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About

Gender forum is an online, peer reviewed academic journal dedicated to the discussion of gender issues. As an electronic journal, *gender forum* offers a free-of-charge platform for the discussion of gender-related topics in the fields of literary and cultural production, media and the arts as well as politics, the natural sciences, medicine, the law, religion and philosophy. Inaugurated by Prof. Dr. Beate Neumeier in 2002, the quarterly issues of the journal have focused on a multitude of questions from different theoretical perspectives of feminist criticism, queer theory, and masculinity studies. *gender forum* also includes reviews and occasionally interviews, fictional pieces and poetry with a gender studies angle.

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Editorial

1 **Rac(e)ing Questions**, the third issue of **gender forum**, focuses on the discursive intersection of gender and race. It examines the question of power and power relations from various theoretical viewpoints. The target essays in **Rac(e)ing Questions** cover a wide range of investigated genres, periods and cultural backgrounds, thus providing a broad insight into contemporary theoretical approaches to questions of gender and racial difference.

2 Mita Banerjee's essay "Josephine Baker: Gendered Ethnicity on a Mainstream Stage" looks at the way in which gender and race intersect in the spectacular performance of Josephine Baker dressed in a bird-feather costume on what is constituted as a "white" stage. At the same time, an analysis of Baker's films *Zou Zou* and *Princess Tam Tam* reveals a curious disavowal of the white male gaze: the films' male protagonists are caught not looking at the black woman on stage. This disavowal of white desire for blackness, Banerjee argues, indexes a strong attempt on the part of the mainstream to uphold the whiteness of its nation-space.

3 Claudia Liebrand's contribution compares *The King and I*, the Hollywood musical based on Anna Leonowens's diary, with its more recent screen adaptation *Anna and the King*. Liebrand argues that in both cases gender and race interact and cross in interesting ways. While the Orient, personified by the King of Siam, is conventionally depicted as the exotic, feminized Other, the opposed masculine subjectivity, ratio and agency of the Occident are embodied by a female representative. Thus power relationships are simultaneously confirmed and refigured.

4 Finally, Monika Müller's article "Nineteenth-Century Narraceons: Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*" compares the ways in which the two writers address the issue of gender and racial identity in their novels. While both authors definitely aimed at a rectification of a racial wrong done by the hegemonical notions of racial difference, their notion of racial difference still seems to be rooted in stereotypical and essentialist ideas, thus leading to conflicting narrative conceptualisations.

5 The questions raced in the interview with Atima Shrivastava by Stefanie Rott attest to the difficulty of avoiding categorisation and marginalisation due to racial and/or gendered difference. The Indian British author talks about *Looking for Maya* (an excerpt of this novel is featured in the second issue of **gender forum**, **Mediating Gender**) and its presentation of the struggle with racial, cultural, and religious difference in a multicultural society.

6 In the fiction section, a selection of poetry by the Indian writer Sridhar Rajeswaran, whose creative and academic work has been strongly influenced by Postcolonial theories, complements the theoretical investigations of **Rac(e)ing questions**.

7 Finally, reviews of recent theoretical works by Richard Dyer, Helen Moglen and Cindy Carlson (coedited with Mazzola, Robert L. Mazzola and Susan Bernardo) complete this issue.

Gender Meets Race: Andy Tennant's *Anna and the King* (1999) and Walter Lang's *The King and I* (1956)

By Claudia Liebrand, University of Cologne, Germany

Abstract:

Both Tennant's *Anna and the King* and Lang's *The King and I* stage the prohibition of physical contact between the 'white woman' and the 'yellow king'; they employ stark oppositions and attempt to contain hybridity. Nevertheless, the clear-cut binarisms are imploded in both films. This is partly due to the films' thwarting of cultural inscriptions of race and gender [...]. Ironically, the 1999 version - and this is my thesis - turns out to be more racist than the original version from 1956 as Tennant's remake adheres to imperialist ideas even more intransigently than Lang's film.

1 Gender has to be regarded as a social determinant, where cultural and historical differences meet. Therefore, gender cannot be studied in isolation, but has to be considered in its interrelation to other cultural determinants. Thus, I would argue, Tennant's *Anna and the King* connects gender performances with race performances, just as the "original" *The King and I*, on which the more recent film is based. In the following, the process of the cultural production of both race and gender, as highlighted in the transfer from "original" to remake, will be analysed. Both Tennant's *Anna and the King* and Lang's *The King and I* stage the prohibition of physical contact between the "white woman" and the "yellow king"; they employ stark oppositions and attempt to contain hybridity. Nevertheless, these clear-cut binarisms are imploded in both films. This is partly due to the films' thwarting of cultural inscriptions of race and gender - the Occident, culturally encoded as masculine, is embodied by a woman, whereas the feminine Orient is represented by a man (whose masculinity, however, is compromised which presents him as exotic object of the gaze in *The King and I* and feminised by the camera).

2 In the following I will read *Anna and The King*, focusing on gender and race. And I will attempt to explain the gap between enthusiastic American and disapproving Thai reception as it was discussed on web forums. Furthermore, I will deal with the more recent film's failure to achieve political correctness despite of its intention to "re-write" the original a politically correct way. Ironically, the 1999 version - and this is my thesis - turns out to be more racist than the original version from 1956 since Tennant's remake adheres to imperialistic ideas even more intransigently than Lang's film.

The King and I

3 *The King and I* can be read as both a day dream and a narcissistic female fantasy of grandiosity, in which Prince Charming not only appears (à la *Pretty Woman*) but also disappears at the right moment, enabling the heroine to slip into the king's robe. Lang's musical film not only narrates a love story, but also a tale of female self-empowerment. Nevertheless, the spectator is left in doubt whether it is Ms. Leonowens or an allegorical Britain who is awarded the unofficial Siamese sceptre at the end of the film. The film suggests that the king a. k. a. Yul Brynner dies due to his heart-breaking love of the British woman Anna. This "liquidation" solves the problem of a romance that cannot lead to marriage, as this would mean Anna's integration into the king's harem - a fate as unbearable for the heroine as for the movie's American audience of the 1950s. Moreover, Ms. Leonowens is married already, albeit to a dead man. Her former husband, whom she still loves, died in the service of the British Empire. Thus according to Lang's film, true romance is authenticated rather than ended by death. Ms. Leonowens will not desecrate the unique love for her husband by marrying again, not even a king. Therefore, the spectator cannot hope to witness a consummation of love between the Asian king and the British teacher.

4 The new Siamese sovereign holds his inaugural speech at the deathbed of his predecessor; a speech that could derive from a school paper written for one of Ms. Leonowens' lessons: he declares rituals of devotion as well as court ceremonies as outdated and harmful to both body and mind and abolishes prostration before the sovereign. In contrast to his father, who proved unable to impart the enlightenment taught by Ms. Leonowens to his subjects and adhered to slavery and polygamy, we can expect the young king, Anna's model pupil, to liberate the slaves and organise his love life according to the Western model, that is, as a search for the one woman who can be his soul's companion, lover, wife, and mother all at the same time.

5 *Mores Britannici vincent omnia*: Siam does not have to become part of the British protectorate, as the coloniser Anna with her crinoline (which extends wide enough for a whole class of schoolchildren to hide under it) is already so successful that Siam's appropriation is rendered unnecessary. Even Ms. Leonowens's name signals her imperialism: it consists of the noun *leo*, the imperial lion and the British heraldic animal, and the verb *to own*, alluding to the appropriation and possession of foreign territory.¹ Leonowens acts as a widow worthy of

¹Although Leonowens carries the imperial lion in her name, she is "merely" a woman. The imperial lion of Britain has already lost its mane and the Empire is in decline. From this perspective, the renunciation of Siam's occupation can be understood differently: the effeminate Great Britain is no longer capable to make Siam, which has degenerated to a doll's house, its protectorate.

her husband, who, as colonel of the British Army, had fought to spread the blessings of British culture all over Asia. Fulfilling the various tasks as a teacher and as an English-speaking correspondent, and, moreover, as the Siamese king's Minister of Foreign Affairs, his widow is even more successful in dedicating herself to this cultural transfer than her deceased husband. The court dignitaries as well as the women from the king's harem address Anna as "Sir." At Anna's request, the king's main wife explains the honorary address "Sir" as resulting from Anna's "scientific appearance" ("[Y]ou scientific. Not lowly, like woman.") lifting her above other women. The simple gender inversion of the address stages the well-known Western cultural pattern (outlined by Edward Said among others), constructing the West as "masculine," as rational, effective, and civilised, and the East as 'feminine,' as passive, irrational, mysterious, and intoxicating.² It should be noted that "Asia," "Orient," and "Siam" are constructed differently in various Western and European traditions. The mentioned pattern thus functions as the "cliché of a cliché." Siam not only signifies irrationality, but also "Eastern wisdom," if not in *The King and I*, then at least in *Anna and the King*. The Western gaze (which would have to be specified as European, Western European, U.S.-American, etc.) locates such Eastern wisdom in Buddhist, Confucian, or Taoist Asia rather than in Islamic, Hindu, Shintoist, or Shaman Asia. However, the pattern of a masculine and active Europe/Britain and a feminine, devout Asia dominates *The King and I* as well as *Anna and the King*. Both films do not specify and differentiate Asia, but simply have recourse to the above-mentioned pattern.³ By means of the gender-inverted form of address, this pattern is exposed as a system of cultural ascription, as the representative of masculinity, occidental culture, and rationality obviously is a woman.⁴ One could argue that colonial discourse thereby reveals that which it disavows. The interlocking of the West, represented as Woman, and the East, represented as Man and king, foregrounds the contingencies and contradictions within the Western systems of cultural ascription.⁵

6 The consistent address of Leonowens as "Sir," which Lang's film offers, disfigures the figurative Western self-description as masculine by taking it literally. The gender identity of

²The juxtaposition of "passive" Asia and "active" Europe goes back to Aristotle, who associated this binarism with the opposition *European nations* = *low intelligence* vs. *Asian nations* = *high intelligence* (see Aristotle 251).

³ If I use the term "Asia" in a general, unspecified way, I am quoting Western discourse on Asia as it is used in the film.

⁴The continual address of Anna as "Sir" appears as a parody of Althusser's concept of subject constitution: it is the interpellation of the Other which contours and determines the interpellated subject (see Althusser).

⁵The mechanisms of differentiation and exclusion within Western systems of representation define culture's Other not only as the foreign (Asia, Africa, colonies), but (Western) Woman is conceptualised as the Other and the foreign as well. She is familiar but still *un-heimlich*, the uncanny dark continent in the heart of civilisation and European culture. Christa Rohde-Dachser has demonstrated to which extent Woman is stigmatised as the "dark continent" and as "Africa/Asia within Europe" in Western systems of representation.

every British man and every British woman is fixed: he, or rather she, is a man. In contrast, the East - from the Occident's point of view - is not only a woman, but also a child; as a woman the East always already has infantile traits which have to be countered by education and civilising efforts. Thus it does not come as a surprise that Anna not only teaches the heir to the throne, as originally agreed upon, but the whole court: the harem, dozens of princes and princesses, and even the king himself become Anna's pupils and submit to Anna's cunning educational plan. Asia apparently has to be schooled by England.

The Spectacle of Exoticism

7 In both films Asia is furnished with the well-known properties of exoticism: Siamese men and women are wrapped in ornate garments decorated with gold, both sexes wear trousers as well as long skirts and expensive golden jewellery. Occasionally, the men are presented as uncivilised "wild men," stripped to the waist.⁶ More often, however, they - and especially the monarch played by Yul Brynner - wear jackets opening at every move, thus allowing the spectators to catch a glimpse of their well-formed chests. Hence, the Siamese are clearly eroticised as they are representing the "exotic," the "other," the "pre-civilised," categories always already connoting femininity from a Western perspective.

8 The introductory scene of Lang's film emphasises this connotation. Anna and her son have just arrived at the harbour. Through his binoculars Louis observes the arriving barque with the prime minister and his entourage. This contrast between the binoculars (and their phallic connotations) and the barque (connoting femininity, as ships often do), repeats the opposition of male West and female East. The binoculars serve as a device for exploring the strange country and its visitors; they make little Louis a "Peeping Tom" - who has to come to terms with the nakedness of the observed people. Astonished and shocked, he tells his mother that the prime minister is "naked." The Victorian mother can tone down this scandalous discovery only slightly by being more precise. She corrects her son calling upon the cliché of the half-naked wild man, when she tells him that the prime minister is only "half-naked," . The use of the gaze in *The King and I* once again thematises the scenario mentioned above: the Western, instrumental, technical, "male" gaze which is directed towards a picturesque, "wild," eroticised, "female" object. Thus little Louis re-enacts a "phallic" constellation of the gaze which traditionally assigns to the men the position of owning and controlling the gaze,

⁶The mechanisms of differentiation and exclusion within Western systems of representation define culture's Other not only as the foreign (Asia, Africa, colonies), but (Western) Woman is conceptualised as the Other and the foreign as well. She is familiar but still *un-heimlich*, the uncanny dark continent in the heart of civilisation and European culture. Christa Rohde-Dachser has demonstrated to which extent Woman is stigmatised as the "dark continent" and as "Africa/Asia within Europe" in Western systems of representation.

whereas women are allocated the complementary position of consciously exhibiting themselves to the gaze. Thus, neither the position of the object nor of the subject of the gaze is gender indifferent - as John Berger and Laura Mulvey among others, have shown. The observers posit themselves as (male) subjects, whereas the observed are (female) objects of the phallic gaze - even if this gaze belongs to a small boy or a Victorian widow who in any case will cause gender trouble among her Siamese hosts. The Siam that is visually investigated by Louis's and Anna's gazes (as well as by those of the cinematic spectators fascinated by this glimpse into the Oriental world) appears to enact its status as object of the gaze in a rather confrontational manner. The rotagonists wear costumes with "show-effect". Yul Brynner, in particular, enacts his role as the King of Siam as a veritable spectacle of masculinity, impersonating the virile bald man and the defiant child at the same time.

9 In contrast to *Anna and the King*, which offers colourful, exotic pictures of Siamese architecture and a breath-taking landscape etc. (excerpts of the film could in fact serve as advertisement trailers for the Thai tourism industry), the Siam of *The King and I* appears almost empty. Images of Siamese exoticism will not be found, unless they are created in the minds of the audience, who, in view of the screen's emptiness, might devise their own projections and imaginations.

Fairy Tale and Musical: A Suffragette in Siam

10 The story that requires such "projective activity" on the audience's part has many characteristics of a fairy tale. An unglamorous teacher is loved by a king and given a ring - but, in spite of this "engagement ring" she will not be married to him, but instead turns into an admired and adored secret ruler herself. The king is immensely rich, the teacher is incredibly old (at least she is bold enough to maintain that she is 150 years old). Despite of the fairy tale character of the Siamese set-up, it allows Anna to encounter rather homely problems far from home. Demanding a "room of her own," she acts as an early British suffragette.⁷ Anna is able to fulfil the roles of the king's understanding friend, caring mother, and object of desire successfully because she treats the foreign king exactly in the same way in which she has learned to treat British men: she suggests ideas to him but then makes him believe that these

⁷ Even today the presentation of the naked *masculine* body is a taboo within Hollywood productions. Until the 1980s, every film that displayed male genitals was X-rated and thus made commercially insignificant. The display of female as well as "exotic" male bodies (or male bodies in exotic surroundings) has always been less tabooed: as early as the 1930s, Buster Crabbe as Tarzan was shown nearly naked in *Tarzan - the Fearless* like Johnny Weissmueller later on. In 1973, *Shakti in Africa* displayed a naked black male body without arousing a scandal. In the case of Yul Brynner's naked upper body this "exoticism-exception" applies, too. Only five years earlier, Marlon Brando in *A Streetcar Named Desire* had been harshly attacked by censors because he was shown wearing an undershirt.

"good ideas" are his own. She caters to his narcissism, flatters him and makes him appear in a favourable light in the presence of others, but nonetheless strictly sees to her own interests. Thus, Lang's portrayal can be seen as a re-figuration, in which the supposedly strange, essentially "other" (i.e. the Asian man) merely copies the British man. The strategy employed seems obvious: otherness is negated; the alien is turned into a mirror image of the well-known. The royal palace of Siam, which at first sight appears exciting and strange, turns out to be a Victorian living room in exotic disguise. The secret domestic battles between the pater familias and the wife as a secret ruler, are re-enacted cheerfully between the fantasy king and the Victorian teacher. Moreover, beneath the Victorian veneer, American family values (not only of the 1950s) appear (like that of the wifely "better half" ruling with friendly determination and exerting a mild civilising pressure upon the man in danger of regressing to barbarism, in his daily strife of professional life (even if he no longer has to colonise the Wild West). In contrast to the average American woman of the 1950s (and in contrast to the average Victorian British woman), Anna is not forced to be a housewife; the financial insecurity of her widowed status enforces her professional career. As a teacher at the Siamese royal court she succeeds in obtaining a "room of her own" (which has been a central feminist demand ever since Virginia Woolf's groundbreaking essay) in a place that is geographically and culturally far removed from home. The musical film guarantees Anna's independence by means of the king's eventual death; thus it not only circumvents the threatening implications of an "impossible" union, but also maintains Anna's (in some ways comfortable) status as a widow. Moreover, she can continue to dedicate herself to the realisation of her concepts: science and "modernisation." "Being scientific" becomes the focus of Lang's film; a focus encompassing everything that is desirable and instructive.

11 Nevertheless, the belief in science which *The King and I* celebrates and promotes is made to appear in a comic light. It remains unclear whether Lang's film mildly criticises the "science craze" of the USA of the nineteenth-century (as well as the 1950s) in a self-reflexive manner or whether the film's criticism is aimed at the "barbaric" king Mongkut whose devoted attempts to serve the gods of colonisation are ridiculed as science mania. However, even if one assumes that Lang's musical derides the king's naïve dealing with Western science, science itself still is contaminated by the royal mimicry of the Western belief in "being scientific." The film thus casts a distorted gaze onto what is possibly the central element of colonial self-confidence.

12 Advocating tolerance and castigating chauvinism are integral aims of the teacher's programme for modernisation. Thus Anna Leonowens orders a map of the world as

replacement of the traditional map of Siam, which presents the country in bright red and in huge dimensions, whereas the map of the world by contrast reduces Siam to a small point. As Siamese students experience this presentation of their country as humiliating, the teacher assumes that she can relieve these negative feelings by demonstrating that England is even smaller than Siam. Ms. Leonowens, who opposes her students' supposed or factual nationalism so vehemently, at the same time propagates British morals, British manners, and a British way of life throughout the film as exemplary in every respect. Thus, her chauvinism is by no means less distinct, but only slightly better concealed than that of the little Siamese princes and princesses, who enthusiastically greet the fact that Siam is larger and more powerful than the neighbouring country, Burma. Just as the Siamese royal palace is a screen onto which the "gender trouble" of the Victorian living room is projected, Siamese nationalism is a screen that functions as a cover for British chauvinism and colonialism. Lang's film preaches British tolerance and its exemplary status, but it practices (I am referring to Paul de Man's binary) something different: in fact, it may be read as a guide on "how to successfully colonise an Asian country without military aid." These military means are nevertheless present in the film as a background threat. Thus the banquet in honour of the British ambassador serves the purpose of informing Queen Victoria about Siam's progress towards civilisation and of preventing her from declaring Siam a British protectorate.

13 The prevention of Siam's military occupation by Britain does not turn *The King and I* into a "politically correct" film. Yet, despite its stereotypes, *The King and I* seems better than its reputation. As the film is designed as musical (see Altman; Feuer; Taylor), even as fairy tale - it is free from the demands of mimesis. To expect an exact historical portrayal would contradict the genre; the musical is - in Richard Dyer's words - a "gospel of happiness." It is not intended as a realistic narrative but as a spectacle - a spectacle of masculinity. The musical being "the only genre in which the male body has been unashamedly put on display in mainstream cinema in any consistent way" (Neale 18).[1] The musical exhibits the half-naked male bodies of Siam, and it tells a fairy tale that foregrounds its own structures. *The King and I* uses well-known stereotypes of the exotic, barbaric Orient but the genre prohibits any equation of the musical film's Orient with "real" Asia. Moreover - and this adds to the vindication of Lang's *The King and I* - the pattern of Cinderella who meets Prince Charming, which is the pattern not only of the musical but also of the fairy tale, is intricately inverted: Yul Brynner does not actually represent the Prince Charming whom Anna and the film's female spectators might dream of. Although love is the topic of a few conversations within the film, it seems as if dead men are more appealing than those living: Ms. Leonowens praises

her dead husband, but at the same time appears to enjoy a widowhood that enables her to live in sovereign independence.

Anna and the King

14 Tennant's *Anna and the King*, the 1999 remake of Lang's 1956 musical film manages to do without the death of the Siamese king: Mongkut is allowed to survive. Moreover, at the end of the film Ms. Leonowens returns to England. Europe withdraws and Asia is left to its own devices. These changes are due to Tennant's efforts to create a politically correct version of the story. In spite of his efforts of ideological decolonisation, *Anna and the King* was censored in Thailand; the authorities did not evaluate the production as politically and ideologically unproblematic. So why did the producers, the director, and the scriptwriter fail in their attempt to de-imperialise the 1956 "original"? In which respects is the remake different from *The King and I*? *Anna and the King* narrates almost the same story as the original film: Anna Leonowens, the widow of a British colonel, accepts the offer to teach at the court of Siam; she travels to Siam - wearing a crinoline that is less voluminous than the one in *The King and I* - in order to teach the heir to the throne, but soon she is surrounded by a crowd of potential pupils - the dozens of children that King Mongkut has with his various wives. Like her predecessor, Anna in the 1999 version falls in love with the Siamese monarch, again a banquet takes place and again Tuptim, one of Mongkut's wives, is desolate because she is in love with another man. Yet, while in *The King and I* Tuptim's beloved drowns in a river, in *Anna and the King* the lovers Tuptim and Balat are both publicly executed. While the musical film does not aim at a detailed depiction of the socio-political context of Siam in the 1860s, Tennant's version intends to narrate not only the private tale of the king's and the teacher's developing friendship, but also a political story: it depicts a general's attempt to overthrow the king and kill all the heirs to the throne. General Alak refuses any co-operation with imperialist states of the kind Mongkut practices; his revolt aims at maintaining Siam's sovereignty. The revolt fails; Mongkut succeeds in deceiving his enemy while Anna and her son Louis succeed in simulating the British Army's advance. Anna has Louis play the British forces' signal of attack on his dead father's trumpet and has fake fireworks ignited. The revolutionaries are deceived and flee. Thus Siam is saved through masquerade and mimicry practised by the colonial and imperialist "assistants" of Mongkut. By means of cunning warfare and intrigue a small British boy and his mother are able to outwit well-trained Asian military personnel. This is how deficient the racial other, the Siamese, are conceptualised: outwitting Asians is child's play.

15 In contrast to *The King and I*, Anna in Tennant's film does not remain in Siam but returns to England. As science does not seem to offer a solution to the "impossible" romance, she has to go expressing her grief on her last evening with the Siamese king:

Anna: I would just like to know why, if science can explain the mystery of something as beautiful as music, it is unable to posit a solution for a king and a schoolteacher.
King Mongkut: The manner in which people might understand such new possibilities is, I'm afraid, a process of evolution.

16 King Mongkut accepts her decision ("Home. This is good, Mem. Very good for Louis as well."), despite the pain it causes him: "Until now, Madam Leonowens, I did not understand the supposition man could be satisfied with only one woman." Mongkut and Anna dance with each other for the last time, closely watched by crown prince Chulalongkorn. Later, in voice-over the adult Chulalongkorn reasons:

I was only a boy, but the image of my father holding the woman he loved for the last time has remained with me throughout the years. It is always surprising how small a part of life is taken up by meaningful moments. Most of them are over before they start, although they cast a light on the future and make the person who originated them unforgettable. Anna had shined such a light on Siam.

This echoes the film's opening on Chulalongkorn's voice-over:

She was the first Englishwoman I had ever met. And it seemed to me she knew more about the world than anyone. But it was a world Siam was afraid would consume them. The monsoon winds had whispered her arrival like a coming storm. Some welcomed the rain, but others feared a raging flood. Still she came, unaware of the suspicion that preceded her. But it wasn't until years later that I began to appreciate how brave she was and how alone she must have felt. An Englishwoman. The first I'd ever met.

17 The "framing" technique reveals the circular structure of the film, the beginning and the ending of the film suggesting memory as a structuring device. Chulalongkorn, now King of Siam, recalls his childhood, the situation at court, and the British teacher's stay. This reconstruction of the past through memories, moreover, is rarely thematised throughout the film's traditional "authorial" narration, but only hinted at in those shots which reveal the young crown prince as an observer while we as spectators sometimes watch him watching.

18 The film thus operates on a structural adaptation of the "primal scene": the king's son watches his father and his motherly teacher - the woman his father loves - when they meet, following their disagreements as well as their waltzes. This construction of the gaze of the crown prince secretly watching his "parents" from a gallery eroticises the scene observed, similarly as to the phallic gaze constituting the introductory sequences of *The King and I*. By means of the choreography of the gaze, the waltz turns into an analogon to the sexual act.

19 In contrast to the couple of the 1956 version, Yul Brynner and Deborah Kerr, Yun Fat and Jodie Foster do not dance a polka but a waltz. Thus the spectator is presented with a dance in three-quarter rhythm that had come into existence in late eighteenth century Austria and that - at least according to the "mythology" of the waltz - became popular as a "bourgeois" dance against strong resistance that the Austrian court mustered against it after the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Anna and the king thus engage in a traditionally "anti-courtly" dance, the dancers whirling around in a tight embrace. By their spinning movement the distinct outlines of the world seem to dissolve, "isolating" the dancing couple dedicated only to the moment from its "shadowy" environment. Moreover, the waltz not only traditionally has "anti-court" and "pro-bourgeois" connotations, but sets into motion (gender-) positions as the dancers circle around each other in a blissful daze. By the end of the film, at the very latest, the polygamous harem owner King Mongkut is converted to monogamy: he finally comes to believe in the unique romantic love (a concept which apart from the concept of "being scientific" talked about and applauded in *Anna and the King*, seems to be Britain's main export). However, Mongkut is not allowed to enact what he now deems right - the love towards one woman, who is a British citizen. According to the script, the king is prohibited this consummation of this love by Siamese tradition which he has to respect even if he personally suffers from it, as the king has to rule over a harem and is not allowed to relate only to one woman. The unequal couple is not granted the fulfilment of their love. Thus the number of instances of physical contact between them is severely limited - the king once puts his hand on Anna's back when they dance and once touches her cheek; not even the usual film kiss is permitted in this mixed-race relationship.

