INTER-CULTURAL STUDIES

A FORUM ON SOCIAL CHANGE & CULTURAL DIVERSITY

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1 Regional and Global China – Culture, Society & the State

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In his purposefully provocative article "Does China Matter?" published in September 1999 Gerry Segal argued that "China does not … matter in terms of global culture" (Segal, 1999). That article was not centrally concerned with either China's cultural interaction with the rest of the world, or even the politics of that interaction, but was primarily an argument cautioning other governments and government agencies about the need to ensure some perspective in dealing with the government of the People's Republic of China (PRC). All the same, to that end Segal's article argued that China is "overrated as … a source of ideas". Specifically it argued that China has had limited cultural reach not only compared to 'the dominant West' but also in comparison to Japan; that during the last twenty years the government of the PRC has spent more effort in resisting and controlling the domestic impact of external cultural influences than in attempting to create any specific external influence of its own; and that China does not play as great a role for Chinese around the world as does India for the Indians. Not all these arguments confront established orthodoxy by any means. During the last twenty years the PRC has retreated from its role as a purveyor of world revolution and has devoted considerable effort to the domestic management of 'Western' cultural manifestations. At the same time, the argument about the relative strengths of Chinese and Japanese influence and authority outside their borders is clearly more contested. Japan it is true has had considerable impact in East and Southeast Asia during the twentieth century both because of its colonial program in the 1930s and its later economic development program. However, China has an even older, and longer sustained cultural influence in the region that might still be said to run deep. On the surface at least Segal's argument about the 'Overseas Chinese' would seem to be even more necessarily contested. It is often asserted that the Chinese outside the PRC constitute a significant social, economic and even political force in their own right; and moreover that there is considerable potential for these 'Overseas Chinese' to ally with the PRC to create a new future Chinese superpower.

The aim in considering each of these three arguments is to attempt to go beyond the original position about how the rest of the world should approach its engagement with the government of the PRC to consider Chinese culture's wider interactions with the external world. In undertaking this analysis it draws on and highlights additional perspectives on China's cultural influence. Segal's article is concerned primarily with the international politics of the government of the PRC as seen from the Atlantic community, for whom it was written. It has been absolutely the norm for Chinese governments during the last hundred years to equate Chinese society with the Chinese state, specific governments and even political parties, and this equation is reflected in Segal's article (Fitzgerald, 1994). All the same it is clearly possible to distinguish between the party-state of the PRC as a source of cultural activity, and Chinese society more generally. In similarly deconstructive mood, China's cultural influence in Europe and North America is almost certain to be different

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from its influence in East and Southeast Asia, and countries where a significant proportion of the population may be Chinese. It is important to ask 'to whom' China matters as a source of cultural influence, as well as to what extent.

Essentially the argument presented here highlights two crucial aspects of China's cultural politics for the future, which do not always pull in the same direction. The first is the role of East and Southeast Asia in China's worldview. East and Southeast Asia are China's principal region of influence, in cultural terms no less than in economics and politics. Moreover, there is a clear, if sometimes less tangible relationship between, on the one hand, any PRC claims to world leadership and its role in its immediate region, and, on the other, China's claims to leadership of East and Southeast Asia and the influences of Chinese culture. The second is the contradiction between the cultural goals of the government of the PRC and the current political system's ability to deliver progress towards those goals. As in economics and politics, the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) wants to see China acknowledged as a cultural superpower. At the same time, the CCP's role in the determination of cultural production makes this extremely unlikely: there is often an inherent contradiction between narrow political nationalism and the wider appreciation of Chinese culture.

1 China as a World Culture

Segal's contention that China has limited influence and authority, not only by comparison with Europe and Atlantic cultures, but also in comparison with Japan, seems puzzling if not downright perverse. There is of course no gainsaying the universal impact of American culture, as Coca Cola, McDonalds, MTV, TV soap operas and Hollywood bear more than adequate witness. European influences are also apparent not only in the widespread acceptance of democratic liberalism, nationalism and capitalism, but also in the appreciation of food and wine, music and literature, especially as standards of living and real disposable incomes rise.

All the same, in his haste to argue, Segal did not interrogate the complexity of the 'global culture' he criticised China for having failed to engage. The description of 'global culture' can of course be limited to an Atlantic eye's view of the spread of the influence of the USA. Alternatively, global culture might be seen in more pluralistic perspectives, recognising the development of other (if less dominant) cultural influences on the world as a whole from other societies. There are after all manifestations of Chinese culture – traditional medicine and exercise regimes, literature and films, not to mention the variety and impact of Chinese cuisine – to be found almost universally. Moreover, some cultures have greater influence in some countries and on some parts of the world than others. This wider appreciation of global culture would seem a particularly wise strategy in this case, given that in the long term China is always more likely, not least for linguistic reasons and the relatively greater ease of communications, to have greater impact within East and Southeast Asia.

While there is no denying the twentieth-century impact of Japan on East and Southeast Asia, first through its colonial expansion and then later since the 1950s through the scale and extent of its economic activities, Chinese culture seems more certainly to be at the heart of regional activities in a number of ways. Confucianism or at least Confucian traditions are often regarded not only as the major characteristic of China but also of East

Asia, and some parts of Southeast Asia, especially those where Chinese migration has been considerable. Difficult as it is to identify and generalise about culture, where Japanese culture is usually regarded as inward looking and only interested in Japan itself, not least by the Japanese themselves (Hendry, 1987), China sees itself fundamentally as a world culture.

Segal's comments about the lack of influence of Chinese culture certainly stand in stark contrast to received wisdom. Even when acknowledging the limits to the generalisation, almost every other commentator since Fairbank has long identified East Asia in terms of the common elements of Chinese cultural heritage (Fairbank, 1960). Indeed, for many the apparent economic success of the early 1990s was at least in part attributable to this background. In its triumphalist report of 1993 the World Bank hailed the "economic miracle" of an East Asian development characterised by "rapid growth and decreasing inequality" (World Bank, 1993). While the World Bank did not explicitly mention the importance of cultural factors, other commentators making similar arguments and later building on the World Bank Report quite explicitly emphasised the role of Confucianism in the emergence of regional economic success. (Levy, 1992, p. 15). Though there was some variability in the Confucianism identified in this way, common characteristics tended to include a stress on social order and the family.

Imperial China was certainly the source of considerable cultural, as well as political influence throughout East Asia. It contributed elements of Confucian statecraft and a popular Confucian religion, as well as Confucian ethics in family and personal relations to the surrounding states. Buddhism came to Mount Wutai in North China (in today's Shanxi Province) from India and moved from Shanxi to Korea and Japan. Unsurprisingly, given the role of texts in both Confucianism and Buddhism, Chinese characters became a common script, and as in China, being able to read and write classical Chinese became the mark of the educated throughout the region. Trade amongst the countries of East Asia was at times extensive, leading amongst other things to shared cultures in paintings and ceramics.

Segal's article does not deny these earlier imperial cultural influences, nor is there anything in his other writings to suggest that was the case. His argument in "Does China Matter?" is that China no longer continues to exert such influence and authority in the region. He had a constant aversion to the China exceptionalism sometimes associated with academic observers of China. This was a discussion, though, that could never be resolved. Segal was talking about China as the government of the PRC: while sometimes the China-experts might accept that equation, often they differentiate between Chinese society and culture on the one hand and any particular state or government on the other.

In the twentieth century it is undeniable that the influence and authority of the Chinese state declined under Empire, Republic and (perhaps more variably) the PRC. This though did not always lead those in the East and Southeast Asia region to reject the influence and importance of Chinese culture. Necessarily in the era of modern nationalism the previous and sometimes much earlier regional position of Imperial China led later to both resentment and resistance. At the same time, even where political contestation between states resulted this did not lead to the total rejection of Chinese culture. For example, while there has been a noticeable decline in Japanese appreciation of Chinese culture during the last twenty years, the attraction for things Chinese remains strong,

including not just material culture but also religious ideas and influences.

Even at the level of more popular culture there would appear to be little to support Segal's contention. Every visitor to the countries of East and Southeast Asia relatively rapidly comes up against various manifestations of Chinese culture, if only because of the apparent ubiquity of the migration chains across the region that started in about 1000 AD. There are Chinese communities across the whole region, including not only the more obvious commercial classes of Southeast Asia, but also the substantial and more recent Chinese communities in Japan, and to a much lesser extent in Korea.

These communities have developed Chinese schools, Chinese temples, and Chinese shops. In many cases they have developed their own local Chinese literatures, and their presence has often led to linguistic and culinary influences. Every capital city has a Chinese district, as do many smaller towns and cities, and there are both Chinese language media and even social and political organizations. Of course, the degree of Chinese cultural manifestation is variable. There are countries, such as Indonesia, where it is only during the last few years that open Chinese public behaviour has once again become possible.

In contrast, manifestations of Japanese culture are considerably more limited. Despite the massive scale of Japanese investment in the countries of East and Southeast Asia, there seems to be only a limited purchase for Japanese culture. Certainly the cuisines of Korea and more particularly Taiwan bear clear influences from the era of Japanese colonialism. In Taiwan's case this remains even celebrated to some extent, reflecting the extent to which many local and indigenous people in Taiwan feel (particularly in retrospect) that Japan brought liberation as well as conquest. Certainly too a number of Japanese cartoon characters, most notably Miss Kitty, have become fairly widespread throughout the region, especially among the young. For the most part though Japanese cultural manifestations are limited and tend to be celebrated (including in China) only in themselves rather than leading to a wider influence for Japan.

On the other hand, Segal's contrast of China and Japan is useful in helping to understand the scope and role of Chinese culture. In a number of ways it could be argued that there is no meaningful Chinese culture, or at least not in the ways that countries like Japan, currently have national cultures. Since the late nineteenth century and the Meiji Restoration the Japanese state has constantly intervened to create a national consciousness and identity, and this codification of Japanese culture was an essential part of post-War reconstruction with the development of new '*nihonjinron*', that is 'theories of Japaneseness' (Nakane, 1986). In contrast, the concept of 'Chinese culture' has always been and remains one of limited utility, lacking in coherence and essentially contested, (Shih, 2002) particularly in the last twenty years within the PRC (Guo, 2003). The explanation of this phenomenon lies in the relative novelty of 'China,' unresolved debates over the meaning of Chinese nationalism, and last but by no means least the size and scale of the area ruled by the Chinese state.

Despite claims by the CCP and the PRC in their constitutions and other foundational statements to present solutions to problems faced by 'the Chinese people' and 'China's sovereignty' during late Imperial China as a result of 'foreign capitalist imperialism and domestic feudalism' (Hu, 1991, p. 1) these are essentially ex post facto rationalisations of events. For those living there 'China' did not come into existence until the establishment of the Republic, and the various terms for it in Modern Standard Chinese

(most notably *Zhongguo* and *Zhonghua* – both referring to the 'Central Plains' which were the location of pre-modern moral authority) are late nineteenth-century neologisms. Before the establishment of the Republic, the Empire was designated only by the ruling dynasty. There was no sovereign Chinese state. The Empire was the world, ruled over by the Emperor – the 'Son of Heaven' – and defined not by boundaries but by allegiance to the Emperor (Shih, 2002, especially p. 2 ff).

Nor were there any 'Chinese people,' let alone citizens before the twentieth century. The idea of a nation was an anathema to an Empire that had prided itself on its social and cultural diversity (Hevia, 1995). The inhabitants of the Empire spoke different languages, had a variety of belief systems, ate vastly different diets and cuisines, and lived different life-styles. This variety should be no great surprise given the size and scale of the Empire. Although China is often implicitly compared to a European nation-state, the more appropriate comparison might be with Europe itself. One result is that there was a far stronger individual identity to native place and locality than to the Empire, which became apparent as the political system began to change at the beginning of the twentieth century, and with the emergence of a strong provincialism (Levenson, 1967, p. 158). Another result is that there was both an Imperial Culture and a series of local cultures. The Imperial Culture centred on the Court and the arts related to education (necessary for Imperial service): essay and poetry writing, calligraphy and painting. Material and social cultures (including language) were essentially localised.

The movement to recognize and develop a Chinese nation dates only from the first decade of the twentieth century, and is usually attributed to Zhang Taiyan who sought to encourage feelings of solidarity to override the country's intense provincialism (Rankin, 1986; Wong, 1989). It coincides with the first tentative attempts to create and use a standard colloquial Chinese language, seen by its promoters as essential in educating people and bringing them together. The nationalist project gained momentum with the collapse of the Empire, the establishment of the Republic, the May Fourth Movement of 1919, and the subsequent establishment of both the Nationalist Party and the Chinese Communist Party. In general, its success is seen in the extent to which people across the various provinces now privilege China rather than their own locality (Goodman, 2002) and have in the process absorbed public beliefs about the longevity of the Chinese nation, the Chinese state and the Chinese people in only about eighty years.

At the same time Chinese nationalism has achieved nowhere near the unanimity of purpose achieved in Japan. From the beginning the conceptualism of Chinese nationalism has been a domestic political issue, argued over by political parties, groups and associations each of whom claimed to be the authentic Chinese voice, equating the fate of the Chinese nation with their own fate (Fitzgerald, 1994). During the Republic there was an uneasy relationship between nation and region (Gillin, 1967; Kapp, 1973; Fitzgerald, 1998) that still largely remains unresolved. In the era of Mao-dominated politics the PRC tried to minimise regionalism in its explanation of Chinese nationalism, though during the 1990s considerably more pluralism has become recognised and to a considerable extent encouraged (Goodman, 2002, p. 853). Even more pertinently for the definition of Chinese culture, there has been an almost continuous debate on the extent to which Chinese heritage should be accepted or rejected in the definition of the nation, as well as about the precise content of that heritage. Paradoxically, in terms of the 1990s wider-world debate

about an East Asian development model, interpretations of Confucianism have been extremely varied (Levenson, 1958; Louie, 1980) and issues of its significance and meaning for Chinese nationalism and the definition of Chinese culture have remained matters of intense debate in the eras of Deng Xiaoping, Jiang Zemin and Hu Jintao (de Bary, 1991; Guo, 2003, p. 91).

The consequences of this history and practice are a definition of Chinese culture that is both complex and contested, not to say occasionally elusive. Contemporary Chinese culture inherits both the imperial imperative to be a world culture and the twentieth-century requirement of a more specific nationalism, with the two often in tension. Equally there is a tension between, on the one hand, a political nationalism that seeks to emulate Japanese nation building and emphasise a revolutionary break with the past (and indeed often the CCP's revolution) and, on the other, a cultural nationalism that constantly refers to China's past, if with little agreement about the content of that past. In addition, there is the somewhat circular attempt to define Chinese culture in terms of the practices and beliefs of those who are now taken generally to be 'Chinese' – the descendants of those whose origins can be traced back to having lived under the rule of one of the imperial dynasties regardless of their current place of residence. In amongst all these competing influences there is also the discourse of race that seeks to define Chinese culture in terms of the Chinese people and their civilising influence (Dikotter, 1992).

2   The Party-State And Culture

Segal's argument about China's cultural engagement with the world is that in the period since 1978 the government of the PRC has been more concerned to limit external cultural influences coming in than with the development of its own external influences outside its borders. It is certainly the case that in the post-Mao Zedong reform era the PRC ceased its attempts at the export of revolution, perfunctory though those were at times. Equally it is the case that in the wake of the Tiananmen Incident of 1989, the CCP and the PRC held the Voice of America and the BBC responsible for inciting the youth rebellion that had preoccupied Beijing throughout May of that year. In the wake of June's clearing of Tiananmen Square the party-state took action to attempt to limit European and American media activities in the PRC. It is also the case that state authorities are anxious, and possibly over-anxious about the impact American and European culture may have on the PRC. The early 2003 request for the Rolling Stones to remove 'Let's Spend the Night Together' from their repertoire, or alter the words, during a planned series of concerts (that eventually did not take place because of the SARS outbreak) is one trivial, yet clear and recent example of such anxiety leading to action. More serious has been the system of internet 'blocking' (exclusion of access to sites) introduced within the PRC since 2001. (Zittrain & Edelman, 2003).

All the same, it would be a mistake to draw the conclusion from these observations that since the beginning of the 1990s the PRC had either withdrawn into its shell, or significantly altered its belief in the need for external cultural outreach. The development and international promotion of the Chinese film industry (notwithstanding attempts at censorship), Beijing's eventually successful bid to host the Olympic Games (after an initial defeat by Sydney) and the domestic promotion of the Chinese Soccer team's participation in the 2002 World Cup are all major events that suggest the PRC's commitment to

international cultural interaction.

Far from abandoning international involvement the regime's external promotion of China has simply changed, with the replacement of an agenda of international revolution by the more nationalist endeavour of acceptance as a major world power; and through the PRC's supplementing Europe and the USA as its major focus of attention with activities targeting its interactions with East and Southeast Asia. In particular, the PRC has focussed its attention on the international promotion of Chinese culture, though that may be no easy matter not least because of the tension between the goals of political and cultural nationalism.

The most recent changes in the PRC's cultural outreach have been shaped by three events: the reform program engineered by Deng Xiaoping in 1978 that resulted in significant changes in the relationship between politics and culture; the end of the Socialist Bloc in the USSR and Eastern Europe; and almost simultaneously the Tiananmen Incident of 1989 and the various reactions to it. Political reform in the late 1970s led first to a radical change in the system of censorship (from prior approval to the possibility of ex post facto condemnation) and the commercialisation of publishing that gradually but dramatically opened up the space for representation of Chinese culture (Hendrischke, 1988; Goodman, 2001). By the 1990s there was essentially an open discussion of the representation of Chinese culture, if confined largely to personnel within the party-state (Dirlik, 1996). Central to the discussion of Chinese culture has been the issue of whether national identity is to be conceptualised as a revolutionary break with Imperial China, or as a return to the essential (often moral) purity of the past (which might also in some senses be regarded as a break with the more recent revolutionary past) (Guo, 2003, p. 75).

One of the historical ironies during the 1990s was that whilst the party-state held external media responsible for the problems it faced during May and June 1989 in Beijing, its longer-term reactions to those events eventually resulted in considerably greater external cultural influences, and especially on the young, being manifested within the PRC. The difference though was that these new external cultural influences came initially from the Chinese communities of East and Southeast Asia, and then more generally from that region, and were more immediately concerned with popular than political culture.   During the early 1990s Cantonese popular music (Canto-pop) from Hong Kong and pop music from Taiwan flooded into the PRC. These were rapidly followed by other manifestations of youth culture from around the region, including magazines, clothes and music from Japan, South Korea, Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand and even Vietnam.

The cause of this sea change was at least in part the situation of relative isolation in international circles that the PRC found itself in following 4 June 1989. Western European states and the USA turned their backs on almost all interactions with the PRC for varying periods of six to eighteen months. The USSR was in the process of removing the communist monopoly both domestically and in Eastern Europe. Faced with the prospects of isolation the PRC turned to improving its relations with the states of East and Southeast Asia. Relations with most of these (with the exception of Japan) had been poor or formally non-existent for some time before the 1990s because of the Cold War and those states' concerns about Communism and revolution, and the PRC's role in their promotion around the region.

