incommensurable elements - the stubborn chunks - as the basis of cultural identifications. What is at issue is the performative nature of differential identities: the regulation and negotiation of those spaces that are continually, *contingently*, 'opening out', remaking the boundaries, exposing the limits of any claim to a singular' or autonomous sign of difference - be it class, gender or race. Such assignments of social differences - where difference is neither One nor the Other but, *something else besides, in-between* - find their agency in a form of the 'future' where the past is not originary, where the present is not simply transitory. It is, if I may stretch a point, an interstitial future, that emerges *in-between* the claims of the-past and the needs of the present."

The present of the world, that appears through the breakdown of temporality, signifies a historical *intermediacy*, familiar to the psychoanalytic concept of *Nachtraglichkeit* (deferred action): 'a, transferential function, whereby the past dissolves in the present, so that the future becomes (once again) an *open question*, instead of being specified by the fixity of the past.?' The iterative 'time' of the future as *a becoming 'once again open'*, makes available to marginalized or minority identities' a mode of performative agency that [Judith Butler has elaborated for the representation of lesbian sexuality: 'a specificity ... to be established, not *outside* or *beyond* that reinscription or reiteration, but in the very modality and effects of that reinscription.'"]

[Jameson dispels the potential of such a 'third' politics of the future-as-open-question, or the 'new world (b)order', by turning social differences into cultural 'distance', and converting interstitial, conflictual temporalities, that may be neither developmental nor linear (*not* 'up and down "a temporal scale"'), into the topoi of spatial separation. Through the metaphor of spatial distance, [Jameson steadfastly maintains the 'frame', if not the face, of the subject-centred perceptual apparatus" which, in a counter move, he attempts to displace in the *virtual reality* of cognitive mapping, or the unrepresentability of the new international space. And the pivot of this 'regulatory, spatial dialectic - the eye of the storm - is none other than the 'class-subject' itself. If [Jameson makes the teleological dimension of the class category retreat in the face of the

multiple axes of transnational globality, then the linear, developmental dimension returns in the shape of a spatial typology. The dialectic of the unrepresentable (that frames the incommensurable realities of international space) suddenly becomes all too easily visible, too predictably knowable:

The three types of spaces I have in mind are all the result of discontinuous expansion of quantum leaps in the enlargement of capital, in the latter's penetration of hitherto uncommodified areas. A certain unifying and totalizing force is presupposed here – not the Hegelian Absolute Spirit, nor the party, nor Stalin, but simply capital itself. (p. 410)

The disjoined signifiers of the present are fixed in the punctual periodizations of market, monopoly and multinational capital; the interstitial, erratic movements that signify culture's transnational temporalities are knit back into the teleological spaces of global capital. And through the framing of the present within the 'three phases' of capital, the innovative energy of the 'third' space is somehow lost.

Try as he does to suggest, in sympathy with Sartre, that 'totalizing' is not access to totality but 'a playing with the boundary, like a loose tooth' (p. 363), there is little doubt that for Jameson the boundary of knowledge, and the prerequisite of critical method, is ordered in a binary division of space: there has to be an 'inside' and an 'outside' for there to be a socially determinative relation. Despite Jameson's fascination with the inside-out spaces of the Bonaventure Hotel or the Frank Gehry House, for him the structure of social causality requires the 'base and superstructure' division which recurs repeatedly in his later work, shorn of its dogmatism, but nonetheless, as he reminds us, his methodological starting point: 'a heuristic recommendation simultaneously to grasp culture (and theory) in and for itself, but also in relation to its outside, its content and its context, its space of intervention and effectivity' (p. 409).

If the incommensurable and asynchronic landscape of the postmodern undermines the possibility of such simultaneity, then Jameson further evolves the concept of base and superstructure by rearticulating the binary division through an *analogon*:

[I]n the present world system, a media term is always present to function as an analogon or material interpretant for this or that more directly representational social model. Something thereby emerges which looks like a new postmodern version of the base-superstructure formula in which a representation of social relations as such now demands the mediation of this or that interposed

communicational structure from which it must be read off indirectly. (p. 416)

Once more the historical difference of the present is articulated in the emergence of a third space of representation which is, just as quickly, reabsorbed into the base-superstructure division. The analogon, required by the new world system as a way of expressing its interstitial cultural temporality – an indirect and interposed communicational structure – is allowed to embellish, but not to interrupt, the base-superstructure formula. What forms of social difference are privileged in the *Aufhebung*, or the transcendence, of the 'unrepresentable'? Who are the new historical subjects that remain unrepresented in the vaster invisibility of this transnational totality?

