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# NARRATIVES OF THE UNCANNY:
# A STUDY OF ASIAN/AMERICAN FICTION

By

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ABSTRACT

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This thesis attempts to read the uncanny contemporary world inundated with fright, terror and catastrophe and haunted by the return of the "animal." It is also an exploration of the uncanny figures "abandoned" to the third place of disjuncture, diaspora, homelessness and exile, and their gradual passage into the "beast" or the Sandman. It meditates on the political and the existential sense of the unheimliche that renders home unhomely and the nation ghostly. It attempts to think nation from the negative space inhabited by the unhomely "immigrants," at home neither at the place of their "origin" nor at the location they adopt as home. After reviewing theories of the uncanny, the thesis discusses the issues of violence of remaking oneself in Bharati Mukherjee's Jasmine, the issues of history, incarceration and rightlessness in John Okada's No-No Boy, the figures of haunting, translators and ghosts in Jhumpa Lahiri's Interpreter of Maladies, and the questions of dictation memory, trauma and textuality in Cha's DICTEE .

To my Father Gopal Ram and my Mother Deva Devi
*with love and gratitude*

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# INTORDUCTION:
# UNCANNY OR THE WORLD AROUND NINE ELEVEN

. . .her name Mother of Exiles.
From her beacon-hand
Glows world-wide welcome; . . .
"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tost to me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"
- *Emma Lazarus*

In his monograph on the "Uncanny" Nicholas Royle characterizes the modern world as an uncanny place. He recalls his own experience in the twin towers and the tragedy of September 11: his visit to the top of the towers, the vertiginous sensation, the deafening wind, illusion of the towers being weirdly close to each other, yet far apart and swaying in the wind. For him the twin towers were "already rather uncanny" (vii). Then he enumerates the uncanny associations of the events of September 11, and especially its resemblance with US system of putting date and the emergency services; the enormity of the death drive in the hijackers, which Royle calls the "double death drive;" the "appalling apparent accident of a plane flying into a skyscraper" which is followed "minutes later by its uncanny repetition;" the live TV coverage of the whole incident and its repetition for days giving the impression of unreality and filmic artificiality. He casts this tragedy further into uncanny plot by referring to other patterns of the uncanny that the events of September 11 reveal, like thousands of people buried alive in the debris of the towers, the "terrible prosopopoeia of the voice of someone about to die on one of the hijacked aircrafts, the voice-mail left by the victims, the mobile technology, the effacing and deranging

the distinctions between private and public, the living and the ghostly" (viii), and the familiar and the domestic security of the US turning illusory, continues Royle, as the First World War of the twenty first century, *a la* US president, was declared against an unknown enemy:

> Here very legibly, was the logic of the double and the diabolical. It quickly emerged that the prime suspect responsible for orchestrating the atrocities in the US had, in the past, himself received military training and support from the US . . . For the uncanniness of September 11 has to do with what was *already happening* as well with the fear or dread of what may be to come. (viii)

Michael Arnzen introduces the special edition of Paradoxa devoted to the uncanny together with the claim that the 20th century is not only the "century of the uncanny," but also a century of uncanny scholarship steeped in a heightened self-awareness and self-criticism responding to the sublime horror of our cultural past, and the strangely familiar spectrum of time streaming toward the grand end of the second millennium.

Royle and Arnzen are not the only theorists to "historicize" the uncanny. Locating the uncanny spatio-temporally and relating it to human experiences, often of a catastrophic magnitude, are recurrent tendencies among its readers. In her provocative excursion of the eighteenth century culture[s], The Female Thermometer: Eighteenth Century Culture and the Invention of the Uncanny, Terry Castle claims that the uncanny is the invention of the eighteenth century (8). She claims that the new human experience of strangeness, anxiety, and intellectual impasse is the "toxic side effect" of the cultural and psychic transformations, the

rationalist drive and the glorification of scientific means and methods by the epoch called the age of reason or enlightenment. She links the uncanny sense of estrangement and uncertainty with what she calls "the enlightened bewilderment," or a state of confusion due to too much knowledge (19).

At the helm of her discussion is the 18th century reception of the newly introduced thermometer, especially the satirist Bonnell Thornton's gendering of this invention as "Female Thermometer" for measuring the exact temperature of a lady's passion. Castle goes on to explore the themes of passions, emotions, and psychic states in relation to machines and the resultant feeling of the uncanniness. The weatherglass is the reflection of human temperament, especially the fickle, fishy, and "fity" nature ascribed to females, - in other words weatherglass as the *femme machine* (31), - and becomes for her a symbol to understand the narratives of uncanniness in the West since the 18th century. According to her, the concept of the mercurial hysteric female associated with the weatherglass however was soon generalized into the vagaries of human mind.

When Castle comes to Hoffmann's "The Sandman," the major point of reference in Freud's essay on the uncanny, she reminds that Coppola, an important figure in the tale, is the repulsive vendor of the weatherglasses, and she finds it interesting that the instrument now is associated more with male neurasthenia than female hysteria. For Castle Freud's topology of human psyche thus is "a universal weatherglass" (40), continually in flux and unpredictably polymorphous, mechanically controlled by the external forces to which it cannot not respond. Her

study focuses then on this intimate machine that she finds in the narratives throughout the centuries ranging from Defoe's Roxana, Richardson's Clarissa to Woolf's To the Lighthouse. She perceives the phenomenon of the uncanny as the merger of the external and the internal, weather and the human moods, and eventually as the conflation of the gender differences in the wake of the *femme machine*.

In Uncanny American Fiction: Medusa's Face Allan Gardner Lloyd-Smith on the other hand argues that Freud's essay unmistakably betrays the association with the Victorian ideology of the "angel in the house," or the heimlich aspect of home that can turn unnervingly unheimlich insofar as the woman is both the bringer of life as well as death (5). Lloyd-Smith not only grasps the janus-faced nature of the uncanny both as confined creature of the house and as the fatal intruder into the intimate confines of life, he also mythicizes the uncanny by arguing that Medusa's face, which has an apostrophic quality of self-defense, best represents the experience of the uncanny.

If Lloyd-Smith's uncanny is divided among this temporal triplet of the present, the Victorian angels, and mythic-cultural fantasies about Medusa, Vidler's The Architectural Uncanny locates the uncanny in the nineteenth century, especially in its archaeological interests. For Vidler the uncanny is the shared trope of the time in literature and arts, which explains the nineteenth century "rediscoveries," and excavations of antique sites especially Egypt, Pompeii and Troy. He traces Freud's use of the analogy of uncovering and excavating the buried in describing

psychoanalysis and the unconscious to this archaeological interests of the nineteenth century. Vidler discusses the rediscovery of Pompeii at length and argues that the site became a locus of the "dramatic confrontation of the homely and the unhomely," or a space of literary and artistic uncanny interspersed in the mystical writings of Nerval, the popular melodramas of Bulwer Lytton, the romanticism of Theophile Gautier and the dream narratives of Wilhelm Jensen (47).

What is interesting about Vidler's discussion is his spatialization of the uncanny. He reads the unheimlich as a site, but his imagery of excavation and his attempts to collate the unconscious with the archaeological bring him close to the thinkers who rarefy the "experience" of the uncanny as something uncommon, thus making it a privileged or an accidental moment.

Martin Jay in his essay "The Uncanny Nineties" calls uncanny the "master trope" of the nineties. Detailing the history of the critical neglect of the term, Jay argues that until recently the term was not in currency in the theoretical idioms of the academy. Freudian scholars like Philip Rieff, Richard Wollheim, the radical Freudians of the sixties like Norman O Brown and Herbert Marcuse, and more recent works by Peter Gay and Frank Sulloway paid no heed to this term. According to Jay, Lacan once discussed uncanny in the 1962-63 seminars on *L'angoisse*, which however remained unpublished. Only in the seventies the concept gets belated recognition by critics like Cixous and Derrida.

Jay is right in observing that uncanny, as a concept, now has become migratory and homeless as it has "migrated from the ghetto of poststructuralist

literary criticism, first to the visual arts, now to the cultural studies in general" (159). Vidler's use of the uncanny in the field of architecture and urban spaces, Hal Foster and Margaret Cohen's engagement with the term in their works on Surrealism (Compulsive Beauty and Profane Illumination respectively) and especially their consideration of the surrealist object as the lost object beyond recovery are some of the examples Jay cites as the nineties' appropriation of the term in a variety of fields.

The increasing use of the uncanny in film studies and cultural studies corroborates Jay's thesis, but when he places Walter Benjamin's "ruminations" on the modern city at the center of these writers' obsession with the uncanny, or in other words, their conceptualization of the uncanny as the reflection of the demonic city, at once unreal but restless, concrete but always changing, he turns the uncanny into an urban, metropolitan and *mutatis mutandis* a western phenomenon at the cost of the global tangents of these metropolises. Jay's delimitating the uncanny first as an experience and then as a rare urban phenomenon is as fractional as temporalizing it in a point of time in history. The hypothesis here in this research is that without bringing the dimension of the uncanny as an ongoing process touching several "worlds" of the globe, including the modern distinction between the global South and the North, we cannot bring all the implications of the term into full play and exploit it to analyze the socio-economic and cultural aspects of global movements like colonialism, imperialism, migration, translation, homelessness and displacement.

In Jay however we not only come across the theme of "loss" in the

uncanny, but we also encounter the notion of migration, even though only in the metaphorical sense, namely the migration of the term from literary studies to cultural studies. This thesis concentrates on the idea of migration and movement between home and location and the production of the uncanny lives in the process of translation and transition. It was Heidegger who first discussed in his book on Holderlin's Ister the relation between the uncanny and translation. He relates the uncanny to Sophocles' use of the term δεινόν in his Antigone and Holderlin's translation of the term as extraordinary and fearful and his own correction as unheimlich (159). In other words, the unheimlich seems to evoke the body of lives that are caught in the process of movement, migration and translation across cultures, languages and nations and any attempt to fix the uncanny in a particular space and time is anything but an exploration into it.

And by extension, it also requires a movement across disciplines, which is reflected in the way uncanny is understandably divided into various theoretical schools. Conceptualization of the uncanny as a critical approach across disciplinary boundaries is not only a correction of Freud's individual appropriation of the term in psychoanalysis, but it is also a way of demystifying the otherwise arguably untheorizable and aconceptual terms like the uncanny by categorizing them into schools, methods of analyses and interpretations.

There are several schools, as it were, of the uncanny, at times related to the names of what Foucault would call the founders of discursivity or the trans-discursive writers of the West, most notable of whom are Kant, Marx, Heidegger,

Wittgenstein, Kierkegaard, and Derrida.

The Kantian notion of the Sublime is sometimes conflated with that of the uncanny. To this school belong essays like "Freud and the Sublime: A Catastrophe Theory of Creativity" by Harold Bloom (compiled in his book Agon), where he calls Freud's essay on the uncanny "the only major contribution that the twentieth century has made to the aesthetics of the Sublime" (101). Interestingly enough Derrida sounds like a member-defector of this school, when in his essay on Nietzsche, The Ear of the Other, he says that Unheimliche is an absolute risk, an absolute madness in which he doesn't believe (156). In the course of this study we will have plenty of occasions to dwell on and suspend our disbelieve about this absolute risk and madness: the madness with which uncanny beings find themselves abandoned.

The school of uncanny literature exposes Freud for his misreading of Hoffmann's "The Sandman." This school basically concentrates on the troubled relationship of psychoanalysis and literature and tries to subsume Freud's insight on the uncanny entirely inside fiction and its phantoms.

The strongest revision of Freudian theory of the uncanny comes from what can be called the feminist school of the uncanny. Almost all feminist theorists including Cixous, Kristeva, Spivak, and Chow have written on and mostly decried Freud's position and arguments on the uncanny.

"Technology as uncanny" dates back early as to Sybil Wuletich-Brinberg's reading of Poe's stories, which according to her, speak of Poe's fascination with machines, for his characters are, like Freud's Olympia, "living machines or dead

machines, or machines that are half dead-half alive" (37). Gia Pascarelli argues that technology is a pervasive presence and a decisive factor in Hoffmann's story and Freud's reading of the story and his theory of the uncanny is his response to the mass technology of the time. Freud's theoretical efforts of the early twentieth century, argues Pascarelli, suggest that he was, even though unbeknownst to himself, engaged in the analysis of the "particular socio-cultural moment in time: a moment when human psyche was being radically conditioned and constituted by . . .industrial technology" (111). Donna Haraway situates her cyborgs and simians where humans and machines merge and anthropology and technology intersect.

There are critics, like Homi Bhabha, Rey Chow and Spivak, who use uncanny to engage the issues of gender and sexuality, agency and empowerment and to wage a critique of capitalism and transnational division of labor that convert workers into dolls often monitored, manufactured and manipulated by computers.

In White Skins/Black Masks: Representation and Colonialism, Gail Ching-Liang Low, for instance, uses the uncanny to elucidate colonial presence in the grotesque and the unhomely colonies. In this interesting application of the uncanny, Low intends to explore colonial narratives by Kipling for configurations of colonial identity reflected back by its inversion of the normal structure. In his own words, colonial identity in the Anglo-Indian setting of Chittor (India) or other colonial locations, with their dark palaces full of eyes and haunting, undergoes an eerie experience of "home that turns out not to be a home and a self that turns out to be some other being" (114).

The reverse of this idea of the cultural uncanny shows how the "homeless" move away from their "native" settings only to discover that neither the place they left nor the one they adopt as home is adequate to their feelings of "home." In "Reflections on Exile," Edward Said muses over the curious fate of the exiles that live, according to him, a death in life, without of course "death's ultimate mercy" (174). Said defines exile as "an unhealable rift forced between a human being and a native place," an essential sadness that can never be surmounted, "a condition of the terminal loss." He also has his round of locating exile both spatially and temporally, and he claims - as does Arendt in her essay on the refugees (Arendt 110) - that modern Western culture, especially the academic, intellectual and aesthetic thought in the U. S. is the work of the exiles, émigrés, and refugees from fascism, communism and other forms of socio-political dictatorship around the globe (173). He cites George Steiner, who posited the thesis of "extraterritorial" literature of the West to differentiate the Romantic exile from the exile of "our age" - with its modern warfare, imperialism, and the quasi theological ambition of totalitarian rulers - the age, in his own words, that belongs to "the refugee, the displaced person, [and] mass immigration" (174).

But he complicates this definition of exile based on belonging first by relating it to nationalism, which stands to exile, according to him, as do master-slave to each other in Hegelian dialectics. If nationalism is an "assertion of belonging in or to a place, a people and a heritage" (176), with its founding fathers, quasi-religious texts replete with the rhetoric of who belongs and who does not, its heroes and

official enemies and its historical landmarks, exile is a discontinuous state of being, "beyond the frontier between "us" and the "outsider" or the perilous territory of not-belonging: this is to where in a primitive time people were banished" (177).

On the one hand exile "belongs" to or constitutes what fares as the modern Western culture, its aesthetics and intellectual capital, on the other hand exile on the twentieth century scale is "neither aesthetically nor humanistically comprehensible" (174). Even though Said overlooks the fact that his own reflections on exile are heavily dependent on literary figures ranging form Faiz, who fled Zia's military dictatorship in Pakistan, to his favorite Conrad, Auerbach and Mahmoud Darwish, whom he repeatedly and symptomatically cites throughout his writing, along with other great figures of European literary tradition, like Dante, Hugo, Joyce, Nabokov, Adorno etc., he makes an important observation about the relationship of literature, music [his description of exile as contrapuntal also evokes Schoenberg], aesthetics and exile. In other words, by ruling out the possibility of comprehending exile humanistically and aesthetically Said raises the question of the authenticity of aesthetic representation, the ahumanity of the concept of exile, or exile as an *aconcept*, the negative space, which defies all spatio-temporalization that Said started his reflection with. Exile is not simply the dialectic of the self and the other, it is beyond both the "us" and the "outsider," a non-locus where home is not only provisional but also experienced as ineluctable loss. The borders that separate the outsiders and us do not encompass the exiles; in this sense the exiles, refugees, immigrants are not in-betweens, at the borders:

> Borders and barriers, which enclose us within the safety of familiar territory, can also become prisons, and are often defended beyond reason or necessity. Exiles cross borders, break barriers of thought and experience. (185)

But Said goes a step further to detect among the exiles the same leap beyond the reason and the urgency with which they too defend the borders between the "us" and the "outsiders." He finds the borders of nationalisms and exiles undergoing continuous erosion and conversion, which lead him to hold suspect the difference between the loss and painful solitude of exile and the jingoism of the nationalists. He wonders:

> What is there worth saving and holding on to between the extremes of exile [or exile as an extreme, beyond borders, thoughts, aesthetics, humanity, etc.] on the one hand, and the often bloody-minded affirmations of nationalism on the other? Do nationalism and exile have any intrinsic attributes? Are they simply two conflicting varieties of paranoia? (177)

In other words, the idea of "nation," "home," "culture," and "belonging" are intricately related to the notions of "exile" and "non-belonging." Said, like Derrida, not only points out the dangers of these two forms of paranoia: the nationalist's championing of home against the "alien" and the exile's sense of home in her homelessness itself, he also traces the non-locus of non-belonging to the ancient space allocated to the condemned. Curiously enough Agamben in his The Man Without Content theorizes this duplex of artistic production and banishment of the artist and calls art "the most uncanny thing," that purges itself not only of spectators, but eventually of the artist as well (50). It is precisely this in-human locus of the condemned that they hardly elaborate. Once we realize that the uncanny beings

belong nowhere but to the "site" of non-belonging itself, they also exceed the economy of the self and the other, the same and the different and assume the features of the ghostly sandman that Freud would talk in his essay on the uncanny.

At the heart of the present study is the exploration of this space of the condemned and the uncanny beings that inhabit this non-locus, which can be explained with the rhetoric neither of the nation nor of exile. This research pursues such places and beings not only in the narratives of the diasporic dispersions of the mass from the so-called third world into the First, but also the other way round as well, that is, the diasporic's disillusionment at her return to her own "native" place. That is the reason why uncanny beings can never be reached even with the rhetoric of the difference or the other.

After revisiting several theorists of the uncanny in chapter two, the reading will elaborate the ways in which narratives like No-No Boy, Jasmine, Interpreter of Maladies and DICTEE attempt to give expression to the dynamics of the production of the uncanny creatures, who live in a state of non-relation both to home and to location.

To clarify by way of a disclaimer, this study is not just about "homelessness" or about "strangers," and human oddities. The last term, oddity, reminds of an early study by a "psychical researcher" named Eric John Dingwall, whose book Some Human Oddities: Studies in the Queer, the Uncanny and the Fanatical, published in 1962, narrates the unbelievable stories of flying friars, dead but active deacons, etc. He calls his book a "medical and psychological monograph"

that relates nothing but the case histories of the concerned people (5).

There are readings that try to incorporate homelessness in the US into the national myth of the pioneers, that is to say pioneers themselves as the homeless exiles, or even before that in the middle ages, or as John Allen opines in his study of homelessness in American Literature, back in the Golden Age of Adam and Eve (4). Kingsley Widmer in his The Literary Rebel locates homelessness at the heart of the Western literary traditions with their "wandering blind Homers, peripatetic Cynics, homeless rhapsodists, drifting jongleurs, mendicant goliards, rhyming beggars . . ." and calls the literature of the West a production of the "muse on the road" (77). Allen explains:

> In the United States, homelessness has played an important role in defining national character and establishing American identity. Early colonists were "homeless" when they arrived in America and successive waves of immigrants and adventurers sought to establish homes in cities and the unsettled rural areas of the west. (5)

Almost similar approach can be found in Peter Karsten's essay on the historical typology of American exile, where he talks about "the British Diaspora" during the renaissance, but unlike the curious phrasing of Allen's about the homeless adventurers to settle in the *unsettled rural* areas, Karsten refers to the production of the exiles by the exiles themselves, namely, as he explains, the encroachment into the Cherokee, Creek and Chickasaw lands that continued down to the eighteenth century by California officials who justified the act by calling the natives the wild people of desperate fortune who would not be subject to the officials' laws (149).

Amy Kaplan, in her presidential address to the American Studies

Association 2003, evokes the recent shift, and by ironic reversal, a revival of the myth of the "American Exile." By exposing the uncanny bond between empire that insists on a borderless world and the homeland that tries to shore up the boundaries again, she tries to unpack the contradictory implications of this move based on the "violence of belonging." On the one hand for her the U.S. national identity has always been linked to geography, and US is said to be the nation of immigrants, a melting pot, the western frontier, manifest destiny, a classless society—all involving metaphors of spatial mobility rather than the spatial fixedness and rootedness that homeland implies, but on the other hand the term "homeland" brings in contradictory connotations, such as a sense of native origins, of birthplace and birthright, or even common bloodlines, ancient loyalties, and racial and ethnic homogeneity. She fears the revival of the Old World mythologies, a Freudian encounter with the long surpassed nativism and unitarism:

> Homeland also conveys a different relation to history, not a nation of futurity, but a reliance on a shared mythic past engrained in the land itself. It resonates with the notion of the heartland. . . [and] underwrites the resurgent nativism and anti-immigrant sentiment and policy. Where is there room for immigrants in this fusion of nation and nativity? How many immigrants and their descendants may identify with America as their country or home but locate their homelands elsewhere, as a spiritual, ethnic, or historical point of origin? How many U.S. citizens see themselves as members of a diasporic community with a homeland in Ireland, Africa, Israel, or Palestine—a place to which they feel spiritual or political affiliation and belonging, whether literally a place of birth or not? Does the idea of America as the homeland make such dual identifications suspect and threatening, something akin to terrorism? Are you either a member of the homeland or with the terrorists, to paraphrase Bush? And what of the terrible irony of the United States as a homeland to Native Americans? (8-9)

If the mythic revival of the "native" past is eliminating a succession of diasporas, and if consolidating the borders is at once an imperial move outside the borders, the whole process takes up features of the production of the uncanny beings at once enclosed into a highly strengthened frontiers of loyalty and exposed to the very often predatory and persecutory legal and political authority. Who are called the uncanny lives here are somewhat the beings Kaplan and Pease put together, or the creatures that are both enclosed and exposed in a "biolpolitical territory" as big as the globe itself:

> . . . the Homeland enacted into law by the Homeland Security Act did not have reference to an enclosed territory. And it was not exactly a political order. The Homeland Security Act was the political instrument on whose authority the state transformed a temporary suspension of order erected on the basis of factual danger into a quasi-permanent biopolitical arrangement that as such remained outside the normal order . . .. This juridical-political apparatus thereafter authorized a biopolitical settlement that inscribed the body of the people into an order of state power that endowed the state with power over the life and death of the population. This biopolitical sphere emerged with the state's decision to construe the populations it governed as indistinguishable from unprotected biological life. Insofar as the Homeland State's biopolitical imperative to regulate the life and death of the population that it governed was irreducible to the denizens of the nation-state, the Homeland State's biopolitical regime became potentially global in its extensibility. (Pease 11-12)

Uncanny in terms of mythico-political geography therefore is exile and homeland put together and if it has been the defining feature of the Western literary culture in general and "American national character," in particular, it is more so in the world awakening to and taking shape around the events of 9/11.

