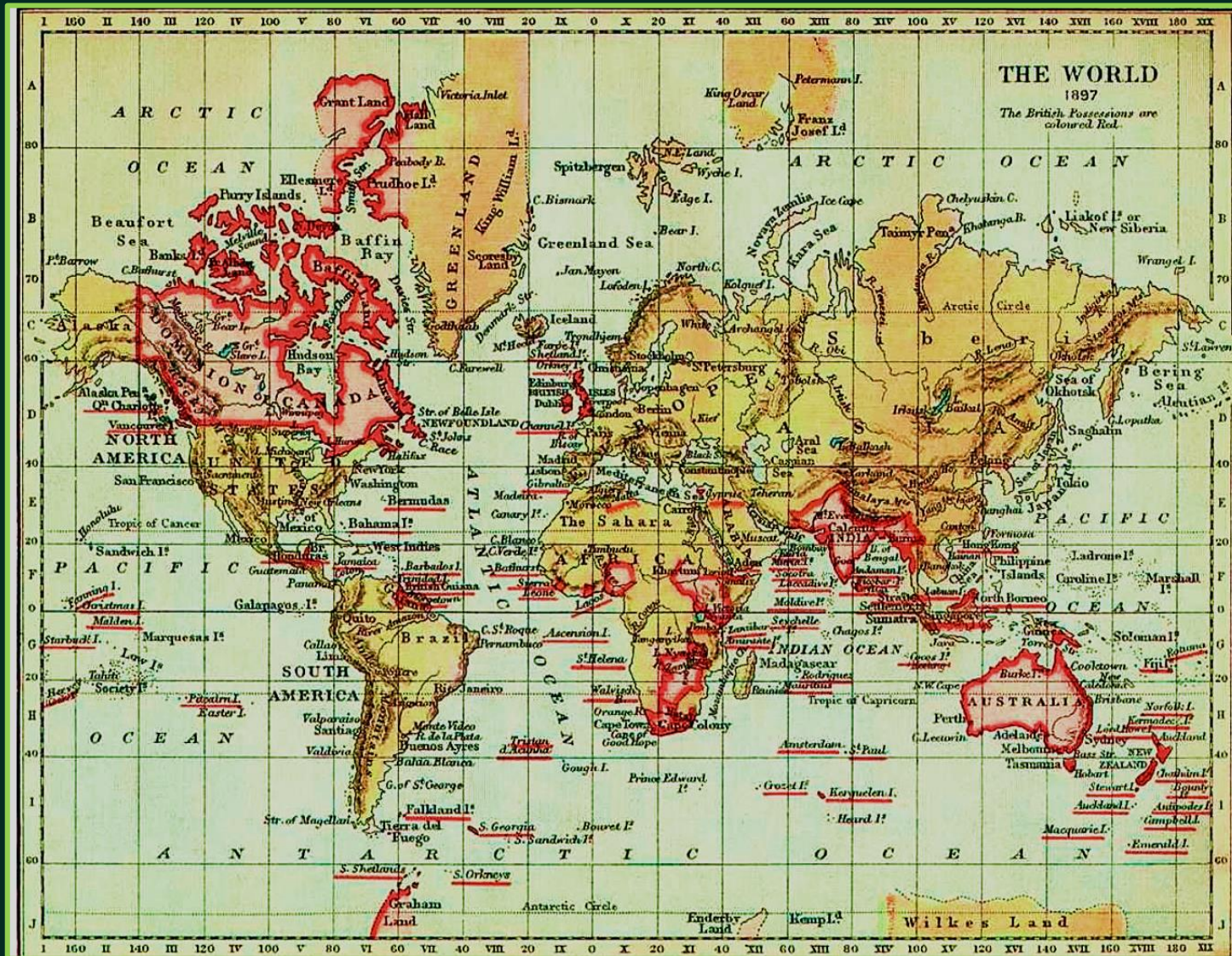


HPEN702 BUILDING SMALL WORLDS: THE SHORT STORY IN ENGLISH



Understanding how history is made has been a primary source of emancipatory insight and practical political consciousness, the great variable container for a critical interpretation of social life and practice. ... however, it may be space more than time that hides consequences from us, the 'making of geography' more than the 'making of history' that provides the most revealing tactical and theoretical world

Edward de Soja, *Postmodern Geographies: the Reassertion of Space in Critical Social Theory*, London: Verso, 1989.