As the West gazes into the broken mirror of its new global unconscious – 'the extraordinary demographic displacements of mass migrant workers and of global tourists ... to a degree unparalleled in world history' (p. 363) – Jameson attempts, in a suggestive move, to turn the schizophrenic social imaginary of the postmodern subject into a crisis in the collective ontology of the group faced with the sheer 'number' of demographic pluralism. The perceptual (and cognitive) anxiety¹⁶ that accompanies the loss of 'infrastructural' mapping becomes exacerbated in the postmodern city, where both Raymond Williams's 'knowable community' and Benedict Anderson's 'imagined community' have been altered by mass migration and settlement. Migrant communities are representative of a much wider trend towards the minoritization of national societies. For Jameson this process is part of a historical irony: 'the transitional nature of the new global economy has not yet allowed its classes to form in any stable way, let alone to acquire a genuine class-consciousness' (p. 348).

The social objectivity of the group-based politics of new social movements – or, indeed, the political groupings of metropolitan minorities – is, in Jameson's argument, to be found in the simulacral superficialities of media institutions or in those practices of the culture industry that produce 'libidinal investments of a more narrative kind.' The construction of political solidarities between minorities or special interest groups would then be considered 'pseudo-dialectical' unless their alignment is mediated through the *prior and primal* identification with class identity (as the mode of equivalence between oppressions or exploitations). Racial hierarchies, sexual discriminations, or, for instance, the linkage of both forms of social differentiation in the iniquitous practices of refugee and nationality law – these may be legitimate causes for political action, but the making of the political group for it-self as an effective consciousness could only occur through the mediation of the category of class.

Such a reading of Jameson's class analysis, it may be argued, does little justice to his innovative image of the social actor as a 'third term ... the non-centred subject that is part of an organic group or collective' (p. 345). We have, by now, learnt that this appeal to a 'thirdness' in the structure of dialectical thought is both an acknowledgement of the disjunctive cultural 'signs' of these (postmodern) times, and a symptom of Jameson's inability to move beyond the binary dialectic of inside and outside, base and superstructure. His innovative conception of the political subject, as a decentred spatial agency, is constrained by his conviction that the moment of History's true recognition – the guarantee of its material objectivity – lies in the ability of the concept of class to become the mirror of social production and cultural representation. He writes:

Class categories are more material, more impure and scandalously mixed, in the way in which their determinants or definitional factors involve the production of objects and the relations determined by that, along with the forces of the respective machinery: we can thus see down through class categories to the rocky bottom of the stream. (p. 346)

Would it be fanciful for me to suggest that in this image of class as the glass of history – an optical ontology that allows a clear view to the 'bottom of the stream' – there is also a form of narcissism? Class subsumes the interpellative, affective power of 'race, gender, ethnic culture and the like ... [which] can always be shown to involve phantasms of culture as such, in the anthropological sense, ... authorized and legitimized by notions of religion' (p. 345). In Jameson's argument, these forms of social difference are fundamentally reactive and group oriented, lacking the material objectivity of the class relation. It is only when political movements of race or gender are mediated by the primary analytic category of class, that these communal identities are transformed into agencies 'capable of interpellating [themselves] and dictating the terms of [their] own specular image[s]' (p. 346).

If the specularity of class consciousness provides race and gender with its interpellative structure, then no form of collective social identity can be designated without its *prior* naming as a form of class identity. Class identity is autoreferential, surmounting other instances of social difference. Its sovereignty is also, in a theoretical sense, an act of surveillance. Class categories that provide a clear view to the stream's rocky bottom are then caught in an autotelic disavowal of their own discursive and epistemic limits. Such a narcissism can articulate 'other' subjects of difference and forms of cultural alterity as either mimetically secondary – a paler shade of the authenticity and originality of class relations, now somehow out of place – or temporally anterior or untimely – archaic,

anthropomorphic, compensatory realities rather than contemporary social communities.

