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Santa Barbara

Queer Routes:

The Eco-Aesthetics of Metamorphosis in Twentieth-Century Anglophone Fiction

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

requirements for the degree Doctor of Philosophy

in English

by

Baron Wolfgang Haber

Committee in charge:

Professor Maurizia Boscagli, Chair

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Professor Teresa Shewry

December 2020

The dissertation of Baron Wolfgang Haber is approved.

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December 2020

Queer Routes: The Eco-Aesthetics of Metamorphosis in Twentieth-Century Anglophone Fiction

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by

Baron Wolfgang Haber

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during our meetings over these years, and also for helping me feel more situated in the exciting world of the environmental humanities.

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ABSTRACT

Queer Routes:

The Eco-Aesthetics of Metamorphosis in Twentieth-Century Anglophone Fiction

by

Baron Wolfgang Haber

Queer Routes draws on ecological and materialist feminist accounts of queer interactions between the human body and the more-than-human environment to interpret the metamorphic body in 20th century Anglophone fiction. The metamorphoses in this study are spatially realized as cultural and geographic border crossings, signaling an internal "crossing over" through external movement across national borders. Metamorphosis – whether the change is from a man to a woman, from a human to an animal or god, or from an able to a disabled body – involves the habituation of the body to a foreign natural/cultural environment; becoming *trans*national triggers a spatially-staged *trans*formation that affectively reorients the subject's embodied experience of the human and more-than-human world. The literary aesthetic of metamorphosis develops textual forms to capture the transformations both of external appearance and internal subjective experience, often engaging with the mythical, the fantastic, and the exotic in order to resist the rational and national tendencies of realist aesthetics. Metamorphosis operates as a critical performance that disrupts and deconstructs nationalized and naturalized forms of embodiment, especially those governing gender, sexuality, and race.

This dissertation follows the genealogy of metamorphoses through three groups of 20th century Anglophone novelists: queer British modernists in the 20's and 30's who question sexual normativity (Virginia Woolf, E.M. Forster), black British writers in the 80's and 90's who critique the racialization of immigrants in Thatcherite England (Salman Rushdie, Hanif Kureishi), and South-Asia-based authors from the 90's and early twenty-first century who expose how imperialism's toxic residues still haunt postcolonial nation-state (Mahasweta Devi, Amitav Ghosh, Indra Sinha). Tracing the genealogy of metamorphosis through these three apparently remote traditions shows how, throughout the twentieth century, novelists represent the metamorphic body against a backdrop of political transformation, as processes of nation and empire alter and are altered by global shifts in power and production. This genealogy uncovers "the eco-aesthetics of metamorphosis": a literary aesthetic that undermines normative biologism, along with the associate ideologies of racism, sexism, and homophobia. This eco-aesthetic outlines new forms of "trans" subjectivities that are distributed across time, space, and manifold bodies, both human and nonhuman, individual and collective.

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Introduction

Queer Roots

In 2015, Dr. Max Coleman, a science communicator for the Royal Botanical Garden Edinburgh, made a shocking discovery while walking through a churchyard in Fortingall, Scotland. He looked up into the canopy of the "Fortingall yew," a famous tree believed to be one of the oldest in Europe, as experts estimate its age to be between 2,000 and 5,000 years old,[1] and saw "three ripe red berries" growing on the end of one of its branches – a rather unremarkable event at first glance, only this tree was male. "Odd as it may seem, yews, and many other conifers that have separate sexes, have been observed to switch sex. It's not fully understood – normally the switch occurs on part of the crown rather than the entire tree changing sex," Coleman observed. "In the Fortingall yew it seems that one small branch in the outer part of the crown has switched and now behaves as female."[2] "It's a strategy for longevity," explained Brian Muelaner, chair of the Ancient Tree Forum, "The Fortingall yew is fragmented and may be so compartmentalized that part of it has become sexually ambiguous." Researchers gathered the berries and are now studying the seeds as part of a project to protect the genetic diversity of the yew species; these berries have been planted in pots, and if they germinate they would be the tree's "first identifiable offspring in perhaps thousands of years."[3] Whether the transformation of the ancient yew is a sign of decay and disease (the tree is repeatedly vandalized by visitors who hang objects from its boughs and take bark and branches as souvenirs), a final stay against oblivion, or of rejuvenation and rebirth, this story of the yew's sex-change reinforces one major theme that I will develop throughout this project: even the world's oldest, most iconic organisms are constantly changing under the influence of new environmental pressure, and often these changes are of the most unpredictable and inexplicable

kind, so that they require broad and fundamental reconsiderations of our normative assumptions about the "laws" that determine the biological existence of humans and other organisms. In spurring us to rethink the laws of life, these metamorphoses also encourage us to reconsider how normative assumptions about "nature" structure our political, economic, and cultural institutions, and furthermore to imagine alternative ways of thinking and living with others.

Queer Routes analyzes 20th century Anglophone novels and short stories where a character undergoes a metamorphosis because of exposure to foreign environments. Drawing on ecological and materialist feminist accounts of "queer" interactions between the human body and the nonhuman environment, I show how these metamorphoses are spatially realized as cultural and geographic border crossings, signaling an internal "crossing over" through external movement across national borders. Metamorphosis – whether the change is from a man to a woman (as in Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*),[4] from a human to a mythical figure (as in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*),[5] or from an able- to a disabled body (as in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*)[6] – involves the rehabituation of the body to a foreign, Othered natural/cultural environment; becoming *trans*national triggers a spatially-staged *trans*formation that affectively reorients the subject's embodied experience of the human and more-than-human world. The literary aesthetic of metamorphosis develops textual forms to capture the transformations both of external appearance and internal experience, often engaging with the mythical, the fantastic, and the exotic in order to resist the rational and national tendencies of realist aesthetics. Analysis of these metamorphoses reveals how these authors call into question all forms of bio-essentialist thinking, especially those associated with race, gender, sexuality, and nationality, while also showing how the more-than-human world actively spurs humans to become-other.

These transformation-inducing environments are unfamiliar to the metamorph, either because of tourism, immigration, or ecosystemic disaster. These encounters – some of which are

represented as ideal, some of which are brutally material – cause the character to change from a man into a woman, from a human into an animal or god, or from an able to a disabled body. Because of the way these metamorphoses are staged as transnational transformations, they suggest connections between *place* and *body* that, I will show, critique and provide an alternative to dominant nationalist imaginations of the embodied human subject. Metamorphosis operates as a critical performance that disrupts and deconstructs nationalized and naturalized forms of embodiment, especially those governing gender, sexuality, and race, by signifying in excess of those disciplinary forms. My analysis of the relationship between the environment and these metamorphic subjects moves from a theory of "trans-corporeal" embodiment (a term, developed by Stacy Alaimo, which articulates how the body is a porous entity that is constantly and imperceptibly exchanging matter, information, and energy with its surroundings) to a politics of nature.[7] This historical excavation of that which is supposed to be "beyond politics" challenges the legacies of sexism, heteronormativity, racism, and colonialism that have been subsumed under the sign of "nature," while highlighting the multi-scalar agency of the more-than-human world in human activity. In providing literary figurations of radical, "unnatural" change, the narratives do not exactly reject nature. Instead, they represent nature as an open, indeterminate space that overflows the narrow channels provided for "life" in the biopolitical nation state. In this way, these metamorphoses imagine trajectories towards horizons of becoming-other with unfamiliar kin.

To describe the aesthetic and political resources of literary metamorphoses, I follow a genealogy through three traditions in the 20th century Anglophone novel: queer British authors in the 20's and 30's who question sexual normativity (especially Virginia Woolf and E.M. Forster [*A Passage to India*][8]) black British writers in the 80's and 90's who question the racialization of immigrants in Thatcherite England (Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi [*The Buddha of*

Suburbia][9]), and South-Asia-based postcolonial novelists from the 90's and aughts who question colonial and national subject formation (Mahasweta Devi ["Douloti the Bountiful"][10], Amitav Ghosh [*The Calcutta Chromosome*][11], and Indra Sinha). All these writers provide a sharp critique of biopolitical nationalism and imperialism. My interpretation of this genealogy uncovers what I term "the eco-aesthetics of metamorphosis," a literary-aesthetic mode which undermines normative biologism, the belief that there is a biological essence or kernel that determines "natural" social relations. Further, this eco-aesthetic outlines new forms of "trans" subjectivities that are distributed across time, space, and multiple bodies, human and nonhuman, individual and collective. Tracing the genealogy of metamorphosis through these three apparently remote traditions will show how, throughout the twentieth century, novelists represent the metamorphic body against a backdrop of political transformation, as processes of nation and empire alter and are altered by global shifts in power and production. Rather than a simple macro/microcosmic relationship between the nation and the body, these texts demonstrate how the body functions as the very site where abstract global politics become particular and material.

Metamorphosis as a theme is associated with certain *temporal modes*, *configurations of the body/environment relationship (embodiment*), and *inter-species kinship structures*. Temporally, metamorphosis moves relentlessly forward in time; the metamorphoses I discuss here are not reversible, and past forms are thoroughly irrecoverable. In this way, narratives of metamorphosis can both produce and criticize pastoral nostalgia – often at the same time. The temporality of metamorphosis is therefore immersed in history but also open to an unpredictable futurity. These metamorphoses all result from the human subject contacting an environmental "trigger," and therefore suggest a configuration of the human body that is constantly influenced by more-than-human forces. In this way, these stories demonstrate the human subject is not the master of its embodied self. In my archive, the influence of these environmental forces is sometimes

represented as ideal/aesthetic, and sometimes represented as physical/material, a result of the body's trans-corporeal exposure to an environment full of toxic risks and also unpredictable allies. This receptiveness to environmental influence is the residue of the animal in the human, or more accurately a way of showing how the very concept of "the human" works to erect conceptual barriers, not only between human and non-human organisms, but between humanity and a relentless process of becoming-other. This speaks to the third element of metamorphosis, which is the way that these embodied transformations enact certain types of kinship between human subjects and the more-than-human world. Human experience is shown to be one way among many others of perceiving and acting within the world, and the differences between human and animal abilities are differences of degree as opposed to differences of kind. Even more, humanity is shown to be thoroughly interpenetrated with more-than-human organisms and entities, so that instead of transcending the natural world, narratives of metamorphosis emphasize how humanity is entangled in those complex materialities, and that the only way to a better future is through immersion in these networks, not transcendence.

My theoretical approach of these three dimensions of metamorphosis – temporal, somatic, and social – is heavily influenced by the work of feminist theorists and ecocritics who have brought Charles Darwin's theory of evolution of to bear on political ecologies and material ontologies. The ideas out of feminist theory that most central to *Queer Routes* are Donna Haraway's multi-species "string figures,"[12] Catherine Malabou's deconstructive ontology of "destructive plasticity,"[13] and Stacy Alaimo's "trans-corporeality." From ecocriticism, I engage Timothy Morton's aesthetic theories regarding "ecorhapsody,"[14] Rob Nixon's environmental justice concept "slow violence,"[15] and also Mel Chen's post-humanist politics of "animacy."[16] I will define all of these concepts over the course of this introduction, but for now I want to

emphasize how bringing these two overlapping theoretical fields together helps an anti-essentialist and metamorphic conception of the embodied subject

In this Introduction, I survey of Western cultural histories of metamorphosis, and also consider how metamorphosis can provide useful figures for contemporary discussions of nationalism, biopolitics, and queer ecology. I begin with analyzing the ontological bases for metamorphosis in the classical, biblical, and science fiction literary traditions, before situating my twentieth-century archive as enacting a return to nature that is sometimes pastoral and sometimes radically material. I then turn to biopolitical theory to discuss how narratives of metamorphosis can both reinscribe and intervene against nationalist conceptions of the racialized subject in their representations of the body/environment relationship. Particularly important to my analysis are elaborations of biopolitical theory by theorists in black studies and postcolonial ecology, as they point the way towards a materialist understanding of "nature" that can attend to the way the concept works simultaneously as an ideological formation for controlling the racialized subject and also a key materialist ontology that can provide grounded responses to global domination. It is here where queer ecology can be particularly useful because of its anti-foundational approach to subjectivity and its commitment to discovering and cultivating forms of kinship that might provide alternatives to the heteronormative, racist, and nationalist forms sanctioned by the biopolitical state. I identify three dimensions of the queer that inform my theoretical framework: the anti-heteronormative, the deconstructive, and the ecological. To close, I provide a short description of each chapter.

Metamorphosis: Definitions, Ontologies, Histories

With a word like "metamorphosis" that refers to the *process* of change as opposed to any particular instantiation of form, the definition of the word is itself a moving target and subject to

contextual interpretation. The ambiguities and contradictions in the term are obvious when looking at its multiple denotations. "Metamorphosis" combines the prefix *μετα-* (change) with the gerund noun *μòρφσις* (shaping, giving shape to). The OED distinguishes between three different Senses of the word. Sense 1 defines the word as "the action or process of changing in form, shape, or substance; *esp*. a transformation by supernatural means." This "supernatural" diagnosis of the agent stands in contrast to Sense 3, which defines metamorphosis in reference to biology and biochemistry, as "change in the form of an animal (or plant) in its post-embryonic development" (such as the development of tadpoles into frogs). Metamorphosis refers to both a violation of the laws of nature and the most basic operations of life and matter. My study analyzes both fantastical transformations that obviously and deliberately violate rational scientific ontologies – such as Orlando's spontaneous transformation from man to woman in Woolf, or Saladin Chamcha's metamorphosis into a demonic satyr in Rushdie – and ones that are the result of biochemical processes – such as the mutations of "bio-gothic" monsters caused by exposure to pathogens or toxins in novels by Mahasweta Devi, Amitav Ghosh, and Indra Sinha. (As I will discuss later in this Introduction, this transition in aesthetics, from fantasy and magical realism to realism, is an important movement that this project tracks as it proceeds from Europe to South Asia, traversing the postcolonial divide in its final chapter.) Sense 2 of metamorphosis brings in another dimension of metamorphosis: while Sense 1 or 3 refer to actual instances of radical change, this Sense applies to metaphorical uses of the term: "A complete change in the appearance, circumstances, condition, or character of a person, state of affairs, etc." This Sense refers to examples where it is *as if* there was some atypical and fundamental change in an individual or situation that constitutes a radical, unexpected break with a previous instantiation. My study also examines several novels (such as E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India* and Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*) featuring characters that undergo this

kind of *metaphorical* metamorphosis, radically redefining themselves through fashion, cuisine, art, and other new adventures. By bringing these different modes of metamorphosis – fantastic, realistic, and figurative – into relief with each other, I show how these narratives desire, celebrate, and tremble before the *possibility for* and the *process of* radical change.

So, with metamorphosis being such "an expansive and hence fuzzy category,"[17] what distinguishes typical, everyday changes (*Wandel*) from transformative change (*Verwandlung*)?[18] This is not so much a question of semantics as one of ontology. Metamorphosis must appear exceptional; it must seem to violate "the norm," a hazy and shifting concept that can only be loosely defined in specific historico-cultural contexts. In the introduction to their edited collection *Transformative Change in Western Thought*, Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zizzos contend, "In the Western cultural tradition, prejudices against marvelous transformation (and its treatment in literature and art) run deep, as metamorphosis has routinely functioned as the alien other of various norms and systems of belief."[19] And yet even as metamorphosis has been imaginatively marginalized into this exotic, other space where the typical rules of scientific rationality, realist aesthetics, and essentialist notions of identity are conditionally suspended, stories of miraculous transformation saturate the many different intellectual tributaries of the modern West. Gildenhard and Zizzos describe "three formative configurations" of metamorphic figures in Western cultural history: "the classical, the biblical, and the scientific."[20] Each of these traditions works through a different ontological configuration of the relationship between the material, corporeal body and its "form" (a body's articulation within a social field of meaning). The authors oppose the ontologies of classical versions of metamorphosis, such as those in Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, with biblical variants like transubstantiation, metempsychosis, rapture, and resurrection. In classical metamorphosis, in the movement from the previous term (*mutandum*) to the latter form (*mutatum*), there is continuity in terms of body/substance but a

change in form.[21] Inversely, in Christian biblical tradition matter is irrelevant and can be sloughed off, but the *soul* is eternal.[22] Despite these opposing configurations, in both cases a fundamental, irreducible, and unchanging essence persists through metamorphosis and assures continuity – for classical metamorphosis, this continuous term is an affective, material charge, whereas for biblical tradition it is the definitionally-immaterial human soul. As I will discuss later in this section, the narratives in my archive represent *nature itself* as the continuous term that carries through a character's metamorphosis, an object of continuity that is also paradoxically a catalyst for incessant change.

As the human capacity to understand and transform the more-than-human environment expanded with the development of science (particularly the life sciences) and new technologies, certain thinkers began to imagine metamorphoses that were determined not by the obscure will of some divine force, but rather by human need. Francis Bacon's *The New Atlantis* (1626) imagines a utopian island where advances in science and technology have given humans the godlike power to transform animals, plants, and the elements according to their will.[23] Bacon's narrative reflects the wonder, ambition, and anxieties associated with Western technological advancement; this combination of fascination and horror at these newfound metamorphic capacities of techno-science appear again almost two centuries later in Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley's *Frankenstein: or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818, 1821).[24] This scientifically-inflected reinvention of the Prometheus myth (one of the stories featured in Ovid's epic) prompts questions about the ethics of gaining control over the principle of life, and of taking on the godlike power of transforming human bodies into supernatural/unnatural hybrids. (Dr. Frankenstein assembles his creature not just of organs from human corpses, but also from matter he collects from the slaughterhouse.) *Frankenstein* problematizes what *The New Atlantis*

celebrates, this god-like/god-given power of the human over matter itself, a capacity that proceeds from human domain over all the material things on earth, even the human body.

It is exactly this sense of a purposeful force behind the emergence of the human as a distinct, exceptional category that gets called into question by Darwin's theories of evolution and natural selection, which he first publishes in *On the Origin of Species* (1859) and further develops in his *The Descent of Man* (1871).[25] Nature, after Darwin, no longer appeared to be a hierarchical chain of being carefully composed by a creator figure, but a vast and dispersed network where different organisms are qualitatively differentiated from each other, but also originally entangled with each other: strange kin. Mutation, instead of being simply an aberrant instance of monstrosity, a "mistake of nature," is revealed to be the singular driving force behind the emergence of all species – including, obviously, man. *Life is transformation. To fail to change, to endlessly repeat the same from generation to generation, is to ensure extinction*. Even more, these changes are random, and the success of one change or the other depends far more on the environment than on the individual subject. There seemed no end to the humiliations that evolutionary theory had in store for Man – something Darwin himself was quite aware of, as he held off publishing his research for over a decade. However, even as Darwinism toppled the idols of Western humanism, his work also inspired new theories and methods of how to raise (Western, white) Man up to new apogees of power, achievement, and being.

While Darwin's theories of evolution disqualify any sense of divine purposiveness behind the natural development of species, insisting that the emergence of advantageous inheritable traits is random, his theories were soon picked up by intellectuals, artists, and policy makers who speculated on how genetics could be harnessed as a tool to effect beneficial transformations to human society through improvement of the human body. In this way, humans began to regard their bodies as a kind of "livestock" that could be manipulated through

the widespread domestication method of selective breeding.[26] Proponents of eugenics ("the science of improving stock," as its founder Francis Galton called it) worked through a metamorphic imagination as they theorized methods to deploy techno-science and public health policy to take control of sexual selection to improve the quality of a nation/race's human biopower. Although much work has been done on the eugenic programs of Germany's Third Reich, eugenic ideas also gained purchase in England. Eugenicist notions of *man* and *woman*, and also of masculinity and femininity (terms that refer to the *essential nature* of each sex), circulated in widely in English intellectual and popular culture during the interwar period. These constructions place a cluster of gendered demands to each sex, most of which spoke to the individual's responsibility to the nuclear family and, by extension, the nation. Women must be chaste, nurturing, obedient, and emotional; men virile, resilient, authoritative, and rational. Only the best specimens of the national "body" should take be allowed to take part in reproduction, and in this way a better form Englishness will emerge.

In addition to eugenics' emphasis on sexual difference and discipline, this pseudo-science takes the relationship between race and nation as a given. Eugenic discourse represents the body as a material extension of the motherland, a primal spiritual link that binds people to the soil upon which they were born. This sense of *rootedness* in the domestic territory that is simultaneously material and transcendent becomes the conceptual foundation for Western modern national identity. For instance, Rupert Brooke's famous WWI poem "The Soldier" (1915) begins, "If I should die, think only this of me: / That there is some corner of some foreign field / That is forever England."[27] The Englishman's body is represented as specially equipped to resist the many triggers of metamorphosis of identity and being that the colonies pose; even over multiple generations, the English body refuses to adapt to these new surroundings, to "go native" while habituating in a foreign natural/cultural environment. Even

more, the male English body has the power to transform the land itself, as contact with English blood can transform a foreign environment incorporating it into material and semiotic colonial networks. Englishmen don't transform *in* foreign lands, they *transform* foreign lands, always retaining their mastery over the feminized natives and natures they encounter in the colonies. Metamorphosis is both a fear and a fantasy, the end (in both senses of the word) of imperial authority. There is a strong pastoral element to eugenic discourse in England, idealizing the hearty and unsullied "stock" of the countryside by opposing it to the squalor of the urban mass. In a twentieth-century revitalization of the Romantic rural escape, this return to the countryside was supposed to fortify the national body in order to restore the national spirit. This is the domestic side of the global metamorphic imagination at work in Brooke's poem; the countryside is cast as a wellspring of national identity, a fountain of youth for a decaying nation and empire.

The metamorphic imagination of eugenics, which imagines how techno-science might change the human, also can be seen in the growing popularity and prominence of science fiction literature, which both consolidated and diversified as a genre during the *fin de siècle* and into the twentieth century. Eugenic visions are ubiquitous in early sci-fi. H.G. Welles's *The Time Machine* (1896) depicts a future world where human beings, because of their differing labor conditions, have mutated into two entirely different species, one sub-terrestrial and predatory, the other the airy intellectual prey.[28] Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* (1928) famously opens in a bottling plant that conditions fetuses to be more excellently fitted into their pre-determined societal/labor niche.[29] In these utopian/dystopian visions (the difference between the two being more one of perspective than of content) the body was a problem to be solved through infrastructure and public policy, a powerful tool waiting to be unleashed in order to more fully secure man's dominion over and desire for nature. With the rise of cinema after World War II, especially (but not exclusively) in the United States and Hollywood, science fiction cinema soon

became one of the primary cultural spaces to consider the transformative effects of new scientific technologies on bodies, with films that weigh the ethics of atomic weapons (Ishirō Honda's *Godzilla* [1954],[30] Roger Corman's *The Day the World Ended* [1955],[31] Franklin Schaffner's *The Planet of the Apes* [1968][32]), genetic engineering (David Cronenberg's *The Fly* [1986],[33] Stephen Spielberg's *Jurassic Park* [1993],[34] John Frankenheimer's *The Island of Dr. Moreau* [1996][35]), and cybernetics (Ridley Scott's *Blade Runner* [1982],[36] James Cameron's *Terminator* series [1984,[37] 1991],[38] Paul Verhoeven's *RoboCop* [1987][39]). In general, these films represented the new forms of being created by these revolutionary sciences as monstrous and hostile to human life, a retelling of the Frankenstein myth, but with varying degrees of sympathy and redemption towards this new creation. Many of these films express the in the impulse to create "Humanity 2.0," as Gildenhard and Zizzos put it, the next version of the human that has through the power of technology further transcended our terrestrial, enfleshed limitations. Beyond Hollywood cinema, many different offshoots of science fiction literature flowed forth during the course of the twentieth century, from pulp and "hard" sci-fi to science fiction written by feminists and people of color (such as Margaret Atwood, Ursula Le Guin, Octavia Butler, and Nnedi Okrafor). Through these different permutations, science fiction is shown to be ideologically flexible and ontologically resourceful, a space where the relationship between the body, technology, and politics may be interrogated and reimagined. It can be said that science fiction is a genre that is fundamentally invested in metamorphosis because of the way it imagines how life can be radically changed. This cursory history further demonstrates how science fiction can be quite politically ambiguous, providing resources for every agenda, from the most fascist to the most anarchist, to imagine how technology could be leveraged to create different bodies and worlds.

While science fiction's dictum to imagine other worlds is certainly one of its greatest aesthetic and political resources, it also is perhaps its greatest limitation, forever cast to the edges

of our ontological reality and therefore sealed off in a speculative, utopian bubble (though, of course, many science fiction texts find ways to penetrate and problematize this separation between fiction and reality). There is also in science fiction the constant threat of technophilia-induced blindness, the idea that through the power of technology, humanity has mastered and transcended the non-human, and the very Promethean power over life has been wrested from the gods by our knowledge and machines. In contrast to the history of metamorphosis in science fiction, where a body's transformation is either the fruit or curse of one's scientific intervention into (and therefore one's removal from) nature, the metamorphoses I examine here are triggered by a character's immersion in nature. These narratives present themselves in some relation to realism, either by conforming to realist aesthetic conventions or through imagining different modes of magical realism, which describe the obviously implausible events of their plot using the resources of realism. The only text I analyze here that corresponds more to the science fiction tradition is Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*, a novel that both imagines an alternative, technologically-advanced future and rewrites scientific history (specifically, the history of the discovery of malaria); I admit Ghosh's novel into this archive because of the way that it actively critiques both official histories of science and the archive of science fiction, describing itself as an example of "counter-science" fiction. This tradition has something in common with the myths of the classical era, only without the explanation of divine will – there is no god to blame for Gregor Samsa's transformation into a giant cockroach.[40] Indeed, the novels I examine here should be thought of descendants of Franz Kafka's surrealism because they describe transformation as a process that happens spontaneously, driven by obscure causes rather than rational human will. These opacity of these metamorphoses makes it a complicated and ultimately fruitless process to diagnose the exact chain of cause and effect. That difficulty is

the point: the novels in my archive will often ascribe the cause of these metamorphoses to that most capacious and protean of signifiers, "nature."

This desire to move away from science and return to nature expresses itself in various ways in different historical contexts. But in both the modernist and contemporary novels that I study, nature is no longer figured as a pastoral source of simplicity, stability, and law, but rather a dynamic and densely interconnected network that is constantly changing on both on the individual and ecosystemic level. The influence of Darwin's evolutionary theory is clear: nature, which operates both "out there" in the environment and "inside" the embodied subject, is represented as a transformative force, constantly pushing subjects beyond their bounds. At the same time, particularly in the modernist texts but also in the Thatcherite novels from my archive, nature is paradoxically fetishized as an object of continuity that carries through the metamorphosis from *mutandum* to *mutatum*. Even the postcolonial texts I interpret, which put forth a much more material and anti-idealist conception of nature, are deeply invested in the way humans are bound to the past through their more-than-human surroundings. These novels incorporate bio-gothic aesthetic tropes emphasize the way that certain ecotones remain haunted by the toxic materials and ideologies of neo-colonial extraction. Even though they openly critique concepts of nature that came out of Western environmentalism, showing how they can readily be turned into tools for oppression and control when translated across divides of class, race, and nation, they also constantly turn back to the human/non-human relationship as the necessary starting point for any effective, "bottom-up" response to these forms of domination.

Orientalism, Race, and Nationalism

Despite their ambivalence toward English nationalism and their reputations as modern urban authors because of their participation in Bloomsbury art and politics, both Woolf and

Forster indulge in idealizing the English countryside – in *Orlando*, for instance, the titular character reclines beneath an oak on his/her ancestral country house and feels as if he/she is riding atop the world; or in the queer romance *Maurice*, the virile working-class love interest Alec Scudder first emerges as if by magic from a hedge of dog-roses, a varietal native to the British Isles. These scenes describe the rural English *locale* as infused with an essential energy that links race with place, a harmony between the nation's native bodies and its (pastoral) environments that emits the aesthetic quality of Englishness; the musical metaphor is deliberate here, as both the novels here deploy aural configurations to suggest an original "attunement" between English blood and soil. Englishness as a *race* seems to generate from historically marked *places*; in this imagination, the Englishman's body (which in Brooke's poem was resilient against and held agency over foreign lands) is uniquely receptive to the beneficial transformative effects of its native habitat.

Even as Woolf and Forster establish their continuity with national history by fetishizing these auratic domestic *locales*, their fictions also cast "the Orient" (a problematically universal concept that held tremendous cultural cache in interwar England) as a place where one's identity as a modern, Western subject could be destabilized and revitalized through contact with some original, primitive essence. Whether it is Orlando gazing over the Thessalian Hills, or Mrs. Quested dis*oriented* within the echo-chamber of the Marabar Caves, English characters come to reconsider their entire world view because of their exchanges with these lands, which are always represented as possessing some ancient, original, or otherwise primitive energy that is at once totally foreign and deeply familiar, an *unheimlich* recognition. ("The horror! The horror!")[41] My discussion of these transformative trigger moments argues that these representation of the Orient are both symptom and function of a colonial culture where non-European lands and bodies are seen as natural resources that may be freely appropriated by the well-equipped

European colonialist. There is a pronounced pastoral element to their representations of the landscapes of Turkey and India; these places are figured as political and historical retreats where the pettiness of Western modernity drowns within reservoirs of ancient-but-unspeakable wisdom. Although these places are described as somehow "beyond" politics – in fact, *because* they represented as such – these representations of the Eastern landscape require a politicized reading that considers the global conditions enabling their production. The (assumed) authority to represent and speak for the East, especially when the message is that the East is unrepresentable or unspeakable, depends upon geopolitical configurations that enable certain types of movement while restricting others. Both Woolf and Forster traveled widely throughout the Middle East and Asia, these journeys made possible not just by personal wealth but often by colonial institutions of governance and war. And indeed, their travels in the East proved to be quite important to their personal and artistic development (particularly in the case of Forster, whose first adult homosexual experience occurs on the beach of Alexandria, Egypt where he was stationed with the RAF during World War I). These authors' representations of these transformative exotic locales must therefore be thought of in relation to colonial biopolitics, which carries with it certain configurations of place and race, often under the sign of "nation."

The belief among the English that they can understand, appropriate, or otherwise control the Oriental other as part of a national birthright crumbed in the aftermath of World War II and independence movements throughout the former colonies. With Britain's global influence severely diminished in this new world order, and with shifts in the national populace's ethnic make-up because of post-War immigration, Englishness as an identity-granting essence had to be remapped. Great Britain initially adopted an open-door policy for Commonwealth subjects in the years after the war from 1948-1961. Diasporic postcolonial subjects came from across a world where, for more than a century, a British sun had never set. Famously, the *Empire*

Windrush brought 492 Caribbean islanders to Tilbury in 1948.[42] The global tides had shifted, with "Jamaica people colonizin / Englan in Reverse," as West Indian poet Louise Bennett Coverly (1966) puts it.[43] During this "honeymoon" decade, tens of thousands colonial subjects immigrated to the Isles. Through the latter-half of the twentieth century, Conservative and Labour policy makers instituted increasingly stringent and racist immigration and citizenship laws. (Even with these measures, the populace of England and Great Britain more largely had forever changed. The number of non-white residents in the Isles grew from around 30,000 in 1945 to over three million by the end of the century. [44]) A sequence of legislation redefined *Englishness* and *Britishness* as fundamentally grounded in specific partial linages (or, to be more direct, in *white* lineages) instead of in auratic *locales*. As immigration and naturalization policies like the 1962 Commonwealth Immigration Act, the 1971 Immigration Bill, and, most dramatically, the 1981 British Nationality Act moved the basis for British citizenship from birthplace (*ius soli*) to (racialized) blood (*ius sanguinis*), the English countryside lost its imagined ability to transform its inhabitants into Englishmen or Englishwomen.

Despite these efforts to consolidate English national identity with white racial identity, new generations of non-white subjects who had either been born in England or immigrated there at a young age began to articulate new, hybrid identities that were grounded in the cosmopolitan environments of the nation's urban centers, particularly London. Chapter three of this project looks at representations of members of this generation in novels by Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi. While racist immigration and citizenship laws had tried to fortify the link between Englishness and particular (white) genetic inheritances, the characters of Mishal and Anahita Sufyan in *The Satanic Verses* and Karim Amir in *The Buddha of Suburbia* show how Englishness is constantly remade within these transformative national urban environments. I argue that this reemphasis on the *places* of Englishness over the *racial content* of Englishness – a

return to *ius soli* – can be understood as a movement from a *genetic* formation of the subject to an *epigenetic* formation. Epigenetics, which describes how genetic content can be differently activated or even altered by environmental influences, can be leveraged to work against the racist and genetically-essentialist logics of national biopolitics. These novels represent the younger, rising generation of second-generation immigrants as filled with hybrid vigor and well-attuned to the dynamic, shifting influences of the late-century urban environment. While racist policy makers and provocateurs sought to demonize these immigrants – a desire that gets literalized with Saladin Chamcha's transformation into a devil in *The Satanic Verses* – these novels show how these characters, because of their adaptability, actually bear the potential to reinvigorate and redeem Englishness in a new multicultural/multiethnic world.

Biopolitics and Postcolonial Ecology

To this point I have discussed biopolitics in mainly in terms of national and gender identity in England – two super-structural ideologies that channel racialized subjects into particular reservoirs of reproductive biopower. Even with Rushdie and Kureishi, there is a strong emphasis on trans-national and diasporic identity within England, where metamorphoses are mainly allegorical or stylistic. In contrast, my final chapter focuses more on the material and economic aspects of contemporary trans-national biopolitics in describing the function of metamorphosis in what I call the "postcolonial bio-gothic." The South Asian novelists I study blend gothic and realist aesthetics to represent how global systems of value-extraction mutilate or otherwise transform the bodies of subaltern subjects though the power of debt, techno-scientific appropriation, and toxic outsourcing. These abject bodies are sites where neocolonial political economies become biological.

In this way my project joins in ongoing revisions of biopolitical theory that seek to more accurately describe the relationship between the bio-social formations of race the extractive economies of (neo)colonialism. "Biopolitics" describes the historical and contemporary processes through which the nation-state has taken biological life itself as its object. Michel Foucault, who developed this term, argues that under the biopolitical regimes of the modern West, the "mechanisms" of life are exposed to "explicit calculations" in order to be transformed into "knowledge power."[45] Biopolitical theory interprets identity categories – especially categories like nationality and race – as *effects* and *disciplinary features* of the structures of power, as opposed to root causes or stabilizing forms. Following Foucault, Giorgio Agamben argues that "politics in our age [has] been entirely transformed into biopolitics" because both totalitarian and democratic governments have taken the "care of life" as their ultimate aim – a care so absolute that it assumes the right to sacrifice an individual life if it can improve the life of the nation, the life of the race, or simply "life" in the abstract.[46] Beyond granting death, the biopolitical nation-state also develops methods to control life, promoting the continuance of forms of being that are perceived to be beneficial to the national *corpus*. Politics no longer is simply a function of the legislature/sovereign, the police, or the army; sovereignty extends into many different cultural institutions and conscripts such professionals as "the doctor, the scientist, the expert, and the priest" to mold life into its most beneficial forms.[47] Agamben contends that within modern biopolitics, it is "as if race were a simple natural given that had to be safeguarded. *The novelty of modern biopolitics lies in the fact that the biological given is as such immediately political and the political as such is immediately the biological given*."[48] Politics declares itself to be "natural" through reference to biology, while at the same time the biological is taken as the "given" through correspondence with the institutional structures of the nation state. By referencing biology, nation-state biopolitics naturalizes race in order to "ground" the discourse

in the places of nation. This construction obfuscates the fact that race is first and foremost a socio-cultural construction – one that heavily influenced the historical development of those very life sciences that are then marshaled to discuss "natural" or "inherent" racial differences. Confirmation bias runs rampant in discourses of biological race.

Several theorists out of postcolonial and black studies have amended Foucault and Agamben's definitions of biopolitics to more accurately describe the role of colonialism and racial difference in these modes of sovereignty. Achilles Mbembe puts forth the concept of "necropolitics" in part to correct what he sees as the major flaw in biopolitics as described by Foucault and Agamben, specifically, a tendency to focus on the ways the nation-state has tried to promote certain forms of life instead of attending to the way that the global order depends upon "the creation of *death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to the conditions of life conferring on them the status of *living-dead."* Though the death-worlds of necropolitics are certainly dehumanizing locations, either converting its inhabitants to the "raw material" of slave labor or by killing them outright, that does not mean that they cannot also be places of life, change, and resistance. The final chapter of this dissertation analyzes the metamorphoses of characters that struggle to survive within these death-worlds of South Asia, such as disease-riddled brothels and environments made permanently toxic by industrial disaster. Novels by Devi, Ghosh, and Sinha document destructive extractive economies, systems with historical roots in British colonial administration that have adapted to and flourished within the postcolonial independent state. They show the cost to bodies, human and non-human alike, of colonial legacies like debt (especially with the bond-slavery system known as *kamiya*), extractive science, and environmental disaster (like the Bhopal chemical disaster of 1984). In this way, the novels respond to the crisis of representation that Rob Nixon describes in his *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor*, specifically the

challenge of representing processes of "slow violence," where destruction is not event-bound but is rather distributed over time and space.[49]

These killing places of necropolitics are not the "end" of politics, but instead where politics and resistance become material within the bodies of these subjects who are forever kept outside the human community. To describe the political ecology of these places, I turn to Alexander Weheliye's critiques of bare life and biopolitics, which he believes "are in dire need of recalibration" because both of these discourses, in their search for "absolute biological matter," fail to account for "how profoundly race and racism shapes the modern idea of the human."[50] Weheliye proposes replacing the term "habeas corpus" ("you shall have the body") to "habeas viscus" ("you shall have the flesh"); by turning shifting the term from *body* to *flesh* Weheliye draws attention to "how violent political domination activates a fleshy surplus," and in so doing he recognizes "the social (after)life" of biopolitics and bare life.[51] This project joins in Weheliye's goals to understand biopolitical formations as thoroughly interpenetrated and historically informed by racist, racializing discourses, as well as his aspiration to show how political domination is never totalized, since life will still persist and seek new ways of becoming. As the biopolitical nation state attempts to reduce both human and non-human bodies to pure data for its administrative calculations, the fact of the flesh – which reminds us how the body is contingent, specific, plastic, and irruptive – becomes an irreducible problem, a horizon of hegemony. The metamorphic bodies of the postcolonial bio-gothic act out their material and ideological entanglements with their environment. If biopolitics attempts to transcend race to find a purely biological basis for the social, these metamorphoses demonstrate the impossibility of understanding the biological without recourse to racialized conceptions of the body, as well as of the body/environment relationship. Interpreting these metamorphoses as instantiations of "habeas viscus" highlights how these transformations open up a space for improvisational social

and political responses to domination; while the metamorphic subject does not "escape" these institutional machineries, his or her methods for survival and perseverance should be understood as expressions of agency and resistance even if he or she remains "within" these formations. It is in this lived, political response to biopolitical domination where the *critical* aspect of these fleshy metamorphoses can be observed, as these figures demonstrate the unjust histories, metaphysical ontologies, racist hierarchies, and static temporalities that underpin the political *status quo*.

Queer Ecologies

One recent movement within critical theory in which my project has strong investment is the (still-in-process) synthesis of queer theory with ecocriticism. Both of these theoretical fields grew alongside social and political movements (women's/gay liberation and environmentalism, respectively), a co-development of theory and praxis. Though these two bodies of theory have several similar methods and goals, there are also numerous points of tension. Queer theory drew heavily from poststructuralist theory, with many of its innovators such as Gayle Rubin, Judith Butler, Eve Kosofsky Sedgewick, and Leigh Edelman theorizing ontologies of anti-essentialism and performativity. In contrast, much of early environmental criticism positioned itself as an alternative to postmodern skepticism and the textual turn in critical theory. Ecocritics like Lawrence Buell and Jonathan Bate theorized and modeled hermeneutics that sought out how the non-human world played a role in human cultural production. These were in many ways positivist hermeneutics that believe in the power of discourse to make the environment "present" in an essential way (whereas postmodernist hermeneutics would likely dismiss such discourse as purely surface illusion, a bit of kitsch to serve Roland Barthes' "reality effect").[52] While it would seem that queer theory and ecocriticism

were therefore on profoundly different theoretical trajectories, subsequent developments in each of these bodies of thought created opportunities for confluence and overlap. Ecocriticism and the environmental movement in general became the target of critiques that it inherently favored a white, male, heterosexual, and able-bodied subject, and a new wave of theory came forth to deconstruct this subject and discover new ontological bases for the human/non-human relationship. On the other side, a material turn in feminist and queer theory demanded that writers and activists return to the flesh and confront what Linda Birke calls "the ghost of biology" by developing a corporeal theory that can provide an alternative to hegemonic patriarchal understandings of the body.[53] While these two schools of theory have by no means come to total accordance, as each has diversified and expanded in a variety of intersectional directions, exciting new work is coming out that simultaneously provides historically-informed deconstructions of identity-formation and attends to the irreducible agency of the more-than-human material world (including the human body, itself a vast and dense network of organisms).[54] My project's methodology has been inspired by many of these queer and feminist ecotheorists, who provide several useful interpretive strategies and ontological formations to analyze how these narratives engage with normative notions of embodiment and environment.

The term *queer* has three interrelated dimensions for this project. On one hand, I use it to discuss lesbian, gay, bisexual, or trans subjects. This is a prominent theme in Woolf, Forster, and Kureishi, who imagine characters who subvert normative gender roles and sexual expectations. Their narratives challenge disciplinary, heteronormative notions of the natural that are used to extract reproductive biopower from citizens and also to buttress racialized conceptions of the national subject. These novels feature storylines enacting the processes through which normative bourgeois family structures narrow possibilities for erotic experience and self-discovery. These are the bounds that the metamorphoses hope to exceed – borders drawn by imagined

geographies, as well as certain conceptions of the English body, the nation's "constitution." In the novels from my archive, this English continence seems more like English closed-mindedness that dulls the mind and deadens the spirit. To break out of these bounds, these authors imagine a kind of queer environmentalism, depicting characters that "tap into" or "harmonize with" an energy within nature that overflows the narrow channels of the English state. Nature, these authors show through these stories, is queer to its roots, and the queer subject is therefore specially tuned to this wavelength, in large part because of his or her willingness to go beyond nationalist forms of embodiment. Those unknown exotic spaces that had been perceived as threats within the racialized affective economy of Englishness become instead objects and trajectories of desire. For the modernists, Woolf and Forster, the "other space" is the Orient; for Kureishi, it is a psychic, spiritual space that can be accessed through consumption of sex, drugs, music, and other commodities. This desire for transformation through spiritual transcendence in Kureishi is in many ways a rearticulation of the Orientalist impulse. The Orient enables a certain queer imagination. Because of this, queerness as a historical formation can and should be excavated for the ways in which the queer subject (and, especially for this study, the queer environmental subject) still bears ties to the cultural, juridical, economic and political institutions of the colonial nation-state.

In addition to analyzing the twentieth-century history of queer subjectivity, I also draw on authors who have theorized the power of "queer" as a deconstructive hermeneutic. In tension with the historical forms of queerness that claim a foundational harmony with a nature that is inherently and originally queer, this application of the term *queer* specifically critiques essentialism, the belief that surfaces and subjects are produced by some positivist kernel. In opposition to Heideggerian ontologies of presence and human exceptionalism, this concept of the queer regards any claim to "the natural" with profound postmodern skepticism, even when

those conceptions of the natural are sympathetic to non-hetero forms of sexuality. For this school, there is no "outside" politics, no "before" interpretation, no "under" surfaces. Whatever forms of harmony with nature these novelists evoke between queer characters and the nonhuman environment is only an effect of discourse, not something that is "really" there to ontologically ground the subject in a "better" nature. Timothy Morton brings a necessary, but perhaps overly caustic, dose of poststructuralist rigor in diagnosing "ecomimetic" discourse in literature and other mediums in his *Ecology Without Nature*. As an analytic, the concept of ecomimesis deconstructs Heidegger's metaphysics of presence, which imagines that human language is somehow specially endowed to capture the *wesen* of a certain environment, that "beyond that is also right here."[55] This negative dialectic reads descriptions of the environment as reflecting the desires of projective subject instead of a deeper environmental truth. As an "intense and specific form of ecomimesis," "ecorhapsody" is a "reading of the book of nature" by a poet (which Morton, after Plato, calls a *rhapsode*) who experiences "an invasion of divine madness. […] The mind lets go while the body takes over."[56] The ecorhapsode feels the environment occupy her like a spirit or drug – or at least that's the methodology the text uses to create the *effect* of the environment. Reading this animating energy as an effect conjured by ecorhapsodic discourse, rather than a driving cause of it, opens up political readings that deconstruct problematic notions of an innate "harmony" between the body and its environment. In place of the problematic positivist conceptions of nature that have typically operated within ecocritique, Morton proposes what he calls "dark ecology," which embraces "a dark side [of ecology] embodied not in a hippie aesthetic of life over death, or a sadistic-sentimental Bambification of sentient beings, but in a 'goth' assertion of the contingent and necessarily queer idea that we want to stay with a dying world." Morton's theories therefore provide methods to critique some of the idealist notions of nature at work in Woolf and Forster – especially those

that seek to "naturalize nation" through ecorhapsodic encounters with the other – and also to begin to chart some new spaces for post-humanist collectivity.

The third and final dimension of the "queer," what I call the "ecological queer," is that developed by queer ecotheorists such as Mel Chen, Anna Tsing, and Donna Haraway. Whereas deconstructive queerness has little truck with nature except as an object to be demystified, the ecological queer instead highlights how humanity has always been and continues to be bound up in kinship structures with the more-than-human world. This is not postmodern nihilism, but rather a grounded and materialist political community, what Haraway calls a "Terrapolis": a collective political subjectivity that "exists in the SF web of always-too-much connection, where response-ability must be cobbled together, not in the existentialist and bond-less, lonely, Man-making gap theorized by Heidegger and his followers," but rather "in place" with "space for unexpected companions," or "oddkin."[57] In my final chapter discussing bio-gothic aesthetics in South Asian postcolonial fiction, I show how narratives of metamorphosis enact Haraway's concept of Terrapolis by tracing multispecies "string figures." For example, Sinha's *Animal's People* features a scene where Animal, who must walk on all fours due to mutations caused by exposure to industrial chemicals, encounters a lizard during a drug trip. In "speaking" to the lizard Animal comes to understand the two as bound in mutual precarity, a condition that Tsing argues characterizes the lives and deaths of all creatures today.[58] (The lizard promises to lay her eggs in Animal's chest after his death, turning him into an environment.) These scenes of improvised, multi-directional interactions with the nonhuman world are unpredictable and often hazardous, as when the subaltern characters in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* willingly expose themselves to malaria as part of a transmigratory ritual. I describe these risky, but potentially transformative acts, as "material ecorhapsody," a way of "tapping into" the nonhuman world that stands in sharp contrast to the idealist forms of ecorhapsody in modernist

texts. The bodies of the "monsters" of these bio-gothic texts function as a site where seemingly-abstract and immaterial global flows of ideas, goods, data, and people become brutally material. They give material form to slow violence. In this way, these characters who suffer mutilating metamorphoses are also key subjects for new, "bottom-up" collective political responses to these systems of injustice *because of* their queer embodied knowledges. The postcolonial bio-gothic monster is a figure of transformation and transgression. This is not to fetishize victimization, but rather to reconceptualize the dis/ability divide to think about how non-normative forms of embodiment can open up new trajectories of knowing, subversion, and healing together.

I. Lands of Flight:

Englishness, Ecorhapsody, and Orientalism in *Orlando*

Trans-national, Trans-sexual, Trans-lation

"How good to eat!" cries Orlando, the eponymous protagonist of Virginia Woolf's 1928 novel, to her gypsy companions as she watches the sun set over the Thessalian hills. The narrator explains the nobleman-turned-woman's odd expression as a failure of translation: "The gypsies have no word for 'beautiful.' This is the nearest." Up to this point, Orlando had blended in with the gypsies of Bursa (a region in northwest Turkey); she learns the group's language and customs so well that they "[look] upon her as one of themselves (which is always the highest compliment a people can pay)." This bit of synesthetic nonsense, however, exposes her as an outsider. The young gypsies burst into a mocking laughter, while the elders regard her with suspicion, fearing that she had "fallen into the clutches of the vilest and cruelest of the Gods, which is Nature."[1] What was a moment of levity soon turns deadly serious, sowing seeds of distrust between the Westerner and her Eastern hosts that soon sprout into a murderous plot among the gypsies against Orlando ("Honour, they said, demanded it, for she did not think as they did" [*O*, 106]). The hero narrowly escapes, inspired by a vision of the English countryside to return to her motherland just in time to escape the assassin's blade.

This episode plays on two opposing and mutually-dependent geographical imaginations: first, of the West as a space of modernity where the human subject appreciates nature for its *aesthetic* value, and thus separates him or herself from the nonhuman environment; and second, of the East as a primitive space where nature penetrates and threatens the body, and where nature has *use* value related to brute survival. In the gypsy culture imagined by Woolf, nature is not intellectually consumed as image, but is rather physically consumed as material – "How good

to eat!". This twisted translation implies a transformation in Orlando's ecological consciousness. Contact with the gypsy's primitive, nomadic culture causes her to rethink normative assumptions about the sexed body's relationship with the environment that she absorbed while growing up as an Englishman. She comes to recognize what Stacy Alaimo has termed "trans-corporeality"[2] – that her body is not a stable and autonomous entity where she can ground her sense of identity, but rather that it is a metamorphic amalgam constantly exchanging affects, particles, and data with its environment. Two becomes one; the modern sense of separation between the body and the environment, between human culture and non-human nature, between male and female, yields to a fundamental, primal unity, represented by the nomadic gypsies.

Orlando's transformation enacts a paradox central to the concept of metamorphosis. On one hand, metamorphosis signals the fluidity and indeterminacy of the material world, especially the human body. As such, it critiques concepts of embodiment based on stable identities and biological determinism, instead endorsing freedom of movement for the subject or organism. On the other hand, because metamorphosis eternalizes an internal force, it also suggests a conservative essentialism where a being's identity is fixed or predetermined on a deeper ontological plane. Something internal carries through, and is even accentuated, through the transformation; the subject never ceases to be herself, and in fact becomes even more emphatically herself by taking on a new form. Keeping this paradox in mind, my reading of the body politics of *Orlando* attends both to fluidity and essentialism. Most succinctly put: Orlando's transformation during her journey to the East enacts the fluidity of sex and gender while at the same time endorsing a theory of racial and national essentialism. Both sides of this paradox are overseen by what Woolf calls Nature, a universal force that exists in the nonhuman environment, the human body, and in the intermezzo, mediating the relationship. Woolf's

concept of Nature, we will see, is simultaneously queer and imperialist; in this way it both challenges and aligns with the biopolitics of interwar England.

Orlando's becoming-woman immediately precedes her becoming-gypsy. This sequence suggests a link and also a hierarchy between two forms of embodied difference, sex and race, where the former proves more fluid, and therefore less essential, than the latter. Orlando's metamorphosis, which provides a line of flight from the geographic, historical, and ideological boundaries that define English national identity, loosens *his* fixed sense of the body's relation to the environment, a dissolution of the subject that makes *her* more porous, self-reflective, and open to the forms of embodiment represented by the gypsies. Through this new theory of embodiment, inspired by and enacted through contact with a primitive Oriental culture, the novel imagines a queer Nature (with a capital-N, to emphasize the theological dimensions of this construction). This Nature does not recognize the taxonomic divisions between sexes and species; it overflows and penetrates whatever boundaries it encounters, be they bodies, walls, or national borders. Queer Nature seeks heterogeneous solidarities, and pursues unfamiliar desires. Orlando's transformation enables her to recognize *a harmony between the body and its environment, especially the body's national motherland.* This harmony persists on both sides the sex change, and therefore cannot be harnessed by biologistic concepts of sexual embodiment that posit a binary divide between male and female experience. I choose the word *harmony* because it signifies resonance, synchronicity, and synthesis. A term from musical aesthetics, it connotes sensory pleasure, even erotic pleasure. Harmony also implies a composer figure deliberately bringing together different elements to form a greater whole; in Woolf's novel, this composer is Nature. Nature, the novel contends, does not conform to or underlie Victorian and Edwardian England's rigid structures of compulsory heterosexuality and patriarchy; in fact, these cultural

institutions are a perversion of natural sexuality, which is fluid, non-monogamous, and runs in excess of the male/female binary.

But even as we recognize the radical potential of Woolf's Nature, with its "free love" attitudes and its emphasis on fluidity, porosity, and hybridity, we must also acknowledge its conservative elements, especially when it deploys the Orientalist stereotypes of empire to represent the Bursan gypsies. The breakdown of the male/female binary in *Orlando* depends upon the reinscription of the binary opposition between two different natures, one seen through the globe-spanning gaze of the modern West and the other from the narrow perspective of the primitive East. Woolf's novel stereotypically describes the gypsies according to the pastoral myth of the "noble savage," a non-Western subject who maintains a natural culture beyond the reach of imperial history. It suggests that the gypsies exist in a prehistoric "golden age," before the traumatic rending of male from female, body from environment, and culture from nature. They appear innocent of the sins of civilization. While this might seem an ennobling representation of non-Western cultures, the image of the noble savage celebrates the "primitiveness" of such cultures only insofar as those celebrations justify colonial administration and dispossession. The novel's gypsies must be seen for the role they play within the larger structure of Orlando's *Künstlerroman*. Though the novel idealizes their lifestyle, especially their laxity towards sexual difference, it also subordinates them to Orlando's becoming. The gypsies are there to provide a setting, a place of origin where culture had not yet departed from nature, where the tourist Orlando can locate him/herself. Once they serve their purpose, they are jettisoned from the novel, and only return in moments of Orlando's self-reflection, when she flips past her memories of Turkey as one would an old postcard.

Woolf's queer modernity is therefore also a romantic primitivism. Even as the novel seems to encourage identification across the East/West divide, Woolf's modes of representation

and the sublation of the gypsies to the protagonist's self-discovery actually reaffirms, and perhaps even deepens, the chasm between the modern colonizers and the primitive colonized. Because the novel represents the East as a fantastic place of the Other where the subject can discover her Self, it remains merely setting, merely image, denied admittance to the category of "reality" by the veil of the aesthetic. The novel silences any voice that does not fit neatly into the *Künstlerroman* structure; the East can only speak through the West. Orlando's tour of the East ironically confirms the protagonist's own inborn Englishness, an essence that unites Orlando's blood with the home soil of her motherland, and provides the bedrock of her artistic identity. Even as this route to the East seems to expose Orlando to "real" nature, as opposed to the West's aestheticized image of nature, *the East ironically becomes the space of the aesthetic itself*: a space of suspended history which ultimately sanctions the primacy of a Western, rational, and biologistic concept of reality.

This chapter therefore has two primary goals: first, to articulate the political potentials of Orlando's sexual metamorphosis; and second, to show how these potentials are compromised by their reliance on Orientalist stereotypes that support the racial logics of imperial biologism.

To begin my study, I examine the references to *Orlando* that Deleuze and Guattari make in the second book of their *Anti-Oedipus* project, *A Thousand Plateaus*. Deleuze and Guattari draw parallels between Woolf's protagonist and the nomad, a figure who eludes the totalizing structures of state and imperial power by occupying "the intermezzo" – the space between such binaries as subject/object, human/nonhuman, and representation/reality. However, the fact that this nomad is presented by Woolf (and also, to an extent, by Deleuze and Guattari) as an Orientalist stereotype undermines the radical potential of this new materiality. These Orientalist constructions redraw a racialized geography, which justifies colonial domination of the East by the West even as it seems to criticize the British Empire's biopolitical regime.

My understandings of the terms "biopower" and "biopolitics" draw primarily from Michel Foucault's writings on this topic, especially in *The History of Sexuality*, *Part I*, where he defines biopower as a term used to "designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life."[3] I would like extend his definition slightly, and insist that biopolitics took not only *human* life as its object, but also non-human life, as well as non-living matter. This is especially true of the British Empire, which radically changed ecosystems across the world in order to incorporate these peripheral colonies more efficiently into networks of control and value-extraction. To understand the extent to which Woolf critiques this regime, and to what extent she accepted or even endorsed this system of control, we must understand Woolf's attitude toward contemporary developments in sexuality, the sciences, and environmental aesthetics. These discourses of knowledge production were integral to the new mechanisms of biopolitical control that were developed in the early 20th century. Here, I will primarily consider Woolf's relationship to eugenics, a pseudo-science popular during the late-19th and early-20th centuries that deeply informed England's self-perception. This "science of improving stock" (as eugenics was defined by its founder Francis Galton in 1883) used the identity categories of "Englishman" and "Englishwoman" as coercive tools to incorporate national subjects into specific biopolitical structures, like the heterosexual family, in order to secure the nation and empire's biopower.[4] *Orlando* has an ambiguous relationship with eugenicist biopolitics: on one hand, it critiques its rigid doctrines which declare that Englishwomen must be pure, chaste, and maternal protectors whose primary task in life is to reproduce the nation's biopower; on the other, because the novel enacts a foundational and essential relationship between Orlando and her motherland, it also reproduces a racialized national identity that works through the nation's nature.

My analysis of *Orlando* first considers scenes where the protagonist communes with England's nature while living in his/her noble family's country estate. These moments constitute him/her as a naturally English subject, confirming his/her English essence through his/her harmony with the nation's rural landscape. In order to establish this harmonious relationship between Orlando's character and the nation's nature, the narrative engages with both the land itself as a material environment, and with the land-as-*locale* – an auratic, palimpsestic space that has been obsessively written and rewritten by authors in the English nature-writing tradition and other nationalist discourses. The novel responds ambiguously to this inheritance, simultaneously repulsed by its sexist ideas, which assume that women are naturally different from men, and compelled by its veneration of the rural English landscape.

After focusing on Orlando's embodied relationship with the nonhuman environment of his/her motherland, I follow the novel's journey East to Turkey. The Orient, as Woolf describes it, is an aesthetic space of transformation that is free from the sex/gender ideologies that underpin England's biopolitical apparatus. Yet this construction of the Orient repeats many stereotypes that the West has produced and reproduced about the East: that it is outside of history; that it is a primitive culture that is more integrated with nature; that it is a place of sexual liberation, but also sexual threat. Even more, this construction of the East ignores the irony that English identity – which ultimately is so inborn within Orlando that it routes her back to her homeland – in fact *depends upon* the Orient as a material and conceptual space. Orlando's escape route to the East must therefore be seen as a colonial conquest, where the value that Orlando extracts is an aesthetic sense of her body's relationship with nature, especially the nature of her home environment of England.

Nomadic Woolf

> "The only way to get outside of dualisms is to be-between, pass between, the intermezzo – that is what Virginia Woolf lived with all her energies, in all her work, never ceasing to become."
>
> "A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own. The life of the nomad is the intermezzo."
>
> -Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*[5]

Readers who are familiar with the work of Gilles Deleuze and his co-author Felix Guattari will no doubt notice my use of their vocabulary, particularly when I discuss deterritorialization, lines of flight, and becoming-woman. Deleuze and Guattari's reading of *Orlando*, and of Woolf more generally, is useful to my argument because they extract from her work something that many subsequent ecocritics[6] and feminist theorists of embodiment[7] have seized upon: the sense of the intermezzo, a fluid, integrated material world that does not divide subject from object, representation from reality, the human from the nonhuman environment. When Deleuze and Guattari refer to Woolf's work, or Woolf herself, they time and again draw attention to moments that I describe as "ecorhapsodic" (to borrow a term from Timothy Morton), where a human subject's communion with her nonhuman environment dissolves the perceptual, conceptual, and political boundaries that divide the two.[8] This communion navigates the intermezzo between dualisms such as culture/nature, subject/object, internal/external to create a haecceity, a rhizomatic "perfect individuality" which is characterized not by solid identity categories but rather "by a longitude and a latitude, by speeds and affects." Deleuze and Guattari cite the characters of *The Waves* and Clarissa Dalloway's meanderings through London as examples of haecceities.[9] Their interest in Woolf therefore circles two interrelated, particularly modernist concerns: the flux, and the moment. These two concepts should be seen as opposing sides of the same coin, as epiphanic moments provide a glimpse of the singular haecceity, which the flux then washes away.

Deleuze and Guattari locate Woolf in the deterritorialized space of intermezzo, as can be seen by the first epigraph to this section. It is also where they place the nomad, a figure for whom "it is deterritorialization that constitutes the relation to the earth, to such a degree that the nomad reterritorializes on deterritorialization itself."[10] In modeling an alternative relationship to the earth, the nomad comes to form the basis for "nomad science," which opposes "royal science."[11] Royal science, which draws on both imperial biologism and the Freudian model of consciousness, maps exterior geographic space and the interior space of consciousness according to fixed coordinates, boundaries, and identities. It is ontological, in that it purports to describe the truth of being. Nomad science, on the other hand, conceives of both time and space in terms of flow, trajectory, and intensity. It does not seek, like psychoanalysis and biology, to unveil the hidden structures of the "plane of organization" which determine one's identity or being, either in the human body or in the nonhuman environment. Rather, it navigates the smooth surfaces of the "plane of consistency" in order to understand how different forces, both human and nonhuman, material and immaterial, constantly affect each other, forming new assemblages and effecting new becomings.

If Deleuze and Guattari see in Woolf a model of their new conception of materiality, is it in the character Orlando that they discover an outline for nomadic subjectivity. They describe Woolf's metamorphic protagonist as a character who, like the nomad, "reterritorializes on deterritorialization," in that he/she "does not operate by memories, but by blocks, blocks of ages, block [*sic*] of epochs, blocks of kingdoms of nature, blocks of sexes, forming so many becomings between things, or so many lines of deterritorialization."[12] To enact Orlando's becoming-other, the novel's plot follows a line of flight to the East; this parallels Deleuze and Guattari's references to the East and to nomadic peoples, which they see as potential vectors leading one outside of the hegemonic Western concepts of history, identity, and culture. In

addition to these resonances around character and plot, Deleuze's fluid materialism accords with *Orlando*'s metamorphic style. Woolf's literary aesthetic defines itself by its elaborate weaving of diverse subjectivities, male and female, human and nonhuman; like the nomad, the author endeavors to reterritorialize on deterritorialization itself. In this novel, which overflows with ironic metafictional play, Woolf shows us that the discursive realm of representation, concepts, and aesthetics is never merely discursive; rather, discourse and materiality are locked in a tight feedback loop. Discourse works as what Deleuze and Guattari term a "machinic assemblage" that transforms both the human subject and the nonhuman world itself by incorporating diverse, seemingly distinct bodies into new rhizomes, which subject them to new mechanisms of power.[13] By attending to Woolf's innovations in these three different aspects of fiction – character, plot, and style – we can observe how nomad provides an escape route from Western hegemony, enabling one to imagining a plane of thought that does not seem to be divided according to rigid binaries, but seems rather consistent, fluid, and integrated.

However, just as Orlando's escape to the East must be interrogated for its Orientalist tendencies and its reproduction of colonial power dynamics, so should Deleuze and Guattari's notions of nomad science, as well as subsequent ecocritical scholarship that draws on these theories.[14] To provide this necessary critique, I draw from the methods of a Marxist aesthetic theorist who is not typically associated with ecocriticism, but who nevertheless has developed important accounts of the place of nature in Romantic and modern culture: Theodor Adorno. Adorno's rejection of the Hegelian synthesis of art and nature is particularly useful because it instructs us to read ecorhapsodic discourse not as transparent messages from some first nature, but rather as the subject projecting his or herself onto the landscape-as-object. Adorno describes how the idealist view of nature that emerged from Europe's Romantic period reduces the nonhuman environment to "exclusively appearance," "raw material" for the human subject to

speak for and thereby dominate. The flight to the natural beauty of first nature, Adorno asserts, is fueled by "the subject's powerlessness in a society petrified into a second nature"; he sees this flight as always reactionary and pastoral, offering "The anamnesis of freedom [that] deceives because it seeks freedom in the old unfreedom."[15] Adorno's theory of natural beauty helps politicize Deleuze's nomad science because it demonstrates how the lines of flight which the latter philosopher champions as enabling a new politics can easily lead one right back to old forms of domination. While Adorno's caustic pessimism and anti-idealism can and should be critiqued for its totalizing view of cultural ideology, his aesthetic theories provide necessary counterbalances to the pastoral tendencies within Deleuzian ecology.

