



Label and Literature: Borders and Spaces in *Postcolonial Migrant Literature* in Australia

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In the novel *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* by Christopher Cyrill the main character Christopher recalls a model of India. His father had carefully constructed the model shortly after his migration from India to Australia. In his individualized version of India the father ignores all “terrain outside the borders of India,” and marks with toothpicks “only the places on the map that interested him” (20). He then places it in the backyard pond of his Australian house. Christopher narrates:

He let the model drift away without securing it. It looked as if India had pulled itself away from Asia, ripping the Himalayas with it, and was powering itself through the Indian Ocean in whatever direction it chose. The Ganges would no longer flow into the Bay of Bengal but into all the oceans of the world. It occurred to me one day as I watched the model float around the mould that India had roughly the same outline as Australia. When the model turned in the water so that Nâgercoil pointed directly east, I could transplant the Great Australian Bight onto the Gulf of Cambay and transplant Arnheim Land onto Calcutta. (21)

The father’s version of India signifies an imaginary which reflects his self-opted place of belonging, constitutes a stable core and defines spaces of Inside and Outside. However, the detachment of the constructed core from its specific geographical locality inaugurates a motion through which borders are blurred and spaces demand new definitions. The individualized model of India is constantly floating and drifting in the water. The wind and movement of the water tirelessly and determinedly force the imagined identity to change directions, sketching one time an image of an Indian landscape and at another appearing to mirror an

Australian scene. Metaphorically, the model illustrates the construction and deconstruction of borders and consequently the deconstruction of a previously established space and its ceaselessly transformable reconstruction.

In the words of Avtar Brah borders are “arbitrary dividing lines” which function on a social, cultural and psychic level. As such they are always metaphors and “part of the discursive materiality of power relations” (198). The creation of borders gives an imaginary authentication to an In- and Outside and defines their specific spaces. Space thus has to be understood as a multidimensional entity comprising notions of territorial dimensions as well as social and cultural characteristics. It is a zone filled with concepts of political, historical and cultural representations. Space is an effect of discourse which divides it into differently perceived zones constituting social categories and, with this, maintaining binary oppositions. Consequently, if space is *only* an effect of discourse, then a new way of speaking, a different way of imagining, and a transformed way of narrating, can change it. “It is,” Kathleen Kirby says, “as if by foregrounding metaphors of space the gap between metaphor and reality narrows, the bridge is shortened, the interchange takes place that much more quickly: space itself is the aperture through which discourse can effect reality” (110).

Borders between literary categories are established through the process of labelling which gives recognition to varied forms of literary productions and establishes definitions of (non) belonging. The application of the label creates specific spaces, thereby defining literary designations, which, in addition, reflects imaginaries of national belonging. David Carter says:

If literature is still often understood as the truest, most profound indicator of the nation’s culture and character it is not surprising that it has often been a spectacular site of struggle between competing interests across the cultural field. Debates about literature, in this context, have never been just about literature. What is at stake is the *nation* and the power to identify one’s own interest with those of the national culture. (22)

Literary labelling then seeks to construct borders but, I want to argue, indeed achieves its opposite. The ambiguity of borders and the potential reconstruction of spaces through a different, possibly oppositional, narration deconstructs previously established imaginaries of Inside and Outside.

Within the Australian context terms such as “migrant literature” and “multicultural literature” have been applied from the early 1980s onwards to give recognition to literary texts written by non-Anglo-Celtic authors (Gunew 3; 22–23; Jurgensen 906). These labels signified an attempt to give recognition and authentication to voices from a non Anglo-Celtic background within the Austral-

ian context and, unequivocally, defined established and evolving categories in the Australian literary landscape. Simultaneously, the literary terms revealed the discursively established definitions of Australianness and echoed:

The rhetorical distinction which has become pervasive in Australia between “migrants,” who can be people who have been born in Australia but who are from non-British or Irish backgrounds, and “Australians,” sometimes identified as “real Australians.” These are the people whose ancestors, it is implied, settled in Australia. These people may themselves only be second, or even first, generation residents in Australia. (Stratton 10)

In Australia, literary labelling operates in multifarious ways and indicates the historically derived political orientation in the country and its struggle over identity formation. As a result, Australian literature appears to be more “contentious than consensual; ironically it has often been contentious precisely because it has functioned to represent one version of consensus against another” (David Carter 17). This implies that labels such as multicultural and migrant literature are culturally and historically derived inventions which grow from a specific national imaginary. However, these labels, which are reflections of discursive practices, contribute to a differentiated perception of the national imaginary and thus function in two ways: on the one hand their exclusive character indicates an established mainstream literature, on the other hand they play a crucial role in reconstructing the national imaginary and are as such expressions of “modern” versions of the nation. “Asian-Australian writings,” Lyn Jacobs points out, “are important as expressions of our people’s lives but also because they may effectively defamiliarize understandings of local conditions and encourage fellow Australians to see differently” (211).

Contemporary writings by Chinese-Australian authors such as Brian Castro, Beth Yaph, and Sang Ye and writers from the Indian subcontinent such as Yasmine Gooneratne, Adib Khan and Chandani Lokugé reflect in their texts Australian spaces which differ from the previously established national imaginary. Similarly, recent publications such as *Bastard Moons: Chinese-Australian Writing* edited by Wenche Ommundsen, *Diaspora: Negotiating Asian-Australia* edited by Helen Gilbert, Tseen Khoo and Jacqueline Lo, *Alter/Asians* edited by Ien Ang *et al.* and Tseen Khoo’s *Banana Bending: Asian-Australian and Asian-Canadian Literatures* indicate an existing necessity to address issues of a disparate literary culture within the Australian environment. Associations with an *other* culture and therefore with migrant experiences are the characteristic basis for these texts which indicate a perceived exclusion from the mainstream Australian society.

In the complex configuration of migrant literature, “postcolonial migrant literature” can be applied to describe literary texts in which concepts of location and

dislocation are central narratives (George 171). This comprises texts by authors with direct or indirect connections to formerly colonized countries. By taking political and ideological contents rather than formal attributes into account, postcolonial migrant literature, though referring more to a methodology than a genre category, characterizes literary texts written by authors from formerly colonized countries who have moved permanently to a metropolitan centre. However, these texts not only include first-generation authors who have spent a considerable length of time in a former colony but also second-generation authors who are still under the influence of the historical and political effects of a former colonial time. Postcolonial migrant literature signifies texts carrying in one way or another elements of migrant experiences, that is (possible) feelings of dislocation and highly sensitive awareness of location and subject position within the native community, but these experiences and perceptions always include and are an amalgamation of political and historical connotations. Postcolonial migrant literature is always a political enterprise. In practical terms this concept implies a specific (non-Western) position from within the West as a starting point and consequently the depiction of a different, possibly oppositional perspective. As a label "postcolonial migrant literature" conjures up complex inter/cross-cultural relationships often based on the combinations of hierarchical and separating elements such as power, race classifications or subliminal notions of supremacy and national belonging and non-belonging. This implies as David Carter has noted that "literature is not just a set of individual texts or authors but rather a set of institutions and institutional practices which regulate the making and transmission of (literary) meanings in a given society" (18). As a consequence, the historical and political subtext, which is implicit in the migrant experience, defines the subject position of the migrant writer and his/her literary expressions.

The novels *Seasonal Adjustment* by Adib Khan and *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* by Christopher Cyrill are examples of first- and second-generation postcolonial migrant literature. Both novels are built on the underlying theme of individual migration processes from the Indian subcontinent to Australia and explore through their characters experiences of migration, conceptualizations of cultural identities, and of home and belonging. Their stories are nevertheless told from within the dominant culture, the country of migration, and are a reflection of positionings derived from a specific site within the national community. The form of narration does not differ from dominant forms of narration. The engagement with the dominant culture describes the adaptation to dominant forms and its escape and modification at the same time. In this sense the novels stand for a dialogic encounter between dominant and marginal, and produce through their active participation in the dialogue, that is through self-representation, a converted reality from an inside position.

