DIVING INTO THE WRECK

An investigation into the 'other' voices of history within the discourse of colonialism and slavery

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2000/589

by

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submitted in part fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in Literary Studies

in the

Department of English Language and Literature

at the

University of Cape Town

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The financial assistance of the Centre for Science Development (HSRC, South Africa) towards this research is hereby acknowledged. Opinions expressed and conclusions arrived at are those of the author and are not necessarily to be attributed to the Centre for Science Development.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the occlusion of 'other' voices within the discourse of colonialism and slavery. The work juxtaposes four texts from the seventeenth and twentieth-centuries, respectively, as a way of examining the continued weight of past history on our postcolonial present. The theoretical framework is drawn from postcolonial and postmodern literary theory with an emphasis on the problematics of speaking for the 'other' in twentieth-century literary revisions.

Chapter 1 examines William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an example of the discourse of colonialism. Throughout there is an emphasis on the reciprocal influence between text and socio-political context. Chapter 2 moves on to a recent intertextual reworking of the play in Marina Warner's *Indigo*. The major focus here is the efficacy of her dialogic remapping of the play as resistance culture. Chapter 3 returns to the seventeenth-century to examine Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* as simultaneously the 'history' of a royal slave and her story of colonizing/colonized womanhood. A major focus here is the need to avoid the conflation of the marginalised position of woman as 'other' with the similar, but by no means identical, position of the slaves she speaks for. With this in mind, I place her story next to Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* which moves the silence and masking within early slave narratives to sound through her enigmatic title character – Beloved.

metonymic parallels drawn between capitalist greed and cannibalism. As Marina Warner comments:

> What is of acute interest is that Turner gives so many different strokes and colours to the single metaphor of consuming and being consumed, devouring and being devoured.[5]

Attention to this detail focuses on one of the paradoxes at work in the discourse of colonialism. Defining the 'other' as less than human fixes alterity in a justificatory, hierarchical relationship; yet the painting fractures the dividing line between civilised centre and barbarous margin through the metonymic alliance between the devouring 'sea monsters' and capitalist greed.

It is the aim of this dissertation to seek out such fractures in four textual canvases, to dive beneath the waves and pay attention to those drowned voices of history, to re-view "the drowned face always staring toward the sun".[6] With this in mind I have chosen to juxtapose two seventeenth-century texts with two twentieth-century texts. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* continues to arouse much contemporary debate within postcolonial theory, and plays an important role in many literary 're-visions'. I have chosen one of the most recent of these, Marina Warner's *Indigo*, as a vehicle to question both the efficacy of intertextual re-visions as resistance culture and the continuing theoretical debate surrounding attempts to speak for the 'other'. From here our dive will return to the seventeenth-century to examine Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* as an example of perhaps one of the earliest slave narratives. My choice of juxtaposition here is once more drawn from a concern with the narrating voice. Much of the contemporary debate surrounding Behn's text focuses on the position of Behn as both woman and colonialist speaking 'for' her royal slaves. With this in mind we return to the twentieth-

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[5] Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters*, p. 67.

[6] Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, *ll* 64-65.

century to examine the voice of the slave as 'other' in Toni Morrison's *Beloved.* A concomitant focus of the dissertation falls on the position of the woman writer. For this reason I have chosen to focus on three women's texts as a way of examining the complex relationship between gender and race. Complex in the sense that there can be no easy conflation between the position of the woman writer as marginalised from literary, political and social structures, and the racial 'other' occupying a similar but by no means identical position.

Throughout our journey there will be an emphasis on the historical and social context from which the discourse arises. While it is impossible to recover the 'event' as 'event', this approach pays careful attention to the reciprocal relationship between text and context. Bearing in mind Rich's awareness of the interlinkings between language and power, language and ideology

> The words are purposes
> The words are maps[7]

the texts will be examined as a social, cultural and ideological cartography. Before beginning the descent it is necessary to ascertain the theoretical background, to equip our search with the 'knives' necessary to cut through the interlocking layers of discourse, simultaneously remaining aware that each forms a particular frame through which to 're-view' the textual canvas. However, this descent towards the silenced 'other' is no smooth dive, no easy insertion of the names of 'others' into the book of myths. In reaching the wreck we need to remain aware of the problematics surrounding the absence of Friday's tongue, and take our cue from Cixous' awareness of the 'other' as both imprisoned by and escaping representation.[8] While our purpose may be to arrive at "the thing itself and not the

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[7] Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, *ll* 52-53.
[8] I am referring here to the two quotations at the beginning of this section.

myth",[9] in seeking to unlock the tongue of those silenced 'others' one constantly runs the risk of instituting strategies which replace the voice of colonial power with a similarly appropriative discourse. Gayatri Spivak draws attention to this problem in her essay on *Jane Eyre*:

> No perspective critical of imperialism can turn the other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always historically refracted what might have been the absolutely other into a domesticated other that consolidates the imperial self.[10]

Texts such as *The Tempest* and *Oroonoko* demonstrate the accuracy of Spivak and Cixous' awareness in that the 'other' functions in both to consolidate the identity of the Eurocentric self, only able to access a voice through the language of those in power. J.M. Coetzee acknowledges this problem by refusing to mimic Friday's voice. The absence of Friday's tongue captures the linguistic dispossession enacted by colonialism. However, it will be argued that while we may never arrive at the 'thing itself', Friday's story may be partially 're-viewed' through seeking sites of resistance and re-vision. It is this strategy that Warner has in mind in her evocative recovery of Caliban's story, a story which is literally born from the womb of a drowned slave. Her answer to Shakespeare's Prospero complex is thus to institute what may best be termed a Bakhtinian dialogism; dialogic in terms of the multiple voices which are articulated throughout the text, undercutting any hegemonic rendering of 'history'. She uses her paintbrush in multiple ways to re-dye the Shakespearean canvas.[11] The problem of representing the 'other' story is sharply drawn in Morrison's *Beloved*, the repetition of the

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[9] Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, ℓ 63.
[10] Gayatri Spivak, *Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism*, p. 253.
[11] Dye is linked to the title of the novel *Indigo*, and the use of colours to suggest multiple perspectives.

move away from a view of culture as unified according to an inside/outside or self/other dichotomy, towards a focus on the interstices of both cultural and subjective identity:

> What emerges as an effect of such incomplete signification is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated.[17]

The formation of what Cixous ironically labels the "noble 'advanced' countries"[18] is thus the macro result of Hegel's master/slave dialectic; national consciousness, like subjective identity, appears to be linked to an international dimension (an 'other'). Moreover the paradoxes at the heart of Hegel's dialectic become on this macro scale the ideological ambivalence of cultural identity which Bhabha will go on to label as the space of a hybridity which may play an important role in resistance culture.

Hegel's master/slave dialectic is crucial for examining racial ideologies through the awareness it shows of the necessity of an 'other' in forming a sense of 'self':

> Self-consciousness exists in and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say it is only by being recognised.[19]

The important aspect of this argument lies in the reciprocal need for mutual recognition when examined in specific historical circumstances. Awareness of the self relies on an 'other', yet if this 'other' is denied a similar 'selfhood' from which to recognise the 'other' as object, one is left with the narcissistic subjectivity of the coloniser and the alienated subjecthood of the

[17] Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 4.
[18] Hélène Cixous, quoted in Robert Young, *White Mythologies* , p. 1.
[19] Hegel, quoted in Richard Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction*, p. 48.

various representations of the 'other' in colonialist discourse. It is this project that Edward Said has in mind in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Said traces the numerous ways in which the 'other' is produced through discourse for the west in a manner which moves along the axis of identity and disavowal. Said's work shows an awareness of the link between language and power, demonstrating that representations of the 'other' are collusive with the western desire for mastery. In *Culture and Imperialism* his focus falls on the ways in which aesthetic representations of the 'other' play an important role in forming an individuality for the European centre.[28] While Said plays an important role in drawing attention to the interstice between representations of the 'other' and the 'other' beyond representation, his writing seems to offer little space for resistance culture, seemingly leaving the instrument of power in the hands of the colonisers. It is Bhabha who builds onto Said's argument an awareness of the conflictual economy at the heart of western representations. Bhabha draws attention to the ways in which stereotypical representations interact with the actual in a way that leads to ambivalence. While colonial discourse may appear to be hegemonic

> it carries within it a flaw invisible at home but increasingly apparent abroad when it is away from the safety of the west.[29]

This 'flaw' is related to the ambivalent desire and anxiety of the coloniser gazing on the 'other'; the need to make the 'other' knowable and recognisable, yet different. The result of this process of identity and disavowal is that the coloniser is faced with a displaced image of the self:

> The representative figure of such a perversion ... is the image of post-enlightenment man, tethered to, not confronted by his dark reflection, the shadow of colonised man, that splits his presence ... the Otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity.[30]

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[28] The role of the novel in developing a European identity will be further examined in Chapters 1 and 3.
[29] Homi Bhabha, quoted in Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 143.
[30] Homi Bhabha, quoted in Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 153.

recognise is the dialogic competition taking place in 'criticism' itself. Every piece of Shakespearean criticism is both a work of critical theory and a form of ideological practice. In this sense one can draw parallels between Prospero's struggle to control semiosis, with the concomitant marginalisation of 'other' voices, and similar hegemonic strategies of critical interpretation. One sees this type of occlusion taking place in Frank Kermode's introduction to the Arden Edition. While one may agree that a central concern of Renaissance culture is the confrontation between culture and nature, concentration on this aspect alone effaces the euphemisation of power moves such universal oppositions enact:

> If Aristotle was right that 'men ... who are as much inferior to others as the body is to the soul ... are slaves by nature' ... then the black and mutilated cannibal must be the natural slave of the European gentleman, and a fortiori, the *Salvage* and *deformed* Caliban of the learned Prospero.[10]

By conjoining Aristotle's discourse on the natural division of the species into masters and slaves, to the colonial discourse fixing alterity as sub-human and thus befitting the position of slave, Kermode repeats the euphemisation of power and ideology enacted by both the text and colonial discourse as a whole. Hegel's master/slave dialectic traces the fractures, exposing these positions as the basis of civilised self-consciousness, carrying within it the contradictions of identity and disavowal once transported to the colonial context:

> The Hegelian dialectic embraces the contradictions flattened out by Aristotle and Kermode. The master's own certainty is doomed to be mediated by the recognition of one unworthy of *recognizing* him. His *superiority* over *nature* is also mediated by the work of a slave ...[11]

By focusing on such fractures in both text and context, one can begin to trace the movement of order/disorder enacted in the play. Similarly, a questioning of the ideological perspective subtending any critical interpretation can guard the critic from becoming one of many

[10] Frank Kermode, Introduction to *The Tempest*, p. xlii (Arden Edition).

[11] Malcolm Evans, *Signifying Nothing*, p. 78; disavowal can be traced through the slippery nature of Caliban's status as man/animal/slave; while identity focuses on his language and comes to a head in Prospero's words: "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (Act V, sc i, *ll* 275-276).

Prosperos seeking to control semiosis. With this in mind our journey through the cartography of the text will hopefully echo Barthes' aim of a writerly reading, opening the text to what plurality constitutes it rather than being driven by a logocentric drive for closure. An approach which echoes the text's own movement between language as resemblance and language as illusion, reminding us of Prospero's famous speech a propos the illusory nature of representation:

> We are such stuff
> as dreams are made on, and our little life
> is rounded with a sleep. (Act IV, sc i, ℓℓ 156-158)

1.1 *This Tunis, Sir, was Carthage*: Discursive conflicts in *The Tempest*

Gonzalo's offhand connecting of seventeenth-century Tunis with Virgil's Carthage has been the subject of much debate in recent interpretations of the text. The ambiguity of Gonzalo's cathecting of the ancient world of Virgil's *Aeneid* with the contemporary world of Mediterranean trade is evidence of a larger movement within the play as a whole which can be read in terms of the conflict between competing discourses for signification. This movement is described by Peter Hulme as the competition between old and new world terms. Examining the title of the play, he argues that there are two ways of dealing with the novelty of experience: one can either domesticate it under a current signifier (Tempest) or mark it as completely 'other' by subsuming it under an alien signifier. Shakespeare uses the Arawak derived term 'hurricane' in other texts, so why does he use the known signifier 'Tempest' to describe what on many levels is a novel experience? Closer examination reveals that the title of the play proffers a clue to the ambiguities and contradictions at the heart of colonial discourse – the movement between identity and disavowal.

Throughout the play one can trace signifiers which link to the discourse of treason, not only applied to those marginalised from power and discourse, but also to those members of the central authority who evince similar threats to Prospero's hegemonic control.[24] It is important to note that it is Prospero himself who allows the growth of both threats to stability, suggesting that he manipulates these plots for his own ends. One possible reason is that it allows him to re-enact his original supplanting as Duke of Milan some years before, but this time with himself firmly in control. In this sense, Shakespeare mirrors the manipulation of oppositional discourse by those in powerful positions. Renaissance England was full of reports of treason – some actual, some fanciful – linked to religious upheavals, inter-European conflicts and class shifts during the period. The discourse of treason grew up around an awareness of the usefulness of what one may term the aestheticisation of politics.[25] Opposition to those in power was by no means monologic or connected to one sector of society, thus it was necessary to continually consolidate the power base of those in authority by the public display of punishment in 'mini-dramas' of torture. It was no longer a matter of discarding a traitor but of developing both discursive and cultural representations which vividly exposed the results of threats to the central authority. Treason was no longer simply a discourse but also a cultural product – text and flesh – ranging from pamphlets, sermons and proclamations, to public displays of body parts, public torture and execution. In these terms the 'pinches' Caliban is threatened with begin to take on ominous tones. As Breight comments on the implications of the discourse of treason in the play:

> Shakespeare's ambiguous representation of colonialism can be juxtaposed with what I take to be his sly perception of conspiratorial manipulation by European authorities.[26]

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[24] Here I am referring to the two levels of usurpation plots: Antonio and Sebastian's plans to kill Alonso on the one hand given comic relief and mimicry in the subplot of the three marginalised characters.

[25] This term was coined by Walter Benjamin in his essay: *The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction*.

[26] Curt Breight, *Treason doth never prosper*, p. 5.

This 'sly perception' surfaces in many instances of Prospero's manipulation of the characters. For example, the 'freezing' of Ferdinand in Act I affords an example of the euphemisation of power; while it is clearly Prospero's 'magical' powers that 'freeze' Ferdinand, this is displaced by the reference to Ferdinand's traitorous conscience.

> Prospero: ... put thy sword up, traitor,
> who mak'st a show but dar'st not strike, thy conscience
> is so possessed with guilt. (Act I, sc ii, *ll* 470-472)

In this instance one sees the displacement of the naked exercise of power, while in the assassination attempt of Antonio and Sebastian one sees the production of treason as a weapon to be used by Prospero to consolidate his power through blackmail at the end of the play.