Given the PRC's changed economic outlook after 1978, as well as its abandonment

of its commitment to international revolution, the impact of changed PRC economic development policy on international investment in East and Southeast Asia, which was rapidly being perceived as a problem by several of the states of the region (Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand) who felt that funds were being directed away from them and towards the PRC, and the collapse of the European Socialist bloc, this rapprochement would probably have eventuated sooner rather than later in any case. Nonetheless, the events of 1989-90 provided a catalyst for change in the PRC's foreign policy that also led to formal diplomatic relations with South Korea and several members of the ASEAN bloc, notably Indonesia and Singapore, and improved relations with others, including Malaysia and Thailand.

During the 1990s trade and cultural interactions with the countries of East and Southeast Asia grew so significantly that several commentators started examining the porousness of the PRC's borders and the possible consequences for the development of the Chinese state (Goodman & Segal 1994). Somewhat paradoxically, given the hostility that used to characterise the attitudes in the countries of Southeast Asia towards their local Chinese communities, the PRC's appeal to the region has been based on its promotion of Chinese culture, as well as on trade. The obvious explanation of this paradox would seem to be the PRC's (not inaccurate) reading that much entrepreneurial expertise in the rest of East and Southeast Asia was in the hands of Chinese business people.

Tourism within the PRC from East and Southeast Asia was an obvious starting point for the development of the promotion of Chinese culture, for all, but particularly during the early 1990s directed at encouraging Overseas Chinese to visit (and presumably invest) in their ancestral places. While tourism to the PRC from the USA and Europe eventually regained its pre-1989 levels and began to grow again, the expansion of tourism from East and Southeast Asia grew even more rapidly during the 1990s. Another channel for the encouragement of Chinese cultural influence in East and Southeast Asia has been the development of Chinese language publications, in particular the overseas edition of *People's Daily* (*Renmin ribao*) the CCP's official daily. This has been remarkable not only for its open circulation in Southeast Asia, which well within living memory would previously have been impossible not to say dangerous in most cases, but also because the overseas edition of the *People's Daily* is printed in the full-form Chinese characters (sometimes described as 'traditional' characters) that are still generally used to write Modern Standard Chinese outside the PRC. Given the CCP's commitment to simplified Chinese characters – a potent symbol of political nationalism and the need to create a fundamental break with past practice – this represents a considerable compromise to the end of extending cultural influence.

All the same there are clear limits to the extent to which considerations of a wider Chinese culture might take precedence over the narrower concerns of political nationalism in the PRC. A most obvious and recent example of this kind of contradiction was the award of the 2000 Nobel Prize for Literature to Gao Xingjian. Gao is primarily a dramatist and was well known in the PRC during the 1980s for *Wild Man* and *Bus-stop*, performed there at that time. He is also a painter and writer of fiction, including *Soul Mountain*, which bore the prize citation. Since 1987 he has lived in Paris, and is now a French citizen, though writing all his plays and fiction in Modern Standard Chinese. While then Premier Zhu Rongji congratulated Gao as a French citizen, others within the party-state poured scorn on

Gao's achievement as not representative of contemporary Chinese literature (citing other preferred writers still living within the PRC) or as a politically motivated attack on the PRC (BBC 12 October 2000; *People's Daily* 13 October 2000). A more enlightened cultural nationalism might have interpreted the award as a triumph for Chinese culture. That it did not underlines the continuing place of the CCP's own particular politics in the determination of Chinese culture.

3   The PRC and the Overseas Chinese

Segal's argument that China does not play a significant role for Chinese around the world is at first sight a remarkably off-beat, unorthodox and provocative comment. Moreover, relative statements about the strength of India's connections with Indians as opposed to China's with the Chinese could really only have been made by someone living in Britain. In general, migrants almost always maintain connections to their country of origin, even if for long periods they may only be emotional or psychological, whether they be Chinese in Sydney or Indians, Pakistanis, Bengalis or Sri Lankans in Britain. In that country China does not loom large in the academic, let alone the public consciousness. Migrants and their descendants from the Indian sub-continent significantly outnumber any kinds of Chinese residents. Even so there were politically inspired disturbances of political order in London's Chinatown during the late 1960s, that took their cue from Mao Zedong's Cultural Revolution. Most elsewhere in the world where Chinese are the more numerous migrant community (of the two) the links with the PRC are more in evidence, if more recently for social and economic rather than political reasons.

The 1990s saw two major stimuli to thinking about international networks of Chinese. The first was the sizeable out-migration of young Chinese from the PRC in the aftermath of the Tiananmen Incident of June 1989, though not solely occasioned by that event. The second was recognition of the phenomenal growth of the PRC economy, fuelled by its international links, that led to considerable attention in both academic publications and the mass media on the varieties and extent of Chinese networks around the world.

In the early 1990s a number of commentators beyond the borders of the PRC seized on the importance of the Chinese living elsewhere – the 'Overseas Chinese' – as an important engine of economic growth. In a contemporaneously influential article *The Economist*, for example, highlighted the leading roles of the fifty-five million (according to its calculations) Overseas Chinese in both their countries of residence and in the more recent development of the PRC. The influence of these Overseas Chinese was identified not only in East and Southeast Asia, where they were (and remain) concentrated, but also in substantial numbers in the USA (1.8 million) Canada (0.6 million) Australia and New Zealand (1.8 million) Latin America (1 million) and Europe (0.6 million.) (*The Economist*, 18 July 1992, p. 21.)

In their own countries of residence these Overseas Chinese were represented as wielding disproportionate, significant and often controlling economic influence, while they were also identified as the vehicle of economic change for the coastal economies of the PRC. (Baldinger,1992; Yamaguchi, 1993). The latter function was most obviously demonstrated for those societies of East Asia that are predominantly Chinese – Hong Kong, Singapore and Taiwan – and where during the late 1980s and early 1990s whole industries moved from their original base into the PRC (Asia Research Centre, 1992). Elsewhere, the

spotlight fell on the small Chinese populations in a number of different countries in Southeast Asia and their apparently much larger economic impact. In Cambodia where 5% of the population were said to control 70% of the economy; in Indonesia where 4% of the population were attributed with a 73% economic control; in Malaysia where 29% were said to control 61%; in the Philippines where 2% was regarded as responsible for 60%; and in Thailand where 10% were held to control 81% of the economy (Goodman, 1998, p.143).

The Economist provided perspective on the scale of influence of the Overseas Chinese by aggregating data:

> Overall, one conservative estimate puts the 1990 "GNP" of Asia's 51m overseas Chinese, Taiwan and Hong Kong included, at $450 billion – a quarter bigger than China's then GNP, and, per head, at about 80% of the level of Spain or Israel.

According to *The Economist*, Overseas Chinese economic success was attributable to two factors. One was the ties of personal acquaintance, trust and obligation said to be at the core of Chinese society. The other was the high rate of savings of the Overseas Chinese:

> Worldwide, the overseas Chinese probably hold liquid assets (not including securities) worth $1.5 trillion – 2 trillion. For a rough comparison, in Japan, with twice as many people, bank deposits in 1990 totalled $3 trillion.
> (*The Economist*, 18 July 1992, p.21)

Building on this kind of analysis other commentators claimed that the interactions of China and the Chinese in East and Southeast Asia had laid the foundations for a new economic 'superpower' to rival the USA, Europe and Japan (Howell, 1992; Weidenbaum, 1993; East Asia Unit, DFAT, Australia, 1995). Still other commentators went spectacularly even further to argue that Ethnic Chinese identity might supercede the need for states and lead to a reduced role for inter-state activity within the region. (Ong & Nonini, 1997, p.323). In the words of one author, there was every possibility that a "Chinese Commonwealth" will emerge as a development from a China whose "very definition ... is up for grabs" (Kao, 1993).

These portrayals of the potential relationship between the PRC and the Overseas Chinese are the essential context to Segal's related comment in "Does China Matter?" Though undoubtedly overstated and probably somewhat misdirected, Segal's comment pointed to the need for perspective and the danger of reading too much into the emergence of a 'Greater China'. Such ideas are inherently interesting and challenging, but they fundamentally misunderstand the structures of Overseas Chinese transnationalism. The unity of the Overseas Chinese in East and Southeast Asia is a categoric construct, more a function of analysis than evident in their economic and political behaviour.

The concepts of either a Chinese Commonwealth or Overseas Chinese unity (with or without the PRC) may be useful devices for drawing attention to the processes contributing to the PRC's economic development during the early 1990s, and may even have some appeal to certain kinds of Chinese nationalism. It may indeed be a particularly useful rhetoric for encouraging Chinese outside the PRC to invest or engage in other business activities there. In 1992, for example, Fu Yuchuan, Director of the Overseas

Chinese College of Hainan University made one such attempt: "The chances are becoming greater for the 24 million Chinese who have attained citizenship in Southeast Asian nations to come to realize once again their common heritage and cultural traditions, as economic cooperation grows" (*China Daily*, 22 October 1992).

At the same time, there are clear social, political and economic limits to the notion of Greater China which are sometimes too easily overlooked by many commentators. The social limits are acute not least since there are many common (flawed) assumptions by Europeans about the homogeneity of 'the Chinese'. The essentialisation of the Chinese in the PRC as a single culture has, as already noted, more to do with the emergence of twentieth-century nationalism than with any social homogeneity. When the various Chinese of Southeast Asia outside the PRC are brought into consideration the meaning of being Chinese in a social sense becomes very broad indeed. Many of the Chinese of the region speak no Chinese language at all and are significantly assimilated in their host societies, through state action and discrimination, no less than through length of stay. Migrating from the Chinese mainland, during the colonial era they rapidly became the business class of Southeast Asia – though it is hotly debated whether this was for cultural or structural reasons – a settled minority in each country who effectively operated as the region's domestic capitalists (Mackie, 1988). Earlier reservations from the host societies were compounded during the latter half of the twentieth century by political discrimination that resulted in response to the establishment of a Chinese Communist party-state.

To cope with hostile circumstances the Chinese of Southeast Asia turned at a very early stage in their migration to more reliable particularistic ties requiring relationships of long-term reciprocity: common place of origin, shared language, family and kinship (Lever-Tracy, Ip & Tracy, 1996). While these may be in a general way common characteristics of the Chinese in the region, in practice they necessarily reflect competition and division rather than any unity of action, purpose or mythical conspiracy. For each Chinese cooperation and interaction is within the security of shared reference groups, rarely moving beyond those boundaries to engage others described as 'Chinese'. Such relationships became particularly important during the late 1980s and early 1990s as the Chinese resident in East and Southeast Asia became involved economically in the PRC preferring to interact with their families' place of origin on the Chinese mainland.

Even in East Asia, there is little social homogeneity about the Chinese of either Taiwan or Hong Kong. Taiwan is the most obviously heterogenous with a major social division between 'mainlanders' who arrived with the defeat of the Nationalist Party on the mainland of China in 1949 and much longer Taiwan-based communities of Hokkien and Hakka-speakers. That division has been the basis of politics since the early 1990s – though without an exact translation of support – which have certainly developed different attitudes to the meaning of Chinese identity. In Hong Kong, society and politics are more divided along socio-economic lines, but even in that case language groups and ancestral homes in China create recognizably separate communities, which are especially active in the business world. Despite or perhaps because of the dominance of Cantonese speakers, there are organised communities of Shanghainese and Indonesian Chinese (those who fled Indonesia during the 1960s) who exercise disproportionate influence.

As these comments on social diversity suggest there are clear political limits to the development of a Greater China. Hong Kong became part of the PRC in the middle of

1997, but Taiwan remains apart. Moreover, Taiwan's political relations are not simply a function of the PRC's domestic politics but also of its own, where significant sections of the population are unlikely to seek closer relations to a Beijing government of whatever persuasion and others are hostile principally to a Communist party-state. For their part, the comparative advantage of the Chinese of Southeast Asia would be lost through closer association with the PRC. They gain precisely because as entrepreneurs they are outside and separate from the PRC. Chinese identity has clearly been important in a general way in the development of relations between the Chinese of Southeast Asia and the PRC but the extent of divided loyalties can be easily overstated. To quote Lee Kuan Yew, in many ways the founder of Singapore, "We are Ethnic Chinese but our stakes are in our own countries, not where our ancestors came from" (Cragg, 1996, p. 17).

Then too the economic scale of Greater China is often exaggerated. The PRC is clearly a growing economy, if from a very low base which leads to spectacular rates of growth for a very long period of time, with considerable potential. All the same, during the early 1990s the wealth of the Overseas Chinese was significantly overstated. The calculation of that wealth rested, without explicit acknowledgment, on only one part of the proposed Chinese Commonwealth, namely Taiwan, which contains more than 80% of the aggregate domestic product of the hypothesised entity, and which is more usually (pace *The Economist*) not recognized as Overseas Chinese territory. Take Taiwan and Hong Kong out of the calculation of an Overseas Chinese Empire in the making and what remains is a small but relatively buoyant Singapore economy, and a series of Chinese entrepreneurs in Southeast Asia, who speak individually for themselves rather than for the Chinese of Southeast Asia. Moreover, there is remarkably little economic integration amongst these various non-PRC constituent parts of a potential Greater China. Their major point of contact is in the PRC, where there are clear limits to the potential for further spectacular growth of Chinese Southeast Asian involvement.

4   Culture, the State and the Region

The PRC would certainly appear to be more limited in its role in the determination of Chinese culture than its own self-view would sometimes seem to imply. Not least this would seem to result from discussions and debate about the structure and dimensions of Chinese culture, and subsequent policy uncertainty. Moreover, the hyperbole surrounding the emergence of the idea of Greater China provides adequate evidence of the need for greater balance in assessing the role of the government of the PRC in regional, and by extension world affairs. By the same token though it also provides evidence of the impact and importance of Chinese culture beyond the borders of the PRC, particularly in East and Southeast Asia, and the significance of that region to the international position of the PRC.

The dynamics of culture influence are such that while the party-state may be divided on the definition of Chinese culture, and may not provide the only source of cultural authority, the PRC may still nonetheless both benefit from the wider appreciation of China and attempt to build on it to other ends. This usage of Chinese culture has clearly been an important part of the PRC's strategy since the early 1990s particularly in its dealings with governments and entrepreneurs in East and Southeast Asia. For their parts, governments and entrepreneurs have responded most of the time positively to the greater interaction. Entrepreneurs have found a degree of ease and possibly psychological comfort

in dealing with more familiar partners in the PRC. Governments have found themselves in agreement with a PRC that, as the discussion over the emergence of 'Asian values' demonstrated, shares a common sense of regional community in many aspects of international politics. The key issue here is not the importance of the PRC to the societies and countries of East and Southeast Asia, but the extent to which it will in the longer term come to be regarded as the regional leader, and the consequences of that interaction for the PRC's role in global politics.

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2   Saving the South Seas – Thomas Heggen & *Mister Roberts*

Sean Brawley

Writing in 1942, University of Hawaii Anthropologist Felix M. Keesing concluded that the war in the South Pacific would have a significant impact on the English-speaking world: "Doubtless some treasured but illusory ideas relating to the South Seas have been exploded; at the same time a realistic view has been attained of these islands and their people" (Keesing, 1942, p. 293).

The South Seas ideas of which Keesing wrote had a long and enduring pedigree. Many dated back to the sixteenth century when European ships first traversed that body of water which Spaniard Vasco Nunez Balboa, looking west from the Isthmus of Panama in 1513 had incorrectly labelled the 'South Sea', and which Magellan would later, incorrectly for him, label 'Pacific'. The idea of the 'South Seas', however, predated this age of 'discovery'. Even before the journeys of Able Tasman and William Dampier, the Western world knew what would be found in these lower latitudes. What would be found was what was always found on the periphery of the known world – a 'new location' inhabited with the 'old nostalgic fictions' that could be traced back to classical times as well as the more recent 'discoveries' of the 'New World' (Rennie, 1995, pp. 1-45). Embedded in these nostalgic fictions was an unrelenting search for 'Utopia'. 'Paradise' existed, it just had to be found, and the South Seas was one of the last remaining places on the earth where it could be. The early Western travellers to the Pacific, therefore, went forth not so much to 'discover' but to 'find' – to reinforce ideas they had long held to be true; and in so doing reinforce the European self.

In the English-speaking world the literary engagement with the South Seas began in the early eighteenth century through publication of the travelogues of 'explorers' such as buccaneer William Dampier, and the fiction of, amongst others, Daniel DeFoe, who used the inspiration provided by works such as Dampier's to produce his classic tale *The Life and Strange Surprising Adventures of Robinson Crusoe of York* (1719). DeFoe's intellectual engagement with the South Seas would be reinforced in the 1860s with Samuel Wallis' discovery of the 'heart' of the South Seas – Tahiti. European engagement with the Polynesian world in the late eighteenth century enhanced and articulated Western ideas about the South Seas. As Rod Edmunds has written:

> From this moment western representations of the Pacific were to form important
> chapters in the history of the Enlightenment and Romanticism, of nineteenth
> century Christianity, science and social theory, of modern painting, anthropology
> and popular culture. (Edmunds, 1997, p. 7)

At a time when neo-classicism was triumphing in Europe, the later explorations of Cook and de Bougainiville reinforced notions of the South Seas as a lost Arcadia inhabited by

noble individuals in the classical Greek mould. Within this construct much was made of the physical beauty and the sexual availability of islander women – a moral and sensual temptation felt by the crew of the *Bounty.* As the nineteenth century progressed, however, the positive image of the South Sea Islander was challenged by the notion of the 'Ignoble Savage'. Missionaries who came in the wake of the explorers had little interest in accepting South Seas islanders on such positive terms. South Sea islanders were headhunting cannibals. With the work of Herman Melville in the 1840s and 1850s countering the missionary onslaught the noble and ignoble would exist side by side in Western literary engagements. Herman Melville's work almost single-handely inspired future generations of writers such as Robert Louis Stevenson, Joseph Conrad, Louis Becke, Jack London and Somerset Maugham to engage with the South Seas. In the late nineteenth and early twentieth century an enormous amount of material, both fiction and non-fiction, would be produced by authors such as these, and they in turn, inspired other popular cultural responses such as theatrical and musical homage to the region.

Without question the most significant amplification of the South Seas tradition in the first half of the twentieth century was cinema. While the medium of film was new, Hollywood would grow to become the foremost image-maker on the South Seas across the English-speaking world and beyond. This cinematic engagement reached its zenith in the late 1930s with the emergence of the 'South Seas Adventure Picture' genre that catapulted Dorothy Lamour to stardom as the quintessential South Seas heroine. As Glenn Man has written: "Hollywood's images of the Pacific formed and reflected the popular attitude of American audiences toward the South Seas" (Man, 1991, p. 16).

During the Pacific War many American service personnel were forced to confront the reality of the South Pacific which was very different to the longstanding image of the South Seas. With their preconceptions based on romantic images derived from literature, music, anthropology and, most recently, Hollywood, service personnel were disillusioned by the disjuncture between their expectations and the reality they encountered (Man, 1991, p. 16). Besides the ethnographical differences between the South Seas, Polynesia and Melanesia, it was hard for war, death and disease to live side by side with the old romantic illusions (Jolly, 1997, p. 100). For many, debunking the myth of the South Seas was the only way to move forward, the only way to regain intellectual control over the space and peoples they had colonised by their presence. With South Seas disillusionment threatening combat effectiveness, the American military command attempted to play a role in deconstructing the tradition. It produced documents for distribution to troops that helped to debunk the South Seas myth with warnings that personnel should "junk from the start" their preconceptions (Pocket Guide, 1944, p. 10).

