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**Travel Writing, Self and Other:
Finding Reciprocal Space**

A thesis
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of the requirements for the degree
of

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ABSTRACT

My thesis engages with the complex relationships between self and other as these are constructed in the travel writing of five authors: the early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*; the Victorian polymath William Morris' *Icelandic Journals*; travel writer and historian Robert Byron's *The Road to Oxiana*; and Nobel Prize for Literature recipients V. S. Naipaul's *An Area of Darkness* and Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. The texts under consideration appeared respectively in 1796, 1873, 1937, 1964 and 2006: they therefore encompass a range of conceptions of the self and other.

My examination of these authors' works prompts a reconsideration of the Saidian self/Other binary, in search of a less polemical stance towards this socially constructed relationship. In problematising this binary, I adopt feminist and postcolonial perspectives and apply critical textual analysis. I posit, and find, that the self and other are mutually constitutive. I suggest this shift visually and textually by using self-other, rather than the more usual self/Other.

I find that these travel writers point to several ways in which the self/Other binary, cemented textually in place by Said's *Orientalism*, is not fixed but rather is as unstable and shifting as each individual's subjectivity. While power and knowledge are clearly contributory factors to that subjectivity, I show that these, too, are not fixed, but are rather shifting concepts variously influencing the shape of the self-other relationship, as are the notions of home which inflect these works. Writing itself clearly serves as a vivifying home of sorts for these writers and, crucially, as a means of remaking or refashioning the self.

I employ an interpretative process that compares and contrasts the departing with the returning self, as against the intercultural experiences encountered and the changes attendant on those experiences. I find that the self-other relationship can be more richly apprehended by interpellating a redefined notion of reciprocity, one removed from its usual (Western) signification as part of a straightforward exchange of commodity or service. This redefined notion of reciprocity sees value in difference in the social encounter, where difference is acknowledged but not subsumed.

My research contributes to the dynamic nature of travel writing studies by exploring beyond prevailing theoretical co-ordinates. Overall, my findings – and redefining of terms – indicate that seeking out such reciprocal engagements in these authors' travel writings is a fruitful expansion in the field of travel writing studies.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction – Finding Reciprocal Space

While travelling from Athens to Bombay in 1964, the writer V. S. Naipaul describes himself as reacting with ‘hysteria’, ‘brutality’, and ‘fear’ to the changing physiques and demeanours of those around him.¹ In *An Area of Darkness*, he writes of his arrival in Bombay: ‘It mattered little through whose eyes I was seeing the East; there had as yet been no time for this type of self-assessment’.² Determined he says to ‘remain what I was’, Naipaul’s visceral responses indicate a troubled awareness of the relationship between the self and the other. His words suggest an intention to examine how the self-other relationship is constructed, visually as well as emotionally, pointing in the process to the acts of travelling and writing as a medium of apprehension. Naipaul anticipates here current understandings of the self as troubled, mobile, and multiple, as well as of textually constructed identities that evolve through travelling and writing, contingent on time and place. Naipaul’s powerful portrayal of his textual and corporeal responses point to the central concern of this thesis: the construction of the mutually constitutive relationship between self and other and how travelling and writing may influence that relationship.

My thesis examines the relationship between self and other as constructed in the travel writing of five authors: the early feminist Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway, and Denmark*; Victorian polymath William Morris’ *Icelandic Journals*; travel writer and historian Robert Byron’s *Road to Oxiana*; and two Nobel Prize for Literature recipients – V. S. Naipaul’s *An Area of Darkness* and Orhan Pamuk’s *Istanbul: Memories and the City*. These works appeared respectively in 1796, 1871-73, 1931, 1964 and 2006, and so encompass a range of conceptions of the self, and the other, which are played out in their travel writing. As Dúnlaith Bird notes: ‘travel writing involves the construction of textual identities through motion, encounters and exchanges. The embedded perspective of the traveller is framed through multiple discourses, for example, race, nationality and class’.³ Travel writing, as Bird also asserts, ‘continues to evolve’ to the extent that it can no longer be ‘read as a form of veiled self-

¹ V. S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* [Andre Deutsch, 1964], (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 13.

² Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness*, p. 13.

³ Dúnlaith Bird, ‘Travel Writing and Gender’ in *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Carl Thompson (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 61. <ebookcentral-proquest-com> [accessed 15 December 2016]

exploration in which the self/Other binary is perpetuated'.⁴ This clearly calls for a new way of reading the relationship between self and other, as well as travel writing.

My objective is to seek a less polemical way of understanding the self-other relationship than through the binary cemented in place by Edward Said's *Orientalism*.⁵ I link the two words with a hyphen to suggest the mutually constitutive relationship between the two, in a departure from the more usual self/Other. I look for reciprocal engagements, rather than conflict, in the intercultural spaces when self and other connect. I ask three main questions of each work:

What subjectivity does each author project at the start of their journey?

How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces discussed in their travel writing?

What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning self, as evidenced in their writing?

I therefore examine the ways in which these authors' travel writings produce embodied subjectivities, at such intersections as gender, race, ethnicity, and class, that are contingent on place and time. All five texts under consideration problematise the Saidian self/Other binary, setting 'multiple discourses, including that of gender, into motion, troubling and fracturing them'.⁶ I view the relationship between self and other in these texts as being mutually constitutive, hence my focus on reciprocal engagement.

In attempting to define the subjectivity projected by each author at the start of their journey, I draw largely on biographical information from a range of sources other than the writer. This is because, as Carl Thompson has shown, it would be unwise to rely on the author's self portrayal since travelogues usually offer 'a carefully staged presentation of the self'.⁷

Notions of identity and subjectivity are clearly central to my project and need defining here, especially as both work in intricate and interwoven ways, rather than as distinct entities. As Weedon makes clear, they can be employed as either repressive or positive

⁴ Bird, p. 70.

⁵ See Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997); Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, *A Said Dictionary* (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012).

⁶ Bird, p. 70.

⁷ Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing, The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2011), p. 119.

social constructs.⁸ Identity has long been debated in the academy following on from the Second World War's 'legacies of colonialism, migration, globalisation, as well as the growth of new social movements and forms of identity politics'.⁹ Weedon suggests that it is more useful 'in order to understand the power of identity, and particularly the role it plays in repressive individual and social practices' to consider the term 'within broader conceptualisations of subjectivity that can account for the unconscious, non-rational and emotional dimensions of identity'.¹⁰ She asks how the relationship between subjectivity and identity might be 'usefully conceptualized' and states that 'identity is perhaps best understood as a limited and temporary fixing for the individual of a particular mode of subjectivity as apparently what one *is*'.¹¹ Ideologically, one of the key roles of identity, she states, is to 'curtail the plural possibilities of subjectivity inherent in the wider discursive field and to give individuals a singular sense of who they are and where they belong'.¹² For this last reason, I tend to prefer the term 'subjectivity' throughout the thesis as it allows for plural perspectives, as well as a consideration of the wider discursive fields of power and knowledge in the intercultural spaces that these authors traverse. At the same time, though, I find Chris Weedon's notion of identity 'as a limited and temporary fixing for the individual' useful when I consider the paradoxical spaces these authors encounter, particularly as these lead to altered subjectivities. Paradoxical spaces have been identified by Rose as those 'spaces that would be mutually exclusive if charted on a two-dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and outside – are occupied simultaneously'.¹³ Wollstonecraft, for example, is a radical feminist, but she lives and travels in a patriarchal world; her journey involves negotiating a secret business mission in an attempt to win back her lover's affections, at the same time as she increasingly despises the rising commercialism shaping those business interests.

From a poststructuralist perspective, subjectivity is established through language, and assumes a subject who is already partially constituted by the language code inherited at birth. Poststructuralism, Sara Mills notes, questions 'the unity of the subject, finding it more useful to analyse the subject-in-process or the subject-in-crisis'.¹⁴ In considering each author's subjectivity, I adopt Catherine Belsey's critical practice. Belsey writes: 'If thought

⁸ Chris Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004).

⁹ Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, p. 1.

¹⁰ Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, p. 2.

¹¹ Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, p. 19.

¹² Weedon, *Identity and Culture*, p. 19.

¹³ Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1993), p. 140.

¹⁴ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 34.

is not independent of the differences inscribed in language, then subjectivity itself is inconceivable outside language'.¹⁵ This understanding of subjectivity also assumes a subject who is always in transit, always being made, and who is always a split subject; for example, the 'I' who thinks is not the same 'I' who writes or speaks.¹⁶

As Carl Thompson *et al* have shown in recent scholarship, the concepts that came from travel writing and which influenced postcolonial studies have shifted and expanded in meaning, having 'proliferated, diversified and grown more historically nuanced and theoretically sophisticated', suggesting new directions in travel writing studies.¹⁷ Along with the changes identified by Bird, recent critical approaches take cognisance of such factors as visual culture, of travels North as well as East, and of inner, psychological journeys as a form of travel. In the texts I consider, two authors in fact do travel North; another travels mainly for the sheer visual pleasure of architectural forms; one appears to live in self-imposed exile, while the last does not move beyond the boundaries of his native city. My research therefore contributes to the dynamic nature of travel writing by considering these works from such perspectives. At the same time, though, Thompson asserts that important earlier readings, such as Pratt's concept of the 'contact zone', must be expanded upon, providing a 'jumping off point for further analysis', rather than a destination.¹⁸ My research suggests that seeking out reciprocal engagements between self and other is one possible, fruitful expansion.

Positing the mutually constitutive nature of the self-other relationship allows me to interpellate notions of reciprocal engagement, thereby troubling prevailing dominant discourses. Subjectivities are always in transit and always under construction, as Mills and Rose, along with other feminist scholars, have explored in a range of ways.¹⁹ My findings suggest the need for a new theoretical paradigm, one that acknowledges difference without being subsumed by it.

Before offering a note about my own positionality in the thesis, I acknowledge here my reading as being partial. The texts I consider are dense, richly suggestive and socially

¹⁵ Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, 2nd edn [1980, Methuen] (London: New York; Routledge, 2002), p. 43.

¹⁶ Belsey, *Critical Practice*, pp. 52-77 and pp. 78-94. See also Mills, *Discourse*, p. 34.

¹⁷ Carl Thompson, Introduction, *The Routledge Companion to Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2015), p. 18.

¹⁸ Thompson, *Routledge Companion*, p. 19.

¹⁹ See, for example, Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991); Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography*; Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones, eds., *Contemporary Feminist Theories* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998).

meaningful texts that clearly invite many other readings. As well, my focus on reciprocity is in no way intended to elide the fact that travel writing, and travelling, have been and still are often complicit in creating and perpetuating the self/Other binary. This is especially so in a world which Mary Louise Pratt sees as being in motion on a scale never seen before, where the ‘rapidly accelerating movement of peoples is creating not a world without history, but the proliferating intersection of histories’.²⁰

My desire to understand how the self-other relationship is mutually constituted stems in part from an incident that took place more than thirty years ago, but which remains fresh in my mind. In 1984, I was travelling by car through central Bombay with my three-year-old daughter and Dodanna, my brother-in-law, who was dropping us off at Sahar airport, where we would board a flight for Australia. We had just pulled up at some traffic lights and, as we waited for the lights to change, an elderly beggar woman suddenly appeared at my window, holding her open palm just in front of my face. She was frail, gap-toothed and dressed in an old, torn sari. Hardly a threatening presence, then, but in a knee-jerk reaction I shrank back. My brother-in-law noticed this and said quietly – and non-judgmentally – that he thought the circumstances for our being inside the car and the old lady outside were down to pure chance. More than this, that she and we were ‘one and the same’. What were the unexamined assumptions that compelled my response? What did my brother-in-law mean by saying that we were ‘one and the same’? I relate the incident here because it would ultimately lead to this thesis, and the questions it seeks to answer, shaped as the incident was around issues of race, class, gender, place, and the self-other relationship.

The works under discussion represent a range of nuanced, sometimes highly charged responses to such issues as race, class, gender, ethnicity, politics, economic circumstance, art, relationships – both private and public – in differing times and places. Differences in time and place serve as well to reveal changing conceptions of the self and the other. These writers challenge accepted norms, sometimes reinforce them, yet also reveal possible new ways of living in the world. They do so through a range of autobiographical writing, including letters, journals, memoir, and travelogue.

These works were chosen for the quality and richness of their writing as works of travel, as well as for the complexity of their portrayals of the self-other relationship. Wollstonecraft in her first letter home, for example, evokes many of travel writing’s powerful effects for her reader. She draws on her senses, her social standing, her gender,

²⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, ‘Planetary’, in Mary Louise Pratt, Ron G. Manley, and Susan Bassnett, *Intercultural Dialogue* (London: British Council, 2004), pp. 10-31, p. 17.

and the material and social circumstances in which she finds herself. She describes – in the space of just a few paragraphs – the smell of juniper, the crispness of fresh linen; her hostess’s recognition that Wollstonecraft, rather than her maid, is the lady by the condition of her hands; her pride at her host’s comment that she asks ‘men’s questions; and her own curiosity as to why her presence as a stranger in this place does not bring anyone to their window or door to investigate further. Morris, Byron, Naipaul and Pamuk, too, travel and write in richly evocative but also quite different ways, reflecting their differing subjectivities and the intercultural spaces they travel in and write about.

It may seem counter-intuitive to base my discussion of these authors – one female and four male – on feminist interventions in travel theory, since it seems to foreground gender more than my project does as a whole. But my choice of texts was driven by a desire to explore the complexity of the self-other relationship, of which gender is part, but not the whole. In fact, I find that the juxtaposition of these texts allows for unexpected and valuable connections to be made between authors, place, and time, and constructions of the self-other relationship. Links between Wollstonecraft and Naipaul, for example, who retreat respectively to lonely hotel room and darkened space in order to deal with depths of emotional turmoil that are similar in intensity, but whose causes are vastly different. As well, Pamuk’s portrayal of Istanbul reflects his own personal experience of the city, but at the same time shows how powerfully he was influenced by Western travel accounts of writers such as Flaubert and de Nerval. Finally, basing my approach on feminist interventions helps pose such questions as who is speaking for whom, in what context, and for what purpose, to discover, as Gillian Rose states: ‘just who is able to see what and how and with what effects’?²¹ These are questions that may be asked of any travel text.

Common threads and concerns running through these texts include the idea of home, of being loved – or unloved – and of deep voids in the lived experience. Notions of home and paradoxical spaces, then, influence how each author’s subjectivity is constructed, as well as how they connect with, and sometimes distance themselves from, people and places. My use of paradoxical draws on Rose’s description of such spaces as being ‘multidimensional, shifting and contingent’.²² My findings suggest that the intercultural and paradoxical spaces these authors encounter, along with the creative acts of travelling and writing, work to subvert, sometimes to affirm, prevailing hegemonic discourses shaping the self and the other. Notions of the sublime, for instance, influenced both Wollstonecraft and Morris, but

²¹ Gillian Rose, *Visual Methodologies: An Introduction to the Interpretation of Visual Materials*, 2nd edn., (London: Sage, 2007), p. 10.

²² Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 140.

in quite different ways. Where Wollstonecraft seeks to subvert and obliterate Burkean conceptions of the real landscape through her physical connection with it, Morris encounters an annihilation – and transformation – of the self through a comprehension of the difference between the literary or imaginary landscape, and the real.

These works reveal in intricate detail the material particularities shaping their authors' complex relationships between self and other, reflecting Barbara Korte's statement that: 'more acutely than any other genre [...] travel writing is defined by the interaction of the human subject with the world'.²³ Wollstonecraft's *Letters* induces an empathy and admiration for her tireless attempts to overcome constraints imposed by class, gender, patriarchy, and the sheer economics of day-to-day living. Morris' *Icelandic Journals* may be understood as a sustained journey into the self, portrayed through landscape and myth. The registers of Byron's *Road to Oxiana* shift between heightened aesthetic appreciation and anti-imperialist anger, challenging in the process exclusive claims to cultural knowledge that Byron sees as being a common human heritage. In *An Area of Darkness*, Naipaul's prose paradoxically both repels and attracts, as he relates the painful experiences of his first visit to his ancestral home – experiences which threaten to engulf him in the darkness of this work's title. Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City* is included because as place it has absorbed and reflects influences both ancient and modern, with elements from East and West, Islam and Christianity, all evidenced in Istanbul's gorgeous architectural forms, cultural artefacts and diverse peoples. These influences shape Pamuk's richly complex portrayal of a self which has been depleted by what he sees as the loss of a collective glorious past, a loss which for him induces personal shame in those living in a less admirable present. Pamuk's text also upsets any narrow definition of the genre of travel writing since his travelling and writing take place purely within his native city.

Travel writing studies have richly enhanced understanding of how conceptions of the relationship between self and other have evolved over time. Edward Said's *Orientalism* was hugely influential in establishing the self/Other binary at the forefront of academic thought, through his examination of textual representations of this relationship in the art and writing of travellers to the Orient – especially during the nineteenth century – such as Flaubert and de Nerval, as well as in a range of other texts. Said's study, Tim Youngs writes, 'stimulated new attention to travel texts' leading to more critical scholarship on 'representations of the Other and to see in them self-serving motives and unequal power

²³ Barbara Korte, *English Travel Writing from Pilgrimages to Postcolonial Explorations*. Trans. Catherine Matthias (Basingstoke: Macmillan, 2000), p. 5.

relationships'.²⁴ Youngs goes on to say that Said, and those influenced by him, read travel writing as not only accompanying and reflecting colonial power, but also helping facilitate its exercise.²⁵

The dichotomous relationship that Said's work cemented in place has been effectively challenged by feminist scholars, leading to more nuanced readings and interpretations of travel writing. In her study of women's travel writing Mills, for instance, asserts that while Said's 'basic contention' in *Orientalism* 'is correct – that the texts do attempt to place, or have been read as placing, the other nation into a position of inferiority', it is equally the case that 'the texts themselves are much more complex than that, particularly women's texts'.²⁶ Travel writing from the eighteenth century, for example, revealed a cultural shift, which Elizabeth Bohls and Ian Duncan have identified in the self that begins to take centre stage in the travel writing genre.²⁷ In a similar fashion, Ingrid Horrocks points to Wollstonecraft's assertion that if travelling is to provide 'the completion of a liberal education', then travellers would do better to travel North, rather than on the well-trodden paths of the Grand Tour, which 'privileged the sites of classical antiquity in Greece and Italy'.²⁸ Wollstonecraft's view thus 'represents a profound shift' in understanding, with the goal of inspiring 'travellers and readers alike to participate in a progressive understanding of society and history'.²⁹ Barbara Korte, too, notes 'a shift towards the travelling subject', all of which perhaps explains the genre's appeal to these writers. Wollstonecraft, for instance, in her advertisement for *Letters*, writes: 'I found I could not avoid being continually the first person—"the little hero of each tale"' (p. 51). This contrasts with earlier conventions in which the authorial presence was expected to be invisible, acting purely as an eye witness to the events written about.³⁰

Holland and Huggan assert that 'travel writing enjoys an intermediary status between subjective inquiry and objective documentation'.³¹ For Youngs, this 'immediately entails two things: the construction of the self and of the other and the relationship between fact

²⁴ Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 163.

²⁵ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 163.

²⁶ Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, pp. 50-51.

²⁷ Elizabeth A. Bohls and Ian Duncan, Bohls, eds., Introduction, *Travel Writing 1700-1830: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. xxiv

²⁸ Ingrid Horrocks, Introduction, Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2013), p. 27.

²⁹ Horrocks, p. 27.

³⁰ Korte, p. 47-48, p. 53.

³¹ Quoted in Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 173.

and fiction'.³² Furthermore, that both this construction and this relationship may be suggested in Holland and Huggan's observation that: 'The roving "I"s of travel narratives...are often drawn to surfaces – more particularly to bodies – onto which they project their fears and fantasies of the ethnicized cultural "other"'.³³ In the intercultural engagements I consider, particularly Naipaul's, the co-presence of bodies from different cultures is central to the subjectivities that emerge, as 'the travelling first-person narrator not only looks at those who inhabit the places through which he or she passes, but views them in ways that throw light on his or her own anxieties and desires and (some critics would say) of the home culture'.³⁴

Conceptions or theories of the self that emerged in the Western world during the periods within which these works were written were influenced to a greater or lesser degree by the philosophies and beliefs that emerged during what are now termed the Enlightenment, the Romantic, and the Modern-Postmodern eras. During these periods, first reason and observation, then the emotions and creativity, and finally a reaction against tradition and past forms were formative influences. While these periods and terms are now seen as less cohesive than was previously the case, in general an Enlightenment self would have valued philosophies of rational thought, linear history and social progress, and a departure from 'ancient superstition, prejudice, dogma, and injustice'.³⁵ The Romantics, in contrast, rejected the 'ordered rationality of the Enlightenment as mechanical, impersonal, and artificial', instead seeing themselves as 'free spirits expressing their own imaginative truths', valuing personal freedom and a view of 'the artist as a genius or prophet', along with such personal attributes as 'sincerity, spontaneity, and originality'.³⁶ The Moderns, especially in literature and art, broke with past forms, and 'tended to see themselves as an *avant-garde* disengaged from bourgeois values', while the Postmodern self is seen as living in 'a culture of fragmentary sensations, eclectic nostalgia, disposable simulacra and promiscuous superficiality'.³⁷ It is important to remember what such theories elided, as Elizabeth Bohls asserts in relation to the aesthetics of Romanticism. She finds that 'liberal political thought values the mind and devalues the body' with the result that more emphasis was placed on 'procedural rights and freedoms like free speech and voting rights rather than substantive entitlements like freedom from starvation, homelessness or

³² Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 173.

³³ Quoted in Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 173.

³⁴ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 173.

³⁵ Chris Baldick, *Oxford Concise Dictionary of Literary Terms* [1990] (Oxford: New York, 1996), p. 69.

³⁶ Baldick, p. 193.

³⁷ Baldick, p. 140, pp. 174-175.

unemployment’, in the process obscuring ‘the ways in which material obstacles keep human beings from unfolding their mental or spiritual capacities’.³⁸

Arguably, the Reformation has had the most formative influence on the modern Western European self, with the introduction of the idea that it was possible for an individual to experience an unmediated connection with a Christian God. For the historian Jacques Barzun, the Reformation marks the beginning of the Modern era. Barzun divides the last five hundred years into four periods, each era having been dominated by a particular issue. He argues that the period 1500-1660 was dominated by the question of what to believe in religion; from 1661-1789 the dominant issue was the status of the individual and the mode of government; during 1790-1920 the overriding concern was the means through which social and economic equality might be achieved; and 1920-2000 saw the ‘mixed consequence of all these efforts’.³⁹

The ‘mixed consequence’ noted by Barzun is explored in the work of Kenneth Gergen. In *The Saturated Self*, Gergen traces the ways in which the social construction of the self has changed ‘in the Western world’, with individual worth beginning to take precedence over ‘holistic units of clan and community’ following the Enlightenment.⁴⁰ It strikes Gergen as extraordinary that the literary and artistic accomplishments of the Romantic period could follow an age in which first reason and then observation were deemed paramount human qualities, which ‘ennobled the individual, and gave him (and more questionably *her*) the capacity for discerning truth and choosing appropriate action’.⁴¹ Gergen notes that it was this view of the self that ‘inspired democratic institutions, a commitment to science, and the hope of [a] broad education’.⁴² The Romantic self, Gergen suggests, valued moral feeling, loyalty, inner joy and a sense of ‘the beyond’, a mood that allowed artists such as Turner, for example, to give shape to something not visible to the eye, beyond the senses. Challenging the supremacy of reason and observation opened up a new world, ‘the world of the deep interior, lying beneath the veneer of conscious reason’.⁴³ This conception of the self he suggests is still present in the contemporary world, but has largely been replaced by a modernist self, for whom Gergen says ‘reason and observation

³⁸ Elizabeth A. Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1766-1818* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), (pp. 140-169), pp. 141-142.

³⁹ Jacques Barzun, *From Dawn to Decadence: 500 Years of Western Cultural Life, 1500 to the Present* (New York: Harper Collins, 2000), p. xvii.

⁴⁰ Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), pp. 239-40.

⁴¹ Gergen, p. 20.

⁴² Gergen, p. 20.

⁴³ Gergen, pp. 20-24.

are the central ingredients of human functioning'.⁴⁴ Part of the reason for the loss of romanticist values he attributes to such values being 'poor company for the expansionist markets of the Western world'.⁴⁵ Both the romantic and modernist self have been encroached upon and eroded by the multiple perspectives of postmodernity. For the postmodern self, the 'implications for conceptions of human character are thus substantial, as threatening as they are intoxicating'.⁴⁶

Gergen's decision to question – parenthesise even – whether women were ennobled along with men, highlights how the notions of the self that he outlines are gendered masculine, pointing up the elision of women's voices and their absence as equals in the social order. The question of how to subvert and overturn those gender biases and elisions has long engaged feminist scholars, as it did Wollstonecraft in her own life and still very relevant writing. In this connection, the contemporary philosopher Genevieve Lloyd asserts:

Attempting to affirm anything distinctively 'feminine' has its hazards in a context of actual inequality. If the full range of human activities – both the nurturing tasks traditionally associated with the private domain and the activities which have hitherto occupied public space – were freely available to all, the exploration of sexual difference would be less fraught with the dangers of perpetuating norms and stereotypes which have mutilated men and women alike. But the task of exposing and criticizing the maleness of ideals of Reason need not wait upon the realization of such hopes; it may indeed be an important contribution to their realization.⁴⁷

Here Lloyd advocates collapsing socially imposed divisions, especially of public and private domains, for the sake of women *and* men; of striking out on a new path that is not divided by gender. Lloyd explores in a later work how Kant, in his *Critique of Reason*, identified the desirability of retaining 'that merely negative attitude (which constitutes enlightenment proper)', by which is meant, Lloyd says 'a process of actively standing back,

⁴⁴ Gergen, p. 19.

⁴⁵ Gergen, p. 28.

⁴⁶ Gergen, p. 111.

⁴⁷ Genevieve Lloyd, *The Man of Reason: "Male" and "Female" in Western Philosophy* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), pp. 106-107.

of refusing passively to follow where others – the putative knowers of absolute truths – would lead'.⁴⁸

In addressing notions of the other in this thesis, I found Thompson's nuanced definitions valuable. As he says, one expects difference to be part of travel writing since this is its purpose, to show to the audience at home what is new, different, about the place the writer is visiting; it is how the difference is portrayed that is important.⁴⁹ Othering can be read on two similar but different levels:

In a weaker, more general sense, 'othering' simply denotes the process by which the members of one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and the members of another culture. In a stronger sense, however, it has come to refer more specifically to the processes and strategies by which one culture depicts another culture as not only different, but also inferior to itself.⁵⁰

The motives for othering may be various, he continues, even unconscious, 'springing from a complex mixture of emotions, such as fear, envy, revulsion, incomprehension and sometimes even desire, when another culture stirs taboo fantasies that travellers wish to repress and disown'.⁵¹ Othering may also serve to justify 'the traveller's personal conduct towards the people he or she met', and 'more crucially perhaps [...] to legitimate the conduct of the traveller's culture'.⁵² Orientals, for example, were 'routinely depicted as sensual and cruel' and their societies as having 'a natural tendency towards despotism'.⁵³ It was these views that Said sought to challenge in *Orientalism*, not least because he saw them as being 'not necessarily an accurate description of the objective reality of the highly diverse cultures and ethnicities of Asia and the Middle East' but rather 'a set of representational conventions which had become pervasive and [...] institutionalised in European and North American culture'.⁵⁴ Thus these notions were already present in the mind of the traveller, stemming from largely unexamined assumptions based on what they had read or been told beforehand.

⁴⁸ Genevieve Lloyd, *Enlightenment Shadows* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), p. 155.

⁴⁹ Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 132-133.

⁵⁰ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, pp. 132-133.

⁵¹ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 133.

⁵² Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 133.

⁵³ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 134.

⁵⁴ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, pp. 134-135.

The practice of othering also changes over time, Thompson states, from colonial and imperialist perspectives, to the post-colonial and neo-colonial views circulating today. He points to the fact that the Orientalist tropes that currently shape feelings of superiority in the West, would at one time have revealed an awareness of inferiority, such as European envy of a more advanced Ottoman Empire.⁵⁵

It is a given that all travel must depict difference to some extent because ‘it brings news of people and places that are to some degree unfamiliar, and “other” to the audience’. What is more debatable, though, is ‘whether *all* travel writing inevitably “others” other cultures in the second, stronger sense of the term’.⁵⁶ While the process of othering often serves the aims and goals, through colonial discourse, of imperial goals, it cannot be assumed, says Thompson, that all ‘Western travel writing is inherently or invariably imperialist and exploitative’.⁵⁷ Thompson’s description of othering can be expanded to include a different type of othering. Naipaul, for example, travels throughout India for a year with his wife, Patricia Hale, and yet she plays no part in his narrative, other than being mentioned on a single occasion, and only then as his ‘companion’. This is despite the fact that Naipaul draws on his wife’s diary from the trip for inspiration. Othering can also be seen, then, as being more finely nuanced, as indicating an absent presence.

Similarly, my reading of Morris points to the fact that the other may not necessarily be a person – the landscape itself may be viewed as other. This begs the question of whether the landscape can be part of a reciprocal relationship, and further, whether there are different forms of reciprocity? My reading of the self-other evident in Morris’ portrayal of the Icelandic landscape shows that landscape has agency, and thus a form of reciprocity, and by extension that reciprocity may be construed in different ways. Morris is deeply affected, for example, when he visits the saga site of Gunnar’s Howe, because the landscape is redolent of this saga character and his story. In relation to landscape, Rose notes that although literally speaking the landscape ‘is the scene within the range of the observer’s vision’, it has come to be ‘increasingly interpreted as a formulation of the dynamic relations between a society or culture and its environment: *the process of human activity in time and area*’.⁵⁸ Further, that ‘whether written or painted, grown or built, a landscape’s meanings draw on the cultural codes of the society for which it was made’.⁵⁹ In Morris’ case, the Icelandic landscape represents one of those paradoxical spaces from which new cultural

⁵⁵ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 153.

⁵⁶ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 133.

⁵⁷ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 136.

⁵⁸ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 86.

⁵⁹ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 89.

codes or meanings might emerge. The savagery he finds in the Icelandic landscape thus compels him on his return to engage in a more socially activist manner. The other may also be plural, may even involve continents rather than simply individuals or groups of people, as in the case of Naipaul, and may even be found in domestic space.

Travel writing as a genre is a valuable vehicle for exploring the self-other relationship because the genre continues to change and evolve, contingent on time, place, author, and fluctuating concerns with this relationship. I see a gap in the academic study of travel literature that stems from a lack of critical attention to the possibility of constructing reciprocal or at least empathetic positions that acknowledge and respect difference in social encounters. A search for reciprocity in the *Journal of Travel Writing Studies* at the time of writing brings up 38 results, but the notion of reciprocity discussed is uncomplicated, or uses the same language to reverse the self/Other binary. My thesis addresses the need for a more nuanced understanding of how the mutually constituted self-other relationship evolves. Thus, a core issue my thesis explores is how might it be possible to construct a reciprocal position that acknowledges and respects difference – whether cultural, sexual, gendered, racial – between traveller and ‘travellee’.⁶⁰

My analysis of travel writing departs from the more usual focus on difference in the self/Other binary, adopting instead a perspective shaped by a notion of reciprocity in the self-other relationship. A non-Istanbullu cannot know, for example, exactly what Pamuk means when he describes *hüzün*, a form of melancholia that sometimes permeates his native Istanbul, but could yet empathise with it, and even understand their own sense of space differently because of it. Some discussion of how I propose to apply the notion of reciprocity is useful here, since I consider it in the context of engagements taking place in close physical proximity and in which power shifts back and forth. This is quite different to how power and reciprocity work, for example, through imperialism, closely linked to capitalism, with which much travel writing engages. This form of reciprocity pays little more than lip service, as Pratt explains:

Reciprocity has always been capitalism’s ideology of itself. In his compelling study of sentimental literature on the colonial frontier, Peter Hulme makes this point, recalling Marcel Mauss’s classic analysis of reciprocity in *The Gift*. Mauss

⁶⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* [1992] 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2008). Pratt describes ‘travellee’ as being ‘a clumsy term’ analogous to the term ‘addressee’ and referring to ‘persons traveled to (or on) by a traveller, receptors of travel’. p. 258, n42.

argues that in stateless, non-capitalist societies reciprocity functions as the basis for social interaction, even in radically hierarchical formations such as feudalism. In Hulme's words: 'only under the fetishised social relations of capitalism does reciprocity disappear altogether, however loudly its presence is trumpeted'. While doing away with reciprocity as the basis for social interaction, capitalism retains it as one of the stories it tells itself about itself.⁶¹

In considering how Wollstonecraft, Morris, Byron, Naipaul and Pamuk engage reciprocally with the other, then, I adopt a modified version of Pratt's concept of the 'contact zone'.⁶² In *Imperial Eyes* Pratt defined 'contact zones' as 'social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination – such as colonialism and slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today'.⁶³ The works I consider do not necessarily fit this paradigm. Recasting Pratt's concept of 'contact zones' as a space of reciprocal negotiation, from which to read the self-other relationship allows a more nuanced interpretative approach. It is notable that Pratt has in recent years modified her view of the 'contact zone', focusing on the potential it contains as a space of improvisation and negotiation.⁶⁴ Improvisation and negotiation call for a willingness to engage reciprocally, creating a space in which the dominant discourse may be dislodged, not to be replaced by another hegemony or dominance, but rather, as Bird observes, to 'construct a paradigm for travel writing and gender which did not reinscribe dominant discourses of power and subjugation'.⁶⁵ That such a space would be dynamic and evolving is indicated by Pratt's insistence that 'such relations cannot be conjured out of nowhere or prescribed according to fixed models. They have to be made up out of what is there in the embodied moment'.⁶⁶ By positing a more radical notion of reciprocity, I extend Pratt's conception of this revised space of the contact zone.

Reciprocity, then, is considered in this thesis not as a straightforward exchange, but rather as an engagement between self and other in a newly defined space, one which, as Pratt says, is improvised and negotiated. In such intercultural spaces, Pratt points to the

⁶¹ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 82.

⁶² Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

⁶³ Pratt, *Imperial Eyes*, p. 7.

⁶⁴ Pratt, 'Planetarity', pp. 13-14.

⁶⁵ Bird, p. 68.

⁶⁶ Pratt, 'Planetarity', p. 13-14.

importance of the ‘Committed Outsider’.⁶⁷ Rather than ‘outsider’ *per se*, as part of her delineation of the ways in which reciprocity may be found through difference, Pratt sees this role as a catalyst for a new way of seeing, and as a path for finding a way through the dilemma posed by the question: ‘how can tolerance include tolerance for intolerance?’⁶⁸ Pratt describes this revised view of this form of human engagement as having ‘the power of converting difference into reciprocity, that is, of enacting or performing differences as reciprocity’.⁶⁹ Such a strategy calls for ‘privileging the lived experience of differences over the knowledge, beliefs and ideologies that codify them’.⁷⁰ This is because at ‘the level of belief, differences readily translate into incompatibilities [...] But difference is lived as coexistence, the co-presence of bodies in spaces – the uneasy arts of the Contact Zone’.⁷¹ The complexity of Pratt’s argument offers a richly productive perspective from which to view the self-other relationship I have proposed.

My interpretation of my chosen texts is based on the understanding that they reveal how each author defines their subjectivity as they engage with the other. I agree with Youngs’ assertion that travel writing is arguably ‘the most socially important of all literary genres’, since:

Its construction of our sense of ‘me’ and ‘you’, ‘us’ and ‘them’, operates on individual and national levels and in the realms of psychology, society and economics. The processes of affiliation and differentiation at play within it can work to forge alliances, precipitate crises and provoke wars. [...] We all have stories of travel and they are of more than personal consequence.⁷²

More specifically, I approach the constructions of the self-other relationships in these texts as portraying what Casey Blanton describes as ‘the various ways the observing self and the foreign world reverberate within each work.’⁷³

The travel writing genre is currently the focus of a diverse range of scholarship. Tim Youngs, founding editor of the journal *Studies in Travel Writing*, notes that recent contributors to the field include not only literary critics, but also geographers, art historians,

⁶⁷ Pratt, ‘Planetarity’, p. 13.

⁶⁸ Pratt, ‘Planetarity’, p. 26.

⁶⁹ Pratt, ‘Planetarity’, p. 12.

⁷⁰ Pratt, ‘Planetarity’, p. 12.

⁷¹ Pratt, ‘Planetarity’, p. 12.

⁷² Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 1.

⁷³ Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xi.

and anthropologists.⁷⁴ Kristi Siegel, as General Editor of the book series *Travel Writing Across the Disciplines: Theory and Pedagogy*, extends her ‘call for books’ to contributors from ‘various disciplines such as social history, cultural theory, multicultural studies, anthropology, sociology, religious studies, literary analysis, and feminist criticism’.⁷⁵ As a genre, then, travel writing defies any simple definition. Its borders are described as being porous, indeterminate and inter-disciplinary, ‘complement[ing] the fluidity of the self whose (re)construction is in process through travel’.⁷⁶

In her own overview of the genre, Blanton identifies a spectrum of travel writing, at one end of which are the apparently factual and disinterested accounts of early explorers, sailors, or pilgrims, for example, while at the other end lie the ‘more explicitly autobiographical travel books that we have come to expect today as travel literature’.⁷⁷ Whether the works under consideration are narratives of adventure, exploration, or escape, travel writing usually falls into ‘a pattern of departure, adventure, and return’.⁷⁸ For Blanton, travel literature has ‘narrative power, both literal and symbolic’ and it is this that continues to engage as:

The traveler/narrator’s well-being and eventual safe homecoming become the primary tensions of the tale, the traveller’s encounter with the other its chief attraction. Indeed, the journey pattern is one of the most persistent of all narratives – both fiction and non-fiction.⁷⁹

In the latter category, the autobiographical works, Blanton includes Naipaul’s *An Area of Darkness*, in which she notes a ‘mediating consciousness that monitors the journey, judges, thinks, confesses, changes, and even grows’.⁸⁰ She writes that, ‘genuine “travel literature”, as opposed to what has been called “pretravel”, depends upon a certain self-consciousness on the part of the narrator that was not seized upon until after the Renaissance’ and which she says was not ‘highly developed until after the concern with “sensibility” in the

⁷⁴ Tim Youngs, ‘Where are we going?: Cross-border Approaches to Travel Writing’, in *Perspectives on Travel Writing*, ed. by Glenn Hooper and Tim Youngs, *Studies in European Cultural Transition*, 19 (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), p. 167.

⁷⁵ Kristi Siegel, *Travel Writing Across the Disciplines: Theory and Pedagogy*, ‘Call for Books’ <<http://www.kristisiegel.com/travelbooks.html>> [16 May 2012].

⁷⁶ Tim Youngs, ‘Pushing against the black/white limits of maps: African American writings of travel’, in *Travel Writing: Critical Concepts in Literary and Cultural Studies*, ed. by Tim Youngs and Charles Forsdick, 4 vols (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2012), IV, p. 344.

⁷⁷ Blanton, pp. 3-4.

⁷⁸ Blanton, p. 2.

⁷⁹ Blanton, p. 2.

⁸⁰ Blanton, p. 4.

eighteenth century'.⁸¹ For Blanton, the role of the narrator, or rather the 'foregrounding of the narrator is central to an understanding of the travel book...'.⁸² This is an important point because it illustrates the different subjective space between the author of a work and its narrator, as well as the crucial, transformative, gaps between the actual experience, writing up the experience, and the final written product, and whether the authors, in the process of narrating, see themselves anew through their creation. While their works read as being immediate and of the moment, often a lapse of some considerable time occurs between the initial writing and the final production of the work. In the case of Morris' *Icelandic Journals*, for example, two years passed before he crafted his notebooks into their final form. Further, Morris appears to be addressing a single person in his work, rather than a wider audience, and apparently never intended the *Journals* for publication.

One of the most engaging descriptions of the genre was coined by Jonathan Raban, for whom:

As a literary form, travel writing is a notoriously raffish open house where very different genres are likely to end up in the same bed. It accommodates the private diary, the essay, the short story, the prose poem, the rough note and polished table talk with indiscriminate hospitality.⁸³

Raban goes on to add that the genre's 'easy virtue' consigned it to 'literature's red light district'.⁸⁴ Generic fluidity is also apparent in Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan's view that travel writing is a 'crucial epistemological category for the displacement of normative values and homogenizing, essentialist views'.⁸⁵ At the same time, these authors are concerned to show how 'travel writing frequently provides an effective alibi for the perpetuation or reinstallation of ethnocentrically superior attitudes to "other" cultures, people, and places'.⁸⁶

A productive framework for discussing my chosen works took shape through a postcolonial feminist lens and recent developments in theories of travel. Mary Campbell addresses some of the concerns outlined above in her chapter 'Travel Writing and Its

⁸¹ Blanton, p. 4.

⁸² Blanton, p. xii.

⁸³ Jonathan Raban, *For Love and Money: Writing, Reading, Travelling, 1969-1987* (London: Collins Harvill, 1987), p. 253.

⁸⁴ Raban, p. 254.

⁸⁵ Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. ix.

⁸⁶ Holland and Huggan, p. viii.