By far the most important and interesting operation within Prospero's manipulation of this discourse appears in the sub-plot co-joining the masterless and the savage. In the Introduction I examined the anxiety and curiosity (even envy) evinced towards those on the margins of society through the trope of the wildman, as well as the use of this trope as a weapon of social control. Within this context the alliance between Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban is not only an issue of social class but also an intra-class weapon utilised here as a lesson to the aristocracy on the results of attempts to topple Prospero from power.[27] In this reading one can interpret the sudden interruption of the masque, as Prospero seemingly returns from oblivion to the world of 'realpolitik', as his most potent manipulation; re-enacting the anxiety of power from a quarter that can be easily dealt with. As Breight comments, this goes to the heart of the paradox of the [Renaissance] ruler

[27] The subplot dramatically enacts the aestheticisation of politics discussed earlier.

> Paradoxically it is the eloquent power of civility which allows him to know his own meaning, offering him a site of resistance.[33]

In this sense Miranda and Prospero's efforts to teach Caliban to speak (English) mirror the linguistic colonisation of peoples in the new world.[34] Language barriers challenged ideals of universalism as well as the isomorphic relation between language and reality widely believed at the time. This challenge was dealt with in various ways, either through assuming that the 'savages' had no language at all, or connecting their language to barbarism and instilling the learning of English as part of the justificatory civilising mission bringing the savage to reason and knowledge of God. In this sense language moves along the lines of disavowal and identity, either pushing the 'other' towards absolute difference, or through the learning of English, allowing a measure of likeness which then becomes a threat to English identity. These attitudes are captured in Miranda's words to Caliban:

> I pitied thee
> Took pains to make thee speak ...
> ... When thou did not, Savage,
> know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
> With words that made them known. (Act I, sc ii, *ll* 352-357)

The movement of identity and disavowal is clear. As Stephen Greenblatt comments, Shakespeare places

> Caliban at the outer limits of difference ['Abhorrèd Slave'] only to insist upon a mysterious measure of resemblance.[35]

Ironically knowing his own purpose and meaning gives Caliban a space for resistance – a space from which to 'curse'. Perhaps his most important point of enunciation is his counter-claim to the island in Act I. Ariel and Caliban disrupt Prospero's hegemonic control of the

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[33] Paul Brown, *This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine*, p. 59 (Dollimore and Sinfield, eds).
[34] The 'curse' of linguistic dispossession echoes through Behn's *Oroonoko* and Defoe's *Friday* to Frederick Douglass's slave narrative.
[35] Stephen Greenblatt, *Learning to Curse*, p. 31.

Moreover one remains aware of the wish fulfilment of colonial power which echoes in Caliban's position:

> Caliban repudiates his claim of his own volition. The violence of slavery is abolished at a stroke and Caliban becomes just another feudal retainer whom Prospero can 'acknowledge mine'.[42]

1.4 Sycorax and Miranda – Black whore/White virgin

A freckled whelp, hag born ...

(Prospero to Ariel, Act I, sc ii, ℓ 283)

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and she said thou wast my daughter ...

(Prospero to Miranda, Act I, sc ii, ℓℓ 57-58)

In the same way that the text can be read as an intervention in both colonial and domestic ideologies, it also presents us with the discourse of patriarchy. Prospero's control of semiosis negotiates both his disquiet with regard to racial plunder and his disquiet with regard to women. In this sense the text brings together two important movements within the discourse of colonialism, revealing the importance of patriarchal transfer subtending anxieties of political and personal legitimacy and identity. While the voice of woman is largely marginalised in the play, the numerous references to women demonstrate the dependency of the centre on what is occluded. The representations of Sycorax and Miranda demonstrate the two extremes of feminine stereotyping.

[42] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 132. This wish-fulfilment is echoed in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in the scene in which Friday voluntarily kneels to kiss Crusoe's foot.

> Between them they split the patriarchal stereotype of woman as the white devil, virgin and whore, goddess ... and witch.[43]

Between them they tell the story of colonised and colonising women. Within the political context of the Renaissance, women played a pivotal role in legitimising political power. Their only real power in a sense related to their ability to give birth; their danger deriving from the same source since the question regarding the legitimacy of a child could never be absolutely answered. Prospero deals with the problem of legitimacy in two ways. He derives his claim to Milan as hereditary succession – however the shakiness of this position surfaces in his narrative to Miranda in which her legitimacy ultimately relies on the word of an absent wife. The journey to the island enacts a transfer to a world of patriarchal origins through the parallels of Prospero's struggles to those of giving birth, with their arrival at the island imaged as a re-birth occluding maternal presence. However, Prospero's self-created power is under threat from the counter-claim of Caliban, based as it is on hereditary succession from a woman. Prospero's discursive agility deals with this threat through the production of Sycorax as a libidinous whore, and Caliban the result of her union with the devil. In this, Prospero's power is absolute since Sycorax is not present to contest his allegations. Moreover, he has fixed a representation of the past in the mind of Ariel, thus dexterously giving us an 'other' voice which mimics his own. The discursive stereotyping of Sycorax as "blue eyed hag" must be seen within the context of Caliban's claim, since through the representation of Caliban's bastardy Prospero is able to perform a double checkmate:

> In deriving authority from his mother, he delivers himself into Prospero's hands: Prospero declares him a bastard ... thereby both disallowing any claim from inheritance and justifying his loathing for Caliban ... Caliban's claim seems to have been designed so that Prospero can disallow it ... we have no way of distinguishing facts about Caliban and Sycorax from Prospero's invective about them.[44]

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[43] Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, p. 151.

[44] Stephen Orgel, *Prospero's Wife*, p. 55 (Margaret Ferguson et al, eds).

In the same way that the discourse of rape serves to justify territorial usurpation, here the discourse of patriarchy serves to legitimise colonial take-over. Sycorax's representation thus mirrors the discursive production of colonised women as libidinous, promiscuous whores, *occluding* the sexual and physical abuse so often enacted by the colonists.[45]

While Sycorax is allowed no point of enunciation, the virginal white woman, Miranda, is present as another important aspect of Prospero's personal and political identity. Many critics have shown an aversion to the cruelty of Miranda's words to Caliban, preferring to connect them with Prospero; however her cruelty suggests the success of the patriarchal project, evincing the extent of Miranda's internalisation of Prospero's lessons. Miranda, like Caliban, is a prisoner of Prospero's discourse. She is in effect discursively produced by him – the perfect mimic. Moreover, she serves as an important cog in the ideological legitimisation of each of Prospero's actions: "I have done nothing but in care of thee" (I, ii, ℓ16). Caliban's enslavement protects her from rape, her marriage to Ferdinand ensures her future. However, like the other women, she remains object rather than subject of Prospero's actions. The representation of Miranda reflects many of the contradictions of white colonialist women. While she is refused a position of full agency, she plays an important role in consolidating the racial and sexual power relations of colonialism. Her representation as chaste virgin is pointedly opposite to the libidinous representation of the black woman, Sycorax, this opposition itself consolidating white womanhood. The contradictions of Miranda's position are interestingly mirrored in Behn's narrator, whose movements of identity and disavowal towards her noble savage (Oroonoko) can be read as the choice between the representational stance of a Miranda (chaste womanhood threatened by black sexuality) and a Desdemona (evincing sexual desire for a black 'other'). Her allegiance ultimately lies with the former.

[45] Warner's inversion of this trope will form an important area of discussion in the following chapter.

concede an exact categorical fit, "I don't really fit into ... these groups, I'm rather a hybrid."[6] I would argue that it is the hybridity of Warner's style and socio-cultural background that gives her work its particular attraction and energy. Homi Bhabha's description of hybridity appears to be a fitting description of Warner's intertextuality: a process whereby, while utilising the dominant forms of knowledge, other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and 'estrange the basis of its authority",[7]. While the novel utilises the 'dominant knowledge' of Shakespeare's play, one cannot view the novel as an intertext driven by its connection to this pre-text alone. Utilising other textual congeners and developing the gaps within the play can on one level be viewed as working along the axis of Linda Hutcheon's definition of postmodern parody as the play of difference at the heart of similarity:

> Parody is a perfect post-modern form ... for it paradoxically both *incorporates* and *challenges* that which it parodies.[8]

Parody and hybridity bear implicit connections. Parodic intertextuality is a useful weapon for postcolonial hybridity in its undercutting of hegemonic discourse, particularly that of history. Juxtaposing different types of discourse (history/fantasy/fictional) both subverts the truth effect of historical discourse and draws attention to the idea that all we can ever know of that past is through its textual remains. However it is important to distinguish Warner's use of these intertextual techniques from the more generalised 'mining' of cultural history evinced in many texts of the postmodern oeuvre.[9] Warner's intertextuality has a more postcolonial slant to it, evinced in the grounding of the text in particular socio-ideological contexts:

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[6] Marina Warner in Chantal Zabus, *Spinning a Yarn with Marina Warner*, p. 526.
[7] Homi Bhabha, *Signs taken for Wonders*, p. 154.
[8] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 11.
[9] For example, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*: Here intertextuality moves across a broad spectrum of intertextual echoes suggesting Derrida and Barthes' awareness of the impossibility of living outside the infinite text.

slavery ... Just another form of paid sex", p. 328) we are shown Xanthe's hard-hitting cynicism:

> Much the easiest way to get rid of that ... dependency you seem to hate is to have a set up that's completely legit ... I think your kind of freedom hampers you ... I just know that I have to choose rather carefully who I'm to depend on.
> (*Indigo*, pp. 328-9)

While Xanthe's cynicism appears to be punished at the moment she becomes vulnerable to love, Miranda is seemingly rewarded by Warner through her marriage to George Felix. She meets the actor again while he is involved in performing the part of Caliban.

> By bringing Miranda and Caliban together, Warner brings together the two victims of colonialist prosperity and, instead of the threat of rape, she offers a union based on the recognition of their mutual enslavement.[21]

The meeting is one of the finest coups of Warner's intertextuality. She juxtaposes the dialogic exchange of Caliban and Miranda in *The Tempest* with the subsequent conversation between Miranda and Felix – incisively undercutting Prospero's discourse of rape with the beginnings of the discourse of love. Felix goes to the heart of the toll of such racism on their present in his sense of the 'placelessness' which is the result of the mythologising that has buried the 'thing itself' beneath the wreck of history:

> I've ended up with no name. I am the unnameable ... You can feel you're marooned – have you felt that? (*Indigo*, p. 394)

The words beautifully demonstrate Warner's connecting of colour and voice, echoing the title of the novel's final movement – maroon/black – maroon here echoing the non-place of his/story and hers. The decision to be free to enter into dialogic relation with an 'other' is envisaged as a personal desire to free themselves from the shackles of their respective historical past and present:

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[21] Chantal Zabus, *Prospero's Progeny Curses Back*, p. 135.

> We'll forget the Middle East, forget Aids, forget famine ... Because I'm so tired, as the poet said, of our fucking envy and your fucking guilt.[22]

Like Morrison, Warner both installs and subverts the scars of colonialism and slavery – the words remain as a story to pass on. Shakespeare's chess game of power is metamorphosed into the beginnings of a dialogic relationship in which divisions can be transgressed bringing together white queen and black pawn.

> They had begun play ... crossing the lines, crossing the squares, far out on the board in the other's sea. (*Indigo*, p. 396)

While Warner's image of intersubjectivity is an incisive re-encoding of these characters' former marginalisation one needs to question the Miranda-like idealism of her postcolonial hybridity here. It too easily conflates their position as black man and 'white' woman as mutual enslavement, attempting to 'forget', along with Felix, the continuing history of racial and ethnic violence which refuses to submerge. In this respect Warner mirrors the naivety of Antoinette's view of 'otherness' as freedom; a glance outward from the text is met with Tia's stone.

The stone preventing an easy insertion of the voice of others into the book of myths, as well as the more violent undercurrent within efforts of dialogue, can be seen in the more violent aspects of other postcolonial re-visions of the play. George Lamming's *Water with Berries* re-views the discourse of rape as surfacing in the Calibanic rage of those refused points of enunciation. In a chilling rendition of white paranoia, an actor who has been reduced to playing a corpse on stage (reminiscent of Caliban's linguistic imprisonment) rapes the leading actress. This re-vision is suggestive of the violence which results from colonial aggression

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[22] Marina Warner, *Indigo*, p. 395. This desire to forget resurfaces in Morrison's novel – both Sethe and Paul D. struggling to free themselves from their respective pasts. The naivety of such forgetfulness is traced by both Morrison and Warner.

are concretely imaged through the twenty four books of his library. However, Greenaway does show some cracks in Prospero's appropriative system, particularly through the figure of Caliban as a dancer moving in a realm outside language:

> Such a physical, material body seems painfully difficult to communicate through while at the same time establishing Caliban as a different order of being than the others contained by Prospero's words.[30]

In this sense one can draw parallels between the postmodernism of Greenaway and Coetzee in their awareness of an alterity beyond language. In a comparison of Greenaway and Warner one again comes up against the problematics of 'the thing itself or the myth'. Warner's dialogism subverts the ventriloquism of Greenaway's Prospero, yet one is still left with an authorial voice speaking for the 'other'.

2.3 The Island of the Time Before

The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

(*The Tempest*, Act III, sc ii, ℓℓ 139-141)

In part II of her novel entitled *Indigo/Blue* Warner paints a rich and complex canvas of life on Shakespeare's isle (Liamuiga) which evokes the dream space of the 'other'. Colour is used suggestively throughout the novel to imply this space beyond the representational economy of language, as well as a move beyond the stark binary oppositions of an either/or in attempts to fix difference:

> I'm actually interested in limits of language and of course colour is one of the areas where there's a difficulty. The eye perceives more than language can tell.[31]

[30] Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, p. 147.

[31] Marina Warner in Chantal Zabus, *Spinning a Yarn with Marina Warner*, p. 524. In this respect the title of her novel is an interesting one. Indigo is one of the world's oldest dyestuffs – used for cave paintings, artefacts and carrying religious and superstitious connotations in ancient civilisations. Moreover, it was used to 'write on the body' as decoration and warpaint. In this area the title echoes the alterity of Imoinda. Indigo resurfaces in our present as a popular dye for textiles and clothing. In this sense the title encompasses Warner's connection of past and present.

set out to attack in 'self-defence' are shown to be no more than two women protecting their own life and property. We witness the dialogic gap between the coloniser's words and intentions, in their determined manipulation of the islanders to learn the 'secrets of the isle', and their empty promises of temporary residence.