If I have described the class category as narcissistic, *tout court*, then I have not done justice to the complexity of Jameson's ambivalence. For it is, perhaps, a wounded narcissus that gazes down to the bottom of the stream. 'In a situation in which, for a time, genuine (or totalising) politics is no longer possible', Jameson concedes, it becomes one's responsibility 'to attend to just such symptoms as the waning of the global dimension, to the ideological resistance to the concept of totality' (p. 330). Jameson's urgent and admirable vigilance is not in doubt. It is the value invested in the visible difference of class that does not allow him to constitute the present moment as the insignia of other interstitial inscriptions of cultural difference. As the autotelic specularity of the class category witnesses the historic loss of its own ontological priority, there emerges the possibility of a politics of social difference that makes no autotelic claims – 'capable of *interpellating itself*'; – but is genuinely articulatory in its understanding that to be discursively represented and socially representative – *to assume an effective political identity or image* – the limits and conditions of specularity have to be exceeded and erased by the inscription of otherness. To revise the problem of global space from the postcolonial perspective is to move the location of cultural difference away from the space of demographic plurality to the border-line negotiations of cultural translation.

II FOREIGN RELATIONS

What does the narrative construction of minority discourses entail for the everyday existence of the Western metropolis? Let us stay with televisual subjects of channel-switching and psychic splitting – that Jameson deems late capitalist – and enter the postmodern city as migrants and minorities. Our siren song comes from the Jewish ad-woman Mimi Mamoulian, talking over the phone from New York to Saladin Chamcha, erstwhile London based voice-over artiste, now a Satanic goatman, sequestered in an Indian-Pakistani ghetto in London's Brickhall Street. The scenario comes, of course, from *The Satanic Verses*,¹⁷ and the voice is Mimi's:

I am conversant with postmodernist critiques of the West, e.g. that we have here a society capable only of pastiche: a flattened world. When I become the voice of a bubble bath, I am entering flatland knowingly, understanding what I am doing and why. . . . Don't teach me about exploitation. . . . Try being jewish, female and ugly sometime. You'll beg to be black. Excuse my french: brown.

At the Shandaar Cafe today all the talk is about Chamcha the Anglo-

phile, famed for his voice-over on the Slimbix ad: *'How's a calorie to earn a salary? Thanks to Slimbix, I'm out of work.'* Chamcha, the great projector of voices, the prestidigitator of personae, has turned into a Goat and has crawled back to the ghetto, to his despised migrant compatriots. In his mythic being he has become the 'borderline' figure of a massive historical displacement – postcolonial migration – that is not only a 'transitional' reality, but also a 'translational' phenomenon. The question is, in Jameson's terms, whether 'narrative invention ... by way of its very implausibility becomes the figure of a larger possible [cultural] praxis' (p. 369).

For Chamcha stands, quite literally, in-between two border conditions. On the one hand lies his landlady Hind who espouses the cause of gastronomic pluralism, devouring the spiced dishes of Kashmir and the yogurt sauces of Lucknow, turning herself into the wide land mass of the subcontinent itself 'because food passes across any boundary you care to mention'.¹⁸ On Chamcha's other side sits his landlord Sufyan, the secular 'colonial' metropolitan who understands the fate of the migrant in the classical contrast between Lucretius and Ovid. Translated, by Sufyan, for the existential guidance of postcolonial migrants, the problem consists in whether the crossing of cultural frontiers permits freedom from the essence of the self (Lucretius), or whether, like wax, migration only changes the surface of the soul, preserving identity under its protean forms (Ovid).

This liminality of migrant experience is no less a transitional phenomenon than a translational one; there is no resolution to it because the two conditions are ambivalently enjoined in the 'survival' of migrant life. Living in the interstices of Lucretius and Ovid, caught in-between a 'nativist', even nationalist, atavism and a postcolonial metropolitan assimilation, the subject of cultural difference becomes a problem that Walter Benjamin has described as the irresolution, or liminality, of 'translation', the element of resistance in the process of transformation, 'that element in a translation which does not lend itself to translation'.¹⁹ This space of the translation of cultural difference at the interstices is infused with that Benjaminian temporality of the present which makes graphic a moment of transition, not merely the continuum of history; it is a strange stillness that defines the present in which the very writing of historical transformation becomes uncannily visible. The migrant culture of the 'in-between', the minority position, dramatizes the activity of culture's untranslatability; and in so doing, it moves the question of culture's appropriation beyond the assimilationist's dream, or the racist's nightmare, of a 'full transmissal of subject-matter',²⁰ and towards an encounter with the ambivalent process of splitting and hybridity that marks the identification with culture's difference. The God of migrants,

in *The Satanic Verses*, speaks unequivocally on this point, while of course, fully equivocal between purity and danger:

Whether We be multiform, plural, representing the union-by-hybridisation of such opposites as Oopar and Neechay, or whether We be pure, stark, extreme, will not be resolved here.²¹