Timothy Morton, a controversial figure within ecocriticism, has been at the forefront of bringing Adornian aesthetic theories into this field. In his *Ecology Without Nature*, he uses the theories of Adorno (who he calls one of his "guiding lights") as the foundation for what he calls his "ambient poetics," a mode of writing that appears to be simultaneously inside and outside of the subject. Ambient poetics claim to be artless because they seem to tear down the aesthetic screen between the human subject and its nonhuman object (which could be the body itself). However, in claiming to be artless, such writing actually becomes *more artistic*: nature writing develops aesthetic ways of appearing non-aesthetic. One of the primary aesthetic strategies in ambient poetics is ecorhapsody, "a reading of the book of nature," where "The mind lets go while the body takes over." Ecorhapsody is England's dominant form of nature writing, especially since the Romantic era, where poets such as Wordsworth, Coleridge, and Shelley sought to escape their habitual mental state and contact the deeper truth of Nature, which persists beneath the false surfaces of modern culture. As we will see, Woolf follows the ecorhapsody formula often in *Orlando*. By tapping into one's sensory body, the poet (or *rhapsode*) tunes into the environment, which ceases to be general and "manifests in some specific element,

as if it were magnetically charged."[16] Morton's simile out of the realm of physics, referring to universal forces like magnetism, points to the resonances between Deleuzian materialism and ecorhapsody. Ecorhapsody operates at the level of intensities and affects. Like Deleuzian materialism, it strives to magically bridge a number of paradoxes: to simultaneously achieve immanence and transcendence; to immerse oneself in the sensual present while regarding experience from an aesthetic distance; to be both medium and message, form and content. In ecorhapsodic moments, stabilizing concepts like identity, place, and history yield to the indeterminacy of affect. Affects, those precognitive sensations through which the subject is both made and unmade, are not simply inert or raw material which is ordered and given form by the individual mind or by social institutions (like language); rather, affect creates the very effect of individual and collective surfaces. Subjectivity stretches beyond the skin, which is a sight of transit as opposed to one of containment, as the body constantly emits and receives particles, information, and intensities to and from its environment. It is this flux between the body and its environment that both Woolf and Deleuze and Guattari endeavor to tap into in imagining their new materialisms.

Morton is skeptical of this theoretical interest in the intermezzo between the body and the environment. He classifies Deleuze and Guattari's concept of the rhizome – a connective system that operates on the plane of consistency – as an example of "post-structuralist fantasies that seek to do away with the strange, bumpy divisions between things," a "'new and improved' [version] of continuity between inside and outside," which he sees as "suspect in their attempt to smooth over the quantum difference" between the external material world and the interior world of mental representations.[17] I agree with his assessment that theories of embodiment tend problematically toward the metaphysical and religious, where multiplicities called "the environment" or "the body" are reduced to a particular charge, sign, and meaning. Many forces

contribute to the formation of this sign, but this multiplicity gets reduced to a singular representation. Further, as I will show in the next section, in the English tradition more broadly and in Woolf's novel specifically, the *natural* body becomes the *national* body, as this sign takes on a nationalist valiance, in that the "natural" body, intersubjectively attuned with its motherland, is concomitant with a vast array of biopolitical demands on the gendered body.

Natural Bodies, National Bodies: Eugenics in England

The turbulent early decades of the twentieth century was an era when many new scientific discoveries were beginning to challenge calcified Victorian beliefs regarding the body. In the aftermath of Charles Darwin's theory of natural selection (1859), Freud's theory of the unconscious (1915), and Einstein's theory of relativity (1905), stabilizing binaries like human/animal, mind/body, and even space/time no longer seemed adequate to describe embodied experience. Also during the *fin de siécle*, a new group of congenital sexologists, including Edward Carpenter and Havelock Ellis, inspired in part by the work of both Darwin and Freud, came to question Victorian ideas about sexual desire and sexual difference, and formed the Fellowship for the New Life, a group of socialist and sexually progressive intellectuals. They advocated for a better understanding of and more tolerance for what they called "inverts," and advanced the idea of congenital "female inversion," where a female exhibits masculine traits that are at least partly inborn. They identify this gender inversion as the root of same-sex female desire.[18] Female homosexuality was to a large extent *naturalized* because it was believed to be biologically inherited. Thus, even progressive scientists sought a biological basis for sexuality, and still operated according to assumed binary difference between male and female forms of embodiment, as well as an assumed consistency between sex and gender.

Woolf, who knew both Carpenter and Ellis through the Bloomsbury group, was familiar with these new ideas coming out of the sciences, which were often circulated not only in elite intellectual circles, but also were popularized in newspapers and, later, on the radio.[19] One particular new field of scientific discourse that captured the public imagination during the early century was eugenics. Whereas Darwin, Freud, and Einstein had undermined the foundations of identity that circulated during the Victorian Era, eugenics offered a return to concepts of identity, using biology and race as its basis. As Marius Turda puts it, adapting Walter Benjamin's famous aphorism, "whereas communists politicized art and fascists aestheticized politics, eugenicists biologized identity."[20] As we will see, Woolf's response to eugenicist discourse was decidedly ambivalent, at once repulsed and seduced by its implications.

Texts like *Orlando*, which anticipate magical realism by radically blending reality with the fantastic, are uniquely positioned to confront biologism. By exceeding or ignoring the biological constraints on reality, such texts demonstrate that biology is not separate from social processes like imperialism, patriarchy, or capitalism; rather, the social and biological are interlocking and co-constitutive. Orlando's spontaneous, magical metamorphosis outlines escape routes from the biopolitics of interwar England, suggesting an alternative way of thinking about the human body and its relationship with the nonhuman environment that is not determined by biologistic notions of binary sexuality. In celebrating the excessive, queer pleasures that can be shared between a body (regardless of its sex) and its "motherland," Woolf creates what Rosi Braidotti calls a figuration, "a living map, a transformative account of the self."[21] This embodied cartography maps out potential spaces of resistance to Edwardian England's imperial and patriarchal biopolitical order, with its relentless will to knowledge and its vigilant pursuit of greater efficiency, more precise rationality, and better hygiene.

In observing these transformations to English society, as well as Woolf's artistic response to such transformations, it is important to remember how metamorphosis articulates both rupture *and* continuity. While *Orlando* seeks lines of flight from English tradition, Woolf also situates the novel *within* such a tradition by claiming an essential relationship between its protagonist and the English land. Orlando's dialectical relationship with the nation's nature works simultaneously against and through England's ecoaesthetic tradition as it has developed since the early modern era, describing generational shifts, as well as essential continuities, in canonical representations of the nonhuman world. This relationship with England's rural landscape, which constitutes Woolf's protagonist as an artist and a subject, persists beneath the artificial and superficial changes to cultural representations of the nonhuman environment that occur over three hundred years of English history. Woolf expresses Orlando's harmony with his/her homeland in moments of ecorhapsody, where the character attunes his/her body to the nation's nature in order to discover this deeper, more essential part of his/her embodied self.

This communion with England's rural environment is an affective process, as well as a political process. In emphasizing how emotions and thoughts emerge from a dynamic, embodied interaction between an organism and its environment, affect theory demonstrates how the body serves as a sight where individual and the collective are made phenomenologically legible. Sara Ahmed employs the term "affective economy" to describe the way that emotions are produced by semiotic circulation within a society. In Ahmed's politicized phenomenology, emotions do not offer pure, unmediated, or original contact with "being" or "nature" or any other such abstraction. There is no ecorhapsodic moment where the subject communes with its object and dissolves into the greater whole. There is no transcendence through immanence. Emotions are not located *within* the subject or object, but rather "they create the very effect of the surfaces or boundaries of bodies and worlds"[22]; an individual's experience of her mind, body, and

environment operates through her embodied mind's affective entanglements with society's discursive and material networks. Ahmed describes a parallel process between the production of capital and that of emotions, employing Marx's formulation of circulation and surplus value to argue that just as the circulation from money to commodity to money (M-C-M) generates surplus value, "the movement between signs converts into affect."[23] The surplus affect generated by semiotic circulation within society, because of its central role in the individuation process, is always already tied to discourses of nation and capitalism; nation is an especially "sticky" node (to borrow Ahmed's term) within these networks of identification.

During the first half of the twentieth century, the identity categories of "Englishman" and "Englishwoman" served as particularly sticky nodes within an affective economy that fueled the British Empire's biopolitical regime of control and value extraction. Major imperial conflicts, the Boer War and World War I, made evident the empire's demand for more robust male bodies with which to fill the trenches and officer corps. If Britain wished to compete in the high-stakes game of international politics, the empire's biopower – its arable and industrial land, its productive and reproductive bodies (both human and nonhuman) – must be subjected to many new scientific and political technologies to determine the most efficient methods of administration. National identity, as one of these modern technologies, operates through discursive, material, and institutional systems to channel the nation's embodied subjects into ideological and literal spaces of surveillance and discipline. Described as the origin of both the individual and the community, identity mediates between individual bodies and collective networks of power. Identity is the hinge where nature meets culture – where culture finds its naturalized point of origin, and, inversely, where nature is subjected the symbolic and hierarchical order of culture. The concept of nation-as-motherland enables the naturalizing logic at the root of national identity. A crucial point of origin for national and colonial narratives of

race, this sacred maternal bond between a subject and their place of birth imagines blood, body, and land as locked within a closed cycle which promises the endless reproduction of the Same. This mentality is literally conservative, in that it believes that the nation's race and racialized identities must be conserved, that is, it must be protected against contamination and utilized as efficiently as possible.

Though many conservators of Englishness emphasized tradition and continuity, by the *fin de siècle*, in the aftermath of Darwin's theory of evolution, many of the nation's thinkers began to discuss the way that the English race had changed, is changing, or should change from generation to generation. Racialized accounts of history developed during Victoria's reign sought to justify inequalities in terms of biology and heredity, claiming that the genetic superiority of the English race explained their position as world administrators. However, by the turn of the century, there was mounting apprehension about the degeneration of the race, in part because of early military defeats in the Boer War.[24] These imperial anxieties fueled the ascent of eugenics at home, as this new theory of embodiment was widely and earnestly discussed in the scientific and popular culture of both Britain and continental Europe during the first three decades of the twentieth century. Eugenics, Turda contends, represented nations as "living organisms, functioning according to biological laws, and embodying great genetic qualities symbolizing innate racial virtues transmitted from generation to generation." This "eugenic ontology of the nation…located the individual and national body within a specifically scientific discourse" and forged "a new sense of identity…constructed around biology."[25] From a eugenicist perspective, the individual body works as a synecdoche for the national and racial body. Because the body represents the nation, the individual must take on particular bodily practices to protect the collective's health and wellbeing. Each of the nation's private bodies was a public matter, as each individual subject was called on to think about the hygiene of the whole when making decisions

about how to use his or her own body – especially the sex organs, which seemed to belong as much to the nation as the individual subject.

The eugenicist cultural imagination is at once biologistic and metamorphic, representing both nature and culture according to a Darwinian model where evolutionary change occurs because of either natural selection based on survival of the fittest, or human selection based on human need.[26] Turda describes how eugenicist discourse inspired modernist artists and intellectuals in their search for "*Neuezeit*," a way of life that would enable one to "'begin history anew' when troubled by the prospect of racial dissolution and national defeat."[27] The ability to take charge of the transformation of the race through the centralized administration of reproductive activity promised redemption through scientific knowledge. In a retelling of the myth of Prometheus, eugenics imagines that evolutionary biology grants humans a power over the body that was previously the exclusive domain of God and Nature: the faculty to harness the future of the (racialized) human organism, both individual and collective, and to guide its metamorphoses.[28] [29]

Woolf's novels, essays, and personal diaries show that she was by no means immune to this widespread fascination with eugenics. Donald Childs contends that Woolf's relationship with eugenicist thinking was ambiguous, for although she did at times express opinions that were in line with this pseudo-science – for example, commenting in her diary that each member of a group of "imbeciles…was a miserable ineffective shuffling idiotic creature" and therefore "should certainly be killed"[30] – she herself suffered from mental illness, and therefore might fall into the category of those unfit to reproduce, a threat to the health of the race. While some of Woolf's characters do express eugenicist viewpoints, those characters are often vilified by the text, such as Dr. Holmes and Sir William Bradshaw, the overbearing and insensitive doctors who drive the shell-shocked Septimus Smith to suicide in *Mrs. Dalloway* (1925). This does not mean,

however, that Woolf wholly rejected eugenics; Childs argues that while she condemns Holmes and Bradshaw, "it is by no means clear that she criticizes eugenics itself."[31] In his analysis of Woolf's theory of the "androgynous" mind as described in *A Room of One's Own* (1929) – where a work of art requires both male and female inputs or "It ceases to be fertilized" and becomes, like a Fascist poem, "a horrid little abortion"[32] – Childs attributes Woolf's "biological model of creativity" to the author's "respect for nature" which is "bound up with eugenical beliefs: anything against nature is monstrous, and monsters die young and without issue because of nature's eugenical wisdom."[33] Eugenicist thinking, for Woolf, was not a perversion of nature, but rather a metamorphic rebirth of the natural order, an update for the new demands and capabilities of the twentieth century. That Woolf was seduced by the power of eugenics to bring about a modernist *Neuezeit* speaks to the degree that she was invested in nationalist and racialized conceptions of the embodied subject, and, further, how these investments structured her feminist and queer political viewpoint. Her imagination of an alternative future was always an alternative future for *Englishwomen*, blood-inheritors of an aggregation of cultural objects, aesthetic styles, economic practices, geographic spaces, and body practices that went under the name "Englishness."

Englishness, then, operates as a battleground for generational conflict: each new group of artists, intellectuals, and politicians had to simultaneously align themselves *with* and *against* this national inheritance. The difficulty comes in determining which aspects of Englishness are essential and which are historically contingent. The struggle over defining Englishness has both spatial and temporal dimensions, which interpenetrate and mutually confirm each other. Nationalist discourse invests the present landscape with the layered temporalities of national tradition. Inversely, the nation's history depends upon a notion of the land as repository of the national past, bearing the bedrock of national identity that somehow persists beneath the

superficial and historically-variable contingencies of national culture. Rural English locales, like Orlando's family's country house, function as stages upon which national identity can be performed, typically through ecorhapsodic engagement with the nation's nature. Ian Baucom describes the way that the locale "serves as a disciplinary and nostalgic discourse on English national identity by making the past visible, by rendering it present, by acting as what Pierre Nora calls a *lieu de mèmoire* that purports to testify to the nation's essential continuity across time."[34] Though these locales seem to enable one to get in touch with the nation's essence or origin point, this essence or origin must be seen as an effect, not a cause, of the cultural discourse surrounding these auratic sites where "the present re-creates the past, as a 'contact zone' in which succeeding generations serially destabilize the nation's acts of collective remembrance." These metamorphic spaces "reveal England as continuously discontinuous with itself," at once proclaiming rupture and continuity with the nation's past. [35] The nation's landscape is a palimpsest, with each subsequent generation viewing these locales through inherited national discourses, while at the same time authoring new discursive frames that transform the way these locales are perceived.

These locales are often rural spaces, where one can witness a characteristically English Nature, which reflects and confirms the nation's traditional social organizations and identity formations, even while these organizations and formations remain vague, idealized, and otherwise undefined. Elizabeth Helsinger explains how rural scenes in painting and literature serve to "bring the nation into being by creating conscious national identifications."[36] Such scenes, which became popular commodities during the late-Victorian era, hailed national subjects and interpellated them into a symbolic order where *nature* and *nation* become virtually indistinguishable, if persistently indefinable. These scenes "[posit] a link between agriculture and culture" and "contradictorily, claim an origin for the nation in nature," so that "rural life and the

national life are made to appear as something wholly natural."[37] The nostalgic aura emanating from these rural scenes makes England's nature something that is tapped into or otherwise felt, an affective commodity within the affective (and material) economy that serves a crucial individuating function while simultaneously situating the subject within the nation's imagined community. These pastoral scenes were almost wholly compensatory, as the consumers of these commodified images were typically people who had lost access to rural life or who never had access in the first place, since the nation's global, industrial economy required that most of its subjects live in a domestic urban centers or abroad in the colonies. And just as the pressures of late industrialism and imperialism destabilized this idyllic rural way of life, Darwin's theory of evolution also destabilized the notion of nature as maternal and eternal; a vision of "nature red in tooth and claw," as Tennyson so famously puts it, replaced that of nature as a pastoral haven of repose, rejuvenation, and self-reflection in the nation's cultural imagination. The desire for the rural locale in the late 19th and early 20th centuries is therefore doubly nostalgic, recalling and, through that recollection, constructing an earlier time when both society and nature were more holistically integrated.

However, national identity is never self-contained or originary; as a product of global politics, it is always already global. Englishness mediates between the local and the global, enabling national subjects to describe their inward, domestic identity as inheritors of the nation's cultural and racial tradition and to define themselves against the "*unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the other."[38] The emphasis on the local and the locale in English literature must be seen in relation to the global and the imperial, those peripheral spaces which are in fact central to the nation's status as a world power. Acknowledging the extent to which England depends on its imperial holdings to uphold its material success and its cultural identity calls into question the notion of an exclusive and prediscursive Englishness that burgeons forth from these locales and

provides a bedrock of national identity. [39] As such, we must reconsider the nationalist vision of nature that underpins imperial systems of biopolitical control and value extraction. England's locales must not be seen through a pastoral frame as a haven from the island nation's imperial entanglements, but should instead be set in relief with its colonial activities, including and especially its manipulations of the nonhuman environments of its imperial holdings.

(Eco)Rhapsody in Rainbow

Orlando's plot deterritorializes and reterritorializes on English identity, as its protagonist first flees her homeland and then comes rushing back. Orlando's boomerang voyage to Turkey provides an excellent image of how the homey, domestic pleasures of England depend upon the nation's imperial entanglements, which simultaneously support and undermine the ideological and material underpinnings of national identity. Like Deleuze and Guattari's wasp and orchid, Woolf's novel represents Orlando and the English countryside becoming through a mutual process or "block of becoming," in that they share a line of deterritorialization. And just as the wasp and the orchid are specifically attuned to each other because of their interdependent evolution, Orlando seems particularly attuned to her native English environment, to such a degree that her body becomes a synecdoche for the nation's nature and culture (which, as we saw earlier, is one of the major concepts in the eugenicist racial imagination). Orlando's erotic and harmonious relationship with her motherland manifests in ecorhapsodic moments where he/she communes with England's nonhuman environment. This relationship with the land provides an essential continuity that persists beneath superficial changes to Orlando's body and the environment itself. In providing this continuity, the land – and particularly the rural locale of the country estate – is naturalized as the bedrock of a national identity that is more authentic than the artificial conceits of culture. The external forms of English culture may change, but

beneath, the Englishness flowing through its land and citizenry remains the same. Through ecorhapsody, Orlando seems to contact this deeper layer, the smooth space of the plane of consistency, which opposes the striated space of the plane of organization upon which the biopolitical apparatus of the state rests. Having made contact with this deeper layer where English body and English land flow together, Orlando then becomes an ecorhapsodist, a prophet-poet whose intimacy with the environment permits him/her to speak for the nonhuman world.

The scenes that most demonstrate Orlando's ecorhapsody, where he/she taps into the nation's nature through art and affect, occur when he/she stands on a hill sitting atop his/her family's property and looks over the English landscape. These moments bookend the text: one occurs near the beginning of chapter one, when Orlando is a boy in the late 16th century, and one takes place just before in the novel's final moment, when Orlando is a middle-aged woman in the early 20th century. There is a third incident about halfway through the text that rhymes with these bracketing scenes, when Orlando hallucinates the England landscape projected over the Turkish landscape, which I attend to near the end of this chapter.

Considering the opening moment first: having just left his family's house where the reader first encounters him "in the act of slicing at the head of a Moor which swung from the rafters," Orlando mounts a hill in his ancestral lands, "a place crowned by a single oak tree" (*O* 11). Woolf bends the limits of biology in this proto-magical-realist moment, granting her protagonist superhuman sight that allows him to see all of England stretched before him, including "nineteen English counties…the English Channel…pleasure boats…galleons setting out to sea…armadas…forts…castles…a watch tower…some vast mansion like that of Orlando's father…the spires of London…the craggy top and serrated edges of Snowdon" (*O* 14). The paratactic description of this impossible vantage point enacts a vision of national life, a

diverse amalgam of different places and activities united in Orlando's eyes under the sign of nation. The nation here becomes articulable through a visual regime of power, marked by fortress, castles, county seats, and watchtowers, which symbolize the institutional presence of the surveillance state; England as a concept and as an affect is constituted *as* and *through* such surveillance. At the same time, the image of ships, beginning with the domestic comforts of pleasure boats and expanding outward to the might of the armadas, pushes the boundaries of nation beyond the regime of the visible to evoke the invisible aspects of nation, namely, it's imperial holdings and global entanglements. The view from this imperial seat is at once sweeping and homely, vast and local; the paratactical syntax points at once to a coherent totality and to the impossibility of ever describing all the elements of that totality.

Woolf's deployment of magical realism works ambiguously, both parodying England's self-centered worldview and locating Orlando within this symbolic, imaginary landscape. This pleasurable identification with the nation's landscape is from the onset bound up in Orlando's sense of benevolent ownership of this natural environment, which stems from his family's aristocratic roots: "That was his father's house; that his uncle's. His aunt owned those three great turrets among the trees there. The heath was theirs and the forest; the pheasant and the deer, the fox, the badger, and the butterfly" (*O* 14). As one of the "landed" class, he expresses an entitled sense of belonging within the landscape, which is virtually indistinguishable from his feelings of ownership; everything the light touches, great and small, human or nonhuman, is his through noble right. His blue blood enables his affective alignment with this visual regime of power, to which he is heir.

Within this visual regime of power, the environment seems subject to Orlando's character, dependent on his masculine, aristocratic, and nationalist vision to come into meaning – nature as the subject of human culture and anthropocentric rationality. However, in the

subsequent moment Woolf shows us the inverse, where Orlando is *subjected to* the nonhuman environment, as he experiences an ecstatic, haptic connection to the oak tree that crowns this rise.[40] The oak tree to which Orlando "attaches his floating heart" mediates an affective bond between the environment and his body, one that integrates Orlando into the environment as a passive, feminized subject of feeling, rather than the active, masculine subject of vision. Against the global view of the landscape and the armada, Orlando slips into the local feeling of "fertility and amorous activity," a more embodied sense of connection with the environment where nonhuman organisms like deer, swallows, and dragonflies are not his by virtue of noble privilege. Rather, he and these animals are all part of the same "web-like" network of life, and are therefore tied together by natural affinity, not by the artificial hierarchy of private property (*O* 14-15). Orlando, like the English nation, seeks the origin of his character within this natural order; however, the difficulty is that for both Orlando and England, this natural order is not prediscursive. Rather, it comes to form as and through the nostalgic idealization of the nation's history of private property, aristocratic privilege, and the surveillance state.

His feeling of haptic connection with the landscape also bears the marks of imperialism, especially when Orlando imagines himself "riding" the world as one would a horse, or a "tumbling ship" (*O* 15). The oak tree (a common symbol of England's monarchy and the nation more generally) allows him to see the world as a form of transport, implying a freedom of movement that is the privilege of his English blood. The oak tree image naturalizes England's position atop the world's hierarchy. This an instructive moment in how the novel conflates nature with national identity, deploying a particular view of the nonhuman, biological world that confirms the exceptionality and superiority of Englishness over its racial and national others. This feeling of affective harmony with the nature's nation that Orlando's ecorhapsody generates depends on a particular vision of nature that rests on imperial hierarchies.

At the same time, it is important to acknowledge the queerness of this moment, especially in the way Orlando's reaction contradicts or otherwise confuses normative ideas about masculinity and femininity. I have already commented above how in his relations with the environment he oscillates between masculine and feminine, visual and haptic, active and passive, responses. The "fertility and amorous activity" in which he feels himself enmeshed as "the deer stepped nearer and the rooks wheeled round him and the swallows dipped and circled and the dragonflies shot past" escapes containment from either side of the sex/gender binary (*O* 15). The animals are in motion, stepping, wheeling, dipping, circling, shooting past; the entire scene is animated by lines of flight that dissolve these individual organisms into a singularity, a haecceity. Emerging through contact with the nonhuman environment, this excessive, "web-like" force coursing through Orlando's body – whether we call it "life," "sexuality," "desire," or "hapticality" – refuses to be classified according to binary ideas of sexuality, or even binary ideas of species. Instead, it seems to operate through the *oscillation between* and *union of* the masculine and the feminine, the human and the animal, enjoying the pleasurable confusion of these boundaries, the "activity" around sexuality rather than static senses of "being." The bodily experience of the nation's nature, then, operates both as the core of Orlando's identity as a desiring subject and an artist, and as a refuge from the artificial bifurcation of sexuality and pleasure into the human-created categories of "male" and "female." In this pastoral retreat, nature enables Orlando to shed the constraints and contingencies of culture and access a fundamentally queer essence that is in deep, instinctual harmony with the English landscape where he reclines.

Crucially, Orlando affectively identifies and harmonizes with the English countryside on both sides of his/her sex change. Having traveled through nearly three and a half centuries of English history, voyaged to the periphery of the empire, transformed from a man to a woman,

married and bore children, and risen to acclaim in the 20th century literary community, Orlando's journey concludes where it began, the same ancestral oak. She hikes to the top of the mountain where the oak stands, and "[forgets] the time," stepping outside of linear history to enter the present moment of the novel's composition. This sensory, embodied present somehow escapes England's national and imperial history. Instead, Orlando presents to us a figuration, an embodied cartography, once again discovering a *place* to locate her becoming in the familiar landscape through the medium of the oak. Woolf repeats many of the same images from the first oak tree scene, with Orlando echoing the same desires as a female that she felt as a male: "The tree had grown bigger, sturdier, and more knotted since she had known it, somewhere around the 1588, but it was still in the prime of life. […] Flinging herself on the ground, she felt the bones of the tree running out like ribs from a spine this way and that beneath her. She liked to think that she was riding the back of the world. She liked to attach herself to something hard" (*O* 224). The tree, a metaphor for the protagonist's metamorphic development, reflects both what's changed and what has stayed the same about Orlando, about nature, and about England. The external changes all three of these entities have experienced over the narrative are shown to be superficial; the essential aspects of each arise through a particular affect that itself depends upon the surfaces it works to create: self, nature, and nation. Thus the very medium that allows Orlando to deterritorialize, her tree and the haptic connection she feels with it, also causes her to reterritorialize within the same nationalist geography. Nature, which simultaneously signifies the nonhuman environment and the imaginary force that ties together Orlando with her homeland, oversees this reterritorialization.

Writing Nature, Righting Bodies

Even though Orlando's poetry is supposed to stem from immediate, embodied contact with the nonhuman world, the way she comes into contact with this nonhuman world is intensely mediated by English culture. The novel presents the affective harmony between Orlando's English body and the countryside as an essence seeking the proper form of expression, but this essence must be seen as a product, not the origin, of England's literary and discursive history. Woolf's parodic treatment for this history has an ambiguous, ironic effect as it articulates both rupture and continuity with tradition; her narrator will make fun of one particular style, exposing its deceptive gimmicks, nascent ideologies, and strategic blindnesses, but that same voice will also take great pleasure from that style and dialectically incorporate it into her prose. The line between parody and homage is fuzzy, a space of play and pleasure in the text. The novel documents how literary representations of the nonhuman environment and the sexed body have changed over nearly three and a half centuries of English history. She moves from the baroque grandiloquence of the Renaissance, to the austere empiricism of the Restoration, to the sublime and sentimental Romantic and Victorian era, to the anxiety and disorientation of the interwar period, and for each literary epoch she ironically exaggerates its characteristic forms of ecomimesis (nature writing) and sexualized embodiment. This parody decalcifies hegemonic notions of the body and nature that dominated during the interwar period, demonstrating how these apparently solid and totalizing concepts are historically and culturally dependent, and therefore fluid and variable. However, Woolf does not resign herself to complete relativity; this chaos finds order through Orlando's climactic returns her ancestral lands. In these moments, the affective harmony between her body and the English countryside articulates itself through the medium of the ecorhapsode, Orlando. These moments fetishize not only the English landscape, but also racialized English body. The novel ends up aligning itself with the very nationalist historical narratives that it set out to parody.

Much of this alignment has to do with the parallels the novel draws between the development of England and Orlando, the gravitational center of this *Künstlerroman*. The novel's long arc tracks the heroic becoming of both character and nation. Orlando discovers his/her artistic identity – a reflection and an adaptation of England's national identity – in a nostalgic and aestheticized view of the nation's nature. Nature mediates the metonymic and metaphorical connection between the individual and the nation; in this way, the *Bildungsroman* can be seen as a form of "human nature" writing. The ecocritic Helena Feder argues that the *Bildungsroman* narrates an individual's development in order to tell "culture's own origin story," which repeats "the humanist myth of separation from and opposition to nature" while dialectically enacting "the recognition of the deep interconnectedness of the cordoned-off worlds of our own biology and all that we build, physically and conceptually."[41] In Feder's take on the *Bildungsroman*, both the self and the nature from which the self proceeds are described according to a depth model, and it is at these depths, where the human subject "interconnects" with the nonhuman world, where the myth of the human's separateness from nature dissolves. The problem is that this "interconnectedness" runs the risk of itself becoming a myth, a reified discourse which works to eliminate the contingencies of representation, that third term between culture and nature, inner and outer, self and other. Feder takes a mythical turn in her own argument by saying that the *Bildungsroman,* in addition to telling the story of culture, also tells "the story of 'nature,' of our knowledge of human animality and nonhuman agency or subjectivity."[42] Despite her scare quotes, Feder's formulation still equates nature with a discursive body of knowledge, an archive of impressions received when one contacts nature, and becomes aware of "nonhuman agency or subjectivity." This ecophenomenological approach assumes that there is some essential content called "nature" that the humans can tap into in revelatory, ecorhapsodic moments. These forms of tapping into the nonhuman have to be understood as discursive, rhetorical, and aesthetic

processes that depend upon particular affective economies, and as such the sensation or knowledge of "interconnectedness" that results from these processes must not be considered as free from the history of cultural representation. Nature does not cleanse the human of politics; it is a product of politics. The generic *Bildungsroman*, then, should not be thought of as the story of one who discovers and manifests her natural being, or of one who is ripped from the state of nature because of the mechanisms of culture. Rather, *Bildungsromans* narrate the formation of one's identity and subjectivity as a *product* of his ecological, material, and discursive environments – environments that are always already mapped according a politicized cartography.

Woolf's *Bildungsroman* dramatizes how, throughout Orlando's development, the nobleman/woman's love of nature was always framed through the ecoaesthetics of the present era. The narrative will often pause to not only describe nature, but to describe the way that descriptions of nature have changed over English literary history. Jane de Gay reads this metafictional vein as Woolf's parody of the Victorian literary critical establishment, a community that included her father, Sir Leslie Stephen. I agree with de Gay's claim that the novel's metafictional and self-reflexive commentary on its own protean style creates an ironic effect that destabilizes the categories of Victorian historical taxonomies and also cuts the greats of the patriarchal canon down to size. But these moments shouldn't be read as pure mockery of the literary critical community because they almost always serve a crucial function in the novel's *Künstlerroman* structure, as they correspond to Orlando's aesthetic development as an English nature poet. In these parodic and allusive moments, Woolf positions Orlando's way of writing nature – and by extension her own – both *against* and *within* the nation's tradition of environmental aesthetics. She thus stakes her claim as a prime inheritor of England's interlocking traditions of nature and art. Even more, the cultural history she lays out in *Orlando* presents a theory about how the apparently distinct realms of cultural discourse and natural

environment are actually quite conductive, dynamically transforming each other in ways that thoroughly confound such neat distinctions as subject/object, immaterial/material, representation/reality, human/nonhuman, and culture/nature.

Two scenes are particularly relevant to the current discussion. The first comes during the mid-seventeenth-century "the age of prose," the Restoration; the second, during the shift from the eighteenth- to the nineteenth-century, the Romantic era. Considering the first: after Nicholas Greene's scathing parody of Orlando's elaborate tragedy "The Death of Hercules," the protagonist (still male) experiences an artistic and personal crisis. In trying to describe what love is, he goes off on a baroque flourish, describing the idea in his mind as "the lump of sea glass which […] is grown about with bones and dragon-flies, and coins and the tresses of drowned women," but then immediately chastises himself: "Another metaphor by Jupiter! […] A figure like that is manifestly untruthful, for no dragon-fly, unless under very exceptional circumstances, could live at the bottom of the sea. And if literature is not the Bride and Bedfellow of Truth, what is she? […] Why not simply say what one means and leave it?" In this humorous moment of consternation, Orlando questions the value of the elaborate environmental aesthetics of the Renaissance, with all its mythic allusions and extravagant diction, and attempts instead to discipline his language into efficient, transparent, and biologically accurate prose. Orlando's crisis here works as an allegory for the nation's own cultural metamorphosis from the Renaissance to the Restoration, from neoclassical myth to Baconian empiricism, from poetry to prose. It also prompts a series of questions central to contemporary ecocriticism: what types of representations of the nonhuman environment (including the nonhuman environment of the biological human body) are most effective? What is the relationship between the observational strategies of literature and those of biological science? Must literature discipline itself to be more scientific in representing the environment?

Orlando's crisis of representation becomes a crisis of reality for the novel, as it begins to depart from biological, ecosystemic verisimilitude. England's environment, as if in response to these changes in the nation's ecoaesthetics, metamorphoses before the reader's eyes. Shortly after Orlando vows to describe the world by "simply saying what one means," the narrator observes a transformation of the nonhuman environment: "The very landscape outside was less stuck about with garlands and the briars themselves were less thorned and intricate. Perhaps the senses were a little duller and honey and cream less seductive to the palate. Also that the streets were better drained and the houses better lit had its effect on the style, it cannot be doubted" (*O* 77). This passage plays on the dynamic interactions between the human subject, the nonhuman environment, and cultural representation. At first, Orlando's attempt to tamp down his poetic style seems to have a tangible, perhaps magical or absurd, effect on the environment, as the garlands and briars on his property become "less thorned and intricate." But the next sentence, which ponders changes in the human sensorium instead of the nonhuman environment, actually makes the first statement ambiguous: is the nonhuman world actually changing? Or should we blame this miraculous metamorphosis on this "dulling of the senses" – an affective realignment that is at least partly the result of a chastened Orlando trying tame his allegorical and pastoral Elizabethan verse into the staid and empirically accurate prose of the Restoration? Following this phenomenological line of inquiry, we can say cause and effect are muddled primarily because of the question of representation: how does one's mental representation of nature, which is subject to cultural discourses surrounding nature, including (and perhaps especially for England) literary style, affect the way nature is perceived? And how do these changed perceptions affect future cultural representations -- and thus create new cultural discourses surrounding nature, adding more layers of annotation to the palimpsest? What came first, the perception or the representation?

The above analysis of the first two quoted sentences shows us how Woolf plays on the feedback-loop between sensory perception and mental/cultural representation, thus probing mind/body interactions in ways that are mostly familiar to neuro-aesthetic and psychoanalytic critique. However, the final sentence in the passage, which mentions the drained streets and lit houses, introduces the third term of *environment*, which moves the inquiry from psychology to ecology, and from parody to hypothesis. This final sentence asks how the nonhuman environment – especially if it is a built environment, which confounds the nature/culture binary – affects human cultural production. Woolf provokes her reader to consider how developments in technology, public health policy, and political administration spur transformations in literary ecoaesthetics. Is nature *actually* "less thorned and intricate" as people move in cleaner, more orderly streets and live in better-lit, more modern homes? Perhaps; these historical developments *do* cause nature to metamorphose, partly through the manipulation of the geological and ecological environment, and partly through the reconceptualization nature as a signifier. Nature-as-sign changes its points of reference, creates and dissolves its boundaries, is afforded new capabilities and is denied others. Following this, we see that Woolf inverts the question: how does the way one *perceives* the nonhuman world have a material impact on that world? As the wilderness becomes less mysterious, less imposing, and more integrated into a totalizing and rationalized Baconian worldview where the nonhuman world's *raison d'etre* is to be mastered and utilized by humans through science, how does nature change, both as an idea and a material reality? How does cultural discourse – which includes not just art but scientific, medical, and political discourse – bring about tangible (non-magical) changes in the nonhuman environment through the *biopolitical administration* of such environments? Woolf here suggests that culture and environment, discourse and material, should not be thought of as distinct, but rather each should be seen as constantly and dynamically influencing and being influenced by the

other. She outlines an ecological phenomenology that can represent what the human/nonhuman distinction effaces: the coconstitution and codependency of the two terms, and the power cultural representation bears to materially transform both.

While the Restoration episode examines the way that the nonhuman environment changes and is changed by cultural discourse, Woolf's narration of the magical transformation in England's environment from the eighteenth to the nineteenth century instead emphasizes the way that ideas about nature come to bear on the human body, especially the female body (as Orlando is now female). The nineteenth century arrives ominously: an "irregular moving darkness" approaches from the east, spreading west until the bell tolls midnight and "a huge blackness [sprawls] over the whole of London." "All was darkness; all was doubt; all was confusion," the narrator intones. "The Eighteenth century was over; the Nineteenth century had begun" (*O* 156). Woolf here parodies John Ruskin's "The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" (1884), where the late-Victorian art critic suggests that the changes to England's weather patterns signify the nation's "moral decline," a repudiation for the fact that "for the last twenty years, England, and all foreign nations, either tempting her, or following her, have blasphemed the name of God deliberately and openly; and have done iniquity by proclamation, every man doing as much injustice to his brother as it is in his power to do."[43] While Ruskin sees this weather change as auguring the divine's vengeance against an increasingly godless and unjust nation, we can also think of him as an early observer of climate change, since the "last twenty years" he references were also years of unparalleled industrial expansion both in England and on the continent, and thus the alterations in weather patters could be in part anthropogenic.

Similar to Ruskin, Woolf describes this shift in England's weather in part to symbolize a change in human behavior, but, unlike Ruskin, she represents the changes to English society as more of an *effect* of climate change, rather than a cause. She writes, "Rain fell frequently, but only

in fitful gusts, which were no sooner over than they began again. The sun shown, of course, but it was so girt with clouds and the air was so saturated with water, that its beams were discolored and purples, oranges, and reds of a dull sort took the place of the more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century" (*O* 137). The "more positive landscapes of the eighteenth century" can be read either literally or figuratively. Was the environment actually more "positive," the air clearer, the weather patterns more distinct? Or did nature only *appear* orderly and predictable because of the positivist view of nature that inhered within post-Baconian, pre-Darwinian, Enlightenment paradigms of nature? Woolf's word choice of "landscape" – which sets the nonhuman environment in a humanist frame – favors the latter interpretation. The miraculous quality of this climate change, and its odd correspondence to human measures of time like centuries, suggests that Woolf here is not talking only about nature, but rather nature as it was understood and represented by particular historical paradigms. Here, as in the seventeenth-century episode, Woolf demonstrates that nature doesn't become nature until it has been perceived and recorded by culture.

To acknowledge nature's historical and cultural contingency is not to negate the agency of the nonhuman world and its role in human culture and politics. Throughout *Orlando*, Woolf frequently draws her reader's attention to moments where transformations to the environment catalyze changes to the cultural and biopolitical foundations of the English nation. During the nineteenth-century chapter, the main source of these mutations is the "damp, which is the most insidious of all enemies." The damp, a "silent, imperceptible, ubiquitous" disease, transforms not just the nonhuman natural environment, but the home environment as well: "damp swells the wood, furs the kettle, rust the iron, rots the stone" (*O* 137). The damp makes humans aware that the nonhuman environment is never absent, that regardless of the rise of modern science there still exist powerful environmental forces whose metamorphic effects cannot be predicted or

prevented against. These forces have no respect for human boundaries, pervading even the seemingly impenetrable havens of England's domestic homes. The damp can be read as a symbol for Darwinian evolution, since both represent the nonhuman world as indifferent to the categories, borders, and sentiments of human society, insisting that the nature of things is to transform and become other.

The invasive damp decays both material structures and political ones, the very "constitution of England" (*O* 137). Woolf's double entendre here plays on "constitution" in terms of the nations cultural identity and in terms of its legislative organization, as the nineteenth century saw major shifts in its political order, including widespread male enfranchisement and the decline of the nobility's parliamentary and economic power. Perhaps one of the reasons that the nonhuman environment appears less "positive" and transparent is because there are more voices that are empowered to represent England as a nation, and therefore as a nature. The damp, while it might seem to imply only the decadence of the old order, can simultaneously be seen to represent ecosystemic cycles of renewal and regeneration – especially when we consider that this new weather results in the "rampant" growth of vegetation, including "giant cauliflowers," as well as the "incessant" laying of hen's eggs (*O* 136). Just as the material nonhuman world is constantly evolving, with old forms giving ways to more viable and vibrant adaptations, the constitution of England's political society is represented as changeful and adaptive, something that alters based "natural selection," rather than as an eternal patrimony that remains firmly intact from one generation to the next.

However, there is a danger in assuming that human politics develop based on evolutionary natural selection. As one of the prime tools of liberal ideology, the naturalization of political structures works to shut down the very possibility of alternatives to capitalism, nationalism, and imperialism by suggesting that inequalities between different races, classes,

sexes, and regions exist by virtue of the inevitable unfolding of immutable laws. The naturalization of these broad structures depends upon the naturalization of the individual embodied subject, whose desires and capabilities are supposed to be determined by biological differences like sex and race. Woolf, as discussed above, has an ambiguous relationship with this eugenicist nationalist imagination, troubled by its sexual essentialism but seduced by its racial theories. I will comment on the racial implications of this imagination in the concluding section of this chapter. Here, I want to highlight how Woolf time and again punctures rhetorics that describe women as "naturally" one thing or another. She depicts through the damp how changing definitions and perceptions of nature come to impact the biopolitical management of human bodies: "The change did not stop at outward things. The damp struck within. Men felt the chill in their hearts, the damp in their minds. In a desperate effort to snuggle their feelings into some sort of warmth one subterfuge was added after another. Love, birth, and death were all swaddled in a variety of fine phrases. The sexes drew further and further apart. No open conversation was tolerated" (*O* 138). As a force that "strikes within," the damp takes on a gothic overtone, manifesting with these affective metamorphoses the unseen, the evasive, and the mysterious. Something "felt" rather than known, it breaks down the mind/body barrier, challenging the mastery of the mind over the body by indicating the agency of unconscious, biological forces.

Similar to the passage discussing the "less thorned and intricate" foliage of the Restoration, Woolf's proto-magical-realist style here once again works ambiguously. Is this accelerated, exaggerated architectural decay simply a metaphor expressing a social essence (in this case Victorian anxiety over its decaying hierarchies)? Or is the supposedly continent and resilient British mind/body actually subject to the environmental transformations of the damp? It would be easy to dismiss the narrator's cheeky suggestion that alterations in England's weather

were, in fact, the root cause of the nation's social and cultural changes as the kind of fanciful exaggeration permitted by her style. But if we take this claim seriously, it appears as if Woolf is articulating a theory of embodiment similar to Stacy Alaimo's "trans-corporeality." Woolf's discussion of the damp, like Alaimo's trans-corporeality, evokes "a rather disconcerting sense of being immersed with incalculable, interconnected material agencies that erode even our most sophisticated modes of understanding."[44] This passage indicates that it was the weather and the affective impact it had on the men who "felt the chill in their hearts, the damp in their minds," and not the rational planning of the patriarchs nor the natural order of the sexes, that erected such a vigilantly monitored wall between men and women. Rather than the autonomous, pure products of rational human will, the nation's social order and the bodies within it are shown to be porous and contingent, radically open to the material agencies of the nonhuman world.

The damp operates as a feminizing force, puncturing the ideal of the rational Englishman who is immune to environmental influence and continent of his unconscious and unseemly desires. Woolf's description of the damp insists on a fact that Victorian England sought to transcend: the entanglement of human life within the processes of "love, birth, and death," which are frequently mapped upon the female body. However, this desire to transcend the body and the environment does not work through simple denial or repression; transcendence, rather than raising one above these entanglements, involves instead a descent into these entanglements, driven by an obsessive desire to set the perpetually chaotic and ungraspable in order. Woolf, anticipating Foucault's rejection of the repressive hypothesis, shows that Victorian anxiety about sexuality actually works as and through an incitement to discourse, "swaddling" the facts of life "in a variety of fine phrases." While on one level, this fear of sexuality imposes strict limits on discourse, shutting down "open conversation" between the sexes, on another level Victorian institutions proliferated discourses around sexuality,

creating many new ways to "hear it spoken about, and to cause *it* to speak explicit articulation and endlessly accumulated detail."[45] This incitement of sex to speech served as a primary mechanism of biopolitical control in Victorian England, as these discursive formations provided a surface of intervention upon which the individual embodied subject could be acted upon by these broader institutions and by the self-disciplinary subject herself. Like Foucault, Woolf sees the performative act of language as constituting the subject, and therefore writing and speaking are events where broad and abstract structures and laws (including the Law of Nature) become material within the embodied subject.

Early on in the Victorian section of the novel, sexuality becomes Orlando's primary concern. This stunts her artistic growth, interrupting the progression of the *Künstlerroman*. She writes poetry in "cascades of involuntary inspiration," composing "the most insipid verse she had read in her life," full of young maidens crying in the moonlight for absent lovers. In one stanza, Orlando describes herself as "a vile link/Amid life's weary chain," suggesting that she's absorbed and is now reproducing, as a self-disciplining subject, the biologistic notion that the female body and it's desires connect one to the brute animality of human life. In disgust at reading her own work, she pours ink over the page, "[blotting] it from human sight she hoped forever" (*O* 164). During this period when there is an explosion of writing going on about sexuality, Orlando, repulsed by her own writing, willfully destroys it, as if attempting to short circuit this incitement to discourse. That blob of redacted poetry signifies Orlando (and Woolf's) refusal to write as a woman, to create herself as a surface of intervention from which and onto which sexual difference can be read. "It is fatal to be a man or woman pure and simple," Woolf writes in *A Room of One's Own* (published one year after *Orlando*), "one must be woman-manly or man-womanly." Here, during the Victorian section of the novel, we see Orlando refusing, even

destroying, "pure and simple" female discourse, seeking instead "some marriage of opposites" which can re-unify the culturally-constructed divide between male and female experience.[46]

Even while Woolf implies that there is no fundamental divide between male and female ways of experiencing the biological body, she demonstrates that men and women have different ways of understanding and representing that experience. That is because for Woolf the body is not autonomous from cultural discourse; just as the body and its desires can radically affect the operations of the mind, the mind can alter the body's sensorium. During this same Victorian section of the novel, gendered cultural demands actually change the way Orlando experiences her body. She becomes suddenly aware of wedding bands worn by every woman that she passes in the street, "indissolubly linked" with a man. She is troubled by this trend towards rigid monogamy and wonders if "some new discovery had been made about the race" that required them to be "somehow stuck together, couple after couple." Her language evokes a will to knowledge characteristic of the nineteenth-century culture of science, which celebrated the way "new discoveries" could alter the empire's economic, social, and familial organization and lead to greater control of the nation's biopower (*O* 165).

Despite her zest for adventure and her aversion to feeling tied down, Orlando begins to feel "a ring of quivering sensibility about the second finger of her left hand" (*O* 165). Her contact with the symbolic discourse of wedding rings triggers a transformation in her affective experience of her body; inversely, this bodily change inhibits her ability to write. This sensation around her ring finger, like the damp, stifles her creativity. The narrator diagnoses Orlando's writer's block as a contamination of her biological body by a hostile culture:

> For it would seem – her case proved it – that we write, not with fingers, but with the whole person. The nerve which controls the pen winds itself around every fibre of our being, threads the heart, pierces the liver. Though the seat of her trouble seemed to be the left hand, she could feel herself poisoned through and through, and was forced at length to consider the most desperate of remedies,

> which was to yield completely and submissively to the spirit of the age, and take a husband. (*O* 167)

The narrator here ventriloquizes the voice of biological and medical science in this diagnosis of Orlando's "case," incorporating laboratory diction to discuss the body, with it's "nerves… heart…[and] liver." She speaks about a body as it is observed, even as it is a body that is lived in and felt. That marriage is described as a "remedy" also shows how the institution of the heterosexual family works in tandem with other aspects of the biopolitical state to coerce women into subject positions that are disciplinary and productive. Ironically, the subject of the narrator's conclusion – the human ability to think abstractly and to create representations – is not typically supposed to be quantifiable or observable through medical technology; rather, this creative ability is usually conceived of an as ineffable, invigorating spirit or soul, an essence which ultimately makes humans exceptional. The narrator's description, however, enfleshes this abstract quality, showing how it "winds itself around every fibre of our being." With the introduction of this "nerve," there is, again, a slippage between parody and speculation, as this animating energy Woolf offers an alternative, non-dualist way of conceiving the mind/body, spirit/flesh relationship.

Woolf gives a name to this energy, which enables a line of flight from England's biologistic order: Nature. Orlando concludes that whatever force imposed compulsory monogamous heterosexuality in England, "It did not seem to be Nature." Capital-N Nature, as both an animating force and a state of being, here marks a return to the (seemingly) uninhibited sexuality of "the doves and the rabbits and the elk-hounds," and also to the "old days, [when] one would meet a boy trifling with a girl under a hawthorne hedge frequently enough" (*O* 166). In this idea of a prelapsarian sexuality, which follows natural, animal impulses as opposed to cultural ideologies, Woolf finds an alternative to biologistic justifications for England's patriarchal social organization. For Woolf, the problem with biology is a problem of framing; in

seeking the *natural order of things*, biology fails to see *things in their natural order*. Proceeding from culture into the realm of nature, biology's allegiances in the former realm contaminate its views of the latter.

Woolf shows how discourse can change the way humans experience their own bodies, suggesting that the biological body is not autonomous from discourse. The "quivering sensibility" that Orlando feels around her wedding-ring finger indicates how the institutions of compulsory heterosexuality trigger metamorphoses, manipulating the affective body to create a self-policing subject who will reproduce the nation and empire's biopower. This episode dramatizes how these cultural, "merely" symbolic discourses instigate material transformations the individual body; just like the briars that appear "less thorned and intricate" because of changes to literary representations of nature, Orlando's body *feels different* as affective economies around the body change. The body enfleshes the Law not just through "external" performance (the visual/symbolic realm) but also through "internal" sensory experience (the haptic/affective realm). Law is not simply known; it is also felt. Woolf describes the social technology of the heterosexual family as a function of the state/capital biopolitical apparatus that mutates the sexed body, inside and out. Through these mutations, the state denies its subjects access to natural sexuality – that is to say, a prelapsarian sexuality, authorized and animated by Nature.

Eat, Pray, Transform

Chapter III of *Orlando* marks one of the most experimental and fantastic moments of embodiment in the British modernist tradition: the protagonist's spontaneous, overnight transformation from a man to a woman. Orlando's sexual transformation coincides with two types of movement, one individual and one geopolitical. First, he travels outside of England, traversing political borders that demarcate properly "English" forms of nature/culture,

embodiment, and sociality in order to discover alternative forms of the three. Second, this transformation occurs simultaneously with a disturbance of British imperial power. The chapter begins by narrating Orlando's activities in Constantinople as an Ambassador of the crown. While his official mission is to assist King Charles in his negotiations with the Turks, this journey also enables him to flee the amorous advances of the Archduchess Harriet, whose forwardness at the end of the previous chapter causes "Love, the Bird of Paradise" to be transformed into the "black, hairy, brutish…Lust, the Vulture" in the young nobleman's imagination (*O* 82). Orlando's journey fulfills his official duties as an English political subject, but it also causes him to neglect his unofficial (but no less pressing) duties as a male English *biopolitical* subject: his duty to find a heterosexual mate, to procreate, and to pass on his aristocratic blood and title. The journey pursues both public servitude and private freedom. The public quest runs aground when the native Turks rise up against the Sultan, invade the British Embassy, and "put every foreigner they could find, either to the sword or the bastinado" – a fate Orlando is saved from thanks to a "profound slumber" that leaves him "stretched to all appearance dead" (*O* 94). However, all this violence serves as merely backdrop or trigger for the chapter's primary set-piece, for when Orlando wakes from his slumber, he discovers "he was a woman" (*O* 95).

The actual scene of Orlando's sex change mocks Victorian feminine virtues, showing how this sexual ideology enables the biopolitical exploitation of Englishwomen. This scene is in the form of a court masque, a form popular in the early 17th century, during the divine-right monarchy of James I. The masque genre relies on spectacular scene dressing and costuming, enacting the consummation of the material with the spiritual, the external with the internal, appearance with essence. Woolf re-appropriates the genre as a tool to disrupt these naturalized ideological connections and to critique binary sexual ideology. Embodiments of Purity, Chastity, and Modesty sermonize above Orlando's sleeping body until blaring trumpets drive them from

the stage. The masquerader's monologues show how these virtues, which are supposed to constitute English female identity, hide widespread corruption and inequality within the nation's patriarchy. "Our Lady of Purity," for instance, declares, "I cover vice and poverty. On all things frail or dark or doubtful, my veil descends. Wherefore, speak not, reveal not. Spare, O spare!" (*O* 96). Purity is unmasked as purely superficial, interested in maintaining the polite and/or sentimental illusions that enable male hegemony and structural inequality to persist. Trumpets – traditionally signaling the arrival Monarch-as-embodied-Divinity – call for the "THE TRUTH!" But this is not the truth of a holistic unification of essence and embodiment, inner and outer, but rather the opposite. The masque concludes, "He stretched himself. He rose. He stood upright in complete nakedness before us, and while the trumpets pealed Truth! Truth! Truth! we have no choice left but confess – he was a woman" (*O* 97). While the masque traditionally ends in the climactic unveiling of the monarch in all the trappings of the state, here Orlando is revealed in the "costume" of the naked female form – his/her stretching, rising body a spectacle that exceeds binary sexuality. The final, paradoxical phrase, "he was a woman," not only marks the metamorphic moment upon which the novel's plot hinges, but it also calls into question the relation between interior mind (he) and exterior body (a woman).

How are we to interpret this line, "he was a woman"? On one hand, the grammar of the sentence seems to reiterate male/female, subject/object logic; "he" (i.e. the masculine Orlando, a subjectivity defined by his upbringing as a male) discovers his body to be marked as "a woman" (i.e. made into a passive object). Such a reading suggests a problematic kind of drag or androgyny, where the male can "take on" the exterior forms of the female while still retaining exclusive right to subjectivity and sexual desire, both of which retain their distinctly masculine associations. The androgynous body, according to this configuration, is always the feminine male, affording queer men (such as the "buggers" of the Bloomsbury circle) a freedom of sexual

expression never afforded to women (such as Woolf). Another reading is available, however, if we read the "to be" verb "was" not as a statement of *being* but rather of *becoming*. In this configuration, the category of "woman" loses its stability and is instead deployed as an artificial construction that points out its own artificiality – as Deleuze and Guattari insist, even women need to become-woman. The move from man to woman is not the movement *from* one coherent form of sexual embodiment to another, nor *from* a coherent form to an incoherent form, but rather movement *within an incoherent, contradictory and fluid system* of sex-gender signification.

Woolf positions the instability of sexual/gender identity at the root of the instability of identity. The subject is not *one*, nor is it *two* that heroically becomes *one*. Both division and synthesis, Woolf shows us, is a function of linguistic convention:

> Orlando had become a woman – there is no denying it. But in every other respect, Orlando remained precisely as he had been. The change of sex, though it had altered their future, did nothing whatever to alter their identity. Their faces remained, as their portraits proved, precisely the same. His memory – but in future we must, for conventions sake, say 'her' for 'his', and 'she for 'he' – her memory then, went back through all the events of her past life without encountering any obstacle. (*O* 95)

Can one's sex change and one's identity stay the same? Can there be exterior metamorphosis and internal continuity? This passage, especially the claim that this change "did nothing whatever to alter their identity," needs to be interpreted in light of Woolf's subtle ironic play. The aspects of Orlando's identity that the narrative voice insists remain the same – his/her physiognomy, his/her memory – are those that remain in the physical, individual body; "identity" as Woolf deploys the concept here is possessed by the individual subject, severed from social context (as Orlando, in the abandoned Constantinople palace, seems at first glance to be). Even if sex and gender are "merely" social constructions, humans are social animals, and therefore one's sex changes one's possibilities, expectations, and ultimately one's bodily experience – as we saw above with Orlando's tingling ring finger. Woolf navigates the question of the relationship between sex and identity by shifting her pronouns, as she moves from "his" to "their" to "hers"

in the passage quoted. "Their" provides the critical middle term to show how the apparent unity at either pole of the male/female binary is in fact an illusion, hiding a fundamental division *within* each category that is only held intact by the technology of language itself.

Orlando's sexual metamorphosis demonstrates the insufficiency of the male/female binary; as if to respond to the loss of this stabilizing matrix, the novel voyages to the land of the gypsies in order to discover a more fundamental and primal unity in this Orientalized nature/culture. Orlando's retreat represents a retreat from imperial history itself, as she journeys to a primitive location that seems beyond the reach of the British ideology, especially its sexual biopolitics. Orlando discovers in the gypsies a liberatory androgyny, and this allows her to experience herself without sex. She "scarcely [gives] her sex a thought" while with the gypsies, and it is not until she first dons restricting female clothing on her boat ride home that she starts understanding "the penalties and privileges of her position" (*O* 108).

The problem with such a journey is that while it seems to retreat from patriarchal history into pansexual nature, nature as a historically produced category fails to transcend history, even though the ideology of nature would have it so. This is, in the words of Adorno, "Natural beauty as suspended history, a moment of becoming at a standstill."[47] Orlando's immersion in this primitive landscape does not signify a return to a nature before it is contaminated by Western imperialism, but rather an erasure of imperial history through the aestheticization of nature-as-image. In fact, the entire gypsy episode works according to these pastoral aesthetics, which celebrate the "pure" and "simple" pleasures and cultural practices of this primitive lifestyle precisely because of their difference from the "corrupt" and "complex" pleasures and practices of the modern West. This perspective obscures the impact of imperial history on gypsy culture. It replicates the idea of gypsies as primitive, an idea produced by a distinctly modern and European mode of discourse that does not reveal any truth about the East; rather, it shows us

the intellectual, ideological and geopolitical investments in the East held by Britain and other European colonial powers. Further, Woolf's description of the gypsies as unconcerned with binary sexuality ironically sexualizes the gypsies. This is nothing new; as Edward Said shows, the association between the Orient and sex is "a remarkably persistent motif in Western attitudes to the Orient," as the Orient appears to signify "not only fecundity but sexual promise (and threat), untiring sexuality, unlimited desire, deep generative energies."[48]

The production of these gypsies according to these Western stereotypes presents the Orient as a place of the aesthetic, an escape from the cold empiricism of Western ontologies. The problem is that since the trip to the Orient is always framed as a departure, a journey, the Western frame remains intact and tends to draw the voyager back to his or her homeland. This is what Adorno feared in the aesthetic; he warns that the "rejection of the empirical world" that one finds in the aesthetic realm actually "sanctions the primacy of reality."[49] The gypsies' imagined status as "outsiders" of history enables the Westerner Orlando – and also Woolf-as-author – to imagine she has transcended the historical and temporal order of Western modernity, when in fact she reproduces this order in the very act of retreat.

This retreat is intensely productive, as contact with this exotic other enables both Orlando-as-protagonist and Woolf-as-author to seek a relation to the non-human world that does not conform to normative English conceptions of nature and naturalness. Orlando "plays gypsy" to experience these alternative ways of relating to the natural world, but she does so as a tourist, never letting go of the views of nature, culture, race, and gender that she learned during her English boyhood. Among the gypsies, Orlando discovers the fluidity of race, and also the pleasure that such fluidity might offer. The gypsies "[seem] to have looked upon her as one of themselves" because of "her dark hair and dark complexion"[50]; they therefore welcome her into their culture, helping her learn "their arts of cheese-making and basket-weaving, their science of

stealing and bird-snaring." In contrast to the extravagant theatricality of Orlando's ambassadorial duties, which involve him pretending to drink tea and smoke tobacco from empty cups and pipes with a seemingly endless procession of Turkish officials, the gypsy culture offers a feeling of pastoral simplicity and harmony. Playing the part of a gypsy allows her to feel closer to nature, as her primary activities involve working the land for sustenance: "She milked the goats; she collected brushwood; she stole a hen's egg now and then, but always put a coin or pearl in place of it; she herded cattle; she stripped vines; she trod the grape; she filled the goat-skin and drank from it" (*O* 100). The paratactical style of this sentence enacts the simplicity of this lifestyle, as almost every clause follows a rather straightforward subject-verb-object structure. These actions are distinct and relate clearly to the bare necessities of survival -- almost the opposite of the endless ceremonies of his/her Ambassadorship. The parataxis suggests a varied but nonetheless discreet set of interactions between the human and non-human, outlining a naturalized "culture" that goes back to the agri*cultural* roots of the word, breaking down the very nature/culture distinction. The only break in this paratactical structure comes when it mentions the money and jewels that Orlando feels compelled to exchange for the stolen egg; this is a crucial deviation, however, because it shows that as much as Orlando immerses herself in gypsy culture, she remains nonetheless a tourist, playing-gypsy while still maintaining her belief in private property and capital exchange. (The whole experience reads something like an eighteenth-century version of agro-tourism.) She carries with her to the imperial periphery Western forms of capital, and the associated moral values. While her racial ambiguity would seem to give her "insider" access to this foreign and primitive culture, her performance of this culture is always contained by the larger moral economy (or economic morality) of the imperial center, her native land. Her metamorphosis from Englishwo/man to gypsy, then, carries forth her Western values, providing that consistency that ultimately undercuts the radicalness of this transformation.

Her Western, capitalist worldview also expresses itself in the way she appreciates nature. Related to her inescapable sense of private property, she brings from her native land "the English disease, a love of nature," which the gypsies suspect is "inborn in her" (*O* 100). This returns the discussion to the moment that I begin the chapter with, "How good to eat." Orlando, wanting to describe what is essentially an aesthetic response to the landscape, has to put her feelings through a dual act of translation: first, from English to the gypsy language; and second, from the aesthetic to the gastronomic. For Orlando, the landscape inspires a sort of abstract desire, its auratic presence always gesturing at some mystery within. While still in Constantinople, the narrator informs us, Orlando often "[looks] at the mountains from her balcony at the Embassy [and longs] to be there" (*O* 99). Her arrival to the gypsy camp does not satisfy these desires, but rather such desires swell into rapturous yearnings for aesthetic metamorphosis:

> She climbed the mountains, roamed the valleys, sat on the banks of the streams. She compared flowers to enamel and the turf to Turkish rugs worn thin. Trees were withered hags, and sheep were grey boulders. Everything, in fact, was something else. She found the tarn on the mountain-top and almost threw herself in to seek the wisdom she thought lay hid there; and when, from the mountain-top, she beheld far off, across the Sea of Marmara, the plains of Greece, and made out (her eyes were admirable) the Acropolis with a white streak or two which must, she thought, be the Parthenon, her soul expanded with her eyeballs, and she prayed that she might share the majesty of the hills, know the serenity of the plains, etc. etc. as all such believers do. Then, looking down, the red hyacinth, the purple iris wrought her to cry out in ecstasy at the goodness, the beauty of nature; raising her eyes again, she beheld the eagle soaring, and imagined its raptures and made them her own. (*O* 101)

Observing Orlando as she gazes upon this impossible panorama (one of many such panoramas in the text), we see that despite her performance of gypsy culture, this is not a cultural viewpoint she can inhabit without bringing the Oriental landscape into relief with Western culture, as symbolized by the "white streak" of the Parthenon, the temple to Athena. This view of the racialized origin point of Western culture inspires metaphors that metamorphose the foreign, nonhuman environment stretching before her eyes into an aesthetic landscape that has been

mastered by the European gaze in this moment of ecorhapsody. The hyacinth and iris who attest to nature's beauty and goodness, the eagle with whom Orlando communes: these images serve to tame this seemingly sublime nature, to bring it down to size and make it familiar and digestible. The nonhuman is Westernized and personified as it comes to represent the distinctly human virtues of majesty, serenity, goodness, and rapture; the tarn is not just a mountain lake, but a repository of some mysterious human "wisdom." The nonhuman world becomes a screen on which the human subject, Orlando, projects her desires and her identity.