Theory' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*.⁸⁷ She states that the increased interest in travel writing was 'part of the necessary reimagining of the world first occasioned by the post-World War Two resistance movements, and wars of liberation in former European colonies as well as by the waves of immigration that followed'.⁸⁸ For Campbell, travel 'consists largely in the collision between inherited and experienced knowledge'.⁸⁹ The idea of a collision suggests that the scrutiny of the self is likely to be a painful act, one to be approached with some trepidation. Campbell outlines how understanding and interpreting the dire state that the world seemed to be in by the mid-twentieth century, as well as how such a precarious state had evolved, was done through the 'recovery and analysis of people's writing about "foreign" and especially "exotic" places in which they had travelled and lived'.⁹⁰ These people included 'colonial masters, pilgrims, explorers, ambassadors, ambivalent wives, roving soldiers, ecstatic cross dressers, conquistadores, missionaries, merchants, escaped slaves, idle students of the gentry and aristocracy, adventurers, and alienated modern artists'.⁹¹ At the same time, Campbell continues, 'theoretical models were developing which would help to launch illuminating readings of texts once considered "sub-literary", of mainly archival use for narrative history, or just boring'.⁹² These readings fed back into theory, 'producing unexpectedly out of what at first, in the 1970s, was mainly rhetorical, semiotic, deconstructive, and even psychoanalytical forms of attention, the more engagé programme of postcolonial theory'.⁹³

Youngs asserts that the heightened academic interest in travel writing since the 1980s can be dated to Said's *Orientalism* (1978), a text which 'generated a wave of studies that looked at the ways in which travel writing, particularly of the nineteenth century, represented other cultures'.⁹⁴ *Orientalism* is also viewed as the founding document of postcolonial studies.⁹⁵ As a distinct category, postcolonial criticism emerged in the 1990s, challenging and undermining the 'universalist, timeless claims once made on behalf of

⁸⁷ Mary B. Campbell, 'Travel Writing and Its Theory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 261-278.

⁸⁸ Campbell, 'Travel Theory', p. 261.

⁸⁹ Mary B. Campbell, *The Witness and the Other World: Exotic European Travel Writing, 400-1600* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1988), p. 165.

⁹⁰ Campbell, 'Travel Theory', p. 261.

⁹¹ Campbell, 'Travel Theory', p. 261.

⁹² Campbell, 'Travel Theory', p. 261.

⁹³ Campbell, 'Travel Theory', p. 262.

⁹⁴ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 9.

⁹⁵ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 134.

literature'.⁹⁶ Such claims blatantly ignore or disregard the vast differences in human experience, whether cultural, social, regional or national, taking for granted the 'superiority of what is European or Western and the inferiority of what is not' as Peter Barry notes, finding that in *Orientalism* Said mines canonical literary texts and imperial practices and institutions such as universities for the silences and evasions which helped establish the Oriental subject as a universal Other, seen through Western eyes as being slavish, weak, corruptible and effeminate – all of the things the Westerner supposedly was not.⁹⁷

The impact of Said's *Orientalism* on the academic world as well as a non-academic literate readership, Radhakrishnan suggests, has been galvanising, bringing into being the new academic field of postcolonial theory and, in the process, shifting, for some, 'the axis and the alignment' of academic interest.⁹⁸ Youngs writes that while Said's focus was largely on the Middle East, scholars took up his identification of the 'connections between travel, representation, and empire', which 'continue to influence countless works on travel to other areas of the world'.⁹⁹ For Youngs, Said's major contribution in the context of travel writing 'has been to show that travel writing does not necessarily consist simply of individual or disinterested factual accounts'. Rather, 'travellers have already been influenced, before they travel, by previous cultural representations that they have encountered'.¹⁰⁰ In this context, it is worth noting that Said turns on numerous occasions in *Orientalism* to the sixteenth-century philosopher Vico, particularly what he sees as the philosopher's great insight – his apprehension of the fact that 'men [sic] make their own history'.¹⁰¹ Extrapolating from this, it is clearly possible to make particular and multiple rather than singular histories, even histories that are reciprocal rather than combative or hostile.

While acknowledging the critical importance accorded to *Orientalism*, it is yet for Campbell a 'textbook case of [...] sociological crudity', in which the only position seen as possible features the 'West vs the Rest'.¹⁰² For Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, Said's *Orientalism*, important and ground-breaking as this work is, cannot fully account for differences between self and other. This is because, they argue, 'Said's theories are

⁹⁶ Peter Barry, *Beginning Theory: An Introduction to Literary and Cultural Theory* (Manchester; New York: Manchester University Press, 1995), p. 191.

⁹⁷ Barry, p. 192 and passim.

⁹⁸ Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan, *A Said Dictionary* (Chichester: Wiley-Blackwell, 2012), p. 76.

⁹⁹ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 9.

¹⁰⁰ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 9.

¹⁰¹ Edward Said, *Orientalism*, (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1978; repr. Penguin, 1995), pp. 4-5, and passim.

¹⁰² Campbell, 'Travel Theory', p. 275, n. 10 and p. 264.

dependent on two assumptions: first, that the sense of self against which the Other is positioned embodies the age's cultural hegemony' and so represents the 'dominant voice'. Second, that the self here is always seen as 'a trope of positive function and value'. The position of the viewer or speaker is thereby constructed 'in colonialist or Orientalist discourse as essentially male'.¹⁰³ More important for the purpose of this thesis is that Said's *Orientalism* also fails to address 'whether or not Othering will occur in non-Imperialist contexts', and if it did, what form it might take.¹⁰⁴

As Peter Childs and Patrick Williams have it, though, Said's importance lies more in his willingness and ability to provoke 'important theoretical analysis', rather than in producing theory per se.¹⁰⁵ They also raise the crucial question of whether constructs of the other in fact expose, as well as 'masks, splits in Western society'.¹⁰⁶ Rajagopalan Radhakrishnan elucidates this point further when he states that after *Orientalism*, it was the project that would determine which theory Said 'might use and how, and not the other way around'.¹⁰⁷ In defining Said's oppositional criticism, Radhakrishnan states that Said 'was asking for the worldly coordinates of theory' demanding to know from theorists such as Foucault, Derrida and Lacan, exactly what it was they were standing for or against.¹⁰⁸ At the heart of Said's work is his abiding concern, as Childs and Williams note, to define the parameters of how it might be possible to 'study other cultures and peoples from a libertarian or non-repressive and non-manipulative perspective?'.¹⁰⁹ Childs and Williams' comment here parallels Pratt's revised notion of reciprocity. My research provides detailed analysis of this notion in the self-other relationship as constructed in the travel writing of Wollstonecraft, Morris, Byron, Naipaul and Pamuk.

In analysing this travel writing I draw in particular on Mills' discussion of the varied and nuanced ways in which post-colonial feminists have reacted 'against the lack of address to gender issues in mainstream post-colonial theory', as well as 'against the universalising tendencies within Western feminist thought'.¹¹⁰ The impact of this reaction, Mills states, is apparent in a number of ways: 'firstly, it has brought about a "worlding" of mainstream

¹⁰³ Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, Introduction, *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (New York; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 7.

¹⁰⁴ Foster and Mills, p. 7.

¹⁰⁵ Peter Childs and Patrick Williams, *An Introduction to Post-Colonial Theory* (London: Prentice Hall, 1997), p. 118.

¹⁰⁶ Childs and Williams, p. 115.

¹⁰⁷ Radhakrishnan, p. 71.

¹⁰⁸ Radhakrishnan, p. 73.

¹⁰⁹ Quoted in Childs and Williams, p. 119.

¹¹⁰ Sara Mills, 'Post-colonial Feminist Theory' in *Contemporary Feminist Theories*, eds., Stevi Jackson and Jackie Jones, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1998), pp. 98-112, pp. 98.

feminist theory’ through a consideration of the ‘different national and cultural contexts’ affecting women’s lives, thereby forging a ‘productive crisis in mainstream white feminist thinking’, leading feminists, especially Western, to ‘subject to scrutiny that very act of “speaking for” someone else’.¹¹¹ This relates directly to my methodology since it demands a consideration suggested by each text of such questions as who is speaking for whom, in what context, and for which purpose? Secondly, post-colonial feminist theory has forced post-colonial theorists to ‘address the question of gender’, a question previously neglected within otherwise ‘productive analyses...on issues of “race” and difference’.¹¹² Thirdly, post-colonial feminist theory has become established in its own right, as an analytical form, to the extent that ‘rather than simply being seen as a critique of Western feminism or post-colonial theory, it has developed both a position from which to speak, and a set of issues to be addressed’.¹¹³ It is a theory that Mills describes as avoiding essentialism – the notion that there is an essence of ‘woman’ which all women, regardless of nationality and culture, possess. This allows for a range of subject positions, especially through the highlighting of already existing pre-colonial versions of subjectivities that can work to dislodge dominant postcolonial perspectives. Particularly valuable is Mills’ foregrounding of Spivak’s assertion of the need for the ‘Western feminist critic...to “unlearn female privilege”, in the sense that she has to think about the history of her position in relation to the subaltern’.¹¹⁴ Another important aspect of Spivak’s argument is her identification of levels of othering, noting as she does the unseen spaces and subjectivities occupied by the female subaltern, who ‘is even more deeply in shadow’.¹¹⁵ In this regard, the absent presence of Naipaul’s wife is a case in point. Similarly, Byron notes (while in India) how what he describes as his pink ‘tegument’ determines who holds power and is worried by the privilege this bestows on him in this context. Together, these issues beg the question of just how far it is possible to consider the self-other relationship, and the power at its crux, *without* a perspective shaped by reciprocity.

It is clearly the case, then, that postcolonial feminist theorists forged a realignment in feminist theory which led to a more nuanced examination of multiple spaces and subjectivities. In the process, they have helped to dislodge dominant binary oppositions, an intervention that is as ground-breaking and important as Said’s own impact.

¹¹¹ Mills, ‘Post-colonial Feminist Theory’ in *Contemporary Feminist*, pp. 98-99.

¹¹² Mills, ‘Post-colonial Feminist Theory’, p. 99.

¹¹³ Mills, ‘Post-colonial Feminist Theory’, p. 99.

¹¹⁴ Gayatri Spivak, ‘Can the Subaltern Speak?’, reprinted in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds., *Colonial Discourse and Post-colonial Theory* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), p. 91, quoted in Mills, ‘Post-colonial Feminist Theory’, p. 107.

¹¹⁵ Mills, ‘Post-colonial Feminist Theory’, p. 107.

The work of feminist geographers, too, has deepened understanding not only of how language works to circumscribe the world, but also how language comes to embody, as well as be embodied in, humans' understanding of themselves and their place in the world.¹¹⁶ Terms such as gender, sexuality and race, have been explored as part of the lived experience of real people, as well as words on a page. In the early 1990s Rose identified spaces and places which signify danger for women, and from which their presence is therefore restricted, if not forbidden.¹¹⁷ In the same work, Rose discusses the supposed Cartesian split between the mind (masculine) and the body (feminine). More recently, Lynda Johnston has explored the 'considerable resistance' to such binary constructions, finding Rose's idea of 'paradoxical spaces' fruitful for rethinking bodies and the spaces they occupy in 'non-dichotomous ways'.¹¹⁸

Utilising postcolonial feminist theory, then, helps define more clearly the complex questions needed for a critique that is nuanced and suggestive, rather than searching for definitive 'truths', which do not exist anyway. As well as drawing on Rose's insights, my reading of these selected texts is indebted to Mills' work. Mills has published in general linguistics, feminist linguistics, discourse analysis, travel writing, and feminist postcolonial theory, to name just some of her areas of research. Her critique of Foucault is especially useful in considering the various hegemonies and subjectivities explored and constructed in this travel writing. I adopt a reading based on Mills' poststructuralist discourse analysis which, she notes, questions 'the unity of the subject, finding it more useful to analyse the subject-in-process or the subject-in-crisis'.¹¹⁹ Mills, together with Reina Lewis, asserts the need for a form of reciprocity within broader feminism, in which 'difference is not absorbed, nor ambivalence and ambiguity erased'.¹²⁰ This argument has elements of Pratt's revised view of the 'contact zone'.

Especially useful for my interpretative approach is Mills' highlighting of Foucault's delineation of how discourses inform the extent to which it is possible to think and act only within certain parameters at each historical juncture, determining what is perceived as

¹¹⁶ See Liz Bondi, et al, *Subjectivities, Knowledges, and Feminist Geographies: The Subjects and Ethics of Social Research* (Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002).

¹¹⁷ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 34.

¹¹⁸ Lynda Johnston, 'Man:Woman' in *Spaces of Geographical Thought: Deconstructing Human Geography's Binaries*, ed. by Paul Cloke and Ron Johnston (London: Sage Publications, 2005), (pp. 105-123), p. 110.

¹¹⁹ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 34.

¹²⁰ Reina Lewis and Sara Mills, eds., *Feminist Postcolonial Theory: A Reader* (New York: Routledge, 2003), Introduction, p. 9. The authors are referring to Ien Ang's essay 'I'm a Feminist but... "Other" Women and Postnational Feminism' in *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 190-206.

significant, and how objects and events are interpreted. Most importantly, Mills hones in on Foucault's concern with what he calls the 'rarefaction of discourse as an internal discursive constraint'.¹²¹ By this she says he means that while it is theoretically possible for any individual to produce an infinite number of utterances, these are instead 'remarkably repetitive and remain within certain socially agreed-upon boundaries'.¹²² This observation will be useful not only for considering the ways in which these authors transgress such boundaries within the paradoxical spaces they encounter, but also for identifying the new subjectivities their works make possible.

Mills' suggests that Foucault's 'discussions of power, knowledge and truth' are the most useful way into his ideas since 'this configuration is essentially what constitutes discourse'.¹²³ For Foucault, 'all knowledge is determined by a combination of social, institutional and discursive pressures' and may either challenge or comply with dominant discourses.¹²⁴ Truth here does not refer to something 'transcendental' but rather to what is made to be 'true' through discourse. Foucault's concern was not the truth or otherwise of the statement, but rather the ways in which it becomes, and remains, the dominant view and, if subverted, how this subversion occurs. Thus, notes Mills, power is also key to any discussion of discourse and Foucault's analysis revealed power to be asymmetrical and dispersed rather than overtly repressive. Mills notes the insightfulness of Foucault's argument that power extends beyond the limits of the state since it allows for a more nuanced understanding in which, rather than seeing power as 'a simple imposition', it becomes apparent that there are 'more possible role positions than simply that of the master-slave presupposed in the State power model'. As well, it points to the 'degrees of power involved' rather than simply to 'a powerful participant and a powerless one'.¹²⁵

Foucault's notions of how power is dispersed and always negotiated have been fruitful for feminist scholars in unravelling the 'complexity of power relations', especially the integration of class concerns with gender and race.¹²⁶ Wollstonecraft's *Letters* speak to a number of such issues and therefore Mills' analysis is particularly useful here. Two of the types of discourse Mills focuses on 'are the confessional and the discourse of femininity', which she says 'Foucault isolated and which have been used for feminist ends'.¹²⁷ The

¹²¹ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 70.

¹²² Mills, *Discourse*, p. 70.

¹²³ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 17.

¹²⁴ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 33.

¹²⁵ Mills, *Discourse*, pp. 38-39.

¹²⁶ Mills, *Discourse*, pp. 78-79.

¹²⁷ Mills, *Discourse*, pp. 80-86.

confessional, in particular, Mills argues has been analysed by feminists to show how women's use of this form helped them claim personal power rather than submit to hegemonic patriarchal power. Feminist theory helps develop a more complex understanding of the discursive structures that shape subjectivity, modifying Foucault's work, by setting discourse 'more clearly in its social context and by examining the possibilities of negotiating with these discursive structures'.¹²⁸

Similarly, in discussing colonial discourse and postcolonial theory, Mills notes how discourse analysis is instrumental in the shift from a focus on how colonised countries and indigenous peoples are 'charted' and presented as 'deficient' to one in which the same texts are presented as 'less homogeneous and more traversed and troubled by conflicting discourses. This has changed the definition of discourse ... now characterised as ... open to different interpretations ... and thus open to resistance'.¹²⁹ In support of this definition, she highlights the importance of Pratt's work on travel writing, in which 'rather than, as Said, seeing discourses as having one dominant meaning, she allows for the possibility of texts speaking against the grain'.¹³⁰ Apparent laziness, for example, or returning to old habits, can be read as resistance; the more didactic the text, the more resistance is being highlighted. Mills says texts can, therefore, be seen as 'the nexus of a range of different discourses; "native" resistance can be figured within texts, even when it is directly contrary to the intentions of the author'.¹³¹ In the case of Naipaul, especially, a broad range of discourses intersect, but it is Naipaul's *own* resistance to these, rather than a 'native' resistance as in Mills' example, that emerges, although the didacticism is apparent in many parts of *Area*. Mills' identification of the ways in which analysing language from a postcolonial perspective has shifted attention to a less homogeneous understanding of texts, one that invites different interpretations, with texts working as vehicles for resistance, has shaped my methodological approach to these selected works.

My reading of these texts draws on the techniques of close reading outlined in Belsey's *Critical Practice*. In the Preface to this work she asks: 'How do we know what we think till we see what we write?'.¹³² It follows from this that to write is to begin to know the self. Belsey is particularly enlightening for the meaning she applies to the concept of ideology – which is synonymous with the dominant discourse through which subjectivities come into being. She asserts that ideology is not something external to ourselves, but is rather

¹²⁸ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 103.

¹²⁹ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 128.

¹³⁰ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 116.

¹³¹ Mills, *Discourse*, pp. 116-117.

¹³² Belsey, p. xi.

something immanent and contingent on the circumstances into which we are born, and thus central to our subjectivity: 'Ideology is inscribed in language in the sense that it is literally written or spoken in it'.¹³³ Belsey's critical approach is based on post-Saussurean linguistics, and draws on the works of the French theorists of the 1960s-1980s who were inspired by de Saussure's work. Belsey's practice is based on the assumption that while we can never experience the text as the author's contemporaries experienced it, we can 'use the text as a basis for the reconstruction of an ideology which is the source of its silences [...] the work of criticism [being] to release possible meanings'.¹³⁴

To read differently from the dominant or prevailing discourse, though, how might one read? Belsey proposes a mode of reading that allows for a plurality of meanings, noting that 'meanings are not fixed or given, but are released in the process of reading'.¹³⁵ She discusses the ways in which the changing focus, development, and concerns of literary criticism – driven in turn by changes in the social order – over the last several decades, have called into question not only the notion that there is any single, correct, way of reading literary texts, but also whether there is a transcendent, authoritative voice to be found within the text, whether that be the author's voice, or the reader's understanding of it. Belsey's practice is informed by the critical approaches defined by poststructuralist theorists such as Derrida, Barthes, Althusser, and Lacan, whose theories served to displace and disrupt 'the authority of common sense itself, the collective and timeless wisdom whose unquestioned presence seems to be the source and guarantee of everything we take for granted'.¹³⁶ She draws on all of these theorists, rather than one alone, because each have their own perspective and thus obscure or elide issues that are not their particular area of concern. She states, for example, that while 'Althusserian Marxism and Lacanian psychoanalysis may contribute to an understanding of the role of literature and the possibilities for literary criticism', if taken in isolation neither is able to 'offer an adequate account of the work of literature ... [since] Lacan apparently leaves little room for history, while Althusser's theory of subjectivity leaves little room for change'.¹³⁷ This comment calls to mind Mills' discussion of how Said's work, despite its powerful influence and insights, was yet gender biased.¹³⁸

For Belsey, 'the notion of a text which tells a (or the) truth, as perceived by an individual

¹³³ Belsey, p. 5.

¹³⁴ Belsey, p. 143.

¹³⁵ Belsey, p. 19.

¹³⁶ Belsey, p. 3.

¹³⁷ Belsey, pp. 50-51.

¹³⁸ Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p. 51.

subject (the author), whose insights are the source of the text's single and authoritative meaning, is not only untenable, but literally unthinkable, because the problematic which supported it, the framework of assumptions and knowledges, ways of thinking, probing and analysing that it was based on, no longer stands'.¹³⁹

Crucial to her demonstration that literature is open to a plurality of readings is a critical practice that Belsey describes as being built upon an unfamiliar conceptual understanding of the term 'ideology' mentioned earlier and which she associates with common sense, rather than with 'a set of doctrines or coherent system of beliefs'.¹⁴⁰ Ideology is literally part of what we are born into, is part of us, embodied in the language we use, and the ways in which we think, speak, and experience our lives. Ideology 'works in conjunction with political practice and economic practice to constitute the *social formation*, a term designed to promote a more complex and radical analysis than the familiar term "society"'.¹⁴¹

Belsey finds that any change in the social structure stems from contradictory positions and, more importantly, from the fact that change in the social structure is at least possible. It is because 'subjectivity is not fixed that literary texts can have an important function'.¹⁴² More than this, 'literature, as one of the most persuasive uses of language, may have an important influence on the ways people understand themselves and their relation to the real relations in which they live'.¹⁴³ Belsey further notes that while literary texts may actually reinforce the social status quo, it is also true that 'certain literary modes could be seen to challenge these concepts'.¹⁴⁴ Travel writing, too, may of course serve to uphold the status quo, but central to my selection of these texts has been travel writing with an autobiographical component that specifically challenges the status quo.

Belsey's critical approach exposes the often-unconscious connections we make between literature, subjectivity, and ideology. Understanding the arbitrary and random nature of language – that there is no fixed nomenclature, and that any nomenclature changes according to social phenomena – is the first step in understanding the ideological positions into which we are born, and our resulting subjectivity. Belsey uses a simple but telling example to illustrate this: while men were simply referred to as Mr, married or unmarried, the terms Miss and Mrs were used to differentiate whether a woman was available for

¹³⁹ Belsey, p. 3.

¹⁴⁰ Belsey, p. 4.

¹⁴¹ She says that this redefinition of Althusser's conception of ideology prevents the habitual and perhaps lazy thought processing of language that would normally associate the word 'society' with 'a single homogeneous mass', p. 5.

¹⁴² Belsey, p. 61.

¹⁴³ Belsey, p. 61.

¹⁴⁴ Belsey, p. 62.

marriage or not, and the introduction of the title ‘Ms.’ reveals how language is informed by changes in the social structure, and not the reverse. Asking questions of a text, interrogating it, works to ‘unfix the subject’, in the process undoing the ‘work of ideology’; it thereby ‘refuses a single point of view’.¹⁴⁵ This is because ‘language is infinitely productive [...] and it is in language that the ideology inscribed in language can be challenged’.¹⁴⁶ Belsey’s focus is on the language of literature, and on identifying approaches to the literary canon which have traditionally worked to maintain the dominant ideology. She proposes an interrogative approach to reading which essentially opens up any text to a plurality of meanings, by asking questions that look beyond and challenge the familiar, which is familiar only when what is portrayed seems natural and part of the real world.

While Rose and Mills provide the theoretical approach from which I consider these texts, and I apply Belsey’s practice to my interpretative approach, I have also found it useful to incorporate insights from James Kinneavy’s *A Theory of Discourse*, particularly the chapter entitled ‘Expressive Discourse’. Expressive discourse, Kinneavy writes, relates to ‘theories of the self’, and he describes it as being ‘psychologically prior to all the other uses of language’.¹⁴⁷ Types of discourse in which expressive components often dominate include diaries, journals, cursing, book reviews, some utopias, confessions, apologies, autobiographies. Kinneavy states that expressive discourse must not only have some element of reciprocity for the discourse to have meaning, but that it is also a type of discourse which reveals the self to itself as a three-part process – the self as it is in the world, the self as it strives to be in the world, and the self that is projected into the future: ‘In other words, we are what we are conscious of being in the face of reality; we are, whether we like it or not, what we have made of ourselves in the past; finally, we are what we are striving to be’.¹⁴⁸ In considering these travel works, I find Kinneavy’s definitions elucidate the gap between author, narrator, and editor, and their relationship to their own particular world. Kinneavy’s argument also points to the fact that the ‘Other contributes to the self’, and that the aim of expressive discourse is to enable a new social personality to achieve self-determination.¹⁴⁹ Although I do not refer to Kinneavy’s work continually

¹⁴⁵ Belsey pp. 83-85.

¹⁴⁶ Belsey, p. 41.

¹⁴⁷ James Kinneavy, *A Theory of Discourse: The Aims of Discourse* (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 1980), pp. 396-397.

¹⁴⁸ Kinneavy, p. 398.

¹⁴⁹ Kinneavy, p. 396-399.

throughout the thesis, he certainly helped inform my understanding of how the relationship between self and other may emerge through the act of composing expressive discourse.

Together, Rose, Mills, Belsey, and Kinneavy provide frameworks that draw on social, geographical, historical and material contexts, to the ways in which the text itself engages with those contexts, and then to the words on the page of each author. This strategic move evolved because I found Foucault's analysis of subjectivities as being constructed by discourses of power and knowledge circulating in the world loomed large, to the extent that any answers to my thesis questions seemed pre-determined and tautological. In considering how self and other are mutually constituted in these texts, then, I seek to challenge the constraints implied by Foucault's notions of power by asserting the power of the creative and transformative fusion of travelling and writing as a means of reshaping the self.

These analytical methods offer a robust framework from which to begin, but without forcing a starting position – such as a purely feminist perspective or postcolonial or travel studies approach. Rather, they allow space for these perspectives to be considered and addressed in new ways. This form of analysis avoids too the sort of tautological reasoning once used to explain away beliefs or views as being historically specific and simply a reflection of the times in which they appear, as Porter notes in his *The Enlightenment*.¹⁵⁰

As I posed my three key questions for each text: – What subjectivity does each author project at the start of their journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces discussed in their travel writing? What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning self, as evidenced in their writing? – I found notions of home emerged as a crucial component of the journey taking place. In the case of Wollstonecraft and Morris, home represents troubled and painful relationships; for Byron, it is a place of privilege and choice; Naipaul's home is problematised to the extent of being dystopic, while for Pamuk home is a space of interiority that encompasses the city at large as much as it does private home. My analysis reveals that all five authors find a home of sorts in the act of writing, as a place of remaking or refashioning the self.

My focus in Chapter 2 is on Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residency in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796). Until recently, Wollstonecraft's *Letters* has received less attention than her other works, with even the reason for her visit to Scandinavia being discovered only as recently as 1979, by the scholar Per Nystrom.¹⁵¹

¹⁵⁰ Roy Porter, *The Enlightenment*, 2nd edn (Hampshire and New York: Palgrave, 2001), p. 38.

¹⁵¹ As noted in Anka Ryall and Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström, eds., *Mary Wollstonecraft's Journey to Scandinavia: Essays* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), p. 4.

In *Letters*, Wollstonecraft makes the reader acutely aware of her position as a woman, travelling in places and spaces in which the patriarchal social order was entrenched enough to be ‘translated into “ground rules” of spatial behaviour’.¹⁵² Caught up as she is in a ‘rationalist masculine world’, there is considerable material in Wollstonecraft’s *Letters* to tease out what Campbell describes ‘as the gendered nature of subjectivity and the positionality or ‘situatedness’ of all knowledge’.¹⁵³ The subjectivity Wollstonecraft asserts, or perhaps retrieves, informs my discussion in this chapter.

Chapter 3 turns to William Morris’ *Icelandic Journals*, which resulted from his visits there in 1871 and 1873. This thesis contributes to scholarship by reading the *Journals* – which contain some of his deepest self-insights – with the intention of opening up Morris’ work to a wider critical audience. The *Journals* are noteworthy for their dense focus on the Icelandic landscape, which worked so cathartically on Morris and his life, as revealed in the changes he made on his return home. They record in minute detail his movement on horseback and on foot, across the Icelandic countryside, conveying such graphic images of the landscape he is traversing that the reader feels almost as if they were at Morris’ side. The chapter also considers how, in the act of writing the journals, he undergoes a personal journey leading to deeper and, eventually, cathartic self-fashioning. In contrast to Wollstonecraft in Scandinavia, Morris is able to move freely around Iceland, highlighting the gendered nature of travelling. I consider Morris’ own assessment of his journey, which he described as being daunting but necessary at the same time. Morris was responsible for establishing in the Victorian imagination an Icelandic landscape that was pastoral in nature.¹⁵⁴ A number of questions emerge in relation to this: what effect does the ‘real’ landscape Morris literally confronts in Iceland have on his life on his return home? Can home represent an other that he chooses not to face? How does the journey change his understanding not only of ‘home’ but also of other major parts of his life, including his commitment to socialism? What, in fact, does ‘home’ mean for Morris, and how does that ‘home’ shape his experience, even force on him the need for the journey itself?

Robert Byron’s *The Road to Oxiana* (1937), an inter-war years travel account that, again, has received limited critical attention, is examined in Chapter 4. Byron’s passion for Byzantine architecture led him to undertake an arduous and dangerous journey in Afghanistan and parts of Iran, visiting places now forbidden to Westerners, in a search for

¹⁵² Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 17.

¹⁵³ Campbell, ‘Travel Theory’, p. 264.

¹⁵⁴ See Alessandro Zirroni, ‘Laxdale as William Morris’s Interior Topography’ in *The Cultural Reconstruction of Places*, ed. by Ástráður Eysteinnsson (Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2006), pp. 209-221.

the origins of this architectural style. This sense of the ‘forbidden’ is similar and yet different to that experienced by Wollstonecraft and is explored in this chapter. For the travel writer Bruce Chatwin, Byron’s work represents perfection, and is beyond criticism, while Paul Fussell describes it as being akin to Joyce’s *Ulysses* and Elliot’s *The Waste Land*, since within its pages, armchair travellers will find ‘newspaper clippings, public signs and notices, official forms, letters, diary entries, essays on current politics, lyric passages[...]historical and archaeological dissertations, brief travel narratives ...’.¹⁵⁵ Fussell’s admiration for Byron is apparent in his hagiographic chapter title ‘Sancta Roberto Ora Pro Nobis’. At one stage in his travels, Byron dresses up as a Persian in order to gain entry to the interior of the Goharshad Mosque, a fifteenth-century architectural wonder forbidden to Western eyes. Here self and other may seem to collapse into one, or, conversely, Byron is able to oscillate between the two, to be various; in contrast, the young Persian teacher who helps him does not have the same option – should he want it – since he probably would not ‘pass’ as a white Westerner. This chapter explores Byron’s text for the intercultural spaces or ‘contact zones’ that occur between himself and the other, and the various roles, stances and beliefs that are in conflict with each other. The work of feminist geographers such as Gillian Rose have revealed how masculinist geographers have tended to view the world as a place to be mapped and known; however, Byron (admittedly not a geographer), reveals instead a sensitivity to knowledge, and art, for the stories they tell of our common humanity. This chapter focuses on the differences and dichotomies made so visible in Byron’s *Road to Oxiana*.

V. S. Naipaul’s *An Area of Darkness* (1964) is the focus of Chapter 5. Naipaul has been as often lauded for the virtuosity of his writing as he has been vilified for his portrayal in that writing of other peoples, cultures and races, especially of India and Africa, and even of his home, Trinidad. Blanton affords a prominent place to Naipaul in her travel anthology, describing him as one of the great travel writers of the twentieth century, but also one of the most splenetic. This chapter considers the painful, paradoxical and deep divisions between self and other that *An Area of Darkness* explores. Descendant of an indentured Brahmin who had moved to Trinidad from India, Naipaul spent his childhood years in the Trinidadian capital of Port of Spain and his university years at Oxford. *Area* is a semi-autobiographical work which details a year-long journey Naipaul took in India, of which one reviewer wrote: ‘there is a kind of displaced person who has a better sense of place than anybody: Mr Naipaul is an outstanding example’.¹⁵⁶ This chapter considers the

¹⁵⁵ Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980), pp. 79-112.

¹⁵⁶ *The Times*, review on back cover, *An Area of Darkness* (London: Penguin, 1968).

ambiguity in the statement. It examines, too, what Blanton describes as Naipaul's search for order, out of which, paradoxically, 'the reader finds meaning where Naipaul finds pain'.¹⁵⁷

Chapter 6 considers Orhan Pamuk's *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (2005). The city of Istanbul represents an encounter or engagement between self and other, East and West, Christianity and Islam, and many different cultures. For Pamuk, Istanbul is a city shaped by melancholy – or *hüzün* – brought on by memories of a once powerful but now lost past. This sense of loss induces a desire to keep 'hiding from Western eyes', recalling Pratt's 'contact zones' but as a space I see as being *within the self*, rather than between self and an external other. Istanbul as city is for Pamuk the place where he is able to map his own complex sense of self, finding in the city streets the 'last traces of a great culture and a great civilisation that we were unfit or unprepared to inherit in our frenzy to turn Istanbul into a pale, poor, second-class imitation of a Western city'.¹⁵⁸ In a chapter entitled 'Flaubert in Istanbul: East West and Syphilis' Pamuk asks why there was such a fascination with what Western travellers wrote about Istanbul – recalling, for example, how Flaubert imagined a novel in which a civilised Westerner and an Eastern barbarian slowly come to resemble each other, eventually changing places – and decides that it was by 'falling under their influence and arguing with them by turns that I have forged my own identity' (p. 260). Pamuk's work provides an opportunity to question 'received notions' that are accepted as 'real', particularly through language, since Turkish has a tense for 'I have been told'. This tense is rich in possibilities for reading not only his travel writing, but also for questioning *how* we know what we know? I explore how Pamuk makes sense of subjectivity by tracing his literary journey through his native Istanbul.

Overall, these writers and their works portray shifts in the travel writing genre as well as in understandings of the relationship between self and other. Wollstonecraft and Morris draw on their personal pain to write works that engage with a broader social order than their personal lives alone. Byron's work marks a shift in style and attention with the personal artistic interests of the author providing impetus for the journey but slowly being overshadowed by his dismay at the creeping Nazism and fascism he observes as he travels. Naipaul is a detached self for much of his journey, paradoxically engaging with strangers during an extended stay in Kashmir, but fleeing desperately within hours from his relatives and ancestral village. Pamuk's nocturnal wanderings through the streets of Istanbul portray

¹⁵⁷ Blanton, p. 94.

¹⁵⁸ Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City* (London: Faber and Faber, 2005), p. 191.

a depressed self, an image dispelled at the end of *Istanbul* when he decides to quit his architectural studies and instead write for his living.

My thesis and analyses are informed overall, then, by the scholarship of Rose, Pratt, Mills, and Belsey. The different historical and social contexts of each author's writing necessarily entail that I draw as well on a range of other theorists for each individual chapter, as I seek answers to my questions: What subjectivity does each author project at the start of their journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces discussed in their travel writing? What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning self, as evidenced in their travel writing?

CHAPTER 2

Mary Wollstonecraft – Turmoil, Gender and Pain

Until relatively recently Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark* (1796) has received less attention than her other works.¹ *Letters* was the literary outcome of Wollstonecraft's journey to Scandinavia during the months of June to September 1795. As Anka Ryall and Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström note, 'the specific motives for her unusual and daring journey were for a long time uncertain', the reason for her visit being discovered only as late as 1979 by the scholar Per Nystrom.² In some twenty-five letters to an unnamed recipient Wollstonecraft makes the reader acutely aware of her position as a woman travelling to – and from – places and spaces in which the patriarchal social order was entrenched enough to be 'translated into "ground rules" of spatial behaviour'.³ Caught up as she is in a 'rationalist masculine world', there is considerable material in Wollstonecraft's *Letters* to tease out what Campbell describes 'as the gendered nature of subjectivity and the positionality or "situatedness" of all knowledge'.⁴ Horrocks encapsulates the depth and breadth of Wollstonecraft's concerns when she observes: 'A *Short Residence* is at once a moving epistolary travel narrative, a politically motivated ethnographic tract on the comparative treatment of women, children, and labourers, a work of scenic tourism, and a sentimental journey'.⁵

Aged thirty-seven years when she published *Letters*, Wollstonecraft had by then a great deal of life experience, spanning private and public spheres. She was acutely aware of the shaping of her feminised identity and of being the other through her roles as a daughter, sister, mother, friend and lover, as well as governess, writer, journalist, and radical social commentator. These subjectivities overlapped of course in complex ways, but especially through gender and class. In this chapter I explore and analyse: how she harnesses her own personal, often painful circumstances in order to foreground the restrictions imposed by gender and class on place and space; the constant attention she pays to the need for reason

¹ Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*, ed. by Ingrid Horrocks (Peterborough, Ont: Broadview Press, 2013), p. 116. Further page references will be given parenthetically.

² Anka Ryall and Catherine Sandbach-Dahlström, Introduction, *Mary Wollstonecraft's Journey to Scandinavia: Essays* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 2003), pp. 1-21, p. 4.

³ Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1993), p. 17.

⁴ Mary Campbell, 'Travel Writing and its Theory', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs, p. 264.

⁵ Horrocks, Introduction, Mary Wollstonecraft, *Letters*, p. 13.

and emotion, the head and the heart, to be composite rather than disparate components of humanity in order for any transformation of subjective space to occur; and, leading on from these, broader issues that she advocates as central for positive social change. The Scandinavian landscape she traverses is central to Wollstonecraft's portrayal of all three perspectives, revealed especially through her deep melancholy, a symptom of the gendered nature of her world, as well as of the conflicting and confusing discourses shaping notions of masculinity and femininity she so ardently addresses.⁶ Rose's concept of paradoxical spaces, especially the 'ground rules' she identified as affecting spatial behaviour, was particularly useful in considering Wollstonecraft's efforts to subvert the patriarchal, dominant status quo upholding those rules.

In what follows I note first the reason for Wollstonecraft's agreeing to the trip, along with her itinerary and her co-travellers. I then identify some of the relationships, experiences and paradoxes shaping Wollstonecraft's life up to and while writing the work, since these are reflected in the concerns she raises. Next, I consider why Wollstonecraft, already a skilled writer and reviewer for the radical *Analytical Review*, chose to transform her letters into a travel narrative, for what would prove to be her most popular work.⁷ I analyse particular letters in which Wollstonecraft's travel writing elucidates her gendered subjectivity, revealed through her engagements with the socially diverse Scandinavian others she encounters. Sometimes solitary, sometimes connected, sometimes seeing herself as above the 'normal' run of humanity, the travelling Wollstonecraft faces up to her personal inner trauma in Scandinavia, but also finds a space in which she can consider its external social causes. Her travelling and writing clarify for Wollstonecraft what was needed to effect 'a transformation of subjectivity ... to complete the civilizing process' which, Barbara Taylor notes, was one of Wollstonecraft's 'leading propositions' in her most radical text, *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*.⁸ What subjectivity does Wollstonecraft project at the start of her journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces discussed in her travel writing? What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning Wollstonecraft, as evidenced in her travel writing?

⁶ See Claudia L. Johnson, *Equivocal Beings: Politics, Gender, and Sentimentality in the 1790s—Wollstonecraft, Radcliffe, Burney, Austen* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1995).

⁷ For the poet Southey, for example, reading *Letters* left him 'in love with a cold climate, and frost and snow, with a northern moonlight', quoted in Horrocks, p. 30.

⁸ Barbara Taylor, *Wollstonecraft and the Feminist Imagination* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 207.

Thanks to Nystrom's research, it is now known that Wollstonecraft made the journey to Scandinavia at the request of her lover and 'fellow radical', the American Gilbert Imlay. Imlay convinced her to take on the task of investigating the mysterious disappearance of one of his boats in a speculative commercial venture that had gone awry.⁹ Imlay and Wollstonecraft had met in Paris in early 1793, just as the 'Reign of Terror' began. Imlay registered Wollstonecraft at the American Embassy, naming her as his wife, entitling her to the protection of American citizenship, since war between France and England appeared to be imminent. Wollstonecraft became pregnant with Imlay's child while in Paris and their baby daughter, Fanny, was born in May 1794. Two months later, Imlay travelled to England alone. Wollstonecraft herself returned to England, along with her baby, and her French maid, Marguerite Fournée, in April 1795. Expecting to be reunited with Imlay, Wollstonecraft was devastated to discover his infidelity, leading to her first suicide attempt. Force of circumstance in the need to earn a living, as well as her deep emotional attachment to Imlay, led to her agreeing to travel on his behalf to Scandinavia, taking her baby and maid with her. The literary result of that journey, published as *Letters*, reveals the deep despair she felt while waiting to leave England, a despair which inflects the work. The itinerary, as Horrocks points out, was driven solely by Imlay's business affairs, while the trip itself served a dual purpose, providing Wollstonecraft with the chance to earn some money from the publication she intended from the start, and at the same time freeing Imlay from her presence.¹⁰ Wollstonecraft's itinerary largely edged around the Scandinavian coastline, as the map and comments given by Nystrom reveal.¹¹ Wollstonecraft's known travelling companions included her baby daughter, Fanny, and her maid, Marguerite. Part of the turmoil I see as shaping *Letters* surely stemmed from Wollstonecraft's having had to leave her infant daughter behind at Gothenburg with Marguerite, unable to have them accompany her because of the difficulty of her mission and the physical landscape.

Wollstonecraft's decision to travel to Scandinavia stems, then, from a range of liminal or paradoxical experiences shaped by personal values and circumstances, gender, and social status, within a patriarchal system. The most compelling of these spaces relates to her attempted suicide, suggesting a psychic vulnerability that is belied by the energy it must have taken even to consider, leave alone undertake, such a journey. As a single woman

⁹ Per Nystrom, *Mary Wollstonecraft's Scandinavian Journey*. Trans. George R. Otter. (Gothenburg: Kungl Vetenskaps, 1980), p. 18.

¹⁰ Horrocks, pp. 20-21.

