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This dissertation argues that transnational literatures of the 1990s emphasize everyday place-making during a period when physical distance might be erased through new technologies and social identities might be understood diffuse and “groundless.” Drawing on a range of cross-disciplinary scholarship on space and transnationality, this project maps the literary place-consciousness of the “long nineties” (1989-2001) by attending to each text’s representation of the multiple histories and geographies of a given place and how characters’ identities are shaped by them. Specifically, each author imagines real places marked by vertical, (post)colonial relationships and lateral, transnational ones in a transitional period of geopolitics neither overdetermined by Cold War factionalism nor circumscribed by a twenty-first century, Euro-American “war on terror.” The resulting transformation of these places offers Nadine Gordimer and Salman Rushdie (chapters 1 and 2, respectively) opportunities to grapple with spatial legacies of British imperialism while forging new place-making practices. Gordimer’s *The Pickup* suggests that a productive sense of place might be recovered by fleeing corrupt postcolonial space for a “pure,” local space, while Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* recognizes that coming to terms with postcolonial spatial politics means understanding space as underwritten by racial and sexual difference. In contrast to the post-imperialist legacies that haunt but do not dominate Gordimer and Rushdie’s work, Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* (chapter 3) and Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* (chapter 4) suggest that colonialist spatial practices continue to have real, material effects in the 1990s. The

former engages the intersection settler colonialist boundary-making and neocolonial boundary erasure located at the U.S.-Mexico border; the latter represents national narration as an act of claiming place, thereby resisting settler colonialist logics of elimination. While previous scholarship tended to focus on representations of hyper-mobility, placelessness, and deterritorialization, this dissertation ultimately seeks to reintroduce overlooked spatial-historical contexts of the “long nineties” into current scholarship in postcolonial and transnational literature studies. Such an approach generates new ways of understanding how authors attempt to reconcile sweeping, globalized flows of power with everyday spatial practice.

RE-VISIONS OF PLACE IN TRANSNATIONAL LITERATURES
OF THE LONG NINETIES

by

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To my parents, Richard and Helen Brister,
for your unwavering love and encouragement

APPROVAL PAGE

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: LITERARY RE-VISIONS OF PLACE

Just as none of us is outside or beyond geography, none of us is completely free of the struggle over geography. That struggle is complex and interesting because it is not only about soldiers and cannons but also about ideas, about forms, about images and imaginings.

—Edward Said, *Culture and Imperialism* (7)

We are, in short, placelings.

—Arturo Escobar, “Culture Sits in Places” (143)

The last two decades of the twentieth century saw two tectonic geopolitical changes, the Cold War’s end marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall at the close of 1989 and the advent of late globalization. In the former, Germans on either side of the wall were able to move more freely across the political border, leading to formal re-unification of East Germany and West Germany in 1990. The effects of this spectacular re-unification of a nation rippled beyond the nation’s new borders. The tearing down of the wall was only the most visible signal that national and transnational relationships were changing. One of the effects, as recorded in humanities scholarship, was the questioning of the so-called “worlding” paradigm and its narrow focus on the U.S. and Soviet Union primarily. Viewed from another vantage, the end of the twentieth century was a time of increased connections and exchanges in culture, communications, and economics across the globe that did not necessarily operate through the nation-state. Transnational corporations largely operated outside of the state, effecting new waves of economic

migrants, and new technology, such as “the World Wide Web,” enabled a “global village” where communication was immediate and distance conquered. Again, humanities scholars engaged such movements with a new vocabulary, such as “postnationality” and “placelessness.”¹

The nation-state, it would seem, was in crisis. The existential threat to this hegemonic political form occurred in two ways during this period: through the reallocation of geopolitical control away from the hands of a few “superpower” nation-states and through the general atrophy of the state’s control over its economic future in the form of multinational corporations, in particular. Although these seismic shifts suggested that the cultural-political construct of the nation as an imagined community was waning, this was not, some humanities scholars asserted, a reason to abjure theorization of the nation and nationality. Paul Jay argues that, while there was a parallel “transnational turn” in literary studies, the nation-state remained and remains a central critical referent.² Nonetheless, the foundational shifts of the decade demanded thinking the national within the transnational or the global, that is, how and to what extent one’s

¹ This project understands “late globalization,” following Paul Jay, as a contemporary “*acceleration of forces* [e.g., mass communication and migration] that have been at work for a few centuries,” characterized by the “*conflation of cultural and economic forms*” (emphasis in original 37, 34). On late globalization as it relates to cultural production, see Appadurai (1996), Wilson and Dissanayake (1996), Hall (1997), Livingston (2001) and Jameson (2000). On “worlding” as addressed in late twentieth century literary and cultural studies, see Mohanty (1984), Spivak (1985), and Shohat (1995).

² Regarding the continued salience of the nation and nationality as central referents in humanities scholarship, see also Peter Hitchcock (2010) and Françoise Lionnet and Shu-mei Shih (2005). On the politics of periodization in the humanities, Neil Lazarus argues against demarcating “epochal shifts” whereby postcolonial scholars update critical theory of the 1980s-1990s by shifting focus away from imperial colonialism as if it is a discrete period that has ended (2011, 14-16). While Lazarus understands the 1980s-1990s as part of a larger history of capitalist imperialism (as do Jay (2010, 33ff.) and Parry (1997, 228), Phillip Wegner favors periodization to the extent that the practice “is heuristic, enabling us to see the familiar in new and productive ways” (32). This dissertation acknowledges that the period at hand, the “long nineties” as Wegner terms it, is necessarily embedded in larger transglobal histories and geographies, while using periodization as a productive analytical tool, following Wegner.

national allegiance articulates with other people and ideas beyond one's own perceived borders. This momentous change was an ongoing process that did not originate with the end of the Cold War, although arguably the large-scale abandonment of "geopolitical logic of spheres, blocs, regions, and countries separated by all sorts of 'curtains' and checkpoints" catalyzed such thinking (Moraru 34).

These two sea changes—the breakdown of the longstanding power structure of Cold War alliances and enemies and the acceleration of mass communication and migration beyond established borders—necessarily influence any study of global literary movements of the 1990s.³ And, this dissertation is no exception. While the effects of the Cold War's end and the ramping-up of late globalization shape any systematic study of cultural texts of the period, this dissertation puts into conversation other contemporary histories that do not necessarily invest in an east-west framework. Instead, this project excavates local maps and narratives that value other modes of socio-spatial organization. These specific spatial histories engage with the period's changing geopolitics to varying degrees. For example, the formal end of South African apartheid in 1994 and the first *Intifada* in Israel-Palestine (1987-1993) create their own histories and geographies that articulate with but are not overdetermined by the ending of the Cold War and the emergence of late globalization. Literary representations of these spatial histories offer ways to understand specific reactions to and negotiations of both local and global changes.

³ For an outline of general and literary manifestations of global thinking and practices in the 1990s, see Wegner (32-36).

“Re-visions of Place” argues that Anglophone literatures of 1990s imaginatively engage marginalized histories and geographies in order to critique dominant discourses of space-time. Drawing on a range of cross-disciplinary scholarship on space and transnationality, this project traces a literary place-consciousness in works by Salman Rushdie, Nadine Gordimer, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Joe Sacco, attending particularly to the intersection of social identities, such as gender and sexuality, and place. I borrow Phillip Wegner’s term “the long nineties” to designate an especially rich period of study (1989-2001) as the large-scale shift of spatial paradigms, where blocs and curtains give way to global villages, afford these authors the opportunity to imagine the palimpsestic histories and maps of a given place. The resulting transformation of these places offers, for example, Gordimer and Rushdie opportunities to grapple with spatial legacies of British imperialism and South African apartheid, respectively, while imagining more equitable place-making practices. Gordimer’s *The Pickup* (2001) suggests that a productive sense of place might be recovered by fleeing corrupt postcolonial space for a “pure,” local space, while Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988) recognizes that coming to terms with postcolonial spatial politics means understanding space as underwritten by racial and sexual difference. In contrast to the post-imperialist legacies that haunt but do not dominate Gordimer and Rushdie’s work, Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* (1997) and Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* (2001) suggest that colonialist spatial practices continue to have real, material effects in the 1990s. The former engages the intersection settler colonialist boundary-making and neocolonial boundary erasure located at the U.S.-Mexico border; the latter represents national narration as an act of claiming place, thereby

resisting settler colonialist logics of elimination. Thus, this dissertation performs a critical re-orientation to the texts at hand as it foregrounds local contexts while keeping transnational and transglobal events and spaces within its purview.

The two epigraphs above suggest related notions of place that provide this dissertation a broad framework, the first indicating the importance of cultural representation to everyday place-making suggested in the second. In his assertion that we are all “placelings,” the anthropologist Arturo Escobar indicates that we understand ourselves and cultivate social relationships in specific places at specific times. The individual and collective identities that grow out of those spatial relationships over time are, consequently, intimately tied to notions of place (Dirlik). Hence, the stories we construct about ourselves and others reflect these local attachments to place, doing so within multiple contexts across a range of spatial-political discourses—local, national, transnational, and global. “The local” is not a discrete, impermeable construct. Rather, local attachments and affiliations can be harnessed for various social, economic, and political programs. The literary scholar Edward Said reminds us that the representation of places is a powerful tool for consolidating broader identities. It is not, however, absolute. The epigraph above suggests a loosely affiliated relationship between control over a place and the imagining of it. In fact, commenting on the high period of British imperialism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Said clarifies, “the enterprise of empire depends upon the *idea of having an empire*” (emphasis in original 11). Similarly, we might say that the practices and horizons of globalization depend upon

an idea of becoming global.⁴ Yet, if cultural texts imagine geographies that facilitate the actual business of governing a place, then cultural texts might imagine new and different mappings of the same place, thereby changing spatial politics.⁵ Thus, literary texts of a given period are an appropriate site of inquiry for examining “how people mobilize [...] notions of attachment and belonging for the construction of individual and collective identities” (Escobar 149). Specifically, the following chapters attend closely to how contemporary transnational literatures deploy the place-based attachments of individuals and groups in order to critique dominant spatial formations and to envision alternate cultural and political alliances.

Although the authors considered in this dissertation are working in a period where the incitement to “become global” and new articulations of transnational power certainly influence how they imagine new geographies, they also grapple with being in places with unacknowledged histories and complex and overlapping claims to land. Consequently, this study performs a critical re-orientation to texts of this period that foregrounds local contexts while keeping dominant transnational/transglobal histories and geographies within its purview. To this end, I employ an approach provisionally termed, “place-based transnationalism.” In general, the transnational approach espoused in these pages might be understood as a set of critical dispositions that foreground two or more nation(-states) in relation, the contingency of political boundaries, and the potential of bodies,

⁴ The link here between British imperialism and globalization is not accidental. This study, especially Chapter Three, recognizes that “the histories of colonization, decolonization, and postcolonialism are part of the long history of globalization” (Jay 41).

⁵ In addition to Said’s groundbreaking work in (post)colonial literary and cultural studies, many scholars of postcolonial studies, such as Homi Bhabha (“third space”) and Gayatri Spivak’s (“learning from below”), have long been concerned with themes of space and place.

commodities, and ideas to traverse them.⁶ Indeed, this dissertation takes as a central premise the interrelation between national spaces and identities and transnational ones. Building on this general critical disposition, the place-based framework borrows from a range of humanities scholarship on space and place and is marked by an attention to the essential placeness of social identities, the integral relationship of national spaces and identities with transnational ones, and the performance of those identities by gendered/sexed bodies in place.

Any project that undertakes the study of literatures labeled “transnational” or “global” must understand both as discursive *and* spatial constructs. Whereas “transnational” indicates a crossing between two nations physically or metaphorically, “globalization” seems to stretch even further to indicate broader social and material effects of globalized practices, such as new forms of mass communication, deterritorialized capital, new catalysts for mass migration, and familiar and new diasporas. However, such constructs are not “off the ground.”⁷ Individuals engage, perform, adopt, and resist globalization *in place*. In an effort to keep the spatiality of the transnational central to this study, I employ a concept of place drawn from human geography studies. “Place,” as used throughout this dissertation, signals both a physical location and, following Doreen Massey, “a particular articulation of space-time relations,” where “space” is social relations “stretched out” (*Space* 2-5). In other words,

⁶ As space does not permit a rehearsal of the archive of transnational studies scholarship, see consequential work by Appadurai (1996), Gibson-Graham (1996), Ong (2006), and Slaughter (2007). In particular, see Lionnet and Shih (2005) for a concise history of the “transnational turn” in humanities scholarship.

⁷ See, for example, C. Kaplan (1994, 1996), Barnard (2007), Gibson-Graham (1996), and Smith and Katz (1993) for critiques of humanities scholarship that problematically glosses over specific histories and spatial claims.

places are locations where social relations occur, where individuals' identities are formed and build over time, and often where they make affective investments. This conception of place does not infer stability or closure. On the contrary, place in these terms is demarcated by contingent and porous borders that connect the nominal "inside" and "outside."⁸ As "a proportion of the social interrelations will [...] go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place" (*Space* 169), the identity of a given place turns on "co-presence," a mixing of the inside and outside. Further, place as a particular mix of social relations suggests a place-ness to social categories that are generated by those relations. Arif Dirlik questions, "Are classes conceivable without reference to places? Are genders, races, and ethnicities? Is the obliviousness to places in the use of such categories responsible for the rendering of critical categories into instruments of hegemony?" ("Place-based" 31).⁹ This dissertation, then, attends to place as a spatial and social construct articulated with other social categories, especially gender and race.¹⁰

⁸ Massey summarizes the porosity of place well: "The particularity of any place is, in these terms, constructed not by placing boundaries around it and defining its identity through counterposition to the other which lies beyond, but precisely (in part) through the specificity of the mix of links and interconnections *to* that 'beyond.' Places viewed this way are open and porous" (*Spaces* 5). While "places gather things, thoughts, and memories in particular configurations," notes Escobar, echoing Massey's idea of the interrelation of places, they "[are] characterized by openness rather than by a unitary self-identity (143).

⁹ Massey echoes Dirlik's suggestion of a "placeness" of social categories in her critique of David Harvey's characterization of place as "curiously solid in an age of recognition of the decentred subject and of multiple identities" (137). She continues, "Individuals' identities are not aligned with *either* place *or* class; they are probably constructed out of both, as well as a whole complex of other things, most especially 'race' and gender" (emphasis in original, Massey 137). Dirlik likewise questions Harvey's assignation of "space" as the province of capital and "place" as "the realm of the laborer" ("Place-based" 19-20).

¹⁰ I borrow Anne McClintock's phrase "articulated categories" throughout to describe the relationship between socially constructed categories. She uses the term to argue that "race, gender, and class are not distinct realms of experience [...but] come into existence in and through relation to each other" (*Leather* 5).

Further, the place-based transnationalism espoused in these pages—that is, the attempt to put notions of nationality, transnationality, and globality back into place—requires differentiating between *kinds of places*. This process is what Neil Smith calls “spatial scale,” “establish[ing] boundaries between different places, locations, and sites of experience” (“Homeless” 100). Eschewing a notion of absolute space, spatial scaling, Smith asserts, is both the resolution of “contested social forces and processes” *and* the site at which those forces are continually contested, where individuals in relation to one another can redefine those spaces (“Homeless” 101). Smith asserts that the taxonomy he outlines (body, home, community, urban, region, nation, global) is not necessarily hierarchical, but dominant institutions and power centers, particularly those invested in global capitalism and patriarchy, have incentive to maintain spatial scale this way. Rather than assume a unidirectional flow of power either “upscale” or “downscale,” a place-based transnationalism understands spatial scales as nested within one another. This project will attend to the embeddedness of scales in two ways. Primarily, it takes the term “transnational” literally, as a signifier that designates spaces and practices performed by border-crossing agents between two or more nations. Consequently, national spaces, practices, and identities resonate with any practice of transnationality, signaling that the nation *continues to be* a present and contested cultural-political construct. This study focuses on literary imaginings of city spaces in particular as they best represent the nesting of national and transnational or global scales.¹¹ Additionally,

¹¹ Saskia Sassen argues that “global-economic features like hypermobility and time-space compression are not self-generative [;] they need to be produced [... through] vast concentrations of very material and not so mobile facilities and infrastructures” (217). Consequently, she asserts that “the global city is emblematic here, with its vast capacities for controlling hypermobile dematerialized financial instruments and its

the following analysis pays close attention to the ways that the gendered/sexed body is the site for the production of spatial scale.¹² Bodies are the original spatial referent, Yi-fu Tuan posits (35-36), and, as such, they are the primary site for differentiating kinds of spaces, argues Smith (“Homeless” 102). Premised on the understanding that bodies are also the “cultural locus of gender meanings” (Butler quoted in “Homeless” 102), this dissertation approaches the literatures at hand with an eye toward their creation and consolidation of gendered/sexed subjects in place.¹³ Doing so situates discourses of gender and sexuality within specific histories and geographies, revealing the groups and institutions that benefit from certain kinds of spatial scaling and those disempowered by such scaling.¹⁴

Thus, place-based transnationalism as a mode of literary analysis holds multiple times and spaces in tension through a comparative examination of literary geographies. As applied to the late-century work of Rushdie, Yamashita, Gordimer, and Sacco in this dissertation, the approach accomplishes several goals. Through its linking of place, spatial scale, and transnationalism in late twentieth century literatures, this dissertation participates in a relatively new scholarly conversation that takes place-making as integral to a range of issues in postcolonial and transnational literary studies, such as the

enormous concentrations of those material and human, mostly place-bound, resources that make such capacities possible. Cities demonstrate one way in which economic globalization can be said to be nationally embedded [...]” (217-218).

¹² I use the term “gender/sex” and variations throughout the project to indicate my affinity with Judith Butler’s concept of the socially performative aspect of both gender and sex, as found in *Bodies That Matter* (1993). See also Fausto-Sterling (2000) on this point.

¹³ Feminist and gender studies scholars across the humanities have long considered “the transnational turn” as it generates new sites of social, economic, and political possibility and oppression for gendered/sexed bodies. Among many others, see notable work by Mohanty (2003), C. Kaplan (1994), Puar (2007), and Grewal (2005).

¹⁴ I echo Ann Brigham here in that a focus on spatial scale “allows for a way to think through those relations and to historicize instances *and* ideas of borderlands, margins, and mobility” (325).

construction of transnational reading publics and alternate imaginings of spatial organization. This study is modeled on Rita Barnard's excellent *Apartheid and Beyond: South African Writers and the Politics of Place* (2007), which traces literary geographies in the (post-)apartheid work of Nadine Gordimer, J.M. Coetzee, and others.¹⁵ In addition to acknowledging place as setting and theme in her study, Barnard theorizes subjectivity as "a spatially contingent fiction" that the texts under consideration interrogate and seek to re-imagine (63-65). This project forwards the critical conversation by employing concepts from fields outside of literary studies, providing a working vocabulary for putting into conversation material places and imagined places. Integrating concepts such as the placeness of social categories (Massey and Dirlik) and spatial scaling (Smith) not only avoids a metaphorization of space that smooths over real places and people who live in and practice those places.¹⁶ A cross-disciplinary approach offers literary scholars a more nuanced vocabulary for discussing representations of those real, material spaces. Moreover, through its attention to the embeddedness of spaces and the co-presence of place, this dissertation provisionally connects specific histories of and claims to place with broader geopolitical and global socio-economic shifts in an effort to highlight moments when literary texts obscure or promote alternate socio-spatial formations. Whereas, for example, Barnard presents a literary archeology through her rich study of a complex *national* history, this dissertation links various cultural responses to changing

¹⁵ Barnard is part of a small but vital constellation of scholars doing this work in postcolonial and transnational literary studies, such as Clingman (2009), Talley (2011), Brigham (2004), and Hitchcock (2010). See also Thacker (2005-2006) for an overview of the critical shift toward analysis of literary geographies.

¹⁶ On this score, see Smith (1993) and Smith and Katz (1993).

notions of nationality in nodal points “on the ground,” such as London and Los Angeles, within and against emergent notions of transnationalism and globalization.

In sum, this dissertation is both recuperative and generative. The project disrupts and challenges national, hemispheric, and global literary maps by re-introducing specific events and spatial formations that do not support dominant discourses of space and place. Further, this study’s way of seeing patterns across texts articulates seemingly groundless categories, such as gender and race, with place. Such an approach to literatures, then, generates new ways of understanding how authors of the period engage with and often attempt to reconcile sweeping flows of power and ideas above the ground with everyday life on the ground. Through the analysis of literary representations of emplaced bodies negotiating both “major” and “minor” histories and maps, this dissertation ultimately endorses a critical disposition that affirms relationality and affiliation rather than incommensurability and difference.¹⁷ This orientation is evident in the project’s collection of primary texts, which require a mode of inquiry that accounts for a relational approach to representations of emplaced bodies and the spaces within which they move. Although the following analysis will demonstrate that transnational flows of power and ideas manifest and are contested differently in different places with particular histories and geographies, the authors imaginatively negotiate and often rewrite spatial relations through similar narratives strategies. In brief, Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup* establishes

¹⁷ Although writing in the context of Native American studies, Holly Youngbear-Tibbetts’ assertion that scholars “prefer the autonomy of alienation to the interconnectivity of affinity” (37) as means of consolidating disciplinary borders seems applicable across a variety of humanities scholarship. In addition to Barnard and the others highlighted above who take place as a dynamic critical referent, see also recent work by Moraru (2011) and Lazarus (2011) regarding relational approaches in other fields of literary studies.

the set of critical concerns for this study, namely bodies grappling with living in places cross-hatched by multiple spatial histories and claims in a time when dominant agents of power press them to abandon those specific contexts and affiliations. “Becoming global,” then, is haunted by imperial pasts in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* and enabled by neocolonial presents in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*, both highlighting how bodies negotiate the clash of old spatial paradigms with new ones. In an effort to hold in productive tension broad geo-spatial orientations and a myriad of claims to contested land, Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* seeks to establish a relation between spatial regimes at odds, thereby embracing the potential of co-presence as a mode of socio-spatial reconciliation.

Chapter Two, “Global Vistas and Local Orientations in Nadine Gordimer’s *The Pickup*,” argues that the author’s effort to recuperate a sense of place hobbled by late globalization glosses over the complex socio-spatial relations by which that recovery is achieved. The protagonist of Gordimer’s novel *The Pickup* (2001), Julie Summers, establishes an affective connection to land and cultivates a local community through her decampment from a fraught urban space to a utopic desert space. In its attempt to imagine a socio-spatial collectivity that is “beyond” the nation-state and globalized circuits of power, Gordimer suggests that one might move downscale, so to speak, from corrupted national-transnational spaces “back to” authentic local spaces. This assumption does not acknowledge the logics of race and class that underwrite such mobility and place-making possibilities. Further, while the novel promotes a vision of a postnational, homosocial community that is somehow outside of patriarchal and

capitalistic regimes of power, it does not recognize Julie's body as the site of the performance of spatial relations. In other words, "the local" and the gendered/sexed body as spatial scales are *embedded* within capitalistic and patriarchal relations that the novel largely masks. Thus, Gordimer treats the novel's global vistas as discrete from its local orientations, resulting in an uncritical re-visioning of place.

Despite the problematic answers it offers, *The Pickup* presents a set of questions animated in the other primary texts considered in following chapters: Of what value are the nation and nationality at the close of the century, an era of multi-national corporations and deterritorialized economic, cultural, and political "flows"? In what ways is the state still relevant to legal and cultural understandings of national belonging and processes of marginalization and exclusion? Under these conditions, how might literary texts imagine more equitable spatial relations within the nation and beyond it? What histories and peoples should be acknowledged in a given place, and what might recognition of co-presence in place look like?

Passionately engaging these questions, Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* (1988) creates a "work of radical dissent and questioning and reimagining," befitting the national and geopolitical restructuring of its time (*Imaginary* 394-395). The third chapter, "London Passages in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," embarks upon a necessarily limited expedition through a sprawling novel, arguably the most famous one written in English in the past several decades. Instead of retreading familiar critical ground, Chapter Three argues that Rushdie's novel presents a mid-1980s London that indexes migrants through logics of race and sexuality primarily, orienting each character to "proper"

Englishness. The “angelicdevilish” Saladin Chamcha and Gibreel Farishta fall into London and commence two inextricable itineraries around the city that engage present-day national identity in different ways by drawing on a shared postcolonial history. Consequently, Rushdie situates the individual’s relationship to Englishness through the racially-coded sexual alliances of Saladin and Gibreel and within the broader spatial borders of racial and ethnic groups across the city-space, demonstrating the permeability of those borders and interrogating investments in maintaining them. Thus, the London passages interrogate the white national’s anxiety about boundary loss and breached territorial integrity through the social and sexual mixing of bodies. However, the novel subverts its satire of (white) national fear of racialized sexualities and anxiety of miscegenation through Saladin’s ultimate investment in those same economies of racial and sexual difference. The protagonist’s exit from London to Bombay, then, undercuts Rushdie’s re-visioning of a more equitable spatial relations.

Whereas Rushdie imagines a postimperial spatial politics that simultaneously empowers and demonizes his characters, Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* (1997) constructs a hemispheric transnationality that questions the very location of borders and the ends that they serve. Chapter Four, “Moving Toward Place Consciousness in Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange*,” argues that the novel promotes a place-based consciousness as a mode of resistance to neocolonial and national formations of power. In a fantastical world where a magical orange connected to the Tropic of Cancer moves the land with it until Mazatlán sits on top of Los Angeles, Yamashita’s literary re-visioning of place attempts to reconcile multiple claims to land within national and

transnational spatial scales while acknowledging the limits of taking the nation as a reference point for such claims. However, the novel's ultimate imagination of more equitable spatial relations—Buzzworm's conception of a place-conscious gentrification—does not fully account for other spatial collectivities that might not take city, state, or federal political structures as referents. While the novel endorses what might be called a “para-national” vision rather than a postnational one, a place-based notion working within or alongside of the nation, its claims to certain kinds of indigeneity to the exclusion of others naturalizes a U.S. settler colonialist past and present.

While the novels consider the attenuation of the nation through the practice of alternative spatial politics, Joe Sacco's graphic narrative *Palestine* (2001) engages directly in the writing of an explicitly national narrative that is legible to hegemonic international powers. Engaging Edward Said's notion of the “permission to narrate” a nation and Joseph Slaughter's concept of the “right to narrate” oneself, Chapter Five, “Sound, Space, and the Politics of Representation in Joe Sacco's *Palestine*,” argues that the text makes productive the space between asking permission and demanding a right to national narration through the mapping of spaces and sounds of the first *Intifada* in Israel-Palestine. Sacco understands the need to challenge existing maps and histories in familiar ways, such as representing the physical containment of people and other forms of oppression in everyday Palestinian life, and less obvious ways, such as mapping the sounds of the occupation. Further, Sacco highlights his and his reader's roles as western interlocutors in the collaborative act of narrating Palestine, doing so particularly through his use of the graphic narrative form. That is, he uses the graphic narrative to enjoin the

reader to construct an alternative spatial and sonic history of the Palestinians, while drawing attention to the ethics of representational practices. While it does not ultimately resolve the tension between asking for a right to narrate the nation and demanding it, *Palestine* speaks a national story *and* questions who hears it.

In sum, Gordimer's *The Pickup* offers this project a critical foundation by attempting to reconcile old geographies (South African apartheid) to new ones (late century globalization). "Becoming global," then, is haunted by imperial pasts in Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* and enabled by neocolonial presents in Yamashita's *Tropic of Orange*, both highlighting how bodies negotiate the clash of old and new spatial paradigms. Joe Sacco's graphic narrative *Palestine* puts into relation competing spatial regimes historically at odds by recognizing the embeddedness of geographies rather than the juxtaposition of them. In the end, "Re-visions of Place" points to the untapped richness of the literary "long nineties," as suggested in Chapter Six, in that it reveals the authors' thoughtful attention to place-making amid economic, political, and cultural tumult.

CHAPTER II

GLOBAL VISTAS AND LOCAL ORIENTATIONS IN NADINE GORDIMER'S *THE PICKUP*

In the 1999 essay “Living on a Frontierless Land: Cultural Globalization,” Nadine Gordimer begins with a hypothetical entry into the “*Oxford Dictionary of New Words*, 1991” wherein she imagines the etymology of the word “globalization.”¹ It derives, she asserts, from the portmanteau “glocalization,” a “process noun” that “make[s] a blend” of “global” and “local” (*Living* 207). The word stems from the Japanese *dochakuka*, which implies “living on one’s own land”; it also has roots in “business thinking in the early Eighties,” indicating “a global outlook adapted to local conditions” (*Living* 207). That the root “local” is subsumed in the more familiar term “globalization” indicates both a paradigm shift in international business practices and a shift of the author’s gaze from local (in her case, explicitly national) concerns to regional and transnational cultural exchanges from her location in post-apartheid South Africa. Similarly, she suggests that South African writers, artists, and performers must “move out of the restriction of North-South culture [...] to profit from the untapped South-South opportunities and—above all—affinities, that Eurocentric colonial attitudes ignored and denied us” (emphasis in original, “Living” 212). By beginning and ending her essay with attention to established discursive spaces (North-South, global-local), Gordimer articulates a kind of cultural

¹ For another example of her concern with physical and material oppression and placelessness, see also her 1997 lecture on global poverty to the U.N., “Labour Well the Teeming Earth” (*Living* 179-188).

expression that is deterritorialized, “a frontierless territory of creativity” not bound by national borders and identifications, not bound by place (*Living* 213).

However, an examination of Gordimer’s other contemporary work reveals the author’s anxiety about her country’s belated entry into a stretched and hyper-connected world. Her turn-of-the-century nonfiction collection, *Living in Hope and History: Notes from Our Century* (1999), expresses a desire to move beyond national borders in order to make transcultural connections that the twentieth century did not afford her. Her fiction suggests that, in contrast to a desire for a “frontierless territory of creativity” (*Living* 213), the author laments a loss of place—that is a seeming sense of placelessness—that late globalization demands. The historical moment would seem to require a stretching beyond national space in particular, a spatio-political concept that cannot perhaps facilitate the kind of community that she seeks, yet Gordimer and the other authors considered in these pages understand themselves as “placelings” (Escobar) and thus imagine consequential places in order to re-vision them. To this end, this chapter argues that Gordimer’s novel *The Pickup* (2001) recuperates an affective connection to land and cultivation of local community through its protagonist’s decampment from a fraught urban space to a utopic desert space. The author’s vision, however, succeeds in the novel only to the extent that it denies the complexity of patriarchal and colonialist-capitalist relations “on the ground.”

As she looks back on a decade of transition and through a national narrative scarred by its recent apartheid past, Gordimer does so in the context of newly deterritorialized economic and cultural “flows” (Appadurai). But, the delinking of and

stretching out of these relations does not entirely obviate the placeness of everyday life. Gordimer notes, “We are not only children of our time but of our place” (*Living* 225). She “was born a second-generation colonial in a capitalist-racist society,” which, she implies, largely explains the impetus for her writing (*Living* 225). However stretched and unmoored “frontierless creativity” might be, one must still consider place, and for Gordimer, this means reconciling herself with national places, which have been a career-long concern in her work. *The Pickup* then suggests that one way to address such a complex national space is to leave it. In the novel, the white, affluent protagonist, Julie Summers, picks up an itinerant laborer, living illegally in an unnamed South African city, likely Johannesburg. After they begin a relationship, the mechanic Ibrahim ibn Musa (who initially gives his name as Abdu) is served expulsion papers by the state. Surprising Ibrahim and herself, Julie decides to marry him and follow him to his home, an unnamed country, where the majority of the novel takes place.² When restless Ibrahim secures two visas to the U.S., Julie decides to remain with his family in the village. Her embarkation on a journey of self-discovery includes the cultivation of her physical and social self within a largely female community in a desert village. In contrast to Gordimer’s wish for a “frontierless territory of creativity,” the novel argues that a physical and affective connection to place as a site of both self-production and social renewal, but that place is not the national capital (now transnational hub) of Johannesburg. *The Pickup* ultimately if provisionally forwards a quasi-utopic vision of a postnational, homosocial community as

² The exact location of Ibrahim’s home country is a matter of some debate in Gordimer scholarship. In his review of the novel, J.M. Coetzee posits that it is a “Middle Eastern” country (245), whereas others have suggested, as Laura Winkiel (2009) summarizes, Saudi Arabia or various “Muslim countries.” (The passages cited in note 6 are the grist for this argument.)

the possible answer to the limitations of the nation-state as guarantor of socially and economically equitable spaces.

The novel's primary concern—questioning of the utility of national frameworks to understand social relations (gender and race, in particular)—echoes the context of its publication. *The Pickup* is, Gordimer notes, her “least South African book” (Steele) in contrast with her *oeuvre* that includes the well-known and lauded anti-apartheid novels *The Conservationist* (1974) and *July's People* (1981). The 2001 novel participates in the “post-transitional” literary period in South Africa, a time when the national literatures of her native South Africa transitioned from thematic concerns of post-apartheid in the mid-1990s to an eager participation in transnational cultural exchanges.³ Thus, Gordimer's novel is not only a transitional work in her own canon, it highlights a paradigm shift of postcolonial, post-apartheid literatures toward transnational and global themes and concerns.

To this end, the novel grapples with the tension between transnational flows of migrants, goods, and capital and the longing for roots, for a place to call “home.” Gordimer tracks the protagonist on her journey to find affective connections to a place and to incorporate herself into a local community, engaging in a (self-)cultivation of the body that might mitigate or counter-act the “inhuman conditions,” following Pheng

³ Frenkel and MacKenzie describe this movement as both a historical period (roughly the last decade of the twentieth century) and a literary sensibility or set of dispositions, “which is often unfettered to the past in the way that much apartheid writing was, but may still reconsider it in new ways” (2). One of these concerns is a focus on transnational mobility and discourse. Leon de Kock speculates that the national signifier “South African literature” is attenuated at best (and perhaps “redundant,” in his words) given the writers' embrace of cultural globalization (31). While “South African” remains a salient literary field, he notes, “the space of the ‘national’ has irrevocably entered into the fluid waters of ‘trans,’ the transitive cusp of crossing and recrossing, of absorbing the fictional self into (now easier, more fluid) space of related elsewhere, [...]” (de Kock 32-33). In addition to Frenkel and MacKenzie (2010), see also Thurman (2010) for detailed analysis of “transitional” and “post-transitional” literatures in South Africa.

Cheah, that late global capitalism entails. Other socio-spatial collectivities, the novel suggests, might be the answer to inhuman conditions in Johannesburg. Gordimer's interrogation of "global," "national," and "local" spaces implies a study of spatial scale. The very term "globalization" and the social and material effects of globalized practices (e.g., new forms of mass communication, deterritorialized capital, new kinds of and reasons for migration) imply spatial scale, movement, and time.⁴ The nation seems subordinate to "the transnational" or "the global." However, Smith reminds us that the demarcation of different kinds of places—spatial scale—is not naturally or necessarily hierarchical, although various institutions and agents of "contemporary capitalism and patriarchy" are invested in maintaining that hierarchy ("Homeless" 102). Gordimer's novel, nonetheless, keeps such a hierarchical notion of spaces intact by implying that one can move "down scale" and "back to" the local: bodies, homes, and communities that are *outside* of patriarchal and capitalistic regimes of power. Specifically, Julie's move from urban Johannesburg to an unnamed desert village would seem to allow her to construct a postnational, homosocial community outside of or beyond national and transnational spaces, which foreclose the kind of socio-spatial relations that she desires.