For some Americans, however, debunking the South Seas myth came at too great a cost. They were unprepared or ill-equipped for the painful self-examination required if they were to assert intellectual control over their surroundings. Some Americans decided simply to ignore the reality and live in the illusion, thereby regaining intellectual control over the space they had colonised. While this (re)empowerment was more easily achieved in Polynesia than Melanesia (because it was closer to the idea of the South Seas), the American military (contradicting its efforts at debunking the tradition) also helped when it could. For example, it was prepared to plant mature palm trees around officers clubs on islands where the palm was not a native; or help local islander communities to mass-

produce grass skirts that reflected Hollywood's idea of the garment rather than a true reflection of local attire (Brawley & Dixon, 1993, pp. 15-29; Lindstrom & White, 1990).

On the home front the American people were left bewildered. War correspondents and friends and loved ones might have attempted to debunk the South Seas myth but Hollywood continued to represent the South Pacific in the same romantic ways it had through the 1930s. Dorothy Lamour had continued to represent the South Seas as a glamorous paradise – when not promoting war bonds she made films that were an almost seamless transition from her South Sea islander heroine roles of the late 30s. Even Bugs Bunny in the 1944 cartoon *Bugs Nips the Nips* found paradise on a South Seas island once he had ridden it of Japanese soldiers, sailors and airmen. Who was to be believed? Were the South Seas no more?

Many Americans looked to Pacific War veterans themselves and their 'authentic' firsthand experiences for answers. As in wars past, such an opportunity was provided by the many veterans who, on their return to peace, sought to make sense of their experience through the written word – picking up the pen as they laid down the sword. In the wake of the Pacific War scores of works of fiction and memoir appeared. At the centre of the Pacific War canon were the works of two American authors – Thomas Heggen and James A. Michener. While both works were critically acclaimed, it was their conversion into, first stage plays, and later films, that elevated their pedagogical power. Writing in 1956 about two of the most popular Broadway productions of the early postwar period, *New York Times* theatre critic Brooks Atkinson asked: "Will future generations think of World War II in terms of *Mister Roberts* and *South Pacific*?" (New York Times, 1956).

Thomas Heggen's pseudo-autobiographical novel *Mister Roberts* was published in 1946 and was one of the first post-war novels to deal with the Pacific War. The novel centred on the story of a young US Navy Lieutenant trapped on a supply ship in the backwaters of the Pacific and his efforts to get a posting to a warship against the wishes of his eccentric captain. Through a series of amusing incidents *Mister Roberts* finally gets his new posting only to die in action shortly thereafter.

Praised for its gritty realism, *Mister Roberts* subverted the South Seas tradition. It does not take Roberts very long to realise that his understanding of his new environment, gained 'straight from *Life* magazine, does not match the reality of his wartime situation: "Holy Christ, thought Roberts, this sea is a phoney. There couldn't be a sea like this. It's a lie, a myth, a legend. It's not real" (Heggen, 1946, p. 53). Roberts growing awareness of the disjuncture between reality and image is further revealed in his treatment of the Captain's palm tree. The potted palm tree outside the captain's cabin is representative of the Captain's idiosyncrasies and symbolic of the South Seas tradition. It becomes the focus of attention for the crew and is spat at and otherwise defiled. Roberts ultimately throws the palm from the ship – a rejection of both the Captain and the South Seas tradition.

In debunking the South Seas tradition, the novel also reinforced the wartime anti-myth of the South Pacific as sexual vacuum (Brawley & Dixon, 1999, pp. 3-18). The young mid-west sailor Lindstrom reports to the ship's doctor that he has the 'clap'. The doctor, almost paralysed by his own boredom, is incredulous and has little time for the sailor's prognosis: "I said don't be silly. Where in the hell could you get the clap around here boy?" Lindstrom replies that during a recent shore leave he met a native man on a beach who took him to a "pretty ugly" islander women with whom he engaged in sexual relations for the

price of his "knife and a pack of Chesterfields". The Doc is flabbergasted: "Here ... is a man who on the most god-forsaken womanless island in the whole goddamn god-forsaken ocean, gets himself a dose of clap". The Doc insists that Lindstrom's is the only case of VD in the South Pacific: "Out of the million men in this ocean, *you* have been chosen ... You have something a million guys would give their left leg to have ...". With potential for such notoriety Lindstrom starts to doubt whether he should be treated. He confides in his divisional petty officer who replies: "You've got holes in your head if you get rid of the only dose of clap in the whole damn Pacific." Lindstrom, however, decides to be treated (Heggan, 1946, pp. 40-7).

In discussing matters sexual, Heggen also offered some insights into how the South Seas tradition could persist in the face of wartime reality. Despite the narrator's warning to the reader that, "The only women you could get were the native, and most of them were dark and pretty rough", the ship's crew remain hopeful of meeting the islander women who inhabit the South Seas tradition. As their ship steams towards shore leave on a nearby island one of the sailors who has already visited there is interrogated by his comrades as to the sexual availability and beauty of the local women. Unhappy with his initially negative response the sailors pester their comrade until he tells them what they want to hear: "His answers grew short, and then sarcastic and finally inaccurate. The girls he told them were all very beautiful and promiscuous. The prices ranged from one to six shillings. All you had to do was step into a souvenir shop and announce that you wanted a to see the turquoise necklace" (Heggen, 1946, p. 135).

Heggen's efforts at de-mythologising the South Pacific, however, were subverted within the very pages of his novel. The illustrations used by Heggen's publishers, Houghton Mifflin, reflected the traditional artistic representation of the South Seas. The most glaring contradiction of image and text relates to the story of the crew's actions when their shore leave is cancelled because of the antics of the first sailors who had been granted 'liberty'. Not prepared to deny their ship-bound comrades the sensual pleasures they had planned, a 'native girl' is smuggled onto the ship for the amusement and enjoyment of the remaining crew. Heggen describes the women as "dark, squat and rather ugly, and she wore sandals and a very dirty white cotton dress" (Heggen, 1946, p. 148). The accompanying illustration, however, depicted a very attractive Europeanised women of the South Seas tradition entertaining the sex-starved American sailors.

The subversion of *Mister Roberts* as a critique of the South Seas was further strengthened with the novel's conversion to a stage play. Having been well received both critically and popularly the theatrical rights to the novel were bought by Broadway producer and theatrical agent Leyland Heyward. Heyward then asked Heggen to write the screenplay. Heggen's difficulties in adaptation saw Heyward co-opt his long-time friend and theatrical director Joshua Logan to complete the work. The result was a play that differed from the novel in several important respects. In his introduction to the published edition of the play in 1947, John Mason Brown alluded to these, noting: "The differences between the two supply as illuminating instruction as can be found on the prerequisites of good narrative as opposed to the needs of expert theatre" (Brown, 1948, p. ix). While Heggen's novel debunked much about the South Seas tradition, the play celebrated it.

The islands of the novel failed to live up to the South Seas tradition. One is described as "desolate" with "a dirty little native village unmolestedly off by itself"

(Heggen, 1946, p. 39). The desolate islands of the book are transformed in the play and Melanesia is replaced with Polynesia. The shore leave greatly anticipated by the crew is now on a 'Polynesian Paradise' – with suitable 'Polynesian music' accompanying their arrival (Heggen & Logan, 1950, p. 82). When they arrive the images are within the proudest South Seas traditions. Resonating with the *Bounty*'s arrival in Tahiti, the ship is greeted by native women in canoes, much to the enjoyment of the crew. On arrival the crew is told of a park where "the good-looking women hang out" (Heggen, 1946, p. 82). This in comparison to the novel where the absence of women on the island results in charges against a crew-member of "making an indecent proposal to an elderly lady" while another is "held by the local police on a charge of rape" (Heggen, 1946, p. 142). Such unpleasantness is not in the play. In the play the sailors gatecrash an Army dance where 50 native women are guests. With the simple mention of the word 'clap' enough to have a production closed by police for obscenity, it is hardly surprising that Lindstrom, the lone VD victim of the novel, does not have that malady in the theatrical version. Upon arrival at the island he is simply anxious to get off the ship before the island "runs out of women" (Heggen & Logan, 1950, p. 87).

While the *New York Times* would comment in review that the play accurately reflected "the drudgery and boredom of non-combatant service in the South Pacific" (New York Times, 1948), the cause of the drudgery and boredom had been subtly re-focussed. In the novel it is the very environment itself as much as the antics of the Captain that were the source of Roberts' disquiet and displeasure, the ships run being "from Tedium to Apathy and back ... It makes an occasional trip to Monotony" (Heggen, 1946, p. xi). In the play, sole responsibility for the boredom endemic in the ship rests with the Captain. If not for the Captain, the play implies, the experience of the sailors on this particular ship in the South Pacific may have been different. Mister Roberts' experience was an exception to the rule. The South Seas were there but Mister Roberts had the misfortune of not finding them thanks to the eccentric Captain.

Unquestionably the fact Heggen shared the adaptation of the novel to the stage with Joshua Logan was significant. While Heggen's dialogue and characterisation mostly stood, it was stage director Logan who decided which scenes and lines could best be transferred to the stage. While Logan was also a veteran – he had spent his war in Europe with the Army Air Corps – the South Seas remained uncomplicated and unchallenged in his mind. When Heyward visited Hawaii for the first time in 1947 he wrote to Logan: "This place is exactly like you imagined" (Heyward, 1947). For Logan the debunking of the South Seas illusion was not the key to the drama. Such changes in emphasis appear not to have concerned Heggen. While the novel had critiqued the South Seas tradition he saw himself as a novelist and playwright not a social critic. In a letter to Logan he noted: "My first aim is to entertain, and to that end I'd do anything in the theater as legitimate." His aim in translating the novel to the stage was not to set the public straight about the war in the Pacific. Indeed, his "bent" was "away from realism" (Heggen, 1947). This comment is interesting in light of the enormous influence the play had in the early post-war period for it did meet Logan's hopes that it would be the "first great war play (Logan, 1947). Much of the praise from critics and the general public, which included Generals Eisenhower and Marshall (Parke, 1951), centred on its 'realism' with the *New York Times* expressing the view that: "The play gives a true picture ..." (New York Times, 1948). The key was seen to be the language. While

dramatically toned down for the stage, the dialogue was seen as authentic. The realism was further strengthened by Logan casting Henry Fonda as Mr Roberts. Fonda had himself served as a Lieutenant in Naval Intelligence in the Pacific during the war. Much was made of Fonda's war service and the fact that he wore his own uniform in each performance (Newsweek, 1948). In interviews he would use his own service as a point of comparison; in one noting "many of the incidents of the play are similar to some we ran up against". Fonda had cried when Logan first read the play to him and Heggen had also always envisioned Fonda playing the role (Fonda, 1950). As with De Foe's *Robinson Crusoe* and Melville's *Typee*, a realist style had helped to enshrine the South Seas tradition.

Mister Roberts' "stupendous splash on Broadway" (Newsweek, 1948) saw a performance telecast in 1948 and the film rights secured by Heyward for $500,000. Once again Heyward would produce and Logan would direct – Heggen, however, would take no part as he had been found dead, drowned in his own bathtub. With Heyward and Logan involved in other Broadway productions (including the adaptation of Michener's novel into the musical *South Pacific*) work on the film did not commence until 1954. Meeting the proud tradition of South Seas films, *Mister Roberts* was filmed primarily on a Hollywood sound stage with most of the exterior shots filmed in the Caribbean. Some footage for the film was shot on Midway Island. Heyward wrote to Logan from the island: "Believe me, its a cruddy island but the main part that we will see is a long, long low sand strip with about five quonset huts painted white and the sand around there is all pure white" (Heyward, 1954). The reality was 'cruddy' but the image that would be produced would be idyllic. With the cinematic version of *Mister Roberts*, the South Seas illusion was only further reinforced.

In her longitudinal study of the South Seas tradition, Patty O'Brien found representations of the "Pacific muse" at the beginning of the twentieth century little changed by its end (O'Brien, 1998). The disjuncture of the war years had not left a lasting legacy on Western constructions of the South Pacific. Professor Keesing's conjecture had been proved incorrect. The damage caused to the tradition by the experience of hundreds of thousands of Allied service personnel in the South Pacific was not enough to destroy those treasured South Seas myths.

Guerric Debona has suggested that literary adaptation is perhaps "the most neglected and impoverished area in contemporary film studies" (Debona, 1996). The same might be said for literary adaptation to the stage. Debona sees the process as a "powerful struggle" between literature and film. In the case of *Mister Roberts*, however, it is the unity of the discursive tradition across literature and film that is important. The power of the South Seas myth is able to overcome the subversive intent of Heggen's novel. With his own South Seas perceptions untouched by the war, Joshua Logan was unmoved by Heggen's deconstruction and saw a perpetuation of Hollywood's representation of the South Seas as the best means to ensure good box office. *Mister Roberts*, the novel, slowly sunk into oblivion with its dead author while the stage play and movie captured and reinforced the public imagination.

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3 Skulls, Wings & Outlaws – Motorcycle Club Insignia & Cultural Identity

George Drewery

In *Objects of Desire: Design and Society 1750-1980*, Adrian Forty notes that "organisations which extend over a large geographical area, perhaps across different countries and languages, have always had difficulties in maintaining their cohesion" (Forty, 1986, p. 223). An outside observer may assume that outlaw motorcycle groups from around the world are claiming exactly such cohesion through the recognisable similarities in the designs of their "colours" – the patches worn on the back of their leather jackets. Whilst all such groups wish to buy into a common worldview, the desire for (internal) demarcation is clearly also at stake. In the case of outlaw motorcycle club insignia, Forty's principle of cohesion through design can be seen to be held in permanent tension by a basic tenet of fashion, as extrapolated by Georg Simmel in his well-known essay of 1904 – fashionable people will seek to change their look as soon as it is copied by other aspiring groups. In the world of fashion, it is the social elite (the aristocracy) that remains at the forefront of fashion. The leading outlaw motorcycle gangs do not change, however; their dominance is reflected in the design of their insignia, and it is this design that other groups wish to copy. Far from, changing to keep ahead, the elite group allows others only a limited access to its look. From an historical perspective the case of outlaw motorcycle club insignia lies at the intersection of various icons and artefacts of an intercultural nature: film and myth mix with American military heritage. This paper will seek to trace the roots of these infamous designs.

The word 'outlaw' has its origins in the old English justice system and referred to someone who was punished by being deprived of the protection of law; literally such people were declared as 'outlaws'. It is therefore perhaps a misnomer to call a club 'outlaw' and in Australia there is no accepted definition of what consitutues an 'outlaw' motorcycle club. In Canada, however, the police have a definition derived from a number of court rulings and in the USA there is also a definition that is generally accepted by both outlaw and non-outlaw clubs. It would seem that in Australia, for a motorcycle club to be considered 'outlaw', it must be accepted as such by existing outlaw clubs. In other words, if a motorcycle club wears a traditional outlaw back patch and is prepared to staunchly defend the right to wear that back patch against any opposition, it would be considered to be an 'outlaw' club. An example of this convention occurred recently in Wallsend, a suburb of Newcastle, New South Wales. A national outlaw motorcycle club opened a clubhouse and rode around on their motorcycles wearing a back patch, in effect claiming the territory. One evening a large white van stopped outside the newly established clubhouse and several men got out carrying baseball bats. They entered the clubhouse and attacked the occupants. Legs were broken and heads bloodied. The attackers then left. Alarmed neighbours called police but there were no arrests as the occupants of the club (in true 'outlaw' tradition) refused to give the police any information. It is common knowledge in the motorcycle fraternity that a

local outlaw motorcycle club was responsible for the attack on the clubhouse. The message is: wear the colours and claim the territory, but be prepared to defend them.

1	The Making of an Image

At the beginning of this research project I made a direct approach to motorcycle clubs for information about their background and membership. I contacted the Director of the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence, for the addresses of outlaw club clubhouses. However, due to legal constraints he was unable to give me the information. I next approached the editor of *Live to Ride* magazine, an Australian magazine that caters to Outlaw clubs. The editor was very supportive and suggested I write a letter to the magazine in which I requested information from the clubs. This was duly done but I soon realized that I had adopted a very naïve approach to finding information about a closed culture of which I was not a member. Assuming that members of such cultures will have respect for 'academic' status and reveal everything about their culture is a mistake made by many researchers. I received a total of three replies, none of which was from a club. Two replies were from individuals containing some very useful information, and the other was a threatening letter written in red ink suggesting I cease my research forthwith. Not deterred, in order to collect images of the various gang colours I attended a variety of motorcycle shows which attracted club members and inconspicuously took photographs.

My original thought was that the design of back patches may have come from the 'nose art' painted on the noses of World War II aircraft. However, I soon discovered that on the vast majority of aircraft the main subjects of 'nose art' were either cartoon characters or scantily dressed, nubile females. 'Nose art' has virtually none of the symbols of skulls and devils that appear in outlaw back patches. 'Nose art' was a good luck talisman for the crew of the aircraft, its purpose being to give them the luck required to successfully return from long dangerous missions over enemy territory – the last things the crews wanted on their aircraft were symbols of death and destruction such as devils and skulls. Naked ladies and cartoons were much more comforting. However, many of the squadron shoulder patches worn by the airmen did indeed have symbols of skulls and devils (see, for example, www.381st, 2003)). It is these shoulder patches which became the inspiration for some of the later outlaw back patches.

In 1941 Claire L Chennault, an American aviator who had written a book on the theory of air combat, was employed by the Chinese government of Chiang Kai-Shek to form a mercenary air force. Their mission was to fight the Japanese army that had invaded China. The pilots of the American Volunteer Group (AVG) or 'Flying Tigers' as it became known, all wore a large coloured patch sewn to the back of their leather flying jackets. The purpose of the patch, known as a 'Blood Chit, was to inform people on the ground, should the airman get shot down, thathe was a friend of the Chinese and should be offered assistance. This is the first instance of coloured patches being applied to leather jackets in large numbers. After America declared the war on Japan in 1941, the exploits of the 'Flying Tigers' were much lauded by the American media and the fliers were given hero status. In 1942 John Wayne stared in a movie loosely based on the 'Flying Tigers' which brought the leather jacket and back patch combination to a wider audience. There is a further 'Flying Tiger' link to outlaw clubs. One of the three squadrons established by Chennault was called the 'Hells Angels', the others being the 'Adam and Eve' and the 'Panda Bears'. However,

the Hells Angels' insignia painted on the aircraft was a scantily dressed female with wings and halo, and bears no relationship to the back patch insignia of the later Hells Angels Motorcycle Club.

Still from *Flying Tigers* starring John Wayne.

In July 1947 an incident took place in the Southern California town of Hollister which became the basis for the notoriety of outlaw motorcycle clubs. Twelve thousand motorcyclists had turned up for the American Motorcycle Association (AMA) annual three-day 'Gypsy Tour' and flat track racing. Not all the clubs in attendance were members of the AMA. Clubs such as the Booze Fighters, the Pissed Off Bastards of Bloomington, the Winos, Satan's Sinners and the Galloping Ghosts, Market Street Commandos, 13 Rebels and Yellow Jackets were also in attendance. After much consumption of alcohol a mild riot ensued with the local police needing to call in out-of-town police to help quell the disturbance. Fifty-nine people were arrested. The majority of motorcyclists at Hollister were not involved and some of the town's residents did not know anything had happened until they read about it in the paper (Brown & McDirmid, 2000, p. 352).