¹¹ Nystrom, p. 51 and p. 5.

travelling alone – ‘in a country which was considered a wilderness at the time’¹² – carrying out an important business transaction for her lover, she is clearly in a position of power, but this power is constrained by the emotional suffering caused by her lover’s faithlessness.

Wollstonecraft’s emotional turmoil emerges in *Letters* through a rhetorical strategy that involves rapid shifts in focus and voice, from factual reporting to emotional pleas. These shifts are sometimes dizzying, sometimes disconcerting, as she extolls and expands on a vast range of ideas, often in a relatively short space. Bohls interprets this aspect of *Letters* as Wollstonecraft’s use of the epistolary travel report, [which], with its informal tone and episodic structure, as being especially congenial to the kind of experiment Wollstonecraft undertakes’.¹³ Turmoil is an appropriate description for a literary creation that yokes the personal to the political, and that shifts from intimate interiors to vast landscapes. In short, in Wollstonecraft’s own words, her ‘reflections flow unrestrained’ (p. 51). In her first letter, composed soon after having landed in Sweden and clearly troubled by the failing relationship between her and Imlay, she writes:

Some recollections, attached to the idea of home, mingled with reflections respecting the state of society I had been contemplating that evening, made a tear drop on the rosy cheek I had just kissed; and emotions that trembled on the brink of extacy and agony gave a poignancy to my sensations, which made me feel more alive than usual. (p. 59)

Here, personal pain is foregrounded as Wollstonecraft courageously uses her grief to capture within a single paragraph her own troubled state, thoughts of her daughter’s future, and wider society, poised between agony and ecstasy. Her reflections are heavily punctuated with the repetition of such words as ‘reason’, ‘heart’, ‘imagination’, ‘sublime’, ‘melancholy’. Her chosen words mirror the unbounded and sometimes unwished-for strands making up her daily life, as well as the injustices and difficulties she experienced, and perhaps sometimes inflicted on herself. Her need to be loved, for example, meant she initially ignored aspects of Imlay’s character that would later become abhorrent to her, especially his pursuit of commercial ventures, one of which, paradoxically, was the reason

¹² Sara Mills, ‘Written on the Landscape: Mary Wollstonecraft’s *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*’, in *Romantic Geographies*, ed. by Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), (pp. 19-34), p. 27.

¹³ Elizabeth Bohls, *Women Travel Writers and the Language of Aesthetics 1766-1818* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 149.

for her journey, and around which her whole itinerary was organised.¹⁴ Some of the tensions in the text must have stemmed from the secrecy surrounding the reason for her trip, but materially too from her mode of travel, since, as Youngs states, this affects ‘how people travel and how they write up their travels’.¹⁵ During her Scandinavian journey Wollstonecraft travelled by ship, by horse-drawn carriage, by rowing boat, sometimes taking the oar herself – in order to assist her guide, who was pregnant (p. 98) – as well as on foot. These modes of transport were sometimes dangerous and exhausting, and involved the added trauma of often having to leave her baby daughter behind. All of this gives a sense of immediacy that makes *Letters* very much of the moment, of Wollstonecraft’s time, as well as our own. Turmoil is the creative force shaping *Letters*, then, revealing her state of mind as she begins her journey, as well as near its end. She writes:

All the world is a stage, thought I; and few are there in it who do not play the part they have learnt by rote; and those who do not, seem marks set up to be pelted at by fortune, or rather as signposts which point out the road to others, whilst forced to stand still themselves amidst the mud and dust. (p. 167)

Wollstonecraft’s subjectivity is under great strain here, revealing the social causes for her turmoil, and a deep sense of isolation brought on because of her refusal to bend to social strictures that demand she ‘play a part’.

When she left for Scandinavia, Wollstonecraft was already a published and respected writer. Her friendship with the rational dissenters at Newington Green, especially Dr Richard Price, had led to an introduction to the publisher Joseph Johnson. Johnson published Wollstonecraft’s first book, *Thoughts on the Education of Daughters* (1786) and, in 1787, offered her a job as reviewer and translator for his new magazine, the *Analytical Review*, including travel writing. Taylor describes Johnson as ‘a large-minded man with an appreciation of ability regardless of sex’.¹⁶ Wollstonecraft gained enormous satisfaction from being able to earn her living as a writer, asserting herself as ‘the first of a new genus’.¹⁷ Johnson’s help must have affirmed Wollstonecraft’s belief in the power of her skills as a writer to effect material change, but at the same time highlighted just how contingent on this help was her success at escaping some of the strictures of gender and

¹⁴ Horrocks, pp. 20-21.

¹⁵ Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 171.

¹⁶ Taylor, *Feminist Imagination*, p. 7.

¹⁷ Janet Todd, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Revolutionary Life* (London: Phoenix Press, 2000), p. 124.

class. Janet Todd suggests that Wollstonecraft's experience of writing and reviewing for the *Analytical Review* 'gave her an intellectual security for which an educated man would not need to struggle so hard', in the process 'teaching her different voices behind the *phalanx* of the editorial "WE"'.¹⁸

Claire Tomalin observes that Wollstonecraft's 'sense of grievance may have been her most important endowment'.¹⁹ This observation is quite telling, especially when combined with what Mary Favret describes as Wollstonecraft's predilection for 'flights of fancy'.²⁰ In the first instance, Tomalin's observation is pertinent not only to Wollstonecraft's life, but also to a much wider scale of reference, since grievances are often the catalyst leading to change in the status quo – the French Revolution being an extreme example and one experienced by Wollstonecraft at close quarters. In the second instance, Favret's identification of Wollstonecraft's 'flights of fancy' can be linked to Wollstonecraft's belief in the creative power of the imagination through her many references in *Letters* to its presence as a vivifying force. To be able to create change, one has first to imagine what that change might look like, and even more how it might be brought about. Wollstonecraft's project is to heal the supposed split between reason and emotion, the head and the heart, to change the condition of women's lives in a patriarchal system. Despite her deep melancholia, or perhaps because of it, her focus on these social issues is insistent and compelling, and woven throughout *Letters* from beginning to end.

During her journey from Hull to the Scandinavian coast Wollstonecraft spent 'eleven days of weariness on board a vessel not intended for the accommodation of passengers' (p. 52), leaving her exhausted and impatient to get ashore as soon as they arrived. The captain of the ship, however, refused to send out a smaller boat to take her to shore. Wollstonecraft's frustration is evident in her remark: 'I exerted all my rhetoric to prevail on the captain to let me have the ship's boat; and though I added the most forcible of arguments, I for a long time addressed him in vain' (pp. 52-53). No reason is given by her for his refusal except that: 'It is a kind of rule at sea, not to send out a boat' and, although he was a good-natured man, he had a shortcoming in that he was like other 'men of common minds [who] seldom break through general rules' (p. 53). Here she is commenting obliquely on a patriarchal order that is imposed without any due consideration of its social

¹⁸ Todd, *Revolutionary Life*, p. 140.

¹⁹ Claire Tomalin, *The Life and Death of Mary Wollstonecraft* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1974; repr. Penguin, 1992), p. 14.

²⁰ Mary A. Favret, 'Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark: Traveling with Mary Wollstonecraft', in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), pp. 209-227, p. 209.

effects. (She does not say, though, whether the rule has anything to do with passengers' safety.) Eventually, the captain acquiesces and gives permission for his sailors to row her to the small island and lighthouse, visible from the ship. Wollstonecraft is delighted to find the sailors are as quick to lower the boat as the captain was slow to agree to its being done. It is worth contrasting the light-hearted tone through which she relates her success here with a far more serious incident when she was returning from Portugal after her great friend Fanny Blood had died in childbirth. On the month-long-crossing, as Ralph Wardle highlights, Wollstonecraft's ship 'encountered a French vessel in danger of foundering'.²¹ The captain of her own ship was unwilling to save the Frenchmen because 'he had barely enough food for his own charges'.²² Despite Wollstonecraft being grief-stricken over the loss of her friend, she threatens to report the captain as soon as they reach land. Thus, as Wardle notes, even in the face of all her complaints and sorrows, Wollstonecraft managed to hold onto 'some of the fearless courage which had long sustained her'.²³ This is exactly the sort of reciprocal space that Pratt describes, with Wollstonecraft here the committed outsider, improvising and negotiating on others' behalf, in a powerful exchange that converts difference into reciprocity, and at the same time convincing others (the captain, and presumably passengers, on her own ship) to do the same.

Having landed in Sweden, Wollstonecraft is intrigued at how little interest is shown in her arrival at a place where 'strangers, especially women, so seldom appeared' (p. 54). Since no-one appears at either window or door to stare, Wollstonecraft avers that this lack of interest stems from their living 'so near the brute creation' and are thus interested only in the most basic needs of life, having 'little or no imagination to call forth the curiosity necessary to fructify the faint glimmerings of mind which entitle them to rank as lords of the creation', since they would, if they only possessed these gifts, find it impossible to remain content with being 'rooted in the clods they so indolently cultivate' (p. 54). Her opinions on the natives reveal as much about her own self as it does of these others since, as Bohls and Duncan find, travel writing can reveal as much about the traveller's 'home culture as about the places and cultures they visit'.²⁴ Thus we can understand that she sees herself as curious, brave, since she is travelling alone, interested in those around her, seeking a life richer than one which the bare necessities would offer. Here, as elsewhere, we hear little in her account from Scandinavians themselves, nor even from her own maid.

²¹ Ralph Wardle, *Mary Wollstonecraft: A Critical Biography* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska, 1966) p. 46.

²² Wardle, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 46.

²³ Wardle, *Mary Wollstonecraft*, p. 46.

²⁴ Elizabeth A. Bohls and Ian Duncan, eds., Introduction, *Travel Writing 1700-1830: An Anthology* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p. xx.

Once on land, Wollstonecraft observes how: ‘poor Marguerite, whose timidity always acts as a feeler before her adventuring spirit, began to wonder at our not seeing any inhabitants. I did not listen to her’ (p. 53). ‘Poor’ Marguerite clearly has no say in the matter.

When they are eventually met by a local pilot, a retired lieutenant, Wollstonecraft is relieved to discover that he speaks English and is able to provide accommodation at his cottage. She writes that Marguerite’s respect for her mistress ‘could hardly keep her from expressing the fear, strongly marked on her countenance, which my putting ourselves into the power of a strange man excited’ (p. 55). Wollstonecraft herself ‘is not sorry’ to see a female figure when they arrive at the lieutenant’s cottage, but this is not because she had any fear, unlike Marguerite we are to understand, who had been ‘thinking of robbers, murders, or the other evil which instantly, as the sailors would have said, runs foul of a woman’s imagination’ (p. 55). Her own relief implies she may not have been quite so immune to Marguerite’s fears as she asserts.

At the same time, any spatial limitations stemming from Wollstonecraft’s gender are off-set to some degree by her social status, which in turn imposes spatial boundaries on others, since ‘while people with high status often have the right to intrude on others of lower status, the reverse is usually not the case’.²⁵ What is extraordinary about this situation is that Wollstonecraft, on the face of it at least, apparently does not allow herself to be constrained by the rhetoric of danger that even today colours the idea of women travelling alone. As Rose has shown, this rhetoric stems from a social order in which women are aware that ‘their bodies are not meant to be in certain spaces’.²⁶ Wollstonecraft, though, is just as aware of intellectual constraints as the physical. She wonders, for example, whether she would be making her infant daughter’s life harder by raising her to expect the best of both, worrying that the child may one day be forced to ‘sacrifice her heart to her principles, or principles to her heart’, and therefore feels a ‘dread to unfold her mind, lest it should render her unfit for the world she is to inhabit. Hapless woman! what a fate is thine!’ (p. 84). Women’s minds here are as constrained as their bodies.

Once having arrived at the lieutenant’s cottage, Wollstonecraft experiences a welcome relief from the deprivations she has endured on a ship not intended to carry passengers. She is charmed by the cottage’s ‘degree of rural elegance’ with ‘muslin covers that were coarse

²⁵ Paddy O’Toole and Prisca Were, ‘Observing Places: Using Space and Material Culture in Qualitative Research’, *Qualitative Research*, 2008: 8, p. 619.

²⁶ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 34. Wollstonecraft is travelling, though, with the security of knowing, which the reader does not, that she possesses letters of introduction to various businessmen and political men of note in Scandinavia, none of whom are named, no doubt because of the secrecy of her mission.

[...] but dazzlingly white; and the floor [...] strewn over with little sprigs of juniper [...] formed a contrast with the curtains and produced an agreeable sensation of freshness, to soften the ardour of noon' (p. 55), an evocative image that appeals to all the senses. Wollstonecraft herself is discovered by the lieutenant's wife to be the lady (not lady's maid) she says, by virtue of the condition of her hands (p. 56), and is deemed by her host to be a 'woman of observation, for I asked him *men's questions*' (p. 58). Although she does not specify what those questions were, in the short time she has been in his company she has already: noted that he wears a badge to show he has received merit for service to his country, asserting as well that at least he has been paid in honour, since the stipend he receives makes perquisites a necessity; learned something of 'the manners of the people I was about to visit'; reserved her judgment on whether the lieutenant is correct in his opinion that the bay they look out upon is 'commodious', although she accepts it is beautiful; spent time with and engaged in conversation with his family, through gestures more than words, as well as joined him on a visit to another family nearby. Initially, it seems strange to read that Wollstonecraft the ardent feminist experienced pleasure and pride at being told she asks 'men's questions', but this is part of her goal to re-educate not only women, but men too, on the need for equality of education, and one not based on gender, but rather on the reasoning powers common to both sexes. For Wollstonecraft, there was no difference between the male and female mind or soul, a crucial distinction in an era in which, as Porter notes, 'the difference between the sexes became a burning issue'.²⁷

Later, during a visit to the home of the lieutenant's friend, Wollstonecraft asserts that from conversations with her host – 'with his wife I could only exchange smiles' (p. 56) she has gained 'an idea of the manners of the people' and finds 'amongst the peasantry...the simplicity of the golden age in this land of flint – so much overflowing of heart, and fellow-feeling' (p. 56). This is in stark contrast with the 'scarcely human' men she describes on first arriving (p. 53). Horrocks points out that the 'golden age' references Rousseau's *Reveries of the Solitary Walker*, a writer and a work Wollstonecraft had once admired.²⁸ Over time, her opinion in real life, and in *Letters*, changes and Rousseau's golden age becomes the 'golden age of stupidity' (p. 107). The colour gold again takes on a less burnished hue later in *Letters* when Wollstonecraft discusses the businessmen of Hamburg and the 'golden harvest' (pp. 170-171) they reap from their dealings, dealings which have begun to lessen Imlay's standing in her eyes.

²⁷ Roy Porter, *Enlightenment: Britain and the Creation of the Modern World* (London: Penguin, 2000), p. 571, n46.

²⁸ Horrocks, *Letters*, p. 30

Horrocks points to a range of discourses that emerge as being of interest to Wollstonecraft, including the philosophical, scenic, and sentimental discourses of travel. She discusses how Wollstonecraft adapts them, reorienting, for example, the sentimental mode, so that rather than exoticising pain and suffering, she instead empathises and engages.²⁹ In this way Wollstonecraft subverts a contemporary understanding of sympathy, in which the affectation of excessive feeling and emotion stood in for genuinely felt responses to suffering and pain.

A particularly important discourse is that of the aesthetic. Wollstonecraft refers often to concepts in Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origins of our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (1757).³⁰ The *Philosophical Enquiry* is described by Wu as being 'nothing short of a revolution in aesthetic theory'.³¹ Burke's theory holds that sublime objects are:

Vast in their dimensions, beautiful ones comparatively small; beauty should be smooth and polished; the great, rugged and negligent; beauty should shun the right line, yet deviate from it insensibly... beauty should not be obscure; the great ought to be dark and gloomy.³²

Writing of the Scandinavian landscape Wollstonecraft is clearly referencing Burke when she declares herself 'delighted with the beauties of the scene' before her, 'for the sublime often gave way to the beautiful, dilating the emotions which were painfully concentrated' (p. 58). At the same time as Wollstonecraft acknowledges the gendered and exalted awe of landscape evoked by Burke, she refashions his concepts, giving them the materiality made invisible by his words, anticipating social issues that still pervade our own world. Her concerns are articulated by Mills, who proposes the need for a materialist feminist perspective rather than 'psychoanalytical frameworks, which implicitly polarise and essentialise gender positions'.³³ Mills notes too (quoting Iris Marion Young) that 'in its immanence and inhibition, feminised spatial existence is *positioned* by a system of co-

²⁹ Horrocks, p. 36.

³⁰ See *The Writing and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, ed. by T. O. McLoughlin and James T. Boulton, 9 vols (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), I.

³¹ Duncan Wu, Introduction, ed., *Romanticism: An Anthology*, 2nd edn. (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 1998), p. 4.

³² Edmund Burke, 'The Sublime and Beautiful Compared', III, XXVII, in *The Norton Anthology of Theory and Criticism*, 2nd ed. (New York: W. W. Norton, 2010), pp. 450-460, p. 460.

³³ Mills, 'Written on the Landscape'. By materialist feminist Mills means 'a type of criticism which is not concerned with the individual psyche [...] but [...] the socio-economic/historical/cultural context within which groups of women negotiate the parameters of subjectivity', p. 32, fn 2.

ordinates which does not have its origin in her own intentional capacities' [emphasis in original].³⁴ Mills' insights, outlined in *Gender and Colonial Space*, enable a more nuanced reading of Wollstonecraft's writing on the landscape:

In the context of discussing the sublime, it should be remembered that the sublime is not as it appears to be – the confrontation of an individual with an awe-inspiring landscape or environment – but rather the confrontation of social systems and systems of classification.³⁵

Through her descriptions of natural phenomena Wollstonecraft, Mills suggests, 'positions herself in a straightforward position of knowledge/vision, in that it is the "naked eye" which is located as the source of these phenomena'.³⁶ And I agree with Mills, but I see Wollstonecraft's position as being just as firmly located in her heart, and this is part of the subtext discernible in *Letters*. Wollstonecraft makes clear that powerful emotions are integral to her being:

You have sometimes wondered, my dear friend, at the extreme affection of my nature—But such is the temperature of my soul—It is not the vivacity of youth, the hey-day of existence. For years have I endeavoured to calm an impetuous tide—laboring to make my feelings take an orderly course. It was striving against the stream. (p. 97)

The 'temperature of my soul' is as moving as any declaration she makes in *Letters*, evoking as it does a love that is both physical and spiritual. Her words here also topple any notion of the control implied in the aesthetics of the picturesque, the sublime, or the beautiful, since she finds it impossible to make her feelings 'take an orderly course'. In reflecting her love for Imlay through natural metaphors, she at the same time calls into question the aesthetics on which they are based; as Mills has it, she sees with 'naked eye'. In the process, Wollstonecraft exposes what is missing from such aesthetics. Love.

It is love, or its lack, that lends the poignant subtext to *Letters*. It is apparent in Wollstonecraft's words that her spirits are exhausted not purely for physical reasons, but

³⁴ Quoted in Mills, 'Written on the Landscape', p. 24.

³⁵ Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester: New York; Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 84.

³⁶ Mills, 'Written on the Landscape', p. 28.

also because of ‘other causes, with which you [Imlay] are already sufficiently acquainted’ (p. 52). This subtext is discernible most in her descriptions of the Scandinavian landscape, which she links often to her emotional and intellectual state. She writes:

Nature is the nurse of sentiment, – the true source of taste; – yet what misery, as well as rapture, is produced by a quick perception of the beautiful and the sublime, when it is exercised in observing animated nature, when every beauteous feeling and emotion excites responsive sympathy and the harmonised soul sinks into melancholy, or rises to ecstasy...But how dangerous it is to foster these sentiments in such an imperfect state of existence; and how difficult to eradicate them when an affection for mankind, a passion for an individual, is but the unfolding of that love which embraces all that is great and beautiful. (pp. 86-87)

Her words ‘responsive sympathy’ register on two levels; in describing this sympathy as something ‘beauteous’, Wollstonecraft effectively subverts the ‘affected’ sympathy mentioned earlier. As well, her words are deeply personal and lyrical, provoking first a sensual and uplifting awareness of the beauties of nature and its power to induce harmony, melancholy, or ecstasy; the mood is cut off, though, by ‘dangerous’, and the ‘imperfect state of existence’, which refers as much to her own troubled life as it does the wider world. Love is the thing that makes ‘responsive sympathy’ possible, and is the very thing withheld from her. Poignantly, Wollstonecraft’s eye had earlier been attracted to some heart’s ease (pansies) peeping through the rocks, but she finds that while ‘going to preserve it in a letter that had not conveyed balm to my heart’ her eyes were suffused by ‘a cruel remembrance’. The contrast between the heart’s ease, and the irony that the letter ‘had not conveyed balm to my heart’ again shows how her love is suffused through nature, and filtered through her words. Later, in the same letter she observes: ‘The aspen leaves tremble into stillness [...] the juniper [...] exhales a wild perfume, mixed with a thousand nameless sweets, that soothing the heart, leave images in the memory which the imagination will ever hold dear’ (p. 94). Words such as ‘tremble’ and ‘exhale’, serve to animate the landscape, to the extent that it is no longer bound by Burke’s theories but is given a material reality.

In another scene, which she describes as ‘the sweetest picture of a harvest home’ (p. 140) she had ever seen, Wollstonecraft redeploys Gilpin’s view of the picturesque, in which

nature is 'rearranged' and made 'perfect' to suit a prevailing cultural ideal.³⁷ This is evident in her depiction of the scene as appealing to both 'pencil and heart', making the picturesque part of real life, rather than imperial vision alone. She writes:

The evening was uncommonly serene. [...] I passed by a little car loaded with rye, that presented, for the pencil and heart, the sweetest picture of a harvest home I had ever beheld. A little girl was mounted a straddle on a shaggy horse, brandishing a stick over its head; the father was walking at the side of the car with a child in his arms, who must have come to meet him with tottering steps, the little creature was stretching out its arms to cling round his neck; and a boy, just above petticoats, was laboring hard, with a fork, behind, to keep the sheaves from falling' (p. 140).

Here, people are spread all over the 'canvas', father with child in arms, labouring behind the cart, on the cart itself, in a completely natural composition. The only thing missing from the 'picture' is the mother who is waiting for her family at home – although Wollstonecraft does not comment on the mother being confined to domestic spaces, and therefore another absent presence. Amusingly, or poignantly, Wollstonecraft says she would even undertake cooking to be part of this scene, this family. In contrast, her own family life is destroyed through the absence of her baby's father from it. She sees only sadness ahead for their baby daughter 'who may never experience a father's care and tenderness', echoing here the sentiments expressed in her words: 'Hapless woman, what a fate is thine!' (p. 141). In her own analysis of this scene, Ashley Tauchert suggests, movingly, that Wollstonecraft here 'seems to offer a glimpse of uncertainty regarding her own mothering', referring as well to Wollstonecraft's fear that on her return to Gothenburg, 'her child may have forgotten her in her absence'.³⁸ As Horrocks highlights, Wollstonecraft's depiction of the scene 'evokes "a pang" that "only an unhappy mother could feel' (p. 38).

Wollstonecraft's deployment of the picturesque here works, Jacqueline Labbe argues, in such a way that, in 'regularizing the sublime, she notes its descriptive docility and even

³⁷ Wollstonecraft wrote four reviews of Gilpin's work for the *Analytical Review*, of which Horrocks notes that in the last one she 'describes the picturesque as an employment of "the idle, we mean the rich"', Introduction, p. 31.

³⁸ Ashley Tauchert, *Mary Wollstonecraft and the Accent of the Feminine* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2002), p. 125 and p. 124.

implies its irrelevance: “*still*, it was sublime”, [emphasis in original].³⁹ Labbe states too that in Wollstonecraft’s submerging of both the sublime and the beautiful and privileging of the picturesque, her aesthetic extends to ‘an intellectual and revolutionary recognition of the possibilities informing an aesthetic’ and further (citing Jeanne Moskal) ‘that the gendered categories of the sublime, the beautiful and the picturesque did not silence women but contributed to the increasing numbers of British women who began to find their voices’.⁴⁰

Wollstonecraft’s ‘striving against the stream’ of her thoughts and feelings is apparent, too, in her envy of her maid Marguerite’s light-hearted spirit, which was ‘worth all my philosophy’ (p. 163). Marguerite is othered in *Letters* since we never hear from her, but Wollstonecraft’s rather poignant comment hints at the fact that the other may have something the self cannot possess. The feelings she displays here are similar to those in the earlier quotation, when she feels isolated from the rest of the world because she refuses to ‘play a role’. Marguerite, in contrast, if I read Wollstonecraft correctly, either cannot or does not want to work hard at considering the meaning of life, and is therefore free to be happy. Having chosen a subjectivity that compels her to destabilise discourses that restrict women to a life mapped according to patriarchal strictures, Wollstonecraft projects at times a deep ambivalence about that choice:

How frequently has melancholy and even misanthropy taken possession of me, when the world has disgusted me, and friends have proved unkind. I have then considered myself as a particle broken off from the grand mass of mankind. (p. 59)

Her words point to the tension and stress brought on by feeling repelled by the social order while at the same time needing to be part of that same ‘grand mass’, evidenced by her wish to yet be accepted by a world whose gendered social conventions repel her, within which women are seen as being ‘either ornaments or slaves’.⁴¹

‘Ornaments or slaves’ calls to mind also the opposite extremes of the tropes of imperialistic discourse as outlined, for example, by Thompson.⁴² Imperialistic othering

³⁹ Jacqueline Labbe, *Romantic Visualities: Landscape, Gender and Romanticism* (Basingstoke: Macmillan; New York: St Martin’s Press, 1998), p. 65.

⁴⁰ Labbe, p. 65.

⁴¹ Wollstonecraft uses these terms in *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, paraphrased here in Wu, p. 141.

⁴² Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 136-155.

included an attention paid to food and table etiquette, to dress, cleanliness, and work ethics, of the others with whom the traveller comes in contact, as well as of course race and gender, most apparent in colonial discourse on Africa and India.⁴³ They are detectable too in some of Wollstonecraft's observations, such as in letter IV, when she comments that eating and drinking habits, and lack of care, mean most of the Swedish have discoloured teeth, while the women dress with more vanity than taste. In this way, the link between imperialistic othering and the othering that occurs in non-imperialistic arenas is clear. To find the same concerns in European travel writing about other Europeans reveals that othering occurs much closer to home as well, in domestic spaces, raising the question of whether these attitudes shape discourse, or are shaped by discourse. The ambiguity suggests too a potentiality: Mills refers to 'a more socially context-bound view of discourse' in which it is possible to 'work out ... subject positions' by being 'attentive to what individual subjects do within and through discursive structures, rather than assuming that discourses force us to behave in certain ways'.⁴⁴ From this perspective, the creative act of writing is loaded with possible transformative powers.

In considering Wollstonecraft's descriptions of the Scandinavian landscape, I found Rose's concept of 'paradoxical spaces' apposite. By 'paradoxical spaces', to remind ourselves, Rose means spaces that would be 'mutually exclusive if charted on a two dimensional map – centre and margin, inside and outside' but which are in fact 'occupied simultaneously'.⁴⁵ This notion of space is 'associated with the emergent subject of feminism' and is 'multi-dimensional, shifting and contingent'.⁴⁶ Rose cites de Lauretis' argument that 'because of its constitution through as well as its resistance to the discourses of masculinism, the subject of feminism is in two places at once'.⁴⁷ Feminism, in this sense, is shaped by 'the tension of contradiction, multiplicity, and heteronomy'.⁴⁸ Wollstonecraft's *Letters* evokes all of these. Rose's notion of paradoxical spaces evolved as a challenge to geographers', usually masculinist, discourses of landscape which failed to raise 'questions of gender and sexuality'.⁴⁹ This is particularly telling, Rose notes, since depictions of landscapes 'are often seen in terms of the female body and the beauty of Nature'.⁵⁰ Implicit here are ideological positions that deny subjective space, or make the

⁴³ Thompson, *Travel Writing*, p. 131-136.

⁴⁴ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 86.

⁴⁵ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 140

⁴⁶ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 140

⁴⁷ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 140

⁴⁸ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 140.

⁴⁹ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 87.

⁵⁰ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 87.

real invisible. The landscape is central to *Letters*, a work which troubles such ideological positions in the materiality of Wollstonecraft's portrayal of the condition of women's lives, whether 'ornaments or slaves', as discussed above. In choosing to express her melancholia through Nature, Wollstonecraft is able to critique the 'supposed norm of a male exaltation' in relation to landscape and the male gaze.⁵¹ In her depictions of the landscape, she is also 'challenging the very basis on which this experience of the sublime is based'.⁵² While it is difficult to read *Letters* without Burke's sublime and beautiful surfacing often, his concepts are subverted by Wollstonecraft's own portrayal of the Scandinavian landscape, through the very materiality Mills describes.

Throughout *Letters* Wollstonecraft's usurping of Burke's concepts have what Rose terms 'subversive potential' since in contesting Burkean notions of the sublime she is able to 'exhaust them, transform them into the historical concepts they are and always have been'.⁵³ That is not to deny the value that Burke attached to history, or tradition, or customs, but rather to question their value where they work purely to serve the (dominant) status quo. In Wollstonecraft's portrayal of the self-other relationship in *Letters*, she identifies the need for notions of reciprocity to challenge and thus change the social relations that marginalise through differences of class and gender. In this way she highlights, too, the rarefaction of discourse that Mills notes helps keep those social constraints in place.⁵⁴ For Rose, this is part of the 'project of the subject of feminism', to comprehend 'the positivity of otherness'.⁵⁵ In other words, to find reciprocal space through difference.

Through the constant probing of her heartache in *Letters*, Wollstonecraft also draws on Burke's writing on pain and melancholy. Burke writes: 'the idea of pain in its highest degree is much stronger than the highest degree of pleasure' and, further, that 'whilst we remain in the presence of whatever is supposed to have the power of inflicting either, it is impossible to be perfectly free from terror'.⁵⁶ Wollstonecraft's portrayal of both pleasure and pain is akin to experiencing being both self and other simultaneously. The forlorn Wollstonecraft is tormented by Imlay's faithlessness, but he becomes the other she turns away from, because 'we never submit to pain willingly'.⁵⁷ In the process of turning away

⁵¹ Mills, 'Written on the Landscape', p. 28.

⁵² Mills, 'Written on the Landscape', p. 28

⁵³ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 151.

⁵⁴ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 70.

⁵⁵ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 150.

⁵⁶ Burke, 'Power', II, V, in *The Writing and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, I, p. 236.

⁵⁷ Burke, 'Power', II, V, in *The Writing and Speeches of Edmund Burke*, I, p. 236.

from the pain caused by Imlay, a process that begins near the end of *Letters*, Wollstonecraft completes, however unwillingly (contra Burke), a psychological reconciliation between self and other, which replicates the same recuperative if painful act that travelling and writing affords. By extending here the Saidian binary into a gendered analysis, it becomes possible to upset the reification of his self/Other dichotomy, which in its fixity does not allow for such a relationship.

Wollstonecraft crosses the Scandinavian landscape as a woman at a time when it was still considered a 'wilderness'.⁵⁸ She transgresses, then, such colonial and patriarchal boundaries as those of the imperial adventurer and hero, while at the same time ignoring the rhetoric of danger that her maid Marguerite could not. With her extensive descriptions of the people she meets and conversations she has with them, Wollstonecraft also resituates in the environment those people who Rose says are usually made invisible in patriarchal descriptions of landscape. She does so, as Bohls reveals, through an 'anti-aesthetics', by 'mobiliz[ing] the standard vocabulary of the picturesque travelogue ("declivity," "herbage," "prospect," "variegated") to build the aestheticized impression that she then wickedly undercuts with the incongruous stench of rotten fish, signifiers of practical agricultural activity'.⁵⁹ At the same time, she subverts Burke's hierarchy by, as Labbe identifies, inverting his terms, making the grand submit to the picturesque, and situating herself in the landscape by 'feeling' it, being 'suffused' by it.⁶⁰

As she crawls across the landscape, even in the dark at one point, it is clearly a horizontal landscape that is the backdrop against which Wollstonecraft's concerns about the social order are played out. Thus she not only transgresses the patriarchal boundaries of the adventurer and hero; in presenting her emotions and deep melancholy through the landscape she in a way reclaims that landscape from the imposed patriarchal boundaries on how it might be viewed, and in the process challenges discursive constraints on her experience, using difference as a means of generating new social spaces, or at least pointing to them. As Pratt notes, though, where hierarchies of power and superiority are not willingly relinquished, there is still much to fight through.⁶¹ My reading of Wollstonecraft, then, as constructed in *Letters*, sees her as both subject and object, as the 'I' who rests upon, is suffused by, and even crawls across the landscape, a literal and pictorial 'I' that invites

⁵⁸ Mills, 'Written on the Landscape', p. 27

⁵⁹ Bohls, *Aesthetics*, p. 151.

⁶⁰ Labbe, p. 63.

⁶¹ Mary Louise Pratt, 'Planetary', in Mary Louise Pratt, Ron G. Manley, and Susan Bassnett, *Intercultural Dialogue* (London: British Council, 2004), p. 13.

a very different way of looking, in its clear opposition to any 'simple view of the sublime as stereotypically masculinist and imperialist'.⁶²

There is no doubt that her sensibility was attuned to the moods of those around her, and that she also possessed a great awareness of her self in relation to others. Striking evidence of this occurs when Wollstonecraft, who is sitting in a coach just about to depart from Laurvig for Tonsberg, spots a gentleman in the crowd staring at her. Wollstonecraft finds she 'cannot avoid shrinking into myself' on observing this 'gentleman-like man; in a crowd of onlookers staring at something 'grotesque in our appearance' and, seeing a 'significant smile' on his face, she bursts into a laugh 'to allow him to do so too, – and away we flew' (p. 85). The incident is compelling for the synchronicity and reflexivity of the embodied behaviours displayed by both Wollstonecraft and the gentleman, as if they are taking part in a dance of sorts whose rhythms are compelling enough to override thought and compel action. Their behaviour reveals how spatial boundaries are complex and multi-dimensional, stemming as they do from a 'matrix of historical, social, sexual, racial and class positions'.⁶³ In living within the social boundaries created by this matrix, 'behaviour and space [become] mutually dependent'.⁶⁴ Another example is when Wollstonecraft rewards a young girl with a coin for the help she has given, only to see this handed immediately, with a smile, over to another child. Wollstonecraft assumes this to mean that the young girl is not a servant, but was simply being courteous. That she notices this displays a self that is attuned to others' behaviour in response to her own, particularly of embodied behaviour and how this reflects social standing. She writes to Imlay that:

I must own to you, that the lower class of people here amuse and interest me much more than the middling, with their apish good breeding and prejudices. The sympathy and frankness of heart conspicuous in the peasantry produces even a simple gracefulness of deportment.... Still, my good friend, I begin to think that I should not like to live continually in the country, with people whose minds have such a narrow range. My heart would frequently be interested; but my mind would languish for more companionable society. (pp. 71-72)

⁶² Mills, *Gender and Colonial*, p. 87.

⁶³ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 155. See also Bondi, et al, for discussion of the ways in which 'distinctly gendered spaces and boundaries' and the 'gendered dichotomies' they produce can be challenged and modified, despite the presence of 'persistent and powerful binary framings', p. 8.

⁶⁴ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 17.

The class prejudice and condescension displayed here pick up again, from another perspective, on her ambivalence about being a part of and yet apart from society, discussed earlier in relation to Marguerite's supposed 'freedom'. Wollstonecraft makes it clear that she needs both heart and mind to be equally engaged. This dilemma is at the forefront of her thoughts when she wonders whether to raise her daughter to follow her head or her heart, since in the current world she cannot do both.

On other occasions, it is less easy to feel she is so attuned. She describes being invited to spend the day with 'the gentleman with whom I had business...the Mayor of Tonsberg' and his family, and is invited along with them to the house of a 'rich merchant'.⁶⁵ Prior to describing the scene, Wollstonecraft writes that:

Though I could not speak Danish, I knew that I could see a great deal: yes, I am persuaded that I have formed a very just opinion of the character of the Norwegians, without being able to hold converse with them'. (p. 100)

That she cannot speak Danish, but is yet able to form a 'very just opinion' of the Norwegian character, is troubled not only by the need for translation but also by the fact that subjectivities are always being made and always in process of change. Wollstonecraft's own fluctuating opinions offer evidence that one's subjectivity is contingent on place and time and changing experience. Early on, for example, the simplicity of the 'peasantry' she finds admirable, but at the same time 'her mind would languish for more companionable society' (p. 72). Wollstonecraft is disconcerted on her arrival at the house of the Mayor's friend. Having expected only 'some company', Wollstonecraft is 'a little discomfited at being ushered into an apartment full of well-dressed people' (p. 100):

Glancing my eyes round, they rested on several very pretty faces. Rosy cheeks, sparkling eyes, and light brown or golden locks; for I never saw so much hair with a yellow cast; and, with their fine complexions, it looked very becoming. [...] The solitariness of my situation, which they thought terrible, interested them very much in my favour. They gathered round me – sung to me – and one of the

⁶⁵ The friend is un-named but Horrocks states the home belonged to the Danish Earl of Jarlsberg, noting too that 'Danish was the official language in Norway throughout the eighteenth century, and the spoken language among the upper classes', p. 100, n2 and n3.

prettiest, to whom I gave my hand, with some degree of cordiality, to meet the glance of her eyes, kissed me very affectionately. (p. 100)

In this scene, she is clearly mixing with people of an equal social standing and yet sees herself as the focus of the scene. She asserts that they understand her situation – without being able to speak the language! She goes on to say that as the evening advanced ‘they became playful and we kept up a sort of conversation of gestures’ (p. 101). It is hard to decide if she is simply being honest in her opinion, however condescending that may be, when she says of the women: ‘As their minds were totally uncultivated, I did not lose much, perhaps gained, by not being able to understand them; for fancy probably filled up, more to their advantage, the void in the picture’ (p. 101). This self-confidence is outrageous enough to be destabilising. While she can clearly claim what she sees, however condescending – ‘the women seem a mixture of indolence and vivacity’ – it is not clear how she can arrive at the assumption (without knowing Danish) that ‘they scarcely ever walk out, and were astonished that I should, for pleasure, yet they are immoderately fond of dancing’ (p. 100).

In her portrayal of this scene, Wollstonecraft positions herself, and the other, from a perspective that is detached in some way. Although she does not acknowledge that language is a barrier to communication, her lack of Danish clearly affects her self portrayal. And whose gaze is doing the ‘glancing’ in the framing of this scene? Just as she challenges masculine discourses of the landscape, here she portrays the sort of scene that feminist art critics assert would normally have ‘been created about women for men’s enjoyment, by men’ but through a quite different gaze from that ‘which is eroticised as masculine and heterosexual’.⁶⁶ This scene disrupts the idea of that particular ‘masculine gaze’ which ‘sees a feminine body which requires interpreting by the cultured knowledgeable look; something to own, and something to give pleasure’⁶⁷ There is, rather, a sense of Wollstonecraft wanting to belong, and be liked by these women, even at the same time as she feels a sense of superiority.

The disparity between the diametrically opposed positions of being either ‘ornament or slave’ is apparent in the attention Wollstonecraft pays to the conditions of women’s lives, an attention which spans the social spectrum from a young wet nurse, or servant girls with bleeding hands, to the banished Queen Matilda. Wollstonecraft finds abhorrent the brutal economic conditions responsible for such miniscule difference between the wages of \$12

⁶⁶ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 97.

⁶⁷ Rose, *Feminism and Geography*, p. 97.

per year paid to the young nurse and the \$10 per year she must pay to have her own child nursed (p. 101). This system doubly impacts on the nurse, who not only loses the chance to care for and bond with her own child, but is trapped too by having no other options open to her. Wollstonecraft, who has had to leave her infant daughter behind with her own maid in Gothenburg, while she travels on to Norway, could hardly fail to make a comparison with her own economic circumstances, saved as she was from being trapped in a similar situation through her chance meeting with Johnson, his providing her with employment, and sharing of her social views. Her portrayal of the young woman's situation is affecting, as Horrocks notes, in a non-sentimental manner and highlights the 'need to think harder about the causes of those distresses'.⁶⁸ Part of that is a need to re-evaluate a patriarchal system in which men, even though they work alongside the women, deem it will disgrace their manhood if they sink to carrying the washer women's tubs down to the river (p. 65).

Wollstonecraft's reaction to the nurse, though, is in stark contrast to the disparaging comments she makes on first landing in Scandinavia. Her descriptions of the Swedish people at this stage range from 'scarcely human', in reference to the two old men whom 'we forced out of their wretched hut', to 'sluggish inhabitants' (pp. 53-54). She is scathing again of rules being obeyed when the two old men inform her, on her request to be taken around the bay, that they 'were not allowed to quit their post, on any pretence' (p. 53). According to Nystrom, however, they may have appeared to her as 'scarcely human in their appearance' because they were covered in coal dust from their work of keeping alight the beacons along the coastline.⁶⁹ That Wollstonecraft either does not notice or ignores this indicates the sort of superior attitude travellers often display when viewing the other, troubling her own egalitarian agenda. To some extent, by noticing the young mother, but not apparently feeling any empathy for the old men, Wollstonecraft is betraying views similar to those of which she accuses Burke in her *Vindications*, in which she argued against a 'gendered aesthetics of sensibility [...] only capable of paying attention to particular kinds of suffering'.⁷⁰

This othering aspect of *Letters* is most apparent when she is tired and stressed, as in letter XVI. She writes of her efforts to reach the post-house at Stromstad, where she must order horses for the next day so that she can get back more quickly to her daughter, as well as to the letters 'which I was impatient to get from you' (pp. 136-137). Travelling from Stromstad to Quistram the next day, she finds she is unable to approach the inn there

⁶⁸ Horrocks, p. 36.