# I. THEORIZING THE UNCANNY OR "THE SANDMAN EFFECT"

"Home," he mocked gently.

"Yes, what else but home?
It all depends on what you mean by home.
Of course he's nothing to us, any more
Than was the hound that came a stranger to us
Out of the woods, worn out upon the trail."
- *Robert Frost.*

## The Call of the Uncanny:

After a long prolusion on the topic, it is time now to look more closely at Freud's essay on the uncanny with some of its readers and critics. This chapter shall review literatures written on and about the uncanny in general and about Freud's essay in particular to attempt a reading by way of an intervention into the debate. The reading is mindful of the resistances to psychoanalysis and Freud, especially with regard to the limited possibility of application they offer to texts in which the cultural contexts predominate the psychological atmosphere; but the present exploration also shies not from taking Freudian propositions on the uncanny to their limits so as to outline insightful inconsistencies and revealing contradictions in his essay. The reading also makes use of arguments from other writers of the uncanny, especially Heidegger, whose works on the subject are very crucial to the understanding of this term.

When Freud brought out his essay on the uncanny in 1919 amidst considerable personal and professional pressures, which we will return to with Neil Hertz, he was aware of the fact that he was venturing into the virtually untrodden territories only with one study as precedent: Jentsch's medico-psychological

literature of 1906. That was also the decade during which Heidegger was invoking the term in his unfinished masterpiece Being and Time. In that work he relates the uncanny with anxiety that brings *Dasein* (Heidegger's term for the Being-in the-world) back from its absorption into the world (233) and the call that recollects or the alien voice that pursues Dasein and threatens its lost-ness (322). Later when Heidegger was to dwell exclusively on the uncanny in his treatise on Holderlin's Ister, he traced the term back to Sophocles's Antigone, without however referring either to Freud or to Jentsch.

Daniel Chapelle in his book Nietzsche and Psychoanalysis links the demon of The Gay Science with the uncanny. The experience of the uncanniness, like that of the demon of the eternal return, he argues, strikes a chord in man's soul that allows him to experience what is taken as nonsensical by reason (199). Thus the uncanny experience that results from the haunting of the demon is at once autonomous spontaneity and ahistoricity, or it is at least a critique of a linear progress of history (201). Chapelle therefore conceives of the uncanny experience as a ghosted moment at which humanity encounters the eternal return of the self. For Chapelle "the psychology of uncanniness constitutes the stuff of which tragic art is made." At the same time, he notes that tragic art is "an aesthetic affirmation of life's uncanniness" (203).

To put it differently, uncanny experience is the eternal return of life's affirmation in the face of human tendency to deny and negate. So like Freudian uncanny as something brought to light, Zarathustra's vision at the mid-day is the

voice of the demon, the diabolic double, which the exorcists try to exorcise on the pretext that Nietzschean notion of the eternal return is not scientifically verifiable. Chapelle responds to Nietzsche's critics who question the objective truth of the eternal return by positing the immediacy as opposed to the verifiability of the encounter with the demon. He argues in the manner of Derrida's arguments in The Postcard, and later in the Specters of Marx, that to refute the veracity of the eternal return is an attempt of "exorcism of the demon from aphorism 341 [from The Gay Science]" (34).

If Freud's theory of the uncanny flounders about the beginnings, Heidegger has the middle omitted from his musings on the uncanny, and Chappelle's Nietzschean demon of uncanniness is fixated upon the immediacy of the "ahistorical" moment brought back by history's eternal return, Mehlman, in his essay on Marx, Hugo and Balzac, locates the early usage, if not the origin, of the uncanny in Marx's Class Struggles in France, in which Marx was to critically attend a kind of "recall," this time the statutory regulation that every newspaper article bear the name of its author, which, according to Mehlman, Marx criticizes for its inability to tolerate "the sinister anonymity [unheimliche Anonymitat]" of any press (5).

In spite of these uncertainties about the beginning of the term, or because of its chance repetition in Freud later on, Mehlman argues that one thing is pretty sure about the uncanny: "what is *unheimlich* about the *unheimlich* is that absolutely *anything* can be *unheimlich*" (6). Mehlman's position on the uncanny, however, sounds somewhat like that of Anneleen Masschelein, who in her article on the

uncanny as a concept notes that uncanny belongs to those critical concepts that have lost their working force.

Citing Mieke Bal's ideas about the misuse of concepts, Masschelein argues that the historicity of all concepts entails a period of development, new accretion of meaning with every new user of the concepts and her intentions, as a result of which the concepts, instead of being descriptive, become more and more normative and programmatic. This "misuse" of concepts, writes Masschelein, causes them to degenerate into labels. Once "the framework to which a concept belongs is no longer visible," she continues, the "concepts lose their working force: they are subject to fashion and ultimately become meaningless" (54).[1] And that is what she thinks has happened to concepts like trauma, cultural memory and the uncanny.

It is precisely this rendering invisible the "original framework" of the concept is the aim of this reading, which in a way helps us move beyond any "programs" Freud and Heidegger or Nietzsche had in mind - which could be likely, for a highly normative reading is possible with all of them - while they proposed their readings of the uncanny. If Freud remains all immersed in his theory of the

[1] In her introductory essay to the special edition of "Image [&] Narrative" on the uncanny, Masschelein argues that uncanny thematises the impossibility of conceptualization in the traditional sense of a self-contained entity, for it, like the concept of the unconscious, is a negative concept and hence internally contradictory. For her uncanny for by virtue of its negativity indicates something which cannot be rationally and consciously thought. And like the sublime, it denotes not an entity but a quality, which in return makes it an aesthetic concept. It expresses a subjective sentiment, she continues "which cannot be captured in words, for the generality of language always in a way betrays the individuality of experience" (Massachelein).

castration complex and the place of the eye both in the complex and in the story by Hoffmann, on which he hinges much of his theory of the uncanny, Heidegger on the other hand makes explicit references to National Socialism in his treatise on the unheimlich: Holderlin's Hymn "The Ister."

It is always fascinating to see where and how Freudian emphasis on vision goes blind and Heidegger's meditation on *polis* converges on the ideological. It is also productive to explore implications and nuances in their writings overlooked by the critics of these thinkers. Therefore instead of complaining about the fading signification of the term, it is always more intriguing to observe how, if not why, a particular shade of meaning is upheld or downplayed by a particular reader of the uncanny.

Or one might argue that the *aconceptualization* to which Masschelein refers might be the ghostly effect of the uncanny visitations, which are always fraught with force but they come in/as flinders. Unlike her empiricization and aestheticization of the term, reading uncanny might be nothing else but an illative act, which only tries to grasp this spectral perambulation. It only assumes some discernible, if not individually identificatory features with what Freud calls terror (*Schreckhaften*), symbolized by the Sandman or with the Heideggerian threat of Being, with Nietzschean diabolism or with Marxian "anonymity," that "speaks," unlike Gayatri Spivak's muted "subalternism" visible as the aborigine and locatable as the global south.

The aphorism in The Joyful Wisdom that Chapelle referred to, follows

Nietzsche's critique of Socrates' babbling even in the last moments of his life:

> I would that he had also been silent in the last moment of his life – perhaps he might then have belonged to a still higher order of intellects. Whether it was death, or the poison, or piety or wickedness – something or other loosened his tongue at that moment, and he said: "O Crito, I owe a cock to Asclepious." (270)

In other words, the uncanny that ambulates or that "arrives" as argues Adam Bresnick, in a moment of singular strangeness to perplex the subject and that returns as a revenant to occupy "a kind of interior no-man's land" (117) has to be received in flight, in diasporic movements, and exilic wanderings. Grasped as a force in flight, it at times might not speak to us, and even if it does, it might not be consistent with our tongues, with our laws and our norms; and it might not benefit from the demands on its behalf of recognizable face and an intelligible language.

Feminism and the Uncanny: The Gendering of the Concept:

Cixous in her essay "Fiction and its Phantoms: A Reading of Freud's *Das Unheimliche* (The "uncanny")" warns the readers of the uncanny that one invites the inevitable undoing by courting the uncanny as Freud did by using Hoffmann's tale to elucidate the uncanny. Cixous starts the equivalence between Freud and the protagonist of the story by stressing the points at which the story and the theory intersect. She believes that there is a transfer and a transmission of roles between the story and the theory. The spy-glasses taken by Nathaniel from Coppola are snatched by Freud; what he comes to see through the spy-glass is the inverted version of the doll; Freud in turn transfers, argues Cixous, that dangerous eye-glass snatched from the protagonist of the story, who had in turn snatched it from Coppola, who might

have snatched it either from Coppelius or from Spalanzani, or even from Nathaniel himself - hence the rounds of snatching, transferring and doubling that eventually leap upon the eyes of the reader to expose him to the "horrible peculiarity of the world of doubles" (527). So Nathaniel reading Olympia across the houses reflects Freud reading Hoffmann across the disciplines.

Cixous reminds as soon as she opens her reading: "These [Freud's] pages are meant as a reading divided between literature and psychoanalysis . . ." (525), with his side-long glances both at Jentsch and several dictionaries, while remaining quite aware of the questions of priorities. Cixous's reading of Freud's reading or skipping explains her emphasis on reading as the locus of the uncanny and its embeddedness into the literary text. In other words, the circularity of reading (as resistance, or as the fear of castration) is not as much the return of the repressed as it is yet another round of displacement and repression. Cixous does not reflect (as she does on the disciplinary boundaries of the texts, or on Freud's distinction between psychology and psychoanalysis, which Cixous calls Jentsch-Freud split, or the difference between psychoanalysis and aesthetics, on which she has her eyes set) on the homogenizing ring of general readership she resorts to. When she blames Freud for pulling a thread and obviously leaving the whole tapestry untouched, for shifting the zoom of the spy-glass (snatched from the same story he set out to analyze) from Olympia to Nathaniel, her own attempts to insert differentiality and displacement and to expose the inherent act of repression into the ring of reading ultimately reinstates the circularity by bringing her back to what she is criticizing. Indeed all conclusions

cut both ways:

> (1) The expulsion of "intellectual uncertainty" allows the prescription of an analytical interpretation, [beginning of Cixous's attempt at distinction between reading and (psycho)analyzing] and the minimizing of Olympia leads to the focus on Nathaniel. (2) In this narrative of the Sand-Man, Freud plays up the fear of becoming blind and its substitute so that the Sand-Man is cut off from view by the reducing equation: Sand-Man = loss of eyes (yet it is not as simple as this). Thus in one stroke, the two grand and extraordinary figures are supplanted and with them, Hoffmann's theatre: one half of the text is eliminated. Only the eyes remain . . .(535)

Supplanting of these two "great and extraordinary figures" equals Freud's reversion of the unheimliche into the heimlich or Freud's lexical analysis of the transfer of the heimlich into the unheimliche. Cixous criticizes it as Freud's gesture of androgenyzing (530) the process at the cost of [sexual] difference:

> At the end of this strange crossing of languages, Unheimliche can consider itself a part of this myth: from Heimlich to Unheimliche. In this crossing, the meaning reproduces itself or it becomes extinguished or it is stirred up. Opposition has been blunted; the divergence opened just enough space for it to be reclosed. The phoenix reproduces itself. (531)

Cixous's critique therefore introduces an equation: the uncanny equals to the Other, the different; and by attempting to domesticate the unheimlich into a prescribed heimlich, Freud, for Cixous, neutralizes the autonomy of the other.

If the analysis of the figures in the narrative supplants the difference, and the analysis of the lexicon androgynies it, the analysis of the story itself linearizes Hoffmann's narrative into the "logical account of Nathaniel and [re]articulate[s it] as a kind of "case history" going from childhood remembrances to the delirium and the ultimate tragic end" (533). More than infantalizing, what is more problematic for Cixous in Freudian "dictionnaire-enfant" is the relegation of Jentsch's position of

critical intellectual uncertainty (regarding the doll's state of being animate or inanimate) into a childish belief, or a superstition that it is alive.

Freud's linearizing of Hoffmann's tale, his obsession with the child and childish beliefs as the point of departure exorcize the ghostly uncertainty inherent in fiction. The road of (psycho)analysis, which is always the road of return to the child, *heimlichizes*, as it were, the uncanny world of the fictional doubles. So Cixous's project of rescuing is not limited to the doll, she is not satisfied with making Freud's androgenized reading aware of the difference, or of the doll's potential for being inanimate or dead, so utterly other, its corporeal hybridity "composed of language and silence (that in the movement which turns it and which it turns, invents doubles, and death (548));" she also tries to instigate a difference between reading and analyzing. In other words, Cixous attempts to rescue the doll of fiction and its reading from the domesticating forces of analysis.

On the one hand therefore the ghostliness and horror of the uncanny is due to its generic association with death; on the other hand Cixous introduces the dimension of doubt about the doll's life by asking: "what if the doll were alive" ( 538), which together render the doll wholly other, therefore uncanny.

In her book Speaking the Unspeakable, Diana Jonte-Pace argues that Freud's texts, including his essay on the uncanny, exhibit an "uncanny association of Judaism, circumcision, death, mother, and immortality" (87); and she also cautions that we do not afford to dismiss Freud for his "womanless psychoanalytical theory," for throughout his writing the figure of the mother, which is interestingly absent from

Cixous's reading of the essay, is both the source of fear as well as fascination. [2]

> The deadly mother, present in the other texts we have examined, is obscured in this text ["The Uncanny"] - yet her spectral presence has not been erased entirely. The Sand-man has deadly maternal qualities: he tears out children's eyes as food for his own little children, a hint that the story itself can be read as a fantasy concealing the fear of death at the hands of the dangerous mother. (65)

Laurens de Voce in "To See or Not See: The Ambiguity of Medusa in relation to Mulisch's The Procedure" argues that Medusa, like the ontological uncertainty of being and not being of the Jentschian doll, represents the uncanny terror, at once extremely ugly and shining with absolute purity and beauty. De Voce points out the simultaneously venomous and curative properties of Medusa's blood, and cites Bataille on the ambiguity of a headless and cruel society based on the expression of tremendum and fascinans:

> A society that succeeds, says Bataille, in catching the ambiguity of the cruel which consists of 'tremendum' and 'fascinans,' has attained the ideal model. Such society he calls "acephale," or headless (de Voce).

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[2] In his Dissertation on Freud and Derrida Eric W. Anders argues that "The 'Uncanny'" is a "position(ing) paper" based on phallocentrism. It is a text of, to use Anders use of the Derridian term, self-posting. The secret of "The 'Uncanny,'" is for Anders the secret of non-binary difference and chance. On the one hand, argues Anders, Freud seems to stress the importance of the mother's role to establishing identity, the importance of the primary identification with the mother for any individual, and the intensity of this bedrock of identity. On the other he is acting out the male infant's anxiety with respect to the secret of the power and significance of the mother and his primary identification with her, the latter being theoretically repressed with the assumption of "primary masculinity." Anders cautions that he is not arguing for primary femininity as a gap-filling measure for Freudian theory; nor is he advocating for the acceptance of primary femininity for identification. He clarifies that his intention is to draw attention to a lacuna in Freud's theorization that also constitute the primary secrets of psychoanalysis, "secrets that establish its home: the significance of the mother, male identification with the mother, the obvious necessity of male bisexuality. . ., its mode of reducing the Other to more of the Same. . .a move to theorize woman once and for all, a mastery of the other (Anders).

Neil Hertz and his Triangles: Emplotting Freudian Uncanny:

If Jonte-Pace stresses the tension of what is said and what is left unsaid [3] in the text as the matrix of the uncanny, Hertz's discussion leads us to the dynamics of theory and its context. In his essay "Freud and the Sandman," Neil Hertz insightfully contributes to the diagnosis of the troubled relationship between literature and psychoanalysis started by Derrida, Cixous and others. Besides focusing on Freud's artful evasion of some important aspects of Hoffmann's story, "The Sandman," he engages several issues entailing Freud's interpretation of the story. He seems to be moving beyond the "doubles" that Freud and his critics depend for their analysis and tries to restore the force field of the triangles. His essay, like Freud's own, employs not only the dictionaries - chief source of entries is Laplanche and Pontalis's The Language of Psychoanalysis - it also sets up an analytical session, as Freud tried to do in his essay, but the subjects involved and the terms of the session are reversed. Now in Hertz, it is not literature or its characters, but what is being analyzed or reconstructed is psychoanalysis with its characters caught up in their tales and triangles.

The doubles of the fiction and phantoms (Cixous), signs/symbols and signification (Derrida), animate and inanimate doll (Jentsch), Coppola - Coppelius

[3] In a reading of Certeau's works in the light of the unheimlich, Alex Demeulenaere, argues that if for Freud the *unheimliche* symbolizes the shattering of the autonomous subject, the uncanny with regard to historiography marks how a triumphant manner of writing history is excavated by what it does not write, by what it cannot think. What results is a mystique or a spectral discourse moving in an atopic space that consciously multiplies the places of writing, which can only point in the direction of the Other without ever grasping it (Demeulenaere).

(Hoffmann), pleasure-death instincts, heimlich-unheimliche (Freud) are replaced by the triangles of popular narratives, thus reading psychoanalysis through literature and not vice versa. At the outset of his reading he makes his intentions clear:

> My hope is to quilt together these scraps of verbal material [his reading of the glossaries as well as the recent publication of biographical material in Freud] each with a somewhat different feel to it - a work of fiction [which he will triple in the course of his analysis of Roazen's story of Tausk and Freud's Wolf Man case], a psychoanalytical accent of its structure, the formulation of a metapsychological theory, some biographical anecdotes . . . (98)

So the new element inserted into the double of fiction and phantoms is the biographical account, which stresses Freud's involvement in the triangles of the transferences with his "disciples" undergoing analysis with him or under his supervision, its effect on the tangled history of the writing or rewriting of his papers, especially, "Beyond the Pleasure Principle," and "The 'Uncanny.'"

While emphasizing Freud's drive to repeat, Hertz points out, as did Cixous and Rand and Torok in their own way, that in citing the story of The Sandman, Freud quoted only the dialogue between the characters and erased the narrator of the story in order to appropriate this position and re-narrate the story on his own. This theme - compulsion to narrate - leads Hertz towards an important observation about the relationship between literature and psychoanalysis:

> It may seem like a quibble to dwell on this difference [the difference between the repetition compulsion and what gets repeated thereby]: surely the awareness of the process of repetition is inseparable from the awareness of something being repeated, for there can be no such thing as sheer repetition. (102)

From this double bind that Hertz detects at the heart of repetition compulsion, he

figures out Freud's unease about broaching into the field of aesthetics - out of compulsion, but not without it's surplus - because every compulsion to repeat is an impossibility in itself, literally unspeakable (102), unless yoked to some figure, some figurative language and coloring. On the one hand the recognition of the compulsion to repeat is the source of the uncanny, on the other the figurative surplus, "brought home in connection with the repetition" (102), is the source of Freud's experience of the uncanny in the process of reading Hoffmann's story.

For Hertz the appearance of the unsettling surplus along with the figurativeness of its account is not the only uncanny experience in Freud. He brings Roazen's "tale" into play, according to which Lou Andreas-Salome, a friend of Nietzsche and Rilke's, comes to Freud to learn about psychoanalysis only to become an active figure in the periodic discussions within the circle. But she also runs into Tausk, whom she thinks to be the most loyal of Freud's disciples. Thereupon begins Freud and Tausk's unconscious rivalry for Lou. Tausk returns from war in 1918-19 to join the circle, but Freud refuses to take him into analysis; instead he puts him under Helen Deutsch, which in turn repeats the triangle of rivalry, now Deutsch at the center. Freud in March of 1919 feels compelled to ask Helen, who was undergoing analysis with Freud, to choose between the master and the disciple, as a result of which Tausk commits suicide on the eve of his marriage leaving a note relating his gratitude for Freud.

What fascinate Hertz are the coincidence between the repetitive triangles (Freud-Tausk-Salome, Freud-Tausk-Deutsch) and Tausk's forceful removing of

himself from it that eventually resulted in death, the part Freud played in it, the theory of death instinct and the uncanny, with its own triangles (Coppelius-Nathaniel-Klara, Coppola-Nathaniel-Olympia, etc.) obviously re/written during this period. Hertz wonders whether one can spin stories out of this interface of theory, biography and the reading of literature.

Hertz feels caught somewhere between seriousness and what he calls the literary fore-pleasure, a conscious vacillation between literary and non-fiction and the sense of repetition in it and he concludes that the intertwining of fiction and non-fiction and the repetition of these moments make one say that "we are experiencing the uncanny" (110).

A similar approach is taken by David Ellison in his book Ethics and Aesthetics in European Modernist Literature: From the Sublime to the Uncanny, in which he theorizes uncanny as a transition from the romantic sublime (ix). Ellison employs uncanny to read the transition of romanticism into modernism. In a highly textual reading of Freud's essay, Ellison focuses on the German text and works out different layers of meaning and association impossible to gather merely from the translation, which can be taken as a continuation of Freud's suspicion regarding the constraints of the foreign languages.

Ellison beautifully deploys the German term *ein Fall* - meaning fall, example and trap - to suggest that one cannot do otherwise than fall into the uncanny as did both Hoffmann and Freud; and the fall as such is nothing less than exemplary since uncanny can be apprehended only through (*fall*) examples. Therefore Ellison

takes Freud's reading of "The Sandman" as his fall into fiction, Freud's fiction envy. According to him, uncanny cannot merely be an example (*ein Fall*), it is also a fall (*ein Fall*) into literariness - and a trap (*eine Falle*) for the analytical thinker (58). It is a trap because the story, argues Ellison, says far more about Freud than Freud says about the story.

He thinks that Freud recognizes himself in the story and he encounters Oedipus - not the theorized "Oedipus Complex," but "Oedipus before theorization, a most dangerous and diabolical antagonist who comes back to haunt his interpreter and rock the foundation of the psychoanalytic edifice itself" (63). Like Hoffmann, Freud is also dictated by the unconscious motivation "to enclose the uncanny within a logical structure" (65). Ellison also traces moments of identification with the story, which he calls Freud's fiction envy, Hoffmann as Freud's double. In addition to these moments of identification, Ellison argues that Freud's *Antrieb* to enter the foreign land of aesthetics concurs with Nathaniel's drive towards spying on his father and Coppelius. Ellison then brings in other strands of his arguments in play here to project Freud's reading of the story into Kierkegaardian theoretical model of the stages and the question of choice.