LEARNING OUTCOMES

Upon the successful completion of this module, the student should be able to:

- To examine the provenance & meaning of the short story in English;
- To understand the significance of the short story as a vehicle of cultural expression in minority cultures within the UK & former colonies;
- To explore the proliferation of short stories in translation;
- To demonstrate this understanding of meaning & technique in the translation of a short story from the students' home language(s) into English, or from close readings of translated short stories.

THEORETICAL / HISTORICAL CONTEXTS

- Enlightenment – reason/ self determination
- The novel as enlightenment form
- Nation state – colonial system
- Emergence of Orientalism (Edward Said)
 - a) Denigration of culture in India – Lord Macaulay
 - b) 'Lack of any culture in Caribbean' – James Froude
- Metropolitan Centre and colonial peripheries
- Mimicry and hybridity

Language

- Standardisation and nation state
- Promotion of dominant language and literature (Wales; India, African countries, Caribbean)

POSTCOLONIAL SHORT STORIES (i) CARIBBEAN (ii) INDIAN / DIASPORA

The short story haunts the edges of the novel and its assumption of the nation state especially its association with the marginalised or oppressed group

Use of English: Cultural appropriation or cultural oppression?

THE NOVEL AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT

The "new" novel of the earlier eighteenth century may be described an institution of the Enlightenment [it partook] in what Webster's dictionary calls "a philosophic movement ... marked by questioning of traditional doctrines and values, a tendency toward individualism, and an emphasis on the idea of universal human progress, the empirical method in science, and the free use of reason" [and] operated within the Enlightenment model of critical communication.

The novels of Daniel Defoe, Samuel Richardson, and Henry Fielding, for example, not only pretend to offer densely particular, virtually evidentiary accounts of the physical and mental circumstances that actuate their characters and motivate the causal sequences of their plots, but ... also attempt to frame the subjectivity of their characters within editorial objectivity, as in Defoe and Richardson or narratorial objectivity, as in Fielding

John Bender, 'Enlightenment Fiction and the Scientific Hypothesis',
Representations Vol. 60 (Winter 1997): 1-23.

INDIA : MINUTE ON EDUCATION T. B. MACAULAY, 2 FEB 1835

[10] I have no knowledge of either Sanscrit or Arabic. But I have done what I could to form a correct estimate of their value. I have read translations of the most celebrated Arabic and Sanscrit works. I have conversed, both here and at home, with men distinguished by their proficiency in the Eastern tongues. I am quite ready to take the oriental learning at the valuation of the orientalists themselves. I have never found one among them who could deny that a single shelf of a good European library was worth the whole native literature of India and Arabia. The intrinsic superiority of the Western literature is indeed fully admitted by those members of the committee who support the oriental plan of education.

[11] It will hardly be disputed, I suppose, that the department of literature in which the Eastern writers stand highest is poetry. And I certainly never met with any orientalist who ventured to maintain that the Arabic and Sanscrit poetry could be compared to that of the great European nations. But when we pass from works of imagination to works in which facts are recorded and general principles investigated, the superiority of the Europeans becomes absolutely immeasurable. It is, I believe, no exaggeration to say that all the historical information which has been collected from all the books written in the Sanscrit language is less valuable than what may be found in the most paltry abridgments used at preparatory schools in England. In every branch of physical or moral philosophy, the relative position of the two nations is nearly the same.

MINUTE ON EDUCATION 1835

(The classic reason for teaching English, but only to a small minority of Indians)

We must do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indians in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals and in intellect.

Lord Macaulay

THE NOVEL AND THE ENLIGHTENMENT PRINCIPLE OF INDIVIDUATION

The 'principle of individuation' accepted by Locke was that of existence at a particular locus in space and time: since, as he wrote, 'ideas become general by separating from them the circumstances of time and place', so they become particular only when both these circumstances are specified. In the same way the characters of the novel can only be individualized if they are set in a background of particularized time and place. . . .

many novelists, from Sterne to Proust, have made their subject the exploration of personality as it is defined in the interpretation of its past and present self-awareness... the novel in general has interested itself much more than any other literary form in the development of its characters in the course of time.