A photograph taken by Barney Peterson of the *San Francisco Chronicle* showing a drunken motorcyclist on a Harley Davidson surrounded by beer bottles appeared in *Life* magazine and was picked up by Associated Press and shown around the world. The rearrangement of the bottles in a second unpublished shot suggests it was a staged photograph but this second image shows a club insignia with wings and a skull. The caption with the photograph claimed that 4000 members of a motorcycle club had roared into Hollister and taken the town over (Life, 1947). The following year, after some further trouble at Riverside, the AMA secretary at the time Lin A Kuchler said "the disreputable cyclists are possibly one percent of the total number of motorcyclists; only one percent are hoodlums and troublemakers" (Zierl & Rebmann, 1998). The Riverside Police Chief described the motorcycle hoodlums for the first time in public as "outlaws". The non-AMA clubs, in the tradition of taking the insults of the enemy as a badge of honour, became 'outlaws' and those described by Koehler as "one percenters" proudly wore a '1%' badge on their jackets and vests, a tradition that continues today.

Photograph published in *Life* Magazine

Unpublished photograph

The incident was given further notoriety when Stanley Kramer's film the *The Wild One*, starring Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin, was released in 1953. The film itself was based on short story entitled *The Cyclists' Raid* by Frank Rooney which appeared in *Harper's Magazine* (Barger & Zimmerman, 2000, p. 25). The plot was very loosely based on the Hollister incident with Marlon Brando playing 'Johnny', the enigmatic leader of the 'Black Rebels Motorcycle Club'. The club's insignia – a skull and crossed pistons – is painted on the back of a black leather jacket. The 'Outlaws' Motorcycle Club that has chapters around the world now uses a very similar design.

Still from *The Wild One* showing skull and crossed pistons back patch

Sonny Barger, the founder of the Oakland chapter of the Hells Angels, in his book *Hells Angel* states he had more in common with Lee Marvin's character Chino, as he was more unkempt than Brando's character and he rode a chopped Harley Davidson. Brando himself rode an English made Triumph and wore a uniform. The Hells Angels is the archetypical outlaw motorcycle club and was one of the first to be established. The name Hell's Angels was used by several groups long before the first chapter of the Hell's Angels Motorcycle Club (HAMC) was formed in Fontana, California in 1948. A World War I fighter squadron used the name as did an aircraft stunt team in the 1930s and 1940s. As previously mentioned, a squadron of the Flying Tigers used the name as did the 303RD bomber group of the USAF based in England. The Hells Angels is currently the largest Outlaw Motorcycle Club in the USA. It was the first to go international with chapters in thirteen countries including Holland, Denmark, Australia, Germany, Canada, the UK, France, Switzerland, Brazil, South Africa, Norway, Sweden and New Zealand. The format of both the HAMC organization and back patch has influenced the way that most other outlaw clubs conduct business around the world. The Hells Angels created a sub-culture, which has seen the growth of their organization as well as the establishment of many similar styled motorcycle gangs throughout the world. (Davis, 1982, p. 43).

Still from Rolling Stone's Altamont concert 1969

Up until at least 1969 the Hells Angels sported two versions of their back patch, the original small patch nicknamed the 'bumble bee' patch and the larger 'deathshead patch. Both patches were based on World War II airforce shoulder patches. The smaller patch is probably based on that of the 85th Fighter Squadron and the larger 'deathshead' patch was designed by Frank Sadliek, a past president of the San Francisco chapter of the HAMC, and is probably based on the 552nd Medium Bomber Squadron.

2   The Backpatch in Australia

I have identified 36 Australian 'outlaw' motorcycle clubs – the Bandidos, Black Ulans, Bros, Club Derose, Coffin Cheaters (3), Comancheros, Cossacks, Descendants, Devil's Henchmen, Finks, Foolish Few, Fourth Reich, Gladiators, God's Garbage, Gypsy Jokers, Hell's Angels, Highway 61, Highwaymen, Immortals, Iron Horsemen, Life and Death, Lone Wolf, Mob Shitters, Nomads, Odins Warriors, Outcasts, Outlaws, Rebels, Renegades, Satan's Riders, Satan's Sinners, Satan's Soldiers, Tramps and Vandiemans.– and collected the back patch images for 30 of these.

Twenty of the Australian patches I have been able to record follow the Hells Angel model almost exactly with only minor changes to the position of the M.C. element. Several use a similar typeface. In addition, four follow this model very closely, with variations in the shape of the bottom rocker or four-part format. The Hells Angels pattern consists of four elements. First, the top 'rocker' (presumably the name comes from the similarity to the bottom rail on a rocking chair) stating the club name in a Semi-Ornamental woodcut typeface similar to American Tuscan. On the patch no apostrophe is used before the 's' of 'Hells'. Second, the 'deathshead' insignia as designed by Frank Sadliek and located in the centre of the design. Third, the bottom rocker, stating the country, state or area where the chapter is located. In the USA the Hells Angels will not allow any club to put a state on the bottom rocker if the Hells Angels have claimed it beforehand. Fourth, a small square patch

to the middle right with the letters M.C. meaning Motorcycle Club. This is in a different sans serif typeface than the top and bottom rockers. I suspect that the typeface chosen for the top and bottom rocker was influenced by the typeface used on posters for the movie *Gone With the Wind* that was released in 1939. The type is unusual, and it is unlikely that the HAMC at that time would have employed a typographer to select a typeface for them.

Of the thirty patches I have recorded only four do not have one or more of the following elements: Skulls/Demons (17); Wings (12); Cartoon characters (3). Four patches do not have any of the common skull/wing/cartoon images. They are the snarling wolf graphic of the Lone Wolf patch; skeletal handshake on the Bros patch; a Confederate flag on the Rebels patch (this is the biggest outlaw club in Australia) and a traditional tattoo design on the Life and Death patch.

The symbolism of the wings in the back patch design is twofold. It refers back to the World War II air force shoulder patches that are the original influence of many of the patches. Since the air force is in the business of flying the symbolism is obvious. Wings are also a symbol for speed and flight. Many people, after their first ride on a motorcycle, refer to the experience as the nearest thing to flying they could imagine. Motorcycle manufactures have long been aware of this symbolism and over the years many Motorcycle Company logo and tank emblems have included a wing or wings. Motorcycle Companies that have used a wing motif include: ABC, Ace, Dax, Harley Davidson, Honda, Henderson, Jawa, Matchless, Moto Guzzi, Royal Enfield,Victoria, and no doubt many more.

The symbolism of the skull in the design of the patches is more complex. In Western culture the skull has symbolised various things. It is the Christian symbol for St Francis of Assisi, St Jerome, St Mary Magdalene and St Paul. A skull with crossed bones is a symbol for death, and a flag with a skull and crossed bones is an emblem of pirates. The skull, on the other hand, is also a symbol of the vital life force contained in the head. Various military units have used the skull and crossed bones as a hat badge including the hat badge of an Austrian Cavalry Officer (circa 1860) and an SS officer's cap badge. The symbolism for the skull in both these examples is that the wearer is a soldier and deals in

death. A skull with crossed bones is also the international container symbol for toxic material. Skulls as a design feature are very common on motorcycles ridden by both outlaw and non-outlaw motorcyclists.

The images of cartoon characters are 'The Fat Mexican' of the Bandidos (originally an American club patch from Texas), 'Taz' the Tasmanian Devil from the Warner Brothers cartoon used by the Vandiemans (this would perhaps give the impression the Vandiemans are from Tasmania, but they are in fact Melbourne-based), and 'Bung' or 'Bung Fink' the drunken jester from the Wizard of Id cartoons used by the Finks (the colour of the bottle and the jester's pants indicate which Australian state the wearer is from). Cartoon characters on back patches provide a link to a previous era when an outlaw motorcycle club was more about riding with like-minded mates, drinking to excess and behaving in an uncouth anti-social manner. This was in the days before outlaw clubs were considered to be organised crime gangs by the authorities and before some clubs started dealing in methamphetamine. The 'Booze Fighters' back patch depicted a bottle of beer. An early Sydney club was 'The Gronks' whose back patch was a hairy caveman carrying a club. Another early club was 'The Galloping Gooses' who had a goose in jackboots as their back patch. The back patches of the 'Finks', the 'Bandidos' and the 'Vandiemans' are examples that are still in use. A good example of a change in design ethos from the earlier patches can be seen in the comparison of the older American "Gypsy Joker" patch and the later Australian "Gypsy Jokers" patch. However. it would be a mistake to presume that because the patches of "The Finks", "Vandiemans" and the "Bandidos" display cartoons and not skulls, that they are not 'outlaw' clubs.

Outlaw clubs in Australia and very careful about whom they admit as members. For example, they do not allow women to be members, and so it is impossible for women to wear an outlaw back patch. In the early days of outlaw clubs in the US, women were allowed to be members of the Hells Angels but this later changed. Women were also allowed to wear club colours if they were riding 'two up'. This was because the rider's back patch would not be exposed to the public if someone were sitting behind him. The woman had to return the colours as soon as she got off the bike. This was also to change and now only initiated club members are allowed to wear a back patch. In Australia the closest a female can get to wear club colours is if she becomes a long-term partner of a club member and gets to wear a 'Property Of' patch. By 1999 there were two female-only motorcycle clubs, these being the 'Vixen' club and 'DOB' (Dykes On Bikes). Both clubs avoided using skull symbols in their patch, but the DOB patch does have wings. Neither of these clubs could be considered 'outlaw'.

Generally speaking Australian outlaw clubs will not allow any other motorcycle club to wear a large coloured back patch, particularly if it is in the traditional outlaw format. There are a few exceptions however, including members of overseas clubs visiting Australia for a limited time, Christian Motorcycle Clubs, and the Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club. Some other clubs such as 'The Ulysses' club do wear a back patch but it is not coloured or in the traditional format. Some Harley Owners Group (HOG) members wear a coloured patch on the back of their jackets but it always small and without a top or bottom rocker, unlike the USA HOG patches that are full sized with top rocker. The Vietnam Veterans Motorcycle Club wears what appears to be an outlaw patch and so it should, as it is a direct copy of the patch worn by the 'Gravediggers' in Sandy Harbutt's

cult Australian biker movie *Stone* released in 1974. Christian Motorcycle Clubs always replace the M.C. element in their back patches with "C.M.C." meaning 'Christian Motorcycle Club' or "M.M." meaning 'Motorcycle Ministry'. Outlaw clubs see them as no threat and therefore allow the patches to be worn.

Many of the clubs realise what a powerful symbol the outlaw back patch is and claim copyright on them. The Hells Angels announce on their web site that:

> *HAMC has copyrighted the name Hells Angels (in any form of spelling) in the US and internationally along with variations of the "Deathshead" insignia of the HAMC. These trademarks and copyright are aggressively protected by HAMC, Inc.* (Hells Angels, 2003)

It should be noted that the Hells Angels Motorcycle Club became an incorporated company in 1968 and a trademark granted in 1972. You might expect an 'outlaw' motorcycle club to protect its copyright with a broken bottle and a bike chain, but in the US in June 1995 the Hells Angels sued in court to protect their copyright. In Australia the 'Bandidos' back patch even has a copyright symbol on the patch itself along with the initials of the copyright holder. During the course of this research I contacted Sonny Barger, the legendary founder of the Oakland Chapter of the Hells Angels, for information on the design of the HAMC patch, I received a reply from Fritz Clapp, 'the club's trade mark attorney' and also Sonny's 'business manager'.

The commodification of culture was a major feature of the 20th century and design played an important part in this process. As Adrian Forty has noted:

> Of all the ways in which design can influence the way we think, the only one to have been acknowledged widely has been its use to express the identity of organizations. Empires, armies, navies, religious orders and modern corporations have all used design to convey ideas about what they are like both to insiders and to the outside world. (Forty, 1986, p. 222)

Hesket has further argued, "Objects and environments can be used by people to construct a sense of who they are, to express their sense of identity." The construction of identity, however, goes much further than an expression of who some one is for it 'can be a deliberate attempt by individuals and organizations, even nations, to create a particular image and meaning intended to shape, even pre-empt, what others perceive and understand" (Heskett, 2002, p. 125). While a good deal of attention has been paid to the formation of corporate symbols – the Golden Arches of McDonalds and the logo and bottle design of Coca Cola – almost no attention has been paid to the design of outlaw motorcycle patches. As has been argued in this paper, however, this design, first developed by the Hells Angels and later adopted by outlaw motorcycle clubs around the world including Australia, has an interesting history, a clever design and is extremely effective in expressing group identity.

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Note
The author has been unable to determine the ownership of copyright in all of the photographs in this article, but acknowledge(s) that ownership in the insignia design itself rests with the Australian Outlaws Motorcycle Clubs involved. Use of the images has been made in good faith as a "fair dealing" for the purposes of research, pursuant to the *Copyright Act 1968*.

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4 Eco-Feminism & the Reconstruction of *The Burning Times*

David Waldron

To a large extent, the romanticist image of the Witch and the accompanying mythology of the 'Burning Times' maintains a particular poignancy as a model of the persecution of women due to its utilization as an archetypal model of irrational and vicious persecution in enlightenment discourse. From the work of historians and folklorists such as Norman Cohn, Margaret Murray and Jules Michelet to Arthur Miller's representation of the Witch trials as a model for understanding the ramifications of the House Committee for Un-American Activities in *The Crucible*, the Witch craze has become associated with the arbitrary persecution of innocents by aggressive fundamentalist ideology. In using the witch as a model for understanding the persecution of women, the eco-feminist neo-Pagan movement – by Eco-feminist neo-Pagan movement I am referring specifically to the sub-branch of the pagan revival that perceives there to be a universal link between radical feminism, deep ecology and the symbols and histories associated with Witchcraft – along with many other scholars involved in representations of Witch persecutions as a patriarchal pogrom against women, are following in the footsteps of liberal, Romantic and humanist historians who deplore the Witch crazes as a symbol of barbarity and injustice manifested in the contemporary injustices of the present (Purkiss, 1996, p. 15). The eco-feminist interpretation of the 'Burning Times' of early modern Europe is well summarized by prominent neo-Pagan author Starhawk.

> The terror was indescribable. Once denounced, by anyone from a spiteful neighbor to a fretful child, a suspect Witch was arrested suddenly without warning and not allowed to return home again. She was considered guilty until proven innocent. Common practice was to strip the subject naked, shave her completely in hopes of finding the Devil's "marks," which might be no more than moles or freckles. Often the accused were pricked all over their bodies with sharp needles; spots the devil had touched were said to feel no pain... Most cruelly, they were tortured until they named others, until a full coven quota of thirteen were taken. Confession earned a merciful death: strangulation before the stake. Recalcitrant suspects, who maintained their innocence, were burned alive. (Starhawk, 1989, pp. 19-21)

This representation of women accused and persecuted by patriarchal society as Witches is a compelling and even horrifying story of domination, misogyny and cruelty. It has become a central driving influence behind many radical feminists like Mary Daly, Andrea Dworkins, Carolyn Merchant and Robin Morgan. Representation of contemporary Witch identity via the drawing of historical and socio-cultural links with the Witch crazes of early modern Europe have become central defining characteristics of much of the eco-

feminist Wiccan movement through the work of writers and activists like Starhawk, Laurie Cabot, Naomi Goldenberg and Zsusanna Budapest (Purkiss, 1996, p. 9). The Witch identity in these narratives is invariably contained in the story of suffering and persecution of the innocent, pure, uncorrupted and natural feminine by the evils and corrupting influence of modernity/patriarchy seeking to objectify nature and, through natural association, the feminine. This representation of the 'burning times' is heavily dependent on the work of Margaret Murray and Jules Michelet and their analysis of the early modern Witch crazes as an attempt by the Church to stamp out the remnants of a surviving pre-Christian Witch cult (Adler, 1986, p. 47; Kephart, 1970, pp. 327-8).

Whilst acknowledging the many differences of detail and emphasis in competing eco-feminist neo-Pagan interpretations of the Witch persecutions of the early modern period, there are several key points upon which most agree. These are that (1) Pagan women were the central targets of Witch persecutions perpetuated by patriarchal and Christian political structures; (2) the Witch burnings were the result of a systematic persecution of women and pre-Christian matriarchal social and religious structures by the Church, secular government, patriarchal society and early modern power structures in general; (3) there was an extremely antagonistic relationship between traditional healers and midwives and the rising male medical profession, who acted to deliberately foster antagonism and persecution against traditional healers and midwives; (4) the *Malleus Maleficarum* was central in defining the attitudes of the established political and religious authorities towards persecuting Witches.

However, this representation of what happened during the Witch crazes of early modern Europe and the Americas is, in purely empirical terms, simplistic and only partly accurate. There are many historical and empirical criticisms of this particular analysis of the Witch crazes as will be discussed below. My contention is that rather than relating specifically to issues of historical veracity, the eco-feminist representation of the 'Burning Times' is indicative of a modern mythological construction relating to contemporary American social and cultural issues. Furthermore, the issues involved in differing historical analyses are directly related to a two-part paradigm of a feminist appropriation of Romanticism combined with a particular means of interpreting history. Both of these features are defined within the context of a prioritization of symbolic impact over empirical analysis.

Europe during the early modern period was far from being an homogenous culture. Cultural attitudes towards gender, Witchcraft, magic and the Church varied immensely from culture to culture and society to society. In addition, there were immense differences between folk beliefs of illegitimate use of magic, sorcery and Witchcraft held by the rural peasantry and the beliefs of the Church hierarchy. Furthermore, there were differences between the Church's attitudes towards Witchcraft as devil worship and its approaches to heresy, local sorcerers and surviving Pagans. This is particularly evidenced by the inquisition's confusion and comparatively ambiguous approach to the Bennandanti Witches of Northern Italy and the Witch/healers of Sicily. Similarly, whilst in England, Germany and many parts of France, Spain, Scotland and Italy, Witch persecutions were generally oriented towards women, in Eastern Europe, Scandinavia, Normandy and several other parts of Europe, persecution was generally focused on male Witches. This is not to discredit the claim that early modern Europe had a patriarchal social and political structure or that

misogyny was strongly involved in Witch prosecutions, but rather that there was far more to the Witch crazes than simply the persecution of dissident women by patriarchal institutions of authority. For that matter it is worth noting that women were commonly central in making Witchcraft accusations and in making depositions supporting charges of Witchcraft (Weisner, 1993; Evans, 1988, pp. 57-74; Monter, 1997, pp. 563-95).