The Prohibition of Physical Contact and the Containment of Hybridity: White Woman and Yellow King

20 Tennant's film not only narrates the difficult relationship between coloniser and colonised, between England and Asia, and the prohibition of physical contact between white women and yellow men in the nineteenth century, but *Anna and the King* itself appears to phantasmagorically refer to the prohibition of such physical contact violating all the rules of a Hollywood love story. Of course, the Hollywood love story, especially the melodrama, often stages such prohibitions of bodily contact, for example with regard to class (socially "impossible" relationships), race (mixed-race relationships), and gender (homosexuality). Melodrama, however, as a rule, shows how the lovers do overcome all obstacles and "do touch" - and subsequently have to pay the price of social sanctions for their transgression.

Anna and the King does not even allow the king and the teacher to really get together. Although the film propagates a meeting of cultures (i.e. the reorganisation of Asia according to Western concepts of modernisation), physical contact between the British-Siamese lovers is declared impossible. The teacher and her king are obliged to live chastely according to both Christian virtues and Buddhist wisdom ("Life is suffering"). *Anna and the King* upholds the prohibition of physical contact, although, on closer examination of the protagonists, the British woman appears less "British" and the Asian man less "Asian." At the beginning of the film, the audience learns from Louis that British Anna only lived in England as a little girl and has spent far more time in Asia than in the country of her birth. Her son Louis has never been to England at all. When Louis alerts his mother to her precarious relationship to England, she responds firmly that the "other place" where she used to live was also British: "India is British." When Anna states this, her Indian servants primarily are responsible for upkeeping a British household and upholding British manners and a British lifestyle, glance at each other meaningfully. King Mongkut's attitude towards Siam is as complex as Anna's Britishness and her relationship to England are precarious. As the king, he represents and embodies his country. Yet at the same time he has a critical, "Western", "enlightened" attitude towards Siamese traditions such as slavery. He speaks English and teaches the language to his favourite daughter. He is enthusiastic about occidental science and interested in Western technical devices; he even wears glasses. The glasses reflect the hybridisations within *Anna and the King*. They are presented as a marker of imported Western culture - however, glasses were not invented in Europe but in Asia.⁸

21 Thus Occident and Orient, embodied by the teacher and the king respectively, do not clash without being mediated. To the British woman, the Orient has become a second - or rather her true - home, while the Siamese king, enthusiastic about modernisation, is guided by Western ideas. Thus the European woman is less European than she herself assumes, whereas the Asian man adheres to European ideas and ideals. Closer examination reveals that the ostensibly stark contrast between the protagonists is less profound than it appears at first sight. Both the teacher and the king live in in-between spaces; their biographies are characterised by hybridity and dubious doublings: the English woman has not been to England for decades, while the "barbaric king" could be awarded a prize for his humanitarian efforts. Considering these overlappings between Orient and Occident, the "apartheid" to which the script subjects both protagonists appears inappropriate; in fact it seems to be applied as an antidote to the obvious hybridisations. As in *The King and I*, in *Anna and the King* the king and the teacher

⁸ The glasses reflect the hybridisations within *Anna and the King*. They are presented as a marker of imported Western culture - however, glasses were not invented in Europe but in Asia.

are prohibited from becoming content lovers. Yet they do not have to suffer a fate as terrible as that of the film's other couple of lovers, Balat and Tuptim.

The Failure of Privation or Crime and Punishment

22 The story of the lovers Tuptim and Balat is presented as a tragic subplot in Tennant's film; in contrast to the couple from the main plot they are guilty of transgression. Tuptim is given to the king by her family against her will; she arrives at the palace at the same time as Anna. Although the king and the other women of the harem treat Tuptim well, she is desolate as she loves Balat (and not the king). Balat believes that he can endure life without Tuptim only by dedicating himself to Buddha. Tuptim cannot bear their separation; she shaves her head and disguises herself as a monk in order to be able to be close to her lover. However, she is found out and put to trial together with Balat; both are sentenced to death. The execution scene in which Tuptim and Balat are beheaded simultaneously is partly shot in slow motion. The camera does not show heads fall, but in a highly aestheticised way focuses on drizzles of blood soiling the white flower Tuptim holds in her hand.

23 Parallel shots centre on King Mongkut praying and desperate Anna in her house. The teacher, shocked by the unjust court trial involving torture, had publicly declared in the courtroom that she was going to ask the king for his intervention. The king who claimed that he had indeed intended to interfere, however, told her that her public announcement had rendered this impossible, as it would generate the impression of him as his teacher's puppet (implicitly the Mongkut of the remake thus argues that he does not want to act as puppet - as his predecessor in *The King and I*). Thus the king holds Anna Leonowens responsible for an act of extreme barbarity; it remains questionable whether the film, which aims at highlighting the king's goodness and generosity, actually challenges the positive characterisation of the king. If this were not the case (and this is what seems to happen), the film would serve as just another take on the conceptualisation of Woman (even a woman coming from the West and thus connoting masculinity) as a Pandora's box. Barbarism - always already connoted as feminine as the antithesis of the civilised, the spiritual, and the cultural - could thus be traced back to a woman. The system of cultural ascriptions conceptualising the West as rational, civilised, and masculine along the lines of which *Anna and the King* operates - would thus implode: the central antagonism between a masculine West and a feminine East would be challenged by notions of "masculinity as civilisation" and "femininity as barbarism." The discomfort that a Thai audience experiences about a woman interfering in the king's governmental affairs would then be negotiated in the film itself, which could be interpreted as

an inverted *Iphigenia on Tauris*, presenting a woman who does not prevent and abolish but, on the contrary, instigate and promote barbarity. Barbarism would be marked as constitutively female.

24 The love affair between Tuptim and Balat and the resulting trial turn out to be a crucial test for Anna and the king's relationship. Anna packs her things in order to leave Siam and its cruel king but is moved to stay by the pleas of the prime minister who informs her about the desperate political situation of an impending revolt. The Balat and Tuptim episode, however, not only provides a crucial test for the relationship between the teacher and the king, it also functions as a double that is capable of distracting from their romance disaster. Those who transgress moral standards and legal rules have to die tragically (even if they move our hearts). The bloody death of the subplot's couple can be read as device to make the decision of the "main couple" plausible - to respect the given limits, to enjoy only a few moments of waltzing bliss and to part at the end of the film in spite of all love. The Tuptim and Balat subplot is organised as exactly the kind of love melodrama which the main plot about Anna and the king does not provide, as it is not characterised by the female masochistic disposition constitutive of melodrama and "Women's Film" (see Gledhill). Anna has to suffer from the adversities of life, but is, nevertheless, able to make decisions and appears to be the active, responsible and knowing subject of her own biography. Moreover, *Anna and the King* does not employ the pattern typical of "Women's Film" and melodrama according to which the heroine, already punished and socially ostracised for her love, has to be destroyed by fate. Although the film suggests that it is not easy for the heroine to face the challenges of life in Siam (shown in her repeated violations knowing and unknowing of the social order of the host country), her violations of the conventions are accepted rather than punished severely. Rather than following the genre of love melodrama, the relationship between Anna and Mongkut seems closer to conventions of screwball comedy. The teacher and the king engage in verbal duels: the "clashes of civilisations" and the "lovers' war" are delivered in the style of the 1930s as alternative and as genre shift away from that of the Tuptim and Balat-melodrama.

25 The voice-over framing the film once again emphasises Anna's goodness and her exemplary conduct as well as the deep love between Anna and the king. Even though all of this is also part of the film's action, as the voice-over that shows that *Anna and the King* is reconstructed from memory is revealed as the voice of the adult Chulalongkorn, who, in the meantime, has become king, it is suggested that the Western perspective (clearly linked to the autobiographical writings of Anna Leonowens on which the film is based) is validated by the highest authority of Siam, that is, by "Asia." Possibly, the Thai critics were not so much taken

aback by the fact that Hollywood once more casts its Western-colonial gaze upon Asia but rather by the film's narrative configuration, which makes the "East" validate Anna Leonowens's perspective.⁹ In spite of the scriptwriters' thorough attempts to portray Siam in a fair and politically correct way, these detailed descriptions are undermined by a narrative pattern about the Western enlightenment of Asian darkness (embodied in a schoolteacher) and legitimated by a Thai voice-over. It should be noted, however, that the Thai disapproval of the film is at the same time accompanied by misogyny: the anti-imperialist impetus is complemented by a misogynist one.¹⁰ The Thai students expressing their rage against the Hollywood production in web forums mostly disagreed with the film's suggestion of their mighty and exemplary king Mongkut having accepted advice from a woman of whatever nationality.¹¹ Significantly, however, the misogyny apparent in the Thai reception does transgress national borders. Although the (mostly adolescent) Thai and U.S.-American web forum visitors evaluated *Anna and the King* in widely different ways, there seems to exist a transcultural agreement concerning one particular question: young American men also criticised that Tennant's film promoted a woman as king's consultant.

26 Although *Anna and the King* depicts the clashing of differing cultures (the British visitor keeps misunderstanding Siamese culture; i.e. for example, categorising Siamese politeness as indiscretion), the film emphasises the constancy and universality of human "essentials". The king is a good man - this we learn, at the very latest, when he mourns his young daughter's death, and the impression is reinforced when he finally converts to monogamous romantic love (which he cannot live only because he lives in a "backward" polygamous country). Thus, at the end of the film, Anna has imparted her most important convictions and principles to Siam: that slavery has to be abolished, that prostration violates the dignity of man, and that "real" love is monogamous rather than polygamous. In fact, this third Western "export idea" appears to be the central one: monogamous romantic love becomes the ideological essence of the Hollywood film. At the beginning of the film, Anna is given a house of her own outside the palace. This is very important to her because she wanted

⁹ The film displays critical attitudes towards imperialism as well; thus the crown prince complains about his "imperialist teacher," and General Alak's revolt is an attempt to prevent the imperialist West from influencing Siam. However, both the crown prince and Alak are discredited, as Anna is the best of all teachers, Alak is excessively cruel, and the revolt fails. Thus criticism of imperialism is not only thematised, but also refuted within the film.

¹⁰ Within the film, Thai misogyny is mentioned as well: the crown prince has a fight with Louis because the latter has apologised to his mother. According to the crown prince, a man should never apologise to a woman in Thailand.

¹¹ This discomfort about being reigned by a woman does not mean that Siam has never been ruled by a woman. As early as the seventh century AD, Chama Davis, a woman, was the factual regent over the kingdom of Haripunchai.

to live in her own small palace according to the British proverb "My home is my castle." The final voice-over by the new king Chulalongkorn stresses the film's message: Anna has enlightened Siamese gloom, she has explored the "dark continent" and opened it up to Western ideas. Although she is a woman, she has brought science, enlightenment, and "masculine" rationality to the "female" Orient. Her colonising efforts have been immensely successful; she has carried out military attacks - or rather, their simulations - brilliantly. Although the Western system of cultural ascriptions that classifies Europe as masculine and Asia as feminine is irritated considerably by the gender inversions of *Anna and the King*, Tennant's film holds on to the general axiom that the East has to be civilised (albeit by a woman, who is actually called "Sir" anyway) even more intransigently than Lang's 1956 version. Thus *Anna and the King* succeeds even less in renouncing an imperialist attitude than its predecessor, *The King and I*. Although Tennant's film occasionally shows a cheerful disregard of gender conventions, it does not do so consistently. In the episode on Tuptim and Balat's trial, Anna is held responsible for the escalation of cruelty and barbarity. In this episode, the pattern West-masculine and East-feminine is disturbed by an appeal to those cultural patterns that specify Woman as always already anti-cultural. Such an association of femininity and barbarism does not take place in Lang's film. Throughout *The King and I* "barbarism" appears to be put in inverted commas; it is comically transposed and does not seem dangerous at all. In contrast, slavery and the judicial system in *Anna and the King's* Siam are shockingly cruel - Western intervention, so the film's logic, is desperately needed.

27 In both film adaptations of Leonowens's biography discussed here the intricate nexus of gender and race offers significant insights: the Western woman, representing the Other within the Western cultural system of representation, advances to a representative of the Same as she is confronted with the non-European Other. She comes to embody Western masculine rationality and effectiveness. *The King and I* as well as *Anna and the King* employ traditional Western cultural ascriptions and stereotypes. However, they also demonstrate that clear demarcations remain impossible. Both films expose their protagonists as hybrid, displaced, "split" subjects living in-between cultures. However, the renunciation plots of both *Anna and the King* and *The King and I* aim at containing hybridity: the West (the Westernness of which is diminished by being represented as a woman) and the East (which is Westernised by its male embodiment) are not meant to come together. White woman and yellow king are denied the consummation of their love in both films.

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Josephine Baker: Gendered Ethnicity on a Mainstream Stage

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Abstract:

[M]y point in using discussions of the portrayal of African American and, for instance, Asian American women to support an overall argument of racial fetishism is to point to a politics of resistance. If the white male gaze blurs, paradoxically, Whoopi Goldberg, Josephine Baker and Lucy Liu as 'Asian' dragon lady in *Ally McBeal*, we may do well to combine black feminist thought and Asian American Studies to deconstruct the nature of such a myopic gaze - such will be the aim of this paper.

1 At a time when popular TV series such as *Miami Vice* establish what Renato Rosaldo has called an affirmative action haven of politically correct multiracial casting, it seems almost obsolete to speak of Josephine Baker. Baker posing for photographers in a bubble bath which reveals more than it conceals attests to a racialized gender politics that, in the age of a sexless Whoopi Goldberg running around in her bathrobe, we seem to have safely left behind. Quite to the contrary, however, it could be argued that Goldberg's contemporary sexlessness and Baker's scanty (bubble bath) costume at the beginning of the 20th century converge in what Sau-ling Wong has called the "gendering of ethnicity": race accounts for the ways in which the gendered spectacle is portrayed. As Patricia Hill Collins has argued in her discussion of stereotypes of black women in US popular culture, the tramp may not be all that different from the mammy under the curious - and, as I will argue in this paper - curiously detached white male gaze: "Connecting [both images] is the common theme of Black women's sexuality" (78) - a sexuality that is apparently absent from the mammy image and hypervisible in the black seductress. Moreover, mainstream discourse, in its lumping together of various ethnicities in the generic spectacle of a desirable "black" woman at the same time creates the basis for a women of color coalition which I would like to inscribe here in methodological terms. Rather than to repeat the gesture of "racial lumping," then, my point in using discussions of the portrayal of African American and, for instance, Asian American women to support an overall argument of racial fetishism is to point to a politics of resistance. If the white male gaze blurs, paradoxically, Whoopi Goldberg, Josephine Baker and Lucy Liu as "Asian" dragon lady in *Ally McBeal*, we may do well to combine black feminist thought and Asian American Studies to deconstruct the nature of such a myopic gaze - this will be the aim of my paper. Moreover, my focus will be a transnational one: as the striking resemblance between the articulation of French national homogeneity in Baker's films and highly similar discursive patterns delineated in US American Ethnic Studies theories demonstrate, strategies

of exclusion may transcend national borders. Even as the particular rationales for introducing restrictive immigration policies may differ, the overall thrust may be the same.

2 Both *Zou Zou* (1934) and *Princess Tam Tam* (1936), I will argue, revolve around two fundamental issues which ultimately converge in a single thematic strand: the (il)logical feat which the mainstream accomplishes to ensure the whiteness of the nation-space. As Robert Lee has suggested in the context of anti-Asian sentiment in the United States at the beginning of the 20th century, this allegation of national purity collapsed the nation into the nuclear family: "The family is the primary metaphor of the nation. The idea of Americans as family is the discursive basis for an imagined nationhood" (7). This strategy of upholding racial purity clearly emerges in Baker's films as a gendered one. Miscegenation or racial mixing is stemmed by disavowing white male desire for the black female body: while the black woman as seductress without moral inhibitions threatens the integrity of the nation space, this desire is never mutual. Ironically, however, this very assumption which underlies the filmic discourse of both *Zou Zou* and *Princess Tam Tam* is undermined by the very fact of Josephine Baker's presence on a mainstream screen - a presence based on her success with especially a white male audience. As metadiscourse and filmic content contradict each other, the question is thus precisely this: just what did white men see when they looked at Josephine Baker dance on stage? My focus therefore is not so much on the authority of the white male gaze as it undresses the black female Other as on the ways in which this authority could be said to be fractured. Mainstream discourse resorts to distancing or screening devices in order to create the impression that even when watching a black woman perform on stage, white men are never *really* looking.

3 My conflation between the actor and the role which would parallel, on a literary level, that between the author and the narrator is deliberate: I am interested in the circulation of Josephine Baker herself as an icon of blackness - with all the misogynist and racist implications this entails. In a sense, then, Baker does play herself in *Zou Zou*, a sense in which, crucially enough, the deconstructive potential of the role may inhere. Read in this vein, *Zou Zou* as Josephine Baker would inhabit the cage deconstructively, holding up a mirror to a white audience which is thus being mocked from behind the bars of a gilded cage, in its fetishization of a blackness that does not exist.

4 In this context, I would like to focus on the image of a half-naked Josephine Baker suspended above the stage in a bird cage. This image, I propose, can be used to unravel the signification not only of Baker's films *Zou Zou* and *Princess Tam Tam*, but also Baker's extra-textual reception as a whole. A key image such as the bird cage can thus be decontextualized

from the narrative of *Zou Zou* in which it occurs and can be made to yield more general conclusions about racialist narratives as such. This abstraction is possible, I would stipulate, because Baker's films are part of an overall continuum of racial fetishism which transcends national borders - a transnationalism implied not only through the presence of an African American actress on a French stage. Interestingly, both films self-consciously breach their own fictional frames and signify on, even explicitly comment on, the "real" success of their lead actress, Josephine Baker. The frenetic audiences shown within *Zou Zou* and *Princess Tam Tam* mirror Baker's own audience in movie theaters and stage performances. If the audience constellation is the same within the films as without them, moreover, so is the life-world of the black woman who is their protagonist. The image of a black woman finding herself alone and abandoned in the Western metropolis, a lonesomeness her stardom could not ultimately ameliorate, could also be said to echo Baker's own life-world and physical presence in the West. There is thus a certain sadness about the bird cage precisely because its inmate is never permitted to fully participate in French society. Finally, I will explore the ways in which Baker's eroticism informs the savagery she is made to enact. For her sex appeal is clearly racialized; why else should she be in a cage? The most remarkable task which both films accomplish, then, is their veiling of the white male spectator's *sexual* desire of racial difference. In a logical tour de force, white men are made to seem curiously disinterested as they contemplate a black woman in a bird-feather costume.

***Zou Zou* and the Art of Checking the Light**

5 Josephine Baker's film *Zou Zou* can be read through the image of ethnicity in a gilded cage - an image that in turn sheds light on another key question: the question of whether the presence of ethnicity on the screen or stage of the mainstream is in itself a good sign or whether, on the contrary, its framing neutralizes any subversive potential which this presence could have unleashed. *Zou Zou* revolves around a black girl's displacement in a benevolent but racially homogeneous French society and her unrequited love for the white "brother" with whom she grew up, Jean. At the same time, the film mirrors Baker's own success as a singer, dancer, and stage performer. *Zou Zou*'s becoming a celebrity on a Paris stage echoes Baker's own career.

6 The film opens with Jean and *Zou Zou* performing in a circus. While Jean can subsequently leave the stage, *Zou Zou* is on display to the narrative's very end. Ethnicity is a canary that sings to itself - an image that, crucially enough, disavows the norm's fetishization of it, its spectatorship. There is thus a contrast between the cage itself and the self-

containment, even vanity, which it implies (the canary looks at itself in the mirror) and the positioning of the cage which betrays the obvious: the cage and Josephine Baker in it are the dream image of the norm that is the audience; in this sense, *Zou Zou* becomes yet another minstrel show which the audience performs for itself.¹

7 What is particularly blatant about this disavowal is the projection of white desire onto the black woman as desiring subject - a reversal highly at odds with Baker's discursive frame. The film thus participates in the legacy of slavery and its aftermath, in a blatant disavowal of white rape as a giving in to the allure of blackness. At the heart of this representation is the stereotypical image of "Jezebel," which Collins has described thus:

The image of Jezebel originated under slavery when Black women were portrayed as being [. . .] "sexually aggressive wet nurses" [. . .]. Jezebel's function was to relegate all Black women to the category of sexually aggressive women, thus providing a powerful rationale for the widespread sexual assaults by white men reported by Black slave women. (77)

Even if the tones of this scenario have been muted, the scenario remains: the disavowal of white desire for blackness which has been responsible for confining blackness to its cage to begin with. The integrity and racial homogeneity of the nation space is thus threatened by black female desire. The practice of caging, however, betrays the ambivalence inherent in this assumption: to what extent is the black woman caged for her own good? For while the cage protects the white nation from the savage seductress, it also protects the alleged seductress from white male desire. In this latter scenario, there is an intriguing parallel to the idea of blaming the victim for mainstream racism: anti-immigration legislation, from this disturbing angle, is seen as legal protection as restrictive immigration policy becomes an anti-racist act: those who are not in the country cannot become victims of hate crimes. Similarly, if the Other is kept aloof from mainstream society, there is no danger of her being ravished by whiteness. In neither case is white desire - for a homogeneous nation space, for black female flesh - at fault; the fault is that of the Other's presence.

8 The film starts as it ends; as a freak show of ethnicity. This scenario echoes Vijay Prashad's description of P.T. Barnum's exhibitions or "congresses" at the end of the nineteenth century: "Barnum paraded people from the wide world before a U.S. audience. Whereas the 1874 congress displayed *representatives* of various parts of the world, the 1884 congress portrayed *specimens* of different (and lower) races" (30). What is particularly interesting about the circus or freak show is that it at the same time exhibits a fundamental, "outrageous"

¹This link to minstrelsy is also emphasized by Wendy Martin: "[Baker] rolled her eyes, contorted her face, and swiveled her body in a deliberate parody of the blackface vaudeville routines and the conventions of the Negro minstrel show" (311).

Otherness and neutralizes the potential danger emanating from the "freak" himself/herself. Reading ethnological exhibits of 1930s Berlin, Nancy Nenno observes: "In the case of the 1931 Völkerschau, the twelve African women seemed very foreign indeed. But the threat posed by their difference was mitigated by the ethnographic context of their exhibition, which circumscribed their presence and their meaning" (150). The cage is thus a marker of the Other's freakishness as well as a containment of the threat which this freakishness potentially constitutes - a threat which is both racial and sexual.

9 The only space available for the Other to inhabit, then, is the stage. All Zou Zou has to do is play herself the way the white audience is bound to see her - as a generic blur of blackness; a blur which, I want to argue, echoes Baker's own playing of herself in *Zou Zou*. The film opens with the child Zou Zou contemplating herself in the mirror: we see a black face framed by "exotic" flowers - here too the canary is self-contained. The gaze on blackness is thus twofold as the viewer shares Zou Zou's own perspective; we see what Zou Zou does, or do we? In the cinematic view of Zou Zou's *mirror* image, the spectatorship of the white norm is once again disavowed as Zou Zou is looking at *herself* in the mirror. Once again, the suggestion of the self-containment of ethnicity - a child absorbed in its own blackness - masks or disavows the gaze of the spectator and his whiteness. At the same time, however, the freakishness of race is twisted by the narrative itself: Zou Zou is to be accompanied on stage by her "brother," Jean, whose "difference" remains unexplained: even as Jean's normative presence seems to attenuate the discourse of racist representation, then, his transparency and consequent lack of difference only serves to reify the exoticism of Zou Zou: if anything, the "accident" of race is paraded by a white boy before a white audience.

10 The circus stage and the announcer's suggestion of the mode of reception in which the spectacle is to be viewed, then, create the sense of a *vision* of ethnicity - which of course, Zou Zou both is and is not. Deconstructively, it must clearly be emphasized that Zou Zou is made to enact her own presence as the mainstream conceives of her. On another level, however, this rendering ethnicity as a dream is clearly an epistemic violence that disavows the very real presence - and subjectivity - of the black child on stage. The Other thus exists regardless of the freaks which the mainstream continues to dream up: it deconstructs these dream simulations of ethnicity even as it is made to authenticate them. Once again, *Zou Zou* thus underlines the ambivalence of an Other that is both within and outside of white imagination. Papa Mélé, Jean's and Zou Zou's foster father in the "real life" of the film, announces his

freaks: "Freaks have the right to be delayed. They're not like us. Don't try to understand. Mysteries are not meant to be understood. Where would we be without them?"²

11 The freakishness of the children, and Jean's part in it, then, is precisely their coexistence on stage, a disavowal of the possibility of a coexistence of whiteness and blackness outside of the circus which in turn prefigures the impossibility of interracial desire that will be inscribed as the filmic narrative progresses - the stage as the space of the nation. The following revelation which is at the same time a (fictive) explanation for the *accidental* presence of race in the West (a blatant disavowal of French colonialism), is at once one of the many narratives of the origins of Zou Zou's racial presence. As difference can never originate in Paris, the mainstream has to be told where Zou Zou "came from" for this assumption to be confirmed: interracial desire is thus inscribed as a specter which remains taboo even as the narrative cannot help returning to it. If even the offspring of a Chinese mother and an Indian father turn out to be freaks, what would happen if whiteness were involved in an interracial marriage? This, precisely, is the question the narrative does not ask even as the disturbing possibility continues to hover in the background. White desire for blackness is so incredible as to not even bear mention: this is an outrageousness, however, which is ironically disproved by the very content of a film culminating in the display of a half-naked black woman on a swing in a birdcage. As Zou Zou and Jean enter the stage, Papa Mélé announces: "[H]ere's one of nature's miracles: the two twins . . . born on a Polynesian island . . . Their parents were a Chinese woman and an Indian who didn't want to acknowledge them because their skin had a different color." The narrative proceeds to toy with the question of Zou Zou's and Jean's "real" parentage. While Jean's heritage is no less ambivalent than that of his sister, this ambivalence is not racially marked and is therefore never acknowledged as significant by the plot. Papa Mélé's telling them that they had different fathers does not altogether rule out the possibility of their being half-siblings; the paradox of their being together despite their obvious racial difference remains. It is crucial for the narrative as a whole that the fact of this paradox is never called into doubt; ethnicity can only originate in Polynesia and will always be freakish when displayed in the West.