Ian Watt, *The Rise of the Novel*, p. 21

*This 'principle of individuation' is consistently denied the colonial subject
see examples of India and the Caribbean*

ORIENTALISM (1)

- from 1815 to 1914 European direct colonial dominion expanded from about 35 percent of the Earth's surface to about 85 percent of it. (p. 41)
- so far as the West was concerned during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, an assumption had been made that the Orient and everything in it was, if not patently inferior to, then in need of corrective study by the West. The Orient was viewed as if framed by the classroom, the criminal court, the prison, the illustrated manual. Orientalism, then, is knowledge of the Orient that places things Oriental in class, court, prison, or manual for scrutiny, judgment, discipline, or governing. (pp.40-41)

CATEGORIES OF POPULATION WITHIN THE COLONIES

In this complex empire of ours the problem presents itself in many shapes, and each must be studied and dealt with according to its character. There is the broad distinction between colonies and conquered countries. Colonists are part of ourselves. Foreigners attached by force to our dominions may submit to be ruled by us, but will not always consent to rule themselves in accordance with our views or interests, or remain attached to us if we enable them to leave us when they please. The Crown, therefore, as in India, rules directly by the police and the army. And there are colonies which are neither one nor the other, where our own people have been settled and have been granted the land in possession with the control of an insubordinate population, themselves claiming political privileges which had to be refused to the rest. This was the position of Ireland, and the result of meddling theoretically with it ought to have taught us caution. Again, there are colonies like the West Indies, either occupied originally by ourselves, as Barbadoes, or taken by force from France or Spain, where the mass of the population were slaves who have been since made free, but where the extent to which the coloured people can be admitted to share in the administration is still an unsettled question.

James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 1888; pp.5-6)

THE CARIBBEAN : AN INADEQUATE & IRRATIONAL SPACE

Roses do not grow on thorn trees, nor figs on thistles. A healthy human civilisation was not perhaps to be looked for in countries which have been alternately the prey of avarice, ambition, and sentimentalism. We visit foreign countries to see varieties of life and character, to learn languages that we may gain an insight into various literatures, to see manners unlike our own springing naturally out of different soils and climates, to see beautiful works of art, to see places associated with great men and great actions, and subsidiary to these, to see lakes and mountains, and strange skies and seas. But the localities of great events and the homes of the actors in them are only saddening when the spiritual results are disappointing, and scenery loses its charm unless the grace of humanity is in the heart of it. To the man of science the West Indies may be delightful and instructive. Rocks and trees and flowers remain as they always were, and Nature is constant to herself. But the traveller whose heart is with his kind, and who cares only to see his brother mortals making their corner of this planet into an orderly and rational home, had better choose some other object for his pilgrimage.

James Anthony Froude, *The English in the West Indies or, The Bow of Ulysses*, 1888; p.307)

ORIENTALISM (2)

Debates today about 'Frenchness' and 'Englishness' in France and Britain respectively, or about Islam in countries such as Egypt and Pakistan, are part of that same interpretive process which involves the identities of different 'others,' whether they be outsiders and refugees, or apostates and infidels. It should be obvious in all cases that these processes are not mental exercises but urgent social contests involving such concrete political issues as immigration laws, the legislation of personal conduct, the constitution of orthodoxy, the legitimization of violence and/or insurrection, the character and content of education, and the direction of foreign policy, which very often has to do with the designation of official enemies.

In short, the construction of identity is bound up with the disposition of power and powerlessness in each society, and is therefore anything but mere academic wool-gathering. (p.332)

DISCUSSION & BREAK

"In an anthropological spirit, then, I propose the following definition of the nation: it is an imagined political community - and imagined as both inherently limited and sovereign. (Benedict Anderson)

"It is imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion. ...Gellner makes a comparable point when he rules that 'Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist.' The drawback to this formulation, however, is that Gellner is so anxious to show that nationalism masquerades under false pretences that he assimilates 'invention' to 'fabrication' and 'falsity', rather than to 'imagining' and 'creation'. In this way he implies that 'true' communities exist which can be advantageously juxtaposed to nations. In fact, all communities larger than primordial villages of face-to-face contact (and perhaps even these) are imagined. Communities are to be distinguished, not by their falsity/genuineness, but by the style in which they are imagined. [...]

"The nation is imagined as limited because even the largest of them encompassing perhaps a billion living human beings, has finite, if elastic boundaries, beyond which lie other nations. No nation imagines itself coterminous with mankind. The most messianic nationalists do not dream of a day when all the members of the human race will join their nation in the way that it was possible, in certain epochs, for, say, Christians to dream of a wholly Christian planet.