According to Ellison, the same "primitive material" (71) of the Sandman is presented in the mother's "rationalized" tale, which takes Sandman as children's state of being overtaken by slumber, without being capable of closing their eyes as if someone had sprinkled sand into them. For him the servant woman's version of the Sandman is fraught with "more folk wisdom" (71), according to which the Sandman

is an ogre that takes children's eyes to feed his own children, who a la Royle, is the cannibal of The Heart of Darkness, more primitive, hence more enticing to civilizing and evangelizing missions. The horror of the heart of darkness anticipated in Hoffman's tale is carried further, again in anticipation by Ellison, as a moment of undecidability. He argues that in The Heart of Darkness Kurtz is the idol of the West to evangelize the natives; on the other hand Marlow is the Buddha without the lotus flower, the idol of the East, both of whom turn the situation into an unheimlich cohabitation, transected, theatrical, undecidable (174). The uncanny situation also erodes the distinction between the moral and the immoral in the text.

Thus for Ellison order and morality in the face of the uncanny are intertwined with violence. The fragmentary nature of the uncanny reflected by Freud's text itself can be totalized only through violence (62), which leads Ellison to privileging Kierkegaardian irony as he points out "the central dramatic conflict" of "Der Sandmann" in the choice Nathaniel has to make between Clara and Olympia, between the ethically constructed world of finite and restricted place and the universe of Romantic irony, in which, says Ellison, "the unbounded power of the imagination's projective capacities causes the young man to find beauty and even life where there is, or has been, only a ghostly resemblance of life (70).

Deconstruction and the Uncanny:

It is Nicholas Royle again, who, dubbing Derrida's rather playful aphorism in Memoirs that deconstruction is America and America is deconstruction, first suggested a similar equation between deconstruction and the uncanny. But there is

another way to evoke the sense of kinship, which emerges somehow, with Samuel Weber's reading of Freud's essay on the uncanny in "The Sideshow, or: Remarks on a Canny Moment," in which Weber is not only conflating deconstruction with the uncanny, but also conflating castration with the uncanny, as Freud is often criticized for doing, but in a different or more precisely deconstructive way.

Weber criticizes Freud's thematic definition of castration complex and proposes an interpretative, differential, or as he says, for the want of a better term, structural definition. He blames Freud for reducing castration complex, along with all of its complexity, to a simple "*thematic material event*, as if it were essentially a perceived reality, the content of a representation" (1119), which eventually succumbs to repression and then returns in identical form. He also charges Freud, to the consternation of the critics who claim that castration is at the helm of Freudian oeuvre, of taking castration as "one phenomenon among others" (1119), or of hypostatizing castration and making it substantial and a visible theme. He decries Freud's naïve hope of fixing, representing, and rendering visible what is given only as the effect of the differential in repetition. His binding of the uncanny directly to the figure of the Sandman, argues Weber, to the effect of reducing all other repetitions, doublings, splitting, to the identical meaning of this single figure in order to derive the conclusion, to quote Weber quoting Freud with emphasis, that "Coppola the optician *really* is the lawyer, Coppelius, and *thus also* the Sandman" (1120), is Freudian simplification of a "complexity of castration complex," which is neither completely genetic or biological nor entirely personal. Resorting to Lacan's

revision of the moment, as "almost nothing but not quite," Weber argues that this complex moment of castration, which structures experience, "dominates both everyday life and the tradition of the western thought as a whole" (1112). In his own words again, it is "neither nothing nor simply something . . .what is discovered is the absence of the maternal phallus, a kind of negative perception, whose object of referent-perceptum-is ultimately nothing but a difference . . ." (1112).

Thus by bringing in the dimension of difference, Weber sets Freudian thematic *idée fixe* right, but his own structural reading also veers towards a fixation, namely the *Urszene*, "the primal scene," the role of the parents, says Weber, "the spectacle of the father, lying dead with contorted features, the mother unconscious next to him" (1119), which is repeated in the tower scene in which Freud as fixated as usual brings the Sandman to the fore denying even a sidelong glances to Clara, but, argues Weber, Nathaniel is not blind not to notice the figure of the poison and antidote - Clara, and tries, as he reaches his *side*-pocket for the spyglass, to hurl her down the tower. Weber thinks that the uncanny moment is not the result of the visible figure of the castrating father, but the "glimpse of that almost-but-not-quite-nothing, a glance which therefore itself blind, but not quite, for it sees the difference that reveals and conceals itself in the same movement" (1121).

Nathaniel's mechanical thrust into the side pocket, which for Weber is the traumatic repetition of the *Urszene*, when parents were lying dead due to the Sandman, necessitates an ***oblique*** direction or sideways. For what is designated by the term "castration," argues Weber, "is the impossibility of seeing directly, right on

or straight ahead. Castration can never be looked at, en face, for it is always off the side, off-side, like the uncanny itself" (1122).

Psychoanalysis and the Uncanny:

If the uncanny is the wholly other in Cixous or the difference that borders on death, it is the heart of darkness, for Royle and Ellison, with its Kurtz and all the missions to bring the cannibals to civilization. For Ellison, it is also a leap of madness in which a person chooses ghostly simulacra over the world of the artifact. And in Weber it is a space lying offside, which can never be viewed directly. So we move from the figure of frightening other as uncanny to the time of the uncanny madness to the uncanny as a savage geography at the margins (off-sides) of Western civilization.

In their Questions for Freud, especially "*The Sandman* looks at "The uncanny": The return of the repressed or of the secret; Hoffmann's question to Freud," Nicholas Rand and Maria Torok bring in another dimension of the uncanny, namely family and its secrets. They critique what they believe to be the "central idea" of the otherwise "unsystematic" text by Freud, "The 'Uncanny,'" namely "the disquieting return of the long-ago repressed" and they try not only to correct Freud's misreading of Hoffmann's tale, for the story and the "independent" theory of the uncanny are hardly consistent, but they also want to replace Freud's incoherent theory of repressed infantile [castration] complex with "the return of the family secret." This attempt to disburden Freud's text of its verbal jugglery, "lexical details," its network of ages, stages, doubles, instincts, myths, stories, folklores,

(foreign) languages and other texts by curtailing the unnecessary impediments on the path of divulging the (family) secret is praiseworthy, so long as it is itself canny, coherent and cohesive.

Their "new psychoanalytical definition of the uncanny" entails much more than just an unease with Freud's rather unjustifiable "wish" to "defend the *symbolic* equivalence between the eyes" (emphasis added) and the male genital (198); it is a discomfort with Freudian notoriety for making associations and equivalences, his uncanny desire (often at the cost of critical astuteness, or of the "text" at hand, as Rand and Torok argue) to take the risk of keeping the text open, without a permanent closure, his courting of the very unheimlich secret, instead of releasing it, and thus inviting the stranger called the castration into the otherwise nicely "uncanny" [or cryptic as Rand and Torok would prefer, for they believe, uncanny goes well with the atmosphere of Hoffmann's awful story] text based upon the little family secret.

Rand and Torok in their critique of Freud's "The 'Uncanny'" are obsessed with keeping the unheimlich that pervades Freud's essay inside the purview/crypt of the family secret, the familiar circle that gets disturbed by the withdrawal of knowledge by the family members themselves. So on the one hand they think Freud is right in claiming that heimlich is what is unheimlich; on the other they fail to imagine the radical otherness of the unheimlich and its complicitous interface with any text. The obsession to keep the uncanny within the family, within the literalness of the text, within its individuality, within the presence and reach of the concerned individual, in this case Nathaniel, is obvious from the very beginning of their text.

They criticize Freud for making a wrong choice of Hoffmann's story to illustrate his theory: "How important is it to note," they ask, "that Freud chose to exemplify his theory of the uncanny with *a literary* (emphasis added) text that arguably does not corroborate it?" (186). Doesn't he cite almost all dictionaries available to him, along with popular sayings, several other literary texts including a novel by Hoffmann himself, which he deals with in a certain detail? The argument here is that neither Freud solely devotes his "theory" of the uncanny to [Freud talks about Sandman in nine paragraphs of a fairly long essay, which is not to suggest that it has relatively less importance] a "literary" text, [which Rand and Torok seem to confuse with the fictional as they call Freud's text a fiction], nor is the literary exclusive in its illustration of the uncanny. In fact Freud's text includes references to lexicons, myths, psychoanalytic theories [at least of Rank and Jentsch], religions, personal anecdotes, philosophy, history, etc. In their correction of Freud's essay, Rand and Torok, therefore replay Freudian "wish" of symbolic equivalence with these four types of "inexorable destinies" (198): familial, textual, temporal and literal - the secrets of the family, the family of languages, of texts and their literalness into which "symbolic" equivalences are the real invasion. Temporal destiny in the sense that they replace Freud's seemingly out-of-reach infantile complex with a date, as if Freud's "fiction" of childhood is null and void, as they say: "The woes of the university student [no mention of the childhood, the nurses and the mother who "mystify" a child's "earnest" search for truth] Nathaniel begin on the day, 30 October at noon to be exact, when a barometer dealer, Coppola-Coppelius, enters his room . .

." (190). Literal destiny in the sense that the eyes that are invariably related to castration for Freud, are now nothing else than literal blindness, inability to see [a doll and a human being apart].

> All these instances of delirium [of seeing nothing but illusions, Olympia in a doll, Coppelius first in his father then in Coppola, and the bloody eyes of the doll thrown at his chest in Spalanzani's place] on the eyes. But what kind of eyes [meaning certainly not that have symbolic value]? These are eyes ripped out of their sockets, dazzling and dazzled, mystified, inert and lifeless; in short these eyes are deprived of the power of sight, they are denied insight and the capacity to discriminate. (196)

What else would be wrong with eyes if anything ever goes wrong with them? In short - literal uncanny devoid of figurality. They continue this literal foreclosure: "Injured, blinded or lifeless eyes are omnipresent in *The Sandman* and they symbolize the sheer inability to see - nothing else" (200). So much so that the secret of the family that rendered the protagonist blind, is the focal point in their inexorable reading of both the tale and its mis/reading by Freud: "Inexorably, Hoffmann's tale stages the misadventure of the eyes, the plight of blocked understanding. No more is needed to grasp fully the hero's suffering" (200).

Maria Tartar's and Allan Lloyd-Smith's essays on the uncanny are continuation of Rand and Torok's line of argument. In her article on Hoffmann's story Tartar argues that uncanny is not about making the unfamiliar familiar, as is usually believed to be the case, it is accepting what one already knows or to come to terms with the truth that one tries to evade for various reasons. Even though she has Freud only as a "brief detour" (169), yet her mode of analysis with t/his concept is close to the theme of enlightenment, literally throwing light, as Terry Castle would

say in The Female Thermometer, into the ancestral secrets and crimes.

For Tartar uncanny is about knowing and acknowledging the criminal and secret past of the family. She exemplifies her argument with narratives like The Castle of Otranto, where Manfred's confession of his parents' and his own criminal past exorcises the seat of his power. The restoration of the "original" identity in Oliver Twist is another example she chooses to instantiate her analysis of the uncanny (182).

Keeping with Abraham and Torok's reinterpretation of the notion, Allan Lloyd- Smith, in his essay "The Phantoms of Drood and Rebecca," links uncanny with their idea of the phantom and cryptonymy. In the opening sentence itself, Lloyd-Smith keeps the "untheorizable" uncanny at par with the periodic moments in criticism "as a reading effect" (285) or the semantic slippage in the text. His argument, as he summarizes, is that "the unresolved contradictions, unedited fears and desires, and incompatible assertions of the culture produce these areas of slippage (285). He works through Abraham and Torok's idea to argue that the experience of the uncanny can be conflated with the moments of reading rather than the complete revelation of the secret of the past. For him uncanny is the moment of unsettling elusiveness rather than the settling of secrets.

A strange critical twist has been given here to the discussion of the uncanny insofar as the uncanny is associated here with the themes of Enlightenment in general, rather than seeing it in association with Romantic Irony, immorality of the heart of darkness and death. Kristeva in her Strangers to Ourselves continues this

subversion of the uncanny from a dismal heart of darkness to the economy of Enlightenment by converting the story of the uncanny Sandman into the story of the foreigner, thereby also radicalizing the familial circle of interpretation drawn by critics from Torok to Tartar. She concludes her reading of the history of the foreigner, as if such a history is possible, with Freud's notion of the uncanny.

During her survey of the figure of the foreigner from the Greek suppliant, the Pauline discourse of the exiles and conversion, the Renaissance utopias and wanderings to the Enlightenment cosmopolitanism and rights of citizen and men, she traces the history of the Western management of the Other. She locates Freud's discourse of the uncanny in the continuum of the humanistic and romantic discourse of the 19th and 20th century, especially Kant's notion of what she calls the universal pacifism and Herder's *volksgeist* and German Nationalism.

Kristeva's history of the foreigner is confined to the "others" from Europe and eventually her contribution to the discourse of the uncanny is her postulation of the internalized or integrated otherness or strangeness in human beings. Her salvaging the foreign otherness - which is for her both biological and symbolic - is restoring it as the integral part of the same. She argues in her characteristic logic that the foreigner in Freud "is neither glorified as a secret *Volkgeist* nor banished as disruptive of rationalist urbanity." Instead, she continues, "foreignness is within us, we are our own foreigners, we are divided (181). In both of these views about the uncanny, the figure of the other or of the foreigner is either homogenized as the familial other, thereby betraying genealogical line of thinking or as the introjected or

internalized other at the cost of the empirical other that shares the world out there with all of us.

The Cultural Uncanny:

In contrast to the psychoanalytical neutralization of the other, the theoretical trend that could be termed the cultural uncanny, seems to argue for the difference, otherness, and the question of agency to point out the hazards of incorporating gestures towards rendering the uncanny just canny. With these writers the unhomely gets applied almost for the first time to themes other than European Enlightenment and to worlds other than just the Western.

Among the post-colonial cultural critics, Homi Bhabha has written at length on home, locations and the uncanny. Low's work on the colonial uncanny White Skins/Black Masks, is partly an exploration of the colonial unheimliche along the lines Bhabha suggested in The Location of Culture. In the introduction of this work Bhabha enunciates the importance of the concept of the unhomely in terms of his notions of the border lives that represent "the conditions of the extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations" (9). The border for Bhabha is a site of inscriptions that confuses the boundaries of home and the world through terror. He argues that to be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can we accommodate the unhomely in the familiar division between the private and the public spheres. Rather the unhomely is a moment unavoidable as our own shadow that creeps stealthily on us out of blue and stages history's intricate onslaught into personal life to the effect of rendering the moment exclusively creative, for it forces upon us "a vision that is as divided as it is

disorienting" (9).

In the section entitled "Articulating the Archaic," he revisits Freud's uncanny to present a colonial situation in which a missionary in Calcutta (India) is patrolling a street, where he runs into the image makers of the Goddess Durga, working almost automatically on thousands of images of the Goddess for the festival dedicated to her - Durgapuja. Bhabha quotes the onlooker, missionary Rev. A. Duff (Duff's India and Indian Mission), who looks aghast at the image makers working at Durga's images, which are at various stages of their manufacture, arms, legs, heads, eyes, half painted, unpainted, to be assembled images. Duff finds himself at his wits end at this "industrious folly;" his past values, "the settled convictions of home experience. . .counterpoised by the previously unimagined scene," lead him to wonder whether these image-makers are men (136).

Bhabha critiques Duff's homogenizing definition of "men," and tries to relate this situation with Freud's interpretation of the Hoffmann's "The Sandman." He paves his way in-between intellectual uncertainty and castration, repression and surmounting, and Durga and Olympia, through whom he says, the ghostly magical spirit of the double embraces his "entire colonial concert party: Marlow, Kurtz, Adela, Aziz, Nostromo, Duff, Maine, the owl, the Marabar caves, Derrida, Foucault, Freud, master and slave alike" (136). These comedians or the teachers of the culture's double lesson, the enunciators of the problem of the intellectual uncertainty are euphorically put together, assembled like the multiple hands of the Goddess in the making, for, Bhabha argues, the uncanny lessons of colonization are inscribed in

the double.

In her essay "Postmodern Automatons," Rey Chow reads Freud's 'Uncanny' in relation to broader theoretical frameworks of modernism, its polemical displacement by postmodernism and feminism's uneasy relationship with both of them. Amid these theoretical "implosions," what keeps Chow interested is the possible emergence, the actual term she uses is "burst[ing] open," of the social. The explosion of the social against the Baudrillardian "implosion" of the simulacra has as significant a place in Chow as can be guessed from her essays like "Where have all the Natives Gone?" The latter stages the disappearance of the "native" between the colonizer's defiled image and his indifferent gaze. Essays like "Media, Matter, Migrants," explore the disappearance of another nature: disappearance of human (resources) into the speed culture of the first world, where migrants are either deposited like un-recyclable waste, the [abject] destitute bodies constituting what Chow calls "the ecology of human waste" or they disappear as the laborer bodies into the (long distance) electro-cybernetically extracted labor devoid of any responsibility in return from the employers. The rhetoric of the distance and closing in, the gaze of the camera and visuality returns when she analyses Nathaniel spying Olympia first from the distance and then from close quarters, every time, alienating or othering the object of the gaze.

Chow's contribution to the discourse of the uncanny lies in the way with which she relates the mechanical doll of "The Sandman" with mass culture as "the automatised site of others, the site of the automatized others, the site of automatons

(63), in which the other is produced as an object of ridicule as in Chaplin's "Modern Times," a silent film on an assembly line worker for whom the line between his body and the machine are blurred. In Olympia's case too, her mesmerizing beauty owes much to the distance from which she is viewed, and to her mechanical assent, ah, ah to everything said to her.

Thus Chow claims that she is moving beyond the usual equation of women as visual objects of male gaze and modernity as visuality as she relates Freudian specularity to broader drama of producing otherness. That is the reason why she criticizes Hélène Cixous's gendering of the doll, which she calls first world feminism's pretension to give life to the mechanical doll with a second look, while accepting all the attributes of automatism attached to it (66).

The modernist interest in the third world "natives" or "indigenous cultures" accepts only the kind of discourse that conforms to its own views, as if it were like, in Chow's words, "so many Olympias saying "Ah, Ah!" to a Western subject demanding repeated uniform message" (67). The oppressive discursive prowess of the first world is repeated in the feminist critique as it upholds the dehumanizing automatism even after animating it with the second look. The repetition compulsion is, as Chow argues, rooted deep within West's individualistic, ahuman speed culture, that erases human "matter" on the ground as did the bombers in the Gulf War[s] (178).

If Chow relates the dehumanizing circumstances that the uncanny lives inhabit in modern spaces, Rushdie records their journey back "home," and the

subsequent experience of disillusionment. There is a moment in Rushdie's Imaginary Homelands, especially in the essay of the same title, which can be called an uncanny moment. The essay starts with Rushdie looking at a picture of his old house hanging on the wall of his room. He describes the house as "peculiar - a three storied gabbled affair," (after all the picture was of the time at which Rushdie had not been yet born), which reminds him of L. P. Hartley's opening sentence in his novel The Go Between: "The past is a foreign country." But, says Rushdie, "the photograph tells me to invert the idea; it reminds me," he continues, "that it's my present that is foreign, and that the past is home in a lost city in the mists of lost time" (9).

His return to the house, both in the picture and in reality after some time, can be seen in the light of what Freud calls the "compulsion to repeat" or what he calls, in Beyond the Pleasure Principle, "return to the inanimate state" (46). On his return to the same house in reality, Rushdie makes an "eerie discovery" that the city telephone directory still had his father's name, their old address, and the telephone number, as if they had never gone away, and nothing had happened in-between. Following the address discovered so eerily in the telephone book he goes to the old house only to get overwhelmed, with the feeling, as Freud would say - so it really exists - without however either being repressed or surmounted. But the memory gathered from the monochromatic pictures of his childhood house is not synchronous with the reality present in front of him. He finds that the colors of history "had seeped out of [his] mind's eyes," and he feels assaulted by colors. The assault of color that drained the monochromatic history confuses Rushdie as to the truth of

memory and the reality of the present, he encounters similar doubts as to his claims and capacity to reclaim history and the past.

Bhabha's descriptions of the inroads of history into the personal "homes" and Rushdie's wounds from the assaults of the colors of reality shed more light on the kind of trauma an uncanny experience could be. Yolanda Gampel, a former president of Israel Psychoanalytical Association and a training analyst argues in her essay on uncanny that the term uncanny is helpful and more exact than others to describe the traumatic experiences of the victims, survivors or their relatives. She casts the dialectic of heimlich-unheimliche into the interdependence of ego and the external world to explore the relationship between trauma and the uncanny. She explains:

> An object becomes *Unheimlich* when it contains some characteristics of the familiar object, but with a twist that is threatening. Feeling of uncanny is a special form of anxiety, a warning sent by the ego facing the ego that threatens it. When this combination of the familiar (soothing) and the unfamiliar (dangerous) confronts the ego with a paradox that it cannot solve, the experience becomes traumatic, obstructing ego's ability to function. (51)

Yolanda cites one of the cases under her analysis in example to explain the relationship of the familiar that turns threatening. T, a child survivor of Shoah, one day leaves Yolanda's clinic and finds unexpectedly that her father's car is behind hers. As always she avoids him by turning her car away. Yolanda relates her patient's panic at the unexpected encounter with the parents to their early experience of Shoah, when the parents were forced to leave their child at a very early age to a non-Jew family, who took care of her until the parents returned after the war to take her

home, at which she cried a lot. The accusatory avoidance is a symptom with which the patient revolts against the circumstances of her separation as well as the parents who could not only take care of her, but also took her away from the ones who did. Yolanda argues that the "strange faces that arrived to take her away" (52) were the familiar turned uncanny. But it also shows the shifting relationship of what she calls the background of safety and the background of the uncanny with which turn the ring of filiations into uncanny affiliation with the other.

Freud's Essay on the Uncanny and the "Sandman Effect":

It is precisely due to the double critique of filiations and affiliations, nature and culture, myth and civilization that the uncanny becomes a useful theoretical tool. It lends invaluable insights to read literatures written by, for instance, Americans who are not quite/only Americans. The combination of African, Asian, Chicano, Native and American literally instantiates the uncanny bond between the heimlich (familial/familiar/native) and the unheimlich (unhomely/unfamiliar/foreigner).