However, the utopian sisterhood that Gordimer envisions for Julie can only function if it elides the patriarchal logic governing the Ibrahim's home and the village community in the first place. In other words, the spatial scale set up in the novel is one

⁴ While "globalization" clearly suggests *spatial* stretching of social relations and the conquering of geographical distance (*For Space* 95), Massey posits that globalization is also a *temporal* process in that, when proponents ignore material effects of globalized capital, communications, and other "flows," the discourse then mimics western notions of modernity that trumpet progress and development. This "aspatial globalization," as she terms it, rejects the spatial for the temporal, where "the standard story of globalization" becomes "the old story of modernity" (*For Space* 88-89).

animated by transnational capitalism and patriarchy. The novel, consequently, presents the local as a redoubt of authentic and equitable social relations, but such a move requires Gordimer to bracket that which would complicate her utopian vision: The postnational, homosocial community is *embedded* within and *articulated* with capitalistic and patriarchal relations that reveal the impossibility of the novel's vision. Considering that spatial scale provides a vocabulary for thinking about the boundaries and the forms of community that Gordimer's novel and others in this project espouse. In whose interest are borders formed? What kinds of peoples or kinds of place-based claims are highlighted or elided by hegemonic spatial scaling? *The Pickup* suggests that recuperating the local in a globalized world, to the extent that one might live on "one's own land," is a process that must grapple with other histories and geographies.

Global Vistas, Local Orientations

When reading *The Pickup*, one senses Nadine Gordimer's wish to stretch her creative vision beyond the set of social and political concerns so central for so long to her apartheid era and post-apartheid era work, as exemplified by *The Conservationist* (1974) and *July's People* (1981). As the essay "Living on a Frontierless Land" signals, she wishes to orient her work toward nascent global sensibilities while attending to local material realities, and the novel at hand bears that out. The opening brief chapters of the novel establish the themes that Gordimer will critique, namely an ostensibly post-racial Johannesburg as an emergent global city and the (im)mobility of transglobal actors in this milieu. Johannesburg as a national and a newly global space cannot offer the kind of

community that the protagonist Julie desires. Consequently, Gordimer uses the first half of the novel to move beyond the nation as a viable space for individual and collective identification and toward a postnational community, a move that takes the narrative to other locations outside of Johannesburg and South Africa, where Julie's global vistas dissolve into local orientations.

At the outset, Gordimer presents a national space (Johannesburg) in transition to a transnational space where the legacy of apartheid is abandoned for a more open and racially equitable society as represented by both the state's internal and external others. By first moving *into* the unnamed Johannesburg, Julie Summers aims to escape from the white, wealthy home in "The Suburbs," where her father, Nigel, and his friends live. Instead, she lives in one of "a series of backyard cottages adapted from servants' quarters" and meets with an eclectic group of friends at "The Table," as they call it, at the L.A. Café (referred to as "the EL-AY" throughout) (8).⁵ To assuage her racial and class guilt, Julie attempts to console herself with seemingly enlightened opinions and lifestyle choices that she has picked up from her friends. Hence, picking up Ibrahim just might be "the latest wearying ploy to distance herself from her father" and reinforce to herself a commitment to a vague multiculturalism (40). Despite being called "the pickup" (11, 63, 74), a "grease-monkey" (15, 49, 82), and "[Julie's] oriental prince" (36), Ibrahim might be, Julie suspects, "like her, a local of this country in which they were born descendant of immigrants in one era or another—in her case from Suffolk and County Cork, as in his from Gujerat or the East Indies" (10). Of course, her friends at The Table understand

⁵ All page numbers to follow refer to a reprinted edition of *The Pickup* (New York: Penguin, 2002).

Ibrahim completely, “telling *him* about his country” (14). Gordimer summarizes their assessment of Ibrahim’s home country, “no work, no development, what can you grow in a desert, corrupt government, religious oppression, cross-border conflict—composite if inaccurate” (14).⁶ Gordimer, who lets few characters in this novel escape critique, notes that the lack of “delicacy” on the part of Julie’s friends is “just the reverse side of bourgeois xenophobia,” a kind of overcompensation of a newly-privileged class that reveals a cultural solipsism at best (14). Later in the novel, Julie takes Ibrahim to a party her father organizes to fete friends Gillie and Adrian, the latter of whom is an “executive director of a world-wide website network” (47). They will “relocate,” as they term it, to Australia with “Gillie’s two Labradors” and their “old driver—Festus [... who is] being relocated with anything else [they] feel inclined to pack up” (46). If Julie and The Table wish to perform a post-apartheid multiculturalism that shuns recent state-sponsored segregationist policies, Gillie and Adrian use a national history that has been recast in transnational discourses of mobility and belonging. That post-apartheid politics significantly attenuates white privilege leads them to seek that privilege elsewhere. Wealth, in their case, trumps race or ethnicity, but the latter still inform Ibrahim’s (im)mobility. The black driver Festus is a belonging to be packed up and taken wherever

⁶ The Table’s sentiments echo Julie’s own when Ibrahim first mentions the name of his country: “He named a country she had barely heard of. One of those partitioned by colonial powers on their departure, or seceded from federations cobbled together to fill vacuums of powerlessness against the regrouping of those old colonial powers under acronyms that still brand-name the world for themselves. One of those countries where you can’t tell religion apart from politics, their forms of persecution from the persecution of poverty, as the reason for getting out and going wherever they’ll let you in” (12). Julie’s assessment echoes her father’s protest that, as we find out later in the novel, she will emigrate to “one of the worst, poorest and most backward of Third World countries, following a man who’s been living here illegally, getting yourself deported—yes—from your own country, thrown out along with him [...] the place is dangerous, a country of gangster political rivals, abominable lack of health standards—and as for women: you, you to whom independence, freedom, mean so much, eh, there women are treated like slaves. It’s the culture, religion [...]” (98).

Gillie and Adrian would like; Ibrahim, in contrast, will “go where they’ll let [him] in” (12).

Gordimer, thus, frames the novel early on with two kinds of transnational migrants: the easy cosmopolitan traveler who enjoys “flexible citizenship” (Aihwa Ong) and the marginalized, invisible laborer who is both necessary to maintain and grow the global city and seen as threat to it. The national space cannot transition to a transnational one without both “classes” of migrants. Ibrahim acknowledges an awareness of his dual function to Julie: “I’m a drug dealer, a white-slave trader coming to take girls. I’ll be a burden on the state, that’s what they say, I’ll steal someone’s job, I’ll take smaller pay than the local man” (19). Julie replies, “It’s terrible. Inhuman. Disgraceful” (19).

Echoing Arjun Appadurai’s notion of the state’s “fear of small numbers,”⁷ a racialized spatial anxiety for both the unrecognized migrant and the recognized citizen is still present in Johannesburg, which is a “labyrinth to get lost in” for immigrants (86).

Although Julie and The Table like to envision themselves as inhabiting a post-racial, post-apartheid space, Gordimer critiques this facile multiculturalism through her attention to the still-fraught politics of national space. The nation is nested in the transnational but not subsumed. In a study on representations of place in South African literatures of the apartheid and post-apartheid periods, Rita Barnard traces Gordimer’s critique of the

⁷ In *Fear of Small Numbers: An Essay on the Geography of Anger* (2006), wherein he reconsiders his earlier post-nationalist stance in *Modernity at Large* (1996), Appadurai pairs the insightful “scapes” taxonomy with a renewed concern with bodies and nations, accounting for both “cellular” and “vertebrate” flows of power, echoing Deleuze and Guattari’s notions of “arborescent” and “rhizomatic” (*Fear* 21). As he tries to make sense of heightened anti-immigrant fervor, among other circumstances, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, he asserts that minorities mark the failure of the national project of pure ethnicity, and ethnic bodies are a “site for displacing anxieties about their [states’] own marginality in globalized world” (*Fear* 40-43).

segregationist pastoral through the author's use of rural spaces and farms as sites of unearthing (literally, in *The Conservationist*) the social relations and identities based on a racialized spatial politics. She notes regarding Johannesburg that, while Gordimer envisioned "a truly public domain where racial and class divisions [were] abolished," the city-space presents the "old divisions [...] articulated and justified in new terms" (Barnard 67).⁸ Similarly in the first chapters of *The Pickup*, the author presents a claustrophobic global city built upon the decayed foundation of apartheid politics, hence the undercurrent of escape in the novel, especially for Julie.⁹

What alternate spaces are available to Julie and Ibrahim, then? In addition to her resistance to the global city as viable site of political and economic access for Ibrahim and as a satisfying space of social actualization for Julie, the author also briefly considers (and then rejects) rural spaces *within* South Africa as a possible site of recuperation of equitable social relations. Early in the novel, Gordimer juxtaposes the global city of Johannesburg and its outskirts and rural areas. The rural spaces offer respite from the urban chaos, but Gordimer obliquely indicates that suburban or rural spaces are also tainted by the oppression and violence associated with "homelands" and "townships." From vacations in Soweto (8) to "[driving] into 'the veld'" on weekends (33) to "sleeping out on the beach at KwaZulu" (35), Gordimer invokes South Africa's colonialist history and recent segregationist past of which Julie and *The Table* take advantage.¹⁰

⁸ On the post-apartheid spatial politics of Johannesburg generally, see also Bremner (1999). On Gordimer's treatment of the same, see Hunt (2006, 105-112).

⁹ Coetzee asserts that Julie's vague need to escape is not credible for one so young (she is twenty-nine (93)), but it is easier to believe of Gordimer's generation (246).

¹⁰ In addition to vacations, Julie, with Ibrahim in tow, and her friends spend nights club-hopping "from one to the other of these modest houses that had once been built by white small-fry speculators aspiring to

Nonetheless, Gordimer's treatment of urban and rural spaces in *The Pickup* implies that there are vestiges of apartheid's "urbanistic" spatial policies, where Johannesburg remains the pure space to be protected and controlled through "enforced villagization" (Barnard 72-73).¹¹

Indicting both urban Johannesburg and the surrounding rural spaces, which refuse any sense of rest or escape, Gordimer turns to larger spatial scales then to smaller ones, namely toward a seemingly freer global space then to the body and its immediate environs. As she renders *national* urban and rural spaces corrupted in the novel, Gordimer sets Julie on an itinerary toward both *global* spaces and *local* spaces. The catalyst that moves Julie toward a "glocal" horizon is Ibrahim's expulsion from one unnamed country to another. He then makes the shrewd decision to exchange his lack of papers for one particular paper: a marriage certificate. While marrying Julie does not earn him a visa to remain in South Africa, she might yet, he calculates, be of use to him in this regard. The novel, despite its global vision in the first half, is not a completely postnational one, engaging as it does the nation-state as the primary institution through which mobility is made possible. Not only is the nation-state still a clear presence and an intervening one throughout the novel, it is the mechanism of state-sanctioned, heterosexual marriage that might facilitate another opportunity for relocation in the future. If the process of differentiating kinds of geographical space is a social practice toward the establishment and maintenance of boundaries (Smith), then bodies in contact,

become affluent, and paid off monthly by working-class whites with genteel aspirations, all fallen into dilapidation as gentility at this humbly snobbish level became part of lost white privilege" (29).

¹¹ While Gordimer does not dramatize these episodes in *The Pickup*, Barnard maps Gordimer's extensive critique of the state's requisition of land and its forced removals of non-white residents throughout her major works to the mid-1990s.

with perceived limits and assumed identities, are the originary spatial scale.¹² While Smith notes that his proposed taxonomy of spaces is not inherently hierarchical, he cites the body as the beginning or foundation of spatial scale. The novel, especially its second half, does not critically engage the body as “a cultural locus of gender meanings” (Butler in Smith 102) but rather assumes a certain generic relation of bodies to space that delimits its ultimate vision for postnational community. In other words, despite the novel’s continued emphasis on socio-economic class, the novel’s ultimate vision assumes genderless, classless, and raceless bodies.

Indeed, the first pages of the novel orient the reader to gender and sexuality as embodied practices that occur in specific places, thereby making spatial politics contingent and unstable. The opening scene of male strangers who are “clustered predators” surrounding Julie’s broken-down Range Rover and The Table’s subsequent discussion of the “sexual stimulant” of rescuing (and controlling) women in such situations forecast the meeting of Julie and Ibrahim, a local mechanic (3-6). As she makes her way around the corner from the EL-AY Café to the garage, Julie internalizes the street corporally: she “feels hot gassy breath. Steel snouts and flashing grilles at her face. Inside her something struggles against them. Her heart summons her like a fist under her ribs, gasps rise within her up to her collar-bones. She is walking along the street, that’s all [...] Shudder. A traffic jam” (6-7). As she enters the garage, Julie encounters Ibrahim, “The legs and lower body wriggled down [from underneath a car] at

¹² Yi-fu Tuan posits two fundamental principles of spatial organization: “The posture and structure of human body” and “the relations between humans” define how we understand space. “Man, [sic] out of his intimate experience with his body and with other people,” Tuan posits, “organizes space so that it conforms with and caters to his biological needs and social relations” (34).

the sound of her apologetic voice and the man emerged. He was young, in his greasy work-clothes, long hands oil-slicked at the dangle from long arms; he wasn't one of them—the white man speaking Afrikaans to the black man at the machine—but glossy dark-haired with black eyes blueish-shadowed” (7). Ibrahim gives his name as “Abdu,” Arabic for “servant” (8). Julie reads Ibrahim’s body immediately, but his body is not legible within her familiar racial taxonomy. That is, national bodies in South Africa are historically racialized ones, and white bodies have been more valued than non-white. If bodies determine and are determined by spaces, then this passage signals both class and nationality of the darker body—“Abdu” is a servant and possibly an illegal immigrant.

From the novel’s outset, Gordimer locates a kind of truth in the body and its connection to place that she ultimately wishes to recuperate. The second half of the novel brings together (but does not earnestly attempt to resolve) this tension between local and global spatial practices. The novel’s second half also marks a clear shift from a social realist mode of narration to a hybridized, experimental mode. The (re)turn to the body as a site of positive investment for the social hearkens to the traditional *Bildung*, a process of self-cultivation as a means of incorporation to society.¹³ Pheng Cheah characterizes “the national *Bildung* [...] not as ideological indoctrination but as a cultivational process where universal ideals are incarnated in the daily practices of a collective’s individual members” (*Spectral* 8). Joseph Slaughter likewise summarizes the goal of *Bildung* as

¹³ Hilary Dannenberg argues that *The Pickup* critiques the Anglophone, (post)colonial desert romance in that it subverts any celebration of white masculinity, instead figuring Julie as *heroine* (78). Julie, however, rejects this role in favor of the role as romantic *hero*, Dannenberg argues (82). While I stipulate Gordimer’s invocation of imperialist desert romances, following Dannenberg, I will argue that the novel’s focus on the cultivation of the gendered/sexed body suggests that the narrative form equally participates in the *Bildungsroman* tradition.

“reconcil[ing] the perceived conflict between the natural inclinations of the human individual and the normalizing regulatory demands of society and the nation-state” (112). The form, however, might be “retooled for new purposes” in contemporary *Bildungsromane*, according to Slaughter, some of which “[imagine] a geocultural and geopolitical alternative to the Westphalian model of the nation-state and of national citizenship as the ultimate expression of human sociality and personality” (31-32).¹⁴ Translating the *Bildungsroman* genre into post-national terms as Gordimer does, however, demands an attention to discourses of gender and sexuality, race, and class as they regulate which bodies might engage in self-cultivation and be incorporated into the postnational community. The author, as I argue below, does not attend to these discourses.

In addition to post-*Bildungsromane*, *The Pickup* has other literary antecedents—the feminist novel of self-discovery, the feminist *Bildungsroman*, and literary utopia. Rita Felski characterizes the feminist *Bildungsroman* as a narrative with a female protagonist moving outward into “the public realm of social engagement and activity” (*Beyond* 126-127), and the novel of self-discovery depicts “a process of awakening to an already given mythic identity or inner self and frequently occurs in nature [...]” (*Beyond* 127). In brief, the former is the “voyage outward,” usually from the confines of a heteronormative domestic space, and the latter is the “voyage inward,” which often

¹⁴ In a historical survey of *Bildungsromane* in English, Slaughter posits that the form has remained “remarkably consistent from the eighteenth-century to the present” and, although the translation of the narrative form’s national goals to an international sphere presents problems, it has “retain(ed) its privileged function as the genre of incorporation” in its contemporary iterations (31-32). Indeed, the *Bildungsroman*, he argues, is “the primary enabling fiction for [the creation of] an international literary public” linked to and complicit with international human rights regimes (33).

involves a quest or journey (*Beyond* 126-127).¹⁵ Of the characteristics of the two forms that Felski examines, it is sufficient here to note one in particular, the crucial difference between “community” and “society.” Community, in the context of this kind of fiction, turns on “associations between individuals possess[ing] a strongly personal dimension and are grounded in shared interests and traditions, bonds of kinship or friendship”; society, by contrast, is a “type of association governed by rational will [and] is most clearly exemplified in the division of labor and differentiation of society which develops under capitalism” (*Beyond* 140). Human relations in society characterized in this way are “fundamentally alienated and abstract, subordinated to instrumental and quantitative goals” (*Beyond* 140). I am, like Felski, wary of such a strict distinction between the two forms of sociality as it sets up an untenable separation between public and private spheres. *The Pickup*, however, accepts an easy divide between “society,” governed by rational will and capitalistic exploits, and “community” that is apart from such logics. Specifically, Julie’s affluence and whiteness allow her to form a community in the desert that she may leave if she wishes. This experimentation does not acknowledge the relationship between localized patriarchal structures and transnational economic flows.

The author’s “return” to community, then, suggests her desire to imagine a different mode of belonging ostensibly *outside of* or *beyond* both the national and global tainted by capitalism and patriarchy. This desire takes the form of utopian elements integrated into the second half of the narrative. If, as Fredric Jameson notes, Thomas More attempted to imagine a different world with a different politics on the “eve of

¹⁵ For another insightful literary history of the feminist novel of self-discovery, see Abel et al. (1983).

capitalism” and “the emergence of new nation-states” (45), Gordimer writes at a similar disjunctive moment when the nation-state would seem to give way to the inevitability of late global capitalism.¹⁶ She engages in what Ashcroft calls an “organic utopianism” that entails “Bloch’s ‘anticipatory consciousness’ of the desire for a better world” (“Critical Utopias” 414). If, however, Gordimer imagines a utopia of homosocial and economic equality, Ashcroft reminds us that such literary imagining also risks “the peril of utopia [which] is that, although imagined, it is a *place*, and spatial perfection requires boundaries, control, limits and direction” (“Critical Utopias” 413).¹⁷ Consequently, the boundaries that Julie’s new community entails are premised upon a still-present patriarchy and haunted by Julie’s wealth, both of which are only masked not eliminated. In sum, Gordimer envisions a process of self-realization fundamentally connected to the *social* cultivation of localized social relations and the *physical* cultivation of body and land, what Tania Zulli calls the novel’s “interiorization of place” (196). Gordimer’s idealization of the desert village and the familial sisterhood assumes a time and place ostensibly undisturbed by the nested spatial relations of the global in the local.

Producing Bodies

Gordimer presents a variety of homes in *The Pickup*: Julie’s servants’ cottage, Nigel’s house in The Suburbs, the EL-AY Café, the “dirty place” Ibrahim calls his village (112), and the “endowed countries” where he longs to go (137). Although Julie and

¹⁶ On the supposed inevitability of late global capitalism, see Massey (2005, 5-9) and Gibson-Graham (2006, 1-23).

¹⁷ Gordimer engages a familiar utopian trope, according to Jameson: a move from the city to country, emphasizing the difference “between planning and organic growth” (48).

Ibrahim move between these places, Julie does not feel like she belongs to a place and a family until she moves to Ibrahim's village.¹⁸ Gordimer's examination of home manifests in two ways in the novel, Julie's body *as* home and her body *at* home. Julie wishes her body to be the physical location where Ibrahim can find respite from his unrelenting drive to succeed financially, and she wishes to find a location where she can emplace herself and invest affectively. Such a transference of investment from Ibrahim to place and community of female relatives suggests an implicit yet anxious feminist politics where a return to the body and its immediate space will liberate Julie from her perception of the social vacuity of late globalization.

The dual function of Julie's body starts at the beginning of the novel. While Ibrahim describes his home village and his family to Julie, she daydreams that "she becomes him, [...forgetting] how she has removed definitively, removed herself from the family, such as it is, in *The Suburbs*" (25-26). She equates two kinds of homelessness, hers and Ibrahim's. In this early passage, Julie's body and psyche become the site of the production of home. Here, she imagines herself physically walking with him in his village, forecasting the pair's movement from a global city to a rural village, from urban space to desert space. This passage echoes the novel's epigraph, an excerpt from a William Plomer poem: "Let us go to another country.../ The rest is understood/ Just say the word." Except, for Julie and Ibrahim, "the rest" is *not* understood. The couple

¹⁸ It is worth remembering here that this project's working definition of "place" as a particular mix of social relations in space-time (Massey) includes Yi-fu Tuan's definition of place as space "endowed with value" (6). If, he posits, space allows movement, then "place is a pause"—a space of respite (Tuan 6). "All human beings," he notes, "[...] perhaps have need of a personal place" (Tuan 32), what Tim Cresswell calls a "subjective, emotional attachment" to place (7). With this in mind, I take "home" here to mean the most immediate location where personal and familial identity formation takes place (Smith 105) and, as such, the location where a person has strong emotional attachments, favorable or otherwise.

understands the very nature of being in place differently, and both understand the function of Julie's body differently. While Ibrahim "had disappeared under the name in which he was born" in Johannesburg (26) and is anxious to disappear again to another place where he might meet with financial success, Julie craves a physical presence, which she conflates with emotional presence.¹⁹ The epitome of "being present" for Julie is found in their sexual relationship, which is "a state of suspension from the pressures of necessity to plan the way others have to plan" (37). That Julie values sex differently from Ibrahim, as we will see, leads her to equate the physicality of their bodies with a separate sphere—another "country"—apart from time and space of the present.

Gordimer reinforces the theme of Julie's body *as* home and her need to place her body *at* home with a running metaphor of pregnancy.²⁰ When she cannot assist Ibrahim in obtaining legal citizenship through her father's connections, she feels a "struggle" within her that "stays clenched tightly inside her. It possesses her, alien to them, even to those she thought close [i.e., The Table]; and makes them alien to her [...] They are the strangers and he [Ibrahim] is the known" (91-92). Julie initially reads the "struggle" as the growing pains of an intimate relationship morphing into a long-term commitment,²¹ which leads her to make a legal commitment by marrying him. However, later in the

¹⁹ In a bit of heavy-handedness, Gordimer repeats various iterations of Julie's obsession with physical presence, such as "I'm here! I'm here! What she meant: can you believe it? I'm with you" (110) and the repetition of "There they were" (112, 115, 117). Likewise, she repeatedly emphasizes Ibrahim's physical and discursive ephemerality. For example, in addition to several references to Ibrahim disappearing (54-55) and "shedding skin" (55), when Julie takes Ibrahim to her father's house, he is "the Someone beside her [that] did not exist" (40, 42).

²⁰ Gordimer includes in the novel two short chapters (65ff. and 100 ff.)—almost a self-contained short story—that present the subplot of Julie's Uncle Archie, a respected gynecologist who has been accused of sexual misconduct with a patient. Although there is a vague thematic link between this story and the novel's focus on Julie's producing body, those chapters otherwise do not speak to my argument here. See Winkiel (2009) for analysis of this aspect of the novel.

²¹ Ibrahim will read her struggle similarly, as a "devotion" to him, later in the novel.

novel, “the struggle” that “possesses” her changes orientation from person to place: from Ibrahim to the village, specifically the desert.

Ibrahim, in contrast, values her body and their sexual relationship in two related ways, both of which are utilitarian at best. Her body’s use value is “just the right amount of flesh for solace” (113). But, Ibrahim is more concerned with its/her exchange value. In one of several similar examples, Ibrahim laments, “we make love on that poor iron bed and I please her, my God, how I please her. And no visas for me” (152). When she presents the airplane tickets to Ibrahim and reveals her plan to accompany him to his village, Ibrahim chides her childish “innocence” and “stupidity,” while wondering to himself “what use will she be [there]” (94-95). Although he claims that he cannot be responsible for her, he acquiesces when he realizes her “devotion [to him]. How could anyone man or woman not want that?” (96). It is, the author suggests, Julie’s subservience to Ibrahim that persuades him to agree to Julie’s plan. Then, Gordimer ends the chapter by echoing the novel’s epigraph, describing their subsequent intercourse as “a kind of love-making that is another country, a country of its own, not yours or mine” where Ibrahim responds with “reciprocal tenderness” (96). While this language suggests that their sexual relationship signifies a commitment beyond the immediate and localized troubles they face, that it takes them to a physical and emotional elsewhere as equals, Gordimer is quick to undercut any romanticized notion of love and sex that the reader might infer. Indeed, the first line of the next chapter is “With the acceptance of love there comes the authority to impose conditions” (97). Thus, the “country” that neither of them owns or controls is swiftly undercut by a re-inscription of the sexualized power dynamic

between them. The romantic idealization of the couple's sexual relationship is unpalatable to Gordimer, but, as we see in this passage and subsequent ones, so too is the possibility that neither protagonist has genuine affection for the other.²²

When Julie and Ibrahim leave one unnamed country for another, each one's relationship to Julie's body changes. Julie's understanding of the "struggle" inside of her is realized, not in Ibrahim, but in her discovery of a positive connection to place; conversely, Ibrahim's (re)anchoring in *this* place—a place he has fled many times in search of financial success—leads to emasculation and impotence. In the second half of the novel, Gordimer brings into focus Julie's need for a more emotionally fulfilling notion of home, through the use of a narrative of self-discovery and *Bildung*. Once the heroine of a feminist *Bildungsroman* "see(s) through the seductive myth of romance as key to female identity" and consequently rejects the heterosexual/social model, the novel imagines a "new configuration of the social," a "visionary hope for future change" (Felski 132-139). This vision rejects "the iron cage of a modernity now explicitly defined as not only as capitalist but fundamentally androcentric in both its ideologies and institutions" and usually endorses a "sisterhood" in its place (Felski 140). Although Julie does not suffer in an "iron cage of modernity," she does reject both late global capitalism

²² While there is a kind of reciprocity in the relationship, the notion of "reciprocal tenderness" is questionable. With its invocation, it seems that Gordimer cannot quite accept that Ibrahim might *only* see Julie as a means to an end, an object within a sexualized economy of exchange (e.g., 81, 91). It also seems that some scholars wish to attribute a similar reciprocity of romantic affection. For example, Michiko Kakutani (2001) makes much of Ibrahim's lone expression of affection in the novel (266), and Stephen Clingman (2009, 234) posits that "fall[ing] in love" is the other "country" to which the epigraph refers. This unease, on the author's part, might be a continuation of what Karen Lazar sees as Gordimer's "uncomfortable relationship between sex and politics" in her earlier fiction, where the two are "seen as competing sites [...] but not really as properly interactive" (799). While "she does insist that politics may intrude into the personal," Lazar notes, "this is not the same thing as seeing [...] that the most intimate of human encounters are fundamentally shaped by socially constructed habits of control and abuse" (799).

and heterosexual marriage as mechanisms of liberatory transglobal movement.²³ The act of “going home” for Julie is a discovery of “home” for the first time. If, in the first half of *The Pickup*, Julie imagines her body *as* home to Ibrahim, together creating a “country” in which they are equal, she realizes a more fulfilling physical and affective connection—her body *at* home—in two senses: when she meets and joins Ibrahim’s family, particularly his female relatives, *and* when she makes an affective and spiritual connection to the desert.

Upon reaching the capitol of the unnamed country, Julie is “exhilarated” at this “new beginning,” while Ibrahim “twitch[es] with impatience” at what he sees as his wife’s ignorance and her approach to their travels as “another of the adventures she prided herself on” (110-112). Although the “desert landscape [is...] all new to her,” he is frustrated and ashamed that he has returned to “everything he had believed he could get away from” (114). In fact, Ibrahim begins immediately to attempt to secure visas for them both, in his words, “to get us out of here” (140). Although she “has been only the Siren to his Ulysses” up to this point, Ibrahim understands that “she, his foreign wife, was the right kind of foreigner [...] who belonged to an internationally acceptable category of origin” (140). He calculates that she might still be of use to him. To his alarm, however, Ibrahim perceives Julie’s nascent connection to his family and the land as threatening to his prospects and, again, uses their sexual relationship “as if to stay something beginning in her” (141). For her part, Julie forms an immediate bond with Ibrahim’s sister, Maryam,

²³ Gordimer does not, as we will see, critique *local* formations of patriarchy and the attendant inequality. As I argue below, this move is one of the weaknesses of the author’s vision: the local is a space where an equitable, familial sisterhood can flourish seemingly without any incursion by the global nor any attenuation by patriarchal structures.

and agrees to give English lessons to the neighborhood women in exchange “for lessons in *their* language” (emphasis in original 143).²⁴ Thus, the “voyage inward” to find a new identity is simultaneously a “voyage outward,” one of (self-)cultivation towards the goal of communal incorporation. In addition to the novel of self-discovery that includes a quest (Felski), Julie’s desire to learn both the language of Ibrahim’s family (and their religious beliefs) and her desire to teach the village women English speak to both the traditional role of education in incorporating the *Bildungsheld* and the imperialist impulse to use literacy as an “educational technology,” as Slaughter argues (273). Thus, Julie is both the “reader” and the “non-reader” of the traditional *Bildungsroman* (Slaughter 284).

Although Gordimer weaves the local and the global together and reminds us that Julie is a white, affluent foreigner who can “always get out,” in her mother’s words (143), Julie pursues a regime of self-discovery and self-cultivation through autodidacticism. Wishing to establish a connection with Ibrahim’s mother, Julie asks her mother, who lives in the U.S., to order “a translation of the Koran” through “one of those wonderful Internet book warehouses in California” (143).²⁵ Of the *suras* that Maryam indicates are her mother’s favorites, Julie pays particular attention to the stories of Mary’s conception and the creation of the world. From the former, Julie reads, “[...] *she went apart from her family, eastward / And took a veil to shroud herself from them [...] / And she conceived him, and retired with him to a far-off place*” (emphasis in original 145). These verses clearly speak to the regard with which Ibrahim’s mother holds her son—a “holy son”—as

²⁴ Gordimer indicates that the vernacular is Arabic once in the novel (196).

²⁵ Christine Sizemore juxtaposes three spaces of the novel—*zenana*, a private women’s space in Islamic practice, the socio-spatiality of the *hijab*, and the desert—as the loci of Julie’s sense of place (78). While Sizemore offers a brief reading of these aspects of the novel, it seems to me that there is more productive work to be done on this score, although such work is beyond the scope of this chapter at present.

the verses indicate (145). Further, Gordimer links Mary's travels "eastward [...] to a far-off place" with Julie's decampment to the village, although the suggestion that Julie has conceived or what Julie will conceive is ambiguous at this point. The connection of Julie to (re)production is echoed in a second excerpt that she reads, "[...] *He hath let loose the two seas which meet each other;/ Yet between them is a barrier which they overpass not*" (emphasis in original 146). The author reinforces for the reader the allegorization of the creation of the world with Julie and Ibrahim's ill-fated relationship, "Everyone knows, in texts like these, what is meant: for her. She left this book open on the last two lines" (146). Despite the clunky authorial interference of these lines, important to the analysis at hand is the manner in which the "two seas" are separated: the barrier is land. The desert, then, is "less a territory than an itinerary," a territory that separates the couple and an itinerary that determines their social orientations (Clingman, *Grammar*, 238). The territory, however, is also a blank space on which Julie can project her desires. Thus, her travels to "a far-off place" of self-discovery, the author suggests, also involves a self-cultivation, that is, a kind of bodily conception linked to the land. What was "clenched" inside of her and "possessed" her is not articulable yet, but Julie has already begun to think in terms of placing the body as a way of placing the self, emplacement that is both a physical and affective experience.

In fact, the author has already introduced the idea of an itinerary of the self. When Adrian and Gillie, Nigel's affluent friends emigrating to Australia, assert that they are "relocating," the narrator wryly notes that this term is a "current euphemism for pulling up anchor and going somewhere else, either perforce or because of the

constrictions of poverty or politics, or by choice of ambition and belief that there's an even more privileged life, safe from pitchforks and AK-47s of the rebellious poor and the handguns of criminals" (48). However, Julie ponders at length other meanings of the term.

'Relocate' they say. The couple are [sic] 'relocating.' [...]

When in doubt go to the dictionary.

'Locate: to discover the exact locality of a person or thing; to enter, take possession of.'

To discover the exact location of a 'thing' is a simple matter of factual research. To discover the exact location of a person: where to locate the self? [...]

Some of the dictionary definitions of the root word 'locate' give away the inexpressible yearning that cannot be explained by ambition, privilege, or even fear of others. (47-48)

The "inexpressible yearning"—the desire to "locate the self"—finds its expression through Julie's imagining of herself as a maternal Mary figure, as a creator of the world, and, ultimately, a cultivator of land. The dual process of cultivating the body and producing something from it takes place in a "lean-to," a rudimentary structure attached to the family home that serves as the couple's bedroom.²⁶ Julie will produce a self by cultivating her body in both senses of relocating her body into the family home and training herself in the family's cultural practices.

²⁶ Stéphanie Genty (2003, 87) describes the novel's lean-to as a "womb-like space." Generally, Gaston Bachelard, in his classic *The Poetics of Space* (1958), figures the (re)productive nature of the home as a "large cradle" and "our first universe" (7, 4).

The novel echoes but inverts the trope of reproduction and pregnancy through Ibrahim's emasculation and impotence, which the text connects to his obsession with escape from his village. The place that is rejuvenating to Julie is the same place that enervates Ibrahim. While Julie's "struggle" or "yearning" is not yet legible to herself and others, Ibrahim's focus is clear, his "determination [to leave his village ...] an awesome possession" (141). Although he refuses to remain in the village and engage politically as his peers do, he "[begins] to feel his manhood [is] in question" (175) when he cannot secure visas for their travel. As with Julie, Ibrahim's understanding of self is linked to a sense of place, but place for him is a pejorative "permanent residence" in "the desert" (179). Further, while Julie begins a positive identification with Islam through her reading of scripture, Ibrahim and his peers do not see any contemporary relevance of this kind of cultivation by education. The men have been, in his view, "returned like dead letters—illegals [who] have no fixed address, no identity" (176). Both the discourse of religion and the physical connection to land, so productively intertwined for Julie, renders Ibrahim impotent.²⁷ In fact, the young men discuss religion in two terms, economic and gendered. They rail against older generations that think "poverty is freedom," favoring instead a book that Ibrahim recommends to the group which argues that "conventional religious authority can't exist with economic market forces today!" (177-178).²⁸ Another way that they want to "bring the modern world to Islam" (176) is in terms of loosened sexual morés and less rigid gender norms. "You happen to make love with a married

²⁷ In a later passage, Ibrahim, "in some other state of concentration," does "not rouse to her [Julie's] hand" (204).

²⁸ Although the young men are "dead letters" and clearly do not look to scripture for a socio-political blueprint, Ibrahim ironically produces *a book* as evidence that "religious authority" offers "the complete opposite of the correct perspective" (178).

woman [...] and she must be stoned to death,” one youth muses, “Who can accept that in this age!” (177). Indeed, another suggests that:

— So what’s our life? With women? You tell me. What freedom do they have or we have with them? —

— But they’re the ones now with their own revolution—

—Oh, it’s part of ours—

— But they want to decide for themselves. They don’t want anyone to tell them to wear the chador, all right, but if they do want to wear it, they won’t have some Westerner telling them to throw it away (178).²⁹

The young men struggle with the role of women in organized resistance to both religious and statist authority: should women’s rights and concerns be subsumed within the broader revolution (a “part of ours”), or should women “decide for themselves” the role of gendered and sexual behaviors? The seemingly unresolvable conflict is but one reason that Ibrahim rejects his home, a “secret refusal, *his* refusal, [which] rouse[s] in him strongly as any sexual desire” (177, 179). He ties sexual identity and sexual performance closely with resistance to family and resistance to place as exemplified in his refusal of his uncle’s offer to work permanently in the garage. It is “the best moment of his manhood so far” as he claims mobility and placelessness for himself. Although he feels a sense of fulfillment—of agency—borne out of redefining masculinity (at the cost of resisting local masculine roles) and although he reminds himself that “this girl [Julie] had failed him,” Ibrahim does feel a kind of “responsibility for her” (173-174). His recent

²⁹ The use of dashes as a substitute for clear speaker tags is a signature of Gordimer’s fiction. Thus, in the above exchange, it is not clear who is speaking. However, we can infer from the hints in the passage (“the graduate of the university” and “grease-monkey”) that Ibrahim does not speak until the end when he offers to lend one of the men a book.

reclamation of “manhood” is imperiled, however, when Julie tells him cryptically, “I dreamed green” (173).