Witch crazes were never systematic or coherent in application. Whilst large-scale edicts against the practices of Witchcraft and the works of the devil were common enough in the Church hierarchy, their application was normally localized and derived from specific local political and cultural issues. Similarly, the specific characteristics and mythology surrounding Witches and their supposed *maleficium* varied a great deal from culture to culture and were commonly a mix of local mythology, use of illegitimate magic, malevolent creatures of local myth and folklore and of Church doctrine. This stands in sharp contrast to the mass execution and military action by the Church and state against heresy and large scale political and religious movement like the Albigensians, Bogomils and Paulicans who challenged the spiritual legitimacy of the Church's role in politics and the obtaining of wealth and threatened to undermine the power of the Papacy in the Middle Ages (Adler, 1986, pp. 49-52, Cohn, 1975, pp. 1-4, 16-7, 22, 55-8 & 229-230; Mayer, 1970, pp. 54-71).

Midwives and traditional healers were not overtly in direct competition and conflict with the Western medical profession until the modern period. Despite claims that the male medical profession was motivated to attack traditional healers and midwives in order to establish their own professional territory, there is little evidence of conflict between the fledgling male medical profession and traditional healers, herbalists and midwives until the late eighteenth century. In fact, in England, midwives were perceived to be extremely important in ascertaining the truth of Witchcraft accusations because of their intimate knowledge of the local community. Similarly there is little evidence to suggest that healers and herbalists in early modern Europe, aside from the area of midwifery and home remedies, were exclusively or even predominantly female prior to the establishment of the Western medical profession (Briggs, 1996, pp. 77-8, 217-8, 279-281; Janet & Allen, 1997, pp. 113-8; Harley, 1990, pp. 1-26; Hillary, 1993, pp. 45, 50, 88, 119, 159).

Whilst undoubtedly excessive, barbaric and unjust, the methods of Witch prosecution and persecution would not have been necessarily incongruous with judicial proceedings of the era. In today's society a confession obtained under duress is nonsensical, except as a means to assure a conviction in a corrupt judicial system. But in the early modern period the role of torture in obtaining a confession had somewhat different overtones. The role of interrogation was in many cases perceived less as a means of establishing an objective fact than as a test of will between the subject and the power of the Church or sovereign. Consequently, the judicial procedure revolved around the processes of accusation and forced confession as opposed to modern ideals of justice or truth differentiated from the will of the sovereign or Church as representative of the higher power of God. Torture, misleading questions and forced confessions were utilized extensively in a range of judicial proceedings until well into the eighteenth century. As late as the nineteenth century there was debate as to the legitimacy of forced confession and misleading depositions in the interrogation of accused persons (Briggs, 1996, pp.17-8, 32, 58, 216-7, 326; Foucault, 1977, pp. 10-22, 32-4, 38-44, 49-55; Russell, 2000, pp. 1-5).

The *Malleus Maleficarum,* often the primary source of the belief that Witch hunting was not the dominant guide for Witchcraft prosecution in Europe. Whilst popular with some extremists, the *Malleus* was far from universally accepted by the Church and political mainstream. Many considered it degrading to the piety of men. Others felt it degraded the works of female saints and nuns and many felt that it ignored much of the established lore of demonology and Witchcraft. Many clergy and inquisitors openly disdained the *Malleus* as a rabidly misogynist and paranoid text which diverted attention away from the finding of 'true Witches'. Similarly, whilst heretics and people practicing Pagan religious and cultural beliefs were often accused of fomenting the work of the devil, the secular and religious authorities commonly distinguished between these activities (Anglo, 1977, pp. 152-3; Ankarloo & Henningsen, 1990, chapter 6; Cohn, 1975, pp. 1-4, 11, 30, 34, 117-122, 225, 262; Kevin, 1997, pp. 61-83). There was a complex methodology used by the inquisition and Church authorities to determine the nature and veracity of claims of Witchcraft practices ranging from accusations that fitted into established demonological doctrine, simple *Maleficium* or evil magical practice, heretical doctrinal beliefs and Paganism. The methods used to ascertain the truth of these claims varied greatly as did the punishments assigned to each transgression. These ranged from hanging, to lashes, to burning at the stake, to short term imprisonment. Often those who were accused were comparatively leniently treated in exchange for an oath of fealty to the Church and a recanting of previously held beliefs. Others were used as examples against those who challenged Church authority (Briggs, 1996, pp. 92, 148-156, 166, 237; Ginzberg, 1983, pp. 14, 32-39; Ankarloo & Henningsen, 1990, pp. 7-16, 47, 191-215, 266-276, 431).

What these issues indicate is that whilst gender conflict and the patriarchal nature of the various early modern European societies were central to what occurred during this period, the actual empirical phenomena are far more localized and socio-culturally fragmented than is generally acknowledged. The Witch crazes occurred over a long period of time, a broadly diverse social, political and cultural expanse of territory and in separate localized areas interconnected with the social, cultural and political formations of the time. Similarly, perceptions of Witchcraft varied according to class and culture in a variety of ways manifested in differences and even conflicts between local beliefs of Witchcraft activity and learned Church doctrine. This is perhaps best demonstrated by the Catholic Church's repeated attempts to establish learned doctrine over Scandinavian, Sicilian, Portuguese and Basque Witch prosecutions, only to be foiled by a conflicting understanding of *Maleficium* among the local populace (Ankarloo & Henningsen, 1990, pp 7-16, 191-215, 266-276).

The issue of empirical veracity is an area of extreme tension for the many eco-feminists, neo-Pagans and others who support this particular perspective. Despite its many empirical difficulties, the mythology of the 'Burning Times' has come to be a powerful symbol, defining the nature of patriarchal exploitation linked to modernity and ecological destructiveness. Consequently, attempts to disprove this perspective are often met with hostility, for example Mary Daly's claim that criticism of feminist histories are equivalent to Nazi book burnings (Daly, 1979, pp. 196, 208, 217, 298, 306). Another response is typified by the statement that "The arguments as to whether our Witchcraft traditions are authentic seems to be the usual male posturing, debating the number of angels on a pinhead" (Aiden, 1972, p. 136). However, the issue of authenticity still appears to be an

area of some tension as illustrated by Starhawk, who after, rather blatantly, utilizing accounts based on the above narratives, almost apologetically includes an appendix in her text *Dreaming the Dark* which gives a far more thorough and empirically oriented historical interpretation of the 'Burning Times' including many of the ambiguities involved in this representation. These included the influence of local social and political disputes, the social impact of the growing market economy, increasing levels of class conflict, localized beliefs of *Maleficium*, the conflict between the Church and secularism and the fact that the localized persecution of women in parts of Europe during this period of history existed within the context of a larger phenomenon, the persecution of Jews, heretics, dissident intellectuals and secularists (Starhawk, 1986, Appendix 1).

This myth has become important, not because of its historical and empirical veracity, but because of its social and cultural impact on the psyche of modern Western women. In a society full of social and ethical ambiguity and having difficulty with traditional values and symbols, the myth of the patriarchal pogrom against liberated women is a story with clear unambiguous oppositions. In this narrative Good and Evil are rigidly defined in Manichean terms as competing universal and transcendent principles. Similarly, the narratives of Witch persecution are used as both a means of identifying with oppression and also a symbolic identity of modern women in a patriarchal industrial society. It is a recreation of humanist and Romantic utopian mythology; how perfect life could be, how perfect society could be if not for the mistakes of the past and the distancing from our authentic origins, created by the corrupting effects of technology and civilization.

Like other histories, the eco-feminist neo-Pagan interpretation of that portion of history referred to as the 'Burning Times', is based upon a variety of myths, ideals and political struggles. The movement's ideological and symbolic approach to the past essentially attempts to erase the issue of their own historicity in order to present eco-feminist neo-Pagans as having access to a transcendent, unmediated perspective on historical authenticity. By focusing representations on the personal narratives of individuals and representations designed to evoke a strong emotive response in individuals in a post-Enlightenment and humanist society, a sense of empathy with the past and an unambiguous sense of personal social identity and source of values can be derived from the construction of historico-cultural identity.

An important example of the mutability of representations of the past is manifested in the all too common use of the *Malleus Maleficarum* as the central representation of chronic misogyny lying behind the Witch crazes without justifying its centrality in Witch persecutions. Very rarely does one find any other early texts or actual trial records being utilized. There are many reasons for this extremely narrow focus but central to its use as the primary analysis of Witch persecutions is its ability to create a strong emotive reaction from its readers raised in an enlightenment humanist culture. It is quoted not for its accuracy in defining popular Witchcraft beliefs in the late Renaissance period but because of its striking confrontational qualities. For example, it contains repeated reference to stolen *Phalloi* and continual representation of the sexual weakness and manipulative ability of women as a source of evil and corruption. Similarly, its representations of Witchcraft stand for ideals fundamentally against traditional enlightenment humanist values, illustrated by its casual attitudes towards torture, execution and imprisonment in adherence to "evidence" based on superstition, religious values and denial of secularist logic and science in defining a

person's guilt (Robins, 1997, pp. 61-83).

The main issue here is that whilst it is important in the eco-feminist representation of the Witch burnings, the *Malleus* is not necessarily representative of beliefs relating to Witchcraft in the early modern period in a broad European context. A text like the *Malleus* is analyzed according to a criterian defined by powerful symbolism, compelling narrative and powerfully striking anecdotes rather than an empirically supported historical interpretation. History, in this case, is perceived as a personal narrative designed to illustrate contemporary social, cultural and political issues. Postmodern historical narratives are representative of a quite conscious attempt to redefine historical interpretations in terms of a mythology symbolically representing the social, cultural and political issues of the present. In this case, the issue is to represent the circumstances of patriarchal domination in Western society, social justice and environmental degradation as integrated together in opposition to modernity. Similarly, this approach attempts to justify the acceptance of the historical model of the 'Burning Times' by claiming it represents an unambiguous representation of past repression by patriarchy, modernity, Christianity and mainstream Western society.

An example of how narratives, anecdotes and symbolism have overwhelmed historicity and empirical variability in the 'Burning Times' mythology is Dianne Purkiss' analysis of Robin Morgan's poem *The Network of the Imaginary Mother*.

> *Repeat the syllables*
> *before the lesson hemorrhages through the brain:*
> *Margaret Barclay, crushed to death with stones, 1618.*
> *Peronette, seated on hot iron as torture*
> *and then buried alive, 1642.*
> *Sister Maria Renata Sanger, sub-prioress*
> *of the Premonstratension Convent of Unter-Zell,*
> *accused of being a lesbian;*
> *the document certifying her torture*
> *is inscribed with the seal of the Jesuits,*
> *and the words Ad Majorem Dei Gloriam-*
> *To the greater glory of God.*
> *What have they done to us?*
> (Morgan as cited by Daly, 1979)

According to Purkiss' analysis, the entire purpose of this poem is to insist on the reader's participation and to direct their attention to a series of names, means of death and dates. The list symbolizes untold stories, lost peoples and memories. Their death and persecution reduces their individual stories to mere names and dates in the context of personal suffering. The poem utilizes similar methods to that of memorials to war and to the Holocaust, oblivious to the fact that these memorials can afford the luxury of anecdotal method as they were designed to remind and serve as a memorial to living people who can remember the names, stories, memories and personalities attached. This is a rather strange method for representing the stories of people, long forgotten and buried under history, yet it is a central feature of the poem's symbolic impact. These people have been buried under oblivion and

forgotten, illustrating the means by which the persecution and history of women has been similarly buried in Western patriarchal society. However, the poem also relies extensively on the fact that the reader is assuredly ignorant of the personal narratives and identities of the people involved. To recognize these people as individuals with individual histories and identities in the context of the social and cultural milieu of the era troubles the central purpose and focus of the poem: that these people were the same as, and closely linked to, the women of contemporary Western society and shared a common social and cultural identity.

Paradoxically, it is her symbolic use of the memorial in illustrating her point that enables Daly to describe the events of early modern Europe as a contemporary atrocity in contemporary Western terms. This is reinforced by her line "What have they done to us". The entire poem is designed to enjoin the reader to claim collective identity with the "us" of the poem, to lead the reader to identify with long dead Witches as a symbol of modern patriarchal oppression (Purkiss, 1996, p. 12). What is particularly interesting about this poem is that it represents an attempt to draw out the narrative of the disenfranchised and disempowered individuals of history whilst simultaneously attempting to categorize and define these figures in terms of contemporary constructions of socio-political identity, cultural structure and ideology. There is a certain element of paradox in this method of defining historical narrative. These figures from the past are appropriated on the basis that they are representative of the voices of the disenfranchised and oppressed of the past that give meaning to the contemporary experience of oppression. However, the actual historical experiences of these figures are concealed behind a method of representation and categorization that perceives the legitimacy of these historical representations purely in relation to contemporary social, cultural and political issues and structures. Consequently, the actual impact of the experiences and events surrounding the deaths of these disenfranchised and oppressed individuals remains buried in the past and the light the actual experiences of these individuals could shed on contemporary experiences of oppression remains buried under layers of cultural and ideological constructions.

This particular phenomenon of appropriation and concealment is illustrated in Mary Daly's utilization of the 'Burning Times' narrative as a symbol of patriarchal oppression. In her representation of the Witch crazes she describes the narratives of only three Witches. In the only story to which she enters in any depth, that of a woman named Agnes, she describes the exact weights and measures utilized in her torture and execution but leaves out any reference to what Agnes actually said, did or even the events leading to her being caught up in that situation (Daly, 1979, pp. 181, 190, 214). As in the above memorial/poem, this silence is particularly significant as it prevents the historical context and individuality of the woman persecuted, or the socio-cultural and historical context in which it occurred from interfering with the meta-narrative extracted from its representation. By this method, the narrative is used to define issues located in modern Western society and culture. The ultimate justification of the ideological project becomes located in the suffering body of a faceless individual; a metaphor constructed to give meaning and inspiration for modern Western women. As all people have a physical body and fear persecution, torture and death, the focus on the details of pain and suffering without acknowledging the specificity of the individuals represented, creates a strong emotive and very visceral means of identifying modern women with long dead Witches from early modern Europe and America. However,

acknowledging the cultural and social individuality of the people represented or the extent to which social discursive practices mediated the circumstances surrounding these people's deaths, could shatter this illusion of government backed systemic pogroms against women.

A central feature of these representations of the past in terms of individual pain and suffering isolated from the socio-cultural structure in which it occurred and the lived experience of those individuals afflicted, is that the people are represented as glorified spectacles of pain and torment selected for their visceral impact on the reader as opposed to an attempt to create a sense of empathy and understanding with appropriated individuals and events of the past. The reduction of these individuals to voiceless, tortured bodies removes the very possibility of subjectivity for the victims who actually lived through this appropriated era of history. Instead these people become instructive spectacles of pain and torment, offering no room for the possibility of a sense of empathy or understanding of the events that occurred or the Witch as a historical figure.

The ultimate result of this method of historical appropriation is that the figure of the Witch is transformed from an individual located in the life experiences of her time and place to that of an ahistorical symbol deeply entrenched in the social, cultural and political construction of modern Western society. This raises an important issue in terms of what fantasies, contemporary issues and symbolic/cultural structures are displaced on the Witch burning narrative. It also raises questions as to the validity of the ontological status of the Witch identity as a symbol of patriarchal oppression if its role is that of a target of social and cultural projection upon a fictional historical narrative whilst relying upon the appropriated symbols of deliberately silenced personal narratives. Consequently, the fundamental issue in examining the development of the figure of the Witch in eco-feminist neo-Paganism is not so much the empirical veracity of its claimed historical origins but rather, the contemporary social, political and cultural features that were involved in its formation.

From this perspective, the image of the Witch itself is a particularly illuminating area of study. The Witch in eco-feminist neo-Pagan discourse is invariably rustic, wise, nurturing and has a close empathy with nature. Often the Witch is beautiful but is sometimes a wise old lady, is sexually liberated and is loved by her local community with the exception of patriarchal men and political patriarchal authorities. Invariably the Witch is also a source of feminine continuity having learned or inherited skills from a long line of matriarchal ancestors. The identity of the Witch represents an earthy contrast to the experience of the fragmented post-modern self. It is a symbol of continuity, it stands for a connection with nature and agrarian life, it stands for feminine nurturing and it represents a desire for a society where traditional female skills and roles in the community are highly regarded and are relied upon as much as traditional male-oriented professional skills. In essence, it represents a fantasy of feminine identity where aspirations to profession, traditional female domestic roles and feminine sexuality are blended together in a way that engenders images of power and respect in the community. It also inherently integrates the 'natural' ideal of feminine identity with nature and an agrarian existence.

Central to this representation of the Witch figure as the ideal feminine archetype is the creation of an image of a feminine *imago dei* which is inherently linked with nature, diversity and agrarian lifestyle in opposition to the objectification of nature, the exploitation of the disenfranchised and the destructiveness of capitalist modernity (Starhawk, 1989, p.

201). Similarly, Elizabeth Brooke also argues that there is an inherent association between sexuality, agrarian lifestyle, nurturing motherhood and feminine identity (Brooke, 1993, p. 9).

This representation of feminine identity is grounded in the belief that femininity, nature and inclusivity are essentially linked through the manifestation of a feminine essence in the figure of the Witch. In other words it is precisely because matriarchal-based social structures are inherently inclusive and integrated with the natural world and are geared towards a matriarchal agrarian utopia that their ontological, ideological and cultural structures are validated. Correspondingly, patriarchal identity is associated with that which is defined as oppositional to the ideals of this feminine essence. Patriarchy is therefore linked with dogmatism, technocratic society, ecological destructiveness, socially exploitative industrialism and is orientated towards a patriarchal industrialized dystopia. This is well illustrated in Starhawk's novel *The Fifth Sacred Thing* which posits a future where patriarchal society has collapsed into a Nazi-style dictatorship based on the exploitation of women and the environment while a competing matriarchal society, through a non-violent revolution, has evolved into an agrarian, spiritual utopia promoting strength through collective diversity and ecological sensitivity (Starhawk, 1994).

This particular perspective attempts to link together the disempowerment of women with images of agrarian utopia and thus join together the dual social constructs of femininity with the crisis of Western modernity in a clear, easily accessible way. However, it also presents problems relating to its insistence on the universality of the eco-feminist perspective and its denial of historicity and subjectivity (Purkiss, 1996, p. 33). The image of the Goddess herself, as a central figure in the construction of eco-feminist neo-Paganism, is a symbol that actively attempts to disassociate feminine identity from the trappings of power, progress and rationality in Western culture. Consequently it serves to make images of the feminine in the context of political and social power problematic and associated with patriarchal identity as a corrupted form of masculinity. A logical derivative of this representation of femininity, as that which is not associated with the supposed inherently masculine traits of progress, technocratic rationality and industrialism, is that cultures which also do not fit contemporary Western representations of masculinity associated with technocratic power are defined as feminine or at least non patriarchal. Ironically enough this often includes the West's own pre-history. This particular representation of Western pre-capitalist history as a matriarchal agrarian utopia bereft of the problems and corruption of modernity is utilized extensively by modern eco-feminist neo-Pagans as a representation of their own history in a pre-Christian/patriarchal society (Cabot, 1993, pp. 34-5). As Zsussana Budapest writes of pre-patriarchal society:

> Matriarchal women had no defense systems. They didn't even have swords
> although they did use wands. All they had was superior sewage systems,
> elaborate baths, beautiful wall paintings and exquisite jewelry. They were
> beauty oriented, not war obsessed, and thus were easily overrun and sacked in
> the cruelest sense of the word. (Budapest, 1989, p. 284)

This particular representation of pre-industrial society relies extensively upon the work of male nineteenth-century writers and is part of the long tradition of Romantic idealization of

medieval Witches. French Historian Jules Michelet, for example, describes Witchcraft as a religion of the peasantry who adapted the ancient fertility cult of the goddess into a protest movement against the Church and state. His image of the priestess representing the Goddess, as stated previously, was that of "A face of Medea, a beauty born of suffering, a deep tragic, feverish gaze, with a torrent of black untamable hair". This combination of objectification of the feminine in the context of a sexualization of the suffering feminine body is extensively used in the creation of the mythology of the 'Burning Times'. It is also important to note that Michelet assumes that because he is describing a fertility cult it must necessarily be associated with the feminine in terms of sexuality, mature and nurturing. This also assumes a certain degree of cultural and societal universality with regards to gender images and socio-cultural constructions of gendered identity. The basis of this representation is that the feminine, like nature and primitive culture, reified the primitive and instinctual. Consequently, women became represented as the dark shadowy projection of civilization that, in a patriarchal society, becomes associated with a concept of masculinity characterized as representing enlightenment values, rationality and the power of knowledge.