12 With Jean having grown up to be a sailor and gone to contemplate more foreign spectacles of racial difference, Zou Zou's adulthood begins innocently enough. She mimics the spectacle of performing ethnicity, yet with its sexual undertones safely removed; the spectacle of race, however, remains. Zou Zou is "performing" for a child who exclaims: "Zou Zou, do the clown again!" In a classical example of both a white and a male gaze, Zou Zou's

²I am referring here to the English subtitles from the film itself. This also applies to my quotations from Baker's *Princess Tam Tam* which I will discuss below.

body is dismembered by the camera into fragments which are both themselves unpredictable and which can only make up a "comic" whole. At first, we see only white-shod dancing feet on black legs. Then, in another shot paralleling the circus child decked out in exotic flowers, we once again see Zou Zou in a mirror. Here too, racial difference can be contemplated at a safe remove. The black woman is a natural clown because her childlikeness parallels that of this particular audience. Zou Zou rolls her eyes, screams, and rolls around on the floor. She is alternately a bleating goat, an acrobat, and a singer accompanied by a toy guitar: the playground of race is at once a disavowal or displacement of a white gaze for which the racially different is unthreatening only when relegated to the nonsensical realm of the childlike.

13 In what follows, this childlikeness is mapped onto a romantic, naïve infatuation with whiteness. Zou Zou's romantic obsession with Jean seems all the more inappropriate because it could not be any more unrequited. Moreover, since so far it has remained unresolved whether or not Jean and her are in fact siblings, this infatuation is all the more inappropriate because it is potentially incestuous. Black signification is thus portrayed as seriously deranged precisely because Zou Zou seems to be unaware of this inappropriateness. When Jean is discharged from the navy, Zou Zou rushes to the harbor with the other women to meet the sailors; only *they* are meeting their *lovers*. The discourse of incest masks what the narrative inscribes as the inappropriateness or impossibility of miscegenation. Interestingly, as films like D.W. Griffith's *Broken Blossoms* attest, the idea of incest as a distancing device inscribing the impossibility of white desire for Other-race bodies can be used to prevent both Asian male predators and black seductresses from entering the nation space through the back door of the nuclear family. While in Griffith's film, the character of Cheng Huan pretends to protect young (white) Lucy, his intentions are far from honorable. As Lee puts it, "Notwithstanding the apparent liberalism of the narrative, the melodramatic power of *Broken Blossoms* rests on its play between three powerful taboos: pedophilia, miscegenation, and incest" (129). This apparent liberalism, I would argue, recurs in *Zou Zou*; here too, the ideology of a white nation-space masks as the impossibility of *mutual* desire.

14 Propriety once again resides with the transparent as Zou Zou cannot see what Jean has been aware of all along. The black female subject is once again shown to be freakish. When Zou Zou sees the tattoo on Jean's forearm, she is inappropriately jealous. This is a jealousy which is all the more ironic and prophetic since, given the fact that we see only the outline of a woman's body, the tattoo depicts a *white* woman. Through the narrative's inscription of the threat of incest, then, Zou Zou's sexual allure is effectively neutralized - a neutralization

which is, however, starkly at odds with the cinematic representation of Zou Zou / Baker herself.³ In the figure of Jean and his only "brotherly" love for Zou Zou, the narrative thus inscribes the assumption that, to paraphrase Thomas Jefferson, whiteness never desires the orangutan; it is always the other way around. Zou Zou not only bleats like a goat; to Jean, she is one.

15 Jefferson's ossification of both Native American and African American racial difference occasions a choice which is at the heart of this paper: in the face of the whitestream's consistent disavowal of its desire for ethnicity, it ceases to matter which terms this disavowal is couched in: the black ape and the Polynesian goat hardly require differentiation. For, then as now, it is this meaning of race that keeps the races different: in each case, the Other is never the same. While the whitestream remains the touchstone of both beauty and wisdom that the Indian is told to emulate and the black will always fail to comprehend, the Other's physical difference precedes his social distance:

Are not the fine mixtures of red and white, the expressions of every passion by greater or less suffusions of colour in the one, preferable to that eternal monotony, which reigns in the countenances, that immoveable veil of black which covers all the emotions of the other race? Add to these, flowing hair, a more elegant symmetry of form, their own judgment in favor of the whites, declared by their preference for them, as uniformly as is the preference of the Oranootan [sic] for the black woman over those of his own species.(Jefferson qtd. in Appiah 44)

History, of course, gives lie to Jefferson's account by reminding us of his own experience with blackness - a twist in which his African American shadow family makes his ideological assurance appear in an altogether different light. As Jefferson avows, "My doubts were the results of personal observation" (Appiah 47) - to which Appiah adds: "[one wonders, a little, about the Orangutan here]" (47).

16 Thus, if we kept separate the ideological and the material, the historical treatise and the internet, we would miss a key opportunity to disprove Jefferson's lip service to the separateness of the races. Yet perhaps, his personal observations had less bearing on his ideology than his language admits: he saw only a black woman, after all, not a presence to disrupt his own thoughtlessness. As the racist sees only what he wants to see, what is already preexistent in his mind as perceivable, personal experience is devoid of the power to rectify racist belief. We are left wondering, as in Appiah's ironic insertion into the quote from Jefferson, about the exact nature of Jefferson's experience with orangutans. PR News service announces, on October 20, 2000: "Join Shannon Lanier, the seventh generation grandson of

³Martin underscores the intersection of the racial and the sexual in Baker's performances: "[I]n addition to playing with the trope of the black savage, she used feminine artifice to successfully arouse the sexual appetites of the white male audience" (313).

America's third president, Thomas Jefferson and his enslaved mistress, Sally Hemings, for a lecture and slide presentation based on his recently published book, 'Jefferson's children: the story of one American family.'" It is here that material life calls the bluff of historical representation: the hypocrisy of Jefferson's evocation of the separateness of the races is exposed through the very presence of his racially different grandson. From these considerations, two conflicting views of Josephine Baker emerge - either an entire audience pays to see a half-naked orangutan on stage, or all of French society has been afflicted with sex with animals.

17 The crux of the issue, however, is that the mainstream strives to relegate race to the margins of both society and representation. The shadow family, as in Jefferson's case, becomes the copy of the "legitimate," white family. It is here, I would argue, that the concept of voyeurism recurs: as *ethnic voyeurs*, the shadow family can only watch, clandestinely, the "real" familial affection of original whiteness. Given the ethnicity she embodies Zou Zou is thus doomed to remain a spectator in the heartland of whiteness. Even when she becomes a laundrywoman and thus adds another layer to her infatuation with whiteness through the bleaching of linen, Zou Zou is never really integrated among her colleagues whom she is nevertheless accepted by as an entertainer. While the other laundrywomen discuss the underwear and the bodies of their clients, it is not for Zou Zou to be that intimate with whiteness - a remove which prefigures her actual confinement to the cage of ethnicity and which earns her a comment from her fellow laundrywomen which is at once a stock feature in the scenario of racism: "Zou Zou is so mysterious!"

18 At the same time, Zou Zou's first "appearance" on stage is itself a key moment of white disavowal of its desire for blackness: Jean, who works in the theater as an electrician, asks his "sister" to go up on stage (she is still wearing the low cut dress the women have admired so much) so that he can adjust the light. Jean's disavowal of his desire for Zou Zou is thus also a distancing of his own gaze from that of the audience. Even as he makes Zou Zou go on stage and as his gaze merges with that of the audience watching a black woman swing her legs, this merging is immediately disavowed: he is only checking the lighting. In order for interracial romance to remain an impossibility, the narrative has to position Jean as the only man in the theater who does *not* enjoy what he is seeing.

19 Tragically, Zou Zou is instrumental in precipitating her own doom by wanting to show off Jean to her best friend, Claire: "You'll see how handsome he is!" Despite her obvious attractiveness, then, Zou Zou inhabits the role of the mammy who can facilitate but never interfere with the romance of whiteness with whiteness. Once again, the tragedy of the

situation is undermined by the absurdity of Zou Zou's innocence and naiveté which reinscribes precisely her unawareness of racial taboos. As Jean and Claire are dancing closely in a dance hall that the three of them have gone to, Zou Zou dreamily writes Jean's name on a white tablecloth in red wine.

20 Ironically, the self-fulfilling prophecy of race enacts itself only by accident - a fact through which, I would argue, the narrative only veils what has been inevitable all along: the fact that the place of ethnicity is on stage, or in the zoo. Zou Zou decides to accept the theater director's offer to play the lead in the show only in order to save enough money to pay Jean's lawyer after he has been wrongfully accused of a murder. Ethnicity remains self-sacrificing even in the face of fame. When Zou Zou, who has witnessed the incident, spots the real murderer in a newspaper, she can only think of Jean and leaves in the middle of the show despite the fact that the audience is already ecstatic about her.

21 When Zou Zou goes to meet Jean at the prison entrance (he has been released only because of her testimony), she glimpses Claire from a distance. The ethnic is doomed to fade into the background wherever the glaring center of whiteness is concerned. As she flees from what has been unpredictable only for her, the camera accelerates the course of time, zooming in on her 100th performance. The cage of ethnicity can unfold only as a spectacle that is on constant replay: the mainstream mind can only accommodate so much variation. The open-endedness of culture is to no avail here. Zou Zou remains trapped in a fictional Haiti; an entrapment whose finality reinforces the fact that Martinique, Polynesia and Haiti are all the same to the mainstream.

22 As the curtain falls, we are left with the tragic certainty that Zou Zou will have to remain the colorful canary that she performs on stage. Yet, even as she assures the mainstream that her dearest wish would be to return to where she came from - Haiti -, I want to argue that this resolution remains ambivalent. Even in Zou Zou's performance of the half-naked bird in the cage of French multiculturalism which is itself a legacy of colonialism, the dream of "home" which is a simulation merges with Zou Zou's unbroken love for Jean which defies the stock scenarios of racism. In her own world, Zou Zou remains the center - an ambivalence in which the containment of the cage is both final and provisionalized. The concept of naiveté is turned on its head in a rhetorical move that is consolation regardless of the fact that the mainstream will not understand it. I want to suggest that the narrative of Zou Zou can be retrospectively deconstructed from its closing song - a deconstruction which is also a race-ing of its lyrics. This is a song in which the mainstream shares in the idiocy of a man who, for all her color, cannot see the attractiveness of his own "sister":

ZOU ZOU: For me, there's only one man in Paris, it's him, I can't help it, my heart belongs to him, I think I'm losing my mind he's so dumb, He hasn't understood a thing. Twenty times a day by the dozen Some very passionate gentlemen Offer me the life of a queen If I gave myself to them There's only one who has pleased me He is naughty and doesn't own a cent His stories ... are not very clear I know it well but I don't care He runs after all the girls They are all at his mercy His look undresses them His hands do so as well I do nothing to make him love me He brings happiness to others But he is still mine Because he is in my heart

Despite this deconstructive insight into the mainstream's idiocy, however, the ending of *Zou Zou* ultimately proves the success of the mainstream's desire: not the ravishing of the black bird, but the maintaining of the whiteness of the nation space. The black seductress has ultimately failed in her plan to make whiteness go astray. In this stock scenario, *Zou Zou* is neither innocent nor mere entertainment. Rather, its plot justifies restrictive immigration policies and national homogeneity: the orangutan is bound to be a voyeur of *human* intimacy. The idea of such voyeurism, of course, could not be cynical. Given the suspension of a half-naked black woman in a bird cage on a white stage, who is the voyeur here?

Revues of Whiteness in *Princess Tam Tam*

23 The issue of black female voyeurism of white intimacy recurs in Baker's subsequent film, *Princess Tam Tam* (1936). Ironically, however, fiction is again disproved by reality: for the very film which inscribed the "natural" separateness of the races was made by Baker's own husband, Pepito Abatino. Abatino's film portrays a French writer, Max, who journeys to Africa in search of inspiration and is rewarded for his efforts: inspiration appears in the form of a "native" woman, Alwina, whose childish pranks he proceeds to turn into a bestseller. Like *Zou Zou*, *Princess Tam Tam* has an autobiographical dimension: Max's novel describes Alwina's transformation from a shepard girl to a princess from Parador - the novel within the film as well as the filmic narrative itself echo Baker's own success story.

24 The film seems to highlight the fact that in the very practice of self-critique, the simulation of the racial Other and its external manifestation (Josephine Baker - as Alwina - herself) are inevitably conflated. In the containment of "black" cultural difference by the filmic narrative, the Other no longer poses a threat to her mirror image created by the norm itself. Instead, the narrative suggests a fundamental continuity between its invention of Otherness and the Other external to this invention. There is thus a slippage, an undecidability which makes it impossible to pinpoint where the material enactment of ethnicity by the external Other ends and her invention by the mainstream begins. This slippage in *Princess Tam Tam* seems to be part of an overall political agenda. The external Other ceases to be a

threat, then, because she is made to enact in real life what fiction prescribes for her. The truth claim of *Princess Tam Tam* is its conflation of its simulation and the external Other (Josephine Baker) who is made to perform it: authenticity is established not only by the fact that "Alwina" is not represented by a white woman in blackface, but also by an implied continuity between the actual Alwina and the Alwina represented in Max's novel within the filmic narrative. Yet, it is crucial to dismantle this alleged opposition between the two Alwinas which the narrative needs in order to authenticate itself - neither Alwina is real; each is colored, literally, by the racist's perception. As Edward Said has so forcefully argued, the Orientalist is never taught otherwise by the *actual* encounter with the Orient: he sees only what he can conceive of.⁴

25 The narrative of *Princess Tam Tam* seems to dramatize the fact that whiteness does not have a story and must turn to its racial Others for inspiration. According to David Roediger, "'Whiteness describes, from Little Big Horn to Simi Valley, not a culture, but an absence of culture. It is an empty and therefore terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn't . . .'" (Haney López 168). The narrative starts out with Max and his wife Lucie fighting in bed; we become voyeurs of white intimacy even as the narrative will claim that it is by no means about whiteness. This beginning, however, is a sign which sets the stage for what is *not* a story about Tunisia and its inhabitants; in a reversal of the racist gaze, we see only Max himself wherever we look. In the mirror of the racist's imagination, it is the racist we see. Ironically, the filmic narrative parallels the mainstream fear outlined by Roediger that a whole film about two white people in bed together would have been dull - a dullness which it consequently proceeds to mask by pretending to be about its opposite, the fascination of blackness.

26 Not surprisingly, the search for the Other emerges from the self-critique of the norm: the narrator is fed up with himself and the old story of normativity. This is the reason for the fight Max has with his wife; whereas he is fed up with "society", his wife delights in it. In his search for respite and inspiration, Max thinks of going "to the country"; a remove from civilization which, however, as his friend and manager informs him, would not be complete enough. It is at this juncture that self-critique collapses into an invention of ethnicity for the first time. Since for Max, it is civilized society that has become savage, his longing seizes upon a savagery that is more real; the "actual" savage (a simulation to begin with) becomes a

⁴ Said's question is thus not quite a rhetorical one: "It seems a common human failing to prefer the schematic authority of a text to the disorientations of direct encounters with the human. But is this failing constantly present, or are there circumstances that, more than others, make the textual attitude likely to prevail?" (*Orientalism* 93).

mirror image of society that is yet fundamentally different. "Africa" is mirror image and alternative at once. Savagery is quaint only in the jungle. Max has found a solution: "Let's go among the savages. The real savages! Yes, to Africa!" The teleology of the journey suggests that we will now catch a glimpse of the "real" geography of Africa, yet this prediction is doubly undermined in a maze of actuality and simulations; the Africa we encounter is seen through Max's eyes in the first place, even as the narrative inscribes a distinction between the country Max enters and his subsequent representation of it. Moreover, this slippage which masks as distinction is repeated by the filmic representation itself: even as the simulation is authenticated through its filmic location - Tunisia - and the presence of Josephine Baker, what we see is nevertheless what the mainstream wants us to see. There is no actuality here, on both planes; the "simulation" never has a referent (Vizenor 15). As the new locale unfolds, we glimpse Baker's face among cacti and aloe vera plants - a picture puzzle of ethnicity. Blackness blurs into the nature surrounding it; ethnicity *is* the jungle.⁵

27 Not surprisingly, then, the narrative itself revolves around an ethnicity which knows its place. It is here that the paradox emerges: ethnicity is most appropriate in its own home - the "East." Yet, in order for the self-critique of the West to succeed, the importing of ethnicity into Paris must also seem intriguing. What is never questioned, however, is the fundamental displacement of ethnicity in the West. Africa is quaint only in its fundamental difference from the West; in Africa, dirt is never quite as distasteful. Alwina is beautiful to Max precisely in her difference. At the same time, this contemplation of the beauty of an exotic female remains "platonic" from the start as the film introduces a taboo very similar to that of incest in *Zou Zou*. Here, too, interracial desire on the part of the white man is disavowed: Alwina so completely blurs into nature and the sheep she is herding that to desire her would come close to contemplating copulation with a sheep. It is in this context that the ensuing test of civilization becomes precarious; once Alwina is transformed from a wild beast - "one wonders, a little, about the Orangutan here" - to an exotic spectacle decked out in Western clothes, this disavowal of desire and the concomitant evocation of perversion - a penchant for sheep - would cease to apply. The transplanting of ethnicity becomes an experiment by and for the West. In a blatant disavowal of the history of colonialism, the alleged separation between whiteness and its Others, between civilization and manure is reinforced. As white men go slumming in Africa, Alwina is the rose in the manure:

MANAGER: I prefer the perfumed chicks of the Rue de la Paix.

MAX: But nature smells much better!

⁵ For a reading of the concept of savagery with regard to Baker's elusive presence, see Wendy Martin's "'Remembering the Jungle': Josephine Baker and Modernist Parody."

MANAGER: Manure is nature!

MAX: Well? Lovely roses grow in manure. . . . They'll be even lovelier once I transplant them.

WHITE AMATEUR GARDENER: African flowers are not meant for the parlor.

28 Interestingly, it is at this point that the narrative introduces Alwina's counterpart in the West. While Max is amusing himself, quite platonically, with this child of nature, his wife has made the acquaintance of the Maharajah of Datane. His very presence, which is, however, undermined by the fact that the Maharajah is impersonated by a white actor, an Indian in blackface, so to speak, seems to belie the argument which the narrative has reiterated so far - that ethnicity, in the West, will always be displaced. The Maharajah, as Alwina's male equivalent, adds a twist to the filmic perception of ethnicity which is clearly gendered: where Alwina is childish and thus ultimately sexless, the Maharajah combines cosmopolitan allure with a knowing masculinity that is associated with the predatoriness of ethnicity. The civilized veneer cannot quite make us forget our knowledge of the Orient: we know how they treat their women. *Princess Tam Tam* thus introduces the idea of an "Asiatic" or "Yellow Peril" with South Asian flavor: crucially, however, the idea of racial pollution is at the same time a masculinist one - the Asiatic predator as potential rapist. As Gina Marchetti has observed with regard to Hollywood cinema, "rape or the threat of rape of a Caucasian woman by an Asian man is the narrative pattern of the Yellow Peril as it is portrayed by [mainstream film]" (10). Even as the Maharajah thus appears sexually threatening, however, his appeal is ultimately contained in the same disavowal of interracial desire which Lucie shares with her husband. Like *Zou Zou*, the narrative makes it very clear that while it is inevitable that ethnicity will be infatuated with the superior beauty of whiteness, whiteness never desires its racial Others. Lucie toys with the Maharajah's desire for her only as a means to an end which continues to be the desire of whiteness. Ultimately, both the Maharajah and Alwina are ethnic pawns in a sexual game whiteness plays with itself.

29 The orangutan is never obsolete as Alwina's ethnicity, for Max, serves two purposes at once: to prove the superiority of whiteness by making Alwina fall for him, and to make his wife as jealous as she makes him by associating with the Maharajah. The question Max poses is paradigmatic: can ethnicity be civilized? The Other is thus subjected to a lab test of culture: "It intrigues me. I'd love to listen to her reactions." At this very point, Alwina's behavior seems to reflect negatively on the very possibility of success of this experiment: we see her chasing an ape up a tree. White voyeurism of a difference that is both racial and cultural is thus masked, from the very beginning, as an altruistic and culturally enlightened experiment which is alleged to be for the benefit of the Other, not the white norm. The white man's

burden has been lightened as the experiment promises to be manageable in its scope: it is clear that once Max has finished his novel, he will return to where he belongs. The Orient is a flirtation which is all the more charming because the experiment will always work: the outcome is predetermined because the racial subject is bound to prove its difference. The test cannot fail precisely because ethnicity is known to be unpredictable to begin with; any outcome will be in keeping with our simulations of the Other.

30 At the same time, another element has to be introduced in which the narrative once again metaphorizes Baker's presence itself. As a mere clown, ethnicity is never childish enough. As Andrea Barnwell has argued, what accounted for Baker's phenomenal success was precisely her mixture of childishness and sexual savagery (cf. 85). In the recipe of ethnic success in and for the West, Max introduces the final link: "I'll pretend to be in love with her. We'll see. She's smart.[...] An interracial story [...]. It could be a contemporary novel." The narrative thus anticipates contemporary multiculturalism by emphasizing the fact that a novel about whiteness desiring whiteness would be predictably dull. Once again, there is thus a slippage between whiteness not having a story and its telling of the same old story *through* its racial Others. What is even more crucial, however, is that in this scenario of both catering to the audience's expectation for juiciness and the "ingredients" of interracial romance, Max blurs into Jean checking the light in *Zou Zou*. By *pretending* to be in love with Alwina, he can enact and disavow his desire for the racial Other at the same time. In both films, then, the narrative enacts a white male gaze that is at once voyeuristic and neutral. In any case, whiteness is only testing the light - an argument which would seem to be disproved by enthusiastic French audiences who could not possibly have come to see the show for the same reason.

31 Even as Max is about to turn Alwina into plain sameness in the act of civilizing her, his wife is being initiated into the pleasures of difference. Her head tilted up to her Maharajah in fascination, she seems to betray the fact that the claim that ethnicity is always infatuated with whiteness, never the other way around, may in fact be false. Even as he is obviously quite at ease in the West, the Maharajah conforms to the script of Orientality through his longing for his origins; a place he is happy to invoke for the enjoyment of the plain. Even when he is most at home with Western customs, the Oriental himself reiterates the sadness of his displacement from "home." The Maharajah remains a cultural informant; the Other's stories are never about Paris. At the same time, his account sheds an ironic light on Max's civilizing mission in the Orient which is about to begin: "The Orient is admirable. Everyone lives naturally. You call us 'savages.' But the poorest among us has more independence than

you'd imagine." Whiteness likes to tease itself with ethnicity, then, without admitting to its own interracial desire. While for Lucie's women friends it is beyond doubt that the Maharajah is madly in love with Lucie, the possibility that the desire could be mutual never presents itself. The fascinated voyeurism on the part of the women watching Lucie's apparent romance with Indian royalty, the narrative alleges, has nothing to do with their own racial fetishism - and is additional proof of Max's prediction that interracial romance sells. What emerges is thus an obsession with interracial romance by a whitestream pitying its racial Others for their incurable infatuation with whiteness. Desire is never about "us": even where indications of this white desire for blackness surface, thus betraying the instability of the discourse of disavowal, they immediately have to be contained. A Maharajah, in the West, is never himself but a token of cultural difference and its fascinating displacement: Lucie could not have possibly desired the Maharajah for what he is. Instead, ethnicity has to be functionalized in order to veil the real reason for the whitestream's interaction with it: regardless of whether Lucie is fascinated by the Maharajah's riches or uses him to win back her husband, the functionalizing remains: again, the West is only checking the light. The Maharajah enters the stage not as a figure in its own right but as the mere tease of ethnicity, complete with pearls and elephants:

WOMAN # 1: He has acquired a huge fortune. And pearls! Even puts them on his elephants.

He doesn't know his own wealth!

WOMAN # 2: If [Max] knew his wife is flirting with the Maharajah!

WOMAN # 3: It's beyond flirting!

WOMAN # 2: Why not? The Maharajah is charming.

WOMAN # 3: You mean he's rich!

Interracial romance thus remains a spectacle with which whiteness entertains itself: Lucie's interaction with the Maharajah must be public for everyone's enjoyment to unfold. With the whole party watching, the Maharajah bends over to kiss Lucie's hand as shadow picture - a tableau or façade of interracial desire which is *staged* in two interconnected senses: the Oriental's alleged desire for Lucie is functionalized in her plan to make her husband jealous; and its staging has to be public in order for this plan to work. With the whole of society looking on, the spectacle is bound to reach Max's ears even in a remote corner of Africa. The place of ethnicity, once again, is on stage; and once again, it is framed by the Western discourse containing the difference. The shadow picture strips the Maharajah of his features; he becomes a generic threat to a whiteness which teases him on. The Maharajah, for all the narrative reiterations of his animal predatoriness, is thus an ethnic pawn Lucie has on a string. And the reason for the puppet theater of ethnicity is never the whitestream's own interracial

desire. In this very scenario, Lucie's attitude towards the Maharajah is mirrored by Max's own pet experiment. Here too, desire is staged to urge ethnicity on:

ALWINA: Why do you say you love me?

MAX: Because I feel something for you. I enjoy being with you. And you?

ALWINA: Me? I think you're nice.

MAX: Are you moved by me?

ALWINA: What does "moved" mean? . . . What's it like to feel confused?

MAX: Your heart beats very fast.

ALWINA [FEELS HER HEART]: Well, then I'm confused.

The desire that is exposed is thus always that of the Other; the Other as a sample of cultural difference can be studied, thus rendering voyeurism devoid of the sexual implication of the norm.

32 There is a slippage, nevertheless, in which Max almost seems to betray the fact that interracial desire may in fact be mutual: while before it was the fate of the racially Other to be moved by whiteness, Max's language slips even as this slippage is immediately contained: he too is moved by Alwina - yet only as he would be by a native animal. Once again, Jefferson's orangutan and the film's sheep conspire to establish the taboo of an interracial desire that is mutual. Max is not perverse: "That little animal moves me; she's so naïve."

33 Max's experiment culminates, then, in the act of displacement: at the completion of his civilizing mission of Alwina, the object of the experiment is taken to Europe. Here too, normative discourse remains ambivalent: Alwina is taken to Paris both as a freak of nature (racial difference) and a *civilized* freak. The veneer of civilization is constantly at risk of being disrupted by the savagery it can only conceal, never eradicate. Alwina as a *civilized* woman can only be *paraded* before a Parisian audience because her race ensures that her civilization will never be complete. To match the Maharajah, Alwina is presented as the "Princess of Parador." As Max's friend and manager puts it: "I've duped [Lucie]. Tit for tat. She and her Maharajah! I gave her the Princess with royal blood."