The indeterminacy of diasporic identity, '[that] will not be resolved here' is the secular, social cause for what has been widely represented as the 'blasphemy' of the book. Hybridity is heresy. The fundamentalist charge has not focused on the misinterpretation of the Koran, as much as on the offence of the 'misnaming' of Islam: Mohamed referred to as Mahound; the prostitutes named after the wives of the Prophet. It is the formal complaint of the fundamentalists that the transposition of these sacred names into profane spaces – brothels or magical realist novels – is not simply sacrilegious, but destructive of the very cement of community. To violate the system of naming is to make contingent and indeterminate what Alisdair MacIntyre, in his essay on 'Tradition and translation', has described as 'naming for: the institutions of naming as the expression and embodiment of the shared standpoint of the community, its traditions of belief and enquiry'.²² The conflict of cultures and community around *The Satanic Verses* has been mainly represented in spatial terms and binary geopolitical polarities – Islamic fundamentalists vs. Western literary modernists, the quarrel of the ancient (ascriptive) migrants and modern (ironic) metropolitans. This obscures the anxiety of the irresolvable, borderline culture of hybridity that articulates its problems of identification and its diasporic aesthetic in an uncanny, disjunctive temporality that is, at once, the time of cultural displacement, and the space of the 'untranslatable'.

To blaspheme is not simply to sully the ineffability of the sacred name. '... [B]lasphemy is by no means confined to the Islamic chapters', Sara Suleri writes in her fine reading of *The Satanic Verses*. '[A] postcolonial desire for deracination, emblemized by the protagonist Saladin Chamcha, is equally represented as cultural heresy. Acts of historical or cultural severance become those blasphemous moments that proliferate in the narrative ...'²³ Blasphemy goes beyond the severance of tradition and replaces its claim to a purity of origins with a poetics of relocation and reinscription. Rushdie repeatedly uses the word 'blasphemy' in the migrant sections of the book to indicate a theatrical form of the staging of cross-genre, cross-cultural identities. Blasphemy is not merely a misrepresentation of the sacred by the secular; it is a moment when the subject-matter or the content of a cultural tradition is being overwhelmed, or alienated, in the act of translation. Into the asserted authenticity or continuity of tradition, 'secular' blasphemy releases a

temporality that reveals the contingencies, even the incommensurabilities, involved in the process of social transformation.

My theoretical description of blasphemy as a transgressive act of cultural translation, is borne out by Yunus Samad's reading of blasphemy in the context of the real event of the fatwah.²⁴ It is the *medium* Rushdie uses to reinterpret the Koran that constitutes the crime. In the Muslim world, Samad argues, poetry is the traditional medium of censure. By casting his revisionary narrative in the form of the novel – largely unknown to traditional Islamic literature – Rushdie violates the poetic licence granted to critics of the Islamic establishment. In Samad's words, 'Salman Rushdie's real crime, in the eyes of the clerics, was that he touched on early Islamic history in a critical, imaginative and irreverent fashion but with deep historical insight.' It could be argued, I think, that far from simply misinterpreting the Koran, Rushdie's sin lies in opening up a space of discursive contestation that places the authority of the Koran within a perspective of historical and cultural relativism. It is not that the 'content' of the Koran is directly disputed; rather, by revealing other enunciatory positions and possibilities within the framework of Koranic reading, Rushdie performs the subversion of its authenticity through the act of cultural translation – he relocates the Koran's 'intentionality' by repeating and reinscribing it in the locale of the novel of postwar cultural migrations and diasporas.

The transposition of the life of Mohamed into the melodramatic theatricality of a popular Bombay movie, *The Message*, results in a hybridized form – the 'theological'²⁵ – targeted to Western immigrant audiences. Blasphemy, here, is the slippage in-between the intended moral fable and its displacement into the dark, symptomatic figurations of the 'dreamwork' of cinematic fantasy. In the racist psychodrama staged around Chamcha, the Satanic goatman, 'blasphemy' stands for the phobic projections that fuel great social fears, cross frontiers, evade the normal controls, and roam loose about the city turning difference into demonism. The social fantasm of racism, driven by rumour, becomes politically credible and strategically negotiable: 'priests became involved, adding another unstable element – the linkage between the term *black* and the sin *blasphemy* – to the mix.'²⁶ As the unstable element – the interstice – enables the linkage black/blasphemy, so it reveals, once more, that the 'present' of translation may not be a smooth transition, a consensual continuity, but the configuration of the disjunctive rewriting of the transcultural, migrant experience.