In sum, although Ibrahim will interpret Julie’s vision of green as her desire for a child, the explicit invocation of green supports the novel’s primary theme of the cultivation of land and of self that Julie seeks. Further, Julie’s dream echoes the novel’s utopian vision of an organic community beyond society, recalling Felski. It is a vision that advocates cultivating affective ties to land and subordinating both heterosexual/social and capitalistic relations. Julie does not simply exchange a heterosexual “romance” for one with the desert, as other scholars, for example Dimitriu (2006, 171) and Dannenberg (2008, 83), have suggested. Rather than exchange a social relationship for an asocial one, the desert is a place that re-orientates Julie socio-spatially from one set of social relations to another. Thus, the novel’s ideal place is socially and economically egalitarian yet homogenous and impossibly pure.

Cultivation and Incorporation

As she sketches out Ibrahim’s and Julie’s individual relationships to the village, which are at cross-purposes, Gordimer considers at length their different understandings of time and place. Ibrahim operates on a time of capitalist “opportunities” (147), a time of development, maintaining “contingency plans for the next country, concurrently with every application that failed” (149). He lives according to an integrated national time of other “endowed” countries in order to become a citizen or at least become “the right kind of foreigner,” in his words. Ibrahim’s unpacked bag stands “ready for departure from this

place, his home, standing week after week, month after month, in the lean-to room” (148). Julie, however, falls out of national time and lives “in the meantime” (150).³⁰ As she teaches classes in English at a woman’s home and at the local school, she continues “picking up [their language]” (150). She has created a bond with Ibrahim’s teenaged sister, Maryam, and Leila, Ibrahim’s young niece, “ha[s] fallen in love with her” (194). When Julie participates in Ramadan observances with his family, her body reacts as if “to the time-change on arrival in a country whose hours are far behind or ahead of the one departed from” (153). This physical change—the literal incorporation of a different time—is prefigured by Julie’s first morning in the village when she is awakened by the muezzin’s call to prayer: “Five times each day the voice of the muezzin set the time-frame she had entered, as once in her tourist travels, she would set her watch to and live a local hour different from the one in the country she had left behind” (124). She asserts to a still-dubious Ibrahim that she is “not a tourist” (125), and perhaps she is not given her active adoption of local practices. Nonetheless, the ease with which Julie settles herself in the village implies an imperialist organization and control of land and space.

Julie is quite busy in the meantime, invested in different ways than Ibrahim; she is, in fact, *cultivating* her body and an identity in his village and in his familial home.

Indeed, her body must produce at the expectation of Ibrahim’s mother. After Ramadan,

³⁰ I borrow the phrase “to fall out of time” from Tom Boellstorff who argues that queer theorists might recuperate (in order to critique) heteronormative marriage as a way of thinking queer time: this new time would “[fall] in coincidence with (and thus [“queer”]) straight time, in the sense that we say ‘May 23rd ‘falls’ on a Tuesday’” (228). Boellstorff’s concept of “coincidental time,” which he terms a “copresence without incorporation” (232), has interesting implications for Julie as a contemporary *Bildungsheld* in that she ultimately does not cultivate a national self (and thus adhere to nation-time like Ibrahim (cf. Slaughter 109)). Indeed, Julie chooses to sidestep the nation altogether by cultivating the time and space of a local community. Following this line of thought, then, Julie might be thought of as a doubly-split *Bildungsheld*: she is spatially incorporated into a *post-national* community by rejecting national incorporation and temporally coincident to but not incorporated within the nation—a *para-national* time.

Maryam, at the urging of her mother, tells Julie that “the others, they wonder why you do not get a baby. Then perhaps you will first marry here, our way. [...] My mother thinks of a child from Ibrahim” (166). This is the first explicit reference to the possibility of Julie producing a child. Gordimer, however, immediately follows the invocation of childbearing with a description of Julie’s “new habit left over from the hours of Ramadan” to awake before dawn and walk to the “sudden end of the street” where the desert begins (166-167). The air is a “pure element,” and in the sky, “there is the stillness of perfect clarity” (167).³¹ When she walks in the sand barefoot, she sees for the first time “a woman enveloped in black herding a small straggle of goats,” who turns out to be a young girl of about twelve years old (167). Subsequently, Julie “dream[s] green” (173). The implication here is that, while she finds a home with Ibrahim’s family, Julie’s self-cultivation comes from orientation to land and space, not the kind of production that her mother-in-law desires. Nonetheless, Julie’s investment in other gendered behaviors has otherwise come to fruition as “she has come to be accepted as one of the women who share household tasks, and she makes use of her education to teach English to schoolchildren” (169-170). Thus, Julie’s cultivation of both body and mind aid in her transition from a heterosexual, potentially reproductive relationship to the incorporation into a homosocial community, where production takes on different valences.

³¹ Winkiel posits the following of Julie’s morning visits: “These meditations, then, open her subjectivity to an existential and epistemological plurality that allow for a recognition of other modes of being and knowing. She experiences a passive receptivity to transformation that undoes her pretension to know and her ability to act. Instead, it is the desert that acts” (37). On the contrary, I argue that, while she finds respite in her morning meditations, Julie engages in dual cultivation of self and place that is anything but passive.

Julie's cultivation of community is facilitated by a settler whiteness that the text obliquely acknowledges. Her pre-dawn encounter with the Bedouin girl is one of several passages wherein Julie's itinerary and Gordimer's overall vision of community is premised upon notions of a blankness of space that is "waiting" for her (Julie's) inscription. The Bedouin girl functions as a kind of mirage for Julie, a projection of her desire for cultivation. If the desert is "out of time" (172), then the girl is part of that timelessness. Julie fantasizes that she might "thrust this [desert] back into time" with water in order to cultivate it (172). The time is not the capitalist-national time of Ibrahim's computers and telecommunications; rather, it is the cyclical and seasonal time of growth, decay, and rebirth that Julie desires. In addition to Ibrahim's niece Leila, the Bedouin girl stands in for the child Julie does not have and represents the potential of cultivation of the desert, dark yet alive. Further, Julie's silent, pre-dawn encounters with the girl also imply an imperialist relationship where Julie is the white settler of an exotic foreign land. Gordimer, however, signals awareness of this possible reading when Julie contemplates "Hester Stanhope, and the man Lawrence, English charades in the desert, imperialism in fancy dress with the ultimate condescension of bestowing the honour of wanting to be like the people of the desert [...]" (198). But, Julie demurs, "Nothing to do with her; she wrapped herself in black robes only when it was necessary for protection against the wind" (198). Despite this effort to avoid a caricature of Julie as a white woman "playing native," Gordimer's romanticization of the desert, her representation of

the young girl as timeless, and her empowerment of Julie to “thrust [the desert and the girl] back into time” undermine Julie’s denunciation of Stanhope and Lawrence.³²

Julie finally finds words and an image for the “struggle”—the itinerary of the self—that she has been waging within herself when she and Maryam accompany her father to a rice field with which he is affiliated. Julie becomes so overwhelmed by the “slender silky reeds, green, green, green” that “the intoxication of green” is “audible as well as visual” (210).³³ She hears a “great company of birds clinging, woven into the green as they fed”; the activity is “a song that filled her head” (210-211). Upon leaving, Julie feels as if she is “under the influence of the lushness [...] as if they had been drinking” (211). During the car ride back, Maryam conveys to Julie that there is great potential to grow “rice, onions, potatoes, tomatoes, [and] beans” if only her family had the money, which prompts Julie to think about a financial trust endowed by her father and fantasize about buying a rice “concession” (215).³⁴ Ibrahim, however, sees this as another of her “adventures” and, in another attempt to deracinate what is now her strong connection to the land, he implores, “Julie, we do not live here” (216). Thus, the process of cultivation for Julie is a sensual experience in many ways, one that notably does not require Ibrahim to catalyze or complete. Indeed, when Ibrahim arrives home with the news that he has acquired two U.S. visas for himself and Julie, he sees her walking with his two sisters-in-law, Amina and Khadija, and their children, looking like a group of

³² See Dannenberg for a favorable reading of this passage (80-81).

³³ Julie’s physical incorporation and cultivation symbolized in the recurrent color green in this passage and others echoes her earlier intellectual and spiritual cultivation, as a *Bildungsheld*, through the importance of green in Islam.

³⁴ Although Ibrahim uses the word “concession,” not Julie, the word is another echo of an imperialist relationship to resource-rich lands used for exploitation.

“female pack-horses” as they return from the market (219). Julie has already fully integrated into the larger family, but Gordimer is careful to note that there is a particular bond between her protagonist and the female family members. But, Julie is jolted back into national-capitalist time and transnational space when Ibrahim receives the visas, and once again their divergent understandings of transnationalism come into conflict. America is, to Ibrahim the country of “chances,” “work for everybody,” computers and communications—“where the world is” (227), whereas for Julie, it is where immigrants do the “shit work” that “*real people*, white Americans won’t do themselves” (emphasis in original 230). Their bedroom—the liminal “lean-to for transients” (246)—is where the world invades the home.³⁵ The self-cultivation is complete when she produces that which has struggled “alien” within her—“the individual truth [...] nobody else’s” (244). On the eve of the couple’s departure, she produces her truth in the form of her life’s story articulated through a “stream of vision, thoughts, re-creation [that] has a kind of narrative of its own” (245). She professes this narrative, “tell[s] it to the desert,” as she engages in what she fears will be her last communion with the land (245). Julie’s story of self begins with locating her body in the desert village, and this bodily emplacement will continue “changing her as the cells in the body renew themselves spontaneously” (260). Gordimer’s story ends with Ibrahim immigrating to the U.S. while Julie remains at her

³⁵ I am thinking here of Homi Bhabha’s “The World and the Home” (1992) where he posits that the comingling of the world within the home engenders an “estranging sense of [...] relocation,” that is, “the unhomely” (141). Neither Julie nor Ibrahim are ever completely “at home,” so to speak, as both are representatives of very different kinds of transnationality. Hence, the lean-to is an “unhomely” space where the primary spatial scale of personal and corporate identity—the home—is cross-hatched with a multivalent worldliness (“World” 141). Interestingly, Bhabha works out this notion of the unhomely through the analysis of another Gordimer novel, *My Son’s Story*, and ultimately develops this exploratory essay into the introduction of *The Location of Culture* (1994).

home. The last scene of the novel depicts her sister-in-law Khadija finding Julie in the lean-to immediately after Ibrahim's departure in order to boost her spirits. With a bunch of dates in one arm and the other flung around Julie "conspiratorially," Khadija says, "He'll come back" (268). We are to understand that she is speaking of both Julie's and her own husband, who works abroad, and that neither man will return. Nonetheless, Julie is emplaced where she feels like she belongs—in a makeshift lean-to in the desert, incorporated into a community of women.

While Julie does not entirely reject the reproductive, heterosexual bond as the primary mode of sociality, she does imply that it is untenable for her at the novel's end.³⁶ Thus, although *Gordimer* does not view herself as a feminist writer and has not made any claims to a feminist politics in *The Pickup*, the novel does have an implicit if reluctant feminist politics framed by her mood of reflection at the turn of the century. As indicated in the chapter's introduction, the tension in Gordimer's thinking between a global push toward deterritorialization and placelessness and a persistent need to be in place and to *feel* in place plays out in *The Pickup*. Whereas the author explicitly signals that the resolution of this tension might be found in a postnational community, she implicitly asserts that the female body is the site of such resolution and, moreover, that Julie's body might free itself from patriarchal structures through postnationality. In fact, Gordimer explicitly characterizes the twentieth century, in the essay "Our Century," as an epoch of destruction by "man," deploying the word "accurately [and] specifically" to her mind

³⁶ In a heated exchange, Julie responds to Ibrahim, "[...] you'd think I was leaving you, the way you take it. I'm not going anywhere. I'm not going back there, I've told you, told you. *I'm in your home*" (emphasis added 261).

(*Living* 216). Gordimer cites the “power of destruction which surpasses natural catastrophe” as “man’s” signal achievement of the twentieth century (*Living* 216).³⁷ In contrast, the “enemy” of sorts in *The Pickup* is the oppressive power structure of global capitalism that takes men away from home, rather than local patriarchal structures of power or local iterations of global economic processes. Consequently, a solution or potential mode of resistance to global capitalism is a local “sisterhood,” which in this novel is separate from both patriarchal and capitalist strictures. In addition, the author’s binaristic formulation of the global as masculine and the local as feminine is too neat in that she retreats from naming and interrogating the gendered nature of transglobal and local oppression as she did in her contemporary nonfiction. The novel presents the discourse of “sisterhood” in similar terms, where the women’s group is a fundamentally egalitarian, harmonious community spatially and discursively outside of national, transnational, and global spaces.³⁸

Despite the novel’s weaknesses, Gordimer projects a clear sense of a loss of place at the turn of the century, skepticism about national or even transnational/transglobal identifications to ameliorate this loss, and confidence in fictional narrative to imagine new geographies for alternative socio-spatial relations. *The Pickup* represents Gordimer’s *reach for* the global at the turn of the century and to *reach beyond* the global and “back

³⁷ She goes on to enumerate the results of the “power of destruction”: “The worship of force and destruction [and the] worship of materialism” have made for, she argues, a frightening array of human oppression and ecological deracination, such as atomic war, religious fundamentalisms, and an insatiable thirst for oil, which is “the ‘why’ of many wars” (*Living* 216-235).

³⁸ More broadly, while Gordimer is not “antifeminist,” Alice Knox posits, “gender equality is not part of her otherwise radical vision” (65-66). However, Lazar contends that Gordimer might be “antifeminist” in a very specific way as she has explicitly distanced herself from a certain ill-conceived, bourgeois feminism of the 1980s (784).

to” the local in order to re-discover place. The affective need for place is heightened, the novel suggests, by multiple global processes sped up and compressed (Jay) that promote placelessness and constant mobility rather than “place as pause” (Tuan). The remedy, according to the novel, is a recalibrated process of *Bildung* to facilitate a process of incorporation into a postnational community and the *Bildungsheld*’s acceptance of societal norms as her own.³⁹ The process, then, is not only psychological and social but spatio-temporal as well. Whatever the limitations of Gordimer’s vision might be, imagining oneself in place and attending to cultivation of land and of self should be the cultural orientation, *The Pickup* argues, for authors and readers at the turn of the century, and the other literary texts considered in this project bear that out. Gordimer’s novel ultimately abandons nationality and transnationality as modes of belonging and as cultural-political vectors through which to achieve both self-realization and the realization of more equitable communities. In contrast, Gordimer’s contemporaries suggest through their imaginative renderings of place that spatial scales, such as the national and the transnational, are embedded within each other and articulate at the site of the body.

³⁹ See Cheah, *Spectral* 111-112.

CHAPTER III

LONDON PASSAGES IN SALMAN RUSHDIE'S *THE SATANIC VERSES*

Salman Rushdie's famous novel *The Satanic Verses* (1988) is so ambitious in scope and so complex in argument and narrative form that, since its publication, scholars have had difficulty deciding what it is "about," that is, the primary cultural work of the novel. Gayatri Spivak has argued that the novel is about India. Sara Suleri has argued that it is, foremost, about Islam. Timothy Brennan has argued that the novel is about skepticism. Rushdie himself has argued that *The Satanic Verses* is about England, but "no one thinks of [it] as a novel about England, but [it] is actually, in large part, a novel about London. It's about the life of immigrants in Thatcherite London" (qtd. in Livings 143). The novel is, of course, about all of these things and more, including religious and ideological fundamentalisms, blasphemy, cultural hybridity, postcoloniality, family, and, in the end, love.

For many, the novel is about "the Rushdie affair." Although Rushdie was already famous, having received critical accolades for *Midnight's Children*,¹ the critical and

¹ Unlike his first novel, the science fiction *Grimus* (1975), a self-described critical "bomb" (*Imaginary Homelands* 1, IH hereafter), his second won the prestigious Booker Prize for Fiction (now the Man Booker Prize) in 1981. The novel also won the "Booker of Bookers" on the occasion of the twenty-fifth anniversary of the award (1993) and the Best of the Booker on the fortieth anniversary of the award (2008). Such laurels indicate a warm critical reception within Britain's elite literary circles: the novel, and by extension the author, had become and arguably has remained the standard for "Commonwealth fiction," a category that Rushdie critiques in *Imaginary Homelands*. See "'Commonwealth Literature' Does Not Exist" (IH 61-70). See also Graham Huggan (1997) for a general critique of the award's politics.

popular reception of *The Satanic Verses* made him infamous in some circles.² The so-called “Rushdie Affair,” a series of bannings, book burnings, rioting, and deaths, was exacerbated most notably by a *fatwa* issued by the Iranian Ayatollah Khomeini on February 14, 1989. It incited “all zealous Muslims to execute them [Rushdie and his publishers] quickly for opposition to Islam, the Prophet, and the Koran” (Appignanesi and Maitland 68). Subsequently, Rushdie went into hiding, amid more rioting and protests. The “affair” made a work that would otherwise be described as a “postcolonial” or a “Commonwealth” a truly transnational one—that is, beyond the two nations of the colonial relationship. Not only is the novel transnational in setting as many of the characters physically move between London and Bombay, Rushdie’s depiction of the characters’ quest for their own “imaginary homeland” and the rude and sometimes violent subversions that ensue signal a thematic transnationalism. Moreover, the novel circulated transnationally and hailed a varied, if not conflicted, transnational readership, garnering protests and threats in South Africa, India, and Pakistan, to name a few.

The novel’s reception, in fact, has been so animated and so long-lasting that any discussion about the novel must address this legacy. Indeed, writing immediately after the *fatwa*, Spivak attempts in the oft-cited “Reading *The Satanic Verses*” to come to grips with the novel’s reception. But rather than trying to tease out the various “sides” of the “affair” or pondering the politics of censorship and blasphemy writ large, Spivak tries to get beyond the “affair” if only temporarily in order to get at *other* cultural work of the novel. She asserts that “the novel is a case of the global *Lebenswelt* —the praxis and

² All page numbers to follow refer to a reprinted edition of *The Satanic Verses* (New York: Random House, 2008).

politics of life—intercepting an aesthetic object so that a mere reading of it has become impossible” (Spivak 41).³ Nonetheless, she attempts a reading of the novel “as if nothing has happened since late 1988” (Spivak 43). Spivak points to two important if under-theorized aspects of the novel: its representation of contemporary India and its “aggressive central theme: the post-colonial divided between two identities: migrant and national” (43-44). Much has been written, subsequent to Spivak’s analysis, about the themes of blasphemy and censorship in the novel itself *and* about the author himself. Instead of rehearsing those conversations here,⁴ I heed Spivak’s challenge to consider the novel’s other business that the “affair” obscures.⁵

Within the small area of scholarship that addresses other aspects of the novel besides the “affair” and blasphemy, religious fundamentalism or Rushdie’s use of magical realist style, scholars often focus on its representations of Englishness and contemporary British history, for example in the work of Ian Baucom, Simon Gikandi, and Timothy Brennan. A further subset of this minor scholarship attends to the novel’s treatment of women. Here, the work Leela Gandhi and Sara Suleri among others is

³ Arjun Appadurai agrees, citing it as a global novel *par excellence*: “No single episode captures these realities [of transnational, “mass-mediated sodalities”] better than the now mind-numbing Salman Rushdie affair [...] The Rushdie Affair is about a text-in-motion, whose commoditized trajectory brought it outside of the safe haven of Western norms about artistic freedom and aesthetic rights [...] In this episode, we can also see how global processes involving mobile texts and migrant audiences create implusive events that fold global pressures into small, already politicized arenas” (*Modernity* 8-9).

⁴ In addition to many articles, there are several book-length studies focused on the novel specifically and Rushdie’s work generally in a post-“affair” frame, including Appignanesi and Maitland (1990), Brennan (1989), Sanga (2001), and Malik (2009), and the scholarly interest remains strong as evidenced by Mendes (2011), Kluwick (2011), and Parashkevova (2012).

⁵ Laura Chrisman also calls for scholarly work beyond the frame of “the affair”: “The Rushdie Affair, in short, currently risks obscuring other important dynamics of 1980s Englishness” (9). Likewise, Sabah Salih asserts that “all other aspects of the novel have been eclipsed by this one issue [the fatwa]” (2).

instructive as they consider the oft-overlooked London passages as well as the Ayesha and Jahilia passages. However, the London passages of the novel present evocative representations of sexuality and race in a postimperial context that warrant further critical attention. Working within this quieter scholarly conversation, this chapter argues that *The Satanic Verses* represents state institutions and a civil society that index migrants through social constructions of race and sexuality primarily, bearing traces of the nation-state's imperialist legacy. Moreover, through its realistic and fantastical re-visioning of its characters passing through city-space, primarily London and later Bombay, Rushdie's novel posits that those logics are further differentiated by location where spatial politics morph as bodies move. In short, if *The Satanic Verses* can be said to be "about" anything, it explores being in places where one is (not) wanted, training its "migrant's eye" on the spatial politics of postimperial London. The characters nonetheless change their locations and, at times, change the landscape itself in order to re-signify spaces and resist containment by governmental agents in particular. Despite the progressive re-articulation of socio-spatial relations that the novel presents in the London passages as the characters literally move about London, the narrative ends by leaving London and moving to a place of forgetting, Bombay.

A New Empire in an Old One

Rushdie's central theme in this novel—that mobility in 1980s London is organized primarily through spatial logics of racial and sexual differentiation—draws on a long cultural and political history. The London passages in particular indicate that the

author understands institutional forms of power as drawing on imperialist strategies and themes of otherness to mitigate the “crisis” of Englishness. The cracks in the worlding paradigm of the Cold War now visible in the mid-1980s, Rushdie’s London is in the process of changing from imperialist metropole to a different kind of globally networked city. Generally, its prominent position as western superpower is attenuated by transnational webs of private corporations and other non-governmental actors; specifically, London is a space that is radically redrawn as migrants from the Commonwealth territories move into it. Hence, Rushdie focuses on the palpable anxiety of both migrants and institutions in the London passages of *The Satanic Verses*. Arjun Appadurai’s recent *The Fear of Small Numbers* best captures the state’s strategies of spatial management of its others. He argues that the nation-state’s failure as a political and cultural project, diminished by the deterritorializing of its power, is made manifest in the presence, the very bodies, of migrants in national space. Consequently, controlling the minoritized body affords the nation-state a way of “‘holding still’ the whirl of globalization, making it small in the body of the violated minority” (*Fear* 50). In this way, the state projects its “anxiety of incompleteness” (*Fear* 52-53). As migrant bodies literally fall from the sky, the novel’s institutional actors, primarily police and politicians, deploy various means of cordoning off and at times making invisible those that represent its impurity.

The practices of sorting, separating, and vilifying migrants according to racial, ethnic, sexual, and class differences, among others, have a long and available history in British imperialist discourse where the nation has been conflated with empire. The

minoritized body is “made minor” through tropes and practices of racialization and processes of sexual difference readily at hand. Indeed, the transnational Englishness of the 1980s bears traces of imperialist discourses, which the novel satirizes at length.⁶ This obsessive but futile work to mitigate the state’s own marginalization is nowhere more evident, Stuart Hall argues, than in England. Specifically, the cultural and political notion of Englishness requires “huge ideological work” in the wake of a defunct imperial project (Hall 178). This shoring up is particularly important to the state since “the very moment that Britain finally convinced itself it had to decolonize, [...] the colonized began flooding into England” (Hall 176).

The Satanic Verses is not only about transnational actors (literally) playing various cultural roles, engaging and celebrating “mongrelization” in Rushdie’s words; the novel captures the state’s attempt to reconsolidate its power by forwarding a pure national identity via familiar racialized and sexualized discourses. In his charting of the changing relationship between Britishness and Englishness, Ian Baucom notes that immediately after decolonization the 1948 British Nationality Bill stretched the *nation* to the borders of the *empire*. That is, “British” was wherever a British subject was, even beyond the territory of England.⁷ If British identity, then, was a political and cultural invention designed to bind disparate territories and to create a people, what does “British” mean when empire dissolves? What happens when the British come to England?

Parliamentary legislation of the period immediately preceding the publication of *The*

⁶ Simon Gikandi posits that “Saladin Chamcha’s England” which “[was] thought to connote the brave new world promised by Englishness [is] simply a place in which old anxieties are restaged in uncanny and ironic moments” (*Maps* 214-215).

⁷ Imperialist expansion, Gikandi posits, was the *raison d’être* for Britishness (*Maps* 29, 31).

Satanic Verses (1988) suggests that Commonwealth subjects migrating to the metropole created a cultural and racial panic: the worry by some, such as the notoriously racist British politician Enoch Powell,⁸ that the (white) Anglocentrism of Englishness would be subsumed into a broader (non-white) Britishness (Baucom 14). Hence, the 1981 Nationality Act exchanged a *jus soli* (literally, law of the soil) citizenship for an “embrace of genealogical and racial principles of shared identity and rights” (Baucom 13). That is, Britishness was delinked from territory and articulated with patriality and bloodlines. Thus, Hall asserts that 1980s Thatcherism is grounded in “an embattled defensiveness of a narrow national definition of Englishness, of cultural identity” (177). The desire for *national* purity is, Hall argues, a desire for *racial* purity (174). Gikandi concurs, “the black threat is what gives Englishness cohesion in times of crisis” (*Maps* 208). Rushdie’s London, then, is the old seat of empire and the newly-contested center of Englishness.⁹

⁸ Powell delivered his infamous “river of blood” speech after returning from a trip to the U.S. and witnessing riots in the aftermath of Martin Luther King, Jr.’s assassination. Powell presented “an inflammatory diatribe against a proposed race relations measure which vaulted him to instant prominence. He warned of a coming race war, stating: ‘like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood.’ The allusion is to a prophecy of war uttered by the Sibyl in Book VI of Virgil’s *Aeneid*.” (Brians). Rushdie alludes to Powell and his speech through Hanif Johnson, a community lawyer from the multicultural Brickhall neighborhood, who argues for the need to control the “vocabularies of power,” that is, “the languages that mattered: sociological, socialistic, black-radical, anti-anti-anti-racist, demagogic, oratorical, sermonic” (290). But, “the real language problem,” Hanif asserts, is the challenge of “how to bend it shape it, how to let it be our freedom, how to repossess its poisoned wells, how to master the river of words of time of blood” (290). See Gikandi on Powellism as well (*Maps* 44-45).

⁹ John Clement Ball notes that, “at the height of imperial power in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, [...] London served as a metonym for imperial power itself: its point of origin, the place where empire was built and around which it revolved” (4). By migrating to the city, “the London that once imposed its power and self-constructions *on* them [Commonwealth subjects] can now be reinvented *by* them” (Ball, emphasis in original 9).

Indeed, writing shortly after the passage of the 1981 Act, Rushdie asserts that “racism is not a side-issue in contemporary Britain; it’s not a peripheral minority affair [...] It’s a crisis of the whole culture, of the society’s entire sense of itself” (IH 129). In the essay “The New Empire Within Britain,” Rushdie sees a nation split within itself: “Britain is now two entirely different worlds, and the one you inhabit is determined by the color of your skin” (IH 134). The author does not in this essay consider the related process of sexual differentiation as a constitutive element of national difference. *The Satanic Verses* does, however, suggest that the regulation and placement of bodies is not solely determined by skin color. Rather, the state and its agents and other ethnic groups read sexed bodies in the novel as variously desirable, fearsome, or even deadly as they move between places in London.

The novel implies that, just as imperial Englishness underwritten by a narrative of racism, it is also grounded in “a certain *sexuality*” both of which identify and discipline “national” and “foreign” bodies (Hall, emphasis in original 174). Such attention to sexual encounters and ethnic purity are classic imperialist tropes that Rushdie draws upon and critiques throughout the novel. Nuancing Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality, Vol. I* and his other works, Ann Stoler asserts that “we should see race and sexuality as ordering mechanisms” of nineteenth-century European colonialisms (9). Specifically, colonial strategies of taxonomizing and disciplining the bodies of both colonizer and colonized turn on logics of race and sexuality that are, at best, thinly veiled in imperialist discourses. The ostensible racial purity of white British body and the perceived degeneracy of the nonwhite Asian or African body is a familiar binarism of colonial

discourse, a strategy most famously analyzed by Edward Said in *Orientalism* (1978). Consequently, ideas of intermingling and “contamination” of racialized bodies invoked sexuality (acts, identifications, and behaviors) as the means by which such exchanges might happen. Thus, as Robert J.C. Young notes, the imperial powers held an “anxiety about hybridity reflect[ing] the desire to keep races separate” (25). Of course, the articulation of race and sexuality in British India, for example, does not simply map onto postimperial London with ease. While the colonial territory was ostensibly stable and “over there,” the fragmenting and stretching of globalized space challenges us to consider imbricated discourses of race and sexuality as mobile but still enabling statist policies of control. The creation of a European bourgeois self was underwritten as much by racialized logics of empire as domestic biopolitics (Stoler 9). Further, whereas fearsome brown or black bodies were relatively immobile and thus distanced from the metropole, the arrival of former imperial subjects in London prompted the postimperial state to enact new policies of racial *and* sexual control, such as the 1981 Nationality Act noted above. Ashley Dawson posits that the Act, requiring former imperial subjects to prove a blood or “patrial” belonging, was particularly onerous for black women migrants as they were “potential reproducers of difference” (13). *The Satanic Verses* understands the *continuity* of the logics of race and sexuality as flowing from classic colonial discourse perpetuated by once-discrete European nation-states through late twenty-first century global flows of money, people, and ideas.

Thus, this chapter argues that Rushdie consciously attends to recent imperialist tropes of otherness to articulate two related concerns. If Rushdie sees the function of

literature as “giv[ing] lie to official facts” (IH 14), then the novel is not only a means of giving lie to the ostensibly democratic and egalitarian nature of Thatcherite policies but a way of giving lie to the “post” in “postcolonialism” and the sheen of globalization. The novel, instead, subverts the linear movement toward the progress of globalization and the concomitant erasure of the colonial relationship between Britain and India. *The Satanic Verses* does not allow an easy shaking-off of recent imperialist history as part of the city’s transition to a late-century global power center. The novel traces the nation-state’s attempt to construct a vision of an emergent global city while maintaining a new empire within the old one. Although he is quick to highlight and satirize the socio-spatial logic of racial difference, Rushdie expresses significant anxiety through his representation of female bodies. That is, while Rushdie presents the reader with ostensibly empowered female characters, the novel itself reveals a tentativeness about female sexuality and agency, especially in the London passages, which ultimately results in the narrative’s reinscription of patriarchal structures by leaving London for Bombay.

In addition to recognizing the potency of the imperial past in the present, Rushdie’s novel attends to a theme common to all of the texts in this project: the contingency of spatial politics largely determined by the re-orienting and re-placing of bodies. Each character considered in the analysis that follows experiences various orientations to “proper” Englishness as he/she passes into different city-spaces and comes into contact with different social groups. On the one hand, Rushdie has asserted that *The Satanic Verses* is the novel is a study in hybridization, or “mongrelization,” to use his term (IH 394). “It is a love-song to our mongrel selves,” he posits, one that celebrates the

“great possibility” of “newness” that migrants bring with them (IH 394). Indeed, from the two protagonists’ metamorphoses into fantastical creatures as they fall through the night sky above London to two Bangladeshi teenagers in the multicultural Brickhall neighborhood, Rushdie’s London is a spatial laboratory of Englishness in that it requires a cultural mixing or an experimentation of languages, behaviors, and embodiments in order to negotiate both nation-statist and civil identities. On the other hand, this chapter argues that the novel is a study in the resulting violence and oppression that occurs when governmental and civil groups resist mongrelization and aggressively fight for “the absolutism of the Pure” (IH 394), as Saladin’s narrative arc in particular suggests. Focusing on the novel’s representation of embodied practice of racial and sexual relations reveals the mutability of these relations as bodies move among places in London. In the end, the novel leaves us with a recognition that “British thought [and] British society [have] never been cleansed of the filth of imperialism” (IH 131) to which an earnest if spectacular literary re-visioning of a more equitable postimperial city-space might be the ablution needed. *The Satanic Verses*, however, undermines its own vision by redeploying some of the same strategies of bodily management in the final Bombay passages.

Naming the National Body

The novel’s famous opening, two men falling from the London night sky, signals immediately to the reader that the story at hand will turn on bodies moving in and through national space, re-defining what it means to be English. The novel’s opening pages, then, begin a sequence of naming, sorting, and separating national bodies from

non-national ones. Such a serious task, however, does not prevent Rushdie from indulging his comedic wit. A perennial wordsmith, Rushdie revels in puns, double entendre, and many familiar and esoteric political and cultural allusions as tools to aid his comedic style. One of the funnier tableaux in the novel is the initial encounter between one of the protagonists, the Bollywood actor Gibreel Farishta, and an English mountain-climbing celebrity, Alleluia “Allie” Cone. The scene is also one of the more important articulations of the contingent relationship between nation, race, and sexuality throughout the novel and, as such, echoes through the other relationships between characters, namely Saladin Chamcha and Otto and Alicja Cone. The novel’s complex understanding of these elements is place-based: as the characters move through the city their bodies are read as racially and/or sexually safe and pure or deviant and impure.

The first glimpse of migrant bodies in postimperial space occurs when two Indian men argue over who can rightfully claim Englishness as they plummet toward the ground after their airplane has exploded. In a “head to tail,” postlapsarian tumble with Saladin Chamcha, an Indo-British voice actor, Gibreel Farishta sings a *ghazal* about his national identity: “‘O, my shoes are Japanese,’ Gibreel sang, translating the old song into English in semi-conscious deference to the uprushing host nation, ‘These trousers English, if you please. On my head, red Russian hat; my heart’s Indian for all that’” (5). Saladin, for his part, counters with a patriotic song of his own, defending his beloved England against Gibreel’s assault. Saladin is, like most of the novel’s characters, a performer professionally (a radio and commercial voice actor) and culturally. His name means

“spoon” or, colloquially, “suck up.”¹⁰ The characters’ initial transmutation into “Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha,” an “angelicdevilish” combination sets up all of the major themes of the novel: national border crossings, the migrant’s multiple identifications, religious skepticism, and “newness” as a product of cultural hybridity. Importantly, the task of naming and categorizing Gibreel as either an divine or satanic being, for example, is couched in terms of aberrant sexuality, a theme that Rushdie generates in the novel’s opening and returns to frequently. The language of the protagonists’ fantastical border-crossing is compared to that of a supernatural birth. After the *Bostan* splits, “a seed-pod giving up its spores,” the two protagonists “[plummet] like bundles dropped from carelessly open-beaked stork, and [...] Chamcha was going down head first, in the recommended position for babies entering the birth canal” toward the “English Sleeve, the appointed zone of their watery reincarnation” (4-5). In both case, the migrants’ entrance to London is a physical and metaphorical penetration of national space. But, whatever each character’s relationship to the idea of Englishness and to nation-space, the naming of the national operates through the state’s reading bodies as fearsomely or acceptably racialized and sexualized. As we will see, Otto Cone and Saladin might declare themselves “English,” but racialized and sexualized “passing” is a necessary underpinning to their performative speech.

¹⁰ Rushdie explains Saladin’s name thusly: “A *chamcha* is a very humble, everyday object. It is, in fact, a spoon. The word is Urdu; and it also has a second meaning. Colloquially a *chamcha* is a person who sucks up to a powerful people, a yes-man, a sycophant. The British Empire would not have lasted a week without such collaborators among its colonized peoples. You could say that the Raj grew fat by being spoon-fed” (“Empire” 8).