⁶⁹ Nystrom, p. 6.

⁷⁰ Horrocks, p. 35.

because of crowds of ‘men, horses, and carts, cows, and pigs huddled together’, in town for a fair:

The boisterous merriment that almost every instant produced a quarrel or made me dread one, with the clouds of tobacco, and fumes of brandy, gave an infernal appearance to the scene. There was everything to drive me back, nothing to excite sympathy in a rude tumult of the senses, which I foresaw would end in a gross debauch...all was lost in noise, riot, and confusion. (p. 138)

This scene, in which merriment threatens to turn hostile, vision disturbed by fumes and clouds, and tumultuous senses threaten to collapse into debauchery, must have reminded Wollstonecraft of her time in revolutionary Paris, when she saw first-hand how quickly honourable principles could be subsumed by brutality.

Leaving Quistram, she sees more people indulging their passions, ‘a number of joyous groups’ who had cut down some trees branches to make a fire around which they were ‘drinking, smoking, and laughing with all their might and main’ (p. 138). She feels sorry for the ‘Hapless nymphs!’ whose ‘haunts’ she fears ‘were polluted by many an unhallowed flame; the casual burst of the moment’ (p. 138). Later, when her carriage is finally drawing near to the post-house, ‘the postillion stopt [sic] short, and neither threats nor promises could prevail on him to go forward’ (p. 138). ‘He even began to howl and weep’ when she tried to make him keep his word, but finds that:

Nothing indeed can equal the stupid obstinacy of these half alive beings, who seem to have been made by Prometheus, when the fire he stole from Heaven was so exhausted, that he could only spare a spark to give life, not animation, to the inert clay. (p. 139)

Wollstonecraft here projects herself as being at one with poetic, animated, sentient life on the one hand, in stark contrast to the drunken, unthinking, clay-like life on the other. Pratt’s ‘contact zones’ are brought to life here, as the joyous revelers first offend Wollstonecraft’s senses with their ‘uncivilised’ behaviour, while her attempts to bribe the ‘churlish brute’ to continue on are foiled by ‘invisible’ orders Wollstonecraft is unaware have been issued by her apparently ‘courteous hostess’ (pp. 139). Social power is here reversed and Wollstonecraft must wait on those who usually do her bidding. She has no choice, then, but to spend the night at this post-house, despite being ‘almost driven back by the stench’ emanating from a room in which ‘eight to ten people were sleeping’, with cats and dogs

lying around on the floor. Traversing the floor, passing ‘warily amongst the pots, pans, milk-pails, and washing tubes’ she then must ‘scal[e] a ruinous staircase’ to reach a bed chamber whose ‘bed did not invite me to enter’ (p. 139). But exhaustion takes over and lying down ‘tired nature found repose’ (p. 139). In this scene, Wollstonecraft suggests that she represents ordered, if tired, nature, and at the same time she draws on numerous tropes of travel writing, such as the squalor of the disordered house and its insalubrious inhabitants (p. 139).

Todd describes Wollstonecraft’s letters as being ‘more like a diary than correspondence, a communion with the self or perhaps a self-created other’, going on to assert that Wollstonecraft talked and thought on paper.⁷¹ Todd’s ‘communion with the self’ is particularly apt as it implies a form of confession between self and other. Diaries come under the umbrella of what Kinneavy describes as ‘Expressive Discourse’. As outlined earlier, for Kinneavy ‘expressive’ discourse must not only have some element of reciprocity for the discourse to have meaning, but is also a type of discourse which reveals the self to itself as a three-part process – the self as it is in the world, the self as it strives to be in the world, and the self that is projected into the future. He notes that the aim of expressive discourse is to enable a new social personality to achieve self-determination.⁷² One form of expressive discourse is the confessional, and Susan Levin outlines how this form was deployed during the Romantic era:

Romantic confessors view and present the universe in terms of their inner turmoil, projecting their anxieties onto their physical surroundings. The reader, they assert, must participate in their vision. Romantic confessors make explicit the reader they expect. Placing the reader in the position of privileged confidant, the confessor can tell all. All texts ask for a reader, but romantic confessions articulate the very creation of the reader they need. Confession demands a listener. No longer speaking to God or the priest, the romantic confessional text creates a non-empirical ‘you’. Finally, the self of the confessor comes to depend on the other. The writer who seeks to individualize and distinguish himself

⁷¹ Janet Todd, ‘Mary Wollstonecraft’s Letters’, in *The Cambridge Companion to Mary Wollstonecraft*, ed. Claudia L. Johnson (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 9.

⁷² James Kinneavy, *A Theory of Discourse: The Aims of Discourse* (New York; London: W.W. Norton, 1980), p. 393.

through confession ultimately reveals his total dependence on the presence of and acceptance by at least one other person.⁷³

Mills describes the confession as a form often employed by women whose voices were unheard and as such can be read ‘as making powerful strategic interventions in their own self-presentations and in their interactions with others in the world’.⁷⁴ Clearly Wollstonecraft is presenting herself and interacting with others in *Letters*. As Levin notes, ‘the title confession brings to the autobiographical act the many facets of its religious past and the simple verbal contrition that God proposed to Moses has evolved into an intriguing religious and linguistic field’.⁷⁵ It is worth noting here Barbara Taylor’s discussion of the religious foundations of Wollstonecraft’s views as expressed in her writing.⁷⁶ Although I do not explore that subject here, there are elements of the confessional in *Letters*. Wollstonecraft’s manipulation of the travel genre fits all of the parameters outlined as shaping romantic confession, but this does not mean that she successfully creates the ‘reader’ she needs, if we understand by this only Imlay. But if the audience is to some extent herself too, and her wider audience – the project of humanity that Taylor observes – then I think she is successful. In her increasing hardening of heart against Imlay, and her flat refusal to allow him to help her financially, lies the proof that her writing leads to a new subjectivity and I believe an answer to Belsey’s rhetorical question: ‘How can we know who we are unless we write’. Kinneavy’s description of expressive discourse as working on three levels is of value here: we have the self that Wollstonecraft depicts at the beginning of *Letters*, troubled but still wanting to heal her relationship with Imlay; the increasingly disillusioned self who realises that he is not responding to her missives, leaving her to question her own subjectivity; and finally, the saddened but determined self she presents at the end of *Letters*. Yet at the same time, she is Pratt’s ‘committed outsider’, communicating with the wider world through her pain and turmoil.

While writing and travelling around Scandinavia, Wollstonecraft slowly arrives at the realisation that love cannot be demanded; ultimately, it is up to the others in one’s life who decide whether or not to love us. *Letters* is in the final analysis about love, and loving, and being loved – or not, as much as it is about Wollstonecraft’s project to change the world.

⁷³ Susan M. Levin, *The Romantic Art of Confession: De Quincey, Musset, Sand, Lamb, Hogg, Frémy, Soulié, Janin* (Columbia, USA: Camden House, 1998), pp. 12-13.

⁷⁴ Mills, *Discourse*, p. 85.

⁷⁵ Levin, p. 3.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *Wollstonecraft and Feminist Imagination*, pp. 95-142.

Travelling and writing about her travels, then, serve as a vehicle or a means for self-fashioning. As Steve Clark notes:

Part of the pleasure of the genre might be in its abandonment and disavowal of certain bonds – kinship, marital, family – which normally appear all-constraining. Travel might thus be seen, in highly abstract terms, as a refutation of the father, and a denial of intimacy with the mother: the necessary condition of entry into language and access unto law.⁷⁷

For Wollstonecraft, it might well be the case that this was so, since she had no reason to think fondly of family, of home. I agree with Clark that travel, in the sense that it takes one out of one's comfort zone and into 'contact zones' can be seen as the necessary condition of entry into language, even if only because it causes at least a questioning of the status quo.

Wollstonecraft's letter from Laurvig, where she is meeting Imlay's lawyers, conveys all of the concerns dealt with elsewhere throughout *Letters*, bringing together the landscape, her melancholia, the need to temper reason with emotion, engagements between self and other, and the condition of humanity. Arriving in Laurvig she finds the road 'very fine, and the country the best cultivated in Norway' (p. 108). She reports that she had never before admired the beech tree, and with its long and lank outline she would have been forced to agree with Gilpin that 'the line of beauty requires some curves' but there is nearby a 'stately pine' whose spreading branches looked beautiful 'in opposition to such narrow rules' (p. 109). She then goes on to say:

In these respects my very reason obliges me to permit my feelings to be my criterion. Whatever excites emotion has charms for me; though I insist that the cultivation of the mind, by warming, nay, almost creating the imagination, produces taste, and an immense variety of sensations and emotions, partaking of the exquisite pleasure inspired by beauty and sublimity. (p. 109)

But feelings must be tempered by reason, as she asserts when confronted with a group of lawyers who caused her heart to grow sick as she 'regarded visages deformed by vice; and

⁷⁷ Stephen Clark, *Travel Writing and Empire: Postcolonial Theory in Transit* (London, UK: Zed Books, 1999), p. 19.

listened to accounts of chicanery that were continually embroiling the ignorant' (p. 109). Such chicanery dispels 'all the sentiments which ennoble our nature'. Later in the same letter, as she moves on to the next stage of her journey, she is sitting:

In a little boat on the ocean, amidst strangers, with sorrow and care pressing hard on me,—buffeting me about from clime to clime—I felt 'Like the loan shrub at random cast / That sighs and trembles at each blast!'. (p. 112)

It is telling that here she has just met with those lawyers through whom she hopes to win back Imlay's investment. In an earlier letter, Wollstonecraft had depicted herself as standing discarded, like a mark by the roadside, destined only to point out the way to others, but with no place for herself, no home. The notion of home is a troubled aspect of her paradoxical situation, aware as she is of being both self and other. She writes of her arrival back at Tonsberg, from the prison-like town of Risør, 'bastilled by nature' (as her own subjectivity has been bastilled by love):

Tonsberg was something like a home—yet I was to enter without lighting up pleasure in any eye—I dreaded the solitariness of my apartment, and wished for night to hide the starting tears, or to shed them on my pillow, and close my eyes on a world where I was destined to wander alone. (p. 119-120)

The contrast between her lonely arrival at her 'dreaded' apartment only makes more vivid the self who was so welcomed and so vivaciously engaging during her visit with the Mayor in the same city. Part of the loneliness and dread surely stemmed from her having returned from Risør, where she had failed on her secret mission and, no doubt, in winning back Imlay's love.

Her melancholia here is debilitating in the extreme. And where, as Favret asks, was home?⁷⁸ Wollstonecraft's emotional trauma, of being unloved and unmissed, cannot be assuaged by any socially mediated constructions of the self-other relationship. But the hegemonies that allow or restrict the other choices women might make about their lives, are definitely open to mediation and change, she suggests.

Why did Wollstonecraft turn her private letters into a travelogue to portray this troubled and turbulent part of her life, as opposed to, say, the sort of political commentary that fired

⁷⁸ Favret, p. 212.

her two *Vindications*? What were her thoughts on travel writing? What did she think she could ‘do’ with this form of writing? Some of these answers come from her own words. For Wollstonecraft, not only is ‘the art of travelling only a branch of the art of thinking’, it is also the ‘conduct of a being who acts from principle’ (p. 219). Within the pages of *Letters* itself she observes:

Travellers who require that every nation should resemble their native country had better stay at home. [...] The most essential service [...] that authors could render to society, would be to promote inquiry and discussion, instead of making those dogmatical assertions which only appear calculated to gird the human mind round with imaginary circles, like the paper globe which represents the one he inhabits. (pp. 80-81)

This posits a reciprocal space created through difference, and one which sees travel as a means of decentring and realigning the self in its relation to the other. The travel genre helps Wollstonecraft to harness life experience, using the personal co-ordinates of her pain to show what was needed for transforming those co-ordinates into a more egalitarian social order. As Horrocks observes, Wollstonecraft’s political thinking is extended through her creation of ‘a hybridised literary form, reworking the travel genre so that it absorbs and integrates a variety of discourses’.⁷⁹ Thus the genre’s flexible boundaries allow Wollstonecraft to create a bulging metaphorical suitcase stuffed to overflowing with emotion, heartache, yearnings, melancholy, and observations. No amount of metaphorical ‘sitting on’ or ‘squashing in’ can contain its contents, though, since Wollstonecraft makes ‘the history of my own heart’ (p. 108) the core of *Letters*.

Reading *Letters* from a privileged retrospective position, it might be argued that Wollstonecraft, ‘widely regarded as the mother of modern feminism’,⁸⁰ was simply doing what she did best. To read *Letters* from this perspective, however, would not do full justice to the very affecting narrative that emerges. Crucially, it would be to elide the sheer mental energy it must have taken Wollstonecraft to challenge, on a daily, even hourly basis, the

⁷⁹ Horrocks, p. 13. As well, this manipulation of the genre had the desired effect for at least one contemporary reviewer of *Letters* who felt that the work proved Wollstonecraft ‘capable of joining to a *masculine* understanding, the finer sensibilities of a female’, thus combining the reason with emotion. Horrocks, p. 245 (Appendix G: Contemporary Reviews).

⁸⁰ Wu, p. 140.

social constructs that limit not only the spaces in which women might feel free to move, but also a social order in which women were ‘either ornaments or slaves’.⁸¹

Her failed mission meant that the physical space of home was little changed for Wollstonecraft at the end of her journey, but her travelling and writing helped her see this more clearly than before she left. Writing provides Wollstonecraft with a home, then, since it affords her independence, but also a means of gaining insights into how discourse shapes the world and how these discourses might be unpicked. From this perspective, her travelling and writing point to a deep and reciprocal engagement with the dynamics of the self-other relationship. Nothing substantiates this more than the fact that, despite her feeling so often as if she were ‘in a little boat on the ocean, amidst strangers, with sorrow and care pressing hard on me—buffeting me about from clime to clime...’ (p. 112), she never allows this to halt her indefatigable efforts on behalf of her ‘favourite subject of contemplation, the future improvement of the world’ (p. 168).

Displaying a subjectivity on her return that was, sadly, as suicidal as that of her departure, this extraordinary woman, in those intercultural spaces she encounters in Scandinavia, points to the life-enhancing value of engaging reciprocally with difference, as well as to the need to disrupt, destabilise and change those discourses that hold in place the hegemonic status quo.

In the following chapter, I discuss the ways in which William Morris espouses similar ideals to Wollstonecraft’s, as he too travels through a Northern landscape. Morris writes, though, from a vastly different social position, and gender. Yet, his concerns coalesce with Wollstonecraft’s in ways that I imagine would have made her heart – and head – sing.

⁸¹ Wu, p. 141.

CHAPTER 3

William Morris – Northern Self Transformations

As he travelled around Iceland on the two visits he made there in 1871 and 1873, the Victorian polymath William Morris jotted down the words and insights that he eventually crafted into the *Icelandic Journals*.¹ The *Journals* have received less critical attention than Morris' other works and their inclusion in my thesis represents a recuperative project, an idea I borrow from Mills.² I aim to show how this particular traveller, who might be expected to display behaviours and ideas that reflect his upper-middle-class privileged station in life, in fact subverts the imperialistic, patriarchal and gendered notions shoring up the hegemonies that paradoxically kept his privileged status intact. As he departs for Iceland, Morris is at the same time troubled husband and reluctant but willing traveller, embarking on a journey that had 'both before and after its occurrence, an importance in Morris's life which can hardly be over-estimated'.³ Morris' socialist ideals evolved more fully following his Icelandic travels, during which he was struck by the resilience, even in great hardship, of the people he met. His apprehension of a material world vastly different to his own had long-lasting effects on Morris' subjectivity. His overarching goal would be to help improve the lives of others less fortunate than himself by stirring up change in the social order, in the hopes that this would lead to more equality.⁴ His egalitarian views were shaped in many ways by his reading and translation of the Icelandic Sagas and by his two journeys to the country whose 'strange imagination' produced those works.

In this chapter I argue that Morris' passion for the sagas, his Icelandic journeys, and writing about those journeys, led to a self transformation that would have a radical effect on his life. I first provide a context for the *Journals* by noting Morris' reasons for the visits, the members of his party, itinerary, as well as publication details relevant to my argument.

¹ All references to the *Icelandic Journals* in this thesis are to: *Icelandic Journals of William Morris*, Introduction by James Morris, (Fontwell, Sussex: Centaur Press, 1969). Page references will be given parenthetically.

² In the introduction to *Feminist Postcolonial Theory*, p. 2, Mills uses the term to reclaim a space for feminist works which are immensely productive but yet sidelined by the greater attention paid to such authors as Said and Bhaba, although she notes Spivak has received critical attention, p. 1.

³ J. W. Mackail, *The Life of William Morris*, 2 vols (London: Longmans, 1901), I, p. 240.

⁴ There are numerous expressions of Morris' socialist ideals. One particular example is in 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth' given in 1881, in which Morris makes clear his apprehension that it is only chance that has put him in a comfortable position in life 'on this side of the window' as he has it, in comparison to others far less privileged, such as the drunken workmen 'outside the window', who initially raise his ire, but then a desire to instigate social change.

I then discuss why Morris was so engaged by the sagas and how he looked to them as inspiration for making life-enhancing changes in his own, real world. Following this, I turn to the *Journals* themselves, and examine what I term Morris' self 'translations', drawing on Andrew Wawn's subtly suggestive essay.⁵ 'Translations' is apposite too because of Morris' own role as translator of the Icelandic sagas for which he had such a passion, as I focus on my questions: What subjectivity does Morris project at the start of his journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces constructed in his *Icelandic Journals*? What changes in subjectivity does Morris display on his return, as evidenced in his travel writing?

My argument focuses on the creative and material elements out of which Morris crafted his *Journals*, these being the Icelandic sagas (and Morris' own translations of them); the Icelandic landscape against which the sagas were imagined, contrasted with the background Morris had poetically imagined; his actual journey across Iceland; and the meaning he attaches to home. Central to my argument is the idea that writing itself represents a home of sorts for Morris, his literary creations offering a metaphorical bridge between self and other, where the other is represented not only by a landscape that is alien to what he had imagined, but also a home that does not offer the safety, love and affection that – ideally at least – colours an understanding of home. Writing offers him a liminal space, however painful it may be, in which to work out his identity in relation to his fluctuating and destabilising experiences. Ultimately, Morris' translations of the sagas evolve into self-transformations, as his travelling and the creative act of writing fuse. I see Morris' engagement with his Icelandic others as leading to a strongly reciprocal commitment to the socialist ideals prompting by his travels, and around which he would shape the rest of his life. This change is reflected in a number of his works, but especially in his utopian novel, *News from Nowhere*.⁶

Morris' Icelandic travels stemmed in part from a crisis in his marriage which he hoped would be resolved by his making himself absent for a while. The journeys were especially compelled by his fascination with the Icelandic sagas, which led to his translation work with the Icelandic scholar Eiríkr Magnússon, quickly followed by a desire to compose his own versions of them. The sagas, which seemed so real to Morris, are now seen as a

⁵ Andrew Wawn, 'William Morris and Translations of Iceland' in *Translating Life: Studies in Transpositional Aesthetics*, ed. by Shirley Chew and Alistair Stead (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 1999), pp. 253-276.

⁶ William Morris, *News from Nowhere* [1890] ed. by Stephen Arata (Ontario: Broadview, 2003).

mythical retelling of Iceland's history, as Margaret Clunies Ross discusses.⁷ Combining history with folklore, the sagas relate to the period after the island was settled by Norse immigrants in the ninth century. Written down in the twelfth century, the sagas relate the lives of tenth-century Icelanders, recounting the vices and virtues of the human condition and, especially in Morris' reading of them, how to bear that condition. The thematic range of the sagas, as Theodore Andersson points out, included aristocratic privilege, old and new money, vengeful relationships, political naivety and political chicanery.⁸ For Morris, they relate to a time when the old pagan ways were disappearing and being taken over by Christianity, but which was still too new to provide much solace in a hard life. In recent scholarship on the sagas, Clunies Ross notes a shift from a view that they represented either history or fiction, to one in which both 'creative impulses' are allowed, within a single text as well as intertextually.⁹

Explaining the absolute necessity to him of visiting Iceland, Morris writes in May 1871 to his friend Edith Marion Story in Rome:

In the middle of all your works of art and the luxury of a beautiful climate [you] will shudder at my choice I fancy; still one will always be ready to go to Italy while the possibility of driving oneself to *Iceland* may fail one: for I am really going there this summer: there is no art there at all, and there is nothing to interest most people there but its strangeness and wildness; yet I have felt for long that I must go there and see the background of the stories for wh: [sic] I have so much sympathy and which must have had something to do with producing and fostering their strange imagination: also to such a cockney and stay-at-home as I am there is a certain amount of adventure about the journey itself which pleases me.¹⁰

That Morris is attracted to the 'strangeness and wildness' of Iceland rather than the 'art' and 'luxury' and 'beautiful climate' of Italy, which 'one will always be ready go to' indicates a struggle between the two, one which is played out in the *Journals*. The letter is

⁷ Margaret Clunies Ross, 'Realism and the Fantastic in the Old Icelandic Sagas', *Scandinavian Studies*, Lawrence: 74.4 (Winter 2002), p. 444.

⁸ Theodore M. Andersson, *Growth of the Medieval Icelandic Sagas (1180-1280)*, (Ithaca NY: Cornell University Press, 2006), *passim*.

⁹ Clunies Ross, 'Realism and the Fantastic', p. 443.

¹⁰ Norman Kelvin, ed., *The Collected Letters of William Morris*, 4 vols, (Princeton: Princeton University Press 1984-1996), I, p. 133, n2. Kelvin writes this is the 'first reference in Morris' letters to plans for the journey to Iceland which took place in 1871'.

subtly revealing, then, about Morris' interests and identity: art is clearly important, and so too is pushing himself to do something that he anticipates will be worthwhile, although hardly easy.

The strangeness and wildness that Morris found so compelling are clearly something outside his normal range of experience, and suggests his openness to discourses other than the familiar, finding value in difference, in the other. Morris' openness is encapsulated in Mills' description of one of Foucault's most valuable insights which points to 'the arbitrariness of this range of discourses, the strangeness of those discourses, in spite of their familiarity'.¹¹ Further, that 'rather than being permanent, as their familiarity would suggest, discourses are constantly changing and their origins can be traced to certain key shifts in history'.¹² This is I believe exactly what is taking place in Morris' particular – personally transformative – moment in history, extending beyond the boundaries of his known world into new and exciting spaces.

Morris' choice of words, and self-depiction, allow a number of insights. He says the luxury and beauty of his friend's surroundings will make her 'shudder' at his decision to go to Iceland, and follows this with the comment that he could go to Italy at any time, but he must go to Iceland, even force himself to, as the word 'driving' suggests. Iceland, he implies, has little to attract visitors, apart from its strangeness and wildness, but it is exactly this that attracts him. Fiona MacCarthy finds that it was the element of strangeness 'that defined, for William Morris, the ultimate experience'.¹³ It is as if art had failed him at this stage in his life, after years of dedicating himself to its pursuit, believing it to be as important to life as food or water. In this intensely personal and paradoxical space, Morris grapples with the juxtaposition of art and reality. (Morris does not mention that Iceland was a popular tourist destination at that time, although itineraries perhaps followed a different path to the one he chose.) He needs to see for himself the 'background', another kind of space, to the sagas he loves so much. The self-deprecating description of himself as a 'cockney and stay-at-home' is undercut by the serious tone implied by his 'sympathy' for the background to the stories, which must have had so much to do with fostering the 'strange imagination' of the saga composers, while at the same time 'stay at home' implies that home is where he is most comfortable.

¹¹ Sara Mills, *Discourse* (London: Routledge, 1997), p. 26.

¹² Mills, *Discourse*, p. 26.

¹³ Fiona MacCarthy, *William Morris: A Life for Our Time* (London: Faber & Faber, 1994), p. 286.

The role of traveller, then, is not one Morris undertakes willingly, but the adventure travel promises is irresistible, even as it troubles the meaning of home for him. Clearly the desire to see the landscape of the sagas is strong enough to suppress any qualms about being a traveller, and is the driving force for Morris' decision to go to Iceland. This points to Morris' heightened sense of how literary imaginings and literal space are important to shaping lives and actions, especially apparent when he reaches Thingvellir, site of the ancient Iceland parliament. Here he experiences:

That thin thread of insight and imagination, which comes so seldom to us, and is such a joy when it does come, did not fail me at this first sight of the greatest marvel and most storied place of Iceland. (p. 168)

His desire to see the background speaks to both space and place as resonating compellingly for Morris. In Iceland he can see and traverse the physical places and spaces of saga action, rather than those conjured up by his own imaginative translations. His need to see the background is subtly suggestive, too, of other Morrisian Selves: firstly, it hints at Morris as craftsman; especially evocative is the process of dye-printing by extraction, the laying on of background and colour, used on his textiles, an intricate process made more so by his organic designs. Secondly, Morris as revivalist of the past in order to make a better present (again through crafts such as weaving, stained glass windows, story telling) speaks to a desire for transformation. Thirdly, knowing the background to a work enhances any reading of it; one can only make deep sense of something when the circumstances of its creation are known.

This reluctant-yet-willing traveller's interest in stories and story-telling was lifelong, Morris apparently having read Scott's *Waverley* novels by the time he was four years old, as well as making up his own stories about 'fairies' and 'knights' as a young and solitary student at Marlborough College.¹⁴ His interest in the Icelandic stories took hold during his university years, but he had read them only in translation until he met Magnusson.¹⁵ Morris' belief in the power of story to transform the social order is apparent in his comment to his friend Charles Eliot Norton in a letter sent in October 1871, in which he wrote that without the sagas the Icelandic peoples 'would have long ago sunk into stolidity and brutality'.¹⁶

¹⁴ Mackail, I, pp. 16-17.

¹⁵ Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), p. 249, and E. P. Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, foreword by Peter Linebaugh (Pontypool: Wales, [1976] repr. 2011), pp. 176-177.

¹⁶ Kelvin, I, p. 152.

He clearly sees literature as a bulwark against such deadening forces. His main purpose for the first journey, then, was to visit the sites described in the sagas, to see where those medieval Icelanders had lived, loved, and died, all the while exercising their ‘strange imagination’.

Morris’ debt to Magnusson for his own and their joint Icelandic translations is worth stressing since both Gary Aho and Andrew Wawn have found that Magnusson’s role in Morris’ Icelandic travels has rarely received the recognition it deserves.¹⁷ Morris and Magnusson had met in 1868 and struck up an immediate friendship, based initially on their common interest in the sagas, and lasting until Morris’ death in 1896. Morris was drawn to the sagas far more than he was to Homer’s works, because the former told the story of the North in ways the Greek could not. Morris began learning Icelandic with Magnusson’s help in order to compose his own versions of the sagas that so affected him. His reshaping reveals Morris’ yearning for self transformation and social change.¹⁸ Magnusson extolled Morris’ knowledge of the sagas and his delight in them, especially the role played by the saga-man, who could be either the hero of the tale, or its narrator.¹⁹ What attracted Morris apparently was:

The directness with which a saga-man would deal with the relations of man to man; the dramatic way in which he arranged the material of his story; his graphic descriptions of the personal appearance of the actors, and of the tumultuous fray of battle; the defiant spirit that as unflinchingly faced wrong-doing as open danger, overwhelming odds, or inevitable death. In fact, he found on every page an echo of his own buoyant, somewhat masterful mind, a marked characteristic of which was a passionate intolerance of all interference with natural right and rational freedom, and especially of any contradictory attitude towards a subject of the reality or truth of which he felt convinced himself.²⁰

¹⁷ Gary Aho, Introduction, *Three Northern Love Stories* (Bristol: Thoemmes Press, 1996), p. v.; For Wawn, Magnusson’s collaboration in the translations is ‘too easily ignored’, *Vikings and Victorians*, p. 249.

¹⁸ See Kathleen Ullal, “‘And my deeds shall be remembered and my name that once was naught’”: Regin’s Role in *Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs*’, *The Journal of William Morris Studies*, 19 (Summer 2012), pp. 63-73.

¹⁹ OED Online definition of saga-man: Old Norse: a narrator of sagas.

²⁰ Eiríkr Magnússon, preface to *The Saga Library: Done into English out of the Icelandic* <https://archive.org/stream/sagalibrarydonei06snor/sagalibrarydonei06snor_djvu.txt>

Magnusson's description captures Morris' energy and innate sense of fairness, as well as his admiration for and identification with the 'defiant spirit' of the saga-man. The Icelandic scholar relates how Morris was not interested in learning Icelandic grammar: 'you be my grammar...I want the literature, I must have the story'.²¹ During their thrice weekly language lessons, Magnusson would write up a literal transcription of a particular saga for Morris, who would then work on his own version of the tale. What struck Magnusson most about Morris' connection with the saga translations was that 'he entered into the spirit of it not with the pre-occupied mind of a foreigner, but with the intuition of an uncommonly wide-awake native'.²² From Magnusson's perspective, Morris appears to have been more Icelandic than an Icelander, in a deeply satisfying self-other relationship.

It is fruitful here to consider the process of writing, and of rewriting, as part of the self eventually portrayed, as well as its material record. The emotions and passions which fill the pages of the *Journals* have an immediacy that suggests little editing was done, other than at the time of writing. The notebooks from 1871, and the diary from 1873, were eventually published by Morris' daughter, May Morris.²³ During the 1871 journey, Morris wrote every day in two notebooks, the first entry being on July 6th and the last on September 7th. In contrast, the 1873 travels are recorded in a diary that is only partially completed, the first entry being on July 24th and the last on August 19th, Morris having written to Jane from Reykjavik on July 18th to let her know they 'start back from here on Sept. 5th'.²⁴ Despite the apparent spontaneity of the published *Journals*, Morris did not finish transcribing the two notebooks from 1871 until just a week prior to heading off on the 1873 trip. The 1873 diary was not edited at all and was published in its original form. I have not yet come across information regarding when he actually *started* transcribing the notebooks. More relevant to my apprehension of Morris' subjectivity is that the transcription came from the pen of a skilled writer, looking back on what was probably the most important journey of his life. Morris gave the fair copy he made of the 1871 notebooks to his friend and confidante, Georgiana Burne-Jones (Georgie), wife of his close friend and fellow artist, Edward Burne-Jones. Most reviewers assume Georgie to be Morris' intended audience for the *Journals* and certainly he mentions in a letter sent in September 1871 to

[accessed 10 August 2014]. The quotation comes from Magnusson's introduction to the saga library he and Morris had begun together, although the volume from which this quotation is taken was published in 1905, after Morris' death. It provides indexes to the works of Snorri Sturlusson.

²¹ Magnusson, Preface to *Saga Library*, p. x.

²² Magnusson, Preface to *Saga Library*, p. xv.

²³ *The Collected Works of William Morris*, 24 vols, Vol 8, (London: Longmans, 1910-1915).

²⁴ Kelvin, I, p. 197.

her sister Louisa that he will be posting the transcribed notebooks to Georgie, and that Louisa is welcome to read them if she cares to do so.²⁵ Initially, then, the work was clearly only for circulation among close friends and Morris was reluctant to publish the notebooks and diary in his lifetime, perhaps because they were simply too painful – or perhaps, as the unfinished and truncated 1873 journal might indicate, he had moved on from his former self, through what he had learned on his first visit to Iceland. To revisit his Icelandic writings, he says, would be ‘like looking at a drawful [sic] of old letters’.²⁶ In the same letter, he writes that he ‘dreads setting to work on it’, worrying about how to respond to their contents. Morris’ words have great significance in the context of translating the self, recognising the intensity of the process but also its immense value.

The 1871 travelling party was made up of Morris, Magnusson, Morris’ old friend Charlie Faulkner and a new acquaintance named W. H. Evans. Magnusson was the most important member of the 1871 party, having not only extensive knowledge of the sagas, but also of every saga site throughout Iceland. Magnusson was equally important from a practical perspective, organizing ponies, guides, accommodation and supplies. As Aho notes, he was physically extremely capable, able to shoe lame pack ponies, as well as help ferry ponies and riders across swollen rivers. He knew where to find decent pasture and camping grounds, and even act as nurse when needed.²⁷ As well, he was known and welcomed everywhere in Iceland, at all levels of society. In contrast, Faulkner went along because, as Morris’ daughter, May, notes, he thought the trip would benefit his health ‘but he went chiefly out of sheer affection for my father, interested in, though not sharing his absorbing passion for the things of the North’.²⁸ Faulkner was not the most robust member of the party, experiencing sea-sickness on the journey out and back, as well as falling ill at one of the camps, causing Morris to question his own integrity because of his angry impatience that Faulkner’s illness might cause a delay in their journey (pp. 59-60). From another perspective, since Faulkner was also ‘store master and paymaster’, refusing at one stage to allow Morris a piece of equipment to replace one he had lost, there may have been an element of incompetence in Morris’ day-to-day handling of practical matters and thus requiring the presence of someone who knew him well and cared enough to be there and compensate for this lack. The fourth member of the party, W. H. Evans, was a recent acquaintance of Morris’, interested in fishing and shooting and happy to go wherever

²⁵ Kelvin, I, p. 149.

²⁶ Kelvin, I, p. 149.

²⁷ Aho, *Three Northern Love Stories*, p. xiii.

²⁸ Kelvin, I, p. 135.

Morris' group went and, of course, he helped with the monetary expenses.²⁹ He also helped with the physical work involved in setting up camp as they moved around the country.

Not surprisingly then, this first trip was designed to follow the saga sites, where heroes such as Gunnar, Grettir, and Njal, lived and died, as well as to Thingvellir, site of the ancient Icelandic parliament. Morris gives a sense of the forward planning and continued movement the trip involved, as well as his mapping of each site as both literary construct and physical space, when he describes the journey in a letter to his friend Charles Eliot Norton one month after the 1871 visit:

We started from Reykjavik and rode east first into the country of the *Njal's Saga*, thence we turned north about the feet of Hecla to the Geysers: then N. still into the great wastes, sleeping a night close by the big lake of Eyne-water (Grettir) & so into Vatusdal. (Waterdale) (In gimnud the Old). Then S.W. through Willowdale to Midfirth and Biarg there, where Grettir was born & buried: thence west still through Ramfirth into Laxdale, and Herdholt there, the scene of my poem;³⁰ we stayed 3 days there, making excursions to Soelingsdale the home of Gudrun, and went S.W. thence to Holy-fell, where she died, and where Snorri the Priest lived before her: this is also headquarters of the *Eyrbiggia Saga*. Thence we went right out to the end of the promontory dominated by the great mountain of Surfells-Jokul: then E. (having turned the corner) with the sea always on our right till we came to Hitdale (Grettir again). Thence to Burgfirth and Whiteriver-side, the scene of many stories but most notably of Gunlaug the Worm-tongue's love and troubles. Thence S. to Reykholt where Snorri the historian lived and was slain: then S. to the wonderful Thing meads – and so S. again to Reykjavik, having been away 6 weeks to the minute. Then on board ship in 3 days and home – and so glad to be there – in 9 weeks in all.³¹

²⁹ Kelvin, I, p. 137.

³⁰ 'The Lovers of Gudrun' in *The Earthly Paradise: A Poem*, 4 vols (London: F. S. Ellis, 1868-70).

³¹ Kelvin, I, p. 153.

One can almost feel Morris' pleasure and relief at being home, after a worthwhile but very difficult journey. He assumes here that his friend knows the sagas he refers to and is likewise not simply interested in them, but rather fully absorbed in the lives of these tenth-century Icelanders. The poem referred to is Morris' 'The Lovers of Gudrun', published as one of the stories in the third volume of his popular *The Earthly Paradise*. Gudrun is only one of the saga characters he translates more empathetically than in the original, Grettir being another case in point, as is the dwarf Regin, who appears in the work Morris considered to be his best, *Sigurd the Volsung and the Fall of the Niblungs* (1876).

In another letter, written long after his Icelandic travels – in September 1883 – to his friend and fellow socialist, the Viennese Andreas Scheu, Morris wrote that the sagas, with their 'delightful freshness and independence of thought ... the air of freedom which breathes through them, their worship of courage (the great virtue of the human race), their utter unconventionality took my heart by storm'³² Here he affirms not only what Magnusson had written about the appeal of the sagas to Morris, but also offers deep insights into his own self-perception, and deep identification with this energising and self-affirming Icelandic other.

One of the most striking aspects of the *Journals* is the need for a dramatic shift in the reader's attention.³³ Morris' precise and measured prose brings the Icelandic landscape vividly to life, step-by-step, moment-by-moment, in a creative strategy the cadences of which call for a slower pace of reading and attention, leaving this reader feeling as if she were walking the same path. This slower pace imprints Morris' observations into his reader's imagination in tandem with Morris' movements across the landscape, especially through his ability to depict scenes that are 'photographed in words'.³⁴ As the travelling party passed Ok glacier, on the way to Thingvellir, Morris writes:

As soon as we were past Ok it grew warmer again: for the wind dropped and a long strip of blue-green opened in the south-west and widened and turned bluer and let the sun out. / It is exciting to see the indigo coloured peaks whose shapes we know rising up one after another over the dull heath: and soon we note the ragged screen of rocks before Ball-Jokul, and that other range that runs south

³² Kelvin, II, p. 229.

³³ I borrow this idea from Stephen Arata, 'On Not Paying Attention' in *Victorian Studies*, 46.2 (Winter 2004), pp. 193-205. Arata here discusses Morris' utopian novel *News from Nowhere*.

³⁴ Mackail, I, p. 254.

from Skjaldbreid, and the whole tumbled sea of peaks that rise between us and the plain of Thingvellir'. (p. 165)

In passages such as these, Morris captures in panoramic detail a scene which I for one would only see in colour – blue, green, and indigo; so, to read of rocks represented as ‘a tumbled sea of peaks’ or a ‘ragged screen’, really does stop this reader in her tracks, and then, to look anew. Wawn’s assessment of the Morrisian grey palette woven throughout the *Journals* has a similar effect, since, instead of a flat grey colour, Morris hones in on: ‘grey’, ‘dark grey’, ‘not very dark grey’, ‘dark ... and dreadful grey’, ‘lightish grey’, ‘dark ashen grey’, ‘light green and grey’, ‘greyer than grey’, ‘light grey-blue’, ‘yellowish grey’, ‘ragged grey’, ‘inky grey’, ‘woeful grey’, ‘spotted grey’, ‘dark grey bordered with white’, ‘heavy grey’, ‘cold grey’, light grey ‘becoming greyer and greyer’, and many other shades’.³⁵ In this veritable rainbow of greys, Wawn’s comment that the ‘stunning primary colours of Iceland flicker across page after page like the northern lights’ is as visually compelling as Morris’ own textual images.³⁶

Also apparent is the extent to which Morris is attuned to Romantic notions of the sublime, particularly the emphasis placed on the imaginative and spontaneous as opposed to the rational and ordered. Romanticism emphasises ‘a deepened appreciation of the beauties of nature’ along with a ‘turning in upon the self and a heightened examination of human personality and its moods, and mental potentialities’.³⁷ From this perspective, it is not hard to imagine that Morris must have felt strangely disoriented on his arrival in Iceland. I say this because the landscape he encountered could not have been more different from the pastoral background which Alessandro Zirroni suggests Morris had established in the Victorian imaginary through his poem ‘The Lovers of Gudrun’.³⁸ Zirroni writes of how in the poem, ‘the landscape described by Morris is taken straight from a pastoral idyll: fresh grass, cows and querulous ewes are reminiscent of a watercolour painted during an Italian Grand Tour’.³⁹ In contrast to this idyllic vision, Morris finds that trekking across the lunar and real (rather than pastoral and fictive) Icelandic landscape is exhausting. At times, the

³⁵ Wawn, *Vikings and Victorians*, p. 254.

³⁶ Wawn, *Vikings and Victorians*, p. 254.

³⁷ Chris Baldick, *The Oxford Dictionary of Literary Terms*, 4th edn (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015), Oxford Reference Online <<http://www.oxfordreference.com.ezproxy.waikato.ac.nz/>> [accessed 10 May 2017] s.v. romanticism.

³⁸ Zirroni, Alessandro, ‘Laxdale as William Morris’ Interior Topography’ in *The Cultural Reconstruction of Places*, ed. by Ástraádur Eysteinnsson (Reykjavik: University of Iceland Press, 2006), pp. 209-221.

³⁹ Zirroni, p. 210.

journey proves mentally intrusive to the extent that his grasp of reality is sometimes shaky. On more than one occasion in the *Journals*' opening pages he describes how some of the small islands they pass by are composed of cliffs that fall straight into the sea, and so have no beaches. Without being too literal, there is clearly a concern with being grounded, with having terra firma underneath his feet. The very idea of bubbling geysirs suddenly erupting under his tent is cause for concern (p. 66), and terms such as 'void', 'gape', and 'shifting', unstable ground, appear often throughout the *Journals*.