"It is imagined as sovereign because the concept was born in an age in which Enlightenment and Revolution were destroying the legitimacy of the divinely-ordained, hierarchical dynastic realm. Coming to maturity at a stage of human history when even the most devout adherents of any universal religion were inescapably confronted with the living pluralism of such religions, and the allomorphism between each faith's ontological claims and territorial stretch, nations dream of being free, and, if under God, directly so. The gage and emblem of this freedom is the sovereign state.

"Finally, it is imagined as a community, because, regardless of the actual inequality and exploitation that may prevail in each, the nation is always conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship. Ultimately it is this fraternity that makes it possible, over the past two centuries, for so many millions of people, not so much to kill, as willingly to die for such limited imaginings.

"These deaths bring us abruptly face to face with the central problem posed by nationalism: what makes the shrunken imaginings of recent history (scarcely more than two centuries) generate such colossal sacrifices? I believe that the beginnings of an answer lie in the cultural roots of nationalism."

Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Rev. Edn ed. London and New York: Verso, 1991, pp. 5-7.

THE FRACTURED SELF

- Legacy of orientalism (Edward Said)
- Submerged and alternative ideas of the self within a colonial system based on a metropolitan centre and colonial peripheries

Diaspora

part of colonial experience. Colonisers moving from centre to peripheries and colonised dispersed from one periphery to another, eg in The Caribbean genocide of native population by Spanish (16th C) then dispersal of other populations first slaves (Africa) and then indentured labourers (India)

Imposed use of English – divided self

- Which language does the postcolonial writer use? – debate between Chinua Achebe (*Things Fall Apart*; Nigeria, 1958) and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, (*A Grain of Wheat*; Kenya 1967)
- Hybrid identities and diasporic literature - key to postcolonial literature
- Derek Walcott – possibilities of multiple others as well as divisions

A Far Cry from Africa

A wind is ruffling the tawny pelt
Of Africa. Kikuyu, quick as flies,
Batten upon the bloodstreams of the veldt.
Corpses are scattered through a paradise.
Only the worm, colonel of carrion, cries:
"Waste no compassion on these separate dead!"
Statistics justify and scholars seize
The salients of colonial policy.
What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
To savages, expendable as Jews?

Threshed out by beaters, the long rushes break
In a white dust of ibises whose cries
Have wheeled since civilization's dawn
From the parched river or beast-teeming plain.
The violence of beast on beast is read
As natural law, but upright man
Seeks his divinity by inflicting pain.

Delirious as these worried beasts, his wars
Dance to the tightened carcass of a drum,
While he calls courage still that native dread
Of the white peace contracted by the dead.

Again brutish necessity wipes its hands
Upon the napkin of a dirty cause, again
A waste of our compassion, as with Spain,
The gorilla wrestles with the superman.
I who am poisoned with the blood of both,
Where shall I turn, divided to the vein?
I who have cursed
The drunken officer of British rule, how choose
Between this Africa and the English tongue I
love?
Betray them both, or give back what they give?
How can I face such slaughter and be cool?
How can I turn from Africa and live?

Derek Walcott (1930-2017)

THE SHORT STORY: EXPRESSING A SUBMERGED POPULATION GROUP

There is no form of society to which any character in it could possibly attach himself and regard as normal. In discussions of the modern novel we have come to talk of ... the novel without a hero. In fact, the short story has never had a hero. What it has instead is a submerged population group... That submerged population changes its character from writer to writer, from generation to generation. It may be Gogol's officials, Turgenev's serfs, Maupassant's prostitutes, Chekhov's doctors and teachers, Sherwood Anderson's provincials, always dreaming of escape.

.....

Always in the short story there is this sense of outlawed figures wandering about on the fringes of society, superimposed sometimes on symbolic figures whom they caricature and echo – Christ, Socrates, Moses... As a result there is in the short story at its most characteristic something we do not often find in the novel – an intense awareness of human loneliness. Indeed, it might be truer to say that while we often read a familiar novel again from companionship, we approach the short story in a very different mood.