34 This completion is sabotaged, however, by Max's by now jealous wife who masterminds an experiment of her own. The party which Lucie persuades the Maharajah to put on becomes the ultimate test of ethnicity and of the ultimate success of the civilizing mission. Once again, it becomes obvious that this mission is never about the Other, but rather about what the norm wants to prove to itself. Yet, as even the failure of the experiment could be blamed on the ultimate inassimilability of Other races, the experiment, for the norm, becomes a situation in which it will always win. Even so, Max is nervous and tells his friend: "Watch the princess carefully. If she makes one mistake, we're sunk. I want all of society prostrate at her feet." Max's concern, however, is hardly about the spectacle itself. Rather, the

white norm continues to define itself against the backdrop of ethnicity. Just as Lucie's chastity, for all her flirting with Indianness, gains shape against the vulgarity of the "black slut," Max's worries about the princess's success are far from altruistic: "My wife will be jealous and I'll say, 'Off to the conjugal bed.'" Ethnicity is thus a mere turn-on to inspire whiteness in its interaction with its peers. The princess serves a purpose in the West; once this purpose has been fulfilled, she is free to follow the call of her ethnic soul to Haiti. Once again, there is thus a striking contradiction between Baker's enactment in role after role of this call and her continuous presence in Paris. Moreover, her displacement in the West may be not so much a sign of individual sadness but the result of the exclusion by the Western mainstream of its unwanted ethnic Others.

35 Nevertheless, however, Lucie's plan is bound to fail in another instance in which the filmic narrative mirrors the overall reception of Baker herself. When ethnicity indeed shows its true colors, those of savage abandon, the audience loves it. Lucie's scheme is doomed to failure because the audience venerates the primitiveness it has suspected to be beneath the civilized veneer all along. The success of ethnicity *is* its vulgarity; vulgarity is the success, not the failure of ethnicity: in its vulgarity, ethnicity is only being true to itself. The simulation of ethnicity thus creates a situation in which the mainstream always wins and its Other never does: when Max realizes that the failure of the experiment is actually a success, he joins a frenetic audience in applauding the spectacle. Conversely, the Other will be deemed savage regardless of whether she conceals or lives up to her own innate vulgarity. The frenetic applause for Alwina's failure to remain civilized, in turn, mirrors the mainstream reception of Baker herself, as well as the constraints this reception must have been framed by. Lucie's plan is thus premised on the self-fulfilling prophecy of race: give the ethnic a drink and her true colors will show. What is beyond doubt is precisely what these true colors will be. It is at this point that the racializing of gender issues surface once again: civilized dress is only an empty marker for the chaste cult of true womanhood which a black woman can aspire to mimic at best. Her unbridled sexuality is bound to resurface. Alwina's true nature thus takes shape against Lucie's ultimate chastity and conjugal faithfulness. For all her scheming, Lucie ultimately remains on the right path. As Collins notes, "[a]ccording to the cult of true womanhood, 'true' women possessed four cardinal virtues: piety, purity, submissiveness, and domesticity. . . . African-American women encountered a different set of controlling images" (71).

36 The revue that is staged as the highlight of the party is yet another disavowal of the very structures the filmic narrative as a whole is predicated upon. Interestingly, the stage

show is being propelled by a vulgarized or stripped-down replica of the host: a bare-breasted "Indian" with a turban. Once again, the sides are being disavowed as the little Indian is implied to parallel the Maharajah. The simile, however, is flawed: even as the Maharajah propels the party and both the guests and the actors on stage seem to be at his command, he has given the party almost in spite of himself. Instead, he himself is used by Lucie in her scheme to get whiteness back. Just as his mirror image on stage, the Maharajah is and is not in command. The fact that the turbaned Indian on stage seems to physically enable the show by touching a whiteness which then springs into motion, veils the fact that the show, like the narrative of *Princess Tam Tam* itself, is hardly about ethnicity at all. The little Indian holds a crystal ball from which the show unfolds; he beats an (African?) gong for the next act of the show to begin. What this scenario suggests is that it is ethnicity that has whiteness on a string just as the Maharajah's butterfly collection disavows the fact that it is he who is being functionalized by Lucie, not the other way around. Thus, in my reading of the cultural politics of Josephine Baker, I would like to focus on two key images: that of whiteness checking the light and that of ethnicity allegedly having whiteness on a string; images which concur in their allegation of white victimization by ethnicity.

37 In his movement, the turbaned ethnic makes the white women dancers spin. Yet they hardly revolve around ethnicity. Instead, it is whiteness which defines itself against its turbaned Other. The image of the ethnic making whiteness spin is thus devoid of agency: he is a mere springboard for white self-definition just as the Maharajah and Alwina serve only to clarify Max's and Lucie's desire for each other. As the scene shifts, "real" Asian actors appear and, taking their cue from their turbaned fellow, spin white women puppets on plates. As the manager at his table tries to mimic ethnicity, the result is pitiful: "they" simply have rhythm and the innate ability to contort their bodies into every possible shape - an idea which, incidentally, the narrative of *Princess Tam Tam* is about. On a white stage, the Other is happy to transform herself into anything at all: a sheep or a princess. Similarly, the turbaned Indian returns to move white women on a checkerboard; ethnicity is suggested to have whiteness at its beck and call. Yet, just as the Maharajah was never allowed to be a real threat to the purity of white womanhood, this scenario hardly rings true. Even so, I want to argue that the revue does evoke the specter of a threatening masculine ethnicity which the narrative as a whole has sought to dispel: as the Indian on stage puts a white doll on the Asian juggler's plate, what is evoked is the specter of ethnic men toying with a passive female whiteness which they trade among themselves. Even as this image is contained through the entertaining frame of the revue, its intricacy remains.

38 Meanwhile, Alwina is quickly getting drunk, mesmerized by the spectacle of whiteness unfolding on stage. The Indian is faded out and turns into a black drummer who is as bare-chested as the lesser ethnicity he has displaced. Ethnicity homes in on the ultimate blackness of Africa: while Alwina may have betrayed the fact that she is not from Parador by resisting the beckoning of the Indian, the African drummer leaves her powerless. Following what the narrative frames as the call of the jungle, the genetic call of her own true ethnicity, Alwina does what is expected of her: the black fingers on the white drum are mesmerizing even or especially to her. Having run up on stage, Alwina obediently proceeds to enact her ethnicity - a truly multiculturalist spectacle. As she undresses, what we glimpse beneath her golden robe is not - simply - her black skin but a black dress, African style. I would like to read this dress as a moment of truth in the simulation of savagery - to the extent that there can be *any* truth or presence within the simulation. For what Alwina performs is not her true, "ethnic" self but a self-imposed mask of blackness which the audience expects. She exaggerates the difference of her skin color by donning blackface. As Alwina shakes her black body for all to see, the Maharajah smiles and Max cringes as Alwina abandons herself to her race: the prophecy fulfills itself. With the black drummer urging her on, the former princess dances as if possessed - possibly by her own ethnicity. Alwina's face blurs into the drummer's in a veritable *musk* of ethnicity.

39 Alwina's failure, then, is Max's success. As the audience celebrates Alwina, Max rushes off after his jealous wife and finally makes up with her. Ethnicity has served its purpose. The Maharajah knows this and rescues Alwina to his chambers. It is then that he reveals that he has been aware of the experiment all along; the secret he divined was both the truth of Alwina's position and her love for Max. Far from mysterious, the Maharajah turns out to be complicit in the experiment of ethnicity: "I knew your secret that night at the opera. I could have told them who you really are. I enjoyed watching them . . . and watching you . . . Return to your country . . . the sooner the better."

40 The Maharajah proceeds to enact what the mainstream conceives of as the schizophrenia of the hyphenated subject: cultures are said to clash within the displaced Oriental precisely because they will always remain incompatible. A race-ing of the norm is impossible; the Oriental is torn apart by what he cannot bridge: David Palumbo-Liu has discussed the concept of schizophrenia as it has been applied by a white mainstream for what the norm perceives as a split Asian American subjectivity: "Deployed as a diagnosis of cultural and racial duality, racial and cultural 'schizophrenia' is predicated upon an absolutist, nation-based notion of identity, which is put into crisis by migrancy and racial difference"

(198). Accordingly, the Maharajah tells Alwina, "My house has two kinds of windows - Those facing the East [the Orient] and those facing the West [the Occident]. This one faces the West." As he opens the curtains, Alwina, through "Orientially" shaped bars, watches Max and Lucie kiss outside. The ethnic becomes a voyeur of a white romance which she herself has helped enable, just as it was Zou Zou who introduced Claire to Jean.

41 The answer to the question of what white men see when they are not looking is thus perhaps an unexpected one: the white gaze is veiled not only by turning its object into the desiring subject, but by turning this subject into a voyeur of an alternate desire. Through this act of disavowal of white desire for blackness, the black Other becomes a sly and pathetic intruder into the family romance of a white nation. The inappropriateness of this voyeurism ultimately reinscribes, in the euphemism of romance, the ideology of white nationhood. The only conclusion that is left is for the Other to return home and leave whiteness alone: the stereotype of ethnic "pollution" of white space and an *illegitimate* black gaze converge. As Lee observes, "Only when the foreign is present does it become alien. The alien is always out of place, therefore disturbing and dangerous" (3).

42 The ending of *Princess Tam Tam* is entirely predictable along these flawed ideological lines. As there is no place, no romance for ethnicity in the West, the solution is for the ethnic to voluntarily end her sad displacement in the country of the transparent. As the Maharajah opens the window to the East, Alwina calls out to her country of origin, "I'm coming!" It is here that the simulation is revealed as fiction; the norm has masterminded not just the tragedy of Eastern displacement in the West, but also its resolution. Max reads from his finished novel: "I'm coming, and the smoke billows up." We are back in Africa as the "real" Alwina re-enters the scene. For once, however, the whitestream doubts the representativeness of its fantasies. Max's friend tells the author: "If Alwina had really gone to Europe, it might have happened differently." Yet, at this very juncture, Alwina is quick to assure the skeptic of the unfoundedness of his self-doubts: ever herself, Alwina slurps a coconut - her stomach not yet having been civilized - and proves that if she had really gone to Europe, everything would have unfolded exactly as Max predicted it: "Won't you take me along?"

43 The black woman thus willingly enacts a white man's fantasy of her - both as the object of his desire and, paradoxically, as a voyeur of white romance which proves that the former desire is nonexistent. Josephine Baker is there to be looked at but not seen. In fact, the theater has been empty all along; or alternatively, the audience came to watch white people kiss, never minding the birdcage suspended above them.

44 The idea of the removal of the ethnic voyeur from a white nation space, then, is resolved somewhat unexpectedly in both *Zou Zou* and *Princess Tam Tam*: the black Other is relegated to the space of entertainment which is always at a remove from the real. It is at this point, however, that the resolution is fractured from within; once Zou Zou/Josephine Baker leaves the stage, she will be a black woman living in Paris. There emerges a clash between the national need or desire for ethnic labor and the will to keep the nation-space racially "pure" which is incompatible with this desire. Even as the form of Baker's work differs significantly, of course, from the turn-of-the-century Chinese domestic laborer, the ensuing paradox is the same - as is the accompanying mixture of innocence and sexual threat in mainstream imagination. According to Lee,

on the one hand, the Chinese were indispensable as domestic labor; on the other, they represented a threat of racial pollution within the household. A representation of the Oriental as both seductively childlike and threateningly sexual allowed for both sympathy and repulsion. (10)

In this very instance, moreover, Baker uncannily prefigures, an entire century ago, contemporary Indian green card holders about whom Vijay Prashad has said, "the United States wants these workers for their labor, but certainly not for the lives they must import as well" (71).

45 As these considerations imply, the presence of Josephine Baker may be far from obsolete: what emerges, rather, is the idea that the desire for national homogeneity transcends both national and chronological borders. Then as now, the economic clashes with the cultural; "our" need for ethnic entertainment, food and - less visible - unskilled labor may contradict calls for more restrictive and culturally vigilant immigration policies. It is at this juncture also, however, that the cultural may give the economic its cue: if French immigration policies had been harsher at the time, not only a French audience would have been deprived of the solace of seeing Josephine Baker dancing, singing about Haiti.

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Nineteenth-Century Narratees: Race, Gender, and (National) Identity in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin and Dred* and George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*

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Abstract:

George Eliot's inquiry into Jewishness as racial origin in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), was motivated by the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's exploration of the subject of race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and *Dred* (1856). Eliot's continued interest in how individual and social identity is constituted made her go beyond Stowe's considerations of race and (national) identity and focus on the teachings of Jewish Kabbalah¹ in *Daniel Deronda*. Her investigation of the ancient Jewish faith caused her to incorporate into her novel a very interesting meditation on identity that explores the identity constituting power of the socio-biological determinants of "race" or (homo)eroticism; this fascinating aspect of *Daniel Deronda* will be discussed in the second part of my paper.

Constructing "Race"

1 George Eliot's inquiry into Jewishness as racial origin in her last novel, *Daniel Deronda* (1876), was motivated by the American writer Harriet Beecher Stowe's exploration of the subject of race in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) and *Dred* (1856). Eliot's continued interest in how individual and social identity is constituted made her go beyond Stowe's considerations of race and (national) identity and focus on the teachings of Jewish Kabbalah¹ in *Daniel Deronda*. Her investigation of the ancient Jewish faith caused her to incorporate into her novel a very interesting meditation on identity that explores the identity constituting power of the socio-biological determinants of "race" or (homo)eroticism; this fascinating aspect of *Daniel Deronda* will be discussed in the second part of my paper.

2 Throughout *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Stowe, like Eliot after her in *Daniel Deronda*, investigates the meaning of otherness as racial, sexual, cultural and religious difference. While she never takes a definite essentialist position on racial difference, her description of her black characters as mostly childlike together with her persistent linkage of superior intelligence (such as George Harris's) with lighter skin color suggests that she viewed blacks as evolutionary and culturally less developed. Yet because it was her life's aim to abolish the enslavement of human beings, she nevertheless actively tried to debunk the stereotypical

¹According to Harold Bloom, "'Kabbalah' has been, since about the year 1200, the popularly accepted word for Jewish esoteric teachings concerning God and everything God created" (15). Gershom Scholem, in *On the Kabbalah and Its Symbolism*, points out that Kabbalah first "surfaced" in twelfth-century France (it remained a vital form of Judaism until the seventeenth century) and reached its zenith in thirteenth century Spain with the publication of the *Zohar*, the kabbalists' holy book, by Rabbi Moses de Leon's (see 89).

presentation of Africans as naturally savage and brutal by endowing them with the best "white qualities" such as "natural religiousness" and motherliness.

3 In writing *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot shared some of the same concerns. Like Stowe, she addresses the subject of racial otherness and considers the consequences of race mixing. To stress the romantic element that she apparently also deemed a necessary ingredient in writing about racial strife, Eliot borrowed a number of ideas from Stowe for her own novel about race. With her character Mordecai, who resembles Stowe's "race prophet" Dred, she introduces a Jewish prophet who hands down ancient kabbalistic wisdom and prophesies the founding of a Zionist state. George Eliot explained her rationale for writing a novel about Jews in one of her letters to Stowe: she meant to work towards the rectification of a racial wrong by "treat[ing] Jews with such sympathy and understanding as my nature and knowledge could attain to" because she felt that "towards the Hebrews we western [sic] people who have been reared in Christianity, have a peculiar debt and, whether we acknowledge it or not, a peculiar thoroughness of fellowship in religious and moral sentiment" (*George Eliot Letters* VI 301-02).

4 Harriet Beecher Stowe's aims in writing *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* also went much beyond the romancer's interest in writing an engaging story about racial strife and the lives and customs of black people. In her anti-slavery novels the political purpose of abolishing slavery takes precedence over any aesthetic considerations; for Stowe the liberation of African American slaves was absolutely necessary on religious grounds since she viewed slavery as a dangerous impediment to the advent of the millennium which would precede Christ's second coming (see Westra 156). The subject of race therefore always ties in with religion in Stowe's writing.

5 Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*, like Stowe's novels, also serves a purpose that combines religion and politics. While *Uncle Tom's Cabin* proposes both to solve America's slavery problem and to further millennialism in America by relocating free blacks to Liberia, *Daniel Deronda* advocates the establishment of a Jewish nation in Palestine. Beyond these obvious parallels, there are quite a few other similarities in Stowe's and Eliot's thematic conceptions and strategies of characterization. In *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot evidently follows Stowe's lead in strategically feminizing some of her male protagonists as well as stressing the "natural religiousness" of her "racially other" protagonists. Mordecai, Daniel's spiritual leader, adheres to an old form of religious faith like Stowe's *Dred*. And *Daniel Deronda*, whom one commentator describes as "Jesus the Jew [with] the manners of a nineteenth-century Englishman" (Cave xxxii), is very much like Stowe's feminized black males, the Christ-like

Uncle Tom and the maternal Tiff, in that he likes to console young women in distress by talking religion and ethics with them. By turning Daniel into a "stereotypical Victorian heroine" - to borrow Elizabeth Ammons's description of Tom (167) - Eliot makes her Jewish main hero, Daniel, a harmless, "normal" person much in the same way in which Stowe automatically forecloses the possibility that Tom might be viewed as a savage native male. "Victorian heroines" simply cannot be equated either with stereotypically "savage black males" prone to violence and rape or with "swarthy, cunning, unsavory Jewish pawnbrokers." But Daniel also has something in common with the mulatto George Harris, whose masculinity and initial rebelliousness, according to Stowe, stem from his white father. George is deprived of his birthright because he is the illegitimate black son of a white man; he seeks and finds a racial identity by becoming one of the founders of a free black nation in Liberia. Daniel, who has been deprived of his Jewish birthright, establishes his personal identity as racial identity and becomes the co-founder of a Zionist state.

6 Through the incorporation of this nationalist plot, *Daniel Deronda* ends on a similar note as *Uncle Tom's Cabin*: those who are racially other leave the West out of their own volition and decide to move to other countries. Nearly all of the surviving African American characters from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* move to the paradisiacal Liberia, whereas Daniel Deronda and his wife Mirah emigrate to Palestine in order to help establish a Jewish colony. Incidentally, these endings which propose emigration of the "other race" have been received quite differently by Stowe's and by Eliot's public; Jewish commentators welcomed George Eliot's support of the foundation of a Jewish state (see Lewis 203), whereas at least some of Stowe's black contemporaries did not appreciate her possible hint that Africans should live in Africa (see Yarborough 69).

7 Stowe's presentation of blacks drew immediate protest and thus established a long tradition of criticizing Stowe for her portrayal of African Americans as racially inferior. From the publication of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* on it has been obvious to critics that Stowe, in spite of her commitment to the abolition of slavery and in spite of her professed sympathy for blacks, actively promoted racial stereotypes. In his landmark article "Strategies of Black Characterization in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the Early Afro-American Novel," Richard Yarborough has meticulously listed aspects of Stowe's characterization of blacks that have met with critical disapproval - from her tendency to endow mulatto characters with more intelligence than pure black ones over her use of "comical darky" figures to her annoying presentation of little black children "mopping and moving and grinning all between railings, and tumbling over the kitchen floor" (UTC 353). A tradition of criticizing Stowe for what

appears to be a racist presentation of blacks was established early on. As Yarborough points out, black male commentators immediately noticed that Tom seems to lack masculine virtues: "To blacks like Allen and George T. Downing, Harris is 'the only one that really betrays any other than the subservient, submissive, Uncle Tom spirit, which has been the cause of much of the disrespect felt for the colored man'" (69).

8 The fact that twentieth-century critics were usually somewhat put off by Stowe's conviction that there are essential racial characteristics² can be explained by changes in attitudes towards race that have taken place since the mid-nineteenth century. Nineteenth-century race theory, whose views influenced popular attitudes towards race, usually held the belief that there are differences between races, that there is a gradation from "lower" to "higher" races, and that racial differences are innate and essential. During the first half of the nineteenth century, scientific opinion on race actually experienced a paradigm shift which caused at least some scientists to forgo the assumption of a monogenetic human origin in favor of a polygenetic one. Polygenetic theories maintained that racial difference originated in the separate creation of different human species. Liberal late-twentieth century scientific theories about race, however, having of course long dismissed these ideas, usually proceed from the hypothesis that if there are any differences between races - other than obvious morphological differences - these differences are culturally constructed.

9 In order not to contradict the Bible's version of human creation, Stowe, as a devout Christian, had to side with monogenetic race theory, which argued that blacks and whites were of the same species.³ Miss Ophelia, one of the "religiously correct" characters in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, thus declares Stowe's view "that the Lord made them of one blood with us" and that "they've [also] got immortal souls" (268). But this does not necessarily mean that Stowe thought that America was the best place for African Americans. In keeping with nineteenth-century race theory, she enthusiastically depicts a golden future for Africans in Africa:

If ever Africa shall show an elevated and cultivated race,- and come it must . . . life will awake there with a gorgeousness of which our cold western tribes faintly have conceived. In that far-off mystic land of gold and gems, and spices, and waving palms and wondrous flowers, and miraculous fertility, will awake new forms of art, new styles of splendor; and the negro race, no longer despised and trodden down will, perhaps, show forth some of the latest and most magnificent revelations of human life. (275)

²Rachel Bowlby has argued persuasively in her article "Breakfast in America: Uncle Tom's Cultural Histories" that Stowe, in spite of believing in the effectiveness of education, does not concede that the "raw, or human material" is the same for whites and blacks (200).

³Stowe might have derived her racist view about blacks from lectures delivered in 1837 and 1838 by Alexander Kinmont in Cincinnati, where she lived (see Nuernberg 260).

The flowery language of this passage might at first conceal the dark subtext that runs through it and tries to make palatable the idea that Africans, who are environmentally adapted to the African continent, should live in Africa. Immediate protest against Stowe's colonizationist stance made her revise her politics. According to Yarborough, Stowe "reportedly regretted her decision, explaining that she would end the novel differently if given the opportunity to write it over again" (69).

10 *Dred*, Stowe's second anti-slavery novel, avoided some of the pitfalls of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Instead of sending her black characters to Liberia, Stowe projects integrated utopian communities of black grandparents and "white, black, and foreign" (333) grandchildren in Northern cities and in Canada. Moreover, Stowe's main hero, after whom the novel is named, proves that a purely black character can exhibit masculine valor and intelligence. But with the character of Tiff, who instead of wearing pants sometimes wears two aprons-one in front and one in back-and who constantly worries about what he can do to inculcate religion in the two white children he takes care of, Stowe again portrays a black male as maternal and devoutly religious. In an often quoted passage from *A Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin*, she gives her rationale for such depictions:

The negro race is confessedly more simple, docile, childlike, and affectionate, than other races; and hence the divine graces of love and faith, when in-breathed by the Holy Spirit, find in their natural temperament a more congenial atmosphere. (41)

11 Anthony Appiah notes that this myth of the "naturally religious African" (which is mirrored by Eliot's "naturally religious" Jews) was also common among missionaries who had come back from Africa impressed with the Africans' "natural religiosity" and "the yearning of the native African for a higher religion" (*My Father's House* 23). According to Appiah this supposed naturalness of religious worship among Africans was fabricated in the minds of those who observed the behavior of enslaved African Americans through a "racialized" lens:

It is tempting to see this view as yet another imposition of the exile's distorting vision; in the New World, Christianity had provided the major vehicle of cultural expression for the slaves. It could not be denied them in a Christian country-and it provided them with solace in their "vale of tears," guiding them through "the valley of the shadow." Once committed to racist explanations, it was inevitable that the rich religious lives of New World blacks should be seen as flowing from the nature of the Negro-and thus projected onto the Negro in Africa. (23)

12 For Stowe, this "natural religiosity" always ties in with "childlikeness." Both in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and in *Dred*, individual African Americans and also "the race as a whole" are described as childlike and dependent. In *Dred*, the narrator sermonizes, "The Negro race, with many of the faults of children, unite many of their most amiable qualities in the simplicity and

confidingness with which they yield themselves up in admiration of a superior friend" (46). Her character Clayton, who compares "the Ethiopian race" to "a slow-growing plant," predicts that "if they ever become highly civilized, they will excel in music, dancing, and elocution" (74). Even though, as I think, these descriptions veer away from what Appiah defines as "racialist" views into what one might have to label "racism,"⁴ it is evident that Stowe believed in a certain dynamism within the Great Chain of Being. Apparently, Stowe had internalized the popular belief that lower "races," like children, could actually grow up.

13 In this context, it is interesting to note that throughout her novels dealing with race, Stowe consistently equates women with children and black men—thus, in *Dred* Harry Gordon, Nina's slave brother, never addresses his wife, Lisette, by her first name, but always calls her child instead. From a twenty-first-century point of view one might certainly wonder what kind of self-image Stowe had if she associated women with children. Did she mean to imply that their intelligence was less developed than that of white males? If this was the case one could almost exonerate Stowe from the reproach of racial discrimination because in the light of this conviction, she would put herself on par with black males. But by the same token one could, of course, also argue that Stowe's socialization necessarily made her adopt racist and sexist viewpoints.

14 During the mid-eighties of the twentieth century white female critics—who wanted to save Stowe from the charge of racism—called attention to the fact that by making Tom "soft like a woman," Stowe introduced a matrifocal vision into American literature. Elizabeth Ammons, for example, very astutely identified what Stowe accomplished when she created Tom:

Stowe's Tom is soft. He personifies the motherly Christ. . . . That Tom is not classically masculine—that he does not fight for his life but instead puts the lives of others first, that he refuses to meet violence with violence, that he remains compassionate, giving, and emotional to the end—illustrates Stowe's political genius in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. What better way to inflame the culture against slavery than by characterizing her hero as a stereotypical Victorian heroine: pious, home-centered, self-sacrificing, nonviolent? The characterization does rely on the antebellum stereotype of blacks as loyal, faithful retainers. At the same time, however, it contradicts the widespread racist categorization of blacks as brutes, subhuman creatures incapable of emotions and ideas. (168)

⁴In *In My Father's House: Africa in the Philosophy of Culture* Appiah distinguishes between "racialism," the view "that there are heritable characteristics, possessed by members of our species, which allow us to divide them into a small set of races, in such a way that all the members of these races share certain traits and tendencies with each other that they do not share with members of any other race" (13) and "racism" which justifies the belief that "members of different races differ in respects that warrant the differential treatment-respects, like honesty or courage or intelligence, that are uncontroversially held . . . to be acceptable as a basis for treating people differently" (13).

Stowe expands this strategy of turning black men into harmless "Uncle Toms" by also presenting the spirituality of women in terms of the childlikeness that she attributes to some black men.⁵ Her rather strange position that women have no sexual desire⁶ and that most - or at least some - black men are like women might be viewed as an ingenious move because it allows her to sidestep the issue of sexual desire between white women and black men. Her presentation of Tom evokes the image of an aged avuncular black male, even though at the beginning of her novel her narrator describes him as the father of small children and "a large powerfully-made man" (68). In *Dred*, her character Tiff even becomes "doubly maternal" by virtue of the two aprons he always sports. Stowe's narrator comments the scene of Tiff sleeping between his two white stepchildren-whom he has saved from their licentious alcoholic stepmother-with the words: "How innocent, soft and kind are all of God's works" (170). Sarah Smith Ducksworth and Hortense Spillers, two recent critics who identify themselves as African American, have nevertheless remained unconvinced by Stowe's description of innocent relations between old black men and young white children and discover subtexts of sexual deviance behind Stowe's presentation of Tom as a motherly savior⁷ (a role that, arguably, Daniel Deronda also fulfills in reference to Gwendolen). The fact that contemporary black critics have such powerfully negative reactions to Stowe's depiction of relations between black men and little white girls shows that even in the late twentieth century the intersection of gender and race-which is always an intersection of power relationships as well-still seems to be considered dangerous territory.