As with the subterranean, so too with the visible landscape: at the site of Grettir's saga, Morris finds 'a mass of jagged bare mountains, all beset with clouds, that, drifting away now and then show dreadful inaccessible ravines and closed up valleys with no trace of grass about them among the toothed peaks and rent walls; I think it was the most horrible sight of mountains I had the whole journey long' (p. 77). Morris as craftsman, designer, creator, of his own version of Grettir's Saga, is destabilised by the material world he confronts as traveller, finding the saga hero so much less admirable in this place. Art and reality are brought into a strange juxtaposition, if not collision, and he has no control over either – the uncanny feeling he experiences is the liminal space between the two. This Morrisian self is questioning the power of the relationship between art and reality. The perils of translation – or mistranslation – perhaps came back to haunt Morris here. Having reached this place where the action of Grettir's saga was said to have taken place, Morris feels disorientated by its vast difference from his own portrayal of the tale of the outlaw hero he had till then admired:

It was such a savage dreadful place, that it gave quite a new turn in my mind to the whole story, and transfigured Grettir into an awful and monstrous being, like one of the early giants of the world. (p. 149)

Morris' expectation that he 'knows' what he will find, is similar to the traveller who already 'knows' what to expect when they arrive in a foreign place and so do not 'see' what is before them. Here, though, the impact is different since Morris *does* see differently and is chastened by his revised view of Grettir.

Similar feelings emerge when the group spend a few days at the Geysirs, something Morris had not wanted to do, contemptuous of the fact that this 'beastly place' (p. 67) was the place most tourists to Iceland visited first. Here he wonders whether it is too dangerous to sleep on the ground, in case a new geyser comes spurting up underneath him. At one point, outstripped by his companions and feeling tired and a 'little downhearted with the savagery of the place', he sits down to observe the scene around him: 'the whole dismal

length of the mountain, crowned with glaciers' (p. 56). At this spot, feeling closed in by a wall of rock that rises at right angles to the mountain, with below it the 'flat black plain space of the valley, and all about it every kind of distortion and disruption, and the labyrinth of the furious brimstone-laden Markefleet' (p. 54), he experiences something transcendental when he writes:

Surely it was what I 'came out for to see', yet for the moment I felt cowed, and as if I should never get back again: yet with that came a feeling of exaltation too, and I seemed to understand how people under all disadvantages should find their imaginations kindle amid such scenes. (p 54.)

Here he echoes his earlier, limited, understanding of the power of the imagination to overcome, in the very moment that he experiences as a physical reality, the power of place to fire the imagination. An interior mapping of the self is now made clear through an exterior relation to place. He understands exactly now how hardship offers a way of rising out of whatever problems one may have – the vehicle of transportation away from such hardship being one's 'strange imagination'.

His Romantic engagement with the landscape structures Morris' *Journals*. He is exquisitely alert to his surroundings: waterfalls that are far away in the distance but which yet appear to be very close because of the light, a strange sensation which is made stranger still for Morris because, being so distant, there is no noise from them. Later, when they reach Kaldidalr (Cold-dale) he finds the place depressing, 'dismal' with 'the horrible black mountains of the waste' (p. 79). The landscape helps Morris see himself anew, as he moves around the country, finding the landscape terrifying and somehow uplifting at the same time: 'Just think, though, what a mournful place this is Whatever solace your life is to have here must come out of yourself or these old stories, not over hopeful themselves' (p. 108). It is as if the physical landscape, the landscape in which Morris sees both sagas and their characters as being fused, provides a metaphorical bridge that allows him to find not only solace in his own life, but a new direction for it.

This begs the question of whether it is possible to engage reciprocally with the landscape? The answer must be 'yes' since, as Rose notes: 'the term landscape [has been] increasingly interpreted as a formulation of the dynamic relations between a society or culture and its environment: "the process of human activity in time and area"'.⁴⁰ The

⁴⁰ Gillian Rose, *Feminism and Geography: The Limits of Geographical Knowledge* (Cambridge, UK: Polity, 1993), p. 86.

landscape, then, has agency, and at the very least can *induce* reciprocity, which it clearly does in Morris' case.

So how, then, might the Icelandic landscape have led to Morris' self-translations? The landscape clearly affected him deeply and, as many travellers do, he tried to comprehend the unfamiliar by relating it to the known. Three Corner Mountain, for example, he describes as being a huge church, with spires, while elsewhere some caves he comes across remind him of the entrances to hell as portrayed in thirteenth-century illuminations (p. 53). This very particular way of knowing, and very particular gaze, suggests an emerging concern that he had paid too much homage to art, to the possibility that the saga stories were not quite so noble when he was confronted with the real – rather than imagined – places where they occurred, as with Grettir's saga site. This clearly destabilising realisation raised the spectre of the danger of having too much faith in art, disproportionately to real life.

Why did Morris feel so cowed, 'as if I should never get back again', by a landscape which paradoxically was 'what he came out for to see' (p. 54), and which at the same time proved to be transformative for him? How could the landscape kindle the imagination to the extent that it provides solace even to the disadvantaged, through literature? Mills observes that a purely psychoanalytic approach closes off rather than opens up spaces for deeper understanding.⁴¹ To gain a deeper understanding of space, it needs to be 'stretched', to include everyone involved in the meaning-making of that space. In *Gender and Colonial Space*, to remind ourselves here, Mills asserts that:

In the context of discussing the sublime, it should be remembered that the sublime is not as it appears to be – the confrontation of an individual with an awe-inspiring landscape or environment.⁴²

The sublime, therefore, should be seen not as in isolation from social relations but rather as a space for 'confrontation of social systems and systems of classification'.⁴³ By this, I take Mills to mean that being away from those systems, even temporarily, enables a different or deeper apprehension of those systems, and their effects. For Mills, any

⁴¹ Sara Mills, 'Written on the Landscape: Mary Wollstonecraft's *Letters Written During a Short Residence in Sweden, Norway and Denmark*', in *Romantic Geographies*, ed. by Amanda Gilroy (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2000), (pp. 19-34), p. 19.

⁴² Sara Mills, *Gender and Colonial Space* (Manchester: New York; Manchester University Press, 2005), p. 84.

⁴³ Mills, *Gender and Colonial*, p. 84.

discussion of the sublime must therefore consider the spatial materiality from within which a writer writes because it is ‘the material conditions and relations of power which determine viewing positions and hence spatial relations’.⁴⁴ She also points to the need to consider ‘the multiplicity of factors informing the production of [a] text’.⁴⁵ Morris’ spatial materiality – masculine, rich, cultured, linguistically able – enables him to travel for six weeks, pursuing his interests, while at the same time ensuring his wife and daughters have a home and food and money to survive without him while he’s away. Thus Morris is clearly in a position of some power. However, this power is material rather than emotional. He also subverts this power when he presents himself to Georgie throughout the 1871 account of his travels as bumbling and stumbling across the landscape, losing his pannikin straps, his slippers (pp. 33-37) and fearfully allowing Magnusson to lead his horse across a rushing stream rather than trusting himself to lead it (pp. 51-52). That this is a ‘projected’ rather than real persona is attested to in later years when Morris as campaigner for social justice has no qualms about facing physical threats, such as during the Bloody Sunday attack in Trafalgar Square in October 1887.⁴⁶

In contrast to the bumbling and incompetent self Morris sometimes projects, at other times on his Icelandic travels he presents himself as being on very sure footing. On their journey out to Iceland, for example, the party stopped at Thorshaven in the Faroe Islands. Morris is taken by ‘the ruin of an old medieval church: a most beautiful and poetical place it looked to me, more remote and melancholy than I can say ... as if the old life of the saga-time had gone, and the modern life [had] never reached the place’ (p. 15). Their guide, a local ‘long-nosed cadaverous parson’ told Morris that the church had ‘never been finished, as the Reformation had stopped the building of it’ (p. 15). Morris observes (he says with qualms) that despite this story ‘the church was visibly not later than 1340’, an assertion which met with the parson’s disgust (p. 15). In matters artistic and medieval Morris was a confident connoisseur. His use of poetical also points to space as being constructed creatively, not just materially.

Reading the *Journals* alongside the *Collected Letters* offers enhanced insights into Morris’ journey and some of the fears and challenges to his identity that confronted him as he travelled around Iceland. So too does reading of Morris’ ambivalence and reservations

⁴⁴ Mills, *Gender and Colonial*, p. 88.

⁴⁵ Mills, *Gender and Colonial*, p. 21.

⁴⁶ Edward Palmer Thompson, *William Morris: Romantic to Revolutionary*, foreword by Peter Linebaugh (Pontypool: Wales, [1976] repr. 2011), pp. 488-490.

about letters themselves, as revealed in this one to Aglaia Coronio who, after Georgie, was perhaps his closest female friend. He writes:

Yes, truly letters are very unsatisfactory; they would do very well if one could write them at our best times; but continually one has to sit down to them dull and cold and worried, with the thoughts all slipping away from us, till the sheet is filled up with trivialities – as this will be I fear – only there is something about the look of the writing of anyone one is fond of that is familiar & dear and saves one from utter disappointment, and one feels that the stiff awkward sentences all about nothing or little have still something of a soul in them – Think what an excitement that day was for me when I got letters after 8 weeks in the Iceland journey: lord! How my heart did go thump thump as I galloped up to the post office in Reykjavik!⁴⁷

This rather poignant image brings to the forefront the way in which home is as much an imaginary as physical space, and that it can provide solace no matter how far away from it one may be.

Striking throughout much of the *Journal* for 1871 is the almost two-dimensional way in which Morris describes the people he engages with, in contrast to the attention he lavishes on the landscape. This is less the case when he is dealing with people who are learned, or who show a desire for learning. There is the guide Jon, for example, who carries two volumes of an English dictionary with him during one excursion, in hopes that Magnusson will give him an English lesson while they are in camp. In his efforts to learn English, the same Jon has also learned Danish, a language Morris describes all Icelanders as hating since it was the language of the Danish colonisers. Morris is disparaging about his fellow traveller, Evans, precisely because he prefers to go fishing rather than visit the saga steads. But Morris' own reactions as traveller are, in turn, similarly scrutinised, as a comment made by Evans to Morris' first biographer, Mackail, reveals:

Near our camp [...] there were several deep holes of beautiful, still, blue boiling water: it was in these holes we boiled our fish and fetched our hot water: but after

⁴⁷ Kelvin, I, p. 178.

we had each been several times, Morris on returning from one of the expeditions said it was so uncanny he could not go again.⁴⁸

In describing the same scene and incident himself, Morris finds that the hot water has, contra Evans, ‘horrible blue and green depths’ from which Morris says he goes ‘back to the tent rather glad I am not quite alone in that strange place’ (p. 69). I wonder if this is partly the reason for his never going back to Iceland after 1873, despite as Wawn notes, saying often that he would like to return. This apparent fear of the uncanny in the sense of something that is strange or fearful and yet familiar at the same time – brings into sharper relief not only Morris’ many references to feeling ungrounded, or to voids and crevasses, but also to home, and his desire to be back there.

It is apparent in the conspiratorial tone of the 1871 journal especially; he comments: ‘I am supposed to be writing the journal at night after each day’s travel for clearness sake’ (p. 3), the conspiratorial tone suggesting he is addressing someone he cares about, or with whom he has shared memories. Early on, as he is journeying to Iceland, he relates how he ‘awoke from a dream of the Grange’ [the Burne-Jones’ house in Fulham Road] (p. 19), suggesting that Georgie at this stage in his life represents an idea of home. Later, awed by his first sight of Iceland’s great glaciers, he apprehends Vatnajokull as ‘an ice tract as big as Yorkshire’ (p. 20) and elsewhere he sees his surroundings as being ‘like a down, say the downs at Brighton’ (p. 42); there is certainly an air of reminiscence here, or at least shared experience. Similarly, he says, as if Georgie is right next to him, ‘as you may see on the map’ (p. 121), and later describes Burgfirth to her in detail, ‘in case you are hazy about your saga geography’ (p. 154). In using familiar places to invoke images of what he is seeing for his confidant, Morris at the same time brings Georgie’s presence into the *Journals*. He also exposes his vulnerability in this strange place; he begs forgiveness of her on more than one occasion, such as for his feeling cross when Faulkner is ill and so they are faced with having to halt their journey for a couple of days; or when he hears about the fever and illness taking place in Reykjavik as they are heading home, and is embarrassed that his first thought is for his own safety; it is apparent especially, though, when he expresses a worry more than once, that he may not return, ‘as if I should never get back again’ (p. 54), and later ‘a pang shot through me at how far away I was and shut in’ (p. 150), and feeling ‘a great jump’ (p. 177) once Reykjavik is back in sight.

⁴⁸ Mackail, I, p. 258.

His concern with voids, crevasses, unstable ground, and geysirs that threaten to erupt under him have psychosomatic effects. He sinks into the depths of depression while crossing Kaldidalr, challenged by its jagged, savage, grey and black landscape, but is comforted when the landscape is suddenly enlivened with colour as he spots the purple cranesbill, or white clover, or deep blue gentian, or strips of green vegetation and yellowish moss, the contrast between what seems like endless grey with the sudden eruption of primary hues providing respite for his craftsman self.

As noted earlier, Morris did not finish transcribing the notebooks from the 1871 excursion until just a week or so before he headed off on his second visit. Did he *need* to finish transcribing the notebooks before he could contemplate the second trip? Mackail notes that Morris wrote to Georgie's sister, Louisa, not long after his return in 1871, saying that he would have plenty to tell her of his travels if he saw her:⁴⁹

But I am the worst of letter writers; besides I made a sort of journal which I intend writing out, perhaps may manage to do so to part of it in time to send to Georgie while she is staying with you ... though I believe it will be but a poor specimen of its class. Moreover, I confess to a dread of setting to work on it: it is true that the journey was altogether successful, and that I think I have gained in many ways by it; but it seems such a long way off now, and there is a bit of one's life gone ... and when I look over it I am afraid of having to grin sourly at this bit of enthusiasm, and be puzzled at that bit of high spirits; and note here how I refused to acknowledge a disappointment, and there how I pretended not to be weary – and in short – all the rest of it; something in its way like looking at a drawful [sic] of old letters – if anybody ever did venture on such a bold act, which I doubt.⁵⁰

This letter reveals a deeply affecting dread of confronting the self the diary from his 1871 journey might reveal. That he could tell her about it but could not possibly go back and reread his journals, indicates, firstly, that he was no longer the same self, or had no wish to 'revisit' that self, and secondly, that the written word perhaps was more powerful than the spoken, at least in this instance.

⁴⁹ Mackail, I, p. 273.

⁵⁰ Kelvin, I, p. 149.

Despite his dread at facing his 1871 self and his mixed feelings about returning to Iceland, Morris decides he *must* go again. As he writes to his close friend Aglaia Coronio in January 1873:

I fancy the Iceland voyage will be a necessity to me this year: sometimes I like the idea of it, and sometimes it fills me with dismay: but I think 'tis pretty certain to do me good if I come back safe from it'.⁵¹

Morris is clearly ambivalent here about returning to Iceland, hinting that parts of the earlier trip carried elements of danger, since he is weighing up the good the trip will do him, as long as he can 'come back safe from it'. But there is an emotional fear too, apparent in Morris' use of the term 'dismay', as he vacillates between wanting something and fearing it at the same time. The ambivalence is still apparent a couple of weeks later when on 11 February 1873 he writes to Aglaia again:

Iceland gapes for me still this summer: I grudge very much being away from the two or three people I care for so long as I must be, but if I can only get away in some sort of hope and heart I know it will be the making of me. I am very disappointed that you are not coming back before: I quite looked for you this month.⁵²

As if attempting to shore up support for the visit, Morris writes to his friend, Philip Webb, on 11 July 1873: 'I feel grave enough & not much as if this were a pleasant trip, but hope to get something out of it all; and (though you may think that unreasonable) to come back again at last'.⁵³ Contrasting the different self he presents in this letter to Webb with the one suggested in his letter to Aglaia, shows how he portrays himself differently to male and female correspondents. This is played out in the self he constructs in the *Journals* too. One example in the 1873 *Journal* is apparent in the entry for the second day: 'So to bed after a light supper of chocolate and cold bacon, I somewhat depressed, I suppose by an ungenial ending of a fine day and a cold I have got on me. I concealed it however', (p. 191). The

⁵¹ Kelvin, I, p. 177.

⁵² Kelvin, I, p. 178.

⁵³ Kelvin, I, p. 195.

fact that he feels the need to conceal his depression is evidence of the ways in which notions of ‘masculinities’ were clearly complex, as Elaine Showalter has shown.⁵⁴

The diary Morris kept for the 1873 visit is quite different in tone, detail and attention, to the notebooks from 1871. The 1873 diary was eventually published exactly as Morris had written it, without any alterations. His 1871 notebooks were composed with Georgie in mind and pay a microscopic attention to landscape and emotions. In 1873, the notes are less detailed, almost staccato in places. It is not clear who the audience for the 1873 writings might be, although Morris does appear to be addressing Georgie at various points throughout the diary: he writes ‘... all along we had before us of course that terrible ice-capped wall I have told you of before’ (p. 202), or ‘I note here I am nothing like so anxious about our journey as last time’ (p. 196), the latter remark suggesting a changed subjectivity, brought on perhaps by the fact that on this second journey Morris was responsible for the itinerary as well as for finding suitable campsites – ‘I settled on a smooth holm amidst the Axara for our camp’ (p. 189). He is also more confident, ‘more at home’, since ‘when a horse ran over stock and stone and the two boxes came down with a crash my heart never rose to my mouth’ (pp. 188-189), and yet it would do exactly this when ‘my own heart came into my mouth as we began to wind down that broken stair, into the rift unseen as yet’, a vision which causes the guide, Jon, to begin quoting poetry, surely for Morris a real life ‘sagaman’ in action (p. 189). His mixed emotions are evident in comments such as ‘indeed it [Steppafil] is a beautiful place, if a terrible, as I told you before’ (p. 205), and shortly after, at the saga site, Gunnar’s Howe, he finds it first to be ‘melancholy and drearier than before’ and only after a second visit is he ‘able to answer to the echoes of the beautiful story’ (p. 207).

May Morris writes that the account for 1873 is published directly from the diary, which was ‘unfinished and far more hurried towards the end than was the earlier one’.⁵⁵ This presumably was because Morris had not transcribed or edited it. Perhaps, bearing in mind his letter to Louisa, this may reflect a self more aware of what he might find. May adds that the second journey affected Morris even more closely than the first;

The strangeness of the land was wearing off, his attention did not need to be so concentrated on everything that happened [...] all that first excitement gave place

⁵⁴ Elaine Showalter, *Sexual Anarchy: Gender and Culture at the Fin de Siecle* (New York: Penguin, 1990).

⁵⁵ May Morris, *The Introductions to the Collected Works of William Morris*, pref. by Joseph Riggs Dunlop, 2 vols (New York: Oriole Editions, 1973), I, p. 238.

to an exaltation of spirit peculiarly intense, expressed in some degree by the sort of detachment the diary conveys. [...] it is curious to see how little mention is made of persons. One gets an impression that for the time he had shaken off his human sympathies, that people did not interest him – he had no need for them – and that he had withdrawn into a frame of mind in which he saw the wilderness in its real loneliness, awful, unlovable and remote from human life.⁵⁶

May's words point I think to a 'frame of mind' that is not too far removed from what I see as Morris' apprehension of the danger of art taking over from real life, or of ceding to art an importance it does not deserve if it intrudes too much into real life. Art without love, for example, represents the wilderness, the real loneliness, that such a stance must surely entail. Art can inspire life, can enhance it, but can never be real life. The parallel between rugged landscape and emotional state suggested by May's words, between the wilderness remote from real life, and a self who had shaken of his human sympathies, suggests a self-examination as rugged and daunting psychically as the landscape is physically. John Purkis, however, reads the 1873 diary quite differently. He finds that Morris on this visit 'writes like an active wide-awake man who has realised that time is beginning to run out and is fully engaged in realising the present moment'.⁵⁷ He asserts that 'Iceland has been wrestled with and conquered' with the result that Morris has 'worked out a neurosis, and so his writing changes from a distorted vision of depression to the clear sight of health and normality'.⁵⁸ While I find May Morris more convincing than Purkis in this instance, the fact that both arguments hold suggests the ambivalence Morris felt about the journey, as well as his responses to Iceland, as discussed in this chapter.

The route taken in 1873 took in only some of the saga sites, and rather more of the interior. MacCarthy notes, in her biography, how the second journey took in 'the relatively untraveled tracts of the interior to Dettifoss, the most powerful waterfall in Europe and to Akureyri'.⁵⁹ The 1873 party was made up only of Morris and Faulkner and their two guides, one of them, Jon, having been their guide for part of the 1871 visit. Morris himself says he was 'low in spirits' when he arrived in Iceland on this occasion. He writes to Jane from Reykjavik on 18 July 1873: 'It is all like a kind of dream to me, and my real life seems

⁵⁶ May Morris, *The Introductions*, I, p. 237.

⁵⁷ John Purkis, *The Icelandic Jaunt: A Study of the Expeditions made by William Morris to Iceland in 1871 and 1873* (London: William Morris Society, 1962), p. 24.

⁵⁸ Purkis, p. 27.

⁵⁹ MacCarthy, p. 331.

set aside till it is over', suggesting he expected much from this second visit.⁶⁰ Morris finds the site of Gunnar's Howe, which previously had moved him literally to poetry, has far less effect this time, and he feels nothing for it until he returns for a second visit.

On this trip Morris, as with the earlier one, experienced homesickness to varying degrees, even suffering from depression that he found hard to shake. His low spirits were brought on by severe wind chill – asserts MacCarthy – which she says is now recognised as being the cause of almost instant demoralisation.⁶¹

It is worth considering Morris as traveller, Morris as narrator, and Morris as the author who has the final word in the projection of the self. That he apparently did not wish to publish his Icelandic writings, not even to re-read them, as his letter to Louisa discussed earlier indicates, suggests a changed self. His wish not to publish may have been because his writings revealed much that he found hard enough to face himself, without having to explain, or expose, those findings to others too. He preferred to keep them to himself. Ruth Ellison's observation suggests this may have been the case. She finds that Morris admired in the sagas a Norse aesthetic of 'expressing grief at one remove in verse' and also sees it as significant that 'of the Norse subjects Morris treated in his poetry all but one...are centrally concerned with the rivalry of two men for one woman...as if he were continually trying to work out in literature the problem insoluble in his own life'.⁶²

Rose has useful things to say about the male gaze and what is actually being 'looked for'.⁶³ She states that 'particular understandings of the self assume particular kinds of space'.⁶⁴ In exploring this idea, Rose analyses a painting which 'describes' the perspectives of four male subjects and a single female subject, or object. She points out that not only may the female figure be read as disinterested in the male view of her, but she may also have her own completely different view of her position in the painting. Rose's aim is to show how the 'spatial organisation of the phallogocentric self is integral to the space through which that subject constructs the world'.⁶⁵ Thus, she says, a male viewer would look at the painting and see an illusion of his 'conscious mastery' of the world, since 'both the content

⁶⁰ Kelvin, I, p. 196.

⁶¹ MacCarthy, p. 302.

⁶² R. C. Ellison, 'The Undying Glory of Dreams': *William Morris and the 'Northland of Old'* in *Victorian Poetry* (London: Edward Arnold, 1972), *Stratford-upon-Avon Studies 15*, pp. 139-175, p. 156.

⁶³ Gillian Rose, 'Distance, Surface, Elsewhere: A Feminist Critique of the Space of Phallogocentric Self/Knowledge', *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space*, 13, 6 (1995), pp. 761-781, <<http://envplan.com/epd/editorials/d130761.pdf>>, [accessed 10 December 2014], p. 763.

⁶⁴ Rose, 'Distance, Surface, Elsewhere', p. 763.

⁶⁵ Rose, 'Distance, Surface, Elsewhere', p. 763.

and the organisation of the image reflect his self'. Rose goes on to describe how this sense of self, this sameness between male viewer and the perspective of self offered to him by the painting's content is:

Obscured by the spectator's interpretation of its perspectival space as something which provides a distance on both the world (the landscape) and the self (the figures); the engraving is seen simply as a transparent window on a pre-existing, distanced, coherent, and knowable world.⁶⁶

For Morris, I think such a window does not exist. In the entry for 19 July 1873 he comments on how his spirits rose as they set out 'on the path made more familiar to me by the one intense sight of it than many years might have made another place' (p. 188). These words suggest his alertness to and immersion in the scene before him, as well as an anticipation of its positive impact. In fact, setting out lifts his spirits so much he feels as if there was no gap between the last journey and this (p. 188). From this perspective, it is clear that there is no transparent window for Morris. His world is given coherence by his knowledge of the sagas, his experience of and immersion in the world within which they were created, remote in time and space from his own world.

As indicated earlier, the 1873 diary was never crafted or worked on after Morris' second, and final, visit to Iceland. He did not even begin writing the diary until 24 July 1873, more than a week after the journey began, on 15 July. Perhaps Morris no longer felt it necessary to 'visit' or 'revisit' the diary, as the 1873 journey could not teach him anything that the first, and 'innocent' – in the sense that he did not know what to expect in Iceland, even as he had created an imaginary vision of it – expedition had already done. Towards the end of the 1873 journey he writes poignantly of the struggle he endures in order to complete day to day tasks, despite his exceedingly low spirits:

A most lovely morning when I got up at eight, still depressed and homesick, which depression I had to throw off in getting breakfast, so that by then I was in the saddle I was excited and in good frame for travelling; moreover, there was something eminently touching about the valley and its nearness to the waste that

⁶⁶ Rose, 'Distance, Surface, Elsewhere', p. 763.

gave me that momentary insight into what the whole thing means that blesses us sometimes and is gone again. (p. 225)

The fleeting quality of this insight suggests the shifting nature of subjectivity, as well as the beauty and value of even a momentary apprehension of what the self is, or might be, prompted here by the notions of home implied in the ‘eminently touching’ valley and its ‘nearness to the waste’ (p. 225).

How did the Icelandic others view this Victorian traveller? Morris received warm posthumous praise from a leading Icelandic poet for his literary and material efforts on behalf of Icelandic society, in a poem that ‘voices Icelandic pride at the attention devoted to its medieval literary culture by one of Victorian Britain’s greatest Icelandophiles’.⁶⁷ Wawn says that the poetic obituary, penned by Matthias Jochumsson in 1896, was not published until 1923 and as far as he knows has ‘never been commented on by Morris scholars’. Highlighting this lack of attention is an attempt again to recuperate Morris’ empathetic engagement with non-dominant world views, in ways that draw on the literary in order to see the real from a more egalitarian perspective.

Morris’ skills as poet and author offer paths, then, to his translations of his self as he travels through Iceland. For Frederick Kirchhoff, what he perceives as the *Journals*’ utterly objective focus represents an exercise in ‘anti-autobiography’.⁶⁸ I find Kirchhoff’s notion of ‘anti-autobiography’ compelling. Considered from this angle it could be that Morris’ intense focus on the landscape, and the craft of rewriting or reinscribing that landscape from notebooks to *Journals* allows him in the process to submerge the emotions that threatened to erupt in Iceland. Such occasions include when he was stressed and worried about the arrival – or non-arrival – of letters from home, or when he fears that he may never actually get back home. These suppressed emotions are apparent when considering the *Journals* alongside the 1871 notebooks and 1873 diary, and especially in a letter he sent home to Jane on 18 July in 1871. He writes of ‘not knowing if I’m on my head or my heels’, commenting too on ‘this shabby letter’ and the fact that he is ‘so anxious’ for Jane’s welfare and suffers still from the grief of their parting.⁶⁹ Although on first reading Kirchhoff’s terms ‘anti-autobiography’ and ‘impersonal “objective” mode’ – which he locates in the short notes conveyed in the journal form – seem to elide the emotions churning underneath

⁶⁷ Wawn, ‘William Morris: Translations’, p. 254.

⁶⁸ Frederick Kirchhoff, ‘Travel as Anti-Autobiography: William Morris’s *Icelandic Journals*’, in *Approaches to Victorian Autobiography*, ed. George P. Landow (Athens, Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1979), (pp. 292-310), p. 292.

⁶⁹ Kelvin, I, p. 196.

Morris' writing, this in fact is Kirchhoff's point, evidenced in his observation that 'the *Icelandic Journals* 'show Morris attempting to present deeply personal experience in an "objective" mode'.⁷⁰

As noted in my opening chapter, expressive discourse draws deeply on the emotional and, at its more sophisticated, draws on myths that help define the human condition. For Morris, home was an important if unstable aspect of that condition, and the gaps and voids and unstable terrain that he encounters in Iceland help him to reconfigure at least some elements of his home, and self, through his writing. It is Morris' skill at writing as well as story-telling, and even more so his being attuned to the different 'voices' that made up the world that so fascinated him, which make the *Journals* so revealing of his changing subjectivity. At the end of his Icelandic travels, Morris is a changed self. His journey began in part to escape a personal crisis at home, and ended with a broadening of perspective to encompass wider social concerns. His goal was not only to remake his own life, but also to make the lives of others better too. His empathetic engagement, through his travelling and writing, with the literary artefacts of a people and a culture different to his own help him accomplish this remaking.⁷¹

He writes of how the second journey:

Has deepened the impression I had of Iceland and increased my love for it. The glorious simplicity of the terrible and tragic, but beautiful land, with its well-remembered stories of brave men, killed all querulous feeling in me, and has made all the dear faces of wife and children and love and friends dearer than ever to me. I feel as if a definite space of my life had passed away now I have seen Iceland for the last time.⁷²

⁷⁰ Kirchhoff, 'Travel as Anti-Autobiography', p. 292.

⁷¹ Morris' socialism was inspired by his Icelandic travels, affecting his literary output for the rest of his life. The following contain some of Morris' socialist ideals, as well as indications of his belief that art was as necessary as food for a life worth living. 'Art and the Beauty of the Earth' (1881), available <The William Morris Internet Archive> [accessed 18 December 2016]; 'The Art of the People' (1879), in *William Morris: Selected Writings: Stories in Prose, Stories in Verse, Shorter Poems, Lectures and Essays*, ed. G. D. H. Cole, (London: Nonesuch, 1948), pp. 517-537; 'How I Became a Socialist' (1894) in *News from Nowhere and Other Writings*, ed. Clive Wilmer (London: Penguin, 1993), pp. 377-383. Morris also made numerous contributions to the socialist magazine *Commonweal*, and started the SPAB movement, what he called Anti-scrape, for the preservation of ancient buildings.

⁷² May Morris, *The Introductions*, pp. 237-238.

His first visit inspired (among other works) two poems, 'Iceland First Seen' and 'To the Muse of the North'. Of these, Wawn writes 'Exposure to Iceland renewed Morris' spirits'; he sees in Morris' poetry 'a kind of Victorian equivalent to Egill Skallagrímsson's *Sonatorrek*, an elegy composed on the death of his sons'.⁷³ Wawn compares the overwhelming grief of the Viking poet to Morris' own 'emotional desolation', but believes that the 'solemnity and stoicism which he came to associate with Iceland afforded him real succour'.⁷⁴ In a letter to Aglaia Coronio, shortly after returning from his 1873 journey, Morris wrote:

I feel as if a definite space of my life had passed away now I have seen Iceland for the last time: as I looked up at Charles' Wain tonight all my travel there seemed to come back on me, made solemn and elevated, in one moment, till my heart swelled with the wonder of it: surely I have gained a great deal and it was no idle whim that drew me there, but a true instinct for what I needed.⁷⁵

Through his love for the sagas, and the saga sites he experiences as he traverses the Icelandic landscape, he transforms his subjectivity by immersing himself in those stories and landscape as a means of expunging, or at best, burying his grief. I could not agree more with Kirchhoff's belief that 'Morris' imaginative poetry and prose was not merely a reflection of his other interests or a vehicle for their dissemination: [rather it was] his central mode of self-discovery and expression'.⁷⁶ In translating or remaking his self, as he travels and writes, it is Morris' creativity that offers a welcome metaphorical bridge, a liminal space between self and other. In traversing the alien landscape of Iceland, Morris travels and writes and finds his way home.

⁷³ Wawn, *Vikings*, p. 247.

⁷⁴ Wawn, *Vikings*, p. 247.

⁷⁵ Kelvin, I, p. 198.

⁷⁶ Frederick Kirchhoff, *William Morris* (Boston: Twayne, 1979), Preface, np.

CHAPTER 4

Robert Byron – Road to Reciprocity

My inclusion of *The Road to Oxiana* (1937) in this thesis stems mainly from a wish to explore how Byron's intense focus on art, specifically architecture, as a vital human endeavour, may elicit a deeper understanding of how the mutually constitutive self-other relationship emerges and evolves.¹ *Oxiana* itself reads as a work of art in the making, so sparkling is Byron's prose style, which has been described as 'wear[ing] long words like jewels'.² Byron's search for the roots of Islamic architecture, in which Thubron says Byron saw the beginnings of a Western style, is counterpointed by an inner quest, to know the self.³ Byron was especially interested in the roots of Islamic architecture and *Oxiana* is a record of his search for these roots, as he journeys through Persia and Afghanistan during the months of August 1933 to July 1934. *Oxiana* is included too by virtue of the fact that a number of critics see it as the most important travel book of the 1930s – for some, the best ever.⁴ As Helen Carr observes, Byron's *Oxiana* is 'passionate and urbane, witty and politically acute'.⁵ And further, that, 'his passion is early Islamic architecture, which he journeys to find in Afghanistan, and which gives him enormous pleasure and satisfaction, emotions rarely in evidence in other travel writing at the time'.⁶ Art has ever been a medium between self and other, just as viewing art and architecture has been a longstanding objective of the travel experience. I see in Byron's search for the origin of this Islamic architectural form a deeply important aspect of his self and his view on the world around him. His pursuit of this architectural form is juxtaposed with the creeping Nazism and fascism that threatens constantly in the background.

In what follows, I note first the context and reasons for Byron's making the journey, as well as details of his itinerary and his co-travellers. I then highlight some of Byron's own

¹ Robert Byron, *The Road to Oxiana*, Intro. by Colin Thubron, [London: MacMillan, 1937] (London: Penguin Classics, 2007). Page references will be given parenthetically.

² James Knox, *A Biography of Robert Byron* (London: John Murray, 2003), p. 327.

³ Thubron, Introduction, *Road to Oxiana*, p. 6.

⁴ See: Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Traveling Between the Wars* (New York, Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1980). Fussell's admiration for Byron is apparent in his hagiographic chapter entitled 'Sancta Roberto Ora Pro Nobis' in *Abroad*. See also: Christopher Sykes, *Four Studies in Loyalty* (London: Collins, 1946), p. 86, where Sykes describes *Oxiana* as 'that classic of travel-literature and art history'.

⁵ Helen Carr, 'Modernism and Travel (1880-1940)' in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p. 84.

⁶ Carr, p. 85.

comments regarding the importance of travelling, and writing, to his identity. My interpretation of this rich work is filtered through Pratt's notion of difference as a reciprocal space. I draw too on Said's 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler' and of course *Orientalism*.⁷ Turning then to discussion of *Oxiana* itself, I address my three main questions: What subjectivity does Byron project at the start of his journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces Byron traverses? What changes in subjectivity are evident in Byron's self on his return?

Byron's reason for making the journey was a desire, tellingly expressed as a spatial metaphor, to extend the 'horizons of his experience and proceed with his plan for a preliminary exploration of the major civilisations of the world before he was 30', as his sister Lucy notes.⁸ As James Knox records, Byron was also hoping to mend his relationship with his lover, Desmond Parsons, having arranged to meet him at the beginning of the journey in Venice, although Parsons is not mentioned in *Oxiana*.⁹ The end goal, though, of the whole journey was to see and explore the eleventh-century cylindrical brick tower, the Gumbad-i-Kabus, in Persia. Byron wrote to his mother saying:

Persian *brick* buildings are what excite me – much more than the later tile work. There never was such a use of brick. They have done all the things with it that the Dutch and Germans think so modern and think they have invented – and much more besides.¹⁰

Travelling and writing from a deeply considered perspective represents Byron's preferred way of earning his living, as he informs his mother: 'I am afraid I shall be permanently discontented until I am again embarked on some *work* – not mere money making, but something calling for a real mental effort'.¹¹ Clearly, travelling and writing, and learning from both, were central to Byron's identity as he set out on his expedition.

More prosaic was the need, the economic necessity, to earn his living, which was eased by the publishing firm Macmillan's agreeing to 'advance him £100 for a travel book'.¹²

⁷ Edward Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler' in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001), pp. 386-404; *Orientalism: Western Conceptions of the Orient*, 1978 (Penguin: London, repr. 1995).

⁸ *Robert Byron: Letters Home*, ed. by Lucy Butler (John Murray: London, 1991), p. 188.

⁹ Knox, p. 281.

¹⁰ Butler, p. 198.

¹¹ Butler, p. 188.

¹² Butler, p. 189.

The travel book ultimately became *The Road to Oxiana*. Byron envisioned the work as being both diary and guide-book; as he wrote to publisher Daniel Macmillan, in January 1934, readers could follow either the travel book or the diary, or both, clearly aiming for as large a market as possible.¹³ So we have on the one hand his lively accounts of his physical journey, and on the other his brilliant architectural expositions, which Thubron says ‘are delivered with a descriptive gift which has never been surpassed: passionately attentive, lyrical, yet almost scientifically precise’.¹⁴ Byron’s travel study is divided into five chapters, based on the five rough notebooks that he filled as he travelled.¹⁵ In the finished work, Thubron writes, Byron’s ‘humour spans every genre from quirky playlets to uproarious vignettes and nuggets of gossip. In this irreverent context the scenic descriptions glow with sudden poetry’.¹⁶

Oxiana is composed of details from recalled conversations (real or fictional), official forms and documents, gossip from embassy dinner parties, amusing vignettes – often at Byron’s own expense – acrimonious arguments, physical assault, being arrested, bartering for goods, all of which evoke the madness, the effervescence, the messiness, ugliness, and general unpredictability of real life. In composition, *Oxiana* combines architectural exposition with riveting storytelling, in which self and other are centre stage. Byron depicts his social engagements in a manner that is as structured and colourful as the monuments that engage his attention, having the effect of a textual mosaic of human connections and emotions. The rich and gorgeous hues Byron sees in the Persian built form – aquamarine, café au lait, lapis lazuli, turquoise, tangerine – are perfectly counterbalanced by his absorbing and engaging human portraits. For example, one Governor’s Secretary ‘wrapped in a purple furlined cloak [...] has just called, and has written a long sentence in this diary, for the privilege, as he put it, of using my beautiful fountain pen’ (p. 120). A few paragraphs later, the same Secretary ‘sent a messenger this morning to tell me, after a lot of circumlocution, that he would like my pen as a present. This I resisted’ (p. 121). Later still, the Secretary ‘came to ask for it in person. Seeing I ought to give him something, I sat him down and did his portrait in colours. He drew my attention to the furlined cloak, which I reproduced with exquisite care. This contented him’ (p. 121). While relating such incidents, Byron’s tone is that of a raconteur clearly seeking to amuse and engage his reader – necessary of course if he is to have a successful publication – but at the same time he

¹³ Knox, p 302.

¹⁴ Thubron, p. viii.

¹⁵ Knox, p 356.

¹⁶ Thubron, p. viii.

negotiates here a space of difference in a charming manner, answering the needs of both parties and offending neither.

Contrasting with this last scene is Byron's resistance to authority, which had been present at least since university, and surfaces often throughout *Oxiana*. Byron was scathing about the British presence in India and, having visited Russia, deplored its culture of spying, and was vehemently opposed to the fascism and Nazism that was then beginning to surface in Afghanistan and Persia. *Oxiana* serves on one level as an exposé of the political situations Byron encounters; at such points, his mordant tone is loaded with presentiments about the future of society. His opinion on the contemporary political scene indicates his concern: 'Somebody must trespass on the taboos of modern nationalism, in the interests of human reason. Business can't. Diplomacy won't. It has to be people like us' (p. 223). Carr asserts: 'Byron is sharply aware of the Nazi threat, Britain's dubious scheming in its Middle Eastern intrigues, and the corruption of the puppet regimes the West maintains there in power'.¹⁷ At the same time, though, as Michael Cronin notes, Byron had at his disposal 'a network of British institutions to sustain him on his journey through Iran and Afghanistan, from the English Club and British Legation in Teheran to the British Consulate in Meshed to the English Mission in Shiraz and the British Legation in Kabul'.¹⁸

Accompanying Byron was Christopher Sykes, a Persian-speaking friend who began at Eton the year Byron left, or was 'sent down'.¹⁹ The fact of his being 'sent down' speaks to Byron's strong anti-establishment stance, a defining factor of his life especially during his university years and one which emerges often throughout *Oxiana*. While Byron does not appear to have been working as a spy, Thubron asserts that he 'made notes for military Intelligence'.²⁰ Their itinerary spanned seven countries, Italy, Cyprus, Syria, Iraq, Persia (modern-day Iran), Afghanistan, and India, although most of the journey was spent crisscrossing Persia and Afghanistan. Conditions were arduous and sometimes dangerous. On one occasion, for instance, Byron's car became marooned on the jagged rocks of a river bed, following a flash flood; on another, he had a lucky escape while driving up a narrow

¹⁷ Carr, pp. 84-85.

¹⁸ Michael Cronin, *Across the Lines: Travel, Language, Translation* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2010), p. 54.