In this respect Warner brings to life the 'before time' of Prospero and Caliban's relationship, showing us the underside of Prospero's allegation of rape and Caliban's hostility. Prospero's allegation of rape is inverted here in a movement which suggests both the territorial rape of Liamuiga and the actual rape of island women by colonisers. The emptiness of the colonisers' promise to leave within an allotted time period is traced through the ironic re-naming of the island as *Blessed Child* and the traffic of letters between Kit and England leading to his eventual instalment as Governor of the island.[37] Perhaps the most incisive subversion of religious justification occurs in the lead up to Ariel's 'rape' by Kit in which we witness him masturbating to the rhythm of religious incantation:

> 'The Lord is my shepherd, I'll not want.' I want he thought, I want, I want her still ... He was holding himself rhythmically now, pumping with long, smooth strokes ... 'Lord be my shepherd' ... With a series of sharp spasms, he ceased ...
> (*Indigo*, pp. 149-150)

Ariel's capitulation to Kit's desire is an interesting one. In a way she appears to have the same attitude as the latter-day Xanthe. She sees the situation for what it is and attempts to manipulate it for her own power and ultimate revenge. "Ariel tasted a certain triumph in his weakness; she found cruelty a reward ..." (*Indigo*, p. 167). Kit and Ariel's relationship and the birth of baby Roucoubé can be seen to bear echoes of the historical pair, John Smith and Pocahontas. Kit's movement between desire, shame and aversion is captured in his religious cant and the irony of his letters to his future wife, Rebecca Clovelly. The juxtaposition of

[37] The name suggests both the linguistic imprisonment and paternalism enacted by colonialism. The importance of naming and re-naming can also be traced in the novels of Behn and Morrison.

these letters with the reality of his plunder and the fruit it bears is a telling one. His language acts here as a mantle clothing the events in utopian rhetoric:

> How should I begin to describe to you the many enchantments of this isle? ... Its marvellous bounty, its plentiful springs ... The natives are amenable for all their savage state, and import their wisdom to us in exchange for fribbling items ... Fly here to stand by my side, sweet lady, for we can further the walls of Christendom on this isle ... (*Indigo*, p. 153)

Ariel's role as unwilling accomplice to Prospero's power is another coup of Warner's intertextual method. We are able to trace Ariel's imprisonment in Sycorax's tree as her gradual linguistic dispossession. Teaching English to Ariel and Dulé (renamed by Kit and the children, 'Caliban') acts as a diversion for Kit:

> It diverts me to teach him our language as he serves me. He has already learned how to curse ... (*Indigo*, p. 201)

Kit's diversion is juxtaposed with Ariel's gradual realisation that she is imprisoned by the colonisers' language, her attempts to manipulate the system from within displacing her into a no-place, cursed by Sycorax and rejected by Kit. Like Coetzee's Friday the placelessness of her 'story' in the subsequent rebellion is echoed by her refusal to speak. Ariel's attempt to trick and kill Kit is simultaneously installed and subverted. There is a Shakespearean echo of misplaced timing in the idea that it is her attempt at revenge which alerts the colonisers to the islanders' attack.[38] The occlusion of her 'story' by history is captured by the two subsequent re-paintings of the event in the Everard family memoirs and Serafine's oral storytelling taken from the writings of a French missionary. The interplay of oral and written word here echoes Greenaway's film in its emphasis on the power of the written word to control semiosis. The irony of Labat's re-vision is seen in the fact that he manages to tell the story despite Ariel's refusal to speak; the 'happy story' of the Everards' memoirs and the history books is thus

[38] "Such however is the mighty providence that guides us, we were averted in due time" (*Indigo*, p. 199).

ultimately traced to a silence that will not speak, except through the tongues of others, becoming

> How the first Kit Everard won the love of an islander and how she saved him and his brave band of pioneers. (*Indigo*, p. 224)

Caliban's role in the attack is similarly presented from two opposing frames. The battle of Sloop's Bight is vividly drawn from the islanders' perspective as the massacre of over four hundred. Caliban's monstrosity is shown here to result from his subsequent torture as a lesson to the islanders, here echoing Prospero's manipulation of Caliban's rebellion in the discourse of treason.[39] The euphemisation of power is repeated in the written survival of the event as a "most fiendish and treacherous Enterprise" (*Indigo*, p. 199). However, while the 'other' story is occluded from history, Warner allusively draws our attention to the horror of the slaughter through her textual paintbrush; here dripping with blood:

> The blood of the wounded trickled from the bank, spilling like one of the showers that freshened the earth each day, and flowed downstream towards the sea, which was not so far that its rich scarlet could diffuse before it met the waves.[40]

2.5 *Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish ...*

The Flash of 'History' in the Present

The multi-perspectivism of the seventeenth-century sections of the text is repeated in the twentieth-century mainly through the technique of suggestive echoes between the imagery and voices of past and present. The twentieth-century Everard family shows the survival of Prospero's patriarchal and racial anxieties through the marginalisation of Sir Ant's 'Creole'

[39] "By due process of law we have sentenced him to be slit in the hamstrings as an example to those who would follow him ..." (*Indigo*, p. 200).

[40] Marina Warner, *Indigo*, p. 203. Warner's ability to interweave factual horror and beauty is similar to Morrison's. Sethe's back is simultaneously a chokecherry tree and no more than a clump of ugly scars.

offspring. Kit is called 'Nigger Everard' at school and spurned in his own family because his mother had been Creole. The placelessness of his hybridity is suggested in his inability to settle down, preferring a life of gambling and alcohol. It is Xanthe who plays the role of white virgin, although like Miranda, she rebels against her father's obsessive patriarchal control through her manipulative marriage to the hotel owner, Sy Nebris.[41] Warner's representation of Sy and the Everard family's attempts to 're-colonise' the island evokes the continuation of colonisation as capitalist and consumerist greed in the twentieth-century. Moreover, the new hotel, *The Spice of Life*, is created on the same site as the earlier settlement, suggesting a repeated territorial rape. While 'Prospero' does not feature as a specific character in Warner's novel, his attitudes resonate in the typical colonial males of the Everard family, particularly through Sir Ant – he is repeatedly drawn as patriotic, patronising, proud of the past and self-justifying – with a penchant for repeating his family history in between the various stages of occupying the 'houses' in the game of flinders!

The suggestive juxtaposition of past and present is repeated in the historical texts and images within the Everard family home. Warner's method of simultaneously installing and subverting this history is beautifully demonstrated in the description of the portrait of the first Sir Kit. Her description here bears echoes of Turner's famous painting; Sir Kit dominates the painting, manoeuvring the tiny fleet and islands akin to a chess player:

> One hand raised to haul ... a galleon with puffed sails, while the other reached to grasp a volcano-tipped island ... in one corner there appeared a painted, *rose-pink* beach, where an Indian brave, also in a feather skirt, and armed with a bow and arrow, was sitting astride another sea creature of a similarly fantastic species. (*Indigo*, p. 48)

[41] Her nickname 'Goldie' simultaneously suggests her marital worth as Sir Ant's 'pure' offspring and echoes the tale with which the novel opens – the tale of the king's transformation of his daughter into gold. The danger of producing a heartless individual is captured in her death, as she transforms into a "pearl of rare size and beauty" (*Indigo*, p. 376).

Her control of the conflicting movements and styles within the text is akin to that of a tightrope walker as she subtly balances identity and disavowal towards the slave as 'other'. Her tightrope crossing is mirrored in the minefield of contemporary debate which focuses on the 'uneasy' vacillation at the heart of Behn's language. Can we read the text as a case of the woman writer championing and giving voice to oppressed slavery? Or is Behn's position as integral to colonial power implicit in the discursive strategies of appropriation and the effacement of 'otherness' which her text undertakes? As with *The Tempest* one needs to guard against a tendency to wrest her/story out of its dialogic context(s). Careful attention to the political, social and ideological contexts surrounding the text can offer a reading which traces the intersection of gender, class and race in the novel with no easy conflation of the terms. In place of an opaque criticism of Behn's work as for/against slavery, voicing/silencing otherness, this approach will seek to demonstrate that

> when giving voice to the abject status of another may threaten their own interests, members of a privileged (but also oppressed) group may vacillate between identity and disavowal.[4]

While *Oroonoko* certainly tells us the 'history' of a royal slave it is Behn's female narrator who acts as arch ventriloquist, controlling the semiosis of her tale.[5] In this respect one can trace another story emerging beneath that of the protagonists – the story of Behn's self-fashioning, the forging of sentimental womanhood and the beginnings of sentimental 'fictions' which can be traced through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Behn's text acts as an exemplum of the important role novels play in shaping representations of gender, and thus demonstrates the centrality of race (another 'other') in societal reconfigurations – particularly the rise of the bourgeois individual.

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[4] SusanAndrade, *White Skin, Black Masks*, p. 189.

[5] This calls to mind the role of Prospero, particularly as he is imaged in *Prospero's Books*.

myriad of conflicting styles and attitudes interweaving heroic romance and African lore with a factuality that places his act beyond the noble in the realm of barbarism.

In the following extract we see the sentimental/heroic styles interfused:

> He, grieved to death, yet pleased at her noble resolution ... embracing her with all the passion and languishment of a dying lover, drew his knife to kill this treasure of his soul ... (*Oroonoko*, p. 68)

Yet on the discovery of the body days later we find brutal factuality:

> they smelt an unusual smell, as of a dead body, for stinks must be very noisome that can be distinguished among such a quantity of natural sweets ...
> (*Oroonoko*, p. 60)

In both Oroonoko's and Imoinda's deaths one can trace the paradoxical positioning of the narrator. She juxtaposes these occasions as both an act of honour and horror, thus bridging her position as simultaneously sentimental, virtuous woman and complicit in colonial power. However, both scenes suggest an excess beyond the narrator's appropriating gaze or understanding. The mutilation of Imoinda's face and Oroonoko's self-inflicted wounds stand as a mark of honour beyond the narrator's texts, reminding us of her reaction when viewing the similar self-mutilation of the Indians:

> for my part, I took 'em for hobgoblins, or fiends, rather than men.
> (*Oroonoko*, p. 55)

Oroonoko's dismemberment thus becomes simultaneously powerful and powerless – it enables him to escape into an alterity beyond the narrator's gaze, yet also points to the legacy of slavery on the individual – the loss of a self featured in his bodily dissolution, suggesting the loss of his/story to pass on.[41] Morrison's text can be seen to intersect with these dual movements here – both installing and subverting *Beloved*'s story, testing our perceptions of Sethe's infanticide as an act of honour/horror.

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[41] The loss of a self featured through bodily dissolution reappears in *Beloved*'s fears: "She had two dreams: exploding and being swallowed" (*Beloved*, p. 133).

manipulation of Ariel's 'saving' action in *Indigo* – reminding us of the masking of other 'her/stories'.

In contrast, in the death scene, Imoinda is represented as sentimental, submissive womanhood:

> He found the heroic wife faster pleading for death than he was to propose it ...
> (*Oroonoko*, p. 68)

In this section the movement of Imoinda from sentimental heroine towards mutilated 'other' enacts an exchange between white and black womanhood, with white womanhood ultimately coming to rest in verbal sentiment and black womanhood as libidinous other.

The death of Imoinda bears an implicit paradox – whose victory is it? Returning to the verbal/physical competition between the narrator and Imoinda one could argue that her death ultimately confines her to the body. Moreover her pregnancy, like the written word, is inherently connected with the power to engender something for the future. While Imoinda may win Oroonoko physically it is the narrator's 'pen' which carries/engenders the tragic story of their love to future generations. The book becomes akin to a

> safe sex substitute for the potentially mutinous but also economically valuable black slave child Oroonoko might have had with Imoinda.[47]

In a more chilling view one can argue that Behn's text is born "from the death and silencing of black persons, one of them pregnant".[48] Imoinda's pregnancy is especially interesting in connection with Morrison's *Beloved*. The figure of the pregnant black female can be seen to have significance throughout African-American women's writing. It simultaneously brings together white desire/exploitation and reproduction which are literally written

[47] Margaret Ferguson, *Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender*, p. 172.
[48] Margaret Ferguson, *Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender*, p. 172.

CHAPTER 4

THE THING ITSELF OR THE MYTH?

Re-tracing the ghost of memory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Down by the stream in back of 124 her footprints come and go, come and go. They are so familiar. Should a child, an adult, place his feet in them, they will fit. Take them out and they disappear again as though nobody ever walked there.

(*Beloved*, p. 275)[1]

We'll forget the middle east, forget Aids, forget famine, the war ... torture death rape and murder ... and the disappeared, forget, forget ...

(*Indigo*, p. 394)

The approaching end of our journey beneath four textual surfaces offers an opportunity to review our progress towards 'the thing itself' through the lens of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. A predominant concern of this dissertation has been the problematics surrounding the absence of 'other' voices within both literary and historical representations. Both seventeenth-century texts evince an authorial control of semiosis which largely occludes other his/her stories except as excess and hybrid resistance. Twentieth-century revisions of such his/her stories are to a large extent driven by an attempt to get closer to the space of occlusion (the thing itself), featured as either a refusal to mimic the other's tongue (*Foe*), or a careful dialogic remapping of other voices, contained nevertheless within an authorial gaze (*Indigo*). Morrison, like Warner, chooses to move silence to sound, yet does so in a manner which suggests that 'the thing itself', whether past event or voice, can only ever be imaged as a ghostly presence or echo. In this respect Morrison reflects an attitude to history which does not deny the events of the past but focuses on the fact that all we can know of that past is through its textual traces:

[1] Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (Picador, 1987). All subsequent quotes from this edition.

> past events existed empirically, but in epistemiological terms we can only know them today through texts. Past events are given meaning, not existence, by their representation in history.[2]

Morrison's project of recovering the traces of 'history' is further complicated by the fact that the voice of slavery's past is encased within layers of myth both within the voice of the master and the voice of the slave. The importance of this doubly textualised masking is seen in the driving force of the novel – its paradoxical concern with the need to rememory and (re)forget. The importance of memory is given added weight in her novel through its focus on both the broader impact of slavery's history on the present and its weight on the personal lives of her characters. She manages this double trajectory through the enigmatic character of her title – Beloved. On the macro scale 'Beloved' echoes the voices of all those denied a voice and subjectivity in slavery – the sixty million and more of the book's dedication. In this area *Beloved* cathects the history of African-American slavery to their original violation and usurpation – the wrenching of the millions of Africans from their homeland across the middle passage to the space of no name, no belonging. On the personal level Beloved becomes the catalyst for the violent unlocking of past traumas suffered by the novel's characters. Her central role here becomes an exploration of Sethe's supreme act of love/horror, the murder of her 'already crawling' baby girl. Yet she also acts as a catalyst in the rememories of the community, ranging from her impact on Paul D, to Stamp Paid, Ella and many more.

The centrality of Sethe's act of infanticide is suggestive on the personal level of the violent fracturing of the mother-daughter relationship through the institution of slavery which viewed reproduction as no more than reproducing market goods. Here infanticide is used to pinpoint the results of a system which creates

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[2] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, pp. 81-82.

language itself to scar. Morrison evinces a Foucauldian awareness of the power of discourse to write on the bodies of the linguistically dispossessed, yet she subverts this power of the signifier through her own writerly jouissance, bringing the excluded body back into language – with Beloved acting as arch signifier of the word made flesh.