15 Stowe's presentation of sexual desire between adult members of different races in terms of violence or transgression has to be understood in light of nineteenth-century race theory, which harbored fears of degeneration and annihilation as the result of the mixing of "higher" and "lower" races and tried to establish whether or not the hybrid progeny of different races-who according to polygenism were also different species-would be infertile

⁵Jan Nederveen Pieterse points out that it was common to associate "lower races" with women and children: "Like Africans and blacks, the Irish have been referred to as 'savages' and likened to 'apes,' to 'women' and to 'children,' just as the Celts were often described as a 'feminine' race, by contrast with the 'masculine' Anglo-Saxons" (214). It seems that through her positive application of the term "childlike" to women and non-white races, Stowe is trying to debunk the negative stereotype.

⁶ Gayle Kimball-who does not acknowledge the discriminatory politics underlying Stowe's views on gender and race-states a bit naively that "Stowe explained that [women] did not have the sexual temptations that men had; HBS took her own case to be the norm, writing to Calvin that she had no sexual passion and therefore felt no jealousy . . ." (72). This position was not altogether uncommon in the nineteenth century, as Barbara Welter describes similar attitudes in her landmark article "The Cult of True Womanhood" (1966).

⁷ Ducksworth poses the question "how could [the nineteenth century reading audience] have read the passages dealing with [Tom and Eva's] mawkish display of affection without a mustard seed of suspicion that Tom, though simple-minded, could have been a dangerous pedophile?" (227). Spillers also allows for an interpretation of Tom as a "sweet tempered, Bible-toting dirty old man under wraps" (46). She, furthermore, views Little Eva's affection for Tom as a manifestation of Stowe's displaced sexual desire for black men (42-43).

like mules. Stowe's narrative strategy clearly entails ruling out any desire between different races; in those cases where she deems it necessary to hint at biracial sexual relations, she presents sexual desire between adult members of different races in terms of violence or transgression. Most of the mixed race characters in Stowe's work indicate that they are either the product of sexual violence perpetrated against their mothers by their white fathers or at least the offspring of a very uneven relationship between a white father and a dependent black mother. If sexual relations between different races seem to be in any way motivated by sexual desire, this desire is marked by transgression rather than love. Thus, in *Dred*, Stowe cites the negative example of Anne's uncle who "lived with a quadroon woman, who was violently tempered, and when angry ferociously cruel and so the servants were constantly passing from the extreme of indulgence to the extreme of cruelty" (47). And in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* she depicts the sexually exploitative relationship between Cassy and Legree which ultimately brings about Legree's doom since Legree does not dare to alienate Cassy completely because of the sexual hold that the memory of their relationship still exerts over him. In Stowe's novels biracial sexual attraction must necessarily lead to repulsion and her ideal of domesticity cannot flourish in mixed race relationships.

16 In spite of Stowe's debatable attitudes about race, there is no doubt that both of her novels are political novels that seek to expose the corruptness of the dominant cultures of the country that they are set in. The same is true for Eliot's *Daniel Deronda*. Yet while Stowe's objective of denouncing slavery in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* is more than obvious, Eliot's purpose of uncovering the decadent aimlessness of the British gentry by juxtaposing it with a healthy Jewish communal alternative that busily devises the building of a Zionist nation is a little more difficult to detect. Eliot very obviously seems to have wanted to present the Jewish race in a sympathetic light in *Daniel Deronda*.⁸ Here, I think, it is only fair to point out that it may well have been easier for Eliot to depict Jews as a cultural asset for England than for Stowe to present Africans as an integral part of American society. To Eliot, Jews must have seemed physically and culturally much less "other" than people of African descent appeared to Stowe. Eliot might have chosen Jews as the particular ethnic group for her fictional

⁸ Eliot had not always been positively inclined towards Jews, as an 1848 letter to John Sibree, written almost thirty years before the publication of *Daniel Deronda*, indicates: "My Gentile nature kicks most resolutely against any assumption of superiority in the Jews Their stock has produced a Moses and a Jesus, but Moses was impregnated with Egyptian philosophy and Jesus is venerated and adored by us only for that wherein he transcended or resisted Judaism. . . . Everything *specifically* Jewish is of a low grade. (*George Eliot Letters* I 246-47)" In the same letter Eliot also voices her "puzzlement" over the black race (one has to concede that Eliot seems to have changed her view of racial alterity considerably in her later years): "The negroes certainly puzzle me—all the other races seem plainly destined to extermination or fusion not excepting even the "Hebrew-Caucasian." But the negroes are too important physiologically and geographically for one to think of their extermination, while the repulsion between them and the other races seems too strong for fusion to take place to a great extent." (246)

evaluation of "race" not only because Jewish people presented the only large racially other group in Britain, but also because they do not necessarily look physically different from English people. By studying a racial minority that can mingle undetectably with the majority, Eliot might have felt better equipped to explore whether or not race is an essential determinant of human behavior or whether it really is only skin-deep.

17 As Jan Nederveen Pieterse observes in his book *White on Black*, there are some similarities between anti-black racism and anti-semitism in spite of the difference in the ability "to pass for white":

[B]oth groups were regarded as non-Christian. The early medieval tripartite division of the world based on Sem, Ham and Japhet, as the ancestors of Asia, Africa and Europe respectively . . . portrayed Semites and Hamites, although both were descendants of Noah, as peoples "external" to Christendom, and later as external to "Europe." The nineteenth-century theory of Aryan race, from the Comte de Gobineau to Houston Stewart Chamberlain, again excluded both "Semites" and "Africans" from the hallowed ground of the Nordic, or Indo-European race. "Africans" were placed at the foot of the human ladder and "Semites" were cast in the role of historical counterparts to the Aryans. (218)

But Pieterse argues that there were also some differences in the ways in which these different racial groups were discriminated against. Jews, unlike blacks, were "envied for their success at money-making" and "hated for their religion and their clannishness" (218). Ivan Hannaford points out that in medieval times the particular branch of Jewish believers who are the ancestors of Mirah and Mordecai in *Daniel Deronda*, namely the Sephardic Spanish Jews, became something like a separate "caste" in Spain because they were discriminated against by both Muslims and Christians and also because they themselves did not want to "lose a distinct identity not as an expression of racial difference but as a passionate desire to preserve a noble spiritual lineage" (106). The trajectory of the Jewish plot of *Daniel Deronda*, and especially its identity-theme, suggests that Eliot's own idea of Jewishness does not rule out such a definition of Jewishness as clan, or caste, which tries to preserve its unique identity. Eliot certainly does not agree with nineteenth-century race theory which defines Jews as a separate, inferior race.

18 Her presentation of Jews in *Daniel Deronda* is very different from Stowe's presentation of blacks in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Unlike Stowe's African Americans, her Jewish characters are obviously not enslaved and for the most part highly educated; if they want to, they can easily deny their Jewish origin. Quite a few of them are even socially on a par with the purely English characters. While Stowe does not seem to be able to let a "comical darky" go unnoticed, Eliot, for the most part, does not single out behavior patterns as essentially Jewish (for example, she takes great care to present "stereotypically Jewish" greed as

stereotypically English as well) and she does not make intelligence dependent on her characters' degree of "whiteness" or Englishness. She also does not dwell much on physical descriptions of her Jewish characters. The musician Herr Klesmer is described as an amalgam, "a felicitous combination of the German, the Slave [sic], the Semite" (47), but beyond this description, he is a stereotypical musician rather than a stereotypical Jew, just as the Alcharisi is a stereotypical diva rather than a stereotypical Jewish mother. The English-Jewish brother and sister, Mordecai and Mirah, are also not primarily defined by racial markers. Mirah comes across as an almost generic frail woman in need of male protection and Mordecai is depicted as a consumptive, sick-looking workman with "wasted yellow hands" and "a consumptive glance" (495). It is primarily this description of him that stays with the reader. His face is initially described as "a finely typical Jewish face" (386), but there are so few physical descriptions of him throughout the hundreds of pages of the novel that readers might easily forget this initial description. Daniel Deronda's ethnic background does not seem readily discernible, either. Eliot presents him as a very handsome, only slightly foreign looking man who does not have any of the typically English features of his "uncle," Sir Hugo Mallinger, and whose face is "not more distinctively oriental than many a type seen among the what we call the Latin races: rich in youthful health, and with a forcible masculine gravity in its repose" (495-96). Because Jewish racial origin is rendered as rather inconspicuous, Eliot, unlike Stowe, can present various ways of dealing with it - including racial amalgamation through marriage. Unlike Stowe's protagonists, Eliot's characters, as, for example, Daniel and his mother, seem to have the freedom of accepting or denying their racial identification.

19 Eliot, I would argue, uses her Jewish novel, *Daniel Deronda*, to investigate possible meanings of "race" and racial identification through a dialogic presentation of the subject which encompasses short comments that characters make about "race" as well as complex issues of racial identification. This investigation of racial identification is made possible by the fact that Eliot's Jewish characters do not seem to look much different from her Gentile characters. But the issue of "race" is a topic of discussion within the Jewish community of *Daniel Deronda* as well as in the English community after it has come into contact with Jews. As soon as Mirah has become an adopted member of the Meyrick family, "race" starts to matter within the Meyrick family circle because Mirah's presence hints at the possibility of "race mixing." Comments range from Mrs. Meyrick's anxious wish that Mirah convert to Christianity over Mirah's apologies for being Jewish and therefore possibly "bad" to Hans's plea for racial amalgamation which, of course, results from his desire for Mirah who, after all, might not want to convert.

20 Eliot's presentation of Jews, like her presentation of gentiles, includes sympathetic as well as unsympathetic depictions and introduces her readers to a wide range of Jewish personalities. Her somewhat depreciatory characterization of the greedy and rather vulgar, yet still kind, Cohens has met with recent criticism because it invokes a negative racial stereotype. But Eliot debunks the Jewish stereotype, almost as soon as she has invoked it. She compares the greedy behavior of a member of the marginal group to "hegemonical" English greed: "[N]o shadow of a Suffering Race distinguished his vulgarity of soul from that of a prosperous pink-and-white huckster of the purest English lineage" (39). This comparison indicates that Jewish shortcomings need not be interpreted as racially motivated, but might also be viewed as one of the many instances of class discrimination in Eliot's work.⁹

21 The - perhaps a bit too aptly named - Jewish musician Klesmer, whom Bryan Cheyette describes as "an assimilated 'Wandering Jew'" (51), however, is an entirely positive figure of racial integration. The fact that he refuses to tell Gwendolen any lies about her artistic capabilities, combined with his refusal to give up his love for his English fiancée when faced with her parents' resistance to their union, stresses his independence from his (potential) employers and attests to his personal integrity. As a person whose racial origin is already described as mixed, he actively pursues racial amalgamation through his marriage to the "purely English" heiress Catherine Arrowpoint. Besides the example of Klesmer, there are various other Jewish characters who yearn for assimilation into the Gentile population. In the *Hand and Banner*-scene Pash and Gideon, members of the Jewish Philosophers' Club, argue that Jewish nationalism is dead. Gideon holds that because it is "the order of the day in point of progress" Jews should assimilate into the Gentile population and "[get] rid of all . . . superstitions and exclusiveness. There's no reason why [Jews] shouldn't melt gradually into the populations we live among. . . . I would as soon my children married Christians as Jews. And I'm for the old maxim, 'A man's country is where he's well off'" (527).

22 By violently denying her Jewish heritage throughout most of her adult life, Daniel's mother, the Alcharisi, even goes one step beyond the assimilation postulated in the *Hand and Banner*-scene. She rejects all racial and gendered ascriptions applied to her, and at one point she even actively chooses not to be Jewish any longer: "I made myself like the people I lived among" (635). As she explains to Daniel, her reason for disowning her race-along with her gender-can be located in her father's sexism which reflects the overall sexism of Jewish patriarchy: "To have a pattern cut out-'this is the Jewish woman; this is what you must be; . . .

⁹ Gillian Beer draws attention to the correspondences between Eliot's treatment of "race" and "class": "The fascination with race is for many Victorian writers essentially a fascination with class. Race and class raise the same questions of descent, genealogy, mobility, the possibility of development and transformation" (202).

a woman's heart must be pressed small, like Chinese feet; her happiness is to be made as cakes are, by a fixed recipe.' That was what my father wanted. . . " (631). Ardently pursuing her goal of making her own life differ from this "fixed recipe," the Alcharisi decided to pursue her stage career as a singer at the expense of her son:

Every woman is supposed to have the same set of motives, or else to be a monster. I am not a monster, but I have not felt exactly what other women feel-or say they feel, for fear of being thought unlike others. When you reproach me in your heart for sending you away from me, you mean that I ought to say I felt about you as other women say they feel about their children. I did not feel that. I was glad to be freed from you. (628)

Eliot's decision to present a woman who does not feel any "natural" love for her child has met with critical disapproval well into the late twentieth-century. In "George Eliot and Feminism," Bonnie Zimmerman suggests that the figure of the Alcharisi shows that "the rejection of the traditional female role . . . would entail the loss to society of love, sympathy, tenderness, affection and nurturance" and that "George Eliot . . . identified this hatred and intolerance, as well as the rejection of feminine sympathy and nurturance, as a potential danger in the emerging feminism of her day" (235). Even though I assume that the characterization of Daniel's mother as an "unmotherly mother" might also have been inspired by Stowe's unsympathetic description of the unloving Marie St. Clare from Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, I do not think that Eliot meant for the Alcharisi to be viewed in such a negative light. Like Klesmer, Daniel's mother is honest and upright and remains true to herself under pressure.

23 The Alcharisi who boasts "I am not a loving woman . . . I was never willingly subject to any man. Men have been subject to me" (666) fits into Eliot's larger project of showing that, provided that they are willing to pay a price for it, women can, at least for some time, escape their gender along with their patriarchal interpellation as subjected female. Yet strangely enough, as soon as Eliot seems to have asserted the Alcharisi's independence from the current ideology of gender she apparently reinserts her into the ideology of race-if not gender-and seems to force her to confess the truth about Daniel's racial inheritance to him:

It is illness, I don't doubt that it has been gathering illness,-my mind has gone back; more than a year ago it began . . . Then a great horror comes over me: what do I know of life or death? and what my father called "right" might be a power that is laying hold of me-that is clutching me now. Well, I will satisfy him. I cannot go into the darkness without satisfying him. I have hidden what was his. I thought once I would burn it. . . I thank God I have not burnt it!" (636)

Ultimately, it cannot be known whether it is feelings of guilt, her bad health, or a strange "call of the blood" that motivates the Alcharisi's confession, or whether her father's friend Joseph Kalonymous "bullied" her into her confession: "My father may have God on his side. This

man's words are like lion's teeth upon me" (638). But what can definitely be said is that the motif of being interpellated by "Race" is also closely connected with Daniel's (also very "gendered") recovery of his racial identity.

From "Race" to (National) Identity

24 Daniel heeds Mordecai's call to become a Jewish national leader as soon as he finds out that he really is of Jewish origin. Eliot's decision to focus on Jewish nationalism in her novel on race was certainly inspired by Stowe's portrayal of an incipient African American nationalism in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. Her characterization of George Harris as a future national leader and the eponymous Dred as a race prophet serve both as models and foils for Eliot's Daniel and Mordecai. But there are also some important differences in Eliot's and Stowe's presentation of race-based national (and individual) identity. Eliot's exploration of the identity constituting powers of the ancient Jewish Kabbalah caused her to go much beyond Stowe's exploration of racial identity by introducing into her novel a fascinating meditation on identity that investigates "race" and (homo)sexuality as socio-biological determinants. Unlike Stowe, who assigns a mostly extrinsic (Western) cultural identity to her characters by disregarding their ethnic and cultural origins, Eliot fully embraces her characters' Jewish origins. George's vision of Liberia reflects a biblical paradise just as Dred's spirituality is based primarily on the Old Testament. Even though Stowe was aware of African American folk traditions, her Christian world view kept her from validating non-Christian African spiritual practices. George Eliot, however, romanticized the ancient kabbalistic Jewish tradition that she presents in *Daniel Deronda* after having meticulously researched it.

25 In her unpublished 1994 dissertation "Originating Fictions: Harriet Beecher Stowe and George Eliot," Nancy Henry has investigated the many parallels between Stowe's and Eliot's depiction of race and national identity in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Daniel Deronda*. Thus she points out that "Eliot and Stowe differ from other nationalist movements of the period because members of the Diaspora community define themselves by 'returning to a place where they have never been'" (18) and that George's and Daniel's "returning to other lands" (64) is part of a process of recovering "absent parental ties" (67) and an unfamiliar personal past. All of this, she argues, is embedded in a larger argumentative strategy which the two authors employ to suggest "that individual identity could be reconstructed on the basis of an origin transmitted to the individual person through textually preserved cultural memories" (62-63). Henry's main thesis is that while "the second origin . . . looks to be essential, racial, fixed" the return to this

"homeland" where George and Daniel have never been is a matter of intellectual choice rather than a genetic "call of the blood." At several instances in her dissertation she argues that the genetic "binding ties in these novels are not imposed or inescapable" (77):

Stowe's and Eliot's interpretations of returning underlie a similar critique of fixed geographic and racial origins. George, the mulatto, French-educated former slave and Daniel, the Ox-bridge-educated gentleman Jew, embody a comparable mixture of cultural inheritances and experiences. George's choice to identify himself as African and Daniel's to identify himself as Jewish represent a self-conscious, retrospective positing of origins. (18)

Henry identifies important similarities in Stowe's and Eliot's depiction of race and nationality, but I disagree with her about the freedom of choice she assigns to an-albeit fictitious-African American character in choosing his national and racial affiliation. In the above quote, Henry obviously alludes to George Harris's "letter to one of his friends" in which he proclaims his refusal "to pass for an American, or to identify myself with them" (UTC 608). While it might have been possible for George, whose "shade of color" is "slight" to "mingle in the circle of whites" (608)-where societal power is located-this would not have been the case for most other former slaves who could not have chosen to become "white Americans" in the same manner in which the racially inconspicuous Daniel chooses to become the Jew that he actually is. Contradicting her above statement about the ready availability of "textually preserved memories" for the characters of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Henry further expounds her understanding of Harriet Beecher Stowe's racial politics by explaining that "[i]n Stowe's imagined Liberian nationalism, the cultural basis of the community which wants to return, reverts to 'race' because it seems to have no coherent alternative culture-in the sense of textually or orally transmitted practices, rituals and beliefs to unify and distinguish it" (73).

26 As part of her optimistic evaluation of Stowe's racial politics, Henry further maintains that Stowe contests "the attribution of behavior to essential or biological characteristics" (10). She also concludes that "there is no ambiguity in [Eliot's] conviction that bonds of obligation by which we understand such terms as 'blood' and 'race' are the product of habit" (5). While Henry might not be too far off the mark in her assessment of Eliot's racial politics in *Daniel Deronda*, I cannot agree with her statement about Stowe's stance since in Stowe's novels as well as in her explanatory essay *The Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* enough evidence of her conviction that race is a decisive determinant of human behavior, intelligence, and identity can be found.

27 While many critics feel that Stowe's overall dubious racial politics culminate in a scheme for African repatriation, Nancy Henry argues that Stowe's investigation of national identity finally made her revise her racial politics and present the result of this in *Dred*:

For Stowe, national identity follows from national origin and in *Dred*, it is precisely the concept of America's origins that she must revise. *Dred* emphasizes a continuous revolutionary process rather than a fixed and exclusively white democratic ideal. . . . The trajectory from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* to *Dred* is the move from Africa for Africans and America for Anglo-Saxons to America as a process for achieving a coherent national character with people possessed of different cultural memories. (104)

Even though *Dred*, the swamp prophet, cannot bring about racial integration by means of a revolution, Henry celebrates *Dred* as a novel featuring a "utopian vision" in "the final resolutions of plot in *Dred* which imagine a radical disregard for national, racial and gender roles" (124-25). Since, as I have pointed out earlier, Stowe carefully avoided any hint at the possibility of racial amalgamation within her utopian community of mixed-raced grandparents and grandchildren, I cannot agree with this optimistic conclusion about the trajectory of Stowe's racial and national politics.

28 A closer examination of the race theme in *Daniel Deronda* in fact shows that Henry's statement that Eliot "unambiguously took Stowe as a literary model" (20) is untenable - especially in light of Stowe's and Eliot's divergent treatment of the essentiality of "racial" characteristics and of the interface of gender and race. Yet there are, nevertheless, some similarities in the ways in which both authors romanticize race in conjunction with religion. Eliot seems to have borrowed plot elements from both *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* and incorporated them into a single plot in *Daniel Deronda*. She heightens the effect of the race/religion theme taken from Stowe's novels by combining the European Zionist movement's "dream of a national home" and the "race prophecy" from *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* and also by making Daniel fulfill Mordecai's prophecy (thus showing that nation-building can indeed be accomplished when it is based on religious "feeling").

29 In her novel about "race," Eliot elaborates on the investigation of cultural and racial identity that Stowe introduces in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. Nancy Henry optimistically suggests that in Stowe's as well as Eliot's novels individual identity is constituted through the study of "preserved cultural" memory. As I have already pointed out, I think that this is the case in Eliot's novel rather than in Stowe's works. Unlike Eliot, Stowe does not look for a long-engrained cultural memory (which in the nineteenth-century was often labeled a "race habit") in the African American population, but instead, having postulated that Africans are naturally religious, she invests them with a cultural identity based on Christian religion because that is where she locates absolute truth for all people. Thus, in *Uncle Tom's Cabin* George Harris, referring to blacks as "they," expresses his hopes for a Christianization of Africa: "I trust that the development of Africa is to be essentially a Christian one. If not a dominant and commanding race, they are, at least, an affectionate, magnanimous and

forgiving one" (611). Similarly, in *Dred* Stowe's narrator introduces the African American prophet Dred with a statement about the "naturalness" of his Christian prophecy: "It is remarkable that, in all ages, communities and individuals who have suffered under oppression have always fled for refuge to the Old Testament, and to the book of Revelation in the New" (214-15). Because of the dangerous and revolutionary potential emanating from such a character as Dred, whose well-chosen name already is "a portent of dread," Stowe disposes of him by having him killed by a racist mob. Nancy Henry argues that the aborted revolution of *Dred* suggests that Stowe favors historic gradualism (see 106-07), yet her decision to forgo a revolution and to dispose of another truly "masculine" black male in favor of the "feminized" avuncular Tiff could also be read as a continuation of the politics of "repatriating dangerous blacks" that she pursued in *Uncle Tom's Cabin*.

30 In her Jewish adaptation of Stowe's African American race plot, Eliot avoided some of the "racial pitfalls" that Stowe could not avoid. By focusing on highly cultured Jews rather than "uncultivated" black swamp dwellers, Eliot sidestepped not only the problem of dealing with protagonists who are "other" because of skin color (and the attendant problem of the "racial markers" of potential offspring), but also evaded the class issue that exacerbates the race issue of *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred*. And by presenting Jews as representatives of an already combined racial and religious alterity, Eliot, unlike Stowe, did not have to invent a rationale for a racial propensity for religiousness. Her careful study of Jewish life enabled her to investigate the meaning of racial/cultural identity and to draw a historically correct, but still rather "researched," picture of the Jewish faith and Jewish customs.

31 In her edition of George Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* Notebooks, Jane Irwin calls attention to Eliot's enormous research of Jewish history¹⁰ which investigated an abundance of information about historical and contemporary aspects of Jewish life and law ranging from food regulations over discriminatory gender laws to questions of heresy. She points out that Jews were amazed at Eliot's knowledge of their faith: "As Sigmund Freud was to remark, George Eliot knew of things 'we [Jews] speak of only among ourselves'" (xxx). Irwin also stresses that it is this research "which extended far beyond what might have been useful for color in her novel and gave her an entry into the inner life of Judaism" (xxxiii) that makes her protagonists believable, otherwise "these characters might have been only vessels of pathos, comparable to Riah in *Our Mutual Friend*" (xxi). This observation can also be used to explain what makes Eliot's presentation of the race plot so much more sophisticated than Stowe's-in spite of the fact that her depiction of Judaism and Jewish characters sometimes seems "over-

¹⁰ According to Irwin, Eliot started taking notes for *Daniel Deronda* in the summer of 1872 (see xxvii) and presumably continued to do so until she started to write the novel in June 1874.

researched" and sterile. Eliot conceived her figures and their backgrounds very carefully before authoring *Daniel Deronda*, whereas Stowe wrote her *Key to Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1854) after the publication of the novel in order to provide a rationale for her racial politics and her characterization of African Americans. Thus, Eliot's visionary Mordecai, for example, puts forth very well researched kabbalistic prophecy whereas Stowe's African American prophet, Dred, spouts spiritual gibberish reflecting his ignorance and cultural deprivation. An example of this can be seen in the following conversation between Dred and his white friend Clayton about Dred's gift of vision:

"And the Lord showed unto me that even as a ship which is forsaken of the waters, wherein all flesh have died, so shall it be with the nation of the oppressor." "How did the Lord show you this" said Clayton, bent upon pursuing his inquiry. "Mine ear received it in the night season," said Dred, "and I heard how the whole creation groaneth and travaileth, waiting for the adoption; and because of this he hath appointed the tide." "I don't see the connection," said Clayton. "Why because of this?" "Because," said Dred, "every day is full of labor, but the labor goes back again into the seas. So that travail of all generations has gone back, till the desire of all nations shall come, and He shall come with burning and with judgment, and with great shakings; but in the end thereof shall be peace. . . ." (293)

Initially, Mordecai's explanation-to Daniel-of where his own gift of prophecy comes from might sound similarly strange:

"A spiritual destiny embraced willingly-in youth?" Mordecai repeated in a corrective tone. "It was the soul fully born within me, and it came in my boyhood. It brought its own world-a medieval world, where there were men who made the ancient language live again in the new psalms of exile. They had absorbed the philosophy of the Gentile into the faith of the Jew, and they still yearned toward a centre for our race. One of their souls was born again within me, and awaked amid the memories of their world. " (498)

Yet while Stowe's home-spun spirituality has no philosophical basis, Mordecai's elucidation of his spiritual gift contains information about the kabbalistic transmigration of souls (his own body holds the soul of a medieval Sephardic Jew) as well as the Neoplatonic sources of the Kabbalah.¹¹ Eliot herself, as if she were indeed writing back to Stowe, stresses the fact that Mordecai is not an "ignorant dreamer":

"I speak not as an ignorant dreamer - as one bred up in the inland valleys, thinking ancient thoughts anew, and not knowing them ancient, never having stood by the great waters where the world's knowledge passes to and fro. . . . English is my mother-

¹¹ George Eliot excerpted and translated Heinrich Graetz's explanation of metempsychosis in her *Pforzheimer Notebook 711*: "Starting from the doctrine that all souls have been pre-existent from the beginning of the Spiritual world, the Kabbala taught that they are all destined to an earthly career in corporeal form. . . . But if the soul becomes stained it must once & again, but at most only thrice, return into corporeal life, till by repeated trials it can ascend in purity. On this transmigration of souls was founded the theory of retribution. The sufferings of the righteous serve simply to purify them. Seth's soul passed into Moses. . . . Marriage in general was a mystical institution, being the means of bringing souls into corporeality." (qtd. in Irwin 174)

tongue But my true life was nourished in Holland, at the feet of my mother's brother, a Rabbi skilled in special learning; and when he died I went to Hamburg to study and afterwards to Göttingen . . . " (497)

As Irwin points out, in *Daniel Deronda*, "George Eliot has set herself the daunting task of bringing the revelations of Old Testament visionary prophecy into conjunction with the mundane world of contemporary London-in a context where the prophetic mode of William Blake's *Jerusalem* would be inappropriate" (163).