If hybridity is heresy, then to blaspheme is to dream. To dream not of the past or present, nor the continuous present; it is not the nostalgic dream of tradition, nor the Utopian dream of modern progress; it is the dream of translation as 'survival' as Derrida translates the 'time' of Benjamin's concept of the after-life of translation, as *sur-vivre*, the act

of living on borderlines. Rushdie translates this into the migrant's dream of survival: an *initiatory* interstices; an empowering condition of hybridity; an emergence that turns 'return' into reinscription or re-description; an iteration that is not belated, but ironic and insurgent. For the migrant's survival depends, as Rushdie put it, on discovering 'how newness enters the world'. The focus is on making the linkages through the unstable elements of literature and life – the dangerous tryst with the 'untranslatable' – rather than arriving at ready-made names.

The 'newness' of migrant or minority discourse has to be discovered *in medias res*: a newness that is not part of the 'progressivist' division between past and present, or the archaic and the modern; nor is it a 'newness' that can be contained in the mimesis of 'original and copy'. In both these cases, the image of the new is iconic rather than enunciatory; in both instances, temporal difference is represented as epistemological or mimetic distance from an original source. The newness of cultural translation is akin to what Walter Benjamin describes as the 'foreignness of languages' – that problem of representation native to representation itself. If Paul de Man focused on the 'metonymy' of translation, I want to foreground the 'foreignness' of cultural translation.

With the concept of 'foreignness' Benjamin comes closest to describing the *performativity of translation as the staging of cultural difference*. The argument begins with the suggestion that though *Brot* and *pain* intend the same object, *bread*, their discursive and cultural *modes of signification* are in conflict with each other, striving to exclude each other. The complementarity of language as communication must be understood as emerging from the constant state of contestation and flux caused by the differential systems of social and cultural signification. This process of complementarity as the agonistic supplement is the seed of the 'untranslatable' – the foreign element in the midst of the performance of cultural translation. And it is this seed that turns into the famous, overworked analogy in the Benjamin essay: unlike the original where fruit and skin form a certain unity, in the act of translation the content or subject matter is made disjunct, overwhelmed and alienated by the form of signification, like a royal robe with ample folds.

Unlike Derrida and de Man, I am less interested in the metonymic fragmentation of the 'original'. I am more engaged with the 'foreign' element that reveals the interstitial; insists in the textile superfluity of folds and wrinkles; and becomes the 'unstable element of linkage', the indeterminate temporality of the in-between, that has to be engaged in creating the conditions through which 'newness comes into the world'. The foreign element 'destroys the original's structures of reference and sense communication as well'²⁷ not simply by negating it but by negotiating the disjunction in which successive cultural temporalities are

'preserved in the work of history and *at the same time* cancelled. . . . The nourishing fruit of the historically understood contains time as a precious but tasteless seed.'²⁸ And through this dialectic of cultural negation-as-negotiation, this splitting of skin and fruit through the *agency* of foreignness, the purpose is, as Rudolf Pannwitz says, not 'to turn Hindi, Greek, English into German [but] instead to turn German into Hindi, Greek, English'.²⁹

Translation is the performative nature of cultural communication. It is language *in actu* (enunciation, positionality) rather than language *in situ* (*énoncé*, or propositionality).³⁰ And the sign of translation continually tells, or 'tolls' the different times and spaces between cultural authority and its performative practices.³¹ The 'time' of translation consists in that *movement* of meaning, the principle and practice of a communication that, in the words of de Man 'puts the original in motion to decanonise it, giving it the movement of fragmentation, a wandering of errance, a kind of permanent exile'.³²

Chamcha is the discriminatory sign of a performative, projective British culture of race and racism – 'illegal immigrant, outlaw king, foul criminal or race hero'.³³ From somewhere between Ovid and Lucretius, or between gastronomic and demographic pluralisms, he confounds nativist and supremacist ascriptions of national(ist) identities. This migrant movement of social identifications leads to the most devastating parody of Maggie Torture's Britain.

The revenge of the migrant hybrid comes in the Club Hot Wax sequence,³⁴ named, no doubt, after Sufyan's translation of Ovid's waxy metaphor for the immutability of the migrant soul. If Gibreel Farishta, later in the book, transforms London into a tropical country with 'increased moral definition, institution of a national siesta, development of vivid and expansive patterns of behaviour',³⁵ then it is the deejay, prancing Pinkwalla, who stages the revenge of black history in the expressivist cultural practices of toasting, rapping and scratching. In a scene that blends Madame Tussaud's with Led Zeppelin, the sepulchral wax figures of an excised black history emerge to dance amidst the migrants of the present in a postcolonial counter-masque of a retrieved and reinscribed history. Waxy Maggie Torture is condemned to a melt-down, accompanied by the Baldwinian chants of 'the fire this time'. And suddenly through this ritual of translation, Saladin Chamcha, the Satanic goatman, is historicized again in the movement of a migrant history, a metropolitan world 'becoming minority'.