Frank O'Connor, *The Lonely Voice*, (pp.17-19)

As all Saturday nights went, we slipped by the wives and find ourselves down by The Tricky Jester. The name made it sound like an establishment outta King Arthur days, but don't get fooled – the place is just as grimy and ragadang as all them other hole-in-the-wall pubs you coulda find here in central Trinidad. Thinking bout it, you don't see much of those any more. The Tricky Jester, you leave your shame at the door. The new places, you have to comb your hair and put on perfume just to get a drink. Times change, you know. World going one way, people another.

Last Saturday, though, something put a sour taste in my mouth. Wasn't the fact that I couldn't break away from these fellas I ain't hardly ever liked, or that the new brand of beer they ordered had the aftertaste of bush-bugs. Nah, this acidic tang bubbling under my tongue come from the story Stew was telling.

Stew is a hot line supervisor. He is the man who oversees the crew that makes sure the power lines don't catch fire. He is an important man, and so he gets to talk. After all, what goes on inside his head could keep your house from being reduced to ash. He'd remind you of that too. Get Stew loose on white rum and salt prunes and you wouldn't think they could ever put such a man in charge of 12,000 volts.

On his spare days, Stew straps on the old spike-boots and backpack. The excursions is too much to count. Edith Falls, Rio Seco, Saut d'Eau, Turure Water Steps, and each one had a goddamn parable attached to it, like each one was a pilgrimage to Mecca. We never wanted him to stop the embellishment and the exaggeration though.

As you get older, you learn to embrace daydreams.

So, how come this one put the sourness in me then?

KEVIN JARED HOSEIN, PASSAGE,

I followed them and then there it was – the house. The daub and wattle house in the distance.

My eyes widened – I expected it to vanish in a blink. I expected it to vanish in a flash of lightning. Not so much like a mirage, but a spirit house. Something not from this realm. Something not meant for the human eye. A house where the creatures and specters of the wood congregate.

I spotted the pile of branches Stew had mentioned – where he seen the smoke rising up. The closer I got to it, the more I felt the needles of cold prick against my face. I nudged one of the charred branches with my boot and something rolled out from under it. I couldn't see what it was at first. Only when I stooped down, I saw and it took a while to register.

It was a skull – the skull of a child. Coated in soot and ash.

My eyes fluttered back to the hut. The door opened and a man popped his head out. I dropped the skull and rocketed through the bushes.

The sharp edge of a bramble hooked my face and ripped a bloody line straight from jaw to temple. My boot got caught in a tendril and sent me tumbling again.

The whole world turned upside-down – my vocal cords went so slack that I couldn't even groan. I tumbled down some outcroppings of rock and mud. I was gonna die, I felt it. Funny how you picture these things sometimes – you see yourself from the outside. How I remember it, seeing my body from the outside, a jumble of limbs cartwheeling down to a gully.

When I finally landed, I heard a loud crack and the pain was so sharp that I felt it in my teeth.

The crack, well, I figured it was just a branch. But no, no. I try, try, try to get up only to send another barb of pain skewering my right leg. I steeled myself before I rolled my pants up above my ankle. The gash was wide open, almost flapping like a mouth. The bone pierced right through the skin. It ain't even look like bone. It looked like plastic, like it ain't belong beneath flesh. The rain pouring on the wound, trying to wash the blood onto the schist.

When I woke up, I found myself lying on the ground, four faces staring down at me – an old man, a young lady and two boys. They musta brung me inside the hut. I focused on the boys. They was completely naked except for a little slip of cloth covering their crotches. Their faces were lined with identical keloids – careful ones rising evenly from their jaws like tapering tiger stripes. Their long hair was tied back and knotted with loops of grass. They was all so scrawny, I coulda see their spines. Outside, the rain was now just a pitter-patter of drips from the trees. Above me, a long stick lain horizontally across the roof. Attached to it was three ristras of mangoes and breadfruit hanging from cerasee vines. Between them, two skinned manicous dangled, their pink flesh beaded with moisture.

I hurled my body up, only to suffer a jolting reminder of my injury.

When I looked down, I saw that one leg of my jeans had been cut off, a dried bloody deposit of red-and-black form in a zig-zag down my calf. The trekking pole was tethered to the side of my leg and the bottom was stuffed with leaves to fashion a sorta back-country splint.

The old man snapped his fingers at me. His beard, mottled with grey and coffee-brown, reached his collarbone. He say to me, 'Bad fall y'had, brudda. Y'come here to kill y'self, eh?' He laughed. 'What side y'come?'