Seasonal Adjustment is a first-generation migrant novel and describes the story

of Bangladeshi Australian Iqbal Chaudhary. Due to a crisis in marriage to his Anglo-Australian wife Michelle, Iqbal decides to return to his former home country Bangladesh after an absence of eighteen years. His journey depicts a search for the familiarity of a time past, a search for cultural roots and belonging. This novel of self-discovery, of belonging and displacement is embedded within the comparison of East and West, within cultural negotiations and the juxtaposition of lives in Bangladesh and Australia.

As a postcolonial migrant Iqbal is thrown into feelings of loss, of a past left behind and simultaneously into a specific perception in the country of arrival leading to both the question of identity and to a search of belonging. He says:

Do you know what it means to be a migrant? A lost soul forever adrift in search of a tarnished dream? You believe in a perpetual state of conflict, torn between what was and what should have been. There is a consciousness of a permanent loss. You get sick of wearing masks to hide your confused aloneness. You can never call anything your own. But out of this deprivation emerges an understanding of humanity unstifled by genetic barriers. No, I wouldn't have it any other way. I have had my prejudices trimmed to manageable proportions. You realise that behind the trappings of cultural differences human strengths and failures are global constants. That is a very precious knowledge. A Bangali can be just as indifferent, mean, egotistical, loving, creating, heroic, generous, humane, cruel and greedy as an Australian. It makes you appreciate mixture which binds humanity, and I am part of it. No better no worse than anyone, but an equal. An equal because I know I am a composite of all those contradictory characteristics which are far stronger than any racial or religious differences. And that is worth celebrating. (143)

Iqbal explores different stages in his migrant experience. The first stage could be termed the "arrival stage" and is concerned with the comparison between past and present, and, equally, the comparison between good and bad or better and worse. The juxtaposition of two worlds, the one left behind and the one of arrival and future residence, is a common theme in migrant literature. Either freely chosen or an externally forced destiny, the arrival of a migrant in the new country leads to the confrontation of a vaguely defined and still to be identified subject position. The estrangement from the past and the strangeness of the present, the experience of being inside and at the same time outside one's immediate situation, the impossibility of return, depicts the (emotional) migrant story as one related to conflicts, powerlessness and losses (King *et al* xv). The migrant is caught constantly between oppositions—past and present, belonging and non-belong-

ing, here and there, inside and outside to name a few, forced to choose from either side or to develop an identity of combining elements. Iain Chambers has described this condition as “the drama of the stranger”:

To come from elsewhere, from “there” and not “here,” and hence to be simultaneously “inside” and “outside” the situation at hand, is to live at the intersection of histories and memories, experiencing both their preliminary dispersal and their subsequent translation into new, more extensive, arrangements along emerging routes. It is simultaneously to encounter the languages of powerlessness and the potential intimations of heterotopic futures. This drama, rarely freely chosen, is also the drama of the stranger. Cut off from the homelands of tradition, experiencing a constantly challenged identity, the stranger is perpetually required to make herself at home in an interminable discussion between a scattered historical inheritance and a heterogeneous present. (14)