Through the Gibreel-Allie alliance, Rushdie rejects any notion of national purity that the two men claim at the novel's opening. Instead, he juxtaposes two different kinds of migrants in order to demonstrate the conditions under which each is able to pass as authentically English. Allie, a "climber of mountains, vanquisher of Everest, blonde yahudan ice queen" (31), first meets Gibreel when he, just having survived a near-fatal episode following a failed movie stunt, loses his faith in God.¹¹ While convalescing in the hospital and "calling upon God every second of every minute" to no avail, Gibreel's faith fades into a "terrible emptiness" when he suspects he is "talking into thin air" (30). Bee-lining to the nearest hotel buffet after his discharge, Gibreel "eat[s] as fast as possible, stuffing the dead pigs into his face so rapidly that bacon rashers [hang] out of the sides of his mouth" (31). Enter Allie who, observing a voracious Gibreel with "pigs falling out of his face" (31), challenges him to embrace a second chance at living rather than gorge himself at a breakfast buffet. This comical episode is arguably the beginning of Gibreel's metamorphosis from uncouth celebrity to powerful if ambiguous archangel, catalyzed by an ill-fated flight from Bombay to London on the airplane *Bostan*.¹² Indeed, the oft-intrusive but playfully coy narrator hints that Gibreel's exit from London was spurred by "the challenge of her [Allie], the newness, the fierceness of the two of them together" (32). More importantly, the narrator asserts—always with qualifications—that Gibreel flees the country "and, or, maybe: because after he ate the pigs the retribution began, a

¹¹ Gibreel, it should be noted, is a non-practicing Muslim who stars in Hindi "theologicals" wherein he portrays, to great acclaim, various Hindu deities and becomes an "instantly recognizable face of the Supreme" (16).

¹² *Bostan*, along with *Gulistan*, are "the traditional heavens of Islam" (Brians).

nocturnal retribution, a punishment of dreams” (32). The dream world of Gibreel opens up the many-stranded narrative for which the novel is well-known.

As suggested above, the brief meeting of Allie and Gibreel in a luxury Bombay hotel does not simply function as a subplot to the main narrative of Gibreel and Saladin's individual and collective crises of faith, episodes of blasphemy, and struggle to find love and acceptance, although this episode is certainly important to forwarding these themes. It performs another crucial function: In a novel famous for its use of twinning, the tumultuous alliance between Allie and Gibreel is one of several pairings that recognizes the ostensible “crisis” of Englishness due to a perceived threat from ethnic migrants. “English” and “non-English” are coded as “white” and “non-white,” respectively, throughout the novel, particularly in the London passages. Not only do Gibreel and Saladin represent the migrant’s two main avenues of cultural identification in multicultural London, as represented primarily by Saladin and Gibreel, their relationships with women suggest that the nation’s anxiety of racialized and ethnic others is a biopolitical one where the sexed body is the site of national contestation. In other words, the characters of Otto and Alicja Cone, Allie’s parents, and Allie’s relationship with Gibreel are not simply evidence of a famously loquacious author’s self-indulgence; rather, Rushdie uses these sections, in addition to the passages addressing Saladin, his white, English wife Pamela Lovelace, and his lover the Indian doctor Zeenat “Zeeny” Vakil, to thematize the racial and sexual differentiation as indices of national authenticity.

Although the novel’s presentation of the Cones has received little scholarly attention, Rushdie’s allotment of narrative space to the history of the Cones establishes a

counterpoint to Gibreel and Saladin. The former are political refugees from ethnic cleansing in eastern Europe, while the latter are affluent, mobile transnational actors, who indeed return to India later in the novel. More than the reason for their relocation to London, Rushdie emphasizes how their bodies are read once they arrive. Otto Cone, “a survivor of a wartime prison camp whose name was never mentioned throughout Allie’s childhood” (307), and his wife Alicja are Polish-Jewish émigrés to London due to the persecution of Jews in Eastern Europe. Although “echoes of the past distressed him,” Otto proclaims, “I am English now, proudly in his thick East European accent” (308). Alicja recounting to Allie Otto’s drive to assimilate, observes that “he seemed content enough being a pantomime member of the English gentry [, but] he’d been only too aware of the fragility of the performance” (308). Alicja, for her part, dresses the part (literally) out of an affection for her husband but does not believe that pretending to authentic Englishness (and therefore obscuring ethnic Jewishness) is necessary in post-war London. Nonetheless, in addition to attending society parties, Otto attempts to eradicate his Jewishness further by Anglicizing all of their names: he “anglicized the name [of Allie’s sister]—Yelyena into Ellaynah [spelled “Elena” throughout]—just as it had been his idea to reduce ‘Alleluia’ to Allie and bowdlerize himself, Cohen from Warsaw, into Cone” (308). Alicja laments to Allie, “He was strictly a melting-pot man [...] When he changed our name I told him, Otto, it isn’t required, this isn’t America, it’s London W-two; but he wanted to wipe the slate clean, even his Jewishness” (308).¹³ For

¹³ “W-two” refers to the postal code of the affluent London neighborhood, Paddington, where the Cones live (Brians). Also, the W2 area includes Notting Hill where Saladin and his wife Pamela live, a point that I return to below.

Otto, migration is an ongoing process requiring a change of location and a change of identity. Rushdie uses the Cones to highlight a particular *kinds of* post-war migration of groups from both Europe and the former imperial colonies to London. As Britain was in need of an immigrant labor force to help with post-war reconstruction, the state actively campaigned for new workers, but “this appeal [...] was aimed primarily at white Europeans” (“Brave New World”). While “Commonwealth” members were welcomed as well, the racism that they faced upon arrival prompted a series of violent clashes that offered the state an expedient reason to enact stricter, racially-coded legislation.¹⁴ Consequently, Ashley Dawson emphasizes that project of “keeping Britain white,” as racist groups would have it, is supported by and even perpetuated by statist policies. We see not a generalized xenophobia inherent in the British citizen but an active state project of maintaining racial purity (Dawson 7-8). But, Otto does not recognize the racialized implications of claiming the name “English,” nor does he recognize the relative ease with which he can “pass” as English.

However, Saladin Chamcha does acknowledge through his words and actions the attempted eradication of racial otherness in the act of claiming Englishness, although he initially denies that this is so. When Salahuddin Chamchawalla first visits London, traveling there to attend prep school in 1961, the narrator describes the character’s perception of his migration as an “interplanetary,” flying in “the father ship [...] not a flying womb but a metal phallus, and the passengers were spermatozoa waiting to be

¹⁴ One significant clash was the 1958 Notting Hill race riots pitting white working-class laborers against nonwhite immigrant laborers and, in turn, prompting the state to enact stricter immigrant legislation (Dawson 8).

split” (42). But, the love of a culture and a city takes root long before Saladin “is birthed” in London. The thirteen-year-old Salahuddin chants a mantra that is a corruption of the city’s name, “ellowen deeowen” (37), which begins the psychological change. As the young Salahuddin envisions of a life in “Proper London,” the “dream-Vilayet” (Hindi for “foreign country”) and desires to be a proper English gentleman, the plane trip is a relatively brief five and a half hours, but the cultural distance cannot be measured: The “change from Indianness to Englishness” for Saladin is “an immeasurable distance,” but the “distance between cities is always small” (41). The collapsing of time and space here is one of many such instances in the narrative where Rushdie indicates the unattainability of Saladin’s quest for authentic Englishness. “The mutation of Salahuddin Chamchawalla into Saladin Chamcha” reflects his desire to be accepted, like Otto, as a proper Englishman. However, whereas the narrator suggests that Otto is aware of the futility of the performance of Englishness, Saladin is not. Saladin is a true believer in the possibility of attaining an ideal Englishness, and he will do so by organizing his life according to the hierarchy of value, “culture, city, wife, a dream [of a son]” (414). This is but one possibility among several for the immigrant as Rushdie has established in the opening passages.

Thus, in the characters of Saladin and Otto, we see two examples of Rushdie’s critique of what Paul Gilroy calls Britain’s “new racism,” the linking of discourses of patriotism, nationalism, xenophobia, Englishness, militarism, and gender difference (43). Contra Benedict Anderson’s assertion that nationalism as an imagined community is made possible by “print capitalism” (and thereby transcending mechanisms of biological

difference or kinship), Gilroy, like Stuart Hall, argues that “the politics of ‘race’ in this country [Britain] is fired by conceptions of national belonging and homogeneity which not only blur the distinction between ‘race’ and nation, but rely on that very ambiguity for their effect” (45). Saladin’s London “birth” in 1961 is made possible by the 1948 Nationality Act that granted Commonwealth subjects British citizenship and allowed them to move to and to live legally in Britain. But, Saladin’s return to London and his reclamation of Englishness later in the novel is complicated by the 1971 Immigration act (and sedimented by the 1981 Nationality Act), establishing “patriality” as a condition for citizenship and “right of abode” (“1971”). This is an historical moment, Gilroy argues, that encourages Britons to conflate “immigrant” with “black” because the patrial “right of abode” “lifts all restrictions on those—mainly white—immigrants with a direct personal or ancestral connection with Britain” (Gilroy 46 and “1971”).¹⁵ Ultimately, the backlash against immigrants is presented in terms of war and invasion, Gilroy notes (45), so white Britons’ fears of “contamination” and “miscegenation” foreclose Saladin’s dream of a “culture, city, wife, and [son],” while the Cones’ whiteness signals the kind of national body that might join the body politic without threat.

“Dark Stars” and the Cultural Politics of Invisibility

While naming themselves “nationals” is certainly a part of seeking recognition by state institutions and civil society, Saladin, Otto, and Gibreel must contend with public

¹⁵ Dawson characterizes the term “black” as a signifier of resistance to the state’s divide-and-rule strategy: “The label *black* thus came to operate primarily as a political signifier, denoting experiences of racialization and resistance shared by the African, Asian, and Caribbean settlers of the postwar period” (Dawson 19).

perceptions of their otherness and the extent to which such difference can be assimilated to the national ideal. Calling oneself English simply does not erase or even necessarily mitigate the “pictures they construct” (174). Rushdie’s migrants are not easily placed inside or outside of the state, so to speak. That is, they are not simply either nationals or foreigners. Rather, the remainder of the novel is concerned with portraying a range of relationships to the state and civil institutions in which skin color and sexuality variously determine a character’s function in telling the national story. Moreover, the London passages of a given character change his/her function in the narrative. Saladin, for example, is not the same kind of migrant—that is, his body is read differently and he performs migrancy to different ends—in Notting Hill and Brickhall.

If, as a minor character notes, control over language is “the real problem” facing immigrants, Saladin, newly transformed into a hybrid goat-man, experiences the bodily effects of containment strategies when he finds himself arrested by police and held in an immigrant detention center after his ill-fated flight. Clad in green “alien pyjamas” [sic], Saladin wakes in a “cryptic and mysterious ward” (a detention center for illegal immigrants) to hear animal sounds and smell “jungle and farmyard odors” (171) and is promptly befriended by a manticore, a hybrid creature with “entirely human body [... and the] head of a ferocious tiger, with three rows of teeth” (173). His new acquaintance informs him that the ward is full of migrants who have been turned into various cross-bred creatures (by whom, the manticore does not specify): “businessmen from Nigeria who have grown sturdy tails,” “holidaymakers from Senegal who were doing nothing more than changing planes when they were turned into slippery snakes,” and a woman

who is now “mostly water-buffalo” (173). When Saladin presses the manticore for an explanation, the other whispers, “‘They describe us’ [...] That’s all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct” (174). Rushdie allows us to speculate on the “they” in this passage. We are likely meant to think that the nebulous pronoun refers to the state, the police in this case. But, in conjunction with other passages, Rushdie constructs a fuller picture of how a postimperial nation-state might facilitate its “rebranding,” so to speak, of contemporary transnational actors by endorsing a cultural politics of (in)visibility, multiply-sited in the state, the global media, and in localized communities. As Rushdie has shown, naming oneself or others does not suffice to obtain “passable” Englishness. While the “new racism” turns on “inclusion and exclusion” (Gilroy 45), the struggle over controlling national discourse is propped up and perpetuated by reading bodies as monstrous. Crossing national and cultural borders, some bodies pass unnoticed, but some bodies are seized upon as the above passage demonstrates. What Rushdie traces in this novel is not only a battle of words; he suggests that practices of saying, especially the language of invasion and contagion, must be accompanied by simultaneous practices of seeing, reading others’ bodies as racially or sexually threatening to the dominant idea of Englishness.

Notably, all of the migrants cloistered in the detention center hail from countries formerly colonized or controlled by Britain, most of which are African. Rushdie indicates that fearsome black bodies are sequestered upon arrival. If “‘race’ is bounded on all sides by the sea” (Gilroy 46), then non-white immigrants crossing the Channel, like Saladin, cross national boundaries that are also racial boundaries. Thus, embodied

subjects become racialized in these examples by moving from place to place. Once a welcomed (because wealthy and obsequious) colonial subject, Saladin must perform race differently. However, the second-generation Allie Cone is successful in “becoming English” because of her fairness (white skin, blonde hair, and blue eyes). In contrast, Saladin ultimately fails to “become English” because, as his producer and fair-weather friend Hal Valance tells him, “Your profile’s wrong” (273). Zeeny Vakil, a doctor at Breach Candy hospital in Bombay, sums up England’s (mis)perception of Saladin, as she chides him, “They pay you to imitate them, as long as they don’t have to look at you. Your voice becomes famous but they hide your face” (61). Saladin, the “Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice” (60), reluctantly concedes that he and “his female equivalent, Mimi Mamoulian,” are “dark stars”: “The gravitational field of their abilities drew work towards them, but they remained invisible, shedding bodies to put on voices” (61). The threat to national purity, then, is mitigated by making it invisible.

While the “they” who detain the monstrous Saladin might be the state, the “they” who hide Saladin’s and Mimi’s faces is the globalized media. That is, Rushdie emphasizes the mutual logic of racial and ethnic containment shared by post-imperial Britain and a transnational circuit of cultural exchange beyond the state. For example, Saladin is on the brink of becoming so successful with his television series, *The Aliens Show*, that money might “lose its meaning” (62). The premise of this children’s show, equal parts *The Munsters*, *Star Wars*, and *Sesame Street*, is that the lead characters, Maxim and Mamma Alien (played by Saladin and Mimi), wish to become television personalities (62). They are aided in their quest by a variety of “extraterrestrials ranging

from the cute to psycho,” including an “artistic space-rock,” a “puking cactus” from Australia, “three grotesquely pneumatic singing space sirens,” “a team of Venusian hip-hoppers and subway spray-painters and soul brothers who called themselves “the Alien Nation,” and a “giant dung-beetle” among others (62-63). Saladin, of course, stubbornly rejects the show’s obvious “aliens-as-freaks” analogy: “The show isn’t an allegory. It’s an entertainment. It aims to please,” he insists to Zeeny (64). And, it does please its intended audience, mainstream, white British television viewers. Moreover, Saladin understands the show’s potential to reach a global audience. “Prime-time beckoned. America, Eurovision, the world,” he fantasizes (63). Not only does the show reinforce blatant racial and ethnic stereotypes, but, importantly, it does not present the characters physically as they are. While Saladin and Mimi do move from behind the radio to in front of the camera, the “latest computer-generated imagery” entirely obscures any way of reading their bodies as “dark stars” (63). The show requires that they change their voices, their clothes, and their hair, and the computer changes their skin color and switches “legs, arms, noses, ears, [and] eyes,” altering what the actors cannot (63). Thus, Saladin and Mimi, the actors, do *not* have the potential to be cross-cultural celebrities; rather, the post-racial “aliens”—their virtual selves—have global cultural value because they are acceptable and non-threatening to dominant white audiences. Saladin and Mimi are, in fact, the “wrong colour for colour TV,” as Zeeny declares (62).

“Putting Down Roots” in London

The virtual spaces of television and radio might make otherness temporarily commensurable to the national narrative, and physical detention might contain threatening otherness indefinitely. But, what about the racialized and ethnic bodies that *are* visible, *not* obscured with wigs and make-up? How do aberrant bodies move within and between seemingly exclusive national spaces? And, what how does that movement resignify space? In the second half of the novel, state agents employ practices of spatial containment of abnormal bodies and foment competition and discord among immigrant groups as way to perpetuate self-containment and isolation. In response, Rushdie imagines familiar spaces anew when migrants circulate and mix. In his words, “newness enters the world” through groups “intermingling,” and the latter London passages of the novel envision a productive “change-by-fusion [and] change-by-conjoining” (IH 394). The author’s word choice here is not accidental. The fusion and conjoining is a sexual one in the novel, not simply a broader mixing of cultures and ethnicities. Rushdie’s language and imagery in several passages satirizes the white national’s anxiety about boundary loss and racial contamination through sexual hybridity, extant remnants of Britain’s imperial past.¹⁶ However, the novel subverts its satire of (white) national fear of

¹⁶ We should recall Stoler’s argument that race and sexuality are mechanisms of imperialist discourses operating in at least two ways. First, what Spivak calls “the masculine-imperialist ideological formation” manifests as the need of white imperialists men (and women, I would add) to “save” colonized women from sexual exploitation: in her words, “White men are saving brown women from brown men” (“Subaltern” 296). Second, Anne McClintock notes that the imperial “feminizing of *terra incognita* was [...] a strategy of violent containment,” both a sexualized fantasy of conquering “dark” lands and physical violence against women particularly in the colonies (*Imperial Leather* 24). So, the representations of sexualized bodies of both colonizer and colonized do not simply signify “saving” fantasies but fantasies of violent sexuality, particularly a violent, *racially-coded* sexuality. The psychological subtext, McClintock argues, is male anxiety about boundary loss; thus, women’s bodies function as the “boundary markers of empire” (*Imperial Leather* 23-24).

ethnic sexualities and the anxiety of miscegenation through Saladin's ultimate investment in those same economies of racial and sexual difference at the novel's end.

After Saladin and Gibreel “[zero] in on London like a bomb” (39),¹⁷ they land in Hastings, echoing an earlier invasion of Britain, and each one resumes his own performance of Englishness through sexual encounters. Recast as invading aliens, the illegal entry of each character is marked by engagements with hegemonic white sexuality. First, Gibreel succumbs to the “narrative sorcery” of their host, the elderly, English eccentric, Rosa Diamond (153); this is the first of Gibreel's many terror-dreams animated by another's will in that Rosa “seemed to know, however, how to draw the images from him” (158). Indeed, after her death, Gibreel continues to dream of a sexual encounter with a younger Rosa Diamond.¹⁸ In the meantime, Saladin, arrested because of his illegal entry into the country, is subjected to various debasements including sexual assault in the back of a police van. In addition to the distinct horns at his temples and the “tough, bony, almost fleshless calves, terminating in a pair of shiny, cloven hoofs,” the policemen's strip search reveals Saladin's “phallus, greatly enlarged and embarrassingly erect” (163). A policeman “giv[es] it a playful tweak,” and then the other younger policemen subject Saladin to “tearing apart, ‘bollocking, ‘bottling,’ [and] gouging various parts of his anatomy” (166-167). The passage ends with the policemen forcing Saladin to eat his own feces (165). Rushdie does not specify what these terms mean so the text remains ambiguous on this score. But, Leela Gandhi questions, “What really

¹⁷ This scene echoes Saladin's boyhood flight in “the metal phallus” from Bombay to London (42).

¹⁸ This nationalist fantasy of sexualized, white femininity is echoed later when Saladin “[finds] himself dreaming of the Queen, of making tender love to the monarch. She was the body of Britain, the avatar of the State, and he had chosen her, joined with her [...]” (175).

happens to Saladin Chamcha in ‘the windowless police van’ that takes him to the detention centre?’ (165). Despite the scene’s ambiguity and Rushdie’s refusal of “an explicit rape narrative,” she concludes that there are two clear results. The senior officers allow the younger policemen to indulge in acceptable sexualized violence (“because boys would have their fun” (167)), and “Chamcha starts to be cured of England” (Gandhi 168). Gandhi ultimately wonders why Saladin must “undergo a specifically homosexual humiliation in order to achieve a distance from England” (166). She suggests that the text’s misogyny and homosexual panic demonstrate “the impossibility of a ‘pure politics’” of migrancy that Rushdie desires. Lynn Sokei reads Gandhi’s analysis, in sum, as an indication “that location *matters less* than the ability to maintain the integrity of one’s masculine identity” (emphasis added 69).

On the contrary, notions of masculinity and sexual behaviors, acts, and identifications appropriate to a national body cannot be separated from location. The homophobic assault occurs in the back of a police van as it travels from the south coast of England where Rosa Diamond lives to London. Saladin is, then, deposited in the detention center on the western outskirts of London. Once he makes his escape with Hyacinth Phillips, the physiotherapist, he heads “east east east, [...] taking the low roads to London town” (177). Saladin’s monstrous and alien body is disciplined in the van and then held separate from “proper London” so that he cannot move as a threatening presence around the city and, therefore, reveal the vacuity of Englishness. If space is “the raw material of sovereignty,” where one entity determines “who is *disposable* and who is

not” (Mbembe emphasis in original 25-27), then, *pace* Gandhi and Sokei, location *is* as important as gender or sexuality when the new empire moves to London.

The text echoes Saladin’s identifications and performances, where race and sexuality are mutable, place-based relationships, with the alliance of Gibreel and Allie, framed as one of colonial invasion and conquest, and conjuring specters of dark foreignness and monstrous sexuality invading the “homeland.”¹⁹ Although both Allie and Gibreel are migrants to England, their liaison is racially coded as the dark latter’s “invasion” of the former’s whiteness.²⁰ The introverted Allie surprises herself by entering “the sexual arena [with Gibreel] with such celerity” but nonetheless feels “invaded, or potentially invaded” by “this big vulgar fellow for whom she could open as she had never opened before” (310-311). Rushdie knowingly taps into national anxiety about “black migrants in Britain [and] ‘miscegenation’ – a notion that was highly gendered, focusing on fears that black men [steal] ‘our women’” (Wendy Webster qtd. in Wang 51). Even in his description of minor details of the scene, Rushdie mimics the language of imperialist discourse: “God, but she’d forgotten what a sprawler the man was, how during the night he colonized your side of the bed and denuded you entirely of bedclothes” (311). Similarly, Allie’s quest for love is couched in terms of exploration in “exotic” lands with the white woman as colonizer. Love, she had feared, was “a whole

¹⁹ While Gandhi highlights some of examples of the novel’s misogyny, she does not fully consider the extent to which “the text asserts the female body’s metonymic relation to Englishness” (167), and I would add, its metonymic relation to London’s urban space. While she turns a keen eye to Saladin’s relationship with Pamela Lovelace and Gibreel’s with Rosa Diamond, she does not fully consider the extent to which misogynistic valences of the text underwrite the idea of “ellowen deeowen” or the spatial performances within the city, a point I discuss below.

²⁰ Rushdie employs many allusions to *Othello* in order to reinforce the theme of fearsome black sexuality. See, for example, pp. 269, 326, 412, and 481. See also Wang (2009) for an extended analysis of Rushdie’s *Othello* references as the author’s engagement with the anti-colonial discourse of Frantz Fanon.

dark continent to map” and “an archetypal, capitalized *dijinn* [spirit], the yearning towards the blurring of the boundaries of the self” (324). Allie understands love in the context of twenty-one nights of sex with Gibreel who makes real for her a formerly “abandoned hope.” Love, then, takes the form of an eroticized hex. The relationship’s volatility is, according to Alicja, due to Gibreel who is ““a case’ [...] taking into consideration the fact that Gibreel was an Indian import, ‘of cashew and monkey nuts’” (321). The irony here is that Gibreel is a paranoid schizophrenic who dreams that he is the archangel Gabriel. However, his psychological instability, becoming evermore apparent as the novel progresses, only serves to exacerbate the specter of the migrant’s body. Thus, the description of Gibreel embodies all that is threatening to a post-imperial state’s program of purifying Englishness. Armed with mystical spells from an uncivilized land, Gibreel is the dark menace from the postcolony invading national land and the national body as represented in a white, bourgeois woman with “hair so fair that it was almost white, and her skin possessed the colour and translucency of mountain ice” (31).²¹ While the description parodies whiteness, it also parodies Englishness as Allie is an acceptable migrant largely because of her skin color.

In addition to Gibreel’s alliance with Allie, Saladin’s encounter with police, and the myriad performances, naming, disguises and alternate worlds of the novel, the sustained theme of invading and conquering whiteness at the site of the sexed body is mostly clearly asserted in Saladin’s relationships, especially his marriage to Pamela.

²¹ This is one of many references to transparent or glass skin. See also pp. 33-34, 169, and 174. Brians speculates that these references might also allude to “one of Rushdie's favorite novels: Laurence Sterne’s *Tristram Shandy* [where] in Vol. 1, Chapter 23, the narrator speculates upon the existence of glass-covered beings.”

Saladin, who desires nothing more strongly than to be a proper Englishman, meets the white English actress Pamela Lovelace in 1959 (50). And, again, Rushdie couches Saladin's courtship and marriage to her in terms of conquering and controlling: "*I put down roots in the women that I love*" (emphasis in original 60). On the night of their meeting, he leaves a party dreaming of her skin and consequently pursues her for two years because "England yields her treasures with reluctance" (50). He realizes that a white English woman is crucial to realizing his dream. "If she did not relent then his entire metamorphosis would fail" because it is essential to have "someone to believe in him," that is, to believe that *he is English* (49-50). The character that ultimately supplants Saladin as Pamela's lover is Jamshed "Jumpy" Joshi, who tells Pamela that Saladin is "a man with a holy land to conquer... You [Pamela] were part of it, too." "Part of it?," Pamela retorts, "I was bloody Britannia" (181). Hence, Saladin's love of "ye olde England" manifests in his conquest of Pamela (186). Putting down roots in London requires, as he indicates, putting down roots in a woman. The narrator reminds us that "a man who sets out to make himself up is taking on the Creator's role, according to one way of seeing things," but he warns "not all mutants survive" (49). However, considered another way, the narrator suggests that "mutating" is a necessary strategy of all migrants, a theme established in the opening pages of the novel. Thus, Saladin creates an important counter-fiction—that marrying a white Englishwoman legitimizes his Englishness—to the naming power that the state wields, as evidenced in the detention center passage.

Before Saladin morphs into a devilish goat-man, his desire for what he would call "non-English" women (coded as non-white), physically sickens him. Upon returning to

Bombay to participate in a staging of George Bernard Shaw's *The Millionairess* (but before the ill-fated flight back to London), Saladin meets old friend Zeeny Vakil and faints because "Zeeny was the first Indian woman he had ever made love to" (51-52). This is the first of several moments of where Saladin's desire for whiteness manifests as physical and psychic repulsion at his partner's skin color.²² Zeeny presents to Saladin what he ostensibly tries to escape, an India that has a hybridized national identity. Like the dominant Englishness that turns on racial *purity* (represented in Pamela), Zeeny represents an Indianness based upon an unapologetic racial *hybridity*.²³ His union with her complicates both his admitted goal of proper Englishness and the unacknowledged goal of obtaining whiteness that he pursues tirelessly in London. In contrast to the white, bourgeois Pamela, Rushdie revives the language of monstrosity and exoticism when describing Zeeny's sexuality: she is a "beautiful vampire" who "[makes] love like a cannibal" (53).²⁴ After their sexual encounter, she immediately challenges his Englishness: "You know what you are, I'll tell you. A deserter is what [...] your Angrez [Hindi meaning "English"] accent wrapped around you like a flag, and don't think it's so perfect, it slips, baba, like a false moustache" (53). Further, she continually challenges the thinly-veiled racial purity bound up in dominant Englishness. She calls him a "paleface" and herself a "wog," a racial slur for a dark-skinned non-Briton (52). Overall,

²² In addition to fainting after a sexual encounter with Zeeny, he is repulsed by his desire for the physiotherapist Hyacinth Phillips and, later in the novel, sickened by his former desire of Pamela who skin now is "like a saintly mask behind which who knows what worms feasted in rotting meat (he was alarmed by the hostile violence of the images arising from his unconscious)" (416-417). Leela Gandhi characterizes this moment as an example of Saladin's "sexual nausea" (168).

²³ Zeeny is also an art critic whose controversial book, *The Only Good Indian*, strikes at the heart of Saladin's life-goal of authenticity as it argues for a "take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest" approach to cultural identity (52). See also Ambreen Hai (1999) for an insightful reading of Rushdie's use of female artistry across several of his novels, including *The Satanic Verses*.

²⁴ Vampirism is a minor recurring theme in the novel. See also, e.g., pp. 179 and 189.

Zeeny's function in the novel is not only to call attention to his cultural hybridity Saladin so wants to purify but also to call attention to the racialized underpinnings of that quest. However, in contrast to Rushdie's ironical presentation of Pamela as the embodiment of white Englishness, the author does not draw the character of Zeeny with the same knowingness as he does Pamela. Sabah Salih argues that "Zeeny's role is now to act and think as a symbolic figure of sexual danger. [...] But now he [Saladin] sees in Zeeny an oriental image, one that Edward Said describes in *Orientalism* as representing 'sexual experiences unobtainable in Europe'" (Salih 3). Thus, the "space of the woman," to borrow Salih's phrase, is delimited by patriarchal and racialized strategies of spatial containment, and the cosmopolitan Saladin is simultaneously a victim of such strategies in London and a perpetuator of them in Bombay.

Rushdie, then, continues problematically to frame Saladin's nascent if unacknowledged critique of racial purity through sexual relationships with women. Upon his return to London after the doomed flight of the *Bostan*, he discovers that he sexually desires the physical therapist Hyacinth Phillips during his stay in the mysterious sanatorium as a goat-man. His metamorphosis must be continuing, he reasons, "because he was actually entertaining romantic notions about a black woman" (175). When he and others escape the detention center, he lands in the multicultural Brickhall neighborhood in London's East End. After his recovery from the diabolical mutation, he desires the almost-of-age Mishal Sufyan, a young woman who identifies as thoroughly British, but "they [Mishal and sister Anahita] weren't British in anyway *he* could recognize" (emphasis in original 267). Mishal and Anahita are not only products of 1980s youth

culture, but they do not pretend to the same kind of white Englishness that Saladin so highly values. He eventually decides to leave Brickhall in order to “come back to life,” that is, his proper English life (415). After his transformation back to a fully human body and his re-installation at the Notting Hill residence with the now pregnant Pamela and her lover, Saladin does not desire whiteness as he has in the past. In fact, Pamela, whose skin Saladin dreamed of, has turned purple due to excessive drinking (424). Although over the course of the novel he interrogates his desire for Englishness, Saladin does so at the site of women’s bodies. That is, although Rushdie might like for us to view Saladin’s orientation to contemporary Englishness as ultimately critical, the author undercuts this argument by re-inscribing women as the boundary markers of post-imperial Englishness. Vassilena Parashkevova suggests that “the text’s reliance on an iconography of the female body for the negotiation of cities and identities could be seen as symptomatic of, and even compensatory for, the protagonists’ increasing awareness of urban instability” (451). The protagonists’ reversion to an understanding of the city as a map of female bodies in the face of urban flux participates in the maintenance of racialized notions of sexuality, which ultimately undermines Rushdie’s attempts at a wholesale critique of such strategies.

Passing Through London

If London becomes the *terra incognita* that Saladin and Gibreel discover and conquer as figured through women’s bodies, Rushdie demonstrates that controlling urban space is always contingent. In contrast with the earlier London passages where Rushdie

focuses, for the most part, on *individuals* fusing and conjoining, the author-director of this cinematic novel widens the frame to consider groups in contact. Fusion in these passages is combustion, and spaces are tropicalized and set on fire as characters cross cultural and political boundaries. After describing the two protagonists' "invasions" of Britain and of white sexuality, the narrator warns the reader of something that he/she has already surmised: that Allie and Gibreel's relationship is fatally flawed, literally and figuratively. Doing so at this point in the novel signals Rushdie's move to contextualize the Gibreel-Allie union and other characters within the broader factionalism and spatial maintenance of city-space.

In an effective authorial move, Rushdie abruptly divides the narrator's diagnosis of the pair's vexed relationship with Otto Cone's homily on the potential fractiousness of multicultural cities:

It was a relationship with serious flaws.

("The modern city," Otto Cone on his hobby horse had lectured his bored family at the table, "is the locus classicus of incompatible realities. Lives that have no business mingling with one another sit side by side upon the omnibus [...] And as long as that's all, they pass in the night, jostling on Tube stations, raising their hats in some hotel corridor, it's not so bad. But if they meet! It's uranium and plutonium, each makes the other decompose, boom." [...] "As a matter of fact, dearest," Alicja said dryly, "I often feel a little incompatible myself.")

The flaws in the grand passion of Alleluia Cone and Gibreel Farishta were as follows: [...] (325)

We expect the narrator to enumerate the failings of the Gibreel-Allie union at the start of this passage, but he pulls a Shandy-ian bit of metanarrative by inserting Otto's theory of modern cities (and, with the mention of a "hobby horse," perhaps another Shandy-ian

wink at the reader). Whereas Alicja and Saladin move *around* the city, seeking a cultural authenticity or purity, Allie *is* the city, although she is also a climber of mountains. As the white, “acceptable” migrant, her body is figured as the site of invasion by dark foreignness (Gibreel).²⁵

Rushdie suggests that other characters, too, must negotiate the politics of spatial (im)mobility in London. For example, while Otto Cone had a longstanding desire to assimilate to English culture, Alicja did not: “After Otto’s death Alicja ditched the elegant high style of dress and gesture which had been her offering on the altar of his lust for integration [...] She now wore her grey hair in a straggly bun, put on a succession of identical floral-print supermarket dresses, abandoned make-up, [and] got herself a painful set of false teeth [...]” (309). No longer does Alicja feel “incompatible” in her marriage or in the city, but she re-embraces an ethnic Jewishness *in and around the city*. If “becoming English” for Otto and Saladin, especially, entails crossing national and class borders, “becoming Jewish” for Alicja entails moving around London. Movement here is feasible because of financial affluence and, importantly, because of skin color. Although the Cones’ Eastern European Jewishness is cast as a kind of cultural “invasion” and Otto’s Englishness is a knowing mimicry, the Cones are accepted as *passably* English. Indeed, “after his death [Alicja] went straight back to Cohen, the synagogue, Chanukah, and Bloom’s. ‘No more imitation of life,’ she munched, and waved a sudden distracted fork [at Allie]. ‘That picture. I was crazy for it. Lana Turner, am I right? And Mahalia

²⁵ It is worth noting that, although Saladin rejects Pamela later in the novel, he does not reject the pursuit of white femininity as a way to achieve “proper” Englishness. Saladin also briefly pursues Allie as Pamela’s replacement (439 ff.).

Jackson singing in a church” (307-308).²⁶ Thus, Alicja not only changes her dress and manner but physically moves from the affluent and mostly white Moscow Road in the “W2” borough to the city’s mostly immigrant and working class East End.

Likewise, the minor character Mimi Mamoulian re-claims land and space as a consolation of sorts for “being [read as] Jewish, female, and ugly” in affluent cosmopolitan London (270). The narrator notes: “Also, she bought property. ‘Neurotic behavior,’” she would confess unashamedly. ‘Excessive need for rooting owing to upheavals of Armenian-Jewish history. [...] Property is so soothing, I do recommend it.’ She owned a Norfolk vicarage, a farmhouse in Normandy, a Tuscan bell-tower, a sea-coast in Bohemia” (61).²⁷ Mimi, due to forced migrancy from Eastern Europe, takes on a kind of imperialist role by buying, instead of conquering and colonizing, bits of land in formerly imperial countries, in two cases. Saladin and Pamela Chamcha live in a “five story mansion in Notting Hill” (59), not more than one mile from Cones’ Moscow Road residence. The mobility within the city and the ability to pass in several cultural spaces for the Cones, Mimi, and the Chamchas turns largely on financial affluence, although, as I indicate above, the obscured faces of Mimi and Saladin facilitates this mobility and occupation of space. They are a small part of the larger city that is “visible yet unseen,” the new empire within the old.

In section five of the novel, entitled “A City Visible Yet Unseen,” Rushdie widens the critical lens in order to consider the very real but largely obscured immigrant

²⁶ The Whitechapel location of Bloom’s, a kosher restaurant, is located in London’s East End, in proximity to the novel’s fictitious Brickhall neighborhood.