Noting this reveals how Orlando, because of her homesick desire for familiar English forms of nature, fails to internalize the translation between "beautiful" and "good to eat"; despite speaking the language of the gastronomic, and living a lifestyle that emphasizes her direct dependence on the nonhuman for sustenance, she nonetheless continues to process the nonhuman through a Western aesthetic frame, one that has a particularly Romantic overtone in its depiction of ecorhapsody. Like the Romantics, this view does not stand for itself, but rather represents a trigger for an epiphanic moment of self-awareness and creativity, the "expansion" of her soul. The material world becomes secondary to the subject's imagination. She "[longs], as she has never longed before, for pen and ink," and cries out "'Oh! if only I could write!'…(for she had the odd conceit of those who write that words written are shared)" (*O* 102). This strong desire to create textual representations that capture the nonhuman environment so they may be "shared" should be seen as the Romantic tourist impulse *par excellence* (see, for instance, Wordsworth's "Tinturn Abbey"). This impulse turns another space into a discursive object of memorabilia that reminds one not only of the space, but that space as the viewing subject experienced it. Her desire to turn nature into art constitutes, in Adorno's words, "[nature's] abolition in effigy" as it "relegates nature to raw material."[51] This tourist impulse is also a colonial impulse, repeating imperial motifs of conquest, capture, and value-extraction.

It is useful to look at Orlando's journey to the east, then, as a colonial adventure. While others go to the colonies seeking financial gain, the value that she extracts from the gypsy lands is not Kurtz's precious ivory but rather the aesthetic experience itself. She is not unlike today's safari-goers, who come armed with Nikons instead of rifles and leave with photographs instead of taxidermied lions. Even though there is less obvious violence or environmental destruction committed by the enlightened individual tourist, the imperial hierarchies and imbalances persist on a structural level. The Orient serves as a looking glass for the Westerner Orlando, and once she's extracted whatever meaning the East has for her, she experiences the strong desire to return and reterritorialize in more familiar geographies.

We see this desire rear its head soon after her vision of the Parthenon across the Sea of Maramara. Orlando reclines under a fig tree (a poor replacement for her native, thick-canopied oak, the fig tree "only served to print patterns of fig-leaves on her light burnous"), and looks upon the foreign desert in front of her, comparing it to a "gigantic skull picked white by a thousand vultures." Though she initially escaped to the East trying to flee "Lust, the Vulture," she finds these vultures have proliferated; the beast she ran from when she left England has pursued her to the periphery. The tour having worn thin, Orlando's homesickness inspires a magical-realist moment of environmental transformation, as she suddenly sees her ancestral lands projected over the arid landscape. A "green hollow showed where there was barren rock before," revealing "a great park-like space" on the hillside. Having experienced in the East nature for its use value, nature-as-material, Orlando yearns for the pleasures of nature's aesthetic value, nature-as-image. This "park-like space," the polar opposite of the stark and inhospitable Turkish desert, recalls England's domesticated nature, those *lieux de mèmoire* that are so generative of English identity. Soon the park fills with all the familiar substance of her rural English motherland: oak trees and thrushes, deer and daws, even "the roofs and belfries and towers and

courtyards of her own home" – the parataxis gesturing to a national totality that is at once concrete and infinite (*O* 105-06). This moment of strong nationalist identification depends on and works through nature; through this yearning for English nature, Orlando confirms her own Englishness, and therefore her unfitness among the gypsies. While she was able to become-gypsy for some time, this was at best a kind of play-acting, a childish way of denying one's essential being as an English subject. Orlando's nature, that inborn part of herself, eventually had to route her back to her motherland. This image saturates the scene in nationalist affect, a force so strong within Orlando that it overwhelms the landscape in front of her, colonizing this foreign environment and transforming it into familiar English forms.

But there is a deeper irony here. It is not simply that Orlando discovers that she is, in fact, English-to-the-core after all. Remembering Baucom, we must insist that this recognition of her essential Englishness doesn't form *despite* these pressures from the imperial other; rather, her Englishness forms *because of* these pressures from the imperial other. In order to recognize her essential Englishness, she must voyage through the East, must attempt and fail to become Other, must come to recognize that she is ultimately *unlike* these gypsies, for the same reason that they reject her from their society: "they did not think as she did." It is not so much that she recognizes a positive content within herself, but rather a negative of her English identity in the gypsies. Becoming-gypsy, becoming-minoritarian, becoming-other does *not* lead Orlando to become-imperceptible, that anti-teleology that Deleuze places at the end of this chain. Instead, it makes her become what she always was: English, through and through.

This Englishness is not the same thing that it was when we first meet Orlando swinging at the head of a Moor swinging from the rafters. This national essence has been somehow transformed by encounter with the Orient. It depends upon its dialectical incorporation of the gypsy culture, which becomes a sublated term within the master signifier. The sublated presence

of the gypsy culture reveals itself in the final moments of the novel, when there is an inversion of the previous scene where the English countryside hallucinogenically appears above the Turkish desert. Once again resting beneath her ancestral oak, Orlando by "some trick of the fading light" witnesses "the bare mountains of Turkey" appear before her: "She looked straight at the baked hill-side. Goats cropped at the sandy tufts at her feet. An eagle soared above her. The raucous voice of old Rustram, the gypsy, croaked in her ears, 'What is your antiquity and your race, and all your possessions compared with this? What do you need with four hundred bedrooms and silver lids on all your dishes, and house-maids dusting?'" (*O* 226). Just as the Oriental nature of the bare, baked hillside strips away the lush flora of the English countryside, the gypsy Rustram strips away the pleasures and conveniences of the country house. This is what Homi Bhabha has called the *unheimlich* terror of the other, the repressed term that suddenly speaks forth in the haunted consciousness of the colonizer. Orlando's memory of Rustram's allegorizes England's memory of its colonial history, and also calls into question Western notions of progress and wealth by putting these minor domestic pleasures in relief with the vast scale of sublime, Oriental nature.

However, as quickly as this moment comes, it passes. While the vision of England over Turkey is enough to inspire Orlando to rush back to her home soil, the inverse has a passing, superficial effect. Nostalgia soothes sharp point of Rustram's words. After the paragraph break, the present "[showers] down around [Orlando's] head once more," and she is back in England, with the only difference being that "Night had come – night that she loved of all times, night in which the reflections in the dark pool of the mind shine more clearly than by day" (*O* 226). The ease with which she moves from her memory of Rustram back to the contemplative pleasures of the present indicates that her memory of the East is not exactly a haunting. Even though Rustram's words bear the potential to make Orlando ashamed of the petty luxury and obvious

hypocrisy of her aristocratic lifestyle, they do not penetrate Orlando's ecorhapsodic harmony with her homeland. Instead, the memory of her voyage to the East becomes part of the pleasure of the present, something to provide variety and color but ultimately secondary and complementary, non-essential.

Conclusion

In *Orlando*, Woolf begins to map out her theory of an alternative, queer sexual embodiment. Woolf insists upon a primary, natural sexuality that was there *before* the artificial binaries of culture rent this universal energy in two. Woolf Romantically believes that Nature is on her side, and draws on natural imagery as a source of strength. However, Woolf problematically constructs nature and the Orient – two places where Orlando finds freedom from Britain's biopolitics – in ways that compromise the political potential of Woolf's novel.

Woolf's gypsies and Deleuze's nomads both provide powerful images of alternaeity for Westerners gazing East, as these apparently primitive cultures enable fantasies of a return to the time when nature and culture were integrated, before the messy identity politics of modernity tore us from the original holisms of body and society. There is nothing inherently wrong with the act of fantasizing; in an age when neoliberal ideology prematurely declares the end of history, when the whole world seems rationalized within a technologically-administered system of biopolitical control and value extraction, fantasy can open spaces of political resistance. It can help us discover excessive pleasures and queer affiliations. But we must distinguish between productive fantasy and fantasy as escapism; we must be willing to politicize our fantasies and understand how they still contain residues from hegemony carry through these metamorphoses. We must, in other words, develop an ethic of encounter with non-Western cultures, a rigorous and endless self-inspection that interrogates our citational and rhetorical practices. This ethic

also must set intellectual production of the West – including this very chapter – in the historical context of Orientalism and the contemporary context of neocolonialism.

In addition to being questioned for their appropriation of non-Western cultures, Woolf and Deleuze's materialisms must be questioned for the concepts of nature that exist within each (even if Deleuze avoids the word *nature*). Both materialisms Romantically seek transcendence through immanence, and both attempt to annihilate the human subject's physical and conceptual boundaries and to tap into a larger, more holistic being. At the same time, these materialisms regard nature as an object of contemplation, which means that even as these theories bring a subject outside herself, they end up routing back to the individual self. Nature remains in an other space, an aesthetic space, a space that may be toured, enjoyed, tried on, consumed, memorialized, frozen into an image. But because this space tries to establish itself outside of history and politics, it must therefore be fully politicized. That is to say, Romantic nature must be seen as a product of imperial and nationalist culture, not a haven from it.

II. The Harmony of Monotony:

The Dark Passage of E.M. Forster's Queer Pastoral

A Room with a Tune

In his 1969 experimental music piece *I Am Sitting in a Room*, the American composer Alvin Lucier records himself speaking a short explanation of his project:

> I am sitting in a room different from the one you are in now. I am recording the sound of my speaking voice and I am going to play it back into the room again and again until the resonant frequencies of the room reinforce themselves so that any semblance of my speech, with perhaps the exception of r-r-rhythm [Lucier grew up with a stutter] is destroyed. What you will hear then are the natural resonant frequencies of the room articulated by speech. I regard this activity n-n-not so much as a demonstration of a physical fact, but more as a way to s-s-smooth out any irregularities my speech may have.[1]

The first half dozen or so repetitions of this text are easily understood, as if the words were spoken from the other end of a telephone connection that grows progressively worse, or by someone retreating further and further into a cave. After ten minutes, the words transform to a barely decipherable murmur behind high-pitched droning. Twenty minutes into the piece, the words are nothing more than an irregular pulse that sets off a haunting and strange symphony of sympathetic tones – the "natural frequencies of the room," as Lucier calls them. Background has become foreground, and the previous foreground – human language – has been reduced to an obscure origin point, barely a rhythm. Half an hour into the forty-five minute recording, even this origin point seems completely irrelevant, a ripple disseminated among an ocean of shifting tones and strange harmonies that rub against each other in unpredictable, indecipherable ways. Those ripples of sounds, for the reader of E.M. Forster, might best be transcribed as "buom."

I begin this chapter on Forster's *A Passage to India* with Lucier's *I Am Sitting in a Room* because I see Forster as similarly pursuing this level of "natural resonant frequencies" with a different "room" – for the modernist novelist, this "room" seems to be the entire sub-continent

of India. Forster finds in India that defamiliarizing space where his linear understanding the relationship between his body and his environment (a product of his upbringing as a public-school Englishman) doubles back on itself, takes on new dimensions, and dissolves into a "muddle and a mystery." For Forster, India suggests a primal flux from which humans came and to which they will return, much like the smooth soundscapes of Lucier's composition. I also begin this chapter with Lucier's example because it emphasizes how this "natural resonance" – thought to belong to the room/India – is originally an echo of the human/Western voice. To understand and contact this "beyond that is always right here,"[2] one must attempt to let go of familiar forms of meaning and teach herself to listen differently to apprehend. Is this understanding of that absolute other ever possible? Or are these "natural resonant frequencies" only an echo of our own words that trap us narcissistically in our own reflections?

Following this eco-phenomenological line of inquiry, his chapter pursues two questions regarding E.M. Forster's fiction that might at first glance seem divergent, but we will see over the course of this chapter how they are in fact interrelated and mutually dependent. First, how do Forster's fictions imagine a *queer ecology* (an alternative, indeterminate, and libidinally-charged relationship between the human body and more-than-human environment) that enables his characters (and Forster himself) to undergo transformative experiences, facilitating their escape from nationalistic, masculinist, and biologistic conceptions of the embodied male subject? Second, how do we account for the effects of Forster's historical subject-position as a beneficiary and agent of British colonialism, especially his reproduction of Orientalist stereotypes in his descriptions of Eastern lands and peoples in *A Passage to India*? To "account for" here is not to judge Forster guilty or innocent of the sins of colonialism or to diagnose the disease of Orientalism in his work (a task that has already produced a substantial body of criticism, both positive and negative). The goal in looking at these two questions alongside each

other is rather to understand how these two axes of biological difference, sex and race, signify within in the theatre of Forster's Indian environment. I ask what the categories of race and sex show us about the environment, and what the environment shows us about these categories. These answer to these questions tends towards the ecophenomenological, describing how the more-than-human bears an agentic capacity in human affairs, particularly human perception. The three English protagonists from *Passage* (Adela Quested, Mrs. Moore, and Cyril Fielding) all have encounters with the Indian environment that cause the background to burst into the foreground and disturb their habitual ways of relating to their more-than-human surroundings. Each member of the trio hopes to "tap into" the landscape in such a way that he or she discovers an alternative form of embodiment that overflows the narrow channels of sexual identity imposed by the British Empire's biopolitical regime. They expect the elusive "real India" to *enable them to become elusive*, *to transform*, if only they can locate this ineffable energy that binds within and without. There is, then, a fundamental irony in these characters' attitude towards India, as their desire to share in this indefinable, elusive quality in the environment spurs a desire to pin down and define that very quality. When these contradictory desires are inevitably frustrated, the characters fall back on the interpretative methods of Western science as they attempt to make sense of these bewildering (a word that speaks to *becoming wild*) experiences. While dualistic Western tradition thus distances Forster's English characters from immediate contact with the environment, this contact seems possible for followers of monist Hindu tradition, such as the attendees of the Krishna festival and Professor Godbole. However, the text distances its readers, as well as its English characters, from these Hindu characters even as it seems to open the possibility for communication between these opposing world-views. The possibility of transformation, while not closed, is deferred, perhaps endlessly, by the novel's conclusion.

Later in this chapter, I show how Forster's representation of the relationship between the human body and the more-than-human environment in *A Passage to India*, his final novel, marks a significant change from his previous conception of that relationship. In the earlier fictions of Forster's that I discuss in this chapter, the short story "The Story of a Panic" and the novel *Maurice*, his queer characters do succeed in *harmonizing with* the more-than-human environments of Italy and rural England. These narratives queer pastoral tradition as his protagonists' essentially queer natures emerge – emergences that Forster describes as primarily bodily transformations. These transformations coincide with experiences of "ecorhapsody," a term of Timothy Morton defines as "a reading of the book of nature,"[3] to which I will return to in a moment. In "The Story of a Panic," an energy animating the natural environment serves as a trigger for this metamorphosis because it is also shown to be queer. The Greek "God of all" Pan manifests a pansexual energy that runs in excess of the disciplinary forms of compulsory heterosexuality. This libidinous energy is also a creative energy, inspiring the character to speak the truth of nature and, by metonymic extension, the truth of themselves. Similarly, in a transitional coda regarding Forster's *Maurice*, I show how this novel makes a claim on England's natural environment by fetishizing the body of Alec Scudder. This working-class, homegrown man provides the protagonist Maurice a medium with which to contact the vast spaces of queer nature and, subsequently, to transform into his true self, which could never emerge in the restrictive interiors of English society. However, in A *Passage to India,* his final novel, he stages multiple encounters with the East that ultimately fail to inaugurate new recognitions with the more-than-human or liberatory conceptions of embodiment. *A Passage to India* pushes the deconstructive methods of queer analysis beyond a critique of national identity to question two foundational elements of identity itself: language and the body. The Indian environment, instead of providing a mirror which reflects some essential element of the character's being or a text

from which one can read the meaning of themselves and the world around them, signals instead the *impossibility of ever understanding being, nature, or meaning itself.* If in earlier Forster, the environment was a place of positivism, of affirmation, in his last novel, the only one set outside of Europe, the environment (which, problematically, includes the Indian characters who straddle the nature/culture divide) was a place of negativism, of deconstruction.

I read the gaps in meaning created by these negative descriptions as interpretative portals through which we can pass from my first question, an aesthetic and ecophenomenological inquiry into the representation of queer nature, to my second question, a political and ethical examination that asks how we should account for Forster's historical subject position when reading his descriptions of India. Through these gaps in the representation of India, the agency of these lands and peoples to show through. To see this agency, one must follow the novel's directions and avoid making the same mistake as Adela Quested: one must resist a positivist reading that expects Forster to reveal the "real India" by discovering some *harmony* that connects the human body (in general) or the subject (as a specially endowed individual) with the Indian environment's exotic essence. To discover the agency of the other in Forster's India, we must instead perform a negativist reading that looks for failure, meaninglessness, confusion, silence, and *monotony* – a word, opposed to harmony, that Forster employs in *Passage* in ways that disrupt such naïve conceptions of the human/more-than-human relationship. "Monotony" suggests also the indecipherability and inexpressibility of Hindu monism, a worldview the novel can only hesitantly adopt from a skeptical, modern, Western viewpoint (that is to say, a dualist viewpoint). What seems an escape route actually leads Forster back to the same old metaphysics. When Forster writes that India is a "muddle (as we call it), a frustration of reason and form,"[4] it not only points to the limits of the epistemologies of Western colonial science, but further provokes the questions: who (or what) is doing the frustrating? How does this protean trickster elude

capture by the Empire's impressive arsenal of technologies, methodologies, and ideologies? Forster's final novel teaches us how the elusiveness of the other creates space for new modes of ethics and politics that can respect difference and be open to radical change, but also demonstrates the contingency, incompleteness, and delicacy of these potentially utopian spaces.

As we saw in the previous chapter on Virginia Woolf's *Orlando*, "the East" as a category produced by the West is especially productive for queer Modernist authors in search of an alternative to heteronormative modes of feeling and being. These authors colonized the exotic landscapes of the East as frontiers for the imagination, providing a wealth of new contents and forms to appropriate into their art. To understand *why* these Eastern landscapes are so productive, one must avoid the twin-but-opposing traps of universalism (where one side of a binary like West/East, male/female, or human/more-than-human can communicate with the other without any distortion) and cultural relativism (where no communication across such binaries is possible at all). Any "passage" across these binaries must be examined both ethically and politically, considering the forces that enable this traversal. This inquiry requires, in other words, a new epistemology of the encounter with the other that *maintains both recognition and misrecognition*. The recognitions could be potential points of solidarity and interconnection, while the misrecognitions create space for the agency of this indomitable, irreducible other (which could be another human organism, a non-human organism, inanimate matter, an unfamiliar place, or various assemblages of these elements). By immersing itself in these ethical or political considerations, this epistemology does not seek the universalism of Kant's categorical imperative or Rousseau's state of nature, nor does it perform what Donna Haraway has called the "God-trick" of "seeing everything from nowhere"[5]; instead it takes account of the historical power structures and cultural practices that enable someone like Forster, a European-born bourgeois male subject, to relocate physically and imaginatively to these alternative vantage points.

This epistemology requires that we reconceptualize two meta-structures, mentioned in passing above, upon which many edifices of colonial science have laid their foundations: first, language, and second, the body. By referring to language and the body as *meta-structures*, I draw attention to the fact that they are structures that contain within them structures, and to their special positions as signifiers endowed with a (false) sense of closure and totality, and therefore as hermeneutics that are often (problematically) used as explanations of origin, organicity, and meaning. The discussion of language will, by way of Jacques Derrida's deconstruction of the linguistic signifier, open into a discussion of music. As sound that communicates without depending on linguistic signification, music simultaneously fails, fulfills, and transcends the requirements and affordances of phonetic language. It spans the space between the meta-structures of the body and language, "speaking" to the body in its "native language" of "unmediated" sensory experience as ripples of air strike the ear-drums. (All of these words in scare quotes will need to be (dis)qualified, but I use them now because they capture Forster's own beliefs about music).

Music, ubiquitous in Foster's fiction, occupies a special place within the author's conception of the world; like Lucier's experiment with "natural resonance," Forster's fiction imagines music as providing human beings a particular kind of contact with the other, a way of "sounding the void," so to speak. According to Michelle Fillion, "Music allowed Forster to transcend the precision of the word and, in his most visionary moments of 'difficult rhythm,' to open the novel to the timeless and the ineffable – and ultimately the ambiguities of modern life."[6] In the years leading up to World War I, Forster, a lifelong devotee of classical music, experienced first-hand the rise of an *avante garde* movement that we today call musical modernism; among other experiences, he had the rare honor of seeing not one but *two* of the first four London performances of Igor Stravinsky's *Le Sacre du printemps* (The Rite of Spring),

with the original choreography by Vaslav Nijinsky.[7] These experiments with music had an effect on Forster's literary style, encouraging him to bring non-lingual sounds into his final novel ("buom"). In my discussion of the Marabar Caves near the end of the chapter, I will suggest that both Forster and Lucien's experiments with the word enact not only the dissemination of the linguistic signifier, but also, in a strange reversal, a (provisional) return to origins, immediacy, and transcendence (as Fillion's quote suggests).

In order to draw attention to the way that music operates as a point of contact between the human and the more-than-human other, I describe these scenes as moments of "ecorhapsody." Morton's concept is useful because it draws attention to the rhetorical and literary devices through which a given text establishes the human body, the nonhuman environment, and the communication between the two. In ecorhapsody, "Poetry *is* a medium, the contact [between human and more-than-human]. The poet becomes the servant of the medium, its gardener. […] The mind lets go while the body takes over."[8] Morton provides a number of different metaphors to explain the interaction between the human and the more-than-human environment to describe his concept: he calls it "'mainlining' reality," a "monitoring," and "the resonance of the foreground in the background."[9] All three metaphors emphasize the medium between the human subject and its nonhuman object – a drug, an image, a sound. Poetry (and literature more broadly) aspires to be all three. Morton's word choice "rhapsody" emphasizes both music and religion, suggesting that music, because it acts directly on the body, is better equipped facilitate an individual's contact with this transcendental signifier, which we may be called "God," "Nature," or "Truth." Morton shows how ecorhapsodic discourse seeks to make the background present in the foreground, but also, following methods of Derridian deconstruction, how this effort always disseminates into textuality; to access that level of reality which is beyond concept and language paradoxically requires that we return to

language. This concept of ecorhapsody will provide a method to interpret both the moments from "The Story of a Panic" and *Maurice* where Forster's protagonists have a successful transformation because of their encounter with the nonhuman, and also those more disturbing encounters from *A Passage to India*. (It is important to note that, in describing the features and tropes of ecorhapsody, Morton means to deconstruct, not to endorse the validity of, this epistemology. Similarly, my aim is to put Forster's gestures towards transcendental signifiers like "Nature" under ethical and political examination, but this requires first taking his epistemologies seriously to understand their logics and mechanisms.)

Ecorhapsodic moments in Forster enact exchanges between the more-than-human environment and the human sensorium that enable the perceiving subject to access (if not fully understand) a level of his or her being that escapes the limiting modes of embodiment dictated by the identity categories of British biopolitics. Being an Englishman, as we will see in a public school essay of Forster's, meant being uniquely resilient to the transformative effects foreign environments. This national identity functioned during the *fin de siècle* as a technology to secure the empire's biopower (both in terms of its actual bodies and its genetic reservoir) against the imagined and actual threats posed by the unfamiliar, untamed environments of the periphery – of "going native," of disorder, of waste, of miscegenation. In Forster's European fictions, ecorhapsody provides a means for Forster's queer protagonists to access a benevolent and sympathetic nature that is infused with pansexual energy. Recognizing themselves in these queer natures, these characters emerge from their ill-fitting cocoon of English masculine identity and transform into fully-realized queer subjects. The two characters I consider most closely, Eustice from "The Story of a Panic" and the titular character of *Maurice,* are both granted the rarest of all honors in Forster's oeuvre: a happy ending (in both cases, a pastoral escape). These transformations are profoundly bodily in nature; in every case, the trigger seems to be the

breakdown of the supposedly resilient and impenetrable English male body, which is shown to in fact be "trans-corporeal"—a term Stacy Alaimo develops to describe our material condition where "the human is always intermeshed with the more-than-human world."[10] By acknowledging the male body's porosity, Forster allows his characters to experience the pleasures and risks of "becoming-with" the more-than-human, a *feminine* and *queer* way of relating to the more-than-human-world.[11]

When Forster and his fiction travel East to India, however, this harmonious and pleasurable trans-corporeal interaction with nature undergoes a "darkening" (a word I choose because of its racial connotations). When Forster first looked upon India's shores while vacationing there in 1912, he described the moment in his diary as an encounter with a trickster figure: "False India – a cloud bank – turned into true, a queer red series of hills a little disquieting, as though Italy had been touched into the sinister."[12] This sentence enacts a *failed recognition*, as India refuses to offer itself as an object of interpretation to Western eyes. First, it presents a "false" mask, which then dissipates to reveal a somewhat disappointing but nonetheless "queer" and "disquieting" face. The final, remarkable clause suggests an author grasping, unsuccessfully, for some formula to account for the unaccountable-because-unfamiliar. This formula, which colors the sensuousness of Italy (a country already richly imagined by Forster in both "The Story of a Panic" and *A Room with a View* [1908] as a paradisiacal retreat where pansexuality is "in the air"[13]) with red hues of deceitfulness, duplicity, and danger, does not "capture" or "reveal" India's nature, but rather defers it, maintains its mystery so that the mystery may return a "disquieting" stare – the stare, I suggest, of deconstruction. As in Forster's life, so in his fiction: the scene of Mrs. Moore in the Marabar caves enacts the deconstruction of language into "*monotonous*" ("single toned") music – music that doesn't sound like music at all, just sound without difference/*différance*, "buom," like the otherworldly hums at the end of *I Am*

Sitting in a Room. Music no longer comprehensible to human ears – or at least to Western ears. Music of the apocalypse – or at least of the apocalypse of a particular historico-cultural formation.

It is problematic that in Forster "Western" and "human" are too easily conflated, since it implies that those from the East are somehow less human. If there is one theme that consistently appears throughout his representation of the Indian landscape and Indian (particularly Hindu) culture, it is the *naturalization* of this "homegrown" culture, reading it as a product of the landscape, recalling the roots of the word culture in *agriculture*. This move is familiar within primitivist representations of colonized peoples that want to see these "savages" as present-day representatives of Rousseau's natural man. While this might seem ennobling, this dehumanizing rhetoric (which continues to find new permutations today) serves imperial power because it makes denies people the agency of self-determination, a power only advanced, civilized societies are supposed to possess. It also effaces the many ways in which the Indian people, rather than accepting their lot another ecosystemic resource for the use of British Empire, were already engaged in active resistance.[14] For the most part, Forster's Hindu characters are flat characters, incapable of change, there to provide ambiance and authenticity to the Indian environment. These characters come to serve as a target of Western desire not because of what they disclose about India, but rather because of the manner in which they maintain India's incomprehensibility. They remain on the other side of an aesthetic screen, there as an object of consumption and contemplation for a gaze that they seem incapable of returning. It is India's environment, instead, that returns the gaze and takes on a kind of "character" as it confuses and frustrates the novel's protagonists. This demonstrates how being described as "closer to nature," while it seems empowering, can often serve as a method of silencing the term that falls on the latter side of the culture/nature binary. The narrator's descriptions of the

landscape repeatedly emphasize the failure of Western categories to comprehend this environment, which is to old, to vast, too strange, too monotonous. Indian nature, Indian people, are ultimately *unsignifiable* for Forster, and his novel can be read as an extended elaboration of this unsignifiability.

It is this unsignifiability of India for Forster that ironically serves to maintain it as a point of desire. The representation of the Shri Krishna festival and the song of the Hindu Professor Godbole celebrates this religion as being uniquely tapped into the monist whole. Forster's impression of Hindu culture is that it is fundamentally metamorphic because of its monist philosophy; it is in a state of constant change and adaptation, and as such can absorb new influences (including the influences of colonialism) while staying essentially the same. The Hindu characters seem capable of accessing and appreciating an unadulterated experience of being, that which constantly eludes the Westerners who want to pin this essence down. These representations reveal much more about the nature of Forster's desire than the nature of Hinduism; he continues to treat Hinduism as a means to an end, a cultural object that can be consumed in order to become other and escape the disciplinary forms of national identity. His queer nature, then, should also be seen as a kind of queer colonialism; even as he seems to revere this exotic and strange land, he stakes his claim.

The Uncivilized Desire for Transformation

In 1897, the sixteen year-old Edward Morgan Forster won a form prize from his public school, Tonbridge, for his essay "The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions on National Character." This essay articulates anxiety about the Englishman's body as he travels to the colonies, where his body becomes a battleground between the man's "half-formed mind" and "external Nature": "Sometimes the man will win, sometimes external Nature, but more often

they will each gain something, and the result will be a race which is a product of the old characteristics and the new influences. If the product is successful that race will be one of the winning nations of the world."[15] Taking the Gothic invasion of Italy's southern climates as his primary example, Forster imagines the racial body in Darwinian and specifically eugenicist terms, in which the world's different races are in a constant process of transformation as they compete with each other over land and resources. As part of this metamorphic imagination, he examines the role different ecosystems play in triggering these transformations, and how moving from one to another might change not only human bodies, but also human minds, cultures, and societies. He presents the exchange between the national male body (the Goths) and the foreign environment (Italy) as a reciprocal process, where "each gains something"; but there is also slippage here, as what was previously two ("they") becomes one "result" – a new, singular race. In this both race and culture are naturalized, as they are seen as the result of human interaction with their nonhuman surroundings. The other part of this exchange, "external Nature," doesn't seem to "gain" anything from this encounter. Forster's anthropocentric equation discards that second element, reducing Nature to catalyst and byproduct. Either Nature doesn't change at all, needing no further description because *external* Nature is also *eternal* Nature, or its being has been absorbed into the new "race."

Young Forster's theory of the relationship between the human body and the more-than-human environment comes through in the essay's methodology. As evidence for his claims, he turns to architecture, an art form which "inevitably shews the spirit of a nature better than literature or painting [because] a building is the work of all classes from the master-builder to the uneducated workman." Beyond being a representation of a cross-section of classed society, Forster reads the architecture of different regions as a result of the particular ecosystemic resources and climatic conditions of those regions. The Goths of the North "heaved from the

mountain side masses of rock" into churches adorned with "fantastic forms and grotesque shapes"; Gothic culture is seen as an extension of the region's geology. When the Goths invaded Italy, however, the influence of the southern climate transformed their architectural style: "Under the dreamy blue sky and amid the marble quarries they made themselves churches where men could sit and ponder." Forster explains the colonial encounter between these two entities in distinctly gendered, erotic terms, where the Gothic north (along with the human body) is masculinized and the Italian south (along with the nonhuman environment) is feminized. He takes up the metaphor of sexual reproduction to depict this union: "The dreamy beauty of the land softened the strong rough genius, and while they adopted the forms of the old civilization they filled them with new and vigorous life."[16] The South is *landscape*, a place of history and vacant forms; the North is *human,* a place of life-energy and genius. This imagery, which speaks to both colonial incursions and sexual communion, creates an entire geography of desire, where different regions, nations, and races simultaneously engage in a Darwinian competition over space and resources and in an erotic, sometimes sexual exchange of cultures, ideas, and friendship. This reproductive union is somehow rejuvenating to human culture, a mode of natural selection that resists the decay of civilization: hybrid vigor at the cultural level.

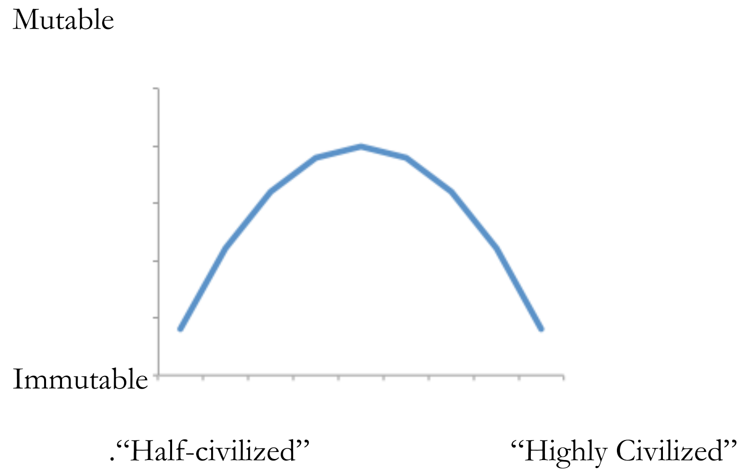
Forster identifies two notable exceptions to this rule of racial metamorphosis who manage to keep their "individuality" even as they move to different ecosystems and cultures: "half-civilized races" like the Moors of Spain and "the negroes" of the United States; and the "highly civilized race" of the English. While he provides no explanation for the former's ability to resist the influence of foreign environments, to the latter he ascribes an exceptional power over unfamiliar lands:

> An Englishman is an Englishman, whether he is on the plains of South Africa or the mountains of Upper India, and though his descendants live in these places for hundred of years they will never in the slightest degree resemble Hottentots or Chiralis. […] In the great struggle between man and his surroundings, man has now the upper hand.

> Aided by modern science he can to a great extent make Nature subservient to his will instead of being moulded to hers.[17] (69)

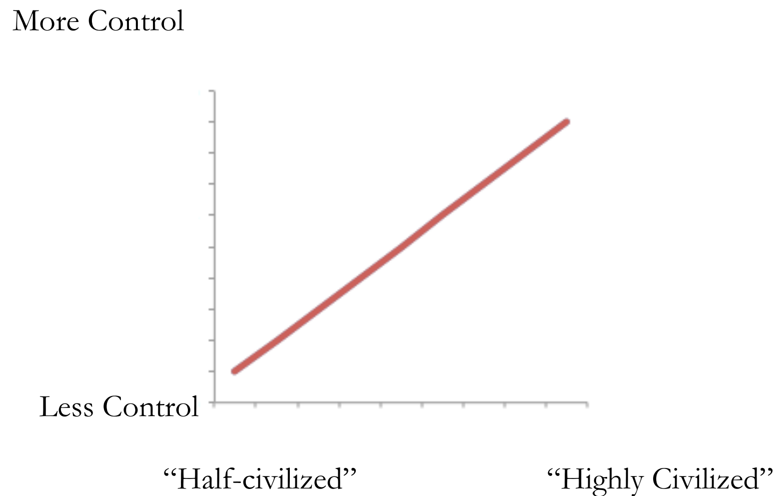
Forster describes a hierarchical spectrum, where the x-axis runs from *"half-civilized"* to "*highly civilized"* and the y axis runs from *mutable* to *immutable*.

Forster's Theory of Racial Mutability



This formula for understanding the mutability and environmental sensitivity of various races is also underpinned by an implicit formula that charts the inverse: the different races ability to transform their surroundings. This relationship, rather than being inverse-parabolic, is linear, and therefore more straightforwardly hierarchical:

Forster's Theory of Different Races' Control Over Environment



Together, these graphs imply a narrative fundamental to *fin de siècle* English identity: that modern "civilization," which includes Western science, technology, political and economic structures, and intellectual culture, has endowed the English race with near-total domain over foreign bodies and environments. Therefore, the race is *beyond transformation*, having achieved an almost perfect form of being that must be maintained at home and reproduced at large across the globe.

This narrative about the immutable Englishman's body emerges from and reconciles rising eugenic fears of racial degeneration and colonial decline. But while the male body is supposed to discipline foreign environments and peoples while in the periphery, it is also supposed to draw strength and stability from its motherland, specifically its rural, pastoral roots. Maurice Turda, describing the central role of eugenics in early twentieth-century European culture, argues that for each nation "the natural environment and peasantry…were deemed healthy and uncontaminated by the ills of modernity" in its "pursuit of a healthy national body."[18] One of these primary "ills of modernity" for Britain was the necessity to go abroad to administer the morally-ambiguous business of empire. Beyond the threat of moral compromise, the colonies also posed the risk of "going native" because of contact with hostile foreign natural/cultural environments, anxieties that were memorably captured in the character of Kurtz in Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*.[19] These fears of contamination were counterbalanced by a fetishization of the English countryside as pure, just, and original. The feminized English countryside was part mother, part nursemaid. A pastoral structure inheres in eugenic thought, especially in its desire to return to "natural" environments and "natural" forms of embodiment. The nation's nature is something one can "tap into" as a kind of quarantine against the contaminates modern world; it serves a cleansing, hermeneutic function, where different objects, behaviors, and affects are identified as "natural" and "healthy" or "unnatural" and "infected/infectious." There is something fundamentally religious in this "tapping in," insofar as

it implies going beyond scientific rationality as man seeks pure contact with a nature that operates beyond the bounds of reason. The religious structure of pastoral eugenics can work as a conservative force, further imposing heteronormative and racist norms by naturalizing them, but it also gives this discourse some political flexibility. Artists like Forster also fetishize the English countryside, but do so in order to reclaim nature for those who have been excluded from the English biopolitical regime as sexually abnormal.

The public school paper works as disciplinary form during the *fin de siècle,* a place where Englishness is sculpted and performed. However, even as a teenager, there is evidence of Forster testing and subverting the boundaries for masculinity set forth by imperial nationalism, a tendency that would come to characterize much of his future fictional and nonfictional writings. Forster wasn't just interested in what Englishness *is*, but rather what it *could become*; his view of race in a global imperial context was fundamentally metamorphic. His unconvincing and pat repetition of English exceptionalism barely conceals the subversive implications of this essay: that English people are somehow *less able to be transformed*. There might be power in being susceptible to foreign environments that English, in their desire to control these foreign lands, fail to comprehend. A glimmer of this emergent critique of English masculinity flashes in the essay's final paragraph, when he theorizes that "even in this age of scientific discovery, no one can form a due estimate" of "the hidden laws that link together in inextricable union the workings of Nature and the fortunes of man" – this problem he bequeaths to "future generations."[20] This final gesture opens a space beyond the rational and national forms of identity and being. It anticipates the trajectory that Forster would take in his life and his fiction as a self-consciously queer Englishman.

And When I Get That Feeling I Want Pansexual Healing

It was in 1902 while on vacation in Ravello, a town on the Amalfi Coast of Southern Italy, that the twenty-two year-old Forster wrote what he considered his first short story, "The Story of a Panic."[21] In this story, the Greek god Pan provides for Forster a positive, powerful mythic model of a primal, queer sexual energy that flows between the embodied self and the nonhuman environment. Known for his fondness for music, his habit of accosting travelers, and his capacious sexual appetite, Pan, the god of "all," represents "all" that *fin de siècle* nationalist eugenicist discourse represses and devalues by marking as degenerate, immoral, or feminine – those aspects of life that cause "Pan-ic." Instead of fearing evolution's decentering of man, Pan (who is often represented with goat's legs and horns, like a satyr) provides authors with a figure who playfully confuses the animal/human distinction, celebrating the unexpected intimacies between the human body and the nonhuman organisms in its environment. The god, who was the legendary inventor of the pan flute, also plays a critical role in the pastoral literary tradition; as god of the flocks, Pan inspires the shepherd's song. There exists, therefore, an erotic and gendered relationship between Pan and his ecorhapsode, the shepherd. The ecorhapsode, according to Morton's reading of Plato, experiences "an invasion of divine madness" and taps into "a force we now call a magnetic field, in which things become charged with energy."[22] The feminized (though typically male) shepherd experiences some immediate contact with this all-encompassing, virile, masculinized energy. The shepherd, who gestates a musical representation of this experience, mediates the reader's access to this energy.

It is also significant that the pastoral tradition originated from the classical Mediterranean of Greece and Italy, two spaces and cultures that were idealized by late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century queer artists as exotic and sexually permissive. Homosexual artists during this period saw in the Ancient Greece that produced works such as Plato's *Symposium* a Golden Age where intimacy between men was not immoral, as bourgeois English ideology would have it, but

was instead ennobling and natural practice. From this vantage, the progression of modern society and it's increasing emphasis on the nuclear, heterosexual family is distinctly *unnatural*; this is essentially a declension narrative where the development of modern biopolitical forms does not signify progress, but rather a corruption of a more natural, more original, less discriminate state of sexual being – pansexuality. Even in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, these centers of classical culture maintained their reputations as homosexual retreats from normative English forms of sexual identity.[23]

As we will see when we turn to Forster's biography later in the chapter, contact with these exotic, erotic environments was an important trigger for his personal development as an openly homosexual man. In "The Story of a Panic," this kind of contact also serves as a transformational force that liberates the protagonist Eustice from the biopolitical demands that are put on his body as an Englishman. The story is focalized through an unnamed male English narrator also vacationing in Ravello. Forster uses the ironic distance between reader and this unreliable narrator to critique nationalistic notions of heterosexual masculine embodiment. In the first paragraph the narrator "confess[es] that [he] is a plain, simple man with no pretensions of literary style," while in the same breath insisting that he can "tell a story without exaggerating" and "give an unbiased account of the extraordinary events of eight years ago."[24] This narrative arrangement encourages the reader to doubt this pompous Englishman's epistemological framework in which "literary style" is feminized, reduced to "pretentious" ornamentation, while his male gaze has to ability to observe the unembellished, "unbiased" truth. The queer narrative that follows will push this framework past its breaking point, as the narrator fails to grasp the meaning of the transformation that occurs right before his eyes.

The story's focalization serves the additional function of distancing the reader from the story's protagonist, Eustice, "a boy of about fourteen" who is staying at the same hotel with his

two aunts (*SP* 1). For both author and character, leaving the shores of England without a male supervisor for this new, sensually-charged land provides an escape route from the demands that compulsory heterosexuality and eugenic nationalism make on his body. Like Forster himself, Eustice fails to manifest an acceptable form of English male identity. After Eustice turns down his offer to join his family for a swim, the exasperated narrator vents, "But he said that he was afraid of water! – a boy afraid! – and of course I said no more" (*SP* 2). He is annoyed not only by the boy's utter lack of manly courage in the face of nature, but also his physical weakness and poor work ethic. With a eugenicist's eye, he diagnoses of Eustice's feminized body as a failure of proper sexual socialization: "Naturally enough, his features were pale, his chest contracted, and his muscles undeveloped. His aunts thought him delicate: what he really needed was discipline" (*SP* 2). The narrator is not alone in his desire to mold Eustice into a robust, middle-class male national subject; the retired English curate, Mr. Sandbach, also a guest at the hotel, "[endeavors] to fit him for one of our great public schools" (*SP* 1). These elder Englishmen thus try to extend the panoptic patriarchal gaze beyond national borders and to police deviant forms of gender identity and sexuality abroad. However, wild, primitive nature – a nature that, Forster demonstrates, still exists in the human body – rises against their attempts at mastery during a group picnic outing to the chestnut woods.

An English picnic typically serves outdoor extension of the tearoom, where one can enjoy the comforts of bourgeois consumerism while still having the illusion of being in nature. The rural environment becomes simply backdrop, framed and appreciated according to urban aesthetic tastes, inoculated from any concerns about labor or environmental degradation. But, in the descriptions of the environment that proceed, Forster draws on gothic aesthetics to indicate the presence of a threatening spirit animating this pastoral landscape. He describes the "vast hollow" of the valley, with its "ravines [radiating] from the precipitous hills," as "a many

fingered green hand, palm upward, which was clutching, convulsively, to keep us in its grasp" (*SP* 2). The picnic goers soon discover that they are in nature's clutches in more ways than one when, after eating, the party experiences a collective "fanciful feeling of foreboding" in response to a sudden gust of wind:

> It is not possible to describe coherently what happened next: but I, for one, am not ashamed to confess that, though the fair sky was above me, and the green spring woods beneath me, and the kindest of friends around me, yet I became terribly frightened, more frightened than I ever wish to become again, frightened in a way I never have known either before or after. And in the eyes of others, too, I saw blank, expressionless fear, while their mouths strove in vain to speak and their hands to gesticulate. (*SP* 6)

This passage emphasizes multiple times the failure of language to accurately communicate primal embodied affects: the narrator takes no responsibility for this failure, but rather asserts that such communication is "not possible"; his repeats the word "frightened" as he unsuccessfully grasps for some grounds for comparison; the group understands each other not through linguistic or gestural signs, but through a kind of intersubjective affect, an exchange of glances. Though he can identify the sky, the woods, the other picnickers, these signs around him do not enable him to locate himself. All at once, as if by instinct, the group dashes off down the hill. As he flees, the narrator feels his rational mind and his sense of individual identity overwhelmed by his sensory experience:

> The sky might have been black as I ran, and the trees short grass, and the hillside a level road; for I saw nothing and heard nothing and felt nothing, since all the channels of sense and reason were blocked. It was not the spiritual fear that one has known at other times, but a brutal overmastering physical fear, stopping up the ears, and dropping clouds before the eyes, and filling the mouth with foul tastes. And it was no ordinary humiliation that survived; for I had been afraid, not as a man, but as a beast. (*SP* 6)

Forster's prose here represents a near-total breakdown of the narrator's sensorium; he is physically disoriented about color, scope, balance. The language of the second quoted sentence emphasizes how the human body's sensory perception depends on the body's "beastly" organs – eyes and ears that get swollen with blood, taste buds that respond to changes in saliva. This shot

of Panic – a "mainlining of reality," remembering Morton's description of ecorhapsody – metamorphoses the narrator's body, transforming his sense of identity by transforming his affect. The Englishman, who initially believed his masculine physical and mental strength endowed him with a position of mastery over his feminized environment, discovers his trans-corporeality. He comes to understand that his body and his embodied mind are not as stable, impenetrable, and continent as British colonial ideology would have him believe.

This "humiliating" descent from a rational man to an instinct-driven beast seems to be nature's way of rising up against consumerist attitudes toward nature that circulate within British culture, especially its artistic culture. Forster critiques these perspectives by putting them in the mouth of the Leyland. In this anti-pastoral story, Leyland functions as a modern, ironic pastoral shepherd, hypocritically critiquing the urban exploitation of the rural while ignoring his own participation in such processes. He imposes an artificial aesthetic taste onto the natural environment. While the narrator's family marvels at a vista point, Leyland doesn't like the lay of the land. He concludes that the view is not beautiful because it doesn't follow aesthetic rules of composition, complaining, "Look…how intolerably straight against the sky is the line of the hill. It would need breaking up and diversifying. And where we are standing the whole thing is out of perspective. Besides, the coloring is all monotonous and crude" (*SP* 3). (This word "monotonous" will figure prominently in the later discussion of *A Passage to India*). In Leyland's view, the role of the painter is to impose aesthetic form upon nature. He looks down on the narrator's daughter, who has a camera, sniping, "you all confuse the artistic view of nature with the photographic" (*SP* 3); for this hack-romantic, there must be a human subject, or there is no art, no meaning. Leyland proceeds to wax poetical about the ecological cost of industrialism, theatrically lamenting how "All the poetry was gone out of Nature…her lakes and marshes are drained, her seas banked up, her forests cut down. Everywhere we see the vulgarity of nature

spreading," the whole time ignoring how his urbane lifestyle might be contributing to this environmental degradation (*SP* 4). While Leyland – and the artistic community he stands in for – wants to see himself as a champion of divine Nature, uniquely equipped to speak on her behalf, it is clear from Forster's narrative that the hypocritical Leyland keeps the environment distanced by an aesthetic frame, and that what he thinks he sees as nature is really just a narcissistic reflection of his own inflated sense of self. His "artistic view of nature" is another method of mastery, and it is soon made ridiculous when he experiences the Panic. The Panic shows that nature is not an object on the other side of an aesthetic screen; it is a force that interlinks the human body and mind with its environment, something that is as much "inside" us as it is "out there."

If Leyland is offered as an ironic shepherd or false prophet of nature, Eustice is the ecorhapsode who metamorphoses into a true prophet because of his encounter with Pan, the Greek god of the wild. The English company's phobic reactions to the signs of Pan and to the behavior of his shepherd Eustice put on display English forms of policing sexual difference, especially rhetorical methods of rendering queerness unspeakable or debased. The party comes upon Eustice while still recovering from their Panic. While the boy lies motionless in a clearing, unresponsive to human voices, in a trance resembling post-orgasmic bliss,[25] the narrator notices "a green lizard dark out from his undershirt cuff" (*SP* 8). (Eustice here appears rather like the young, male Orlando in the oak tree scene which I discussed in Chapter One, when Woolf's protagonist lays beneath the tree and feels "all the fertility and amorous activity of a summers evening…woven web-like about his body.")[26] The lizard emerging from beneath Eustice's clothing suggests an erotic intimacy between the boy's body and the Italian environment. This queer web unites Eustice even with something as repellant as a scaly, cold-blooded lizard. Predictably, the narrator regards this lizard with "unspeakable horror," once again trying to

silence the implications of the body's queer intimacy with the animal (*SP* 8). When Eustice comes to, he proceeds to roll in a nearby set of goat prints "as a dog does in dirt" (*SP* 9). This simile emphasizes how Eustice once again transgresses the human/animal divide, pursing material intimacy by coating himself in the smell of these goats. (Or is it Pan himself who left those footprints? the story prompts the reader to ask). The curate Mr. Sandbach takes the boy's behavior as a sign that "The Evil one is very near us in bodily form" (*SP* 9) – recalling the fact that Christian renderings of the devil with cloven hoof and horns closely resemble classical representations of Pan. Forster, by conflating these Christian and Greek mythical figures, privileges the latter as a vibrant, primitive, and original figure/force that has been made monstrous by a manipulative, heteronormative Protestant tradition. Pan is a queer figure, flaunting excessive forms of erotic embodiment that exceed the narrow channels of compulsory heterosexuality, as well as the human/animal divide.

The narrator tries and fails to contain Pan through descriptive language, indicating the failure of bourgeois Englishness to overcome their phobic attitude towards the queer nature that exists in their animal bodies. Later in the story, the narrator wakes during the night, looks out on the terrace and observes a "thing that took all manner of curious shapes. Now it was a great dog, now an enormous bat, now a mass of quickly traveling cloud. It would bounce like a ball, or take short flights like a bird, or glide slowly like a wraith" (*SP* 15). In describing this metamorphic entity Forster repeats three of the same forms (dog, bat, cloud) taken on by another metamorphic, queer creature from *fin de siècle* fiction: the titular character of Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897). Several literary critics have discussed Dracula as a queer figure because of his erotic, bestial sensuousness, his inversion and perversion of sexual norms, and his ability to evade the panoptic gaze of eugenic biopolitics.[27] Pan serves a similar function in Forster's text, though the representation is less phobic than Stoker's. While a queer reading of *Dracula*, which is

sympathetic to the monster, requires considerable reading against the grain of Stoker's authorial intent, Forster's text provokes a positive view Pan; because the narrator is so obviously unreliable, the reader doesn't share in his anxiety in the same way she does in Jonathan Harker's and Mina Murray's. Rather, the narrative demands she endeavor to see past these phobic descriptions to gain a more accurate understanding of Pan and his shepherd Eustice.

As Pan's shepherd, his ecorhapsode, Eustice functions as a channel for the God's sensuous vivacity, and therefore he takes on the God's metamorphic slipperiness. While returning from the picnic, the previously feeble boy draws from a newfound well of strength and energy, running through the woods with such liveliness that even the skeptical narrator says he appears "like a real boy" (*SP* 11). But this "realness" immediately comes into question with the boy's queer behavior: "Once he came whooping down on us like a wild Indian, and another time he made believe to be a dog. The last time he came back with a poor dazed hare, too frightened to move, sitting on his arm" (*SP* 11). Like Pan, Eustice's elusive, protean body refuses the narrator's attempts to apply the proper metaphor, the proper signifier, demonstrating the failure of language to contain his queerness; the only way his public-school mind, with its fear of racial degeneration, can come to terms with the strange boy is to see him through dehumanizing terms, as "a wild Indian" or "a dog." The hare, also, confounds the narrator's attempt to apply the gender codes of a "real boy" to Eustice; he challenges "reality" by entrancing the animal as if by magic and, more significantly, challenges the category "boy" because of his pacifistic, non-predatory attitude toward this animal that is the most archetypal of prey. Instead of fulfilling the "natural" male role as predator, he sympathizes with the feminized side of the predator/prey binary. Eustice, it is apparent, has been enlivened and energized by his contact with Pan, but this is a queer energy that refuses to fit into the restrictive molds of masculine English identity. Eustice's indeterminacy deconstructs the narrator's perspective, unraveling his sense of the

human into a string of inadequate metaphors and displaying his increasingly futile methods of asserting power over deviant bodies.

Following pastoral generic tradition, this energy, drawn from contact with Pan, comes bubbling out of the shepherd's body in the form of a song. Eustice's rhapsody comes the night after the picnic; crucially, this song begins as a mélange of non-lingual music, "five-finger exercises, scales, hymn tunes, scraps of Wagner," before it becomes "an extraordinary speech":

> He spoke first of night and the stars and the planets above his head, of the swarms of fireflies below him, of the invisible sea below the fireflies, of the great rocks covered with anemones and shells there were slumbering in the invisible sea. He spoke of the rivers and waterfalls, of the ripening bunches of grapes, of the smoking cone of Vesuvius and the hidden fire-channels that made the smoke, of the myriads of lizards who were laying crannies of the sultry earth, of the showers of white rose-leaves that were tangled in his hair. And then he spoke of the rain and the wind by which all things are changed, of the air through which all things live, of the woods in which all things can be hidden. *(SP 16-17)*.

As readers of this passage, we are doubly removed from Eustice's contact with Pan: first, because this is a summary, not a transcription, of Eustice's speech, we do not hear his actual poetry; and second, because of our exteriority to Eustice-as-ecorhapsode. His verse seems to spout forth because of this affective intercourse with the nonhuman environment, embodied by Pan. The poem is the fruit of this union. In order for readers to understand the true nature of Pan, this deeper, queer energy of "all" that animates the plot of "The Story of a Panic," we must undergo a double act of interpretation: from summary to verse, from verse to experience. Regarding the first level of interpretation, it is significant that the narrator summarizes Eustice's rhapsody through a series of lists. Reading through these impressionistic lists, one imagines that there is so much more that is being left out, specific examples and neglected elements that get left out of this summary of the cosmos. Even as the summary transitions between different scopes, from the far-flung heavens to minute lizards and flowers, there is the sense that there is always even more that can be included if the narrator had better recall of the original verse or

was himself more "literary." This idea of incomplete lists links into the second level of interpretation, as listing is essential to the rhetorical structure of ecorhapsody. Morton argues, "Ecorhapsody operates through parataxis and metonymy. The general shines in the particular after a lot of rubbing, each phrase trying to coax a new sparkle. […] Shifts in phrase and tone a force from 'elsewhere' within the text itself."[28] Nature, this "elsewhere," emerges as a "shine" or a "sparkle" that emanates from these paratactic lists, which imply some force unifying unlike things. As Eustice's speech catalogues these many different specific images from nature, these things become metonyms for an all-encompassing element in which humans exist non-hierarchically with the more-than-human environment, from the most sublime geological forces, like Vesuvius's magma, to the lowliest organisms, fireflies and anenomes. This song, like Pan, like Nature, brings in "all" – something we will recognize later, inflected, in the song of the Hindu Professor Godbole of *A Passage to India*. As the final sentence of the passage emphasizes, this nature is fundamentally metamorphic, transforming through the elemental forces of wind and water, as well as through the organisms breathing the air. Nature also maintains an evasiveness, escaping human perception by hiding in the woods or remaining otherwise unseen. Because it exists "out there" even as it is registered "inside" the ecorhapsodist, it can never be fully accounted for. Radical equalities, unexpected intimacies, unpredictable transformations, evasive materialities: these are the qualities of Forster's queer nature apparent in Eustice's song.

Eustice's ecorhapsody, then, is a kind of "natural writing" – a concept, emerging out of Rousseauvian tradition, that Derrida interrogates in his *Of Grammatology*. Derrida draws out the Enlightenment philosopher's concept of the self, which is present in the senses and which "carries the inscription of divine law."[29] This "law," which connects that *within* the human with that *without*, always has a prescriptive element; it distinguishes, among other things, between "good and bad writing," where the former is a "divine inscription in the heart or soul" and the

latter a "perverse and artful…technique, exiled in the exteriority of the body."[30] To write the self, then, is not just to write the interiority of the self, but also to write the *interiority of the exterior*. To interpret the Rousseauvian "holy voice of nature" requires (in Derrida's words) "one encounter oneself within it, to enter into a dialogue with its signs, speak and respond to oneself in its pages."[31] While I share Derrida's dubious attitude toward this concept of divine nature, Eustice's ecorhapsody in "The Story of a Panic" demonstrates how this "law" which connects the human interior with the exterior is not fixed or determinate. This "law" can just as well be a law of queer nature that opposes fixed categories and rigid boundaries, and can therefore be a point of contention, as we see playing out in the conflict between Eustice and the narrator over their opposing views of nature and embodiment. However, the pastoral element that I previously identified within eugenic thought also applies here, since the political force of this story depends upon its "back to nature" motif – a Rousseavian reassertion of "natural" law over the laws of man. However, this is *a queer pastoral* which naturalizes queerness by declaring this "divine law" to be essentially queer in its pansexuality.

Eustice's transformation opens him up to non-English characters, especially Gennaro, a local "impertinent fisher-lad" with whom he might have had an erotic tryst (*SP* 11). At story's end, Gennaro dies trying to secure the young boy's escape. Before this climactic conclusion, Eustice's relationship with Gennaro especially aggravates the narrator, who is shocked when, upon returning from the picnic, the two young men of different nationalities embrace: "this habit of promiscuous intimacy was perfectly intolerable, and could only lead to familiarity and mortification for all" (*PI* 12). This "promiscuous intimacy," affection that crosses the hierarchies of class and nation, disgusts the narrator; readers alert to his unreliability can see around his bigotry to perceive instead a noble, equal, and mutually satisfying queer relationship that Eustice is able to enjoy because of his enlivening contact with Pan. The idealized relationship between

Gennaro and Eustice is the first example in Forster's writing of a theme that will be central to his fiction and his life: homosexual desire between lovers that come from different places in the social hierarchy. Though Forster would still not have his first recurrent sexual relationship for another fourteen years – and then, as we will see, with an Egyptian tram conductor half his age – we see already in his first story how this desire is energized by this potential to cross boundaries of nation, class, and race.

By opening himself to nature and contacting this pansexual force, Eustice becomes his true and healthy homosexual self. Eustice's "true self," however, proves to be as evasive as his inspiring God. He flees the panoptic disciplinary space before the patriarchs, who insist upon keeping watch over him while he sleeps until the "English doctor at Naples" can come and restore him to Eustice proper national mentality (*SP* 20). The final phrase of the story dramatizes him dissolving into the landscape: "far down the valley towards the sea, there still resounded the shouts and laughter of the escaping boy" (*SP* 23). As he retreats from the narrator's ken, his voice becomes another note in Pan's symphony. But there is also a problem here, especially when we consider the situation from poor Gennaro's perspective: while Eustice is granted escape, it costs the fisherman his life. Gennaro is there to catalyze the transformation, but is then discarded. This is similar to the manner in which, in "The Influence of Climate…," Italian nature inspires a change in the gothic human, but we are never told what that nature gains from this transaction. The rustic Gennaro is figured as part of the landscape; therefore his body can be used as another regional resource for the English tourist. This association between the eroticized body of the racial/national/class other and the land is fundamental to Forster's geography of homosexual desire, as I will show in the upcoming discussion of *Maurice* and *A Passage to India*.

Pollenating the Greenwood

In Forster's first story, homosexual love required the ultimate sacrifice of one of the lovers; by the time ten years later that Forster wrote his first novel-length treatment of the topic, *Maurice* (1912), the thirty-three year-old author was in search of more hopeful alternatives. What constrained him, however, were laws criminalizing the representation or practice of homosexuality, such as the Obscene Publications Act of 1857 and the Labouchere Amendment of 1885; partly as a result of these laws (and also, perhaps, partly because of Forster's own protective feelings towards this most personal of novels), *Maurice* went unpublished until 1971, a year after Forster's death. Reflecting on the novel in 1960, Forster writes, "A happy ending was imperative. I shouldn't have bothered to write it otherwise. I was determined that in fiction anyway two men should fall in love and remain in it for the ever and ever that fiction allows, and in this sense Maurice and Alec still roam the greenwood."[32] By refusing to condemn either of its homosexual characters to "a noose or…a suicide pact,"[33] *Maurice* breaks with melancholic forms of queer narratives, instead enacting a flight into a sympathetic nature where love between men can proliferate free of sacrifice.

Maurice is a *Bildungsroman* that follows its upper-middle class British protagonist, Maurice Hall, through two formative homosexual relationships. The first is with an aristocrat, Clive Durham, whose sense of homosexuality is abstract and ascetic; he desires "The love that Socrates bore Phadeo…, love passionate but temperate, such as only finer natures can understand."[34] Later, after Clive spurns Maurice and gets married because of pressure to continue his aristocratic line, Maurice considers suicide, but he is pulled out of his depression when he meets Alec Scudder, the gamekeeper at Penge, the Durham family estate. Alec's physical and vitalist sense of pleasure and affection provides exactly the salve that Maurice needs. With this idealized "greenwood" to which Maurice and Alec escape at novel's end,

Forster imagines a pastoral, queer nature outside of the corrupt and restrictive influences of modernity, such as imperialism, industrialism, and the nuclear family. However, just because Forster wants to cordon these rural spaces away as sanctuaries does not mean that he successfully resists these influences. Stuart Christie sees in Forster's the greenwood both a "place [for] homosexuality beyond the phobias of national culture" and "an ecopolitical ideology hostile to the encroachment of class and 'race' difference on home soil."[35] This echoes my interpretation of Woolf's *Orlando*: to discover the fluid and free space of sexual indeterminacy, Forster relies on a nationalist conception of nature that grants the racial category of "Englishness" exceptionalism and superiority because of its roots in the pastoral landscape. In this "unhappy alliance of homosexual 'nature' and English 'Nature,'"[36] ties between English blood and English soil remain unquestioned, even fetishized. Forster's narratives that are set in England naturalize race and preserve the integrity and impermeability of "Englishness" even as they question the foundations of the empire nation's liberal-humanist order. Nature both drives transformation and ties one to determinist essences.

Similar to Gennaro in "The Story of a Panic," the gamekeeper Alec serves as an idealized working-class male body that helps Forster's queer protagonist liberate his true nature from the restrictive, heteronormative channels of English bourgeois identity. But Alec, significantly, is also English, and is represented as a homegrown product of a rural English countryside that is itself queer in its deviance from normative forms. During Maurice's retreat from his disappointment at Penge, he catches sight of Alec while contemplating a hedge of dog roses (a species of wild roses native to the British Isles):

> Blossom after blossom crept passed them, draggled by the ungenial year: some had cankered, others would never unfold: here and there beauty triumphed, but desperately, flickering in a world of gloom. Maurice looked into one after another, and though he did not care for the flowers the failure irritated him. Scarcely was anything perfect. On one spray every flower was lopsided, the next swarmed with caterpillars, or bulged with galls. The indifference of nature! And her incompetence! He leant out the window to see

whether she couldn't bring it off once, and stared straight into the bright brown eyes of a young man. (*M* 156)

In this passage, Maurice's pathetic fallacy (as this is the emotional low-point of the text) diverts the reader's attention (but not completely) from a fact of nature. Forster's careful dramatic irony enables the reader to peer around Maurice's frustration with nature's "indifference" and "incompetence," to perceive the fact that the protagonist misses: the biological world is not a place of concrete laws or stable forms, and diversions from these ideals far outnumber their instantiations. This is both a Darwinian vision of nature and an ecological sense of life: the caterpillars and the galls show how interspecies relationships and dependencies cause organisms to appear differently in the field than they do in the laboratory. While this passage denies the possibility of an "ideal form" of nature, it also imagines that there can be moments of beauty and revelation – "flickerings in a world of gloom." And, sure enough, the end of the paragraph enacts such a flickering as England's nature manages to "bring off," not an ideal dog rose, but another of the nation's "native species" in Alec.

Alec's emergence in this passage suggests that his beauty does not result from his meeting of an ideal, but rather from a vitalist energy that flows between him and his native environment. I discussed above how, in eugenic thought, the countryside was seen as a place where the nation's biopower can be reinvigorated and regenerated. The novel situates Alec as possessing a Nietzschean will that throws off the confining moral values of bourgeois society: "Scudder cleaned a gun, carried a suitcase, baled out a boat, emigrated – did something, anyway, while gentle-folk squatted on chairs finding fault with his souls" (*M* 164). Engaging in physical contact with a force like Alec releases Maurice from the calcification and inactivity of the middle-class social sphere. Beyond being, in some way, impregnated (with this new self) by Alec, the novel suggests that Maurice has also been fertilized by the natural world itself, as just before his first sexual experience with Alec he returns from a walk with primrose pollen in his hair (*M*

164). Forster's description of homosexual intercourse recalls his first story: "Physical love means reaction, being *panic in essence*…" (*M* 198). Again, panic is not necessarily a negative state of being. Rather, panic gets one in touch with a primal "essence," pansexuality, which has a curative effect regarding the "sickness" of an overly rational and disembodied modernity (like that represented by Clive). Panic is a first and necessary step in a process of queer becoming.