¹⁹ In his recollections of the journey Sykes does not record of course that part of his own reason for going was to enable him to spy for the British government. He had held a government position in Teheran in the early 1930s. It is also worth noting that Byron's biographer, Knox, asserts that Sykes committed 'literary immolation' by withdrawing his book *Changed*, just prior to publication, for fear he would never be allowed back in Persia again, because of comments he had made about the then Shah, Imam Reza, p. 278.

²⁰ Thubron, Introduction, p. x. Thubron also notes that Byron would later agree to spy for the British and was killed when his boat was blown up by a German u-boat off Stornoway, p. xii.

pass made slippery by heavy rains, when his car was hit by an out-of-control lorry careering around a corner, and sending ‘us lurching towards a precipice above the valley...this was the end; but no, we stayed on the road...’ (p. 233). Despite the danger, he continues with the laconic remark that he need only ‘deplore that my suitcase, which had been attached to the step, lay crushed by the lorry’s front wheel into a thin blue sandwich, extruding clothes, films, and drawing paper. The insurance, which had lasted eight months, ran out last week’ (p. 233). To some extent this echoes Wollstonecraft’s display of bravado in front of her maid, and is as much an adopted pose as Morris’ own presentation of himself as sometimes fumblingly incompetent.

Byron’s fascination with the cylindrical brick structures began with a visit to India in 1929-1930, giving him the chance to study and admire many of the ‘Moslem monuments’, which Byron thought had ‘a certain air of unreality about them, as though, in many cases, the impressive marble and precious materials in which they were wrought were often hiding an uneasy sense of sham’, to the extent that Byron felt as though ‘he was looking at a picture of a building and not at the building itself’.²¹ From photographs, one building in particular appeared to be ‘one of the great buildings of the world’ and ‘was reputed to stand on the Turcoman Steppe’.²²

As the earlier quotations indicate, Byron clearly views the built form as a reflection of the humans who created it and are therefore able to tell him something about their culture and social order. The built form represents one form of hegemony against which Byron often kicked, especially in his ‘location of the roots of Western art in Byzantium’ which Thubron notes was ‘bold for its time’, but then Byron ‘significantly accorded alien cultures a deep validity of their own’.²³ His investigations led Byron to the theory that ‘a central impulse of Islamic art was to be found elsewhere than in the places he had visited; in Persia’.²⁴ But when he came to study Persian architecture the brick towers were unexpected, says Sykes, prompting Byron’s question, ‘What the hell are they?’.²⁵ *Oxiana* seeks to answer that question, advocating simultaneously for the attractions of cultural diversity.²⁶

²¹ Sykes, p. 84.

²² Sykes, p. 84.

²³ Thubron, p. vi.

²⁴ Sykes, p. 84.

²⁵ Sykes, p. 84.

²⁶ Sykes describes *The Road to Oxiana* as ‘an unerring guide to certain origins, and the character, of Persian architecture’, p. 128.

One element of Byron's concern to answer that question may have been prompted by his earlier travel writings.²⁷ Particularly relevant to *Oxiana* is his *Essay on India*, a report which he published as a twenty-six-year-old, following his visit to the sub-continent in 1929.²⁸ He writes that while he had never had any interest in India, on his return he found himself 'burdened with thoughts that give me no peace and have destroyed the harmony of my former way of life'.²⁹ His essay is prompted by his belief that 'the outcome of the present problem between English and Indians can determine the character of all future civilization'.³⁰ While in India, he finds he experienced 'an exaltation in himself at being "master"' – or self as opposed to other – and a simultaneous discomfort stemming from his realisation that power accrues to him merely because of his whiteness. Byron questions as early as the 1930s the power that accrues to skin colour, specifically, whiteness, which as Dyer and other scholars have found 'is seldom recognised as an explicit identity by those who live it except in relation to those it excludes. It is assumed to be natural and the norm'.³¹

My reading of *Oxiana* focuses on the ways in which Byron challenges prevailing discourses, such as those around the built form and academia, as well as his assertion of the right to freedom of thought, especially in relation to cultural perspectives, which are not only multiple but always in flux. Given the assertions Byron makes, Said's *Orientalism* is relevant, but so too is his 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom: The Potentate and the Traveler', the focus of which is academic freedom.³² Although the two works may seem antithetical – after all, it was the view of the Oriental world established by academic departments in the West that Said critiques in *Orientalism* – the latter work does not necessarily refute the former. Rather, since it was through the academy that the other was cemented in place, it must be through the same academic discourses that it be destabilised. And of course Said's own views changed over time, as all subjectivities do. From this perspective, Said's works allow a more nuanced interpretation of how self and other are imbricated in *Oxiana*. In 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom' Said asserts:

²⁷ These works include *Europe in the Looking Glass* (1926); *The Station* (1928), *The Byzantine Achievement* (1929), *The Birth of Western Painting* (1930), *An Essay on India* (1931), *First Russia, then Tibet* (1933).

²⁸ Robert Byron, *An Essay on India* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, [1931], repr. 2011).

²⁹ Byron, *India*, p. 4.

³⁰ Byron, *India*, p. 4.

³¹ Richard Dyer, *White: Essays on Race and Culture* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 1997), quoted in Weedon, *Identity and Culture: Narratives of Difference and Belonging* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2004), p. 15.

³² Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', pp. 386-404.

The image of traveler depends not on power but on motion, on a willingness to go into different worlds, use different idioms, and understand a variety of disguises, masks, and rhetorics. Travelers must suspend the claim of customary routine in order to live in new rhythms and rituals. Most of all, and most unlike the potentate who must guard only one place and defend its frontier, the traveler *crosses over*, traverses territory, and abandons fixed positions, all the time.³³

[Emphasis in original].

Byron's travelling and writing self aligns in many ways with Said's description of the ideal persona of the traveller, especially in his willingness to enter a world other than his own, and his use of disguise, both in costume and rhetoric, in order to traverse new spaces. In reading *Oxiana* I found Said's notion of an ideal 'model for academic freedom' as being 'the migrant or traveler' very pertinent in comprehending the self-other relationships Byron reveals.³⁴ Said, opposing any conception of the search for knowledge as a 'search for coercion and control over others', proposes instead that it is to our common benefit if we are able to 'regard knowledge as something for which to risk identity'.³⁵ Taking such a risk is one of the most exciting, as well as disturbing, aspects of *Oxiana*, for example, when Byron courts physical danger in order to enter the Gohar Shad Mosque. On the one hand, he gains entry and sees for himself, but on the other hand it is impossible to dislodge the thought that there is a sense of entitlement that allows him to ignore the other's cultural codes.

Reading *Oxiana*, nothing is clearer than just how indeterminate and shape-shifting notions of identity can be. Byron is witty, for instance, when he describes the Doge's palace as looking 'more attractive from a speed-boat than it ever did from a gondola', or of 'taking sanctuary from culture in Harry's bar' (p. 3), clearly disrupting discourses around the Grand Tour, or 'culture' as a commodity. He is empathetic in his noticing of a group of Jewish refugees boarding a ship from Trieste for Palestine who 'stifle their emotions by singing', as the crowd seeing them off follow 'the quay to its brink, where they stood till the ship was on the horizon' (p. 5). The tension implied by following 'the quay to its brink' is quite unbearable, in the context of what was to come. At other times Byron is self-deprecating, such as when he recounts how he fell into a pile of manure, wearing only his night-clothes

³³ Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', p. 404.

³⁴ Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', p. 403.

³⁵ Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', p. 403.

(p. 120). Poking fun at oneself represents a form of power, since, as Youngs notes, ‘authors are in control of the embarrassment they choose to share’ and thus there is, ‘paradoxically, an authority that accrues from the invitation to laugh at oneself’.³⁶ Power rests with the traveller, then, even when they may seem to be representing themselves as the other.

This authority has implications for how one interprets the use of power, or the type of power, in the text. In Byron’s account of his meeting with the Afghan ambassador, for example, he chooses to portray their conversation almost as a skit, providing musical notation, to indicate, as Cronin notes in *Across the Lines*, the different accents.³⁷ At the same time the text is presented in the form of a playscript, setting up the scene between self and other here as spectacle. Cronin finds that ‘the other-directed comedy of language in this instance tends not to subvert but to confirm the linguistic superiority of the traveller’ with Byron’s ‘laconic questions and statements... juxtaposed to the effusive musings of the Afghan diplomat’.³⁸ And this is true, but at the same time elsewhere Byron uses the same musical notations and theatrical conventions to portray a quite different conversation with the same ambassador; here the same techniques are used to mock the Shah’s facile attempts to placate the ambassador, who has called the Shah to account for his violent treatment of citizens. The purpose of humour, or better here, irony, clearly has other intents than accruing power alone. In the scene described a little earlier, in which the Jewish families are bidding goodbye to Europe, Byron’s voice is complex. This is because at first reading he appears to be speaking in a detached tone, despite his empathy. It is not until Byron describes the comic arrival of a dignitary that he relieves a tension of which, Howard Booth notes, the reader has until then been unaware.³⁹

Byron’s dominant subjectivity emerges though his textual homage to the monuments he visits. Aside from earning a living by writing about these Islamic buildings as he travels, the architectural wonders also ground Byron in an enhanced subjectivity. Byron compares himself to an earlier traveller, Diez, whose text book *Churasanische Baudenkmäler* ‘a gigantic quarto’ (p. 95) he has brought with him, saying that: ‘He is not the slave of his journey’s emotions like me’, but does not expand on why (p. 99). I wonder if he means that because Diez discusses the *subject* as artefact or object, his perspective is cerebral rather than, as with Byron, equal parts passionate and cerebral. More likely is that his being a

³⁶ Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 75.

³⁷ Cronin, pp. 45-46.

³⁸ Cronin, p. 46.

³⁹ Howard J. Booth, ‘Making the Case for Cross-Cultural Exchange’, in *Cultural Encounters: European Travel Writing in the 1930s*, eds. Charles Burdett and Derek Duncan (Oxford: Bergahn Books, 2002), (pp. 161-172), p. 169.

‘slave to his emotions’ is a subliminal reflection on the fact that his lover, Desmond Parsons, had been diagnosed with Hodgkin’s disease, just at the time Byron had joined him in Peking in order to finish writing *Oxiana*.⁴⁰

Byron’s appreciation of an art created in a world vastly different to his own, but which works on his imagination to a remarkable degree is made clear in the anxiety conveyed in the statement:

I tremble to think that of the four finest buildings in Persia - the Gumbad-i-Kabus, the small dome-chamber in the Friday Mosque at Isfahan, the Gohar Shad Mosque here [Meshed], and the Mosque of Sheikh Lutfullah at Isfahan, my acquaintance with two was postponed till my last fortnight in the country. (p. 245)

The fear implied in ‘tremble’ is picked up again in his depiction of his visit to the Gohar Shad Mosque in Meshed. Unable to convince Assadi, the Mutavali Bashi (court-appointed custodian) to take them into the shrine, since he was ‘disinclined to take official responsibility for the safety of a foreigner inside the Shrine’, Byron and Sykes manage to gain the help of ‘an amiable young schoolmaster ... who offered to help us for the fun of the thing – for the fun that is of striking a blow for knowledge against the forces of ecclesiastical darkness’ (p. 238). The first visit is made at night time. Byron disguised his whiteness with charcoal and cork and his demeanour ‘with eyes cast down’ so that he looked, he says, like ‘a seedy Oriental’. He claims that ‘I had become a Persian’ (p. 238) and, later, that he had become ‘my lower middle class Persian self’ (p. 244). Here perhaps he is poking fun at himself, but he at the same time betrays the racism and condescension Said identified. Nonetheless, the young schoolmaster is so convinced by the disguise, he greets Byron in Persian. The binary oppositions that intersect in this scene of racial difference include self-other, West-Orient, black-white, home-away, as Byron literally becomes the other in order to see this beautiful building, such binary oppositions apparently dissolving in his disguise. It should be noted, too, that the Persian teacher would not be able to do the same, had he wanted to pose as a white man. Thanks to the disguise, but especially to their guide, their other, the three men – one real Oriental, one posing convincingly as Oriental (Byron), and one posing less convincingly (Sykes) – then pass relatively easily into the ‘great court of the Mosque of Gohar Shad’, where:

⁴⁰ Thubron, p. xi.

Every circumstance of sight, sound, and trespass conspired to swamp the intelligence. The message of a work of art overcame this conspiracy, forcing its way out of the shadows, insisting on structure and proportion, on the impress of superlative quality, and on the intellect behind them [...] Glimpses of arabesques so liquid, so delicately interlaced [...] vaults and friezes alive with calligraphy ... But the sense was larger. An epoch, the Timurids, Gohar Shad herself, and her architect Kavam-ad-Din, ruled the night. (p. 241)

Their safe passage through the courtyards and quadrangle is guaranteed by their guide's being well-known to the 'various guards, porters, and ecclesiastics' they encounter as they leave, with Byron and Sykes following behind the young schoolmaster (pp. 240-241). Byron tries to convince the young man to take them back the next day, and he initially agrees, but pulls out at the last minute. Overcoming his own fear of being caught out in daylight, when his disguise looks far less convincing, Byron the next day walks to the shrine, sweating in the hot sun under the mackintosh that forms part of his disguise. The tension he feels is conveyed through his 'invention [of] a quick Persian-looking trot of short high steps that would prevent me from tripping over uneven paving-stones', as well as in short, staccato sentences, such as: 'The goal grew nearer. There was the main gate. There the little tunnel' (p. 243). He continues:

Everything depended on my pace. I was keyed to it, and by it. If I faltered, I was exposed. [...] I hastened down the dark bazaar, found the dome [...] and was greeted, on coming out into the court, by such a fanfare of colour and light, that I stopped a moment, half blinded. It was if someone had switched on another sun.

The whole quadrangle was a garden of turquoise, pink, dark red, and dark blue, with touches of purple, green, and yellow, planted among paths of plain buff brick. Huge white arabesques whirled above the ivan arches. The ivans themselves hid other gardens, shadier, fritillary-coloured. The great minarets beside the sanctuary, rising from bases encircled with Kufic the size of a boy, were bedizened with a network of jeweled lozenges. The swollen sea-green dome adorned with yellow tendrils appeared between them. At the opposite end glinted

the top of a gold minaret. But in all this variety, this principle of union, the life-spark of the whole blazing apparition, was kindled by two great texts: the one, a frieze of white suls writing powdered over a field of gentian blue along the skyline of the entire quadrangle; the other, a border of the same alphabet in daisy white and yellow on a sapphire field, interlaced with turquoise Kufic along its inner edge. (pp. 243-244)

I include this lengthy quotation here largely because Byron describes the experience as taking place as ‘a vision’ in ‘a matter of seconds’ as he ‘simultaneously [...] began to feel insecure’ (p. 244). He thus indicates the tension inherent in the sort of engagement contained in Shirley Foster and Sara Mills’ explanation of how putting on and wearing the garb of the other is akin, to some extent, to a ‘process of cultural reciprocity which temporarily reverse[s] or at least challenge[s] the stability of the subject/object positionality’.⁴¹ Aware he looks different in his ‘lower middle-class Persian’ garb to the other pilgrims ‘many of them Afghans’, Byron imagines he is being ‘eyed with hawk-like scowls’ as he walks to and fro but then says ‘it was no longer imagination’ as he realises he has been given away by ‘his gaping inquisitiveness’ (p. 244).

In Said’s depiction of the work of the British Orientalist, Edward Lane, a similar circumstance takes place, where Lane wishes to be subsumed within Egyptian culture. Said, though, feels he betrays the help offered him in this endeavour:

Lane there describes his principal informant and friend, Sheikh Ahmed, as companion and as curiosity. Together the two pretend that Lane is a Muslim; yet only after Ahmed conquers his fear, inspired by Lane’s audacious mimicry, can he go through the motions of praying by his side in a mosque.⁴²

The mood portrayed by Byron is somewhat different in that Byron is clearly grateful for the help of the young schoolmaster, but at the same time, Byron’s passion to see the mosque means he underplays the young school-teacher’s anxieties describing him as having ‘funked at the last minute’ (p. 242). This points to the pivotal moment when art comes dangerously close to taking on more importance than real life. There is a sense in *Oxiana* that Byron is

⁴¹ Shirley Foster and Sara Mills, Introduction, *An Anthology of Women's Travel Writing* (New York; Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2002), p. 17.

⁴² Said, *Orientalism*, p. 160.

reaching for answers to questions as to what might it mean to be human in its most admirable form, not as a scientific exercise, but purely for the joy of encountering such works as he is lucky enough to visit. It must also be noted that a less admirable and more troubling perspective on his actions would be that Byron used his privileged position as white, Western male to observe at will, thereby ‘arrogat[ing] the rights of mobility and representation that once accrued to Empire’.⁴³ In disregarding the other’s cultural and religious beliefs, then, Byron’s cross-dressing allies him more closely with such imperial cross dressers as Richard Burton.

Byron, as a traveller then, and as a travel writer, anticipates the concerns Said outlines in relation to the need for academic freedom, tied, both Byron and Said imply, necessarily to a willingness to acknowledge multiple others. What might be entailed in crossing the socially imposed boundaries that prevent the self from recognising the relationship it has with its others? In ‘Orientalism Reconsidered’ Said suggests that these boundaries are those which prevent ‘the production of knowledge [which] best serves communal, as opposed to sectarian ends’ and which are ‘inscribed with the politics, the considerations, the positions and the strategies of power’.⁴⁴ But there is danger inherent in thwarting those inscriptions. In the cross-dressing incident discussed above, Byron’s concern is with physical danger from those watching his movements, watching because his are so clearly out of alignment with their own. He realises he is under surveillance because his appearance and physical movements are foreign, exposing him to scrutiny. From his perspective, the danger was worth it as a means ‘of striking a blow for knowledge against the forces of ecclesiastical darkness’ (p. 238).

In ‘Identity, Authority, and Freedom’, Said recognises that academic freedom is an absolute prerequisite for any reciprocal engagement. Without the freedom to talk, write, think, discuss openly, issues, circumstances, art, that shape the world’s varied and multiple individual identities, we collectively lie hostage to being acted upon rather than having agency, Byron’s central concern. The taboos Byron seeks to trample on I see as lying within the troubled binary of the ‘discrepancy between the heterogeneous reality and the concept of national identity’ that Said identifies.⁴⁵ One example might be having to pretend to be something other to the self in order to experience something new, or having to perform an act of self-censorship since: ‘To asperse a sunset in these days is a political indiscretion; and equally so to praise it, if there happens to be a cement factory in the foreground that

⁴³ Holland and Huggan, p. 5.

⁴⁴ Said, ‘Orientalism Reconsidered’ in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* (London: Granta, 2001) pp. 198-215, p. 200.

⁴⁵ Said, ‘Identity, Authority, and Freedom’, pp. 396-397.

ought to be praised instead' (p. 223). Neatly capturing the scenic and political as dominant subjects of travel writing, Byron's 'people like us', then, must also be travellers who are 'mobile [...] playful [...] although no less serious', who are open to at least respecting other and multiple identities and cultures, but especially to see through their own eyes, rather than accepting unthinkingly what has been filtered through another's. I agree with Booth's assertion that *Oxiana* 'offered a response to the "other" that differed from the intolerant and extreme right-wing views which were common in Europe and from British attitudes to the colonised'.⁴⁶ More than this, *Oxiana* 'celebrated the possibilities for cultural renaissance and personal growth that could result from cross-cultural encounters'.⁴⁷

Paradoxically, while Byron's travelling self dovetails in many ways with Said's ideal traveller, he is only able to be so because he is in a position of power, courtesy of his gender and class, his Etonian education, his access to the power of imperialist relationships and technologies, and his comparative wealth in relation to the local population. This last fact is noted by Byron himself when he writes, while in Beirut and bemoaning the fact that there are no 'real travellers' any more, that 'they consider anyone who can come from London to Syria on business [...] must be rich. If you can come so far without business, you must be very rich' (p. 32).

No reciprocity is apparent though in Byron's description of and reaction to the 'palsied dotard' who attempts to make him purchase a ticket before entering the ruins at Baalbek, Damascus, or the hotel manager with whom he spars verbally in order to bring down the price of his hotel room, demanding to know whether the manager 'owns the ruins', a view of which calls for a higher room charge, (p. 30). While Byron here clearly is arrogant and abrasive, from a different perspective it may be the case that these incidents are less about money than a real belief that the views and the ruins are a common heritage, and thus represent Byron's attempts to thwart such 'authority'. It also reflects the period in which Byron was writing, during which Fussell says the fragmentary and parceling-out actions that are 'implicit in the redrafting of frontiers [...] imply an awareness of reality as disjointed, dissociated, fractured'.⁴⁸ It reflects too a self used to wielding privilege and power, locking horns with an other whose identity is also undergoing great change. At the same time, it is a cultural space, where bartering is expected, and Byron does this too.

There were far more sinister forms of officialdom, and taboos, to contend with, however, than the incidents noted above. While considering 'the indignity of the people's

⁴⁶ Booth, p. 167.

⁴⁷ Booth, p. 167.

⁴⁸ Fussell, p. 36.

clothes' in Persia, thanks to the new sumptuary laws imposed by the then Shah, Byron asks 'Why does the Shah make them wear those hats?' and is warned by Sykes 'never to mention the Shah out loud' (p. 41). He must use a code name:

CS: Call him Mr Smith.

RB: I always call Mussolini Mr. Smith in Italy.

CS: Well, Mr. Brown.

RB: No, that's Stalin's name in Russia.

CS: Mr. Jones then.

RB: Jones is no good either. Hitler has to have it now that Primo de Rivera is dead. And anyhow, I get confused with these ordinary names. We had better call him Marjoribanks, if we want to remember whom we mean. (p. 41)

This satirical tone continues when Byron relates how he and Sykes met up with one of Sykes' friends, a chief of the Bakhtiari tribe, for dinner, but who asked 'for secrecy because intercourse with foreigners is dangerous to one who has inherited the position of tribal khan' (p. 73). Marjoribanks, being frightened of the 'king-making' power of the tribes, 'kept them in unofficial captivity' in villages where they were kept away from their leaders and under the control of the police (p. 74). 'Our guest' says Byron 'spoke with foreboding of the future' resigning himself to having 'patience till the tyrant died' (p. 74). That the Shah is apparently sensitive in turn 'to European comment' means for Byron that 'revenge is easy' but 'the satisfaction of driving a senile megalomaniac into a tantrum is not much compensation for the destruction of one's immediate pleasure in the country' (p. 156). In contrast, however, to 'an age of weapons that deals death from a distance', the Shah's brutal and feared royal boot seems paradoxically more humane. Whether death is dealt from a distance, or delivered up close – by the Shah's boot – Byron makes it clear here how the individual's life is imbricated in and apparently inextricable from the abstract nature of such institutions. Byron delivers a superbly concise and concentrated attack on the methods used by this particular hegemonic structure – 'unofficial captivity' for all those who disagree with the Shah's policies. At the same time, he shows how such actions entrap leaders of those structures into a prison of their own making – the need for a vigilant surveillance which is impossible to sustain, contra Foucault's panopticon. Thus the Bakhtiari tribesman is not 'allowed' to speak with foreigners, and yet that is exactly what

he manages to do; Byron is loath to speak out and mock the Shah's excesses, for fear he will be thrown out of Persia, but that is exactly what he does. As well as displaying how power circulates and permeates social structures mercurially, the scene depicted by Byron attests to the power of that creative act to at least point up how and where hegemonic structures might be destabilised, as well as indicating the reciprocal engagements that may help bring about such change.

Alongside blind authority, brutality and fear, Byron also encounters warm hospitality offered without any expectation of repayment on at least three occasions. Byron relates how the Governor of Firuzabad kindly offered him a horse so that he could ride to Gur, just outside Firuzabad. Byron had refused this offer, choosing instead to walk. At the very moment when Byron is starting to regret his refusal, the Governor arrives with a whole retinue of retainers and soldiers, and a posse of horses. On reaching Byron he says: 'This is for you. Our guests do not walk' (p. 164). This charming act of hospitality is one of the jewels in *Oxiana* in more ways than one. Byron had first come upon the Governor of Firuzabad and his son, a young boy with the 'sort of features that Persian artists love to paint', sitting, tranquilly, without 'book nor pen, nor food nor drink':

There was no furniture in the room. In the middle of the floor stood a brass lamp, casting a cold white blaze over the red carpets and bare white walls. It stood between two pewter bowls, one filled with branches of pink fruit blossom, the other with a posy of big yellow jonquils wrapped round a bunch of violets. By the jonquils sat the Governor, with his legs crossed and his hands folded in his sleeves; by the blossom his young son, whose oval face, black eyes and curving lashes were the ideal beauty of the Persian miniaturist. They had nothing to occupy them, neither book nor pen nor food nor drink. Father and son were lost in the sight and the smell of spring. (p. 163)

Byron's depiction of this scene resembles nothing less than a Persian miniature 'painted' in words. He goes on to note the impeccable manners of father and son, which allowed them to leave their state of poetic contemplation and attend to the 'barbarian' figure he presented. Byron's tone, as he recalls this intimate, domestic moment, captures something beyond the words on the page – a perfect alignment of all that is good and admirable about humanity, through its art, creativity, caring. In this moment, in this quiet, intimate space, self and other are far from being in binary opposition: they merge into one through a

reciprocal acknowledgement of difference, and an engagement that sees this difference as being life-enhancing. Byron reverses, as well, the barbaric/civilised binary so often used to portray the other in Western discourse, when he describes his own presence as:

The irruption of the barbarian, dusty, unshaved, and lurching tired, was a trial of manners to which they rose, not without astonishment, but with a bustle and goodwill that must have hurt their mood of poetic contemplation. While I lowered myself to the floor, creaking and sprawling like a dog in a doll's-house, and feasted my nose in the jonquils, fire was kindled, the samovar relit, and thick red wine poured out; with his own hands the Governor chopped and skewered the meat to make me a kabob, and roasted it over the charcoal embers; then he was dismembering tangerines and sugaring them, for my pudding. In the end he went so far as to offer me his own bed. I explained that mine was coming, and begged the room below to put it in. (p. 163)

The tranquility and harmony of the first scene, allied with the erotically charged depiction of feasting, drinking wine, dismembered and sugared tangerines, is mesmerising and exotic, and the warmth it conveys could not be further removed from the animosity that colours Byron's combative meeting with the archaeologist Herzfeld. This meeting is pivotal in *Oxiana* insofar as it brings together many of Byron's concerns. Herzfeld tries to prevent Byron from taking pictures of Naksh-i-Rustam at Persepolis, in Teheran, whose 'carvings on the cliff ... range over twenty centuries' (p. 179). On the one hand, Herzfeld deserves some sympathy; the plates for the images of his own discoveries had been stolen by his photographer, who then sold them on for profit. On the other hand, Herzfeld had since 'turned Persepolis into his private domain, forbid[ding] anyone to photograph there' (*Oxiana* p. 44). Herzfeld tells Byron that all his photographs are now being sent to the University of Chicago and Byron must apply there for permission. Byron is incensed, arguing:

I quite see that if other people sell pictures of your discoveries, they are stealing money from the excavation fund. But listen to my point of view. I'm not an archaeologist. I've no concern with your discoveries. All I'm interested in here is the architectural forms, not because they are old, but because they are a part of architectural history. The doors for instance. Doors only exist in relation to the

human figure; you can judge these doors and Renaissance doors and Corbusier's doors all by the one same standard. To make that kind of comparison I simply want a few reference pictures of things people have been looking at for 2000 years and have already sketched and photographed hundreds of times. ... You may think you have the legal right to prevent my taking any photographs at all. But you must admit it would be morally indefensible. It would be as if the Parthenon had suddenly become a private villa and the rest of the world been excluded from it. (p. 185)

While intellectual freedom is often associated with the academy, for Byron sometimes the academy is the problem, as evidenced in his bitter comment regarding the 'code of academic malice controlled from Chicago' (p. 187). In this charged and complicated space Byron and Herzfeld are at one and the same time foreigners arguing over another country's artefacts and who has a right to present them, and to whom; from their individual perspectives they are each self in relation to an intruding other. Byron ultimately refers back to the governor who confirms 'that Herzfeld has no right to refuse people permission to photograph the old remains at Persepolis' (p. 175), confirming Byron in his decision to call Herzfeld's bluff on a letter he says he has from the 'Minister of Public Instruction' affirming this right (p. 175). Byron outwits Herzfeld further by refusing his offer of hospitality, taking away from the archaeologist the chance to exert control over Byron's movements. Byron's refusal of Herzfeld's hospitality left the archaeologist 'quite haggard...not at the loss of my company, but at my escaping the shackles of [his] hospitality', (p. 186). The contrast between the charming and altruistic hospitality offered by the governor and that offered by Herzfeld could not be more stark. The governor's actions point to a quite different form of reciprocity, one in which because Byron is a guest, not only is no form of payment required, but rather the hospitality is offered purely because he is a guest. For Byron, the situation with Herzfeld came down to 'a question of principle. I got my pictures, and did a service to travellers in calling Herzfeld's bluff. But it was a pity to lose his conversation.' (p 187).⁴⁹ These words are tinged with regret at what now appears to be a pyrrhic victory: Byron may have won the larger battle – that other travellers will not be prevented from photographing Persepolis – but in the process an opportunity

⁴⁹ Knox reports Byron as having said: 'On the whole, I have lost far more than I gained. H's conversation on ancient subjects wd. have been worth far more to me than a few paltry photos [...] Besides, I was longing to ask him about Firuzabad and Shapur etc', p. 311.

has been lost at the personal level, since he will now be unable to enjoy the scholarly conversations he might have had with Herzfeld.

When Byron ultimately reaches the site of Gumbad-i-Kabus, the goal of the expedition, his description evokes what it means to travel, and see, and know, differently, as he considers the perfect relationship between the vertical and the horizontal, the stasis and mobility, that the tower suggests to him:

A tapering cylinder of café-au-lait brick springs from a round plinth to a pointed grey-green roof, which swallows it up like a candle extinguisher [...] Up the cylinder, between plinth and roof, rush ten triangular buttresses, which cut across two narrow garters of Kufic text, one at the top underneath the cornice, one at the bottom over the slender black entrance. / The bricks are long and thin, and as sharp as when they left the kiln, thus dividing the shadow from the sunshine of each buttress with knife-like precision. As the buttresses recede from the direction of the sun, the shadows extend on to the curving wall of the cylinder between them, so that the stripes of light and shade, varying in width, attain an extraordinary momentum. It is the opposition of this vertical momentum to the lateral embrace of the Kufic rings that gives the building its character unlike anything else in architecture. (p. 230)

Re-reading his own words two years later, Byron writes that ‘superlatives applied by travellers to objects which they have seen, but most people have not, are generally suspect’, but that he still holds ‘the opinion I formed before going to Persia, and confirmed that evening on the steppe: that the Gumbad-i-Kabus ranks with the great buildings of the world’ (p. 231). The power of architectural spaces to convey human history is evident in Byron’s narrative of how the lighthouse (which the tower was) announced for ‘more than a thousand years’ the memory of Kabus ‘and the genius of Persia, to the nomads of the Central Asian sea’ (p. 231). He concludes that the much larger audience the tower has today must ‘wonder how the use of brick, at the beginning of the second millennium after Christ’ produced a ‘more heroic monument, and a happier play of surfaces and ornament than has ever been seen in that material since’ (p. 231).

Byron’s fascination with the Persian brickwork which prompted the expedition was, according to Thubron, ‘shocked into second place’ in Herat and the ‘near-vanished royal

college' built by the Timurid queen, Gohar Shad. Here Byron was instantly 'converted to the beauty of tiled decoration'.⁵⁰ While Knox describes this as Byron being cleared of 'aesthetic prejudice', one could also ascribe to this his challenging of the dominant culture represented in a preference for particular building styles.⁵¹ Byron's predilection for the Byzantine style and his two-volume work on it – took hold during an era when the so-called 'battle of the styles', between the Classical and the Gothic had dominated the visual landscape in England (and in India too) and thus might be read as Byron's challenge to institutional norms that determine what is worth keeping and what is not. One such instance occurred when Byron spoke out on behalf of Lutyens, architect of New Delhi, and against the 'venality' of Baker, whose own building apparently was designed intentionally to obscure the dome of Lutyens' new parliamentary building, the Raj Bhavan. Byron's protests on Lutyens' behalf draws the comment that there is no need to worry about the opinion of 'a pipsqueak like Mr Byron'.⁵² None of these arguments, however, even hint at what the opinions may have been of the Indians then subject to imperial rule, or the effect that rule had on their own visual landscape, to say nothing of the social scape. Byron makes clear in his *Essay on India*, Booth asserts, that the problem stemmed from 'the small-mindedness, racism and bigotry of the English colonial rulers', which Byron put down to 'their lack of travel and sustained engagement with other cultures before they went to India'.⁵³ Booth also states that central to all Byron's work is his concern 'with cross-cultural contacts' in which 'the Western subject has to admit that she or he should open their assumptions to questioning'.⁵⁴

While Byron's privileged status, courtesy of his class and gender and education, might imply an unproblematic sense of identity, his concern to trample on restrictive taboos indicates a refusal to allow those taboos to constrain his identity. Thus the ancient monuments and sites he visits and ponders on represent for him a common heritage, what Said's moving words describe as 'a place to voyage in, owning none of it but at home everywhere in it'.⁵⁵ Far better to be traveller – in the sense of being open to new experiences, new subjectivities – than potentate (untravelling self perhaps) suggests Said, since the latter sits 'surveying all [...] with detachment and mastery [...] with authority',

⁵⁰ Thubron, p. ix. Thubron goes on to note that Byron's 'description of these masterpieces preserves them more richly than any photograph' but that 'is a bitter memorial now' since 'the two finest minarets have fallen, and the others are so shaken by Russian gunfire that their mosaic faience cover the ground in multicoloured pools' (ix).

⁵¹ Knox, p. 314.

⁵² Knox, pp. 233-234

⁵³ Booth, p. 165.

⁵⁴ Booth, p. 165.

⁵⁵ Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', p. 404.

while the traveller, in contrast, is ‘mobile [...] playful [...] although no less serious’.⁵⁶ But is the potentate really ‘surveying all [...] with detachment and mastery [...] with authority’? Potentate as the word is used here confirms Mills’ valuable theory, not just that the master-slave binary is not the only relationship possible, but also how limiting and constricting the role of master is, imposing as it does the need for an endless vigilance in order to retain that position.

In what might be termed the larger cross-cultural spaces he encounters, such as the war between Russia and Afghanistan when the British were supporting the latter, Byron’s tone loses any levity and he becomes scathing in his comments on the failings of his own country. As Youngs notes, ‘Byron holds the British liable for cultural devastation’.⁵⁷ Youngs’ comment relates to an incident that Knox elucidates as having taken place in 1885, in Herat, a town which ‘had acquired strategic importance as the key to Russia’s threatened advance on India’.⁵⁸ Knox reports how:

The Emir of Afghanistan, with British approval, ordered the demolition of all buildings to the north of the town which might provide cover for the enemy. Only Gohar Shad’s mausoleum, and nine minarets, which had originally been attached to particular buildings, were spared. A few years before Robert’s arrival two of the minarets had collapsed in an earthquake. So unknown was the architecture of Herat that the first significant account of its monuments had not been written until a British officer, Major C. E. Yate, serving on the Afghan Boundary Commission, had inspected them in the process of their demolition.⁵⁹

Byron writes of this incident that ‘the most glorious production of Mohammadan architecture in the XVth century, having survived the barbarism of four centuries, was now raised [sic] to the ground under the eyes, and with the approval, of the English Commissioners’ (pp. 98-99). Here, imperialism, closely linked to capitalism, and race, are juxtaposed significantly, making clear just how fragile notions of reciprocity are, and thus how much harder and important it is to engage fruitfully with them. At the very least, such

⁵⁶ Said, ‘Identity, Authority, and Freedom’, p. 404.

⁵⁷ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 74.

⁵⁸ Knox, p. 296.

⁵⁹ Knox, p. 296.

an engagement calls for more than lip service. To repeat here Pratt's description of reciprocity:

Reciprocity has always been capitalism's ideology of itself. In his compelling study of sentimental literature on the colonial frontier, Peter Hulme makes this point, recalling Marcel Mauss's classic analysis of reciprocity in *The Gift*. Mauss argues that in stateless, non-capitalist societies reciprocity functions as the basis for social interaction, even in radically hierarchical formations such as feudalism. In Hulme's words: 'only under the fetishised social relations of capitalism does reciprocity disappear altogether, however loudly its presence is trumpeted'. While doing away with reciprocity as the basis for social interaction, capitalism retains it as one of the stories it tells itself about itself.⁶⁰

In the opening sentences of the last section of *Oxiana*, Byron's thoughts about the journey and the inspiration and impetus for it coalesce in a number of striking contrasts and images. First of all, he feels it is impossible to repay the hospitality he has received, since 'it needs a rich man to offer the same degree of hospitality in England as two clean sheets and a bath represent after a journey in Persia' (p. 223). Here he offers a different perspective on social comforts, of human needs stripped back to basics and tied at the same time to politics, since anyone who attempts to write their thanks for such hospitality will more than likely 'repay it with injury' through some political indiscretion (p. 223). This is followed by intense relief at his:

Escape from a world of stone and mud and sand and everlasting drought [...] into one of wood and leaves and moisture, where the hills were clothed with bushes, the bushes grew into trees, and the trees, as the snow stopped, gathered into a glowing forest bare of trunks whose leafy vaults shut out the sky. The oppression of the plateau was suddenly remitted. It was only now I knew what a penalty had been levied on the spirit by the bare wind-swept deserts, the threatening mountains and the tumbledown villages. The relief was actually physical. Our

⁶⁰ Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* [1992] 2nd edn (London: Routledge, 2008), p. 82.

bodies seemed to undergo a change of gravity, a return to normal buoyancy. (p. 223-224)

The experience of returning home then, is physically affecting for Byron and clearly the journeying into the new and sometimes dangerous has had this effect. His response to the ‘mud and sand and drought’ has a psychosomatic quality similar to that Morris experienced at Kaldidald, as does the strangeness of his own return. Arriving back in England at Paddington Station, he begins to ‘feel dazed, dazed at the prospect of coming to a stop, at the impending collision between eleven months’ momentum and the immobility of a beloved home’ (p.333). His journey had changed him in a number of ways. During and after the journey, he converts from wanting to see only the phallic Persian brick towers to a new and deep appreciation of the exquisitely tiled decoration of such buildings as the Gohar Shad Mosque. His journey leads him to the realisation that he knew far less about Persian art than he thought - as if, he says, he had been a foreigner visiting England who confused Edward I with Edward VII, again linking the idea of travel with gaining new knowledge by moving away from the known into the unknown. As he says to his mother – ‘Darling Mibble’—in a letter written from Meshed on 2 May 1934:

You must remember that I don’t travel merely out of idle curiosity or to have adventures (which I loathe). It is a sort of *need* – a sort of grindstone to temper one’s character and get free of the cloying thoughts of Europe. It is how I develop. I have become quite a different person from what I was when I went away, and the change is for the better.⁶¹

His journey had revealed, too, the extent of the spread of Nazism, heightening his own abhorrence of it, but at the same time the ways in which such malevolent ideologies might be thwarted. Throughout *Oxiana*, Byron refers on several occasions to how Nazi ideology was even then beginning to find its way into Afghanistan, as Byron discovers when he asks the Afghan consul about the Afghan Government’s intention to rebuild the city of Balkh: ‘I asked him what the point was, since Mazar-i-Sherif, the capital of Afghan Turkestan and a flourishing city, is only seventeen miles away’ (p. 237). He is told that Balkh was ‘a historical city, the Home of the Aryan Race’, which prompts the thought ‘this mania must have spread from Germany’ (p. 237), as well as the puzzled comment that ‘until a year ago the Afghans claimed that they themselves were Jews; the lost tribes of Israel’ (p. 238), a

⁶¹ Butler, *Letters*, p. 221.

psychic shift between polar opposites, which suggests the rift Childs and Williams see in the West has its counterpart in the East.

In his biography, Knox describes Byron's reaction to Kristallnacht, 9 November 1938, and to the exhibition 'The Wandering Jew', which opened in the Reichstag in Berlin, at a time when 'many Jews were murdered, thousands were rounded up, and heavy fines were imposed to pay for the damage'.⁶² These sickening actions, which included the pillorying of 'many of Germany's greatest writers, scientists and intellectuals [...] left him in no doubt', says Knox, 'as to the fight ahead'.⁶³ Later the same day after he'd seen the exhibition, Byron wrote of how: 'It confirmed more vividly than any previous experience...that there can be no compromise with these people, that there is not room in the world for them & oneself & that one or the other must go under'.⁶⁴ Discussing his views with his sister, Byron told her that "'the technique of showmanship" reminded him of the anti-God museums in Russia' and on being asked why the German version was worse, his answer was: 'It seemed to me quite legitimate to argue over the Virgin Birth – but [...] an anti-Jewish exhibition is an attack on humanity itself – by which I mean, on that [...] which enables [man] to conceive and apprehend God'.⁶⁵

The self that Byron reveals here was clearly influenced by his travels in *Oxiana*. I find Byron projects throughout much of *Oxiana* the sort of self that Said defines in 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', which resonate on all levels with Pratt's notion of engaging with difference through reciprocity:

Our model for academic freedom should therefore be the migrant or traveler: for if, in the real world outside the academy, we must needs be ourselves and only ourselves, inside the academy we should be able to discover and travel among other selves, other identities, other varieties of the human adventure. But, most essentially, in this joint discovery of self and Other, it is the role of the academy to transform what might be conflict, or contest, or assertion into reconciliation, mutuality, recognition and creative interaction.⁶⁶

⁶² Knox, p. 408.