The aim of this chapter is not an attempt to re-colonise the myriad of critical interpretations surrounding the novel, but rather to view it as the culmination of our journey into the wreck of 'other' his/her stories. Morrison's gaze is a hybrid one, traversing history, folklore, African-American myth and orality in a way which shows us that if all we can know of the past is through its textual traces, it is in the space between sign and sound, presence and absence, life and death, from which the drowned voice resides and speaks. The suggestive layering of Morrison's writerly method can be glimpsed in the image of Sethe from which the title of the novel emanates:

> ... her knees wide open as any grave ... Ten minutes for seven letters ... She thought it would be enough, rutting among the gravestones with the engraver ... That should certainly be enough. (*Beloved*, p. 5)

In this one image Morrison is able to suggest the cost of slavery – life-giving womb collapses into death – enclosing grave in a system in which the systematic rape of women to produce commodities unleashes a cycle in which the only choice of freedom or resistance becomes the negation of life itself. Sethe's mother body becomes by metonymic extension the desecrated centre of African-American history – its origins an act of territorial and physical violation, and its retrieval through rememory a process in which the cost of each drop of ink, each letter, acts as a testimony to the 'rape' and absence of those sixty million and more.

American canon. The American context is perhaps even more definitive of this production of the 'other' for a consolidation of its own identity in its paradoxical status as both coloniser and colonised. The war of independence 'freeing' America from English colonialism becomes for many white Americans the epitome of American identity and liberation. Yet, freedom for one group has left a myriad of 'Jims' and romanticised 'mammy figures' linguistically and figuratively imprisoned in other texts.

Morrison seeks the eyes behind the mask of such literary representations on the broad level by moving the voices of those marginalised or spoken for in earlier texts to the centre, and on the specific level through two white characters in her novel – Schoolteacher and Amy Denver. Schoolteacher wields the power of the word and the whip. In this sense he can be read as an allegory for the power of discourse to violently define the 'other', as well as for the process of literary canon formation. The reliance of the definer on the defined, and the linguistic dispossession enacted by slavery's uprooting of origins, is ironically imaged in the fact that it is Sethe who makes the link which enables Schoolteacher to arrange Sethe's 'animal' and 'human' characteristics on the right and left hand sides of the paper.[6] The power of the definer's gaze is imaged in the nephew's literalisation of their lesson as they milk the pregnant Sethe, protecting the 'merchandise' her womb contains in a hole in the ground. Ink becomes blood, as pen turns to whip, carving slavery's definition onto Sethe's back.[7] However, Morrison does not allow the power to remain with the definer – Sethe's act of infanticide is, in an important sense, the only way she can talk back to Schoolteacher:

> No one ... would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper. (*Beloved*, p. 251)

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[6] We are reminded of this irony at the end of the novel by Sethe: "I made the ink, Paul D. He couldn't have done it if I hadn't made the ink" (*Beloved*, p. 271).

[7] Here Morrison rends the veil surrounding the dislocation of word from flesh enacted in Behn's text.

examining slave narratives as a genre it is important to keep in mind the total context out of which the written word evolved, particularly the machinations of the abolitionist movement

> which enabled the liberation of many slaves, along with their stories, while simultaneously imposing constraints upon the speaking, writing self.[11]

While the slave narrative form undoubtedly provided the opportunity for inserting the 'other' as 'self' into history, such a 'self' had to struggle against the political and literary demands of a largely white audience which, like Amy Denver, still evinced many of the stereotypical attitudes towards blackness. In a sense one may compare the rhetorical strategies adopted to convince readers of their 'humanness' with similar problems faced by a marginalised voice such as Behn's. Behn's repeated attesting to the power of her female pen and the veracity of her eyewitness account is matched in the oft seen documents and 'white' editorial notes accompanying slave narratives to 'prove' the writer's veracity. Caught within a web of white literary imagination and discourse created a similarly paradoxical position of power and powerlessness for the hand that wrote. The need to convince readers of the slaves' essential humanity needed to be countered by a 'not quite, not white' strategy to avoid 'insulting' his or her white audience, through the establishment of an overtly convincing kinship.[12] Douglass' narrative is interesting in its double movement of power and powerlessness, its undermining of origin through its re-writing (a total of three autobiographies) and his refusal to concede to the demands of his abolitionist supporters to be 'himself' – in other words, act the slave.

Douglass's rhetorical power is born of a special attention to the semiotic power of language, his use of such power to deconstruct the master's discourse from within creating a hybridised realm. Two excerpts will demonstrate Douglass's talent for rhetoric:

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[11] Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers* , p. 118.

[12] Thus mimicking the movement of identity and disavowal seen in Behn's text and others.

> You have seen how a man was made a slave;
> You shall see how a slave was made a man.[13]

Here Douglass subverts the practice of slavery as a whole by deconstructing its founding premise – slave as less than man.[14] By enclosing the sentence within the double movement of man-slave, slave-man, Douglass suggests his project of moving towards a subjectivity always there, but violated through the institution of slavery. Douglass also shows awareness of the idea that it is not language per se that creates the brutality of slavery, but rather the uses man makes of it – "What man can make, man can unmake."[15] Douglass uses the power of language to deconstruct the iron of the white signifier through turning his attention to that masterpiece of legitimisation – the Bible. He rewrites the word by opening this text up to other hermeneutic possibilities, introducing an alternative black history into the process of interpretation. For example, he draws on his own paradoxical status as slave and descendant of a white master to deconstruct one of the central biblical arguments legitimising slavery:

> If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery in the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters.[16]

One can compare Douglass' rhetorical power, his revenge on the iron of the signifier, with Morrison's similar linguistic juggling: she takes the discourse of slavery, the discourse of the good mother, the discourse of rape and the discourse of masculinity and strips down their rhetorical strategies to focus on the fractures within their founding premises. An interesting parallel can be drawn between Douglass's attitude to his acquisition of language and Sethe's violent catapulting into what it means to be in the hands of the definer:

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[13] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 120.
[14] Douglass's hybrid resistance through the power of the written word is thus beyond the mimicking power of Caliban.
[15] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 121.
[16] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 132. Here Douglass deconstructs a literal reading of Genesis (viii.18-29) by inserting the occluded history of miscegenation into the text.

> I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. it had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy.[17]

While Sethe does not acquire the same level of literacy, her inauguration into the 'wretchedness' of her condition is tied to the power of ink to fragment her subjectivity into animal/human. Furthermore, the only remedy she can call upon to wrest her children's bodies out of a similar representational economy catapults the discourse of the good mother into the discourse of infanticide. While Douglass evinces a Calibanesque awareness of the curse of the master's language, his acquisition of literacy nevertheless enables him to move silence to sound in a lasting testimony which subverts the iron of established meanings. His own master evinces an awareness of the power of the signifier (the word) to enable the slave to move beyond the gaze of the definer.

> Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world ... if you teach that nigger ... how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave ...[18]

Morrison's text attests to the 'truth' of the master's rude awareness, and yet goes further than Douglass in both the unmasking of the pain beyond his representational economy and the dialogic interlinking of many his/her stories within the frame of her rhetorical power. A similar widening and unmasking of unspeakable acts within Morrison's novel can be glimpsed by looking at an exemplum of the African-American sentimental slave narrative.

Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* evinces a similar paradoxical status between rending the veil on the more violent aspects of a woman's life in slavery, and simultaneously masking such violence beneath the nineteenth century cult of true

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[17] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, p. 130.

[18] Douglass, in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 135. Douglass' subversion of established meaning is suggested in his learning to write in the spaces between the lines of his master's copybooks. Here we are reminded of Caliban's similar use of the master's language in rhetorical acts of resistance.

'paid for' through an integration of ink and blood, which owes much to those who have gone before.

Furthermore, what many may term Morrison's post-modern concern with language is shown to be grounded in a far more concrete subversive history which felt the effects of fragmented subjectivity, utilised the gaps between signifier and signified, showed an awareness of the power of language to narrativise reality long before technical terms such as postmodernism, deconstruction, historiography surfaced on the contemporary scene. She draws on an African-American heritage of orality which allows her to revise American history through a dialogic remapping of earlier texts as ghostly trace, body and memory with a voice, if not a story, to pass on.

4.2 My Girl Come Home

It was the right thing to do, but she had no right to do it ...
It was the only thing to do, but it was the wrong thing to do.

(Toni Morrison).

And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them.

(*Beloved*, p. 163).

Morrison's title character, Beloved, haunts each page of the novel as an alterity that defies interpretative mastery. In a sense she can be read as a writerly figure who becomes for each character in the novel what he/she would make of her. Thus for Sethe she constitutes the miraculous return of her 'best thing', her already-crawling baby; for Denver she is the sister whose presence becomes an integral part of her struggle to be 'looked at', recognised as a separate individual; for Paul D she becomes the key to unlock the 'red heart' of his damaged manhood, and for the community at large she becomes a catalyst in their own memories of

repeatedly imaged as tasting, licking, absorbing Sethe.[30] On one level one can connect this oral imagery to the pre-oedipal stage of the child's development in which the lack of a sense of separation between self and (m)other leads to a contradictory desire for the 'join' and a fear that such a 'join' will lead to bodily dissolution. While the object-relations theory of Melanie Klein is useful in examining these contradictory impulses within the character of Beloved, it is important to place such theories within the wider context of the system of slavery in which the fracturing of the mother-child relationship distorts the growth from pre-oedipal fears and desires towards separation and selfhood. Morrison suggests this wider context through imaging Beloved as both the child Sethe killed on the personal level, and on the wider historical level suggesting that Beloved is the returned history of all those abused and killed, separated from their mothers, during the middle passage. For Beloved, Sethe's separation is both drawn from infanticide and the decision of so many other mothers to separate from their children through diving into the release of death from the slave ships. The slipperiness of Beloved's double status here enables Morrison to suggest an internalisation of Beloved within Sethe herself, reminding us of her own reactions to being left behind by the mother who attempted escape and was subsequently hung:

> I wonder what they was doing when they was caught. Running, you think? No, not that. Because she was my m'am and nobody's m'am would run off and leave her daughter, would she? Would she now? (*Beloved*, p. 203)

Beloved thus enacts the absence resulting from the impossible choices of so many mothers in slavery. Part of the community's disdain for Sethe's action is thus linked to a similar internalisation of absent Beloveds within themselves. The dangers of an all-consuming 'mother'-love are connected to the cannibalistic appropriation of 'otherness' which slavery itself enacts. The use of a repertoire of the contradictory impulses of swallowing and being

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[30] This imagery has echoes of cannibalistic discourse – it suggests that the cannibalism of a system which refuses the development of selfhood creates a situation in which love itself knows no boundaries – Beloved is the prime example of the cannibalistic underside of a devouring love.

the restrictions of slavery choking both Beloved and Sethe, and more specifically the physical torture of such a system. The 'choking' involved in a narcissistic search for selfhood is evoked in the three chapters of interior monologue – the repetition of the word 'mine' together with the gradual breakdown of punctuation, and the ambiguity of the speaking voice, all contribute to a sense of separate identities dissolving.

Sethe's chapter begins: "Beloved, she my daughter, she mine ..."; Denver's: "Beloved is my sister ...", and later, "She's mine, Beloved, she's mine". The most powerful need for consuming recognition is seen in Beloved's chapter, her need to join and become one with Sethe moving dangerously close to dissolving any separate identity: "I am Beloved and she is mine ... I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop; and later, "now we can join a hot thing". Here, the warping of self caused by slavery is evoked in the confusion of seeing and being seen, becoming a suffocating desire both to be seen by the other, and to become the other.[34]

The suffocation of separate identity reaches a crescendo in the following chapter, in which the ambiguity of speaking voice evokes the need of each woman to possess the 'other' as evoked in the repeated phrase, "You are mine. You are mine" (*Beloved*, p. 217). The repeated desire of possession establishes a cycle which one feels must be broken if any of the three women is to survive. Sethe and Beloved are unable to break the pattern, interlocked in a struggle in which Sethe is drained of will and identity in the face of Beloved's consuming need. This interlocking of 'self' and 'other' is portrayed in the visual image of Sethe shrinking while Beloved swells, gradually resembling a pregnant woman, an image which evokes the sense of Sethe's self being drained into Beloved. It is thus Denver who has to break the pattern of

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[34] Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (pp. 207-213).

these were the bodies of slaves. The power of text, body and ink to bring the 'other' story to the surface bears enigmatic parallels to our search into the 'other' side of his/her stories. The blurring of the dividing line between history/fiction is figured in the living colours of a textualised past in our present.

The old man's yarn brings to mind the oral spinning of another storyteller – Serafine, in Warner's *Indigo*. Serafine's stories serve as an exemplum of the interweaving of myth, magic and historical fact which both twentieth-century texts enact. Yet Serafine has the additional challenge of being colonised subject, speaking from within the master's discourse. Her 'yarns' draw on the living colours of events, myths and patriarchal tales, creating hybridised realms of resistance which reflect the rhetorical strategies of both Warner and Morrison. As Warner comments:

> She's an island that has been taken over. But at the same time, through her possibilities of rethinking her lot and distributing rewards and punishments, she stands for me as the exemplary fiction writer who can be colonised and still speak.[6]

Throughout our journey beneath four textual surfaces we have traced the problematics surrounding the speaking voice of the colonised other. Both Morrison and Warner make the choice of moving silence to sound. Warner manages a dialogic multiperspectivism which destroys Prospero's semiotic control of his/story. While her text may appear to be overly idealistic in some respects, it evinces the power of the literary imagination to 'listen for the holes' as a way of inserting other voices into the book of myths. Morrison evinces a similarly evocative echo of these other stories through the title character of her novel – Beloved. In this respect she subverts the Prospero-like power of Behn's narrator, allowing the alterity of the stories of Oroonoko, Imoinda and others like them to resurface with the mask removed. While

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[6] Marina Warner, in Chantal Zabus, *Spinning a Yarn with Marina Warner*, p. 521.

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation focuses on the occlusion of 'other' voices within the discourse of colonialism and slavery. The work juxtaposes four texts from the seventeenth and twentieth-centuries, respectively, as a way of examining the continued weight of past history on our postcolonial present. The theoretical framework is drawn from postcolonial and postmodern literary theory with an emphasis on the problematics of speaking for the 'other' in twentieth-century literary revisions.