Cultural translation desacralizes the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy, and in that very act, demands a contextual specificity, a historical differentiation *within* minority positions. If the public image of the Rushdie affair has become mired in the righteous indignation of Magus and Mullah, that is because its re-citation within a feminist, anti-

fundamentalist public discourse has received little attention. The most productive debates, and political initiatives, in the post-fatwah period, have come from women's groups like Women Against Fundamentalism and Southall Black Sisters³⁶ in Britain. They have been concerned less with the politics of textuality and international terrorism, and more with demonstrating that the secular, global issue lies uncannily at home, in Britain – in the policies of local government and the race-relations industry; in the 'racialization of religion' in multicultural Britain; in the imposition of homogeneity on 'minority' populations in the name of cultural diversity or pluralism.

Feminists have not fetishized the infamous naming of the prostitutes after Mohamed's wives: rather they have drawn attention to the politicized violence in the brothel and the bedroom, raising demands for the establishment of refuges for minority women coerced into marriages. Their response to the Rushdie affair reveals what they describe as 'the *contradictory* influences of feminist and multi-culturalist policies adopted by the local state (mainly in Labour-led councils)'.³⁷ From such ambivalent, antagonistic identifications of class, gender, generation and tradition, the British feminist movement of the 1990s has redefined its agenda. The Irish question, post-fatwah, has also been reposed as a *postcolonial* problem of the 'racialization of religion'. The critique of patriarchal fundamentalism and its regulation of gender and sexual desire has become a major issue for minority cultures. Minority artists have questioned the heterosexism that regulates traditional, joint-family based communities, making gay and lesbian relations restrictive and repressive. Such is the tropic movement of cultural translation, as Rushdie spectacularly renames London, in its Indo-Pakistani iteration, as 'Ellowen Deeowen'.

X

III COMMUNITY MATTERS

Can 'libidinal investments of a more narrative kind'³⁸ produce a representative discourse of minorities? In other words – *pace* Jameson – how would collective agency be signified in groups that do not have the 'organistic' history and conceptuality of the discourse of 'class'? 'Becoming minor', Abdul Janmohamed and David Lloyd remind us, 'is not a question of essence ... but a question of subject position.' Such a position articulates 'alternative practices and values that are embedded in the often-damaged, -fragmentary, -hampered, or -occluded work of minorities';³⁹ and having been 'coerced into a negative, generic subject position, the oppressed individual transforms it into a positive collective one'.⁴⁰ These fragmented, partially occluded values of minority discourse are both continuous and discontinuous with Marxism, according to Cornel West. He proposes a genealogical materialism as a way of

contesting a 'psycho-sexual racial logic'.⁴¹ It represents a logic of living that cuts across the everyday life of different ideological forms – race, religion, patriarchy, homophobia; it reveals, and contests, the mechanisms by which self-images and self-identities are formed in the realm of cultural styles, aesthetic ideals, psychosexual sensibilities. Both these accounts of the racial, gendered minority positions stage the symbolic form of self-identification represented through fragmentation and occlusion of the sovereignty of the self. Affiliative solidarity is formed through the ambivalent articulations of the realm of the aesthetic, the fantasmatic, the economic and the body political: a temporality of social construction and contradiction that is iterative and interstitial; an insurgent 'intersubjectivity' that is interdisciplinary; an everyday that interrogates the synchronous contemporaneity of modernity.

It is too easy to see the discourses of the minority as symptoms of the postmodern condition. Jameson's claim, that in the absence of a genuine class consciousness, 'the very lively social struggles of the current period are largely dispersed and anarchic' (p. 349), does not sufficiently register the antagonistic displacement that minority discourses initiate, across, or at cross-purposes with, the dialectics of class identities. To seek a 'healthy' sociological holism and philosophical realism (p. 323), as Jameson derives from Georg Lukács, would hardly be appropriate to those passionate and partial *conditions of communal emergence* which are an integral part of the temporal and historic conditions of postcolonial critique.