32 Eliot validates the race/religion plot and heightens its romantic effect by allowing Mordecai - who, like Stowe's Dred, knows that he will not be able to carry out his vision himself - to choose his own successor through charming him with his gift of prophecy. Daniel, who does not know that he is Jewish when he first meets Mordecai, heeds his call without really knowing why and without being able to identify the homoerotic component in his relationship to Mordecai, who soon becomes his closest friend. The "Jewish part" of the novel focuses on Daniel's decision to follow this "call of the blood"-or love-and seems to forsake the "objective" realms of realism and science in favor of the "personal" ones of romance and religion. The story of Daniel's response to Mordecai's plea to join him in his crusade for Jewish nationalism is one of the most fascinating episodes of *Daniel Deronda* as it examines the meaning of "race" and explores the constitution of individual as well as collective identity.

33 Daniel's encounters with his racial origin are mystifying from the beginning. After having met Mirah, but before he even knows that he is Jewish, just at the point at which he is fed up with the idle existence of an English gentleman and greatly desires "either some eternal event, or some inward light, that would urge him into a definite line of action, and compress his wandering energy" (365), Daniel is mysteriously drawn to Judaism. He attends a service at a synagogue in Frankfurt and suddenly feels personally addressed:

The Hebrew liturgy . . . the chant of the Chazan's or Reader's grand wide-ranging voice with its passage from monotony to sudden cries . . . the devotional swaying of men's bodies backwards and forwards, the very commonness of the building and shabbiness of the scene where a national faith, which had penetrated the thinking of half the world, and moulded the splendid forms of that world's religion, was finding a remote, obscure echo-all were blent for him as one expression of a binding history, tragic and yet glorious. He wondered at the strength of his own feeling; it seemed beyond the occasion-what one might imagine to be a divine influx in the darkness, before there was any vision to interpret. (367-68)

David Carroll correctly identifies this moment as identity-constituting for Daniel:

This is the pre-hermeneutic moment to which Deronda's state of suspension, his negative capability, his habitual self-emptying or kenosis, enables him to respond. This is the primal religious experience, the divine influx, the spirit breathing upon the

waters, not only before interpretation gets to work but even before there is a vision to interpret. . . . Deronda is able to respond because he has the correct form of pre-understanding, that of a man whose life is the open hypothesis which hasn't yet crystallized into a theory or a character. (289)

After the service Daniel is approached by a Jew who asks him about his mother's maiden-name. Realizing that the man might think him a fellow-Jew, "Deronda . . . said coldly, 'I am an Englishman'" (368). This is the first of two occasions on which he is identified as a fellow Jew by Jewish men. The second occasion occurs when Daniel first meets Mordecai in Mr. Ram's bookstore and Mordecai grasps his arm and excitedly asks him "You are perhaps of our race?" (387). Deronda-still not knowing his racial origin-again denies being Jewish: "Deronda coloured deeply, not liking the grasp, and then answered with a slight shake of the head, 'No.'" (387). Even though Daniel initially tries to resist being hailed, this identification of Daniel as Jewish strangely anticipates Louis Althusser's theory about interpellation into ideology which contemporary cultural theory views as an important model for the construction of the social subject.

34 It seems that Judaism both as racial ideology and as a system of religious belief or religious ideology (according to Althusser's Marxist definition, "ideology" is "the system of the ideas and representations which dominate the mind of a man or a social group" [32]) sends forth the "call" that Daniel does not just yet heed. Daniel's interpellation into Judaism unfolds in accordance with the processes outlined by Althusser roughly a hundred years later. Judaism works not only as a biological, racial determinant but also as a religious ideology because it fulfills Althusser's postulate that there be a proper Subject ("a Unique, Absolute, Other Subject, i. e. God" [52]) "in whose Name the religious ideology interpellates all individuals as subjects" (52-53). Daniel is hailed by this Subject and like the "suspect" from Althusser's example, who is hailed by the policeman's "Hey, you there" (48), he turns around.¹² From then on everything proceeds in accordance with Althusser's plan:

[T]he hailed individual will turn round. By this mere one-hundred-and-eighty degree physical conversion, he becomes a subject. Why? Because he has recognized that the hail was "really" addressed to him, and that it was *really him* who was hailed (and not someone else). Experience shows that the practical telecommunication of hailings is such that they hardly ever miss their man: verbal call or whistle, the one hailed always recognizes that it is really him who is being hailed. And yet it is a strange

¹² Stuart Hall calls attention to a seeming inconsistency in Althusser's theory of interpellation: Althusser models the doubly specular aspect of interpellation on Lacan's mirror stage, yet he apparently does not take into consideration "Lacan's somewhat sensationalist proposition that *everything* constitutive of the subject not only happens through this mechanism but happens in the same moment [at the resolution of the Oedipal crisis]" (8). Hall criticizes Lacanian "hot-gospellers" who adopt this notion because "the more complex notion of a subject-in-process is lost in these polemical condensations" (8). Althusser seems to present the interpellation of an adult in his "policeman" example. Eliot's Daniel Deronda is also interpellated as an adult of approximately twenty-five years.

phenomenon, and one which cannot be explained solely by "guilt feelings," despite the large numbers who "have something on their consciences." (48)

Initially, Deronda, like a person who "has something on his conscience," who could be "found out," wants to shake Mordecai's grasp and not be of the Jewish race. Why is this so? The question is whether Daniel colors because he, as a presumable Englishman, suddenly confronted with Judaism "had lately been thinking of vulgar Jews with a sort of personal alarm" (366) since they have "that look of ma[king their] toilet with little water" (387) or because he interprets Mordecai's grasp as an unwanted advance.

35 It looks as if-just like the Alcharisi cannot for all time deny her race-Daniel cannot escape his interpellation, his "call of the blood." On the second occasion of meeting Daniel, Mordecai, "a frail incorporation of the national consciousness" (517), tells him that he is his successor: "But I have found you. You have come in time. . . . You will take the sacred inheritance of the Jew" (500). Daniel remains skeptical because he does not know what to make of Mordecai's visionary conviction that he is the perfect carrier of the torch: "A . . . plausible reason for putting discipleship out of the question was the strain of visionary excitement in Mordecai, which turned his wishes into overmastering impressions and made him read outward fact as fulfilment" (513). At the same time Daniel, whose musings about his relationship with Mordecai employ "nationalist" vocabulary, speculates that Mordecai might be his chance to overcome his sense of unbelonging and to find his "citizenship":

Nay, it was conceivable that as Mordecai needed and believed that he had found an active replenishment of himself, so Deronda might receive from Mordecai's mind the complete ideal shape of that personal duty and citizenship which lay in his own thought like sculptured fragments certifying some beauty yearned after but not traceable by divination. (512)

Daniel finally suspends his pronounced skepticism by meditating upon the speculative nature of all knowledge:

And since the unemotional intellect may carry us into a mathematical dreamland where nothing is but what is not, perhaps an emotional intellect may have absorbed into its passionate vision of possibilities some truth of what will be - the more comprehensive massive life feeding theory with new material, as the sensibility of the artist seizes combinations which science explains and justifies. At any rate, presumptions to the contrary are not to be trusted. (414)

Gillian Beer establishes a connection with Darwinian thought and argues that Darwin's theory of biological descent is often speculative rather than deterministic and that *Daniel Deronda* "moves into that central problem focused by Darwinian theory: is there a foreknown or an ultimate plan? Is teleology itself a fiction?-do we self-protectively interpret as providence that

which is chance?" [191]). She poses a string of rhetorical questions in order to reveal the speculative nature of Eliot's ruminations about biological descent:

Are beginnings to be identified with origins? Is it possible to search out the primal repose of the original? Is there a necessary connection between the idea of the source and the idea of development-or is this habitual connection itself ideological and polemical? (188)

Interestingly enough, late twentieth-century cultural theory asks very similar questions about the origins of individual as well as collective and even national identity.

36 Carroll, Beer and other commentators - with the exception of Nancy Henry, who remains on the surface of the identification problem by deciding that cultural identity in Stowe's and Eliot's novels is "simply" passed on through preserved textual memory, - hint at the complex mechanisms of identification in *Daniel Deronda*, but do not thoroughly investigate them. Eliot's text poses the question of whether or not a Jew who has not been socialized as a Jew can assume his Jewish heritage and identification solely on the strength of his racial affiliation.¹³ As we have seen, Mordecai is convinced of this; Daniel himself also seems to believe in the power of "Race." He tells his mother, "I consider it my duty-it is the impulse of my feeling-to identify myself, as far as possible, with my hereditary people" (661). He further elaborates that he has indeed been called by "the stronger Something" ("Race," Judaism, or love) to carry on his grandfather's legacy: "But that stronger Something has determined that I shall be all the more the grandson whom also you willed to annihilate" (663).

37 Since discourse on racial identity in *Daniel Deronda* is highly indeterminate, Daniel's discovery of his racial origin and the subsequent constitution of his Jewish identity is presented as a very complicated issue. On the one hand it seems as if Eliot proceeds from a Cartesian concept of selfhood which supposes that every human being has a core self which s/he needs to discover, yet on the other hand she appears to anticipate modern theories proposing a discursive constitution of cultural identity through interpellation into ideology. The way in which race and religion are conflated in Eliot's depiction of Judaism allows for a reading that-strangely mixing proto-Althusserian analysis with a Cartesian conception of selfhood-suggests that "Race" functions as "the stronger Something" that interpellates Daniel

¹³ Here, Eliot again anticipates concerns of recent cultural theory. According to David Hollinger, identification with one's less "obvious" roots is possible only in a postethnic society: "And postethnicity would enable [Alex] Haley and [Ishmael] Reed to be both African American and Irish American without having to choose one to the exclusion of the other. Postethnicity reacts against the nation's invidiously ethnic history, builds upon the current generation's unprecedented appreciation of previously ignored cultures, and supports on the basis of revocable consent those affiliations by shared descent that were previously taken to be primordial. (21)" Thus, in a postethnic society Eliot's *Daniel Deronda* could as easily identify with both his English and his Jewish roots as Stowe's George Harris could with both his African American and his white heritage.

and helps him "dig out" his authentic Jewish self that had previously been buried beneath his false Englishness.¹⁴

38 Thus, Eliot's conception of identity and its constitution works according to two definitions of identification described by Stuart Hall. According to the older, commonsensical definition, "identification is constructed on the back of a recognition of some common origin or shared characteristics with another person or group, or with an ideal and with the natural closure of solidarity and allegiance established on this foundation" (2). Hall explains that the newer "discursive approach" sees identification as "a construction, a process never completed-always 'in process'" (2) because identities are "points of temporary attachments to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us" (5-6). Collective identities, according to Anthony Appiah, supply the dialogues that shape personal identities (which are not to be confused with the older notion of "authentic" core selves): "[They] . . . provide what we might call scripts: narratives that people can use in shaping their life plans and telling their life stories" ("Race" 97).

39 Eliot's Daniel Deronda, whose initial cultural identity is that of a young English gentleman, explores Sephardic Judaism for an alternative collective identity offering him "a traditional society," with "shared beliefs, values, signs and symbols as the common culture" (Appiah, "Race" 86). Since until adulthood he does not find out that he is Jewish and therefore knows almost nothing about the "common origin" he supposedly shares with his race, he wills himself into the Jewish community by joining their dialogues, as for example in his study of Hebrew.

40 The question remains whether or not Daniel-in whom fears of an illegitimate birth have instilled a feeling of sympathy towards those who are "othered" by society (minorities, women)-can actually become the Jew that he already is by trying to perform the ascriptions of his racial identity. Contemporary commentators, as for example Jacob Press, do not seem to think so. Thus, Press contends that "Deronda willingly divests himself of the identity category of 'Christian,' declares his 'identification' with the Jews-and that is where his transformation stops. Jewish nationalism becomes a way of reframing an otherwise intact ideology of self" (324). Daniel's lack of "authentic Jewishness" at the end of the narrative allows for two explanations: 1) Eliot did not know how to turn an Englishman into a Jew, even if he has got

¹⁴ Anthony Appiah describes a "post-Romantic" shift in attitudes about the self: "Authenticity speaks of the real self buried in there, the self one has to dig out and express. It is only later, *after romanticism* that the idea develops that one's self is something that one creates, makes up, so that every life should be an artwork, whose creator is, in some sense, his or her greatest creation (96)." The tension between different models for the construction of identity in *Daniel Deronda* suggests that the novel was written at the time when the paradigm for "selfhood" started to shift.

the "right blood,"¹⁵ or 2) she did after all believe in social constructivism rather than "racial essentialism" in spite of invoking the interpellative powers of "Race" as possible "call of the blood."

41 Appiah discusses W. E. B. DuBois's difficulties in finding common ground for pan-African solidarity in *In My Father's House* and suggests that, ultimately, DuBois had to concede that race-based rationales for solidarity ("common history," "long memory," "the social heritage of slavery" [41]) simply do not work:

The logic of his argument leads naturally to the final repudiation of race as a term of difference to "speaking of civilizations where we now speak of races." The logic is the same logic that has led us to speak of gender-the social construction out of the biological facts-where we once spoke of sex. (45)

Eliot appears to have made a similar discovery about the arbitrariness of essentialist attitudes towards race and sex which she does not seem to be able to formulate clearly in *Daniel Deronda*. Nevertheless, in the exchange between Daniel and his mother, the Alcharisi hints at a "nature," which here seems to be some notion of self beyond race and sex, when she insists: "I had a right to be an artist, though my father's will was against it: My nature gave me a charter" (664). *Daniel Deronda* thus builds up an unresolved tension between essentialist and constructivist conceptions of identity, stressing that in some way identity is always a fiction of the self.

42 Jacob Press who discusses *Daniel Deronda* and Jacob Herzl's *Altneuland* as Zionist novels concerned with nation-building, seems to be bothered by the fact that both George Eliot and the Jewish nationalist Herzl apparently do not know how to render Jewish difference in an adequate manner and therefore "articulate a vision of separateness that replicates that from which it has separated" (325). Yet at the same time, Press also rejects Jewish essentialism:

[T]he . . . mapping of Zionist pride functions only as damning exposure of Zionist incoherence if one accepts the facile foundational premise that there are such things as Jewish subjects with unproblematically original "selves" existing prior to and in a realm separate from particular historical contingencies and ideological orientations . . . (325)

He reluctantly concludes that there might be no alternative to assimilation simply because there is no "racial core":

For what is "assimilation" but an organization of the self so as to foreground those personal characteristics that will enable one to become a member of the group with

¹⁵ In the *Hand and Banner*-scene Eliot's narrator seems rather skeptical about the notion of "pure blood" when s/he comments: "In fact, pure English blood (if leech or lancet can furnish us with the precise product) did not declare itself predominantly in the party at present assembled" (523).

which one wishes to be associated? In this sense, both Herzl and Deronda are Jewish assimilationists in two senses: they assimilate themselves into Jewishness, and they assimilate Jewishness into themselves. There is no simple sense in which their projects can be discredited on this account. (325)

Here, Press identifies what seems to be the dilemma in theorizing about racial identity once the notion that there is no such thing as an individual or collective core self has been accepted. The above discussion has shown that George Eliot, unlike Harriet Beecher Stowe, to some degree seems to have been aware of the fact that racial identity ultimately cannot be established. Her characterization of her Jewish figures shows that this partial awareness had consequences for her depiction of her "racially other" characters. While Stowe assigns her own essentialist notions about blacks to her African American characters, Eliot, by meticulously researching Jewish cultural history and then inventing a Jewish character who remains an Englishman (which reflects an inability to render convincing descriptions of cultural alterity), finds a less discriminatory but still rather evasive solution to the problem of locating racial identity.

43 Perhaps because of these difficulties in defining racial identity, Eliot's novel also allows for a reading that views Daniel's identification with Judaism as a result of his gendered identity, his emotional relationship with Mordecai and Mirah, rather than as a result of a "call of the blood" and thus his racial identity. Daniel's mother hints at this when she suspects that what motivates Daniel might be "love" rather than "Race":

"You are in love with a Jewess." Deronda coloured and said, "My reasons would be independent of any such fact." "I know better. I have seen what men are," said the Princess; peremptorily. "Tell me the truth. She is a Jewess who will not accept anyone but a Jew. There are a few such," she added with a touch of scorn. (661)

Daniel himself later on acknowledges the fact that his love for Mordecai and Mirah is instrumental in boosting his enthusiasm about his newly discovered Jewishness: "If this revelation had been made to me before I knew you both, I think my mind would have rebelled against it. Perhaps I should have felt then-'If I could have chosen, I would not have been a Jew'" (750). But while the Alcharisi has correctly identified Daniel's motivation, she is not altogether right about the gender of Daniel's object of love, for, although he eventually marries Mirah, the emotional bond that motivates his decision to acknowledge his Judaism is chiefly between him and Mordecai.

44 The language used to describe the relationship of Mordecai and Daniel is erotically charged from the beginning of their acquaintance: "In ten minutes the two men, with as intense a consciousness as if they had been two undeclared lovers . . . turned face to face, each

baring his head from an instinctive feeling that they wished to see each other fully" (495). Their friendship is so dominant that Daniel continues to emphasize the impact of his relationship with Mordecai even after he has told himself and others that he is in love with Mirah. Thus, he explains to Gwendolen about his discovery of his Jewishness: "I had been prepared for it by becoming intimate with a very remarkable Jew" (802). The scene in which Mordecai tells Daniel that Daniel will inevitably help him fulfill his Jewish destiny-even against his will-is saturated with sexualized vocabulary:

"You would remind me that I may be under an illusion-that the history of our people's trust has been full of illusion. I face it all." Here Mordecai paused for a moment. Then bending his head a little forward, he said, in a hoarse whisper, "*So it might be with my trust, if you would make it an illusion. But you will not.*" [emphasis in original] The very sharpness with which these words penetrated Deronda, made him feel the more that there was a crisis in which he must be firm. (502)

Eliot here uses language that is typical for seduction scenes in nineteenth-century literature. In her introduction to the 1984 Penguin edition of Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, Annette Kolodny, for example, draws attention to the fact that "crisis" was "a common nineteenth-century euphemism for sexual excitation" (xix).

45 And Elinor Shaffer elucidates Eliot's possible theological inspiration for the sexualization of spirituality:

The work of both Feuerbach and Renan underlies her analysis of the sexual basis of religion, Feuerbach in his theoretical formulation of the I-thou relation and his systematic equation of theology and pathology, Renan in his psychological and literary studies of the sources of religious experience. (234)

Shaffer thus locates the source for Eliot's depiction of the emotional (and sexual) dependence of "man on man" (or woman) in Feuerbach's realization that God is no longer at the center of religion because in the nineteenth century "the concrete empirical dependence of a man [is] on nature and other men" (245) and that the I-thou relationship has evolved from a relationship between a human being and his or her creator to a relationship between humans.¹⁶ She furthermore takes into account Renan's description of the erotic underpinnings of Jesus's messianic love for his female followers in his *Life of Jesus* and applies her findings to Daniel's relationship with Gwendolen: "We know fully what sends Gwendolen down on her knees to

¹⁶ Shaffer furthermore points out that in *Daniel Deronda*, Eliot puts much emphasis on the I-thou relationship, the social component of religious feeling. According to the kabbalistic philosophy underlying the social philosophy of *Daniel Deronda*, "The mystical basis of the I-Thou unity is the gnostic-cabbalistic notion of Adam as the soul that contained all souls" (255). While the Neoplatonic origins of the kabbalistic notion of the "soul that contains all souls" will be discussed later at greater length, it might be worthwhile to point out here that Hawthorne's *The Blithedale Romance*, which also focuses on idealized relationships between humans within a religious community, provides a similar philosophic background for the social and religious experiment by couching it in the transcendental philosophy that views human beings as parts of the all-encompassing oversoul.

Daniel Deronda. Underlying her adoption of the role of acolyte to his 'secular priesthood' is a frank analysis of the hysterical desire occasioned by sexual deprivation" (262). Somewhat surprisingly, Shaffer, who prefers the conservative interpretation of Mordecai as Daniel's spiritual father, does not draw a parallel conclusion about Mordecai and his acolyte in spite of the much more eroticized language in which their relationship is presented.

46 Even though the homoerotic content of the novel is too obvious to be ignored, only few critics have paid attention to it. Press focuses on *Daniel Deronda's* Jewish aspect in his article "Same-Sex Unions in Modern Europe: *Daniel Deronda*, *Altneuland* and the Homoerotics of Jewish Nationalism," yet he does not position the relationship of Daniel and Mordecai within the kabbalistic Jewish tradition. He points out that the sexually charged metaphors betray a desire "to penetrate" on Mordecai's part and a desire "to submit" on Daniel's part and projects late twentieth-century attitudes toward homosexuality onto the two characters, as for example, when he writes that "Mordecai has a thing for high-class types" (307). Laura Callanan, however, in "The Seduction of Daniel Deronda," puts the homoerotic content of *Daniel Deronda* in historical perspective. She speculates that Eliot-at a time when homosexuality was barely known as a sexual orientation-was aware of homosexuality because she personally knew Dr. Carl Friedrich Otto Westphal, who became famous for his research on "contrary sexual feelings" (180). To suggest that the homoerotic attraction between Mordecai and Daniel need not necessarily result in sexual activity, Callanan refers to the (by now standard) theoretical model of locating male-male desire on a continuum between homosocial and homosexual desire (which was introduced by Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick in *Between Men* [1990] for explaining homosexual desire before homosexuality became a subject of medical inquiry). Callanan thus argues that:

Therefore, to acknowledge the erotic nature of Eliot's language is not to suggest that Mordecai and Daniel are involved in a sexual relationship, but to see that desire for homosocial bonds and for homosexual bonds are on the same "continuum," and can display the same level of desire and attraction. (180)

47 Both Press and Callanan, however, ignore the important fact that Eliot has added another spiritual level to the homoerotic relationship of Daniel and Mordecai which, following Christian David Ginsburg's account of the Kabbalah, presents them as exiled androgynous souls waiting for the great Jubilee when all souls will come back to "the bosom of the Infinite Source-in the Palace of love, where the heavenly King is united with all souls by a kiss" (452). As Mordecai explains to Daniel about their upcoming kabbalistic "marriage of souls":

"In the doctrine of the Cabbala, souls are born again and again in new bodies till they are perfected and purified, and a soul liberated from a worn-out body may join the fellow-soul that needs it, that they may be perfected together, and their earthly work accomplished. Then they will depart from the mortal region, and leave place for new souls to be born out of the store in the eternal bosom. It is the lingering imperfection of the souls already born into the mortal region that hinders the birth of new souls and the preparation of the Messianic time When my long-wandering soul is liberated from this weary body, it will join yours, and its work will be perfected." (540)

Jane Irwin remarks that according to Ginsburg these souls are androgynous and that the "latent paradoxes" inherent in this situation make for a rather strange gender triangle in Daniel's marriage situation (452).¹⁷ Thus, in chapter sixty-three when Daniel goes to see Mordecai and Mirah after he has found out that he is Jewish and when he has just made up his mind to propose to Mirah, personal pronouns, which would immediately reveal the sex of the beloved he is thinking about, are carefully avoided. In the emotional scene in which Daniel reveals his Jewishness to the siblings, his relationship with Mordecai is prevalent: "The two men clasped hands with a movement that seemed part of the flash from Mordecai's eyes, and passed through Mirah like an electric shock" (748). In accordance with the predominance of Daniel's relationship with Mordecai, Daniel's marriage (of souls) with Mordecai begins in this chapter, whereas his "legal" marriage to Mirah takes place later. His marriage with Mordecai is "consummated" in the novel's final scene when Mordecai dies:

It was not till late in the afternoon, when the light was falling, that he took a hand of each in his and said, looking at Deronda, "Death is coming to me as the divine kiss which is both parting and reunion-which takes me from your bodily eyes and gives me full presence in your soul. Where thou goest Daniel, I shall go. Is it not begun? Have I not breathed my soul into you? We shall live together." He paused, and Deronda waited, thinking that there might be another word for him. . . . He sank back gently into his chair, and did not speak again. But it was some hours before he had ceased to breathe, with Mirah's and Deronda's arms around him. (811)

Daniel's marriage to Mordecai results in eternal unity, whereas his marriage to Mirah seems to have produced a corpse whom both of them hold as if it were a newborn baby. In light of this scene one might conclude that rather than "Race" love for a person who happens to be Jewish (and who also happens to be of the same sex) is the chief force behind Daniel Deronda's identification with Jewishness. Whereas Daniel's love for Mordecai focuses-at least in the beginning-on Mordecai as an individual, Mordecai's love for Daniel cannot be viewed separately from his social and religious vision which places his relationship with Mordecai within a general design to end Jewish exile on both a spiritual and a geographical level.

¹⁷ Since Eliot still wrote at a time when "male-male desire [was] widely intelligible primarily by being routed through triangular relations involving a woman" (Sedgwick 15), the marriage of Daniel and Mirah can be viewed as an instance of a homoerotic exchange of a woman between Mordecai and Daniel.

48 The foregoing discussion thus seems to indicate that Eliot has deliberately and creatively "misread" Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *Dred* at several points, perhaps indeed with the intention of devising a more liberal race politics in *Daniel Deronda*, her novel about racial alterity. Unlike Stowe, Eliot debunks stereotypes, advocates racial amalgamation, and even suggests that homoeroticism is a powerful determinant for Daniel Deronda's constitution of his (racial) identity. Yet due to her substitution of Stowe's African Americans with an inconspicuous racial minority-which she might not even have regarded as a *racial* [my emphasis] minority-Eliot's stance on the subject of "race" nevertheless remains open to discussion.