Chapter 1 examines William Shakespeare's *The Tempest* as an example of the discourse of colonialism. Throughout there is an emphasis on the reciprocal influence between text and socio-political context. Chapter 2 moves on to a recent intertextual reworking of the play in Marina Warner's *Indigo*. The major focus here is the efficacy of her dialogic remapping of the play as resistance culture. Chapter 3 returns to the seventeenth-century to examine Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* as simultaneously the 'history' of a royal slave and her story of colonizing/colonized womanhood. A major focus here is the need to avoid the conflation of the marginalised position of woman as 'other' with the similar, but by no means identical, position of the slaves she speaks for. With this in mind, I place her story next to Toni Morrison's *Beloved,* which moves the silence and masking within early slave narratives to sound through her enigmatic title character – Beloved.

metonymic parallels drawn between capitalist greed and cannibalism. As Marina Warner comments:

> What is of acute interest is that Turner gives so many different strokes and colours to the single metaphor of consuming and being consumed, devouring and being devoured.[5]

Attention to this detail focuses on one of the paradoxes at work in the discourse of colonialism. Defining the 'other' as less than human fixes alterity in a justificatory, hierarchical relationship; yet the painting fractures the dividing line between civilised centre and barbarous margin through the metonymic alliance between the devouring 'sea monsters' and capitalist greed.

It is the aim of this dissertation to seek out such fractures in four textual canvases, to dive beneath the waves and pay attention to those drowned voices of history, to re-view "the drowned face always staring toward the sun".[6] With this in mind I have chosen to juxtapose two seventeenth-century texts with two twentieth-century texts. Shakespeare's *The Tempest* continues to arouse much contemporary debate within postcolonial theory, and plays an important role in many literary 're-visions'. I have chosen one of the most recent of these, Marina Warner's *Indigo*, as a vehicle to question both the efficacy of intertextual re-visions as resistance culture and the continuing theoretical debate surrounding attempts to speak for the 'other'. From here our dive will return to the seventeenth-century to examine Aphra Behn's *Oroonoko* as an example of perhaps one of the earliest slave narratives. My choice of juxtaposition here is once more drawn from a concern with the narrating voice. Much of the contemporary debate surrounding Behn's text focuses on the position of Behn as both woman and colonialist speaking 'for' her royal slaves. With this in mind we return to the twentieth-

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[5] Marina Warner, *Managing Monsters*, p. 67.

[6] Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, ℓℓ 64-65.

century to examine the voice of the slave as 'other' in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. A concomitant focus of the dissertation falls on the position of the woman writer. For this reason I have chosen to focus on three women's texts as a way of examining the complex relationship between gender and race. Complex in the sense that there can be no easy conflation between the position of the woman writer as marginalised from literary, political and social structures, and the racial 'other' occupying a similar but by no means identical position.

Throughout our journey there will be an emphasis on the historical and social context from which the discourse arises. While it is impossible to recover the 'event' as 'event', this approach pays careful attention to the reciprocal relationship between text and context. Bearing in mind Rich's awareness of the interlinkings between language and power, language and ideology

> The words are purposes
> The words are maps[7]

the texts will be examined as a social, cultural and ideological cartography. Before beginning the descent it is necessary to ascertain the theoretical background, to equip our search with the 'knives' necessary to cut through the interlocking layers of discourse, simultaneously remaining aware that each forms a particular frame through which to 're-view' the textual canvas. However, this descent towards the silenced 'other' is no smooth dive, no easy insertion of the names of 'others' into the book of myths. In reaching the wreck we need to remain aware of the problematics surrounding the absence of Friday's tongue, and take our cue from Cixous' awareness of the 'other' as both imprisoned by and escaping representation.[8] While our purpose may be to arrive at "the thing itself and not the

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[7] Adrienne Rich, *Diving into the Wreck*, *ll* 52-53.
[8] I am referring here to the two quotations at the beginning of this section.

myth",[9] in seeking to unlock the tongue of those silenced 'others' one constantly runs the risk of instituting strategies which replace the voice of colonial power with a similarly appropriative discourse. Gayatri Spivak draws attention to this problem in her essay on *Jane Eyre*:

> No perspective critical of imperialism can turn the other into a self, because the project of imperialism has always historically refracted what might have been the absolutely other into a domesticated other that consolidates the imperial self.[10]

Texts such as *The Tempest* and *Oroonoko* demonstrate the accuracy of Spivak and Cixous' awareness in that the 'other' functions in both to consolidate the identity of the Eurocentric self, only able to access a voice through the language of those in power. J.M. Coetzee acknowledges this problem by refusing to mimic Friday's voice. The absence of Friday's tongue captures the linguistic dispossession enacted by colonialism. However, it will be argued that while we may never arrive at the 'thing itself', Friday's story may be partially 're-viewed' through seeking sites of resistance and re-vision. It is this strategy that Warner has in mind in her evocative recovery of Caliban's story, a story which is literally born from the womb of a drowned slave. Her answer to Shakespeare's Prospero complex is thus to institute what may best be termed a Bakhtinian dialogism; dialogic in terms of the multiple voices which are articulated throughout the text, undercutting any hegemonic rendering of 'history'. She uses her paintbrush in multiple ways to re-dye the Shakespearean canvas.[11] The problem of representing the 'other' story is sharply drawn in Morrison's *Beloved*, the repetition of the

[9] Adrienne Rich. *Diving into the Wreck*, ℓ 63.
[10] Gayatri Spivak. *Three Women's Texts and a Critique of Imperialism*, p. 253.
[11] Dye is linked to the title of the novel *Indigo*, and the use of colours to suggest multiple perspectives.

move away from a view of culture as unified according to an inside/outside or self/other dichotomy, towards a focus on the interstices of both cultural and subjective identity:

> What emerges as an effect of such incomplete signification is a turning of boundaries and limits into the in-between spaces through which the meanings of cultural and political authority are negotiated.[17]

The formation of what Cixous ironically labels the "noble 'advanced' countries"[18] is thus the macro result of Hegel's master/slave dialectic; national consciousness, like subjective identity, appears to be linked to an international dimension (an 'other'). Moreover the paradoxes at the heart of Hegel's dialectic become on this macro scale the ideological ambivalence of cultural identity which Bhabha will go on to label as the space of a hybridity which may play an important role in resistance culture.

Hegel's master/slave dialectic is crucial for examining racial ideologies through the awareness it shows of the necessity of an 'other' in forming a sense of 'self':

> Self-consciousness exists in and for itself, in that, and by the fact that it exists for another self-consciousness; that is to say it is only by being recognised.[19]

The important aspect of this argument lies in the reciprocal need for mutual recognition when examined in specific historical circumstances. Awareness of the self relies on an 'other', yet if this 'other' is denied a similar 'selfhood' from which to recognise the 'other' as object, one is left with the narcissistic subjectivity of the coloniser and the alienated subjecthood of the

[17] Homi Bhabha, *Nation and Narration*, p. 4.
[18] Hélène Cixous, quoted in Robert Young, *White Mythologies* , p. 1.
[19] Hegel, quoted in Richard Norman, *Hegel's Phenomenology: A Philosophical Introduction*, p. 48.

various representations of the 'other' in colonialist discourse. It is this project that Edward Said has in mind in *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*. Said traces the numerous ways in which the 'other' is produced through discourse for the west in a manner which moves along the axis of identity and disavowal. Said's work shows an awareness of the link between language and power, demonstrating that representations of the 'other' are collusive with the western desire for mastery. In *Culture and Imperialism* his focus falls on the ways in which aesthetic representations of the 'other' play an important role in forming an individuality for the European centre.[28] While Said plays an important role in drawing attention to the interstice between representations of the 'other' and the 'other' beyond representation, his writing seems to offer little space for resistance culture, seemingly leaving the instrument of power in the hands of the colonisers. It is Bhabha who builds onto Said's argument an awareness of the conflictual economy at the heart of western representations. Bhabha draws attention to the ways in which stereotypical representations interact with the actual in a way that leads to ambivalence. While colonial discourse may appear to be hegemonic

> it carries within it a flaw invisible at home but increasingly apparent abroad when it is away from the safety of the west.[29]

This 'flaw' is related to the ambivalent desire and anxiety of the coloniser gazing on the 'other'; the need to make the 'other' knowable and recognisable, yet different. The result of this process of identity and disavowal is that the coloniser is faced with a displaced image of the self:

> The representative figure of such a perversion ... is the image of post-enlightenment man, tethered to, not confronted by his dark reflection, the shadow of colonised man, that splits his presence ... the Otherness of the Self inscribed in the perverse palimpsest of colonial identity.[30]

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[28] The role of the novel in developing a European identity will be further examined in Chapters 1 and 3.
[29] Homi Bhabha, quoted in Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 143.
[30] Homi Bhabha, quoted in Robert Young, *White Mythologies*, p. 153.

recognise is the dialogic competition taking place in 'criticism' itself. Every piece of Shakespearean criticism is both a work of critical theory and a form of ideological practice. In this sense one can draw parallels between Prospero's struggle to control semiosis, with the concomitant marginalisation of 'other' voices, and similar hegemonic strategies of critical interpretation. One sees this type of occlusion taking place in Frank Kermode's introduction to the Arden Edition. While one may agree that a central concern of Renaissance culture is the confrontation between culture and nature, concentration on this aspect alone effaces the euphemisation of power moves such universal oppositions enact:

> If Aristotle was right that 'men ... who are as much inferior to others as the body is to the soul ... are slaves by nature' ... then the black and mutilated cannibal must be the natural slave of the European gentleman, and a fortiori, the *Salvage* and *deformed* Caliban of the learned Prospero.[10]

By conjoining Aristotle's discourse on the natural division of the species into masters and slaves, to the colonial discourse fixing alterity as sub-human and thus befitting the position of slave, Kermode repeats the euphemisation of power and ideology enacted by both the text and colonial discourse as a whole. Hegel's master/slave dialectic traces the fractures, exposing these positions as the basis of civilised self-consciousness, carrying within it the contradictions of identity and disavowal once transported to the colonial context:

> The Hegelian dialectic embraces the contradictions flattened out by Aristotle and Kermode. The master's own certainty is doomed to be mediated by the recognition of one unworthy of *recognizing* him. His *superiority* over *nature* is also mediated by the work of a slave ...[11]

By focusing on such fractures in both text and context, one can begin to trace the movement of order/disorder enacted in the play. Similarly, a questioning of the ideological perspective subtending any critical interpretation can guard the critic from becoming one of many

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[10] Frank Kermode, Introduction to *The Tempest*, p. xlii (Arden Edition).

[11] Malcolm Evans, *Signifying Nothing*, p. 78; disavowal can be traced through the slippery nature of Caliban's status as man/animal/slave; while identity focuses on his language and comes to a head in Prospero's words: "This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine" (Act V, sc i, *ll* 275-276).

Prosperos seeking to control semiosis. With this in mind our journey through the cartography of the text will hopefully echo Barthes' aim of a writerly reading, opening the text to what plurality constitutes it rather than being driven by a logocentric drive for closure. An approach which echoes the text's own movement between language as resemblance and language as illusion, reminding us of Prospero's famous speech a propos the illusory nature of representation:

> We are such stuff
> as dreams are made on, and our little life
> is rounded with a sleep. (Act IV, sc i, *ll* 156-158)

1.1 *This Tunis, Sir, was Carthage*: Discursive conflicts in *The Tempest*

Gonzalo's offhand connecting of seventeenth-century Tunis with Virgil's Carthage has been the subject of much debate in recent interpretations of the text. The ambiguity of Gonzalo's cathecting of the ancient world of Virgil's *Aeneid* with the contemporary world of Mediterranean trade is evidence of a larger movement within the play as a whole which can be read in terms of the conflict between competing discourses for signification. This movement is described by Peter Hulme as the competition between old and new world terms. Examining the title of the play, he argues that there are two ways of dealing with the novelty of experience: one can either domesticate it under a current signifier (Tempest) or mark it as completely 'other' by subsuming it under an alien signifier. Shakespeare uses the Arawak derived term 'hurricane' in other texts, so why does he use the known signifier 'Tempest' to describe what on many levels is a novel experience? Closer examination reveals that the title of the play proffers a clue to the ambiguities and contradictions at the heart of colonial discourse – the movement between identity and disavowal.

Throughout the play one can trace signifiers which link to the discourse of treason, not only applied to those marginalised from power and discourse, but also to those members of the central authority who evince similar threats to Prospero's hegemonic control.[24] It is important to note that it is Prospero himself who allows the growth of both threats to stability, suggesting that he manipulates these plots for his own ends. One possible reason is that it allows him to re-enact his original supplanting as Duke of Milan some years before, but this time with himself firmly in control. In this sense, Shakespeare mirrors the manipulation of oppositional discourse by those in powerful positions. Renaissance England was full of reports of treason – some actual, some fanciful – linked to religious upheavals, inter-European conflicts and class shifts during the period. The discourse of treason grew up around an awareness of the usefulness of what one may term the aestheticisation of politics.[25] Opposition to those in power was by no means monologic or connected to one sector of society, thus it was necessary to continually consolidate the power base of those in authority by the public display of punishment in 'mini-dramas' of torture. It was no longer a matter of discarding a traitor but of developing both discursive and cultural representations which vividly exposed the results of threats to the central authority. Treason was no longer simply a discourse but also a cultural product – text and flesh – ranging from pamphlets, sermons and proclamations, to public displays of body parts, public torture and execution. In these terms the 'pinches' Caliban is threatened with begin to take on ominous tones. As Breight comments on the implications of the discourse of treason in the play:

> Shakespeare's ambiguous representation of colonialism can be juxtaposed with what I take to be his sly perception of conspiratorial manipulation by European authorities.[26]

[24] Here I am referring to the two levels of usurpation plots: Antonio and Sebastian's plans to kill Alonso on the one hand given comic relief and mimicry in the subplot of the three marginalised characters.
[25] This term was coined by Walter Benjamin in his essay: *The Work of Art in the age of Mechanical Reproduction*.
[26] Curt Breight, *Treason doth never prosper*, p. 5.

This 'sly perception' surfaces in many instances of Prospero's manipulation of the characters. For example, the 'freezing' of Ferdinand in Act I affords an example of the euphemisation of power; while it is clearly Prospero's 'magical' powers that 'freeze' Ferdinand, this is displaced by the reference to Ferdinand's traitorous conscience.

> Prospero: ... put thy sword up, traitor,
> who mak'st a show but dar'st not strike, thy conscience
> is so possessed with guilt. (Act I, sc ii, *ll* 470-472)

In this instance one sees the displacement of the naked exercise of power, while in the assassination attempt of Antonio and Sebastian one sees the production of treason as a weapon to be used by Prospero to consolidate his power through blackmail at the end of the play.

By far the most important and interesting operation within Prospero's manipulation of this discourse appears in the sub-plot co-joining the masterless and the savage. In the Introduction I examined the anxiety and curiosity (even envy) evinced towards those on the margins of society through the trope of the wildman, as well as the use of this trope as a weapon of social control. Within this context the alliance between Trinculo, Stephano and Caliban is not only an issue of social class but also an intra-class weapon utilised here as a lesson to the aristocracy on the results of attempts to topple Prospero from power.[27] In this reading one can interpret the sudden interruption of the masque, as Prospero seemingly returns from oblivion to the world of 'realpolitik', as his most potent manipulation; re-enacting the anxiety of power from a quarter that can be easily dealt with. As Breight comments, this goes to the heart of the paradox of the [Renaissance] ruler

[27] The subplot dramatically enacts the aestheticisation of politics discussed earlier.