The belief in an ancient matriarch of pre-history dominated by a great mother or goddess is one shared by many nineteenth-century Romantic writers. In this regard, perhaps the most important writings are those of Rousseau in which the trappings of civilization serve to corrupt and confine the spiritual, cultural and intellectual verities of the primitive. In this context myths like that of the Romantic 'Prometheus' or Michelet's Pagan peasant religion come to represent underlying truths about the nature of human identity differentiated from the corrupting ideals of Western technocratic industrial civilization. In other words, the quasi-spiritual representation of past events according to specifically contemporary social, cultural and political issues, comes to represent ideals, beliefs and symbols fundamental to a natural essence of human identity buried under artificial layers of Western society. These buried ideals, images and representations of the past were believed to be beyond those of culture, knowledge and experience, within the discourse of Western socio-cultural formations, and represent the universal cultural and social infrastructure upon which our identity is based. Subsequently, those categorized by mainstream Western society through patriarchal and colonial social formations as lacking the refinements of progress, civilization, technology and rational objectivity, such as women and traditional societies, are also commonly caricatured as having access to the lived experience of a universal truth of human identity, uncorrupted by the artificial formative power of Western modernity. As a consequence, the images of women, traditional societies and agrarian cultures were created from the symbolic cultural and social projections of individuals in Western society.

The concept of images of femininity linked to nature dates back to the nineteenth-century. As previously stated, in its contemporary form it is strongly dependent on images and ideals of nineteenth century Romanticism that were subsequently adopted in a broad trend of feminist appropriation of Romanticism in post-sixties feminism. Whilst many Romantic writers linked femininity to nature via the opposing association of masculinity with the values of modernity, rationality and progress, many post-sixties feminist writers began to interpret the perceived natural feminine-nature association as intrinsic to the development of gender equality. This occurred through a variety of ways. Some believed that patriarchy represents a certain kind of socio-cultural structure which categorizes

women and nature as objects. Other writers sought the linkages between femininity and nature in biology through the act of birthing and the belief that women are more in touch with their bodies (and therefore the physical world) than men. In either case the result is an embracing of femininity linked with nature as a means to alleviate the inequalities and exploitation suffered by Western women (King, 1987, p.19). The eco-feminist neo-Pagan conception of the feminine is critically dependent on the ideology of the feminine link with nature and the ultimate expression of femininity being located in a mother Goddess image. The ideal is an intrinsically Romantic one, not merely through the application of images utilized by Romantic writers of the past such as Michelet or Rousseau. Central to this ideal is the precedence of 'traditional' values disassociated from the corrupting influence of Western rationality, industrialism and its corresponding association, in a technocratic patriarchal society, with masculinity.

The essential links between modern eco-feminist neo-Paganism and Romanticism are belief in the necessity to gaze inwards and into representations of the past to find forms of identity and symbols of meaning which are quintessentially perceived as natural and in opposition to the forces of modernity and industrialism. Conversely, this also involves a belief in the veracity of symbols, images and feelings over empirical experience and logic. Like much of Western Romantic literature, eco-feminist neo-Paganism is fundamentally dominated by a belief in the authenticity of beliefs and images. Quintessentially modern ideological and symbolic socio-cultural formations are reinforced by interpretations of the past which are dogmatically protected. In the post-sixties era of mass culture and commodity fetishism however, this belief in the legitimizing power of historical and cultural authenticity underwent a subtle transformation. While pre-sixties neo-Pagan movements were involved in extremely dedicated studies of folklore and mythology as a source of accurate rituals and practices, post-sixties eco-feminist neo-Paganism, along with other new-age and neo-Pagan subcultures, became focused upon the veracity of popular images which had a powerful impact on mass culture, representing fundamental psychic truths beyond the dictates of empirical accuracy.

The ambiguity of the relationship between eco-feminist neo-Paganism as a protest sub-culture and mainstream American capitalist society is perhaps best illustrated by Starhawk's call for Paganism to aid a return to 'traditional' American values for modern American society (Starhawk, 1987, p. 315). Similarly, Laurie Cabot, despite her promotion of Paganism as a source of world peace and her claims that matriarchal social structures are intrinsically nonviolent and lack the political and military means to instigate warfare, claims that an American Pagan matriarchy could utilize magic to aid the defeat of US enemies and the defense of U.S soil (Cabot, 1993, p. 293). Furthermore, Laurie Cabot also strongly promotes the idea of magic and traditional medicine being taught and treated as a science despite her previous claim of scientific rationality being inherently linked with patriarchal epistemological structures and a tradition of dominating nature (Cabot, 1993, pp. 149-151).

These ambiguities indicate that there is much more going on within the eco-feminist neo-Pagan subculture than simply a protest against Western modernity, capitalism or patriarchal power structures. Many of the values extolled by eco-feminist neo-Pagans are based in enlightenment rationality and humanism, and many of the symbols of femininity and patriarchal persecution are also derived from sources located in Western traditions of

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patriarchy and modernity. Starhawk's definitive patriarchal enemy in her novel *The Fifth Sacred Thing* is not defined as exploitative capitalism, theocracy, commodification of social formations or even enlightenment rationality, but an anti-capitalist military dictatorship, America's long-held traditional enemy. This heavy reliance on traditional Enlightenment and American propagandistic ideals, values and symbols demonstrate that, like Western Romantic traditions, eco-feminist neo-Paganism consists of more than just latent traditions of femininity or anti-patriarchal/modernist protests, but is instead a curious offshoot of critical modernism.

The central feature of the mythology of the 'Burning Times' is that it is a contemporary expression of the romanticist episteme in Western culture, finding authenticity in its ideological opposition to enlightenment modernism, Christianity and patriarchy. Ultimately this is manifested through the construction of a Witch/Pagan heritage and history through appropriation of symbols deemed inimical to enlightenment modernism and symbolically representing the struggles of contemporary Western women via a holocaust mythology of the Witch Trials. The consequence of this is ultimately the belief that the past needs to be constructed in a particular format because that map applies to the present and, more importantly, is based in the underlying belief that all history is constructed according to this paradigm. In other words history is the product of contemporary politics, symbolism and aesthetics as opposed to being purely an empirically verifiable study of an actual past. There are difficulties with this perspective, most notably in that it denies historical and personal specificity, and ironically that it rather cynically removes the unique and personal nature of the suffering of those in the past and reconstructs them as objects for political gain and aesthetic appeal. By reducing the experiences and record of individuals who have suffered in past as aesthetic objects and icons of contemporary suffering the personal histories and experiences of these peoples is suppressed and silenced. Denied specificity and ambiguity, the potential of empathy for those who have suffered and died in the past can potentially be significantly diminished and thus the impact of an understanding of these events on the present can also be obscured.

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5 Cultural Identity & Reviews of the Performing Arts – From German Theatre to Cross-Cultural Performances

Ulrike Garde

When it comes to determining national cultural identity, Australians attribute great importance to the role of the performing arts in helping them to "define what it means to be an Australian". This is not only the outcome of the Nugent report, which resulted from a government inquiry into the sustainability of Australia's thirty-one major subsidized performing arts companies (Nugent, 1999) but also of other sources, such as the Saatchi & Saatchi report, entitled *Australians and the Arts: What Do the Arts Mean to Australians*. According to the latter, "75 per cent [of Australians interviewed] say the arts help them define and express their cultural identity" (Saatchi & Saatchi, 2000).

However, these surveys lack any detail as to *how* the performing arts assist Australians in creating a national cultural identity. For instance, the Nugent report under section 2.1.3. merely states that "the presentation of distinctively Australian works and productions is important because it helps Australians define their national identity and [because] it helps build a distinctively Australian image abroad". Thus it should be assumed that those interviewed attach a special significance to the theatre's traditional role of mirroring society (Fischer-Lichte, 1990, pp. 3-9), as displayed in an early review by Bruce Grant of Ray Lawler's seminal drama *The Summer of the Seventeenth Doll*, stating "[The Australian playwright] is saying that their [Australians'] lives are fascinating, that everything they do is significant. He is holding up the mirror, and they are seeing themselves for the first time" (Radic, 1991, p. 12).

This article looks beyond this traditional role attributed to the performing arts, arguing that the function of creating cultural identities can be extended to reviews of performances for daily newspapers and specialist journals. Applying this area of investigation to intercultural and cross-cultural performances in an Australian and German context, the analysis will examine how critics of the performing arts have expressed their relationship with the Other culture(s) presented on stage and what role cultural stereotypes have played in this context. Moreover, how have these relationships with the Other culture(s) led to a definition of what these critics perceive as their own culture?

In the first part of this essay, the analysis will refer to Australian interpretations of German theories of theatre, to Australian productions of German drama and to performances of German actors in Australia in the last forty years in order to establish what role German theatre culture has played in creating or confirming cultural identities for the Australian theatre scene. For the sake of simplicity, the 'German' elements will be referred to as 'German theatre culture' albeit with the awareness that no such homogenous culture exists. In the second part of the essay, these findings will be applied to recent cross-cultural performances, thus moving the analysis beyond performances associated with a single culture and beyond *Sprechtheater*, theatre of the word. Choosing performances which have been shown in Australia and in German-speaking countries will allow both countries involved in the intercultural dialogue to be considered.

Culture(s), in this context, are defined as "world(s) of meanings" which presuppose a minimal semiotic coherence, that is, the ability to share a common code (Sewell, 1999). Consequently, engaging in cultural practice requires individuals, as members of various communities, to be able to use their respective semiotic codes. This practice, in turn, shapes the community. Applying this to reviews of the performing arts, mainly taken from the daily press and thus written for the general public, the case studies will show that being able to use and vary the code not only gives critics the feeling of belonging to the cultural community whose code they share, but this ability also provides them with an instrument for creating, modifying and reinforcing a cultural identity in their reviews. Thus, cultural identities are created in the communicative process of reacting towards Other cultures and in sharing these cultural identities with potential readers; the way in which a review is composed anticipates, and thus situates, a certain Self as writer and reader. In this respect, the realization that "every explicit characterization of another nation as foreign is always also an implicit (often unconscious) characterization of one's own nation" (Nünning, 1999, p. 326) can be applied to reviews of the performing arts.

The communicative process underlying these reviews reflects to some extent the dialogues which have preceded the productions involving elements of an Other or several Other theatre cultures; yet, at the same time, each review constitutes an individual response to a production which, in itself, represents the sum of a number of reactions towards inter- and cross-cultural dialogue by those people involved in the production reviewed. During the entire process, cultural identities are created and re-created in a hermeneutic circle.

This intention of defining a cultural identity is clearly present in Robert Ward's review of *Nathan der Weise* by Die Brücke with Peter Lühr in the lead. When reviewing the Adelaide production in 1966, Ward wrote:

> It is German acting. […] Overall, it is acting that is clear in delivery, measured in its responses, and meaningful in its moves. These qualities are immediately recognisable, and show what would be a German theatrical characteristic: they are intellectual in their approach to the character, it is all in the head. (Ward, 1966)

It is worthwhile noting that Ward revealed his awareness of creating a cultural identity for the German theatre culture by inserting the phrase "what would be a German theatrical characteristic".

Ward defined the Other culture in national terms which allowed him to reinforce his characterisation of German acting style by referring to a common stereotype of German theatre culture, and even German literature in general, when associating it with intellectualism. As I have argued elsewhere (Garde, in print), the stereotypical belief that German theatre culture is intellectual has an ongoing tradition in Australian theatre criticism. On the one hand, critics have reproached German theatre culture for being intellectual in the sense of being 'heavy-handed', that is, lacking a certain lightness or sense of humour. On the other hand, critics have claimed that the alleged intellectualism of the German theatre culture has resulted in a lack of audience involvement. As the analysis will show, this corresponds to a tendency to define Australian theatre culture *ex negativo*, that is, characterized by being light, easy-going, entertaining, involving and down-to-earth.

Ultimately, such stereotypes fulfil the function of assisting critics and their readers in participating in cultural practice because they simplify the cultural code by reinforcing pre-existing, generalized images of a culture, thus providing identifiable chunks which can be readily used in communication. Consisting of a "small fixed bundle of characteristics" (Nünning, 1999, p. 325), they constitute ready-made points of reference which reappear in the communication about an 'Other' culture, thus assisting in confirming and maintaining the shared code amongst the members of a cultural community. They thus represent 'landmarks' in an ongoing line of conversation which allow for a quick definition of the user's own identity with reference to these stereotypes.

The notion of intellectualism illustrates how critics have used a stereotype of German theatre culture to create cultural identities for the Australian theatre scene using the rhetorical figures of *locus a simili* and *locus a contrario*. In 1979, for instance, Australian director and academic Wal Cherry commented on a German playwright perceived to personify the German theatre culture's lack of humour, Bertolt Brecht (Garde, 2001). However, Cherry did not reinforce the common view that Brecht's work for the theatre lacked humour, stating instead that

> The poor man [Brecht] is a walking generalisation. […] This is not to say that there have not been excellent productions of Brecht in Australia. It is to say that Brecht has not been as well served as he might have given that the Australian theatre is notorious, so I am told, for characteristics which would seem of enormous advantage: 1. A sense of humour coupled with sardonic incredulity […]. (Cherry, 1979)

Cherry used a *locus a simili* for the perceived resemblance in the sense of humour, shared by Brecht and what he considered to be the Australian theatre, to define his own, that is the Australian theatre culture. At the same time, his description of this cultural community became a point of reference for marking out his own place with regards to this community. In this respect, it is crucial that Cherry wrote about Australian theatre in the third person singular instead of employing the inclusive first person plural. Similarly, the insertion "so I am told" can be interpreted as an ironic allusion to his expertise regarding Brecht and his work for the theatre; after all, Cherry directed the first Australian professional production of a play by Brecht in 1959 and had been involved in directing and teaching Brecht's work ever since. This aside might also express Cherry's personal dissatisfaction with the Australian theatre scene at the time. After all, Cherry left Australia for the United States in the year in which he wrote his article.

In short, Cherry's article on Brecht and Brechtian humor did not only attempt to assess the relationship between an Australian cultural community and a German playwright but it also served a personal purpose when it came to defining a cultural identity in national terms. In this process, it did not seem necessary to refer explicitly to the stereotype of German intellectualism in the sense of lack of humour because Cherry could presume a tacit agreement regarding this stereotype.

Against this background, it is no coincidence that Roger Pulvers, a playwright of American origin who lived in Australia at the time, also made use of a *locus a simili* with reference to Brecht's sense of humour. Like Cherry, Pulvers created an Australian national

identity based on a shared sense of humour with the difference, though, that he did consider himself part of that community. Therefore he defined the first person plural as "we, in Australia," and dissociated himself from his national origin, America, and its people through a *locus a contrario*. He noted

> It may sound funny, but I think we, in Australia, instinctively, if at times
> unknowingly, understand Brecht. Our sense of humour is based on irreverence.
> In addition, our view of ourselves is detached: we don't take ourselves as
> seriously, for instance, as Americans do. (Pulvers, 1979)

In this context, it is not important whether and how it could be possible to understand Brecht "instinctively" and "unknowingly", but it is essential that both Cherry and Pulvers used similar means to define a cultural identity in national terms while expressing their feeling of (not)-belonging to this cultural community.

A reference to intellectualism is also present in a review by Paul McGillick from 1985. He used a *locus a contrario* to distance himself from Philip Keir's production of *Torquato Tasso* for the Sydney Theatre Company and commented:

> The non-liking of German literature by English-speaking people […]. boils
> down to two conflicting attitudes: the Germans' speculative interest and the
> English distrust of ideas. Things have not changed, especially in Australia. We
> don't like too many ideas cluttering up the action. (McGillick, 1985)

Thus McGillick aligned himself with a traditional Australian expectation which has previously been strongly associated with 'Australian naturalism', that is that a good theatre production should contain a linear, straightforward storyline, not disturb the direct contact between the subject matter and the spectator and attempt to create the illusion of real life on stage. While individual critics' expectations varied as to specifics there was general agreement that this style should enable audiences to feel "compassion" for a play's characters (McCallum, 1981). Obviously, a performance in which "too many ideas [clutter] up the action" did not fulfil these requirements. At the same time, such a performance could be criticized for lacking lightness, which would relate to one of the characteristics ascribed to intellectualism.

While Pulvers and Cherry were stressing what, according to them, Brecht and Australians had in common, McGillick set out to contrast German and Australian theatre aesthetics. He used his description of German theatre aesthetics to develop the taste of Australian audiences *ex negativo*. In order to increase the credibility of his hypothesis, he presupposed an alliance between Australian and English tastes regarding the "'non-liking' of German literature by English-speaking people", based on an article by D. J. Enright from 1964 (Enright, 1964), and presented it as having a long tradition going back to German Idealism.

In McGillick's description, the conflicting tastes were presented as given characteristics. Ethnicity has become the decisive criterion for the development of intellectual and aesthetic preferences. By quoting Enright's "English attitudes of non-liking towards German literature" in a modified form as "the 'non-liking' of German literature by

English-speaking people" the Australian critic assumed that English tastes could be readily transferred to Australian aesthetic preferences. This is an attitude that, in retrospect, would be associated with the much discussed "cultural cringe" (Phillips, 1958; Hume, 1993; Davis, 1997; Melbourne Writers' Festival, 2000) and which many of McGillick's colleagues would have considered out-dated at the time.

However, McGillick's article is characteristic of the process of defining a cultural identity for Australian theatre in so far as most critics used a *locus a contrario*. For instance, critics distanced themselves from German-speaking theatre culture with expressions such as "this trail-blazing German's [Brecht's] notions, quirks and ambitions" (Skipper, 1959) and "turgidly German à la *Wozzeck*" (Constantino, 1974).

So far, when critics compared what they perceived as the German and Australian theatre cultures, the use of *locus a simili* and *locus a contrario* enabled them to define both their own and the Other culture in national or ethnic terms. However, most critics neither showed an awareness of the fact that, through their description of the Other, they were creating and re-creating a cultural identity for themselves, nor did they express any doubt regarding nationality and ethnicity as possible criteria for determining cultural identity.