For Freud uncanny is a negative feeling rather than a positive one like beauty and sublime, both, according to him, chief staples of aesthetics, hence the marginalization of the unheimlich in aesthetics. Freud also aspires to displace Jentsch's notion of intellectual uncertainty with that of certainty about the feelings of the uncanny and he attempts to move beyond Jentsch's combination of new/unfamiliar and the uncanny, the inanimate and the animate. He calls this equation the limitation of Jentsch's theory of the uncanny against which he proposes the new definition of the uncanny as "that class of the frightening which leads back

to what is known of the old and the long familiar" (220).

Freud's advancement on Jentsch's theory therefore is based on the principle of the return of the repressed and her recognition. But Freudian recognition results into the familiarization or even the domestication of the other as he neutralizes at the level of semantics the dynamics of difference between the unheimlich and the heimlich. For him heimlich is a word that "finally coincides with its opposite, *unheimlich* [and] *Unheimlich* is in some way or other a subspecies of *heimlich* (226).

The problematic distinction of the species and the subspecies therefore is more important and dangerous in Freud than the accusation like Cixous's that he emphasized the Sandman and the eyes at the cost of being blind to the equally uncanny figure of the doll, Olympia. In the first place Freud is hardly interested in the "figure" of the uncanny. For him uncanny is a feeling rather than a being, for which later in his meditation on Ister Heidegger will critique him without ever invoking his name by arguing that uncanny is never a matter of impression and feeling, rather it is the fundamental trait of human beings (90-91).

After the linguistic excursion on the subject, which Lyndenberg calls the "linguistic shifter" from the realization that one is foreign to oneself (1076), Freud reaches that conclusive moment when he says that the heimlich is a subspecies (*Art*) of the unheimlich. *Art* is a curious German term, which was later capitalized by the national socialists in coining quite interesting combinations with the term. As The New Cassell's German Dictionary explains, in the national socialist usage *Art* is a

comfortable term between more politically troublesome *Rasse* and *Volk* and it implies a spiritual adjustment of the *Volk* to the race idea (33).

On the one hand therefore Freud, as many readers of his essay on the uncanny have already noticed, conflates the dichotomy of the heimlich and the unheimlich into a unity; on the other hand however he tacitly introduces a dimension of ethnic and racial othering into the overlapping domains of the terms. Besides Lyndenberg's argument that Freud's reference to Italy, local women, and foreign languages, including his pun on "gen Italian," reflect his "complex relation to the foreign," what is equally fascinating is Freud's exoticization of the Roman women in the Italian Piazza he happens to return repeatedly.

Freud's wanderings "through the red light district of a small Italian village," as Susan Bernstein reminds (1119), not only expose him to his own deep seated desires and his wish to flee from the unpremeditated encounter, but the painted faces of the women, as Freud himself describes them in the essay also become the inscription of the primitivism (237), which brings back "animism, magic and sorcery" (243).

Freud begins his double moves, contrary to what Sarah Kofman calls his "desire for unity which drives the investigation" (123), towards the analysis of the uncanny from the moment he makes a theoretical choice, whose significance most of the readings we reviewed overlook:

> Two courses are open to us at the outset. Either we can find out what meaning has come to be attached to the word 'uncanny' in the course of its history; or we can collect all those properties of persons, things, sense-

> impressions, experiences and situations, which arouse in us the feeling of uncanniness, and then infer the unknown nature of the uncanny from what these examples have in common. (220)

Then he follows both the choices by turns. He begins the investigation by surveying dictionaries for various usages of the term, for which he starts with the German language and finds that in German unheimlich is obviously the opposite of heimlich and heimisch. He continues the survey with the Latin, Greek, English, French, Spanish, Italian and Portuguese languages where he finds his convictions confirmed that uncanny is a "locus suspectus," a "haunted house" perhaps populated with "xenos, the foreigners" (221).

By his methodological choice, he seems to suggest that moving towards the foreign is indispensable to the understanding of uncanny. But he also realizes two things: one that the dictionaries he consulted tell him nothing *new*, second "perhaps only because we ourselves speak a language that is foreign" (221). Freud's logical moves are as always intriguing. He goes to consult foreign dictionaries only to find, like his definition of the uncanny, that the unfamiliar is nothing new. In other words, the intimacy and similarity of the unfamiliar is what is unheimlich. That is the case not because the foreigner is within us, as Kristeva might hurry to argue, nor because Freud is playing a kid's game with his dictionnaire enfants, as Cixous would "parentalize" Freud's arguments, but because in relation to those foreign languages, we too speak a foreign language.

On the other hand however his obsession wit the eye, the attendant fear of the sandman and his encroachment upon the cozy circles of the family, mostly

couples, turn the sandman (who we all are for each other, with our own haunted houses of languages and their huge walls that, to appropriate Heidegger's terminology, put communication between the houses entirely out of question) into a terrifying, violent, intruding foreigner.

Freud notices that in Hoffmann the sandman hardly takes up recognizable features; on the contrary it is an ambulatory "spirit" passing as the folk wisdom of the nurse, or as the rationalized explanations of the mother. This spirit arrives but only through misrecognition and displacement, as Coppola, Coppelius, etc. Freud not only tries to give a shape, but also a recognizable identity to the sandman so as to create a killjoy from him so that eventually the ghost of the sandman can be connected to the terror of the castration complex.

If the unheimlich sandman is being imposed on every intruding figure into the familial, which in turn helps Freud subrogate history, as Volosinov would say in his book on Freudianism, with the annals of human emotions (10),[4] on the other hand this very refraction of history with its sandman effects - the ghosting of the encroacher with the terrifying sandman, constitutes a form of resistance to the

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[4] In a characteristic passage Volosinov terms Freud's emphasis on the biological being a "fear of history." And he opines that the state of European philosophy itself speaks to this uncanny fear of history:

> Thus, we see the basic ideological motif of Freudianism is by no means its motif alone. The motif chimes in unison with all the basic motifs of contemporary bourgeois philosophy. *A sui generis fear of history, an ambition to locate a world beyond the social and the historical, a search for this world, precisely in the depths of the organic - these are the features that pervade all systems of contemporary philosophy and constitute the symptom of the disintegration and decline of the bourgeois world.* (14)

Fanon reaches a similar conclusion about Freud, but he puts it somewhat differently, as he says, in Black Skin: Whit Masks, that Freud substituted for a phylogenetic theory the ontogenetic perspective (13).

regimes of official history external to the familial. This explains why Freud, despite his references to the native (heimisch) and the foreigner dichotomy in the fluid juxtaposition of the uncanny, never mentions the mid-nineteenth century Pfälzers, nor the legal reforms and popular literary inventions of the Biedemeier period, which, argues Applegate, were essential in German history for the development of the concept of Heimat that later evolved first as provincial culture and German nationhood and then, gathering more political, racial and emotional significance during the war, as the ideology of extreme nationalism (4-5).

In a historico-theoretical survey of the German idea of Heimat in relation to identity and modernity Peter Blickle weaves some of the trends together, for instance Habermas's project of modernity - which Blickle calls "a clear picture of what Heimat denies and how it effects this denial" (139) - his reinstatement of the proud culture of reflection against the postmodern reenchantment of the world in the name of Heimat, in short his proposition of the public sphere as the uncanny; Friedrich Schlegel's 1797 banner phrase for the theory of irony: "Philosophy is the true Heimat of irony;" and the German Heimatkehr literature from Holderlin to Handke "that describes coming home as self-healing" (41).

If repressing the official versions of history based on the notion of Heimat and replacing it with the familial and emotional histories are Freudian modes of resistance, by the same token Freud also tries to play down certain historical areas related to the usage of the term. Except for a line from Shelling on which he tries to hang almost all of his essay, for instance, Freud never bothers to cite Fichte's idea of

the absolute I, the curious turn in Nietzsche's thinking between his The Birth of Tragedy and the reconciliation of the Dionysian and Apollonian as Heimat, and the anti-Heimat aphorisms of the Thus Spake Zarathustra, the inhabitants of the mountains and The Joyful Wisdom, where Nietzsche openly expresses his distrust for home. In the aphorism 240 of The Joyful Wisdom for instance, Nietzsche asserts that he will have no truck with the idea of home:

> I would not build myself a house (it is an element of my happiness not to be a house owner!). If I had to do so, however, I should build it, like many of the Romans, right into the sea, - I should like to have in common with that beautiful monster. (203-4)

Between the Nietzschean monster of the unhomely sea and the Freudian Sandman or the wicked man, who comes, as Freud have the nurse describe the monster, when children won't go to bed, and throws handful of sand in their eyes so that they jump out of their heads all bleeding, and then he puts the eyes in a sack and carries them off to the half-moon to feed his children (228), opens a space for a critical discourse that threatens all forms of closure in the name of the family, nations, languages and cultures, and also "brings into light" every form of persecution of the sandman in the name of civilizing the savage or exorcizing the ghost.

That is the reason why the discourse of the uncanny is at once psychoanalysis dealing with the "spirit" of the sandman, and how people get the wicked and violent sandman imposed on them in the name of home, nation and through all existing and imaginable hegemonic formations, including colonization,

imperialism, sexism, fundamentalism, or racism, not only in the "material" or biological form, but also in all the subtle psychological forms as well. But it is also a cultural discourse of the return of the repressed, the discourse of resistance that brings in theoretical unease by exploding all disciplinary homes into the unhomely site of contestation and confrontation.

## II. THE VIOLENCE OF BEING IN JASMINE

Grant me an old man's frenzy,
Myself must I remake
Till I am Timon and Lear
Or that William Blake
Who beat upon the wall
Till Truth obeyed his call.
- W. B. Yeats

Imaginary v. Imagining Homelands:

Bharati Mukherjee instantiates a sustained engagement yet a fierce struggle against exile. In spite of espousing the idea of fluid identity, multiple selves, immigration, dislocation and diaspora, her novels as well as her interviews and conversations, which are no less novelistic, exemplify a hidden discomfort against certain versions of march and movement. This Heideggerian contradiction of not moving in moving, concealing in unconcealing and the confusion of the personal and the political not only intrigues Mukherjee's readers, it also complicates further, instead of easing, the critical debates about assimilation and wholehearted surrender to the mainstream, and the questions of betrayal that have always surrounded her and her works.

Criticized from all sides, by the fellow immigrant writers and scholars for her championing the mainstream ideology of American rugged individualism,[5] and for dehistoricizing and romantically conniving at the uneven immigrant experiences and the blatant ethnico-political discriminations in the New World (one of many

[5] In her interview with Bill Moyers, Mukherjee, almost in a settler's tone, said: "I want to conquer. I want to love and possess the country. . ." (Moyers 8).

examples is Jamil Y. Khader's reference to Jasmine as "popular multiculturalist literature (9) as opposed to his theoretical project of migrancy and multiple diasporic conditions); and by the so-called mainstream which she loves to identify with for being the mean mouthed retrograde antifeminist. Even the innovative readings of the novel like Hoppe's, which argue that the New World equals to Technology and the novel capitalizes this equation by way of its fascination with both, hardly escape the traps of tokenization, which in turn carry the rings of Freudian mis/reading of the doll.

The mechanization of Jasmine becomes clear when Hoppe catches her saying that since she has neither accents nor does she sound Iowan, her voice is like those on the telephones (146). The protean "subject" in the novel, who for Hoppe resembles highly mutable character of technology and the fluid and multicultural image of America, leads him to believe that Jasmine is one with the mercurial America. Mukherjee's experience of constantly being tokenized - in spite of her repetitive attempts at reminder that she is an American, rather than an Asian-American writer - and her Canadian experience of being spat at, render her a painfully homeless storyteller of the agonistic dislocation and dispossession and the traumatic venture for transformation and reclamation.

In her essay "Imagining Homelands," which seems to be a powerful rejoinder to Rushdie's "Imaginary Homelands," she critiques the exilic sojourning and the "expatriateist" aloofness as opposed to her notion of mongrelization and the acceptance of the entire history of the US as a whole including the historical guilt of

slavery, segregation, extermination of Native Americans, "the CIA, Vietnam . . .the hypocrisy of supporting both freedom and dictatorships and . . .[the] generally vulgar "Coca-Cola" and "McDonald's" culture" (79). While she sounds all the way towards the end like a mongrelizing immigrant integrationist, she suddenly unsettles the categories by this exuberant expression:

> Did we come seeking religious freedom? I didn't. Did we come to escape oppression, the shackles of dictatorship? I didn't. Did we rejoin the remnants of our shattered family? I didn't. Have we come seeking happiness and fortune? - For both, I should have stayed where I was. We are expatriates, exiles, slaves and dispossessed, we are conquerors, plunderers, refugees, and amnesty-seekers, we are temporary workers, undocumented workers, visitors, students, tourists, we are joy seekers, claim-jumpers, parole-violators. (85)

Mukherjee emphasizes the travails of transit and the violence inherent in "crossing the black waters" to exile, to use Nilufer Bharucha's terms that define typical "Indian" reaction to diaspora, which involves the loss both of home and caste and a perpetual banishment without return, which Bharucha thinks to be the dividing line between Indian and other diasporic experiences, for the former "lacks the searing desire to return to the Homeland" (53).

Radhakrishnan in his book Diasporic Meditation: Between Home and Location locates diaspora as an in-betweenness or a state of being always between what is left behind as home and the present place of residence as location, hence its foreign environ; and he wonders whether naturalization empowers us or marginalizes us (205). On the contrary Mukherjee champions affirmation without return, hence the apparent tone of anti-exile in her. Her novel Jasmine documents this ambiguity of

exile and affirmation, repression and return.

The Enigma of Arrival [6] in Jasmine:

Jasmine lands, or to be more precise, is stranded in Florida by proxy and prosthesis, thereby interrogating all past and future arrivals. Her documents were all forged up; her passport teemed with false information. She had a false name (a name which she no longer identified herself with, the name of the girl from Hasnapur, whom she and her husband so successfully dispatched off long ago) and also a false date of birth. Along with assuming the name of the long dead girl, she used the dead husband's money, visa, and other papers, which all made the trip more eerie and ghostly.

The motif of fake identity continues even in New York, when she suddenly discovers that the "Professorji" that Prakash had always looked up to, admired and thought of emulating is in reality a retailer in human hair. The picture of the professor that she had first from his inspiring long letters to Prakash, urging the latter to come to the States and then from his talks of lab work and assistants during her stay with his family in New York, and the reality taught Jasmine that masks and the troubling identity of the heimlich and the unheimlich are part of American identity.

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[6] Referring to the so-called discovery of America, the "first of all arrivals" of the "immigrants," Prashad in his book The Karma Of Brown Folk writes about the pioneering prosthetizing of Indian's arrival in America. He writes: "India came to America by mistake. A Genoese navigator landed in the Bahamas in search of India. He saw and slaughtered the Bahamians (and rescued for world history one Bahamian word, "hammock"). Those whom he found he named "Indians," and the land he called "India" (1).

In other words it is Prakash, who is coming by proxy, it is his ideal, his dream of establishing a firm, "Vijh and Wife" that brings Jasmine here as Jyoti Vijh. That is not to say, as does Dayal, when he calls Prakash "the prime mover" (Dayal 67), or as does Kristin Carter-Sanborn in her essay "We Murder Who We Were: *Jasmine* and the Violence of Identity," that here the man transforms and the woman is transformed, and as positive as her transformation might be, it fails not to oppose violence to agency, active force to passive object. "The male postcolonial nurtures his American dream," continues Carter-Sanborn, "with that dream he wields the power that will violently "rebirth" the wife" (580).

Jasmine decides upon this transfer of life, of documents and dreams, when she finds it impossible to go back to Hasnapur, Jyoti's place of birth. For Jasmine, the feudal Jyoti is dead. Jasmine's reduction to widowhood, as the astrologer predicted, was not simply a state of not being with one's husband; it was not simply the fact of having lost one's husband, it's being abandoned, forgotten, and even psychologically killed by friends, relatives, religion and caste. At Prakash's death, Jasmine was this despair of dereliction and deceit. Recalling Prakash's admonition - "Don't crawl back to Hasnapur and feudalism. That Jyoti is dead." Jasmine continues to reflect:

> My sisters all were living in cities, with jealous, drunken men who would not part with a few rupees of bus or train fair. They were gone from my life. Except for the visits from my brothers on the weekends, Mata and I were alone in the widow's dark hut, little better than the Muzbis and the Untouchables. My young friends, like Vimla, never visited. (96)

This "widow of the war of feudalisms," as she calls herself is left as an outcaste

amidst her family and friends, or as an alien or exile in her own birthplace. The war of feudalism killed Prakash, but the consequence was the systematic smothering of Jasmine too, who as a woman was nothing there without a husband. It is this state of cultural non-being and not-belonging that Jasmine wants to flee. It is this sense of exile in the so-called native place she wants to overcome. Thus starts Ms. Supplementarity's prosthetic journey into the New World with fake documents and proxy dreams that eventually displace, substitute (Derrida) and appropriate - in the sense of owning or Ereignis (Heidegger) the original dream.

After defining the human essence as the uncanniest of all, Heidegger in his meditation on Ister elaborates his propositions by arguing that if becoming homely is the care of literature (poetry), encounter between the foreign and one's own is also the fundamental truth of history:

> This *coming to be* at home in one's own in itself entails that human beings are initially, and for a long time, and sometimes forever, not at home. And this in turn entails that human beings fail to recognize, that they deny, and perhaps even have to deny and flee what belongs to the home. Coming to be at home is thus a passage through the foreign. And if the becoming homely of a particular humankind sustains the historicality of its history, then the law of the encounter [*Auseinanderstzung*] between the foreign and one's own is the fundamental truth of history, a truth from out of which the essence of history must unveil itself. (49)

In this way her arrival is not only double but agonistic; she not only carries the duplex of the dreams, but she also appropriates that dream, and she displaces that dream into her own duty and honor, (what dream is not a displacement, or what is a dream if it is not a displacement itself? In that sense she is dreaming her husband's dream as displacement, as departure from the place of her seclusion and exile). So

Jasmine plans to set out in a journey beyond these two deaths - death to/from the relatives and to/from herself.

If the reader encounters her as a fated exile from the very first page of the novel, therefore never at home at all, as Heidegger would say, the journey beyond these deaths is also toward it. Jasmine herself is going to become at many points in the novel the reeking dead animal she despised and thought she escaped from as soon as the story unrolls. That is to say, the protean permutations of the selves, the dreams of a young girl full of wanderlust, the audacious acts of self-defense by this seemingly innocent and vulnerable stranger into the New World neither speak of her agency, nor of her being at home. Coming to oneself or creating oneself is for both Mukherjee and Heidegger not only a loss of "intellectual mastery" that disturbs us from our beliefs and ontologies, as Curtis Bowman argues in his Heideggerian reading of Jacques Tourneur's horror films (73), but it is the most difficult of all tasks, for it involves catastrophe.

To eulogize Jasmine's journey across the world as globalization (as does Anthony C. Alessandrini in his essay "Reading Bharati Mukherjee, Reading Globalization") is as naïve as to patronize her as a survivor from the brutalities of a primitivism.[7] The readings that equate Mukherjee's sense of journey in this novel as well as elsewhere with adventure or wandering also miss the specific sense of voyage

[7] Chua in "Passages from India," makes an interesting remark with regard to survivorship in the novel. For Chua Jasmine is a double survivor. She survives the death into a short story, for she was tenuous enough to make the author let her survive beyond the short story into a full-fledged life of the novel, and she also survived, which is rather a problematic survivorship, the fatalistic determinations of life in Hasnapur "to the freedom" of American life (57).

Mukherjee evokes in the story. Journey here in the novel and in Heidegger is not simply a wandering and an indulgence in being unhomely forever.

Elucidating the distinction between these two "passages" Heidgger says in the same book that:

> . . .this is no more homeless wandering around that merely seeks a location in order then to abandon it and take its pleasure and satisfaction in a mere traveling around. The human being here is not the adventurer who remains homeless on account of his lack of rootedness. Rather the sea and the land and the wilderness are those realms that human beings transform with their skillfulness, use and make their own, so that they may find their own vicinity through such realms. The homely is sought after and striven for in the violent activity of passing through that which is inhabitual with respect to the sea and earth, and yet in such passage the homely is precisely not attained. (73)

An adventurer can be an interesting figure but s/he cannot be an uncanny being, to whose essence, argues Heidegger, belongs what he calls "counterturning." The adventurer is also not unhomely, but the δεινότατοζ, the uncanniest is unhomely precisely because "it" remains excluded from its own essence, or it finds no entry in the essence. Heidegger explains his arguments and maintains that the uncanniest goes everywhere, but it comes to nothing and attains no home. In his algebra, Heidegger calls it: παντοπόροζ αποροζ (*pantoporos aporos*) - a being that experiences everything, yet remains without experience.

This Heideggerian meditation gets more resonant when one reads how Jasmine escapes the metropolitan life of New York city to fill the pots with water in Iowa, which reminds her of her days in rural India, and how Bud's ex-wife bugs her in the beginning thinking her to be a money-grubber, but soon realizes her mistake

when she finds that Jasmine is not after Bud's money at all. Therefore to interpret Jasmine's westward movements as Mukherjee's longing to identify with the pioneers is to miss the uncanny move towards everything without reaching anything. "Poros" in Greek, explains Heidegger, is opposed to "penia" or poverty, so it also means "earning a living," or wealth. But in spite of and because of this accumulated "porosity" in every sense of the term, the uncanny gets to "nothing." To let Heidegger explain this unique situation in which the uncanny find themselves caught:

> Driven to busy themselves with all beings in every way, human beings are simultaneously (as though) driven out from being, however much effect beings may have . . . For the powers and forces of nature too can indeed be fearful in their effect; other things in their sublimity can indeed demand awe; . . .[But] Human beings alone stand in the midst of beings in such a way as to comport themselves toward being as such . . . Human beings simultaneously stand in the midst of being in such a way that in relation to those beings they are αποροζ. Yet only as παντοπόροζ are they αποροζ and vice versa. In those beings they come to, and in which they think themselves at home, they come to nothing. Thinking they are homely, human beings are those who are unhomely. (76)

In other words, the more homely one feels with beings, the more radically unhomely one becomes. For Heidegger this singular fate humans are consigned to is more catastrophic than all catastrophes of nature and cosmos put together. For him human essence is the sole catastrophe, not only because home turns him forever away from what is homely, but also because one needs to fight against one's own coziness and comfort, one's rootedness and rigidity.[8]

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[8] In her essay "Reading and Writing the South Asian Diaspora," Inderpal Grewal not only blames

It is precisely in the light of this necessity to explode out of one's coziness (both material and metaphysical) Mukherjee detects and decries the classy gesture of the purity of pain and moral superiority maintained by the émigrés and exiles - the "haughty cousins," as she calls them - against the déclassé immigrant. She in her essay "Immigrant Writing: Give Us Your Maximalist," directs her critique especially towards exiles like Rushdie, with their "nostalgic glee" and "bitter world weariness" and the post-colonials, "who earn the right to be permanent scolds, soaking up comfort and privilege and nursing real grievances until privileges and grievances become habits of mind (28). Mukherjee tries to demythologize the aura of exile by replacing it with what she in "Imagining Homelands" calls "the scraped-knuckled, bruised-elbow immigration" (70).