²⁷ According to Brians, Rushdie alludes here to Shakespeare’s ignorance of the land-locked region when he set Act 3, Scene 3 of *The Winter’s Tale* in “Bohemia. A desert country near the sea.” (Brians).

population of London, the titular city of the section. The diverse population comprises an invisible London within “proper London,” as Saladin would say. Rushdie represents the city divided within itself by his well-established strategy of the contrasting Saladin and Gibreel. “Where Chamcha saw attractively faded grandeur, Gibreel saw a wreck, a Crusoe-city, marooned on the island of its past, and trying, with the help of a Man-Friday underclass, to keep up appearances” (453). This underclass is mostly concentrated in the novel’s fictitious Brickhall neighborhood.²⁸ More than using the characters as metaphors for certain “Londons” and certain kinds of Englishness, the city itself is a split character with “secret selves” just like the other characters. The city is a collection multiple and conflicting spaces demarcated as “English” and “non-English,” that is, racially-coded much like the characters themselves. And, we see this division played out in Rushdie’s juxtaposition of the conflicting cartographies of London.

In addition to figuring the Gibreel-Allie alliance as a metaphor for the potentially combustible demography of London, Rushdie represents this thematic shift from individual characters’ metaphorical functions to a broader study of the city’s internal tensions through Gibreel’s vision of the city’s wholesale change into a tropical paradise. Having just received a “dressing down” from an ambiguous deity in the familiar form of a balding, “myopic scrivener” (329), Gibreel leaves the site of his first conquest in Allie’s bedroom and, with renewed resolve, seeks to conquer the rest of the city as a divine agent

²⁸ Peter Kalliney speculates on the name as follows: “The ‘etymology’ of the name might come from combining Brixton and Southall. Brixton, in south London and home to a large Afro-Caribbean population, was the site of several disturbances during the late 1970s and 1980s. Southall, in west London, has one of the largest and oldest South Asian communities in Britain. The postal code for the mythical place is NE1, which could put it in the vicinity of Tower Hamlets. The name’s first syllable might also refer to Brick Lane, also known as ‘Little Bangladesh’” (78, note 6).

of change, “bring[ing] this metropolis of the ungodly [...] back to the knowledge of God, to shower upon it the blessings of the Recitation, the sacred Word” (330). Armed with a copy of *Geographers’ London A to Z* and “the unquiet horn, Azrael” (474),²⁹ Gibreel encounters city streets that “[coil] around him, writhing like serpents” in a “tortured metropolis whose fabric was now utterly transformed” (330-331). Rushdie reveals to us in a sustained way the city’s condition that we have only glimpsed piecemeal in the novel so far, the political and material truths behind the masks that London wears. Gibreel’s supernatural vision allows him to see London’s “true, capricious, tormented nature, its anguish of a city that had lost its sense of self and wallowed, accordingly, in the impotence of its selfish angry present of masks and parodies, stifled and twisted by the insupportable burden of its past, staring into the bleakness of its impoverished future” (330-331). The imperial past haunts the global present, indeed, stifles the present with masks and parodies that slip too easily. As the literal and ideological center of British imperialism, the city’s population changes, and consequently the politicization of space changes, morphing according to the flows of globalization.

Rushdie figures this change through Gibreel’s attempt to fix “the trouble with the English,” which is, Gibreel declares, the weather. “City,” Gibreel decrees, “I am going to tropicalize you” (365). Simon Gikandi notes, “It is out of the despair generated by his inability to penetrate and embrace the metropolis that he sets out to transform the city into a projection of his abjection” (*Maps* 222). As a metropolitan heat wave ensues, Gibreel offers a litany of benefits of a warmer climate, such as “institution of a national

²⁹ “Azrael or more commonly ‘Izra’il,’” Brians notes, “is the principal angel of death in Islam.”

siesta,” “new birds in the trees (macaws, peacocks, cockatoos),” “improved street life,” “outrageously coloured flowers (magenta, vermillion, neon-green), “a new mass-market for domestic air-conditioning units,” “spicier food,” and “no more British reserve” (365).³⁰ Rushdie, of course, cannot resist mixing political satire with some comical throw-away lines, such as “higher emphasis on ball-control among professional footballers” (365), but the immigrant population that is metaphorized as a heat wave also brings an “emergence of new social values: friends to commence dropping in on one another without making appointments, closure of old folks’ homes, emphasis on extended family” (366). But, Rushdie does not allow the recurring theme of closed spaces and freighted atmospheres to be read as exclusively positive or negative. First, Gibreel understands the imperial past is a stifling malaise that requires “huge ideological work” in order to prop up hegemonic Englishness, following Hall. Then, he harnesses the power of tropicalization to transform the malaise into a positive presence signaling that migrants from the global South also bring social and cultural formations to be valued.³¹ Later in the novel, however, as he wanders through the city-space lost in a schizophrenic fog, Gibreel notes, “How hot it is: steamy, close, intolerable,” wandering “through a confusion of languages [...] Babylon” (474).³²

In Rushdie’s critique of London’s spatial politics, city-space is not only politicized by a vestigial imperial past, but the purported egalitarianism of Thatcherism is

³⁰ The disadvantages, Gibreel notes summarily, are but few: “cholera, typhoid, legionnaires’ disease, cockroaches, dust, noise, a culture of excess” (366).

³¹ As the next chapter demonstrates, Karen Tei Yamashita employs a “tropicalization,” cast in similarly fantastical terms, of Los Angeles, where various cultures and peoples mix and the land itself fuses and conjoins.

³² This sentiment echoes Otto’s earlier assessment of cosmopolitan cities like London, “the locus classicus of incompatible realities” (325).

revealed as a mask and parody, particularly in the novel's Brickhall passages. In these sections, Gibreel's vision of "tropicalizing" London is echoed in the ethnic rivalries and class divisions in migrant community of Brickhall, where Saladin is the author's main vehicle of critique. After his unfortunate mutation into a goat-man, Saladin finds refuge in a neighborhood among, what his landlord Sufyan, calls "your own people, your own kind" (261). The affluent, "proper" Englishman mutters, "I'm not your kind [...] You're not my people. I've spent half my life trying to get away from you" (262). Nonetheless, Saladin's understanding of London's relationship to its migrants is a welcoming one, "its conglomerate nature mirroring his own" (412). It offers a "hospitality—yes!—in spite of immigration laws, and his own recent experience, he still insisted on the truth of that" (412). However, his forced movement from the propertied residents of Notting Hill to the working poor of Brickhall challenge, what Pamela calls, his "museum-values" (413).³³

For example, in the Shaandaar Café and Bed and Breakfast, a neighborhood "rooming-house" for immigrants, the Bangladeshi Hind Sufyan laments the "alien sounds of English [that] make [her] tongue feel tired,"³⁴ and she "had sunk into the anonymity, the characterless plurality of being merely one-of-the-women-like-her" (257-258). Hind and her tenants are corralled into East End neighborhoods understood by "'English' English" Saladin, standing in here for white British hegemony, as frightening and

³³ Peter Kalliney argues that Saladin's "Indianness is not only a condition of his national origin, the color of his skin, and his cultural affiliations, but also of the urban politics of England's capital" (53). Thus, Saladin's border-crossing in these passages is Rushdie's exploration, Kalliney asserts, of the effects of Thatcherism and the civil unrest of London's East End (63).

³⁴ Hind further dismays that "the poison of the devil-island infect[s] her baby girls [Mishal and Anahita], who were growing up refusing to speak their mother-tongue" (258). Mishal and Anahita, in turn, call Bangladesh "Bungleditch" (267). It is, however, worth noting that Hind as proprietress of the Shaandaar "rakes in the cash" because the rooming-house is categorized as a "Bed and Breakfast," which the borough councils label as "temporary accommodation." The councils pay proprietors to keep five-person families in one room despite health and safety issues (272-273).

contaminated. But, Saladin's relocation to the neighborhood and the mobility of the characters that populate Brickhall attest to the fiction of impermeable boundary lines. Mishal, the Sufyans' elder daughter, recounts for Saladin the racial history of Brickhall. The history of "the Street," which Mishal talks about "as if it were a mythical battleground," is peppered with racial violence and struggles over spatial control, for example "a Sikh ancient shocked by a racial attack into complete silence," "the National Front [...] battl[ing] with the fearless radicals of the Socialist Workers Party,"³⁵ and the murders of two immigrants, one Jamaican and one Indian (292-293). Mishal sums up the plan of anti-immigrant forces as "five or six white bastards murdering us, one individual at a time," but she asserts ominously, "'It's our turf [...] Let 'em come and get it if they can'" (293). Mishal's warning foreshadows Gibreel's communication with the city, as he sinks further into delirium: "Not all migrants are powerless, the still-standing edifices whisper. They impose their needs on their new earth, bringing their own coherence to the new-found land, imagining it afresh. But look out, the city warns. Incoherence must have its day" (473). If, as this chapter argues, the primary work of *The Satanic Verses* is to imagine afresh the spatial politics of London, then Rushdie suggests through Gibreel and Mishal that "incoherence" or Otto's "incompatibility" necessarily involves aggressive, perhaps even violent, redefinition of those politics. The climactic conflagration of the city is both a result of Gibreel's civilizing mission, and the residents' resistance to it.

Indeed, Rushdie offers a variety of acts of spatial resistance in Brickhall. Amid the racial tension brewing over the arrest of community activist, Dr. Urdu Simba, for the

³⁵ The National Front is a racist, anti-immigrant British political organization (Brians).

“Granny Ripper” serial murders, Saladin, in his devilish goat-man state, becomes a reluctant folk hero as a multicultural monster that white society fears (296). Mishal tells Saladin excitedly, ““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, you know, occupy it, inhabit it, reclaim it, and make it our own”” (296). Youth take to wearing plastic horns on their heads as symbols of collective resistance even as the police detain and interrogate “the ‘tints”” (297). In other acts of resistance, residents of Brickhall gather at Club Hot Wax dance and burn wax figures in effigy. On the night that Saladin visits, the crowd chooses from among likenesses of various British politicians the figure of Margaret Thatcher, complete with “her permawaved coiffure, her pearls, her suit of blue” (302). As the crowd chants, “Meltdown, meltdown,” the MC Pinkwalla throws the switch on the large microwave oven, called “Hell’s Kitchen,” and the crowd “sighs in ecstasy” as they watch the wax figure melt (302). The collective anger toward these politicians and the subsequent excitement at watching the figures burn is certainly a community’s political critique of dominant figures and their policies. Further, in a metaphorical collapsing of city-spaces, the likenesses of Thatcherite politicians are transplanted into the Brickhall neighborhood, specifically into “Hell’s Kitchen” (which is itself a further geographical collapsing of a historically immigrant New York neighborhood). Moving around London, then, is regulated by modes of racialization and economic affluence. As Saladin, a member of the same affluent class and espousing similar ideas of English purity, watches “Maggie” melt, Rushdie reiterates the alternating

currents of race, sexuality, and class that have enabled or restricted Saladin's negotiation of space from Bombay to London, within London, and ultimately back to Bombay.

Leaving London

This chapter has argued that the cultural work of the novel, following Rushdie's own assessment, is to highlight the "very experience of uprooting, disjuncture, and metamorphosis" (IH 394). Analyzing the "migrant's eye view" (IH 394) of the novel's London passages, this chapter asserts that Thatcherite practices of managing national bodies turn on related indices of racial and sexual difference, primarily. However, while the novel's important work occurs in these passages, Rushdie does not end the novel in London. If the author wishes to highlight the uprooting and disjuncture of the migrant experience, the novel's ending allows Saladin to plant roots and reconnect to Bombay, to Zeeny, and to his father. Leaving London not only gives the author a facile solution to the complexity of the city's spatial politics; the move also allows Rushdie to reiterate the normative disciplining of women's bodies, where the nation might be reproduced seemingly outside of or beyond a shared imperial past.

Earlier in the novel, Saladin describes his first trip back to Bombay as a mistake because it is the beginning of the unmaking of his coveted Englishness, particularly his accent. However, his second trip back to Bombay, occasioned by his father's imminent death, allows him "to fall in love" with his father and embrace the "many alternative Saladins—or rather Salahuddins" (537-538). In doing so, he is able to abjure the quest for "proper" Englishness and find a kind of peace that he has not previously known. Rushdie

calls the novel's ending "the most naturalistic piece of writing I've ever done" (Fenton). It is also, he suggests, "the biggest emotional risk I've ever taken as a writer, which is, to put it at its simplest, to include at the end of that novel an extremely intimate description of my father's death" (Fenton). The ending certainly represents a moving eulogy to Rushdie's father as the author's stand-in, Saladin, reconnects with his father in his dying moments. Not only does Saladin make peace with his father and accept his multiple selves, Zeeny encourages him to embrace Bombay as well: "Try and embrace this city...Draw it close. The actual existing place" (555). Thus, the "cure" for his Englishness is not complete without a reconnection with a multicultural and slightly romanticized Bombay.³⁶ That is, reconciling with the "crisis" of Englishness means leaving England.

However, the novel's transplantation of Saladin from chaotic London to palliative Bombay has been the source of much scholarly critique. For example, echoing many readers, Simon Gikandi wonders, "If the identity and power of *The Satanic Verses* depend on its ability to question modern and colonial notions of identity, including ideals of home and return, why does it end with a kind of begrudging affirmation of such ideals?" (*Maps* 223). Although Gikandi does not offer any extended answer to his question, Rushdie's continued attention to sexuality and race as modalities of identity and discipline might offer a tentative answer. Although "the female body," as Leela Gandhi argues, "is postulated as the site of sexual unreliability" (168) throughout the novel, for

³⁶ Michael Gorra suggests the same about Rushdie's treatment of Bombay in *Midnight's Children*: the novel "seems too full of an unironized nostalgia for Saleem's Bombay childhood to convince me that we're intended to read it with [...] skepticism" (146-147).

example, in the morbid sexuality of Rosa Diamond or in the wayward sexuality of Pamela Lovelace, Zeeny Vakil's body is recast as the location of nurturing, domesticated safety, no longer unreliable and aberrantly racialized. Saladin has moved between global cities and ultimately let go of the desire for Englishness and, by extension, whiteness. And, the catalysts for doing so are his father's death and the promise of a stable alliance with Zeeny. In what could be a possible answer to Gikandi's question, Joy Wang understands the novel's ending as a recovery of the emotional attachments that are inaccessible abroad. "Saladin Chamcha's recuperation of love, both romantic and filial," she notes, "concludes with a triumphant struggle against both the dehumanizing experience of racism and its reactionary modes of masculine re-assertion. In this context, Saladin's white women – mere symbols of liberalism or the English nation-state itself – are demystified and relegated to the periphery of a more fundamental struggle for human agency" (Wang 58). While I agree that this demystification is certainly desirable, Saladin's redemption is possible because, first, he leaves London. Peter Kalliney posits that Indianness becomes resignified as a process of racialization when Saladin moves to London. Kalliney suggests that Rushdie, in moving Saladin from London to Bombay at the novel's end, undercuts the novel's strong critique of class and race because it does not acknowledge "that social mobility circumscribes the formal resolution of the story" (76). The text does not address the ease with which Saladin can leave England (as opposed to, say, Mishal Sufyan), implying a vector of affluence that subtends the novel's migrant politics.

The second challenge to Saladin's newfound agency, *pace* Wang, is that Rushdie chooses to locate this struggle for selfhood and agency once again at the site of a woman's body. Wang suggests that Saladin rejects the "experience of racism and its reactionary modes of masculine re-assertion" (58), and "reactionary" here carries a double meaning signaling a specific reference to the ultra-conservative politics of Thatcherism and a general reference to the retrograde series of social practices we see in the novel. However, we should not assume that Saladin's re-masculation in Bombay is necessarily progressive. Zeeny is, Parashkevova notes, "instrumental to the male migrant's negotiation of a *re-configured* Bombay, to the idea of the city as a *re-turn* or a new beginning" (emphasis in original 451). The city-space of Bombay is re-imagined in similar terms as Zeeny's body. It is the safe cosmopolitan space that does not hold physical or psychological danger. Both the woman and the city are havens from his London passages. Indeed, Zeeny's encouragement to Saladin to embrace Bombay again figures her as the city itself. This passage echoes the Saladin's earlier admission that he "puts down roots" in women. If he *does* embrace Zeeny and the "actually existing place" of Bombay, the city becomes a place of forgetting—forgetting his nightmarish transformation into a devilish goat-man and forgetting the violent racialization in post-imperial urban space that accompanies it, following Kalliney. Thus, "putting down roots" in Zeeny catalyzes the forgetting process, which the text confirms when Zeeny hints at a possible sexual encounter in the novel's final lines: "'My place,' Zeeny offered. 'Let's get the hell out of here'" (61). Saladin's answer in the affirmative is, according to Lynn Sokei, Rushdie's way of "avail[ing] himself of this transnational male privilege that

partially maintains itself through shared anxieties of female power” (76). Ultimately, the novel teaches us that one way to resist the familiar strategies of managing minoritized bodies in post-imperial London is to escape that space if possible. Another strategy, however, that crosses both urban spaces of Bombay and London in this novel is positioning women as spatial boundary markers, to use McClintock’s term, in order for othered men to maintain some kind of control over space. When Saladin replants himself, so to speak, in Zeeny and Bombay after the death of his father, his actions mimic practices of spatial containment and control in the London passages that help him to relocate himself in the circuit of transnational male privilege.

CHAPTER IV

MOVING TOWARD PLACE CONSCIOUSNESS IN KAREN TEI YAMASHITA'S *TROPIC OF ORANGE*

Neil Smith opens his analysis of spatial scale, “Homeless/Global: Scaling Places,” with a discussion of the Homeless Vehicle created by Krzysztof Wodiczko and used initially in New York. The vehicle, inspired by the basic frame of a shopping cart, has a lower rack for storage and an upper rack that converts to a platform for sleeping. That such a vehicle is necessary, Smith argues, “expresses the social absurdity and obscenity of widespread homelessness in the capitalist heartland,” (“Homeless” 89). He further argues that the vehicle also allows the owner to produce spatial relations in way that he/she has not previously. The vehicle offers an agency and a visibility that the homeless heretofore have not had as they are both banned from private real estate ownership and shuttled between public spaces to maintain invisibility (“Homeless” 89). The Homeless Vehicle “promises not just the production of space in the abstract,” Smith posits, “but the concrete *production and reproduction of geographical scale* as a political strategy of resistance” (emphasis in original, “Homeless” 90). Consequently, it “enables evicted people to ‘jump scales’—to organize the production and reproduction of daily life and to resist oppression and exploitation at a higher scale—over a wider geographical field” (“Homeless” 90).

In *Tropic of Orange* (1997), Karen Tei Yamashita offers a different take on the Homeless Vehicle. The author orchestrates a car wreck and ensuing chaos on a section of

Los Angeles' Harbor Freeway (Interstate 110) through a highly improbable but not impossible series of events. After eating a contaminated orange, the driver of a Porche passes out and collides with a semi truck hauling propane, which in turn causes another semi to jackknife (carrying gasoline), causing a two explosions and collapsing an overpass on the multi-level freeway. This "firestorm in a crater" then taps into a natural gas line on either end of the freeway, fueling the conflagration, which is fanned by strong Santa Ana winds (90).¹ As the Harbor Freeway was a makeshift shelter for a homeless encampment below, the homeless move up onto the freeway and into the abandoned vehicles. The more spacious, utilitarian vehicles, such as vans and camper trailers, become valued real estate, but "Porches, Corvettes, Jaguars, and Miatas [are] suddenly relegated to the status of sitting or powder rooms or telephone booths (those having cellular phones)" (121). The homeless become visible through both a literal ascension from their encampment under the freeway to the top of an overpass in an effort to escape the brush fires (which will surely consume any possessions there) and through the possession of automobiles and other abandoned goods by those of more affluence. "In a matter of minutes, life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways" (121). The community that grows up on top the freeway is "grassroots" in its organicity and in its spatial orientation (up from the ground).

The Harbor Freeway event allows the homeless to, in Smith's parlance, "jump scales." Their movement from invisibility to visibility is a rewriting of spatial scale, "dissolv[ing] spatial boundaries that are largely imposed from above" ("Homeless" 90).

¹ All page numbers refer to the first edition of *Tropic of Orange* (Minneapolis, MN: Coffee House Press, 1997).

“Homeless” is a socio-political category that is also clearly a spatial one (literally, without a home) and spurs us to think of space and place as articulated categories with other social categories, such as class in the above example. Yamashita thus demonstrates the placeness of socio-economic class: To be dispossessed of a home and relegated to marginal or even subterranean spaces both creates social relations and is created by them. Expanding upon the notion of the placeness of social categories developed in Chapter Two, this chapter argues that, although Yamashita’s vision of a placed-based (but not place-bound) consciousness is characterized by a physical interconnectivity of places and a social co-presence of place, the novel’s attention to spatial scale (different *kinds of* spaces) does not attend to relations to place outside of a nation-transnation spatial paradigm. Thus, attention to spatial scale reveals the limits of taking the nation as a reference point for claims to place.

To examine the potential and limits of the place-consciousness of *Tropic of Orange* is to engage an aspect of Yamashita’s third novel that the author has already named, its “spatial consciousness” and its use of maps and mapping as the text’s leitmotif (Yamashita and Imafuku).² One of the primary goals of the novel, to Yamashita’s mind, is critique of a facile multiculturalism demonstrated through its characters’ engagement with map-making and border-crossing. Yamashita has noted that the first draft of the

² Many scholars have considered to various extents Yamashita’s use of mapping and border-crossing in the novel. For example, Molly Wallace analyzes the novel’s use of NAFTA as an exemplar of the problems of neocolonialism in the Americas and as a metaphor for the mapping of new social and economic relations. Likewise, “the novel’s geography” for Johannes Hauser complements its thematics of maps and border-crossings, pressing the reader to construct narrative meaning with the author. In a particularly insightful study, Elisabeth Mermann-Jozwiak similarly traces “the novel’s ‘spatial archeology’” that belies a celebratory notion of mobility and transnationality. See also Sadowski-Smith (2001), Sato (2010), Cooney (2009), and Ling (2012) for other analyses of borders and mapping in the novel.

novel was a “big map” of Los Angeles that she constructed in *Lotus*, which ended up in the final version of the novel as its informal preface, “HyperContexts.”³ Equal parts detective fiction, disaster movie, and magical realist novel, Yamashita assembles “a cast of characters with their own little problems [...in order to] discover what their world becomes and how they mix and match and how it ends, how the disaster is resolved” (Yamashita and Imafuku). Yamashita suggests here that, more than a map of Los Angeles’ multiple and conflicting spaces, *Tropic of Orange* is a study of place, of making people and groups visible by emplacing them in a geographically and ethnically heterogeneous city-space. The thematics of maps and border-crossing are crucial to Yamashita’s critique of spatially unmoored and ahistoricized discourses of transnational mobility and ethnicities, particularly as it manifests in the specific city-space of Los Angeles.

In addition to Yamashita’s explicit treatment of ostensibly stable borders and identities in mid-1990s Los Angeles, scholars have recently suggested that the novel does the same for disciplinary borders. Indeed, Caroline Rody posits that *Tropic of Orange* does no less than productively disrupt the very definition of a “border novel” in Chicano and U.S.-Mexico border studies and the definition of “Asianness” in Asian American studies (131). Rody joins other scholars in her difficulty in categorizing *Tropic of Orange*. As Yamashita has not restricted her fiction to “portrayals of her ‘own’ ethnic community,” Claudia Sadowski-Smith suggests that “readers of Yamashita’s work may be asking themselves: What’s Asian American about this?” (101). Instead of considering

³ Yamashita notes, “It [the map] was the context of the book, how I would structure it, the vision of it, and the plan for how I would make all the characters say what they have to say” (Yamashita and Imafuku).

how the novel does or does not fit into a cultural-disciplinary rubric of “Asian American,” this chapter considers how, for example, the signifier “American,” which names a cultural-political construct and a kind of space, articulates with “Asian” as an overdetermined category of ethnicity. That is, this chapter argues that the novel’s attention to spatial scale highlights identification processes as related to place, where “Asian,” for example, signifies differently for Emi in a sushi bar and for Manzanar on top of a freeway overpass, and, further, suggests that pre-given scales are not adequate for thinking certain forms of community. In her analysis of spatial scale and colonialist-capitalist economic formations in Leslie Marmon Silko’s *Almanac of the Dead*, Ann Brigham asserts that “focusing on scale construction reveals how spaces gain and lose their fixity, visibility, and meaning, leading us to examine where and when locations and identities are pronounced and erased, for what purposes and in whose interests” (307). Similarly, this chapter examines the seven main characters’ grappling with being in place and being placeless (or, perhaps more accurately, having a sense of placelessness) as a way of negotiating spatial scales. The novel presents the characters’ physical and psychological experiences of translocal mobility *between places*, their movements *between spatial scales*, and the production and sedimentation of social identifications dependent on such placings. Yamashita ultimately recommends a place-based consciousness that accounts for individual, affective experiences of social relations in place and a collective understanding of the interrelations of “the here and elsewhere” of place. However, the novel’s conception of a place-based model of community ultimately

does not account for indigenous collectivities that do not take the nation(-state) as a primary referent.

Gendering in Place

The previous chapter's treatment of Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* posited a mutually constitutive relationship between place and other seemingly stable social categories, such as race and gender. Specifically, transnational Englishness in the novel's London passages is underwritten by logics of racial, gendered, and sexed difference depending upon a given character's location. As Rushdie (re)positions his characters throughout the London and outlying areas, these subjects perform race and gender/sex differently. The analysis that follows here teases out this line of thought it manifests in Yamashita's novel. The social expectations of two female characters varies as each one moves between places and between *kinds of* spaces. Rafaela Cortés, a young Mexican-American woman, is both a stand-in for peoples and land decimated by imperialist-colonialist plundering; she also carries out the retribution for those acts when she moves translocally from Mazatlán to the U.S.-México border. Japanese-American Emi challenges gendered and ethnic stereotypes as she moves translocally as well. While Emi's ostensible placelessness would seem to speak back to Rafaela's emplacement, both characters resignify space as they move. Thus, the (kinds of) spaces in which each character moves circumscribe social relations and are challenged by them.

Yamashita opens *Tropic of Orange* with Rafaela tending to a large house and grounds, located "not too far from Mazatlán" (3) and owned by Gabriel Balboa, a

Chicano reporter living in Los Angeles. Rafaela assesses Gabriel's home improvement plan with some skepticism. "He seemed to be building a spacious hacienda," she surmises, "maybe a kind of old style rancho, circa 1800, with rustic touches, thick adobe-like walls and beams, but with modern appliances" (6). Because "translat[ing] his vision to others" is difficult (6), Gabriel brings furniture, plants, and one peculiar orange tree from Los Angeles in an attempt to construct his dream home, a dream that is firmly situated in the past. His desire for a refurbished hacienda might be yet another iteration of Gabriel's romanticization of the past. From his love of film noir to his affection for his beat-up, orange BMW 2002, Gabriel curates his life as one would curate a museum. The acquisition of property is his attempt to recreate a romanticized colonial version of México, complete with a stately main house, extensively cultivated grounds, and, significantly, a beautiful Mexican woman. However, Gabriel is at a loss to explain his own actions and desires to himself, wondering why he was seized by "a spontaneous, sudden passion for the acquisition of land, the sensation of a timeless vacation, the erotic tastes of chili pepper and salty breezes, and for México" (5). He concludes that the property's location, close to Mazatlán (a name suggesting mythical paradise), is what drew him to it since it is situated directly on the Tropic of Cancer, "[running] through his place like a good metaphor" (5). The location is also close to his ancestral home. His grandmother "supposedly came from right around there [Mazatlán]" and his grandfather fought with Pancho Villa (5). But, he realizes that the house and the dream "would never be finished" because he "could never abandon this life [of "budgets, deadlines, secret sources"] for the endless lull of a private paradise" (45). From the opening pages,

Yamashita introduces Rafaela in terms of Gabriel and his house. That is, we are to understand her character in terms of gendered relations and place.

In Gabriel's daydreams, Rafaela is the mistress of the plantation in the dual sense of both a female custodian of his dream-place and an object of sexual desire, a stark alternative to his girlfriend Emi, a fast-talking and fast-moving television producer in Los Angeles.

I thought about Rafaela down at my place in México. [...] I imagined Rafaela there, padding across the tile floors in her bare feet, her dark hair crinkling in the summer humidity, her soft Afro-Mayan features bronzed by the Mexican sun [...] I imagined the industry of her hands and mind, running my accounts, paying the workers, planting, placing, arranging, completing my foolish love affair [...] I couldn't imagine her returning to her husband, returning to her janitorial jobs, ever again running the vacuum under my feet in the evenings [...] This was a world I was sure she had left for good, and I could now only imagine Rafaela *in my place, in my home, there* (emphasis added 44-45).

Gabriel's vision is a reach for a kind of authenticity that involves a reclamation of ancestral land from the clutches of Spanish colonialism *and* a re-inscription of that conquest through his latent colonialist understanding of gender, ethnicity, and land. He is both the settler colonialist and the indigenous resident in this context. Moreover, his dreams of both the property and Rafaela are structured by the patriarchal logic of imperial conquest where both land and woman are couched in terms of an exotic sexuality to be tamed.⁴ Anne McClintock reminds us that, in European fantasies based on the "Enlightenment logic of private property and possessive individualism [...], the world is feminized and spatially spread for male exploration, then reassembled and deployed in

⁴ Gabriel's alternate but unsatisfying vision for Rafaela in this passage is also structured by a gendered division of labor as she is the "domestic" that cleans for him.

the interests of massive imperial power” (*Leather* 23). While McClintock notes that the conversion of foreign lands into a feminized *terra incognita* reveals a “sense of male anxiety and boundary loss” (*Leather* 24), Doreen Massey reminds us that boundary maintenance also signals an “[attempt] to get to grips with the unutterable mobility and contingency of space-time” (5). In other words, the seizing of and demarcation of place is an effort to stabilize space *and* time. Although Gabriel’s mock-imperialist fantasy is place-based, it is also his effort to change time. His nostalgic vision of Mazatlán, which is partially achieved by re-locating Rafaela to the *hacienda*, suggests a need to re-establish both a sense of physical place and a suspension of time, a point developed later in this chapter.

Further, Yamashita also frames their relationship in this passage in terms of Gabriel’s dream of *saving* Rafaela from both Bobby Ngu, her Chinese-American husband, and menial janitorial work in favor of the ostensibly more exalted work of caretaking his home. Yamashita echoes and modifies Gayatri Spivak’s well-known synopsis of racialized imperialism, “White men are saving brown women from brown men” (“Subaltern” 296), by replacing the subject “white men” and the referent of Anglo-European whiteness in Spivak’s formulation to foreground “brown men” as an active subject. More than a simple inversion of Spivak’s terms, Yamashita *doubles* the function of the subject in this revised savior discourse: Gabriel is cast as the Spanish colonizer of Amerindian land and the ethnic Chicano reclaiming that land, both of which are played out on Rafaela’s body.

The function of Rafaela in these passages, then, is a normative one. She is both the indigenous other to be conquered (her mother hails from the Yucatan and her father from the Andes (8)) and the maternal figure to be protected. Both of their names invoke an element of supernatural fantasy (Rafaela and Gabriel) and link them to imperialist *conquistadores* (Cortés and Balboa, respectively). However, while she clearly wishes to satirize Gabriel’s projection of sexualized fantasy in terms of similar European imperialist ones, Yamashita does not ultimately cast Gabriel as a modern-day *conquistador*. Rather, Gabriel is a diligent reporter, producing stories about pressing social issues in Los Angeles, and he exhibits a genuine (if unspoken) affection for the indefatigable Emi. Further, his outward words and actions with regard to Rafaela, despite his fantasies, suggest an earnest wish to help a promising woman with limited socio-economic options. Rafaela, for her part, has lived at the would-be hacienda for about two years after leaving her husband (with her baby son Sol in tow) for reasons that the novel leaves ambiguous. Gabriel’s efforts to “save” her notwithstanding, Rafaela is not without agency. She travels to Los Angeles with Bobby to find work, earning a bachelor’s degree while there, and leaves Bobby in Los Angeles to re-evaluate her marriage. She also intervenes, at risk to herself and her son, in a crime syndicate that traffics in human organs out of Doña Maria’s home. In sum, Yamashita does not relegate either character to one-dimensional types in a satirical-revisionist imperial fantasy.

In fact, as Rafaela moves, she is able to challenge gendered underpinnings of imperialist savior discourses and sexualized possession as proxy for land. Her movement parallels the titular orange’s movement from Mazatlán toward Los Angeles, initializing

the novel's fantastical main plot. She notices a scrawny orange hanging from one of Gabriel's fruit trees but does not realize that it is connected to a thin line "finer than the thread of a spider web" with "very supple strength" that "[runs] across Gabriel's property" (12). The small orange falls from the tree and makes its way into the hands of Arcangel, an "actor and prankster, mimic and comic, freak, a one man circus act [, and ...] a performance artist" (47).⁵ As Arcangel travels north by bus with the orange, the thread attached to the orange drags the Tropic of Cancer, the land, and the people (including Rafaela and Sol) with it. When the orange disappears, Rafaela vaguely senses an "elasticity of the land and time" so much so that Gabriel's property "seemed to creeping up, step by step toward the hotel" (149, 152). Her suspicions are confirmed as she ride the bus with Sol, Arcangel, the mini-cooler with a human heart, and the orange northward: "The landscape was continually familiar to Rafaela, as if they were moving but not moving" (153). The orange, integrally connected to the Tropic of Cancer, drags the land and people with it as it moves toward and eventually crosses the U.S.-Mexico border. Thus, when Rafaela leaves the *hacienda*, she does not leave the land; it travels with her.

While her body is the site of maternal care and loss throughout the novel, it is also the site of retribution and justice for indigenous loss. After discovering a mini-cooler with

⁵ "Arcangel is based on Guillermo Gomez-Peña," notes Yamashita, discussing her inspiration for the character. "In fact, he says things that Gomez-Peña says. The first time I saw and watched him perform and read his work, I was fascinated. I've had this sensation that, in Los Angeles, he has been, in some ways, rejected—I'm not sure. Arcangel is a literary interpretation of Peña. Arcangel's performance is grotesque, freakish, yet Christ-like, accounting for 500 years of history in the Americas. He's also like Neruda, who, through his great poem, *Canto General*, expresses all of Latin America. He takes the poetry and also the political conscience and history across the border" (Gier and Tejeda). See Hande Tekdemir for a specific discussion of Yamashita's use of Garcia Marquez's story, "A Very Old Man with Enormous Wings" as a source for Arcangel (43-44).

a baby's heart has gone missing and suspecting Rafaela, Doña Maria's son Hernando catches up to the bus and violently attacks her. He stages the rape in the back of a Jaguar that has turned into a "great yawning universe in the night" (220). This transition from deserted Mexican plain to a magical realist realm above the ground allows Rafaela to morph into a powerful serpent in order to battle Hernando's "feline" claws. That the rape and Rafaela's counter-attack are located near a mythical paradise yet above ground suggests a re-enactment of Hernán Cortés' conquest of Mesoamerican land and women. Claudia Sadowski-Smith argues that this scene "critiques the very selective employment of Mesoamerican mythology by a male-dominated Chicano cultural nationalism [...] by rewrit[ing] the myth of Aztlán which is symbolized by the image of an eagle devouring a snake" (101-102).⁶ Yamashita's re-writing of the myth concludes with Rafaela's ultimate victory where she eats Hernando/Hernán alive but not before he has ravaged both Rafaela and the land. Rafaela is figured as all "massacred men and women" and mothers in particular who have survived a long history of sexualized violence, such as the "5,000 women of Cochibamba resisting with tin guns an entire army of Spaniards," "La Malinche abandoning her children and La Llorona howling after, of *cangaceira* [bandit] Maria Bonita, [...] of one hundred mothers pacing day after day the Plaza de Mayo with the photos of their disappeared children" (220). Rafaela becomes the collective indigenous dead and living, exacting revenge for historical atrocities during this "horrifying dance with death [...] copulating in rage, destroying and creating at once"

⁶ Discussing Cherríe Moraga's work as critique of *indigenismo*, Sadowski-Smith helps to contextualize this passage further: "Attributing the origin of the mestizo/a race to the union between Spanish colonialist Hernán Cortés and his indigenous translator La Malinche, *indigenismo* characterizes the indigenous woman as a mere 'receptacle for the seeds of exploitation and extermination against her will'" (95). Rafaela here is both receptacle and death-giver in her violent encounter with Hernando/Hernán.