At the moment of arrival the migrant tries to find an orientation, initially comparing the new environment with the home and past left behind. The disconnection from a seemingly culturally stable past and homeland confronts the migrant with the problem of an identity constantly put into question by the reconsideration of the formerly lived culture as well as with the handling of this individual past in the cultural present. The position of the migrant and the perception of being a stranger in the sense of being outside the community or even more a postcolonial stranger are mutually experienced, that is both, the migrant and the host society are informed by overlapping discourses. Similarly, the perception and discernment of historical facets are shared experiences (though not shared positions) bound to and defined through location and space. “Questions of identity,” says Papastergiadis, “are always posed in relation to space.” But, as he continues, “space is neither a flat stage upon which subjects perform their historical task, nor a predefined volume through which they pass. Space is both a transformative force and a field that is transformed by the interactions that occur within it” (52). Iqbal Chaudhary’s reflections of his position as a migrant show the inclusion of the multiple facets contributing to his space within the new community; at the same time he is elucidating the consequent result of this space and is setting it in relation to personal change. In his exploration he is moving from the personal level of being a migrant to the general level of the perception of cultural and historical relations before moving back to the personal level and expressing the consequent individual changes derived from this contemplation. In this “discontinuous state of being” (Said 360) the migrant is trying to find, to make meaning of the changed world around him. This search for meaning, Paul

Carter says:

Begins in an immediate physical and intellectual perception that the cultural system in which migrants move and act and speak does not speak for them; rather, it treats them as “nature,” raw material to be turned into objects (submissive citizens) whose worth can be calculated in terms of stability of the status quo. (119)

But there is movement. Iqbal Chaudhary’s position in the new community is not necessarily a fixed, static and inflexible space in the present history of the West. On a very personal level he perceives, he experiences, he is transformed. This implies that he is also an agent, and this agency forces him to move on to the next stage that could be termed the stage of “awareness” of his subject position within the community. His position is characterized by a distance from the community and by a “confused aloneness” leading, as a result, to the awareness of the diverse factors, internal and external, which constitute his space and which inaugurate modification and revision of his personal worldview. Cultural difference, prejudice and bias are thought of in relative terms. “I have my prejudices trimmed to manageable proportions,” he remarks and then concludes, “behind the trappings of cultural differences human strengths and failures are global constants.” Thus, Iqbal arrives at the last stage of “comprehension” or “insight,” the basic understanding of humankind in which the classifying binaries of East and West find their dissolution and nullification. This journey of self-discovery, of transformation on a very personal level depicts a possible, or even idealistic and desirable, outcome of a postcolonial migrant experience and as such appears to be too simplistic and one-dimensional. But Iqbal’s position is not only a personal reaction to his individual experience in a foreign world; he is negotiating and comparing cultural constants based on historically determined discursive realities.

As a consequence and through this negotiation the voice of Iqbal is positioned in an interstitial space and is grounded in ambivalence and ambiguity. In the course of the narration the process of his personal negotiations of belonging leads Iqbal through divergent positionings of the self within these negotiations. His voice moves seemingly unpredictably between a Western influenced discourse through which he distances himself from Bangladesh to a position in which he rejects Australia as his ultimate place of belonging. The following two paragraphs depict this very clearly:

Travelling beyond Dhaka is like taking a giant leap back in time. The countryside is steeped in superstition and quaint customs which fascinate me much in the same way as a museum might strike a romantic chord in a present-day technocrat ruled by the precision of a microship. The pucca roads, radiating from the city like the arms

of a starfish, are the only enduring symbols of impenetrable depths of an ancient way of life. (10–11)

There is a medieval dankness about the place. In some ways Ballarat is a very Christian city. It encourages propriety, self-restraint and tolerance. Perhaps that has something to do with its stoical acceptance of anything foreign, as long as it is not too outrageous. Culturally it is an active city. There are several theatrical companies which tirelessly churn out their yearly share of musicals and comedies. Never anything too serious or intellectually demanding. We are too provincial for that. [. . .] It is a community I do not threaten. I feel safe in the streets, knowing that at any given time I form a minority of one. (121–22)