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Mukherjee for stereotyping the Sikh minority of India, who also form the first wave of Indian immigrants to the United States, she also interrogates the portrayal of Jasmine, the Third World woman as an anomaly, or a representation of "specialness," rather than "difference." Grewal quotes Minh-ha to support her argument that "this kind of formation creates a division "between I-who-have-made-it and You-cannot-make-it" and it has unfortunate consequences in the preservation of one's identity as special at the cost of other women, it leads to a "double game: on the one hand (I shall) loudly assert my right, as a woman, as an exemplary one, to have access to equal opportunity; on the other hand, (I shall) quietly maintain my privileges by helping the master perpetuate his cycle of oppression"" (233). When we look at Jasmine as a pantoporos uncanny being, we immediately see where Grewal's arguments lose their relevance.

For Mukherjee, if diaspora is a search for *the* homeland, that is why suspect, exile is also a painful preservation of *the* wound, which the exile retains against relating to the host country. The difference between Mukherjee's déclassé mongrelizing - debasing and profane - and the purist stand of the exile, expatriate and the postcolonial deepens when she in "Imagining Homelands" suggests that the latter bear some resemblance with the "current crop of French and Austrian race-baiters who even propose cleansing the various motherlands of Turks, Gypsies, Africans, Kurds, and Bosnians/Kosovo refugees (77).

Her critique of hyphenization is taken as an alibi for assimilation and her declaration that she is an American writer rather than an Asian-American is read as betrayal. Contrary to this Mukherjee argues that the elitism of exile silences, instead of enunciating, the pain of migration. In her essay, "Immigrant Writing," she articulates the gap between the new comer "with too much story to tell" (28) and too few people to speak for them (1). She feels constrained in the deeply rootedness of the exile and the expatriates, who, says she, end up all their genius talking only to themselves and their biographers (29). As opposed to this the immigrant is the double, the flexible ubiquity that finds ease in fictionally entering lives and characters other than him/herself.

With the "immigrant" that inhabits this jointure or rupture of too much story to tell and too little possibility of actually doing so, Mukherjee might have been expressing the divide of the houses and the "near" impossibility of the dialogue between them that Heidegger referred to in his On the Way to Language (5). The

compulsion to speak beyond one's own house entails a journey away from one's own house, which in turn renders both the houses quite unhomely.

Fighting Fatalistic Exile:

Even though there are attempts (Alam 1996) at periodizing Mukherjee's literary output, the so-called phase of exile and nostalgia for home in her early writings that include The Tiger's Daughter, 1972, and her nonfiction collaboration with her husband Clark Blaise Days and Nights in Calcutta, 1977, mostly based on her Canadian experience; the second phase of expatriate's aloofness with which she moves to New York and publishes Wife and Darkness; the third phase of the exuberance of immigration that includes Jasmine, The Middleman and Other Stories, etc.; yet the sense of passage to hold dialogue between different houses and the resultant homelessness and dislocation are present in different guise throughout her writing.

Her encounter with and her entrenched opposition to fatalistic exile are obvious in the first sentence of Jasmine: "Lifetimes ago, under a banyan tree, in the village of Hasnapur, an astrologer cupped his ears - his satellite dish to the stars - and foretold my widowhood and exile" (3). This sentence in the beginning of the novel, about the beginning of Jasmine's life (though even at that point Jyoti had a past, the past perfect before the partition, the stories of affluent, comfortable, elegant, prepolitical, and spectacular past, favorite site of her father's nostalgic musings of which she was an instinctive participant), unfolds, intensifies and thickens the plot of the text, as if Jasmine were sentenced into/by it, its ominous articulation and its

subsequent misinterpretation. This articulation of destiny belongs to the symbolic order that tries to impose coherence into the chaotic past and the fleeting future of the place, culture, civilization and peoples (Jyoti in particular). It is this sentencing against which the author pits her protagonist and postulates, as does Heidegger with the figure of Antigone, her own politics/poetics of self-remaking and birthing. This is what leads the readers to giving a generic reading to Mukherjee's passionate narratives in general and Jasmine in particular and to saying, as does Dlaska, that women are unhousement and exile (45).

One needs to be more careful, more attentive to the cultural complexity involved either in Mukherjee's case or in Jyoti's. If we call Jyoti a survivor, a victim of extreme disadvantage and injustice, as Dlaska seems to claim her to be (129), we need to remember that she became Jasmine not in the first world, but already in the third one with Prakash. The rebellion against any sentencing started even as early as her encounter with the astrologer, the violence of whose chucking resulted into the revelation of third eye. And on the other hand if we use the short-shrift paradigm of first and the third world in order to put the savior sentencing into circulation and call the author a survivor from the submissiveness demanded of Indian women (Bloom 68), that would jeopardize the privileges enjoyed by her, her sense of being in control of her destiny, as she puts in Days and Nights in Calcutta, better in India than in Canada (168).

What suggests itself here is not that unhousement is not women's general condition in Hasnapur, nor that there is persecution of the survivor here in the West.

More interesting is fatalistic exile, the inescapability of being nothing else than what the astrologers and the Half-Faces want one to be - the double-bind of widowhood and survivorship, which Mukherjee herself at times promotes and indulges in. On the one hand there is a cultural submission, on the other there is paternalized survivorship, beyond which one cannot simply grow in these respective ideologies. Mukherjee is opposed to both modes of exiles and exclusions, so she takes recourse to what in an interview her husband Clark Blaise said, is a move from unhousement to rehousement, a painful "breaking away from the culture into which one is born. . .[to] reroot. . .oneself in a new culture (Hancock 39).

"Rerooting" in Jasmine is neither getting assimilated, nor forgetting the past. Forgetting and being engrossed into thrownness occur only when the being feels homely in the paths he lays for himself and gets stuck with them. In Introduction to Metaphysics Heidegger clarifies:

> The violence-doing, which originally creates the routes, begets in itself its own unessence, the versatility of many twists and turns, which in itself is the lack of ways out, so much so that it shuts itself out from the way of meditation on the seeming within which it drifts around. (168)

If the uprooted Jasmine travels, as Mukherjee would say in "Immigrant Writing," "half the world in every direction to come here and begin again" (28), the rerooting is never simply a rehousement for her. Dwelling, as Heidegger characterizes it in his "Building Dwelling Thinking," is building (148), but such a building also accompanies violence that surmounts the violence-doing in building. In this way the issue of *techné*, or technology in Heidegger's sense of the term and not

the way Hoppe reads technology in the novel, is relevant in relation to Jasmine's move beyond simple rehousement. *Techné*, as Heidegger uses the term in Introduction to Metaphysics, is knowing , it is "initially and constantly looking out beyond what in each case, is directly present at hand" (169).

There is a monstrous leakage therefore between technology and Jasmine not because her voice resembles the ones in the telephones, nor because, like Olympia, she is a mechanical doll receiving directives from the authorities starting from the patriarchs and the purists in Hasnapur to the mythmakers of the nation-building here in the New World, but because in her is set to work "being-out-beyond" that impels her to move beyond all beings. In this way *techné* suggests the *deinon*, the violence-doing against the overwhelming character of what Heidegger calls *Fug* after the Greek *dikē*, both of which constitute the essence of the uncanny being. Jasmine embodies this agonistic confrontation of *dikē* and *techné*, or a violent move away from all the structures of power and authority, which brings a sense of justice (*dikē*) too to the journey full of adventure and violence.

The first words of Jasmine, Lifetimes ago - thus speak of Jasmine's life in the joints (*Fug*), the ruptures between the selves and her constant fall and escape from those ruptures and traps. Jyoti of Hasnapur village gives way to Jasmine after marrying Prakash, a man from the city with new ideas and values. She in turn becomes Jazzy after she escapes from the motel where she killed the man she was raped by. The process continues into a succession of avatars that Jasmine takes as Jase in New York, and as Jane in Baden, Iowa.

Each displacement exposes her to greater violence and greater loss. This being situated at the ruptures without the benefit of a niche, this pantoporos wanderer across the world is aware of being hemmed in, of having no way-out than going towards beings, but experiencing nothing. This aporosity of being-in-the-world, laying out paths, without ever reaching anywhere explains the way Jasmine describes her transition and translation in the New World: "Let go just one thing, like not wearing our normal clothes, or a turban or not wearing a tika on the forehead - the rest goes on its own down a sinkhole" (29). This is also how Du's language, his shrines, pictures, candles and dried fragrances disappeared; the same happened to Jasmine's Ganapati - the elephant god that landed with her on this side of the shore, but could not make with her more than a few lodgings; and same fate befalls on Prakash's suit, his mission and his memories too. This is the reason why Heidgger in his meditation on Ister calls uncanny beings the ones who are απολιζ- *apolis* -, the ones who are "forfeiting the site" (86).

To put it differently, the uncanny wanderers like Jasmine are at once inside the *polis*, and among the beings, but also above it or without it, since they violently overcome what is present at hand. As a result of which they forfeit the site or the polis and become unheimliche. "There are" argues Jasmine, "no harmless, compassionate ways to remake ourselves. We murder who we were so we can rebirth ourselves in the image of dreams" (29).

The existence of an uncanny wanderer is calibrated upon the loss of the constructed selves and the political sites. Their essential homelessness, however,

puts them above the site and the polis too, as a result of which their very unhomeliness acquires the form of the Third Eye. If Freudian uncanny is the fear of losing one's eyes, Mukherjee portrays an uncanny character, who acquires the mythical third eye associated with the Hindu hermaphrodite god of death and destruction.

In acquiring the Third Eye she becomes Shiva, the hermaphrodite lord of dance as well as destruction, the homeless fakir, who is at once the care giver and the lord of death. And his dancing consort in the ambivalent dance of death is Kali, the black goddess, the only force of justice through violence. Jasmine, who is at once Shiva and Kali (hence the ambiguity of gender in her), who tells Duff the stories of Nachiketa - the boy sent towards Death by his own father, becomes the historical humanity itself. "I feel old," she exclaims, "very old, millennia old, a bug eyed viewer of beginnings and ends. In the old Hindu books they say that in the eye of the Creator, mountains rise and fall like waves and the ocean" (35). One can read in her what Heidegger in Basic Questions of Philosophy terms the historical humanity, in contrast to the cult of individualism:

> The historical man is not a separate "individual," dragging his past behind himself. Nor does it mean several individuals, belonging together in a form of a society. . .Historical man: that shall mean for us the unexhausted unique fullness of essential human possibilities and necessities. . .ones arising from man's relation to the truth of Being itself. (181)

What frightens Bud about Jasmine is her uncanniness, for him she symbolizes an apolis, a world "that he will never see" (109). It does not mean that

Jasmine withdraws into the old world, let alone the mythical world of the gods and the goddesses. Like her author, for her too India is a place for relaxed vacationing, not more than that. And withdrawing from the new world also does not mean that Jasmine does not belong. Even though she leaves Lilian, she leaves Taylor and New York, she abandons Bud to join Duff and Taylor to go to California, like a *pantaporos aporos*, she remains one of the Americans, and in spite of the fact that Jasmine's papers are not straight even at the end of the novel, her undocumented unhomeliness lends strength to the vision she has of America. Jasmine is about dreaming nation and history from this negative space of uncanniness.

## III. THE BARE HUMANS IN A NATIONSCAPE: OKADA'S NO-NO BOY

Consider if this is a man
Who works in the mud
Who does not know peace
Who fights for a scrap of bread
Who dies because of a yes or no
- *Primo Levi*

Foucault and the Space of Power:

In his interview "Space, Power and Knowledge" Foucault relates within parenthesis an anecdote about his encounter with a Sartrean psychologist in a discussion organized by a group of architects gathered to study space. The Sartrean psychologist, says Foucault, announced that "*space* is reactionary and capitalist, but *history* and *becoming* are revolutionary" (140). Foucault calls it an absurd discourse at which one would be convulsed with laughter these days. For him space can neither be reactionary nor capitalist because, he continues, even within the concentration camps, there is resistance.

A couple of questions before in the interview he says, " There are certain number of things that one can say with some certainty about a concentration camp to the effect that it is not an instrument of liberation, but one should still take into account" - and this is what he claims to be his contribution to the discussion of this issue - "that in spite of torture and execution, no matter how terrifying a given system may be, there are always possibilities of resistance, disobedience and oppositional groupings" (135). In other words, for him neither is the space completely liberating nor entirely repressive. Even though he allows that space is fundamental in the exercise of power, but the walls of repressive architecture, certain

allocation of people in space "is a plunge into a field of social relations" (140) rather than a separation, seclusion, exclusion and confinement, let alone repression.

Foucaultian space and its analytics steeped in the discourse of power, discipline and punishment are also sites of resistance, revolt and negation, which necessarily entail freedom. What if the space in which freedom and resistance is "exercised" to a certain "effect," brings more seclusion thereby turning the resistance null and void? So the reference to power is not enough to analyze space that stages social relations or their absence.

Foucault's playing of space against history, the latter is the old man's wistful "that good old time" for him, is subjected in turn to the service of the critique of the present as against the myth of the return of the past. The presentism ossified into the correlations of power and resistance smoothes over total rationalization of power relations that ultimately ends up with the severing of ties from the subject. Foucault's eye or the architecture of power, with its autonomous mechanism, as in Panopticon, his advancement on Bentham's regulatory mechanism, resulting in mutual control, glosses over certain historical facts. The concentration on space and the neglect of history to the extent of reducing it to the history of the present is politically more comfortable, but historically irresponsible, because it limits point of views to the local in such a debilitating way that it denies the global fact of people's marches and movements, their migration and displacement. To concentrate just on the plunge of social relations is to deny diaspora just as to stress the subjects of freedom and resistance is to overlook the beings for whom freedom is more like

abandonment and resistance without effect.

Foucault's topos devoid of chronos reappears in modern manifestation in the critics like Arif Dirlik, who in his essay "Asian on the Rim: Transnational Capital and Local Community in the Making of Contemporary Asian America" argues against diasporic nostalgia for the past, which for him undesirably foregrounds ethnicity, which it should suppress in favor of what Dirlik calls the "place based politics." The diasporic recourse to the historical point of common origin is less "effective" (48) towards coping with society. He offers an example of a Chinese in Los Angeles, who has more of a stake with his or her African American or Hispanic American neighbor than with some distant cousin in Hong Kong. Dirlik's politics based on space can be taken as a spatial presentism that not only discards genealogy, ethnicity, race and history as undesirable for racial bridging and dereification of identities, in short, assimilation, even though Dirlik posits ethnic assimilation against spatial rootedness, unwittingly in the service of the nation, thus supporting the myth of "home wherever one lands." His historical trajectory through places involves "forgetting and new acquisition" (47). But both of these panaceas of forgetting and new accretion are difficult if the "enrooted" people happen to be the Japanese Americans like Ichiro's family, for whom forgetting is as difficult as acquisition and the place is as uneven as history is zigzag.

Dirlik's juxtaposition of the genealogical and the geographical belonging, his dream of "enabling people to feel at home where they live" (46) instead of whimpering with the so-called location of origin, is only ironically applicable to the

uncanny groups thrown into internment, exile, displacement and diaspora.

Feminist Critique of No-No Boy:

One might wonder if Lowe's reading of No-No Boy as an anti-developmental novel with an almost static plot (58) hints towards this ossification that we just discussed in the light of Foucault and Dirlik's critical stance. Only the dyads of the origin and place, or the two points of the spatial contiguity are replaced with another dyad of nativism and assimilationism that Lowe presents as problematic in Asian American writing. In the same way as Shirley Lim and Amy Ling critique what they consider to be the mere rearticulation of masculinist version of anti-racist and anti-mainstream reading of Asian American writers by critics like Frank Chin, Lowe points out the danger of such static narratives that tend to silence internal heterogeneity in the name of fighting for it externally.

If Frank Chin accuses writers like Kingston for unduly feminizing Chinese culture, Shirley Lim in her article, "Japanese American Women's Life Stories: Maternality in Monica Sone's Nisei Daughter and Joy Kagawa's Obasan," accuses the editors of Aiiieeeee anthology for "setting up an alternate critical hegemony . . .based on masculinist and sociological evaluation" (90). She continues:

> The *Aiiieeeee* critics offer an ideal of male Asian American writing defined as social history, possessing an original force beyond the reach of any tradition. John Okada's *No-No Boy* is their idealized textual type, a text they insist on receiving as "arrogantly self-begotten." (90)

The feminist response to Chin's apotheosis of the novel undoubtedly complicates a simple place based politics by foregrounding the double space and double

temporalities that Asian-Americans inhabit, but unfortunately her "feminist reading" that "values instead of disparages ambiguities and fluid boundaries in writing" (91) gets too elusive to account for the discontinuities inherent in being or not being an American of Japanese descent, and for the difference it makes to be a no-no boy.

In a reading of this novel in the light of Freud's uncanny, Bryn Gribben argues that Ichiro's identity formation follows the Western path often fortified by the disciplines of sociology and psychoanalysis. At the outset of the essay Gribben writes:

> Both the emergence of sociology as a discipline in the 1940s and the specifically Western emphasis on psychoanalytic models of identity formation pervade Ichiro's attempts to define a self apart from his family. . . . Many of the tropes of No-No Boy are familiar to students of psychoanalysis: the controlling mother, her refusal to look into a mirror with her son and face their separateness, and her death by water all signify, in traditional Western psychoanalysis, a psychosexually-rooted crisis in masculine identity formation, based on separation and differentiation from the mother. The home which is now "umheimlich" and the dismembered leg of the character Kenji (a Japanese American peer of Ichiro's who fought in the war) also foreground the dis-ease Ichiro faces upon his return from prison, a return met continually with other "present" absences. (Gribben)

Jinqui Ling in his Narrating Nationalism: Ideology and Form in Asian American Literature on the contrary reads No-No Boy as a narrative intervention and a rhetorical decision in the broader context of the U.S. history, namely the mass consumerism, corporatism, and technological fetishism of the fifties and the growing sense of resistance and alienation among the American intellectuals (52). Ling recontextualizes the novel in the critique of corporatism and the search for

alternatives to individualism. But his narration of nationalism is more than a conflation of exile and nation. For him the novel is a rhetorical decision by the author. Okada's choice of the fictional mode in order to express his discontent, argues Ling, is an attempt to "speak [the] ideologically unspeakable," which Ling finds ambiguously built in the No-No Boy, a strategy on the part of the author to utilize the form and structure of the novel ideologically in order to balance the demands of resolution from the readers and the demand of conformity to assimilation from the publishers (49).

What is left unelaborated in Ling is the state of dual citizenship, hence the dichotomous pressure of belonging on the issei and the nisei. Ling mentions but does not carry to more serious implications the duality of legal status of Japanese Americans in the U. S.:

> Historically, the conflict between the issei and nisei had been largely shaped by a phenomenon of dual citizenship, which repeatedly called into question the nisei American identity, because the Japanese law designates the offspring of a Japanese father, regardless of the place of birth, as a natural Japanese citizen, while American law recognizes anyone born on American soil, regardless of the parents' ethnicity or nationality, as a U. S. citizen. (41)

The dichotomy of the place-based U.S. politics and the patriarchal, nativist, ethnic, genealogical Japanese ideology beset the soul of Ichiro by a Du Boisian double-bind, or in Du Bois's famous words, by the "twoness, an American, a Negro; two souls, two unreconciled strivings (5); but instead of staying with the duality of souls inside the racial veils Okada characterizes Ichiro's situation as more precarious, so that the "split-man" of the novel looks more like what Hannah Arendt would call a bare

human: without a state and without rights.

The Condition of a Bare Human:

Lowe's interpretation of Ichiro's condition as "a deeply divided subject" (50), Ling's reading of Ichiro's "failed identity quest" (51), McDonald's desire for Ichiro's successful redemption from the guilt of not choosing (McDonald 12) unwittingly rehash the myth of the individual heroism free of history. Arendt's ideas about modern conditions that reduce people to bare humans address these complexities by realigning the readings based on individual's quest to broader concept of belonging, rightlessness and dislocation.

As Arendt clarifies in The Origin of Totalitarianism, the term "displacement" is the invention of the postwar era in order to attenuate a person's reduction into the mere existence and to snatch even the title of the "stateless," which at least suggests the person's belonging to a state in the past (Arendt 279), which in turn completes the circle of belonging to nothing, or being just the mysterious given of being human.

On the one hand Ichiro's survivorship - from the war, which he "fought" inwardly for deciding to not fight it, from the internment, and from the violence that ultimately devoured Freddie, another no-no boy, separates him from what Arendt/Heidegger, following the Greeks, call *polis* - he in the Aristotelian sense remains no longer a political animal, he is animal itself, a savage inside civilization, and a beast amidst humanity. But on the other hand, argues Arendt, like all survivors his abstract nakedness of being nothing but human is his greatest danger.

He failed the test of claiming the rights by saying no to the article 27-28 of the "Statement of United States Citizenship of Japanese Ancestry," particularly 28th, which reads: "Will you swear unqualified allegiance to the United States of America and faithfully defend the United States from any or all attack by foreign or domestic forces, and forswear any form of allegiance or obedience to the Japanese emperor, to any foreign government, power, or organization?" (Weglyn 136). As a result of which he continues saying no to every offer and opportunity for job, love, business and relationship. He declines Mr. Carrick's generous offer for a job in Portland. He cannot find himself to be the right person to accept Emi's proposal for love or Mr. Maeno's offer of a job. He goes to the Christian Rehabilitation Center, but fails to accept Morrison's job in the center.