(221). The fight occurs *above* the land but is clearly a struggle *about* the land, its people, and its resources. To this latter point, most scholars who discuss this passage subordinate the second stage or full scope of the battle. Importantly, Yamashita extends the contest beyond the “human massacre” to the “ravaged thousands of birds,” “bleeding silver,” “exhausted gold,” and “scorched land that followed the sweet stuff called white gold and crude stuff called black gold, and the coffee, cacao and bananas” (221). Although Yamashita rewrites the settler colonialist script in this fantastical passage where Rafaela “wins,” the dual assault that both destroys and creates is nonetheless, Yamashita suggests, performed at the site of women’s bodies.

Although Rafaela is figured as a re-gendered *reconquistadora*, her victory does not travel north of the border, so to speak. Jodi Byrd posits that a nation founded on the proclamation that “all men are created equal” excludes women in its very language (“City” 19). At a basic level, then, Rafaela’s actions might be lost in translation or simply not legible in national terms. Moreover, while other ethnic groups might be reconciled or be “created equal,” Byrd asserts that such a move requires “a complete disavowal of the violent history of colonisation” upon which the national narrative is based (“City” 19). Likewise, Yamashita emphasizes through this violent event, where Rafaela’s “screams traveled south not north” (220), that her victory is muted by a continued disavowal in the U.S. (and the global north generally) of such violent erasure of indigenous bodies. However, the novel’s ultimate revisioning of more equitable spatial relations—Buzzworm’s conception of a place-based consciousness—does not

account for Rafaela's victory, attenuating a spatial politics of elsewhere and co-presence (Massey). At the end of the novel, Rafaela's screams are not heard north of the border.

While Rafaela reclaims land by engaging emplaced gendered relations, the firebrand Emi seems to flout both gender and ethnic expectations and indulges in an affluent "placelessness." Not only does she criticize Gabriel's nostalgia for the "*passé*," as she calls it, Emi is attracted to both an idealized hypermasculine Chicano stereotype *and* Gabriel's resistance to it. While "she had started dating Gabriel because he was Latino, part of that hot colorful race," Emi is disappointed "to find out that [...] he wasn't what you call the stereotype" (19). In fact, Yamashita notes that Emi is "so distant from the Asian female stereotype—it was questionable if she even had an identity" (19). For example, Emi routinely exclaims to Gabriel "right in the middle of some public place [...] 'Oh you're so Chicano!'" and teases him by calling him "Prince of the Aztecs" (21, 60). Emi's acts of "being antimulticultural" reflect her own disidentification with "Japanese American" as the "Model Minority" (37). Her rejection of the confining stereotype manifests in several ways. She is outspoken and openly sexual, to which her mother laments, "No J.A. talks like that" (21). In fact, the Japanese American community has been struggling with a "blight on their image" in the form of Manzanar Murakami, a homeless Japanese American man who conducts an imaginary orchestra of vehicles on top of the Harbor Freeway overpass. Manzanar, who takes his name from the internment camp where he was born (110), is Emi's grandfather.⁷

⁷ Gayle Sato posits that Emi's arc "supplements Manzanar's narrative as a postmemory subject of internment. She grew up disavowing all interest in Japanese American history while crafting and flaunting an almost stereotypical anti-Model Minority identity, yet this was no less a form of amnesia and psychic homelessness than her grandfather's" (90). Characterizing Emi's disidentification with the signifier

Comfortable in her ignorance of her grandfather, Emi is first and foremost placeless; or, more accurately, Emi is comfortably translocal because of unfettered mobility that her affluence affords. She “lunches” with Gabriel in an upscale Westside restaurant (19) and gets expensive hair treatments in Torrance (162), zipping around town in her turbo-charged Supra. Emi also enacts a quintessentially American kind of hyper-consumption, chronicling her life in consumer goods, marking milestones in terms of her first Honda Civic to her first Panasonic VCR to her “electronic scheduler” and foldable cell phone (22-23). Discussing her job as a television producer, which requires that she maximize (“slash and burn”) movies and T.V. shows “to wrap around the commercials” (126), spurs her to theorize her understanding of ethnic identification to Gabriel:

The point is that anybody can do it. You just have to want to. It’s just about the money. It’s not about good honest people like you or about whether us Chicanos or Asians get a bum rap or whether third world countries deserve dictators or whether we should make the world safe for democracy. It’s about selling things: Reebok, Pepsi, Chevrolet, AllState, Pampers, Pollo Loco, Levis, Fritos, Larry Parker Esq., Tide, Riad, the Pillsbury Doughboy, and Famous Amos. [...] Hey, we’re all on board to buy. (126)

Her obsession with all things current might be understood as a way to move beyond what she sees as the confines of ethnic identification. Easy mobility and consumerism, then, might represent a vehicle of post-ethnicity for Emi. For all of her consumption, however, the passage above indicates that she has a finely-honed critical eye for commodification in general and, we learn, for commodification of ethnicity in particular. More than

“Japanese American” as a cultural amnesia implies that Emi might embrace her “true” ethnicity if only she would, like Manzanar, regain her memory, thereby regaining an “appropriate” cultural identification. Further, such a reading of Emi sidesteps Yamashita’s crucial argument regarding the *mutability* of the construction of ethnic difference and identification and the role of place in such processes.

simply an awareness of ethnic stereotypes, Emi skewers a celebratory multiculturalism that turns on consumption of exoticism, incorporating difference (thereby taming it) through commodification. One of the more humorous examples Yamashita offers is Emi's treatise on multiculturalism in Hiro's sushi restaurant. "Here we all are, your multicultural mosaic" (127), Emi proclaims upon surveying the restaurant, "Cultural diversity is bullshit. [...] It's a white guy wearing a Nirvana t-shirt and dreds. That's cultural diversity" (128). Addressing Hiro, Emi concludes, "You're invisible. I'm invisible. We're all invisible. It's just tea, ginger, raw fish, and a credit card" (128). Her tirade culminates in a confrontation with a white woman who, having overheard Emi, praises Los Angeles as "a true celebration of an international world" (129). Not one to be cowed, Emi notices that "the woman's hair was held together miraculously by two ornately-lacquered chopsticks," so she holds up two forks and asks the woman, "Would you consider using these in your hair? Or would you consider that," Emi paused, "unsanitary?" (129). Confronted with the unspoken expectations of the space (Hiro's restaurant), where the indignant woman might travel the world without leaving Los Angeles, Emi does not perform ethnic Asian-Americanness in prescribed ways, and when she does not, Emi's re-articulation of the space is simply not legible to the white woman.⁸ The woman cannot or will not recognize a multiculturalism that takes as its silent referent whiteness and its exoticized other, Asianness in this case. While she provisionally claims a kind of post-ethnicity that easy mobility affords her, Emi recognizes the literal repackaging of ethnic otherness in Hiro's restaurant, repurposing such spaces in order to

⁸ The woman says in the course of the confrontation, "Whatever is your problem?" and "I can't understand your attitude at all" (129).

critique them. Thus, the series of placings of Rafaela's body on a hemispheric trajectory from south to the northerly border and of Emi's body translocally around Los Angeles echo each other but do not fully connect. While Rafaela's quasi-*maquiladora* makes Emi's über-consumer possible in that goods and money flow freely across the border enabled by hemispheric neocolonial relations, each woman's spatial agency has a different orientation to the nation-transnation spatial scale. Rafaela must take violent revenge upon Hernando/Hernán, a dual blow to settler colonialist and neocolonialist discourses. Emi, in contrast, might promote or resist interethnic alliance as she wishes. The former is not invested in national-transnational spaces as is the latter. Thus, Yamashita signals that Emi has potential to adopt a local, interethnic spatial orientation, as Buzzworm endorses at the novel's end, and hints at the impossibility of Rafaela's co-presence or incorporation with his plan.

Times in Place

Emi's identity relies not only on a sense of placelessness but also a timeliness, being located in "the now." "You're *then*," she informs Gabriel, "I'm *now*" (41). The novel's emphases on maps and mapping, place and emplacement, might imply Yamashita's exclusive concern with place as location. But, place not only happens in space, at a physical location; it is articulated with and in time. Place has a temporality. Indeed, Yamashita tellingly arranges *Tropic of Orange* in a linear sequence, each section of the novel corresponding to a day of the week and each of the seven characters

receiving equal narrative time but enjoying different relationships to time.⁹ Rafaela's fight with Hernando/Hernán is a significant example as it takes place both in the narrative present and in the location's colonialist past. The place-based consciousness that the novel will ultimately endorse, via Buzzworm, understands place as a location and a particular mix of social relations at that location in space-time (Massey). To this latter point, Dirlik insists that we attend to the identities formed over time in a given place. "Attention to place suggests," he notes, "the historicity of identity" ("Asians" 88-89).¹⁰ In addition to highlighting the placeness of social categories in terms of spatiality and physicality, Yamashita emphasizes the temporality of a given place, the social relationships it generates and consolidates into legible categories, and the historical situatedness of those relations and categories. Yamashita moves characters between places and moves actual land, consequently bringing together temporalities that are linear, fragmented, collapsed, and overwritten. Although all of the main characters end up in metamorphosed Los Angeles without leaving "home," Yamashita uses Manzanar, Arcangel, and Buzzworm in particular to highlight the characters' experiences of being in multiple times at once, thus engaging in sequences of remembering the past(s) crucial to identity formation. Identities are recuperated and formed anew through Yamashita's shuffling and redistribution of spaces and times, making possible the novel's central

⁹ Yamashita highlights the novel's structure through a preface of sorts called "HyperContexts" where she translates her vision for the structure to a helpful chart. Not only can the reader see graphically the major sections as they correspond to *time*, every one of the forty-nine chapters' subtitles refers to a *place*, which is the character's location (e.g., Buzzworm's home at "Jefferson & Normandie" or Arcangel's battle at the Pacific Rim Auditorium). Gayle Sato summarizes it, "HyperContexts imagines a non-hierarchical mapping of trans-regional and trans-pacific traffic" (86).

¹⁰ For example, Dirlik cites the origin of the term "Asian American" in orientalist discourses of U.S. nationalism, particularly in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries ("Asians" 76-79). On the history of "Asian American" as a hegemonic object of knowledge, see also Lim, et al. (4) and Wong (5-6).

ambition, a place-based consciousness. If such an understanding of place might be a basis for community-building, as the novel's end suggests, then any collective identity must recognize its own historicity and consider what other histories might be included or elided.

The homeless conductor, Manzanar Murakami, is physically rooted to Los Angeles but psychically unmoored. His perch on top of the Harbor Freeway functions as a metaphorical place-holder for the traumatic memory of being the “first *sansei* born in captivity” in the Manzanar internment camp (hence his adopted name) (108, 110). With the hands of a “skilled surgeon” and a body “like a stevedore” (56, 110), Manzanar directs the music that he hears emanating from the mechanical creatures that speed past him. In his composition, *The Hour of the Trucks*, the “largest monsters of the animal kingdom”—those “great products of civilization”—lumber past him and harmonize with the “smaller vehicles of animal kingdom” (120).¹¹ Not only does Manzanar link the man-made to the natural through his “recycling” of sounds that he *hears*, he conducts the vibrations and sounds that he *feels*, which he “sensed through his feet, through the vibration rumbling through the cement and steel and by the intervals of vehicles passing beneath him” (34). He is a conductor of unheard music and a joiner of humanity and nature: “He bore and raised each note, joined them, united families, created a sense of community, a great society, an entire civilization of sound. The great flow of humanity ran below and beyond his feet in every direction, pumping and pulsating, that blood connection, the great heartbeat of a great city” (35). While all of the other characters

¹¹ See Bahng on the role of trucks as symbol of transpacific/transamerican commerce (80 ff).

move about the city regularly, “only Manzanar remains stationary, lodged on the freeway overpass and, god-like, conducting traffic” (Mermann-Jozwiak 17). He is, however, out of place as well. He has left his family and community to conduct on the freeway by choice, but he is not homeless, Yamashita notes, “No one was more at home than this man” (36).¹²

Manzanar’s displacement helps him to see other physical and social layers invisible to most people and, importantly, helps him to experience different times. “*There are maps and there are maps and there are maps,*” he thinks to himself, which he can see simultaneously (56). He notes “the very geology of the land, the artesian rivers running beneath the surface,” “the man-made grid of civil utilities,” “the prehistoric grid of plant and fauna and human behavior, [...] the historic grid of land usage and property, the great overlays of transport–sidewalks, bicycle paths, roads, freeways, systems of transit both ground and air, a thousand natural and man-made divisions” (56-57). His position above the fray allows him to see multiple spaces *and* allows him to experience multiple times. And temporally, according to Edward Soja, is the only way that Los Angeles *can* be understood. He suggests that, if we wish to think of the city in a “temporal narrative,” such a narrative will “always [seem] to stretch laterally instead of [unfold] sequentially” (222). As Manzanar ponders the history of the land sequentially, he also indicates that a palimpsestic ecology demands a syncretic map-making process. One must, to engage the geographic complexity of Los Angeles, consider all of the maps concurrently.

¹² When Gabriel asks Emi if she has spoken with her family about her grandfather, she writes through e-mail: “*Said they didn’t want him institutionalized. That he’s not crazy-crazy, see? Just stubborn.*” (emphasis in original 222).

Manzanar's orchestration of spaces and times is aided by an orange when a negligent driver, eating a noxious orange, hits a tanker truck, igniting a great explosion on a freeway overpass. The homeless who live underneath the Harbor Freeway move up on top of it, settling into the vehicles and forming a temporary encampment. Breaking from his conducting because there is no more traffic allows Manzanar "to drop his arms to peel himself away from his performance, his music. It was like an out-of-body experience [...]" (169). He is placed uniquely to see the Harbor Freeway event as a stabilizing, even equalizing, event rather than a disaster in terms of infrastructure and commodities. Moreover, his position on overpass and the moment of stasis releases the past, opening his memory: "The past flooded around him in great murky swirls. For a moment, he saw his childhood between Lone Pine and Independence [...] Curiously, he remembered. The past spread out like a great starry fan and then folded in upon itself" (169-170). Then, Yamashita shifts Manzanar's perspective from time back to space. The moment of stasis allows him to see "the great Pacific [...] stretching along its great rim, brimming over long coastal shores from one hemisphere to the other" (170). He then shifts his gaze southward to view "the southern continent and the central Americas," but here Yamashita suggests that he is *also* looking back in time; he sees the hemispheres "fixed as they had supposedly always been" before "human civilization covered everything in layers, [...] before it would shift irrevocably, [...] filling a northern vacuum with its cultural conflicts, political disruption, romantic language, with its one hundred years of solitude and its tropical sadness" (170-171). Sau-Ling Cynthia Wong posits that Asian Americans generally "[share] an ambiguous and ambivalent relationship to

American land” and, further, that “Asian American subgroups each had specific historical experiences that affected their visions of mobility” (124).¹³ Consequently, Manzanar’s identity is dually emplaced in that it is situated in the individual and collective historical trauma of internment *and* in the invisible presence of the homeless, both of which mark the land on which he stands.

Although Manzanar was born under circumstances that highlight his foreignness, he claims the land by claiming the name Manzanar, assigning him a kind of nativeness. He would seem, then, to figure as both native and foreigner in the novel. Jodi Byrd has argued that the internment of Japanese Americans during WWII operated as a way to control a perceived threat to the racial purity of the nation (by aligning them with nativeness) and, subsequently, as a way to incorporate an ethnic group (in a limited way) into the discourse of U.S. exceptionalism (*Transit* 191 ff.). Thus, the state initially assigned Japanese-Americans the role of other to the national self, borrowing the logic of settler colonialism (*Transit* 191-192), and then assigned them the “model minority” role with the signifier “Asian-American,” where “Asian” is the modifier to the stable referent “American,” following David Palumbo-Liu (*Transit* 208). In the internment camps, Asian immigrants were collapsed with indigenous peoples as those who “may or may not be full citizens” (*Transit* 202). If indigeneity becomes a racialized category, where “Native American” becomes the equivalent to “Asian American” (*Transit* 209), then a given path of reconciliation with the nation for one group would presumably be equally

¹³ “Whatever at-homeness the Japanese immigrants and their children managed to attain was illusory” due in large part to their internment during World War II, Wong notes (126).

as effective for the other.¹⁴ Yamashita's novel does not accept what Byrd terms a "postracial liberalism" that allows for "a sanitized remembrance" of the national past (Transit 203). Indeed, Emi explicitly critiques such thinking. However, by collapsing an implicit nativeness with foreignness in the character of Manzanar, Yamashita elides indigenous contexts specific to the U.S. settler nationalism and expansion. Consequently, when Manzanar remembers his past at the novel's end, he is able to rejoin the local Japanese-American community and, the novel implies, become the model minority again. But, this remembering entails a forgetting of other histories, which is echoed in Buzzworm's plan for a new place consciousness, as discussed below.

Yamashita provides an ostensible complement to Manzanar's emplacement in multiple times through the supernatural Arcangel's displacement into a free-floating, universal time. Manzanar is an individual from a specific family yet synecdochic of a larger Japanese American community, whereas Arcangel is a synthesis of both colonial and neocolonial conquests and oppression. He is of all times and places and therefore takes on all identities. In a narrative twist on the time-space compression of the globalized present, Yamashita condenses separate and wide ranging historical conquests of a variety of locations in the Americas into one location and one time—the body of Arcangel in the narrative present. However, as with Manzanar's identity and emplacement, Arcangel as both native and migrant assumes a unified solution—that is,

¹⁴ Byrd argues that U.S. construction of indigeneity as a "racial category" was a way to legitimize the narrative of "manifest destiny" (Transit 202), which lead to an equation of indigenous peoples with other racialized or ethnic groups, thereby eliding the dispossession upon which U.S. settler colonialism is based (Transit 202-203).

resistance to economic and cultural globalization in the Americas—for inequitable spatial relations.

A man-child with curious holes in his side and large wings attached to his back, Arcangel has a voice that is “a jumble of unknown dialects” that aids him in performing “for the people” (47-48).¹⁵ He is also a prophet and a weaver of “political poetry” (148) who, in his most ambitious performance yet, will challenge “the wrestling giant” SUPERNAFTA. To this end, Arcangel takes the form of “El Gran Mojado” (“the Great Wetback”), “part superhero, part professional wrestler, part Subcomandante Marcos” (132). His mission is to rouse oppressed people to historical consciousness:

*Have you forgotten 1848 and the
Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo?
With the stroke of the pen,
México gave California to the gringos.
The following year,
1849,
everyone rushed to get the gold in California,
and all of you Californianos who were already there
and all of you indigena who crossed
and still cross the new border
for a piece of gold have become wetbacks.
My struggle is for all of you. (133)*

Arcangel connects late twentieth century neocolonialist policies with initial expeditions and colonization of the Americas. For example, after he labors with a hired worker, Rodriguez, on Gabriel’s property, Arcangel dreams that he embodies all of the

¹⁵ In one performance, Arcangel pulls a truck of full oranges into the market via metal hooks in his flesh, while the crowd cheers and jeers and “women and children run forward [...] to cup their hands to catch the blood and sweat from his torn stigmata” (72-75). This is the first of several scenes where Yamashita couches her description of Arcangel in Messianic imagery in order to present him as a possible savior of all oppressed masses.

indigenous laborers before him: “*Haitian farmers burning and slashing cane, /workers stirring molasses into white gold, /Guatemalans loading trucks with / crates of bananas and corn [...] / Everybody’s labor got occupied in the/ industry of draining their /homeland of its natural wealth. /In exchange /they got progress, /technology, /loans, and /loaded guns*” (145-146). The laborers and the lost “*Tierra y Libertad*” transubstantiate into Arcangel’s body and consciousness, “all of them crowded into his memory in a single moment” (148, 145). This transformation is completed when Arcangel confronts SUPERNAFTA in the Pacific Rim Auditorium, wherein he claims, “*I do not defend my title for the/ rainbow children of the world./This is not a benefit for UNESCO./ We are not the world./ This is not a rock concert*” (259). He echoes Emi’s critique of a celebratory multiculturalism that, by commodification, domesticates difference, be it lacquered chopsticks or a concert t-shirt. Whereas Emi summarizes her own perspective on cultural diversity in the present, Arcangel becomes a multiple embodiment of all oppressed peoples, past and present. All of colonial time and space collapse into one time and space in this epic battle against SUPERNAFTA, the transnational economic policy in the form of a Terminator-like cyborg (259). That Arcangel and SUPERNAFTA ultimately destroy each other indicates perhaps Yamashita’s resignation that violent revenge fantasies are futile. Whatever the prospects of deconstructing dominant socio-economic policies through a struggle of spaces, “a clash of a flat world with a round world” (262), the epic fight is a performance that entails an audience, spectacle, and profits. The novel suggests that the spatial fight by the “*The indigena who crossed / and still cross the new border*” for “*tierra y libertad*” will not be resolved in supra- or

transnational terms (emphasis in original 133, 148). Arcangel as the embodiment of all spaces and times, ultimately, glosses over specific forms of remediation and reconciliation that, for example, Rafaela's reclamation of land and the indigenous body attend to.

Jumping Scales and Landing at Home

Manzanar's and Arcangel's respective visions for new spatio-temporal regimes suggest the need to understand place as connected to a beyond-place. Although we might unconsciously think of the "beyond" of place as a *lateral* beyond (e.g., what happens in the next town over), the beyond of place is also a *hierarchical* elsewhere. As noted in the introduction, Neil Smith posits that spatial scale, which differentiates between types of places, "is not simply a spatial solidification or materialization of contested social forces and processes," but it is also "an active progenitor of specific social processes" ("Homeless" 101).¹⁶ How one performs various and interconnected social relationships and the archive of social "scripts" one might draw from are determined by "an already partitioned geography" ("Homeless" 101). However, the very performance of place allows for resistance to, complicity in, and evasion of (if only temporarily) hegemonic spatial relations—that is, the opportunity to "jump scales," in Smith's parlance. That *Tropic of Orange* takes movement, emplacement, and border-crossing as a reality of late twentieth-century Los Angeles is most evident in two significant events, both catalyzed

¹⁶ Smith explains further, "In a literal as much as metaphorical way, scale both *contains* social activity and at the same time provides an already partitioned geography within which social activity *takes place*. Scale demarcates the sites of social contest, the object as well as the resolution of contest. [...] It is geographical scale that defines the boundaries and bounds the identities around which control is exerted *and* contested" (*Homeless* 101).

by dubious oranges: the Harbor Freeway collapse in Los Angeles and the migrants' crossing of the U.S.-Mexico border. In the novel's fantastical world, borders physically move. What is "over there" moves to the "here," and the beyond-place collapses into place. Or, as Buzzword concludes, "Hell, L.A. don't go nowhere [...] Shit just comes to us" (TO 114). For all of the epic destruction and death that drive the second-half of the novel, which he witnesses, Buzzworm expresses a realizable version of Yamashita's critical spatial politics, including both a rejection of the class- and race-driven spatial segregation and, importantly, an imagined "positive relations with elsewhere" (Massey 170). This understanding of place, however, does not account for other collectivities that might not take city, state, or federal political structures as referents. Thus, the novel's place-based consciousness assumes that acts of jumping scales hierarchically and thinking place laterally happen in given frames of spatial reference, namely the national and the transnational, without attending to other spatial collectivities.

If the novel "conducts a 'spatial archaeology'" in order to depict a "palimpsestic urban space" (Mermann-Jozwiak 2), then the character Buzzworm is its lead archaeologist.¹⁷ Yamashita describes Buzzworm as a "big black seven-foot dude, Vietnam vet, an Afro shirt with palm trees painted all over it, dreds, pager and Walkman belted to his waist, sound plugged into one ear and two or three watches at least on both his wrists" (27). While he "walk[s] to some other rhythms" through his music, Buzz is also a "walking social services," a self-described "Angel of Mercy" (103, 26). He walks

¹⁷ Referencing Arcangel's comments that Los Angeles is "the second largest city of México" (212), Molly Wallace asserts, echoing Mermann-Jozwiak, that "L.A. has become a kind of metonym for the global" (153), a place containing multi-layered cultural and economic inscriptions from the local, regional, national, and transnational.

“the hood every day [...] making contact” in central and south central Los Angeles (26). In addition to offering residents information for “rehab [...], free clinic, legal services, shelter, [and] soup kitchen,” Buzzworm feeds tips and stories to Gabriel Balboa with whom he has made a deal: Buzzworm will deliver a Pulitzer-prize winning story that “humanize[s] the homeless” if Gabriel will write and publish it (26, 43). Thus, Buzzworm not only helps those in need but identifies with them in solidarity against structural inequalities of urban Los Angeles. He also understands the need to speak through someone who has access to socio-political flows of power. “Who else but Balboa’s gonna write about us?,” Buzzworm asks (41). Consequently, he drafts Gabriel into service by charging him, “Homeless are like the dead. You [Gabriel] the medium. We gonna talk through you, Day of the Dead like” (157).

Importantly, Buzzworm couches his social work, both generally and with Gabriel, in terms of a recognition of uneven spatiality. The homeless for whom Buzzworm advocates are spatially displaced and economically emplaced in that hegemonic spatial scale operates under the guise of a hierarchy, “produced as part of the social and cultural, economic and political landscapes of contemporary capitalism and patriarchy” (Smith 102). The homeless in the novel are outside of the public sphere (in that they have no access to discourses of power) and the private realm (no private property) yet firmly situated within an established spatial hierarchy (that is, at the bottom of the scale). After the Harbor Freeway collapses and the homeless are imperiled, Buzzworm challenges Gabriel to “forget the social agenda. There’s people out here. Life out here” (111). From his attempts to persuade “little homey” (who dies of “an overdose of hormones and

poverty” (105)) to abandon gang life to his friendship with street vendor Margarita (who dies of “an overdose of work” (106)), Buzzworm sees both lateral and hierarchical socio-spatial scales. That is, he holds a holistic concept of space, according to Hauser. He notes, that, in addition to Arcangel and Manzanar, Buzzworm’s vision “reconcile[s] the geography with human social life. The inner city, a place usually not described favorably, becomes a site full of human life and possibilities” (Hauser 16).

Thus, Yamashita considers three models of collective identifications related to place. Sue-Im Lee theorizes the first two models as interrelated, a two-fold global “we” in the novel, one imperialist and unidirectional and the other humanistic and transcontinental (S. Lee 502-503). Arcangel’s rejection of the “global village” discourse speaks to the former and Manzanar’s “all-inclusive romantic universalism” to the latter.¹⁸ During his fight to the death with SUPERNAFTA, Arcangel proclaims, “We are not the world,” echoing Emi in his rejection of a homogenizing and commodified multiculturalism (259). While Yamashita clearly eschews “the unidirectional, imperialist deployments of universalism,” as voiced by Arcangel, she does not reject the concept itself, Lee asserts (505). Rather, Yamashita recasts it as Manzanar’s absolute universalism, which includes all of humanity, the built environment, and the natural world. However, this vision contains its own negation, suggesting the practical impossibility of such a vision (S. Lee 517). While I agree with Lee that *Tropic of Orange* “pushes beyond the critique [of the “global village”] to attempt a nonimperialist,

¹⁸ Cooney questions of Lee’s reading of Manzanar’s “all-inclusive romantic universalism” because it is a vision formulated in the aftermath of the 1992 Los Angeles Uprisings, which “paper[s] over real historical and economic grievances” (200).

nonparticular, absolutely total universalism” (505), as expressed by Manzanar, his vision fades when he is abruptly pulled back into the present through the brutal end to the Harbor Freeway experiment and subsequently presented with his granddaughter’s body. We might read both Manzanar’s and Arcangel’s *dénouement* as the author’s resignation to the impossibility of community as such, but Yamashita balances their visions with Buzzworm’s plan of “gente-fication,” a humanist approach to collective identity that implies a strong place-consciousness. In contrast to both Manzanar and Arcangel, Buzzworm’s conception of place includes a notion of “beyond-place,” acknowledging the porosity of boundaries and implied others beyond those boundaries. His plan, “gente-fication,” suggests a positive place-consciousness that, while not fully realized in the novel, offers a basis for productive collective identity.

Buzzworm’s plan for returning the neighborhood to the people along with a reclamation of land has been on his mind for some time, originating from his connection to his grandmother’s house. Buzzworm’s travels in the novel begin at Jefferson and Normandie and, at the novel’s close, end a few blocks away from his home at Jefferson and Fifth. He maps the neighborhood on foot, daily, administering help to his neighbors as needed. He also creates an imagined map of what the neighborhood could be:

Buzzworm had a plan. Call it gentrification. Not the sort that brings in poor artists. Sort where people living there become their own gentry. Self-gentrification by a self-made set of standards and respectability. Do-it-yourself gentrification. Latinos had this word *gente*. Something translated like *us*. Like *folks*. That sort of gente-fication. (83)

He muses about his plan when he studies a map of gang territories that Gabriel has given him, torn out of “*Quartz City* or some such title” (80). Yamashita refers here to Mike Davis’s *City of Quartz* (1990),¹⁹ a study of the built environment and, what Massey would call, the “power geometry” of late twentieth-century Los Angeles.²⁰ That the map is old (1972) and conceives of the city in terms of gang territories spurs Buzzworm to think of alternate mappings of the land in both synchronic and diachronic terms. “Whose territory was it anyway?,” he wonders (81). He then imagines various maps, such as “which police departments covered which beats; which local, state and federal politicians claimed which constituents; which kind of colored people (brown, black, yellow) lived where [...]” (81). “If someone could put down all the layers of the real map,” he thinks in frustration, “maybe he could get the real picture” (81). In contrast to Manzanar’s imagination of physical and social layers of the land that is global in scale, Buzzworm orients the multi-form mapping process to his grandmother’s house. He wonders why he continued to pay (and eventually paid off) the mortgage and why he maintains the house, “Was it the land?,” and if so, “Was this his territory?” (81). Buzzworm’s conception of place is not only located through his affective investment in his family home, but it acknowledges the porosity of boundaries and, consequently, the interrelation of places through his understanding of the multiple and overlapping claims to land. The idea of

¹⁹ Davis has been widely criticized for what Veronique de Turenne calls an “imaginative use of facts” about Los Angeles in both *City of Quartz* and his follow-up *Ecology of Fear* (1999). See de Turenne for a history of both books’ criticism; for a recent update of that history, see Hawthorne (2012).

²⁰ Massey characterizes “power geometry” as follows: “Different social groups have distinct relationships to this anyway differentiated mobility: some people are more in charge of it than others; some initiate flows and movement, others don’t; some are more on the receiving-end of it than others; some are effectively imprisoned by it” (*Space* 149).

“home” on Jefferson and Fifth is cross-hatched by social relations that extend beyond place.²¹

Moreover, Buzzworm holds in tension with the synchronic notion of mapping a diachronic one as well. He remembers when politicians persuaded residents into agreeing to give up their property for new freeway and dismissed their concerns because they had “time and paper on their side” (82). He also imagines a time when “the Mexican rancheros and before that, about the Chumash and the Yangna” claimed the very neighborhood that he claims (82). This reaching back in time, this remembering, is not an abstract or nostalgic production of time, but his ethical acknowledgement of multiple times located in a specific place that influences individual and collective identificatory processes. Of his signature watch collection, Buzzworm notes, “Everybody’s got a timepiece and a piece of time [...] sense of time [...] sense of history” (86). The identity of place and the place-ness of social identity is, Dirlik reminds us, historical and accretive (“Asians” 88-89). Social identity is both a process we engage in the now, and it is also partially determined by the influences of other places and other times, as Manzanar’s experiences demonstrate. Thus, Yamashita outlines a humanistic, egalitarian politics that is place-based. It does acknowledge all claims to land and attempts to reconcile those claims, and, in doing so, affirming that there is “life out here” (111). However, the spatial

²¹ Buzzworm’s “gente-fication” plan does have affinities with Raúl Homero Villa’s characterization of “barriology,” which are the “subaltern tactics of sociospatial resistance” to “barrioization,” “the dominant strategies of sociospatial repression” in the urban barrio (17). He argues, “Collectively, these community-sustaining practices constitute a tactical ethos (and aesthetic) of *barriology* ever engaged in counterpoint to external barrioization” (emphasis in original, Villa 6). While Yamashita certainly forwards a critique of urban spatial hegemony in Los Angeles, she does not hold such a clear demarcation between community and “the external” as Villa seems to do. Instead, as I hope to make clear in what follows, she suggests the necessity of understanding place as constituted by what and who is beyond its ostensible boundaries, both laterally and hierarchically.

framework upon which a possible place consciousness is based does not consider, in particular, claims to land and indigeneity conceived outside of that framework.

The homeless encampment on the collapsed freeway, then, is an iteration of Buzzworm's "gente-fication." It is a socio-economic experiment of sorts that tests his hypothesis of a "self-made set of standards and respectability" (83). As Manzanar observes "the storming of this mile-long abandoned car lot," he thinks, "It was one of those happy riots" (122). Indeed, the group's rush up onto the freeway overpass evokes the 1992 Los Angeles riots, particularly the real-time televised action, evoking another freeway spectacle involving a white Bronco (122). However, unlike the 1992 clashes charged by racial injustices, ethnic tensions, and class inequities, Yamashita employs language that carries largely non-violent, even natural connotations: "life filled a vacuum, reorganizing itself in predictable and unpredictable ways," such as "people living in abandoned luxury cars, creating a community out of a traffic jam" (121, 155-156). The community creates a barter system for food and other necessities. Moreover, a culture arises from the new community, epitomized by group's continual singing and its newfound access to media (156). The community appropriates the NewsNow van with its satellite hook-up and creates *FreeZone*, a televised talk show where "street peddlers come to tell their side of the poison orange mess" (192). In addition, Buzzworm, the default producer (much to Emi's dismay), encourages televised segments on urban gardening, the LAPD ("Los Angeles Poverty Department," a "homeless performance group"), and *The Car Show*, among others (190-192, 214). However, Buzzworm realizes that "we all know that people value their cars above their spouses" so the

community “can’t last forever” (157-158). He concludes, “Until the invasion or whatever, I guess we’ll conduct business like a FreeZone [...] TV from the bottom” (192).

Yamashita recuperates the term “free zone” from meaning a neoliberal enclave with lax labor and tax laws to meaning a space where the homeless occupy free cars, are free to trade, and, importantly, free to speak. This “do-it-yourself gentrification” is marked not only by a re-allocation of goods but a re-distribution of discursive agency, the from-below voice that Emi and others previously could not hear. This experimental community forwards a two-part argument about side-stepping or “jumping” spatial scales and the related importance of placeness of identity. Jumping socio-economic scale (from homeless to propertied) engenders a sense of community from place, ironically built on an icon of modernity and twentieth century mobility—the freeway.

The homeless encampment is Yamashita’s critique on both the goods and infrastructure (along with political access/rights) that “overpasses” the poor community below, but it is also her acknowledgement that such economic and cultural redistribution will certainly be seen as a threat to dominant institutions, especially the state. To this end, the group’s voice is commodified and sold, and eventually their bodies are sacrificed to preserve the hegemonic socio-spatial order. For example, Emi and her NewsNow colleagues have dollar-signs in their eyes, so to speak, when they realize the television ratings begin to skyrocket. “The public has been served,” Emi’s boss tells her. Now, the program can answer the “sponsors [...] banging at the door” (176). Reflecting on this turn in the narrative, Yamashita notes that “even though Buzzworm and the homeless control the nature of the material that goes out on the air, eventually they’re co-opted; it

isn't a nice message. Even if the possibility exists for people to have control over the media, they are also controlled by it" (quoted in Gier and Tejeda). The group is further co-opted by state and local officials who tour the encampment, what they see as a "big border town," in order "do the political hip hop" (216-217). Buzzworm correctly assesses the place as the new location of "the urban front line," and the swarming military helicopters and police in riot gear confirm his suspicions (216).