When looking at the current conditions for creating cultural identities through intercultural encounters, there are important changes in at least two respects: Firstly, there is the notion of globalisation, that is, the perception that the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements are receding and the social process of people becoming increasingly aware that they are receding (Wiseman,1998, p, 14; Marshall, 1998, p. 258; Giddens, 1999). At least theoretically, globalisation challenges traditional concepts of cultural identity linked to nationality, including in the performing arts (Fensham, 2001, pp. 3-8)

Secondly, an increasing number of performances consist of cross-cultural collaborations and can thus no longer be attributed to a single national or ethnic cultural community. This raises a number of questions: How do the changed conditions of reception affect the patterns of defining cultural identities and the make-up of cultural communities? Under the changed conditions of reception, what constitutes the Other that allows for a definition of the 'Own' culture? What are the repercussions for the stereotypes associated with a national culture such as the German theatre culture?

Presuming that critics react to the changed conditions of reception in dealing with Other cultures, there are two likely reactions. One would be to attribute an increasing importance to the local elements of theatre culture, the Other would be a strong focus on elements that could link cultural communities across the globe.

The following analysis will concentrate on two case studies which reflect a range of reactions towards the changed conditions of reception. These are *Total Masala Slammer* (premiere in 2000), a genre-bending multimedia production which involved dancers and performers from America, Europe and India, and the Australian-Indonesian production *The Theft of Sita* (premiere in 2001), both performed in a number of countries, including in Australia and German-speaking countries, over the past three years. The analysis of individual reviews shows that critics' reactions depended to a large degree on how successful they judged a cross-cultural collaboration to be.

In the case of *The Theft of Sita*, most critics characterised the production as having effectively combined the various cultural elements to achieve a unified whole. To begin

with, the 2001 program for the Sydney Opera House described the production's various elements in the following way:

> *The Theft of Sita* is an extraordinary Australian-Indonesian artistic collaboration. The work combines mythical stories and modern environmental warnings, traditional [Indonesian] art forms and high-tech computer animation, gamelan music and improvised western jazz. (Program notes, 2001)

As far as the participating artists' nationalities are concerned, the program for the Hebbel Theater in Berlin pointed out that Australian-British director Nigel Jamieson assembled a number of performers "ranging from the superb Balinese shadow puppet master I Made Sidia, to Paul Grabowsky, director of the Australian Art Orchestra, and acclaimed British designer Julian Crouch" (Program notes, 2002). It is also important that *Sita* was based "loosely […] on an ancient Indian story from the Ramayana epic […]", which the program for the Sydney Opera House characterised as "the basis for a contemporary and universal parable about the theft of natural resources by greedy capitalists" (Program notes, Sydney, 2001). This combination of an "archetypal story of world literature" (CHB, 2002) and its successful adaptation for contemporary audiences led to the general impression that *Sita* clearly had a universal character, with critics using a range of labels for expressing *Sita's* universal character, such as "Öko-Märchen" (*Neue Osnabrücker Zeitung*, 2000), "ecological fairy tale", "Theater- und Weltenmär"(Busz, 2002), "theatre- and world- fairy tale". Additionally, the perception that music is an art form which might facilitate international contacts because it is not language-based contributed to the view that *Sita* was an ideal combination of "cross-culture and musical world theatre" (Pfister, 2002). In reality, however, it took the Indonesian and Australian musicians some time "to find a range where their instruments could unite" and to combine the respective sound characteristics (Aria, 2001; Grabowsky, 2002).

Here, 'world theatre' or 'world literature' is not interpreted in Goethe's sense of an intercultural exchange in which different nations and – one could add – different cultural communities get to know each other and subsequently aim for mutual respect and tolerance (Goethe, 1967, pp. 361-364). Instead of this co-existence of differences, critics emphasized a kind of cultural melting pot; world literature is interpreted as a work of art which, through its universal character, transcends the limits of a particular situation, place and time and thus becomes accessible to everybody. To a certain extent, their reactions reflect early idealistic expectations which had arisen from a euphoric interpretation of globalisation as an increase of possibilities in global communication. For some, this might entail that a successful cross-cultural production is considered as realising the utopia of a world theatre, which, according to Eva Behrendt, believes in a "universal theatre code – a kind of esperanto, in terms of gestures and atmosphere, in the service of international understanding" (Behrendt, 2002, p. 137).

This appears to have repercussions for the definition of cultural identity as discussed above because the question arises as to whether and how this concept of a universal culture still allows for a clearly detectable Other. Yet the reviews of *Sita* show that, despite the parable's universal character, the notion of the Other is not entirely dismissed. Consciously or unconsciously, critics differentiate between content and form. Whilst attributing to the

content a universal character, they allocate the Other to the realm of form. In the context of form and style, the Other is referred to as the unfamiliar which cannot be understood directly and effortlessly. Thus Daniele Muscionico from *Neue Züricher Zeitung* is of the opinion that "it is probably the self-irony which allows Western spectators access to the meaning of this educative, symbol-heavy and erotically playful evening" (Muscionico, 2002). This means that Western cultural communities can access the unfamiliar elements of the Australian-Indonesian production by concentrating on one of the characteristics that appears to be familiar, that is the use of irony. In other words, the common strategy of having recourse to the own and its literary traditions allows for an encounter and possible understanding of the unfamiliar. Yet, the critics do not reflect on this process of trying to come to terms with the production so that, without the above analysis, their assessment of *Sita* as being both simultaneously universal and unfamiliar appears paradoxical. This apparent paradox seems to be underlying a number of reviews which make a great effort to compare the production to something familiar in their own culture.

Accordingly, Muscionico alluded to Goethe's *Westöstlicher Divan*, albeit only as a pun, and the critic of the Berlin *Tagesspiegel* even made a comparison with a well-known local artist from the past, Brecht, noting:

> It is amazing how [the production] succeeds in combining the ritualistic power
> of an ancient art form [puppetry] with the language and techniques of today in
> such an effortless way – as if it was a democratic piece of propaganda by
> Brecht with dialogues by Disney [...]. (Muscionico, 2002)

The critic admired a fusion of the old and the new, the unfamiliar and the familiar which bestowed on the production a universal character. This combination of the local and the universal in this admiration is indicative of a general reaction towards globalisation that comprises the contradictory processes of homogenisation and differentiation.

Yet, the actual patterns and means of creating cultural identities have not been affected by globalisation. By approving of a world literature, critics use a *locus a simili* which makes the own and the Other part of a higher order. In short, the main influence of globalisation on the reception of *Sita* consists of the critics' enthusiasm in embracing the idea of a universal literature.

These traditional patterns of reactions contrast sharply with the way in which critics received Michael Laub's *Total Masala Slammer. Heartbreak No 5* (*TMS*). This production not only brought together dancers and performers from America, Europe and India but also "very dissimilar ingredients: classical Indian dance and modern ballet, Goethe's *The Sorrows of Young Werther* and set pieces from soaps and biographical texts, tabla rhythms and the sound of drum 'n' bass" (Kühl, 2002). It did so without fusing these elements to a new unified whole, applying instead Laub's "Remote Control Production's" principle of zapping between genres and cultures.

Critics referred in their reviews to two key areas, to postmodern form and to political correctness. As far as the form is concerned, *TMS* "was pretty much critically slammed in Melbourne" (Rothfield, 2002) whilst reactions in the German-speaking press towards the channel-flicking between dance, theatre, video-projection, art installations and

music were mixed. For the process of creating cultural identities it is of great importance that the dismissal of the performance's style takes the role of the Other in these reviews. The consequence is a greater degree of abstraction when it comes to defining the own cultural identity *ex negativo*. This is illustrated by Helen Thomson's comment, expressed in *The Age*, that "Perhaps this show simply represents the real problem with the postmodern" (Thomson, 2002). Thomson's opinion, later expanded into "relativism" and a "lack of central speaking or viewing position", represents a personal and, at the same time, highly abstract expression of taste. She seems to consider the production's form as representative of the postmodern as such. However, as her review does not refer directly to Australian aesthetics, it does not lead the reader to create a cultural community through a *locus a contrario*.

Yet, when Thomson proceeded to criticise *TMS* for "lack of real humour" and "a [lack of] a crucial lightness of touch", this is reminiscent of the binary of 'lightness' and intellectualism in Australian theatre and theatre reviewing, as displayed for instance in the following entry in the *Companion to Theatre in Australia*, entitled "European influences [on Australian theatre]": "There remains a strong streak of anti-intellectualism in the Australian theatre, both with the audiences and the profession" (Parsons, Chance, 1995, p. 216). In Thomson's review, however, the stereotypes no longer refer to German theatre culture but it is implied that they constitute the opposite of what Australian theatre culture has to offer. Consequently, stereotypes of the Australian theatre scene are reinforced without a precise reference to another national or ethnic theatre culture.

Similarly, when Lee Christofis from *The Australian* described what he calls TMS'*s* "contemporary dance material" as "the European avant-garde", it is not clear whether his label for the Other has moved from national boundaries to continental ones because Christofis was thinking in global rather than local terms, as far as recent developments in contemporary dance are concerned, or simply because Laub has lived and worked in so many European countries that it is difficult to attribute a specific national identity to him. Christofis subsumed the American dancers under their colleagues' and their director's geographic origins.

Clearly untouched by changes related to globalisation is the context in which the critic referred to the "European avant-garde". When commenting on audiences' strong interest in the performance he asked: "One more case of cultural cringe in favour of the European avant-garde?" (Christofis, 2002). Ironically, Christofis's criticism of a behaviour which he considered as motivated by 'cultural cringe' contributed to keeping this stereotype of Australian cultural history alive; as shown repeatedly in this article and elsewhere (Garde, 2000), it is through communication that cultural identities are created and re-created.

Overall, these Australian reviews criticise what Christofis described as "unhinged soap opera, a pastiche of multiple narratives, unrelated dances and text that rarely bounce off each other in convincingly dynamic ways". Christiane Kühl's programme notes for the Melbourne Festival stressed, though, that it was not a central speaking or viewing point that Laub was looking for. She quoted Laub when reporting his reaction after he had watched a number of Bollywood movies in Sri Lanka: "I watched those shifting levels […], the leaps from genre to genre, and suddenly I thought: hang on, that's the way I work, too" (Kühl, 2002). Gerald Siegmund from the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* is a critic who could

relate to Laub's technique and who appreciated his "endeavour to implement the structural principles of a non-theatrical genre on stage"; he considered *TMS* a "successful attempt to produce a Bollywood movie for the stage" and he was in favour of Laub's "method of creating collages" which do not end up being entirely smooth. The critic relished the fact that Laub "works on several levels at the same time, which he interlinks elaborately, without the spectator being able to immediately recognise the correlations" (Siegmund, 2001). Siegmund was able to value Laub's work because the understanding of his technique provided him with a frame for interpreting the production. In Australia, his colleague Lucinda Strahan from the *ABC* approached Laub's work in a similar way (Strahan, 2002).

This diverse range of reactions by critics was also acknowledged by Magdalena Schwaegermann, TMS'*s* executive producer from the Hebbel Theater in Berlin. Having witnessed reactions in a number of countries, she came to the conclusion that theatre critics are clearly challenged by the task of interpreting new work in the performing arts that is characterised by hybridity, the use of multimedia and cross-cultural elements. According to Schwaegermann, a debate and a discourse about the future training of journalists [in the performing arts] is needed. She asks herself: "How can we teach [future critics] basic principles which allow [them] to describe unfamiliar languages, cultures [and] aesthetic qualities in order to provide them with the possible tools for critical assessment?"(Schwaegermann, 2002).

However, the current training and working conditions of critics in Australia and German-speaking countries are very diverse (Garde, 2000, pp. 244-7). These different conditions for viewing and judging a work such as *TMS* are further increased by individual critics' personal tastes and past experiences. Thus it comes as no surprise that critics were divided in assessing TMS's form and content, and political correctness in particular.

For Siegmund, though, the question of political correctness did not arise; he considered the cross-cultural collaboration as successful because the performance was "characterised by mutual curiosity and respect towards the unfamiliarity of the other [as well as by] the fun which the dancers, performers and the tabla player Naku Mishra had together" which also spread to the audience who acknowledged it with a storm of applause. He appreciated the production's form as representing a kind of "utopia". Similarly, Lucinda Strahan from the *ABC* commented:

> The quick, channel-flicking, info-byte form that this production is served up in, is exactly the way that these hybrid identities, Indian-Germans or Vietnamese-Australians or any other east-meets-west combination are formed in contemporary Western countries. […] *Total Masala Slammer* is part of the new face of multiculturalism. (Strahan, 2002)

While Strahan does not explain further her concept of multiculturalism, she appreciated Laub's work because it represented structural changes in the performing arts which, in turn, mirrored structural changes in society. However, these positive comments were not shared by many other critics. Whilst Siegmund's colleague from the *FAZ* commented favourably on the cross-cultural collaboration (Hüster 2001), the majority of the Australian journalists criticised Laub heavily for not being "hampered by any concern for political correctness", for example Hillary Crampton in *The Age* (Crampton, 2002).

For Crampton, political correctness represented an ethical code of behaviour. This positive use of the concept was characteristic of the majority of Australian responses towards *TMS*. However, it did not reflect the debate present in other areas of the Australian arts, such as discussions caused by David Williamson's *Dead White Males*, Australian publications such as those by Peter Colman (Colman, 1996) and the wider debate in other English-speaking publications (Goldsmith, 1996; Berger, 1995; Wilson, 1995). As far as the reviews of *TMS* are concerned, several critics used the "conformity to current beliefs about correctness in language and behaviour" (*The Macquarie Concise Dictionary*) and applied it to the representation of a cultural community on stage without question. Thus Lee Christofis agreed with Crampton's remark by commenting:

> Also unclear is the purpose of the laid-back style employed by Caucasians in contrast to the constant pursuit of form and technique the subcontinental dance and music suggest. Are we to be simply entertained by these so-called exotic, once-colonised artists or have they turned the tables on the West? (Christofis, 2002)

Hence, these critics judged a so-called postmodern production which stressed the element of chance – according to Laub's "guiding principle: depth comes about purely through chance" (Kühl, 2002) – largely in social, ideological and political terms. Their assessment of political correctness depended to a great extent on how they interpreted the presentation and role of the Kathak dances.

As Siegmund considered them as being on equal terms with the other cultural elements in the collage that constitutes *TMS*, he did not question the production on ethical grounds. However, his colleague Franz Anton Cramer from *Theater heute* considered the "random combination of postmodern cynicism of form and of traditional Indian forms" as "frivolous" because, in India, the Kathak dances "are perfectly alive and taken seriously", and concluded: "The entire project is covered by a layer of colonial arrogance" (Cramer, 2001). Although he acknowledged that standards of postmodern performance culture have been homogenised through globalisation, he argued that a form that is still considered authentic in its country of origin, that is the Kathak in India, should not be presented in its 'pure' form in a context that refers to most other cultures in an ironic way, in particular if the relationship between the two countries can be expressed in colonial terms.

Disregarding the appropriateness of any of the above reviews, it is crucial to note that political correctness has become a criterion for assessing the qualities of a production. More importantly, with regard to (post-) colonialism, it has become a new way of creating cultural identity. In this context, most critics neither challenged political correctness as a valid criterion for assessing a production, nor did they show an awareness of the fact that they ultimately created cultural identities this way. By contrast, Cramer gave a clear indication of his awareness in this respect. He also showed that a particular aspect of political correctness, that is ethnic correctness, is a criterion for assessing a production that is frowned upon in certain German circles, such as those associated with arts festivals. He anticipated their criticism by writing: "For heaven's sake! Don't you dare mention ethnic correctness – this is the response given to the niggling critic from the festival crowds".

It can be added that by criticising the production on the grounds of political or ethnic correctness, Cramer makes himself part of those Western critics who speak on behalf of former colonised countries. Their critics, however, do not get the opportunity to see productions such as *TMS* and *Sita* in their home country, let alone review them or enter into the critical discourse about them. In this context, even the present article could perhaps be considered as part of a discourse that is influenced by neo-colonialism. In *AI magazine*, Barbara Aria addressed the question "of the extent to which it is possible to create artistic products for First World consumption by tapping Third World traditions without being guilty of the very exploitation that *Sita* illustrates" (Aria, 2001).

Yet, this is not the main concern of this article. In the context of creating cultural identity it is important that, for those critics, political correctness has become a new term of reference for creating a cultural community that is no longer defined in national terms. Both in Australia and Germany, those who dismiss a performance on the grounds of political correctness can consider themselves part of an international cultural community whose common code is based on an internationally established ethical code of behaviour. In the context of the performing arts, this largely unconscious use of political correctness confirms the general perception that the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements such as cultural identity have receded through globalisation. Consequently, it is political correctness rather than universal literature that has brought about a change in the creation of cultural identities under the influence of globalisation.

Political correctness as a new way of establishing an international cultural community illustrates the importance of a shared code for a cultural community, referred to earlier in this article. On the other hand, the reviews under consideration have demonstrated how the mechanisms of creating cultural communities and identities have not changed under the growing influence of globalisation. Apart from the description of the Other having moved beyond national boundaries, the principles of creating cultural identities *a simili* and *a contrario* have not changed. It has also been shown that stereotypes of the Own and the Other continue to play an important role in this process.

In short, critics might have replaced 'It is German acting' by 'It is the European avant-garde', but the utopia of a universal theatre has not been realised as yet; interestingly enough, some might consider the world as growing together in terms of ethical codes of behaviour and value systems rather than in terms of aesthetics.

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<u>Reviews</u>

***The Empire Builders*, Bohemian Productions,**
Street Theatre Studio, Canberra, November 5-15 2003,
Directed by Nick Johnson and Kim Gorter
Original script by Boris Vian (*Les Bâtisseurs d'empire ou Le Schmürz*)

      Serendipity is the art of making chance discoveries; that is to say that it is a word that contains an inherent contradiction. Boris Vian's play is itself just such a paradox awaiting dramatization. And whilst the script is there, its words – the life blood of this play that is, again paradoxically, about the insufficiency (and perhaps not the emptiness) of words – written in black and white, it takes actors and direction to allow the spectator to see inside this seductive and gut-wrenching void. Johnson and Gorter provide the vision through which our eyes open on to all the beauty and horror of *The Empire Builders*. The protagonist (Stuart Roberts) – that is to say, the actor portraying the Father who acts out the most energetic inaction – comes most alive when spitting out his tirades on "synthesis" and "analysis", ensuring that the potential self-referentiality of this play is successfully brought home to the audience.

      For the play is a synthesis. The seemingly mandatory comparisons to Beckett and Ionesco that fill the streets of theatres emptying their audiences after productions of Pinter, Adamov and, of course, Vian, here find an appropriate vehicle: *The Empire Builders* does lie somewhere between Beckett's stark fatalism and the (ephemerally) cathartic laughter of Ionesco. And yet Bohemian Productions do not allow Vian's play to falter between two extremes, lost between thesis and antithesis: the words that proliferate in two-dimensional free fall in Ionesco, here multiply, challenging us to keep up. But we do. Words cannot quite attach to signifieds; they cannot quite make everything all right; they do, however, "make sense". The horror of this play does not lie in the physical violence administered to the bandaged Schmürz (the ever-present scapegoat-cum-safety-valve that must have reminded this contemporary Australian film-going audience of an oversized and under-seen Gollum) but in the fact that *we* understand, *we* feel this pain.