Once he falls out of the polis, the political, the public realm of rights and the pale of law, he also loses his ties and rights to belong to the body politic. Arendt explains:

> The calamity of the rightless is not that they are deprived of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness or of equality before the law and freedom of opinion - formulas, which are designed to solve problems *within* a given communities - but that they no longer belong to any community whatsoever. Their plight is not that they are not equal before law, but that no law exists for them, not that they are oppressed, but that no body wants even to oppress them. (296)

Ichiro's desperate attempt to enter back into the polis gets rebuffed from the very beginning. Eto, the friend turned stranger or a Japanese who plays "more American than most Americans" (73) spits on him, Mr. Brown says - you just pick up where you left off, and you won't have any trouble - as if nothing has happened at

all. But Ichiro knows that Brown and he are creatures of two different worlds. He describes his meeting with Brown as meeting someone in a revolving door, same as well as different, it was like, says he, seeing without meeting, talking without hearing, smiling without feeling. Ichiro takes this fissure as the terminal loss of the polis:

> No, Brown is still Brown. It is I who reduces conversation to the inconsequential because Brown is of that life, which I have forfeited, and forgetting it, have lost the right to see and hear and become excited over things, which are of that wonderful past. (57)

It becomes clear that merely ethnic analysis of Ichiro's problem is inadequate to fully grasp the situation, when his own father fails to understand what he is undergoing and snaps that Ichiro's problem is over once he came home from prison, which, thinks his father, is not the case with Mama. Ichiro hardly believes his ears when his father calls his "homecoming" the termination of his problems, and he retorts:

> "You are a Jap. How can you understand? No. I'm wrong. You are nothing. You don't understand a damn thing. You don't understand about me and about Ma and you will never know why it is that Taro had to go in the army. Goddamn fool, that is what you are, Pa, a goddamn fool." (115)

His attempts to reconnect to the polis, to the public life and to resume in that world of the wonderful past by visiting the Club Oriental bar, for instance, are frustrated by his own brother and his hoodlums. He wants to change place with Kenji just in order to stay connected like Kenji to the polity, to history, even after knowing that Kenji has only eleven inches to death. The immense uprootedness that he feels is

aggravated by the realization that even though by language, by culture, by education and upbringing he belongs to the polis, to the logos of the polis, yet he as an American of Japanese descent has to prove that he belongs, not the German, the Italian or Russian (31), for his rightlessness is built into his body itself.

This dark background of mere givenness, as Arendt would call it, is a permanent threat to the public sphere, which is built on the principle of equality. And the people who want to stay within the public sphere of equality, who want the sphere safe from these abject creatures that are threat to the atmosphere of equality, the humane domain of justice and freedom, feel self-hatred, for having a creature inside, which is nothing but a human being. Hannah Arendt continues to argue that the higher the development of a civilization, the more accomplished the world of human artifice it has produced. Therefore:

> The more at home men feel with human artifice, the more they will resent everything they have not produced, everything that is merely given to them. The human being who has lost his place in a community, his political status in the struggle of his time, and the legal personality, which makes his action and part of his destiny a consistent whole, is left with those qualities, which usually can become articulate only in the sphere of private life and must remain unqualified, mere existence in all matters of public concern. (301)

But Ichiro's "rightlessness, hence his uncanniness, are not allowed even this Arendtian niche of the private sphere. The guilt of having failed to connect himself with the polis - the "site" of history and destiny, freedom and equality, justice and judgment, bounces back to consume him. The war to which he said no and for which he was incarcerated seems to invert into or encroach upon his private

sphere, his family and friends. Just like the self-accusing body politic projecting self-hatred into the body of the abject, Ichiro, as the ghost of the public sphere, who haunts the polis to be reconnected, displaces self-hatred into the inmates of the private sphere - especially his own mother.

His life turns uncanny from the moment he realizes that he is no longer a plain "Jap," which his father is, or the moment at which it dawns upon him that the uncanny combination of the Asian and the American would never allow him to plainly identify with the story of the mythical hero Momotaro. In his monologic address to his mother, Ichiro muses on this condition of uncanny double that depletes rather than duplicates identity:

> There was a time when I was your son. There was a time I no longer remember when you used to smile a mother's smile and tell me stories about gallant and fierce warriors who protected their lords with blades of shining steel and about the old woman who found a peach in the stream and took it home and, when her husband split it in half, a husky little boy tumbled out to fill their hearts with boundless joy. I was that boy in the peach and you were the old woman . . .it was all right then to be Japanese and feel and think all the things that Japanese do even if we lived in America. (15)

And there comes a time as an emergency during which Ichiro is asked to make a choice, which he fails to do. He fought the hollow idea of being an American, as he fights the idea of being a Japanese now. His identity in this sense is neither divided nor double, let alone hybrid; rather that he is left with none, with an emptiness, due to the ghostly appearance of that part of his identity, as Freud would have it, which has to remain suppressed:

I wish with all my heart that I were Japanese or that I were American. I am

> neither and I blame you and I blame myself and I blame the world, which is made of many countries, which fight with each other and kill and hate and destroy again and again and again. (16)

The severance is at once spatial as well as ontological. To be more precise, the plane of blame is equally divided between the world, which is not a globe but countries, and himself, who is not a being, but a spectral double of being and non-being, both warring against each other, a perpetual killing and destruction.

Arendt's elucidation of "mere existence" in the political sphere is not elaborated enough to encompass this violence against oneself that Ichiro's uncanny existence instantiates, nor can her notion of the polis adequately describe the merger of the hearth and the polis that we encounter here in the novel as we do in Heidegger too. The *polis* is like a pole, argues Heidegger, towards and around which turns everyone. He seems to wonder whether there is any "out" to the polis. He suggests on his book on Holderlin's Ister that we avoid this unavoidable confusion of explanation of the logical, the aesthetic, technical, metaphysical and biological.

The essence of the polis he says, "always comes to light, in accordance with the way in which beings as such in general enter the realm of the unconcealed" (82). Arendt's discussion of the rightless is political inasmuch as it is invariably characterized in relation to treaties, laws, legislations and rights, rather than beings and their relationship to themselves. Whereas in the novel, as well as in Heidegger at this point, the polis is pre-political so far as what is excluded as non-relational is included in the polis as prepolitical.

In the novel the lines between the home, the shop, kitchen and the

bedroom are blurred. The bells at the entrance ring throughout the house. He finds his home already political, he belongs or does not, for Ma he does, since he is her true son, who never betrayed her, the true strength of Japan. For the same reason, however, Taro finds himself an outsider.

> . . .even Mr. Carrick, why isn't he in? Why is he on the outside squandering his goodness on outcasts like me? May be the answer is that there is no in. May be the whole damned country is pushing and shoving and screaming to get into some place that doesn't exist (159-60).

Ichiro's realization of this emptiness at the heart of the nation is also the realization of his own uncanniness, his realization that he inhabits a place that Heidegger calls the apolis. He is that unheimlich being who is at once everywhere without ever being anywhere.

# IV. HAUNTING AND GHOSTING IN LAHIRI'S INTERPRETER OF MALADIES

> Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
> The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
> Of dead and living.
>
> - *T S Eliot*

Jhumpa Lahiri's Pulitzer prize winning debut, Interpreter of Maladies, deals with the problems of belonging, home, exile and immigration. Lahiri's tales are deceptively simple but they present subtle pictures of the immigrants' life portrayed with uncommon beauty and elaborateness. As Lahiri seems to be an artist that believes in art as concealment, beneath the light surface of her short stories lie a poignant world of painful diaspora, a distant but powerfully present ghostly world of the past, and an eerie socio-political reality in which nations and relations are broken as quickly and easily as they are built.

This chapter is a critical diagnosis of these worlds veiled in Lahiri's narrative grace and stylistic elegance. It dwells primarily on the themes of conflicting times and confronting geographies inhabited by the uncanny beings and the resultant sense of incommunicability and trauma that they undergo. In the course of the discussion this chapter will engage the title story, "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine," and the last in the collection, "The Third and the Final Continent" in detail, while the other stories will be touched during the discussion of these themes.

## The Watch of the Sandman:

Upon looking closer almost all stories in the collection reveal a consistent pattern - a room or a house, mis/matched couples or families trying to overcome the

strangeness imposed most of the time by tradition, and a visible and at times secret presence of the third other, sometimes in the form of a person, but most of the times a ghost or a memory, a land or home rendering the rooms and houses and their neatness and orderliness all unhomely.

In "A Temporary Matter" rooms become both refuge as well as abodes of secrecy or even haunting spaces, especially after Shoba ends up with delivering a premature stillborn and her relationship with her husband gets more strained than ever. She starts preparing on her own to leave her husband:

> She would look around the wall of the room, which they had decorated together last summer with a border of marching ducks and rabbits playing trumpets and drums. By the end of August there was a cherry crib under the window, white changing table with mint green knobs. . . For some reason the room did not haunt him the way it haunted Shoba. In January, when he stooped working at his carrel in the library, he set up his desk there deliberately partly because the room soothed him, and partly because it was a place Shoba avoided. (8)

"When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" is a story about a guest who comes regularly to the narrator's house in Boston for dinner. Mr. Pirzada, the guest, is from a place caught up in the throes of partition, as a result of which he cannot be introduced in same way as a person from a fixed place. He looks like an Indian, but he is not; he came to the US on a grant from the government of Pakistan, but he is not in true sense a Pakistani either, despite his being a citizen of Pakistan. His family is missing from home in the Eastern Pakistan due to the war for independence and since the Eastern Pakistan is not yet independent, he cannot be called a Bangladeshi yet. To make the matters worse. Lilia, the narrator, who knows everything about

American history, does not seem to have even a slightest idea of the historical turns that part of the world has been taking.

Almost every evening at six, Mr. Pirzada would come to their house and announce: "Another refuge, I am afraid, on Indian territory" (28). And he would hand his coat with no recognizable tags inside to little Lilia along with a variety of chocolates, and a theatrical bow to her, the "lady of the house," before they would all sit in front of the TV invariably every evening after his arrival. Along with him would also come, as in Hoffmann's "Der Sandman," the disturbing news from another place to which Lilia had never been. The little lady narrator of the story describes this invasion of her little world in Boston by another place, another time and another history in very moving terms. The dinner would be served and the diners would move from the table to the TV, and Mr. Pirzada, would do a very curious ritual-like thing before eating: he would take out a watch without a band from his breast pocket, hold it briefly to one of his ears, wind it and put it in front of him during the dinner time. Since the watch was set to the local time at home in Dacca, he would never consult it, but he would do the same every evening before meals. The narrator describes her feeling of uneasiness at the sight of this man, who keeps multiple times and inhabits multiple locations:

> When I saw it that night, as he wound it and arranged it on the coffee table, an uneasiness possessed me; life, I realized, was being lived in Dacca first [since Dacca is almost 12 hrs ahead in time]. I imagined Mr. Pirzada's daughters rising from sleep, tying ribbons in their hair, anticipating breakfast, preparing for school. Our meals, our actions, were only a shadow of what had already happened there, a lagging ghost of where Mr. Pirzada really belonged. (31)

During and after the dinner they would concentrate on the news, and the narrator would occupy her self with her book, but that day her father insisted that she pay attention to the news, which further eroded her sense of insularity from the happenings around the world. She describes her exposure to this sandman guest, who brought the news of destruction and catastrophe:

> On the screen I saw tanks rolling through dusty streets, and fallen buildings, and forests of unfamiliar trees into which East Pakistani refugees had fled, seeking safety over the Indian border. I saw boats with fan-shaped sails floating on wide coffee-colored rivers, a barricaded university, newspaper offices burnt to the ground. I turned to look at Mr. Pirzada . . .he had an immovable expression on his face, composed but alert, as if someone were giving him directions to an unknown destination. . . I wondered if the reason he was always so smartly dressed was in preparation to endure with dignity whatever news assailed him, perhaps even to attend a funeral at a moment's notice. (31)

The Uncanny Hymen:

The story "The Third and Final Continent" talks in its subtle way about home, belonging and migration. It is a story about a no-name man, who comes to the third continent to work full time in MIT library. It is narrated by this no-name man, and is about his experiences in a multiple continents that include Asia, Europe and North America; but the story revolves round two female figures: a very old woman, older than a century, and the narrator's wife, Mala, who follows him to the third continent.

The narrator lands on the third continent interestingly on the day which man landed on the moon. His journey from the penury of Bengal to his broke days in London to the YMCA and MIT is the replica of man's journey to the moon. When

his plane began its descent over the Boston Harbor, this nameless narrator hears the pilots announce the news of "two American men [landing] on the moon," for which President Nixon had declared a national holiday. Still in the sky, suspended between the continents and probably between worlds, as if in a certain sense the two American men and this half-Bengali - for he was on green card, which is a kind of citizenship, but not quite, - shared what Immanuel Levinas in his essay "Heidegger, Gagarin and Us" would call "the absolute of homogeneous space" (233); both the parties - the inhabitants of the geometrical space, but less geometric and absolute than Gagarin's techno-induced abode - the Americans landed on the moon, and the narrator is about to or at least intends to land in the First World.

The exodus of the narrator and the opening of the final frontier by the Americans are put together by the almost-metaphysical-conceit of the writer as if to imply parallels of agency and ingenuity between the acts that seem to demand and deserve equal credits and recognition. But one needs to be more careful than Levinas seems to be to praise technology and its alleged capacity in the bid to do away with human sense of rootedness and the related sense of exile. It took years of labor for the narrator of the story to shift from *SS Roma* to the plane. On the other hand, Mrs. Croft, the narrator's first American landlady, is obsessed with the idea of the American conquest of the moon, the splendid feat of science and technology in which she wants to stay enrooted rest of her sedentary life.

As the story begins we have this Bengali version of Neil Armstrong sailing on the *SS Roma,* an Italian cargo vessel, with a certificate of commerce and an

equivalent of ten dollars to his name. When the story wraps up, he is no longer a foreigner in Massachusetts, he is a naturalized citizen, has a house, a devoted wife and a son who is at Harvard, a very much American story with a rags to riches motif. But there are also patterns of repetition. The nameless narrator's days, especially nights at YMCA, remind one of the busy Calcutta streets, with impatient traffic honking throughout the night, and the stained glasses of the lodging have uncanny reappearance of the cheap *Dharmashalas* (lodgings often free of cost) scattered throughout India. To make the matters worse, Mrs. Croft, his first American landlady is so typical of her kind that she can be universalized without much harm, and her rules, especially her objection to lady visitors, remind us of a typical Indian censure against the unmonitored mixing of young men and women. One cannot fail to hear the echo of a possessive parent somewhere in India in Mrs. Croft's directives to her daughter Helen against talking to the nameless narrator:

> When we stood [Helen and the narrator after being called by Mrs. Croft from downstairs] before her she did not slap the bench, or ask us to sit down. She glared.
> "What is it, Mother?"
> "It's improper!"
> "What's improper?"
> "It's improper for a lady and gentleman who are not married to one another to hold a private conversation without a chaperon!" (186)

The narrator's relationship with his wife also was not "proper" in this sense since they lived like strangers in the house until the day they called on Mrs. Croft.

Marriage in Lahiri is not only an affair of arrangement, as one might just as well guess to be the case if the cast is typical Indian, but it has an uncanny ring to

it, an undecipherable ambiguity that reveals the writer's ironical, if not cynical attitude towards the issue. The questions of gender and sexuality, identity and agency, subjectivity and critique of patriarchy, exploitation of the domestic labor and the debatable issue of reproductivity seem to be artistically articulated without letting them overwhelm the tone of the "tales." Whether it is Mrs. Sen, who is also the mistress of spices married all at once to fish, Bengal and the Professor, displaying the division of her emotional loyalty to all of them in her scalp parted evenly by the blood-red vermillion, or Bibi Haldar uncannily obsessed with the idea of being a canny housewife, all speak of the ambiguities of arranged marriages, its ills and illusions, its challenges and hopes, mimicry and mockery.

In this story, "The Third and the Final Continent," the nameless narrator married Mala simply because he had to. In his own words: "I regarded the proposition with neither objection nor enthusiasm. It was a duty expected of me, as it was expected of every man" (181). As usual it was an arranged marriage to a woman not fair enough to get married on time. The parents of the girl were ready to send their daughter overseas instead of keeping her with them eventually to be a spinster, a kind of culturally sanctioned banishment. If the bargain of marriage was a ritual exile, her relationship with her husband is one of alienation. Lahiri describes it in her well-weighed prose, economic and calculative enough to lay bare its theme:

> For five nights we shared a bed. Each of those nights, after applying cold cream [a deliberate attempt to acquire whiteness and desirability, perhaps] and braiding her hair, which she tied up at the end she turned from me and wept; she missed her parents . . .. I did nothing to console her. I lay on my side of the bed, reading my guidebook by flashlight and anticipating my

> journey. At times I thought of the tiny room on the other side of the wall, which belonged to my mother. Now the room was practically empty; the wooden pallet on which she had once slept was piled with trunks and old bedding. Nearly six years ago, before leaving for London, I had watched her die on that bed, had found her playing with her excrement in her final days. (181-82)

The narrator begins his married life with, what Derrida in Dissemination would call the double session, "a double scene upon a double stage" (221). The nameless narrator leaps from the second continent back into the first to reenter it as if it were a cave, a vault, a natural grotto or to borrow from Derrida once again, the *antre*:

> "Antrum, Sanscrit, antara, cleft, cave. Antara properly signifies "interval" and is thus related to the Latin preposition inter. . . And the entry for ENTER ["to enter"] ends with the same etymological reference. The *interval* of the entre, the in-between of the hymen: one might be tempted to visualize these as the hollow or bed of a valley (vallis) . . . (212).

The narrator at the moment is in such a dark grotto, the Platonic cave or more precisely the Platonic bed, which is at once an *antre* and an entrance, an opening as well as a closure that opens on the other side, a house that is unhomely, which turns the inhabitant into an entity which is contiguous with *antara*, which also means "difference." The hymen is such a habitat wherein borders the union of marriage on the membrane of separation: Mala getting separated from her parents, and the narrator, instead of reposing in the marriage bed, reading the guide book for the third and the final continent. In the double session of the hymen the beds converge - the nuptial bed changing into the one on which his mother gasped her last in her own excrement.

The guidebook he was reading by the flashlight eventually takes him to the flames with which he touched the temple of his mother to ignite her pyre. The logic of the hymen, the logic of consummation and cremation, unveils the affinities between the wedding songs and the dirge of mourning, both *embedded* into the hymn, *huphos* or *humnos*, both etymological references to what Derrida calls the hymnographies (213).

The house, which is unhomely, the hymen veiled by the film of remembrance is also an *antre*, which is an *entre*, the suspension or in-betweenness of the binaries of continents and discontents, union and separation, consummation and cremation, life and death. Derrida tries to differentiate his logic of the hymen from Freud's *Das Unheimliche*, in contrast to which he sums up the argument of the whole book, Dissemination, typically in the footnote:

> We are referring less to the text in which Freud is directly inspired by Abel (1910) than to *Das Unheimliche* (1919), of which we are here, in sum, proposing a rereading, we find ourselves constantly being brought back to that text by the paradoxes of the double and of repetition, the blurring of the boundary lines between "imagination" and "reality," between the "symbol" and the "thing it symbolizes." (220)

Derrida's rereading of Freud's interface of heimliche-unheimliche with the proposed replacement of *entre-antre* and the logic of the hymen plays out or mimics the very ambiguity of Freudian uncanny with a difference, as it were with an *antara* - at once what is inside and what is different from it, or outside, hence undecidable, suspended. He continues:

> "Undecidability" is not caused here by some enigmatic equivocality , some inexhaustible ambivalence of a word in a "natural" language, and still less

> by some "Gegensinn der Urworte" (Abel). [In hymen, no repetition of Hegelian *Aufhebung*, no marveling over the lucky accidents of natural languages or the speculative play of dialectics, Freud's included, as if Freud's speculation over the homonymy is merely an identification of contradiction (*Gegensinn*) or at worst a misinterpretation]. What counts here is not the lexical richness, the semantic infiniteness, of a word or a concept, its depth or breadth, the sedimentation that has produced inside it two contradictory layers of signification (continuity and discontinuity, inside and outside, identity and difference, etc.). What counts here is the formal or syntactic *praxis* that composes and decomposes it. We've indeed been making believe that everything could be traced to the word hymen [an apt realization of how much he owes to those whom he criticizes]. But the irreplaceable character of this signifier, . . .was laid out like a trap. This word, this syllepsis [which Derrida defines as "mixed tropes . . .consit[ing] of taking one and the same word in two different senses, probably a politics of numbers he would return to towards the end of the same book, as opposed to the constant shift between two words to the effect of producing the same meaning] is not indispensable; . . . It [hymen] produces the effect first and foremost through the syntax, which disposes the "entre" in such a way that the suspense is due only to the *placement* and not to the content of the words. (220)

Before we continue with Derrida's rereading of Freud's *Urworteism*, as if the former never resorts to it, even not when he in the same text follows the traces of "antre" in Latin, Greek, "Sanscrit," Spanish etc., and without going into Derrida's privileging of the formalistic and the syntactic over what he calls the [Freudian] "semantic" (221), let us look at the formalistic or textual features of this story.

The houses in all three continents are maintained by the rhythms of entry and exit and the differences between. The syncopation of *entre* and *antre* in the bachelor house at Finsbury Park in London is described in these terms:

> Every now and then someone in the house moved out to live with the woman his family back in Calcutta had determined he was to wed. (174)

This continues as if it were the only way to create more room for the new comers

into the house. But the house into the next continent is no less haunted with the rhythms of the *entre*, with its dark grotto that seems to open on both sides, as if to enter is also to exit, which not only suggests constant movement from a continent to the other, but a conflation and consummation without fulfillment, a movement out that also draws the one who moves in. After living like a stranger with Mala, the narrator leaves for the third continent, where he had a job waiting, but no home. He looks for a place and finds a room in a century-old woman's house, who is obsessed not only with the idea of American victory over the moon, but also with keeping her house locked to all but "boys" from Harvard and Tech. The narrator anyhow moves out of this place only to come back time and again to her house, which he calls his first home in America:

> Whenever we make that drive, I always make it a point to take Massachusetts Avenue, in spite of the traffic. I barely recognize the building now, but each time I am there, I return instantly to those six weeks as if they were only the other day, and slow down and point to Mrs. Croft's street, saying to my son, here was my first home in America, where I lived with a woman who was 103. " Remember?" Mala says, and smiles, amazed, as I am, that there was ever a time that we were strangers. (197)

And one can ask Mala, where is a family which has no stranger or a house without its ghosts? Aren't they afraid of their own son, who is getting stranger day after day? Isn't that precisely the reason why Mala weeps now, instead of weeping for people back "home"? They visit him as often as they can, and sometimes bring this intimate stranger home for a weekend, "so that he can eat rice with us with his hands, and speak in Bengali, things we sometimes worry he will no longer do after we die" (197).