⁶³ Knox, p. 408.

⁶⁴ Knox, p. 408.

⁶⁵ Knox, p. 408.

⁶⁶ Said, 'Identity, Authority, and Freedom', p. 403.

Said's 'migrant or traveler' synchronises with Pratt's 'committed outsider', a position she says 'many scholars try to occupy as they study and teach literatures, languages and cultures not of their own time or place'.⁶⁷

An equally crucial influence on Byron's subjectivity was his wish to honour his mother. Byron wrote to her at the beginning of his journey, and again in the closing lines of the work, where he offers to her 'the whole record; what I have seen she taught me to see, and will tell me if I have honoured it' (p. 333). Perhaps, then, he means 'people like us' are those who honour all humanity, rather than a single version of it, who honour both self and other, male and female, black and white, Westerner and Oriental, in the process disrupting and subverting those binary distinctions responsible for any singular, hegemonic perspective. In *Oxiana*, he remains true to the self he projected in one of his earlier works of travel: 'I have written throughout, I hope, with respect for the aspirations and convictions of my fellow-men, even when I cannot share them'.⁶⁸

Byron's departing self was shaped by his fascination with early Islamic architecture, coupled with a desire to understand other cultures and other people. The varied, complex, warm, combative, intercultural, and intracultural engagements he encountered while travelling served to affirm the value in that pairing. In challenging this particular hegemony, Byron affirms in *Oxiana* the immeasurable value of the multicultural spaces he lived and thrived in, and at the same time the urgent need for us to find them in our own time.

⁶⁷ Mary Louise Pratt, 'Planetary' in Mary Louise Pratt, Ron G. Manley, and Susan Bassnett, *Intercultural Dialogue*, (London: British Council, 2004), p. 13.

⁶⁸ Robert Byron, *First Russia, then Tibet* [1933] (Harmondsworth, Middlesex: Penguin, 1985), p. 11.

CHAPTER 5

V. S. Naipaul – ‘Seeing the East’

While travelling in 1962 from Athens to Bombay, via Alexandria and Karachi, the writer V. S. Naipaul describes himself as having reacted with ‘hysteria’, ‘brutality’ and ‘fear’ to the changing physiques and demeanours of those around him. On his first ever visit to his ancestral homeland, he describes how:

Another idea of man had defined itself by degrees, a new type of authority and subservience [...] men had been diminished and deformed; they begged and whined. Hysteria had been my reaction, and a brutality dictated by a new awareness of myself as a whole human being and a determination, touched by fear, to remain what I was. It mattered little through whose eyes I was seeing the East; there had as yet been no time for this type of self-assessment.¹

Naipaul’s visceral response here points to a deeply troubled awareness of the relationship between self and other, an anxiety that shapes his *An Area of Darkness*, from which these words are taken.² At the end of his year-long and first ever journey through India, Naipaul was so profoundly moved as to write: ‘It was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two’ (p. 265).

The use of words such as ‘brutality’, ‘hysteria’ and ‘fear’ conveys extremes of emotion that are akin to the polarising opinions Naipaul’s works have generated, despite his being lauded as one of the twentieth-century’s most important writers in English.³ As Fawzia Mustafa says, however, ‘the importance of Naipaul’s achievements does not really lie in the balance of views between champions and detractors, but more vitally in the exemplary space his writings have helped create in the understanding, and making, of late twentieth-

¹ V. S. Naipaul, *An Area of Darkness* [London: Andre Deutsch, 1964], (London: Penguin, 1968), p. 13. Further page references will be given parenthetically.

² *Naipaul, An Area of Darkness*, p. 13.

³ Casey Blanton, *Travel Writing: The Self and the World* (New York: Routledge, 2002), p. xiii, p. 84; Wimal Dissanayake and Carmen Wickramagamage, *Self and Colonial Desire: Travel Writings of V. S. Naipaul, Studies of World Literature in English, 2* (New York: Peter Lang, 1993), p. vii.

century literary history'.⁴ From this I infer Naipaul's work creates a space in which the literary, the historical, and the cultural meet, or collide.

Naipaul himself has declared often that his life has been defined by his wish, since childhood, to be a writer, as Peter Hughes notes: 'ever since he left Trinidad in his teens to come to England, he has been "travelling to write"'.⁵ Youngs elucidates this position: 'Naipaul refers to "writing, the ordering of events and emotions", as having "made things manageable for me, helped me as it were to clear the decks"'.⁶ Naipaul attaches to writing the same power that Belsey asserts when she asks, 'how can we know who we are until we write'. In the process of writing, then, the author's subjectivity is revealed.

This chapter explores the juxtapositions between the deeply affective emotional responses to the self-other relationship that Naipaul articulates throughout *Area*, and his attempts to remain separate from rather than defined within those relationships. These juxtapositions stem from the different spaces he inhabited in Trinidad, England, and India, including those between Brahmin and non-Brahmin, Hindu and Muslim, husband and wife, colonisers and colonised, the clean and the unclean, darkness and light.

Area traces the journey Naipaul made in India between February 1962 and February 1963. One reviewer describes *Area* as the work of a 'displaced person who has a better sense of place than anybody'.⁷ For Blanton, Naipaul's search for order through his writing creates a space within which 'the reader finds meaning where Naipaul finds pain'.⁸ In reading *Area*, it would be fair to say that the reader, too, may sometimes find pain, as Naipaul portrays his experiences in prose that repels and attracts at the same time, as the questions are considered: What subjectivity does Naipaul project at the start of his journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces he discusses in his travel writing? What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning Naipaul, as evidenced in his travel writing?

Naipaul's perspective in *Area* positions him for Rob Nixon more often 'as the disdainful outsider than as the would-be insider'.⁹ This problematic vision shapes *Area* from the beginning, as Naipaul trains a microscopically attentive eye on his fellow humans,

⁴ Fawzia Mustafa, *V. S. Naipaul* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p. 2.

⁵ Peter Hughes, *V. S. Naipaul* (London: Routledge, 1988), p. 10.

⁶ Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 159.

⁷ Reviewer, *The Times* [on back cover of *An Area of Darkness*]. No date, no author.

⁸ Blanton, p. 94.

⁹ Nixon, Rob, *London Calling: V. S. Naipaul, Postcolonial Mandarin* (New York: Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1992) p. 86.

recreating textually what he sees, in apparently detached, often condescending detail. His gaze is that of the Imperial/colonial/Western traveller whom Pratt describes as shaping much colonial writing, even as the colonial world is in a state of collapse. More complexly, Sara Suleri, as Mustafa notes, ‘phrases the question of whether it is possible for a postcolonial writer to exist in the absence of the imperial theme’.¹⁰ One example of this occurs within hours of his arrival in Bombay, at the Customs Office. Here Naipaul, frustrated by the bureaucratic paperwork he is confronted with, rushes to the head of a queue of people waiting to have their documents stamped by the customs officer, Mr Kulkarni. Naipaul is entranced by the manner in which the ‘loose-wristed gesture of indefinable elegance’ of Mr Kulkarni, still looking at his ‘crisp white’ paperwork, is able to cause the group of Sikhs in front of him to split into two lines, creating a gap through which Kulkarni is then able to see the calendar on the wall behind them. The incident encapsulates Naipaul’s ability to see not only the complexities of the relationship between self and other, but also his perspicacity, and powers of expression, evidenced in the choreographic manner in which the above scene is related. As Nixon observes:

Because he attempts to anatomise the cultures he visits (rather than simply embarking on an adventure), there are few travel writers who invoke the discourses of cultural representation in as sustained or earnest a fashion. Conversely, Naipaul has often remarked that he views travel less as a series of interludes in his life than as an autobiographically motivated enactment of his origins and identity.¹¹

The incident encapsulates too the embodied responses provoked by the self-other relationship.

As Patrick French notes, Naipaul’s visit to India was generated by a long-standing desire to visit his ancestral home, his grandfather’s village of Gorakhpur, from where he had departed as an indentured labourer for Trinidad in 1894.¹² The reason for Naipaul’s visit to India is complicated at the outset, then, by the idea of where home might be, encompassing as it does his childhood home in Trinidad – ‘the Indian world of Chaguanas,

¹⁰ Sara Suleri, *The Rhetoric of English India* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), quoted in Mustafa, pp. 12-13.

¹¹ Nixon, pp. 66-67.

¹² Patrick French, *The World Is What It Is: The Authorised Biography of V. S. Naipaul* (London: Pan MacMillan, 2008), p. 6.

with its supporting Hindu networks, [and] the Creole world of Port of Spain',¹³ his literary home, Oxford; and his ancestral home, India, which until now had been 'a featureless area of darkness' (p. 35). In his youth, India lived for him less through people than through the artefacts that his grandfather had brought from India, such as string beds, plaited straw mats, brass vessels, wooden printing blocks, and 'brightly coloured pictures of deities on pink lotus or radiant against Himalayan snow' (p. 29). Naipaul was 17 years old when he won a scholarship to Oxford where he completed his degree. The 'darkness' of his title implies not only unknown geographical territory, but also unexplored areas of the self. Naipaul encapsulates the depth of his knowledge of India in the following image: 'as darkness surrounds a hut at evening, though for a little way around the hut there is still light. The light was the area of my experience, in time and place' (p. 30).

Home in Trinidad was also shaped to some extent by caste, and Naipaul's ambivalence about his Brahmin heritage is worth noting here. In refusing, while still a teenager at high school, to go through with the traditional thread ceremony, to which his cousin did submit, he declares: 'I had no belief; I disliked religious ritual; and I had a sense of the ridiculous' (p. 34).¹⁴ He had 'contracted out' (p. 34). He then relates, however, a classroom science experiment in which 'a beaker and a length of tube were passed from boy to boy, so that we might suck and observe the effects. I let the beaker pass me' (p. 34). Naipaul takes pleasure from the fact that his action is noted by 'a Port of Spain boy, a recognised class tough' who whispered approvingly 'Real Brahmin' (p. 34). Naipaul says that caste in Trinidad 'had no meaning in our day-to-day life' and was observed almost negligibly. In India, however, he finds 'it implied a brutal division of labour; and at its centre, as I had never realised, lay the degradation of the latrine-cleaner' (p. 34). He goes on to say, 'In India I never wished to know what a man's caste was' (p. 34). But clearly it was important enough to be discussed, since Naipaul's brother, Shiva, also a writer, comments: 'our ancestors, when they crossed the black water (*kala pani*) lost caste. Complex purification rituals would have to be performed if they were to be cleansed of their defilement and restored to the fold'.¹⁵ One of Naipaul's hosts in India is sceptical that a 'pukka' Brahmin

¹³ Jeremy Taylor, 'Guerilla: V. S. Naipaul', *Caribbean Beat*, 53 (January/February 2002), <<http://caribbean-beat.com/issue-53/guerilla-vs-naipaul#axzz4VatMWSaU>>, [accessed 29 March 2015]

¹⁴ By this he means the embarrassment of seeing his cousin setting off in his loincloth and stick bundle, embarrassed because he sets off 'as he might have done [...] two thousand years ago—announcing his intention of going to Kasi-Banaras to study', thereby attracting unwelcome attention as he emerges in a Port of Spain street (p. 34).

¹⁵ Shiva Naipaul, *North of South: An African Journey* (London: Andre Deutsch, 1978), p. 73, quoted in John Thieme, 'Searching for a Centre: The Writing of V. S. Naipaul' in *Third World Quarterly*, 9:4 (1 October 1987), p. 1353.

would ever have signed up to manual labour, and perhaps this had also occurred to Naipaul. Once he reaches his ancestral village, he is told by Jussodra, his grandmother, that his grandfather was tricked into travelling to Trinidad because he was under the impression that he was to take up work as a pundit, or teacher, to Indian labourers already working there. Naipaul reveals his antipathy towards, or fear of, a social structure that dictated one's life before one was even born.

Naipaul ultimately defines himself as being forever homeless. He evokes exactly this sense in his poignant words: 'I belong nowhere...I have no home...I am an exile'.¹⁶ These words were spoken in the late 1960s, after his *The Loss of El Dorado* failed to interest the publisher who had commissioned the book.¹⁷ Naipaul goes on to say that he had lived all his adult life in countries where he was a stranger, and had written from the position of stranger ever since, it being the only conceivable position he could see for himself.¹⁸

The state of being in exile, of not belonging, is the focus of Edward Said's article 'Reflections on Exile'. Movingly, Said writes that reflecting on exile involves leaving 'the modest refuge provided by subjectivity and resort[ing] instead to the abstractions of mass politics'.¹⁹ Said writes that: 'Emigrés enjoy an ambiguous status. Technically, an émigré is anyone who emigrates to a new country. Choice in the matter is certainly a possibility'.²⁰ According to Said, 'Much of the exile's life is taken up with compensating for disorienting loss by creating a new world to rule'.²¹ For Naipaul, the possibility of a new world came from the book he planned to write about his journey, for which he received an advance of £500 from his publisher, Andre Deutsch.²² His search for ancestry, for knowledge of the self, is closely aligned, then, with his means of economic survival – his writing – and he declared often that the only profession he had ever followed was as a writer.

Naipaul's inclusion in this thesis stems from his portrayal of a travelling and writing self whose engagement with Indian society I see as vacillating between a detached arrogance and a destabilising insecurity. *Area* allows me to explore the central question of this thesis: how does the relationship between self and other evolve, as they react on, collide with, and influence each other, especially where the self is informed by so many conflicting

¹⁶ Quoted by Taylor, 'Guerilla: V. S. Naipaul'.

¹⁷ French, pp. 264-265.

¹⁸ Taylor, 'Guerilla: V. S. Naipaul'.

¹⁹ Edward Said, 'Reflections on Exile' in *Reflections on Exile and Other Literary and Cultural Essays* [1988] (London: Granta, 2001) pp. 173-186, p. 176.

²⁰ Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 181.

²¹ Said, 'Reflections on Exile', p. 181.

²² French, p. 230.

others. What provokes that vacillation? Blanton, who affords Naipaul a prominent place in her travel anthology *Self and the World*, defining him as one of the great travel writers of the twentieth century, also describes him as one of the most splenetic; indeed, she names the chapter on Naipaul ‘Splenetic Travellers’. I include Naipaul in this thesis because the themes of displacement, loss and exile that are central to so many of his works, as well as to their success, suggest that it is not only exiles who find resonances in his work.

Why *An Area of Darkness* rather than any other of Naipaul’s works? As a work of travel writing, *Area* points to a shift in the genre, encapsulating a period when notions of self and other began to loom large, as the imperial world became increasingly decolonised, or rather, neo-colonised. As Dennis Porter notes, Naipaul was a ‘member of a nonwhite ethnic minority on a colonial island in the era of decolonization’.²³ Despite the specificity of Porter’s statement, it still does not fully account for the shifting identity Naipaul portrays in *Area*. *Area* maps a range of intersecting influences and discourses – English, Indian, Trinidadian, Enlightenment values such as a belief in rationality, linear historical progress, patriarchal hegemonies, and insider and outside status at one and the same time – all surface within its pages.²⁴ In this context, the value of Pratt’s ‘committed outsider’ is clear, surfacing as a catalyst for a new way of seeing, and as a path for finding a way through the dilemma posed by the question: ‘how can tolerance include tolerance for intolerance?’²⁵

In addition to *Area*, Naipaul wrote two more books following further visits to the subcontinent: *India: A Wounded Civilisation* (1976), and *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990). Naipaul’s writing, according to Wimal Dissanayake and Carmen Wickramagamage, ‘involves the carving out of a distinctive discursive space in which the writer can fashion his imperial self – in both senses of the term’.²⁶ As they imply here, Naipaul’s self-fashioning is fraught, caught as he is in the net cast by empire’s literary canon (where he is most at home) and a postcolonial world whose coordinates were only just emerging, and which are still contested more than half a century later. It is not difficult to see why Naipaul is seen as being trapped. He sits somewhere between the two extremes defined by on the one hand, Suleri, and on the other, Nixon’s title ‘Postcolonial Mandarin’.

An important instance of Naipaul’s worrying about how he is perceived by others, at the intersections of race and class, is contained in a letter he sent in September 1956 to his

²³ Dennis Porter, *Haunted Journeys: Desire and Transgression in European Travel Writing* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), p. 310.

²⁴ See further discussion in Dissanayake, and Wickramagamage, pp. 45-57.

²⁵ Mary Louise Pratt, ‘Planetary’, in Mary Louise Pratt, Ron G. Manley, and Susan Bassnett, *Intercultural Dialogue* (London: British Council, 2004), p. 26.

²⁶ Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, p. 113.

wife, Patricia Hale, who was to represent Naipaul at a meeting with the BBC regarding a radio play Naipaul had written. French notes that the play, '*B. Wordsworth*', was 'adapted from a chapter in *Miguel Street*. It told the story of a chancer and poet, Black Wordsworth ("White Wordsworth was my brother. We share one heart") and his relationship with a young boy and his mother'.²⁷ Naipaul, then 24 years old, was at the time en route for Trinidad on his first visit home since having left for Oxford four years earlier. He informed Patricia that:

My name is to be V. S. Naipaul (not Vidia N). I am not to be described as a West Indian; but as a 'Trinidadian of Hindu descent'. I insist on these things.²⁸

Here, in what sounds like an intention to transform an old identity into a new one – as he puts it, 'not Vidia N' anymore – he stresses his relation to Trinidad and his Hindu descent. His wife's response was: 'You've got to be able to get along comfortably with people [...] "A Trinidadian of Hindu Descent". Forgive us darling, but it is rather funny & quite incomprehensible to a listener.'²⁹ In this exchange between husband and wife, Patricia Hale's response signifies a broader social awareness of the ways we might understand the Other (*pace* Said) – in this case, listening, rather than seeing – as well as her more personal concerns as Naipaul's wife. In effect, she is his interlocutor. The BBC represents an extraordinarily influential hegemonic technology through which Naipaul will be projecting himself as other through his writing, and therefore his anxiety that he is represented as accurately as possible is understandable. Crucial here is his concern that he be reflected as *he* sees himself, because that is the only opinion to which he attaches importance. This is especially so as the separate, textual world he creates represents for him an overarching presence, more meaningful than real life

Complicating his desire to be separate is his portrayal of his Trinidadian self. While travelling to Trinidad, in 1956, on his first visit back home from Oxford, he writes to Patricia:

This is one of the most horrible journeys I will ever undertake in my life. I don't mean it purely from the physical point of view. All my conscious life I wanted and strove to get away from the Trinidad atmosphere: to use a horrible word, it is

²⁷ French, p. 175.

²⁸ French, p. 175.

²⁹ French, p. 175.

far too “philistine” and I never was at ease in it. And now I find myself right back again in it – and time has done nothing to lessen my discomfort in it.³⁰

In the same letter, he continues: ‘I wonder if you can imagine the fear and the constriction I feel. [...] It is this physical sense of being lost, of being between two worlds and respected in neither that afflicts me. I can’t write any more. My eyes are hurting too much’.³¹ Once he had returned to England though, after having spent two months in Trinidad, he wrote to his sister Kamla:

I am so glad I came home. I cannot tell you what it has done for me. I no longer feel separated from you. It seems that you are all within my reach and I have no fears at all that we will ever lose touch.³²

These conflicting responses, about family as home, as opposed to Trinidad as home, make it clear how difficult it is to define what home might mean in his works. When he left for India, Naipaul seems to have already been submerging his Trinidadian self, as indicated in his words to Pat, above. His biographer describes him as being, just prior to departing for India: ‘Ambitious, protean, made of smart material, deracinated by the accelerated politics of the end of Empire [and making] a conscious choice to refashion himself’, adding that Naipaul’s colleague, Jan Carew, remembered a conversation in which ‘[Naipaul] told me he was going to become English. [...] He meant he was giving up his West Indian imprimatur and taking on an English one’.³³ Clearly, Naipaul, by then twenty-nine years old, was already feeling torn in more than two pieces, as he set off for his first and long anticipated visit to his ancestral home.

The structure of *Area* signposts changes in Naipaul’s subjectivity as he travels through India, and represents a departure from earlier work. As French notes, Naipaul chose to reinvent himself as English because the ‘vogue for West Indian writing was over’.³⁴ Here, the need to be tied to his writing, rather than to a country, is Naipaul’s concern. Chapter titles are suggestive of the self he seeks. The first for instance, ‘Traveller’s Prelude: A Little Paperwork’, calls to mind not only the bureaucracy of the Mr Kulkarni incident, but also Wordsworth’s *The Prelude* (1798), with its insistence on a new way of writing about and

³⁰ French, p. 167.

³¹ French, p. 167.

³² French, p. 179.

³³ French, p. 214.

³⁴ French, p. 214.

looking at the human experience, especially given the title of Naipaul's radio play. Naipaul's belief that his work belongs in the same canon as Wordsworth's is apparent too, alongside his wish to dissociate himself from the Caribbean genre that is 'not selling'.

There is an intertextual reference in Naipaul's title to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*, although as Mustafa notes Naipaul was interested in 'Conrad's writing rather than colonial history, and his quest [was] canonical rather than historical'.³⁵ At the same time, though, *Area* comments on and judges India's colonial past and present, with Naipaul as judge and jury.

Another chapter, entitled 'Degree', implies education as well as the highly-structured Hindu caste system, within which, as his narrative progresses, Naipaul suggests there is only stasis, never progress. He asserts that even though 'adventure is possible...a knowledge of degree is in the bones and no Indian is far from his origins' (p. 55). Dissanayake and Wickramagamage point to Naipaul's 'horror and anger' as he observes how caste in India operates so differently to the way it functioned in Trinidad, where it was 'largely without any real social function' and served mainly 'to uphold identity and difference'.³⁶ In India, however, it is 'socially debilitating and it obstructs any real social advancement'.³⁷ Thus while the cruelty of the caste system in India offends Naipaul, it does allow him to 'scrutinise closely the role his "vague sense of caste" had played in the evolution of his self-identity'.³⁸

While the first third of the book is full of commentary asserted as the sort of common sense history Belsey describes, it is in fact often disjointed and heavy-going, giving the reader some sense of Naipaul's feeling of dislocation, as he realises India is failing to live up to the promise he had imagined it would yield. His distress at finding himself as just one of the crowd, looking like an insider, suggests that he was ambivalent about whether he belonged, from the start. He does not, however, make apparent just how mediated his travel throughout India is and the extensive hospitality he receives. This seems ironic, given that the feeling of displacement is so strong, even in the face of receiving so much attention and kindness. Nixon's comment is enlightening here:

³⁵ Mustafa, p. 3.

³⁶ Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, p. 47.

³⁷ Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, p. 47.

³⁸ Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, p. 47.

Accumulatively, Naipaul's reliance on normative traditions of discourse – many of them manifesting imperial affinities – calls into question the routine accounts of his embattled extratraditionalism.³⁹

Further, he observes that Naipaul 'invokes the travel genre's semiethnographic and autobiographical styles of cultural description in ways that tend to affirm dominant metropolitan preconceptions about Third World Societies'.⁴⁰

It comes as some relief then, to read the chapter entitled 'A Doll's House on the Dal Lake', set right in the middle of *Area*. At this point in his travels, Naipaul spent three months at the Liward Hotel on the Dal Lake in Kashmir. At times here it is as if a different Naipaul is present, perhaps because he is no longer hosted by Indians in their homes, but rather is staying in a hotel and so engages directly with the owner, Mr Butt, and particularly with Aziz, whom Naipaul employs as his servant. Through Butt and Aziz, Naipaul experiences how power in India works in complex, sometimes invisible, ways. He has, for example, the ear of the local Maharajah, but is unable to make the local tourist officer come to the hotel to assess whether it deserves a season permit. That he is unable to help 'shy Mr Butt' distresses Naipaul, who apparently claims ownership when he refers to '*our* prices', and '*we* began to get guests' (pp. 110-111). He also realises the power of the servant to create dependency where none had existed before, to the extent that he is attuned to Aziz's moods and is manipulated by him on numerous occasions (pp. 114–117). Mustafa notes how the relationship Naipaul depicts is curious in that it 'take[s] on the guise of a lover's discourse' but that it is 'also appropriate since it evokes the nascent sexuality and familial grafting reminiscent of colonial relations'.⁴¹ She sees Naipaul's time in Kashmir differently where, rather than suggesting a different self, Naipaul intends to show that through this experience, he has been able to take stock of India, before he 'launches into a hasty but sweeping assessment of English India and its texts', thereby situating himself in the canon, 'the literary-historical enterprise to which [his] commentaries elect him'.⁴²

Mills describes some of the implications of such a manoeuvre, noting how, in relation to the process of othering: 'personal statements are presented as somehow less Orientalist than generalisations as they emphasise the common humanity of both the author and the

³⁹ Nixon, p. 88.

⁴⁰ Nixon, p. 88.

⁴¹ Mustafa, p. 99.

⁴² Mustafa, p. 99.

people described'.⁴³ She then goes on to ask where that leaves interpretations of Naipaul's *Area* in which he 'strings together highly subjective anecdotes, personal encounters [...] stressing his lack of analysis', concluding that it is 'ironic, therefore, that on linguistic grounds his work would not necessarily be classified as Orientalist, or as part of a residue of colonialism'.⁴⁴ In assessing Naipaul's presentation of 'facts' about India, Belsey's critical approach helps identify how despite the fact that 'differences and distinctions seem obvious, a matter of common sense', these 'cannot be taken for granted'.⁴⁵ In fact the more didactic Naipaul is, the more one feels the need to challenge him, because as Mills asserts, opinions presented as fact make opaque not only their source, but also raises the question of their validity.⁴⁶ A case in point would be Naipaul's apparently only ever seeing Indians who defecate, or who are dirty, or who display any number of negative qualities.

Thompson's definition of othering is useful here, since his explanation of how this term shifts in meaning allows me to articulate a more nuanced argument. He asserts that this term is sometimes confusingly used 'in two slightly different senses':

In a weaker, more general sense, 'othering' simply denotes the process by which the members of one culture identify and highlight the differences between themselves and the members of another culture. In a stronger sense, however, it has come to refer more specifically to the processes and strategies by which one culture depicts another culture as not only different but also inferior to itself. All travel writing must, arguably, engage in an act of othering in the first sense, since every travel account is premised on the assumption that it brings news of people and places that are to some degree unfamiliar and 'other' to the audience. More debatable, however, is whether all travel writing inevitably 'others' other cultures in the second, stronger sense of the term.⁴⁷

⁴³ Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 50.

⁴⁴ Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p. 50.

⁴⁵ Catherine Belsey, *Critical Practice*, 2nd edn [1980, Methuen] (London: New York; Routledge, 2002), pp. 41-42.

⁴⁶ Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p. 50.

⁴⁷ Carl Thompson, *Travel Writing, The New Critical Idiom* (London: Routledge, 2011), pp. 132-133.

Useful as this explanation is, it does not account for the very particular sort of ‘othering’ that Naipaul projects in *Area*, shaped as it is by his Trinidadian self, the self shaped by the Anglophile culture whose literary norms inflect his writing, and finally his Indian ancestry. While Naipaul is writing as a colonial subject, he is distinctly both self and other throughout *Area*, both insider and outsider. He receives help during his travels from many of the Indian others with whom he comes in contact, allowing him to gain ‘real insight’ that he would not normally have experienced, although this crucial mediation is hardly made clear in *Area*.⁴⁸

One of the most extraordinary things about *Area* is that Naipaul never reveals he has a travelling companion, who is actually his wife, until well into the first chapter. Even then, there is merely the brief comment that ‘my companion slumped forward on her chair, hung her head between her knees and fainted’ (p. 21). That is the last we hear of his ‘companion’, in the nine months she accompanied him on his journey.⁴⁹ Travelling companions often are invisible in travel writing, of course, and according to Naipaul, if he had included his companion’s name ‘it would have been quite a different type of book’.⁵⁰ Naipaul here points to his intention of creating or projecting a very particular self. His comment though, is disingenuous, since in letters sent from Madras he tells his sister Mira that he is worried about how to write the book, saying ‘I really don’t know how I am going to set about it; and if I don’t write it, I will have to pay back Deutsch £500. Heigho!’.⁵¹ To his brother, Shiva, he writes that he hadn’t kept any journals.⁵² So how does he recreate the extraordinary visual pictures and embodied responses that fill the pages of *Area*? While the creative power is Naipaul’s, he was surely helped, notes French, by the richly detailed diary that Patricia kept throughout their travels in India. An early entry written in Bombay is packed with detailed reminders of where they went, who with, and what they saw:

Bazaar with Adhil Joosewala [...] Piles of fruit, spice in pyramids and other shapes. Incense. Bangles. Prostitutes in crowded boxes or pens. Some beautiful, some old and grotesque. Some with faces powdered white.⁵³

⁴⁸ French, p. 231.

⁴⁹ French, p. 221. French notes that companion becomes ‘my wife’ in the American edition.

⁵⁰ Quoted in French, p. 221.

⁵¹ French, p. 230.

⁵² French, p. 230.

⁵³ French, p. 221.

Naipaul's apparent detachment from his wife continues throughout the book, yet he confesses elsewhere that he cannot write without Pat's presence.⁵⁴ Her presence relieves him of the tedium of taking notes or keeping a journal; instead French says, 'he drank in the experiences, letting them settle inside him'.⁵⁵ In *London Calling* Nixon notes 'the textual extinction of [Naipaul's] wife, Patricia, whose sustaining companionship in the manorial cottage is held from view', and Naipaul's excuse as being that her 'acknowledged presence would have jeopardised the uninterrupted "I" who is wedded to the Wiltshire landscape and, through it, gains entry into the lineage of romantic English pastoral'.⁵⁶ Patricia's influence on the work, then, was far more important than Naipaul makes obvious in *Area*. She is here akin to what Gergen would describe as a ghostly presence – 'a social ghost' – invisible but still influential in Naipaul's recreation of his visit to India.⁵⁷ This othering of Naipaul's companion needs to be noted, as well as the fact that her positive responses to India do not appear in *Area*. Also worth noting is that the 'othering' in evidence here does not fall under either of the senses described by Thompson.

As Naipaul travels throughout India, the relationship between self and other, in Naipaul's own personally charged literary and historical context, undergoes scrutiny in a range of ways, and at different levels of intensity that are both destabilising and troubling, culminating with Naipaul's feeling that he 'had been broken in two'. Tropes of vision and seeing, of separateness, and of clothing, or unraveled cloth, all serve as vehicles through which Naipaul probes the self-other relationship in microcosm and at large. Cumulatively, these tropes – or the incidents they describe – trace an arc from the collision described at the beginning of this chapter, to Naipaul's feeling at the end of his journey that he has been split in two. For Mustafa, this splitting is exactly what Naipaul wants to achieve:

The crisis that visiting India engendered in him ultimately allowed him to fully rather than partially posit *himself* before positing the subjects and topics of his travel. The internal contradiction of his identity, in other words, gives Naipaul a lease on his career that his despondency in the Caribbean and isolation in England were unable to. Whatever relation to 'truth' Naipaul's persona allows him,

⁵⁴ He says she creates an aura that allows him to write, a compliment which she feels is 'so undeserved', quoted in French, p. 382.

⁵⁵ French, p. 219.

⁵⁶ Nixon, p. 163.

⁵⁷ Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p. 72.

therefore, its historical facets need to function in the discursive space he constructs for himself with such care and calculation from within the seams of the colonial and postcolonial, and their juncture at the metropole.⁵⁸

For me, the crucial word here is ‘ultimately’ – since the agony of the self Naipaul portrays in *Area*, the self that needs darkness in order to survive, does not seem in the moment to be a self who is able to so carefully and consciously construct such a well-defined subjective space. Suleri puts this idea more eloquently when she says of ‘the deeply unsettling narrative of *An Area of Darkness*’ that the work ‘has not yet arrived at the luxury of the past tense’.⁵⁹

An early and intensely destabilising incident for Naipaul occurs just after he has gone into a shop to buy some sunglasses. Having chosen a pair with ‘good British lenses, and a cheap Indian frame’, he is confronted by their flimsiness as they fall apart in his hands as soon as he gets out of the shop (p. 43). At this moment, it occurs to Naipaul that he is just one in a crowd of jostling millions, that he looks no different to anyone else. He is utterly disconcerted to find that no one is looking at him, but in a quite different manner to Wollstonecraft’s curiosity about why no-one was looking at her, since she was a stranger in Scandinavia. Suleri suggests that in the irresolution of this moment Naipaul’s ‘narrative powerfully enacts central problems for any discourse that attempts to address what it means to live in a racial body’.⁶⁰ And yet, Naipaul, for the most part, seems contemptuous and dismissive of virtually all he sees in India. As portrayed by him, his experiences depict the emergence of a new subjectivity, or a newly defined, postcolonial subjectivity as being more nuanced and layered, more disjointed and fractured, than until then it had been. Suleri sees Naipaul as experiencing ‘a moment of postcolonial panic’ brought on by the fact that India has not turned out to be the place he had for so long imagined it to be. It is intensely moving that instead of feeling at home, he notices, or rather ‘obsesses’ over ‘the foreign’ and thus:

An Area of Darkness thus becomes a fascinating record of delusion [...] Naipaul’s obsessive need to apprehend his own hybridity [...] addresses the psychic terror implicit in a sense of cultural malformation: its lack of alignment

⁵⁸ Mustafa, pp. 95-96.

⁵⁹ Suleri, p. 158.

⁶⁰ Suleri, p. 162.

to the worlds that surround it forces the narrative to locate itself in representations of a wasted colonial body.⁶¹

Thus, Naipaul finds no ‘resting place’ for his imagination (as the chapter title has it) when he lands in Bombay and finds he looks exactly like everyone else. Part of this dislocation may have stemmed from the fact that the Naipaul children had been used to keeping to themselves in Trinidad, not only despising those around them, but also feeling as adults that ‘the people ought to have been despised!’, as Naipaul reminds his sister in a letter he sends from England.⁶² His distaste at being so close to his other emerges in such bestialising images as the Anglo-Indian he describes as having a face like a rat (p. 43) or the poor ‘sweepers’ who move ‘crab-like’ between the feet of café patrons (p. 75). Most paradoxically, he portrays himself as an outsider who looks like an insider, taken to be Indian, although he doesn’t feel he is an Indian (p. 43). For Nixon, though, the sunglasses scene is moving, seeing Naipaul’s ‘recognition of his difference’ as being:

One of those redeeming moments in *An Area of Darkness* where Naipaul allows us access to the fundamental contradiction in his identity as a travel writer, as he recognises that the projected pleasure of identifying with a group is diminished by the accompanying threat of anonymity.⁶³

The boundaries of the self are under threat for Naipaul physically too, with his constant references to defecation and filth, perhaps not surprising given his Brahmin background, but also because filth and cleanliness are old and common tropes in travel literature.⁶⁴ Naipaul’s overuse of the term ‘defecate’ represents such a violent personal response and is at the same time intended to test his reader’s ‘eye’, so that by the end of *Area* the word loses its power to shock, becomes almost invisible. Linked to this invisibility is the extreme poverty that Naipaul sees before him:

But wait. Stay six months. The winter will bring fresh visitors. Their talk will also be of poverty; they too will show their anger. You will agree; but deep down there will be annoyance; it will seem to you then, too, that they are seeing only

⁶¹ Suleri, p. 159.

⁶² Quoted in French, p. 84.

⁶³ Nixon, p. 84.

⁶⁴ Mary Douglas, *Purity and Danger: An Analysis of Concepts of Pollution and Taboo* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1966), p. 63. Douglas notes ‘boundaries are always dangerous’.

the obvious; and it will not please you to find your sensibility so accurately parodied...Ten months later, I was to revisit Bombay and wonder at my hysteria.
... It was my eye that had changed. (p. 45)

Retrospectively he wonders why he had felt this emotion, in an address that seems to be directed at an inner self and external other. What had caused his 'eye' to change? In the intervening ten months he had visited Indian villages, and seen even worse poverty, disease and excrement in 'narrow, broken lanes with green slime in the gutters [...] jumble of filth and food and animals and people' even seeing 'the possibility of an evolution downwards' in 'the physique of the people of Andhra' (p. 45). In such scenes he sees 'Nature mocking herself' and is overcome by fear, saying: 'Compassion and pity did not answer; they were refinements of hope. Fear was what I felt. Contempt was what I had to fight against; to give way to that was to abandon the self I had known' (p 45). He wonders whether the hysteria he feels is due to exhaustion, since he is calmed again only when he is able to:

Separate myself from what I saw, to separate the pleasant from the unpleasant,
the whole circular sky ablaze at sunset from the peasants diminished by its glory,
the beauty of brassware and silk from the thin wrists that held them up for display,
the ruins from the child defecating among them, to separate things from men. (p.
45)

In this passage he exoticises and at the same time distances himself from Indian people and Indian scenes, especially from their beauty contrasted with their poverty, drawn to and at the same time repelled by both. 'Contempt was what I had to fight against' seems somewhat disingenuous here, when he finds calm only by metaphorically dispensing with people, and with India. He uses the word 'hysteria' on at least three other occasions in *Area*, to describe threatening emotions brought on by confrontation, for example, with the squalor he sees in Bombay, and with a Sikh passenger on the same train, who may or may not be Naipaul's alter ego. His use of 'hysteria' implies a different meaning from that identified by feminist scholars such as Showalter, who have pointed to the ways in which the term has been used pejoratively of the female gender, as if the female body is itself diseased, in attempts to silence any complaints about the subjectivities the patriarchal order assigns them.⁶⁵ Naipaul uses the term pre-emptively, before he has even set foot in India. I think it is in these

⁶⁵ See Elaine Showalter, *The Female Malady: Women, Madness and English Culture, 1830-1980* (New York: Pantheon, 1985).

moments, because his hysteria is attached to outbursts of anger or fear, that Naipaul most draws empathy from this reader.

Who might the self be that Naipaul is afraid he will abandon? For Suleri it is an exhausted and fatigued self. Suleri argues that ‘in attempting to expose bodies already too exposed, *An Area of Darkness* is forced to contemplate its own extraneousness as a narrative, and its secret arrival at an image of race as the evacuated body’.⁶⁶ She sees Naipaul’s language as ‘being deeply invested in representing the literary as an evacuated site, so that Orientalist narrative is already a ruin before Naipaul as tourist arrives at it’.⁶⁷ From this perspective, then, *An Area of Darkness*, is less a narrative about Naipaul’s finding a home in India, than about Naipaul searching for a home as a writer, worrying that all that could be said – in that format – has already been said.

Elsewhere, Naipaul compares himself with Mahatma Gandhi, introducing him obliquely in the first instance with the words, ‘But here is that observer again’ (p. 71):

He looked at India as no Indian was able to; his vision was direct, and this directness was, and is, revolutionary. He sees exactly what the visitor sees; he does not ignore the obvious. He sees the beggar and the shameless pundits and the filth of Banaras; he sees the atrocious sanitary habits of doctors, lawyers, and journalists. He sees the Indian callousness, the Indian problem, the Indian refusal to see. No Indian attitude escapes him, no Indian problem; he looks down to the roots of the static, decayed society. (p. 73)

He puts Gandhi’s vision, his ‘sharp eye’ down to the fact that he is, like Naipaul, a colonial.

Separating himself from those around him affords Naipaul an escape route. Escape here is to tourist spots such as ‘Marine Drive, Malabar Hill, the lights of the city from Kamala Nehru Park’, where it is possible to ‘ignore the obvious’ of the scenes around him but at the same time to ‘build up a dread of what was not shown’ (p. 45). He is relieved to find that every Indian town has a ‘corner of comparative order and cleanliness in which one could recover and cherish one’s self-respect’ (p. 45). Not surprisingly, it was in the colonial city of New Delhi that Naipaul began to find a bearable self, writing:

⁶⁶ Suleri, p. 163.

⁶⁷ Suleri, p. 164.

In Lutyens' city I required privacy and protection. Only then was I released from the delirium of seeing certain aspects of myself magnified out of recognition. I could sense the elegance of the city, in those colonnades hidden by signboards and straw blinds, in those vistas; the new tower at one end of the tree lined avenue, the old dome at the other. I could sense the 'studious' atmosphere of which people had spoken in Bombay. I could sense its excitement as a new capital city, in the gatherings at the Gymkhana Club on a Sunday morning, the proconsular talk about the abominations of the Congo from former United Nations Officials, in the announcements in the newspapers of 'cultural' entertainments provided by embassies of competing governments: a city to which importance had newly come, and all the new toys of the 'diplomatic'. But to me it was a city in which I could only escape from one darkened room to another, separate from the reality of out of doors, of dust and light and low-caste women in gorgeous saris – gorgeousness in saris being emblematic of lowness – working on building sites. A city doubly unreal, rising out of the plain; acres of seventeenth and eighteenth-century ruins, then the ultra-contemporary exhibition buildings; a city whose emblematic grandeur spoke of a rich and settled hinterland and not of the poor parched land through which we had been travelling for twenty-four hours. (p. 92)

Here, escape from the 'delirium' of the self is conjured up through Naipaul's depiction of the capital city's calm order, privilege, culture, newness, diplomacy, but comes only when he makes his retreat to the darkened rooms, away from the reality of dust, of life, outside. Naipaul finds he was neither English nor Indian and was 'denied the victories of both' (pp. 92-3), highlighting a very uncertain subjectivity. This uncertainty is apparent too in his interaction with a fellow passenger, nominally identified throughout only as 'the Sikh'. The two meet on a train, with Naipaul first enjoying the Sikh's company, but later worrying that the Sikh's personality will overwhelm his own. 'The Sikhs', Naipaul writes, 'are among the few whole men in India, and of all Indians they seemed closest in many ways to the Indians of Trinidad', apparently here comparing himself to the Sikh, although clearly of a different character to those he describes so choreographically in the opening pages) (p. 222). Although clearly interested in his fellow passenger, Naipaul is ambivalent, worrying

that 'my interest was inviting his own, making inevitable a contact I wished to avoid' (p. 222).