Neil Smith maintains that the enhanced mobility of scale jumping also "renders 'the homeless' more dangerous to the brittle coherence of the ruling political geographies of the city" (90). This is what, in fact, transpires at the novel's climax. Mermann-Jozwiak notes that "ironically the freeway, space of access and mobility, becomes the site where spatial invention is brutally crushed" (18-19). When the military and police contingent acts, the resolution is swift and violent. What is intended as a warning shot to disable the news van's satellite dish hits Emi, as she suns herself on the van's roof. Then, we see from Manzanar's point of view "the assemblage of military might pointed at one's own people," and we hear with him the "thunder of a hundred helicopters [...] strafing the freeway along its dotted lines, bombing the valley with tear gas and smoke" (237-239). At the end of the freeway massacre, Emi dies and is reunited with her grandfather who recovers the memory of his past and his family, and Buzzworm walks off of the freeway and goes home. In fact, most of the characters (save Gabriel and Arcangel) go home at the novel's end. In addition to Buzzworm, presumably Manzanar returns to his family home with Emi's body. Yamashita also implies that Bobby, Rafaela, and Sol have

reconstituted their family. And, the audience at the Pacific Rim auditorium goes home: “the audience, like life, would go on” (263).

The fantastical stretching and compressing of time and space that facilitates the experiment of “gente-fiction” has been violently dissipated. If Yamashita implies that this particular reconfiguring of social space as an impossibility, as destined to fail, then what does she leave us with when everyone goes home? The return back home might suggest the community’s way forward. The novel imagines a positive politics of place that remains after the fantastical world disintegrates. Such a conception involves an appreciation of the affective, political, and economic histories of place and an understanding the elsewhere of place, of what is beyond place.

Buzzworm again offers us a glimpse of what such a politics might look like. When he was a kid, Buzzworm developed “a thing for palm trees” (30). But more than just an anomaly in the “city desert” of Los Angeles, Buzzworm recognizes that the trees can “see over the freeway, over the hood to the other side” (32). The place beyond his neighborhood at the corner of Jefferson and Normandie cannot see him and his house. That is, his neighborhood is invisible from the freeway. Riding in a car on the freeway, he could:

[...] speed over the hood just like the freeway was a giant bridge. He realized you could just skip out over his house, his streets, his part of town. You never had to see it ever. Only thing you could see that anybody might take notice of were the palm trees. That was what the palm trees were for. To make out the place where he lived. To make sure that people noticed. And the palm trees were like the eyes of his neighborhood, watching the rest of the city, watching it sleep and eat and play and die. (33)

Unlike the high-occupancy fast lanes of the freeway, the palm trees are, to Buzzworm's mind, "the true diamond lanes of the city" (83) in that they are a kind of beauty to be "appreciated from afar" while *on* the freeway. Moreover, the trees are "like [his] watches here, markin' time" and marking space, suggesting to those speeding on the freeway that there is life *below* it (31). In addition to marking time and space, the trees represent life below but might also suggest a means by which the residents engage in what Eyal Weizman calls, the "politics of verticality."²² Although he has read somewhere that the palm trees look phallic, he prefers to imagine them "giving everyone the finger" (83-84). Thus, an identity that is place-based might do all of these things: look outward to other places, signify the presence of life and beauty, and resist "the annihilation of space by time" by engaging spatial politics of reconfiguration.

After the experiment of "gente-fication" is violently dismantled, Buzzworm redefines his connection to place from a relationship augmented by the multiple mediated realities of radio waves and watches to an unmediated communion with the land and his neighbors:

Buzzworm finally went home. Grandma's house down on Fifth and Jefferson was still intact. Took a bath. Took a nap. Swept the porch out. Watered the palms [...] Tossed some seeds out there. Seeds from one of the brothers doing urban gardening on the freeway. Grow there; grow here, too. (264)

²² Using the term in the context of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Weizman characterizes "politics of verticality" as controlling both the air-space above land the subterranean space below it ("Introduction"). For a thorough application of this concept to the conflict, see Weizman's *Hollow Land* (2007).

He gives away his extensive watch collection and unplugs his Walkman. He concludes, “Things would be what he and everybody else chose to do and make of it. It wasn’t gonna be something imagined” (265). Although being “unplugged and timeless” engenders a palpable unease, Buzzworm embraces being “solar-powered [so] he could not run out of time” (265). His physical and psychological orientation to the sun, to the palms, to his home offers a groundedness in identity that is recalibrated after seeing “gente-fication” come to fruition if only briefly. But, the re-ensconement of Buzzworm at home is not Yamashita’s turn to a false stability, signaling his retreat from “reality” through the re-inscription of “an apparently reassuring boundedness” (Massey, *Space* 170). Rather, he decides he has “some serious intineratin’ to do” in order to harness the city’s newfound attention to the neighborhood, the homeless, and the structural inequities thrown into sharp relief by the freeway collapse (265).

However, although he concludes that the “paradigm had definitely shifted,” Buzzworm passes as he walks home an “Indian momma” on the late Margarita’s corner selling fruit juice (264). She could have been “his Margarita,” and thus Buzzworm is reminded that the social, economic, and political inequalities and tensions have only been submerged beneath the “big love song” that Los Angeles now sings (265). “Indian momma” like Margarita is part of the working poor, who, while temporarily visible in “gente-fication,” will quickly fade from view. Consequently, orienting oneself to place—both physical location and porous, contingent social relations in space-time—is a way forward, the novel suggests. Although Buzzworm contends that a productive, more equitable future “wasn’t gonna be something imagined,” that is exactly what Yamashita’s

novel attempts to do. She has noted that her fiction continually returns to the “idea of grassroots development, where people create these moments when they do help each other, and create structures that are harmonious” (Gier and Tejeda). Although she recognizes the limitations of the novel’s experimental community, Yamashita underwrites both realist and fantastical representations of social relations with a concept of located, affective connection to place. Thus, Yamashita’s implicit argument is that a practical, workable politics of place is the starting point for socio-economic change.

Although I have concluded with the implications of Buzzworm’s “gente-fication” plan, Yamashita does not. The last chapter presents Bobby’s reunification with Rafaela and Sol in fantastical and transnational terms in contrast to the largely realist and localized framing of Buzzworm’s chapter. The three characters are located in the Pacific Rim auditorium where the Tropic of Cancer now rests as Bobby struggles to hold together the “invisible bungy cords” of the line (268), thereby placing the three characters in the U.S. and Mexico at the same time. Importantly, Yamashita juxtaposes—or rather, puts into relation—Buzzworm’s translocalism with Bobby’s transglobalism. The place-consciousness of gente-fication, Yamashita suggests, is imbued with relations from other places and other spatial scales. The porosity of place in Buzzworm’s Los Angeles is inflected as much by Bobby’s Koreatown as it is by Emi’s Westside. Ultimately, Yamashita reminds us that a place-based consciousness and related spatial politics, if they are to be viable, must simultaneously consider translocal and transnational/global implications of place, the “here and elsewhere” in direct relation.

But, can gente-fication account for Rafaela's Mazatlán? She is reunited with her family in (or rather above) Los Angeles, but the screams from her violent encounter have not traveled northward. If, as this chapter has argued, the novel ultimately affirms a socio-spatial collectivity based on affective ties to place, gente-fication is implicitly nested within and a reaction to the space of the nation-state, in which the local institutional authorities (police) are embedded as well. An alternate reading of the novel's end is that Rafaela has had to leave her indigeneity at the border. She reunites with a multi-ethnic family and "becomes American," but she does so suspended in air above Buzzworm's neighborhood, which suggests that her direct engagement with historical colonialist violence in Mazatlán does not find a correlative in the ongoing dispossession of native lands underwriting the U.S. national narrative. While Buzzworm does acknowledge Chumash and Yangna claims to land in passing as he formulates gente-fication, the silent presence of "Indian momma" in Margarita's place implies that certain histories and certain populations will continue to remain invisible.

CHAPTER V
SPACE, SOUND, AND THE POLITICS OF REPRESENTATION
IN JOE SACCO'S *PALESTINE*

After its bid for full membership to the United Nations (UN) was sidelined in October 2011, the Palestinian Authority (PA) applied for membership with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in hopes that it would receive recognition of its cultural heritage, especially protection of historical sites, some of which sit on land controlled by Israel (Sayare and Erlanger). Such admittance would signify to the UN's General Assembly the organization's implicit recognition of a Palestinian nation (if not a state),¹ deserving of all of the privileges and protections of other member groups and states. While the Palestinian envoy Elias Wadiah Sanbar celebrated "a new era in which Palestine is recognized," the U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton lamented that UNESCO, "in [its] enthusiasm to recognize the aspirations of the Palestinian people, was skipping over the most important step, which is determining what the state will look like, what its borders are, how it will deal with the myriad issues that states must address" (Sayare and Erlanger). That a nation or an empire is created through its cultural production of both itself and others is a familiar idea, notably theorized by Benedict Anderson in *Imagined Communities* (1983) and Edward

¹ I use "Palestinian(s)" provisionally to indicate all of those dispossessed and/or expelled from the land of historical Palestine in the 1947-48 Israeli-Arab war/conflict, with the understanding that such a signifier homogenizes what is a complex mix of ethnicities, including Arab-Jews, Druze, Bedouin, and others. So, I engage in a kind of "strategic essentialism" (Spivak) in this chapter with the acknowledgement that more work must be done in this regard.

Said in *Culture and Imperialism* (1993). However, the notion that cultural representations of the nation are “skipping over the most important step” (drawing lines on a map, per the Secretary) belies the power of such texts to help create an idea of that nation, building a narrative that articulates the nation’s origins, its values, and its identity and, thus, attempts to create “a people.” The process of national narration has been a fraught one for Palestinians historically where the act of telling the national story has met and still meets with resistance from other narratives, especially those of Israel, the U.S., and much western media.

Perhaps, as the PA delegation to the UN suggests, the organization’s recognition of heritage sites is a way (albeit indirect) of telling the national story. In other words, the PA might be able to resignify particular spaces by garnering recognition of cultural representations of that land and cultural practices on that land. As Clinton notes, however, all parties must grapple with political borders at some point. Of the roughly four sets of historical borders of the modern state of Israel, the post-1967 capture of the West Bank, the Gaza Strip, the Golan Heights, and the Sinai Peninsula (which was subsequently ceded to Egypt) comprises the current “Administered Territories,” which is the state’s preferred term (Golan).² These borders, while ostensibly stable politically (if not legally), are overwritten and re-written by new Jewish settlements within the

² Daphna Golan distinguishes four periods of border-writing on the land: post-1949 with the establishment of the so-called Green Line; 1949-1967 where the Israelis for the most part lived within these borders; post-1967 where Israel acquired new territories, attempting to erase the Green Line; and post-1987 where the Palestinian *Intifada* both emphasized and erased existing borders (Golan 1056-1057).

territories and by the state's mobile walls, enclosures, and "flying checkpoints."³ Consequently, the PA's goal of establishing a contiguous territory on which to found a Palestinian state is a necessary one. Further, both political entities not only vie for control of the land but also attach extended narratives of collectivity to it. For example, official Israeli state discourse distinguishes between the *state* of Israel and the *land* of Israel, which according to Jewish scripture extends into present-day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Egypt.⁴ However, what is divinely-sanctioned expansion for one group amounts to dispossession and catastrophe for another. The 1948 Arab-Israeli war resulted in mass expulsion and dispossession of residents of historical Palestine by Jewish settlers, *al-Nakba* or the Catastrophe, as Palestinians term it.⁵ Thus, the PA's UNESCO bid is but one way to begin to reclaim a right to the land. The move is both an act of *asking* for recognition and, despite the strong opposition, *demanding* it.

Joe Sacco's graphic narrative *Palestine* (2001) participates in the long-standing challenge of Palestinians and others to narrate "Palestine" as a nation and "Palestinians" as a national people. In an effort to challenge his own preconceptions of the Palestinians' plight,⁶ the comics journalist visited the Occupied Territories, over the course of two and a half months in 1991-1992, the twilight of the first *Intifada*, in order to "tell stories of

³ On walls and enclosures in Israel-Palestine, see Brown (2010), Fields (2010), Mbembe (2003), and Weizman (2007). On "flying checkpoints" and the maintenance of various borders in Israel-Palestine, see Hallward (2008).

⁴ This dual notion of the state and the land is evident when official Israeli discourse refers to the Occupied West Bank by the biblical names of Judea and Samaria. Historically, the state has employed the term "Eretz Israel," or "Land of Israel," to indicate the full extent of the land promised to the Jewish people in the biblical Old Testament. See Aaronsohn (1996) regarding the history and politics of this term.

⁵ See Farah (2006) and Saloul (2008) regarding Palestinian refugees and *al-Nakba*.

⁶ Sacco notes early in the collection that western media, especially U.S. media, has represented Palestinians largely as terrorists: "Terrorism is the bread Palestinians get buttered on" (7). References to the special edition of the collection *Palestine* (2007) are designated with "SE." Otherwise, all page numbers refer to the first edition of the collection *Palestine* (2001).

the occupation” (SE ix).⁷ Consequently, he engaged in the process of narrating the Palestinian nation by publishing a series of comics about the experience, issued every few months from 1993-1995 (SE ix). The serialized version of the comic, caught the attention of Edward Said, a childhood devotee of comics and a scholar well-versed in the challenges of narrating Palestine, prompting him to write an introduction to the first edition of the collected comics, also entitled *Palestine*.⁸ Noting his long-standing commitment to “giv[ing] the Palestinian narrative [...] a presence and a human shape” (“Homage” iii), Said praises Sacco’s work as a “political and aesthetic work of extraordinary originality” with “no easily discernible line of doctrine” (“Homage” iii). Although he is not an ideologue, Sacco makes clear his preconceived notions of the Arab-Israeli conflict generally and of Palestinian people specifically and hopes that a first-hand account of the people and the occupation will help him interrogate these ideas. Both Said and Sacco are about the business of facilitating a Palestinian narrative, the former a Palestinian-American and the latter Maltese-American. Sacco uses the comics form to get at what he calls “the essential truth” of the place (“Presentation”). And, it is

⁷ Hillary Chute defines graphic narrative as “a book-length work in the medium of comics” (“Comics” 453). Regarding *Palestine* specifically, Adam Rosenblatt and Andrea Lunsford (2010) term the work “comics journalism,” which is the term Sacco prefers. However, Benjamin Woo (2010) disputes this assignation to Sacco’s work.

⁸ Edward Said’s criticism is the most relevant to my argument, and I engage his work fully below. In addition to myriad voices who critique the spatial politics of Israel-Palestine (for example, Makdisi (2008), Christison and Christison (2009) and Sorkin (2005)), there is a significant contingent of Israeli scholars, journalists, activists, politicians, and others who oppose the state’s occupation of Arab Palestinians, Druze, Bedouin, and others. Israeli “New Historians,” e.g. Benny Morris, Ilan Pappé, and Avi Shlaim, have engaged in revisionist historiography of Zionism and Israel by using recent archival material from both Israel and Great Britain, but their work has been variously received. See Bronner (2003) and Heller (2006) for generous readings of the collective’s work and see Ben-Dor (2010) for a critique of the group and of Morris in particular. In contrast to Morris’s ambivalence (see Shavit 2004), Pappé (2008) and Shlaim (2009) forward explicit critiques of Israel’s occupation and militarism regarding Arab Palestinians and other minorities. Additionally, Israeli scholars in other disciplines, such as Weizman (2007) and Shohat (1989, 2010), and activist groups such as Bat Shalom (batshalom.org) and Maschom Watch (see Hallward 2008) have argued forcefully against the separation and occupation of peoples in the Occupied Territories.

his use of this form, this chapter argues, that draws attention to the ethics of representations of the land of and the people of Palestine by non-Palestinians.

Said and Sacco seek a coherent narrative of Palestinians as a national people and, moreover, understand Palestinians as having that *right* to tell their story. Indeed, the UN recognizes a right to nationality as a universal human right.⁹ If human rights are “the proper name of a particular set of promises about a future of social equality and justice,” Sophia McClennen and Joseph Slaughter contend that there is “a gap between the imagination of human rights and the state of their practice” (4). This notion of a discursive gap between imagining a right and the implementation and practice of that right has particular relevance for a comics collection entitled *Palestine*, a name freighted with centuries of religious and political meaning. Although the attempt to facilitate a productive relation between imagining rights and practicing them generates many questions, this chapter takes up two. First, what narrative strategies best achieve national narration for the Palestinian people?¹⁰ Said and Sacco advocate a visual-verbal grammar as necessary to the Palestinians’ narrative process. The graphic narrative, in particular, relies on formal strategies of closure and completion that engender a collaborative relationship between author and reader, which would seem to complement dominant

⁹ Article 15 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights states, “(1) Everyone has the right to a nationality. (2) No one shall be arbitrarily deprived of his [sic] nationality nor denied the right to change his nationality” (“Universal”).

¹⁰ Homi Bhabha in the context of postcolonial studies posits that a “national people”—as separate concept from actual persons—is a “complex rhetorical strategy of social reference” (*Location* 208). In the context of Native American studies, Mark Rifkin further distinguishes between “people,” “People,” and “peoples,” where the latter term offers an alternative to the homogenous, unified subject of the “national people” (93-94). I use “people” through this chapter to indicate the collective subject of the national narrative, understood as historically contingent and socially heterogeneous. The term “people,” despite its assumption of a stable, coherent national identity, is the more useful term for the following analysis as it is both a keyword and a form of polity that is legible within the discourse that the PA seeks to influence.

forms of national narration that encourage unified modes of storytelling that draw from invented traditions of the past and look toward ever more perfect unions in the future.¹¹ However, “huge ideological work” (Hall) must be done to maintain a gloss of stability and coherence in the face of other times and other forms of socio-spatial relations that upend the notion of “out of many, one” (Bhabha, *Location* 204, 222).¹² If the form Sacco uses requires narrative closure but the nation resists such unity and stability, then a second key question or series of related questions arises regarding the politics of representation: How does Sacco’s engagement with an ambivalent national narrative square with a form that demands completion? Further, what does it mean that a Maltese-American, a self-styled “westerner,” is the author of this narrative? Ultimately, what are the cultural politics of this author and his collaborative reader claiming another’s right to narrate?

The following chapter considers these questions in terms of Sacco’s use of the graphic narrative form in the collection *Palestine* as he attempts to tell the story of Palestinians as a national people. Specifically, this chapter makes several related claims regarding textual space, sound, and the politics of representation in *Palestine* drawing from concepts across the humanities. The chapter takes as its point of departure Edward Said’s assertion that to narrate through word and image, as he did in collaboration with Jean Mohr in *After the Last Sky* (1986), suggests that mapping an imaginative space is to make a claim to that space because the act of narration is always emplaced. Moreover,

¹¹ See Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (1983) regarding how states or groups “invent traditions” as a nation-building practice. See also Tom Nairn on the dual temporalities of the nation, which looks into “primordial mists of the past” and toward an “infinite future” (quoted in McClintock 358).

¹² On the historical fragmentation and contingency of national narration from a (post)colonial perspective, see Bhabha (1990 and 1994, especially Chapter 8) and Chatterjee (1993), among others.

the visual aspect of mapping makes a Palestinian narrative sayable. Working implicitly from this understanding of visualizing space as an act of narration, Sacco constructs a two-fold Palestinian narrative. He traces a Saidian imagined geography and a soundscape, or spatialized sound, in the Occupied Territories during the waning days of the first *Intifada* in order to convey a “truth” about everyday life in Palestine. Although the graphic narrative form would seem to demand a complete national story, with the reader’s assistance, Sacco uses the form to disrupt a coherent narrative by emphasizing explicitly and implicitly the relationship between cultural and political representation. Thus, the primary claim asserted in the first part of the chapter is that mapping space and sound is a textual practice that inscribes the material reality of the occupation into the Palestinian national narrative. The cultural practice of imagining rights functions also as a political claim to them.

Further, Sacco’s multi-layered textual map indicates that there is a need for a national people to be seen *and to be heard*. To this end, the chapter’s second half explores the tension that Sacco’s text exposes between what Said calls “permission to narrate” and what Slaughter terms a “right to narrate.” Although the former implies a request and the latter suggests a demand, both concepts of narrativity are premised on the legibility of marginalized voices within dominant cultural-political regimes. Considering textual silence in *Palestine*, the latter half of the chapter argues that the graphic narrative in Sacco’s hands is particularly adept at making this tension productive by narrating the gaps and silences in ways that establish a relationship between speaking the nation and hearing it.

Narrating Space and Sound

In “Permission to Narrate” (1984), Edward Said assessed the state of the Palestinian national narrative shortly after Israel’s invasion of Lebanon in 1982. It comes from, he laments, “a small archive [...] discussed in terms of absences and gaps—in terms of either pre-narrative or, in a sense, anti-narrative. The archive speaks of the depressed condition of the Palestinian narrative at present” (“Permission” 38). He further suggests that one of the stakes of the war, indeed a significant *casus belli*, was the discursive impossibility of a “Palestinian people whose history, actuality and aspirations, as possessed of a coherent narrative direction pointed towards self-determination [...] Israel's war was designed to reduce Palestinian existence as much as possible” (“Permission” 28).¹³ Said implies that foreclosing narrative approximates foreclosing existence. The extent to which a national narrative is coherent, however, is dependent upon absences and gaps (Anderson) and is undermined by them (Bhabha). If “national narratives authorize and represent” as a “sense of communal or collective commitment” (“Permission” 47), how does one attend to and contend with the absences and gaps in the Palestinian narrative archive?

Mapping discursive absences and gaps is a complex undertaking that postcolonial, transnational, and human rights studies scholars have engaged for some time. With “Permission to Narrate,” Said enters a conversation with other scholars, notably Gayatri Spivak, on the uses of speaking and silence in a variety of discourses and from a variety

¹³ This was not always the case, however, as Said notes: “For the years between 1974 and 1982, there was a genuine international consensus underwriting the Palestinian communal narrative and restoring it as a historical story to its place of origin and future resolution in Palestine” (“Permission” 31).

of standpoints. In her critique of western intellectuals' self-serving animation of the subaltern voice, Spivak suggests, like Said, that scholars attend to the absences and gaps. Such work involves "the task of measuring silences" in discursive representations, a point I develop below ("Subaltern" 286). To speak as an everyday practice might function as a tactic of socio-political resistance; *not* to speak might also work as a strategic silence but not without risk. Judith Butler reminds us that "to move outside the domain of speakability is to risk one's status as a subject" (*Excitable* 133), a problem Said recognizes in his implied relationship between narration and existence.

With these complications in mind, Said took a different approach to the politics of national and self-narration when he collaborated with photographer Jean Mohr in 1986. Reflecting on his work with Mohr in *After the Last Sky: Palestinian Lives* (hereafter, ALS) wherein the two document everyday experiences of Palestinian refugees in Israel and Lebanon in the early 1980s, Said asserts that the text is "a sourcebook for the Palestinian condition" (ALS xi). He notes, later to interlocutor W.J.T. Mitchell, that he and Mohr sought to "narrate with pictures" because "we didn't have and couldn't formulate a linear narrative in the national sense for all kind of reasons. There were too many obstacles, we were too divided over this and that, and the absence of a center made our lives essentially fragmented. [...] Then I said, well, I can't tell a story in a traditional way or in an accepted way. And I had to do something else" ("Panic" 15-18). Narrating oneself as a national subject is a recurring critical concern in Said's *oeuvre*. From his foundational work on the exoticization and consequent discursive and physical subjugation of the "eastern" colonized other in *Orientalism* (1978) to his later essays in

The Nation, *The Guardian*, and *New Left Review*, the leitmotif of Said's work is the importance of telling one's own story particularly in terms of nationality. Thus, telling one's own story is individuating and agentivizing and, when that story is a national one, can create a kind of imagined community. The salience of Said's political and cultural critique of film, music, criticism, journalism, autobiography, and photography is most pronounced in his extended discussion of the Israeli occupation of historical Palestine and the subsequent political and physical dispossession of Arab Palestinians and other groups.

Thus, Said's collaboration with Mohr in *After the Last Sky* attempts at a basic level to fill in the absences and gaps that he long recognized in his engagement with regional politics in Palestine. More than adding another voice—a strong voice—to aid in making coherent a national narrative, however, the *images* of Arab Palestinians and other marginalized individuals, Said implies, make the text possible. Reflecting on Foucault's characterization of epistemology, Said suggests that Foucault employed a “distinctly theatrical component in his work, as if epistemology were a theatrical instrument of some sort” (“Panic” 24-25). The implications of this statement are several. At its most profound, Said's assessment of Foucault's work proposes that the *seeable* makes possible the *sayable*, although he later amends the inference of a causal relationship, calling the two modalities “correlative” (“Panic” 24-26). One cannot *know* a thing, an idea, a person without seeing it. Further, one cannot *articulate* that thing, idea, person without seeing it, he suggests.

Said develops the relationship between the visual and the articulable further in his conversation with Mitchell by connecting visuality to space and place.¹⁴ However, Said emphasizes in his discussion with Mitchell an understanding of place beyond the metaphorization of “place.” Instead, citing his longstanding interest in Italian materialists such as Antonio Gramsci and the politics of geography in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Said posits that “the narrative here [in the Palestinian context] is a function of speaking from a place.” When Mitchell queries, “So narrative for you is actually a kind of spatial notion,” Said clarifies,

Absolutely. Not a temporal one. I mean, obviously, it has temporal elements—it would be silly not to acknowledge that. But it’s principally, for me, the possibility of producing a territorial object, if you like, or a territorial location, as in Robinson Crusoe, where, in talking, he revisits, he repopulates, he reenacts both the shipwreck and the establishing of himself on the island. That’s the core of it. (“Panic” 26)

Narration, then, is an imaginative mapping; it is, for Said, an act of claiming place.

Conversely, as Mitchell suggests, lacking a narrative implies a lack of place (“Panic” 26).

Said’s discussion with Mitchell and his subsequent work with Mohr on this score open up a rich seam of thought in light of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and Sacco’s work in particular. One implication for “the question of Palestine” is that Mohr’s images are necessary to articulate a cohesive national narrative, to fill in the blanks of the Palestinian experience. A second implication of Said’s linking of the visual and the articulable is the notion of an agent at work in this process who constructs the text and a

¹⁴ Said argues elsewhere, “Every idea or system of ideas exists *somewhere*; it is mixed in with historical circumstances” (emphasis in original, “Zionism” 15).

viewer for whom the text is constructed. If Said and Mohr seek to make visible the everyday challenges of people living under military occupation, for whom do they make Palestinians visible? Bound up in the understanding of the theatricality of knowing that Said attributes to Foucault is an idea of *staging* that understanding, an active framing that is often naturalized and, therefore, unseen. Further, the act of staging is for a viewer's benefit, thereby emphasizing the rhetoricity of the images.¹⁵ A third implication and a main concern of this chapter is the importance of hearing and sound. Although Said and Mohr's work draws attention to the ways visuals make national narration possible, the complex relationship between cultural representation and political representation remains. If Said suggests that a visual-verbal grammar facilitates a Palestinian narrative, who *hears* the nation speak itself? Sacco's text engages this particular conversation surrounding the ethics of cultural representation, joining an ongoing discussion in postcolonial, human rights, and Indigenous literary studies on the subject.

In his assertion that Palestinians need "permission to narrate," Said echoes Spivak's concept of the dual function of representation—as a "re-presentation" or portrait and as "a speaking for" or proxy—proposed in "Can the Subaltern Speak?"¹⁶ Granting permission to the marginalized to speak, in the sense of a having a voice in cultural-political discourse, is itself a re-inscription of dominance and a desire for authenticity, an othering and essentializing move. The title question and her answer to it at the end of the

¹⁵ I am thinking here of recent work on visibility and the politics of framing as a knowledge-making practice from Judith Butler (2009), Ariella Azoulay (2008), and Wendy Hesford (2011).

¹⁶ On the collapsing of the two representational processes, which results in the dominant power usurping the subaltern's discursive voice, Spivak argues that "such theories [of subject formation] cannot afford to overlook the category of representation in its two senses. They must note how the staging of the world in representation—its scene of writing, its *Darstellung*—dissimulates the choice of and need for 'heroes,' paternal proxies, agents of power—*Vertretung*" ("Subaltern" 279).

essay “was meant to signal less a problem of articulation than of reception,” a problem of hearing more than speaking, according to Indigenous studies scholars Jodi Byrd and Michael Rothberg (5). They posit that a critical focus on “the inability to ‘hear’ opens up the possibility for building bridges across marginalized locations” (Byrd and Rothberg 5).¹⁷ Likewise, the human rights scholar Joseph Slaughter asserts the close and complex relationship between cultural representations of (violations of) those rights and political and legal discourses.¹⁸ If, in the context of human rights testimony, we assume that “the individual, through self-narration, experiences herself as a distinct spatio-historical being” (“Question” 429), then the act of narration is naturalized as an “innate human capacity,” eliding its constructedness within political-judicial discourses (*Human* note 108, 336).¹⁹ Slaughter argues further that “the right to narration is not merely the right to tell one’s story, it is the right to control representation” (“Question” 430). That Sacco draws attention to representational processes in *Palestine* indicts both author and reader for attempting to ventriloquize a unified and stable Palestinian voice. Indeed, Slaughter argues elsewhere that naming something as “unnarratable” is itself the product of a given narrative—a narrative about unnarratability (“Vanishing” 213). The following analysis engages the premise that the difference between asking for permission to narrate and

¹⁷ Elsewhere, Byrd updates Spivak’s famous challenge: “The question has now become how, and by what and whom, is the subaltern silenced” (*Transit* xxxi).

¹⁸ Slaughter has indicated that his consequential *Human Rights, Inc.* (2007) “offer[s] a methodology for thinking the formal, historical, sociological, and ideological human rights implications of other, nonhegemonic literary genres” than prose narrative (41). Graphic narrative, this chapter argues, is one such literary genre.

¹⁹ Slaughter has argued that narrative, narrativity, and narratability should not be taken “as an Archimedean point by positing it as a universal, innate human capacity that is shared by all people” (*Human*, note 108, 336). Rather, he posits that “human narrative capacity and activity [...] are constitutive of the category of human (or better, of person) as the subject of narrative and law” (*Human*, note 108, 336).

claiming a right to narrate depends upon the place of those speaking and those hearing. Sacco's mapping of space and sound questions who animates "the Palestinian voice" where each word in that phrase is under erasure, assuming a cohesive and enduring speaking position yet acknowledging its contingency.

The Textuality of Space

As he seeks to capture pictorially the spaces he saw during the first *intifada*, spanning from the Mediterranean to the Jordan, Joe Sacco chooses the graphic narrative form in its arrangement of panels, sequencing, text, and page space to engage the reader in writing the Palestinian narrative with him. This choice in itself frames the question of representing a national people before one even opens the book. The latter part of the term "graphic narrative" carries with it certain broad characteristics. Slaughter describes (the act of) narrative as follows: "Narrative implies (in fact, requires) perspective, a point of view (ordinarily supplied in literature by a narrator) from which all things may be strung together in a meaningful whole" ("Vanishing" 217). The particular way in which the form employs graphics, however, intensifies the narrative drive toward wholeness. The signature graphic element of the comics form is "the gutter," and the related narrative process it requires, "closure." The comics artist and theoretician Scott McCloud defines the gutter as simply "the space between two panels" (66). But, the cognitive processes that occur in that space, McCloud argues, are complex. Experience tells us, he posits, that between two different scenes (panels) something or someone effected this difference that we observe from one panel to the next. So, we imagine that scene, the one

not depicted, in our mind's eye, thereby filling in the gaps of the narrative. This process is what McCloud names "closure"; it is an act of "observing the parts but perceiving the whole," a largely unconscious fill-in-the-blank process of meaning making, which engenders a "continuous, unified reality" (McCloud 67).²⁰ Thierry Groensteen characterizes the process of closure as central meaning-making tool of comics, which "exist only as a satisfying narrative under the condition that [...] the resultant story forms an uninterrupted and intelligible totality" (quoted in E. Thomas 159). Consequently, Sacco's choice of the graphic narrative to represent his experiences in the Occupied Territories not only demands a heightened level of reader participation but silently suggests the need for narrative completion. To construct a *national* narrative, then, using this form raises questions of the (im)possibility of representing multiple and conflicting voices in a cultural form that requires such totalizing gestures.

The tendency toward narrative completion in the graphic narrative manifests in two significant ways. One of the effects—perhaps the primary effect—of closure is malleability of narrative time.²¹ "A comics page offers a rich temporal map," as Hillary Chute argues, that can compress or stretch time as the story dictates (455). While the complementary function of the gutter and closure regarding narrative *time* has received much critical attention (e.g., Chute, Hirsch, and others), it is important not to overlook

²⁰ Arguably, Henry Pratt notes, the gutter and closure is what gives comics a distinct narrative form (108). McCloud takes this idea further: "comics *is* closure" (67), a kind of "magic" (66). (See also Berlatsky (2009) on the gutter as an active framing.) However, in lieu of couching the gutter and closure in fantastical terms, I will discuss below the form's closure in light of the reader's complicity in narrating both settler colonialist critique and human rights violations.

²¹ Although he ultimately argues that comics and film as narrative forms have significant affinities, Pratt argues that, while filmic time is set by the filmmaker, comics time is activated by the reader, enabling "the reader's eyes and mind play over the succession of panels at the reader's own speed" (109-110).

how McCloud and others theorize the comics' use of *space*. The panels on the page physically fragment space, McCloud notes, but he does not develop this line of thought in his subsequent discussion of the gutter and closure (67). "As readers, we're left with only a *vague sense* that as our eyes are moving through *space*, they're also moving through *time*" (emphasis in original 100). McCloud in one brief clause gestures towards the spatiality of the comics form but continues instead to focus on the writer's and reader's collaborative manipulation of time. A cursory reading of page 148 demonstrates the reader's obligation to make at least minimal temporal connections between the panels. As the scene changes among each of the three panels, he/she assumes that *between* the panels in the gutter that Sacco has traveled in the car to different locales and, simultaneously, that time has passed. If the comics artist is "aided and abetted by a silent accomplice" (McCloud 68), then we must consider how space and spatiality (that is, a sense of space or a quality of spaceness) are mutually constructed by writer and reader. An important question for the reader of *Palestine* in particular is one of his/her "aiding and abetting" in the creation of space. From the Zionist settlers of a homeland in historical Palestine in the early to mid-twentieth century to the expulsion of Arab Palestinians in 1947-1948 (*al-Nakba*) to the many reconfigurations of political boundaries (particularly in the Six Day War of 1967 and the First Lebanon War of 1982) to the current occupation and settlement of the Palestinian West Bank, any future peaceable relations between the two main parties, the state of Israel and the Palestinian Authority, depend upon resolving competing claims of space. We should ask, then: What *kind of* space does the reader create along with Joe Sacco?