Although both Australia's and Bangladesh's rural areas are being associated with medieval times, the outcome of the contemplation differs. Bangladesh's primitivism is accompanied by uneven dirt roads ending in a nowhere land, whereas Ballarat's provincialism is interrupted through cultural activities taking place in a safe, quiet and tolerant environment. Iqbal's depiction of rural areas of Bangladesh and Australia, and his mode of representation appear to be a mere reflection of the modern view of the world. Iqbal is fascinated by the East, regards it from a distance and thus does not incorporate himself into its body. Instead he is talking of Ballarat by using the plural pronoun "we." Nothing in Ballarat is "too serious or intellectually demanding," he says. "We are too provincial for that" (121). Although Iqbal talks on the one hand from a Westernized position placing himself on the side of the superior, he at the same time excludes himself from this side. In the same paragraph in which he signifies his status of unquestioned belonging to the community of Ballarat, he withdraws this. "It is a community I do not threaten," he remarks, pointing to the space of the outside to which he feels himself being confined. Belonging to a controllable minority group which is too small to intimidate Ballarat's mainly Anglo-Australian community, his (Anglicized) *otherness* is tolerated. The applied perspective signifies the clearly operating colonial discourse which establishes the borders of Inside and Outside; it simultaneously refers to the potential border crossings through the adaptation of a Westernized view of the world. And this potential border crossing deconstructs the Manicheanism of the imperial ideology and unbinds the colonial subject from confinement.

Iqbal's description of Bangladesh and Ballarat is bound to the concept of positioning himself within the Australian community. And positioning, as Bill Ashcroft points out, is "a matter of representation, of giving concrete form to ideological concepts. Representation describes both the site of identity formation and the site of the *struggle* over identity formation" (4). Iqbal escapes a clearly definable catego-

rization through his ambiguous representation which eventually leads to new forms of contemplating identities and to new forms of incorporating them into a cultural reality. In a much clearer way the ambivalence of his position is expressed when Iqbal, contemplating his former home town in Bangladesh, realizes:

The disparity between the large, *pucca* houses and the tin and bamboo shacks underlines the glaring inequalities of a third-world nation. As it happens, Bangladesh is just about the poorest country in the world. It is a fact I have never been able to confirm without a humiliating feeling of shame. Deep inside me there are doubts I shall never express openly because they threaten my most fundamental values. Are Bengalis, in some ways, naturally deficient? Do these deplorable conditions reflect a racial limitation which condemns us to perpetual abjection? As a race, are we destined to survive a technologically aggressive twenty-first century? I have made an effort to develop a mechanism of escaping the onslaught of such misgivings by reminding myself that I have adopted another country. These are not my problems. I shouldn't take them personally. The ploy does not succeed. I cannot remove the weight of this perturbation, this feeling of frustrated sorrow and pain as if I were somehow on the outside of myself, watching my own slow death. (42)

Iqbal's position, both the perceived space of belonging as well as the way of representing his position, is constructed through ambivalence. He describes himself as belonging to Australia, that is, to the developed West, by contemplating Bangladesh through distant and distinctive eyes. But he is belonging *not quite* and is moving in between feelings of being included and excluded within the communities in Australia and Bangladesh likewise.

Formerly established positions revealing themselves in contemporary operating discourses and their modification through indeterminacy play the crucial role in dissolving the notions of separated entities. In the course of the narration the division of the two cultures undergoes revision by describing new experiences (positive or negative) and their possible outcome, signifying the impossibility of maintaining the previously established worldview.

The second-generation postcolonial migrant novel *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* demonstrates a further possibility of undermining borders through a specific way of positioning the self within Australia. The main character Christopher, in opposition to Iqbal, did not experience the physical movement from the country of his parents, but was born shortly after his parent's migration from India to Australia. His life is characterized by an upbringing in an Australian community in between his Indian relatives. Thus, his appearance and existence in a Western

space is approached as a life “not really belonging,” originating from the notion of not being “of” the place.