'It is not so much the state-civil society opposition but rather the capital-community opposition that seems to be the great unsurpassed contradiction in Western social philosophy.'⁴² From this perspective, Partha Chatterjee, the Indian subaltern scholar, returns to Hegel – crucial to both Lukács and Jameson – to claim that the idea of community articulates a cultural temporality of contingency and indeterminacy at the heart of the discourse of civil society. This 'minority' reading is built on the occluded, partial presence of the idea of community that haunts or doubles the concept of civil society, leading 'a subterranean, potentially subversive life within it because it refuses to go away'.⁴³ As a category, community enables a division between the private and the public, the civil and the familial; but as a performative discourse it enacts the impossibility of drawing an objective line between the two. The agency of the community-concept 'seeps through the interstices of the objectively constructed, contractually regulated structure of civil society',⁴⁴ class-relations and national identities. Community disturbs the grand globalizing narrative of capital, displaces the emphasis on production in 'class' collectivity, and disrupts the homogeneity of the imagined community of the nation. The narrative of community substantializes cultural difference, and constitutes a 'split-and-double' form

of group identification which Chatterjee illustrates through a specifically 'anti-colonialist' contradiction of the public sphere. The colonized refuse to accept membership in the civil society of subjects; consequently they create a cultural domain 'marked by the distinctions of the material and the spiritual, the outer and the inner'.⁴⁵

I am less concerned with the conceptual aporia of the community-capital contradiction, than with the genealogy of the idea of community as itself a 'minority' discourse; as the making, or becoming 'minor', of the idea of Society, in the practice of the politics of culture. Community is the antagonist supplement of modernity: in the metropolitan space it is the territory of the minority, threatening the claims of civility; in the transnational world it becomes the border-problem of the diasporic, the migrant, the refugee. Binary divisions of social space neglect the profound temporal disjunction – the translational time and space – through which minority communities negotiate their collective identifications. For what is at issue in the discourse of minorities is the creation of agency through incommensurable (not simply multiple) positions. Is there a poetics of the 'interstitial' community? How does it name itself, author its agency?

Nowhere in contemporary postcolonial poetry have I found the concept of the right to signify more profoundly evoked than in Derek Walcott's poem on the colonization of the Caribbean as the possession of a space through the power of naming.⁴⁶ Ordinary language develops an auratic authority, an imperial persona; but in a specifically postcolonial performance of reinscription, the focus shifts from the nominalism of imperialism to the emergence of another sign of agency and identity. It signifies the destiny of culture as a site, not simply of subversion and transgression, but one that prefigures a kind of solidarity between ethnicities that meet in the tryst of colonial history.

My race began as the sea began,
with no nouns, and with no horizon,
with pebbles under my tongue,
with a different fix on the stars.

.....

Have we melted into the mirror
leaving our souls behind?
The goldsmith from Benares,
the stonecutter from Canton,
the bronzesmith from Benin.

A sea-eagle screams from the rock,
and my race began like the osprey
with that cry,

THE LOCATION OF CULTURE

that terrible vowel,
that I!

[. . .] this stick
to trace our names on the sand
which the sea erased again, to our indifference.

II

And when they named these bays
bays,
was it nostalgia or irony?

.....

Where were the courts of Castille?
Versailles' colonnades
supplanted by cabbage palms
with Corinthian crests,
belittling diminutives,
then, little Versailles,
meant plans for a pigsty,
names for the sour apples
and green grapes
of their exile.

[. . .] Being men they could not live
except they first presumed
the right of everything to be a noun.
The African acquiesced,
repeated and changed them.

Listen, my children, say:
moubain: the hogplum,
cerise: the wild cherry,
baie-la: the bay,
with the fresh green voices
they were once themselves
in the way the wind bends
our natural inflections.

These palms are greater than Versailles,
for no man made them,
their fallen columns greater than Castille,
no man unmade them
except the worm who has no helmet,
but was always the emperor,

There are two myths of history in this poem, each of them related to opposing versions of the place of identity in the process of cultural knowledge. There is the pedagogical process of imperialist naming:

Being men, they could not live
except they first presumed
the right of everything to be a noun.

Opposed to this is the African acquiescence which, in repeating the lesson of the masters, changes their inflections:

moubain: the hogplum
cerise: the wild cherry
baie-la: the bay
with the fresh green voices
they were once themselves . . .