Forster uses imagery of open versus closed spaces to express Maurice's sense of liberation. Just before his first sexual experience with Alec, Maurice sits in his room at Penge and desires to escape "the darkness of a house which coops up a man among furniture" for "the darkness where he can be free. […] love – nobility – big spaces where passion clasped peace, spaces no science could reach, but they existed forever, full of woods some of them, and arched with majestic sky and a friend…" (*M* 166-67). By evoking these "spaces no science could reach, but they existed forever," Forster anticipates a gesture that will appear frequently in the next and final novel he would complete, *A Passage to India*: he dwarfs Western scientific knowledge by appealing to spaces and temporalities that are beyond its scope. The moments just before Maurice meets Alec reveal an opening up toward the more-than-human world, looking to nature and the universe more broadly in order to escape the domestic space (both in terms of the home and terms of the nation), which is a space of discipline, frustration, and meaningless consumption ("furniture").

Maurice's salvation at the body of Alec, the release of his true, queer nature should not be read as a simple refusal of England's eugenic conceptions of national identity that circulated in the early 1910's as Forster completed his novel. Instead, we should interpret Maurice's assertion that "England belonged to them" as an effort to redeem England, to reinvigorate it through the potent body of the working class, rural male (*M,* 215). In other words, Forster

reappropriates nationalist eugenic discourse into a queer framework. As *Maurice* reclaims nature, so it reclaims nation.

Between Despots and Slaves

An eventful decade, both personally and globally, passes between the time that Forster completes *Maurice* (in 1914, shortly after returning from his first vacation to India) and the publication of what would be his final novel, *A Passage to India*, in 1924. World War I broke out in summer 1914 after he finished *Maurice*. During the war, Forster worked with the British Red Cross in Alexandria, Egypt as a "searcher," helping to track down missing soldiers.[37] In her biography of Forster, Nicole Beauman characterizes Alexandria as an place where global oppositions flow together: "Because of its position, on the Mediterranean yet in Africa, Westernized yet Oriental, it has been in flux for all the years of its existence; more than any other city Alexandria has *always* been streaming."[38] The liminal space of Alexandria opened new creative, professional, and sexual opportunities for Forster. (He would eventually write a guidebook of the city.) While his first visit to India in 1912-13 – one of the first periods of his life when he wasn't under the direct supervision of his mother or schoolmaster – had been of a tourist variety, in this Egyptian city Forster was able to experience day-to-day life with a new degree of independence from the domestic home/nation. Alexandria also offered Forster, for the first time, an opportunity to experience the physical side of homosexuality, as up to this point his only erotic relationships with other men (such as Syed Ross Masood, a Muslim-Indian man studying at Oxford that Forster tutored) had been ideal and unrequited, more textual than physical. Wartime in a foreign country, however, created opportunities for deviant sexual behavior that were impossible in panoptic England; in October of 1916, Forster first parted with what he calls his "respectability" with a soldier on Montazah beach.[39] He was thirty-eight years

old. The next year Forster began an affair with the Egyptian who would be his first recurring sexual partner, a seventeen year-old tram conductor named Mohammed el Adl.[40] Forster's relationship with el Adl continued by post after Forster returned to England in 1919, until the latter died of tuberculosis in 1922. Their last visit would be in 1921, when el Adl and Forster enjoyed a tryst aboard a ship, bound for India, that stopped in Alexandria for the afternoon.[41]

The purpose of this trip, Forster's second to India, was that he had been offered a position as the Personal Secretary of the Maharaja of Dewas Senior (a princely state under the British Raj). It was also to complete his Indian novel, which he began after his first trip but had abandoned after writing the first few chapters, struck with writer's block. The Maharaja of Dewas distinguished himself from his orthodox predecessors by dining with Westerners, and he attempted during his rule to modernize his region by building schools, ending untouchability, and supporting land-reform.[42] It was likely this progressive attitude, and fear that rumors of his flirtation with a Hindu servant might catch his employer's ear, that led Forster to confess his proclivities to the Maharaja. His trust proved to be well-placed: not only did the Maharaja tolerate Forster's homosexuality, he even paid the barber who shaved Forster, a young man named Kanaya, to have sex with the Englishman.[43] This sexual relationship, while Forster declared it a benefit to his health, did not provide the same satisfaction as the one he shared with el Adl: "I couldn't get from Kanaya the same emotional response of an Egyptian, because he had the body of the soul of a slave, but he was always merry and he improved my health."[44] He continued to have sex with Kanaya throughout his six-month visit to India, although his anger at the Indian's "incredible silliness" in attempting to "establish himself as a Catamite to the Crown" resulted in a change, as the intercourse became more violent and straightforwardly hierarchical than it had been with el Adl. His desire for sex "was now mixed with a desire to inflict pain. […] I've never had that desire with anyone else, before or after, and I wasn't trying

to punish him – I knew his silly little soul was incurable. I just felt he was a slave, without rights, and I a despot whom no one could call to account."[45] Forster, never Sadeian in his tastes, felt a great deal of shame as a result of this slave/despot relationship, imagining himself at one point as "the dead cow among vultures at the edge of the road."[46] Despite (or, perhaps, *because of*) this shame, when Forster returned to his mother's home in Weybridge, he was able to once again work on *A Passage to India*. The first quarter of the book that he completed after his first trip focused mainly on parodying Anglo Indian society; the later three quarters, which include the more mythical and philosophical themes, he wrote between 1922-23, after these sexual experiences abroad.[47]

We see from this cursory biography of this decade of Forster's life how his understanding of sexuality, an understanding that was to have a profound effect on his literary style, is inextricably bound up with colonial power structures. Forster's sexual awakening, which was also a creative, political, and spiritual awakening for him, depended on the mobility and power afforded to him as a rich Englishman abroad. The dark-skinned bodies of el Adl and Kanaya enabled Forster to discover levels of his self that were hidden, even to himself. These levels were not always pleasurable and often disturbing (as the "dead cow" image evinces); however, they were ultimately *productive*, enabling him to break out of his writer's block. While his experiences in Egypt and India then provided a means for Forster to "open himself" to the darkness of his unconscious, embodied sexual desires, they also opened him up spiritually to non-Western ways of relating to the more-than-human world. One such experience was walking about the Gokul Ashtami, a feast in honor of Krishna. While at first the festival strikes him as "fatuous and in bad taste,"[48] he comes to see (as he would write in *A Passage to India*) "By sacrificing good taste, this worship achieved what Christianity has shirked: the inclusion of merriment. All spirit as well as matter must participate in salvation, and if practical jokes are

banned the circle is incomplete." This image of Hinduism completing the circle provides an appropriate departure point for my analysis of *Passage* because it indicates both how India comes to serve as the solution for Forster, a way to escape the narrow bounds of British identity, and also an irresolvable problem, as the image of a *closed* circle indicates that there is no point of entry for the Westerner into this naturalized and primitivized society.

My analysis of *Passage* proceeds in three parts. First, I show that while the majority of Anglo-Indian society in the novel desires to remain resilient against the metamorphic influences of the Indian environment, to become *even more English* in these foreign lands, this community does end up changing because of this disturbing influence. Then I discuss the experiences of the novel's three English protagonists – Adela, Mrs. Moore, and Cyril – to show how the landscape frustrates their desire to use it as a means connect with a deeper level of themselves, a level that will enable them to escape the constraints of British colonial identity and discover new ways of being in the world. Finally, I analyze representation of Godbole's song and the Krishna festival in the final section, "Temple." My analysis of this final section will discuss how the novel simultaneously *opens* and *closes* the possibility for communication across boundaries between the self and the other, as well the possibility for transforming the West's relationship with the East.

Rooting in the Periphery

A Passage to India puts on display the toxic attitudes of Anglo-Indian society. Throughout "Mosque," the narrator ventriloquizes the community's anxiety-ridden cultural imagination about the transformations that might result from contact with the Indian colony's natural/cultural environment. These transformations are primarily "internal," in the sense they are changes of political and philosophic attitude; however, the language of the novel insists that these *internal* changes result from physical, affective changes to their trans-corporeal bodies,

which exchange data, particles, and energy with the *external* Indian environment. We see this imagination at work when the narrator dips into Ronny's perspective. In one sense, this colonial bureaucrat structures his identity according to the public-school attitudes that Forster himself earlier expressed in "The Influence of Climate…." Ronny believes his Englishness endows him with a unique resilience to the transformative effects of foreign lands. However, Forster's presentation of Ronny's masculinist, nationalist sense of embodiment ironizes this belief in English exceptionalism. The narrative points out how Ronny's prideful sense of Englishness, far from being an embodied state that he brought with him intact from his motherland, in fact depends upon his physical encounter with the colony's environment. Ronny, upset with Adela's attitude towards Indians, criticizes her for lacking the "expert knowledge" he has gained from his education of "A Public School, London University, a year at a crammer's, a particular sequence of posts in a particular province, a fall from a horse and a touch of fever" and which gives him "the only training by which Indians and all who can reside in their country can be understood" (*PI* 86). He conceives of his life and knowledge as rigidly following a linear "sequence" that moves that from the most quintessentially English domestic experiences to the exotic threats of the colony. The body is changed by contact with the more-than-human world (the horse, the fever-causing pathogen), and this contact completes his education. His role in the colonial administration gives him the opportunity to apply his abstract training and to turn it into embodied knowledge. These changes to the body inform the mind; transformation occurs within, but it begins from without. The body's pores may be breached, but, so Ronny believes, if a man is properly trained, these breaches can be set to order, can be made intelligible and useful as *education*.

Ronny views his colonial superiors as more advanced beings because of the way they have adapted to this environment. He sees the Callendars and the Turtons, veteran colonial

administrators with twenty years experience, as a more evolved version of the human, who have access to "higher realms of knowledge" and possesses embodied "instincts [that] were superhuman" (*PI* 86). The diction here is simultaneously theological and Darwinian, pointing at once to the divine sphere and to the enfleshed, animal body of instinct; this is not offered as contradiction, but rather as a consistency. Those Callendars and Turtons have become, to Ronny's eyes, what God and Nature (for these seem to be the same) have fated them to be: superhuman administrators of the benighted races, beacons of whiteness and Englishness in a chaotic, foreign space, benefactors who manage to set things in order through instinct alone. Being in a foreign space has elevated them by making them *more English* (at least in their minds). As the narrator sardonically observes after the club's mediocre production of *Cousin Kate*, "it was the Public School attitude; flourishing more vigorously than it can yet hope to do in England" (*PI* 40). The botanical metaphor, where English culture "flourishes" in this foreign soil, uses the natural to understand the cultural: English identity is not diminished, but is instead *fortified* by this exotic influence. To resolve colonial anxiety, these characters turn to the club as a place to "root" their national identity.

The Anglo-Indian community envisions that their imported culture is impervious to, and perhaps even reinforced and enriched by, the foreign environment. However, their reaction to Adela's accusation that Dr. Aziz sexually assaulted her at the Marabar Caves belies this view. The novel presents the community's response as both sexed and racialized, in that the crisis brings out behaviors that confirm stereotypical conceptions of these biological differences. In this white male imagination, familiar to readers of Rudyard Kipling and other popular colonial romances,[49] white women become more passive, vulnerable, and dependent on their heroic male protectors, and dark bodies become more menacing and less human. To open the chapter that describes the club's response to the charge, the narrator ironically observes, "Although Miss

Quested had not made herself popular with the English, she brought out all that was fine in their character" (*PI* 199). The language here suggests a community-wide transformation, where an internal, subconscious force, in this case a racial instinct against miscegenation, is "brought out" into external form and action. The charge and subsequent trial awakens a dormant herd mentality that causes the white colonizers to circle about their women. The herd mentality triggers gendered responses from the characters, where men are stirred to possessive rage and women to hysterical fear. This is especially apparent in the incident of Mrs. Blakiston, the "young mother" whose husband is out of town on colonial business and who "dared not return to her bungalow in case the 'niggers attacked.'" Though Mrs. Blakiston, a "brainless but most beautiful girl," is "generally snubbed," upon articulating this fear she transforms in the eyes of club into a "[symbol of] all that is worth fighting and dying for; more pertinent a symbol, perhaps, than poor Adela" (*PI* 200). Her transformation into the feminine ideal of a damsel in distress depends on her participation in approved reproductive institutions. Forster's prose ironizes this transformation, displaying the community's racist logic and language, as well as the absurdity of this substitution of Mrs. Blakiston (who has not been exposed to any threat except the inventions her own imagination) for Adela (who actually claims to have been assaulted).

The club's violent discourse towards Indian bodies demonstrates the dehumanizing core of colonialism that reduces native people to simple biopower, another regional resource to be managed and consumed. Mrs. Turton makes this clear when she condemns the men at the club for failing to protect the English women from predatory natives: "You're weak, weak, weak. Why, they ought to crawl from here to the caves on their hands and knees whenever an Englishwoman's in sight, they oughtn't to be spoken to, they ought to be spat at, they ought to be ground into dust…" (*PI* 240). Her rant here enacts an increasingly dehumanizing series of metamorphoses, where Indian men are reduced first to cavemen, then vermin-like animals, and

finally to inanimate earth itself. It is clear that British colonialism's central goal with the natives is not to enlighten them, but to transform these people to raw matter, biopower to be used or discarded at the will of colonial authorities. Mrs. Turton puts on display the hierarchy of being implicit in British colonialism, which elevates the colonizing race to superhuman Gods and reduces the colonized races to animals, or even dust.

However, despite the Anglo-Indian community's effort to remain ever the same, its members still register a change in their experience of India. At the club, that island which is supposed to be a little bit of England in a hostile, strange land, "They exchanged the usual drinks but everything tasted different, and then they looked out at the palisade of cactuses stabbing the purple throat of the sky; they realized they were thousands of miles from the scenery that they understood" (*PI* 200). Forster's sentence here moves from body (a disorientation of taste) to landscape (the cactuses puncturing the sky) to identity. The environment makes barely perceptible changes to one's sensory experience, which makes new neural connections and changes the way the brain processes sensory experience. As one perceives the world differently, one perceives ones self differently. This sequence, moving from affect to image to identity, suggests that the porosity of the English body results in the porosity of British imperial culture. One's embodied experience of the more-than-human environment is not "natural" or predetermined, but is instead impacted by one's upbringing and present cultural environment. This is not just a sequence, but a feedback loop, where the body is changed by culture, which is in turn changed by the body, which in turn changes culture. By seeing this as a feedback loop, the very concepts of a "national body" and "imperial culture" come under question, since they are shown to be both mutually reinforcing ideas and in a state of constant flux. Though the members of the Anglo-Indian club want to believe that their resilient Englishness enables both their bodies and their culture to resist the foreign environment's

transformative influence, Forster makes it clear that the community is in denial. Neither their bodies nor their culture were stable and autonomous in the first place.

Monotony or Monism?

The novel's three most sympathetic British characters, Adela Quested, Mrs. Moore, and Cyril Fielding, distinguish themselves from the chauvinist club because all desire a transformative encounter with the Indian natural/cultural environment. They seek in the Orient a mirror of their unique identity; they imagine that they are, like Forster's earlier queer protagonists, in harmony with their more-than-human surroundings. Further, they believe that accessing this harmonious plane will reveal their true selves and prevent them from taking on the colonialist attitudes of the other Anglo-Indian characters in the novel. Instead of fearing that they will be changed by the *Indian* environment, they worry that their true, benevolent selves will be contaminated by the other *British* characters and colonial institutions. They desire to move away from the linear tracks of identity and opportunity set forth by British biopolitics and into more unpredictable and multidimensional conceptions of their selves and the surrounding world. However, though all three of them have a transformative experience because of their interaction with the sub-continent's natural landscape, these transformations are ultimately failures (at least in the characters' eyes) because they are too disorienting to bear. They find no harmony with the environment; instead, they find it hostile, opaque, and *monotonous*. This monotony, I will argue in the subsequent section, is crucial, because what Mrs. Moore, Adela, and Cyril perceive as *monotonous* instead of *harmonious*, some Indian characters – specifically Hindu characters – experience as the expression of a *monist whole*. For these more sympathetic English characters, their desire to understand the environment through recognition of the self ironically ends up confirming their Western dualistic viewpoints. Overcome, the character ends

up more deeply embedded in the very Anglo-Indian ideology he or she sought at first to escape (in the case of Adela and Cyril), or is destroyed altogether (like Mrs. Moore).

Adela yearns to break through the distorting lenses of the British colonial mentality. Her difficulty is that India presents itself to her English eyes as an aesthetic, theatrical space; she laments that "She would see India always as a frieze, never as a spirit" (*PI* 48). Forster's word choice of "frieze" shows Adela's frustration with her cultural lens as a tourist; she can't help but view her surroundings as if they were a museum display prepared for her aesthetic pleasure. This "spirit" she seeks seems to be an undefined but essential content beyond the artificial surface appearance that can only be perceived through immediate contact with the "real India" (*PI* 25). Adela's expectation for an epiphanic recognition of essential content is tautological; she will recognize the real Indian spirit when she feels the real India. This tautology inheres in rhapsody, which cannot be described or known in the same manner it is experienced; in ecorhapsody, the natural world is supposed to "speak" to and through the human subject by overwhelming the sensorium and bubbling out as language. To know whether one saw the "real" India is akin to knowing whether one experienced "real" rhapsody; it is a hermeneutical question of recognition and faith. For Adela, to see the real India is to recognize something of herself in this foreign environment which proves that she and it are deeply attuned. Relative to Adela, Forster situates readers in the space between belief and skepticism that is so characteristic of modernism; neither dogmatic faith in traditional religion nor a totally disenchanted atheism can hold. The reader's orientation to Adela enacts what Craig Woelfel calls Forster's "*dissociated belief* – holding to fundamental rational, practical, and epistemological critiques of religious experience with also maintaining the reality of that experience."[50] On one hand, Adela's fascination distinguishes her from the myopic club, and readers sympathize with her desire to escape this narrow worldview and to come to know this exotic country and its people. On the other, the terms in which Adela

talks about India promote skepticism, because she has no reliable method of affirming the authenticity of her experience, nor any clear form to communicate its contents. Most problematically, she expects to find *harmony* with this environment, so that the transformation it triggers in her identity will be both unexpected and ultimately in line with her desires.

The incident at the Marabar Caves, the mysterious and disorienting encounter with a foreign environment and (perhaps) an exotic body around which the novel's plot swirls, spurs a transformation that Adela neither expected nor desired. Critical discussion of the novel has centralized on this scene, especially the question of whether Forster meant the assault to be real or the result of Adela's hysterical imagination, like Mrs. Blakison's imaginary dark-skinned assailants.[51] The goal of the present discussion is not to determine what truly happened in the caves (an interpretive task that is, finally, impossible), but rather to examine the event's causes and its consequences on Adela's sense of embodied identity. First among these causes: the trip to the caves is staged as an escape for Adela from colonial patriarchal authority (though its status as an escape is qualified by the fact that she is not truly autonomous but under the supervision of a male in Dr. Aziz). Beyond the protective gaze of white males, Adela is better able to access thoughts and desires that she usually keeps in check as a self-policing subject. She begins to relate differently to her both her surroundings and her own body. The narrative style here becomes more experimental, describing a kind of vitalist agency within the nonhuman environment: "The air felt like a warm bath into which hotter water is trickling constantly, the temperature rose and rose, the boulders said, 'I am alive,' the small stones answered, 'I am alive'" (*PI* 166). The sentence follows the affective track from overheated body to hallucinating mind. The free indirect discourse, which makes it unclear whose thoughts are being channeled (Adela's? Aziz's? A disembodied third person's?), enacts the breakdown of the subject's boundaries. However, the sentence's lurching syntax, which rises in tension with the

temperature, indicates that this is not a feeling of harmonious interconnectedness, but rather a sensory assault. Agitated by the environment, Adela begins to ruminate on her impending marriage to Ronny: "her mind was mainly with her marriage. Simla next week, get rid of Antony, a view of Thibet [*sic*], tiresome wedding bells. Agra in October, see Mrs. Moore comfortably off from Bombay – the procession passed before her again, blurred by the heat…." The staccato rhythm of the paratactic sentence structure indicates that these images come from Adela's "blurry" mind in free indirect discourse. The linear "procession" that Adela sees as her future appears to readers as a series of images passing before us like railway cars or frames from a film-strip. Just like India, Tibet will never be experienced, just "viewed." Adela hopes to find some middle ground, where she could "neither rail against Anglo-India nor succumb to it," but ultimately feels she has no agency to divert from the narrow path set forth for her as an Englishwoman *(PI 167).*

This feeling of powerlessness causes her, first, to realize that she doesn't love Ronny, and, subsequently, to change her view of Aziz, beginning to consider him as a potential sexual candidate: "What a handsome little Oriental he was…. She did not admire him with any personal warmth, for there was nothing of the vagrant in her blood, but she guessed he might attract women of his own race and rank, and she regretted that neither she nor Ronny had physical charm. It does make a difference in a relationship – beauty, thick hair, a fine skin" (*PI* 169). It is significant that in order to sexualize Aziz, Adela has to imagine herself as a woman of a different "race and rank." This suggests that, despite her insistence on the purity of her white blood, her desire for Aziz is a symptom of a deeper desire to experience "vagrant" life outside the tracks of Englishness, to become-other.

Like Eustice and Maurice, Adela desires contact with the more-than-human environment that transforms her in such a way that opens different paths of experience, including and

especially sexual experience. This does happen, but not at all as she had hoped. Kelly Sultzbach, describing how English characters from the novel are "transfigured as landscape," points to the fact that after Adela bushwhacks down the hillside and flees back to town, "hundreds of cactus spines had to be picked out of her flesh" (*PI* 213).[52] These cactus spines (perhaps from the same species of cactus that puncture the sky outside the club in the passage discussed in the previous section) penetrate the skin, indicating a nature far different from that of the idyllic English oak, like the one we see in Woolf's *Orlando*. While the oak provides a maternal sense of protection and belonging, the cactus violates and rejects the body. Its spines force Adela to realize her own trans-corporeality, that nature is not simply a place for leisure or an image for contemplation, but also a situation of being embedded in material conditions that could at any point cause illness and pain. This realization, and the confusion of self it causes her, ultimately causes her to retreat from the foreign land, first to the confines of the club and then, when she is no longer welcome there after the trial, back to England. She tells Cyril that her experiences in India have "cured" her of wanting love, her medical diction suggesting that she has returned to those passive middle-class mentalities deemed "healthy" by the biopolitical state. Returning to stabilizing concepts of health and rationality, Adela's final movement in the novel abandons her to the very same narrow channels of identity and possibility from which she hoped to escape.

In some ways, the Marabar Caves have a similar effect on Mrs. Moore that they have on Adela. Though the older woman does not, like Adela, believe herself to be sexually assaulted, she also experiences the caves as an attack on her sensorium, and this disturbance of her body also disturbs her mind. However, for Mrs. Moore, these disturbances prove fatal, motivating her retreat to England on a boat from which she never disembarks. Many critics have used methods and theories of deconstruction to interpret Mrs. Moore's experience in the Marabar Caves. Robert Barratt argues, accurately in my opinion, that the cave "is a mirror waiting to disperse,

divide and deconstruct the visitor's 'presence' not with a reflection of that 'presence,' but rather 'that differential relation of alterity which breaks apart all "presence" of being or of conscious thought.' Devoid of presence itself, the Marabar cave functions like Derrida's trace made manifest."[53] Barratt's argument is useful because it shows how the caves hollow out presence as a metaphysical concept; instead of seeing the cave as the *essence* of India, his argument suggests that the caves operate through a negative capability as they refuse the possibility for essentialist thinking altogether. There is no recognition, no contact with the "real" India.

The cave's refusal of essentialist thinking is central to the overall queerness of Forster's imagined India. Yonatan Touval, in his essay from the collection *Queer Forster*, argues, "it's as though queerness is the stuff things Indian (or, like Fielding, Adela, and Mrs. Moore, things *gone* Indian) are made of, the very essence of Indianicity. […Queerness] usually (if not always) springs in order to qualify some relation (*the* relation?) between Englishness and Indianness."[54] For Touval, this essential queerness emerges from the way India escapes Western attempts to turn it into an object of knowledge and control; but, paradoxically, to identify India as queer is itself a claim that is infused with power, as it sets the Britishness as the normative standard against which this queerness is measured. Touval's argument reminds us not to read Forster's rendering of the landscape as a "real" representation of this queer essence; this failure to comprehend India is an effect of colonial power structure that is invested in rendering India incomprehensible. Inverting the hierarchy and values of that incomprehensibility does not necessarily mean that Forster avoids or subverts this stereotype about the mysterious Orient.

A more positivist (and therefore more problematic) deconstructive reading of the cave comes from Tony Jackson, who relies not on Derridian methods of deconstruction, but rather media-theory versions in the tradition of Marshall McLuhan and Walter Ong. Jackson cites the "organic human package" and "organic unity" as the origins of language and, by extension,

humanity in general, since language is "a crucial element of species unity that distinguishes humans in general from other animals."[55] Jackson seeks in human language an organic totality that both draws a clear line between human and nonhuman; however, his very concept of "organic" works not as a method of analysis but rather as a way of shutting down analysis, since what's "organic" or "natural" supposedly is absolute, unchangeable, and unfragmentable. Humanity and language, in other words, are metaphysical presences, as opposed to traces. Jackson assigns much more value and presence to oral communication (which is afforded a primary, exceptional status) than Derridian deconstruction would allow. To do so he emphasizes the *embodiment of discourse* in communication (which is always between two human beings): "We clearly have on the one hand the paradigm of all storytelling: the corporeal communication of a narrative by one or more flesh and blood human beings immediately to one or more other flesh and blood human beings, none of whom need ever have had any idea whatsoever of writing."[56] Note Jackson's totalizing terms: "paradigms of all story telling"; "immediate" communication; "flesh and blood human beings." To locate communication in the enfleshed body like this naively upholds human exceptionalism, and, as with the discussion of organicity above, works as a way to shut down analysis rather than a way of opening it up. Further, his claim that the Marabar reflects a "disjunction from oral nature" or a "lost orality," so that "the very voice itself seems to become literally, not just representationally, disembodied,"[57] continues to discuss orality in terms of a fall from a natural speech, which is the only type of speech for Jackson that can deliver the authenticity of oral story. This framework – orality=presence, writing=absence – predictably follows a historical narrative where oral cultures represent a state of nature before the fall. Rousseau's noble savage returns in this fetishization of embodied, "natural" speech.

A more effective deconstructive reading of Mrs. Moore's experience will still emphasize the role of the body in linguistic signification, but does so while avoiding the tropes of

organicity, presence, and human exceptionalism. Instead of seeing the "flesh and blood" body as the final location of the human, a limit of analysis and perhaps a path to "lost oralities," we should instead see the body as an assemblage where enfleshed experience and cultural forms intersect and intertwine. The sensorium is where meaning is constructed, not determined. Forster's description of Mrs. Moore's experience in the cave simultaneously enacts and muddles this process of meaning making. The experimental prose in this section has a phenomenological quality as it assembles fragments of information and tries to make sense of disturbing sensory experience. It is important to note that the narrative voice does not enter the caves with Mrs. Moore. Readers must cobble together her experience from her convoluted recollections and its catastrophic results. Her experience does not provide access "the thing itself" – it is a trace of that raw experience, which remains inaccessible both to language and to conscious thought. What we gather from her account is that she nearly fainted because of the crunch and odor of the servant's bodies; she is especially disturbed when "some vile naked thing struck her face and settled on her mouth like a pad." While the narrative voice stuck with *visual* descriptions outside the cave, inside Mrs. Moore sensorium is dominated by the sense of touch, smell, and taste – all senses that imply physical contact with the other. Communication here isn't just about passing signs back and forth, but also the communication of bodily secretions and pathogens. The inability to even assign this "vile naked thing" a name drives the horror of the cave. This thing recalls the descriptions of Pan in "The Story of a Panic," as it is an amorphous force that has no discernable boundaries, no identifying markers; but this is not unmediated "flesh and blood" experience, as is implied by the adjective "vile" (a word, we imagine, comes form Mrs. Moore's stream of consciousness after she leaves the cave). The sensory information has already been interpreted and processed through the Englishwoman's cultural filter.

Even worse than the disturbance to Mrs. Moore's intimate senses is that effected on her sense of hearing by the cave's echo. If taste, touch, and smell challenge language because of they are so difficult to describe, the echo makes description itself seem meaningless: "The echo in a Marabar Cave...is entirely devoid of distinction. Whatever is said, the same monotonous noise replies, and quivers up and down the walls until it is absorbed in the roof. 'Boum' is the sound as far as the human alphabet can express it, or 'bou-oum,' or 'ou-boum' – utterly dull. Hope, politeness, the blowing of a nose, the squeak of a boot, all produce 'boum'" (*PI* 163). The echo enacts a kind of violence on linguistic meaning itself, reducing meaning (which requires difference) to "monotony" (etymologically, "single tone"). It does so by taking its linear thread and sending it off in different directions, doubling it back on itself, transforming a stream of signifiers into a multi-dimensional flood of noise.

In his *Of Grammatology*, Derrida provides a phenomenology of spoken language, the movement from noise to meaning. He describes this phenomenology as a two-step process, which requires first "the isolation of the sensible mass" and then the comprehension of "articulated unity of sound and sense in the phonie."[58] The first step, then, involves fracturing the soundscape into comprehensible units, distinguishing spoken words from other noise produced by the speaker or by the environment. Though this isolation is, for the most part, unconscious, Derrida insists that it "requires idealities that are not purely sensible," and therefore denies that this is a purely natural process outside of cultural influences. The second step requires that one make a connection between the sound of the word and its sense – a word used in linguistics in reference to a given sign's relationship to other signs. Similarly, *this* is not a natural or immediate process for Derrida; he critiques Sassurian linguistics precisely because of its refusal to question this "articulated unity," which allows "a full and originally spoken language" to stay on the side of the unconscious and the natural, and therefore beyond critique.

Mrs. Moore's experience of the caves disturbs both steps in Derrida's phenomenology of language; within the flood of noise of the echo chamber, Mrs. Moore cannot distinguish the sensible mass, and this causes her to question this "unity of sound and sense." In this flood of sound, there is no *différance*, and therefore no meaning: everything "only amounted to 'boum'" (*PI* 166). Language, instead of successfully converting the space of caves to a communicable message, disseminates within the cave. There can be no ecorhapsodic channeling of this environment because the product of this interaction – the poetry as medium – is too monotonous to signify anything but its own failure as a signifier.

Whereas ecorhapsody is represented as a kind of automatic writing where "the mind lets go and the body takes over" – such as Eustice's speech in "The Story of a Panic" – for Mrs. Moore, when she sits beneath a tree outside the cave to write a letter to her children, she finds composition impossible.[59] This crisis of meaning quickly becomes a crisis of faith. "Poor little talkative Christianity" provides no comfort, and without this foundation of her identity, Mrs. Moore finds herself "terrified over an area larger than usual; the universe, never comprehensible to her intellect, offered no response to her soul, the mood of the last two months took definite form at last, as she realized that she didn't want to write her children, didn't want to communicate with anyone, not even God" (*PI* 166). Encountering the massive, indifferent cosmos, Mrs. Moore discovers no harmony. The universe neither receives nor gives any meaning. If there is any element that unites her interiority with her environment, it offers neither transcendence nor enlightenment. Instead, this element is ultimately degrading to humans: the cave's echo murmurs, "Pathos, piety, courage – they exist, but are identical, and so is filth. Everything exists, nothing has value" (*PI* 165). For Mrs. Moore, this raw sensory experience triggers her discovery of the contingency and constructedness of the qualities and concepts she

used to differentiate herself from human and more-than-human others. It leads her to doubt language as a system of creating meanings and hierarchies of value.

So is this raw, unmediated experience inaccessible? Is Forster, as Woelfel argues, too much of a skeptic to believe in the validity of experiences like ecstasy or rapture that are supposed to take one outside of oneself into a larger sense of being? In my view, it is not so much that Forster wants to deny this metaphysics of presence. As I will show, his final novel still represents *Indian* characters – specifically *Hindu* characters who follow a religion native to the subcontinent – as capable of accessing this authentic, monist level of reality, at least in moments. But for Mrs. Moore, as with Adela, this disorienting experience of the Indian more-than-human environment results in isolation, illness, and retraction. While both characters hope to divert from the linear paths of English national identity, both find themselves unprepared for the unpredictable, indifferent, and monotonous flood they find outside these canals.

Both Adela's and Mrs. Moore's inability to cope with the Indian environment could perhaps be ascribed to Forster's well-documented misogyny, as well as a general English belief that women, as the weaker, more susceptible sex, are more easily "touched" by foreign environments. However, these explanations do not account for how Cyril Fielding, an Englishman, also experiences a sense of dislocation and disorientation because of his contact with the foreign environment. Cyril distinguishes himself from the overt bigotry of the Anglo-Indian community because of his willingness to communicate, fraternize, and sympathize with Indians. There is a gendered element to this spectrum of behavior towards Indians: as the schoolmaster for the Government College, Cyril's work with the natives feminizes him, especially compared to the other colonial administrators like Ronny and Major Callendar. If these latter two men represent the "hard" authoritarian, military side of colonialism, Cyril participates in the "soft" side of colonialism, preaching the liberal-humanist ideal of a universal

brotherhood of man while willfully ignoring how this legacy is contaminated by colonialism – or, more cynically, how its principles are actually products *of* colonialism developed specifically to distort or erase injustice.

Perhaps because of his feminine receptivity, Cyril's experience of the foreign environment disrupts his sense of identity and causes him to question his entire value system. After Fielding declares his belief in Aziz's innocence and resigns from the club, he takes one last trip to the building's upper verandah and looks towards the Marabar Hills. While he "wasn't impressed" by the caves when he saw them up close earlier that day, "At this distance and hour they leapt into beauty" (*PI* 175, 212). Just as, in Woolf's *Orlando*, looking on the Thessalian hills awakens the protagonist to her body's porous relationship with the external world, the view of the Marabar triggers a revelation for Cyril. He begins to question how English national identity – even one as tenuous, critical, and qualified as his – has foreclosed a greater sense of interconnectedness with the nonhuman world:

> [The Hills] seemed to move graciously towards him like a queen, and their charm became the sky's. At that moment they were everywhere, the cool benediction of night descended, the stars sparkled, and the whole of the universe was a hill. Lovely, exquisite moment – but passing the Englishman with averted face and on swift wings. He experienced nothing himself; it was as if someone had told him there was such a moment, and he was obliged to believe. And he felt dubious and disconnected suddenly, and wondered if he was really and truly successful as a human being. After forty year's experience, he had learnt to manage his life and make the best of it on advanced European lines, had developed his personality, explored his limitations, controlled his passions – and he had done it all without becoming either pedantic or worldly. A credible achievement, but as the moment passed, he felt he ought to have been working at something else the whole time, -- he didn't know at what, never would know, never could know, and that was why he felt sad. (*PI* 212-213)

This crucial transitional moment for Cyril's character works through the landscape as *image* becomes *experience*. The hills break the aesthetic screen, "moving graciously towards" Cyril as a feminine force that is simultaneously maternal and seductive. The second sentence of the quoted passage moves from the specific to the sublime. The narrative voice, speaking in prophetic tones

from inside and outside the Englishman, describes the environment using ecorhapsodic tropes that specifically exceed and explode the visual realm. The hills are "everywhere," becoming "the whole of the universe." The night arrives as a "cool benediction," Forster's word choice here suggesting a somewhat ineffable but essential connection between the embodied experience of the environment – here the cool breeze – and the transcendent, the spiritual. This feeling of rhapsody – what we might call a "religious experience" – seems to dissipate on the articulation of the next phrase, "Lovely, exquisite moment." It is as if these three words, self-aware and retrospective, jolt Fielding out of this feeling of interconnectedness; labeling the moment mediates what seemed to be an immediate experience. Whatever feeling there was is instantly buried in doubt and retrospection, leaving Fielding "dubious and disconnected," whereas before he was to be open and interconnected. He blames this shortcoming on the "European lines," narrow like the railroad lines that thread through India and the novel, on which he built his life. Similar to Adela, he sees how these tracks have made him self-centered, over-concerned with worldly accomplishments, and dispassionate. Ironically, he articulates his desire for something outside of these restrictive paths of nationality in recognizably English terms, when he reflects, "he ought to have been working at something else the whole time." He cannot name what this goal should have been, but he feels he must *work for it*, applying the British work ethic that he sees as lacking in his disordered environment.

Cyril's fleeting experience of interconnectedness with the nonhuman environment slips through the language of the passage like water seeps out of a fist. In *Orlando*, the protagonist's desire to write ultimately draws her away from the gypsy's interconnected way life and back to her English homeland; here, Cyril's desire to label this experience *as* an experience only serves to deepen his modern, Western sense of rationality, secularism, and doubt. In both cases, the Eastern landscape explodes the aesthetic screen only to register its renewed application.

The Sound of Everything

In Lahore in 1913, during his first visit to India, Forster met a Brahman musician named Godbole. A raga singer, Godbole serenaded Forster on a walk through the temple gardens and explained, "There are scales appropriate for every time of day. That for evening the scale was C major, but with F# in it instead of F."[60] From his very first encounter with Indian music, Forster associated it with a certain attunement to the more-than-human environment. As in ecorhapsodic poetry, music serves as the medium and point of contact through which the human can commune with greater-than-human forces. This is because music's affective language has the ability to call forth certain bodily impulses. Later in Lahore, after listening to a raga, Forster explains how the "unusual" music, which "was like Western music reflected in trembling water," "aroused" him.[61] This description of the raga is a variation of a familiar pattern that repeats itself throughout *Passage*, where Indian culture is presented as an image reflecting the West from the other side of an aesthetic screen. It is a provocative image: it arouses; it defamiliarizes; it calls forth something that the mind has forgotten but the body remembers. Forster both recognizes himself and fails to recognize himself in this foreign music. Though his Western aesthetic tastes would lead him to complain that the raga lacks "any dramatic feeling" and never "comes to a crisis," it seems to be precisely this preference for ambiance over progression that fascinates Forster. Indian music, especially the raga, provided a less teleological, more porous model for Forster to think about both the novel form and the relationship between the human body and the more-than-human environment. In both cases, these new forms that Forster imagines are more ambiguous, open-ended, and indecisive; they do not seek the mastery of dualist closures, but rather the interconnectedness of monist portals.

In *A Passage to India*, one of Forster's main mechanisms for opening dualist closures is Professor Godbole, a fictional version of his garden guide. The novel's third section, "Temple," is initially focalized through Godbole, whose consciousness the third-person narrator freely dips into through free indirect discourse as it describes the Shri Krishna festival. Because of this narrative technique, it is difficult to determine where to locate the voice with regards to Godbole, and to identify tone and irony with any level of confidence. Forster's rendering of the festival destabilizes the epistemological and hermeneutical grounds on which the reader stood for most of the novel. Instead of emphasizing the hierarchical ordering of spaces (like in the "Mosque" section) or the terrifying absence at the center of spaces (like in "Caves"), the descriptions celebrate the vibrant heterogeneity of surfaces without affirming a positive presence at the core: "Where was the God Himself, in whose honor this congregation had gathered? Indistinguishable in the jumble of His own altar, huddled out of sight amid images of inferior descent, smothered under rose-leaves, overhung by oleographs, outblazed by golden tablets representing the Rajah's ancestors, and entirely obscured, when the wind blew, by the tattered foliage of a banana" (*PI* 319). The string of verbs in this sentence (huddled, smothered, overhung, etc.) depicts "God Himself" as a trickster who can only be seen as a flickering absence beneath a flood of matter and signs. The search for inner truth, of a transcendental signified, is frustrated by endless deferment to the heterogeny of surfaces.

"Temple," then, might seem at first to be simply repeating the themes of "Caves," emphasizing the dualistic West's inability to distinguish monism within monotony. However, this section alters these themes by focusing on Hindu characters attending the festival who manage to break through or elude these dualisms. When Forster turns his narrative eye to these characters, his primitivist metaphors and imagery emphasize their interconnection with the more than human environment. This naturalization of Hindu religion, like most primitivist discourse,

is simultaneously reverent and degrading. Take, for instance, the description of the "toiling ryot, whom some call the real India" as they approach the shrine to Krishna:

> The assembly was in a tender, happy state unknown to an English crowd, it seethed like a beneficent potion. When the villagers broke cordon for a glimpse of the silver image, a most beautiful and radiant expression came into their faces, a beauty in which there was nothing personal, for it caused them all to resemble one another during the one moment of its indwelling, and only when it was withdrawn did they revert to individual clods. (*PI* 318)

Forster's purpose in this passage is paradoxical and impossible: to make palpable to an English-speaking audience, in that most English literary form, the novel, an embodied state that is defined as the exact opposite of Englishness. To accomplish this task, he describes the *faces* of the crowd: the faces and their associate bodies become texts that the reader must interpret to understand this altered state. Seeking this internal, essential animating force – that universal feeling of interconnection that "indwells" the festival attendees and transforms them so that they "all to resemble one another" – returns one to the external signs of the exotic body that is defined in explicit opposition to the English body. The final metaphor of the quoted passage, where the Hindu attendees revert back from an epiphanic image of universal being to an "individual clod," completes this transformation of Indian people into land itself. This figurative transformation is to a certain extent ennobling: it indicates that the practitioners of Hinduism, because they have this intimacy with the land, are not eternally, fatally removed from this essence, like Forster's British characters. But the clumsy sound and the degraded connotations of the word "clod" point also the other side of this transformation, where these dark-skinned bodies are degenerate and uncivilized because of this very same association with the land. "Clod" here disturbingly recalls Mrs. Turton's conclusion that all Indians "out to be ground into dust." While the evocation of primitivism in "Temple" might not be overtly violent like Mrs. Turton's decree, it repeats the symbolic violence of dehumanization through naturalization.

This visual image of the Hindu masses reinforces the psychological and material border between East and West. However, the aural descriptions of the festival's cacophonous music penetrate these divisions: "Music there was, but from so many sources that the sum-total was untrammelled. The braying banging crooning melted into a single mass which trailed round the palace before joining the thunder" (*PI* 318-19). The breakdown of the second sentence's syntax, especially the omission of commas, enacts the dissolution of individual sonic units of meaning into "a single mass." With this breakdown, the narrative voice gestures towards the limits of language itself; language can attempt to impose identity on sound, label it as "braying" or "banging" or "crooning," but, like the trickster God constantly slipping out of vision, the sound will always have something excessive, and can always be transformed by contact with another sound in the mass. Sound, in other words, is an ecology.[62] It is a material plane where human experience joins with an environment populated by both human and nonhuman others. Forster emphasizes this materiality in the quoted passage as the language follows the "mass" travel on sound waves about the palace and into the open air as it joins with the thunder. While the visual descriptions of the festival emphasize divisions and difference, the aural descriptions break down those barriers.

Godbole, a voice within this mass, bridges the chasm between identity and non-identity. He can distinguish the parts in the whole and the whole in the parts. The narrative voice, tapping into the singer's ecorhapsodic trance during the height of the festival, enacts his distinctly non-dualist viewpoint. Godbole perceives the essential similarities among heterogeneous things while also maintaining the singularity of each part of the monist whole: "Noise, noise, the Europeanized band louder, incense on the altar, sweat, the blaze of light, wind in the bananas, noise, thunder, eleven-fifty by his wrist-watch, seen as he threw up his hands and detached the tiny reverberation that was his soul. Louder shouts in the crowd. He danced on" (*PI* 321). This

passage bears all the distinguishing tropes of ecorhapsody: the parataxis, the sliding between different senses from one image to the next, the repetition of "noise," and the disregard for syntax, as sentences fragment or run-on. The narrative voice and Godbole channel the energy of the festival, raw and unfiltered but somehow unified. Michael Valdez Moses, commenting on the imperial origins of Joseph Conrad's modernist style in *Heart of Darkness*, interprets Marlow's paratactic descriptions of the landscape as an "imperial encounter…of disorientation, …in which the Western mind, far from subjugating the pliable native environment to scientific and epistemological categories of its omnipotent and omniscient European intelligence, finds itself at a loss, overthrown, confused, panicked, frustrated, and turned back on itself."[63] But here, as Forster attempts to render Godbole's ecorhapsodic trance, we see parataxis not as a method of rendering a fractured Western perspective, but rather its dialectical opposite – an integrated and holistic Eastern perspective. Parataxis signifies not the breakdown of language, but rather Forster's effort to transform language to its highest form, music.

It is especially noteworthy that this single mass that Godbole feels himself as part of is not purely Indian; the "Europeanized" music and the exacting Western measurements of time provided by his wrist-watch show that this culture has, in fact, been fundamentally altered by the history of colonialism. But this is the power of Godbole, and Hinduism in Forster more generally: while Western culture wants to maintain its purity and let no foreign elements pass into it, Hinduism enables consciousness to be porous and omnivorous. The glance at the watch does not keep him from "detaching" his soul and joining the "Infinite Love" celebrated by the Shri Krishna festival (*PI* 322). Forster's concept of Hinduism can assimilate the West by bringing its technologies and concepts into its worldview; as a "living force," it has an adaptability and porosity that the West does not (*PI* 341). At the same time, there is a suggestion that despite these changes, the religion maintains a timeless and unchanging essence. Recalling the theory of

racial mutability that a young Forster espoused in his early essay, "The Influence of Climate," we see an ironic commonality between either side of the highly civilized/uncivilized spectrum: both are described as resistant to the transformative effects of foreign elements and environments. But their method of resistance couldn't be more opposed: for the English, their forms of being are too effective, logical, and powerful to be changed (or so they believe); for adherents of Hinduism, because their forms are defined by their openness and fluidity, because, in other words, they exist *as* and *in* transformation, these foreign elements cannot have an effect as they are washed away. Channels and floods; linearity and planarity; Forster's imagery repeatedly returns to these opposing conceptions of Western and Eastern culture, especially in the final section.

Godbole, then, joins the line of other ecorhapsodes in Forster's oeuvre, like Eustice and Maurice, that are able to break through the unnatural natures imagined by Edwardian England and access some universal, pansexual force that links up the human and the more than human. But even as Forster seems to offer his reader access to this alternate way of embodiment in these descriptions of Godbole, he simultaneously casts suspicion on the ability of any non-Hindu person to access this "wild and sincere" feeling. For example, Godbole refuses to shake Fielding's hand when he meets him during this festival, as it would require him to wash and repurify himself; the religious dogma of the festival suggests that the presence of Westerners would only serve to contaminate the proceedings. Even more, the narrative voice explicitly states that this experience is primarily, if not solely, accessible to Hindus: "Aziz could not understand this, any more than an average Christian could" (*PI* 341). "Average" is the key word here: it suggests that there could be an exceptional Christian who could exceed these bounds and understand the universal love at the heart of the ancient Hindu way of being. The novel leaves the possibility open, but also offers no examples of such exceptions.

Even for Forster's Hindu characters, their access to this greater monist whole is contingent and fleeting. Even the most "in touch" Hindu, Godbole, still has limitations on his ability to tap into the more than human environment. At the height of his song, he endeavors to "imitate God" by extending this infinite love out to nonhuman beings. He manages to grant this love to a wasp, but when he tries to give it to "the stone where the wasp clung – could he…no he could not, he had been wrong to attempt the stone, logic and conscious effort had seduced, he came back to the strip of red carpet and discovered he was dancing upon it" (*PI* 321). The stone operates as a limit test for Godbole's access to this monist whole. Woelfel reads Godbole's inability to incorporate the stone into his ecstasy as "a synecdoche for the meaning-effacing transcendent extreme of the caves….He approaches Krishna but does not reach the second stage of religious experience…where Krishna multiplies himself for others, extending to each maiden individual contact with the divine." Woelful sees this failure as ultimately delegitimizing Godbole's religious sense, as his "vision remains solipsistic and limited, even on his own terms."[64] However, I suggest Godbole's failure to include the stone must be read as a reflection of the limits of Forster's vision, rather than of Godbole's.

This pattern, where a character appears to be on the precipice of an epiphany only to be seduced by "logic and conscious effort," echoes the passage interpreted above where Cyril looked upon the hills from the club. In both cases, the desire for mastery and understanding frustrates the character's desire for presence and truth. One can either have an experience or know an experience; language stands in the way as a perhaps impenetrable barrier between the two. The narrator tells us this is true of both the "unbeliever" and the "adept": "He may think, if he chooses, that he has been with God, but as soon as he thinks it, it becomes history, and falls under the rules of time" (*PI* 320). The rules of time, of history, are also the rules of signs. These rules insist on the incommensurability of an object of knowledge and the thing itself. There is

always a delay; knowledge of a thing is always only a trace of the real thing. While Godbole's song might enable him to experience a fragment of this Infinite Love, he cannot report it back to Forster's readers. The experience must pass through too many translations – not the least of which is the translation of embodied experience to linguistic sign – before it reaches the reader's consciousness. We are left to unravel the assemblage, to discover the original text, which we could not read even if we managed to locate it.

"Not yet…not there"

Passage ends with a moment of frustrated queer desire between Cyril and Aziz. Embracing each other, they mutually declare their desire for a new place where relationships between an Indian and an Englishman can exist. However, in the closing paragraph of the novel, it seems that the more-than-human environment itself rises to separate these two would-be friends: "But the horses didn't want it – they swerved apart; the earth didn't want it, sending up rocks through which the riders must pass single-file; the temples, the tank, the jail, the palace, the birds, the carrion, the Guest House, that came into view as they issued from the gap and saw Mau beneath: they didn't want it, they said in their hundred voices, 'No, not yet,' the sky said, 'No, not there'" (*PI* 362). Far from the queer relationships that are enabled by the more-than-human world, like we saw in "The Story of a Panic" and *Maurice*, here the more-than-human actively prohibits this union. The horses, the earth, and everything else that fills this paratactic list rises to separate these bodies. This is where the content of the novel, its exploration of the erotic and unequal relationship between British and Indian characters, as well as between British characters and the Indian environment, strives against the novel form itself. That "Not yet," expresses a desire for a future beyond the novel's temporal bounds.

III. Cosmopolitan Adaptations:

Epigenetic Figurations and the Multi-ethnic Metropolis

Hybridity, "A Bit of a Nightmare" (Or, in Defense of the Ragwort)

An October 2019 episode of the BBC podcast *In Our Time: Science* (which is geared to bring the latest topics in scientific research to a general audience) on "Hybrids" featured the following existential reflection on hybrid organisms between Steve Jones, a Senior Research Fellow in Genetics at University College, London, and the show's host, Melvyn Bragg:

> JONES: "For example, in Britain there is a very familiar hybrid plant which has become rather a pest that is called the Oxford Ragwort, and this is a hybrid between an Italian volcanic rare species on broken rocks in Italy and a native species, a native relative, that is grown in the Oxford Botanic Gardens, and they hybridized and formed a plant which everyone has seen millions of without realizing, because whenever you go on the train, you look out of the window, and there are tons and tons, millions, of these bright yellow flowered plants – they all are hybrids. And they're all new hybrids. They're not more than two-hundred years old."
> BRAGG: "And there are many, many more…"
> JONES: "There are many examples, yes."
> BRAGG: "Hybrids have been…they've invaded the world of species."
> JONES: "Yes, I would say so. I think animals, too. There are hybrid mice, there are hybrid fruit flies. It's all a bit of a nightmare.
> BRAGG: "Why is it a nightmare?"
> JONES: "Life was…life…you know, many of us can say, this is our age, life used to be so simple."[1]

This remarkable exchange is tinged with an ironic pastoral whimsy, a tongue-in-cheek nostalgia for those "simpler" times for society and biology. The panelists all share a chuckle. But even with these notes of levity, there is in Jones's profile of this hybrid plant a sincere note of mourning and loss. The position of his imagined viewer – gazing out the window of a train – is the seat of modernity, gazing longingly from within the machine in the garden.[2] Jones's description of the pestilent Oxford Ragwort, the botanical comrade of the nightmarish mice and flies in the hybrids' assault on species, unwittingly echoes fears of another "invasion" that threatens the "simple" life of the British Isles: the widespread immigration of non-white ex-

colonial subjects throughout the latter half of the twentieth century. Jones's interests are obviously the conservation of England's botanical inheritance and its bio-diversity, the genetics and environments of native flora and fauna. For the conservative commentators on race that emerged in the latter half of the twentieth-century, they wanted to protect the nation's genetic (or at least its phenotypical) whiteness and also its environments, those locales that are so central to English national identity – an identity that is always racialized, implicitly or explicitly. Just as Jones decries fields overrun by "tons and tons, millions" of yellow flowers, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher and others stoked fears about historically white neighborhoods "swamped" by black- and brown-skinned humans. The conservators of Englishness during the 80's wanted the island nation to be, in effect, like the Oxford Botanic Gardens: a place where different historical identities are "rooted," kept in pristine condition, and tended into eternity. A living record of the past. The problem, of course, it is much harder to control the reproduction of people in a nation than that of plants in a garden. And organisms of all kinds find ways to breach walls and borders.

In referring to hybrids as "pests" and "nightmares," Jones's rhetoric edges into moral categories, applying subjective human metrics to supposedly objective biological fact.[3] The language and stories of the novels that I will discuss here work in the opposite direction, taking biology as both a metaphor for and an active agent within postcolonial subject formation. This chapter will consider novels by authors of South Asian descent, Salman Rushdie and Hanif Kureishi, that feature Indian characters who transform – either literally, from a human to a beast, or figuratively, through a change in style – because of their experiences living in the metropolis of London during the 1970's and 80's. Furthermore, by virtue of being inhabited by these characters who are becoming-other through the processes of hybridization, London (and, by extension, England) undergoes a similar transformation of its physical environment and

identity. In order for Englishness to survive as a concept, those "species" of identity which had previously signified the national collective will need to rapidly adapt to extreme environmental pressure. In this way, the hybrid, no longer a contaminative agent, instead becomes the protagonist of the story: resourceful, fertile, even rejuvenating. The invasive hybrid is that new thing that can succeed better than the old thing in the environmental present.

The two novels I focus on in this chapter, Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia,* both depict the emergence of *the new* in England's non-white, ex-commonwealth communities – new styles, new political communities, new levels of psychical and physical experience, and new forms of embodiment. For both Kureishi and Rushdie, immigration is a process of metamorphosis, of becoming-other because of contact with unfamiliar cultures and climates. Both authors employ biological language as figurations of these social processes of identity (trans)formation and individuation. By following each novel's representation of the formation of *the new*, I will describe how both narratives enact a critique of English tradition, showing it to be degraded and sterile. Both also imagine new modes of being that could enable non-white individuals and communities to survive and thrive within England's gardens and ghettos. Hybridity – the creation of a new organism through cross-breeding of parents of different species – is one biological process that can be used to metaphorize the production of the new; another is *epigenetics*, which speaks to adaptations that an organism undergoes because (as Rushdie's narrator translates Jean Baptiste Lamarck, the French naturalist whose ideas inspired epigenetic theory), "under extreme environmental pressure, characteristics were acquired" (*SV* 6).[4] (Rushdie here, with characteristic understatement, is referring to Saladin acquiring the "characteristics" of turning fully into a devil, but epigenetic changes are typically minor but meaningful genetic transformations.) Through hybridity, *the new* is formed at conception through the fusion of the parent's DNA; with epigenetics, *the new* emerges from an

ecological process in which genetics are differently activated and even transformed because of environmental influences. In other words, epigenetics presents a metamorphic, trans-corporeal conception of DNA and genetics more broadly.

Epigenetics also introduces the concept of inherited epiallates, transformations in an individual organism that are passed down to the next generation. This kind of generational exchange is a central plot concern in both Kureishi and Rushdie's novels. In my discussion, I show how there is a generational difference in various characters' ability to transform and adapt to the pressures of living as a non-white immigrant in England. In both novels there are characters of the older generation – Saladin Chamcha in *The Satanic Verses* and Haroon Amir *The Buddha of Suburbia* – who are represented as absurd and sterile (either figuratively or, in the case of Saladin, literally), "freaks," because of the way they have adapted (or failed to adapt) to the environment of late-century London, despite (or perhaps because of) their reverence for Englishness. Inversely, in both novels characters of the younger generation – Mishal Sufyan and Karim Amir – succeed in adapting to the pressures of the multicultural metropolis, forging new identities and ways of being in the world. These characters end up providing "happy endings" that change the story of the hybrid from that of the antagonist to the protagonist. These endings celebrate this invader's ability to set roots in the disturbed, hostile beds of Thatcherite London.

In order to map some of the "extreme environmental pressures" of immigrant life in Thatcherite England, this chapter begins with a short history of Britain's immigration, nationality, and naturalization policies over the latter half of the twentieth-century, after most of the former British Empire had gained some measure of independence. I pay particular attention to the racist rhetoric leading up to the 1981 British Nationality Act, which changed the basis of nationality from birthplace (*ius soli*) to parentage (*ius sanguinis*), and discuss the act as a compensatory measure that sought to restore the value of Englishness by, first, celebrating its

"pure" racial inheritance and, second, by casting it as under immediate threat from an invasive menace from the former colonies. From this historical overview, I proceed to Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses,* discussing Saladin's attempts to "become English" by erasing his ethnic past, and his subsequent transformation into a goatish demon. Saladin's metamorphosis manifests the dehumanization of the non-white body in rhetorics of Englishness, where this national identity must somehow stand in contrast to a bestial racial other. In contrast to Saladin, the novel provides an example of a successful adaptation in Mishal Sufyan, a transformation that Rushdie metaphorizes through Lamarckian epigenetics. My discussion of Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* follows a similar pattern, first analyzing the older generation character (in this case, Haroon Amir) who undertakes a transformation that is ultimately unsuccessful, and then a character of a younger generation (Haroon's son Karim) who successfully defines himself as a hybrid urban subject.

Uprooting Englishness: The British Nationality Act

Legislatively, the British Nationality Act of 1981 (BNA) was designed to resolve ambiguities and contradictions in immigration and citizenship policy that had existed since the passage of the first Nationality Act of 1948.[5] Although the aims of the 1948 Act were "constitutional, not migratory,"[6] it had the unintended consequence of inaugurating a mass migration of New Commonwealth citizens to the UK. First came the "'honeymoon' decade of the open-door policy" from 1948-1961.[7] This arrangement did not last long; the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act closed the free entry policy and introduced an employment voucher scheme as a mechanism of immigration control.[8] Despite these restrictions, many relations entered the UK between 1962-1974, constituting a second wave of immigration. While many of these Commonwealth subjects came over with intentions of making money and

returning to their home country, a majority permanently settled in England. The children of this generation subsequently found themselves split between one homeland they only knew through their parents' stories and another that denied them full belonging despite it being the land of their birth. All in all, this global migration had a profound effect on the racial composition of the UK, as the Isles' non-white population jumped from around 30,000 after World War II to over 3 million at the end of the century.[9]

To many white Britons, this arrival of these ethnic others amounted to a kind of reverse colonization, and tensions ran high, especially in urban centers where immigrant communities began to take root. Race riots punctuate the latter half of Britain's mid-century, with the most notable case being the Brixton uprisings of 1981.[10] Conservative politicians began to win campaigns with explicitly racist anti-immigrant platforms, such as in 1964 when Peter Griffiths won the seat from the industrial town of Smethwick under the slogan "If you want a Nigger Neighbor vote Labour."[11] It was in this context that Conservative provocateur Enoch Powell rose to prominence, stoking anti-immigrant sentiment and pushing for closed borders and even repatriation of New Commonwealth citizens who had settled in the UK. Powell's most iconic moment was his "Rivers of Blood" speech, delivered in 1968, in which he prophesizes, "In this country in fifteen or twenty years time the black man will have his whip-hand over the white man."[12] (I will return to this speech later, when discussing Rushdie's reappropriation of Powell's apocalyptic image of "the River Tiber foaming with much blood.") Powell's more radical proposals were never enacted, but his influence stoked white supremacist sentiment in the populace (especially obvious in the rise of the National Front and it's "Keep Britain White" campaign of the 1970s),[13] and set the stage for a restrictionist overhaul of Britain's immigration policies.

Following Powell, Conservative policy makers turned the question of citizenship "from place to race."[14] In 1970, Conservatives campaigned on the promise of "no more further large-scale permanent immigration,"[15] and passed another Immigration Bill in 1971 that introduced the concept of "patriality," where citizenship and right to abode was contingent upon the citizenship of one's parents or grandparents. Patriality obviously favored Old Commonwealth, majority white colonies (such as Australia, New Zealand, and Canada) while slamming the door on immigration from New Commonwealth nations. This established a symbolic and legal distinction "between the familial community of Britishness composed of the truly British – those descended from white colonizers – and the political community of Britishness composed of individuals who had become British though conquest or domination."[16] All aliens and non-patrial Commonwealth citizens now needed permission to enter the Isles. Employment vouchers no longer entitled one to settle, and now were subject to annual renewal, moving the UK more towards a migrant worker system, "an important step in the institutionalization of racist immigration controls."[17]

According to Thatcher, 1981 BNA was crafted to address a public fear "that this country might be rather swamped by people with a different culture"[18] – her image of the swamp displaying the way anti-immigrant discourse associates non-white bodies and cultures with primitivism, disease, and decay. Following the trend set by the 1971 Immigration Bill's concept of patriality, the BNA moved citizenship away from *ius soli*, citizenship by place of birth, to a policy of *ius sanguinis*, citizenship by blood. Under the new BNA, a child born on UK soil was not automatically a British citizen, unless one or both of the child's parents were British citizens or legally settled in Britain. The severance of the legal and symbolic ties between birthplace and body effected by both the 1971 Immigration Bill and the 1981 BNA should not be understated. On the legal axis, citizenship, and the full practice of all the rights it entails, no longer

masquerades as a status granted at birth by nature; it is obviously and officially conferred by the state. (Rushdie implores his white audience in *Imaginary Homelands*, "For nine centuries any child born on British soil was British. Automatically. By right. Not by permission of the state. […] From now on citizenship is a gift of the government. You were blind, because you believed the Act was aimed at blacks."[19]) On the symbolic axis, the BNA "attempted to restore the space between center and periphery to prevent further unlooked-for merging" between Englishness and its racial others.[20] As Ian Baucom puts it, this new racialized conception of national citizenship and identity, in contrast to earlier conceptions that root Englishness in the particular domestic locales, finally admits "there was no enchanting magic in the nation's soil which would mysteriously transform immigrants, or even the island-born children of immigrants, into Englishmen."[21] Englishness can no longer be described as something that wells forth from the motherland. It must be carried through blood alone – a racial inheritance.

As I discussed in the first two chapters of this project, this question of where Englishness resides – in blood or in soil – animated modernist writers who represented the metamorphoses of English protagonists traveling to the East. Characters like Virginia Woolf's Orlando or E.M. Forster's Cyril Fielding and Adela Quested are caught between the apparently solid, stabilizing identity of an English essence (blood) and the transformative effects of contact with an exotic landscape (soil). However, even as these modernist novels critique Englishness by enacting its breakdown in foreign lands, they both also affirm a sacred relationship between homeland and body, soil and blood, nature and nation. It is precisely this racialized imaginary that the division of *ius soli* from *ius sanguinis* unravels. As the average melanin levels of those born on the British Isles began to increase, and as the traditional locales of Englishness take on *unheimlich* affects as they are inhabited by these strangers, white supremacist policy makers like Powell and Thatcher felt the need to sever racial and national identity from soil and to locate it

more in the genetic content of specific bodies. This is a key point: although the BNA as a law was obviously designed as an exclusionary measure to control immigration, it should also be seen as a symbolic attempt to consolidate *Englishness* under the sign of *whiteness* at a moment when this foundational racial imaginary was beginning to crumble.[22] Homi Bhabha (one of Rushdie's friends and interlocutors) describes how these new populations disturb the essentialist discourse of nationalism, with its "historical certainty and settled nature," by introducing "counter-narratives of nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries."[23] As the white English citizenship was having to come to terms with the new, post-Empire global order, the BNA affirmed that *Englishness* was a precious essence possessed by white bodies and passed down from one generation to the next, a reproduction of the same.[24] In this way, the BNA was a tentpole in the edifice of Thatcherite nostalgia. There is a pronounced pastoralist tendency in this New Right discourse, which insists on the primacy of the country over the city, the past over the present.[25] Thatcher and her government leveraged traditional, sentimental, self-congratulatory images of England in order to institute neoliberal global-economic policies and austerity measures that, ironically, radically altered the nation's social, cultural, and physical landscape.[26]

Within all the debate in post-war Britain around immigration and citizenship, it was taken as a given that immigrants from the New Commonwealth would not be able to assimilate to English culture, and that there was in fact grave danger in letting this irreducibly foreign element onto English soil, and into its bloodstream. In 1954, Winston Churchill warned that Britain would become "magpie society."[27] In his "River of Blood" speech, Powell tells the story of an old white pensioner whose boarding house overrun by immigrants whose children, "wide-grinned piccaninnies," hound her when she ventures out with the only English word they know, "Racialist."[28] In both of these examples, whiteness is locked in a territorial battle with blackness,

with clearly demarcated lines that admit no hybrid shades of grey. *Whiteness* in these formulations is always figured as the victim, the pure, the aggressed, *blackness* as the perpetrator, the contaminant, the home-invader (ignoring, of course, centuries of imperial history with the inverse configuration): these qualities are removed from individual bodies and described more two different elements with opposing essences. These attitudes carried forward into the Thatcher administration: As Sukdev Sandhu puts it, "Those who grew up in the 1980's hoping to assert their Englishness knew that, as far Margaret Thatcher was concerned, they were a threat to national cohesion."[29]

Powell's and Thatcher's two images – of a river of blood and a swamp – associate immigrants with viscous fluid, something that seeps and infects. But in these two images also exists the possibility for subversion, in that both of these images may also be associated with fecundity and fertility. The rivers of blood could be flowing through the veins of a united humanity (as Rushdie's character Jumpy Joshi poetically reimagines the image); from this swamped bastion might emerge "a new breed" like Karim that is better equipped to deal with the shifting environs of contemporary London. In telling these narratives, these novels offer a critique of Englishness, both as an organizing identity and a historical discursive formation. The novels show how England a) is built on a foundation of irrational and superstitious myths – and these anti-modern beliefs doesn't necessarily remain in the past; b) is obsessed with self-fashioned self-images, insisting on a cultural value and a cultural purity that transcends its compromised global status, post-empire; c) relies on the East as a locus of fear and desire, and thus compulsively recreates these images of East-as-other in order to continue to consolidate whiteness and Englishness.