> Paradoxically it is the eloquent power of civility which allows him to know his own meaning, offering him a site of resistance.[33]

In this sense Miranda and Prospero's efforts to teach Caliban to speak (English) mirror the linguistic colonisation of peoples in the new world.[34] Language barriers challenged ideals of universalism as well as the isomorphic relation between language and reality widely believed at the time. This challenge was dealt with in various ways, either through assuming that the 'savages' had no language at all, or connecting their language to barbarism and instilling the learning of English as part of the justificatory civilising mission bringing the savage to reason and knowledge of God. In this sense language moves along the lines of disavowal and identity, either pushing the 'other' towards absolute difference, or through the learning of English, allowing a measure of likeness which then becomes a threat to English identity. These attitudes are captured in Miranda's words to Caliban:

> I pitied thee
> Took pains to make thee speak ...
> ... When thou did not, Savage,
> know thine own meaning, but wouldst gabble like
> A thing most brutish, I endowed thy purposes
> With words that made them known. (Act I, sc ii, *ll* 352-357)

The movement of identity and disavowal is clear. As Stephen Greenblatt comments, Shakespeare places

> Caliban at the outer limits of difference ['Abhorrèd Slave'] only to insist upon a mysterious measure of resemblance.[35]

Ironically knowing his own purpose and meaning gives Caliban a space for resistance – a space from which to 'curse'. Perhaps his most important point of enunciation is his counter-claim to the island in Act I. Ariel and Caliban disrupt Prospero's hegemonic control of the

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[33] Paul Brown. *This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine*, p. 59 (Dollimore and Sinfield, eds).
[34] The 'curse' of linguistic dispossession echoes through Behn's *Oroonoko* and Defoe's *Friday* to Frederick Douglass's slave narrative.
[35] Stephen Greenblatt. *Learning to Curse*, p. 31.

Moreover one remains aware of the wish fulfilment of colonial power which echoes in Caliban's position:

> Caliban repudiates his claim of his own volition. The violence of slavery is abolished at a stroke and Caliban becomes just another feudal retainer whom Prospero can 'acknowledge mine'.[42]

1.4 Sycorax and Miranda – Black whore/White virgin

A freckled whelp, hag born ...

(Prospero to Ariel, Act I, sc ii, ℓ 283)

Thy mother was a piece of virtue, and she said thou wast my daughter ...

(Prospero to Miranda, Act I, sc ii, ℓℓ 57-58)

In the same way that the text can be read as an intervention in both colonial and domestic ideologies, it also presents us with the discourse of patriarchy. Prospero's control of semiosis negotiates both his disquiet with regard to racial plunder and his disquiet with regard to women. In this sense the text brings together two important movements within the discourse of colonialism, revealing the importance of patriarchal transfer subtending anxieties of political and personal legitimacy and identity. While the voice of woman is largely marginalised in the play, the numerous references to women demonstrate the dependency of the centre on what is occluded. The representations of Sycorax and Miranda demonstrate the two extremes of feminine stereotyping.

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[42] Peter Hulme, *Colonial Encounters*, p. 132. This wish-fulfilment is echoed in Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* in the scene in which Friday voluntarily kneels to kiss Crusoe's foot.

> Between them they split the patriarchal stereotype of woman as the white devil, virgin and whore, goddess ... and witch.[43]

Between them they tell the story of colonised and colonising women. Within the political context of the Renaissance,. women played a pivotal role in legitimising political power. Their only real power in a sense related to their ability to give birth; their danger deriving from the same source since the question regarding the legitimacy of a child could never be absolutely answered. Prospero deals with the problem of legitimacy in two ways. He derives his claim to Milan as hereditary succession – however the shakiness of this position surfaces in his narrative to Miranda in which her legitimacy ultimately relies on the word of an absent wife. The journey to the island enacts a transfer to a world of patriarchal origins through the parallels of Prospero's struggles to those of giving birth, with their arrival at the island imaged as a re-birth occluding maternal presence. However, Prospero's self-created power is under threat from the counter-claim of Caliban, based as it is on hereditary succession from a woman. Prospero's discursive agility deals with this threat through the production of Sycorax as a libidinous whore, and Caliban the result of her union with the devil. In this, Prospero's power is absolute since Sycorax is not present to contest his allegations. Moreover, he has fixed a representation of the past in the mind of Ariel, thus dexterously giving us an 'other' voice which mimics his own. The discursive stereotyping of Sycorax as "blue eyed hag" must be seen within the context of Caliban's claim, since through the representation of Caliban's bastardy Prospero is able to perform a double checkmate:

> In deriving authority from his mother, he delivers himself into Prospero's hands: Prospero declares him a bastard ... thereby both disallowing any claim from inheritance and justifying his loathing for Caliban ... Caliban's claim seems to have been designed so that Prospero can disallow it ... we have no way of distinguishing facts about Caliban and Sycorax from Prospero's invective about them.[44]

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[43] Ania Loomba, *Gender, Race, Renaissance Drama*, p. 151.
[44] Stephen Orgel, *Prospero's Wife*, p. 55 (Margaret Ferguson et al, eds).

In the same way that the discourse of rape serves to justify territorial usurpation, here the discourse of patriarchy serves to legitimise colonial take-over. Sycorax's representation thus mirrors the discursive production of colonised women as libidinous, promiscuous whores, *occluding* the sexual and physical abuse so often enacted by the colonists.[45]

While Sycorax is allowed no point of enunciation, the virginal white woman, Miranda, is present as another important aspect of Prospero's personal and political identity. Many critics have shown an aversion to the cruelty of Miranda's words to Caliban, preferring to connect them with Prospero; however her cruelty suggests the success of the patriarchal project, evincing the extent of Miranda's internalisation of Prospero's lessons. Miranda, like Caliban, is a prisoner of Prospero's discourse. She is in effect discursively produced by him – the perfect mimic. Moreover, she serves as an important cog in the ideological legitimisation of each of Prospero's actions: "I have done nothing but in care of thee" (I, ii, ℓ16). Caliban's enslavement protects her from rape, her marriage to Ferdinand ensures her future. However, like the other women, she remains object rather than subject of Prospero's actions. The representation of Miranda reflects many of the contradictions of white colonialist women. While she is refused a position of full agency, she plays an important role in consolidating the racial and sexual power relations of colonialism. Her representation as chaste virgin is pointedly opposite to the libidinous representation of the black woman, Sycorax, this opposition itself consolidating white womanhood. The contradictions of Miranda's position are interestingly mirrored in Behn's narrator, whose movements of identity and disavowal towards her noble savage (Oroonoko) can be read as the choice between the representational stance of a Miranda (chaste womanhood threatened by black sexuality) and a Desdemona (evincing sexual desire for a black 'other'). Her allegiance ultimately lies with the former.

[45] Warner's inversion of this trope will form an important area of discussion in the following chapter.

concede an exact categorical fit, "I don't really fit into ... these groups, I'm rather a hybrid."[6] I would argue that it is the hybridity of Warner's style and socio-cultural background that gives her work its particular attraction and energy. Homi Bhabha's description of hybridity appears to be a fitting description of Warner's intertextuality: a process whereby, while utilising the dominant forms of knowledge, other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and 'estrange the basis of its authority",[7]. While the novel utilises the 'dominant knowledge' of Shakespeare's play, one cannot view the novel as an intertext driven by its connection to this pre-text alone. Utilising other textual congeners and developing the gaps within the play can on one level be viewed as working along the axis of Linda Hutcheon's definition of postmodern parody as the play of difference at the heart of similarity:

> Parody is a perfect post-modern form ... for it paradoxically both *incorporates* and *challenges* that which it parodies.[8]

Parody and hybridity bear implicit connections. Parodic intertextuality is a useful weapon for postcolonial hybridity in its undercutting of hegemonic discourse, particularly that of history. Juxtaposing different types of discourse (history/fantasy/fictional) both subverts the truth effect of historical discourse and draws attention to the idea that all we can ever know of that past is through its textual remains. However it is important to distinguish Warner's use of these intertextual techniques from the more generalised 'mining' of cultural history evinced in many texts of the postmodern oeuvre.[9] Warner's intertextuality has a more postcolonial slant to it, evinced in the grounding of the text in particular socio-ideological contexts:

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[6] Marina Warner in Chantal Zabus, *Spinning a Yarn with Marina Warner*, p. 526.
[7] Homi Bhabha, *Signs taken for Wonders*, p. 154.
[8] Linda Hutcheon, *A Poetics of Postmodernism*, p. 11.
[9] For example, Italo Calvino's *If on a Winter's Night a Traveller*: Here intertextuality moves across a broad spectrum of intertextual echoes suggesting Derrida and Barthes' awareness of the impossibility of living outside the infinite text.

slavery ... Just another form of paid sex", p. 328) we are shown Xanthe's hard-hitting cynicism:

> Much the easiest way to get rid of that ... dependency you seem to hate is to have a set up that's completely legit ... I think your kind of freedom hampers you ... I just know that I have to choose rather carefully who I'm to depend on.
> (*Indigo*, pp. 328-9)

While Xanthe's cynicism appears to be punished at the moment she becomes vulnerable to love, Miranda is seemingly rewarded by Warner through her marriage to George Felix. She meets the actor again while he is involved in performing the part of Caliban.

> By bringing Miranda and Caliban together, Warner brings together the two victims of colonialist prosperity and, instead of the threat of rape, she offers a union based on the recognition of their mutual enslavement.[21]

The meeting is one of the finest coups of Warner's intertextuality. She juxtaposes the dialogic exchange of Caliban and Miranda in *The Tempest* with the subsequent conversation between Miranda and Felix – incisively undercutting Prospero's discourse of rape with the beginnings of the discourse of love. Felix goes to the heart of the toll of such racism on their present in his sense of the 'placelessness' which is the result of the mythologising that has buried the 'thing itself' beneath the wreck of history:

> I've ended up with no name. I am the unnameable ... You can feel you're marooned – have you felt that? (*Indigo*, p. 394)

The words beautifully demonstrate Warner's connecting of colour and voice, echoing the title of the novel's final movement – maroon/black – maroon here echoing the non-place of his/story and hers. The decision to be free to enter into dialogic relation with an 'other' is envisaged as a personal desire to free themselves from the shackles of their respective historical past and present:

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[21] Chantal Zabus, *Prospero's Progeny Curses Back*, p. 135.

> We'll forget the Middle East, forget Aids, forget famine ... Because I'm so tired, as the poet said, of our fucking envy and your fucking guilt.[22]

Like Morrison, Warner both installs and subverts the scars of colonialism and slavery – the words remain as a story to pass on. Shakespeare's chess game of power is metamorphosed into the beginnings of a dialogic relationship in which divisions can be transgressed bringing together white queen and black pawn.

> They had begun play ... crossing the lines, crossing the squares, far out on the board in the other's sea. (*Indigo*, p. 396)

While Warner's image of intersubjectivity is an incisive re-encoding of these characters' former marginalisation one needs to question the Miranda-like idealism of her postcolonial hybridity here. It too easily conflates their position as black man and 'white' woman as mutual enslavement, attempting to 'forget', along with Felix, the continuing history of racial and ethnic violence which refuses to submerge. In this respect Warner mirrors the naivety of Antoinette's view of 'otherness' as freedom; a glance outward from the text is met with Tia's stone.

The stone preventing an easy insertion of the voice of others into the book of myths, as well as the more violent undercurrent within efforts of dialogue, can be seen in the more violent aspects of other postcolonial re-visions of the play. George Lamming's *Water with Berries* re-views the discourse of rape as surfacing in the Calibanic rage of those refused points of enunciation. In a chilling rendition of white paranoia, an actor who has been reduced to playing a corpse on stage (reminiscent of Caliban's linguistic imprisonment) rapes the leading actress. This re-vision is suggestive of the violence which results from colonial aggression

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22 Marina Warner, *Indigo*, p. 395. This desire to forget resurfaces in Morrison's novel – both Sethe and Paul D. struggling to free themselves from their respective pasts. The naivety of such forgetfulness is traced by both Morrison and Warner.

are concretely imaged through the twenty four books of his library. However, Greenaway does show some cracks in Prospero's appropriative system, particularly through the figure of Caliban as a dancer moving in a realm outside language:

> Such a physical, material body seems painfully difficult to communicate through while at the same time establishing Caliban as a different order of being than the others contained by Prospero's words.[30]

In this sense one can draw parallels between the postmodernism of Greenaway and Coetzee in their awareness of an alterity beyond language. In a comparison of Greenaway and Warner one again comes up against the problematics of 'the thing itself or the myth'. Warner's dialogism subverts the ventriloquism of Greenaway's Prospero, yet one is still left with an authorial voice speaking for the 'other'.

2.3 The Island of the Time Before

The clouds methought would open and show riches
Ready to drop upon me, that when I waked
I cried to dream again.

(*The Tempest*, Act III, sc ii, ℓℓ 139-141)

In part II of her novel entitled *Indigo/Blue* Warner paints a rich and complex canvas of life on Shakespeare's isle (Liamuiga) which evokes the dream space of the 'other'. Colour is used suggestively throughout the novel to imply this space beyond the representational economy of language, as well as a move beyond the stark binary oppositions of an either/or in attempts to fix difference:

> I'm actually interested in limits of language and of course colour is one of the areas where there's a difficulty. The eye perceives more than language can tell.[31]

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[30] Amy Lawrence, *The Films of Peter Greenaway*, p. 147.

[31] Marina Warner in Chantal Zabus, *Spinning a Yarn with Marina Warner*, p. 524. In this respect the title of her novel is an interesting one. Indigo is one of the world's oldest dyestuffs – used for cave paintings, artefacts and carrying religious and superstitious connotations in ancient civilisations. Moreover, it was used to 'write on the body' as decoration and warpaint. In this area the title echoes the alterity of Imoinda. Indigo resurfaces in our present as a popular dye for textiles and clothing. In this sense the title encompasses Warner's connection of past and present.

set out to attack in 'self-defence' are shown to be no more than two women protecting their own life and property. We witness the dialogic gap between the coloniser's words and intentions, in their determined manipulation of the islanders to learn the 'secrets of the isle', and their empty promises of temporary residence.