In addition to his use of the gutter and closure, Sacco obliges the reader to inhabit a variety of spaces within the narrative, some of which are clearly designed to engender a visceral unease. For example, he aligns the reader's line of sight with a Palestinian woman who is tortured by being held in a coffin (97). He then resituates us in an Israeli guard tower looking down upon residents or prisoners (81, 191). We also find ourselves with a bird's-eye view of the land (124, 146-147, 208). For the sake of brevity, I offer one example of how Sacco draws our attention subtly to our emplacement in the narrative. It depicts three series of three panels each from a larger, several-page sequence where Sacco re-imagines the beating of Firas, a fifteen-year-old resistance fighter, at the hands of Israeli Defense Force (IDF) soldiers (148). As we read the words and images from left to right and top to bottom, we are positioned as a soldier, then as a seemingly disconnected bystander, and finally as a member of the hospital staff. Is that *the reader's* hand in the first panel, grabbing the Firas' arm? Is the reader looking over the shoulder of a fellow officer in the first series? The gutter not only signals time progressing in the event but also signals the reader moving about the scene. That is, as the panels change perspective, the implication is that the reader has moved about the room, witnessing and perhaps enacting torture. It is, perhaps, a more comfortable (yet problematic) position to be standing, so to speak, with the staff. There, the reader is able to identify more comfortably with the victim rather than with the perpetrators. Or, rather than a part of any kind of intervention, the reader might be backing out of the room and away from the violence, which would suggest an even more comfortable remoteness or detachment from

the scene of violence. This is but one of several places in the text where Sacco stages moments of spatial anxiety.²²

Perhaps no other point-of-view strategy is more effective and more complex than Sacco's representation of himself as the narrative everyman upon which we can project our expectations, our fears, and our desires. On a "tour" of the refugee camp Jabalia in the Gaza Strip operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Sacco positions the reader in the van beside him. We ride with him and view scenes of poverty, misery, and an anger roiling below the surface. First, we see children standing in the rain, staring back at us; then, a group of young men, every one glaring at us; then a group of (IDF) soldiers on patrol in the area, the soldier in the foreground looks at us. I use "us" and "we" here because, first, we are clearly positioned in the van "on tour" with Sacco and consequently are meant to see what he sees. Further, as the panels progress, the gutter requires our recognition that time is moving (the scenes through the window change) but that we as the readers-viewers move as well—closer to Sacco until our line of sight is almost aligned with his. Thus, this panel sequence is an exemplar of how both the explicit point-of-view within panels and the space between panels (the gutter) operate in tandem to effect a spatial closure complementing the temporal one. Sacco's rendering of the UNRWA tour maps space at a distance, from the safety of the van, but the spatial

²² His own reading of the panels suggests that he deliberately attempted to engender such anxiety: "I opted for a straightforward telling of the story [...] which relies mostly on rapid eye movement along the captions and tight compositions for its propulsion" (SE xxvii-xxix). See also other examples of spatial anxiety, such as Rifat's recollection of his shooting where the reader is located in the first-person shooter point-of-view (202) and Sacco's memory of watching IDF soldiers interrogate boy while he stands in the rain, where the reader positioned as both the soldier and the boy (282). N.B. I borrow the term "spatial anxiety" from Ella Shohat's concept of "the iconography of spatial anxiety" in Israeli and Palestinian cinema. "Maps, borders, checkpoints, and the Wall," she posits, "have now become signature icons of the Israeli/Arab conflict," revealing a "spatial anxiety" by all parties (*Cinema* 287).

anxiety here is ultimately dissatisfying to Sacco, prompting him to stay on in Gaza and explore on his own.

In fact, the discomfort that the reader feels when explicitly aligned with Sacco's gaze is a key narrative strategy throughout *Palestine*, emphasized by Sacco's rendering of himself graphically and through his metacommentary on his two-month tour of Israel and the Occupied Territories. Sacco's representation of himself does not vary: glasses obscuring his eyes, scarf, jacket, and jeans.²³ In search of the big, career-making story, he tells us that we, the readers, are cynical westerners but that he, too, is cynical and mercenary. Early in the text, a Palestinian vendor entreats Sacco, "You write something about us? I showed you, you saw!" to which Sacco thinks to himself, "I'm off to fill my notebook! I will alert the world to your suffering! Watch your local comic-book store..." (10). While acknowledging the general apathy of Americans regarding the Palestinian plight (e.g., 6 ff.) and the relative inefficacy of translating that plight into comics form, Sacco nonetheless presents himself as a western adventurer in an exotic land: "I am Lawrence of Arabia...Tim Page...Dan Rather and his Afghanistan stubble...the first white man into Jenin... 'Dr. Livingstone, I presume!'" (27). Not only does he want us to see what he sees but is quick to acknowledge his less-than-noble motives, implicating the reader as well. Thus, Sacco takes the reader further than simply riding in a van with him; he/she is visually and rhetorically positioned as the colonial tourist on holiday to "see the natives" or the perhaps well-meaning but seriously misguided "disaster" tourist in, for example, post-Katrina New Orleans. The Gaza Strip is "Disneyland" for a journalist,

²³ Wendy Kozol argues that the eye-less depiction signals Sacco's function as an "avatar [...] call[ing] attention to the privileged perspective of the outsider" (167).

offering the opportunity to get a “splash page” for the comic (217) and to get “burning tires and automatic fire to add to [the] collection” (125). Not only do “we want faces, we want pain” (59), Sacco argues, want to *see* the faces and pain because we want to *participate* in the fight. Sacco knowingly dramatizes this urge when he finally, after many Saturday mornings loitering about Ramallah, gets what he is after. Between tires burning and a crowd protesting, he knows he has a story on his hands, but he notices another bystander with a camcorder in front of him capturing the action: “He’s standing in the street like it’s no one’s business...like it’s *his* intifada. *I’m* the one who spent those Saturdays waiting...,” he thinks indignantly (121). Lawrence-style, he puts himself in the middle of the action, “Move over, buddy! Pussies with zoom lenses can film my ass...” (122). Sacco utilizes the comics form to infer his and the reader’s ambivalence about voyeuristic looking.

While Sacco cannot entirely resist spectatorship, defined by Wendy Kozol as a passive looking, he does draw attention to the politics of looking as a way to “[mobilize] the viewer’s sense of responsibility” (166). Kozol argues that, in fact, Sacco’s text enacts a “pedagogical model of ethical spectatorship” (167). That is, Sacco is trying to teach the reader that he/she should be uneasy with the act of looking and, consequently, should examine his/her motives for looking. But, what does ethical spectatorship *do*? Regarding *Palestine* specifically, what does imagining a space with Sacco, however ethically, accomplish? If the seeable makes the nation sayable, following Said, and the act of seeing in the comics form enjoins the reader to complete the narrative, then reading *Palestine* functions as an act of completing a *national* narrative. By explicitly and

regularly attending to his and his reader's positionality, Sacco raises both the important question of looking ethically *and* the cultural politics of representing another's nation. In *Palestine*, the reader and Sacco are not only looking; they are telling *someone else's* story.

There is one more kind of mapping that supplements both visual and narrative space discussed above, that is, affective space. In a full-page panel, Sacco walks with Paula, an Israeli woman he has just met, through Jerusalem's "Arab Quarter" (218). He represents their walk through this "foreign" space with crowded with bodies that Paula feels are threatening to her. Sacco implies that he holds a similar fear through the representation of his downcast eyes, sweat, and fast pace. The comics form intensifies the claustrophobic feeling by denying the reader even a fraction of blank space on the page, no margin, and no gutter. As a counter-balance to enclosed, phobic spaces, Sacco also uses the comics form to suggest open space but does not necessarily imply that openness should be read as a kind of liberation or a sense of peace. For example, after his unproductive "tour" with UNRWA, Sacco is hosted by Sameh, a Gazan and local volunteer, during his stay in Jabalia, and Sacco uses a "bleeding" panel²⁴ (218-19) in order to convey the vastness of the threatening sky, in contrast to the reality of this high population density area, and the desolation and despair that he witnesses. As the picture "bleeds" off of the page and seems to continue past the frame, we understand that the physical and affective space continues as well. Kozol notes that, over the course of the book, Sacco transitions from panels with explicit narration of present events and

²⁴ "Bleeding" panels are those that run off of the page visually, i.e., panels not bounded by lines (McCloud 103).

rehearsal of past events to panels with less text and more silent panels that are pensive and even mournful (173). *Palestine* also employs a kind of pan-temporality since, first, Sacco offers no gutter, which would require temporal closure on the reader's part. Moreover, the affective space in this panel and others like it is citational, echoing the despair of *al-Nakba* and the everyday "micro-nakbas," to borrow a term from Ella Shohat, of Palestinian life (*Cinema* 294-295).

The comics form, as demonstrated above, not only engages readers' creation of and manipulation of time but of space as well. Sacco and the reader collaboratively map an "imagined geography," following Said, "designating in one's mind a familiar space which is 'ours' and an unfamiliar space which is 'theirs' [and] arbitrary" (*Orientalism* 54). The spatial relationship between the orientalist "they" and the occidentalist "us" that Said theorized still obtains in the late twentieth century, as Sacco's work suggests. Thus, this process raises several questions about readers' constructing and mapping difference "over there," which *Palestine* explicitly engages. The text is an imaginative geography that calls for a self-reflexiveness not necessarily needed with comics in general because what is being mapped is a space cross-hatched with complex claims to land, where the two major factions claims indigenous relationships to the same land.²⁵ The gutter particularly functions on multiple levels, a literal space on the page that signals a cognitive space for the reader to fill in time and physical space and as a metaphorical placeholder for the peoples that Sacco does not depict, such as Druze and Bedouin

²⁵ On depictions of Native American claims to land through graphic narrative, see also Sheyashe (2008) and Mellon (2009). Notably, Sacco's most recent work, a collaboration with Chris Hedges called *Days of Destruction, Days of Revolt* (2012), depicts graphically the history of the indigenous Lakota as part of the authors' broader history of American poverty.

peoples. Consequently, the spaces depicted and those that are not work together toward a completion of a Palestinian narrative, while marking an absent presence that denies completion.

Attending to textual sound offers a way to work through the tendency toward formal closure and the politics of representation that resist such closure. Although recent scholarship on graphic narrative has focused on historical time and trauma to which space and spatiality have been subordinate, it has also gestured toward new lines of inquiry, such as textual sound. Hillary Chute, for example, has insightfully analyzed Art Spiegelman's *Maus* in order to consider "how [it] represents history through the time and space of the comics page" ("Shadow" 201). Marianne Hirsch has considered the same text as "both a manifestation of this kind of visual-verbal biocularity and a meditation on traumatic seeing" (1213). While the word-image circuit in comics is the primary narrative mechanism by which knowledges are produced and, consequently, an appropriate site of inquiry for scholars, an exclusive focus on visuality in the terms outlined above delimits the potential of the form, thereby limiting critical inquiry. A text that in its very title links the concept of a national people called "Palestinians" to a national land called "Palestine" must be considered in terms of space as well as time.²⁶ To this end, scholars have gestured toward other narrative elements in graphic narrative scholarship. In her analysis of Marjane Satrapi's *Persepolis*, Chute posits that the comics form "require[s] a rethinking of the dominant tropes of unspeakability, invisibility, and

²⁶ See, among many others, Benita Parry's insistence on analysis of the material effects of national discourses (1987).

inaudibility” (“Texture” 93).²⁷ Sacco’s travels and graphic representation of a space designated by most as “the Occupied Territories” suggests that analyses of the settler colonialist project in Palestine must consider it as a “land-centred project,” as Patrick Wolfe describes it (393). Such a project turns, Wolfe posits, on a “logic of elimination” that includes both physical eradication and discursive erasure and silencing in order to gain access to territory (388). Part of this logic, the remainder of this chapter argues, is what Michael Titlestad calls “acoustic occupation,” the human voices and other sounds generated by the physical control of land (584). With this in mind, Sacco’s mapping of the space of Palestine and recording of the sonic regime of the Occupied Territories are attempts to disrupt the logic of elimination. If silencing and inaudibility are deliberate strategies of this logic, which engenders problems of speaking and hearing, then Sacco’s and the reader’s representational practices must be understood as dynamic and dialogic rather than static and monological.

The Sound of Space

Describing his drawing style, Sacco asserts that he utilizes exaggeration, caricature, and other techniques to make his early comics “loud,” in his words, “like Brueghel’s *The Triumph of Death*.” “I see that painting as ... just so loud,” he reflects,

²⁷ Kozol echoes on Chute’s argument when she asserts that Sacco “refuses the claim of ‘unspeakability or invisibility, instead registering its difficulty through inventive (and various) textual practice’” (Chute quoted in Kozol 175). Kozol does not explore the potential of this idea. Hirsch likewise challenges us to consider fully the question, “What kind of visual-verbal literacy can respond to the needs of the present moment?” (1212). This chapter argues that a significant element of the “visual-verbal literacy” she recommends involves a closer attention to the relationship between textual space and sound. The comics form, especially in its graphic narrative or comics journalism iterations, has greater potential than has been recognized.

“it’s shattering to my ears almost. And that’s part of what I wanted somehow to get at in my own way” (quoted in Rosenblatt and Lunsford 71-73). Sacco’s “loud” comic—that is, the verbal and nonverbal sounds represented in the text—indicate a materiality or “there-ness” of people and objects.²⁸ Similar to the process of charting space, mapping the sounds of *Palestine* is collaborative work between the reader and the comics artist. Mapping sound in *Palestine* is an “imaginative sonography,” modifying Said’s phrase, that offers an anti-settler critique of both the Israeli occupation and other silencing transnational discourses. *Palestine*’s sonography functions both as a witness to the reality of everyday occupation and a different kind of speaking back—a sounding back—to that oppression. However, similar, complex cultural politics applies to mapping sound as with mapping space. If Sacco’s comics journalism renders a Palestinian national narrative by creating a “territorial object” in Said’s words, then who hears the sayable? That is, what does it mean to ask permission or to claim a right to narrate when western interlocutors control representational practices?

Sacco strives to capture loudness in his comics, and *Palestine* is an exemplar of this desire. “A comic needs some bangbang, and I’m hoping Ramallah will deliver” he tells us as he travels to the West Bank, implicitly yet clearly critiquing his already ambivalent positionality (118).²⁹ He not only wants to capture scenes of conflict, poverty, and desolation, he wants to capture the sounds of conflict. From the opening full-panel page of the first chapter depicting Cairo’s tangled traffic, pedestrians yelling to

²⁸ See Scherr (forthcoming) on Sacco’s “haptic aesthetic” in *Palestine*.

²⁹ This term might be a reference to Greg Marinovich and Joao Silva’s account of their experiences, along with two other photographers, capturing the violent end of South African apartheid called *The Bang-Bang Club: Snapshots from a Hidden War* (2000).

and at one another, a policeman's insistent whistle, and other familiar city noises, the reader engages—in fact, helps to create—the sound of space as a complement to the visual map of space. Thus, he reminds us from the beginning that we are readers, viewers, and *hearers* of *Palestine*.

While he regularly distinguishes between his commentary and dialogue, Sacco skillfully uses narrative elements unique to the comics form to represent sound. For example, as he waits for “his *intifada*” in Ramallah (122), a skirmish between Palestinian youth and IDF soldiers ensues, and Sacco attempts to convey both the visual confusion and the aural layering. The series of panels (123) depicts both spatial and sonic confusion. The panels are tilted and overlapping, not holding to any linear sequence. The reader will intuitively scan the page from top to bottom, suggesting only the loosest narrative track. Additionally, Sacco uses what Warner calls “acoustigrams,” “sound pictures” that are analogous to pictograms (108). These are the “Bham! Splat!” word-sounds that are familiar to us in comics.³⁰ Among the disheveled panels, Sacco includes a “Rat-tat-tat-tat” to augment the “automatic fire” box at the top of the page. Further, Sacco uses the gutter to imply chaotic noise, amplifying the panels’ noise. Instead of blank white or black gutters, Sacco draws many sharp, cross-hatched black lines in the gutter space to suggest a further, perhaps unrepresentable layer of sound. The gutter echoes the black lines within the panels that Sacco uses to suggest the motion of the

³⁰ “When it comes to comic strips, things make a noise as if they had voices,” Warner posits. “Cartoonists relish this kind of total sound, which smashes the visual coherence of the scene into acoustic smithereens. They attempt to represent the mad motion of sound waves, not the images carried by light waves” (Warner 113).

youths running.³¹ Additionally, this panel uses the “bleed” effect that implies an all-encompassing sound, analogous to a panoramic lens that captures a 180-degree view.

This panel sequence taken as a whole provides the reader with part of the *Intifada*'s soundscape. “*This is what the Israeli-Palestinian conflict sounds like,*” Sacco seems to say to his reader. Mapping the soundscape of Ramallah re-inscribes the sounds of Israeli occupation back into the narrative of Palestinian nationhood. And, the sonic politics of the Occupied Territories are certainly complex. Israel has used sound as a weapon, for example, when the IDF used “The Scream,” a sonic cannon that emits “non-lethal” bursts of sound painful to the human ear, in order to disburse protesters (see Federman 2005 and Rawnsley 2011). Further, that this sequence uses the gutter to represent sound requires us to engage in a different kind of closure than considered in previous examples. The reader marks through the gutter both narrative time and sound progressing through space. Thus, this example suggests that it is useful to augment McCloud’s definition of closure as a collaborative function of author and reader to create narrative time, space, *and sound*. Beyond the “rat-tat-tat-tat,” the reader surely imagines more sound than is represented verbally or nonverbally on the page: the pounding of feet back and forth, the yelling of youths and soldiers, the hurling of stones and the sound when they hit, and various other sounds (bystanders yelling, doors slamming, cars screeching away). Moreover, similar to the variable points-of-view analyzed earlier in the chapter, the gutter in this sequence requires an uncomfortable engagement with sound

³¹ This is the only series in the book where Sacco uses sharp black lines *in the gutter*, although he does use these kind of “zip-ribbons” *within* panels, for example to dramatize a wounded man’s pain (32). McCloud defines “zip-ribbons,” lines representing “moving objects through space” (111).

both on the part of Sacco and the reader-viewer-hearer. The panels, for Sacco, cannot contain the sound; that is, the sound is not entirely representable within the bounds of the panel. Elsewhere, Sacco forgoes the use of panels with a relatively clear frame delineations in order to attempt to represent the chaos of Palestinian protesters' clash with IDF soldiers (55-56), suggesting the limit of the form where delineated and sequential panels cannot represent the visual and sonic chaos. Although Sacco has described his style in *Palestine* as occasionally "cartoony" and "loud," the second half of the collection takes a different tack.³²

Wendy Kozol posits that the second half of *Palestine* tends toward a less didactic and more somber tone (173), and Chapter Eight, entitled "Pilgrimage," is a largely (but not entirely) silent one worth considering at length. By "silent," I mean, following McCloud, that the panel has no word box or balloon, that is, no commentary by the comics artist nor representation of dialogue (100-102). However, the absence of words does not mean that the images and page are mute. For example, as Sacco walks around the refugee camp in Jabalia with Sameh, his friend and guide, Sacco only renders his inner thoughts that are largely concerned with two conflicting ideas: the need to get "another authentic refugee experience" (217) and the physical and psychological toll Sameh's translating duties take on him (219). Again, he draws our attention to his position (and ours) as consumers of the occupation and *Intifada*. However, after a few pages of desolate landscapes and abject poverty, he seems to want the images to speak for

³² Rosenblatt and Lunsford, in their analysis of Sacco's work, mention Sacco's attention to "the silences of war," "the variation between loud and quiet in Sacco's stories" lending "an almost musical quality" to his comics (73). This acknowledgement of Sacco's use of sound is one of the few scholarly engagements on this score, but they do not develop this point with textual analysis or further discussion.

themselves. As Sameh speaks for Sacco as his translator, Sacco in turn translates all he has witnessed to the reader. He has noted that he wants the hand-drawn images to speak: “In what I consider to be its [*Palestine*’s] most successful sequences, I let the visual atmosphere take over from the words [...]” (SE xxii). Of course, the form requires continual reader engagement to make the images “speak.” As depicted on page 227, Sacco “make[s] a good picture” out of a series of wordless scenes, but we are meant to hear the rain relentlessly falling, the rustling of the sheep, the squishing of the mud under their boots, and the whirring and sputtering of the IDF trucks as they lumber past (221). This sequence echoes previous ones in its wordless desolation, utilizing a technique called “braiding,” the “linkages between panels through non-narrative correspondences” (E. Thomas 158).³³ Sacco braids both physical aspects of the landscape (rain and mud, primarily) and sonic aspects of the landscape (the sounds that rain and mud can make) to produce a soundscape of the occupied territories.

In addition to verbal and nonverbal cues, Sacco uses the gutter to suggest sound in space. He exclusively uses black for the gutter space in “Pilgrimage” to signal both the trauma of *al-Nakba* and the bleakness of current micro-*nakbas*. Both time and space are collapsed in a series of vignettes that comprise Chapter Eight. Sacco links a visit to the grave of Hattem Sissi, the first person killed in the *intifada* (223), to an elderly woman’s recollection of her son’s death at the hands of an IDF soldier (242), and to a virtually

³³ Unfortunately, space does not permit a reproduction of the two-page, full-bleed silent panel wherein Sacco attempts to capture what is clearly his overwhelming first view of the poverty wrought by the occupation in Gaza (146-147). From a bird’s-eye point of view, the two-page panel captures both the chaotic proximity of buildings and people and the stark expanse of the landscape. (The cover image of *Palestine* (2001) is a detail of p. 146.) Other full-bleed, silent panels that achieve the same effect are “One Shekel to Gaza Town” (175), “Jabalia” (186), and an untitled interchapter (81).

wordless stay in Gaza Town (231-234). The black gutters link these scenes within the chapter and link the eighth chapter with another chapter, “Moderate Pressure, Part 2” (102-113), which also uses black gutters.³⁴ This is another example of braiding where Sacco connects the spaces of Gazan refugee camps in Chapter Eight with the inside of a torture chamber, collapsing narrative time and space. Much like the “silent” panels that are not free of meaning, the black gutters simultaneously suggest a void of sound and space *and* evoke a productive silence within the chapter and across the entire text as they supplement the Palestinian national narrative with a sound regime of the occupation. Historical silencing, as Said reminds us, prohibits a Palestinian national identity, and the prohibition to narrate is part of the story itself. Chapter Eight, although largely silent, is punctuated by strategic sound, for example, when Sameh’s young sister peppers Sacco with questions about political and cultural conditions in America and by a secretive but lively wedding celebration. In the latter part of the chapter, we see and hear the rhythmic stomping of a group of youth as they dance to the accompanying pro-Fatah songs at the wedding (227-228). The event of the wedding and the song and dance are Sacco’s representation of the sonics of settler colonialist resistance, a strategy of being heard and proof of “there-ness.” The chapter “Pilgrimage” is, in the end, a map of Sacco’s travels throughout Gaza and back to Jerusalem. It is also a map of complex soundscape of the occupation in Gaza, complementing the visual and verbal relationship by standing in for words at times and for marking presence when words seem insufficient.

³⁴ See Kozol’s insightful analysis of Sacco’s use of panel size and gutters in “Moderate Pressure, Part 2” (175-176). He uses black gutters in two other episodes: in the sharp black lines on page 123 and in a rendering of an IDF incident in Nablus (266-267).

Sacco's use of textual sound, then, functions as a way to "give evidence of materiality" (Warner 121) of Palestinian bodies in the space of the occupied territories. A crucial part of constructing the national narrative, *Palestine* indicates, is reading space and sound, telling the story of the land and what happens there. Whether adopting a "cartoony" bent or attempting verisimilitude, Sacco argues that the comics form helps him to get at the "essential truth" he is trying to convey ("Presentation").³⁵ Of the montage on page 227 particularly, he notes, "This is no realism. This is playing with composition to make a point and *to show something*" (emphasis added, "Presentation"). Similarly, if the panel as the basic unit of comics separates time and space, then a "borderless" panel [has] a timeless quality," McCloud asserts (99, 102). Further, "bleeding" panels stretch time, which "*hemorrhages and escapes into timeless space*" (emphasis in original, McCloud 103). The images, then, contained (or, rather *not* contained) in this type of panel "can *set the mood* or a *sense of place* for *whole scenes* through their *lingering timeless presence*" (emphasis in original, McCloud 103). Thus, Sacco's use of silent and bleeding panels are his way of suggesting an "essential truth" or "timeless presence."³⁶ To render a presence through words, images, or other non-verbal means, is the objective of comics, and "the sonics of comics" make that a possibility.

³⁵ See Rosenblatt and Lunsford for a gentle critique of the "cartoony-ness" (bordering on caricature) of Sacco's early work, including *Palestine* (71-73).

³⁶ However, Marina Warner posits that the form's use of sound nuances the visual and verbal exchange. She argues that "showing something" need not amount to drawing a realist picture or even using pictures at all. Whereas McCloud and Sacco focus on the visual-verbal circuit to represent presence or truth, "comic strip artists," Warner counters, "[...] felt the need to communicate [...] the capacity for pain and for sensation of their drawn characters and they reached for sonics to do it, for 'Whaam!' and 'Crakk!,' because noises give evidence of materiality in a way that photography" cannot (121).

Speaking and Hearing the Nation

This chapter has argued that the “question of Palestine,” in Said’s words, is a spatial and a sonic one that turns on questions of land, rights, and identity determined by the settler colonialist institutions of Israel, the contentious and sometimes quixotic posture of the Palestinian Authority, and the seemingly well-intentioned yet regularly ineffective policies of the U.N. The Palestinians’ claim to the land of historical Palestine has been effectively silenced through the dual strategies of map-making and “acoustic occupation,” two elements of the “logic of elimination.” Sacco’s *Palestine* is his attempt to remedy this problem by mapping space and sound, but it ultimately leaves us with the quandary of claiming a right to narrate on another’s behalf. The PA, for its part, has recently sought alternative means of narrating its nationhood toward the goal of unconditional recognition by the U.N. General Assembly. Although it has met with intransigence from Israel and the U.S., the PA has recently met with some success. In June 2012, UNESCO voted to add the Church of the Nativity, located in Bethlehem, and the pilgrimage route from Bethlehem to Jerusalem to its list of World Heritage sites (Kershner). The Palestinian delegation welcomed the vote as a recognition of its cultural heritage and as a possible advancement toward its goal of internationally-recognized statehood in the General Assembly. In contrast, the Israeli Prime Minister’s office released a statement, reading in part, “This is proof that UNESCO is motivated by political considerations and not cultural ones,” which suggests that cultural concerns should be separate from political ones (Kershner). However, the alacrity with which the PA has pursued UNESCO acceptance and the vehemence with which Israel and U.S.

have opposed it belies the Prime Minister's statement, signaling that all sides recognize the crucial link between cultural representations and political agency—between portrait (*Darstellung*) and proxy (*Vertretung*). Understanding well the necessity of cultural texts in national narration, Sacco seeks to map the geography and the soundscape of the Occupied Territories in order to “give voice to” the Palestinians as a national people. As he does so, he engages broader journalistic and scholarly conversations surrounding representational practices by attempting an ethical orientation to his interviewees. However, the graphic narrative, because it enjoins the reader to collaborative meaning-making, requires a kind of totalizing gesture that implies a telos of completion (a kind of “development narrative”) that risks the author's and his reader's complacency and undermines his attention to his ethical stance.

Thus, in *Palestine*, Sacco comes up against the limits of the graphic narrative form. By his own admission, he cannot avoid speaking for the Palestinians and Israelis that he meets and represents in the text. But, he does understand the need to get out of the way, so to speak. For example, Sacco uses the occasion of the 2007 special edition of *Palestine* to reflect on his process of drawing the comics and other attendant concerns, such as the politics of representation. He reconsiders in particular the sequence of images dramatizing his UNRWA “tour” (148). Referencing his original notes from that day, he thinks to himself, “I can't bring myself to say stop, let me out. I feel removed from the scene, it's the manner of presentation. I'm in a bubble looking out” (SE xxii). He desires to remove himself from the UNRWA van and “be there,” and he has suggested that the comics form can do the same for the reader. While he concedes that prose writers can

use their narrative form evocatively, Sacco asserts, “I find there is nothing like thrusting someone right there. And that’s what I think a cartoonist can do” (quoted in Rosenblatt and Lunsford 70). However, in an effort to put the reader “there,” he laments that *Palestine* might be “too wordy in places.” Instead, he gauges success by his ability to “let the visual atmosphere take over from the words” (SE xxii). Consequently, Sacco is pleased that the finished version of the UNRWA “tour” does not have any words. “They are,” he notes, “my favorite three pages in the book” (SE xxii). Sacco himself wants to “be there” on the land and with the people of Palestine, and he uses his chosen narrative form in an attempt to achieve “there-ness” for the reader and to represent the “there-ness” of a national people. Nonetheless, he recognizes that his presence on “the scene” complicates the representational process. In sum, *Palestine* captures this tension in its form, where graphic narrative exposes the gap between speaking and hearing, between imagining a right and practicing it.

In fact, the text precisely points to Sacco and his reader standing in that gap. The comics collection is his provisional attempt to highlight the relationship between speaker and hearer, rejecting incommensurability in favor of affinity and co-presence. When a radically uneven power dynamic is at play, as in *Palestine*, Spivak has suggested that the problem is one of the receiver hearing the message rather than the subaltern speaking it. Despite the discursive gap, Byrd and Rothberg assert that “the focus on the inability to ‘hear’ opens up the possibility for building bridges across marginalized locations” (5).³⁷

³⁷ Likewise, regarding the use of the scholar engaging textual silence in Algerian writer Assia Djebar’s work, Peter Hitchcock posits that, while, “historically specific matrices of power *produce* silence, enact its aura of absent subjectivity. [...] The difficulty remains whether the critic can speak to this position, the Other under the subjection of silence, without merely reproducing the insidious desire of modes of

Not only has this chapter argued for a relational speaking-hearing process that activates the right to national narration, this project has likewise argued for a notion of place that has contingent boundaries, that recognizes affinities with other people and places beyond those borders, and, importantly, that values co-presence of others that *are* “here” and historical others that *were* “here.” This complex understanding of place flourished in late twentieth century literary texts wherein authors represented real places in imaginative ways, animating, contesting, and rejecting dominant socio-spatial regimes. This period was not an originary moment for such literary re-visioning, but it was rather a period of tectonic shifts in global power, materials, and people, an upheaval that pushed these authors to map alternative, equitable spaces beyond familiar worlding paradigms and national shores. The authors considered in these pages attempt (arguably, to varying degrees of success) to “put down all the layers of the real maps,” following Buzzworm, and then, re-vision the maps anew, accounting for multiple presences in a given place and suggesting that egalitarian social relations are possible.

The literary cartographies considered here are provocative yet provisional, as all of the authors recognize. Although Sacco has pointed to the need to foster an ethics of representing Palestinians as a national people, he suggests at the collection’s end that his is not the definitive map and that it cannot be. The last panels of *Palestine* leave open the possibility of a further reimagining of the historical land. Perhaps, it is more accurate to say that Sacco implies that *Palestine* is necessarily incomplete and that any positive resolution to competing spatial claims will *require* other imaginings than he has set

domination themselves. This is what must be risked, however [...]” (emphasis in original, “Scriptable” 135).

down.³⁸ In the closing sequence, the driver of a bus leaving Gaza for Rafah, Sacco realizes, gets lost in an effort to exit Palestine. As he approaches a Palestinian refugee camp, the driver sees youths in the distance gathering stones and grows nervous that they might attack the bus. In the last panel of the collection, Sacco depicts the driver conferring with an IDF soldier at a small outpost, both men huddled over a map (285). Ending the powerful collection with such a pedestrian episode, Sacco signals that drawing borders on maps, following Clinton's admonition, will continue to be a foundational practice of nation-making. He also indicates that imaginative cultural mappings of real places might be a first step toward claiming political recognition.

³⁸ In fact, Sacco returns to the Gaza-Rafah region about a decade later to draw another, complementary literary map. In *Footnotes in Gaza* (2009), the comics journalist recuperates a lost history of two violent episodes that happened within days of each other in November 1956 in the towns of Khan Younis and Rafah.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE POTENTIAL OF LITERARY PLACE-CONSCIOUSNESS

The end of the last century saw two seismic shifts in perceptions of place and nation. The breakdown of Cold War power structures disbursed geopolitical control away from the hands of a few “superpower” nation-states, and the latest phase of globalization accelerated modes of mass communication and migration beyond established national borders. Places seemed to grow closer through new technologies, and the nation seemed to recede in geopolitical importance in favor of the incitement to “become global.” However, the end of the century also saw, for example, the formal end of South African apartheid and the first *Intifada* in Israel-Palestine, events with histories and geographies articulated with (but not overdetermined by) the end of the Cold War and the emergence of late globalization and not yet complicated by the Euro-American “war on terror.” This dissertation has examined representations of these spaces in transition in order to understand how the authors develop a literary place-consciousness as a way to negotiate national and transnational changes. It has asked these key questions: Of what value are notions of place and nation at the close of the twentieth century? And, how might literary texts hold in tension multiple histories and geographies in order to imagine more equitable spatial relations within this period of profound geopolitical change?

In an attempt to answer these questions, “Re-visions of Place” posits that Anglophone literatures of 1990s imaginatively engage marginalized histories and geographies in order to critique dominant discourses of space-time. Drawing on a range of cross-disciplinary scholarship on space and transnationality, this project traces a literary place-consciousness in works by Salman Rushdie, Nadine Gordimer, Karen Tei Yamashita, and Joe Sacco, attending particularly to the intersection of social identities, such as gender and sexuality, and place. “The long nineties,” following Phillip Wegner, designates an especially rich period of study (1989-2001) as the large-scale shift of spatial paradigms, where blocs and curtains give way to global villages, afford these authors the opportunity to imagine the palimpsestic histories and maps of a given place. The resulting transformation of these places offers, for example, Gordimer and Rushdie opportunities to grapple with spatial legacies of British imperialism and South African apartheid, respectively, while imagining more equitable place-making practices. Gordimer’s *The Pickup* (2001) suggests that a productive sense of place might be recovered by fleeing corrupt postcolonial space for a “pure,” local space, while Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses* (1988) recognizes that coming to terms with postcolonial spatial politics means understanding space as underwritten by racial and sexual difference. In contrast to the post-imperialist legacies that haunt but do not dominate Gordimer and Rushdie’s work, Karen Tei Yamashita’s *Tropic of Orange* (1997) and Joe Sacco’s *Palestine* (2001) suggest that colonialist spatial practices continue to have real, material effects in the 1990s. The former engages the intersection settler colonialist boundary-making and neocolonial boundary erasure located at the U.S.-Mexico border; the latter

represents national narration as an act of claiming place, thereby resisting settler colonialist logics of elimination. Thus, this dissertation performs a critical re-orientation to the texts at hand as it foregrounds local contexts while keeping transnational and transglobal events and spaces within its purview.

Ultimately, “Re-visions of Place” is not so much a study *against* placelessness and postnationality of the long nineties as it is an argument *for* the continued importance of place and nation as bound up with *senses of* placelessness and postnationality. These latter notions, as suggested in the introduction, found traction in scholarship of postcolonial and transnational literary studies of the period. Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* (1993) and Homi Bhabha’s *The Location of Culture* (1994) are but two prominent examples. However, as the analysis in these pages demonstrates, importing concepts from human geography and social theory highlights lacunae in such scholarship. To this end, I have employed an approach provisionally termed, “place-based transnationalism,” which builds on a general transnationalist disposition by adding a place-based framework borrowed from a range of humanities scholarship on space and place. Such an approach allows literary scholars to attend to the integral relationship of national spaces and identities with transnational ones and to the seemingly groundless categories of, for example, gender and race. Further, I integrate theories of place-making from indigenous studies and human rights studies when needed to test the limits of a transnational approach. Consequently, place-based transnationalism facilitates a comparative examination of literary geographies that holds multiple histories and geographies in productive tension. I have integrated concepts from geography studies

such as the “locatedness” of social categories (Doreen Massey and Arif Dirlik) and spatial scaling (Neil Smith) with concepts such as the settler colonialist “logic of elimination” (Patrick Wolfe) in order to avoid a metaphorization of space that smooths over real places and people and to offer literary scholars a more nuanced vocabulary for discussing representations of those real, material spaces.

I join other postcolonialist and transnationalist scholars who are engaged in similar work (e.g., Barnard, Clingman, Hitchcock, et al.) by analyzing literary representations of place-making across several sites, several hemispheres in order to discern the common narrative strategies between texts. However, this project’s focus on the literary place-consciousness of this particular time period reveals the richness of the textured and even messy ways in which place-making is imagined, thereby forwarding the scholarly conversation in inventive ways. Indeed, the dissertation suggests that there is much more work to be done on this score. It proposes questions such as: What is unique about the confluence of the period’s events and movements that allows authors to grapple with the local, national, and transnational so effectively? How might postcolonial theory, broadly construed, have imposed limits upon disciplinary scholarship of the period, obscuring certain place-making? Further, if the periodization of the long nineties is a productive framework as demonstrate in this study, how might we trace the antecedents and the enduring legacy of the literary place-consciousness of the twelve-year period? “Re-visions of Place” has posed these questions and suggested provisional answers through the examination of selected literatures. This dissertation, then, gestures

toward the consequential critical stakes of attending to re-visions of sweeping, globalized flows of power and everyday spatial practices.

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