      Synthesis, too, of reality, of Man's facticity, our own particular present, our point in history and theatricality, post-modernism, intertextuality, absence of history. Johnson is right to point out that this is "Vian's most existential play"; it synthesises a reading of Existentialism (the hopelessness of Man's actions in a contingent universe, the necessity notwithstanding of acting and the bad faith that ineluctably smothers Man's occasional heroism) and a rejection of Existentialism: Stuart Roberts, squatting in the hell that is the encroaching presence/absence of a noise (of Others) looks into the mirror that shows him the being for-others, this collective past that has become his sole identity in the here and now. This mirror is thus symbolic; it is also, however, *the* mirror, the one that is starkly absent from the one-room hell of Jean-Paul Sartre's *Huis Clos* (1944). It is also reminiscent of *the* looking-glass through which Alice steps… into *The Empire Builders*. Zenobia dressed as Alice. Serendipity?

      Synthesis, too, not only of all the Absurdists (for it is a wilfully composite play) but of the Absurdists with a more self-consciously political Theatre, that of Brecht, for example,

which Kenneth Tynan held aloft as a counterpoint to Ionesco throughout the London Controversy. For there is a clear political message to be inferred. And once again, it is certainly to be inferred. Zenobia (played by Ellie Haas, who did wonderfully well to bring both the maturity and youthfulness that this role demands) points out that we can but approach this play from the backdrop of our own preconceptions; all that we see and hear is understood from a position of *parti pris*. Whatever our stance, we are all partial. Those who read a critique of the Algerian war in the French text will surely feel a post-September-11 nihilism in this production. This, you may say, is only inferred inasmuch as it is always already implied by the text. And so it is, but always alongside its own negation.

Synthesis. Johnson and Gorter's production simultaneously exposes the vanity of America's Global Democratic Revolution - the feeble grasp held by a soldier who cannot see his enemy for the human being that he is – and the reminder that this political reading must fade to grey against the backdrop of an eternal hopelessness. "Things are not what they once were" – true. "Things won't be the same again after September 11" – true. And yet in the play, it is not the parents who hark back to the good old days; rather it is their daughter, who was not there to be able to remember them. Perversely again, it is their daughter, who is the only character to see and pity the alien presence, whose name carries the theme of intolerance of that which is different (Xeno[pho]bia). *The Empire Builders* incorporates a sentimental Vian who regrets our loss of values in an ever-accelerating rush to the future with a realistically critical Vian who is aware that things never were what we suppose them to have been. All is mythology and phantasmagoria. We cannot see the Schmürz today any more than we ever could. When the parents look back, it is into an intertextual and composite past, one mythologized on the spot, made up of fragments of other texts.

Serendipity. After the play I commented on the importance of the Mother being a brunette. To which Kim Gorter replied that the line had been changed to correspond to Steph Brewster's hair colour: the French text, she reminded me, describes her as "une blondinette". That is to say that the Father recalls marrying *une blondinette*… There is a cross-over between the marriage to a blonde, which is something of a leitmotiv in Vian (his most famous novel, *L'Écume des jours*, showcases a disastrous case of failing to marry a blonde and electing a brunette instead, whilst Vian himself married two existent blondes), and the woman here present. Is this the woman he is recalling? In which case, does she need to be blonde? Hair colour is crucial to an analysis of the Vian text; it also supports a biographical reading of his work. Johnson and Gorter thus put on show not only the play but Vian the man. The programme points to the potentially brilliant staging of the author's own death:

> Vian died at 39, at a private screening of the film adaptation of his most infamous novel, *J'irai cracher sur vos tombes* (*I will spit on your graves*), which is about an African-American man who seeks sado-erotic revenge for the murder of his brother by a white neighbour. Vian had protested about the film and refused to be named in the credits. After viewing the film for ten minutes, he reportedly exclaimed, "These are supposed to be Americans? My arse!" then clutched his chest and dropped dead. He had forgotten to take his heart medicine that day.

The Father's death at the end of the play – if, indeed, the defenestration is to be read as suicide and not some kind of leap of faith – poses the question of the posthumous status of *The Empires Builders*. Did Vian intend it to be, as Johnson and Gorter seem to suggest, a résumé of his life? Is it, rather, a review of his entire *œuvre*? The play teems with references to his earlier novels and plays, but these, too, have all provoked biographical readings. It may be pointed out that the eponymous poem of Vian's most famous (and again posthumously published) anthology of poetry, *Je voudrais pas crever*, with its quite literally heart-rending reference to the author's own personal torment ("I don't want to die") draws on a line taken from Louis Aragon's seminal Surrealist text, *Le Paysan de Paris* (*Paris Peasant*, 1926). Vian was a man aware of, in love with and tragically disappointed by life and writing.

One thing is certain: Johnson and Gorter capture Vian. Be it the man or the works. Their direction is, to the very end, as deft as the performances are captivating. The decision to castrate the Father is a bold one. The original script despatches of the Father only after he has shot and killed what he could not bear to recognise. In this production, his shots break the window but have no effect on the Schmürz who remains alive, looming menacingly above the helpless patriarch. A perfect open ending that ensures that the audience leave saturated not with the logical clarity of "understanding" but a more primitive and direct sensation of the play. Surrealism, then, as much as Existentialism? An intertextual reading opens up a whole range of possibilities: the Father's leap from the window draws both on a crucial motif in André Breton's surrealist masterpiece *Nadja* (1928), which is then reprised in Sartre's *La Nausée* (*Nausea*, 1938); as such it is caught up in the eddies of the opposing tides of these two famous movements. Johnson and Gorter also leave ample (and deliberately orchestrated) space for interpreting the (possibility of a) suicide solution. Is this a viable existentialist act? If the Father kills himself, is it the ultimate cop out (to reduce oneself to object must be an act of bad faith…) or the one truly heroic act in the play? He does, after all, manage to kill himself despite the failing revolver, and the same cannot be said for Paul Hilbert who feebly waits, revolver in hand, for the noise of the people outside to come into his cubicle in the public toilets and to serve him his fate ("Érostrate", in Sartre's *Le Mur*, 1939). He also manages to leave the room that is his hell, unlike the characters in *Huis Clos* who cannot, or will not leave even when the door to their cell opens before them. *The Empire Builders* refuses to toe any party line, allowing us to see futility and heroism, despair and humanity.

The Schmürz survives in Canberra 2003. Life will not be the same again. Our precious values cannot withstand the Other (the values of the Father are the wartime triptych of Pétain's collaborationist Vichy Régime - Travail, Famille, Patrie – that replaced the Republican "Liberté, Égalité, Fraternité" during the period of the Occupation). The glory that became Vian's on the wave of May '68 (nine years after his death) no longer shines as brightly. The barricades have come down, forgotten in this age of virtual reality and genuine indifference. But Vian *is* being played. Brilliant young people are still devoting themselves to artistic bagatelles. The little things in life are still there, making it all worthwhile. "Things are", after all, "as good as they ever were."

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Brook Emery, *Misplaced Heart*,
Wollongong: Five Islands Press, 2003, pp. 93.
ISBN 174128 0184

Speaking tonight[1], at the Newcastle launch of *Misplaced Heart*, I think back to the first time I encountered Brook Emery. It was courtesy of regional ABC radio, 2NC – a voice speaking of how he'd revised his Newcastle Poetry Prize-winning poem, 'Approaching the Edge', twenty times. I confess it offended me. It reminded me of the Boston poet, Robert Lowell, saying he'd revised fifty times a long stanza from his Virgilian 'Falling Asleep Over the *Aeneid*', then cut the stanza after deciding the epic fragment worked better without it. What this man Emery said struck me as *American*; it struck me, to revert to a vintage Australianism, as *skiting*. I was reconciled to the prize-winning poem in the usual way, by reading it. 'Approaching the Edge' was more than clever, in its transitions from voyages – in which early explorers were frightened of sailing over the edge of a flat world – to stepping off a precipice in a hang-glider, to starting a new relationship, to any kind of adventure or transgression. It told an affecting story of a hippie couple deciding *not* to smuggle their stash across the Nepalese border, and it ended with the idea that emotion has to be *smuggled* into modern poetry.

When Paul Kavanagh smuggled Brook into the Master of Creative Arts workshops in Creative Writing, and I began to read the hand-written drafts Brook brought into the workshops, I realised that he hadn't been skiting on 2NC: he'd been modestly under-estimating. Brook became a creative conscience for the rest of us, whatever we were writing. One workshop, I got stuck into Brook for a poem in which, writing about a field of Waverley angels, he cast Sydney flying-foxes as a set of antithetical vampire bats. The poem doesn't appear in *Misplaced Heart*. It was, however, one of twenty-plus draft poems that Brook (a sterner critic of his own work than I ever managed to be) cut from the new book he was preparing. The result, *Misplaced Heart*, is a volume which is more than well salted or compacted: it is a volume which interrogates the degree to which contemporary Australian poetry – or rather, poetry written in English – can engage with the referential, with matters of both common and public concern.

Reading through *Misplaced Heart* after *and dug my fingers in the sand*, I was first struck by the new volume being more unobtrusive about its learning. It is not just that one of the authorities in the new book is Newcastle's own Mark Richards, quoted on the polymorphism of worthwhile surf. The poems are concerned, at first reading, with that most common of topics, the weather, with common daily experiences, and with registering the hail of events in everyday language. Some of our best Australian poets (I'm thinking of Peter Porter, for example) can't do us a poem unless it comes out of a corner of European culture so arcane that no other English-speaking poet has heard of it. Some of our best poets (I remember Les Murray reciting me a list of words from the Oxford English Dictionary I was expected never to have come across) can't do us a poem unless it comes from the lexicographical margins of standard English. By contrast, here is Emery doing us a rainy morning in early winter. It is a Sunday morning (so I'm inclined to think), because the poem is called 'A raven before the dove'. Just when we think it can't rain any harder, the

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[1] This speech was given on Wednesday, 17th of September, 2003, at the University of Newcastle.

rain steps up:

> Things weigh more in rain. Even inside, the air is
> heavy and slow, an atmosphere of fathoms.
> The sky coming in closer and pressing down.
>
> Just when it can't get any louder
> it does, so loud you have to imagine
> the silences that make sound, the silences
> in a house, in a body, in a heart you feel beating
> more than you hear. The questions rain asks:
> How long can this go on? Will the roof hold?
> Why can't we hear each other any more?

Can you *fathom* that? As yet, I can't fully, but I can sense how in 'fathom', without any showing off, both nominal *and* verbal connotations are activated. I can sense there's a depth story being, not told exactly, but intimated in 'Why can't we hear each other any more?' Emery has a way of telling stories in verse that is less lyrical than it is impersonal. It is not impersonal in the T. S. Eliot style, which rebukes readers for thinking the story in an Eliot poem has anything to do with T. S. Eliot. It is impersonal in a Shakespearean way, which cheerfully agrees that the story has to do with me and you, and with him and her and them – with anyone who wants to put their hand up for some understanding of our commonality.

Emery does something more in his verse that few poets have the temerity or capacity to do. He thinks. It's shocking enough in these days, when poetry is supposed to be about the words it's written in, to smuggle feeling and narrative into a poem. To use the resources of the language in unobtrusively new ways *and* think in a poem is total heterodoxy. Would-be critics like myself, who have enough trouble thinking *about* poetry, are overwhelmed when they also have to think about thinking *in* poetry. In 'Letter While Flying', Emery compares putting up with being hurtled in a trajectory with hundreds of others to what comes intuitively to the sea-borne poet, surfing:

> I've decided, I mean to tell you, I hate flying too.
> It's the take-off, the way the engines tense themselves
> and charge, the same and opposite as abandonment
> to a wave – there's no contact going up, apart from;
> not like going down and into.

Here the precise enjambements make of the apparently improvised prepositions a vital syntax. In the next stanza the persona contrasts crudely powered flight to the supple flock-mind of sparrows in flight, until taught by his scepticism to reject this Romantic valorising of nature. Human crowds might seem equally gracefully coordinated to sparrows, unaware how such motion is dictated by traffic rules or knock-off times. If originality consists in divergence from flock or from mechanical movement, or if Billy Wilder's rules for film-making – 'one to nine: don't be boring. Rule ten, I forget' – were applied to Joyce,

Beckett and co., who would be original, who rule-breaking?   And what could be said of modern poetry? – 'third-rate philosophy, someone said. Writing about/ thinking about thinking by writing about something else'. 'Letter While Flying' both fails to escape its definition of poetry, and effortlessly does escape it, by dint of sheer immediacy and intellectual agility, by thinking more than self-reflexively or merely wittily about philosophy and poetry, about fear of flying and the urge to fly the nets that the age erects.

Every section of *Misplaced Heart* is introduced by one from a series of sonnets. Beginning 'The mind is', each of the blank sonnets (though the seventh is more like a prose sestina) is a specimen of 'thinking about thinking', and also about brain and metabolic function, aesthetics and metaphysics, the unconscious and consciousness. For one of the few times since Gerard Manley Hopkins's 'No Worst, There Is None', sonnets are being used to re-enact thinking as the great drama of existence. When Emery writes that '*The mind is*'

> *a metonymic heart enabling*
> reasons reason cannot know, *it*
> *makes its way feelingly, negotiating*
>
> *an emptiness awash with solar wind*
> *and anti-matter, the pulse of unrecorded stars*
> *resolving where absence was presumed*.

– he is setting down what it's like to think in a sceptical age that has outgrown the Victorian melodrama of religious doubt. I feel like some watcher of the stars when a new planet swims into his ken. To put it another way, the kinds of allusion Emery incorporates in his unostentatiously well-read verse are more than just the verbal ones, to Pascal and *King Lear*. The sum of the allusions, like the seven sections of *Misplaced Heart*, is greater than the sum of their parts.

Not all of Emery's *Misplaced Heart* is concerned with interiority, with nuance. Two-thirds of the way in, after a completely different style has been adapted, from Mayakovksy, for a verse biography of the Russian futurist, many of the poems adopt a public stance, to deal with the mayhem and black comedy of twentieth-first century politics. Semtex and plasma drips, urban poverty and inner-city breakdown, genetic modifications and the invasion/liberation of Iraq become, not thematic coordinates, but points of reference. While it takes ages to unpick why the poems thinking about thinking are original and powerful, the wit and power of these lines, from 'Aubade and Evensong: New Year, 2003', can be quickly grasped:

> The sun rises like an orphaned, bloodshot eye.
> Drain pipes are stuffed with tennis balls, residents stand on roofs
> and drizzle water down the walls. Sheep catch fire,
> the telescopes at Mount Stromlo fuse and I see a holy city
> coming out of heaven as a bride adorned and hear a great voice
>
> warning us to be alert but not alarmed.

In Nauru, Iraqui refugees throw stones at their custodians.
How long, how long, one man asks, not realising
he's been excised from time. . . .

Misplaced Heart is the best book of Australian poetry I've read so far in the twenty-first century. It's a book that makes me grin rather than laugh; and it's a book that makes me weep, with joy, with admiration, and with its unsentimental, pinpoint pathos.

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L. M. Cullen, *A History of Japan, 1582-1941, Internal and External Worlds*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003, pp. 357. ISBN 0521529182

Japan's economic growth in the post war period, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, greatly increased interest in both contemporary and historical Japan in the English-speaking world. Although the recession of the 1990s has somewhat taken the gloss off the idea of the 'economic miracle', substantial interest remains and this is reflected in the steady stream of Japan-related books that continue to appear every year. With regard to Japanese history, however, the great tendency is for new books simply to repeat stereotypical images of the Japanese past, especially of Tokugawa Japan. The standard image of Edo period Japan is of a society in which 'development' was strangled by the government's national isolation policy and its adherence to a rigidly hierarchical social structure. Although this image has been modified in recent years by recognition of economic growth, technological innovation and large-scale urbanisation, the analytical framework that is used to conceptualise Tokugawa society, that of a 'traditional' and 'feudal' society, effectively precludes the possibility of a major reinterpretation. In this book, however, L. M. Cullen, Professor of Irish History at Trinity College, Dublin, attempts to offer an alternate perspective on the Japanese past. As the dust jacket notes, the central theme of the book is that "Japan before 1854, far from being in either progressive economic and social decay or political crisis, was on balance a successful society led by rational policy makers". In two hundred and ninety densely packed pages, the author forcefully challenges many of our basic assumptions about Tokugawa Japan, especially the idea that national isolation had a negative impact on Japanese society. Historians and social scientists tend to assume that the 'West' is the source of all good things in the world including political democracy, social equality, economic growth and technological innovation. As a consequence, by limiting contact with the 'West' through the policy of national isolation, the Tokugawa government was cutting Japan off from the source of 'civilization' in world history. This assumption is one of the main reasons why historians in the English-speaking world have had such a negative attitude towards the Tokugawa government. Professor Cullen successfully argues, however, that increased contact with the 'West' would not necessarily have worked to Japan's advantage.

A second important feature of this book is the emphasis it places on the continuity between pre- and post restoration Japan. The common pattern in books on Japanese history is to treat the events associated with the Meiji Restoration not simply as a political revolution but as a shift from one kind of society to another, a transition from a failed 'traditional' society to a successful 'modern' one. Professor Cullen, however, offers an alternative perspective by suggesting that Tokugawa Japan was much more 'modern' and successful than is generally thought. From this basic reconceptualisation of Tokugawa history flows a great many other insights that make this the best general survey of modern Japanese history available in English. For example, Professor Cullen sees the failure of Japanese foreign policy not in the government's response to the crisis of the 1850s and 1860s but in the period leading up to the Pacific War. In traditional accounts of Japanese history, Japan began to 'modernise', that is began to develop democratic political institutions, an industrial economy and so on, in the wake of the Meiji Restoration. However, if democratic political institutions are taken as a key ingredient in a 'modern' state, then it becomes difficult to explain why Japan turned towards militarism in the 1930s. This is usually explained rather unconvincingly in terms of the 'failure' of 'modernity' to properly take root. It may be, however, that the concept of 'modernity' itself is at fault. That is, the notion of 'modernity' is used to join together concepts such as democracy, capitalism, industrialisation, technological innovation and so on that may not be linked at all. The material presented in Professor Cullen's book suggests that the changes that took place in the post-Meiji period, rather than representing a movement towards some general, universal "modernity', reflected patterns of behaviour that had their origin in Tokugawa Japan. This is not to minimise the impact of the West on Japan in the late-Tokugawa and Meiji periods, but merely to suggest that the various forms of Western culture that influenced Japan did not replace the indigenous cultural tradition with something new and fundamentally different but merely modified it. Although I should qualify this by saying, in making these observations, I may be reading more into the text than the author intends.

Two final observations. First, this book demonstrates the value of historians adopting a broad global perspective in their work. Professor Cullen's previous publications are in the field of Irish and French history and trade relations in the early modern period and seemingly it is this background that allows him to bring a new perspective to the study of Japanese history. Second, a criticism, or perhaps more accurately a suggestion for any future revised edition. This book is mainly aimed at undergraduate students studying Japanese history but I think the innovative aspect of this work, that is the new conceptual framework, is buried to an extent under the weight of information. For academic specialists this presents no problems but for undergraduates perhaps a shorter and less dense and detailed version would be of assistance.

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