But these novels have greater ambitions than simply a critiquing white Englishness, which in this post-Empire moment was a punching bag that was looking rather worse for the

wear. They also want to imagine new forms of Englishness that might emerge when non-white characters set conquest on this national identity. This is no simple process; in their representation of ethnic South Asians living in late-century London, both Rushdie and Kureishi demonstrate how these characters' efforts at self-fashioning are always embedded within a politicized symbolic field that carries with it residues of imperial racism, which limits the characters' capacity to freely choose their identity and destiny. Even more, they come to understand how their own desires have been shaped by an imperial culture that offers misleading images of both colonizer and colonized. By representing characters who work as actors, Saladin, Gibreel, and Karim (also Karim's father, the titular Buddha), the authors highlight the manner in which English culture has historically been obsessed with producing images of racial difference. Beneath white producers and directors, these characters work as symbolic laborers whose bodies symbolize otherness within a culture machine that advances white-supremacist logics under the guise of multiculturalism.

Beyond critiquing the notion of Englishness as exceptional, pure, and rational, these novels reconceptualize the relationship between racial and national identity, often by dwelling on the idea of birth and rebirth. The BNA changes the question of Britishness from "where were you born?" to "who were your parents?"; Rushdie and Kureishi's novels challenge this shift, showing how both *Britishness* and *Englishness* are refashioned (and indeed, revived) in these racially diverse metropolitan locales. These narratives show the London environment – an environment that is both natural and cultural, both native and intersected with the bodies and goods from across the globe – influence one's subject formation. This is more than just nature versus nurture; a better figuration would be genetics versus epigenetics. Genetics look primarily at the content of an organism, its DNA; epigenetics consider how that content functions within and changes in response to a particular environmental context. The novelists both represent

second-generation immigrants – Mishal and Anahita Sufyan in *The Satanic Verses,* and Karim Amir and Jamila in *The Buddha of Suburbia* – whose hybrid identities demonstrate the incoherence of genetic explanations of human identity and behavior. (Mishal and Anahita both were technically born in India, but moved to England at a very young age, and therefore are perhaps better described as a "one-point-five-generation"). These offspring show that racial or ethnic identity, rather than being a biological/cultural touchstone, is constantly renegotiated in many different social, economic, historical, and political contexts, and therefore should not be thought of as determinate or stabilizing. Modernists frequently represented the fear/desire of "going native" in foreign lands; these postcolonial diasporic writers flip this on its head in representing non-white subjects who "go English" as they both change and are changed by the imperial metropolis of London. The presence in the text of Karim and Mishal, as well as the other characters from the multi-ethnic, counter-cultural Club Hot Wax in *The Satanic Verses*, show that London, far from being a beacon of white Western culture, or a wellspring of Englishness (as Dickens, who Rushdie evokes as a predecessor, might have it), is a contested, discontinuous, and protean space that is enmeshed in a global flow of ideas, goods, and people. Englishness in Rushdie is constantly at risk of dissolving into a multivalent chaos, much like Saleem Sinai does at the end of his Indian epic, *Midnight's Children*.[30] Similarly, Kureishi's mixed-race narrator Karim Amir sees Englishness as a sign or slogan like any other, to be regarded with skepticism and sarcasm. But while these young people demystify these old versions of Englishness, they also offer a glimmer of hope for a future where Englishness is remade, perhaps even redeemed. In this way, both Kureishi and Rushdie stop short of a radical rejection of national identity; they still have hope for a multicultural England.

Eating Englishness

The Satanic Verses is a complex, multidimensional novel that spans vast historical, geographic, and metaphysical distances, but its primary narrative thread is set Thatcherite England and is focused around the lives of two actors, Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta, and their incredible metamorphoses into a devil and an archangel, respectively.[31] In many ways, these characters are opposites: Saladin comes from a family of means, Gibreel comes from a poor family and both of his parents die while he is still young. After the death of his mother, Saladin travels to England for his education and ends up marrying an Englishwoman and working as a voice actor, while Gibreel becomes a famous actor in Bollywood films. These two actors are coincidentally brought together on a flight from Bombay to London that is hijacked by a group of Islamic fundamentalists, and bond with each other during "a second period of gestation" (*SV* 85) when the plane is moored on a desert airstrip. They are "reborn" together when the hijackers blow the plane up above the English Channel, and miraculously survive this fall of more than a mile. When they land on English soil, the process of metamorphosis begins, as Saladin grows horns and Gibreel develops a halo. These opposing transformations end up radically impacting each character's trajectory: Saladin, despite being a British citizen, is imprisoned and tortured by immigration police, while Gibreel becomes an even bigger star once he comes back from the dead – although increasingly mentally unstable. After escaping immigration police, a demonic Saladin seeks shelter with the Sufyan family at the Shaandaar Café, and eventually turns back into a human; meanwhile, Gibreel, who is living with world-famous mountaineer Allie Cone, begins to have psychotic episodes where he wanders the streets trying to "tropicalize" London with his angelic horn. Gibreel's psychosis worsens once Saladin, driven by a vengeful rage, begins to torment his nemesis with prank calls where he makes sexual suggestions in sing-song doggerel – satanic verses. Despite his insanity, Gibreel emerges as something of a hero when, during a London race riot, he saves an incapacitated Saladin from the

burning remains of the Shaandaar. Gibreel's story is still ultimately one of tragedy, as he ends up killing Allie, a man he assumes to be her lover, and himself. Saladin's story, on the other hand, ends more fortunately, as he returns home to his estranged, dying father in India, takes up with an old girlfriend, and comes to a greater peace with a past he had previously sought to repress.

Saladin Chamcha presents a test case to determine what extent a non-white, "New Commonwealth" subject can actually become English. Saladin's reverence for England, especially his dream city "*Ellowen Deeowen*" (London), is not just about cultural values and global power, although those clearly are elements of its appeal; it is that the English appear to Saladin as the reasonable, disciplined antidote to the squalor and excess of India. England, a nation of "poise and moderation," symbolizes the antithesis of his native Bombay, with its "dust, vulgarity, policemen in shorts, transvestites, movie fanzines, pavement sleepers and the rumored singing whores of Grant Road who had begun as devotees of the Yellamma cult in Karnataka but ended up here as dancers in the more prosaic temples of the flesh" (*SV* 37). The paratactic list presents India as a place of total chaos where binary, fundamental concepts of the Enlightenment tradition – law and body, religion and sex, male and female, rich and poor, high and low culture – are horribly mixed and "muddled" (to borrow a favorite term of E.M. Forster's). The episode where a "creature of bone" molests a thirteen-year-old Saladin cements the boy's anxiety-fueled resentment of India, as he decides he must "escape Bombay, or die" (*SV* 38). For Saladin, to be Indian is to be tied to the body and all its traumas and appetites; to be English, to rise above such humiliating enmeshments as one transcends the flesh.

Saladin endeavors to "transmute himself into a Vilayeti" by enrobing himself in all the most traditional symbols of Englishness (*SV* 44); he approaches this identity as a regimen of tastes (both metaphorical and literal), a set of linguistic signs, products, and political attitudes that, once consumed by the self-medicating subject, will cleanse his body of its marks of

difference. He dresses in a bowler hat; he refuses to drink Indian tap water; he complains about his home nation's "coarse" cinema (*SV* 45); he acquires a British passport (having "arrived in the country just before the laws tightened up" [*SV* 48]). He adopts a staunchly conservative political viewpoint, quite in line with the right-wing avante garde of Thatcherite Britain. Saladin's defense of the Falkland's War echoes Powell's anecdote of the old pensioner in his "Rivers of Blood" speech: "suppose you heard a noise downstairs in the middle of the night and went to investigate and found a huge man in the living-room with a shotgun…. Well, it's like that. Intruders in the home. It won't do" (*SV* 181). In both speeches, Britain's territory – here a colonial holding, not the homeland – is described as a domestic edifice and the state as a benevolent patriarch trying to defend against an invasive threat who shows no respect for home or body. (Saladin's wife, the Englishwoman Pamela, vents that the real situation in the Falklands is as "if two people claim they own a house, and one of them is squatting the place, and *then* the other turns up with a shotgun" [*SV* 181]).

One particular scene from his boarding-school days, in which he struggles to choke down a breakfast of bone-filled kipper, provides a fitting microcosm of Saladin's "digestion" of Englishness: "England was a peculiar-tasting smoked fish full of spikes and bones, and nobody would ever tell him how to eat it" (*SV* 44). Saladin never pauses to question *why* he must consume this strange food; he simply understands that it is valuable because it is an English tradition, and if he is to conqueror this land, he must understand and accept its tastes. The narrator compares him to William the Conqueror, who began his conquest of the Isles "by eating a mouthful of British sand" (*SV* 44). The Conqueror and Saladin each feel a need to consume the land itself, to take the territory, which possesses some metamorphic germ that can make one become-English, into his own body. In this transformative ritual, the migrant submits to the national soil, but also establishes a claim on the land. The comparison between Saladin

and William the Conqueror, as well as the diction associated with invasion, conquest, and colonization, casts light on another dimension of Saladin's Anglophilia. While he certainly venerates English ideals, his attitude toward actual English people and mainstream late-century English culture alternates between disgust, superiority, and desire for domination. He sees low-culture English subjects, and also high-culture subjects who have rejected English ideals (like his wife), as betraying a sacred English tradition. An Indian migrant, he ironically fashions himself as a bastion of Englishness against the actual living English. Saladin's desire to consume Englishness proves futile partly because, in the oft-quoted, drunken words of S.S. "Whiskey" Sissoda, "The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don't know what it means" (*SV* 353). Thatcher's post-imperial nationalism needs to define some essential Englishness that is rooted in the domestic space; *The Satanic Verses* exposes this pastoral rhetoric, showing how the "motherland" which is supposed to be ideal and (racially) pure but is now degraded and mongrel – and in fact, it has always been that way.

Saladin's conquest to become English is most obviously ironized in his transformation into a devil, but there is another more subtle commentary on this transformation in the fact that he is a genetic anomaly. His marriage to Pamela is barren. Their childlessness turns out to be because of his "genetic inheritance": "something was the matter with Saladin's chromosomes, two sticks too long, or too short, he couldn't remember" (*SV* 51). With Saladin's inherited infertility, the novel suggests that his "type" of subject that fully rejects his ethnic, colonized past and endeavors to completely define himself according to the image of the colonizer will be sterile, a hybrid (like a mule) who cannot reproduce. This genetic diagnosis of Saladin's infertility also resonates with his Indian girlfriend Zeeny's diagnosis of him as a "freak" (*SV* 54). She describes him as "An empty slate, nobody home" (*SV* 62); in Zeeny's eyes, by purging himself of his Indianness through this rigorous program of consuming Englishness, he has voided some

vital aspect of his personhood. In the magical realist ontologies of Rushdie's novel, the possibility that there is some relationship between his genetic difference and his "freakish" subjectivity can neither be totally denied nor totally affirmed. But in this fictional world, it can be seen that there is some relationship (though not necessarily a causal one) between Saladin's biological body and his ideological formation. This relationship becomes central to the question of his monstrous transformation it a satyric devil, which I will discuss momentarily. First, though, I must describe how Saladin's career as a voice actor signifies his desire to overcome the racial markings put on him in England's affective economies – and also his ultimate failure to ever transcend his race, since white supremacist logics of mainstream English culture will always see him as other, no matter how much he tries to model himself after their self-image.

Homely Aliens

Saladin's main means of self-fashioning is by cultivating that part of him that most readily exceeds his racially-marked body, his voice. (Voice, of course, plays a privileged role in a novel that explicitly calls itself *Verses*). Saladin trains himself to be the "Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice," able to take on any accent ("On the radio he could convince an audience that he was Russian, Chinese, Sicilian, the President of the United States"). In so doing he and his "female equivalent," the Jewish Mimi Mamoulian, "[shed] bodies to put on voices" (*SV* 60-61) in the popular sitcom, *The Alien Show*. Saladin seeks in voice-acting the ability to exceed his body, to access instead a color-blind zone of value-production that is somehow removed from the contingencies of the flesh. He endeavors to construct himself as pure voice, pure mask, and in that way to cut off all ties with his past, with history itself, and to advance a myth of auto-generation. The problem, he comes to discover, is that the terms deemed valuable in this symbolic field come with history, and these material contingencies are not so easily shed.

Rushdie's invention *The Aliens Show* parodies the white culture industry's superficial appropriation of multiculturalism, showing how it neutralizes the political potentials of these new collectivities. It demonstrates the refusal or inability of English mass culture to have a direct discussion of specific race-relations. The show, a children's sitcom, features a cast that goes beyond racial diversity to represent a diversity of beings, "ranging from cute to psycho, from animal to vegetable, and also mineral." There is Pygmalien the "artistic rock"; the Alien Korns, space sirens; Bugsy the giant dung-beetle (notes of Kafka); Brains the super-intelligent abalone; and Ridley, "who looked like a Francis Bacon painting of a mouthful of teeth waving at the end of a sightless pod" (*SV* 62, 63). In order to profit off embodied difference, the show's producers push variance to its absolute limit by removing all markings that could tie the characters to political and social realities. For the characters to be relatable, there needs to be another level of remove. When Saladin protests, "The damn show isn't an allegory. It's an entertainment. It aims to please," he underestimates the extent to which seemingly innocuous texts, like a children's comedy show, both reflect and reproduce cultural beliefs. Just because the text doesn't offer itself as allegory doesn't mean that allegorical readings aren't available, even if such readings can be accused of being symptomatic. As Zeeny interrogates Saladin, "To please whom?" (*SV* 64): *The Aliens Show* is a multicultural show for a monocultural audience. For this target audience, it is easier to relate to a talking rock or giant beetle than a dark-skinned human.

At the same time, from a twenty-first century perspective, the trans-species and trans-material collectives within *The Aliens Show* also pre-figure post-humanist collectives that have been outlined by theorists such as Jane Bennett, Donna Haraway, and Timothy Morton. All of these theorists have challenged readers to confront otherness as otherness, and to see how human *being* is intimately intertwined with other organisms and vibrant materiality itself. But although *The Aliens Show* offers one model of post-human collectivity, it does so in such a

manner that maintains anthropocentric, capitalist, patriarchal, and white supremacist power structures. In addition to being mostly illegible according to race categories, the show makes sure to emphasize its allegiance to popular white culture. The post-humanist collective makes it clear that its aims are in line with the political mainstream. The two protean leads, Maxim and Mamma Alien (played by Saladin and Mimi), who, thanks to special cinematic effects, change hair color, height, accent, and even arm and leg number, both desire to be television personalities. Though the cast is as different as possible, the political and cultural milieu is utterly conventional. The "alienness" sold by the show is both exaggerated to the point of novelty and negated to the point of illegibility.

Even though the producers of *The Aliens Show* design it to be palatable to a white audience, it nevertheless fails to be more than a passing novelty once the taste for difference fades. Hal Valance, the producer, squashes the show, declaring that "the ethnic universe" is "shrinking" and that "with [Saladin] in the show it's just too damn racial" (*SV* 273-274); despite the show's effort to neutralize its racial messages, the mere presence of a non-white cast member (even a voice actor!) designates the show as exotic and other. Valance turns to economics to explain why he maintains cultural white supremacy: "Let me tell you some facts. Within the last three months, we re-shot a peanut-butter poster because it researched better without the black-kid in the background. We re-recorded a building society jingle because T'Chairman thought the singer sounded black, even though he was white as a sodding sheet" (*SV* 276). Valance demonstrates how free-market logics, when applied to "art" (to use the term generously) tend to reproduce the values of the white majority. Further, it shows an obsession with the image without concern for its relation to reality: the advertising executives want the *sound* of blackness, and all the symbolic capital it entails, regardless of its correspondence to actual blackness. Whiteness and Britishness are valued in and of themselves, images of value before they are even

expressed in specific bodies. White supremacy is baked into the mass culture, so much so that even Valance's "ethnics" "want fucking *Dynasty*, like everyone else" (*SV* 273). Chamcha, the Anglophile, Valance's "Brown Uncle Tom" (*SV* 276), represents exactly this sort of migrant whose tastes have been shaped by a racist British culture.

Valance's other main production, a film version of a stage-musical version of Dickens' novel *Our Mutual Friend* renamed as *Friends!*, shows how British culture, like Valance himself, creates and markets its self-images. For the movie set, "London has been altered – no, *condensed* – according to the imperatives of film" – so that all of the iconic images of the city, from London Bridge to Portman Square to Boffin's Bower to the Thames, are lined up next to each other. This "reborn city" of Valance's Dickens set seeks to recreate a time when England was powerful, unified, and almost uniformly white (*SV* 436). The rampant, absurd quality of this nationalism of this movie is accentuated when one of the actresses tempts Saladin with a map of London that she had tattooed on her breast. This geographied mammary parodies the idea of England as a "motherland." This buxom, randy, inebriated actress is a monstrous translation of the mythic Britannia. "[T]here is in the Englishman a combination of qualities, a modesty, an independence, a responsibility, a repose, which one would seek in vain among the Nations of the Earth," she sings to Saladin (*SV* 438). *Friends!* represents an attempt by the white cultural establishment to refashion itself according to the mythologies of imperial culture, where the English possess an essence that makes them autonomous, rational, benevolent, and impervious to external forces of change. This is precisely the image of England that Saladin designs himself after, even though both Pamela and Zeeny try to show him that there is no substance behind these "postcard" surfaces (*SV* 180). Within the novel as a whole, the *Friends!* episode ironizes British culture by showing how it is built on self-congratulatory myths. It also serves as Rushdie's way of interceding in a long history of literary representations of London, challenging

Dickens' vision of London – dirty, diseased, troubled, but ultimately unified through various social and material networks – by showing how this London is in fact disconnected and chaotic, a city that appears and functions in radically different ways for different individuals and communities.

The cast of *The Aliens Show* provides a counterpoint to the novel's other bestiary, those unfortunate metamorphs detained by British Immigration authorities. While the show's cast is politically neutralized because of the removal or negation of recognizable cultural markers, the detainees' metamorphoses symbolize how dehumanizing stereotypes that circulate within society come to have material effects. *The Aliens Show* says that particular embodied differences don't matter, that identity is simultaneously free-floating and readily mapped upon conventional cultural spaces. In contrast, as I will soon show, the detainee bestiary shows how different bodies are assigned different meanings in English culture, and how these meanings are then inscribed upon immigrant bodies. Instead of an escape from difficult issues around race, it offers a critical examination of how racist discourses operate upon minority populations, how images become reality. This captive group of metamorphosed migrants provides a microscope (or, perhaps, a kaleidoscope) to look more closely at the politics of this world instead of a telescope to imagine others.

Coming to "Succumb"

Racist discourse, like that within Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech, is self-confirming; its gaze upon the world is constantly seeking evidence to support preconceived notions of racial difference. Pointing to demographic statistics such as crime rate, birth rate, and drug use, and also to specific spectacular events like riots or Powell's poor pensioner, peddlers of this discourse follow a common formula: *See, they are what we always knew they were.* This discourse

works in two directions, taxonomizing the racial other while positioning the speaker as the neutral, normative observer, the voice of the national community. What role did the discovery and advancements of genetic play in this hierarchical, nationalist system of racial classification? How have these ideas sedimented in cultural, juridical, and economic institutions? What alternative formations of the embodied subject, such as those offered by epigenetics, might decode these histories of racial oppression and offer new trajectories towards community activism and social justice? These are, of course, gigantic historical and theoretical questions that will not be resolved in any final way here; however, Rushdie's novel does provide a useful narrative to pursue some of these issues. This is because, in his detainee bestiary, we have a set of black and brown immigrants who *have become that which white England describes them as*. They literally have been made into an example*,* been *demonized,* manifesting the cultural processes that Homi Bhabha characterizes as "difference in demonism."[32]

How and why do these metamorphoses occur? There is no single clear answer to these questions within *The Satanic Verses*: in fact, there are too many explanations, many of them conflicting. Anyhow, the point is not to diagnose a single cause or process – in Rushdie's magical realism to attempt to diagnose the reason behind the absurd can only lead one to absurdity. But to ask "*What is the trigger of these monstrous transformations*?" can be usefully thought of as a theoretical question which requires one to think about ethics, politics, and, above all else, the relationship between the embodied, racialized subject and her "environment" (with the broadest sense of the word entailed: socio-cultural, eco/biological, genetic, molecular). In what proceeds, I show how the novel negotiates the question of biological essentialism verses cultural constructivism ("nature versus nurture," to use to more common but problematic terms) with regard to racial difference. Racial discourses within colonialism and forward into multiculturalism have constructed a matrix of theories to explain interactions between the two

"environments" of the subject – one a biological, genetic, ecological environment that sees subjectivity as a process of "natural" (insofar as they are "out of our hands") forces, and one an environment of ideas where societal structures such as education, criminal justice, and culture have the determinative power to mold whatever human clay exists in their domain, for better or for worse. These two determinisms, one biological and one cultural, might seem to be strictly opposed, but in fact the power to say which situations are "biological" and which "cultural," and to what extent, is an essential function of the modern biopolitical state. Race becomes an organizing principle, an overdetermined, intersectional field where different meanings are extracted from and imposed upon the embodied subject. The idea of race negotiates the relationship between biology and culture, often by removing each concept of identity from the specific historical contexts and seeing them as absolutes types – types exaggerated and parodied in Rushdie's detainee bestiary. Who is responsible for the creation of these "monsters" conjured by Conservatives like Powell and Thatcher, that hold such sway over the mainstream British racial imaginary? While it would be easy simply to blame those political mouthpieces who describe these boogeymen, the novel (somewhat troublingly) indicates at several points that accounting for responsibility is more complex. Several clues suggest that these manifestations of racial types are the result of a dialectical process where non-white immigrants play a role, if only as willing victims who "succumb" to discursive and institutional violence, too easily molded by the deleterious influences of life in diaspora.

Most critical explanations of the transformations of Rushdie's Medical Centre patients have emphasized how these transformations are triggered by the England's racist cultural environment. Christopher Warnes, for example, argues that their metamorphoses are "intimately related to the demonisation [*sic*] of immigrants by the police and by an institutional culture designed to protect notions of cultural purity," representing how the English police state

"metaphorically withholds humanity" from black and Asian subjects.[33] Similarly, Josie Gill says the transformations demonstrate "Rushdie's insistence that it is racism which creates the racial other, whose difference is constructed rather than made biologically fixed or inherited."[34] Although all of these explanations of these transformations certainly have value, they also do not fully account for the evidence in the text that the responsibility for these transformations should be somehow distributed between an external environment and an inward subjectivity or essence. The metamorphs, the novel seems to suggest, play a role in their monstrous mutations. My purpose in pointing out these ambiguities is not to negate these other critics' incisive analyses – each of which do describe at some point how ideology works *within* colonized subjects like Saladin -- but rather to linger on the space that Rushdie creates for the agency of the immigrant subject to form some sort of resistance to these discourses of violence. There is, potentially, some escape route from the Manichean imaginary of racial difference, some alternative to the negative, oppositional forms of identity and community offered the colonized by colonial culture. (But, the question must be asked, does Rushdie champion these hybrid identities at the expense of real-life radical politics? Is this ultimately a *liberal* view of the multicultural metropolis, where oppositional racial politics are set up to fail?)

For instance, consider the Manicore's explanation for the detainee's transformations. The Manticore – formerly a male-model from Bombay who has been transformed into a mythical man-tiger, with "an entirely human body, but [the head of] a ferocious tiger, with three rows of teeth" (*SV* 173) – sketches some the Centre's various metamorphic detainees: "There's a woman over that way…who is now mostly water-buffalo. There are businessmen from Nigeria who have grown sturdy tails. There is a group of holidaymakers from Senegal who were doing no more than changing planes when there were turned into slippery snakes" (*SV* 173). This list of wild animals – tiger, buffalo, snake – literalizes the dehumanizing, white supremacist rhetoric

of England's New Right, manifesting stereotypes that associate immigrants with violence, laziness, and imposture. Saladin has no sense of "who can be blamed" these metamorphoses, but the Manticore – a creature with mythical oracular powers – is sure of the cause: "They describe us. […] That's all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (*SV* 174). The power to speak is the power to make; images become reality. He does not give any clear indication of who is the antecedent of the pronoun *they*, whether it's the immigration police, conservative politicians, or white English culture more generally. The ambiguity of this *they* refuses to identify a singular scapegoat, instead highlighting how discourse circulates between different levels, and in this way descriptions take on a life and truth of their own as they are repeated and reinterpreted.

The use of the word "succumb" also presents another ambiguity with regards to the process of transformation. "Succumb" implies that there is some sort of struggle, and that the loser was defeated because it is *weaker* or *inferior* to the victor.[35] To "succumb to a picture" implies that these immigrant's transformations could possibly have been avoided; it suggests the possibility for a heroic resistance to the pressure caused by the perpetual circulation of these dehumanizing images. This is a slightly different interpretation than Warnes, since for him the metamorphoses are purely the result of these descriptions. It is difficult to determine the extent to which "succumb" amounts to a kind of victim blaming. Is the use of "succumb," spoken here by the oracular Manticore, an example of the novel critiquing the politics and behavior of immigrant communities? Is the detainee who gives birth over and over parodying Thatcher's racist idea that immigrants are "swamping" England with their offspring, or does she parody the actual behavior of immigrants? These interpretive questions open up larger theoretical questions about the politics and literature. What is the relationship between the act of "describing" and that of "succumbing"? How deterministic is discourse? What paths for resistance are available?

The differences and similarities between *subjectivity* and *essence* are of importance to this discussion. They are both forms of individuation, and also expressions of an individual's participation in broader categories and communities: human, English, black, Muslim, female, gay, immigrant, earthling – these communities are intersectional, liminal, and constantly renegotiated in different historical contexts. The main difference is once again a question of directionality of affective energy. *Essence* speaks to something held *originally* within and then expressed; *subjectivity* as something within that was previously impressed, absorbed, or otherwise consumed from without. Subjectivity here is largely (but not entirely) an unconscious process, a way of being in and making sense of the world that is the result of one's lived, embodied experience. Even though one's subjectivity is an unconscious product of one's environment, it is not merely a matter of cultural construction; the individual does participate in their own making not merely by selecting from different pre-existing identity categories, but by shifting in, out, within, and beyond those categories in different contexts. Subjectivity therefore provides a way of thinking about the relationship between the "internal" self and the "external" world that accounts for the dynamic, dialectical, trans-corporeal process through which identities are created and transformed.

There are other indications that Saladin's metamorphosis, in particular, proceeds from an internal trigger. For example, before his full transformation, on his return flight to London after turning his back on both Zeeny's activist politics and his father's "house of perversions," Saladin begins to lose control of his carefully cultivated accent, which "unaccountably metamorphose[s] into the Bombay lilt he had so diligently (and so long ago!) unmade" (*SV* 72, 34). This "traitor voice," informing on a history Saladin had hoped to leave behind at Scandal Point, presents a hermeneutic puzzle. Is this irruptive force some sort of essential Indian self that does in many ways conform to internalized colonial stereotypes, "That black fellow creeping up behind" (*SV*

54), breaking out of Saladin's attempts at containment through becoming-English? Is this a residue of Saladin's "true" former identity lurking somewhere within? Or, alternately, is this a satire of British imperial stereotypes about racial others, where non-white persons were time and again described as "naturally" bestial, hypersexual, and violently rebellious? Once again, is his transformation driven by an *emergent internal essence* or an *imposed external apparatus*? In neither case is the subject empowered to self-fashion. In the first case, the racialized body dictates Saladin's identity and fate, while in the second a racist society takes on these powers. These two explanations of Saladin becoming a racial stereotype are like two snakes eating each other's tails, each digesting the other's terms – the relationship between the *internal* and *external* origin of racial difference is simultaneously destructive and dependent. The way out of this double-bind seems to be through a combination of *historicization* and *criticism*, which Biswas provides when he reads Saladin's fear of this "black fellow" through Bhabha's theory of a colonial subject that is split between an "Enlightened self and a 'darker' self": "Rushdie's image of Chamcha carries in its repressed unconscious the shadow of the colonized with the insigna of the colonizer's 'Otherness'. […] Chamcha sincerely thinks he is a 'goodandproper' English man, but the devil of colonial binarism is always with him, following him like a shadow."[36] Another critic who has discussed the role of subjectivity in the transformations in *The Satanic Verses* is Vassilena Parashkevova, who argues that although Saladin's metamorphosis is "in effect the result of the processes of hegemonic description," it is also "the realization of his own subconscious, *camera-obscura* fears that the 'bad Indian' or 'black fellow' he has suppressed might take over his public self-made image."[37]

These accounts describe Saladin's trigger-function as a result of psychological trauma, but this is only one aspect of violence against the non-white immigrant; there is also physical trauma, moments where this dehumanization is imposed on the body itself. In these moments

we see how the immigrant body, the body in the state of exception, is taken up as a kind of *techne* to produce knowledge about racial difference; this is both through spectacular brute violence and also historical use of the non-white body as a site of scientific experimentation, as if they were (sub-)human lab rats. Saladin, upon being apprehended by immigration police, comes to know the "universe of fear" that is this state of exception. In a scene that provides a horrific mirror to his determined ingestion of Englishness-via-kipper, the three officers physically force a now-demonic Saladin to "perform…the latest and basest ritual of his unwarranted humiliation" by forcing him to eat his own goatish excrement. "Animal," one taunts Saladin as he beats him, "You're all the same. Can't expect animals to observe civilized standards" (*SV* 164). While Saladin had hoped that his diet of Englishness would help him transcend his marked body, he comes to see how England's state and culture will literally shove his abjection down his throat. Through this "ritual," Saladin is animalized and, critically, the officers (who are themselves reflective of England's creole past, with names like Stein, Bruno, and Novak) are brought together in a brotherhood. This moment reveals to Saladin his dehumanized condition not only by what is forced down his throat, but also by what comes from it. He still hears his voice as his own cultivated accent as he pleads with them, but they respond "'What's that? What was that noise?' […] 'Maa-aa-aa!' …so that Saladin had no way of telling if they were simply insulting him or if his vocal chords had truly been infected, as he feared, by this macabre demoniasis" (*SV* 164-65). His voice was supposed to be the tool that would elevate him to the level of the Englishman – even higher – but this exchange shows that such free discourse was a fantasy, since these men will filter whatever Saladin says through the dehumanizing frameworks of race. Saladin's confusion between whether this miscommunication is because of their mocking racism or his own "infected" body once again posits the question that the slip of his accent in the plane did: is his monstrous metamorphosis a function of an external stereotype that is forced upon

(and into) his body, or is it an internal trigger, a symptom of some psychological and/or biological pathology? The end of this scene provides something of a synthesis of these two explanations. As the policemen beat him, he starts "squealing like a pig …. Eek…. Aargh, unnhh, owoo" (*SV* 167). Here, as Saladin feels the boot-end of the racist police state, his polished English breaks down to raw animal noises. The "trigger" for this change in his voice from human to animal (which readers, not just the officers, hear) is neither simply stereotype nor ethnic essence: it is physical suffering. In this moment, Saladin's body feels his position as a racial minority in England not as a cultural abstraction, but as a material condition.

In hope of finding some cure for his satyric condition, Saladin turns to the explanations of his host Muhammad Sufyan, the good-natured, ill-fated proprietor of Shaandaar Café. Muhammad, "self-taught in classical texts of many cultures," offers Saladin two mythical interpretations of metamorphosis from Ancient Rome, one from Ovid (the author of *Metamorphoses*) and one from Lucretius (the Epicurean author of *De rerum natura*). On one hand, the former schoolteacher explains, Ovid describes the body as "yielding wax" that can take on many different forms but retains its "immortal essence" (*SV* 285). In contrast to this theory, Muhammad translates Lucretius: "'Whatever by its changing goes out of its frontiers,' – that is, burst its banks, – or, maybe, breaks out of its limitations, – so to speak, disregards its own rules, but that is too free, I am thinking…'that thing', at any rate, Lucretius holds, 'by doing so brings immediate death to its old self'" (*SV* 285). Muhammad's multiple translations of the same phrase creates a chain of metaphors: frontiers, banks, limitations, rules are all shown to be alike, but also (importantly) shown to be unlike, so that the reader is left pondering how frontiers are *not like* riverbanks, the way rules *differ from* limitations. Translation, and language itself, is shown to be indeterminate because of its overdetermination, and also thoroughly infused with processes of interpretation, and therefore processes of power. (Is a frontier a "rule" or a "limit"?

Who gets to say?) Though Muhammad prefers an Ovidian world where an identity-endowing essence can carry through embodied metamorphosis, his very attempt to translate these diverse cultural texts displays the impossibility of ever arriving at this pre-discursive essence. There are too many moments of interpretation, moments of politics, to arrive at that original truth, if it ever existed in the first place. Truth, meaning, essence, and other such totalizing original notions are swept away by the protean tide of circulation, translation, and reinterpretation. Though Muhammad wants to reassure Saladin of Ovidian continuity, that "deep down" he still "is" what he "was," his explanation reveals how much the world is made up of Lucretian disjunctures. Through the act of translation, Saladin has become irreversibly other.

While the question of whether Saladin's transformation is triggered by cultural environment or racial essence makes the metamorphosis seem like a passive, accidental process, the novel also makes available another possible explanation that there is something much more deliberate and sinister driving these monstrous mutations. Jumpy, always with an eye towards the postcolonial politics, proposes this "ideological view" of Saladin's transformation. As he lists off his reasons for suspecting foul play on the part of immigration authorities, he speculates that Saladin could have been exposed to "unknown medical experimentation," a proposal that earns "murmurs of assent" from the other immigrants in the room "as memories of intra-vaginal inspections, Depo-Provera scandals, unauthorized post-partum sterilizations, and, further back, the knowledge of Third World drug-dumping arose in every person present to give substance to the speaker's insinuations" (*SV* 261). While the invasion of the body might seem like something out of horror or sci-fi to a Western readership, these characters understand how biopolitical processes of colonialism have always used the *bios* of the native body as a site of experimentation and control. In addition to this bio-technical explanation for these metamorphoses, Pamela and Jumpy propose a supernatural trigger, researching rumors that the British police might be

appropriating obeah magic to use against immigrants.[38] The comingling of these two explanations – one out of science fiction, one out of religious superstition – breaks down the binary between a modernized, scientifically rational Europe and a backwards postcolonial periphery. Nation-state biopolitics functions as the Western version of "Dark" Magic, as it also regards the material world as fundamentally mutable to human will.

Melting Down, Rising Up: Epigenetics and Generational Politics

The Satanic Verses engages directly with discussions of genetic determinism and genetic engineering; this "creationism" is set against other modes, including religious and legal creationism (as in the creation of the legal subject). In fact, the novel subtly juxtaposes legal creationism with genetic engineering in its representation of this "new breed" of transnational Indo-English subjects like Saladin (and, as we will see later, with Mishal and Anahita Sufyan). One explanation for Saladin's transformation in a devil that the novel provides is that it is caused by his "rebirth" more than thirty-thousand feet above the English Channel – a Cesarean birth as the inexact scalpel of Tazneen's suicide bomb rips open the "womb" of Flight 420. His crossing over into national airspace, synchronized with his direct exposure to fundamentalist violence, causes him to be infected with the metamorphic agent, to absorb it from his environment – and he proves to be a willing, fruitful host, already with compromised immunity, as was indicated by his slippage in intonation. In this crossing over, the parasitic seed is planted that will rapidly overtake his body, transforming him into everything he feared, everything he has repressed. The narrator identifies the "angelicdevilish fall" of these two men, "Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha," as "the moment at which the process of transmutation began" (*SV* 5). In addition discussing this "transmutation" as a change of both *form* and *essence*, the novel also describes this as a moment of rebirth, as something that promises to bring forth *the new, the redemptive*. One of the

greatest ethical challenges that *The Satanic Verses* poses its reader is to learn to see how the new can be simultaneously monstrous and redemptive, destructive and creative, horrific and beautiful.

It is also in this moment that Rushdie directly introduces the idea of epigenetics with reference to the French naturalist whose ideas are credited with inspiring epigenetic theory:

> Mutation?
>
> Yessir, but not random. Up there in air-space, in that soft, imperceptible field which had been made possible by the century and which, thereafter, made the century possible, becoming of its defining locations, the place of movement and war, the planet-shrinker and power-vacuum, most insecure and transitory of zones, illusory, discontinuous, metamorphic – because when you throw everything up in the air anything becomes possible – wayupthere, at any rate, changes took place in delirious actors that would have gladdened the heart of old Mr. Lamarck: under extreme environmental pressure, characteristics were acquired. (*SV* 5-6)

In this passage, Rushdie identifies how the techno-scientific developments have shrunken and mobilized the globe, creating a new "environment" for the subject that is itself associated with radical anti-foundationalism, literally removed from the earth and thrown into the chaotic "wayupthere" that defines late-century flows of ideas, goods, and people. In this moment that seems to erase the idea of an *environment,* making the concept seem outdated and quaint under globalization, Rushdie paradoxically identifies this non-place as *the* environment that triggers change. And just as the novel tracks Saladin's inability to adequately set down roots and adapt to this change, the novel also features characters in Mishal and Anahita Sufyan, as well as the rest of the multi-ethnic youth that inhabit the counter-cultural Club Hot Wax, who do adapt to this extreme pressure.

"Mr. Lamarck" refers to Jean Baptiste Lamarck (1729-1849), a French naturalist who was a precursor to Darwin. Like Darwin, Lamarck studied how changes to an organism's environment – which could result from alterations within its native ecosystem, or from a passage from one ecosystem to another – come to impact the biology of said organism: "*Circumstances*

have an impact on the form and the organic structure of animals."[39] But Lamarckism differs from Darwinism (especially in contemporary understandings of the two theories that accentuate these divergences) because of the former's theory of inheritance of acquired characteristics. According to Lamarck, there are two "laws" governing transformations of an organism. The first stipulates that an organism will change its structure by using or not using a certain organ. That use or disuse will engender either development or deterioration of that organ. The second law of "soft inheritance" is that these changes can be passed along to the next generation.[40] Both of these laws are at odds with Darwin's theory, which describes the gene as both determinate and fixed within the life of an individual organism. For Darwin, minor, random mutations an organism, affected at the genetic level at conception, give certain individuals in a species an advantage over other individuals in the race for survival and reproduction. Ecosystemic circumstances certainly play a role in determining which variations of species carry through to future generations, but the time scale is different, where transformation occurs over hundreds of generations rather than over an individual's lifetime. Darwin and Lamarck's theories disagree about the extent to which the individual's behavior matters to transformations in the species, beyond surviving long enough to entice a mate and pass along one's genetic material to one's offspring (Darwin's sexual selection). Though Lamarck clearly doesn't see transformative organisms acting intentionally (he habitually names the active agent in such transformations "nature"), his version of evolution describes how a creature can exceed its genetic coding in order to accommodate "extreme environmental pressure." Transformation of the individual, even down at the molecular level, is possible, though it is neither teleological nor predictable.

Recent research in epigenetics have partly confirmed some of Lamarck's theories, noting that many "epiallates" (non-genetic mutations) are indeed passed from one generation to the next in both plants and animals. Usually these mutations are "neutral or deleterious," but in

them also exists "the potential to be adaptive" and to "respond to environmental challenges."[41] Epigenetics show that genes, rather than being "discrete entities with stable, determinative effects" are "plastic [and] can change according to environmental circumstances, …thus reconfiguring genetic inheritance as a complex, rather than fixed, process."[42] Josie Gill argues that epigenetics, by overturning the notion of the gene as a fixed, determinate entity, can be useful for the anti-racist project of confronting the "new biopolitics of identity," the study and institutionalization of genetic differences between various groups in such fields as population genetics and race-based medicine.[43] Instead of seeing race as biological essence or cultural construction, epigenetics provides the theoretical foundation for a conception of race as "a locus of increasingly complex intersections between biology and culture."[44] Gill interprets the demonic transformations in *The Satanic Verses* as representing the "porous boundary between the body and its wider environment," demonstrating how racism can in fact (and in fiction) be a catalyst for epigenetic transformation: "The value of Rushdie's magical representation of race and Lamarckian evolution lies in its very ability to reveal the dynamic relationship between the imaginary and the real; the immigrants' unprecedented animalistic transformations work to show the arbitrariness, absurdity, but also the ultimate power of the racist belief which shapes their reality." [45] [46] Gill's argument demonstrates how biology and language are in a feedback loop, with linguistic signs having a material effect on the biology of individuals while biology also impacts discursive processes.

One element regarding epigenetics that Gill does not address in her discussion of *The Satanic Verses* is the question of inherited epiallates, adaptations that are passed down at the genetic level from one generation to the next, something I will now discuss with relation to Hind and Muhammud Sufyan's daughters, Mishal and Anahita. I should be clear that when I apply to the novel the concept of inherited epiallates, it is in the same spirit as Gill applies epigenetics,

that is to say, *metaphorically* (in a manner which attends to the difference between, but also the co-constitutiveness of, imagination and material reality) and *critically* (as a way of interrogating the relationship between biology and socio-cultural structures). Rushdie's representation of Mishal and Anahita frequently draws on the language of evolutionary biology to explain their subject formation; by following this pattern, we can see how the novel simultaneously critiques white nationalist views of Englishness (showing how such views fail to represent the actual condition of the realm in the 80's) while imagining new radical political formations that might emerge from the multicultural urban environment.

As I mentioned previously, both girls were both were born in Dhaka, but moved to England at a young age with after their father Muhammed gets involved with the "demons" of the "occult" (according to Hind) Communist Party.[47] The migration disrupts the traditional Indo-Islamic patriarchal structure of the Sufyan family, and the two generations of women respond in opposite but mirroring ways. Hind's position in London as the "cook and breadwinner, chief architect of the success of the Shaanadaar Café" affords her more independence and agency that she had in India, and, moreover, gives her advantage in her ongoing power struggle against her husband, who she accuses of flagrantly neglecting of his patriarchal duties.[48] Despite this, Hind regards her migration as a humiliating exile from her homeland that evacuates meaning from her life: "Everything she valued had been upset by the change; had in this process of translation, been lost" (*SV* 257). Her sense of dislocation and entrapment within this unfamiliar "demon city," this "land of phantom imps," encourages her to lock herself away from the metropolis's evil contaminations (*SV* 258). Hind's starves herself culturally and socially, isolating herself from her urban surroundings, while she fattens herself the food of her native subcontinent (*SV* 254). It is as if, as she accumulates mass and financial power in the family, her sense of personhood, her feeling of stability and meaningfulness,

correspondingly diminishes to its vanishing point. By refusing translation, Hind finds herself "sunk into the anonymity, the characterless plurality, of being merely one-of-the-women-like-her [who do nothing] but suffer, remember, and die" (*SV* 258-59). Hind's fundamentalism, in this light, can be understood as a mode of postcolonial resistance, a bastion to define herself against the onslaught of Western modernity. Such methods at purity and containment are ultimately futile in Rushdie's mutable, evolving, hybridizing world. Despite these efforts to root herself in tradition through food and religion, Hind finds that in her marriage and family she has unwittingly become-English.

What's worse, she has passed these monstrous epiallates down to her daughters, who immerse themselves in and define themselves through English culture. They dress in Madonna t-shirts, devour in Western cinema, and "[refuse] to speak their mother-tongue, even though they understood every word" (*SV* 258). As they tell Saladin, they see no consistency between themselves and their own birthplace: "Mishal confided: 'Bangladesh in't nothing to me. Just some place Dad and Mum keep banging on about.' – And Anahita, conclusively: 'Bungleditch'" (*SV* 267). In a repudiation of *ius soli* that both mirrors and critiques that of the BNA, they see their identity and belonging not determined by birthplace or racial inheritance, but rather as something that they can build for themselves through the consumption of particular cultural tastes. Mishal, in particular, enjoys the affordances that the metropolis offers her to remake herself beyond ethnic typography, her "rainbow" hair signifying, in ways that both resonate and clash with the post-raciality of *The Alien Show*, a playfulness with normative racial categories and a willingness to move beyond the black/white binary into multicultural urban plurality. She produces herself *through* English culture, but also exhibits a capacity to remix its commodities and images in a counter-cultural manner. Baucom contrasts the England that the Sufyan girls turn towards with Saladin's object of obsession: "They are English, and aggressively so, though

not as Chamcha is English. Theirs, rather, is the debased England of his fellow actors and of his manager. […They] require him to recognize that though their respective Englands are radically dissimilar, they are nevertheless alike in their flirtations with Englishness and their rejections of the suit of a subcontinental past."[49] While Saladin models himself after England as it would like to be, its postcard self-image, Mishal and Anahita design their identity within and through a new England that is emerging in the lived experience of the multiethnic global metropolis. (At the same time there is a problem with the Sufyan daughter's total disavowal of their ethnic roots which keeps them "[hostage] to an obsessive belief in single origins" – an obsession that mirrors their mother's.)[50]

Mishal further distinguishes herself as the opposite of her mother with her sexuality and politics. While Hind banishes Muhammed from the bedroom when he dares to ask her to move during sex, the seventeen-year-old Mishal enters into a sexual relationship with the activist lawyer Hanif Johnson. This relationship is illegal, which scandalizes Jumpy, but even he has to remind himself that she is no longer a child, but rather a woman capable of understanding her desires. Mishal's self-asserting revolt also extends to politics; while Hind vilified the Indian Communists who seduced her sex-starved husband with the temptations of revolution, Mishal soon starts articulating a militant localism. "Thatcherism has its effect," she observes of an uptick in violence against immigrants. "The emphasis is on small-scale enterprises and the cult of the individual, right? In other words, five or six of the white bastards murdering us, one individual at a time. …This is our turf…. Let 'em come and get it if they can" (*SV* 293). Her claim that this is her "turf" articulates a relationship between place and identity that stands in contrast to that of traditional Englishness. If the cult of localism imagined a consistency between place and identity, suggesting that the former shaped latter, Mishal's view instead suggests the

opposite, that the identity of a place is given by those who live in it, adapt to it, and defend it as their own.

The political potentials of the girls' counter-cultural attitudes also are on display in their reaction to a metamorphosed Saladin. Even though Hind is terrified of his demonic form – in fact, *because* of her terror – the Sufyan girls immediately idolize him: "'Mister, …anyone who scares her that way has got to be seriously *bad*.' / 'Wicked' Anahita agreed" (*BS* 253, emphasis Rushdie's). Mishal sees in Saladin-the-devil a figure that can be reappropriated by the masses to resist the culture of white supremacy: "Chamcha, …you're a hero. I mean, people can really identify with you. It's an image white society has rejected for so long that we can really take it, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it and make it our own" (*SV* 296). Sure enough, the youth of London soon excitedly take up his demonic image in a "Satanic revival," flying "symbol of the Goatman" above their demonstrations (*SV* 295). The Sufyan girl's reaction to Saladin and the Satanic revival in London counter-culture feeds into Rushdie's broader reappropriation of demonic and hellish imagery, an inversion of traditional theological cosmologies to show us London as a hellscape that is, paradoxically, redemptive and revitalizing. This anti-cosmology finds its epicenter in Club Hot Wax. The Club, "formerly the Blak-an-Tan," is "one mile from Shaandaar, here where the beat meets the street" (*SV* 300); it is figured as proximal to the sanctuary of Sufyan's salon, but instead of high-minded discourse the language of this space is raw and affective. The narrator guides the reader through their descent into the London Underground in a manner that self-consciously recalls Virgil's shepherding of Dante through *Inferno*: "On this star-crossed and moonless night, let us follow the figures…converging from all quarters of the neighborhood to dive, abruptly, underground, and through this unmarked door. What's within? Lights, fluids, powers, bodies shaking themselves, singly, in pairs, in threes, moving towards possibilities" (*SV* 300-301). While this passage draws on hellish imagery, the

paratactic list of the final sentence represents this counter-cultural space as one of psychedelic sensual communion for the marginalized of London.

The club's host, Pinkwalla, embodies this community as a hybrid subject: "Truly, he is exceptional, a seven-foot albino, his hair the palest rose, the whites of his eyes likewise, his features unmistakably Indian, the haughty nose, long thin lips, a face from a *Hamza-nama* cloth. An Indian who has never seen India, East-India man from the West Indies, white black man. A star." (*SV* 301). Pinkwalla's identity traverses binaries, rooting itself in the fluid interstices. He leads the community, but his method of leadership is one of call-and-response; his vibrant *patois* remixes English to protest immigration policy in the language of the multicultural London: "The migrants of the past, as much the living dancers' ancestors as their own flesh and blood, gyrate stilly while Pinkwalla rants toasts raps up on the stage, *Now-mi-feel-indignation-when-dem-talk-immigration-when-dem-make-insinuation-we-no-part-a-de-nation-an-mi-make-proclamation-a-de-true-situation-how-we-make-contribution-since-de-Rome-Occupation"* (*SV* 301). Pinkwalla's song connects contemporary immigration with one of the original colonizations of England, the conquests of Rome. This verse therefore demands to be read against the repudiation of authentic, pure Englishness in Daniel Defoe's oft-quoted poem *The True-Born Englishman* (1700), which describes "That Het'rogeneous Thing, *An Englishman,*" showing how Englishness from its beginning has been hybrid and defined both *against* and *through* colonizations and reverse-colonizations.[51] By connecting twentieth-century immigration with this ongoing legacy, Pinkwalla shows how the cultural changes brought about by this movement of peoples is not a disruption of English identity, but rather the newest in an ongoing series of rejuvenating remixes. As an albino, he is a genetic anomaly like Saladin, but while Saladin's mutation is associated with sterility, Pinkwalla's is associated with a vibrant production of the new. His lack of pigmentation does not signify his

transcendence of the color line; rather it is a demonstration of the incoherence of biological race as an organizing concept, a fissure between content and appearance.

Club Hot Wax lives up to its name by melting-in-effigy of the figures of Britain's New Right, including Powell and Thatcher. Just as wax Thatcher "[crumples] into formlessness" under "the Hot Seat," this community shows the ability to transform Englishness, to break it down to its constituent elements and make it new (*SV* 302). "The fire this time" (*SV* 301): Pinkwalla adapts the words of James Baldwin, connecting the United States civil rights movement with this incendiary revolution brought about by London's counter-cultural multiethnic masses. The novel regards these radical formations with some degree of suspicion – although perhaps Rushdie's hesitancy to embrace these politics has been exaggerated in the years after the *fatwa*, which (most critics agree) triggered a liberal, pro-Western turn in Rushdie's political views. While there is certainly fascination with the unpredictable, counter-cultural energy emanating from such locales as Club Hot Wax, the novel also clearly associates this space with the threat of violence, by linking it with riots (that ultimately lead to the immolation of the Shaandaar Café and the death of Mohammed and Hind Sufyan), or by implying that the leader of this radical movement, Uhuru Simba, makes a habit of sexual assault (notably, one of his victims is Mishal Sufyan). While these spaces are "cool," they are also hellish, risky, unpredictable. But in these spaces of riot also exists the possibility for a nomadic, redemptive politics that opens a "riotous present that continuously gives birth to itself by redeeming the past."[52] This ambivalence about these new forms, the unresolved question of whether this new community is redemptive or monstrous, does not fully undercut the critiques of Britain's white supremacist police state, but rather shows how the terms and heroes of this counter-cultural movement must also be investigated for both their potentials and their dangers.

Though these liberatory figures (like Pinkwalla and Mishal) and spaces (like Shaandaar and Club Hot Wax) are all subjected to various disciplinary structures, by novel's end they still find some way to exceed these structures. Pinkwalla and his companions are accused by a corrupt police system of drug dealing and sex trafficking; at their arrest, the club is "smashed up…*totalled*" (*SV* 471-72). These charges are ultimately dropped for lack of evidence. While the Club is never mentioned again, the Shaandaar does rise like a phoenix after its conflagration. After her parent's death in the flames, Mishal suffers guilt-ridden dreams of her admonishing mother, so much so that she ends up moving out of Hanif's apartment. It seems for a moment that Hind has posthumously achieved what she never could during her life – a method to restrain her daughter's sexual and political liberation. However, Mishal finds a path that lets her manage her guilt while still pursuing her will. She works to restore the Shaandaar, and once she has it up and running, she proposes to Hanif (who is so dumbfounded that one of his lawyer friends must accept on his behalf). At their wedding, one of several redemptive moments in the novel's closing section, Saladin notes, "Today feels like a new start for me, too; for all of us" (*SV* 530). Mishal's ability to enter into the disciplinary structure of marriage but to do so on her own terms – as a property and business owner, as the pursuer, in a marriage so sexually fulfilling that bride and groom cannot keep themselves from making love before the wedding party – is another example of her adapting to extreme environmental pressure. Her story is the closest the novel provides to an uncomplicated happy ending. She points the direction towards a way of being in England and the world that balances self-determination with community responsibility, tradition with the contemporary. In this way, Mishal seems to be a close cousin of Karim Amir, the narrator of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, as they both overcome pressure from backward-looking family and unwelcoming white Londoners to forge new modes of Englishness.

Becoming Buddha

Similar to Rushdie's version of the city, Hanif Kureishi's London is at the junction of the tectonic plates of class, race, culture, and history. Through the eyes of its half-Indian, half-English narrator Karim, *The Buddha of Suburbia* follows 1970's cultural shifts in high and popular taste, political movements and social experiments, and the demographic and physical transformations of various neighborhoods. The spark of experimentation – in politics, religion, fashion, sex, drugs, architecture, music, theatre, and literature – crackles through the streets. Karim exalts on the eve of his escape from the suburbs,

> There was a sound London had. It was, I'm afraid, people in Hyde Park playing bongos with their hands; there was also the keyboard on the Doors's 'Light My Fire'. There were kids dressed in velvet cloaks who lived free lives; there were thousands of black people everywhere, so I wouldn't feel exposed; there were bookshops with racks of magazines printed without capital letters or the bourgeois disturbance of full stops; there were shops selling all the records you could desire; there were parties where girls and boys you didn't know took you upstairs and fucked you; there were all the drugs you could use.[53]

In this passage, London starts as a sound (the beat of drum circle mingled with rock music) moves through poetry (the radical bookshelves, with ideas loosed from "bourgeois" punctuation) and enters into the body itself through sex and drugs. This movement is a different kind of "ecorhapsody," or writing of the environment, than the pastoral ecorhapsodies of Forster and Woolf, but it still follows a similar formula: a character brings the spirit of the environment into his or her body, and that spirit, once consumed, sparks a metamorphosis. The difference between those modernist ecorhapsodic transformations and this one is that Kureishi's "environment" is thoroughly artificial. Even the gesture towards nature – Hyde Park and its hippies – is hyper-stylized; and yet, despite its physical containment and Karim's irony, from this patch of green beats the seductive, transformative lyric of the city. This is the "natural environment" – one disconnected from any sense of organicism or originality – that creates the

"extreme pressure" driving Karim's epigenetic transformation. Like the beat at Club Hot Wax, this sound of London unites heterogeneous people, organisms, and commodities into a cacophonous, beautiful symphony, a level of intensity characters can tap into and be "with it."

This metamorphic energy of the city environment, which stands in sharp contrast to the stagnated suburbs, is a central theme of *The Buddha of Suburbia*, as various characters manage to make this transition and get swept away by the metropolis's transformative flows. The plot of *The Buddha of Suburbia* follows the growth of a large cast of characters, but pays primary attention to the career of two actors, Haroon Amir, the titular "Buddha," and his son Karim, the novel's narrator, as they are transformed through their entrance into the London scene. Haroon is not a stage actor, but gains money and social capital by selling himself as a Buddhist spiritual advisor to the white residents of London's suburbs. Karim works as an actor in the more traditional sense, performing in several plays before eventually taking a part in a soap opera in the novel's denouement. While these characters transform through the experience of playing these roles, the novel makes clear that they are not the ones in charge of these metamorphoses. The careers of these two men together demonstrate how constructions of Indianness circulating in late-century English culture play out colonial scripts that produce "the Indian" as an object of aesthetic consumption for the white suburban public. By consuming these stereotyped, exotic images of this racial other, white characters try to rejuvenate a stale English suburban identity, while contradictorily reaffirming the enduring value of white English culture and blood, that is, its inherent position as cultural and political arbiter over other races. From authoritative positions such as manager, director, and teacher, white English characters try to "get inside" the novel's ethnically-Indian characters, both figuratively, as Eva, Pyke, and Mrs. Cutmore assume control of Haroon, Karim, and Jamila's respective intellectual/artistic development, and literally, as Karim becomes an object of sexual conquest for various white characters. While Haroon, a

member of the immigrant generation, finds both financial and spiritual fulfillment in the image that Eva molds from his racialized body, the two younger Indian-English characters instead seek ways to resist these claims upon them. Jamila overtly rejects of white identity and embraces radical racial politics, while Karim turns to youth culture to experiment with hybrid identities that resist any singular stereotypical reading of his marked body. At novel's end these two younger characters both end up forging new paths beyond these old types, while Haroon finally insists on faithful conformity to his Indian roots – even as his engagement to Eva solidifies his location within white London.[54] Both of these younger characters are able to adapt, styling themselves as hybrid subjects who can manipulate their multiple positionalities to negotiate the stimulating, violent, and racially-charged socio-culture environment of the city.

The "metamorphoses" in *The Buddha of Suburbia* work *out* to *in,* the opposite of the type of transformations I describe in chapter four on the "bio-gothic," in which a body is transformed through trans-corporeal contact with the more-than-human environment. Here, I apply the term metamorphosis more metaphorically to refer to the multiple instances that characters restyle themselves or are restyled by others. (I focus primarily on Haroon and Karim, but other characters like Jamila, Charlie, Ted, and Eva also restyle themselves over the course of the novel.) While these are superficial transformations, the plot of the novel shows how these stylizations "work their way in," so to speak, and transform the identities, and indeed the very bodies, of the metamorph. These transformations are effected *through* commodities, as well as other forms of cultural capital like language and skin tone; in these transformations Haroon and Karim are *produced as* commodities. These productions of the self are both personally and socially consequential; they open up new avenues of professional and sexual enterprise, and close down others. Those affordances and limitations are determined by a cultural marketplace that reproduces the racist, white supremacist logics of British imperialism. The irony is that,

while both Karim and Haroon try to produce themselves as counter-cultural subjects, they then are sold (quite successfully) to mainstream, white, suburban Britain, repackaged and reappropriated by managers and publicity agents to create broad appeal.

Take, for starters, Haroon Amir's transformation into "the Buddha of Suburbia." His backstory in many ways parallels Saladin Chamcha's in *The Satanic Verses,* as both of these characters "become English" in order to navigate the experience of migration. In each of these diasporic subjects' relocation from Bombay to London, he enjoys the privileges, and suffers the particular blindnesses, of his elite class position. Like Saladin, Haroon wants to distinguish himself from "the swarms of Indian peasants who came to Britain in the 1950's and 1960's, and of whom it was said they were not familiar with the cutlery and certainly not with the toilets, since they squatted on the seats and shat from on high" (*BS* 24). Both characters refer to their knowledge of European culture to erase the mark of racial difference that (through the British gaze) ties one to the abject humiliations of the body. Haroon and Saladin are also united in their disgust towards the white working classes, who disgrace the ideal of Englishness to which they have committed themselves. Haroon, who had "never seen the English in poverty," is (rather hilariously) astonished when he tries to discuss Lord Byron in a local pub only to discover "that not every Englishman could read or that they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian or the poetry of a pervert and a madman" (*BS* 25). And finally, as with Saladin, Haroon's formal and informal imperial education taught him to venerate the symbols of English cultural capital; once in England, they each witness the gap between the nation's self-image and the reality of its population. While they had hoped London would be a place governed by airy ideals of rationality, order, and beauty, they find that this City on the Hill is also submerged in the mire of class, race, and queer sexuality that they had hoped to leave behind in Bombay. Even after this discovery, Haroon still understands the use value of English cultural capital, as exemplified in

the pocket dictionary from which he learns one new word every day because (he tells Karim) "You never know when you might need a heavyweight word to impress an Englishman" (*BS* 28). Beating the colonizers at their own game, he becomes more English than the English.

Haroon, however, departs from Saladin's path after he comes to understand that the game isn't quite the same in 1970's London as it was growing up in India. Although at first he tries to erase signs of racial difference, the novel tracks his self-fashioning into a very different figure, the "Buddha of Suburbia." After settling into a marriage with a white English woman, Karim's mother Margaret, and a clerical job in the Civil Service, Haroon, who was raised in a Muslim family, "turns to Lieh Tzu, Lao Tzu, and Chuang Tzu as if they'd never been read before, as if they'd been writing exclusively for him" (*BS* 26). From one perspective, Haroon's research into Daoism seems to compensate for the relative mediocrity of his life, offering contemplative bliss in the place of material success: "I don't care about money. There's always money. I must understand these secret things" (*BS* 27). In another, more skeptical view, Haroon comes to understand that selling himself as a particular kind of Indian – most significantly, a Buddhist not a Muslim – opens up financial and social avenues that would always have been closed to him had he continued to aim to become English. Instead of trying to show white Englishman his likeness to them, he transforms himself into a stereotypical image of pronounced, radical otherness. And he comes to discover that there is quite a market for this kind of heterogeneity in the monoculture of the South London suburbs.

Haroon's self-fashioning capitalizes on the 1970's desire for alternatives to the brute, repetitive materialism of suburban life. The obvious irony, to which Karim is acutely tuned, is that this commitment to Buddhist anti-materialism by Haroon and his patrons is saturated in commodities. Early in the novel, en route to a workshop in the swanky suburban neighborhood of Chislehurst, "God" (Karim's sarcastic nickname for Haroon) reveals his new ensemble:

> [U]nder his car coat my father was wearing what looked like a long pair of pajamas. On top was a long silk shirt embroidered at the neck with dragons. …But the real crime, the reason for concealment under the hairy car coat, was the crimson waistcoat with gold and silver patters that he wore over the shirt. If Mum had caught him going out like that she would have called the police. After all, God was a Civil Servant, he had a briefcase and an umbrella, he shouldn't be walking around like a midget toreador. (*BS* 29)

Haroon's emergence from the frumpy car coat echoes a butterfly's from its cocoon. With the flowing fabric, the dragon embroidery, and the ornate waistband, he styles himself according to the Orientalist stereotype of the guru. Whereas Saladin in *The Satanic Verses* was horrified when his accent began to crack through his carefully cultivated intonation, Haroon practices "hissing his s's and exaggerating his Indian accent" (*BS* 21). Although those familiar with his *mutandum*, Karim and Margaret, see through his performance, he sells this image to the party's white, suburban attendees. This proves to be a prime market, full of people like Carl and Marianne who had recently returned from a voyage to India with "sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays and striped elephants which decorated every available space" and who greet Karim with "the palms of their hands together in prayer and their heads bowed as if they were temple servants and not partners in the local TV rental firm of Rumbold & Toedrip" (*BS* 30). What began in the 60's has moved to the suburbs, a fascination with the "Oriental style" that has nothing to do with actual Daoist teachings. (Not that those earlier counter-cultural movements were any more "true" to Buddhism, but they were at least couched in anti-consumerist, anti-establishment rhetorics.) Buddhist style is the older generation's counterpoint to rock music, another romantic expression for some liberation from suburban stagnation. Though there is this taste for Asian culture, it is clear that this openness does not extend to people, as Karim overhears murmurs of "has he got his camel parked outside?" and "he came on a magic carpet" (*BS* 12). The Orientalist stereotypes Haroon draws on to gain acceptance are leveraged against him to maintain his outsider status.