In this respect Warner brings to life the 'before time' of Prospero and Caliban's relationship, showing us the underside of Prospero's allegation of rape and Caliban's hostility. Prospero's allegation of rape is inverted here in a movement which suggests both the territorial rape of Liamuiga and the actual rape of island women by colonisers. The emptiness of the colonisers' promise to leave within an allotted time period is traced through the ironic re-naming of the island as *Blessed Child* and the traffic of letters between Kit and England leading to his eventual instalment as Governor of the island.[37] Perhaps the most incisive subversion of religious justification occurs in the lead up to Ariel's 'rape' by Kit in which we witness him masturbating to the rhythm of religious incantation:

> 'The Lord is my shepherd, I'll not want.' I want he thought, I want, I want her still ... He was holding himself rhythmically now, pumping with long, smooth strokes ... 'Lord be my shepherd' ... With a series of sharp spasms, he ceased ...
> (*Indigo*, pp. 149-150)

Ariel's capitulation to Kit's desire is an interesting one. In a way she appears to have the same attitude as the latter-day Xanthe. She sees the situation for what it is and attempts to manipulate it for her own power and ultimate revenge. "Ariel tasted a certain triumph in his weakness; she found cruelty a reward ..." (*Indigo*, p. 167). Kit and Ariel's relationship and the birth of baby Roucoubé can be seen to bear echoes of the historical pair, John Smith and Pocahontas. Kit's movement between desire, shame and aversion is captured in his religious cant and the irony of his letters to his future wife, Rebecca Clovelly. The juxtaposition of

[37] The name suggests both the linguistic imprisonment and paternalism enacted by colonialism. The importance of naming and re-naming can also be traced in the novels of Behn and Morrison.

these letters with the reality of his plunder and the fruit it bears is a telling one. His language acts here as a mantle clothing the events in utopian rhetoric:

> How should I begin to describe to you the many enchantments of this isle? ... Its marvellous bounty, its plentiful springs ... The natives are amenable for all their savage state, and import their wisdom to us in exchange for fribbling items ... Fly here to stand by my side, sweet lady, for we can further the walls of Christendom on this isle ... (*Indigo*, p. 153)

Ariel's role as unwilling accomplice to Prospero's power is another coup of Warner's intertextual method. We are able to trace Ariel's imprisonment in Sycorax's tree as her gradual linguistic dispossession. Teaching English to Ariel and Dulé (renamed by Kit and the children, 'Caliban') acts as a diversion for Kit:

> It diverts me to teach him our language as he serves me. He has already learned how to curse ... (*Indigo*, p. 201)

Kit's diversion is juxtaposed with Ariel's gradual realisation that she is imprisoned by the colonisers' language, her attempts to manipulate the system from within displacing her into a no-place, cursed by Sycorax and rejected by Kit. Like Coetzee's Friday the placelessness of her 'story' in the subsequent rebellion is echoed by her refusal to speak. Ariel's attempt to trick and kill Kit is simultaneously installed and subverted. There is a Shakespearean echo of misplaced timing in the idea that it is her attempt at revenge which alerts the colonisers to the islanders' attack.[38] The occlusion of her 'story' by history is captured by the two subsequent re-paintings of the event in the Everard family memoirs and Serafine's oral storytelling taken from the writings of a French missionary. The interplay of oral and written word here echoes Greenaway's film in its emphasis on the power of the written word to control semiosis. The irony of Labat's re-vision is seen in the fact that he manages to tell the story despite Ariel's refusal to speak; the 'happy story' of the Everards' memoirs and the history books is thus

[38] "Such however is the mighty providence that guides us, we were averted in due time" (*Indigo*, p. 199).

ultimately traced to a silence that will not speak, except through the tongues of others, becoming

> How the first Kit Everard won the love of an islander and how she saved him and his brave band of pioneers. (*Indigo*, p. 224)

Caliban's role in the attack is similarly presented from two opposing frames. The battle of Sloop's Bight is vividly drawn from the islanders' perspective as the massacre of over four hundred. Caliban's monstrosity is shown here to result from his subsequent torture as a lesson to the islanders, here echoing Prospero's manipulation of Caliban's rebellion in the discourse of treason.[39] The euphemisation of power is repeated in the written survival of the event as a "most fiendish and treacherous Enterprise" (*Indigo*, p. 199). However, while the 'other' story is occluded from history, Warner allusively draws our attention to the horror of the slaughter through her textual paintbrush; here dripping with blood:

> The blood of the wounded trickled from the bank, spilling like one of the showers that freshened the earth each day, and flowed downstream towards the sea, which was not so far that its rich scarlet could diffuse before it met the waves.[40]

2.5 *Nymphs and Reapers Heavily Vanish ...*

The Flash of 'History' in the Present

The multi-perspectivism of the seventeenth-century sections of the text is repeated in the twentieth-century mainly through the technique of suggestive echoes between the imagery and voices of past and present. The twentieth-century Everard family shows the survival of Prospero's patriarchal and racial anxieties through the marginalisation of Sir Ant's 'Creole'

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[39] "By due process of law we have sentenced him to be slit in the hamstrings as an example to those who would follow him ..." (*Indigo*, p. 200).

[40] Marina Warner, *Indigo*, p. 203. Warner's ability to interweave factual horror and beauty is similar to Morrison's. Sethe's back is simultaneously a chokecherry tree and no more than a clump of ugly scars.

offspring. Kit is called 'Nigger Everard' at school and spurned in his own family because his mother had been Creole. The placelessness of his hybridity is suggested in his inability to settle down, preferring a life of gambling and alcohol. It is Xanthe who plays the role of white virgin, although like Miranda, she rebels against her father's obsessive patriarchal control through her manipulative marriage to the hotel owner, Sy Nebris.[41] Warner's representation of Sy and the Everard family's attempts to 're-colonise' the island evokes the continuation of colonisation as capitalist and consumerist greed in the twentieth-century. Moreover, the new hotel, *The Spice of Life*, is created on the same site as the earlier settlement, suggesting a repeated territorial rape. While 'Prospero' does not feature as a specific character in Warner's novel, his attitudes resonate in the typical colonial males of the Everard family, particularly through Sir Ant – he is repeatedly drawn as patriotic, patronising, proud of the past and self-justifying – with a penchant for repeating his family history in between the various stages of occupying the 'houses' in the game of flinders!

The suggestive juxtaposition of past and present is repeated in the historical texts and images within the Everard family home. Warner's method of simultaneously installing and subverting this history is beautifully demonstrated in the description of the portrait of the first Sir Kit. Her description here bears echoes of Turner's famous painting; Sir Kit dominates the painting, manoeuvring the tiny fleet and islands akin to a chess player:

> One hand raised to haul ... a galleon with puffed sails, while the other reached to grasp a volcano-tipped island ... in one corner there appeared a painted, *rose-pink* beach, where an Indian brave, also in a feather skirt, and armed with a bow and arrow, was sitting astride another sea creature of a similarly fantastic species. (*Indigo*, p. 48)

[41] Her nickname 'Goldie' simultaneously suggests her marital worth as Sir Ant's 'pure' offspring and echoes the tale with which the novel opens – the tale of the king's transformation of his daughter into gold. The danger of producing a heartless individual is captured in her death, as she transforms into a "pearl of rare size and beauty" (*Indigo*, p. 376).

Her control of the conflicting movements and styles within the text is akin to that of a tightrope walker as she subtly balances identity and disavowal towards the slave as 'other'. Her tightrope crossing is mirrored in the minefield of contemporary debate which focuses on the 'uneasy' vacillation at the heart of Behn's language. Can we read the text as a case of the woman writer championing and giving voice to oppressed slavery? Or is Behn's position as integral to colonial power implicit in the discursive strategies of appropriation and the effacement of 'otherness' which her text undertakes? As with *The Tempest* one needs to guard against a tendency to wrest her/story out of its dialogic context(s). Careful attention to the political, social and ideological contexts surrounding the text can offer a reading which traces the intersection of gender, class and race in the novel with no easy conflation of the terms. In place of an opaque criticism of Behn's work as for/against slavery, voicing/silencing otherness, this approach will seek to demonstrate that

> when giving voice to the abject status of another may threaten their own interests, members of a privileged (but also oppressed) group may vacillate between identity and disavowal.[4]

While *Oroonoko* certainly tells us the 'history' of a royal slave it is Behn's female narrator who acts as arch ventriloquist, controlling the semiosis of her tale.[5] In this respect one can trace another story emerging beneath that of the protagonists – the story of Behn's self-fashioning, the forging of sentimental womanhood and the beginnings of sentimental 'fictions' which can be traced through the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Behn's text acts as an exemplum of the important role novels play in shaping representations of gender, and thus demonstrates the centrality of race (another 'other') in societal reconfigurations – particularly the rise of the bourgeois individual.

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[4] SusanAndrade. *White Skin, Black Masks*, p. 189.
[5] This calls to mind the role of Prospero, particularly as he is imaged in *Prospero's Books*.

myriad of conflicting styles and attitudes interweaving heroic romance and African lore with a factuality that places his act beyond the noble in the realm of barbarism.

In the following extract we see the sentimental/heroic styles interfused:

> He, grieved to death, yet pleased at her noble resolution ... embracing her with all the passion and languishment of a dying lover, drew his knife to kill this treasure of his soul ... (*Oroonoko*, p. 68)

Yet on the discovery of the body days later we find brutal factuality:

> they smelt an unusual smell, as of a dead body, for stinks must be very noisome that can be distinguished among such a quantity of natural sweets ...
> (*Oroonoko*, p. 60)

In both Oroonoko's and Imoinda's deaths one can trace the paradoxical positioning of the narrator. She juxtaposes these occasions as both an act of honour and horror, thus bridging her position as simultaneously sentimental, virtuous woman and complicit in colonial power. However, both scenes suggest an excess beyond the narrator's appropriating gaze or understanding. The mutilation of Imoinda's face and Oroonoko's self-inflicted wounds stand as a mark of honour beyond the narrator's texts, reminding us of her reaction when viewing the similar self-mutilation of the Indians:

> for my part, I took 'em for hobgoblins, or fiends, rather than men.
> (*Oroonoko*, p. 55)

Oroonoko's dismemberment thus becomes simultaneously powerful and powerless – it enables him to escape into an alterity beyond the narrator's gaze, yet also points to the legacy of slavery on the individual – the loss of a self featured in his bodily dissolution, suggesting the loss of his/story to pass on.[41] Morrison's text can be seen to intersect with these dual movements here – both installing and subverting *Beloved*'s story, testing our perceptions of Sethe's infanticide as an act of honour/horror.

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[41] The loss of a self featured through bodily dissolution reappears in *Beloved*'s fears: "She had two dreams: exploding and being swallowed" (*Beloved*, p. 133).

manipulation of Ariel's 'saving' action in *Indigo* – reminding us of the masking of other 'her/stories'.

In contrast, in the death scene, Imoinda is represented as sentimental, submissive womanhood:

> He found the heroic wife faster pleading for death than he was to propose it ...
> (*Oroonoko*, p. 68)

In this section the movement of Imoinda from sentimental heroine towards mutilated 'other' enacts an exchange between white and black womanhood, with white womanhood ultimately coming to rest in verbal sentiment and black womanhood as libidinous other.

The death of Imoinda bears an implicit paradox – whose victory is it? Returning to the verbal/physical competition between the narrator and Imoinda one could argue that her death ultimately confines her to the body. Moreover her pregnancy, like the written word, is inherently connected with the power to engender something for the future. While Imoinda may win Oroonoko physically it is the narrator's 'pen' which carries/engenders the tragic story of their love to future generations. The book becomes akin to a

> safe sex substitute for the potentially mutinous but also economically valuable black slave child Oroonoko might have had with Imoinda.[47]

In a more chilling view one can argue that Behn's text is born "from the death and silencing of black persons, one of them pregnant".[48] Imoinda's pregnancy is especially interesting in connection with Morrison's *Beloved*. The figure of the pregnant black female can be seen to have significance throughout African-American women's writing. It simultaneously brings together white desire/exploitation and reproduction which are literally written

[47] Margaret Ferguson. *Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender*, p. 172.
[48] Margaret Ferguson. *Juggling the Categories of Race, Class and Gender*, p. 172.

CHAPTER 4

THE THING ITSELF OR THE MYTH?

Re-tracing the ghost of memory in Toni Morrison's *Beloved*

Down by the stream in back of 124 her footprints come and go, come and go. They are so familiar. Should a child, an adult, place his feet in them, they will fit. Take them out and they disappear again as though nobody ever walked there.

(*Beloved*, p. 275)[1]

We'll forget the middle east, forget Aids, forget famine, the war ... torture death rape and murder ... and the disappeared, forget, forget ...

(*Indigo*, p. 394)

The approaching end of our journey beneath four textual surfaces offers an opportunity to review our progress towards 'the thing itself' through the lens of Toni Morrison's *Beloved*. A predominant concern of this dissertation has been the problematics surrounding the absence of 'other' voices within both literary and historical representations. Both seventeenth-century texts evince an authorial control of semiosis which largely occludes other his/her stories except as excess and hybrid resistance. Twentieth-century revisions of such his/her stories are to a large extent driven by an attempt to get closer to the space of occlusion (the thing itself), featured as either a refusal to mimic the other's tongue (*Foe*), or a careful dialogic remapping of other voices, contained nevertheless within an authorial gaze (*Indigo*). Morrison, like Warner, chooses to move silence to sound, yet does so in a manner which suggests that 'the thing itself', whether past event or voice, can only ever be imaged as a ghostly presence or echo. In this respect Morrison reflects an attitude to history which does not deny the events of the past but focuses on the fact that all we can know of that past is through its textual traces:

[1] Toni Morrison. *Beloved* (Picador. 1987). All subsequent quotes from this edition.

> past events existed empirically, but in epistemiological terms we can only know them today through texts. Past events are given meaning, not existence, by their representation in history.[2]

Morrison's project of recovering the traces of 'history' is further complicated by the fact that the voice of slavery's past is encased within layers of myth both within the voice of the master and the voice of the slave. The importance of this doubly textualised masking is seen in the driving force of the novel – its paradoxical concern with the need to rememory and (re)forget. The importance of memory is given added weight in her novel through its focus on both the broader impact of slavery's history on the present and its weight on the personal lives of her characters. She manages this double trajectory through the enigmatic character of her title – Beloved. On the macro scale 'Beloved' echoes the voices of all those denied a voice and subjectivity in slavery – the sixty million and more of the book's dedication. In this area *Beloved* cathects the history of African-American slavery to their original violation and usurpation – the wrenching of the millions of Africans from their homeland across the middle passage to the space of no name, no belonging. On the personal level Beloved becomes the catalyst for the violent unlocking of past traumas suffered by the novel's characters. Her central role here becomes an exploration of Sethe's supreme act of love/horror, the murder of her 'already crawling' baby girl. Yet she also acts as a catalyst in the rememories of the community, ranging from her impact on Paul D, to Stamp Paid, Ella and many more.

The centrality of Sethe's act of infanticide is suggestive on the personal level of the violent fracturing of the mother-daughter relationship through the institution of slavery which viewed reproduction as no more than reproducing market goods. Here infanticide is used to pinpoint the results of a system which creates

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[2] Linda Hutcheon, *The Politics of Postmodernism*, pp. 81-82.

language itself to scar. Morrison evinces a Foucauldian awareness of the power of discourse to write on the bodies of the linguistically dispossessed, yet she subverts this power of the signifier through her own writerly jouissance, bringing the excluded body back into language – with Beloved acting as arch signifier of the word made flesh.