Christopher’s position in the contemporary world has a variety of origins. It is, on the one side, constructed historically and politically by the awareness of being placed in a space often perceived as being outside the community; he would be characterized as belonging to a marginal group, being a minority within the (white) Australian community. His upbringing in Australia, on the other side, his concrete and sometimes felt distance from an Indian community places him similarly on the margin of the Indian communities in Australia:

My relatives all seemed to love me as soon as they saw me. I felt nothing for them the first time we met, and even after they had lived with me for a few months I still felt estranged from many of them. Whenever I watched an uncle smoking a hookah, or heard an aunt talk about her ayah, or saw my grandmother turning slippers the right way up, I felt like the foreigner in their country. (38)

The migrant experience is always related to the intermingling of divergent cultures, it always signifies possibilities of different positionalities and, with this, opens up possibilities of transformation. Christopher, though born in Australia, experiences through his parents a close connection to their country of origin, India. The constant flow of relatives from India arriving in Australia and being sponsored by his parents confronts Christopher with the existence of another place and lead to the comprehension of other spaces. Through this confrontation he is, furthermore, observing the experiences and transformations of his relatives after their arrival in the new country. He sees his cousin Manjay keeping record “of how many Indians he had seen while shopping or on the bus,” and his cousin Vismara “refusing to wear anything but saris during the day” (35). Christopher is experiencing forms of “border negotiations” and of “border crossings.”

Papastergiadis has pointed out “that cultures do not need to be rooted in a given place, that fragments of culture can survive in multiple places, that cultural meanings may leap across generations and transform themselves across the gaps of time” (123). The spaces, having their origin in transformation, give room for different manifold positions within one society. It is the “living through difference” which has the capacity to unravel hegemonic practices and to establish new forms of discourses. This implies that the migrant is crossing the border not only in the very concrete physical and geographical sense, but also in the symbolic sense, so that the migrant’s space cannot be encapsulated into fixed, unmovable boundaries. Crossing the border in the very concrete sense and moving into the Western space, means, in the abstract, shifting the border to a *touching distance*, and with this challenging the “universal thought—reason, theory, the West—that has historically masked the

presence of a particular voice, sex, sexuality, ethnicity and history, and has only granted the “Other” a presence in order to confirm its own premises (and prejudices)” (Chambers 70). The crossing of borders, the flexibility of spaces, and the notion of de-essentialism signify the search for a solution and for a concept to foster this world and to make sense for the individual.

In *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* the encounters and the overlapping of cultures are explored through memories, imaginations and the world of the mind. In one of his imaginations Christopher describes the intermingling of stories producing another story. The interflow is symbolized through the diversified ingredients in an Indian dish, signifying the transgression of borders and the possibility of taking on contradictory positions. He says:

I stirred chicken korma, added a teaspoon of salt and a teaspoon of sugar. The curry was white and brown, flecked with green and streaked with orange. As I stirred I imagined that I was combining the stories my father had told me about India. (68)

I imagined that all stories were coloured by their ingredients, as loaves of bread are coloured by corn, wheat or eggs. I remembered stories about kings dicing for empires, knights battling giants, and explorers exasperated by their inability to locate rivers, map oceans, and sail seas. Many stories reminded me of other stories. I believed that those told of a girl and lover, or the plumage of a parakeet, or told of the death of a child, were all ingredients of another, endless story. I imagined that one day I would buy from an op-shop a book by an anonymous author which combined stories of angels, floods and houses. (69)

The stories that are composing one’s life, the routes one decides to take, are the material out of which identity is constructed. If someone is asked about his/her identity, Madan Sarup points out, “a story soon appears. Our identity is not separated from what happened” (15). These stories, it can be added, interflow into each other and contribute to new stories. The interflow of stories prevents categorizations based on previously established discourses.

Christopher is negotiating his identity and is constantly creating new positions from where to view the world. He is informed by two separately considered cultures, so that his imaginations are a conglomeration of two sides. They encompass notions of outside and inside. And within this world he is making his own choices and establishes his own positions which are fluid and de-essentialized. His identity is rooted in more than one space and his routes develop from the intermingling of diversified worlds.