I didn't answer. I coulda barely breathe, much less speak. 'Fetch the man some water,' the old man then said to the two boys. They dashed over to the corner of a room and returned with two half-calabashes of water. The young lady, whose breasts was now banded with a piece of cloth, propped my head up and let me have a few sips. 'I take you to Lluengo,' the man say. 'Lil village near the coast, y'know it? Nice people in Lluengo, y'know.'

DISCUSSION

MIMICRY

Under colonialism and in the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behavior: one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself.

Mimicry is often seen as something shameful, and a black or brown person engaging in mimicry is usually derided by other members of his or her group for doing so. ...

Mimicry, however, is not all bad. In his essay “Of Mimicry and Man,” Bhabha described mimicry as sometimes unintentionally subversive. In Bhabha’s way of thinking ... mimicry is a kind of performance that exposes the artificiality of all symbolic expressions of power. In other words, if an Indian, desiring to mimic the English, becomes obsessed with some particular codes associated with Englishness, such as the British colonial obsession with the sola topee, his performance of those codes might show how hollow the codes really are.

Amardeep Singh, ‘Mimicry and Hybridity in Plain English’
<https://www.lehigh.edu/~amsp/2009/05/mimicry-and-hybridity-in-plain-english.html>

Focus on three

HYBRIDITY

1. Linguistic hybridity. Linguistic hybridity can refer to elements from foreign languages that enter into a given language, whether it's the adoption of English words into Asian or African languages, or the advent of Asian or African words into English.

(consider James Joyce as example)

2. Literary hybridity. What I am calling literary hybridity (hybridity at the level of narrative form) is fundamental to what we now know as postcolonial literature. In part, basic modern literary forms such as the novel and the short story are modes of writing invented in the West, though they were readily adopted by colonial authors in Africa and Asia (the first Indian novels were being published in the 1860s). But almost immediately after it emerged, the “foreign” genre of the western novel became one of the primary ways by which Africans and Asians began to collectively imagine a sense of national, cultural identity.

3. Cultural hybridity. Culture, defined in terms of art, music, fashion, cuisine, and so on, might be the broadest and perhaps also the easiest place to think about hybridity....

*** mixing of forms – see Caradoc Evans and Dylan Thomas in Wales; comments on the West Indian short story

There are no West Indian novelists, only short story writers in disguise; no West Indian novels, only fabrications taking their shape and structure from the transfigured short stories they contain. There are more exceptions to this among the novels published after 1970, but they are still only exceptions.

It is, of course, necessary to call these idiosyncratically West Indian constructs 'novels,' for they are extended fictions to which the term 'short story' cannot be applied. [...]

An early and clear illustration of what I mean is Sam Salvin's *The Lonely Londoners* (1956) which has often been dismissed as 'episodic' or lacking in coherence. 'Episodic' does not automatically and necessarily mean unsatisfactory. If it did, some of the best known West Indian novels would be blushing in the tropical bush. [...]

...This novel has a grammar and logic demonstrably formed out of two traditions in the West Indies: an old even ancestral tradition of telling and performing stories, and the newer practise of writing short stories that was introduced into a situation where there was a living and functional tradition, because the newer practise could not impose imperially upon that tradition for too long. It was inevitable that in due course, as always in the West Indies, the two traditions would meet and fuse. In this instance, the native tradition was so dynamic, so ingrained, and so continuingly influential, that we can speak of the emerging Creole form as indigenous.

Kenneth Ramchand, 'The West Indian Short Story,' *Journal of Caribbean Literatures* Vol. 1, No. 1 (Spring 1997), pp. 21-33

DESPITE EVERYTHING : TRANSPORTING LITERATURE ACROSS BOUNDARIES

After all, we make ourselves according to the ideas we have of our possibilities.

V.S. Naipaul, *A Bend in the River*)

He read political books. They gave him phrases which he could only speak to himself and use on Shama. They also revealed one region after another of misery and injustice and left him feeling more helpless and more isolated than ever. Then it was that he discovered the solace of Dickens. Without difficulty he transferred characters and settings to people and places he knew. In the grotesques of Dickens everything he feared and suffered from was ridiculed and diminished, so that his own anger, his own contempt became unnecessary, and he was given strength to bear the most difficult part of his day: dressing in the morning, that daily affirmation of faith in oneself, which at times for him was almost like an act of sacrifice.

V.S. Naipaul, *A House for Mr Biswas*

DISCUSSION