Walcott's purpose is not to oppose the pedagogy of the imperialist noun to the inflectional appropriation of the native voice. He proposes to go beyond such binaries of power in order to reorganize our sense of the process of identification in the negotiations of cultural politics. He stages the slaves' *right to signify*, not simply by denying the imperialist the 'right of everything to be a noun' but by questioning the masculinist, authoritative subjectivity produced in the colonizing process: *Being men they could not live/except they first presumed/the right of everything to be a noun*. What is 'man' as an effect of, as subjected to, the sign – the noun – of a colonizing discourse? To this end, Walcott poses the problem of 'beginning' outside the question of 'origins', beyond that perspectival field of vision – *the mind halved by the horizon* – that constitutes human consciousness in the mirror of nature, as Richard Rorty has famously described it.⁴⁷

Walcott's history begins elsewhere. He leads us to that moment of undecidability or unconditionality that constitutes the ambivalence of modernity as it executes its critical judgements, or seeks justification for its social facts.⁴⁸ Against the possessive, coercive 'right' of the Western noun, Walcott places a different mode of postcolonial speech; a historical time envisaged in the discourse of the enslaved or the indentured. The undecidability from which Walcott builds his narrative opens up his poem to the historical 'present' which Walter Benjamin describes as a 'present which is not a transition, but in which time stands still and has come to a stop'.⁴⁹ *For this notion defines the present in which history is being written*. From this discursive space of struggle, the violence of the letter, the terror of the timeless, is negotiated the agency of the goldsmith from Benares, the Benin bronzesmith, the Cantonese stone-cutter. It is a collective agency that is, at once, pronomial and postnominalist:

and my race began like the osprey
with that cry,
that terrible vowel,
that I!

Where does the postcolonial subject lie?

With that *terrible vowel, that I*, Walcott opens up the disjunctive present of the poem's writing of its history. The I as vowel, as the arbitrariness of the signifier, is the *sign* of the interstitial difference through which the identity of meaning is made. The 'I' as pronominal, as the avowal of the enslaved colonial subject is the repetition of the symbolic agency of history, tracing its name on the shifting sands, constituting a postcolonial, migrant community in-difference: Hindu, Chinese, African. With this disjunctive, double 'I' Walcott writes a history of cultural difference that envisages the production of difference as the political and social definition of the historical present. Cultural differences must be understood as they constitute identities – contingently, indeterminately – in-between the repetition of the vowel I – that can always be reinscribed and relocated – and the restitution of the subject I. Read like this, in-between the I-as-symbol and the I-as-sign, the articulations of difference – race, history, gender – are never singular or binary. Claims to identity are nominative or normative, in a preliminary, passing moment; they are never nouns when they are culturally productive or historically progressive. Like the vowel itself, forms of social identity must be capable of turning up in-and-as an-other's difference and turning the right to signify into an act of cultural translation.

Pomme arac
 otaheite apple,
 pomme cythère,
 pomme granate,
 moubain,
 z'ananas
 the pineapple's
 Aztec helmet,
 pomme,
 I have forgotten
 what pomme for
 Irish potato,
 cerise,
 the cherry,
 z'aman
 sea-almonds
 by the crisp
 sea-bursts,

au bord de la ouvrière.
 Come back to me,
 my language.
 Come back,
 cacao,
 grigri,
 solitaire, . . .⁵⁰

Richard Rorty suggests that 'solidarity has to be constructed out of little pieces, rather than found already waiting, in the form of an ur-language which all of us recognise when we hear it'.⁵¹ In the spirit of such solidarity, Walcott's call to language serves a symbolic function. As the poem shuttles between the small acts of nature's naming and the larger performance of a communal tongue, its rhythm registers the 'foreignness' of cultural memory. In forgetting the proper name, in each return of language – its 'coming back' – the disjunctive temporality of translation reveals the intimate differences that lie between genealogies and geographies. It is an interstitial time and space that I have variously described, through this chapter, as living 'in the midst of the incomprehensible', or dwelling with Sufyan at the Shandaar Cafe, on the borderlines between Ovid and Lucretius, in-between Oopar (above) and Neechay (below). History's *intermediacy* poses the future, once again, as an open question. It provides an agency of initiation that enables one to possess again and anew – as in the movement of Walcott's poem – the signs of survival, the terrain of other histories, the hybridity of cultures. The act of cultural translation works through 'the *continua* of transformation' to yield a sense of culture's belonging:

generations going,
 generations gone,
 moi c'est gens Ste. Lucie
 C'est la moi sorti:
 is there that I born.⁵²

And from the little pieces of the poem, its going and coming, there rises the great history of the languages and landscapes of migration and diaspora.