The presence of the intimate alien in the family is almost an obsession in Lahiri's stories. Shoba, in "A Temporary Matter," plays the game of memory, of revisiting past in anecdotes, in order to prepare her husband and herself for her decision to break up, - memory and perpetration - an effort to reconcile with the fact that they have been living together but like strangers. In "When Mr. Pirzada Came to Dine" Mr. Pirzada and the news from "home" are always intimate strangers. The presence of the intimate stranger is part of the plot of "Interpreter of Maladies." Boori Ma, a refugee of "A Real Durwan" is a stranger (with all her strange stories that are extremely unbelievable and inconsistent with her present) living in all type of unhomely places like rooftops, or under the letter box, yet familiar; Dev and Miranda's love story in "Sexy;" Eliot in "Mrs. Sen's;" the blessings littered house of "The Blessed House," which starts crumbling in spite of the blessings themselves; the absent and unknown father in "The Treatment of Bibi Haldar," who became instrumental in the treatment of the Bibi, are some instances of strangers being the indispensable element of the families in the making (or breaking). The figure of the stranger is not always the figure of the foreigner - in fact some of the stories, like the title story, "Interpreter of Maladies," play with this idea of foreigner and stranger. In the beginning of the title story, Mr. Kapasi, who is supposed to drive the Das family to the Sun temple, wonders whether they are foreigner as their clothes and accents suggest or just native strangers, for they look Indian. Nor are the intimate strangers the elements that alienate us from ourselves, as Kristeva seems to suggest in her Strangers to Ourselves. Here Derrida's hairsplitting of *antre* is more useful, the cave

as cleft and difference, at once sheltering and exposing to the other(side), which in turn puts into question the often praised nostalgia for the so-called original home.

However, on the other hand, the textual, formalistic and syntactic effect of the unhomely of the hymen in the story is, unlike Derrida's assumptions, neither dispensable nor replaceable, though repetitious. His critique of the *Urwortes*, his deconstruction of a certain practice of semantic analysis that tries to trace the word back up to its so-called original, which is in turn held against the diachronic accretion of meaning of the term, get challenged vis-à-vis a system where *antre-entre* are controlled by "a certificate in commerce and the equivalent" that allow the narrator to enter the first continent in the beginning of the story; by the mantras of Harvard/Tech and the "splendid" to Mrs. Croft's exhilaration - "There is an American Flag on the moon," which reminds the narrator of the endless wreaths of Sanskrit verses he repeated without knowing what they were during his wedding ceremony.

All these foreign cards and mantras are as indispensable as irreplaceable. No supplement, as was the case with Jasmine. Derrida is right in pointing out that the hymen effect is produced "first and foremost through the syntax, which disposes the "*entre*" in such a way that the suspense is due to the *placement* and not to the *content* (emphasis added) of words" (220). The content or the meaning of the words, whether in the password of Harvard and Tech, (since he was not a student in either), or of Sanskrit verses that married him to a woman whom he barely knew by the sole authority that the verses were in Sanskrit, so completely unintelligible; or Mrs.

Croft's "she is a perfect lady," which marries him to his wife in reality, is secondary since these utterances function as syntagms or syncategorems, as Derrida would say, that are effective in terms of their placement, of being in the right place, performed according to the rules rather than their essential value or content. But they are not easily substitutable.

Here is a narrator, without a name, but with worlds and continents and not necessarily an in-between, but a dweller of a cave that opens on all sides without actually opening. What constitutes the life of this creature is the invasion of the unroomy texts of/about rooms by the global. What sanctifies the narrator's marriage is the seal of the other not simply as an assent and acceptance. Even though in her room, Mrs. Croft declares from her death bed that Mala is a perfect lady, what brings the narrator close is the feeling that Mala is what the narrator himself was years back in London, when he used to confuse "paper" with "piper," etc. The narrator recalls:

> Like me Mala has traveled far from home, not knowing where she was going, or what she would find, for no reason other than to be his wife. As strange as it seemed, I know in my heart, that one day her death would affect me [unlike the old lady, who survived her husband's death, which affected her, but not to the extent of succumbing to it, was the case with the narrator's mother after her husband's death], and stranger still, that mine would affect her. (195)

In "Living On: *Border Lines*," Derrida reads Shelley's "The Triumph of Life" and Blanchot's "L'arret de mort" together to show the contiguous borderline of texts, their interface not only with each other, but with the world outside:

> When a text quotes and requotes, with or without quotation marks, when it is written in the brink, you start, or indeed have already started, to lose your footing. You lose sight of any line of demarcation between a text and

what is outside it (81-82).

Without going into the details of the enriching play of words in Derrida's text and its bordering upon "The Third and the Final Continent," which, like the issue of "the bord, the edge, the border, and the *bord de mer*, the shore" (82), is also a shipboard journal that the nameless narrator, not very unlike the nameless narrator of Blanchot's "Death Sentence/Suspension of Death, narrates to his wife, let us go to the issue of boarding, of rooms with which Derrida opens the merging yet typographically separated borders of the 'major' text and the economy of the house - the oikos, at once economically room, tomb, crypt, savings, reserve, reversion (76). What is important here is the ghosting of the "I" and the haunting in the room, which finally reunited the couple of the story. When the narrator goes to Mrs. Croft's place with his wife, Mala, Mrs. Croft sees " what has to remain hidden."

In *L' arrét de mort* J is dying, [here in Lahiri's story the woman has just broken her hips; J asks for death, if denied, that would be a murder; Mrs. Croft in Lahiri is full of life in death] and the narrator is called, who arrives only after J's death:

> "I" arrives in the dead woman's room. The *room* is the privileged place of *la chose* in all these stories, domestic but utterly foreign (*unheimlich),* left in the coldest anonymity [like the room of the narrator's mother in Bengal and Mrs. Croft's room with her long muted piano], sealed off [locks are important in both stories], usually a hotel room [YMCA in Lahiri], in any case devoid of any other description, reduced to the most indispensable constants of Western habitation: a bed on the *edge* of which one sits, at times an armchair that one tries to reach, a door, a lock and in L' arrét de mort, keys . . .outside, corridors and stairways. (121-22)

It is against this constant of the western habitation, the privileged abode of

the room, is posited the logic of the unhomely. Even though "I" or in Lahiri "we" arrive in the woman's room, yet the "we" get reconciled not by any merger of the borders, nor by the woman's death, but by the irreconcilable difference between the dying woman and the one who is already dead, the narrator's mother and the one who has yet to begin her life in the U.S., his wife. The narrator explains:

> I wanted somehow to explain this [the difficulties of a newcomer, her ignorance about things like the piano] to Mrs. Croft, who was still scrutinizing Mala from top to toe with what seemed to be placid disdain. I wondered if Mrs. Croft had ever seen a woman in sari, with a dot painted on her forehead and bracelets stacked on her wrists. I wondered what she would object to. I wondered if she could see the red dye still vivid on Mala's feet, all but obscured by the bottom edge of her sari. (195)

What follows the description of the good wife is the complicit assent from Mrs. Croft - She is a perfect lady. The I, the subject that arrives in the room of the woman, who is dying, gets objectified as the good wife and a perfect lady. As the narrator suspects, Mrs. Croft might not have any idea of what that dye, the covered head with the free-end of sari, the dot in the middle of the forehead, cold cream applied to the brown arms and the coconut oil applied to the scalp divided by red vermilion, mean. The complete incomprehensibility as objectified wonder makes Mrs. Croft's judgment possible. The "I" arrives with this realization of difference and incommunicability between the continents, heavily guarded with green cards and keys.

<u>The Race of the Interpreters</u>:

The narrator's realization of the duty to save Mala, and Mrs. Croft's exoticization without understanding becomes more complex in the title story,

"Interpreter of Maladies." The figure of the interpreter around whom the story is set can be traced to the narrative residues of the colonial fictions or the embodiment of Macaulay's vision of the middlemen/mimic men between the Raj and the "natives." Talking about this "race" of humanity, Bhabha in his The Location of Culture observes that it owes its philosophy to the Burdwan Plan, 1818, which follows the vision of Missionary Schools, and which is followed by Tom Macaulay's infamous "Minute on Education," that plans, to quote Bhabha quoting Macaulay, to "form a body of well instructed laborers, competent in their proficiency in English to act as Teachers, Translators, and Compilers of useful works for the masses of the people" (106). To complicate the scenario, Lahiri presents Mr. Das as the double of Mr. Kapasi, as the former draws, during the rounds of preliminary introduction between the parties, an interesting parallel between Kapasi and himself:

> Mr. Kapasi turned to Mr. Das.
> "Where in America do you live?"
> New Brunswick, New Jersey."
> "Next to New York?"
> "Exactly. I teach middle school there."
> "What subject?"
> "Science. In fact, every year I take my students on a trip to the Museum of Natural History in New York City. In a way we have a lot in common, you could say, you and I. How long have been a tour guide Mr. Kapasi?" (46)

Their fate is intertwined not only by profession and their belonging to the race of the interpreters and the tourist guides, but also by their education - one educated in the model of the British Raj, the other in the model of the New World. His get up, the way he shook Mr. Kapasi's hand, his language, his relationship with the family, his wife and children, the way they take turns to bring their daughter to

the restroom, all speak of his incorporation of the values of the world he lives in. On the way to the Sun Temple, Mr. Das had, like American tourists, a flashy tourist guide in his hand from which he could read the historical details of the shrine, its importance, its architecture and much more, in a nut shell, exactly like Mr. Kapasi, who, despite his suspicion that his kids speak better English than himself, could read almost all the European languages and could speak a fair amount of each without dictionary. The only difference could be that the Das come every other year to India to visit their retired parents, who yoked them together in marriage almost by a ruse, a sort of hodgepodge marriage - both love and arranged -, whereas Mr. Kapasi seemed, despite his one time ambition to be the ambassador of peace between the nations, not to have set his foot out of India at all, a reminder on both sides of the fact that their belonging to either of the world can be justifiably interrogated.

The Das have to go to India, without actually being of it, whereas Kapasi has to stay there, without belonging to it by spirit and desire, which gets explicit with the scene at the monastic dwellings of the Udaygiri and Khandagiri, especially the helplessness that Mr. Das exhibits at the encounter with the monkeys and the dismay that escapes from Kapasi's flushed face at the sight of the slip of address, the last straw of being linked to the West, to the foreign country getting blown by the wind as Mrs. Das whips out her hair brush from her bag. The double duplicates again into a loss of a child. Kapasi knows that he lost a child due to his poorly paid job as an English Grammar teacher and his wife never forgave him for taking up the job of the interpreter with the doctor who could not save their son's life. In contrast to this ever

repeating pain of the loss, Mr. Das is unaware of the fact that one of the kids, who is always around him, is not his own.

The rounds of misunderstanding, in spite of the presence of the guides and interpreters, continue with Mina's complimenting Mr. Kapasi for his job, which she finds "so romantic" (50). The way the compliment was uttered despite her "extended silence," roused even Mr. Das from his book: "What's so romantic about it?" (50). Upon her request Kapasi relates a typical situation in his job as an interpreter - once a patient came to see the doctor with throat pain, which he described in Gujarati, which in turn Kapasi translated to the doctor. Mrs. Das is perceptive enough to see that the patient is dependent more on him than the doctor and his job of the interpreter is a big responsibility. The compliments surprise Kapasi too, for whom his job is nothing less than a sign of his being a failure. With his knowledge of many foreign languages he wanted to be the interpreter for the dignitaries and help them solve the disputes between the nations. But the reason why the reserved Mina was generous with the compliment was that she also had a wound inside her which wanted words and interpretation and she thought Kapasi would be the right person to reveal her wound to. So on their way back from the temple she decided to stay in the car with Kapasi, while her husband and the children went to see the monastery. She pointed at Bobby, one of her sons, who was surrounded by a bunch of wild monkeys, but was fearlessly passing a stick back and forth with a monkey, and while Kapasi admired the boy, partly in order to compliment Mina, Mina told him suddenly that the reason why Bobby is more courageous than Ronny

was that he was not Raj's son.

> "A brave little boy," Mr. Kapasi commented.
> "It's not so surprising," Mrs. Das said.
> "No?"
> "He's not his."
> "I beg your pardon?"
> "Raj's. He's not Raj's son."
>
> Mr. Kapasi felt a prickle on his skin. He reached into his shirt pocket for the small tin of lotus-oil balm he carried with him at all times, and applied it to three spots on his forehead. (62)

But instead of giving her consolation, which she had expected from a person wont to hearing complains from patients and translating them to the doctors and saving their lives, here Kapasi fell silent. He fails to understand Mina's situation, especially her marriage, which in reality was a trap set by their parents (both her and Raj's) to keep both of them away from other friends, possibly non-Indians in New Jersey:

> "Mr. Kapasi, don't you have anything to say? I thought that was your job."
> "My job is to give tours, Mrs. Das."
> "Not that. Your other job. As an interpreter."
> "But we do not face a language barrier. What need is there for an interpreter?" (65)

What is a terrible feeling for Mina is just a "common, trivial little secret" (66) for Kapasi and he interprets it as her guilt rather than pain. These two displaced, uncanny creatures fail to understand each other.

> She turned to him and glared, mustard oil thick on her frosty pink lips. She opened her mouth to say something, as she glared at Mr. Kapasi some certain knowledge seemed to pass before her eyes, and she stopped. It crushed him; he knew at the moment that he was not even important enough to be properly insulted. (66)

The confidence that suddenly turned into contempt is reflected in the scene that follows, when Bobby was surrounded by monkeys ready to attack him. Suddenly the whole trip of "homecoming" and visiting a familiar tourist place turns sinister and violent. When Mina went back to her children and husband, Bobby was not there. They started calling him, and found him surrounded by a bunch of monkeys. Raj stood all nervous and non-plussed. He made the situation worse by accidentally clicking the shutter in the camera and with its whirr, excited the monkeys:

"What are we supposed to do? What if they start attacking?" (68)

The whole homecoming changes into an unhomely encounter with the strange or *geheim* (secret) life of the visitors and the tour guides, who at the critical moments of mutual misunderstanding feel more disconnected than close and find each other more exposed than enclosed in each other's the personal sphere.

## V. DICTATION, DISPLACEMENT AND DISMISSAL IN DICTEE

I'M nobody! Who are you?
Are you nobody, too?
Then there 's a pair of us—don't tell!
They 'd banish us, you know.
- *Emily Dickinson*

### Worlding in DICTEE:

Nicole Cooley in her essay on DICTEE quotes Cha, who describes her text as a "Tracing of names, events and biographies through non-linear narrative accounts in Nine parts. Interlocking of non-fictional events and mythology based associations" (Cooley 120). In other words, the writer herself conceived the text in fragments, which in turn serve as the objective correlative to the theme of disconnection that pervades the text.

The reception of this strange book also documents the readers' perplexity in the face of its fragmentariness, its uncompromising resistance to any constraints of narrative forms, genres and themes. Ling criticizes it for its heavy 'materiality,' by which he means its text-centricity or its immaterial theoretical construct devoid of practical or ideological work. Ling argues that texts like DICTEE exemplify a politics of dehistoricization and despatialization, which he calls an offspring of "Nietzschean perspectivism," by itself false to the historical realities, and a justification of modern tendency towards "avant-garde celebration of difference" (Ling 9).

As if to answer Ling, Lowe in Immigrant Acts argues that DICTEE is at once an Asian American text, a postcolonial text, and a woman's text (129), which

resists any heavy materiality or any all-encompassing theories of the text. Besides arguing for DICTEE's anti-developmental narrative, its "fragmented recitation," "episodic nonidentity," and its "aesthetic[s] of infidelity," Lowe thinks that DICTEE thwarts the reader's desire to abstract a notion of ethnic or national identity (129). Not only that it subverts colonial or imperialistic interpellations, but also because it poses critical problems to the emerging fields of Asian American Studies, Third World Studies, or Women's Studies (130). On the other hand though, Lowe finds in DICTEE crucial connections between anti-immigrant sentiments at home in the United States and imperialistic expansion in the third world (131). In other words, in spite of the problematic of categorization, the *topos* of DICTEE's aesthetics of infidelity is at once opposed to ethnicization or nationalization of the origin and the wholesale assimilation into or annexation by the Western cultures.

Ling's suspicion is not wholly unfounded or unwarranted, though, for there are readings of this text that primarily focus on its avant-garde tendencies. For example Elizabeth A. Frost, in her essay on DICTEE notes that Cha represents "contemporary women conceptual artists and avant-garde poets" (181), and for Frost DICTEE connotes "a postmodern fractured state of being" (182). Even though she finds hybridity, diaspora and postcolonial dispersal embodied into the text, yet she thinks that the images belie their hermeticism.

As opposed to these debates over ideology, textuality and avant-gardism, Elaine Kim in her contribution to the collection of critical essays on the text believes that the insertion of Korea into the text resists the effacement of Korean history in

the West (10). She also believes that it helps correct the assumptions that East Asians are either Japanese or Chinese, and it critiques the vilifications of North Korea by US military and government leaders as the most dangerous nation on earth. In contrast to the alienating and reifying character of DICTEE, Kim recalls a Korean student in her class, who usually kept quite, but actively took part in the discussion on DICTEE. She argues that DICTEE gave him an opportunity "to be "of" instead of merely "in" America by giving him something from American Literature to call his own" (21). In short, for her, DICTEE as a text acts like a world in doubles, the in-between of the world; and its ideological work is at once its affirmation and reinscription of identity against attempts of erasure and elision. She thinks that DICTEE is an attempt to be a Diseuse, who finds herself in many in-betweenness - in-between the worlds, selves, nations, cultures, languages, identities, roles, relations etc. She argues that DICTEE is about "negotiating the tensions between self and the world, the interior and the exterior, the body and language, the creator and the viewer, nationalist and the female concerns" (14).

The third space of the exilic selves, the locus beyond the either/or and of not-belonging for her are forms of agency and empowerment. The text is a "personal dwelling place that makes survival possible," and for her the text itself becomes the hyphen that separates Korean from the American in Korean-American identity. Otherwise argues Kim, there are only two options open for people of color in the United States: inferior difference or invisible sameness.

Even though Kim's attempts to bring DICTEE to "critical" notice is commendable,

her theoretical approach celebrating "the third space" or the in-betweenness, fails to account for the state of uncanniness a dictee is constantly exposed to. Kim notices the spectralization of the whole nation on the basis of the ideology or politics it follows, but she fails to extend it to the individuals, who, due to their non-relational relation with "home," get converted into dangerous beings to be suspected, dismissed and finally persecuted.

Juliana Spahr pushes Kim's position further in her appreciation of the text and argues that DICTEE is "a prime textual example of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a "contact zone," by which she means a social space where different cultures meet, clash and struggle with one another in an asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination (129). For her the porosity of DICTEE as a text represents challenge to conventional reading as well as dominant patterns of thinking (124). She employs the in-between metaphor once again as a way out of the deadlock that Rushdie's remaking of English language and Ngugi's rejection of English have posed to the readers, for DICTEE breaks colonialism's policing of language, control of culture through its "non-native language practices, collage, translation and multilingualism (127). She also thinks that DICTEE is engaged in a creative and critical dialogue ever since its publication with texts like Catalina Cariaga's Cultural Evidence, Carla Harryman's In the Mode of, Myung Mi Kim's Under Flag and The Bounty, Walter Lew's Excerpts from Δikth, and Trinh Minh-ha's "Grandma's Story" in Woman, Native, Other (152).

Spahr is right in observing that DICTEE seems to unknot the impasse

posed by Rushdie and Ngugi, but the politics of translation, transition and transliteration is more problematic in DICTEE insofar as its collage of various languages and media suggests a state of incommunicability rather than inspiration. Not only that the text leaves several terms and notions un-translated or un-transliterated, but also that even the tentative translation defies its basic rules. As a result the contact zone of languages and cultures becomes a site of disorientation and disillusionment.

In her essay on DICTEE, Shu-mei Shih proposes a diasporic nationalism and postcolonial hybridity and the trauma of separation and loss as the guiding themes of the text. She also gives a succinct history of the external invasion and the internal colonization of Korea by the dictators, who act as the puppets in the hand of foreign powers to maintain themselves in power. The palpable history of bloodshed can be said to have begun, says Shih, with the Japanese colonial rule of 1910-43, which is followed by the partition of Korea after the defeat of Japan in the second World War, the Korean civil war of 1950-53 that results in the neocolonial military presence after the war. The aftermath of these foreign incursions is the "autocratic rules of Rhee Syngman and Park Chung-hee until 1979, and numerous political coups, and demonstration from the 1960s to the present day including the bloody Kwangju incident (1980)" (Shih 147), during which probably Cha was in Korea for shooting her film.

Hyun Yi Kang in her essay "The Liberatory Voice" of Theresa Hak Kyung Cha's *Dictée*" recounts her encounter with DICTEE in a slightly different way:

> My subjective positioning [meaning probably her place as "a bilingual Korean immigrant woman embarking upon an uncertain future"] in relation to the text was most evident during the very first encounter when I found myself literally yelling at the book. (75)

Her reaction to this "slippery text" (75) leads Kang to conclude that the text is itself an articulation of inaccessibility and incomprehensibility, which resists any simple act of identification, or what she calls "the instant mirroring" (76). For Kang DICTEE is a collaborative work by "writers," who take multiple positions of enunciation and representation. The writer for Kang is all at once "a story teller, a scribe, a transmitter, a revisioning historian, a translator, a camera lens, a catholic penitent, a poet writing in French, a student, a reciter" (78). For her DICTEE represents a refusal of the individualization of the genre, which it is supposed to be - autobiography.

But instead of dwelling more on the problems of the incommunicable in the text, Kang goes on to enumerate the ways in which the multi-layered narrative of DICTEE contains the voice of liberation. As a result of which the readers like Kim or Kang at once perceive the tension in the text and miss it by trying to give or seek from it a direction.

The Problem of the Genre:

The problem of non-belonging or non-relation, which constitutes the major tenor of the text continues from languages, subject positions, narrative voices, and worlding to that of the genre as well. If Lowe and Kang calls it a multi-text by multiple author functions, thus un-appropriable, for Kim it is ownable, identifiable

revisionary history, or the story, argues Kim, obviously following Trinh T Minha, that Cha's mother could not tell.

Eun Kyung Min on the other hand proposes that DICTEE is made of citations, and it is an art of reproduction and displacement, of putting excerpts from one text and medium into the other, thus devoid of any referential value at all (319). Cheng's reading of the text as a novel, a work of difference, mimesis and fantasy comes close to what Min has in mind. In her book The Melancholy of Race, she argues that the first thing one confronts in DICTEE is its resistance towards its own visibility (142). Besides rendering the text invisible, along with its drive towards anti-documentation, decontextualization, and homelessness, especially through uncaptioned or stranded images, she thinks that the "subject" of this text, if there is any in the first place, is hardly locatable or identifiable.