Postcolonial literature and postcolonial discourse by concentrating on the relationship of center and periphery, politically and subjectively, accentuate a politics of opposition and open up a debate about norms of literature and standards of social and cultural formations. The changes and critique by forms of postcolonial explorations of seemingly established values and representations are evoked as Albert Wendt points out in the introduction of *Nuanua: Pacific Writing in English since 1980*, “by what it says and how it says it” (3). It is the articulation, the enunciation that matters, the restructuring and reformation of modes of representation through other representations that direct the way towards different statements.

In both novels *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* and *Seasonal Adjustments* the crucial point of departure is the denial of two separately existing entities. The postcolonial migrant can only speak “alongside” the Other, the Centre, because both are existing in combination with each other. Thus, it is a movement away from linearity towards an “open” circularity with diverse and manifold subject positions.

In terms of literary categorization, Christopher and Iqbal’s representation implies that postcolonial migrant literature does not belong to a space outside the national community but defines a specific position within the community. It is because of this that it blurs and moves boundaries and borders. Consequently, the keeping of control of literary spaces and the attempt of securing a literary tradition has a double effect. On the one hand both engender an authentication of a definable Australian culture and literature, on the other hand the validity of a distinguishable Australian literature is undermined by the construction of new spaces which are only viable in combination. Postcolonial migrant literature can only exist within the Australian space. The Outside is then simultaneously the Inside. The naming of new formations points to the heterogeneity of a location. It shows that movement and diversified perceptions of spaces create breaks and fissures which eventually lead to new imaginings of the nation, culture, and its literature. The heterogeneous character of the national literature forces one to read differently. It sets in motion a perspective that is shaped by a nation of diversified, even incomparable cultural combinations, leading to the understanding of Australian literary history as a continuing intercultural dialogue (Veit 99). The appearance of the other within the same border, in the concrete and abstract, the hearing of an-other within the same border, defining and shifting the space of belonging blurs and distracts the definitions of a concrete and valid dividing line.

The stories created, though told from uncountable positions, tell the stories of a place with many spaces, and although Iqbal and Christopher are constantly crossing borders (in the metaphorical sense), their stories find existence and meaning only within the specific boundaries they are negotiating. Their stories and unique narratives from very different positions lead to the abolishment of borders, of clearly definable separated spaces, of identifiable binary oppositions, of the signifier and the signified. The mutual necessity and need of Inside and Outside not only

put the notions of binary oppositions into question but undermine and confuse the concepts of clear-cut borderlines and of unmovable social patterns. Exclusion is no longer exclusion. The realization and comprehension of an existence, of another that touches and affects the own space, forces a reply to one's own belonging space in the world.

So, what happens to the construction of a floating India? In *The Ganges and Its Tributaries* the outcome is that the father decides one day to throw the model away and ends the construction of two disparate, even, opposing positions. Christopher narrates:

My father had thrown the model of India away [. . .] Rainwater had caused the dye of the shoelaces to run, creating fictitious tributaries of the Ganges that ran up through the Himalayas, across the silken Thar Desert, and down through Mysore and Madurai to the Gulf of Mannar. The sandalwood Himalayas had been chipped away by my stray cover drives, and the wind had blown all the toothpicks from the map. Occasionally I would find a flag of India in the garden when I went to retrieve a cricket ball. (148)

The postcolonial migrant author lives in a country in which s/he finds him/herself in a pre-defined, that is excluded, space filled with past and present imaginations from an *other* side. At the same time the postcolonial migrant writer modifies this space through his/her narrations and diversified forms of imagining. Forms of encounters always lead to certain effects, carrying within them moments of change, of re-structuring, of transformation. Therefore, encounters between East and West cannot be regarded as static, and although patterns of formerly perceptible structures show themselves in modified ways their spaces are flexible and their borders mutable and inconsistent.

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