Haroon clearly savors the social and financial distinction he receives in return for proclaiming the meaningless of all worldly things. Haroon especially enjoys how becoming the

Buddha brings him into the company of Charlie's mother Eva Kay, his mistress and future fiancé. Eva – a white English woman who is first introduced "pumping out a plume of Oriental aroma," wearing a kaftan and kohl-darkened eyes "so she looked like a panda" (*BS* 9) – is a zealous, if culturally-appropriative, stylist, and Haroon proves to be supple material for her designs. As his publicist and manager, she amplifies his exoticism while simultaneously framing him as a cultural translator who will share secret wisdom for a price. "My good and deep friend Haroon here," she introduces him to a gathering, "he will show us the Way. The Path" (*BS* 13). She "becomes proprietal" with Haroon and his "guru gigs," introducing incense, Indian sweets, and an entrance fee, and even assigning him "esoteric library books" to improve his services (*BS* 38, 115). Though these instances demonstrate how Eva has "colonized" Haroon as Mrs. Cutmore did Jamila, Eva and Haroon's professional relationship also proves symbiotic (*BS* 53). This symbiosis is, in fact, typical of colonial relationships, where such *quid pro quos* between colonizer and colonized are common currency. Just as Haroon benefits from Eva's careful packaging, Eva uses her position as Haroon's manager to free herself from her limiting position as suburban housewife and to "launch into London." Eva is another kind of social climber, "constructing an artistic persona for herself" in order to "scour that suburban stigma right off her body" (*BS* 150, 134). Even though Karim is generally quite seduced by Eva's aura, he is as tuned to her ironies as he is his father's: "She didn't realize [suburbia] was in the blood and not on the skin: she didn't see there could be nothing more suburban than suburbanites repudiating themselves" (*BS* 134). Karim's assessment of Eva shows how English identity, instead of offering one access to a community of belonging, works as a trap that hinders to the full realization of one's being. Just as Eva first understood the cultural capital that "the guru" could provide in the suburbs, she comes to understand the similar value of "the artist" could provide in the city: "the word itself was a philter; a whiff of the sublime accompanied its mention; it was

an entrance to the uncontrolled and inspired" (*BS* 150). These figures hold the key to these other, transformative zones, called "the Way" or "the uncontrolled and inspired," which draw aura from their status as a liberating antithesis of the disenchanted materialism of urban life.

The question of whether this is in any way a "true" liberation, or if it is simply a superficial matter of style, a romantic, escapist "counter-culture" that only reproduces the mainstream, looms large over the novel. Karim seems both intrigued and thoroughly disenchanted by this Eva and Haroon's elaborate enterprise to style themselves into prominence and profit. One principle that seems particularly important to Karim is one's right to self-define. While Karim regards "God's" teachings with a great deal of sarcasm and hostility, when Jean complains about him "impersonating a Buddhist," he is quick to defend his father: "He *is* a Buddhist" (*BS* 44). Despite his anger about his father's abandonment of his mother and his keen eye for the many hypocrisies of his performance as the Buddha, Karim still believes, on principle, in one's right to identify with the categories of their choice, not just the ones that are assigned to them by virtue of birthplace or parentage. Karim's principle of self-determination explains his passion for Eva, with her unwavering belief in "the full development of all individuals" (*BS* 263). Eva expounds, with an indeterminate degree of sincerity, a new, cruel aestheticism: "you're beautiful, and the beautiful should be given everything they want. […] The ugly ones. […] It's their fault if they're ugly. They're to be blamed and not pitied" (*BS* 93). This meritocracy of beauty fits neatly into the Thatcherite neoliberal program: "Look at those people who live on sordid housing estates. They expect others – the Government – to do everything for them. They are only half human, because only half active. We have to find a way to enable them to grow. Individual human flourishing isn't something that either socialism or conservatism caters for" (*BS* 263). In the elite incubator of London's cultural elite, Eva uses the concept of artistic beauty as an idealistic escape from the realities of political life. So interested is she in how

things should be, she has no concern (like Jamila) for things as they actually are. This is one of the things most unites Eva and Haroon, a shared belief in another plane beyond the material here-and-now where real value is determined. This belief that lets them both ignore, first, how class and race enables these viewpoints, and second, the consequences of their actions on others.

In spite of the fact that she and Haroon are engaged during the novel's denouement, even Eva's interest in Buddhism proves to be nothing more than a passing taste once her interest turns to her "assault on London." She gives up on Urdu and sitar music, immerses herself in the London theatre scene and a new career in home design, and councils Haroon to "cut down on the bloody mysticism" and to deal in "facts, not vapours" (*BS* 151). Eva, who at the beginning of the novel felt so bogged down in suburban life, is at the end happily rootless, renovating one house after the next, always moving on to the next project. "I want to be able to work in a number of styles," she brags to the journalist from *Furnishings* – her next fascination is with Japanese design (*BS* 261). In this way, Eva reflects late-century Britain's multiculturalism; she appropriates from across the globe, while always maintaining her role as cultural arbiter and assignor of value. Eva eclectic aestheticism is an obvious example of cultural appropriation. She feels free to take on any markers of difference because, to her mind, her body is a blank canvas. From her rooted position in London and in England more broadly, assured by her race and her class, Eva can market these exotic signs without any real concern for the people or cultures that produced them. Beauty is the only metric: how can these people create value on the cultural marketplace? Despite all of her disavowals of the state of England and her eagerness to rub shoulders with radicals, Eva aesthetic attitudes actually fit quite well into the bottom-line, enterprise-oriented ideology of Thatcherite political economy. Commodities, be they kaftans or people, are only valuable insofar they can be sold to (an inherently white) consumer base.

"A New Breed"

In contrast to Eva, Karim enjoys no sense of belonging within England, no sense of a fundamental rootedness from which he may freely define himself and others – this, despite the fact that England is his motherland, both in terms of being his birthplace and in terms of having a white English mother. Instead, he feels compelled turn to those like Eva and other white authority figures to determine and improve his value – which he recognizes as compromised on the cultural marketplace by his skin tone. This compulsion, encouraged by Britain's white supremacist culture, to improve his standing in the eyes of these white arbiters of value is one of those "extreme environmental pressures" that drives Karim to acquire new characteristics, to epigenetic transformation. While my turn to epigenetics here is metaphorical, the novel's language invites this comparison and confusion of biology and culture. For example, the opening salvo takes up the language of genetic taxonomy as it sets up the conflict between place and race as the foundation for Englishness: "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere" (*BS* 3). The mark of difference, written in his name and on his skin, is incongruous with his "born and bred" claim to Englishness; this is because English national identity in the twentieth century was first and foremost described as racial, referring to a sacred connection between the (inherently white) body and its motherland. He uses biological language – "a new breed" – to explain how his body has been formed by the cross-pollinations of history. Born from an English mother, begot by an Indian father, his very existence disrupts the supposedly closed circle of blood and soil that far-right nativist organizations such as the National Front sought to restore. Karim's attitude is hardly one of multicultural patriotism; rather, he depreciates Englishness even as he stakes his

claim to it. Englishness to Karim signifies embeddedness in the stagnating institutions of suburban life, a condition to escape from rather than a place to root one's identity.

In contrasting the socio-cultural environment of the suburbs and with that of the city, Karim's coming-of-age narrative presents several questions about the location of English identity and the relationship between the body and its motherland. In his reading of the novel, Ryan Timm describes the suburbs as an "in-between space" within England's national imagination, in the interstices between a pastoral countryside that signifies the national and native, and an urban city that signifies the multicultural and cosmopolitan.[55] Karim's story upsets this binary imaginary, showing how the suburbs work as a liminal, transformative zone where national identity is renegotiated. "The novel uses the suburbs to signal change," explains Timm, "as descendants from the 'New Commonwealth' have now more fully settled and have made more 'native' spaces of their own. However, this transformation also signals the uprooting of the idea of home itself, for home is no longer about something anchored, but marked by a certain, if limited, mobility."[56] In contrast to conservatives who draw on a pastoral rhetoric to redraw racist colonial geographies across the domestic space, Kureishi imagines the relationship between space and identity to be constantly shifting as new, more diverse generations begin to cast new meanings on English territory through the processes of settling and surviving.

However, to describe the relationship between identity and space as fluid does not mean that these old, calcified notions of national identity have been neutralized. Quite the opposite: Karim's first-hand experiences of racism in the suburbs demonstrate to him of how his skin-color excludes him from full entry into the community of Englishness: "we were supposed to be English, but to the English we were always Pakis and nigs and wogs and the rest of it" (*BS* 53). This racism comes from people who fetishize his ethnic difference – such as Helen, who spouts the multicultural-yet-ethnocentric tagline, "We like you being here. You benefit our country with

your traditions" (*BS* 74) – and, inversely, from people who overtly demonize him as an outsider – such as Helen's dad, who Karim names "Hairy Back," who sics his jissom-spouting Great Dane on Karim while screaming anti-immigrant rhetoric, "We don't want you blackies coming to the house. […] However many niggers there are, we don't like it. We're with Enoch. And if you put one of your black 'ands near my daughter I'll smash it with a 'ammer!" (*BS* 40). "Hairy Back" functions in this way as the suburb's racist id, broadcasting the white-supremacist imagination of a turf-war between white and black Londoners. This is the other, more direct and brash side of the coin from the Orientalized suburban mansions where Haroon conducts his seminars. Karim comes to understand that, regardless of whether his difference is idealized or demonized, the very act of making him into an exotic other serves as a way for white English suburbanites to preserve the us/them racial logics of colonialism. This seems to be a way of compensating for a fact that Karim's very existence exposes: that the coherent narrative of "the English race" has long since frayed, revealing in its decay how this history has always been incongruent, heterogeneous, and contingent.

To negotiate his liminal place within the British cultural imaginary, Karim embarks on his own program of self-fashioning, taking up the clothing, hairstyles, cultural tastes, and consumer habits of 1970's youth culture. He pairs flamboyant see-through shirts with blue-suede, Cuban-heeled boots. He dons eyeliner and nail polish, and spikes his hair with sugar water. He starts doing push-ups to increase his chest size and tone his arms. While it might be tempting to write off this behavior as superficial vanity, it is important to recognize how these experiments with style give him the resources to scramble the various stereotypes, idealist or derogatory, that white Englanders have applied to him because of his skin color.

This consumer style that Karim cultivates goes beyond clothing and hair-style, extending into the body itself *via* the staples of 1970's youth culture, sex and drugs. Karim regards his own

body as a *techne* for experimentation, not tied to any stable foundation of place or people. He partakes in the substances and experiences that are available to him not in order to achieve any specific goal but rather to instigate change for change's sake. Early in the narrative, Karim comes to an "extraordinary revelation" about how he wants to inhabit his body: "I wanted to live always this intensely: mysticism, alcohol, sexual promise, clever people and drugs. I hadn't come upon it at all like this before, and now I wanted nothing else" (*BS* 15). While both the content and setting of this epiphany invite skepticism – he is in the bathroom with his trousers down, aroused by the rush of a joint shared with Charlie – this moment of youthful euphoria can also be read as a statement of resistance against a suburban social environment that wants to pin Karim down as a certain type. Karim wants to tap into the sensations that this environment has to offer, but the metaphor is not one of a taproot (biology) but of electricity (physics). He doesn't want roots, a feeling of groundedness: he wants "intensity," movement, stimulation, transformation. It is especially telling that right after this moment, as he desires to join with this free-moving, pleasure-seeking spirit, his thoughts go to Charlie, his friend and love interest: "I preferred him to me and wanted to be him. I coveted his talents, face, style. I wanted to wake up with them all transferred to me" (*BS* 15). Karim's jealous desire for Charlie stems from the fact that his white friend feels more comfortable in this zone of intensity, less impelled by self and others to conform to a certain social expectation. Charlie is never colonized; rather, he appropriates and extracts from those around him, never questioning his right to do so. It is this particular sense of exceptionalism and privilege – both qualities associated white Englishness – that Karim wants to "transfer" from Charlie's body to his.

Karim's sense of experimentation and fluidity also carries over to his sexuality. When he explains his bisexual preferences, he focuses not on his desire for specific sexes, but rather for his enjoyment of various sensations divorced from any individual body:

> It was unusual, I knew, the way I wanted to sleep with boys as well as girls. I liked strong bodies and the backs of boys' necks. I liked being handled by men, their fists pulling at me; and I liked objects – the ends of brushes, pens, fingers – up my arse. But I liked cunts and breasts, all of women's softness, long smooth legs and the way women dressed. I felt it would be heart-breaking to choose one or the other, like having to choose between the Beatles and the Rolling Stones. I never liked to think much about the whole thing in case I turned out to be a pervert and needed to have treatment, hormones, or electric shocks through my brain. When I did think about it I considered myself lucky that I could go to parties and go home with anyone from either sex – not that I went to many parties, none at all really, but if I did, I could, you know, trade either way. (*BS* 55)

His consumerist attitude toward sexuality, apparent in the way he compares different sexes to different bands and his satisfaction that he can "trade" with both men and women, is partly a product of his growing up in the London suburbs. The opportunity to have sexual contact with these manifold bodies (and objects) is simply another of the pleasurable experiences offered by the late-modern, post-imperial metropolis. To say that this is a consumerist attitude does not invalidate the ways that his sexuality subverts compulsory heterosexuality, especially the pathologization of homosexuality and the over-emphasis on sexuality as a psychoanalytic diagnostic. Karim does not describe his sexual practices as constitutive of his subjectivity, he never describes himself as "bisexual" (just as he resists descriptions of himself as "black"); instead, he rather pragmatically considers what sensations and experiences are available and desirable to him, without regard for what it means about his identity or his mental health. While this attitude certainly doesn't protect Karim from heartbreak at the hands of such beloveds as Charlie and Eleanor, the novel never suggests that there is anything wrong with Karim's sexuality; rather, it seems to be a mostly productive and satisfying way of approaching life in the city, an open-mindedness that empowers Karim to enjoy its many opportunities for pleasure.

Karim's attitudes about the city as a space of experimentation and pleasure stands in contrast to that of his friend and sometimes lover Jamila. Jamila specifically rejects mainstream English culture, abruptly ending "the highest-class education" she received from Miss Cutmore

because this English schoolteacher "[forgot] that she was Indian" and "wanted to eradicate everything that was foreign in her" (*BS* 52-53). Even though Miss Cutmore is a feminist, teaching Jamila such concepts as patriarchy and colonialism, for Jamila her whiteness compromises her as a political mentor. Jamila, with sharp intersectional analysis, perceives that in educating her, "Miss Cutmore had colonized her" (*BS* 53). As part of her self-decolonizing project, Jamila undertakes her own program of political education: fed by a radical diet of Angela Davis, James Baldwin, and Malcolm X, Jamila seeks her identity not in England but rather in trans-national black solidarity. Jamila trains herself to be "a militant, a real shaker and trembler" with "a PhD in physical retribution" who does not hesitate to strike back at those who spit slurs at her (*BS* 53).[57] Throughout the novel, Jamila acts as Karim's political conscience, frequently admonishing him for focusing too much on his own career and pleasure and not enough on his obligations to other members of England's non-white community. Karim eventually has an epiphany that reveals to him his place within England's racial economies, but reading is not enough for him: he discovers his place within white England through work.

Nowhere is the novel's critique of white English culture more pointed than in the representations of Karim's first two theatre directors, Jeremy Shadwell and Matthew Pyke. In their productions, both directors demand that Karim represent a particular construction of the stereotypical Indian, and that he do so *authentically*. Each directs Karim to channel a particular racial type that he assumes is in his Indian blood, even though this type always has been a colonial construction. Shadwell, for example, hires Karim for his first acting gig after watching him perform just one monologue because he needs "an actor who will fit the part" of Mowgli in Rudyard Kipling's *The Jungle Book*. It becomes clear quite quickly that Karim's "fit" to this part is based on his appearance: "You're dark-skinned, you're small and wiry, and you'll be sweet but wholesome in the costume. Not to pornographic, I hope. Certain critics will go for you. Oh yes.

Ha, ha, ha, ha, ha!" (*BS* 143). Shadwell's comment shows how the Indian body functions as a fetish object of desire in the English culture industry. Shadwell's production puts forth Karim as a specimen and spectacle: the primitive "Half-devil and half-child" (in Kipling's words) racial other against which whiteness defines itself and through which Britishness seeks to rejuvenate itself.[58] Shadwell takes up biological (even subtly eugenic) diction as he marvels at Karim, an Indian body with no apparent connection to India: "What a breed of people two hundred years of imperialism has given birth to. If the pioneers from the East India Company could see you. What puzzlement there'd be" (*BS* 141). Shadwell's own investment in the mythology of the British Empire, with its "pioneers," is plain to see, even as he fashions himself as a liberal, bemoaning the racism of his own country and musing, "The immigrant is the Everyman of the twentieth century" (*BS* 141). Even as he seems to respect "the immigrant," Shadwell claims a certain ownership over the figure in calling it the "Everyman": ultimately this figure of difference is simply a reflection of Shadwell's own self, reducible to a universalized term as opposed to important for its own specificity.

Shadwell's perspective on India is that of the tourist; he frames the subcontinent as an exotic landscape with the power to transform its beholder. A cultural imperialist for the 1970's, Shadwell claims authority over Indian culture, speaking in "Punjabi or Urdu" (the monoglot Karim can't tell the difference) recommending that his new protégé travel to India to "have that dust in your nostrils" (*BS* 141). This latter phrase evokes a dimension of the English imperial imagination that I discuss in earlier chapters: that the very land of the Orient possesses the mystical (but still material) power to invade the embodied subject and engender a radical transformation in identity. Shadwell's Orientalizing view of India infuses his expressionistic production of *The Jungle Book*, in which actors evoke the environment so that "The jungle itself, its trees and swamps, the many animals, fires and huts, were to be fashioned from our bodies,

movements, and cries" (*BS* 145). Shadwell's "expressionistic" India (as he calls it) is an enchanted dreamworld where flesh and land are in a kind of symbiotic loop: the land invades the body and the body conjures the land (*BS* 151). It does not matter to him whether his production in any way corresponds to India; similar to Haroon's suburban workshops, this is India as aura, as style. In capturing the style, it seems to express the essence of this exotic land, but a behind-the-scenes view of Shadwell's production reveals that that essence is an effect, not a cause, of this kitsch Orientalist style. Although Shadwell believes his production, with the help of Karim, captures the spirit of India, ultimately the signals he relies on to evoke this space are the most superficial markers of racial difference – skin tone and intonation. He requires that Karim manipulate both of these aspects of his body in his representation of Mowgli, boot-polishing his skin and adopting a cartoonish Indian accent. Karim resists on both accounts, but when he protests, insisting, "It's a political matter for me," Shadwell admonishes him, "you have been cast for authenticity and not for experience" (*BS* 147) –blind to the obvious irony that he is asking Karim to be "authentic" to a contrived stereotype.

Despite his disgust for "Shitwell" (as he and the other actors refer to the director) Karim still takes pride in becoming a professional actor, especially insofar as his initiation into art culture signals that he has escaped the blandness of his suburban upbringing. Karim follows Eva's lead by setting artistic value as the greatest of all qualities, even at the expense of his social and political commitments. His expectations of praise from his family, however, are met with disappointment: after watching opening night, his father bemoans that his son was in a show "looking like a Black and White Minstrel," and Jamila concludes, "You looked wonderful…. So innocent and young, showing off your pretty body, so thin and perfectly formed. But no doubt about it, the play is completely neo-fascist. […] I expect you're ashamed, aren't you?" (*BS* 157). Jamila's critique is more subtle than Haroon because she perceives how the play offers up Karim

as a particular kind of sex object to its mostly-white consumer base, and, further, how this fetishization of the Indian body reinscribes colonial hierarchies, where foreign countries become (in the words of Franz Fanon) "bordellos for Europe."[59] After this squabble, *The Jungle Book* becomes *thema non grata* in the Amir household. However, Kureishi's novel seems more generous than Haroon and Jamila in its estimation of the play's political impact (unsurprising, perhaps, since Karim is the narrator). In subsequent performances of the play, Karim discovers ways to subvert Shadwell's efforts to treat him as raw material, and in so doing he alters the play's political themes. For example, he "[sends] up the accent and made the audience laugh by suddenly relapsing into cockney at odd times. 'Leave it out, Bagheera,' I'd say" (*BS* 158). His deft code switching elicits the audience's laughter because flipping between these two linguistic registers demonstrates, on an individual level, the absurd falsity of Karim's accent, and on broader level, the cultural and demographic mish-mash of the late-century multicultural metropolis, where many different accents and skin colors comingle in ways that confound imperial geographies. Through this small act of resistance, he undermines Shadwell's Henry-Higgens-esque domain over his mixed-race Doolittle. Karim takes control of his own representation, breaking through shoe polish and fake accent alike to wink at the audience, letting them know that he is in on the joke.

While Shadwell certainly carries a significant amount of cultural cachet, his production of *The Jungle Book* caters to mainstream, middle-brow public taste. This is especially apparent when contrasted with the high-brow director Pyke, whose experimental theatrical style discards scripts, instead asking actors in his company, Moving Theatre, to create original characters from which the play will emerge. Karim's experiences with Moving Theatre shows how England's mainstream racial dynamics still operate within the cultural *avant-garde*. Pyke's notion of racial difference might be more nuanced than Shadwell's lazy stereotyping, but it similarly packages the

"exotic" Indian as the Englishman's other, a target of desire and a source of anxiety. His process for directing company members in the creation of their characters reflects his determinist social views. First, he makes each actor tell the story of his or her life to the rest of the group, instructing them to "Concentrate on the way your position in society has been fixed" (*BS* 169). Pyke's gaze organizes people according to types, and as a director he composes an image of England's social body using each of his actors as a representative of a particular group. (Pyke's taste for social engineering also shows in his cringe-inducing game from early rehearsals where he writes down predictions of which members of his cast will have sex with each other.) His typecasting tendencies also show when he rejects Karim's first idea for his character, his white rock star friend Charlie. "We need someone from your own background," Pyke instructs Karim, "Someone black." Karim, who describes himself as "more beige than anything," is confused by this direction: "I didn't know anyone black, but I'd been to school with a Nigerian." Pyke clarifies that he means someone from his Indian family, to "give the play some variety" (*BS* 169-170). This exchange demonstrates, first, how Pyke collapses all minorities into the category of "black," and, second, how he sees the ethnic others on his stage as a pleasing supplement to the master narrative of white Englishness. Shadwell's direction takes advantage of Karim's racialized body to evoke an exoticized version of India; Pyke's psychoanalytic and sociological methods appropriate the lived experience of his actors, not to empower them to tell their stories, but to enrich his own set image of London as a locus of racial and class stratification (with himself, naturally, at the top). While purportedly radical, the vision of England that Pyke ultimately summons on his stage still draws on the racialized mythologies of imperial culture.

Pyke goes further than Shadwell in his conquest of Karim in that he tries to *literally* "get inside" the young Anglo-Indian's body, turning him into an object of sexual consumption. Pyke invites Karim and Eleanor, his girlfriend and co-star, over to his apartment for a night of food,

alcohol, drugs, and group sex with he and his wife, Marlene. These two members of the upper-middle class cultural elite see these two younger actors as easily available resources with which they can freely satisfy their physical desires. This experience of being turned a sexual plaything for this powerful couple, who see his young racialized body as a reservoir of pleasurable sensations, brings about a confusing jumble of emotions in Karim – fear, jealousy, pride, and regret. This serves as an awakening for him, as he begins to perceive that "the fucker was fucking me in other ways" (*BS* 219) – most painfully by Karim, by stealing away Eleanor. Karim begins to understand that the only way that he can progress his career is by making himself available, sexually and otherwise, to white elites; in this way he parallels his father's path.

Because of this experience, Karim comes to identify with Eleanor's dead former lover, the talented West Indian actor Gene who overdoses after being rejected from a theatre company. As Marlene explains his tragic story to Karim, "[H]e never got the work he deserved. He emptied bed-pans in hospital programmes. He played criminals and taxi drivers. He never played in Chekhov or Ibsen or Shakespeare, and he deserved to" (*BS* 201). Even though the art industry wants to think it is on the political left, Gene's tragic tale shows how this labor market still follows the racist logics of mainstream/conservative England – even in the worlds of fiction, black actors must still do the representative work of the underclass. While Karim previously resisted being lumped together with other non-white English subjects, Pyke and Shadwell showed him how the white cultural marketplace will always place this associations upon him. It is in reflecting on Gene that Karim begins to understand how his ability to enjoy all the pleasures of the multicultural metropolis will always be limited by his skin color:

> Sweet Gene…killed himself because every day, by a look, by a remark, an attitude, though him a nigger, a slave, a lower being. And we pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness and this beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard --- into the eye of Hairy Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet we proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves from all this bitterness and

> resentment too. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment were generated afresh every day? (*BS* 227).

Here, Karim echoes Saladin after Rushdie's protagonist finally admits to himself that he can never become fully English, that his mark of difference (whether something imposed on him from without or emerging from within) can never finally be erased in this symbolic economy.

With this understanding, both Karim and Saladin feel a compulsion to return to their own ethnic roots to discover how these ties might provide some sort of grounding this emergent diasporic subjectivity. In both cases, the death of a patriarch calls them back to these communities: for Saladin, the news of his father's illness feels like "tentacles" reaching out from India to bring him home, while for Karim, the Anwar's death compels him to return to Jamila the rest of the Indian ethnic community. Looking at his family and friends gathered for the funeral, Karim reflects, "I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now – the Indians – that in some way these were my people, and that I'd spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I'd been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted all Indians to be like them" (*BS* 212). And yet, even as he acknowledges his kinship with these "strange creatures," Karim doesn't believe he has true access to this foreign essence: "if I wanted the additional personality bonus of an Indian past, I would have to create it" (*BS* 213). He feels tension between a sense of belonging to a group and feeling like all group identities are fabricated and spontaneously created, as opposed to referent to any clear essence or origin. This stands in sharp contrast to his father, who insists at that he "remains for all intents and purposes an Indian man" (*BS* 263), even as he is lives in London, engaged to a white woman, and thoroughly disconnected from any ties to his past life in Bombay. While Haroon still believes in an essence that he holds within him that ties him to real Indianness, Karim's adaptation is to view Indianness as something *inspirational*, created through his style and relationships, but without any authentic reference.

With Mishal and Karim, Rushdie and Kureishi both champion characters of the rising generation who improvise methods to balance their English identity and their ties to their ethnic community. This improvisations can be metaphorically understood as epigenetic "epiallates," transformations of inherited traits that adapt to the pressures of a racist London environment. By regarding their relationship to their ethnic past as both enabling but non-determinative, they contrast sharply their first-generation elders. Mishal and Karim form relationships with their ethnic identities on their own terms, but this also carries the weight of responsibility associated with the *invention* of these identities, as Karim puts it. There is no claim to authenticity or originality. The influence of their familial past is more inspirational than rooted, more about style than essence, more about community relationships than sweeping historical narratives of race. In each of these characters, these novels express a hopefulness that London can be a place where national identity is reforged into something that can accommodate ethnic diversity; in their narrative exists the seed of a new Britishness that has somehow dissolved or disarmed the enduring presence of white supremacy. The success of these characters stands in contrast to other characters and political movements who completely disavow and critique Englishness (such as Uhuru Simba and Terry, Karim's Marxist co-star); in this way, Rushdie and Kureishi's novels both demonstrate a liberal hesitancy to endorse radical racial and class politics. They are much more interested in cultural than political forms of rebellion. Despite their critiques of Englishness and British immigration policy, both authors present characters whose subject-formations are ultimately recuperative and heroic, redeeming Englishness through these youthful character's resourcefulness, ingenuity, and resilience. They are the hybrids who have metamorphosed in response to extreme environmental pressure, and the future is theirs.

IV. Monster Ecologies:

Destructive Plasticity and the Postcolonial Bio-Gothic

De-monster-ating Destruction

> The words induced me to turn to myself. I learned that the possessions most esteemed by your fellow creatures were high and unsullied descent united with riches. A man might be respected with only one of those advantages, but without either he was considered, except in very rare instances, as a vagabond and a slave, doomed to waste his powers for the profits of the chosen few! And what was I? Of my creation and creator I was absolutely ignorant, but I knew that I possessed no money, no friends, no kind of property. I was, besides, endued with a figure hideously deformed and loathsome; I was not even of the same nature as man. I was more agile than they and could subsist on a coarser diet; I bore the extremes of heat and cold with less injury to my frame; my stature far exceeded theirs. When I looked around I saw and heard none like me. Was I, then, a monster, a blot upon the earth, from which all men fled and whom all men disowned?
> -Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein* (1818)[1]
>
> "*i am an animal fierce and free*
> *in all the world is none like me*
> *crooked I'm, a nightmare child*
> *fed on hunger, running wild*
> *no love and cuddles for this boy*
> *live without hope, laugh without joy*
> *but if you dare to pity me*
> *i'll shit in your shoe and piss in your tea*"
> -Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (2007)[2]

Perhaps the most emblematic work of early-19th century gothic fiction, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* provides a powerful allegory for the postcolonial subject. The creature's narrative, embedded at the novel's core, follows his education into "human nature," as well as his own his own, not-fully-human nature.[3] In the passage cited above, Shelley invites her reader to consider this *Bildungsroman* within the context of global colonial history.[4] The creature has just been listening to the cottager Felix De Lacey read to the "Arabian" Safie from Volney's *Ruins of Empire*, a chronicle of world history that champions the rise of Christianity and European imperialism. In this scene of parallel education, both Safie and the creature relate to colonial

history from the perspective of the colonized, as they weep together over "the discovery of the American hemisphere and…the hapless fate of the original inhabitants." When the creature wonders if he is a "vagabond or slave," he connects his experience with the suffering of others who have likewise been made monstrous by the march of Western imperialism and industry. He is, in other words, an early postcolonial subject – one whose experience outside the normative borders of European humanism has offered him a fractured double-vision. Both he and Safie interpret Western history from the perspective of the exploited, abjected other, and therefore offer transgressive interpretations of this hegemonic history, observing catastrophic violence in the official narrative's heroic achievements. The afterlife of Shelley's novel, its ongoing cultural relevance and reinvention more than two centuries after its publication, stems in part from its careful, sympathetic examination of the psychology of monstrosity. *Frankenstein* shows how the label of monstrosity is both imprinted upon and transgressed by the differently-bodied subject. Because of his lack of clear origins, his "hideously deformed" aspect, and his crude methods for survival, the creature falls into an existential crisis, expressed in the final, tortured question from the quote: how does one proceed with the knowledge that the body you inhabit will always be read as other? What possible identity, community, or future exists for this "blot upon the earth," an outcast whose body causes them to be so thoroughly abjected and rejected from the narratives of Western humanism?

The urgency of these questions grows as this warming globe accelerates into a future that is more integrated, more automated, and less equitable. These themes return, but with a very different tone, in the song of Indra Sinha's narrator Animal, an Indian orphan whose body has been bent in half by exposure to industrial pesticides. This "nightmare child" – another of modern science's spurned offspring– does not seek approval or pity, or at least will not admit to those desires; instead, he arms himself with profanity, irony, and hostility, rhetorical weapons

with which he combats others' patronizing attitudes. Instead of seeking community among humans, Animal adopts a persona that is deliberately caustic and perverse. This hostility provides Animal the agency that the juridical and economic order of neoliberal globalization denies him. His abjection from the human condition is not a curse, as Shelley's creature feels it, but rather a source of strength. He does not want pity because he perceives how pity establishes an imbalance of power; he would prefer to "run wild," seeking a vector of becoming that leads him outside of the same old circuits of control.

I begin this chapter about metamorphosis in the South Asian postcolonial bio-gothic with this commentary on *Frankenstein* because I see the political and ethical work of Shelley's novel as genealogically linked with the challenges presented by texts in this later archive. The narratives discussed here all engage with "bio-gothic" aesthetics, a narrative mode that locates the trigger for a destabilizing metamorphosis within the *bios* of the human body. Bio-gothic aesthetics imagine a trans-corporeal body that is enmeshed with an evolving, damaged environment, where disruptions to the ecosystem effected by human activity return to disturb the so-called "normal" behavior of the body – though the bio-gothic shows that "normative" embodiment exist only in concept, never in the flesh. The bio-gothic enacts the return of a past that refuses to stay neatly on one side of the culture/nature binary. This abjected past is still present within the human body itself, related to what Catherine Malabou has described as the "destructive plasticity" of the human body and psyche. The "monsters" (more on this term in a moment) of bio-gothic narratives reveal how "humanity" is not a stable biological or spiritual category by eroding the lines between humans and animals, culture and nature, body and environment, form and destructive plasticity.

The concept of destructive plasticity is particularly useful for explicating the theory of embodiment lurking within the bio-gothic because it emphasizes how form always contains

within it the seeds of its own dissolution. Explaining this deconstructive ontology, Malabou writes, "[D]estruction too is formative. A smashed-up face is still a face, a stump a limb, a traumatized psyche remains a psyche. Destruction has its own sculpting tools."[5] Because bio-gothic aesthetics conceive of the human body in metamorphosis, when the normative operations break down and when form becomes unrecognizable, destructive plasticity assists in articulating how these breakdowns are not exceptions, but a necessity for form. Malabou explains, "[T]his type of destruction in no way contradicts positive plasticity: it is its condition."[6] Deviations from normative forms of embodiment show that this delicate norm never existed in the first place, that humanity exists as an idealist teleology and never in the malleable flesh. Remembering the vocabulary of ecocritic Stacy Alaimo, destructive plasticity conceives of a "trans-corporeal" body that is constantly exchanging matter and information with its environment. Like trans-corporeality, destructive plasticity elicits "a rather disconcerting sense of being immersed with incalculable, interconnected material agencies that erode even our most sophisticated forms of understanding."[7] The monsters from the bio-gothic narratives discussed in this chapter – Sinha's *Animal's People*, Mahasweta Devi's "Douloti the Bountiful," and Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* – each display the body's trans-corporeality and destructive plasticity, serving as living proof of the environmental disruptions effected by agents of neocolonial capitalism. They warn how easily the *bios* of a body or an ecosystem can be mutilated beyond recognition. While gothic monstrosity primarily has been theorized as cultural form, symptomatic of social and psychological traumas, the bio-gothic rearticulates monstrosity as a biological process. It reveals the destructive plasticity of the human body – that the monster exists within our very material (de)composition.

The bio-gothic mode enacts a conceptual funnel, moving from ontology through phenomenology and arriving at politics. At the top, there is trans-corporeality and destructive

plasticity, both concepts that describe an ontological state where human and non-human bodies are embedded in and connected through a deep distribution of matter. Together these concepts emphasize how both trauma and resilience work through the biological substrates of the body. These ontological conditions are experienced phenomenologically through material ecorhapsody. Material ecorhapsody distinguishes itself from idealist conceptions of communing with nature. Nature in these interactions is not some idealized animating spirit, but rather an embodied condition of constant exposure to material processes that foster both creation and destruction. Acknowledging the uneven distribution of these effects opens up the political dimensions of bio-gothic ontology. Certain bodies are more heavily exposed to toxic or pathological matter. These embodied subjects, because of this increased exposure, are hyper-attuned the body's destructive plasticity. This is not a romantic or primitivist attunement. For these "ecosystem people" (to borrow a term from Rob Nixon),[8] to be more "interconnected" with the ecosystem means that they are more directly affected by the processes of slow violence wrought by colonial and neocolonial incursions. While one face of destructive plasticity emphasizes the fragility and emptiness of normative form, the other emphasizes how the body has it's own resources for adaptation. These characters are mutilated but resilient. They possess a *conatus* – a tendency to preserve their being[9] – that drives them to persist through, even embrace, the transformations wrought upon their body by a toxic environment. Politically, this phenomenology has two interlocking trajectories, both critiquing idealist Western conceptions of nature. The first trajectory speaks to postcolonial ecology, the second to dark ecology. Both of these ecological viewpoints regard with suspicion Romantic conceptions of nature, which they see as providing a sentimental cover for a situation of exploitation, manipulation, and destruction. Both also call for a new ethical relationship with the more-than-human world that

preserves its radical otherness while acknowledging the extent to which human experience is enmeshed in these processes that are beyond our ken and control.

It can be difficult to discuss figures such as Douloti, Mangala, and Animal as "monstrous" without relying on a normative Western sense of embodiment, and also without taking on a patronizing or sensationalist approach to these subaltern characters. To meet these ethical challenges, I firstly discuss these texts as literary hybrids that bear resemblances to both their Western and Eastern influences and that "face" in multiple directions to diverse reading publics. Secondly, I approach these texts from a queer gothic critical perspective, one that utilizes the transgressive power of the gothic mode to explore non-normative ways of being, desiring, and reproducing. Instead of reading for how these creatures are contained, nullified, or silenced by the text, I follow other critics of the queer gothic that emphasize how monsters defy containment and, like Frankenstein's creature, end up transforming the very system that seeks to isolate and nullify them. Finally, I reconceptualize monstrosity, interpreting the monster works as a hermeneutic with which to read colonial and neo-colonial institutions, especially those related to biological science. To describe something as "monstrous" is not to present it as a figure of fear or sensationalistic thrill, but rather (remembering the etymology of the word)[10] to emphasize how the creature de*monstr*ates a gap or fissure in normative imperial epistemologies, revealing a truth that these explanations of the world cannot account for. Stuart Hall's (rather gothic) assertion that "We always knew that the dismantling of the colonial paradigm would release strange demons from the deep, and that these monsters might come trailing all sorts of subterranean material" indicates the postcolonial imperative of re-evaluating monstrosity.[11] We must confront monsters not as a deviation from a norm, but rather as the abjected element through which the norm constitutes itself in the first place. Hall's discussion of "subterranean material" further shows how postcolonial discourse is invested in not simply gothic aesthetics

but *bio*-gothic aesthetics, which dissolve any clear distinction between human and non-human entities.

The philosophical writings of Georges Canguilhem help explain how the bio-gothic leverages monstrosity to undermine normative modes of embodiment..[12] In his *Knowledge of Life* (1965), Canguilhem deconstructs the concept of a biological norm, arguing that in order for a being to be viable it must be "productive of novelties, however imperceptible they might be at first sight"[13]: metamorphosis and mutation are not just effects of life, they are its condition. Normative embodiment exists only as a statistical concept, never as an enfleshed perfect form. All living beings for Canguilhem should be thought of as "normalized monsters" or "anomals" who have developed resources for survival within a shifting material milieu.[14] The health of a being in this configuration is not measured by the meeting of some normative prototype, but rather by its resiliency within a variety of conditions. In addition to universalizing monstrosity, Canguilhem also critiques role of the monster within the ontologies of mainstream biology as "a living being whose value is to be a counterpoint. […] Monstrosity is the accidental and conditional threat of incompleteness or distortion in the formation of form; it is the limitation from within, the negation of the living by the nonviable."[15] He tracks the history of monstrosity from its medieval theological instantiations, as an unlawful hybrid being demonstrating the "licentiousness of the living," to a nineteenth- and twentieth-century biological paradigm, where the monster instead serves as a reminder of "the contingency of life," its destructive plasticity.[16] Canguilhem's aphorism "the madman is in the asylum, where he serves to teach reason, and the monster is in the embryologist jar, where it serves to teach the norm" resonates with the ontological critiques of these bio-gothic novels, especially *Animal's People* (Anomal's People?), which features a scene where Kha, a deformed fetus confined to one such jar, speaks a warning that all beings on earth contain residues of the poisons that triggered his fatal mutations. One

potential limitation of Canguilhem's discussion of monstrosity is that he suggests that only living beings can be monstrous, disqualifying mineral and mechanical monsters.[17] Alaimo's work with trans-corporeality and Timothy Morton's critiques of the animate/inanimate divide present a challenge to Canguilhem's boundaries. The bio-gothic narratives discussed here show how non-organic matter, like industrial toxins or hallucinogenic drugs, inhabit the human body in ways that suggest that they also have a trans-subjectivity all their own. Even immaterial concepts like debt, because of the way they organize material flows, can be both monstrous and trans-subjective.

From a literary perspective, mine is not a classificatory argument, where I categorize these novels as "belonging to" or "being an example of" a discreet genre called the "bio-gothic." Instead, I discuss the bio-gothic as an aesthetic mode. Mode emphasizes how various genres become culturally embedded, so that certain organizations of elements become identifiable as "bio-gothic" even if the larger text does not fit this framework. Various modes can exist side by side in a text, and modes can inhabit a variety of genres. Two formal elements that underpin the bio-gothic mode are, first, a phenomenological axis of what I call material ecorhapsody (the "funnel" discussed above), and second, a hermeneutics of archival rupture which regards any absolute knowledge claim by Western science as politically compromised and incomplete. Of the first axis: bio-gothic provides a formal patterning of the destructive plasticity of the bodies by enacting this dark ecorhapsody, where something pathological becomes the point of contact with the vibrant plasticity of matter. In these moments, destructive plasticity as an ontological condition becomes a phenomenological experience. As an experience of trans-corporeality, those who experience material ecorhapsody are most aware of the plasticity of their body, how their body is constantly transforming as it is invaded by other bodies. Material ecorhapsody is an experience of raw affect. The transformative experience uncodes emotion, unraveling

boundaries and biological constraints. The body frees the subject from normative perceptual experience and habits of the mind. In bio-gothic, the body becomes a kind of *techne* for change. The body comes first in bio-gothic, whereas in classic gothic it comes later as a symptom of cultural forms of monstrosity. Bio-gothic experience is not recuperative; it does not mark the return of a lost knowledge paradigm. Instead, it is deconstructive, revealing ontological gaps and the violent elisions that must occur in order to consolidate the norm of modern science.

This speaks to the second axis of the bio-gothic: a hermeneutics of archival rupture. Bio-gothic aesthetics fragment the institutional archive in order to dissolve the totalizing histories and ontologies of global modernity. The traditional gothic genre both supports and transgresses the institutional archive; the genre's hybridity and pastiche structure makes it an essentially archival narrative form. It assembles various discursive technologies in order to make the inexplicable speak. There is an anthropological aspect to the gothic, as texts bring different cultures together under the umbrella of global modernity. Traditional European gothic texts are often fascinated with folk and other anti-modern traditions, casting their gaze to the periphery of empire in search of these monstrous others.[18] Ironically, the gothic is a paradigmatically modern mode *because of*, not despite, its fascination with a stylized, exoticized lost past. It triggers a nostalgia related to that solicited by pastoral landscapes, which became popular at the exact moment in history when England's countryside was no longer readily accessible to the masses. While most British gothic novels fetishize these old ways of knowing, they also tend to contain these epistemologies within a larger modern schema. In many gothic novels, such as Ann Radcliffe's *The Mysteries of Udolpho* and Jane Austen's *Northanger Abbey*, fears spurred by old superstitions are eventually soothed by a rational explanation of all the disturbing events.[19] [20] Even in novels that ask the audience to suspend their disbelief, such as Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the plot tends to contain that foreign element, as it is identified, isolated, and destroyed by

superior methods of scientific inquiry. The archive is militarized against difference, deployed to foreclose any other ontological paradigms it encounters.

Inversely, the contemporary South Asian bio-gothic novels I discuss here all enact the failure of the archive to ensnare difference. "Douloti the Bountiful" represents the impotence of institutional response to violence by describing how the protagonist's tragic tale ends up "imprisoned in a *file*."[21] *The Calcutta Chromosome* rewrites official histories of imperial science in order to show the agentic capacity of colonized people, whose essential contributions to scientific progress are silenced by the archive. *Animal's People* features a central plot line about how the ill residents of Khaufpur should avoid a clinic offering free medical care because the data gathered at such appoints could be used against them in the courtroom. In all these cases, characters resist incorporation into a global archive that maintains inequality and injustice. This gothic approach to the archive works against the idea of the global as a unifying concept, instead following postcolonial theory's emphasis on epistemic rupture. Revealing the porosity and fragility of the archive shows the gaps of the global view.

This discussion of the gothic's archival form also gives some indication about why it is potentially problematic for a Western-trained scholar like myself to apply literary genres of European origin across the East/West divide, because this practice still privileges European modes of analysis and evaluation. The three novels I discuss in this chapter emphasize their heterogeneous influences and take up hybridity (both cultural and biological) as a central theme. They all show interest in vernacular ghost stories, but these oral narratives are enfolded into the modern, Western form of the novel. There is therefore the danger that these novels, by incorporating these stories, only extend the Western anthropological gaze further East to find more Oriental mysteries to embroider into their gothic tales. To address this problematic, I maintain the tension between different narrative modes active within these hybrid texts. Neither

mode receives obvious privilege, so clear lines between scientific modernity and superstitious tradition cannot be drawn. The bio-gothic's deconstructive hermeneutic admits no positivist identification; the lost episteme cannot be recuperated. These novels do not enact the full revelation of this alternate way of knowing. In fact, they do the opposite, dramatizing how this radical ontology remains silent or otherwise imperceptible. To enact a true alternative to hegemonic modern epistemologies, it must resist any coding whatsoever.

There is, then, a demand for some way to gesture towards the extra-discursive – those elements of experience which cannot be captured by the archive. Within the bio-gothic novels I examine here, this archival rupture is effected in part by playing on the concept of ritual. A ritual is a transformative experience that both puts the body at risk and opens the body to new possibilities of being. Mangala, for instance, oversees a ceremony where syphilis patients are bitten by malaria-bearing mosquitos, which will help them survive the venereal disease but will also will forever change their physiological and mental structure. Because ritual is necessarily embodied, it will always run in excess of the archival record – what's important is the experience itself, not its representation.

This chapter proceeds in four parts. First, I survey some of the vast field of gothic criticism to theorize the important formal and thematic properties of the bio-gothic mode. Three critical approaches to the gothic are particularly relevant: gender and queer theory, postcolonial theory, and ecocriticism. From there, I turn to the first of the three bio-gothic narratives emerging from India, Mahasweta Devi's novella[22] "Douloti the Bountiful" from her collection *Imaginary Maps,* arguing that the Bengali author utilizes bio-gothic aesthetics to dramatize how debt comes to mutilate the bodies of Indian tribal women who are forced into sex-work because of the *kamiya* (bond-slavery system). Next, I demonstrate how Amitav Ghosh's science fiction novel *The Calcutta Chromosome* takes up the disease malaria as both a

method for and an allegorical figuration of a parasitic postcolonial agency that is distributed across both human and more-than-human organisms. Ghosh incorporates bio-gothic elements in his texts as part of a larger interrogation of the anthropocentric methods of Western modern science. I close with a discussion of Indra Sinha's *Animal's People* and the bio-gothic trope of material ecorhapsody, a mode of experiencing violent eco-histories by exposing ones trans-corporeal body to an environment's pathogens and neurotoxins. Bodies that have mutated or otherwise transformed because of their high level of exposure to these contaminates have a heightened understanding of the body's destructive plasticity, and therefore they also have the best understanding of the fragility and contingency of the norm. In these metamorphic bodies, global capitalist flows become material and particular, and therefore they should be privileged sites for new, socially- and environmentally-just forms of knowledge and community.

Subterranean/Subaltern: The Postcolonial Bio-Gothic

Three critical traditions inform my understanding of the bio-gothic: queer theory, postcolonial theory, and ecocriticism. All three emphasize how the gothic mode works dialectically with and against a post-Enlightenment order that sought to stabilize and instrumentalize the material world through rational thought and scientific technologies. Critics from each field have embraced the transgressive affordances of the gothic and its ambiguous ethics. Gothic aesthetics characteristically note the disruption and decay of apparently stable edifices, bodies, and systems, and therefore metamorphosis serves as a central theme and trope. In the earlier chapters of this dissertation, I discuss how Western novelists found in the East a place where characters could shed one form and take on a new one, a liberatory transformation. The monsters in this chapter, whose contaminated homelands have mutilated their bodies, exert a different kind of agency that is both postcolonial and queer. Through their improvised

methods of survival, they destabilize the networks of control in which they are embedded. Transformation and transgression unite in the body of the monster.

Critics from gender and queer theory frequently read bodies represented in gothic texts as sites to interrogate patriarchal and heteronormative conceptions of gender and sexuality. Feminist literary critic Donna Heiland describes a transgressive gothic body that utilizes "the subjective realities of sensibility and the sublime" to disrupt the machinations of patriarchal politics.[23] According to Heiland, late-eighteenth century thinkers conceived of sensibility as an intuitive sympathetic feeling that streams forth from the experiences humans register in "very fibres of our being."[24] Theories of sensibility understood the body as essentially metamorphic, constantly transforming on a minute, elemental level in response to environmental stimuli. (Sensibility is, in this way, more *ecological* than rationality.) The novels that I discuss in this chapter each feature protagonists whose sensibility is heightened by transformations in his or her "fibres" – the body's chemical, cellular, or microbial make-up. While these foreign contaminates disrupt the body's normal operations, they also open new, indeterminate possibilities for becoming with others outside of the disciplinary bounds of global capitalist patriarchy. Several critics have even gone so far to describe the changes to characters' sensoriums effected by poison or pathogen as "gifts."[25] These monsters' acts of becoming depend on the very contaminates that banished them from the bounds of normality – be they disease-inducing pathogens, industrial chemicals, or psychoactive drugs. The medium through which these characters tap into their environment is not constructive and affirming, but rather destructive and silent. And yet, in the breakdown of form and meaning, contingent possibilities for new forms of embodiment and sociality coalesce.

Gothic texts are often ambivalent in their attitude towards this this breakdown of old forms and the emergence of new ones. Queer theory provides critical resources to interpret the

ambiguous ethics of the bio-gothic. Jack Halberstam's methodology in his essay on Bram Stoker's *Dracula* provides a useful hermeneutic for non-normative creatures that a gothic text renders terrifying. Halberstam sees monsters in gothic novels as "over-determined [because] they transform the fragments of otherness into one body."[26] For Halberstam, "Gothic…always goes both ways. So, even as the Gothic creates the monster, it draws attention to the plasticity or constructed nature of the monster and, therefore, calls into question all scientific and rational attempts to classify and quantify agents of disorder."[27] Like Halberstam, in my analysis I show how these monsters are both produced by and productive of ideologies around the racialized and sexualized body. The novels discussed here dwell on both the cultural and cellular processes through which a monster is created. Douloti, Mangala, and Animal might appear horrific, but the horror reflects back upon the Western institutions that have, like Dr. Frankenstein, spurned their progeny.

The queer gothic critical tradition employs similar methods as the postcolonial critical approach to the mode, as both emphasize how gothic texts unsettle enlightenment notions of rationality by showing that the human subject is porous and unstable, not autonomous and reliable. Both also highlight how the gothic undermines a Western humanist discourse of Self and Other that establishes hierarchical "biological" differences as the basis for a politics of domination. David McInnis claims that the postcolonial narrative inverts the typical gothic formula: "Where these two modes of writing differ principally is in the perspective they privilege; for whilst the gothic primarily addresses and feeds upon the anxieties of English encounters with Others, postcolonial works tend to counter the privileged imperialist perspective by writing back to the empire from the perspective of the unrepresented or misrepresented other."[28] This "alienation effect," as McInnis calls it, serves to undermine colonial hegemony by representing gaps and elisions of the official story. The alienation effect is

why Shelley's *Frankenstein*, with its dialectical structure between monster and creator, is such a poignant allegory for the modern postcolonial novel; once the monster's story is told, it is no longer entirely clear where our human allegiances should lie.

These monsters transgress the concept of the "human" as a discreet bio-culture entity, thus evading what Michel Foucault calls science's "exhausting ordering of the world" through *taxinomia*.[29] Andrew Hock Soon Ng focuses in on such transgressive evasions in his argument that gothic aesthetics are "vital to postcolonial discourse" because of the way the mode grants interstitial subjects "the ability to speak from a liminal space" and "the ability to articulate one's failure to signify."[30] This interstitial speech is deconstructive, pointing at the failure of the discursive medium to capture the monster's "true nature" (itself a problematic essentialist concept that is an effect of *taxinomia*). Like Ng, Alison Rudd sees the gothic providing postcolonial authors the dialectical resources to transgress imperial ideology, focusing her analysis on the uncanny[31] and the abject[32]. Against the universalizing and hierarchical conceptions of the embodied subject advanced by imperial science, the uncanny shows how the sensorium and psyche are plastic and evolving. Rudd further identifies three aspects of the abject operating in postcolonial texts, all of which are apparent in the novels discussed here: first, in instances of Orientalist constructions of otherness; second, in relation to society's hypocrisy; and finally, in the embrasure of abjection as a means of gaining agency. Like me, Rudd is interested in how the monster warns of a disturbance "that arises partially from cross-cultural contamination" – but I would extend her claim that the bio-gothic monster registers not only imperialisms' cultural contaminations, but also its ecological ones.

In the preceding paragraphs I have shown how interpretations of gothic aesthetics from both gender and postcolonial studies have incorporated some notion of *bios*, describing a trans-corporeal human body that transforms and is transformed by its exchanges with the more-than-

human world. Several literary ecocritics have already identified this environmental aspect to the gothic, and, inversely, have demonstrated how environmental writing, like postcolonial discourse, utilizes gothic tropes as a means to engender ecological awareness in its reader. Lawrence Buell describes the "Virgilian mode" of the gothic, where the reader is led through an ecological hellscape as Vergil led Dante, as a constitutive element of "toxic discourse." The problem with this narrative configuration, especially in a postcolonial context where there is a great geographical and/or cultural distance between the represented subjects and the audience, is that it can "reinscribe the polarization of the saved versus the damned, the guide being so much wiser, so much more like us, then the hapless, hardly human victims."[33] As I will show, the postcolonial novels discussed here disrupt this polarization by returning the gaze of the western reader and enacting a crisis of representation by playing on the theme of archival rupture. These metafictional strategies compel one to question dominant images of South Asia that circulate in Western media.

Another interpretation of the environmental gothic can be seen in Timothy Morton's "dark ecology," which he defines as the "goth assertion of the contingent and necessarily queer idea that we want to stay with a dying world."[34] Dark ecology calls for a gothic reassessment of the idea of nature, describing this interconnected network as a mechanical, indifferent, and monstrous, instead of holistic and benevolent, like one would expect in the "hippie aesthetics" (as Morton calls them) of deep ecology. Like me, Morton reads Shelley's *Frankenstein* as an allegory for the modern ecological situation because of the way the novel shows "how social conditions are not yet established for such 'twisted' ethical forms to take place." Dark ecology, while not explicitly associated with postcolonial ecology, can usefully show how ideas of nature that circulate in today's global discourse still bear imperialist residues because they regard the non-human world as a standing reserve of resources to be identified, quantified, and managed.

Dark ecology calls into question the phenomenology of "eco-rhapsody," a writing of the environment by a subject who communes with its animating life force, typically called Nature (capitalized to emphasize the theological dimensions of this concept). In the modernist novels discussed earlier in this project, encounters with the Eastern landscape catalyzed English character's transformations because it made them feel connected with original, primal force that unites humans with Nature. The monsters of these bio-gothic novels have no such illusions about cosmic harmony. They come to understand how being connected with the environment means being exposed to the pathogens and toxins that lurk just beneath the pastoral surface. It is not the human who taps into nature; it is nature that taps into the human.

There are elements of toxic discourse and dark ecology in Rob Nixon's concept of "slow violence" – violent acts that are not event-bound, but are instead distributed across time and space. Neocolonial forces, by disrupting, depleting, or poisoning certain ecotones, are responsible for the suffering of the ecosystem people who depend on those environments for their survival. On one hand, it would seem that Nixon's concept slow violence is directly opposed to the sensational thrills of gothic violence, as gothic texts typically go to great lengths to frame their horrific moment of revelation.[35] With ecological slow violence, there is never a dramatic reveal where the destructive agent is unmasked; the chain of cause and effect is at once too scattered and too interconnected to capture in a single image. There are, however, several other strategies that gothic aesthetics employ to create its horrific effects, and two of them are well equipped to manage the problems associated with representing slow violence. The first strategy is to create a monster that is somehow unrepresentable. The cause of this unrepresentability might be because the monster is too elusive to be glimpsed for more than a passing moment (Mangala), or because it constantly is taking on different forms (Lahkhan), or because it is too large (The Kampani) or too minute (malaria). The symptomatic analytics needed

to perceive these monsters are the same strategies that must be used to comprehend environmental destruction. The second gothic aesthetic strategy that addresses the problems with representing slow violence is the vision – a dream, hallucination, or trance that reveals through an (often obscure) allegory a truth that is hidden from waking habits of perception. All of the narratives I examine in this chapter feature moments where a subject experiences a revelatory vision under the influence of some sort of psychoactive drug, pathogen, or industrial chemical. These events should not be read simply as "hallucinations," where a character sees something that is not really there. Instead, I read these hallucinations as material ecorhapsody, where subjects channels a natural environment – or, thinking in terms of trans-corporeal agency, the environment taps into them – that is thoroughly contaminated by the toxic matter of human activity. These characters become visionaries who are able to explain the complex situation of globalized late capitalism, but only through allegory, because that kind of extended metaphor is the only way to visualize the distributed networks of slow violence.

The Indebted and the Undead[36]

Mahasweta Devi's postcolonial bio-gothic frames the neocolonial encounter as one of competing temporal paradigms, as the short-term temporality of resource-extraction disrupts the long-term temporalities of sustenance farming and ancestor worship. Her stories dramatize the uncanny return of the violent history of Indian tribal peoples – or, as some refer to themselves, *adivasis* (*adi*="oldest," *vasi*=inhabitant)[37] – that official histories of national and global progress repress. The narratives in her collection *Imaginary Maps* document the transformation of *adivasi* bodies to expendable matter via the *kamiya* (bond-slavery) system, the poisoning of tribal water supply with industrial pesticides, and the destruction of the forest ecosystem due to the extractive practices of cash-cropping, logging, and mining. They enact the processes through

which social axes of difference, such as race, caste, class, gender, and sexuality, influence unequal exposure to trans-corporeal risk. Monstrous deformations of tribal peoples' bodies give form to these invisible processes of neocolonial[38] slow violence. Being confronted with the monsters' narratives triggers an alienation effect in the modern reader, challenging her to recognize that sources of horror in Devi's stories are not the disfigured bodies of these victims, but rather the Dr. Frankensteins of global capitalism, come to extract, exploit, and expunge.

Because of her work as a journalist and activist,[39] Devi harbors anxiety about the representation of tribal people, or lack thereof, in both Western and mainstream Indian media networks.[40] Getting attention from global media, or even foreign academics, can in fact put indigenous people at risk, as their culture can quickly become "museumized,"[41] a process that projects a facade of cultural sustainability while masking a larger economic and ecosystemic program of neocolonial exploitation. Devi's tales further demonstrate how about how programs of sustainable development, which supposedly bring the security and convenience of Western technology to impoverished peoples like the *adivasi*, can frequently disrupt their traditional and ongoing methods for surviving off the land. To be modernized means for *adivasi* communities the degradation of the forest ecosystem that sustains their culture. It means to fall further and further into debt because of the brutal *kamiya* system.[42] It means to starve while harvesting cash crops on land that used to grow food.[43] The language of modernization, which runs rampant in discourses of "sustainable development," enables neocolonial amnesia, which seeks to efface such a history. Devi's use of the postcolonial bio-gothic forces any centrally-administered plan advertising itself as bringing greater "security" or "sustainability" to indigenous peoples to reckon with the long, violent history of colonial and neocolonial exploitation of tribal lands and people, a history that could otherwise be swept away by the progressive myth of "development."

In *Slow Violence*, Nixon describes the neocolonial encounter as a meeting of opposing temporalities: the "short-term" temporality of the neocolonial agents who "arrive (with their official landscape maps) to extract, despoil, and depart," versus the "long-term" temporality of those who depend on regional resources for their survival.[44] The intrusion of this extraction-based temporal order commonly results in what Nixon refers to as "displacement without moving," as extraction leaves indigenous groups stranded on a land stripped of the resources that made it habitable.[45] The history of the Bengali forest where Devi sets her stories is a paradigmatic example of this slow ecosystemic catastrophe. Officially, the colonial and commercial appropriation of the forests began 1865 when the occupying British government passed the Indian Forest Act, but the practice had in fact begun more than one hundred years earlier during the natal stages of the East India Company. This "scientific" method of forest management, a colonial mechanism which "displaces indigenous knowledge about and management of the forests," actually intensified after Independence as the Forest Department seized control, declaring the trees that tribals depended on for their day-to-day survival to be government property.[46] Despite several attempts to strike a more just balance between local, national, and international claims to this wood, the extraction of the forest resources of India continues, and tribal life becomes more and more precarious. As one *adivasi* man tells Devi, "When these forests disappear, we will also disappear."[47] This comment reminds us that the "displacement" effected by slow violence needs to be seen not only as the depletion of an area's material wealth, but also of its cultural and spiritual wealth. Neocolonial geographies impose official, "pitilessly instrumental" maps over what Nixon calls the "vernacular landscape," a non-hegemonic landscape which is "shaped by the affective, historically textured maps that communities have devised over generations, maps replete with names and routes, maps alive to significant ecological and surface geological features."[48] The loss of these vernacular landscapes

signifies the loss of the indigenous cultural meanings and histories that the land has accumulated over many generations. This sense of cultural loss, which is inseparable from ecological loss, is at the heart of *Imaginary Maps*. Official geography maintains its authority in part by erasing from the discursive record the local, unofficial oral histories of indigenous communities, especially those memories of violence (slow or fast) that has helped shape the present ecological and socio-economic landscape. It is here, in resisting nationalist and global modes of collective repression, that the political agency of the postcolonial abject becomes legible.

To counter this official discourse – which, as Nixon puts it, "abstracts to extract"[49] – Devi smashes bureaucratic jargon against a heteroglossia drawing omnivorously from Eastern and Western literature, philosophy, myth, and slang. Minoli Salgado writes of Devi's style, "the language used is itself unfixed, incorporating a mixture of folk dialects and urbane Bengali, slang and Shakespeare."[50] In her translation, Gayatri Spivak italicizes the English words from the original Bengali manuscript, justifying her decision in her "Translator's Note": "Mahasweta's stories are *post*colonial. They must operate *with* the resources of a history shaped by colonization *against* the legacy of colonialism. […] By contrast, the culturalist intellectual…and the State can affect a 'pure' idiom, which disguises *neo*colonialist collaboration."[51] A quick sample of these words paints a picture of those elements of British colonial rule that refuse to dissolve, having been appropriated by the new national ruling class to continue the exploitation of *adivasi* and other outcastes: *police, military, paramilitary, officers, Father, schoolmaster, jail, laborer, trucks, bridges, buses, train, circus, movies, Congress*, *Elections,* and *vote* (*IM* 89, 88, 22, 24, 65, 37, 65, 32). By showing how the English language still lurks within vernacular literature, Devi demonstrates how the institutions of colonialism still haunt in the Indian national project.

In addition to these gothic stylistic elements to Devi's language, the plot of her novella "Douloti the Bountiful" follows a relatively familiar gothic structure of female entrapment. A

predatory male, the brahman pimp Paramananda, lures Douloti, an innocent virgin from her tribal forest village of Seora, with promises of marriage and a pay-off to her destitute *kamiya* father, Ganori "Crook" Nagesia. ("Crook" earns his nickname from his bent body, which was broken when his cruel master forced him to drag a plough-cart after the death of his horse – another example of a body horrifically metamorphosed by the *kamiya* system.) With bitter irony, the narrator calls Paramananda's arrival to rescue Douloti "A true fairy tale" (*IM* 39), playing on Romantic notions of heterosexual love. However, postcolonial realism soon casts its shadow over this folktale, as Prince Charming transforms into Blue Beard.[52] Once Douloti is alone with her captor, he drugs and rapes her. Her assailant, Latia, a "bestial" and sexually-violent contractor who builds faulty roads and bridges into tribal forest areas, claims the fourteen year-old Douloti as his own, paying Paramananda to keep her out of the brothel's normal rotation. Douloti never sees any of the money, and actually ends up further in debt because she is forced to borrow more money for food and cosmetics. This lasts until, after years of abuse and poor nutrition her body begins to break down, and Latia casts her aside. After this, and after Paramananda's cruel, ambitious son Baijnath takes over the brothel, Douloti is put into heavy rotation, forced to see "twenty to thirty clients by the clock" (*IM* 80). Under this strain, Douloti contracts syphilis and tuberculosis. These diseases quickly mutilate her undernourished body, so much so that Baijnath kicks her out of the brothel, as she can no longer draw clientele. As she wastes away, she tries to travel back to Seora, but cannot complete the journey; she dies on the blacktop outside of a school, her disease-ridden body stretched over a chalk map of the Indian nation. While often in gothic tales, the damsel in distress gets rescued by some white knight, there is no such salvation at the hands of patriarchy for Douloti.