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"Two Different Feelings at the Same Time." Interview with Atima Srivastava

By Stephanie Rott, University of Cologne, Germany

1 Atima Srivastava was born in Mumbai (India) in 1961, moved to Britain when she was eight, and has since been living in North London. She has written two novels, *Transmission* (1993) and *Looking for Maya* (1999), both of which are set texts in the syllabi of several Universities in Britain and other European countries ranging from Poland to Spain. Several of her short stories have been commissioned for and published in anthologies such as *New Writing 2001*, *Well Sorted* and *Tran-Lit*. She has worked in television for over 13 years as a film editor and, more recently, as a director in documentaries and magazine shows. She has three screenplays to her credit: *Dancing in the Dark Tx* (1992), *The Legendary Vindaloo* commissioned for Channel 4 (1993); and *Camden Story* developed for the BBC. A play, *Why not Love?* has been commissioned by The National Theatre and she has written the libretto for a new opera, *Cross Currents*, commissioned by Broom Hill Opera, performed in June 2001.

2 Atima Srivastava has won the first prize in the Bridport Arts Short Story competition, Arts Council Awards for her second and third novel, and a Hawthornden Fellowship. She was Writer in Residence at the University of Singapore, University of Sophia (Bulgaria), University of Mainz (Germany) and Ewha Women's University (Seoul). She has taught Creative Writing courses and lectured around the world supported by the British Council. Presently, she is working on her third novel, tentatively titled *The Non-Resident Indian*, and on a commission from the Leicester Haymarket Theatre.

3 The following interview exclusively deals with Atima's second novel *Looking for Maya* whose first chapter is featured in the second issue of **gender forum, Mediating Gender** 6/2002. In *Looking for Maya* the central character, 25-year-old Mira Chowdhary who has just graduated from university, tells the story of her relationships with two completely different men: Luke, a really nice British chap, and Amrit, an unconventional middle-aged British-Asian writer and university lecturer of postcolonial studies. However, her story is not only about love and passion, but also explores themes of identity, culture, family, and friendship.

Stephanie Rott: I would like to start with the first question that refers to the title of the novel *Looking for Maya*. "Maya" is the Hindi word for illusion, but Maya is also the name of Amrit's Indian wife. Why did you choose this title?

Atima Srivastava: I chose the title because in a way Maya is the woman that Amrit has lost, and in a way she stands for a sort of perfect love, or some kind of love that can't be reached. This central character, Mira Chowdhary, is reaching for an illusion, she's reaching for something which can't be. And I like the idea of making it a two-fold meaning: she is looking for Maya, i. e. illusion which means that she's looking for something she can't have, and also wanting to find out about what it was that Amrit lost in the woman Maya.

S.R.: Would you say that "looking for" hints at Mira's quest of identity? Is she trying to find out more about who she is?

A.S.: Good question, yes, definitely. I think that *Looking for Maya* is also a hint towards identity, because she's got this English boyfriend who is the opposite of her. Then she meets this Indian man who she seems to think there's something in him which she can add to her identity to make her identity more whole, or have some sort of recognition or something. And he's also a writer or whatever, so it is a search towards a feeling of wholeness which, in turn, is also about a feeling of identity. A whole identity.

S.R.: So Mira is in search of a whole identity. Do you think that she goes through a kind of learning process? Would you think of your novel as a *Bildungsroman*?

A.S.: Well, I don't think my novel aspires to that. I don't think the novel is that epic. I think it's more of a "rite-of-passage" story. I think that it's more about an individual, this girl, who looks for something which she feels is missing, and in that quest she learns more about loss than about gain. That's what I felt when I was writing it. It's about, and that's why it's a "rite-of-passage", about growing up. In many ways we don't find the things we search for. Maybe we find other things, rather than the things that we've searched for. So in her searching, she actually understands about and suffers loss. I think it was more to do with that sort of idea. I also wanted to write about the feeling when you have left university, and that you want the world, you know. You want everything to happen to you. And when things do happen, then perhaps, it's not what you think they're going to be.

S.R.: So you intended to write a love-story?

A.S.: Oh, yeah, definitely. An unrequited-love-story, yes. The idea of love as illusion, the idea of knowing yourself through someone is very attractive but, it is also an illusion in a sense. But also a kind of big idea originally for me was this feeling that Mira is 25, and she wants life to happen to her. She wants experience. She's ready and there's that thing, I don't know if you remember it, but later on, there's this line when she says: "I suddenly wanted to protect the things I already knew rather than disregard the things that I knew and go forward." So it was about that feeling as well. Mira gets a knock. But that's what life is.

S.R.: I've got the impression that the novel deals with difference, not only cultural, or ethnic difference, but also with interpersonal differences, with boundaries between people and within human relationships. Could you please comment on that?

A.S.: The novel definitely is about differences. But, again, differences which keep us apart, and differences which also bring us together. I think that I'm always concerned with how a thing, whether it's love, whether it's intimacy or whether it's difference, or desire, how those feelings engender not one but two feelings in us. The example is that with Luke. Mira feels "he's so different to me," and she thinks she can "handle him." It's like pushing something away and wanting it at the same time, to be in that moment where you're pushing and pulling at the same time. I don't know how to comment on that, it's only what interests me; if you want me to say something wider, that's linked up with identity for me. I wrote something about identity a few months ago. It was about a feeling of "here" and also of "there" at the same time. So in that way, with reference to India: 1. feeling of India, "there" and 2. feeling of "here" which I think is different to how British-Asians feel. They feel "I'm British, but I'm Asian." But I actually don't really have a feeling of Britishness; I feel I'm a Londoner, right, but I also belong to India. And so what exactly is this feeling of looking back and looking forward all the time? Well, it's not the feeling of exile, 'cause I feel at home in both (laughter), you know what I mean? And if there are tensions, then to exist within the tensions means that there are also other things circulating. With Mira, for instance, there's Luke, and then there's Amrit. But then there's also Tash, and Frank, and so there's lots of different influences; this is shown at the end of the novel when they have tapas. They're all together, and Mira says: "I had the feeling that something important was happening." So life, our existence, our notion of identity is made up of so many different things and we embrace all of them. We feel different on different levels about them; I'm trying to address all that (laughter).

S.R.: On the one hand, there are Luke or Tash, for instance, they're both from "broken homes" or "dysfunctional families," and on the other hand, you have Mira who comes from a stable Indian background. Would you think that it is the family where differences are located?

A.S.: (Pause) I'm hesitating to answer that question, because, on the one hand, yes, certainly as far as I have experienced things, but that's very much to do with the kind of background I've had. I've had a very stable family life, but at the same time... (laughs). I mean it's always two things with me! On the one hand, I've had a very stable family life, and on the other hand, I haven't had to deal with too much family. Most of my family live in India. I can be, if you like, romantic and happy and so on, but my parents are here. So on the one hand, I'm very close to my family, but I'm not so in proximity to them. I don't know, I shouldn't make the generalisation, but it just happens that many English people who I know do come from "broken homes." So of course the difference is that. But I have friends in Europe who come from very similar backgrounds to mine. I have friends in Spain, for me their family is just like being in India and I'm like: "Oh my God!". It's just like being in India! You go to someone's house, the grandmother is there, uncles and aunties are there, everybody is there... So on the one hand, I say that I enjoy the feeling of the family being stable, but then, when you're confronted by that in another culture, you think "Oh my God, let me get away from that!" So I don't know, if I'm answering the question correctly. Yes, differences are located in family, but I think that a stable Indian family is not very different from a stable English or Spanish or German family. Nevertheless I think that it does make a difference if you come from a stable background. I just think perhaps my experience is not quite typical, because it seems that I know a lot of English people who don't come from that kind of background. But I'm sure that's not true for all English people. I don't want to make that kind of comments like "all English people are like this and all Indian people are like that." 'Cause that's not true. But of course I know Indian people who are also from "broken homes." My idea of family has been very very formulated by my own experience, of course. And that experience has been stable and loving. I didn't have a terrible childhood (laughter).

S.R.: (laughter) You didn't? Why not?

A.S.: Yeah, exactly, how could I be a writer? It is very important to have had a terrible childhood, no? (laughter)

S.R.: Let's talk about the male characters. We've already mentioned the opposition of the characters of Luke and Amrit. Would you say that the difference between them is connected to their respective ethnic identities, or could Luke also have been an Indian, and could Amrit also have been an Englishman?

A.S.: That's a very interesting question actually. Could it have been reversed? Could Luke have been an Indian and could Amrit have been...

S.R.: Or even French or whatever?

A.S.: Yeah. - I think so. In a way, if you like, the things that Amrit represents are quite universal, aren't they? Really you're right, I've just never thought of it like that. Sure, because I think that they also occupy different spaces. What is Luke to Mira? Luke is about friendship, you know, he's like a brother, he's like a friend. There's a kind of deep friendship which is about forgiveness, and even when they break up he says "we'll be alright." And they are alright. You could say that relationship is more evolved, because it moves. The relationship moves on. At the end Luke introduces his new girlfriend to Mira, and things go further. Mira also wants to know who he is. That relationship has evolved, whereas the relationship with Amrit - because it occupies another space, it occupies something which is not just about two people, it's more about a quest of her own in a way - that relationship doesn't evolve, does it? It becomes more distant, it becomes more about yearning. I think it adds another frisson that Amrit happens to be Indian, because actually, if you look at it, he is nothing like Mira in terms of his Indianness. Mira's Indianness is influenced by her parents who are Indian poets... It's a quite interesting question, and in my head, when you say that, if I suddenly make them two different ethnic groups, yeah, you could do it. Yeah, if it's a film you could have Amrit as French and whatever... Yeah, great!

S.R.: Alright, Mira uses spatial metaphors when she refers to Amrit. She says, for instance "he's like an alien country" where she wants to travel. Why does she do that?

A.S.: I didn't think of it - spatial metaphor - but, yes you're right, she uses a lot of those metaphors, because again, I think in her mind this person represents a country, a space, a background, a landscape in which she can fit herself. Whereas Luke is real. He is a real person whose hand she can hold, or who she can get angry with, or who she can ask to go and

buy tampons, who has cold feet in the morning... You know, he's a real person, whereas Amrit is more like a landscape.

S.R.: Where she can lose herself?

A.S.: Yeah, but also find herself (laughter), again the two things! So that's why. And Amrit is unknown as well, because he has his whole other life. In a way you can say it's like being lost in a landscape. We don't know what is there. You can see it's a forest or whatever. Or a snowstorm. In a way that's what he is. But, imagine being lost in a snowstorm that you can touch. You can see the crystals, but you don't quite know where you are. I like your questions, 'cause I haven't thought about them.

S.R.: Now, here's the question concerning Mira's parents. In the course of the novel it turns out that Amrit is not only different from Luke, but he is also opposed to Mira's parental unit which she calls RaviKavi.

A.S.: That's very specific. Mira comes from this family unit, okay that's clear. To make that more intense I borrowed an idea from Hinduism. Hinduism is a polytheistic religion, so there are many Gods. Now, many of the Gods are together, married to each other, and you worship them together. A very common couple of Gods that people worship together is Shiv and his wife Shakti who is the Goddess of power and strength. When Hindus worship them together, Shiv and Shakti, they call them ShivShakti, that's how it's called. In Hindu culture husband and wife are as one. When you get married, your two souls are joined and become one. So it's this whole kind of, again this wholeness, this oneness. Actually in real life, many Indian people, when they talk about going to see their friends, they often run the two names together. It's something I notice that people do without really thinking in the same way that they do with the Gods. So I thought it would be nice to show that RaviKavi becomes one. Through the words you actually see that they are one. You know, united front. And that idea, I think is, very non-Western. It is a non-Western idea, although in the West we talk about feelings of wholeness. But you don't talk about your identity being merged into another person. On the whole I think people in the West would be quite disturbed or offended, if you talked about two of them being one. So I wanted to show very much how Mira is a product of that kind of unit. Not only is it stable, it is very much a kind of traditional but free unit. Naturally I suppose that the notion of a quest for wholeness would be inherent in Mira.

S.R.: I see, yes. But could we get back to the other part of the last question which refers to the opposition of Amrit and RaviKavi?

A.S.: Okay, so RaviKavi are like that. And then Amrit is the opposite of them which is that he has many independent relationships. His children are nothing like the kind of child Mira was. He is a very oppositional person, but also quite exotic. Now, that's another thing. I'm interested in that idea, because, as an Indian woman I've often been faced with this idea that people say that English people find Indian people exotic. But I've always found it the other way (laughter). Obviously you look at things which are different to what you know, and you find them exotic. So I thought it'll be interesting to show that Amrit - although he's Indian on the one hand, he's brown - is exotic to Mira. The idea of having affairs is exotic to her, or the idea of somebody not being married and having more than one relationship is exotic to Mira. You know, it's something exciting or adventurous. Again, that unknown territory.

S.R.: And it's opposed to a protective home?

A.S.: Yeah, and a solid home, if you like. Here: stability, something known, something safe. And there is excitement, adventure, the unknown.

S.R.: Yes, and Amrit is also the character who speaks a lot of writing as such. What does writing mean to you as a writer? Mira, for instance says in one passage that she feels the powerful urge to grasp her memories and then she sits down and starts to write her first novel.

A.S.: That didn't happen to me! (laughter) I don't think I'm like Mira at all in that way. Because I try not to have any conversations about writing if I can help it, you know. To be absolutely frank with you, I just know that I love writing. I just know that I have a powerful urge to tell stories. I have no idea where it comes from, on one level. And, two, I also don't have an agenda. I don't kind of think "I've got this message and I must tell the world", you know. And I don't like theories. I want to write. Obviously, I've got certain things I want to say. And you want to order your experience, things like that, sure. But I think, also the very impulse to write... I really have no idea (laughter), because, you know, when it's not working, you just think "why am I doing this? I could have a real job." And when it's working, it's just so fantastic. So there's really some kind of "deep mystery," too. I know that it's quite an old-

fashioned thing to say. Going back to the character, again, I think that Mira's book coming out is quite incidental almost, isn't it? I think that for her grasping the memories is, again, trying to enter a landscape that she can't enter. For Mira writing is connected with trying to understand your identity. But for me, Atima, I think it's something much more mysterious and bigger than just trying to "pin down your identity." I think that trying to pin down what your identity is, number one is rather fruitless an activity in real life, because it's changing. And, two, there are other ways to pin down your identity. Writing is a way to pin down other things like ideas or feelings which aren't always that certainly referring to the question "Who am I?" Sometimes I just want to tell a story: "What's that about?" Then I just want to tell the story of these characters that are running around in my head.

S.R.: So do you always have these characters in your head, as you say, do they sometimes emerge, or can they also be based on people you know?

A.S.: I have to say all the characters I've ever written, whether it's in a novel or a play, are always rooted in reality. Always. It doesn't matter whether you begin with an idea or with a character. I don't really use people that I know very well, 'cause I know them too well. Sometimes, you meet people and there's something about them that makes you go: "Why are they like that?" (laughter). Whereas with people you're close to you don't really care why, because you know them and love them regardless.

S.R.: (laughter) Then for you writing is also about trying to understand people...

A.S.: People, yeah, and sometimes just finding people funny or finding people weird. Sometimes you ask yourself, if someone is being an interesting person to you. But I find that the characters emerge. Sometimes, you are compelled to write about a person. I felt compelled to write about a character like Amrit, for instance, because he is a composite of many people I've known - men and women - who did intrigue me on various levels, tutors even, or just people who I didn't understand, because they lived in a weird way. So Amrit was a composite character. But in other things I find that characters kind of emerge.

S.R.: During the act of writing?

A.S.: Yeah, during the act of writing. Very much so. I think it also depends on the medium you're writing. Characters seem to come differently in a play than in a novel or in a short-story. In a way I can't even talk about it, because sometimes you don't even know. I think a large part of me is in all my characters, sure, (laughter) and that's fine for me. I don't know if all writers are like this, 'cause many writers say that not. They say they make everything up.

S.R.: Amrit is also the character who mocks Mira, when she's writing her first novel. He says "Are you writing the 'great immigrant novel'?" and then he fears that the novel will be published by the "Black Women's Press." Could you please comment on Amrit's point of view?

A.S.: Okay, he's mocking it, because he thinks that "the great immigrant novel" is always about mangos and grandmothers, you know, exotica, and that's what the West wants. They want to read about 'the exotic'... There's no Booker Prize we know of an Indian novel which is like, for instance, Bridget Jones' Diary. An Indian novel has to be about the landscape... If you look, that's true, isn't it? History, epic's weep of history, mangos, families, three generations, and nature, these things. You don't get metropolitan novels. When you're this young Indian, you're writing of being oppressed, okay. So "the great immigrant novel" is about feeling like a victim, feeling victimized and saying "white people are so terrible" and "life is so bad," that sort of idea. According to Amrit, being published just by the "Women's Press" as a young Indian woman, that's bad enough. That's apologetic writing, but the term "Black Women" would be even worse, 'cause later on he also makes that long comment about...

S.R.: Yes, I think he says that "Women's Writing" doesn't interest him, for it is apologetic and second rate, and that, as he puts it, "writing is about ways of seeing the world and not about feeling the world."

A.S.: Yes, exactly. Which is a general feeling about male writing and female writing anyway. Amrit is a misogynist. Therefore he says that to Mira, although he's also doing it to tease her. He puts her down as well by that.

S.R.: Yes, and then Mira says that she knew exactly what he thought about such publishing houses, how they make concessions for untalented opportunists. What do you

think about Amrit's attitude towards "Women's Writing"? Do you feel like a "Woman Writer"?

A.S.: I partly do agree with Amrit's view. "Women Writers" are not untalented, but there are a lot of people out there who use, if you like, "the race card," who use the "women's card," or who use the "gay card." They're writing about something, and their only sort of qualification for writing about it is that they are "that particular victim." I think that's quite a generally held view amongst people. There are certain kinds of people who use this particular "disability." But that's okay. Maybe that's not even true anymore, I don't know. I don't completely agree with Amrit, I think it's the kind of thing that people say to put down other people. In the end, even if you're writing about being I don't know, a single mother who is gay and black and disabled, if it's a good piece of work, it's a good piece of work. Who cares why? I partly agree with Amrit's view, although I think that it is very male, it's nothing Indian. There's sort of two views on the issue of "Women's Writing" and a lot of it is confessional. *Looking for Maya* is in the "confessional genre."

S.R.: Would you feel disturbed if somebody labelled you a "Woman Writer"?

A.S.: No, not at all. I don't care. Of course, I would only like to be known as a writer, that's what I'd like to be known as, a London-writer. But if somebody called me a "Woman Writer," no, why should I be offended? Or a "Black Writer?" I think most writers wouldn't want to be put in just one hole. If I'm called a "Woman Writer", does that mean that men don't want to read me? Why would that be? No, why should I be offended? I would be offended, if somebody said I was a bad writer! (laughs)

S.R.: Amrit is a lecturer dealing with postcolonial studies and there's a bit in the novel where Amrit and Torquil point out that "Black Politics," victimhood, and issues of race, class, and gender are en vogue these days. Would you agree with them? Would you consider yourself an Asian writer?

A.S.: No, I mean again, those statements are linked up with what Amrit says about it. It's a point of view. If you're oppressed, people like that. People don't want to hear about somebody being happy (laughter). Yes, anger is en vogue.

S.R.: So what do you think about "Postcolonial Studies?"

A.S.: I have to say, personally speaking, there's a bit in *Looking for Maya* where Mira had been given lots of A3 photocopied articles in a seminar on Postcolonial Literature, and she lined her underwear drawers with these sheets. I'm just not a theory person, and so that was me making fun of theories. I don't get involved too much in the whole kind of theory side of things, because that's not why I'm writing novels. I'm writing novels because I want to tell stories. Now, it's not my job to theorize about my novels. I can tell you about what I feel why I wrote something. I don't have a problem with people analyzing my texts, because once you've written a book, it's out there, and people can and should analyze it the way they want to. And you the reader is entitled to read a book the way you want to read it. And I think it's very interesting, actually, when people have written papers using my novels. I find them very interesting, because obviously, you think "Oh, I've never thought of it like that." If you're just asking me what I think personally, I just think "Well, it's out there," but I certainly wouldn't read something that Homi Bhabha, for instance, said and go "Oh, how can I illustrate that in my novel." I wouldn't even know how to do that to be honest.

S.R.: In the novel Mira is disgusted by "that sort of white women", as she puts it, "hanging around with the men who formed the 'Black Students Alliance'", and she also disapproves of Luke's overzealousness with "the Indian culture." Could you please comment on that?

A.S.: First of all, it's not that Mira disapproves of it. If you read it, it is that she says she remembers, when she was at college, there were these white women who would hang around with black guys. Because again, what she's trying to do in her quest for identity is that she's trying to place other people. She's trying to place where other people are. It's not that she disapproves of them. That's just something she observed. Concerning Luke's overzealousness with Indian culture, Mira shouldn't think like that, because Luke was into it before he met her. So she feels bad, she shouldn't think like that. I think that this is something, I'm sure at a particular age, all black women feel like that, if they have a white boyfriend. I think I probably did that at that age, maybe younger, rather seventeen or whatever. If you're with somebody, you think "are they interested in me because of my culture." But that's also to do with what you know about your own self, isn't it? Mira realizes that Luke is basically a genuine person. Why shouldn't he be interested in Indian culture? It's natural when he says

"why can't we go to India." Luke and Mira have two agendas. He just, of course, he wants to go to India. He can mix in more with her family. But for Mira it's another agenda, she wants to keep him separate.

S.R.: Okay, so let me ask my final question. Mira's parents provide a very negative definition of the term "hybrid." They say that hybrids are out of place and inauthentic like the British soldiers in colonial India. Do you share this notion of hybridity as "being out of place?"

A.S.: No, I feel exactly the opposite. I think that's why I wanted to show that, on the one hand you've got this stable family. They're good people, they're nice people. But, of course, by the very fact of what they are - which is RaviKavi -, their whole view of anybody who isn't like them is not right. So hybridity is the opposite of that, if you like. They think that's inauthentic, whereas I think, Mira occupies that space, which again - to go back to my original subject - is both. There's a feeling of, if you like authenticity (what does it mean anyway), but there's also a feeling of hybridity. In a sense you start thinking that hybridity exists everywhere, even within the notion of authenticity. I think what RaviKavi think about hybridity is the exact opposite to what Mira feels or knows about herself. But she feels that she has to find out what her hybridity is and what it means. I think she feels it. She feels different, she feels caught in, and part of many things. She knows that she is not like her parents. She knows that there are other influences and just wants to find them. To her parents hybridity is alien, whereas for her it's not alien. For her it almost makes up what she is. I think she occupies the space which is where hybridity begins. If you like, you can go on and on trying to find out what hybridity is. In a way her parents seem to be one, RaviKavi, the same. But actually, if you look at their parents, perhaps to their parents they are hybrids. They left India, they only have one child - there are many things, so it seems that hybridity really is the actual thing that happens in life which is that we do change, we are open to other influences. Think about it, even if you live in a village, and you've never been out of the village, you are still a hybrid, if perhaps you speak another language using a computer. If you speak to the the village priest, for instance, you use another language than at home. I mean you are still open to many different influences. There is no such thing as purity or authenticity. Although, again we want the illusion of that, we want the idea that there is something authentic. We aspire to that. Maybe, there isn't anything authentic. So I thought that's something that Mira grapples with. Again, she grapples with wanting to find out what it means: "Am I out of place, or is this what I am?"

I don't think it's the question that the novel particularly answers. I don't think that it's a question that can be answered. You know, you're a flux.

S.R.: Time is also a flux. Thank you very much, Atima. I'm looking forward to your new play and your third novel.

Helene Moglen. *The Trauma of Gender. A Feminist Theory of the English Novel*. Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001.

By Cornelia Dahmer, University of Frankfurt, Germany

1 Helene Moglen intends to challenge the traditional view, most famously expressed by Ian Watt in "The Rise of the Novel" from 1959, that the English novel as a genre developed in the eighteenth century in response to the "rise" of capitalism and the ascent of the middle class. As a starting point for her study, she takes Nancy Armstrong, who argues in *Desire and Domestic Fiction: A Political History of the Novel* (New York: Oxford University Press 1987) that the economical and political concerns central to the eighteenth century novel were often masked as problems of gender relations. Moglen claims that gender relations in the novel were not, in fact, a mask for other concerns but themselves the central problem which caused the development of the novel as a means of articulating and negotiating it. Her "feminist theory of the novel" is based on the assumption that the rigid definition of "masculinity" and "femininity" as complementary and mutually exclusive categories, and of gender as a natural and immutable part of every person's identity, which gradually became the dominant view from about 1650 onwards as a result of economical development, philosophical discourse, and anatomical research, caused "the trauma of gender." Individuals, Moglen argues, originally in possession of all possible traits, felt the need to conform to the prescribed gender roles and to suppress all those aspects of their personality that did not fit in. This resulted in strain, fear, and a feeling of loss. Moglen's theory of the novel is feminist in the sense that she intends to contribute to the uncovering and understanding of the psychic costs of this sex-gender system and its influence on the Western world until today, thus aiming at social and psychological change.

2 According to Moglen, the struggle of each new generation to adapt successfully to the appropriate gender roles - as well as their secret fears and melancholy resulting from the loss of the original ungendered wholeness - found expression in the novel. Rejecting the conviction of most literary historians that the early English novel was predominantly a realist genre, Moglen holds that it combined fantastic narrative structures with realistic ones to produce a special bimodal form well suited to investigate the sex-gender-system: the fantastic is suited for investigating the intrapsychic state of the traumatised gendered subject, the realistic to describe gendered society. Moglen links the development of this bimodal form to the emergence of individualism. Individualism has an outward-looking aspect - the endeavour to be autonomous -, which corresponds to the realistic narrative mode. It also has an inward-

looking aspect - the interest in one's own interior life -, which corresponds to the fantastic mode.

3 To exemplify her "feminist theory of the English novel," Moglen analyses novels by four well-known eighteenth-century authors, two of them traditionally considered to be the "fathers of the novel" (Daniel Defoe and Samuel Richardson), the other two dismissed as minor talents (Horace Walpole) or atypical (Laurence Sterne) by Watt and later theorists of the English novel as a realist genre. Moglen concentrates entirely on male authors, as in her view the differences between male and female experience of the "trauma of gender" require a separate treatment of each.