Her "original" contribution in the interpretation of the text is her analysis of race in the text as collective fantasy or the unconscious, in which she draws insights from Freud, Lacoue-Labarthe, Michael Omi and Howard Winant. The relevance becomes at once obvious when she supports Omi and Winant's idea of race as the fantasmatic, the only "organizing principle, which traverses both public and private experiences." For her the psychoanalytical concept of the fantasmatic breaks down the division between what is real and material and what is dreamed and illusory (167-8). Thus the fantasmatic world of DICTEE is also the world of echoes and ghosts. Cheng tries to problematize Lowe's Althusserian reading of DICTEE by arguing that interpellation is void if the hailing is not always already present in the

subject hailed.

Michael Stephens's essay on DICTEE, which is probably the first critical notes ever written on the text, calls it a "song," and relates it to the Korean instinct for songs and Korea's lyrical landscape. He sets the notes on the background of Korean mountains, which he thinks to be partly the reason for Chinese, Japanese, or Russian - he doesn't mention the U. S. - lust for Korea. For him DICTEE is a small novel that can be better understood, "not as fiction, not as a philosophy [even though a little earlier he found it influenced, as he thought the whole country was, by Chinese Confucianism], not as religious meditation, all of which it is to various degrees - but as a song" (191). He continues to feminize and exoticize it by arguing that its "sound is that of a Korean woman speaking in her invented English, . . .jagged and broken like the mountains, and always resonating" (191). Thus Stephens locates this resonating song in the jagged mountains of Korea and effaces the travails of the "someone from a far" that we encounter on page one of the text. It is taken to the extreme with his comparison of Cha with two other twentieth century Korean poets - Kim Souol and Yi Sang, who he says died early like Cha herself (197).

Stephens' "American" perspective on DICTEE is pushed further by his European counterpart, Kirsten Twelbeck, who like Stephens, thinks that DICTEE is a musical text, but unlike Stephens, she does not locate it in the lyrical landscape of Korea, but in the "semantic breakdown" [not the syntactic] of the text (195). In her comparative and highly textual analysis, she thinks DICTEE to be at once an experience in cultural otherness and suggestive of the former class enemy crossing

the German iron curtain (195). The beauty of her essay is her attempt to walk the fine line between her criticism of the contributors of Writing Self and Nation, especially Kim, for their pretentious claim of being the cultural insiders, which, for Twelbeck, implies the "claim to cultural ownership" (185), and her own attempt to read it vis-à-vis Hyun, another Korean American writer's autobiography, In the New World, which she thinks shares with DICTEE what she calls their "cultural perspectivism" (194).

Almost similar reading is found in Trinh's Woman, Native, Other, where she compares DICTEE with a Grandma's story that passes on "from generation to generation" (119) and becomes the history of people's coming into being. For her if history tells us what happened in a specific time and space, a story not only tells us what might have happened but what is happening too, its revelatory power vis-à-vis the present. She compares the figure of the diseuse with the African griot or griotte, whom she defines as keepers and transmitters in contrast to writers and creators; they are for her the archives of human memory that teem libraries all over the world.

> Diseuse, Thought-Woman, Spider-Woman, griotte, storytalker, fortune-teller, witch. If you have the patience to listen, she will take delight in relating it to you. An entire history, an entire vision of the world, a life time story. Mother always has a mother. And Great Mothers are recalled as goddesses of all waters, the source of diseases and healing, the protectresses of women and of childbearing. To listen carefully is to preserve. (121)

In this poetic world of the healing and destroying Mother, who is but a link in the chain of the mothers, what is not accounted for is the disjunction or difference, forced or voluntary rupture created into the filiative circle of the generations of the

mothers or "peoples." Trinh's use of Cha in the discourse of the native or even just Woman, with capital W in singular is bound to miss the violence involved in the act of translation, the act of transmitting experiences in the language that is not one's own. Nor does it do justice to the multivocal world of DICTEE.

Shelley Sunn Wong, on the contrary, notes that DICTEE is anti-representational, by which she means its resistance to be a type, specimen or example. She blames western aesthetics since Schiller for its gesture of trying to fix the "location of a site of reconciliation and resolution and its function to "harmonize the individual within "himself" and with society" (47). Cha, as "an Asian Immigrant artist, film maker and writer trained within the western academy," struggles with this tradition and tries to problematize the inheritance rather than incorporating it or letting it assimilate. Wong cites two notions - home and contestation as example of Cha's struggle against the trend. She argues that home within the western tradition generally is "end point or finalization," whereas for a postcolonial subject like Cha, "home will be a situation continually being fought over, [and] for ever in the making" (47).

Turning of the Tables or the Figure of the Diseuse:

The politics of home, world, and genre continues into the problematic of the location of the figure of the diseuse that recurs in the text. For Elaine Kim, it is a Korean entertainer- *kisaeng*, the Korean equivalent of Japanese geisha, who represents a romantic character of Korean heritage often born of a noble man and a low-born woman (14). For Wong on the other hand she is a Greek figure often

associated with the mythical Demeter and Persephone. The interesting figure of the diseuse - somewhat a diminutive version of the French *diseuse de bonne aventure* - the fortune teller, is such an unfortunate creature that she at times is hardly able to say anything, let alone telling fortune or entertaining. Diseuse of the text seems to be no other than the infantalized version of the culturally displaced, who has to start her life in the new culture from the rubble. She often sounds like a subhuman mimicking human speech or, as the text has it, her mimicking ends up producing endless drone of bared noise, groan or bits from words (3).

In After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives, which is in many ways similar to DICTEE, Edward Said also points out in a different site to the production of this subhuman figure mimicking human speech, at times in mockery. He tries to create explanatory links between a series of photographs of Palestinians in refugee camps. Aware of the difficulty inherent in such a task, he makes an interesting remark, which might as well be true about DICTEE itself:

> Exile is a series of portraits without names, without contexts. Images that are largely unexplained, nameless, mute. I look at them without precise anecdotal knowledge, but their realistic exactness nevertheless makes a deeper impression than mere information [or in DICTEE, narration]. (12)

If Said's nameless and muted exiles are capable of leaving deeper impressions, Rushdie's experience in a similar context is no less disorienting. His frequently quoted essay, "Imaginary Homelands" begins with the description of a photograph of "his" old house, a black and white picture, not very unlike the pictures in DICTEE, shot before he was born. He had no other options than to feed on the

monochromatic images like this, which renders all past before exile foreign. But the photograph, in spite of its drab monochromaticism, and its apparent foreignness, leads him to believe that his present is what is foreign as all the colors come back during his encounter with the house. He describes Midnight's Children as his attempt to replace the gray memory of the childhood home, to "restore the past to myself, not in the faded grays of old family-album snapshots, but whole, in CinemaScope and glorious Technicolor" (10).

Cha never bothers to replace the gray mnemonics of her photographs with the brilliant CinemaScope; the imaginary homeland somehow preserves in Cha its representational value, or, to appropriate a Lacanian term, a "gestural" value, or even to go further, a traumatic value. In other words, instead of she imagining the lost house of the past, the house imagines her or she is haunted by the images of the home she lost in the traumatic experience of her brother's death, the Japanese occupation of Korea and the eventual partition of the nation due to the Western imperialistic interventions. The traumatic experience, in short, continues to dictate the very subject formation in the text.

The question of the beginning of this text and its title is thus put into question; a text made of quotations - from films, text book exercises, poems, history, or colonial documents, photographs, calligraphy, letters, diary, etc.- has probably no beginnings, probably because its beginning is always elsewhere. Therefore Shelley Sunn Wong cautions those readers who start, as usual with the first page and do not even bother to look what precedes it, which in the present text, thinks Wong, is

inextricable from the rest of the text. So the first page that talks about the first day of dictation dictating about the first day of a person from "a far away" in a foreign place, is not the beginning in the real sense of the term, for it is preceded by another important "text" - for it stands on its own; it is a text that has its own history, its own separate language, separate script, the Hangul script of the Koreans, the only text in Hangul in the whole book - the frontispiece, which is a photographic representation of Korean characters etched on the wall of a coal mine by a Korean exile in Japan, one of the thousands, says Wong, who were forced into various kind of labor by the Japanese (46). The frontispiece reads: Mother I miss you, I am hungry, I want to go home.

In spite of her carefulness, however, Wong too missed the picture of the Egyptian ruins that precedes the photograph of the Korean exile's writing on the stone. So the problematic question of beginning remains as does the issue of the worlding of this text. Elaine Kim believes Korea to be the inevitable reference point to the text and she thinks that postmodern readings of DICTEE interpret the text off without referring to the context and their prioritizing "text" over "history," or geographic reference point hardly do justice to a text like DICTEE.

Where should one home DICTEE now? Is it to be the photograph of the Egyptian ruins that precedes the "frontispiece" carrying the Korean exile's longing, or the Greek muses, who, even though slightly altered [Euterpe, the muse of music changed to Elitiere], happen to be the inspirational as well as the formalistic principles of the text? Or is it the French poetry and the exercise on translation, or

the Chinese calligraphy, which "genders" or "engenders" it, for the two sets of Chinese letters are woman and man, and mother and father? Should we anchor the text in Korea and Korean history, which is actually the history of Korea's disappearance and division, in spite of, as the text says, 5000 years of Korean antiquity?

For Freud one is always on the way to return home; every drive, every impulse, is occasioned by human homesickness. Yet DICTEE, in spite of the Korean exile's hungry homesickness, seems to forestall, not only the narrative, as Wong argues, but the idea of home as well; it seems to be displacing the place called home along different locations ranging from Greece, Manchuria, Korea, to America, as though home is only the effect of this displacement.

The diseuse, in whom are blended the ontic and the epistemic, is on the one hand an empty urge to speak, an urge coming from an empty below (5), a void that aches to articulate. On the other hand every utterance that escapes her sounds like an "other" she cannot help allow into herself:

> She allows others. In place of her. Admits others to make full. Make swarm. All barren cavities to make swollen. The others each occupy her. Timorous layers, expel all exercises until in all cavities she is all flesh. (3)

The diseuse, the fortuneteller, represents the unholy mélange of the self and the other; as in Freud's heimlich and the unheimlich, she makes the subject of this text indistinguishable from a non-entity, therefore it is uncanny. Therein lies the reader's fascination with the exotic "figure" of the diseuse and its inherent vulnerability due to its non-relation not only to the dominant ideologies of nation,

culture and linguistic-artistic practices, but also with itself. Like the infant of Freud's Beyond the Pleasure Principle, this subject blended with a non-subject starts playing the game of fort/da, which is at once the game of separation and sadness and restitution and recuperation. She groans and pauses, groans and punctuates, and utters again, slow and thick. Even though her fortune and her life depend upon articulation (141), she is aware that the moment of articulation is in itself a moment of alienation, for the words themselves mostly constitute the other, the words as other, the words of the He-God, He-God as the Word, as if she were to dictate herself into articulation, into the body that she is, which is denied by the very words that preach abstraction. She wants the word to flesh it, the word made flesh.

Bhabha, in his essay "Signs Taken for Wonder," in The Location of Culture, talks about the "sudden fortuitous discovery of the book" as myth of the origin, the inauguration of the literature of empire, a balance between epiphany and enunciation, the moment of originality and authority. Even though the circumstances are different, because Bhabha is strictly talking about British presence in India and the English book as the measure of mimesis, and Cha's DICTEE is more plurivocal than Bhabha's examples, yet the situation is almost the same. Bhabha traces the trajectory of the colonized subject in mimicry from being "disciplined to the desiring."

The first titled section of DICTEE opens with mimicry: She mimicks the speaking. That might resemble the speech (Cha 3). But this repetition is not a mimesis; it is mimicry, including the way 'mimic' is spelt. The authority of the

language to be spoken is recognized, but with a ruse for, as Bhabha in the same essay says, this mimicry is the problematic of colonial representation and individuation that tends to reverse the effect of the colonialist disavowal, so that the other denied knowledges, or here, tongues enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority (114). Thus by mimicking the authoritative discourse of/on the Word she is, as Bhabha would say, making the presence partial, as a result of which, "the book retains its presence, but it is no longer a representation of an essence; it is now a partial presence . . .an appurtenance of authority (114-115).

And by the time we reach the invocation (of the muses) it seems as though she were dictating the muses - "Tell me *the* story," not just any story, but "of all *these* (emphasis added) things (that precede and follow the invocation). The muses are allowed only one choice, that of the beginning; like the text itself, they can begin wherever they wish, but not of the story (7/11). Thereupon follows the dictation, the Greek muses dictated, as it were, to tell the stories of the women (and some men) almost all over the world, since the mythical time.

The catholic catechism is more of an occasion to speak: "I am making up the sins. For the guarantee of absolution" (16). - than a religious submission. She repeats: "I am making confession. To make words. To make a speech in such tongues" (17). The ambivalence of the mass, the organ song, given mostly in French is accentuated with the confessor's uncertainty, apparently due to her inability to capture the song, but implicitly her theological quibble about the infant of Mon Sacré Coeur, his Word (Promesse), which is our (nos) hope, our (notre) fortune (bonheure)

and her telling doubt, within parenthesis- (or was it votre) - not our but "your" hope, His own or certain people's not everyone's, "dans la tendresse," or as doubts the neophyte, was it my (ma) tenderness, all of which amounts to the questioning of whose word, whose happiness or fortune?

So is the novena, nine days of recitation and prayer, of the immaculate conception, which repeats the nine muses, which in turn is a repetition of the table of the Chinese scheme of things given first in Chinese towards the end of the text and then in translation, with the surplus of Chung Wai - the Tenth, a circle within a Circle, a series of concentric circles, imitating each other. Or as Michael Stephens argues, it might be the mimesis of the ancient Korean text, Nine Cloud Dream, a humanistic text on the mystical nature of number nine (197).

Thus the subject alien-ated from itself, the subject who is the uncanny double of the other as well, is herself seduced in DICTEE by the duplex of contradictory promises this position seems to hold: that of imagining, inventing, and creating oneself perpetually, thereby, exposing oneself at times to the existing politico-ideological structures as well. To understand this self-betrayal we need to follow Cha's disillusionizing remarks about her hope of homecoming and her victimization to what we called politico-ideological structures. While describing the mother's homecoming after her long exile in Manchuria, Cha exclaims:

> No more sentence to exile, Mother, no black crows to mourn you [as if the one in exile were as good as dead, so mourned at 'home,' not as surviving, but as already dead]. Neither takes you neither will take you Heaven nor Hell they fall too near you let them fall to each other you come back you come back to your one mother one father. (53)

This return to one mother and one father is repeated in the next page as if to double it by Chinese calligraphy of woman-man, but this time the letters are left untranslated, so unique and irreplaceable. The whole paean to oneness and uniqueness, however, gets quickly replaced by the highly reproducible version of the American identity:

> The united States of America. Somewhere someone has taken my identity and replaced it with their photograph. The other one. Their signature their seals. Their own image. (56)

This betrayal at the moment of achievement, the game of fort-da that the uncanny subject of trauma is bound to repeat, is further elucidated at the mother's second shot at homecoming and her eventual dismissal or permanent banishment from it:

> They say you look other than you say. As if you didn't know who you were. You say who you are but you begin to doubt. (57)

Cha explains the effect of this perpetual loss or, in other words, of being stranger in one's own house. How else does a person get persecuted by uncanniness and estrangement if it's not in one's own home and with one's intimate relatives? To talk about estrangement in a foreign place is a platitude. This is what perhaps Freud meant when he said uncanny is what is once familiar. It is to be or to be made into an uncanny being at one's own place either by the colonial force or by the native armies camouflaged, as in this text, as nature.

After eighteen years Cha comes home and she is given away by her own tongue that she painstakingly cultivated all those years in the West.

> Eighteen years pass. I am here for the first time in eighteen years, Mother. We left here in this memory still fresh, still new. I speak another tongue, a second tongue.This is how distant I am from then. From that time. (85)

Being unheimlich is to find out that one remains, in Cha's own words, "neither one thing nor the other" (20). This uncanny being is left to repeat the inexorable yet forever incomplete "sentence of the exile," while the black crows, notes Cha, continue to mourn for her (53):

> Our destination is fixed on the perpetual motion of search. Fixed in its perpetual exile. Here at my return in eighteen years, the war is not ended. We fight the same war. We are inside the same struggle seeking same destination. (81)

# VI: THE RESISTANCES OF THE UNCANNY

Writing about minority, ethnic or third world literatures, to use terms usually employed to describe literatures dealing with issues that include migration, translation, displacement and diaspora, from the perspective of the uncanny is itself an uncanny critical practice, especially when these texts themselves presuppose and require certain critical models such as ethnic studies, postcolonial theories, feminist studies or cultural studies. This thesis has tried on the contrary to look at these texts from the theoretical point of view of the unheimliche for a couple of reasons, which would be pertinent to enumerate here.

Generally speaking "Asian American literatures" in the US exclude literatures written by writers of South Asian descent. It is not surprising if one finds no contribution on literatures written by the latter in the collections dedicated to studying Asian American literatures. The metaphysical conceit of this thesis is to violently yoke these two together by discussing Cha and Okada and Lahiri and Mukherjee together. The implied assumption behind this yoking could be a disbelief of the "gaps," cracks and fissures between just Asian American and South Asian American invoked, for instance, by Shankar and Srikanth's anthology of critical essays, A Part, Yet Apart. If we function by their circulars, Mukherjee and Lahiri, for instance would not get a place in a reading like this, because Shankar and Srikanth argue, with Garrett Hongo, that sheer inclusion of any work into mainstream American institution is the evidence of its inauthenticity and its ineligibility for being

considered in any reading lists of Asian American or Ethnic Studies courses (11).

The other violent yoking would be reading Okada's novel with its "masculine protagonist" together with the texts mostly focusing on women, their experiences and the issues of gender. The assumption is that these texts at a certain level articulate, without screening their differences, similar anxieties over the state of what we have been calling the uncanny beings. If the violence involved in the making and unmaking of being is the issue in Jasmine, the same problematic continues in No-No Boy, especially in Ichiro's experience of abandonment and non-relation to both inside and outside his family, which in turn reveals the true nature of the nationscape that turns every one into the pre-political bare existence for the operation of its repressive mechanism.

From the self caught in the violent cycles of building and unbuilding in Jasmine, to the being hemmed as bare existence in No-No Boy, we encounter in Lahiri's stories haunted selves at home neither in the world they reside nor the one they frequently visit both physically and in memories. In Cha's complicated text, we have a traumatized and aphasic self dismissed and displaced from languages, cultures and homes.

This reading is also responding to certain theoretical resistances: first, resistance manifested in the critical neglect of the term uncanny in aesthetics and also in the fear that the term as a critical concept has lost its force altogether; secondly, resistance *of* psychoanalysis, both in the sense of modern suspicion of certain version of psychoanalysis, and the resistance of psychoanalysis itself to

overcoming its own traditional and highly atavistic frameworks.

This return to the uncanny as intervention is consonant with one of the basic traits of the uncanny: the return of the repressed. The critical exhumation of the repressed here also hints towards yet another, and more dangerous, form of resistance, especially from the "critics of postcolonial reason": to studying literatures written by/on the uncanny beings, namely the immigrants, the double exiles, not only the ones whom Griffith calls the double exiles brought up in a culture radically different from that of the West yet writing in English (9), but the unhomely beings at once in and beyond the spaces and categories of belonging.

In the "manifesto" of the critique of postcolonial reason, Spivak makes her position clear by asserting that her project is "to track the figure of the Native Informant," who for her is an autochthon (ix). Spivak swerves away from the immigrant, who for her passes as the native in the first world, thereby obviating and obfuscating any attempt towards reaching the native. Spivak's position, which is somewhat similar to Ngugi's eulogy for the "homecoming" to "African consciousness" celebrated in Caribbean literature (89), interestingly comes close to that of Freud's when in Death of a Discipline she takes up Freud's essay on the uncanny to elucidate her views on planetarity to argue in favor of the perspective of the pterodactyl, "who can claim the entire planet as its other" (80) over against the postcolonial perspective fixated on the mobile figure of the of the immigrant.

The present study not only holds suspect any form of "homecoming," it also hesitates to exhort the perspective of the diasporic, the outsider, or the other not

only because the biopolitical globality that Pease, as we discussed in the introduction, referred to exceeds all economy of ins and outs, but also because, as Said and even Freud clarified, nation and exile, natives and foreigners are two aspects of the same paranoia. If the diasporic becomes the model of cultural and textual analyses, as it does in Boyarin brothers' essay on the Jewish diaspora, the danger is that it might, as the brothers well perceive and surprisingly concede to, "allow for stubborn hanging-on to ethnic, cultural specificity. . ." (108). Or it might as well lead to a foolhardy statement of Rajiv Shankar's, which is parallel to Freudian anxieties in front of the painted faces of the Italian women, that "South Asia, with its legacy of British imperialism and its internal strife and poverty, has offered to America (and the world) considerable wealth in terms of spirituality, peace and civilization" (ix). The uncanny beings upheld in the thesis not only defy all civilizing missions from all sides, including the East and the West, the North and the South; but it is also avers to the politics of recognition that Freudian uncanny postulates with its - I have been here before.

The unheimliche provides a critique to any ethnico-cultural, or politico-sexual specificity insofar as it is a space concomitant to the *polis* in general which, with the bulwark of home, nation and culture, stages all versions of sandman effects: the other as the fright, the Terror, etc. But on the other hand, it also represents the agency of rendering the home unhomely by the very virtue of the impossibility of the other's being co-opted into the *polis*. Uncanny therefore is not only a global politico-cultural "experience." Nor is it merely the fundamental essence of Beings, as

Heidegger would say. It is also imagining nation and reflecting upon exile and refuge from the negative space occupied by the unhomely, who is related to the *polis* only through its non-relation.

This is the reason why Fanon's description of the native in his The Wretched of the Earth as a "being hemmed in,"(52) overlooks the other half of the scenario, where the same could be observed for "the immigrants," who are hemmed both at the places they try to leave and the ones they expect to arrive. As we have seen in chapter four, their arrival is as ghosted as their departure is haunted. The sandman of the arrival, to risk a gross illustration, is the same one who is accused of soaking up resources safely in the First World only to "send money and guns, circulate propaganda and build intercontinental computer information circuits" to the zones of his "ultimate destinations" (Anderson 327). Thus the overlap of the nation and the desti-nation continues through the identity, as we noted earlier in chapter two, of the sandman and the monster of the sea, which in turn helps reveal the fact that it is the figure of the monster that makes both nation and destination unhomely through his critique of the monolithic nation and the myth of the ultimate destination.

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