"Douloti the Bountiful" critiques two concepts that English modernist authors articulated as the essence of their protagonists' beings: nature and nation. Earlier in this project I

show how for Woolf and Forster, these intertwining imaginaries provided a foundation for their representation of ecorhapsody, as one's internal English nature harmonized with the spirit animating a nation's landscape, either familiar or exotic. Devi's novella shows how both of these hallowed notions are compromised ideological abstractions, often used as justification for violence, slow and fast, against the *adivasi* and other indigenous people. Brahman and upper-case characters leverage nature and religion against *kamiya* sex workers to claim that their position of super-exploitation is both inevitable and just. Paramananda claims "it is written in the great epics Ramanyana and Mahabharata that ending bonded labor is against religion" (*IM* 81). In addition to claims such as this, that some natural, divine order predestines *adivasi* to be bond-slaves of upper castes, Devi's male characters justify their sexual abuse and exploitation of *kamiya* women by asserting that such behavior is a natural consequence of an unquenchable libido. The narrator sardonically adopts this rhetoric of naturalness when describing Latia after he first rapes Douloti:

> There is no objection to [Latia] sitting around naked. Here everybody fears him. This way is natural for him.
>
> Douloti was afraid of Latia's naturalness.
>
> Paramananda has entered the room this way many a time. He has completed exchange with the rapist without glancing once at the naked harijan woman's helpless body. This behavior is natural for him.
>
> Douloti was afraid of Paramananda's naturalness. (*IM* 58)

This chilling passage, saturated with gothic fear of sexual abuse and exploitation, demonstrates how "nature" designates, not an original or ideal state of being, but rather a certain organization of power. In Foucaultian terms, the concept of nature is an effect of power and discourse, not a cause. The idea of predatory sexuality being an essential part of masculine nature serves to justify rape culture by effacing the responsibility of individual men who perpetrate such violence. Tragically, Douloti and most of the other *kamiya* characters of the novella come accept their situation as natural, not out of any ideological commitment, but rather because their position of super-exploitation gives them few other options. There is no ecorhapsodic revelation of nature

for these characters. Instead, their experiences on the front lines of sex and labor trafficking affords them an intimate understanding of how the interlocking systems of neocolonial capitalism, patriarchy, racism, and the police state conspire to profit off their suffering. This knowledge is in no way compensatory, only critical. In contrast, the other two novels I discuss here (two novels, it must be said, that are written by men) do suggest that experiencing such violence brings monsters an unexpected "gift" – a way of perceiving the one's relationship with the more-than-human world that opens up new routes of becoming with others.

Related to this deconstruction of the concept of "nature," the novella enacts a critique of the joint ideologies of nationalism and liberal democracy, showing how *adivasi* are often left out from this vision of a unified, modernized India. It is clear that the bond-slaves of the brothel live in a completely different reality than the mainstream history of the Indian nation. The story takes place between 1960-72, a tumultuous time of tremendous conflict, including the Sino-Indian War of 1962 and the Emergency of the early 70's. The narrative mentions these national upheavals, but they are to a distant backdrop. The *kamiya* women do not even understand what "India" is, much less do they recognize themselves as part of this imaginary community:

> "They are fighting some in China."
> "Whose fight?"
> "Someone called India, his. I didn't understand anything." (65)

From the sham elections, where tribal people are first bribed with food and later intimidated by armed thugs to vote for friends of their brahman masters,[53] to the repeated failure of the government to enforce laws against *kamiya*, Devi's novella makes it clear that the promises of autonomy and human rights that are supposed to come along with modern democracy are not extended across the castes. In postcolonial India, this class still exists in a state of exception.

India's traditional class/caste hierarchy reproduces itself in the twentieth and twenty-first century with the muscle of global capitalism, debt. While it might at first seem like a finance-

capitalism concept like debt is immaterial, and therefore has no place within an argument about trans-corporeal toxicity, it is important to understand how debt does in fact have a materiality because of the way it influences flows of commodities, resources, bi-products, and bodies within global capitalist networks. "Douloti the Bountiful" highlights the way that debt comes to bear on the body, especially in the scene that describes how one of the masters, Munabar, keeps a ledger of different *kamiyas*' fingerprints.[54] Debt operates on local, national, and global scales as a disciplinary tool that compels poor communities of color to welcome polluting industries, toxic waste storage facilities, and other environmentally catastrophic activities. Debt is frequently a matter of life and death, with close ties to "necropolitics," This concept, developed by Achille Mbembe as an elaboration of Foucault's biopolitics, describes how certain communities, usually from postcolonial sites in the global south, are compelled to live in "*death-worlds*, new and unique forms of social existence in which vast populations are subjected to conditions of life conferring upon them the status of *living dead*."[55] With this blurring of the border between life and death, Mbembe's necropolitics has obvious gothic dimensions. The monstrous suffering of these abjected populations is not an exception to a neocolonial global order but rather its condition, for without these foundational sacrifice zones the global capitalist order would collapse.

The brothels of India constitute exactly one of these death-worlds for *kamiya* women. These bond sex slaves are trapped within a contemporary version of the plantation, which Mbembe describes as an apparatus where "The slave is kept alive but in *a state of injury*, in a phantom-like world of horrors and intense cruelty and profanity. […] Slave life, in many ways, is a form of death-in-life."[56] Paramandara subjects the bodies of Douloti and the rest of the women to the tightest of biopolitical regimens, including forcing them to have abortions, as well as the coldest of economic calculations, as they are only given proper food in preparation for particularly important clients. Because Douloti and the other women know that their survival

depends upon making themselves appealing to powerful men like Latia, they borrow money and go further into debt so that they can produce themselves as desirable sexual objects. This brutal debtor economy becomes even more taxing under Bajinath, who declares, "The feeding money will go down more, the number of clients will go up more. Body! Kamiya woman's body! If the body dries up she'll depart. Famine's on the way, is there any shortage of harijan kamiya women?" (*IM* 79). The corrupt patriarchal order transforms the bodies of *adivasi* women first to a commodities, an abundant resource to be harvested, and later to expendable matter, to be cast aside once it has been depleted.

These women who "own nothing: not the means to their livelihood, nor their own bodies," are, in Spivak's terms, "the super-exploited."[57] Because of this position of super-exploitation, the *kamiya* women are more heavily exposed to trans-corporeal risk than their male counterparts. In addition to the dangers associated with pregnancy and abortion (which the reader is hyper-aware of because of the tragic fate of Kalabati, who dies because of complications with an abortive medicine [*IM* 61]), women in these brothels are constantly, but unevenly, at risk of sexually transmitted diseases. In this necropolitical sacrifice zone, women's bodies are transformed by this relentless onslaught of sexual abuse. The story of Somni, a woman of thirty with "the broken cackling voice of a seventy-year-old-witch" (63), who has borne three children got from clients of the brothel, attests to how this regimen will metamorphose a healthy body. By story's end she ends up a beggar asking for scraps at the brothel's door, hoping for famine so that she can turn her children over to the local Mission (*IM* 76-77). Somni's fate portends Douloti's: "Now Latia is her client, her body is tight. Then going down and down Douloti will be as skeletal as Somni. She will repay the bondslavery loan as a beggar" (*IM* 73). For the women of this death-world brothel, becoming less sexually desirable to

powerful males increases one's exposure to trans-corporeal risk; debt and patriarchy collude to push the sex-worker's body into destructive plasticity.

Douloti never does repay her bondslavery loan. Once Latia casts her aside ("These goods are threadbare now" [*IM* 77]) and she is put into the main rotation, syphilis quickly comes to claim her. The abjection of Douloti's body parallels the degradation of the land throughout the collection, in that both are diseased and exhausted in the name of profit. As the haunting verse of the *kamiya* women laments, "The boss has turned them into land"(*IM* 59). This monstrous metamorphosis recalls my earlier point that for tribals being "closer to nature" actually means being more subject to slow violence; this vulnerability becomes especially acute for tribal women, who are intersectionally associated with nature across the ontological fields of race and gender. Patriarchy would have us see this conflation as ennobling, but it is an illusion covering exploitation and violence, justifying the treatment of indigenous people (especially women) as "natural" resources to be used at will. For Douloti, being marked as "bountiful" frames her as ripe for abuse. Super-exploitation turns out to be super-profitable for those who keep such *kamiya* women in bondage. Shortly before Douloti's death, a group of men led by a white European missionary, Father Bomfuller, finally comes to close down the brothel for keeping *kamiya*. Father Bomfuller calculates how much money has been made off her body over the course of her bond-slavery – over forty thousand rupees (*IM* 85). The steady pace of the abuse against her body parallels the steady pace of slow violence against the land.

Douloti's final act, her grotesque death, works as a direct critique of nationalist amnesia. As the residents of Tohri rise for Independence Day celebrations, they encounter Douloti's dead body atop a chalk map of India:

> Filling the entire Indian peninsula from the oceans to the Himalayas, here lies *bonded labor* spread-eagled, kamiya-whore Douloti Nagesia's tormented corpse, putrefied with venereal diseases, having vomited up all the blood in its desiccated lungs.

> Today, on the fifteenth of *August,* Douloti has left no room at all in the India of people like Mohan for planting the standard of the Independence flag. What will Mohan do now? Douloti is all over India. (*IM* 93)

Douloti's monstrous, abject body gives form to the exploitation of tribals across India; it is the "vernacular landscape" disgorged over the nation's official geography. This "demonstration" stands against the pomp of Independence Day, annihilating idealized notions of an independent and cohesive India.[58] In her spectacular death, Douloti warns of the unspectacular but still-destructive slow violence that has poisoned and disfigured her body. The monstrosity of this body results from the pathogens that have infected her body through this patriarchal, capitalist, and colonialist network of exploitation. Her "monstrosity" acts out the depravity of a dispersed and mostly invisible network. To Devi's readers, Douloti's body is not simply spectacle, but narrative; the story demands a hermeneutic that looks beyond the immediacy of her monstrosity to recognize the monstrous processes of slow violence that created this "tormented corpse."

Even those who endeavor to help the *adivasi* by exposing the continued unlawful existence of *kamiya* to the government find themselves to be unwitting accomplices to tribal peoples' suffering. Bureaucratic responses by NGOs and religious charities prove to be part of the problem, not the solution. The results of Bomfuller's survey end up "imprisoned in a *file*" (*IM* 89) – the intrusion of this English word, *file*, shows how even the response to neocolonial exploitation is problematically reliant on colonial methodologies. This phrasing, once again emphasizing entrapment, links the gothic with government bureaucracy and information networks such as mass media and academia. The political structures and public discourses of the modernized world fail to addresses injustices such as the ones that led to Douloti's demise; rather, they repress such injustices by reducing them to data. The bureaucratic archive is here shown to be impotent in confronting violence, fast or slow. While technological modernity and development is supposed to bring with it the promise of human rights, these tools ultimately

prove to be part of the apparatus of control, a way of dissolving violence against individuals into global data networks. Institutional and bureaucratic responses to slow violence are complicit with these systems of injustice. There needs to be some other way of understanding postcolonial subaltern agency beyond just further incorporation into and reliance on the networks of global neoliberal capitalism. As Dhano, one of Father Bumfuller's colleagues, admits of the dispersed *kamiya* "society," "If you call it a society, there is no accounting for the number of people in it" (*IM* 75). While one reading of this claim that "no accounting" is possible emphasizes the sheer size of this class, it also can be productively read as an ontological claim – these people cannot be "counted" because the very act of counting eliminates the critical individual experiences of those super-exploited subjects. There is an element of gothic unspeakability at work here, warning that every act of representation is saturated with multiple dimensions of power and will also be incomplete. Instead of seeking mastery over these people and their lands with the discursive technologies of the institutional archive, those from the developed world must cultivate a more delicate and passive attitude towards these abjected peoples.[59]

Malarial Mediums

While Devi's use of the postcolonial bio-gothic marks the return of the violent environmental history of rural India, the other two narratives that I discuss in this chapter instead relate the tales of monsters who survive in India's cities. These urban bio-gothic novels, comparatively, are more invested in leveling critiques against Western techno-science, instead of focusing primarily on political and economic institutions, as Devi does in "Douloti the Bountiful." Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome* (1995) is exceptional within this project because it is the only novel that is typically characterized as science fiction, or "SF."[60] I admit Ghosh's novel because of its liminal generic classification. From its opening, the novel issues

clear signals that it should be read as SF; it begins in a near-future New York where the life and labor of Antar (an Egyptian widower) is managed by a panoptic computer system. This AI network, "Ava," conducts routine global "inventories" for the ominously-named International Water Council. However, despite these obvious SF cues, the novel violates the genre's conventions; thematically, these experiments interrogate SF's (frequent) complicity with the capitalist and imperialist aspirations of Western techno-science. Through this transformation of SF, Ghosh conjures an alternative narrative to hegemonic Western histories of Science; it is a history of "counter-science." This bio-gothic shadow of Science, with its methodology of "secrecy," critiques the universalist epistemologies of Western modern science. In this hybridization of the genre, the SF novel no longer functions as a locus where fantasy and science come together in a techno-utopian (or techno-dystopian) projection, but rather a place where Science undergoes a gothic excavation that unearths abjected knowledge systems.

Ghosh's novel, subtitled *A Novel of Fevers, Delirium, and Discovery*, is characteristically complex and difficult to categorize; this is in part because its main character is a pathogen, not a person. The major conceit of *The Calcutta Chromosome* is that a strain of malaria, encouraged by two Indian lab assistants working in Ronald Ross's lab during the end of the 19th century, mutates in such a way that a human's subjectivity, their inner "I," can be "transposed" from one body to another via mosquito. (Ronald Ross is based on a real person, an English medical doctor who won the Nobel Prize in 1902 for discovering the process of malaria transfer from mosquitos to humans.) The novel intercuts scenes from three historical settings: one in imperial Calcutta during the *fin de siècle*; one in the same metropolis in 1995 (the novel's year of publication); and one, discussed just above, featuring Antar and Ava in future New York City. Weaving together these three timelines, the plot traces the passage of this "chromosome" (a term the novel uses only "by analogy" [*CC* 250])[61] across several generations. The chromosome

functions as a deliberate method of reincarnation for the subaltern Indian lab assistants, a reproduction of the self in the body of another through the technology of the mosquito. Through this malarial medium, one of these lab assistants, Mangala, passes her subjectivity from her body to that of the mystic Mrs. Aratounian's, to Urmila's, a newspaper reporter living in 1995, and finally to Tara's, a childcare worker from the future timeline. The same goes for Mangala's servant Laakhan, who transposes his subjectivity (along with his four-fingered left hand) onto a sequence of bodies, eventually that of real-estate mogul Roman Handler, "a self-made man (in more than one sense)," as the critic Diane Nelson quips.[62] These subaltern agents fascinate Murugan, a self-anointed expert on the history of the discovery of malaria whose plot spans the two later timelines. He describes the cult's aim as "the biggest goal of all, the biggest fucking ball game any human being has ever thought of: the ultimate transcendence of nature....Immortality" (*CC* 107). The novel's closing scene seems to grant Murugan his ambition to "transcend nature" as his subjectivity enters Antar's body with the unwitting assistance of Ava's virtual reality human-computer interface. The ending suggests that this is not a possession, where one's body is overtaken by a foreign invader, but rather a communion, as Antar merges with Murugan, as well as the other members of Mangala's cult who seem to be in the New York apartment with him, telling him, "We're with you; you're not alone; we'll help you across" (*CC* 311). The *where* of this across is unclear; it a metaphysical and intersubjective presence that is simultaneously biological, technological, and spiritual.

The malarial process of "transposition" at the center of *The Calcutta Chromosome* is a form of metamorphosis; even if the host displays few external signs of change, the possession irrevocably changes the body's processes, including and especially the workings of embodied mind. Like other metamorphoses discussed in this chapter, *The Calcutta Chromosome* insists that the mind is always enfleshed and therefore can be altered by trans-corporeal contact with the

more-than-human environment. The ending is an image of material ecorhapsody, where Antar exceeds his monadic subjectivity to contact a intersubjective psychical beyond. Ghosh, by making the trigger for this transformation the malaria bug (*Plasmodium*), effects a gothic inversion of the typical trigger-function: instead of a human subject tapping into the environment, it is the environment that possesses the human. This possession is a kind of escape route; transposition-via-malaria provides a way for characters to operate undetected within a global system of technological surveillance and biopolitical management. In an interview, Ghosh identifies *becoming-imperceptible* as the primary aim of the novel's subaltern characters: "in some sense, *The Calcutta Chromosome* is really about people trying to escape being known. I think that began to fascinate me – in a world where everything is known, how do you become what is not known, how do you escape the omniscient gaze?"[63] For these characters, malaria provides a (literal) "line of flight" on the wings of mosquitos that the carry this infectious "gift"[64] from one body to the next.

In addition to being the *method* of gaining power, the malaria also provides an *allegorical figuration* of a parasitic subaltern agency; Mangala and her cult operate as parasites to the "host" of British colonial and, later, global capitalist infrastructure, reappropriating its organs to effect a queer auto-reproduction that works both inside and outside these systems of biopolitical control. Mangala is able to wield counter-science and counter-knowledge because she is open to the fact that, in an encounter with an other, both you and it will change; neither participant in the encounter is simply the observing, masterful subject nor the inert, passive object. Knowledge transforms the subject just as the subject transforms the objects to which he or she applies knowledge making apparatuses. Mangala understands that knowledge must be contingent because humans are contingent beings.

Critical discussions of *The Calcutta Chromosome* have mostly centered on the question of how to characterize the novel's complex relationship to SF. These arguments have shown how Ghosh's experimentation with the genre both critiques hegemonic narratives about the development and inherent superiority of Western modern science and imagines an alternative conceptual and political space built on non-Western, anti-modern epistemologies.[65] However, as I indicated above, accounts of the novel that focus on its SF elements are somewhat limited because they do not pay enough attention to the other aesthetic modes operating within the novel. *The Calcutta Chromosome* has a pastiche form characteristic of the gothic, combining several different genres beyond its science fiction elements: the detective story, the vernacular ghost story, the alternate history, the philosophical rumination, the utopian fantasy, and the postcolonial resistance narrative are all programmed into the novel's DNA. These different elements do not marry into a sympathetic whole, some multicultural super-genre; rather, they are often at odds with each other, creating a dialectical energy within the novel as each mode of storytelling muscles for supremacy. Several critics have commented on this generic hybridity. Hugh O'Connell understands Ghosh's novel as built upon the "tension between detective and science fiction genre structures," where detective fiction is about the instrumentalization of knowledge, while SF focuses on utopian (or dystopian) concepts of possibility and futurity, and thus rejects the facticity that is at the center of detective fiction.[66] With its "centrifugal structure" and "ever-expanding narrative," the novel works at the level of form to deconstruct these literary genres and to question the nature of the cultural work they perform.[67] Ghosh exploits these tensions between different Western genres to create his complex aesthetic and ideological effects; he does the same with different global literary traditions. Bishnupriya Ghosh describes how, in this "ghost story foisted upon the reader of a medical thriller,"[68] Amitav Ghosh "grafts" and "ghosts" the form of the Indian vernacular short story onto the novel form with the

"Laakhan Stories."[69] These episodes in the novel, apparently lost stories of the fictional writer Phulboni, adapt stories by two famous Indian authors who wrote in languages other than English: Rabindrahath Tagore's "The Hungry Stones," originally in Bengali, and Phaniswarnath Renu's "Smells of Primeval Night," originally in Hindi. The spectral presence of these non-Western, non-English forms encourage the reader to see the novel against Indian cultural traditions (such as the opposition between Brahmanical and *tantra* Hinduism), something that often gets lost in analyses of the novel that only focus on its place in SF.[70] According to B. Ghosh, "By the end of the novel, the vernacular literary tale is the *only* authoritative means through which the characters can decode the muddled and untruthful records of scientific discovery."[71] In gothic fashion, these vernacular stories bring to life counter-narratives about the violences of colonialism that official histories of science often occlude.

As I argued in this chapter's introduction, a major concern of gothic aesthetics is the failure of discourse to capture unspeakable truths. One of the primary methods through which gothic novels advance this theme is by deploying an archival form, so that many of the most famous novels of the British gothic (*Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* – three novels that could also be characterized as bio-gothic)[72] read as an assemblage of different types of documents. In each of these canonical examples, a "counter" story is both glimpsed within and silenced by the archive. The genre's uncanny aesthetic charge issues from the space between the official record and the untold/untellable story. The two central monsters of Ghosh's novel – the malaria bug and Mangala – are never isolated and identified by the archive of materials that the novel brings together; they hover on the periphery of the text, constantly metamorphosing in order to escape the gaze of microscope and imperial law alike.

From certain perspectives, malaria seems like the protagonist of this bio-gothic novel, an ambiguous monster that readers both fear and desire. The organism occupies each of the novel's

central characters, and the events of the plot enact its parasitic agency. While it is rather perverse to ask the audience to identify with a disease as murderous as malaria, the novel asks that we suspend some level of judgment to see the pathogen as enabling as well as destructive (at least in this fictional setting).[73] The disease's negative effects are unevenly distributed unevenly along lines of class, race, biological sex, and global region. Geographic and ecosystemic factors contribute to this distribution, as well as economic, political, and cultural factors; observing malaria requires that we see how these apparently different modes of analysis are interlocking and mutually dependent because their object of study intersects all these disciplinary divides. Recreating the complex causalities of malaria joins the queer ecological project laid out by Mel Chen in his book *Animacies*: "to make critical links between popular knowledges of environmental entities and the larger sociopolitical environments in which they are seated."[74] To consider malaria's "animacy" in this light is not to fetishize its destructive agency, but rather to understand how malaria shapes and is shaped by human processes. Malaria, like the toxins that Chen discusses in his study, is racialized, sexualized, and queered in scientific and popular discourse, and the ways in which malaria gets discussed can often occlude the complex intersections between the disease and other vectors of power. To tell the story of malaria, one must also tell the story of imperial agricultural programs, climate change, uneven development, urbanization, human immunology, NGO debt provisions, the plunder and devaluation of indigenous knowledges, global nutritional disparities, ecosystemic slow violence, inter- and intra-national racial politics: the list goes on. Ghosh's novel, with its pastiche form, its spiraling narrative structure, and its swift navigation of vast temporal and spatial distances, is well-designed to represent malaria's animacy, ironically, *because of* its disunity. It imagines slow resistance to slow violence, tracking agentic actions of subalterns across generations.

The bug's agency – its ability to reproduce itself through the body of its various hosts while transforming those hosts in the process – largely derives from its metamorphic capabilities. These faculties enable malaria to escape detection from scientific technology; Ghosh's novel catalogues the futile attempts of real-life European researchers working to pin down the disease's process of transmission. Murugan calls malaria "the cold fusion of [Ross's] day," one of "the Last Unknowns" of the nineteenth century that had yet to be conquered by the march of imperial science (*CC* 55, 56). Malaria escapes scientific efforts at mastery in part because it presents in so many different ways: "it can mimic the symptoms of more diseases than you can count – lumbago, the flu, cerebral hemorrhage, yellow fever" (*CC* 56). Just as malaria's symptoms are metamorphic in form, the *Plasmodium* bug itself transforms and evades detection, as it can only be seen in its active, reproductive form in live blood. Murugan recaps how the discovery of these protozoan organisms by the French scientist Alphonse Laveran – who is the first to observe these "crescent-shaped granules…beginning to jive, turning into a miniature octopus, throwing out tentacles, shaking the whole cell" – is initially dismissed by most of the European scientific establishment: "it's like he said he found the yeti" (*CC* 70). Like the yeti, for late-Victorian scientists believe in this chimera, they had to take the word of a few fringe devotees, as Laveran's observations were not reproducible in slides of dead blood. In gothic fashion, malaria does not appear as a stationary object to be disenchanted through empirical science. It comes to life as vibrant matter that refuses to remain an inanimate specimen.

The parasite's mutability makes it imperceptible not only to the eye of Western science, but also to the biological human body. As Murugan explains, "what's special about the malaria bug is that as it goes through its life cycle it keeps altering its coat-proteins. So by the time the body's immune system learns to recognize the threat, the bug's already had time to do a little costume-change before the next act" (*CC* 251). Ghosh's sartorial and theatrical metaphor

emphasizes the way that malaria manipulates its appearance; it is a "performative" pathogen. With an uncanny deliberateness, it bamboozles its "audience," the immune system's antibodies, whose militant purpose is to identify the parasite and communicate that information to other killer white blood cells. The horror comes from the fact that this metamorphic disease seems to have a mind of its own as it evades detection from the most advanced technology of man as well as the most sophisticated of nature's technologies, the body's cellular and biochemical processes.

Beyond this ability to escape detection, *Plasmodium* provokes horror because of the way it transforms humans, an instance of destructive plasticity. Malaria doesn't simply transform the body of its host; it also alters mental functions. Observing these transformations reminds us that the brain is embodied, and therefore it, like the body, is porous, contingent, and unstable. *Plasmodium falciparum*, the species associated cerebral malaria and also the most deadly, provokes hallucinations in its human hosts. The *falciparum* variation is especially dangerous because it has a high reproductive capacity, with an average parasitemia ranging anywhere from two and a half to twenty-five times the amount of the next most reproductive variation.[75] It is also more dangerous than the other three species because it causes infected blood cells to become sticky so that they adhere to the vascular beds of various organs, including the lung, heart, placenta, and brain, a process known as "sequestration."[76] Once the parasite colonizes the cerebral microvasculature, the host can experience neurological symptoms, including stupor, loss of consciousness, coma, and death.[77] *The Calcutta Chromosome* proposes that these changes to the brain are not limited to the *falciparum* species; Murugan explains, "other kinds of malaria have weird neural effects too. A lot of people who've had malaria know that: it can be more hallucinogenic than any mind-bending drug. That's why primitive people sometimes thought of malaria as a kind of spirit-possession" (*CC* 249). This "primitive" explanation of spirit-possession touches upon a blind spot of the logocentric methods of Western modern science:

that malaria has a kind of subjectivity, a way of being in and making (non)sense of the world. Instead of considering a mental effect of malaria as a "hallucination" – which implies that one is seeing something without a correspondence in reality – to describe an malarial episode as a "spirit possession" instead implies the opposite. When one is possessed, they tap into a real force that exists beyond typical modes of sensorial and technological perception. Or, more accurately for this parasite, this force taps into them, as the human characters "become-malarial." In this trans-corporeal relationship, it is no longer possible to determine subject and object. It is an instance of *malarial subjectivity* – a subjectivity that exists only as and through a complex interaction among *Plasmodium*, mosquito, and human organisms.

Malaria in *The Calcutta Chromosome* thus adapts the concept of ecorhapsody and its relationship to metamorphosis as I have described its development in early twentieth century English literature. Similar to its modernist predecessors, this novel demonstrates how human subjectivity is not self-contained but is rather distributed among many nonhuman organisms and inanimate matter. Also similar, it emphasizes how exposure to exotic environments affects both body and mind, which breaks down any notion of a Cartesian divide between these two entities and emphasizes how both are subject to unpredictable, uncontrollable change. However, in the West-goes-East modernist novels I consider in my first two chapters, Woolf's *Orlando* and Forster's *A Passage to India*, transformative encounters with the Eastern landscape still emphasize the primacy of the sensory image (the sun setting over Turkish hills, the "buom" of the Marabar Caves) as a trigger for rhapsody and metamorphosis. They therefore maintain the agency of the human intellect over the body even as they seem to trouble that hierarchy. In Ghosh's novel, the trigger is a non-human subject whose subjectivity is (almost) completely alien and unimaginable to the human. To "contact nature" is not to look upon her beautiful or awesome landscapes, but rather to be colonized by her disease-and-death-inducing pathogens. *The Calcutta Chromosome*

critiques idealist views of nature while still maintaining the concept's mystery and threat within its gothic elements. There still might be some greater truth to tap into, some beyond that technological science has failed to enclose, but, the novel promises and warns, this element might be entirely hostile to human life, and even if you survive, the encounter will leave you fundamentally and permanently changed, inside and out.

Even as the novel endeavors to horrify its readers about the metamorphic threat of malaria, it simultaneously challenges them to understand the encounter between parasite and host as (re)productive, instead of simply combative and destructive. This challenge is a familiar theme within the gothic tradition; Shelley's *Frankenstein*, for instance, similarly calls on its readers to imagine new social and biological forms that might emerge if we risked empathy with a monster. *The Calcutta Chromosome* imagines a form of queer reproduction that exceeds the biologistic laws of compulsory heterosexuality. Rachel Lee, discussing the novel in terms of epigenetics and reproductive labor, argues, "Ghosh's novel, read through a microbiologically informed lens, limns the entangled reproductive cycles of several species. Mangala's group…treats not as pathological, but as natural and even as advantageous, entanglement in another's alter-reproductive habits…."[78] Mangala, perhaps because she was born with hereditary syphilis, develops a sense of reproduction and care is not limited by phobic (because racialized and sexualized) conceptions of disease. Indeed, many followers seek out her "gift" of malaria because they learn that she has figured out how to use the disease to treat psychosis brought on by late-stage syphilis. (This discovery won Austrian scientist Julius Wagner-Jauregg the Nobel Prize in Medicine in 1927.) Malaria functions not only as a queer method of reproduction for Mangala and her crew, but also a queer method of care and community.

The characteristics of malaria I describe above – its metamorphic evasion of scientific containment, its trans-corporeal penetration of boundaries, its power to transform a much larger

and more powerful host organism, and its appropriation of that host organism's infrastructure to reproduce itself – show how this disease provides an allegory for parasitic subaltern agency. The plot around the Ross's discovery of malaria and his Indian lab assistants parallels the process of malaria transmission and infection, where the British Empire's scientific establishment plays the role of the host while Mangala and Laakhan take on that of the parasite. These Indian lab assistants, like the *Plasmodium* bug, escape the gaze of the scientific community by constantly changing their names, behavior, and bodies. They succeed mostly because the novel's British characters, Ross and D.D Cunningham, are too blinded by their own colonialist assumptions about Indians to take note of their subalterns' surreptitious activities. Ross only sees Laakhan for his work as a "'dhooley-barer': in other words the British government pays him to shovel shit" (*CC* 76) while Cunningham dismisses concerns about Mangala by saying, "Oh, she's just the sweeper-woman" (*CC* 142). In both cases, the officious eyes of imperial medical science pass over these characters because of their abjection, a condition reinforced by their work with abject material, feces and dirt. While this might seem to put these Indian characters in a disempowered position, it actually provides precisely the cover they need. Similar to the way that malaria alters its chemical coating to trick the immune system while it sequesters itself in organ tissue, Mangala and Laakhan exaggerate their abjection in order to dupe these scientists into seeing them as inert sources of labor while they penetrate the body of the British Empire's scientific infrastructure.

Once she sequesters herself in the empire's techno-scientific apparatus, Mangala functions like a parasite: she reappropriates the organs of her host for auto-reproduction. Murugan supposes that it was not colonial science who chose Mangala; rather, it was Mangala who targeted colonial infrastructure as a technological means to "effect a mutation" in the *Plasmodium falciparum* bug (*CC* 105). Reconstructing this alternative history, Murugan hypothesizes, "They decide the next big leap in their project will come from a mutation in the

parasite. The question now is: how to speed up the process? The answer is: they've got to find a conventional scientist who'll give it a push" (*CC* 106). Subject and object, colonizer and colonized, master and slave, have been inverted beneath the microscopes of the best-equipped laboratory in British Asia. Mangala, an illiterate woman, has a much better understanding of malaria than the bumbling British scientists, who prove comically ineffectual until she begins manipulating their research. Despite Cunningham's dismissal that her "mind's been wasted" (*CC* 147) by syphilis, Mangala possesses critical, close-to-the-ground knowledge about the more-than-human environment that was essential to the discovery of malaria transmission. She is the one who, via Laakhan, informs the clueless Ross that only a certain species of mosquito (the *Anopheles*, "dappled wing mosquitos" [*CC* 78]) is capable of gestating and passing along malarial sporozoites. Ross, with characteristically English blindness, believes Laakhan's explanation that the "hot tip" came from a goatherd in the mountains. (Another mountain goatherd! In the British imperial imagination, who besides this nomadic stereotype would posses such intimate environmental knowledge?) In a passage from Ross's *Memoirs* that is recorded in Ghosh's novel, the Englishman chalks up the good fortune to the "Angel of Fate" – or, as Murugan sardonically translates, "some Fat Cat way up in the sky" (*CC* 78).[79] Ross imagines himself as a latter-day Robinson Crusoe taming the New Worlds of epidemiology. And, like Crusoe, Ross provides spurious religious explanations for his good fortune, even when it is the result of material and human agents. With his absurd self-assurance, the novel parodies the myths of scientific progress, benevolent paternalism, and divine will, all central to Britain's imperial narrative.

Beyond their blindness towards the subversive activities of their subalterns, this good-old-boys club of Ross and his colleagues are also limited by their heteronormative prudishness. They cannot "deal with all that sex happening under [the] 'scope" (*CC* 120), seeing "the charge of the Light Brigade" (*CC* 118) instead of reproduction when they observe the union of the male

and female malarial gametocytes. The sex-phobic English mindset habituates them to see all encounters as predicated in violence and competition (captured humorously by the Tennyson reference), instead of in reproductive union. Mangala finally points them in the right direction, commanding Farley to "tell [Cunningham] that what he sees is the body's member entering the body of its mate, doing what men and women must do…" (*CC* 153). She does not fear this queer reproduction, but rather connects the asexual reproduction of the *Plasmodium* organism with the human urge to reproduce. Both organisms, she understands, are driven by a *conatus*, the urge, common to all living things, to preserve and reproduce one's being.[80] She gains power by recognizing that both human and non-human organisms, even ones as monstrous as malaria, are not essentially different but are rather part of this same bio-/ecological mesh. Mangala exists confidently within material, ecological flux, while British scientists want to box malaria into a taxonomic structure of absolute, stable knowledge. She is an early ecologist, as she understands that removing an organism from its environment and sequestering it in a lab will necessarily limit and alter one's observations. Because she "[starts] at the deep end by stumbling over the process of transmission, rather than the chromosome itself" (*CC* 251) – in other words, because she understands that this miraculous chromosome is a phenomenal result of dynamic and multi-layered interactions between many different organisms, and not a bit of data that can be isolated on a laboratory slide – she is able to harness the powers that elude the colonizers.

Mangala thus occupies an idealized space within the text, but a problematic one, as her knowledge about the more-than-human world risks reinscribing primitivist stereotypes about how indigenous and subaltern people (especially women) enjoy a more heightened connection to nature. Mangala does not fit the stereotype of the "ecological Indian"[81] because she is a city-dweller, not an indigenous *adivasi*; her "environment" is not an idealized untouched wild space, but the wasteland of the imperial metropolis. Critics have disagreed about how the properly

assess Mangala. Some, such as Suchitra Mathur, endorse her as a heroic "Cyborg Goddess," a "mode of being that combines the artificial *and* the supernatural, and thus posits a 'third' identity for third world (women) natives which combines the past with the future, the innocence of the organic with the knowledge of the technical"; this "map[s] out the 'postcolonial new human.'"[82] Other critics have taken issue with this "Cyborg Goddess" figuration. Christopher Shinn argues that these critics overstate the case when they assume "Mangala's own 'rightful' place in leading the silent revolution," a proposition he finds "obscure and deeply disturbing" because of the subaltern woman's willingness to be violent in order to achieve her goals, which are themselves unclear.[83] While I agree with Shinn's argument that we should not over-valorize Mangala, his methodology for weighing her place in the novel strikes me as problematic. [84] What Shinn misses is that in Mangala's vague goals, because of their indeterminism, there exists the possibility for the irruptive emergence of the new. Her anti-teleological methodology enables her to remain imperceptible and to retain her agency in a metamorphic material world. Her peripheral existence in the narrative – which offers no access to her internality nor a straightforward description of her rituals, only glances and hints – enacts this necessary slipperiness.

Mangala passes along this crucial ecological knowledge to the British scientists not because she wants to help them finally conqueror this disease, but rather because she needs their technological resources to advance her own, "counter-scientific" agenda (*CC* 104). The novel's discussion of counter-science connects scientific knowledge production with the colonial will to domination. Like Mangala's preference for process over content, counter-science critiques the totalizing epistemologies of Western modern science through what O'Connell calls a "postcolonial utopian phenomenology predicated on difference…rather than the determinations and identity thinking of Western imperialism…."[85] Murugan outlines this counter-science, which relates to science as "matter [to] antimatter" and "Christ [to] Antichrist" (*CC* 104). On one side

of this science/counter-science spectrum, there is presence – of matter, of God. This metaphysical presence forms the core of knowledge; it ensures the consistency all objects, including and especially the self. On the other side of the spectrum, there is, not absence, but opposition. Counter-science does not say that there is no matter, that there is no Word, but rather that phenomena will always exceed and escape these totalizing concepts. Murugan introduces the "principles" of counter-science; the first, he explains, "would have to be secrecy[.] It would have to use secrecy as a technique or procedure. It would in principle have to refuse all direct communication, straight off the bat, because to communicate, to put ideas into language, would be to establish a claim to *know* – which is the first thing that a counter-science would dispute" (*CC* 105, emphasis Ghosh's). This epistemological crisis, where knowledge as a primary concept is suspect because of the way its communication depends on the inexact, delayed medium of language, also haunts and energizes ecorhapsodic writing, which points its reader towards the limits of language to communicate sensory (or extra-sensory) experience. Counter-science exists within that uncanny space between lived experience and communicable knowledge, between presence and trace. This epistemological gap serves as a center of the plot, as the desire to fill that gap drives the novel's bio-gothic detective plot forward.

This desire does not get realized (although the novel's final moment leaves open the possibility); the point of counter-science is that knowledge will always be haunted by its incompleteness, because "to know something is to change it…: you only know its history. …knowledge couldn't begin without acknowledging the impossibility of knowledge" (*CC* 105). Murugan's disquisition follows Derridian critiques of knowledge production: that all knowledge, dependent as it is on the sign, is a trace; it shows what something *was* ("its history") but doesn't establish what it *is*. When matter itself is protean, even the translation from signifier to sign is too much of a delay. Beyond this deconstruction of the linguistic signifier, Murugan's

commentary also implies something even more radical: that it is *knowledge* that is the aberration, the fantasy, the lie, and that the actual state of being is one of not-knowing – or perhaps, following the book's terminology, counter-knowledge. "Form" is not a normative condition that is then eroded by encounters with its others: form contains with in itself its own undoing.

This doesn't mean that the pursuit of knowledge is completely futile, the nihilistic version of deconstruction. There is a desire for knowledge and community through critical analysis that gets expressed in the plotlines of Murugan and Phulboni. Murugan I have discussed above. For the author Phulboni, counter-science is both an object of desire and a source of frustration because of the way this epistemological system insists upon the impossibility of knowledge. Phulboni's crisis is a hermeneutical one and also a question of faith. Lamenting his inability to contact "the mistress of silence, that most secret of deities," Phulboni cries, "I see signs of her [the Silence's] presence everywhere I go, in images, words, glances, but only signs, nothing more…" (*CC* 32-33, 124). Phulboni's unrealized desire to be possessed by the environment, to have some contact with the Real beneath the endless chain of signs, should be seen as a queer desire (even as he conjures a female avatar to aim this desire) because it involves not the restoration of self through the consumption of the other, but rather the annihilation of the self within the flux. It is therefore unrealizable desire, habitually melancholic, but all the more ecological for it because it refuses to reappropriate its object into a structure of knowing. Ng describes this as an example of sublime experience but one that differs from "traditional Western epistemologies of the sublime, which always require a 'reasonable' surmounting" because "for something to be truly sublime, reason must *necessarily* fail."[86] Ng argues that the sublime encounters featured in *The Calcutta Chromosome* are better thought of as an example of *ecstasis* (ecstasy), a mode of experience which "involves a relationship that does not cancel out the *alterity* of the other but accommodates it instead [thus inviting] a respectful and transparent

dialogue between two disparate entities without any hidden agenda of subjugation."[87] Ng's discussion of ecstasy is closely aligned with my discussion of ecorhapsody, but I prefer the term "ecorhapsody" because while the etymology of ecstasy emphasizes how the subject is taken outside of herself, rhapsody emphasizes instead how that experience facilitates interactions between subject and object. With rhapsody it is not just that the subject is displaced by the environment; it's that the boundaries of subject and object are completely dissolved (or rather are shown to be illusory in the first place), and what's left is only the trace, the rhapsody, the medium of contact between subject and object – "only signs, nothing more." It's not just that the subject is out of place; it's that the subject comes to see that the very sense of being "in place" is already the result of a complex network of dislocations. "Ecstasy" is a matter of faith because in its expression it refers back to the emplaced, embodied subject; "rhapsody" is a matter of hermeneutics and critical analysis because of the way it shows how subject and object are themselves conjured through the act of writing.

It is an example of cruel (but fitting) irony that it is the writer figure, Phulboni, who most wants to break through signs to arrive at the pure experience itself. The man who made himself with the power of words is the one who most wants to brush them aside and see what's buried underneath. Though it is never explicitly stated, it seems as if Phulboni is denied his desire to be taken into the inner sanctum of the subaltern group. His failure can be taken as another evasion on the part of malaria and the parasitic postcolonials. That someone (especially a male who is celebrated by the establishment) can so deeply desire to be taken into this collective and still be denied access shows how this cannot be a teleological process where one can choose to join this group of immortal insiders. Those who want to be metamorphosed must be willing to be made other, to put themselves at risk and to "become-monster." They must not only open their mind, but their body. Murugan, for example, lays down in a mosquito-filled net "in that elementary

open posture of invitation, of embrace, of longing" (*CC* 156). Passive, feminized, and objectified by the more-than-human environment (as he becomes food for mosquito and *Plasmodium* alike): Murugan displays both the risk and reward of opening one's body to the bio-gothic other. You stand to lose everything but also hope to gain a new future.

Eco-*nasha*

Since its 2007 publication, *Animal's People* has received significant critical attention in high-profile environmental humanities publications such as Rob Nixon's award-winning book *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* and Oxford University Press's edited collection *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, which features an essay on the novel by Pablo Mukherjee.[88] The novel follows the struggles and hijinks of Animal a homeless Indian boy who was orphaned by a chemical leak in his hometown of Khaufpur, a fictionalized version of the city of Bhopal where the Union Carbide factory experienced such a disaster in December of 1984.[89] The novel is part legal-political thriller, as Khaufpur's poor residents led by the agitator Zafar work to hold the American company (or as Animal pronounces it "Amrikan Kampani") responsible for the death and disfiguration caused by the leak. It is also part coming-of-age tale, as Animal lusts after Zafar's love, Nisha, and an American doctor, Elli, who claims to have come to the city to provide free medical care to these residents. Nixon identifies the novel as innovating the "environmental picaresque,"[90] a literary aesthetic mode that manifests a history of environmental "slow violence" through body of the picaro, a social outlier (like Animal) who manages to survive on society's margins through his or her wits alone. The picaro provides a solution a crucial epistemological crisis facing environmentalists today: how, in a media environment that represents violence as event-bound, does one make visible destructive acts and processes that are distributed across time and space? The devastating effects of the Bhopal

chemical spill were not contained to the night of the disaster, nor were they limited to the immediate surrounding area. Similarly, the causes for the disaster were not localized; rather, the leak and its aftermath resulted from a complex sequence of events across a global capitalist network.[91] Animal, bent in half by the "smelting in [his] spine" so that he must walk on all fours (*AP* 15), testifies to both the violence of the night of the leak and to the ongoing "slow" effects that the toxic chemicals have on the area's human and nonhuman residents. For Nixon, the transformations wrought on Animal's body – and, even more horrifically, those effected on "Kha-in-the-Jar," a two-headed fetus deformed in-utero by the Kampani's poisons – "give the absence wrought by toxicity a sensory density."[92] Following Nixon's interpretation of the picaro's "sensory density," when I call Animal and Kha-in-the-Jar "monstrous," I do so not to further their abjection or otherness, but rather to emphasize how these mutated bodies de*monstr*ate ongoing violent processes that are otherwise invisible.

While Nixon's analysis focuses on how Animal's physical body makes visible the invisible processes of slow violence, Mukherjee attends more to Animal's psychic and sensory experience, or (recalling Heiland's discussion of the gothic body) his sensibility. One the "gifts" that Animal received from the poison that bent his body is what Mukherjee calls Animal's "transpersonality, an ability to experience the objective existence of the entire environment of Khaufpur as a network of related subjects, *including himself*."[93] Animal's access to the subjectivity of various human and non-human others does not proceed from his access to a pure, original state of nature. Rather the opposite: his transpersonality is an adaptation precipitated by exposure the toxic products and biproducts of global capitalism. Mukherjee points out a crucial paradox: while the poison is the agent of mutation and slow violence, it also paradoxically facilitates postcolonial resistance by opening new forms of collective consciousness.[94] This is very similar to the crisis presented by malaria in *The Calcutta Chromosome*: both the Plasmodium

bug and the industrial pesticides are simultaneous lethal and vital, mutilating and catalytic. The poison's victims prompt reactions of gothic ambivalence, horror and empathy, and therefore present an ethical and epistemological dilemma: how do we move towards a more just future when the only agents for change are the toxic remains of an unjust past?

In order to pursue this problem through *Animal's People*, I will follow the moments when Animal experiences material ecorhapsody. In no way do these episodes constitute "pure" contact with an "untouched" or "wild" natural world, which was the trigger for the metamorphic Western protagonists. The triggers for Animal's ecorhapsodies, where channels the voice of Khaufpur's damaged-yet-resilient environment, are psychoactive chemicals, such as the industrial poisons made at the Kampani's "death factory" and drugs, such as bhang (a milky drink laced with cannabis) and datura (jimson weed). Aided/contaminated by these molecules, Animal enters into a new perceptual relationship with the material world, a transformation of mind that has both personal and political consequences in the novel. During these visions, Animal becomes both a living record of the past and a prophet of an unpredictable (but perhaps more just) future. But even as he exists in these gothic temporalities, tying him to the past and pushing him towards the future, Animal is also a creature of the present who lives at "now o'clock," as he calls it (*AP* 185). While this relationship with time is partly a necessity for survival – "In the Kingdom of the Poor, time doesn't exist," he explains to Elli (*AP* 185) – it is also a deliberate choice for Animal, who sees human temporal constructions as constraints on an inborn freedom. He will follow his impulse to drink bhang, enter the condemned factory's grounds, gulp down an almost lethal amount of datura, and no law, fence, or fear of death can stop him. And while there are certainly significant risks to all of these actions, they also are all necessary for Animal's political and existential awakening. His experiences of chemical-induced ecorhapsody teach him to "stay with the trouble," as Donna Haraway puts it: "staying with the

trouble requires learning to be truly present, not as a vanishing pivot between awful or edenic pasts and apocalyptic or salvific futures, but as moral critters entwined in myriad unfinished configurations of places, times, matters, and meanings."[95] In this temporal/psychological state of "true" but "unfinished" presence, Animal embodies an alternative to the hegemonic historical narratives of hopeless backwardness, lost origins, and contaminated purity that are typically deployed to explain the postcolonial condition. His reveries help him recognize the degree to which he is enmeshed with others in a state of impurity, partiality, and mutual precarity. This is the "power of nothing," as Zafar calls it (*AP* 111), an idea that Animal initially rejects but seems to endorse with the novel's conclusion, "All things pass, but the poor remain. We are the people of the Apokalis. Tomorrow there will be more of us" (*AP* 366). For Animal's people, there is no use fearing the apocalypse, because they already live it. Instead of trying to protect the idealized past, we must recognize that we live in disaster already, and therefore it is immediately critical that we find radical new grounds for alliance that are not based on identity or shared origins.

Animal is a fitting icon for this rallying cry because has no origin story, at least not in the conventional sense. He does not remember his parentage, his birthday, his religious background, or his body before the poison bent it double. For Animal, "humanity" is not something that he possesses within his body, an inborn state where he can root his sense of self. It is a narrative put upon him by others. This is clear from his introduction in the first tape: "I used to be human once. So I'm told. I don't remember it myself, but people who knew me when I was small say I walked on two feet just like a human being" (*AP* 1). He has no access to his *mutandum*, or pre-metamorphic form; while stories of metamorphosis, dating past Ovid, often chronicle a lost humanity, from Animal's perspective there was no humanity to be lost. There is no "before" the disaster for him: "I was six when the pains began, plus the burning in my neck and across the

shoulders. Nothing else do I remember from that time, my first memory is that fire" (*AP* 15). Animal's origin is apocalypse; his coming-to-being enacts destructive plasticity.

Following Malabou's claim (cited earlier) that "a smashed-up face is still a face," I submit, "a poisoned nature is still a nature." *Animal's People* is a novel that inhabits its toxic ecosystem, surveying the slums, the brothels, the condemned factories, the corrupted forests, and the rotted political institutions. The characters and the events of the plot constantly remind the reader of her trans-corporeality – that the body is porous, enmeshed in material processes that constantly affect our physical and psychical experiences. This exchange of chemicals, pathogens, and data between the body and its environment can be understood as material ecorhapsody. Instead of presenting a harmonious relationship between humanity and a deified nature, this shows how humanity is in a destructive, co-dependent relationship with an environment that has no positivist essence. And, the novel shows, that is precisely why we must do all we can to protect this relationship, which is sacred precisely because of its contamination.

I will discuss three episodes where Animal experiences chemically-induced ecorhapsody – first, his bhang bender, where he carouses across Khaufpur during the Holi festival with Farouq; second, when he breaks into the contaminated ground of the Kampani's factory; and third, when he attempts suicide by taking the datura pills that he had been secretly feeding to rival Zafar. These three episodes are the most gothic and mystical in a novel that is otherwise characterized by a wry realism. At the same time, as Mukherjee points out, these episodes are not "'magical realism' in the gimmicky, often misunderstood sense of the term, but realism fitted to express the horrors of a reality that threatens to escape the normative ordinary boundaries of style."[96] Each of these psychedelic scenes plays a key role in the novel's *bildungsroman* plot – the first episode teaching Animal about sexuality, the second about justice, the third about community. His subjectivity is never purely human, but distributed among various chemicals.

The novel does not mourn or celebrate this fact; rather it asserts that such "impure" development is ubiquitous and inevitable in Khaufpur.

Animal's first experience with altered consciousness in the novel is when he and Farouq drink several glasses of bhang and wander through the Hindu spring festival, Holi. (The setting of Holi is significant, for reasons I will explain shortly.) With this cannabis-infused tea surging through his system, Animal falls into a "nasha." However, the drug does not dull Animal's senses, at least not immediately. "The nasha is not drunkenness," Animal reports, "it opens things up, shows their inner natures. Just by looking at people walking by I know their souls" (*AP* 235). Animal describes the denizens of Khaufpur as they pass, noting "so many have that common look among Khaufpuris, tiredness, sickness, futility, their faces drift and dissolve like pools of cloud" (*AP* 236). The bhang also enables a key element of Animal's transpersonality – his "insight," the ability to penetrate the outward appearance of others to recognize their ephemeral, hopeless souls. This sensibility is not innate or natural; it depends upon the THC "opening" truths that are closed to habitual perceptions.

As the Holi celebration goes deeper into the night and Animal drinks more bhang, he eventually slips into a full-blown hallucination. But, just like Zafar's datura-induced nasha of the Kampani (which I will return to in a moment), this vision functions as an allegory, a narrative figuration that gives form to a situation that is otherwise difficult to observe. In this case, the situation is the relationship between corporate capitalism and toxicity in the developing world. Just as the bhang helped him see the "inner nature" of passing strangers, it allows him to see the truth about the Kampani. A deliriously stoned Animal imagines himself before Kha and other deformed fetuses, the youngest of the disaster's victims who ironically refer to themselves as the "Board of Directors of the poisonwallah shares." Jars atop a polished conference table display their mutated bodies: "One has a single huge staring eye in the middle of the forehead, another

has three arms, a third lacks a nose and a mouth" (*AP* 236). The monstrously metamorphosed bodies command empathy from the reader, but also self-interested fear as they demonstrate the body's trans-corporeality and destructive plasticity. "Everyone on this earth has in their body a share of the Kampani's poisons," Kha warns: we are all enmeshed in material processes that can unmake us as easily as they make us. The stock market metaphor, which compares the trace amounts of industrial toxins found in all humans, even newborn babies, with company "shares," links the abstract, seemingly immaterial processes of finance capitalism with their often-imperceptible material consequences. Instead of being committed to profit, the Board in Animal's allegorical trip is committed to postcolonial environmental justice, "To undo everything the Kampani does": to plant trees instead of build factories, to create medicines instead of poisons (*AP* 237). As they enumerate their plans, the fetuses transform into angels. This metamorphosis symbolically reverses the mutation effected by the poison.

This bhangy vision plays an important role in Animal's *bildungsroman*, as it solidifies his commitment to resist the Kampani with the rest of his community, something he previously regarded with skepticism and hopelessness, and also causes him to reevaluate his sexuality. This progression in his character can be observed the very next morning, when he wakes up in a brothel with Anjali. Sinha's choice to set the scene during Holi indicates these developments. The Holi festival (which is especially important to *bhakti* Hinduism) is associated with legends that resonate with Animal's contaminated origins as well as his future. Celebrants color their faces and bodies with many different colored powders. This honors the story of the milkmaid Radha, Krishna's beloved that merges with the god to reconstitute the primal half-male, half-female *purusa*.[97] According to one version of this Hindu legend, Krishna's skin turned blue because as an infant he was poisoned by the breast milk of the demon Putana. Krishna's origin story parallels Animal's: like Animal, the god was transformed by a nefarious pollutant when he

was very young. Later, Krishna grows jealous of Radha's fair complexion, and his mother tells him he can paint her face whatever color she wants. The Holi celebration, in addition to celebrating the love of Radha and Krishna, evokes a carnivalesque playfulness around identity, where labels that seem imprinted on the body are negated by a explosion of color. Similarly, when Animal wakes the morning after with Anjali, both of them naked and smeared with the colors of Holi so that they appear bestial, the novel opens the possibility for a union for these two based not on their conventional attractiveness or desirability, but rather on their mutual suffering. "You and me sweetheart, our life is tragedy," Anjali tells Animal (*AP* 242). This delicate love scene is literally colored with the hues of Holi. In the morning light, Animal and Anjali are no longer just a deformed boy and a sex-worker; they become avatars of the legendary lovers Krishna and Radha. There is, of course, significant irony to the religious overtones of this scene, especially in light of Animal's earlier declaration, "I'm not a Muslim, I'm not a Hindu, I'm not Isayi [Christian], I'm an animal, I'd be lying if I said religion meant a damn thing to me. Where was god the cunt when we needed him?" (*AP* 14). But despite Animal's deliberate profanity in the face of organized religion, his relationship with Anjali does end up offering both lovers something like *kripa* (divine grace in *bhakti* tradition). At novel's end, Animal uses the money that could help him travel to America and receive medical treatment to pay off Anjali's debts and free her from the brothel. This is hardly a "happy ever after" ending, but it marks a progression in Animal, who no longer desires the idealized beauty of Nisha and Elli, or to regain his physical normality, but self-acceptance and an equal partnership with another outcast.

While potent, bhang is a relatively harmless drug; the same cannot be said for the other two triggers for Animal's ecorhapsodic visions, the Kampani's poisons and datura. Despite knowing the obvious risks of these chemicals, Animal does not avoid the contaminated factory grounds. Several times throughout the novel, Animal crosses over the fence. He boasts, "No

one goes there, people say it's haunted by those who died. It's a shunned place, where better for an animal to make its lair?" He describes this "haunted, shunned" place as one of gothic abjection, but also calls the "death factory" home. Here, life and death are uncannily intertwined: "Look inside, you see something strange, a forest is growing, tall grasses, bushes, creepers that shoot sprays of flowers like fireworks" (*AP* 29). This forest appears peaceful, separated from the din of the city; however, the silence, evocative of the opening scene of Rachel Carson's exposé on pesticides *Silent Spring*, does not indicate pastoral harmony but rather ecosystemic collapse, as no songbird or honeybee can survive these toxic grounds.[98] The environment is beautiful, but that beauty is deceitful, occluding past and ongoing violence. The view of the city from the top of the factory is beautiful, but the streets below are "killing grounds all." The flora smells so sweet, "you forget it's poisoned and haunted" (*AP* 31). This gothic toxic discourse shows how beauty and death can exist in close proximity, and inversely, how what appears ugly or deformed can be infused with vital energy.

Animal enjoys "his kingdom" because of, not despite, its horrors (*AP* 30). To protect his sanctuary, he exaggerates the factory's mythology, spreading gothic stories about missing children and mysterious gnawed bones. Even as he embellishes these ghastly tales, it is clear that he also believes in them to some extent. "You should hear the ghosts," he says, "the factory is full of them, when a big wind blows, their souls fly shrieking up and down the empty pipes" (*AP* 32). The howling smokestacks give voice those victims who history has silenced: "My arms are round the pipe, now cold, up which the poisons flew to kill a city. The pipe is moaning. […] Give us justice, screams the blood. It promises years of disaster, years of illness, if I do not take revenge. […] The dead are rising up in the factory grounds, they are coming, looking as they did on that night, with eyes dripping blood they are coming, they're coming for me" (*AP* 275). He embraces the factory's poison pipe while listening to these cries of vengeful dead, indicating the

residual pesticide might be a primary cause of this rhapsody. That the trigger for this experience is an industrial chemical does not nullify its content. Because the toxin operating within Animal gives voice to a hidden history, it negates any clear divide between hallucination, fantasy, and revelation. Realism becomes unreal; the bio-gothic imagery unearths a history usually passed over by habitual perception. Animal's toxin-induced unreliability paradoxically makes him uniquely equipped to tell the true story.

The most powerful hallucinations in the novel are triggered by *Datura stramonium*, an entheogen, or a drug used to incite spiritual experience. This is the drug that is in the pills Animal uses to secretly dose his romantic rival, the activist Zafar, in a plot to reduce his sex drive. Traditional cultures in both Asia and the Americas have used the datura plant for religious ceremonies. In Hindu tradition, it is considered sacred, associated with one the most widely circulated images of classical Indic art: Shiva Nataraja, or Shiva as the "Lord of the Dance."[99] Art historians have long debated the meaning of Nataraja's "dance of furious bliss (*andana-tandava*)."[100] Padma Kaimal argues that, while many twentieth-century interpreters argue that the Nataraja figure represents the balance between Shiva's creative and destructive powers, a more careful examination of the icon's history indicates that the dancing incarnation of Shiva emphasizes his "associations with death, cremation, and the destructive parts of the cosmic cycle."[101] Kaimal's version of Shiva Nataraja fits with the Sinha's invocation of the figure in *Animal's People*, a novel about the aftermath of disaster; this is not a novel that celebrates cosmic balance, but rather one that represents ongoing apocalypse.

The novel features two scenes where a character has a vision induced by datura. The first is Zafar's, who has a dream-vision of the Kampani after Animal ups his dosage. In the vision, Zafar imagines he is flying high above Khaufpur when he is visited by a crow who shows him "the face of his enemy," a giant building towering over a neon cityscape, patrolled by the full

arsenal of the military-industrial complex. Each floor of this building features one of the many dimensions of the multi-national corporation: there is a floor for lawyers, doctors, engineers, chemists, test animals, ad-men, public relations consultants, and finally one of the Kampani directors who are throwing a party that includes "generals and judges, senators, presidents and prime ministers, oil sheikhs, newspaper owners, movies stars, police chiefs, mafia dons, members of obscure royal families etcetera etcetera" (*AP* 227-229). Zafar's allegorical dream provides a structural figuration of a dispersed and uncontrollable network of global capitalism, showing how this network is actually quite vertically integrated against the poor of Khaufpur. While of course no such monstrous skyscraper actually exists, this vision crystalizes the global distribution of power into a single allegorical image. Although Animal, with characteristic aversion to overtly political speech and action, dismisses Zafar's vision as "really every old mantra he'd been regurgitating for years jumbled into one big druggy nasha" (*AP* 230), for the reader it retains its haunting poignancy because it reveals a hidden "face" that prefers to dissipate within these distributed networks of control. The datura doesn't delude or dissociate Zafar; rather it serves a revelatory and synthetic function.

Animal's datura trip comes when he takes a nearly-lethal amount of the pills after Nisha finally rejects him. While this can be seen as an act of adolescent despair, it also has a speculative dimension insofar as Animal sees the tablets as tools with which he may finally do away with the last residue of his humanity and "become-animal," entering into a spontaneous, harmonious, and original state of existence with nature – perhaps even through death itself. However, what this experience reveals to Animal is not a final transcendence from his obligations to and desires for others, but rather his coexistence with a multispecies collective that is neither in harmony with or hostile to his being. The drug propels him into a hallucinogenic experience that taps him into the destructive elements of the cosmic cycle, transforming him in to an avatar of Shiva

Nataraja. From this critical perspective, the visions he experiences are not properly described as "hallucinations," a word which implies that Animal is seeing something that is not there. Rather, datura connects him with levels of experience that humanity has blinded itself to, that realism cannot rationalize, which one must *become-animal* to perceive. It is in that *becoming-animal* that one finds, not redemption or some balancing of the cosmic scales, but rather a bio-gothic encounter with oddkin that are both uncannily familiar and monstrously other.

Take, for instance, when a starving Animal encounters a lizard in the depths of his datura reverie: Animal wounds the lizard with a stone, then catches it before it dashes away. However, just before he finishes the kill, he experiences a moment of transpersonality: he feels the lizard's gaze, even hears it speak, as it begs for its life and warns of her poisonous venom. He releases the lizard, and it taunts him back: "A broken rib may mend…but your nature you can never change. You are human, if you were animal you would have eaten me" (*AP* 346). This exchange demonstrates to Animal that the environment will not just absorb him into its non-human community, and there is no return for the human subject to these imagined origins: "I call to my fellow creatures, 'Brothers and sisters, the lizard's wrong, I am one of you, come to live with you. Show yourselves.' None come, but there's a rustling, it's the lizard whose life I spared, she says, "Hey Animal, soon you'll be a shriveled old sack, I will creep into your dry carcass and lay my eggs around your heart" (*AP* 346-47). Animal will be useful for reproduction; but instead of him occupying the environment, the environment occupies him, turns him into an environment.

This interaction between Animal and the lizard traces what Donna Haraway would call a "string figure," a speculative method of transspecies networking.[102] String figures involve the "tentacular" transfer of knots and patterns between multiple actors who share this "vulnerable and wounded earth." String figures model the structures of earthbound "Gaia stories" or "geostories" that bring to the forefront the agency of oddkin (like the lizard) who are usually

confined to the background as "props" within the phallic hero-myths of humanism (40-41).[103] These geostories narrate a lived politics, a Terrapolis that is immersed in the earth, the compost, the humus from which humanity has never yet/will never manage to extract itself. This contaminated Terrapolis that Animal and the Lizard share presents a sharp contrast to Zafar's politics of transcendence: "Terrapolis is in place," writes Haraway, "Terrapolis makes place for unexpected companies." This Terrapolis plays the "SF game" cultivating "response-ability" with oddkin, acknowledging at once their familiarity and their irreducible difference. This is a gothic relationship of mutual fear but also mutual dependency.

In this way, Animal models a speculative radical multispecies solidarity that might engender new, more just conditions for living altogether here in the present before the apocalyptic temporalities of humanism accelerate us into a catastrophic future.

Introduction

[1] According to local legend, Pontius Pilate was born beneath this tree.

[2] "Berries show ancient Fortingall yew tree is 'changing sex,'" *BBC* online. 2 November 2015, https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-scotland-tayside-central-34700033.

[3] Patrick Barkham, "How Britain's oldest tree became 'sexually ambiguous,'" *The Guardian,* 2 November 2015, https://www.theguardian.com/environment/shortcuts/2015/nov/02/britain-oldest-tree-fortingall-yew-change-sex.

[4] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Penguin, 1993).

[5] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Random House, 1988).

[6] Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007).

[7] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2.

[8] E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1924).

[9] Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (New York: Penguin, 1990).

[10] Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: Routledge, 1994).

[11] Amitav Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium, and Discovery* (New York: Perennial, 1995).