4 Moglen's approach is based on psychoanalysis, which she considers to be especially appropriate for the English novel because both Freud and the novel describe alienated subjects, who strive for autonomy but are traumatised by the sex-gender system. She focuses on the authors' biographies and the veiled layers of meanings they unconsciously inserted as subtexts into their novels, as well as on the intentionally produced and therefore more accessible parts of the texts. Her interpretation is based on feminist object relations theory with its emphasis on the central role of the mother as primary object and dominant presence in the child's interior life. (Yet, in disturbing contradiction to this, the mother is reduced to a minor role in the family and society by the patriarchal sex-gender system.) In addition, Moglen uses different psychoanalytic theories to interpret the works of individual authors: Heinz Kohut (Defoe), Jessica Benjamin (Richardson), Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva (Sterne), and Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok (Walpole). Assuming an interdependent relation between literature and psychoanalysis, she also uses her interpretation of the novels to point up flaws and limits of psychoanalytic theories.

5 In the chapter "Daniel Defoe and the Gendered Subject of Individualism," Moglen compares Kohut's "narcissistic individuals," who are characterised by a quick alternation between feelings of grandiosity and feelings of worthlessness and fear, to Defoe's protagonists. Defoe's characters fight ruthlessly for autonomy under the conditions of entrepreneurial capitalism in the realist parts of his novels, but their unconscious fears and insoluble conflicts are exposed in a fantastic mode of writing. These conflicts, caused by the collision of individualism with the sex-gender system, make the characters' achievement of complete autonomy impossible; for the female protagonists, even the thought of autonomy appears obnoxious. Since a successful achievement of bourgeois individuality is impossible for Defoe's protagonists, Moglen rejects Kohut's attempt to adapt the "narcissistic individual" to bourgeois society by therapy as also impossible

6 According to Moglen, Richardson's central topic is male psychosexuality. In *Clarissa* he reproduces the model of gender relations typical of the "pornographic imagination" as described by Benjamin: In the realist parts of his fiction autonomous, dominant men have exploitative relationships with women, whom they misogynistically divide into desexualized potential future wives and sexual - and therefore despicable as well as desirable - whores. Women react by either going along with the masochistic part or trying to protect their own individuality by virtuous resistance and withdrawal. While approving of this model of gender roles, Richardson involuntarily reveals the deficient nature of it in the fantastic parts of the novel: his characters not only fear but also secretly long for the strong affective ties they once experienced in a primal ungendered past but sacrificed for the sake of autonomy.

7 *Tristram Shandy*, according to Moglen, depicts men who try to escape from the pressure exerted by their masculine gender role (in which their phallic power, in contrast to Lacan's definition taken to be quite literally based on the [im]potence of the penis, is continually questioned) as well as from the misogynistic fears evoked by the remembrance of their primal past dominated by a creatively fertile mother. They create an intermediary space in between the realistic and the fantastic for themselves: the realm of the "hobbyhorse," which Moglen describes as similar to the *semiotic* defined by Kristeva as an affective dimension in between the infantile state of mind (corresponding to the fantastic) and the Lacanian symbolic (corresponding to the realistic). At the intersection of realistic and fantastic narrative modes, Sterne's male characters experience a state of self-transcendent being comparable to Lacan's *jouissance*, which replaces gender oppositions with all-male sameness, desire with homosocial friendship and female fertility with male cultural productivity.

8 While in all the novels by Defoe, Richardson, and Sterne the realist mode dominates, in Walpole's gothic fiction the fantastic mode is more conspicuous, since it interrogates and criticises the realist narrative. The realist plot of the autonomous male individual and his exploitative relationships with others becomes a grotesquely exaggerated parody. Unconvincing motivations and anticlimactic scenes call the significance of the realist narrative into question and point to the fantastic narrative as a source of more significant meanings. The way in which Walpole deals with the fantastic is similar to the theories of Abraham and Torok, who link the uncanny to melancholia, and use gothic metaphors to capture melancholic affectivity: Walpole's fantastic plot about the son's estrangement from an aggressive and competitive father and longing for a mother who is desired, feared, and lost is saturated with melancholia and expressed in uncanny, gothic images of a past haunting the present, of incestuous desire and unrestrained rage.

9 The complexity of the interrelations between the narrative modes, the different works by one author, the author's biography and the psychoanalytic theories used to interpret the author's works almost exceeds the limits of chapters of about thirty pages each and makes them difficult reading. Yet on the whole Moglen presents an interesting and thought-provoking new approach to the old question of why the English novel came into being in the eighteenth century. The spread of complementary concepts of gender caused - even if not necessarily a "trauma" - a flood of fictional and non-fictional writings dealing with the new forms of behaviour and thinking required of each sex. This intense interest in gender roles and gender relations was most probably more than just a "mask" for economical or political concerns. A psychoanalytic, rather than a historical or purely feminist approach, proves helpful in highlighting the sexual and intrapsychic implications of the changes in gender relations. Moglen's flexible and undogmatic use of different theories enables her to adapt them to the novels she discusses, rather than ignore features of the texts which do not fit in. Convincing as her analysis of the four famous eighteenth century novelists is, one would wish for the inclusion of texts by female authors and of novels from the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, in order to be better able to judge whether Moglen's "theory of the English novel" is indeed applicable to the genre as a whole. This, as she announces in a footnote to the introduction, is of continued research interest to her.

Dyer, Richard. *The Culture of Queers*. London: Routledge, 2002

By Dirk Schulz, University of Cologne, Germany

1 Richard Dyer, Professor of Film Studies at The University of Warwick (GB), is the author of several highly acclaimed works such as *Now You See It: Studies in Lesbian and Gay Film* (1990), *The Matter of Images* (1993) and *White* (1997). His latest monograph is a collection of fourteen essays out of which only two were specifically written for this volume. The task of this collection is to present a wide range of genres, aesthetics and individuals as "cultural productions", which together help to form a notion of male queer culture before the infamous Stonewall riots in 1969. Each of these individual articles can be loosely linked to the overall historical context to which *The Culture of Queers* adheres. Looking at the contribution made by queer cultural production before the era of Gay Pride, Act Up and Gay Studies, their underlying queer quality, Dyer suggests, proves to have been even more coded, subversive, and isolated than its manifestations and representations nowadays are.

2 The historical perspective of the book calls back to memory that the term queer, due to its historically negative connotations of oppression and stigmatisation of homosexuals was replaced at the beginning of the seventies by the term gay, a term imbued with positive connotations by the homosexual community itself. At least within the academic world, the word queer has been actively reappropriated and now refers to a deconstructivist theoretical approach which "looks beyond an exclusive and fixed sexuality [and in which] sexual constitution tends to be viewed as always in some manner dissonant, disturbing, subversive, transgressive" (4). By exposing the playful, diverse, ironic and self celebrating subversive potential inherent in the productions examined, *The Culture of Queers* also challenges the "notions and feelings of immorality, deviance, weakness, illness, inadequacy, shame, degeneracy, sordidness, disgust and pathos [which] were all part of the notion of queerdom" (6). However, throughout the book the reality of the oppression and marginalisation, which accompanies the category of "queer" is also taken into consideration.

3 In his introduction to the volume, Richard Dyer explains the reasons for his historical approach and the difficulty of organising the fourteen articles which the book comprises: "Dates, especially when they so neatly embrace a century [1869-1969], are never more than vivid emblems of the much more ragged processes by which ideas come to prominence and ebb away" (1) he states. Still, since "queer cultural production - like queers - can only exist in the society and culture in which it finds itself" (9), this periodisation of the subsequent essays allows for interesting conclusions about the zeitgeist of their moment of conception. Dyer's

enterprise seems to be caught up in an apparent paradox, inasmuch as "only occasionally is queer cultural production done in order to say something about queers and the world in which they find themselves" (2). Nevertheless, the individual essays argue for specifically queer-produced codes and aesthetics that reflect the time of their circulation and that helped to shape an idea of gay identity before the actual inauguration of the "gay" movement.

4 Dyer's understanding of culture in Western society as "primarily concerned with pleasure, with making things that are enjoyable and giving vent to the need to speak, to express and communicate" (9), in the context of any notion of homosexual identity, gains a special quality which he refers to in "The Politics of Gay Culture". This essay functions almost as an additional introduction to the values, aims and design the volume. He argues that "[c]ulture does [...] tell us what was available to be thought and felt about being a queer. [...] [W]hether it be television, theatre, music or advertising, culture at once shapes our identity, tells us about the world" (15). Thus, in shaping a social group identity becomes "a prerequisite for any political activity proper" (15). Dyer maintains that "[t]here is a felt difference - of weight, emphasis, tone, rather than sharply drawn contours or rigid formal differences - between queer and straight cultural production, and straight retains the prestige of normative sexuality, its felt centrality and taken for grantedness" (10). This conceptualisation of a particular distinctiveness of "queer culture" is the glue which holds the seemingly random articles together.

5 The analyses offered within the individual articles, ranging from an exploration of gay porn, film noir, and the films of Rainer Werner Fassbinder to gay misogyny, images of the vampire and the sad young man to queer stars (in particular Quentin Crisp and Charles Hawtrey) are, for the most part, insightful, convincing and inspiring. However, sometimes the way Dyer addresses the reader appears rather patronising and also tends towards generalisation. This might be due to the different types of publications the articles were originally written for. They span gay glam mags such as *Playguy* and *Attitude* as well as academic theoretical volumes. Thus, when invoking a presumed primarily non-academic gay readership, Dyer's pleading for more awareness of queer culture's inherent sexist, racist and capitalist power structures, although principally welcome, at times jars with the reader and creates defensiveness to his otherwise stimulating and evident explorations. The difficulty of trying to avoid generalisations on the one hand, while arguing in favour of a social group identity on the other, becomes most apparent in those articles where a distinct queer productivity and perceptiveness is addressed as in gay misogyny, the aesthetics of camp, queer dress sense and self-reflexivity in gay pornography.

6 The article on Rock Hudson, in the context of the book's ostensible rational, also deserves a special mentioning. Although, for the most part, Dyer's explorations of queer culture remain rooted in the historical context of their production, in the case of Hudson, the queer aspect of his work was obviously revealed only retrospectively. The belated awareness of the actor's homosexuality, - an actor who seemed to embody "that uniquely U. S. men's style of antiseptic machismo" (163) - allows for a brilliant analysis of the unsettling effect of his outing, an event which "seems to subvert the security with which ideas of masculinity and femininity, normality and heterosexuality, are held" (163). In the analysis of Rock Hudson's public and private persona, queer theory's concept of gender performativity thus becomes most apparent. Here, Dyer cleverly highlights the potential for "queering" the everyday, thereby going beyond other readings in the volume which suggest a notion of queer culture that could be conceived as distinct from or even opposed to straight culture.

7 In his introduction, Richard Dyer rightfully states that "accepting that all writing is historically contingent, I think the essays stand as valid in their own right" (13). Apart from minor criticisms with regards to tone and unavoidable difficulties of positioning which any notion of group identity creates, the articles in *The Culture of Queers* deliver a varied, complex, distinguished and personally committed discussion on a variety of queer-related cultural productions. The wide range of subjects and aspects discussed should provide ample material for further debates. As a result, this book can be highly recommended.

Carlson, Cindy L., Mazzola, Robert L. and Susan M. Bernardo (eds).
***Gender Reconstructions - Pornography and Perversion in Literature and Culture.* Aldershot: Ashgate, 2002.**

By Philipp Hofmann, MA, University of Cologne, Germany

1 "There are no dirty words. Ever!" Leonard Cohen stated when, before a recording of a reading of his poems in 1965, a sound engineer told him that "dirty words" would be deleted from the tape. The volume *Gender Reconstructions - Pornography and Perversion in Literature and Culture* [edited by Cindy L. Carlson, Robert L. Mazzola and Susan M. Bernardo] suggests that Cohen's statement is not just the incensed exclamation of an artist faced with the mutilation of his work but also holds true generally for art that represents the pornographic and/or the perverse. The eleven essays published in this volume offer a wide range of voices expressing ideas and perspectives on the current debate on pornography and its relation to power structures and questions of identity. As the title suggests, pornography and perversion are discussed especially with an emphasis on the ability to challenge and break up phallogocentric structures and discourses to re|construct (concepts of) gender. The authors do not only discuss the aesthetics of perversion and pornography in various types of media (such as texts, paintings and installations) but also how, on different levels, a work of art can be connected to these aesthetics: from the content level on the one hand (essays dealing with explicitly "perverse" and "pornographic" art) to a structural level on the other (essays applying a theory of "perversion" to art that isn't necessarily "pornographic" in itself).

2 Deborah Caslav Covino's article on the painting "The Artist and His Mother" by the Armenian-American expressionist Arshile Gorky is one of the essays that - on first sight - does not seem to deal with an object of art directly related to questions of pornography|perversion. She focuses on the mother-son relation that is expressed in the painting and underlines the "perversion" of this structure within a Freudian discourse while simultaneously emphasizing its power to break up and rearrange constellations and dogmas of Freudian psychoanalysis. Covino draws on an earlier reading of the painting by Jack Ben-Levi in which Ben-Levi identifies the father as the boy's lost object, and rearranges the psychic and family constellations: in her interpretation the mother is the object of desire, but this "mother-longing," she argues, "Freud would have considered [...] 'perversion'" (80) because "[d]esire for the mother means exile from the community of men, a form of social emasculation" (81). The bodies in Gorky's painting are read as symptoms of the "psychic rupture" of the "post-Oedipal (heterosexual) male" who "must abject woman only in order to

love her a gain" (85). To revise these Freudian "unfavorable characterizations" (86) of female sexuality and subjectivity, Covino discusses Kristeva's theory of abjection but concludes that it does not fully disallow the reading of sons and mothers that Freud enfranchises and thus warns that without abandoning "the heterosexual decree that males reject the feminine [...] male-to-female sexuality will remain an alternative kind of perversion: an ineffectual effort to love the refused other" (88).

3 In contrast to Covino's essay, Ann Bomberger's article "The Efficacy of Shock for Feminist Politics" deals with a more openly pornographic subject. It discusses the question whether postmodern shock tactics - such as the depiction of sexually explicit material in perverse and pornographic fashion - still have the ability to initialize political change or whether they are immediately co-opted by late capitalism and thus only reinforce long-held and established beliefs and power structures. She contrasts two texts that react differently to the challenge of a readership that is "beyond shock": Kathy Acker's *Blood and Guts in High School* and Donald Barthelme's *Snow White*. Bomberger argues that Acker's novel challenges the politics behind writing by challenging the structure of writing: although the effect is based on a "conventional" notion of shock she regards Acker's work to be more successful in rupturing readers' expectations and in making them reconsider cultural - and especially heterosexual - norms and values than Barthelme's. Acker tries to shock by "connecting the perverse [...] with the dominant norm, that is, heterosexual adult relationship" (191). The perverse - in Acker's case - serves as the disturbing element in the smoothly running machine of late capitalism that - with its ceaseless production of texts - has co-opted the language of political attack and at the same time emptied it of all signification. For Bomberger it is especially the young age of the protagonist of *Blood and Guts in High School* (the little girl is only ten years old) and the sexual involvement with her father that creates a shocking effect and she concludes that "sexuality [...] in its most degraded and perverse form can be a potentially rebellious political act" (193). Barthelme's writing differs from Acker's decisively, not only in the way that perversion and pornography are used but especially in the function they fulfill within the novel and the subversive potential Bomberger ascribes to them. According to her, Barthelme is a "dissident postmodernist" (198) who uses gender and female sexuality as a platform to criticize capitalism and language, but in contrast to Acker he "creates a world where no one can be shocked by anything [...] and one where the predominating emotion is boredom" (199). She presents Barthelme's *Snow White* as being centered on "perverting one of the most sacred films of American popular culture" (198) and underlines the pornographic elements that have been added to turn the Disney version into a

postmodern fairy tale that serves as a serious critique "of the ability to write about anything at all with passion" (200). However, Bomberger concludes that *Snow White* does not challenge the prevailing norms - although it "parodies the objectification of women" - because Barthelme is "less successful at keeping his parody from re-inscribing the stereotypes than Acker is" (198).

4 In probably the most controversial essay of the volume, Gregory L. Robinson goes even a step further in discussing pornographic writing as a tool for - rather than against - the deconstruction of phallic misogynistic writing. In his analysis of Angela Carter's novel *The Passion of New Eve*, he draws on the notion of the "moral pornographer" - a concept developed by Carter in *The Sadeian Woman* - to show how pornography might be used "as a critique of current relations between the sexes" (126). Carter uses this oxymoron (which - as one could argue - is in itself a 'perverse' term) to denote "pornography's potential to be critical of gender relations" (126) and rejects the idea that pornography automatically implies an exploitive and misogynistic authorship. As Robinson points out, she hints at the danger of assuming such a "natural" connection and instead focuses on the culturally constructed gender archetypes that pornography reinforces but also has the power to deconstruct: Carter reads Sade's perverted writings as a challenge to the archetypical models of femaleness by upsetting "the bourgeois ideal of women as demure drawing-room objects" and by asserting "their right to be part of the culture of 'fucking' - the society of activity - and shape history in the active sense" (127). For Robinson, *The Passion of New Eve* is Carter's attempt to write a novel that uses the weapon of moral pornography aimed at initiating "a conceptual change in pornography as a genre" and "demonstrating the real problems of life as a woman in a male-dominated society and culture" (144).

5 These are just three examples of the variety of opinions that *Gender Reconstructions* offers and of how the articles acknowledge - if not embrace - the potential that pornographic and especially perverse writing and structures can have to deconstruct gender stereotypes and expectations: this is not a book that the antiporn movement will like. It may not be politically correct to approach pornography from a consciously amoral angle, but it is the only way to realize the subversiveness it can develop. Or - to speak with Acker's protagonist - "every position of desire [...] is capable of putting to question the established order of a society" (193). There are no dirty words. Ever? Unfortunately the volume does not leave the reader with that kind of certainty: the subtitle "pornography and perversion in literature and culture" is somewhat misleading, since the essays only cover the rather thin cultural sphere of "high art" - for lack of a better term. Whether any random page of *The Hustler* might have the same

subversiveness and ability to deconstruct and challenge gender expectations, concepts and norms as a novel by Acker, or Carter, or a painting by Gorky still needs to be discussed.

Three poems by Sridhar Rajeswaran

by Sridhar Rajeswaran

A Dialogue Between the Self and the Other

Her: Remind us again of

what was

The fifty odd years of dislocation

The great Divide

When the Mount with the Baton

Played half Solomon.

Tears, sweat, blood

Hunger, strife...

We are brain-dead

And passions rule the roost.

We are a country of impotent hypocrites

Unable to amalgamate the wealth

Of disparate experience...

We have chosen to divide.

The only freedom we hear

Is the decadent voice of a commercial.

Neo-colonialism aided by a

Willing suspension of disbelief.

A deadening of existence,

An annihilation of integrity,

A violation of senses,

Through a systematic misrepresentation

Of dreams

Him: You do not seem to do anything about it

Either. Your struggle, your cause,
Your work is disparate.
You do not subscribe to 'ideology'

Her: My work is Existential
It is part of the broader circle.
We negotiate Margins, Centers,
We comprehend 'difference'.

Historically no one fought our battles
There were no 'representations'
Voices were a consequence of –
Conspicuous, only through absence.

For over a millennium we have had
Our feet tied.
Now, we are a Community.
Race, caste, class and gender
Notwithstanding.

Woman's politics enables a vision
Of a more equal and less
Unjust world.
We have our Ideology
But no ideologues
No Icons.

 We are one, we are all.
We offer 'alternatives'...

 We try to see the finger
As a point of reference to the world
The one exists to prevent the negation of the other.

An Escape into the Mad House...

An escape into the mad house

By ten of them imperfect:

The first

Woman - Eve

Out to amend creation

Spared ribs for the pot of gruel

The second

Man - farmer

Ploughed season long

Labour sanctified wine dance and song

The third was love

Fetterless, sound, unbound

Floated free across

Rainbows and clouds

The fourth a stupid sharer

Knew no want before

Because gave away even what he needed

if he found the other's need greater

The fifth the committed worker

Plodded scoured and endeavoured

The whistle between his lips

And a song in his heart

The sixth was human suffering

dieting all day through

to vanish, to vanish, to vanish

vanity to the fore.

The seventh a dunce unwise
Teacher, philosopher, guide
Economic in disposition
Gluttony his foe.

The eighth one, space
Building dwelling thinking
Open and wide
Eating the apple to the core.

Nine the indomitable artist
Rooted on ground solid
History, self and collective
No more placebos to the soul.

The Perfect Ten
Woman - community
Relentless in pursuit
Stretching tireless striving

Toward a more equal
And a less unjust world.

Around
All were round circles,
Round moon, round sun
Full life, fuller community

Humanity riding a crest
On the wing of a wimpling wing

In their ecstasy they go forth on a swing,
As a skate's heel sweeps smooth on a bow-bend:
They swoop and glide

Rebuffing the big wind.
My heart in hiding
Stirred for a bird, - the achievement, the mastery of the thing!
Within the walls, between the corridors
The angels sang of the new king born again.

But sound travelled
The paper kite rocket
Plunged head first
Into the damp squid din

And the rats came.
In swarms, in torrents
Wave after wave
Great rats, lean rats,

Grey old plodders gay young whiskers
Fathers, uncles, cousins
And drowned and drowned and drowned
The rich music lost in melodious guile.

The Mad house crumbled
Windows crumpled
Doors collapsed
And humanity was mouse-trapped.

They were led by the other ten -
Under written by the dollar
With guns and knives and those bits of paper,
Cavorting grasshoppers on a string

Waving flags, brandishing banners
The leaders and the damned.

And they levelled
And levelled and levelled
Until,
All was heat dust and destruction.

Rebirth: More Static than Words

The old man has done it again
Ordered his djinn to frustrate me.
My ordered world make
An incoherent cosmos.

My perceptions vary.
Foul-mouthed
I devour myself
Like his sow that devours her own.

Unable to immortalise muses
Unpossessed of the talent
That helps hear an ocean in a conch shell
I battle reckless seas

Twiddling swords to shame
The magic wand of innocence
Insouciance the sickening after taste.
And the scented breath transmogrified.

It is no more gentleness that bridges
Distances across acres of grass.
Life: now worn nonchalant
On the edge of a sleeve marks sway

With its palpable venom.
Unleashes the rustle of the viper
To trail images which question -

The need for memory.

From the present I need no memories.

What may be the remembrance?

But events that shall ceaselessly image for me,

In later moments of happiness

My own split and unageing self

That sought autonomy being denied agency?

A parrot raging at his own image in the enamelled sea

Refrains from peeling masks lest, the image frightens.

Rage and fear

Constant companions

Inveigling needs, dousing soporifics that deaden

Leadean dreams and leaden eyed despairs -

Inducing purposes to hallucinations

Structures to abstractions

Ferrying stone for the blinds man's bread

milking placebos to the soul.

The sow that eats her piglets

Her own that devour so

Wars that order chaos

And chaos has won order now.

Every order had his destruction

Will every other its other ?

In vain hope recompensed,

lies wailing frenetic in its earthy wisdom.

The age is not come about

Suffering not yet a badge
History mocks easy transfer of
One man's labour other men's food.

Four platoons in complete regalia
Four humours, four directions represent
The fifth in 'sense'
A secret gestapo.

England her dream made true
And now the Americanos come
Branding freedom stamps in hand,
For throat chemical concentrations.

Synthetic tastes fertile in imagination.
Chaos rules the roost.

The hour gone by
Clock time tolled eras of destitution.
Collieries that light visions of meaning
In unfathomable abbeys.

Echo-becoming,
Meaning lost in a complex muddle of jarring notes
To civilised humanity
Essensced in grovelling harmony.

Birds in the canneries
Brides in the nests
Liveried in misery,
Mystery veils the shroud.

Two hands to hold the neck
Two to pierce lips

Few drops of acid down the throat
A new parrot in its full- throated ease.

They broke away from the asylum
Ten of them, perfect:
One a hoarder now leader
Stealing pennies from a blind girl's bowl.

The second a dual vice
With knives and guns roams
Ushering in order, waving flags
In corridors where children go.

The third begins, middles and ends
In streets, states and doors
Bits of paper with heads of leaders
Valued at core.

The fourth was vice
And visceral in joy, abattoired human folk.
Drink and devil on a dead man's bum
Hey hey ho and a bottle of rum.

The fifth was neutral and scavenged
Spoils that needlessly
Go waste in a land of need-
Mercury and quick silver.

The sixth a priest of love
Who strung grasshoppers on a string
Enlivened divine Idée fixed
great thought, great action, good flow.

The seventh man was wise
The great spiritual saint
Enigmatic in action
For his left hand knew not his right.

The eighth was openly Satan
frontal as they come
Ravaged, maimed, and killed.
Population was his forte.

The ninth was the leveller
And he levelled, and levelled
And levelled until
All was dust, heat and destruction.

The tenth was the lord over-seer
Corporate head purloiner
Reigned supreme with iron hand
The dance of the wolf, the blood-moon days.

Around the round they fled
Great rats, lean rats, strong rats
Nibbling great mounds of flesh
O! for the humans in mouse traps.

Maddened by chaos,
Lost in the rectitude of a meaningless existence,
Wanting to liberate a reductive vision
They met. He and they,

In the sombre silence
Of sepulchral doom.

Beyond the moments-

Between the sheets
Of fluorescent glare
In the darkness of mournful glee

In the diatribe of seclusion -
They huddled close
Hung tight in the current
Of cuddly warmth he, they and liberty.

Eight O' clock and sedatives
Noon and a pot of gruel
Psychiatrists and dreadful monotones
Love that is pitched in excrement.

Hypnopaedia and mind bending
Impelling force through ductile medicines
Tactility, gauze-worn cottoned tongue
Speech, poor poll.

They lived their chosen nightmare
Feigned innocent converts
Then furrowed, plotted, pieced
Land small, but space their own.

List of Contributors

Prof. Claudia Liebrand teaches at the German department of the University of Cologne. She has chaired a research project on media and cultural communication since 2000. Her research interests include 19th century literature, gender, media theory (with a focus on film) and psychoanalysis. Among others, she has published on Fontane (*Das Ich und die anderen. Fontanes Figuren und ihre Selbstbilder*. Freiburg: Rombach 1990) E.T.A. Hoffmann (*Aporie des Kunstmythos. Die Texte E. T. A. Hoffmanns*. Freiburg: Rombach 1996); a book on Kafka (*Kafkas Intertexte*. Eds. Claudia Liebrand and Franziska Schöblier) and one on gender and film (*Gender und Genre im zeitgenössischen Hollywoodfilm*. Eds. Claudia Liebrand and Ines Steiner) will be published in 2003. Her article "Gender Meets Race" is a shortened and translated version of a chapter from her forthcoming monograph *Gender-Topographien. Kulturwissenschaftliches Lektüren von Hollywood-Filmen der Jahrhundertwende* (Köln: DuMont 2003).

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