The aim of this chapter is not an attempt to re-colonise the myriad of critical interpretations surrounding the novel, but rather to view it as the culmination of our journey into the wreck of 'other' his/her stories. Morrison's gaze is a hybrid one, traversing history, folklore, African-American myth and orality in a way which shows us that if all we can know of the past is through its textual traces, it is in the space between sign and sound, presence and absence, life and death, from which the drowned voice resides and speaks. The suggestive layering of Morrison's writerly method can be glimpsed in the image of Sethe from which the title of the novel emanates:

> ... her knees wide open as any grave ... Ten minutes for seven letters ... She thought it would be enough, rutting among the gravestones with the engraver ... That should certainly be enough. (*Beloved*, p. 5)

In this one image Morrison is able to suggest the cost of slavery – life-giving womb collapses into death – enclosing grave in a system in which the systematic rape of women to produce commodities unleashes a cycle in which the only choice of freedom or resistance becomes the negation of life itself. Sethe's mother body becomes by metonymic extension the desecrated centre of African-American history – its origins an act of territorial and physical violation, and its retrieval through rememory a process in which the cost of each drop of ink, each letter, acts as a testimony to the 'rape' and absence of those sixty million and more.

American canon. The American context is perhaps even more definitive of this production of the 'other' for a consolidation of its own identity in its paradoxical status as both coloniser and colonised. The war of independence 'freeing' America from English colonialism becomes for many white Americans the epitome of American identity and liberation. Yet, freedom for one group has left a myriad of 'Jims' and romanticised 'mammy figures' linguistically and figuratively imprisoned in other texts.

Morrison seeks the eyes behind the mask of such literary representations on the broad level by moving the voices of those marginalised or spoken for in earlier texts to the centre, and on the specific level through two white characters in her novel – Schoolteacher and Amy Denver. Schoolteacher wields the power of the word and the whip. In this sense he can be read as an allegory for the power of discourse to violently define the 'other', as well as for the process of literary canon formation. The reliance of the definer on the defined, and the linguistic dispossession enacted by slavery's uprooting of origins, is ironically imaged in the fact that it is Sethe who makes the link which enables Schoolteacher to arrange Sethe's 'animal' and 'human' characteristics on the right and left hand sides of the paper.[6] The power of the definer's gaze is imaged in the nephew's literalisation of their lesson as they milk the pregnant Sethe, protecting the 'merchandise' her womb contains in a hole in the ground. Ink becomes blood, as pen turns to whip, carving slavery's definition onto Sethe's back.[7] However, Morrison does not allow the power to remain with the definer – Sethe's act of infanticide is, in an important sense, the only way she can talk back to Schoolteacher:

> No one ... would list her daughter's characteristics on the animal side of the paper. (*Beloved*, p. 251)

[6] We are reminded of this irony at the end of the novel by Sethe: "I made the ink, Paul D. He couldn't have done it if I hadn't made the ink" (*Beloved*, p. 271).
[7] Here Morrison rends the veil surrounding the dislocation of word from flesh enacted in Behn's text.

examining slave narratives as a genre it is important to keep in mind the total context out of which the written word evolved, particularly the machinations of the abolitionist movement

> which enabled the liberation of many slaves, along with their stories, while simultaneously imposing constraints upon the speaking, writing self.[11]

While the slave narrative form undoubtedly provided the opportunity for inserting the 'other' as 'self' into history, such a 'self' had to struggle against the political and literary demands of a largely white audience which, like Amy Denver, still evinced many of the stereotypical attitudes towards blackness. In a sense one may compare the rhetorical strategies adopted to convince readers of their 'humanness' with similar problems faced by a marginalised voice such as Behn's. Behn's repeated attesting to the power of her female pen and the veracity of her eyewitness account is matched in the oft seen documents and 'white' editorial notes accompanying slave narratives to 'prove' the writer's veracity. Caught within a web of white literary imagination and discourse created a similarly paradoxical position of power and powerlessness for the hand that wrote. The need to convince readers of the slaves' essential humanity needed to be countered by a 'not quite, not white' strategy to avoid 'insulting' his or her white audience, through the establishment of an overtly convincing kinship.[12] Douglass' narrative is interesting in its double movement of power and powerlessness, its undermining of origin through its re-writing (a total of three autobiographies) and his refusal to concede to the demands of his abolitionist supporters to be 'himself' – in other words, act the slave.

Douglass's rhetorical power is born of a special attention to the semiotic power of language, his use of such power to deconstruct the master's discourse from within creating a hybridised realm. Two excerpts will demonstrate Douglass's talent for rhetoric:

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[11] Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers* , p. 118.
[12] Thus mimicking the movement of identity and disavowal seen in Behn's text and others.

> You have seen how a man was made a slave;
> You shall see how a slave was made a man.[13]

Here Douglass subverts the practice of slavery as a whole by deconstructing its founding premise – slave as less than man.[14] By enclosing the sentence within the double movement of man-slave, slave-man, Douglass suggests his project of moving towards a subjectivity always there, but violated through the institution of slavery. Douglass also shows awareness of the idea that it is not language per se that creates the brutality of slavery, but rather the uses man makes of it – "What man can make, man can unmake."[15] Douglass uses the power of language to deconstruct the iron of the white signifier through turning his attention to that masterpiece of legitimisation – the Bible. He rewrites the word by opening this text up to other hermeneutic possibilities, introducing an alternative black history into the process of interpretation. For example, he draws on his own paradoxical status as slave and descendant of a white master to deconstruct one of the central biblical arguments legitimising slavery:

> If the lineal descendants of Ham are alone to be scripturally enslaved, it is certain that slavery in the south must soon become unscriptural; for thousands are ushered into the world, annually, who, like myself, owe their existence to white fathers, and those fathers most frequently their own masters.[16]

One can compare Douglass' rhetorical power, his revenge on the iron of the signifier, with Morrison's similar linguistic juggling: she takes the discourse of slavery, the discourse of the good mother, the discourse of rape and the discourse of masculinity and strips down their rhetorical strategies to focus on the fractures within their founding premises. An interesting parallel can be drawn between Douglass's attitude to his acquisition of language and Sethe's violent catapulting into what it means to be in the hands of the definer:

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[13] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 120.
[14] Douglass's hybrid resistance through the power of the written word is thus beyond the mimicking power of Caliban.
[15] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 121.
[16] Douglass, quoted in Betty Ring, *Painting by Numbers*, p. 132. Here Douglass deconstructs a literal reading of Genesis (viii.18-29) by inserting the occluded history of miscegenation into the text.

> I would at times feel that learning to read had been a curse rather than a blessing. it had given me a view of my wretched condition, without the remedy.[17]

While Sethe does not acquire the same level of literacy, her inauguration into the 'wretchedness' of her condition is tied to the power of ink to fragment her subjectivity into animal/human. Furthermore, the only remedy she can call upon to wrest her children's bodies out of a similar representational economy catapults the discourse of the good mother into the discourse of infanticide. While Douglass evinces a Calibanesque awareness of the curse of the master's language, his acquisition of literacy nevertheless enables him to move silence to sound in a lasting testimony which subverts the iron of established meanings. His own master evinces an awareness of the power of the signifier (the word) to enable the slave to move beyond the gaze of the definer.

> Learning would spoil the best nigger in the world ... if you teach that nigger ... how to read, there would be no keeping him. It would forever unfit him to be a slave ...[18]

Morrison's text attests to the 'truth' of the master's rude awareness, and yet goes further than Douglass in both the unmasking of the pain beyond his representational economy and the dialogic interlinking of many his/her stories within the frame of her rhetorical power. A similar widening and unmasking of unspeakable acts within Morrison's novel can be glimpsed by looking at an exemplum of the African-American sentimental slave narrative.

Harriet Jacobs' *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* evinces a similar paradoxical status between rending the veil on the more violent aspects of a woman's life in slavery, and simultaneously masking such violence beneath the nineteenth century cult of true

[17] Douglass. quoted in Betty Ring. p. 130.
[18] Douglass. in Betty Ring. *Painting by Numbers*, p. 135. Douglass' subversion of established meaning is suggested in his learning to write in the spaces between the lines of his master's copybooks. Here we are reminded of Caliban's similar use of the master's language in rhetorical acts of resistance.

'paid for' through an integration of ink and blood, which owes much to those who have gone before.

Furthermore, what many may term Morrison's post-modern concern with language is shown to be grounded in a far more concrete subversive history which felt the effects of fragmented subjectivity, utilised the gaps between signifier and signified, showed an awareness of the power of language to narrativise reality long before technical terms such as postmodernism, deconstruction, historiography surfaced on the contemporary scene. She draws on an African-American heritage of orality which allows her to revise American history through a dialogic remapping of earlier texts as ghostly trace, body and memory with a voice, if not a story, to pass on.

4.2 My Girl Come Home

It was the right thing to do, but she had no right to do it ...
It was the only thing to do, but it was the wrong thing to do.
(Toni Morrison).

And if she thought anything, it was No. No. Nono. Nonono. Simple. She just flew. Collected every bit of life she had made, all the parts of her that were precious and fine and beautiful, and carried, pushed, dragged them through the veil, out, away, over there where no one could hurt them.
(*Beloved*, p. 163).

Morrison's title character, Beloved, haunts each page of the novel as an alterity that defies interpretative mastery. In a sense she can be read as a writerly figure who becomes for each character in the novel what he/she would make of her. Thus for Sethe she constitutes the miraculous return of her 'best thing', her already-crawling baby; for Denver she is the sister whose presence becomes an integral part of her struggle to be 'looked at', recognised as a separate individual; for Paul D she becomes the key to unlock the 'red heart' of his damaged manhood, and for the community at large she becomes a catalyst in their own memories of

repeatedly imaged as tasting, licking, absorbing Sethe.[30] On one level one can connect this oral imagery to the pre-oedipal stage of the child's development in which the lack of a sense of separation between self and (m)other leads to a contradictory desire for the 'join' and a fear that such a 'join' will lead to bodily dissolution. While the object-relations theory of Melanie Klein is useful in examining these contradictory impulses within the character of Beloved, it is important to place such theories within the wider context of the system of slavery in which the fracturing of the mother-child relationship distorts the growth from pre-oedipal fears and desires towards separation and selfhood. Morrison suggests this wider context through imaging Beloved as both the child Sethe killed on the personal level, and on the wider historical level suggesting that Beloved is the returned history of all those abused and killed, separated from their mothers, during the middle passage. For Beloved, Sethe's separation is both drawn from infanticide and the decision of so many other mothers to separate from their children through diving into the release of death from the slave ships. The slipperiness of Beloved's double status here enables Morrison to suggest an internalisation of Beloved within Sethe herself, reminding us of her own reactions to being left behind by the mother who attempted escape and was subsequently hung:

> I wonder what they was doing when they was caught. Running, you think? No, not that. Because she was my m'am and nobody's m'am would run off and leave her daughter, would she? Would she now? (*Beloved*, p. 203)

Beloved thus enacts the absence resulting from the impossible choices of so many mothers in slavery. Part of the community's disdain for Sethe's action is thus linked to a similar internalisation of absent Beloveds within themselves. The dangers of an all-consuming 'mother'-love are connected to the cannibalistic appropriation of 'otherness' which slavery itself enacts. The use of a repertoire of the contradictory impulses of swallowing and being

[30] This imagery has echoes of cannibalistic discourse – it suggests that the cannibalism of a system which refuses the development of selfhood creates a situation in which love itself knows no boundaries – Beloved is the prime example of the cannibalistic underside of a devouring love.

the restrictions of slavery choking both Beloved and Sethe, and more specifically the physical torture of such a system. The 'choking' involved in a narcissistic search for selfhood is evoked in the three chapters of interior monologue – the repetition of the word 'mine' together with the gradual breakdown of punctuation, and the ambiguity of the speaking voice, all contribute to a sense of separate identities dissolving.

Sethe's chapter begins: "Beloved, she my daughter, she mine ..."; Denver's: "Beloved is my sister ...", and later, "She's mine, Beloved, she's mine". The most powerful need for consuming recognition is seen in Beloved's chapter, her need to join and become one with Sethe moving dangerously close to dissolving any separate identity: "I am Beloved and she is mine ... I am not separate from her   there is no place where I stop; and later, "now we can join   a hot thing". Here, the warping of self caused by slavery is evoked in the confusion of seeing and being seen, becoming a suffocating desire both to be seen by the other, and to become the other.[34]

The suffocation of separate identity reaches a crescendo in the following chapter, in which the ambiguity of speaking voice evokes the need of each woman to possess the 'other' as evoked in the repeated phrase, "You are mine. You are mine" (*Beloved*, p. 217). The repeated desire of possession establishes a cycle which one feels must be broken if any of the three women is to survive. Sethe and Beloved are unable to break the pattern, interlocked in a struggle in which Sethe is drained of will and identity in the face of Beloved's consuming need. This interlocking of 'self' and 'other' is portrayed in the visual image of Sethe shrinking while Beloved swells, gradually resembling a pregnant woman, an image which evokes the sense of Sethe's self being drained into Beloved. It is thus Denver who has to break the pattern of

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[34] Toni Morrison, *Beloved* (pp. 207-213).

these were the bodies of slaves. The power of text, body and ink to bring the 'other' story to the surface bears enigmatic parallels to our search into the 'other' side of his/her stories. The blurring of the dividing line between history/fiction is figured in the living colours of a textualised past in our present.

The old man's yarn brings to mind the oral spinning of another storyteller – Serafine, in Warner's *Indigo*. Serafine's stories serve as an exemplum of the interweaving of myth, magic and historical fact which both twentieth-century texts enact. Yet Serafine has the additional challenge of being colonised subject, speaking from within the master's discourse. Her 'yarns' draw on the living colours of events, myths and patriarchal tales, creating hybridised realms of resistance which reflect the rhetorical strategies of both Warner and Morrison. As Warner comments:

> She's an island that has been taken over. But at the same time, through her possibilities of rethinking her lot and distributing rewards and punishments, she stands for me as the exemplary fiction writer who can be colonised and still speak.[6]

Throughout our journey beneath four textual surfaces we have traced the problematics surrounding the speaking voice of the colonised other. Both Morrison and Warner make the choice of moving silence to sound. Warner manages a dialogic multiperspectivism which destroys Prospero's semiotic control of his/story. While her text may appear to be overly idealistic in some respects, it evinces the power of the literary imagination to 'listen for the holes' as a way of inserting other voices into the book of myths. Morrison evinces a similarly evocative echo of these other stories through the title character of her novel – Beloved. In this respect she subverts the Prospero-like power of Behn's narrator, allowing the alterity of the stories of Oroonoko, Imoinda and others like them to resurface with the mask removed. While

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[6] Marina Warner, in Chantal Zabus, *Spinning a Yarn with Marina Warner*, p. 521.

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