[12] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene (*Duke University Press, 2016), 10.

[13] Catherine Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Cambridge, Polity, 2012), 4.

[14] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2006), 61.

[15] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism and the Poor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

[16] Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2012), 5.

[17] Ingo Gildenhard and Andrew Zizzos, *Transformative Change in Western Thought: A History of Metamorphosis from Homer to Hollywood (*London: Legenda, 2013), 5.

[18] Gildenhard and Zizzos, 2.

[19] Gildenhard and Zizzos, 1. They elaborate on this central thesis: "In light of the epistemic and aesthetic protocols associated with the Bible, scientific rationality, classicism, naturalism, and realism, stories involving marvelous change would seem to belong to the realms of the abnormal or the fantastic, the grotesque or irrational, the monstrous, the obscene, or occult, the pagan or primitive, the surreal, non-western, or zany – in short, the exact opposite of qualities that underwrite essentialist notions of identity, realist protocols of representation, regulatory ideals of beauty, and rational conceptions of reality in occidental thought."

[20] Gildenhard and Zizzos, 1.

[21] Gildenhard and Zizzos, 13. For instance, in Ovid's *Metamorphoses* when Jove transforms the tyrant Lycaon into a wolf, these are both "formal instantiations of the same underlying matter": "He grows a wolf, his hoariness remains/And the same rage in other members reigns." Lycaon has ceased to be, has irreversibly become-wolf, but both forms are composed of the same predatory substance. Matter is eternal and charged with vital energy, but its meaning is constantly slipping into and out of form.

[22] Gildenhard and Zizzos, 16. Gildenhard and Zizzos refer to Paul's metaphor of the seed in his account of resurrection in I Corinthians 15.37 ("And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not the body that shall be, but bare grain").
[23] Francis Bacon, *The New Atlantis* (1626), in *Three Early Modern Utopias: Utopia, The New Atlantis, and the Isle of Pines* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 149-86.
[24] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) (New York: Knopf, 1992),
[25] Charles Darwin, *The Origin of the Species* (1859) (New York: Signet, 2003).
Charles Darwin, *The Descent of Man (1871, 1879)* (New York: Penguin, 2004).
[26] Darwin, *The Origin of Species*, 80. Darwin opposes natural selection with the selective breeding methods of animal husbandry: "Under domestication, it maybe truly said that the whole organization becomes in some degree plastic."
[27] Rupert Brooke, "The Soldier," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. F*, 9th ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2012), 2019.
[28] H.G Wells, *The Time Machine* (1896) (New York: Penguin, 2004).
[29] Aldous Huxley, *Brave New World* (1928) (New York: HarperCollins, 2004).
[30] *Godzilla,* directed by Ishirō Honda (1954; Tokyo: Criterion Collection, 2012), DVD.
[31] *The Day the World Ended,* directed by Roger Corman (1955; Los Angeles: Arkoff Film Library, 2004), DVD.
[32] *The Planet of the Apes,* directed by Franklin Schaffner (1968; Los Angeles: Fox, 2014), DVD.
[33] *The Fly*, directed by David Cronenberg (1986; Los Angeles: Fox, 2005), DVD.
[34] *Jurassic Park*, directed by Stephen Spielberg (1993; Universal City: Universal, 2018), DVD.
[35] *The Island Of Dr. Moreau: Unrated Director's Cut*, directed by John Frankenheimer (1996; Los Angeles: Warner, 2017), DVD.
[36] *Blade Runner*, directed by Ridley Scott (1982; Los Angeles: Warner, 2007), DVD.
[37] *Terminator*, directed by James Cameron (1984; Los Angeles: MGM, 2015), DVD.
[38] *Terminator 2: Judgment Day,* directed by James Cameron (1987; Los Angeles: Artisan/Lionsgate, 2009), DVD.
[39] *Robocop*, directed by Paul Verhoeven (1987; Los Angeles: MGM, 2001), DVD.
[40] Franz Kafka, *The Metamorphosis* (1915), trans. Susan Bernofsky (New York: Norton, 2014).
[41] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, in *The Norton Anthology of British Literature, Vol. F*, 9th ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2012), 2005.
[42] Susheila Nashta, "1940s-1970s," *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature (1945-2010*), ed. Deirdre Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 25. While the *Windrush* does signal an epochal change, Susheila Nashta offers a more skeptical view of this event, calling it "part of the belated mythology of Britain's public face as a multicultural nation, a conveniently distant and palatable signifier of a culturally diverse past" (25); the passengers on this iconic ship "were bound on a journey not to a welcoming 'motherland' but an 'illusion.'"
[43] Louise Bennett, "Colonization in Reverse," in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. F*, 9th ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2012), 2726.
[44] Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 3.
[45] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Part I* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 143.
[46] Giorgio Agamben, *Homo Sacer: Sovereign Power and Bare Life*, trans. Daniel Heller-Roazen (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1998), 120.
[47] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 122.
[48] Agamben, *Homo Sacer*, 122.

[49] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism and the Poor* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).
[50] Alexander Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus: Racializing Assemblages, Bio-Politics, and Black Feminist Theories of the Human* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 1, 4.
[51] Weheliye, *Habeas Viscus*, 2.
[52] Roland Barthes, "The Effect of the Real," *Communications* 11 (1968): 84-89.
[53] Linda Birke, "Bodies and Biology," in *Feminist Theory and the Body: A Reader*, ed. Janet Prince and Margrit Shildrick (New York: Routledge, 1999), 44.
[54] Donna Haraway, *When Species Meet* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2008), 3. As Haraway points out, only ten percent of the cells in the body contain human genomes, with the other ninety percent of cells "filled with the genomes of bacteria, fungi, protists, and such some of which play in a symphony necessary to my being alive at all, and some of which are hitching a ride and doing the rest of me, of us, no hard. […] To be one is always to *become with* many."
[55] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 59.
[56] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 54-55.
[57] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Chthulucene* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2016), 11.
[58] Anna Tsing, *The Mushrooms at the End of the World* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2015).

<u>Chapter 1</u>
[1] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Penguin, 1993), 100-101. Subsequent quotations from *Orlando* will be cited *O* in-text with page numbers.
[2] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures: Science, Environment, and the Material Self* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 2.
[3] Michel Foucault, *The History of Sexuality, Part I* (New York: Vintage, 1978), 143. It is also important to note that while biopolitics signifies an attempt to totally incorporate life into regimes of productivity and control, Foucault insists life "constantly escapes" these attempts.
[4] Francis Galton, *Inquiries into Human Faculty* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 42.
[5] Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*, trans. Brian Massumi (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1987), 277, 280.
[6] See for instance: Anatoli Ignatov, "Practices of Eco-sensation: Opening Doors of Perception to the Non-human," *Theory & Event* 14, no 2 (2011); Dianne Chisholm, "The Art of Ecological Thinking: Literary Ecology," *ISLE* 18, no. 3 (2011) 569-93; Sian Sullivan, " 'Ecosystem Service Commodities' – A New Imperial Ecology? Implications for Animist Immanent Ecologies, With Deleuze and Guattari," *New Formations* 69 (2010): 111-28; Mark Halsey, "Ecology and Machinic Thought: Nietzsche, Deleuze, Guattari," *Angelaki* 10, no. 3 (2005): 33-55; Lorraine Code, *Ecological Thinking: The Politics of Epistemic Location* (New York: Houghton Press, 2003).
[7] See for instance: Elizabeth Grosz, *Time Travels: Feminism, Nature, Power* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2005), and *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1994); Rosi Braidotti, *Nomadic Subjects: Embodiment and Sexual Difference in Contemporary Feminist Theory,* 2nd ed. (New York: Columbia University Press, 2011), and *Metamorphoses: Towards a Materialist Theory of Becoming* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 2002).
[8] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 13.

[9] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 252, 263. They argue that each character in *The Waves* "with his or her name, its individuality, designates a multiplicity" and that "[e]ach is simultaneously in this multiplicity and at its edge, and crosses over into others."
[10] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 381.
[11] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus,* 369. "Royal science is inseparable from a 'hylomorphic' model implying both a form that organizes matter and a matter prepared for form; it has often been shown that this schema derives less from technology or life than from a society divided into governors and the governed, and later, intellectuals and manual laborers. […] It seems nomad science is more immediately in tune with the connection between content and expression in themselves, each of these two terms encompassing both form and matter. Thus matter, in nomad science, is never prepared and therefore homogenized matter, but is essentially laden with singularities…."
[12] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 293-294. The authors relate these "blocks" to lines of flight, deterritorialization, and becoming. They explain, "If becoming is a block (a line-block), it is because it constitutes a zone of proximity and indiscernibility, a no-man's land, a nonlocalizable relation sweeping up the two distant or congruous points, carrying one into the proximity of the other."
[13] Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus*, 90. "We think the material or machinic aspect of an assemblage relates not to the production of goods but rather to a precise state of intermingling bodies in a society, including all the attractions and repulsions, sympathies and antipathies, alterations, amalgamations, penetrations, and expansions that affect bodies of all kinds in relation to each other."
[14] There are many critics that fit this description, but to provide a brief example of the type of claim I think needs to be politicized, consider Anatoli Ignatov's definition of eco-philosophy, in which he builds on the work not just of Deleuze but also Jane Bennett: "Life is a flow of differences and becomings that includes the inorganic world and ceaselessly proliferates new lines of flight and ever more complex forms. As part of the flux of life thinking becomes one more of maximalization of the virtual within life, which harbors the potential to grasp prehumen forces and differences that precede and preclude it. Whereas science seeks to isolate the properties and functions of actual bodies and states of affairs, philosophy is more interested in what a body can do or become but has not yet done or become. […] Ecophilosophy…may be conceived as a set of practices of thinking and sensing by way of concepts that 'open lines of flight from an actual order of human bodies' and their habitual modes of perception. Ecophilosophy is an aggregate of concepts that maps the virtual possibilities of 'forces, energies and flows that congeal into the more tangible materiality of animals, vegetables, minerals, wind, gravity, tides, sunlight.'" We see in Ignatoy's definition the simultaneous urge to escape from an established order, but also a equally strong urge to remap and reform that order. I question to what extent these "habitual modes of perception" are actually broken, and to what extent these new forms might repeat old discursive tropes, like that of Orientalism.
[15] Theodor Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory,* trans. Robert Hullot Kentor (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997), 65.
[16] Adorno, 54, 55, 56.
[17] Morton, 13, 52. Morton's relationship with Adorno is complex. Although he does borrow heavily from Adorno's concept of the aesthetic as a distancing mechanism and shares his belief that nature writing is politically compromised because it is "caught in the logic of reification," he also asserts "Adorno is really a Romantic, because he thinks that things could be different, and that art whispers that this is so." This is a difficulty of Adornian analysis that Morton admits that

even he is not entirely free of, suggesting that his chapter "Imagining Ecology without Nature" could be thought of as Romantic because it seeks a "good" aesthetic to ameliorate the issues with the "bad" aesthetic. My study could be subject to the same critiques.

[18] Gay Wachman, *Lesbian Empire: Radical Crosswriting in the Twenties* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2001), 11.

[19] For more comprehensive studies about how Woolf engaged with scientific discoveries of the late-19th and early-20th century, see Holly Henry, *Virginia Woolf and the Discourse of Science* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003) and Christina Alt, *Virginia Woolf and the Study of Nature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010).

[20] Marius Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (London: Palgrave, 2010), 2.

[21] Braidotti, *Metamorphoses,* 3.

[22] Sara Ahmed, "Affective Economies," *Social Text* 79, no. 2 (2004), 117.

[23] Ahmed*,* 120.

[24] William Greenslade, *Degeneration, Culture, and the Novel: 1880-1940* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1994), 15. Greenslade describes "the growing sense that in the last decades of the century of a lack of synchrony between the rhetoric of progress…and the facts on the ground, the evidence in front of people's eyes, of poverty and degeneration at the heart of ever richer empires."

[25] Turda 5, 6.

[26] Donald Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics: Woolf, Eliot, Yeats, and the Culture of Degeneration* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2001), 3. In his analysis of eugenics in modernist British culture, Donald Childs distinguishes between two different types of eugenics: "negative eugenics," which sought to identify "human weeds" (as the eugenicist F.C.S. Schiller calls them) and check their reproductive capabilities, sometimes through segregation, sterilization, or even euthanasia; and "positive eugenics," where "the flowers of humankind are encouraged to have large families."

[27] Turda 6.

[28] We might say that now, in the twentieth century, we are experiencing a rebirth of this Promethean myth with the rise of genetic engineering, which promises to make plants and animals alike more useful for human beings. Especially interesting for the present discussion is scientific exploration with chimeras, half-human half-animal organisms created with stem cells with hope that these creatures will be able to grow human organs.

[29] In the aftermath of the Nazi's genocidal program of racial hygiene, the selective memory of nationalist British history has forgotten the domestic popularity of eugenics during the first few decades of the century. Major thinkers from both ends of the political spectrum promoted positive and negative forms of eugenics as the scientific answer to the problems posed by racial, national, and imperial degeneration. On the left, Fabian socialists like H.G. Wells and George Bernard Shaw called for a eugenicist program which would enable the nation's people to (as Shaw puts it) "work towards that ideal until we get to be supermen, then super-supermen, and then a world of organisms who have achieved and realized God." In Shaw's metamorphic image, the bio-power of the nation's genetic material is put to work, plugged into a network of technologies of analysis and administration that are ever more precise and efficient. By manipulating the biological process of species reproduction, humans (or at least a particular group of humans) may ascend past the category of the human to paradoxically become both a lowly "organism" but also an omnipotent "God." This vitalist, post-humanist imagination is deeply biologistic, assuming that the biological content of the human organism is almost wholly determinant of humans' individual and social capabilities. It is also deeply humanist, in that it still

celebrates the potency of human agency and the total subjugation of the nonhuman world – including the body itself – to human needs. This type of eugenicist thinking emphasizes how during this period, the reproductive body came to be seen not just as a source of labor but also a reservoir of genetic resources for the race. And like any reservoir, it must be carefully monitored, conserved, and protected against contaminants.

[30] Childs 23, 29.

[31] Childs 38.

[32] Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, in *The Norton Anthology of English Literature, Vol. F*, 8th ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2006): 2146.

[33] Childs 69.

[34] Ian Baucom, *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1999), 4-5.

[35] Baucom, 4-5.

[36] Elizabeth Helsinger, *Rural Scenes and National Representation: Britain, 1815-1850* (Princeton, Princeton University Press, 1997), 13.

[37] Helsinger, 17.

[38] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1994), 2.

[39] Baucom, 3. As Baucom puts it, "The empire…is less a place where England exerts control than the place where England loses command of its own narrative of identity."

[40] "He sighed profoundly and flung himself…on the earth at the foot of the oak tree. He loved, beneath all this summer transiency, to feel the earth's spine beneath him; for such he took the hard root of the oak tree to be; or, for image followed image, it was the back of a great horse that he was riding, or the deck of a tumbling ship – it was anything indeed, so long as it was hard, for he felt the need of something which he could attach his floating heart to…. To the oak tree he tied it and as he lay there, gradually the flutter in and about him stilled itself; the little leaves hung, the deer stopped; the pale summer clouds stayed; his limbs grew heavy on the ground; and he lay so still that by degrees the deer stepped nearer and the rooks wheeled round him and the swallows dipped and circled and the dragonflies shot past, as if all the fertility and amorous activity of a summers evening were woven web-like about his body." Woolf*, Orlando*, 14-15.

[41] Helena Feder, *Ecocriticism and the Idea of Culture: Biology and the Bildungsroman* (Burlington: Ashgate, 2014), 18.

[42] Feder, 19.

[43] John Ruskin, "The Storm Cloud of the Nineteenth Century," in *The Longman Anthology of British Literature, Vol. 2B*, 4th ed., ed. David Damrosch and Kevin J.H. Dettmar (Boston: Longman, 2010), 1509.

[44] Alaimo, *Bodily Natures,* 17.

[45] Foucault, *History of Sexuality, Volume 1,* 18.

[46] Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 2146

[47] Adorno, 71.

[48] Edward Said, *Orientalism: 25th Anniversary Edition* (New York: Vintage, 1994), 188.

[49] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 2.

[50] Sackville-West also had dark hair and a dark complexion, likely due to her maternal Grandmother Rosina Pepita, a Spanish woman thought to come from gypsy origins. This aspect of Vita's lineage led to a lawsuit against her father. During chapter III, Orlando is rumored to have married gypsy named Rosina Pepita.

[51] Adorno, *Aesthetic Theory*, 66.

Chapter 2

[1] Alvin Lucier, *I Am Sitting in a Room*, recorded 1970, track 1 on *I Am Sitting in a Room*, Lovely Music, compact disc.

[2] Timothy Morton, *Ecology Without Nature: Rethinking Environmental Aesthetics* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2007), 59.

[3] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 54.

[4] E.M. Forster, *A Passage to India* (San Diego: Harcourt, 1924), 319. Subsequent quotations from *A Passage to India* will be cited *PI* in-text with page numbers.

[5] Donna Haraway, "Situated Knowledges," *Feminist Studies* 14.3 (1988): 581.

[6] Michelle Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm: Music and the Word in E.M. Forster (*Urbana: U of Illinois Press, 2010), xvii.

[7] Fillion, *Difficult Rhythm*, Appendix A.

[8] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 55.

[9] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 54, 56, 57.

[10] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* (Bloomington, Indiana University Press, 2010), 2.

[11] Stacy Alaimo, *Exposed: Environmental Politics and Pleasures in Posthuman Times* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2016), 93. Note that when I say "feminine," my goal is not to say that these characters access some essential spirit or element that is "female." Instead, I wish to see "feminine" relationally, as a multiply-determined position that does not come from or belong to specific bodies, but that can be occupied by different subjects, either human or more-than human.

[12] E.M. Forster, *The Hill of Devi* (London: Harvest, 1971), 9.

[13] E.M. Forster, *A Room with a View* (1908) (New York: Dover, 1995).

[14] Zakia Pathak, Saswati Sangupta, and Sharmila Pukayasta, "The Prisonhouse of Orientalism," *Textual Practice* 5, no. 2 (1991): 199. M.K. Naik argues that *Passage* does not even qualify as a historical novel because of his elision of Indian resistance such as the Civil Disobedience Movement, the Rebellions of the late 19th century, or the rising movement around Mahatma Gandhi. Though Naik's demand that Forster include "representative" Indians who are not simply caricatures has been justifiably deconstructed (see Pathak, Sangupta, and Purkayastha, "The Prisonhouse of Orientalism"), his point stands that Forster's novel is (perhaps hopelessly) Eurocentric in its understanding of Indian culture and history.

[15] E.M. Forster, "The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions upon National Character," *Seeds in the Wind: Early Signs of Genius: Virginia Woolf to Graham Greene*, ed. Neville Braybrooke (San Francisco: Mercury House, 1989), 67.

[16] Forster, "The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions upon National Character," 67. Here, Forster echoes John Ruskin's discussion of gothic cathedrals.

[17] Forster, "The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions upon National Character," 67. Here, Forster echoes John Ruskin's discussion of gothic cathedrals.

[18] Maurice Turda, *Modernism and Eugenics* (New York, Palgrave MacMillan, 2010), 4.

[19] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, in *The Norton Anthology of British Literature, Vol. F*, 9th ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2012), 1951-2012.

[20] Forster, "The Influence of Climate and Physical Conditions on National Character," 69.

[21] Nicole Beauman, *Morgan: A Biography of E.M. Forster* (New York: A.A. Knopf, 1994, 109-112. In fact, "The Story of a Panic" was Forster's second published story; his first, "Albergo Empedocle," he wrote on his travels to Sicily just before arriving in Ravello. "Albergo Empedocle" narrates the story of a British man, Harold, who, during a vacation in Sicily,

awakens one morning with the newfound belief that he has had a prior life as an Ancient Greek. While I do not have space to give sustained attention to this "unofficial" text of Forster's, it does touch on many themes relevant to this project. Colored with homosexual overtones in its representation of male friendship and its idealization of Greek culture, this story marks another moment where Forster has an English character encounter an exotic, "primitive" land and subsequently have a epiphanic discovery about the narrowness and frivolity of modern English life, especially in its prudish bourgeois models of sexuality. However, Forster later disavowed this short story, leaving it out of his first collection (1911) and convincing himself that his first story was, instead, "The Story of a Panic". See Beauman 109-112 for a fuller explanation of this issue.

[22] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 55.

[23] The photography of the German Wilhem von Gloeden, taken in Sicily during the 1890's, captures this imagination of the Mediterranean as a haven for classical forms of homosexuality. Van Gloeden's photos stage young male nudes in classical poses before classical backdrops, backdrops which fit the description of those "churches where men could sit and ponder" that a young Forster writes about in "The Influence of Climate…." These compositions are not simply erotica or kitsch, although there are certainly elements of both. Important for our discussion is the way that they imply a continuity between the body and its environment; because they are photographs, the message seems to be that in Southern Europe there are still pockets where men and boys still exist "before the fall" into modern forms of compulsory heterosexuality.

[24] E.M. Forster, "The Story of a Panic," *Selected Stories* (London: Penguin, 2001), 1. Subsequent quotations from "The Story of a Panic" will be cited *SP* in-text with page numbers.

[25] Beauman, 113.

[26] Virginia Woolf, *Orlando: A Biography* (London: Penguin, 1993), 15.

[27] See, for instance, Jack Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Victorian Studies* 36, no. 3 (1993): 333-52.

[28] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 61.

[29] Jacques Derrida, *Of Grammatology*, trans. Gayatri Spivak (Baltimore, Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 17.

[30] Derrida, 17.

[31] Derrida, 18.

[32] E.M. Forster, "Terminal Note," *Maurice* (London: Penguin, 1972), 218.

[33] Forster, "Terminal Note," 218.

[34] E.M. Forster, *Maurice* (London: Penguin, 1972), 91. Subsequent quotations from *Maurice* will be cited *M* in-text with page numbers.

[35] Stuart Christie, *Worlding Forster: The Passage from Pastoral* (New York: Routledge, 2005), 3.

[36] Christie, 3.

[37] Beauman, 291.

[38] Beauman, 294.

[39] Beauman, 299.

[40] Beauman, 299.

[41] Robert Altrich, *Colonialism and Homosexuality* (London: Routledge, 2008), 314.

[42] Altrich, 321.

[43] Altrich, 322.

[44] Beauman, 315.

[45] Beauman, 315.

[46] Beauman, 316.

[47] Beauman, 326.
[48] Beauman, 315.
[49] Beauman, 260. Beauman contrasts Forster's approach to India with "formula Indian Romances [by Maud Diver, 'Sydney C. Grier,' and Alice Perrin] in which English soldiers stationed on the North-West Frontier try not to let affairs of the heart interfere with their military duties." English novels set in India were, almost as a rule, "about Anglo-Indians," a trend Forster managed to escape in part because of his numerous meetings with actual Indians facilitated by his relationship with Masood. Cyril in *Passage* humorously comments on the Anglo-Indian myopia when he responds to Ronny's sarcastic question "how's one to see the real India?" with "Try seeing Indians" (*PI* 25).
[50] Craig Bradshaw Woelfel, "Stopping at the Stone: Rethinking Belief (and Non-Belief) in Modernism Via *A Passage to India,*" *Twentieth Century Literature* 58, no. 1 (2012): 39.
[51] For discussion of what "actually" happens in the cave, see Jo Ann Hoeppner Moran, "E.M. Forster's *A Passage to India*: What Really Happened in the Caves" *MFS* 34, no. 4 (1988): 596-604 (who reads the event as a misinterpretation, by Adela, of the guide's attempt to stop a sacrilegious act), and Louise Dauner, "What Happened in the Cave? Reflections on *A Passage to India*," *Perspectives on E.M. Forster's "A Passage to India,"* ed. V.A. Shahane (New York: Barnes, 1968), 52-64.
[52] Kelly Sultzbach, *Ecocriticism and the Modernist Imagination: Forster, Woolf, and Auden* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 67.
[53] Robert Barratt, "Marabar: The Caves of Deconstruction," *Journal of Narrative Technique* 23.2 (1993): 130.
[54] Yonatan Touval, "Colonial Queer Something," in *Queer Forster*, ed. Robert Martin and George Piggford (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1997), 242-43.
[55] Tony Jackson, "The De-composition of Writing in *A Passage to India*," *Journal of Modern Literature* 29, no. 3 (2006): 2.
[56] Jackson, 2-3.
[57] Jackson, 12.
[58] Derrida, 29
[59] Morton, *Ecology without Nature*, 54, 55.
[60] Cited in Fillion, 9.
[61] Cited in Fillion, 8.
[62] Bryan C. Pijanowski, Luis J. Villanueva-Rivera, Sarah L. Dumyahn, Almo Farina, Bernie L. Krause, Brian M. Napoletano, Stuart H. Gage and Nadia Pieretti, "Sound Ecology: The Science of Sound in the Landscape," *BioScience* 61, no. 3 (2011): 203. The concept of "sound ecology" has also been advanced by a recent study coming out of the journal *BioScience*; in that article, the researchers recommended the development of a new field called "soundscape ecology, emphasizing the ecological characteristics of sounds and their spatial-temporal patterns as they emerge from landscapes."
[63] Michael Valdez Moses, "Disorientalism: Conrad and the Imperial Origins of Modernist Aesthetics," in *Modernism and Colonialism: British and Irish Literature, 1899-1939*, ed. Richard Bryam and Michael Valdez Moses (Durham: Duke University press, 2007), 45.
[64] Woelfel, 46-47.

Chapter 3
[1] Simon Tillotson, "Hybrids," October 31, 2019, in *In Our Time: Science*, produced by BBC, podcast, MP3 audio, 52:01.

[2] "Rail Travel," *Flora Britannica, BBC* online, video, December 12, 2012, https://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p008lx1c. The spread of the Oxford Ragwort was helped along tremendously by the spread of railway lines across England, which disturbed the soil and created conditions in the railway clinker beds that were in many ways similar to the volcanic rock formations where the Italian version of the plant flourished. As a BBC program on the Ragwort describes the plant's history of invasion, "The Oxford Ragwort's life in the UK, reputedly, with a single specimen gathered from Mount Etna. It was then carefully replanted in Oxford University's hallowed gardens. But Oxford ragwort did not stay confined for long. It soon made its way over the wall. By 1830 it had reached the railway station, and the Great Western Railway helped it from there. The slipstream of the trains carried the lightweight seeds far and wide. It colonized the railway lines and beyond. It is doing very nicely nowadays – strictly urban in its tastes and still spreading – it is now spread across most of the country." This account obviously follows many of the same notes as Jones's account of this hybrid invader, reading the spread of the ragwort as an analogue and example of the spread of contaminative modernity.

[3] "pest, n.," *OED Online*, March 2020, Oxford University Press, https://www-oed-com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/141738 (accessed May 02, 2020). "Pest" is etymologically derived from the Latin *pestis* ("plague, pestilence, instrument of death or destruction, source of damage, of unknown origin") and the middle French *peste*, which refers not just to epidemics in general but specifically the bubonic plague, another organism that is treated with moral and theological categories throughout history (the "Black Death"). The idea of a pest is therefore, linguistically, right at the edge of morality and biology, bridging religion and science.

[4] Salman Rushdie, *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Random House, 1988), 6. Subsequent quotations from *The Satanic Verses* will be cited *SV* in-text with page numbers.

[5] Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 46. This earlier, post-war version had established the legal category of the Citizen of the United Kingdom and Commonwealth (CUKC), a standing that was granted to all subjects in Canada, New Zealand, the Union of South Africa, Newfoundland, India, Pakistan, Southern Rhodesia, and Ceylon. CUKCs enjoyed many rights, including free entry into the UK and access to full citizenship after a year's residence.

[6] Hansen, 67.

[7] Susheila Nashta, "1940s-1970s," *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature (1945-2010*), ed. Deirdre Osborne (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 2016), 25.

[8] Hansen, 109-110.

[9] Hansen, 3.

[10] Deirdre Osborne (ed.), "Timeline," *The Cambridge Companion to British Black and Asian Literature (1945-2010*) (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), xiii, xiv. To note a few other particular incidents of race riots: "The Nottingham Carnival" in summer of 1958, featured self-described "nigger-hunts" which included crowds of between 1,500-4000, and neo-fascists of London roved the majority West Indian neighborhood of Notting Hill; the Southall Uprising of 1979.

[11] Osbourne, xiii.

[12] Quoted in Hansen, 183.

[13] Hansen, 187. After Edward Heath suspended Powell from the Shadow Cabinet after the "Rivers of Blood" speech, some of his most fervent supporters marched on Parliament under signs reading "Keep Britain White."

[14] Ian Baucom. *Out of Place: Englishness, Empire, and the Locations of Identity*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 5.

[15] John Solomos, *Race and Racism in Contemporary Britain* (Houndmills: Macmillan, 1989), 57.
[16] Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain: Race and Citizenship in the Postwar Era* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 181. Paul supports her conclusion that the Immigration Act was based primarily on skin-color with the evidence that the 1971 Act, by introducing the concept of "old dominions," ironically *increased* the number of subjects permitted to migrate to the UK (181).
[17] Solomos, 58.
[18] Quoted in Paul, 192.
[19] Salman Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* (London: Granta, 1991), 136.
[20] Paul, 184.
[21] Baucom, 14.
[22] Baucom, 15. It should be noted that the racial concept of Englishness, while foundational to New Right discourse in the latter half of the twentieth century, is by no means a prediscursive given or a historical reality; in fact, it was a specific invention that emerged in tension with England's history of imperialism (as both an imperial holding of Rome and later as a globe-colonizing nation-state). As Baucom incisively notes in his commentary on Powell's "River's of Blood" speech, "Englishness is here revealed, *in its moments of vanishing*, as whiteness, a command of the English language, and a certain kind of domestic space" (emphasis mine). This is not so much a *restoration* of a racially pure Englishness but rather its *invention*.
[23] Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (New York, Routledge, 1994), 213.
[24] Baucom, 20. Baucom describes a tradition of English localism that "evinced an obsessive interest in discovering the principles that not only would connect England's unborn, its living, and its dead but would guarantee that the nation's past, present, and future would be fundamentally alike." Along with this "diachronic conformity" imperialism implies a "synchronic imperative, dictating that English men and women distant from one another in space would be similarly alike." This localism, therefore, simultaneously relies on place to root these "principles," but also effaces the importance of those locales by asserting that these principles can be shared commonly across global distances.
[25] Baucom 21.
[26] Baucom 21.
[27] Hansen, 3.
[28] Cited in Baucom 15.
[29] Sukdev Sandhu, *London Calling: How Black and Asian Writers Imagined A City* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 2003), 284.
[30] Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* (1981) (New York: Random House, 2006).
[31] This is interwoven with three other storylines, narrativizations of the increasingly delusional Gibreel's dreams. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be focusing only on the main storyline, but to summarize the other threads: one of these stories is a retelling of the story of the Islamic Prophet Mohammed (in the novel he goes by Mahound – "the Devil's synonym" – in order to "turn insults into strengths" [*SV* 95]) and his life and death in Mecca (which in the novel is called Jahilia). This storyline is the one most decried by Islamic fundamentalists because of the way Rushdie deliberately (in their mind, profanely) blasphemes the legend of the prophet. He does this first in the "Mahound" by reconstructing the incident of the Satanic Verses when Mahound temporarily accepts the three goddesses Lat, Uzza, and Manat as equals of Allah before declaring that he was directed to do so by the Devil. He also does this in the "Return to Jahila" section, which narrates the story of Mahound's scribe (also named Salman) who becomes suspicious of the way Mahound is constantly producing new Allah-given laws to fit his needs as a governor, and so develops a scheme to test their authenticity by slightly altering the Prophet's

recitations as he writes them down (thus creating another satanic verse in the novel). The other two storylines from these dreams are set in contemporary times. One is a profile of a fundamentalist Imam who lives in hiding in London, sealed from the contaminative effects of Western culture (which he ironically accomplishes in part by drinking water "cleaned of impurities…in an American filtration machine" [*SV* 215]), awaiting his triumphant return to his beloved Desh. The other is a story of a village who goes on a suicidal pilgrimage under the command of a young girl named Ayesha who is followed by a miraculous cloud of butterflies; ultimately, they follow her commands to walk straight into the Arabian Sea, where they drown, although the novel does create doubt about whether or not they actually ascended to heaven, as Ayesha promised. These storylines are interspersed throughout the novel, oftentimes evoking parallels to the main storyline.

[32] Homi Bhabha, 226.

[33] Warnes 102, 117.

[34] Josie Gill, "'Under Extreme Environmental Pressure, Characteristics were Acquired': Epigenetics, Race, and Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," *Textual Practice* 29, no. 3 (2015): 492.

[35] "succumb.," *OED Online*, March 2020, Oxford University Press, https://www-oed-com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/193389 (accessed May 02, 2020). See definition 3.a: "To sink under pressure or give way to a superior force, authority, etc."

[36] Amrit Biswas, "The Colonial Subject and Colonial Discourse: Salman Rushdie's Critique of Englishness in *The Satanic Verses*," *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 40, no. 2 (2004): 93, 94-95.

[37] Vassilena Parashkevova, "'Turn Your Watch Upside Down in Bombay and you see the Time in London': Catoptric Urban Configurations in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 42, no. 3 (2007): 11.

[38] See Warnes, 118 for more on the "witchcraft plot."

[39] Jean Baptise Lamarck, *Zoological Philosophy*, trans. Ian Johnson. PDF document. http://johnstoniatexts.x10host.com/lamarck/lamarcktofc.htm

[40] Jean Baptise Lamarck, *Zoological Philosophy*. First Law: "In every animal which has not exceeded the limit of its development, the more frequent and sustained use of any organ gradually strengthens this organ, develops it, makes it larger, and gives it a power proportional to the duration of this use; whereas, the constant lack of use of such an organ imperceptibly weakens it, makes it deteriorate, progressively diminishes it faculties, and ends by making it disappear." Second Law: "Everything which nature has made individuals acquire or lose through the influence of conditions to which their race has been exposed for a long time and, consequently, through the influence of the predominant use of some organ or by the influence of the constant disuse of this organ, nature preserves by reproduction in the new individuals arising from them, provided that the acquired changes are common to the two sexes or to those who have produced these new individuals."

[41] Edith Heard and Robert Marteinssen, "Transgenerational Epigenetic Inheritance: myths and mechanisms," *Cell* 157.1 (2014), 96.

[42] Gill, 480.

[43] Gill, 482.

[44] Gill, 483. She cites, for example, the lower birth weight of African-American babies, a variation that cannot be explained by genetics and socio-economic inequalities alone, but also demand that one consider the epigenetic effects of generational slavery.

[45] Gill, 493.

[46] Gill, 481.

[47] Rushdie, as part of a program of allusive irony that he builds across *The Satanic Verses*, names Muhammed and Hind after two major figures of the history of Islam: the religions main prophet and one of his greatest rivals, as Hind bint Utbah, wife of powerful Meccan merchant Abu Sufyan ibn Harb, first opposes and later converts to Islam. Rushdie's version of this history of Islam, which I do not extensively address in this chapter, is spread across two sections of *The Satanic Verses*: "II. Mahound" and "VI. Return to Jahila." In those sections, Muhammed goes by "Mahound" and Hind retains her name.
[48] This echoes the episode in "Return to Jahilia" where the prostitutes of "The Curtain" demand that Baal take on the traditional patriarchal role because they "want nothing more than to be the obedient, and – yes – submissive helpmeets of a man who was wise, loving, and strong" (*SV* 396).
[49] Baucom 205
[50] Baucom, 205.
[51] Daniel Defoe, *The True-Born Englishman* in *The Novels and Miscellaneous Works of Daniel Defoe* (London: George Bell and Son, 1896), 441.

> Thus from a mixture of all kinds began,
> That Het'rogeneous Thing, *An Englishman*:
> In eager Rapes, and furious Lust begot,
> Betwixt a Painted *Britton* and a *Scot:*
> Whose gend'ring Offspring quickly learned to bow,
> And yoke their Heifers to the *Roman* Plough:
> From whence a Mongrel Half-Breed Race there came,
> With neither Name nor Nation, Speech or Fame.

See Baucom, 16, and Warnes, 106, for commentaries on Defoe's poem.
Rushdie also invites comparison between *The Satanic Verses* and Defoe by quoting his *The History of the Devil* as the novel's epigram.
[52] Baucom, 199. Baucom utilizes the Deleuzian political formations of Brian Masumi and the cultural analysis of Homi Bhabha to discuss the riot as a space where Englishness, instead of being vandalized, is actually redeemed in the riot-as-affect-event. His reading of *The Satanic Verses* discusses moments in the novel's representation of riots (for example, when Gibreel carries Saladin from the burning Shaandaar Café) as "hybridized moment[s] of riotous newness and redemption that is 'of fusions, translations, conjoinings' made" (216). More Baucom: "The rioter here appears not as the nation's enemy but as its savior. This move [is] emblematic of the movement I am attempting to trace from the placement of riot within the nomadic war machine to its location in the cultural politics of migrancy" (199).
[53] Hanif Kureishi, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (New York: Penguin, 1990), 121. Subsequent quotations from *The Buddha of Suburbia* will be cited *BS* in-text with page numbers.
[54] Jamila, who earlier in the novel submitted to an arranged marriage in order to end her father's manipulative hunger strike, ends up living with another woman in a free-love commune, happily raising a mixed-race child she bore from another man. Karim finds satisfaction in his career, landing a lucrative role in an edgy soap opera as (both appropriately and stereotypically) "the rebellious son of an Indian shopkeeper" (*BS* 259).
[55] Ryan Timm, "'The suburbs that did it': Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* and Metropolitan Multicultural Fiction," in *Hanif Kureishi*, ed. Susan Allen Fischer (London: Bloomsbury, 2015), 52.

[56] Timm, 52-53.
[57] One of the most tragic stories of the novel is when Jamila father, Anwar, manipulates her to accept an arranged marriage by nearly starving himself to death. Jamila concedes to save her father's life, but she manages to turn this tragedy into something of a triumph by novel's end, as she and her husband Changez move into a commune, where Jamila has a child with a different man and eventually enters into a relationship with another woman.
[58] Rudyard Kipling, "The White Man's Burden," in *The Norton Anthology of British Literature, Vol. E,* 8th ed., ed. Stephen Greenblatt (New York: Norton, 2006), 1821-22.
[59] Franz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth* (1963), trans. Richard Philcox (New York: Grove, 2004), 102.

Chapter 4
[1] Mary Shelley, *Frankenstein, or, The Modern Prometheus* (1818) (New York: Knopf, 1992), 119.
[2] Indra Sinha, *Animal's People* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2007), 172. Subsequent quotations from *Animal's People* will be cited *AP* in-text with page numbers.
[3] Victor Frankenstein, remember, assembles his creature with organs and tissue from both "the dissecting room and the slaughterhouse" (47) – a detail that both effaces any clear distinction between human and animal bodies and links scientific discovery with modern industry.
[4] Shelley builds many other references in her text to colonial relations in general and the slave trade specifically. The frame narrative of Robert Walton, who is leading an expedition to the North Pole, sets the novel within a quintessential masculine colonial narrative, as he seeks to "proceed over the untamed yet obedient element" (11). This will to mastery is shared by Victor, who imagines himself as "the creator and source" of "a new species" – much like fantasies of colonial explorers who endeavored to appear as gods to the natives (46). Descriptions of the creature are distinctly racialized, including his "lustrous black" hair, his "straight black lips," and the numerous instances where his "superhuman" strength or resilience is described. His hand-to-mouth way of life recalls the descriptions of natural man in Rousseau, who drew extensively on stereotypical conceptions of non-European peoples when imagining his noble savage. The word "slave" appears ten times in the novel, including the memorable reversal of roles in the creature's command to Victor, "Slave, I before reasoned with you, but you have proved yourself unworthy of condescension. Remember that I have power; you believe yourself miserable, but I can make you so wretched that the light of day will be hateful to you. You are my creator, but I am your master; -- obey!" (171). These details, and others, set the local action of Shelley's novel against a much larger political and economic backdrop.
See also Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "*Frankenstein* and Devi's Pterodactyl," in *Empire and the Gothic: The Politics of Genre*, ed. Andrew Smith and William Hughes (Houndmills: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), 56-68.
[5] Catherine Malabou, *The Ontology of the Accident: An Essay on Destructive Plasticity*, trans. Carolyn Shread (Cambridge, Polity, 2012), 4.
[6] Malabou, 5.
[7] Stacy Alaimo, *Bodily Natures* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 2010), 17.
[8] Rob Nixon, *Slow Violence and the Environmentalism of the Poor* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2011), 61. "Ordinarily rural subsistence communities – 'ecosystem people' – are attuned (and vulnerable) to different ecologies of time from those that impact the lives of the urban poor. This is not to suggest that ecosystem people possess some romantic, timeless, organic bond to the pulse of nature, but rather to acknowledge that their often precarious conditions of survival depend on different combinations of temporal awareness." Nixon goes on to say that

both urban and rural communities are both vulnerable to what Ulrich Beck has described as the "shadow kingdom" of ecosystemic toxification.(Another example of bio-gothic imagery in environmental criticism.)

[9] Malabou, 20.

[10] "monster, etymology". *OED Online*, March 2020, Oxford University Press, https://www-oed-com/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/121738 (accessed May 02, 2020). The word monster comes from the Latin *monstrum,* which is associated with a "wicked person" or an "atrocity," but also with the concepts of a "portent" and a "prodigy" – both terms that emphasize the monster's power to signify and reveal. In a similar vein, the word also was derived from the root *monere*, to warn.

[11] Stuart Hall, "When was 'The Post-Colonial'? Thinking at the Limit," in *The Postcolonial Question: Common Skies, Different Horizons,* ed. Iain Chambers and Lidia Curti (London: Routledge, 1996), 259.

[12] Georges Canguilhem, in addition to being a philosopher, was trained as a medical doctor. He mentored Michel Foucault, who built much of his *The Order of Things* on Canguilhem's writing about biology.

[13] Georges Canguilhem, *Knowledge of Life* (1965), trans. Stefanos Geroulanos and Daniela Ginsburg (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 125.

[14] Canguilhem, 126.

[15] Canguilhem, 135-36.

[16] Canguilhem, 137.

[17] Canguilhem, 135.

[18] To list a few European examples: William Bradford, *Vathek* (1816) (Oxford: Oxford World Classics, 2013); Richard Marsh, *The Beetle* (1897) (Peterborough: Broadview, 2004); Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897) (New York: Dover, 2000).

[19] Ann Radcliffe, *The Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008).

[20] Jane Austin, *Northanger Abbey* (1817) (New York: Penguin, 2012).

[21] Mahasweta Devi, *Imaginary Maps*, trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (London: Routledge, 1994), 89. Subsequent quotations from *Imaginary Maps* will be cited *IM* in-text with page numbers.

[22] I have chosen to describe "Douloti the Bountiful" as a novella, even though it is in a collection of three different narratives, *Imaginary Maps.* At seventy-five (lengthy) pages, divided into six chapters, and featuring an array of different characters, spaces, and major events, it exceeds the typical bounds of the short story, but it is significantly shorter than the other two texts, which can properly be described as novels.

[23] Donna Heiland, *Gothic and Gender: An Introduction* (Malden: Blackwell, 2004), 5.

[24] Heiland, 11. Heiland borrows her definition of "the sensible" from Claudia Johnson.

[25] See for instance Pablo Mukherjee, "'Tomorrow There Will Be More of Us': Toxic Postcoloniality in *Animal's People*," in *Postcolonial Ecologies: Literatures of the Environment*, ed. Elizabeth Deloughrey and George Handley (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 216-31.

[26] Jack Halberstam, "Technologies of Monstrosity: Bram Stoker's *Dracula*," *Victorian Studies* 30.3 (1993), 337.

[27] Halberstam 181.

[28] David McInnis, "Re-orienting the Gothic Romance: Jean Rhys, Tayeb Salih, and Strategies of Representation in the Postcolonial Gothic," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 39.3 (2008), 86.

[29] Michel Foucault, *The Order of Things: An Archaeology of the Human Sciences* (New York: Vintage, 1970), 74. Foucault also directly addresses monsters in *The Order of Things*. For Foucault monsters confirm the classificatory system because they "ensure the emergence of difference" over time: "The difference is still without law and without any well-defined structure; the monster is the root-stock of specification, but it is only a sub-species itself in the stubbornly slow stream of history. [...] the monster and the fossil are merely the backward projection of those differences and those identities that provide *taxinomia* first with a structure, then with a character. Between the table and the continuum they form a shady, mobile, wavering region in which was analysis is to define as identity is still only mute analogy" (156-157). Foucault's description of the monster as both excluded from and a precondition for *taxinomia* recalls Malabou's destructive plasticity, which paradoxically confirms form by showing how it is constituted by its absences and breakdowns.

[30] Andrew Hock Soon Ng, *Interrogating Interstices: Gothic Aesthetics in Postcolonial Asian and Asian American Literature* (Bern: Peter Lang, 2007), 32.

[31] The uncanny is a Freudian concept describing a psychological estrangement similar to McInnis's alienation effect, where but what's important for Freud is that this un-homely (*unheimlich*) entity is actually homely (*heimlich*) – it terrifies because it "leads us back to something long known to us, once very familiar." For Freud, rather predictably for those familiar with his work, this fear is the fear of the castrating father.

[32] Julia Kristeva, "Approaching Abjection," in *The Portable Kristeva*, ed. Kelly Oliver (New York: Columbia University Press, 2002), 233. Julia Kristeva distinguishes the abject from the uncanny, claiming that the former is "more violent" and more alien: "abjection is elaborated through a failure to recognize its kin; nothing is familiar, not even the shadow of a memory."

[33] Lawrence Buell, "Toxic Discourse," *Critical Inquiry* 24.3 (1998), 655.

[34] Morton, *Ecology Without Nature*, 184-85.

[35] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (1897) (New York: Dover, 2000). Think, for instance, of The Crew of the Light bursting in to the bedchamber to find Dracula forcing Mina to suckle from his bleeding breast.

[36] This section on Devi's "Douloti the Bountiful" has been adapted from my discussion of Devi's full collection: see Baron Haber, "'We destroyed it undiscovered': Slow Violence, the Gothic, and Neocolonialism in Mahasweta Devi's *Imaginary Maps*," *darkmatter* 13 (2016).

[37] Gabrielle Collu, "*Adivasis* and the Myth of Independence: Mahasweta Devi's 'Douloti the Bountiful," *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 30.1 (1999), 45.

[38] Nagesh Rao, "'Neocolonialism' or 'Globalization'? Postcolonial Theory and the Demands of Political Economy," *Interdisciplinary Literary Studies* 1.2 (2000), 165-84. Rao claims the primary difficulty with the term "neocolonialism" is that, in emphasizing how the nation-based colonial powers of high-imperialism still exert political, economic, cultural, and environmental control over the nations that formed from their former colonial holdings, neocolonial theorists don't adequately account for "the *death* of the nation state" (169) that has resulted from globalization. I resolve Rao's critique in this essay by emphasizing how, in Devi's stories, the "colonizers" are not only foreign or international powers that come to extract resources from tribal lands; the privileged, modernized classes within India who manipulate the laws of the nation-state to exert control of and profit off of such spaces.

[39] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "The Author in Conversation," in *Imaginary Maps* by Mahasweta Devi, Trans. Spivak. (London, Routledge, 1995), xviii. Devi's work as an investigative journalist and social activist deeply informs her fiction. "I think a creative writer should have a social conscience," she tells Spivak, "I have a duty towards society" (xvi). Since her first visit to the

tribal areas of the Palamu district in 1965, she has gained notoriety among government officials for her exposés documenting widespread corruption and tribal exploitation. She also helped develop several organizations that fight for tribal autonomy. The *Adim Jati Aikya Parishad*, or Tribal Unity Forum, is the most notable of these organizations. These organizations worked on a variety of fronts; they set in motion a literacy initiative that employed both *adivasis* and "untouchables" as teachers, organized resistance against the *kamiya* system, and helped women from such communities access markets without middle-men to sell their handicrafts. In addition to supporting these social programs, Devi's affiliated organizations also led initiatives to protect and rehabilitate tribal land, including a community-led reforestation program and the conversion to lift irrigation, which helped mitigate well depletion (xiii-xiv).

[40] In her "Translator's Preface," Spivak says Devi's fiction, when translated from Bengali to English, "faces in two directions, encounters two readerships" (xxiii), one in the West and one in India. This insight reminds us that India needs to be seen not as a monolithic unity, "the East" that stands against "the West," but rather as a dynamic, diverse, and diffuse amalgam of different races, classes, religions, cultures, and world views. The tribal communities in Devi's stories are often invisible even within India's own borders, and as such her tribal characters might strike her middle-class Indian readers as more "other" than their U.S. or European counterparts. As Subha Dasgupta puts it, "[Devi] is the mediator between two world separated by time gaps of thousands and thousands of years as it were and yet living side-by-side."

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translators Preface," in *Imaginary Maps* by Mahasweta Devi, Trans. Spivak. (London, Routledge, 1995), ix-xxix.

Subha Chakraborty Dasgupta, "Contesting Polarities: Creating Spaces – Reading Myths in Mahasweta Devi's Stories," *Indian Literature* 20.2 (2003), 202.

[41] "Mueseumized" from Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translators Preface," xxiv.

[42] Siddharth Kara, *Bonded Labor: Tackling the System of Slavery in South Asia* (New York, Columbia University Press, 2012). Siddharth Kara describes bonded labor as "the most extensive form of slavery in the world today" (3). A 2011 study estimates that more than 80% of the world's 20.5 million bonded laborers are in South Asia (3). These laborers are severely exploited and are often forced to pay interests rates north of 20%, with "money lent for future medicine, clothes or basic sustenance" constantly adding to the debt, thus creating a vicious "ongoing cycle of debt bondage" (4). Kara sets the continued evolution of bonded labor within "an ancient history of slavery dating back to Vedic times, up to and including the British colonial period" (16) Though he insists that European colonizers did not introduce slavery to India, he also identifies two expansions of the slavery system that can be linked to British colonial rule: the expansion of the slave trade throughout the British Empire and the "solidification of debt as the primary means of securing slave labor" (23).

[43] From *Pterodactyl*, another of the novellas in Devi's collection: "Who controls the fertile black soil for producing cotton in the Malwa area? So-called main crops are jawar, wheat, and rice. Who eats this? So called 'lesser food grains' such as kodo, kutki, and soma are also grown. This states agri-products for trade are oilseed, cotton, and sugar-cane. The other day a Bhil tribal and six members of his family killed themselves for reasons of poverty, although, in the unwritten Adivasi lexicon, suicide is a dreadful sin. Central India will soon make news in soybean cultivation. Is it the soybean revolution after the green revolution? Who will consume this soybean power, nutri-nuggests, oil, the whole seed?" (109)

[44] Nixon, 16.

[45] Nixon, 19.

[46] Jennifer Wenzel, "Epic Struggles over India's Forests in Mahasweta Devi's Short Fiction," *Alif: Journal of Comparative Poetics* 18 (1998), 129.
[47] Wenzel, 127.
[48] Nixon, 17.
[49] Nixon, 41.
[50] Minoli Salgado, "Tribal Stories, Scribal Worlds: Mahasweta Devi and the Unreliable Translator," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 35.1 (2000), 132.
[51] Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Translator's Note," xxxi.
[52] Bluebeard, while not properly a gothic tale, certainly is a folk tale with extremely gruesome and fear-inducing elements: it involves a young woman who marries a rich man, Blue Beard, so named because of his inexplicable facial hair. After their marriage, Blue Beard carries his bride off to his opulent country house, but this domestic paradise soon turns into a prison when she discovers a secret closet containing the bodies of his dead wives. (Angela Carter famously gothicized this story in her "The Bloody Chamber.") The shift from a marriage plot to one of entrapment is familiar within gothic fiction; following this trope, the "fairy tale" of Douloti's marrying a brahman horrifically transforms into a tale of entrapment within the living hell of the brothel.
Angela Carter, "The Bloody Chamber," *The Bloody Chamber and Other Stories* (1979) (London: Vintage, 1995), 7-40.
[53] "In 1962 was the *vote*. What *vote*, why *vote*, tell me what the people of Senora know about this. They will *vote* for whomever Munabar tells them to *vote* for. They don't know what the *vote* or election signifies. But Munabar is a Rajput and Jayvant Singh is also a Rajput. Munabar has told them that they must *vote* for his caste brother. Then that's what they'll do. You can't say 'no' to the master" (32). The fact that "vote" is italicized (and, therefore, in English in Devi's original manuscript) emphasizes that democracy is a foreign concept that, because of residual feudal ideologies, does not work the same way in India as it does in Europe.
[54] The song of the *kamiya* women laments how opportunistic masters like Munabar leverage debt to entrap bodies within their absolute power:

> We don't know what to do
> We gape like fools
> His pet wolves catch our hands
> Smear ink on our left thumbs
> Take our mark on white paper
> Put the paper in the safe
> He has thousands of sheets of paper like this
> He is king by strength of loans
> He is government by strength of loans
> He is the patwari, he is the jungle *officer*
> He is the police station, he is the *policeman*,
> He is the judge the verdict the court. (21)

[55] Achille Mbembe, "Necropolitics," trans. Libby Meintjes, *Public Culture* 15.1 (2003), 40.
[56] Mbembe, "Necropolitics," 21.
[57] Collu, 49.
[58] Wetzel, 150-51. The history that Douloti's death brings to bear on the present reaches back to before colonialism, all the way to India's mythic roots. Wenzel reads Douloti's obstruction of the Independence Day celebration as paralleling the story from the *Ramayana* where "Sita prevents Rama from ritually recognizing his consolidation of power." Wenzel argues that Devi's use of

such epic traditions "turns those great epics strategically against themselves – or, more precisely, against those tellings and invocations employed in the service of a divinely justified oppression." Devi's stories thus condemn not only neocolonial actors coming from the West, but also those Indian agents who seek to continue "the great struggle to tame the forest, to domesticate those outside of the Hindu tradition." The gothic here functions as a hybrid genre, showing a capaciousness to take on a diversity of intellectual and social traditions.

[59] In my article-length analysis of Devi's *Imaginary Maps*, I advance the concept of "the sacred" as a potential framework to structure the developed world's interactions with tribal peoples.

[60] I prefer the term "SF" to "science fiction" is especially useful because it also speaks to *speculative fiction* – a term that deemphasizes the centrality of Western techno-science and opens the genre to other types of speculation, including political, cultural, spiritual, and biological.

[61] Amitav Ghosh, *The Calcutta Chromosome: A Novel of Fevers, Delirium, and Discovery* (New York: Perennial, 1995). Subsequent Citations of *The Calcutta Chromosome* will be cited *CC* with page numbers in-text.

[62] Diane Nelson, "A Social Science Fiction of Fevers, Delirium and Discovery: *The Calcutta Chromosome,* the Colonial Laboratory, and the Postcolonial New Human," *Science Fiction Studies* 30.2 (2003), 252.

[63] Claire Chambers, "The Absolute Essentialness of Conversations: A discussion with Amitav Ghosh" *Journal of Postcolonial Writing* 41.1 (2005): 30.

[64] For more on the idea of Ghosh's malaria as a "gift," see Jenni Halpin, "Gift Unpossessed: Community as 'Gift' in *The Calcutta Chromosome,*" *ARIEL: A Review of International English Literature* 40.2-3 (April/July 2009): 23-39. In that article, Halpin uses Wendy Brown's extension of Derrida's formulation of justice to think about community justice – "not one of economic or political balance sheets[, but one that sets] aside zero-sum contexts and [pursues] justice on a 'win=win' basis. Justice as gift does not measure but rather offers a joining of what is there" (23).

[65] Claire Chambers describes how the novel, in its satirical representation of Ross and other European scientists, puts a "playful twist on the notion of 'science fiction' [by suggesting] that many of the grand claims made for science are fictions," especially those claims that scientific and technological progress was unilaterally advanced by the West, and usually by solitary geniuses (58). Chambers sees Mangala's manipulation of Ross's research as performing a critique similar to that of Gyan Prakash's history of science in *Another Reason*, where Prakash argues that indigenous knowledges were systematically discredited in the imperial encounter. Prakash asserts that despite this legacy of epistemological violence, non-Western countries do in fact have agency in science, which was developed through an ambi-directional process of discovery that included both colonizer and colonized. Several other critics have also turned to Prakash's history to explain the novel's critiques of WMS. One of these authors, James Thrall, sees the novel as troubling the Orientalist binary between the "spiritual and sensuous Indian" and the "materialist and rational British" (290). Thrall extends the claim that colonized peoples contributed to science to question the autonomy, authority, and rationality of Western science more generally. He argues that Ghosh's play with "multi-layered, and inter-layered, renditions of science and religion" make it so these two apparent opposites "somehow come to be one and the same thing" (298). The supposedly rational scientists carry their own Western superstitions about divine right and providence, while inversely the agents of counter-science develop their own methodology that Thrall calls "a form of rational inquiry of an entirely different order, Eastern rather than Western it is orientation, with goals commensurately more vast, and independent from limited perspectives that can accomplish only what is perceived as possible" (298).

Together, Chambers and Thrall's arguments show how Ghosh's experimentation with genre outlines an alternative conceptual and political space outside the hegemonic logics of WMS, one built on non-Western narratives and epistemologies.
Claire Chambers, "Postcolonial Science Fiction: Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 38.1 (March 2003): 57-72.
James Thrall, "Postcolonial Science Fiction?: Science, Religion, and the Transformation of Genre in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome,*" *Literature and Theology* 23.3 (September 2009), 289-302.

[66] Hugh O'Connell, "Mutating Toward the Future: The Convergence of Utopianism, Postcolonial SF, and the Postcontemporary Longing for Form in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome,*" *Modern Fiction Studies* 58.4 (Winter 2012): 776.

[67] O'Connell 779.

[68] Bishnupriya Ghosh, "On Grafting the Vernacular: The Consequences of Postcolonial Specrology," *boundary 2: An International Journal of Literature and Culture* 31.2 (Summer 2004): 198.

[69] Bishnupriya Ghosh, 198.

[70] "[With the underground rituals and cults of the novel] we are in the domain not only of religion but *popular* religion. The nature of the performances described in the novel – rituals with a punchy charge – refers us to *tantra*, that Other of Brahmanical Hinduism. Always seen as a counterreligion, *tantra* work against the Brahmanical imperative to control and prohibit desire in order to attain *moksha* (freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth); *tantric* cults deploy desire, and therefore the body, as a means to freeing the soul. The ecstatic antics of Mangala's followers, their ease with violence and the worship of sexualized female deities, echo the *tantric* rites exalting the Kali (a malignant manifestation of the mother goddess venerated in Bengal)." Bishnupriya Ghosh, 212.

[71] Bishnupriya Ghosh, 214.

[72] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1886) (London: Wordsworth Editions, 1999).

[73] The CDC estimates that 445,000 people, mostly "young children in sub-Saharan Africa," died from malaria worldwide in 2016. Malaria's reproductive cycle interferes with human reproduction. In addition to these children, the most vulnerable populations are pregnant women from the same region, whose immune systems are suppressed while gestating. "Malaria's Impact Worldwide," *United States Center for Disease Control and Prevention*, last modified May 3, 2018, https://www.cdc.gov/malaria/malaria_worldwide/impact.html.

[74] Mel Chen, *Animacies: Biopolitics, Racial Mattering, and Queer Affect* (Durham, Duke University Press, 2012), 5.

[75] Mark Wiser, "Malaria," Tulane University, last modified April 4, 2018, http://www.tulane.edu/~wiser/protozoology/notes/malaria.html.

[76] Wiser, "Malaria."

[77] Wiser, "Malaria."

[78] Rachel C. Lee, "Parasexual Generativity and Chimeracologial Entanglements in Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome,*" *Scholar and Feminist Online* 11.3 (Summer 2013).

[79] Claire Chambers, "Postcolonial Science Fiction: Amitav Ghosh's *The Calcutta Chromosome*," 63. In this article, Chambers provides an overview of how Ghosh's novel provides critical commentary on Ross's autobiographical writing, seeking an alternative history of its minor characters. This is a method similar to that Ghosh uses in *In an Antique Land*, and also from such texts as Tom Stoppard's *Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* and Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Sea* (61).

[80] Catherine Malabou, *Ontology of the Accident* (Cambridge: Polity, 2012), 20. Malabou doesn't refer to the demand to reproduce one's being, but I think that preservation always implies a kind of reproduction, whether "inside" the self (in self-image, in language, in memory) or "outside" of the self (in artifacts, language, or offspring).

[81] I understand that the stereotype of the "ecological Indian" is typically applied to the American Indian, but I use it here to acknowledge how, in today's discourse of globalization, this spurious idea that indigenous people exist in some ecological harmony with wild natural environments has been extended to other continents and regions.

[82] Suchitra Mathur, "Caught Between the Goddess and the Cyborg: Third-World Women and the Politics of Science in Three Works of Indian Science Fiction," *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* 39.3 (2004): 135, 136.

[83] Christopher Shinn, "On Machines and Mosquitos: Neuroscience, Bodies, and Cyborgs in Amitav Ghosh's 'The Calcutta Chromosome'," *MELUS* 33.4 (Winter 2008): 152.

[84] There are three primary objections I would raise against Shinn's reading of Mangala. First, one of the main critiques he levels against her viability as a political icon is the lack of clarity around "her exact purposes in developing this technology and what type of world she plans to create" (151-52); in other words, because her actions are not rationally teleological (at least from Shinn's perspective), their value and efficacy are especially questionable. Second, Shinn argues that instead of mapping out a viable postcolonial agency, the novel "ultimately reaffirms the importance of the organic in a 'post-human' world" (147), where "the organic" refers to "certain biological processes that occur prior to the effects of discourse and representation" (152), but not prior to the effects of technology. Third, Shinn's understanding of the "postbiological" relationship between the biological body and technology, which characterizes machines as catalyzers for human bodies to trigger "their own internal processes and facilitate biological mutation." In all of these critiques Shinn betrays a techno-utopian view that makes claims on the indeterminacy of the "organic" while at the same time subsuming the organic to the technological. His theory of postbiological embodiment ignores the costs of technology to the biological environment (153), and in this regard his argument is right in line with mainstream SF's faith in Western technology as a progressive and self-regulating system.

[85] O'Connell, 785.

[86] Ng 228.

[87] Ng 231.

[88] Nixon's *Slow Violence* won four major awards: an American Book Award, the International Studies Association's Sprout prize, the Interdisciplinary Humanities award, and the ASLE Award for the best book in environmental studies.

[89] Justin Omar Johnson, "'A Nother World' in Indra Sinha's *Animal's People*." *Twentieth-Century Literature* 62.2 (2016): 119-144. The Bhopal was the first large-scale environmental disaster of independent India, a spectacular catastrophe with an event horizon that stretches across generations. In the aftermath of this massacre, the people of Bhopal continue to this day to experience a high rate of birth defects, respiratory and neurological disorders, and "all manner of tumorous growths" (Johnson 119). Despite an initial wave of international outcry against this murderous event, the US multinational corporation that owned the factory, Union Carbide, was able to avoid going to trial in India and the U.S, ultimately agreeing in 1989 to a limited liability settlement with the Indian Supreme Court that valued the dead at about 2000 USD each. The settlement did not account for any of the estimated 200,000 people who suffered long-term injury, nor the ongoing ecological devastation of the Bhopal region. As Justin Omar Johnson

concludes, "The people of Bhopal have now been abandoned by their corporate benefactors, their national government, and the legal systems in India and the United States."
For more see Larry Everest, *Behind the Poison Cloud: Union Carbide's Bhopal Massacre* (Chicago: Banner, 1986).

[90] Nixon, 46.

[91] Mukherjee provides a useful account of these causes, which includes engineering decisions about the storage of the pesticides and bi-products, fluctuations in the market price, reduced staffing and overlooked safety precautions at the factory, lack of governmental oversight, among other factors. Mukherjee, 217-221.

[92] Nixon, 64.

[93] Mukherjee, 226. Emphasis in the original.

[94] Mukherjee, 228.

[95] Donna Haraway, *Staying with the Trouble: Making Kin in the Cthulucene (*Duke University Press, 2016), 1.

[96] Mukherjee, 227.

[97] Kali Charan Bahl, "The Twin (Rugala) image of Radha-Krishna in the Bhakti Literature of Northern India and its Impact on the 'Riti' Poetry in the Hindi Area," *Journal of South Asian Literature* 19.2 (1984), 34.

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[101] Kaimal, 401.

[102] Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble*, 10.

[103] Haraway, *Staying With the Trouble,* 40-41.

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