Naipaul initially finds his fellow passenger amusing, notwithstanding the fact that he displays disdain and disgust for other passengers in the train. Disgust is reserved especially for the South Indian passengers on the train, whose custom it is to eat with their hands, and whose actions Naipaul exaggerates when he refers to them on three or four occasions as 'the squelchers' (p. 223-224). As Thompson notes, commenting on food or eating habits is often used as a form of othering, and it is especially so here, since rice is described as 'the staple of non-Aryan South' when food serves also to reveal racist sentiments through caste divisions (p. 225). It is reserved too for the non-presence of South Indians in photographs of the Asian Games team (mainly Sikhs), with his fellow passenger asking Naipaul 'how many of these South Indian monkeys' he can find in the photograph (p. 225). Naipaul is uneasy about his fellow passenger, finding himself unable to escape, now that contact had been made (p. 225). Discussing race, religion, scriptures, elections, the Sikh is negative and violent in all his opinions, reflecting political foment in the Indian nation, as well as divisions between groups. He writes that the Sikh 'became more perceptibly bitter as the journey went on, but this answered my own mood' (p. 226). He goes on to list 'shrill railway stations, poor fields, decaying towns, starving cattle, a withered race of men: because his reactions appeared to be like mine it did not occur to me that they were unusual in an Indian' (p. 226). For Naipaul, this violence 'steadied me; he became my irrational self' (p. 226). Here, again, he separates himself from his experience, seeing his irrational self in his Sikh other. They part at the next station, agreeing to meet up again to tour South India.

As Naipaul boards his own train, he changes his third-class ticket for first class, and pulls down all window blinds 'shutting out intruders, all those staring faces and skeletal bodies. I put on no lights' (p. 227). Again, he requires darkness – distancing himself from India and Indians. Meeting up again with the Sikh, Naipaul describes his hospitality, providing food and drink, and also much of his time. He feels that friendship is also being offered, but is embarrassed that he cannot respond in kind, although he says, 'I felt calmer now than I had been on the train, and his moods no longer always answered mine' (p. 227). As they spend time together visiting a temple, the Sikh is increasingly and belligerently racist and misogynistic: 'His rage was like self-torment; he indulged it to the pitch of soliloquy' (p. 228). Naipaul, feeling disaster close in, 'tried to transmit compensating love to every starved man and woman I saw on the road' (p. 230). But he finds himself 'yielding to the rage and contempt of the man beside me', since as the host he had been solicitous and thus says Naipaul 'he placed me under a growing obligation' (p. 228). Hospitality here

is then a loaded term, one which entails obligations that one may not wish for or enjoy. I imagine that it is in such chance encounters as the one between Naipaul and the Sikh that Pratt's notion of planetary has the potential to evolve, but equally is also the sort of space in which the opposite can just as easily take place, raising her concerning question of how to deal tolerantly with intolerance.

Naipaul's evocative vacillation between a self that is drawn in by the Sikh's anger and an other that seeks to compensate for that anger is moving, and his fear is catching. As French notes, the Sikh is based on a real character, named Visky, whom Naipaul seemed 'to identify with [...] in a horrified sort of way'.⁶⁸ Naipaul extrapolates the Sikh's violence to the horrors attendant on the partition of India, a rupture which drew maddened and murderous responses to the other from both sides of the divided subcontinent, in the ambushing of trains and savage massacre of passengers: 'I had seen photographs of the Punjab massacres of 1947 and of the Great Calcutta Killing; I had heard of trains – those Indian trains! – ferrying dead bodies across the border...' (p. 233). Drawn in by the Sikh's bitterness and anger Naipaul finds that:

Love insensibly turned into a self-lacerating hysteria in which I was longing for greater and greater decay, more rags and filth, more bones, men more starved and grotesque, more spectacularly deformed. I wished to extend myself to the limits of human degradation, to take it all in at that moment. For me this was the end, my private failure; even as I wished I knew I would carry the taint of that moment.
(p. 230)

In a horrible confrontation in a restaurant, the Sikh knocks down a fellow guest, a Punjabi, for staring at him, a Sikh. Naipaul is so sickened by the violence he needs to escape from the Sikh's presence. He returns to his hotel. It is here that the insensibility of the killing brought on by partition haunts the uneasy relationship between Naipaul and his fellow passenger, which threatens at any moment to derail. Naipaul's concern with how 'love insensibly turned to a self-lacerating hysteria' parallels the downward spiral of the social order brought on by the partition of India. If the Sikh is his alter ego, then Naipaul here is examining himself as other, and in a compensatory act of reciprocity wants to absorb back into himself all the hatred and bitterness that has surfaced in his narrative. In his wish to absorb these 'limits of human degradation', Naipaul relates his private failure to publicly

⁶⁸ French, pp. 230-231.

traumatic events, whose effects are still present if invisible: 'the city seemed tainted by the threat of violence and self-torment of the sort I had seen' (p. 233).

While sitting at a local sweet-shop the next morning, trying to find some relief, he is introduced to a man who is startled on hearing Naipaul's name. He is reading one of his books and never dreamed of meeting him 'in the bazaar of an out-of-the-way Indian town' (p. 232). He is surprised to find that Naipaul is 'a *baccha*, a boy!' (p. 233). He wants to show his appreciation, and asks Naipaul where he is staying. On returning to his room later that evening, Naipaul finds acrid white smoke billowing out of his room, but there was no fire, only 'great clumps of incense sticks burned, like dying brands everywhere ... on the floor the ash was like bird droppings' but the passage ends with the words 'Flowers were strewn over my bed, and there was a garland on my pillow' (p. 233). This seems to be a cathartic and unexpected moment, in which a strong image of being unable to see through the smoke – of his own first impressions – of India, has prevented him from seeing the contrasting peace, beauty, vibrancy and vitality that surely coexists with the degradation he sees. Tellingly, it is the recognition of his writing self, through the garland of flowers, here in this 'out-of-the-way Indian town' that generates this catharsis.

Some little peace is to be had when he finally reaches his ancestral village, but this peace has less to do with India than with Naipaul's colonial heritage, since there could not have been a starker contrast between this place and the rest of India. Where before he had seen only dust, grime and excrement, here there was 'charm, carved wooden doors and tiled roofs' (p. 253). A small English village is evoked by its 'pastoral aspect' and 'two spires [which] showed white and clean against the dark green foliage'; the lanes were paved and clean, and all in all it 'exceeded anything [he] had expected' (p. 253). The spires were built with money sent by his grandfather from Trinidad. Naipaul speaks admiringly and repeatedly of Brahmins here, the word appearing many times in two short paragraphs: 'Brahmin village, brahmin village'; 'Brahmin women [...] very fearless'; 'it was a village of Dubes and Tiwaris, all brahmins'; 'How in the midst of populousness and dereliction had such beauty been preserved? They were Brahmins [...]'; 'abounds in brahmins' (pp. 253-254). He is disappointed, then, when they 'stopped in front of a small thatched roof', the home of the 'present head of my grandfather's branch of the Dubes [family]' (p. 254). There follows a lengthy story from Jussodra, his grandmother, about how his grandfather made good in his new Caribbean home because he was 'a Banaras-trained pundit [...] rare in Trinidad' and also extremely entrepreneurial (p. 255). Clearly, although Naipaul has much earlier declared his hatred of the caste system, it still holds significance for him in this context.

Photographs were brought out – and their effect is destabilising since the sepia images are not only old but also completely forgotten. They disturb Naipaul’s ‘sense of place and time’, here in this ‘vast land where I was anchored to no familiar points and could so easily be lost’ (p. 256). Paradoxically, here in India, in this most English of villages, the purple stamp of the Trinidadian photographer holds more significance for him than the images pictured. Of his visit to his village he declares that he had ‘come to them reluctantly. I had expected little, and I had been afraid. The ugliness is all mine’ (p. 256). His journey to the village ends badly: ‘too much had been assumed; I felt overwhelmed; I wished to extricate myself at once’ (p. 262). When a young boy runs after the car to try and get a lift into town, the IAS officer and guide (again, un-named, despite the fact he was Naipaul’s host) asks Naipaul ‘shall we take him on?’ to which Naipaul replies brutally, ‘no, let the idler walk’ (p. 261). His visit ends with another image of distorted vision: ‘The headlamps of the jeep shot two separate beams into the day’s slowly settling dust which, made turbulent again by our passage, blotted out the scattered lights of the village. [...] So it ended, in futility and impatience, a gratuitous act of cruelty, self-reproach and flight’ (p. 263). For Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, if Naipaul’s experience of India ‘does not adequately throw light on the area of darkness that India had always been in his imagination, it at least forces upon him the awareness that he cannot look to India anymore to provide a measure of his self-identity’.⁶⁹ Furthermore, ‘through his writing Naipaul seeks to create a new subjectivity – one that need not look to any one culture or society for points of self-reference or validation’.⁷⁰ The double vision implied in the headlamps, and the village blotted out by movement, by travel, clarifies for Naipaul that his ancestral village is not home, a conclusion arrived at through his writing.

In the final chapter, entitled ‘Flight’, Naipaul receives a gift of some suit-cloth from an architect he had met (pp. 264-266). Before turning to this incident, it is worth noting that within twenty-four hours of leaving India, Naipaul writes it ‘was a journey that ought not to have been made; it had broken my life in two’ (p. 265). He wrote to an Indian friend who wanted to hear, once he’d got back to England, ‘your freshest impressions’ (p. 265). Naipaul says he has forgotten what he wrote, recalling only that: ‘It was violent and incoherent; but, like everything I wrote about India, it exorcised nothing’ (p. 265).

The England he comes up against in India is different to the England he knew in Trinidad and different again to the England he knew in England.

⁶⁹ Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, p. 46.

⁷⁰ Dissanayake and Wickramagamage, p. 46.

This England had disturbed me from the first, when, sitting in the launch, I had seen the English names on the cranes of the Bombay docks. It was partly the disturbance we feel – the abrupt moment of unreality in which fleetingly we lose our powers of assessment – at the confirmation of a bizarre but well-established fact. It was also for me a little more. This confirmation laid bare a small area of self-deception which, below knowledge and self-knowledge, had survived in that part of my mind which held as a possibility the existence of the white Himalayan cones against a cold blue sky, as in the religious pictures in my grandmother's house. For in the India of my childhood, the land which in my imagination was an extension, separate from the alienness by which we ourselves were surrounded, of my grandmother's house, there was no alien presence. How could such a thing be conceived? (p. 187)

The sense of displacement he feels here is painful in the extreme, to the extent that he can no longer think clearly. The India of his imagination was home, which helped separate him from the alienness by which he and his family were surrounded in Trinidad, has been utterly supplanted by real India, which is now too alien for him. And England, or rather the English language, which provides him with his strongest self, is destabilised by the English words on the Bombay docks. His moment of greatest clarity in India is his most painful, his most unreal; when self-deception will no longer serve, forcing him to confront the intersection of general knowledge and below that self-knowledge. Perhaps the fact that he is drawing in the first place on Pat's impressions of India gives him the sort of distance he needs to be able to come to terms with all he has experienced, and the sense of displacement that his tri-continental history has given him. Pat is an other who is to be desired, rather than rejected.

The notion of home for Naipaul then finally is one of flux, spanning continents and islands, social codes, and historical contexts. The India he had imagined in childhood did not exist. His bewilderment is evident in the comment 'How could such a thing be conceived'? There is real pain apparent in his bewilderment at how his longstanding childhood memories of his grandmother's picture of the Himalayas – held close in his imagination but fated to be 'lost' to him (p. 167) – are dissipated by his experience of India. Perhaps home lay hidden in the piece of suit cloth, a gift from 'an architect I had known for a short time [who] had made a declaration of his affection and loyalty' (p. 266).

Naipaul says: 'I had reciprocated. This was part of the sweetness of India: it went with everything else' (p. 266). It is strange to hear about 'the sweetness of India' here, but it is a qualified statement. The gift was given with the words 'promise me you will have it stitched into a jacket as soon as you get to Europe' (p. 266). And having returned to London, Naipaul finds himself 'facing as if for the first time a culture whose point, going by the advertisements and shop windows, appeared to be home-making, the creation of separate warm cells' (p. 266). Wandering the streets full of such 'warm cells', he writes that his 'experience of India defined itself more properly against my own homelessness' (p. 266). Separateness is his preferred place, the thing that most answers to and shapes his subjectivity. Poignantly, the notion of 'cells' here implies a prison, a metaphorical prison set up by the culture he is now facing (his colonial heritage) for the first time. It is in this state that he dreams of having a piece of stiff new cloth in front of him, and being able to cut it to a specific size, smaller shape, then perhaps he would find the clues which he knew existed, 'which I desired above everything else to find, but which I knew I never would' (p. 267).

As Naipaul describes, probes, judges all those aspects of Indian society which he finds repellent, or backward, or irrational, he begins to determine, towards the end of *Area*, what his own identity might be. Ultimately, his way of seeing India reveals a subjectivity that incessantly craves to be distinct from humanity in general, one with a fear of becoming just another person in India's millions. In a work that is predicated on vision and seeing, and on notions of home, Naipaul ultimately wants only separation. Nixon's reading of the self Naipaul projects is telling:

The way Naipaul's arguments turn on the division between seeing and not seeing and the correspondence between this split and an outsider's and an insider's perspectives render *An Area of Darkness* a classic instance of the fixation with visual authority that has governed the discourses of ethnography and travel alike. The most imperial of the senses, the eye becomes in *An Area of Darkness* less a conduit for empiricism than a controlling metaphor that is symptomatic of Naipaul's cognitive style.⁷¹

If Naipaul *does* find what Said terms a 'new world to rule', then, it is one shaped by Naipaul alone, not Naipaul as part of a community. It is rather a metaphorical world

⁷¹ Nixon, pp. 86-87.

encapsulated wholly in the actual process of writing, which, as Amit Chaudhuri observed: 'is Naipaul's great subject, as it is his great achievement'.⁷² Naipaul himself, tellingly, sees his writing as a way to 'triumph over darkness'.⁷³ He clearly sees himself as an exile, and chooses his homelessness; however, he is at the same time privileged in ways that most exiles are not: free to travel, to write, especially to explore the condition of being in exile. From this perspective, his desire to be separate creates a proactive space that actually suits his identity, which while empathetic in the attention he pays to the human condition, is reciprocal only in that his writing, as Mustafa says, creates a space in which it is possible to read the world differently.

Peter Hulme echoes those sentiments when he says that Naipaul's work may represent (referring to his later fiction) 'a still emergent genre: allusive and literary meditations, with elements of autobiography and travel writing'.⁷⁴ In considering how that genre might emerge, or evolve, with Naipaul's hysteria as a catalyst, there is potential for extending feminist intervention in such debates by identifying the basis of Naipaul's hysteria as being both postcolonial as well as drawing on the same symptoms that Showalter has explored.⁷⁵ Naipaul's hysteria, and its invisible intersection with notions of gender in the travel encounter, has productive implications for future travel writing studies research. For example, if such 'hysteria' is experienced so forcibly by a male traveller, what might this indicate for interpreting anew the experiences of female travellers, and in fact female experience generally.

Naipaul writes elsewhere that 'I've decolonised myself through the practice of writing, through what I've learned from writing, looking at the world'.⁷⁶ Within these words, there is a hint of the 'rift' that Childs and Williams suggest lies in the Western psyche, especially since Naipaul sees history as another word for loss. It is possible, then, that travelling to a reciprocal space needs to begin before the traveller even leaves home, as happens within the pages of Pamuk's *Istanbul*, the subject of the following chapter.

⁷² Amit Chaudhuri, 'Nobel Thoughts' <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2001/oct/13/fiction.vشناipaul>> [accessed 1 July 2016]

⁷³ Taylor, 'Guerilla: V. S. Naipaul'.

⁷⁴ Peter Hulme, 'Travelling to Write', in *The Cambridge Companion to Travel Writing*, ed. by Peter Hulme and Tim Youngs (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2002), (pp. 87-101), p. 89.

⁷⁵ Elaine Showalter, *Female Malady*.

⁷⁶ Quoted in Thieme, p. 1362.

CHAPTER 6

Orhan Pamuk – Istanbul and Goya’s Giants

Istanbul: Memories and the City (2005) is the memoir of Orhan Pamuk (b.1952), a writer who has lived most of his life in Istanbul, for many years even living in the same apartment block, built specifically to house the various branches of the Pamuk family.¹ *Istanbul* the text is included in the thesis because Istanbul as place evokes many of the binaries upon which notions of the self and other have been constructed, and maintained – Istanbul and Constantinople, East and West, Christian and Muslim, modern and traditional, as well as being repository of cultural artefacts for all of these concepts. Within the pages of *Istanbul* Pamuk strategically disrupts those binaries, through the creative acts of painting and writing, dispersing them into the complex psychic concepts they are in reality. Although strictly a memoir of home, *Istanbul* is equally a work of travel writing, of the sort that Youngs describes as an ‘inner journey’, a type which explores the themes of loss of power and position, such as for those subjects of fallen empires.² The fallen Ottoman Empire is responsible in part for Pamuk’s sense of being impoverished by what he sees as the loss of a collective glorious past, a loss which he says induces personal shame in those living in a less heroic, less admirable present. This sense of loss induces a desire to keep hidden, ‘safe from Western eyes’, (p. 32), a wish brought on in part by living within the ‘last traces of a great culture and a great civilisation that we were unfit or unprepared to inherit, in our frenzy to turn Istanbul into a pale, poor, second-class imitation of a Western city’ (p. 191). Pamuk is a traveling subject, moving around that city.

Pamuk’s memoir is of a travelling subject whose movements take place purely within the confines of Istanbul. The link between internal journeys, travel writing and memoir is clear, since the narratives that emerge are ‘less concerned with recuperating, or reinventing, a single self than with following the trajectory of a series of selves in transit. ... reveal[ing] a conflicted sense of belonging and allegiance’.³ Pamuk seems to be both insider and

¹ Orhan Pamuk, *Istanbul: Memories and the City*, trans. by Maureen Freely (London: Faber, 2005), p. 5. Further page references will be given parenthetically.

² Tim Youngs, *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 103.

³ Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan, *Tourists with Typewriters: Critical Reflections on Contemporary Travel Writing* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2003), p. 14. The authors note that ‘perhaps in this sense, travel writing is more closely affiliated with memoir’, referring back to Fussell’s famous definition of travel writing as being ‘a sub-species of memoir in which the autobiographical narrative arises from the speaker’s encounter with distant or unfamiliar data’.

outsider, despite the fact that he is writing from and of his own city, making clear how these boundaries are not easily demarcated. That he can be both suggests to me that the self-other relationship takes place at the most intimate personal level as much as it does in the social formation, to use Belsey's term. Pamuk notes how writers such as Conrad, Nabokov, and Naipaul have managed to 'migrate between languages, cultures, countries, continents, even civilisations' because 'their imaginations were fed by exile, a nourishment drawn not through roots but through rootlessness' (p. 6). While Pamuk's use of 'nourishment' and 'successful migration', especially in the face of Naipaul's psychic displacement discussed in the last chapter, seems problematic, his use of these terms does trouble the notion of exile, seeing it instead as an opportunity to create something new. Pamuk's main point, however, is that in contrast to these travel writers' imaginaries, his own is tied to the city of Istanbul, to the extent that he can do nothing other than 'stay in the same city, on the same street, in the same house, gazing at the same view. Istanbul's fate is my fate: I am attached to this city because it made me who I am' (p. 6). He recalls his mother's 'sorrowful voice' asking him 'Why don't you go outside for a while, why don't you try a change of scene, do some travelling...?' (p. 6). *Istanbul* is perhaps his response to her question.

In the opening pages, Pamuk reveals in just a few paragraphs exactly how complex his subjectivity is, affected by notions of a lost Empire, by other writers from both the East and the West, and an affirmation of travelling and writing as productive of understanding the self-other dynamic. *Istanbul* provides rich ground against which to ask my questions: What subjectivity does Pamuk project at the start of his journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces discussed in his travel writing? What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning Pamuk, as evidenced in his travel writing?

I first came upon Pamuk's work in late 2010, when I made a short visit to Istanbul to see my sister, who had just started working there as a teacher. She was living in the district of Nisantasi and as we meandered one day along its colourful streets, Liz mentioned it was famous as the home of one of Turkey's most celebrated authors, Orhan Pamuk, whose major work then was *The Black Book* (1990). The same author, I later discovered, had also written *Istanbul* and my fascination, as tourist, with Istanbul meant that this was the first of Pamuk's books I would buy. As I flicked through its pages in anticipation of reading it on the plane home, I was struck by three things: the word *hüzün*, a term that describes a sort of communal melancholy; Pamuk's comment that there is a tense in the Turkish language for 'I've been told', which allows a distinction to be made between 'hearsay' and 'what we've seen with our own eyes' (p. 8); and his assertion that he learned most about Istanbul from Western writers. I was also struck by the black and white photographs that

fill the book, which are visually far removed from the iconic images such as the Blue Mosque, or Hagia Sofia, with their domes, spires, and minarets against the gorgeous blue and aquamarine skyline, gracing most tourist views of the city. These photographs, in their graininess, depth of field, and often unusual perspectives – tell a story that is interwoven with Pamuk’s own.

Coincidentally, it was in Pamuk’s district of Nisantasi that my own awareness of being both self and other was jolted into being. As well as being famous as Pamuk’s home, the area is known too for its textiles. My sister mentioned that I should visit a street just down from her apartment, since every shop window there was adorned with gorgeous displays of richly coloured fabrics. Wandering down the street the next day I took photos of virtually every display I passed, oblivious to anything else going on around me. So, I was shocked to be confronted by an angry and gesticulating shopkeeper who stormed out of a doorway and shouted ‘WHY you are taking so many photographs!?’ I explained that I found the displays attractive and wanted to have a memento of them, but he was still furious and it was only when I offered to delete the photographs that his anger abated. Upset and puzzled by the confrontation, I belatedly wondered whether the anger stemmed from the current tough economic environment, in which my seemingly innocent photographs were seen as a threat, a theft of ideas, of livelihood. Now, the incident highlights for me how I as a tourist failed completely at the time to see that I was also the foreigner/Other – an intruder in this space. I include this incident because it provides evidence of Youngs’ assertion that travel is never innocent, and always has effects.

In my analysis of *Istanbul* I focus on the elements I found so intriguing when I first skimmed its pages. How does the Turkish tense for ‘I have been told’ impact on Pamuk’s subjectivity? How does he define *hüzün* and what implications does it have for his subjectivity?⁴ Who were the Western writers and what were the insights garnered from them about his city, and by extension his identity? In his exploration and portrayal of these elements, Pamuk’s ultimate goal emerges as a desire to lead what he perceives to be an authentic life, an authenticity that he apprehends first through painting and then writing. My reading of *Istanbul* and of how the relationship between self and other is constructed within it, is influenced by Youngs’ assertion that the construction of our ‘our sense of “me”

⁴ Jan Morris, ‘A Map of the Heart’, Book Review of Orhan Pamuk’s *Istanbul: Memories and the City* <<https://www.theguardian.com/books/2005/apr/02/biography.highereducation>> [accessed 28 December 2016]. In her review of *Istanbul*, Morris sees *hüzün* as ‘a congenital Turkish melancholy apparently akin to the Welsh hiraeth’. See also Norbert Bugeja, *Postcolonial Memoir in the Middle East: Rethinking the Liminal in Mashriqi Writing* (New York: Oxon, UK; Routledge, 2012).

and “you”, “us” and “them” operates on individual and national levels and in the realms of psychology, society and economics’.⁵ With this in mind I consider how Pamuk’s subjectivity is constructed through: his close relationships, from childhood through to college years, the point at which *Istanbul* ends; the effects he says *hüzün* has on his identity; those instances in which painting and finally writing help him apprehend what he perceives as an authentic (a problematic concept) identity, an apprehension which evolves through his melancholic nocturnal meanderings through the streets of Istanbul.

In the process, Pamuk institutes a new form of discourse, one that deflects attention from the periphery to centre and back again. One way in which he does this is through a taxonomic scale that recalls colonial travel writing at the same time as it displaces its classificatory and acquisitive intent: he lists, for example, such things as paper littering the streets, the smell of urine on lamp posts, decrepit villas, crumbling city walls, and then elsewhere he reverses the visual scale – from the Bosphorus, to the boats sailing on it, to the platform where passengers are waiting to board, to the elderly lady carrying a plastic bag. As well as the displacing effect Pamuk’s shifts in visual scale achieve, they reveal too how both self and other, us and them, yours and ours, are deeply entwined. These concepts are also shown to be unstable, not least because the author tells us that he may have made things up for the sake of the narrative – for example, when he writes that from when he was six years old to ten, his brother was almost constantly beating him up, but when he reminds his mother and brother, is told that he is making up the beatings just to give himself something to write about (p. 265).

Another way in which he suggests a new discursive space is through his discussion of the influence of Western writers and visitors to Istanbul, tracing an intertextual ‘conversation’ between Flaubert and Nerval and Turkish writers such as Tanpınar and Kemal, who were charged with introducing Westernisation in language and literature in the new republic of Turkey (pp. 211-220). In this regard, he notes how, according to Benjamin, ‘the enthusiasm for seeing a city from the outside is the exotic or the picturesque. For natives of the city, the connection is always mediated by memories’ (p. 216). Pamuk adopts both an insider and an outsider perspective, mediating his journey with the numerous photographs that illustrate *Istanbul*’s pages.

My objectives in what follows are to identify those moments when Pamuk probes the influence of self on other and vice versa, especially in his portrayal of family and other close relationships, in the process challenging the ‘hidden values’ contained in

⁵ Youngs, *Cambridge Introduction*, p. 1.

‘authoritative accounts of the “way things are”’.⁶ In contrast, for example, to the iconic images of the Istanbul skyline mentioned earlier, Pamuk’s gaze is at foot level, on the darkened, dirty and poverty-stricken streets and neighbourhoods of the city. He evokes instead the void he says is experienced by many Istanbulis since the formation of the Republic of Turkey, with the concomitant attempts to modernise and westernise the country and city. The wearing down of the self and community implied in this void stemmed from such impositions as the wearing of western dress, not Turkish; replacement of the Arabic script with the Latin alphabet; and, religious faith supplanted by a secularism that looked down on what was deemed to be the irrationality of prayer and faith. Pamuk’s personal experience of this void is summed up when he notes Flaubert’s response to Istanbul following his visit to the city, a century before Pamuk’s birth:

Struck by the variety of life in its teeming streets; in one of [Flaubert’s] letters he predicted that in a century’s time it would be the capital of the world. The reverse came true: after the Ottoman Empire collapsed, the world almost forgot that Istanbul existed. The city into which I was born was poorer, shabbier, and more isolated than it had ever been in its two-thousand-year history. For me it has always been a city of ruins and of end-of-empire melancholy. I’ve spent my life either battling with this melancholy, or (like all Istanbulis) making it my own.

(p. 6)

Istanbul the city is, then, as much a character in the text as Pamuk’s melancholic exposé of self. No longer the rich and gorgeous centre of the Ottoman Empire – itself dead since the beginning of the twentieth century – Istanbul is now on the periphery, not just of the West but also of Turkey itself, the capital having shifted from Istanbul to Ankara with the establishment of Ataturk’s regime in 1923. Despite this void, Pamuk can still write ‘I poured my soul in the city’s streets and there it still resides’ (p. 313). The city of Istanbul and Pamuk are both other than, apparently left and forgotten as the rest of the world moved on.

Pamuk opens *Istanbul* with a textual image and a question each of which recurs throughout the book: is there another Orhan, a ghostly other? He recalls suspecting as a child that ‘there was more to my world than I could see’ (p. 3). In one of his earliest

⁶ Kenneth J. Gergen, *The Saturated Self: Dilemmas of Identity in Contemporary Life* (New York: Basic Books, 1991), p. 97.

memories he wonders if this other Orhan is free in another house somewhere in Istanbul, recognising that the idea ‘must have emerged from a web of rumours, misunderstandings, illusions and fears’ (p. 3). This seems an accurate description of the tense for ‘I’ve been told’, which Pamuk says allows for a distinction to be made between hearsay and actual experience, useful for ‘relating dreams, fairy tales, or past events we could not have witnessed’ (p. 8). It is, he says, useful in allowing us to connect with ‘our earliest life experiences [...] as reported by our parents, stories to which we listen with the same rapt attention we might pay some brilliant tale that happened to concern some other person’ (p. 8). While this tense affords ‘a sensation as sweet as seeing ourselves in our dreams’ it costs us dearly because ‘once imprinted in our minds, other people’s reports of what we’ve done end up mattering more than what we ourselves remember’, (p. 8). Perhaps a more serious cost is that ‘just as we learn about our lives from others, so, too, do we let others shape our understanding of the city in which we live’ (p. 8). When I first read how this tense works, I was reminded of Maurice Halbwachs’ description of the space or gap between an event occurring and the same event being reported, suggesting a liminal space within which many readings or interpretations are possible.⁷ Although not quite the same as Pamuk’s tense, it has value here because in the melancholic liminal spaces around which he shapes his memoir, Pamuk seeks in part to redress the heavy price he suggests the tense brings.

Pamuk makes it clear, after the opening image and associated question, that the notion of another Orhan was due at least in part to the occasions when he was sent to stay with an aunt in Cihangir, following one of his parents’ many volatile arguments. On one wall of her apartment his aunt had a ‘kitsch’ picture of a ‘sweet, doe-eyed boy’ someone had ‘brought back from Europe’ (p. 3). Pointing at the picture, she would tell the five-year-old Pamuk: ‘Look! That’s you’, (p. 3). Already feeling lost because he is away from home, his aunt and uncle’s teasing him that he was the boy in the picture – not the boy he was – led to ‘my mind unravelling: my ideas about myself, my house, my picture and the picture I resembled, the boy who looked like me, and the other house would slide about in a confusion that made me long all the more to be at home again, surrounded by my family’ (p. 4). This image stays with him all through his childhood and well into adolescence, when he would sometimes find himself ‘on winter evenings, walking through the streets of the city [...] gaz[ing] into other people’s houses through the pale orange light of home and dream of happy, peaceful families living comfortable lives’ (p. 4). Pamuk, writing in

⁷ Maurice Halbwachs, *The Collective Memory*, trans. Francis J. Ditter, Jr., and Vida Yazdi Ditter (New York: Harper, 1980), p. 55.

middle age, looks back on his childhood and adolescent years with startling clarity (assisted, no doubt, by the fictional element hinted at by his mother and brother) despite the complications – or perhaps because of them – of temporal and spatial issues. One of the many questions travel writing foregrounds is which particular self or selves are at play in the writing: who is speaking – the person they are back home, or the travelling self, or the writing self? Pamuk's words suggest that there may be even more selves at play than the three Kinneavy suggests.

Born into a wealthy, educated, secular, Western-orientated class, for Pamuk home was an apartment that took up the fourth floor of the Pamuk Apartments building, described by the author as the 'bleak museum house' (p. 31). Each branch of the family occupied one floor, with the children having the run of the whole building. He notes that a piano decorated every apartment but the fact that they were never played caused him sadness. As well, there were 'unused desks with mother-of-pearl inlay', an alluring metaphor evoking words as jewels to be transformed by writing. Every apartment was furnished as well with a locked glass display cabinet, filled with objects – 'Chinese porcelains, teacups, silver sets, sugar bowls, snuff boxes, crystal glasses, rosewater pitchers, plates and censers which no one ever touched' (p. 10). That they are never touched is intriguing in a number of ways, calling to mind curiosity cabinets and museum collections, but also a very physical engagement between self and other, if reified. These objects are present because they are from Western Europe, ostensibly revealing the Pamuk family as being modern and Westernised, and other. So Pamuk's childhood is filled with objects that suggest someone else's past, quite different to his ancestral one, a culture other to his own. They stand in for 'all the bitter memories of the fallen empire' (p. 27).

More than these beautiful but unused objects, though, it is the photographs decorating the walls of his grandmother's apartment that most affect Pamuk's young self. He writes that even though he has looked at each photograph 'hundreds of times', he cannot help but re-examine them all every time he goes back into the room (p. 13). Pamuk conjures up a *tableau vivant* that straddles the past through the photographs, and the present through real presence, as he gazes from photographs of family members on the wall to the same family members in the living room. He can see 'my uncle pose my brother a maths problem, and at the same time [...] see him in a picture taken thirty two years earlier' while over in the corner he can see 'my father scanning the newspaper and trying, with a half-smile to catch the tail of a joke rippling across the crowded room, and at that very moment to see a picture of him at five years old - my age - with hair as long as a girl's' – casually disrupting the male/female binary (p. 13). For Pamuk this connection between past and present was no accident, as it seemed to him that his grandmother had 'framed and frozen these memories

so that we could weave them into the present' (p. 13). Ghostly presences filter into his psyche then not only from the small white-framed photograph of the other Orhan, but also from the photos his grandmother keeps on the wall. His prolonged study of the photographs led him to appreciate 'the importance of preserving certain moments for posterity, and as time moved forwards I also came to see what a powerful influence these framed scenes exerted over us as we went about our daily lives' (p. 13). At the same time, the photos leave him feeling, along with his grandmother – whose husband died young – pulled in two directions, in a liminal space, wanting to go on with life but also longing to capture the moment of perfection, 'savouring the ordinary but still honouring the ideal' (p. 13). Rose's work on family photography is richly suggestive of how photographs – and other material objects – can be explored as a means of 'both reproduc[ing] and exceed[ing] discourse and meaning'.⁸ She makes clear that different people look in different ways, and the question to ask is not so much what the picture shows or what it means than 'what happens when people look, and what emerges from that act?'.⁹ Pamuk's grandmother clearly is heavily invested in the photographs. Her grandson asks 'if you plucked a special moment from life and framed it, were you defying death, decay and the passage of time, or were you submitting to them? - I grew very bored with [the photographs] and cannot help but think that life was much more fun outside the picture frame' (p. 13).

Istanbul is enlivened with signposts to Pamuk's various wanderings, with numerous black and white photographs of the city's mid-twentieth-century streets and of Pamuk himself, from childhood to early adulthood. Most of the photographs are from Ara Güler, in whose 'home-studio-archive-museum' Pamuk recalls coming 'across many treasured but long-forgotten images', one such treasure being 'the snow-covered Galatea Bridge' gazing on which, Pamuk finds, 'it was as if my own memory had been projected onto the screen' (p. 335). One photograph especially 'perfectly captures the lonely back streets of my childhood, where [...] streetlamps illuminate nothing, and the chiaroscuro of twilight – the thing for me that defines the city – has descended' (p. 32). There are no captions to any of the photographs and the only way to discover more about them is to refer to the index at the back of the book, which is vaguely irritating, but thought-provoking. I wondered whether this was a strategic move on Pamuk's part, from two perspectives: the first relates to his own appreciation of the eighteenth-century European artist Antoine-Melling's work, in that he does not exoticise any particular aspect of the scene he is painting, but at the same time captures the scene in all its minute detail. The second

⁸ Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography* (Farnham: Ashgate, 2010), p. 15.

⁹ Rose, *Family Photography*, p. 21, (quoting Mieke Bal, 'Visual Essentialism and the Object of Visual Culture, *Journal of Visual Culture*, 2, (2003), p. 9).

perspective stems from the work requiring a different kind of attention from one that seeks to categorise, by checking the photograph's legend first, before the image itself; in this way the photographs work in tandem with the same strategy Pamuk uses elsewhere, but this time textually, in that he disrupts linear and hierarchical codings by privileging neither the textual nor the visual; both are important records, as well as treasured memories. And in fact, turning to the index, there is no list of captions, rather engaging stories about the people who took the photos, especially Güler, who captured for Pamuk 'a treasured memory he had forgotten' (p. 335), a richly evocative example of the value of photographs to identity. From another perspective, the fact that there are no legends perhaps brings language itself into conflict with the particular subjectivity Pamuk was experiencing at the time.

But was life really so much more fun in the real world not encapsulated in the photographs, as Pamuk asserts? A little later, he looks back on family parties at holiday time, feeling the security of 'belonging to a large and happy family' allowing him to:

Bask in the illusion that we were put on earth to take pleasure in it, though I had long been aware that these relatives of mine who could laugh, dine and joke together on holidays were also merciless and unforgiving in quarrels over money and property. (pp. 13-14)

He is aware that 'behind the gaiety, there was a mounting pile of unsettled scores and a sea of recriminations' (p. 14) suggesting perhaps the fallen Empire writ small. Pamuk's mother especially would often return to their apartment upset after yet another family fracas, about money, and the failing business ventures of her husband and his brother. Her husband would feign interest in why his wife was so upset, but would then be immediately dismissive of her explanation. There seems to have been here a need to know, to have power, but no wish to help or do anything to comfort his wife. In what was clearly an unhappy marriage, both parents would often disappear for months at a time, especially Pamuk's father. Often, however, because they lived in a house full of relatives, maids and servants, the fact of his absence would go unnoticed for a while. Never offered an explanation for these disappearances, Pamuk as a child would become aware of them through external manifestations such as 'the excessive warmth of our maid Esma Hanim's embrace' or in the way his grandmother's servant 'Bekir read too much into something we said', or through his 'Uncle Aydan's excessive bravado during a Sunday morning spin along the Bosphorus in his 1952 Dodge' (p. 68). In his father's absence, then, Pamuk learns to read gesture and emotion as constitutive of the self. Once his father's absence was

realised, he knew that his mother's would be coming shortly too, when she would go to stay with her own cousins for support during her husband's absence, and in preparation for which Pamuk would sometimes sit by her at the dressing table mirror, searching in its three-panelled 'infinity for the Orhan furthest away' (p. 69-70). Losing himself in his reflections came to be the 'disappearing game', preparing him for his mother's disappearance, which he knew was coming from phone calls she was making to friends and family.

It was at his aunt's house in Cihangir, 'home' of the 'other Orhan', though, where Pamuk begins to perceive differences between the outside world and his Nisantasi home, prompting him to be a different self. As a pampered five-year-old, lying in bed, he calls out for his aunt's maid to come and dress him, but receives only a sharp reprimand. Seeking to overcome his embarrassment he 'pretends to be older' than he is by announcing to his aunt, uncle and 13-year-old cousin at the breakfast table – with 'the kitsch kid on the wall' looking on – that the prime minister is his uncle, and is quite disconcerted by the laughter this prompts. He then explains to his reader that he only believed this in one 'enciphering corner of his mind' making the associations from real and factual information – his uncle lived in the US and the prime minister had just visited there; he had seen lots of photos of the PM's visit in the papers, and saw similarities with these and his uncle's photo on the wall at home – so it's not so outlandish, he declares, that the idea should take root (p. 75). At Cihangir, then, away from home, in this rather moving image of himself on the edge of the dining room table, while his aunt and uncle and cousin laugh at his young self, he learns to see himself differently, through others' eyes. In this house too he sees that life is not the enclosed life it is in Nisantasi. At his aunt's in Cihangir he learns that life revolves around neighbours one can see in the streets, looking all the way down to the Bosphorus and that 'there must always be a centre (usually a shop) where all the gossip was collected and assessed and spread' (p. 78). The centre at his aunt's place was the grocery store, whose owner was Greek. But in Nisantasi he discovers that the Greeks, along with the poor, are lumped together and looked down on – he can tell by his family's response when he mimics and makes fun of the Greek shop owner. It is in this space that he learns to distinguish between self and other and to read communication that is indirect.

Pamuk says he knows the persistence of his living in the same place owes something to 'my imaginary friend, and to the solace I took from the bond between us' (p. 5). The 'bond' is shaky, though. In his dreams, or nightmares, he 'greet[s] this Orhan – always in another house – with shrieks of horror; in others the two of us would stare each other down in 'eerie merciless silence' (pp. 4-5). These meetings would cause Pamuk to cling 'ever more fiercely to my pillow, my house, my street, my place in the world' (p. 5). It is as if he has to imagine himself through the eyes of the other Orhan in order to exist. Other worlds, other

selves and ghostly presences – sometimes imaginary, sometimes the real Orhan reflected in mirrors – feature throughout *Istanbul*, constantly emerging and receding. Keeping this second (imaginary) and secret world to himself made it easier for him ‘to come and go’:

If I dreamed of changing places with the other Orhan in the other house; if I longed for a life beyond the museum’s rooms, corridors carpets (how I hated those carpets) [...] if I felt hemmed in by this gloomy, cluttered house that rejected (though my family would deny it later) any suggestion of spirituality, love, art, literature, or even mythology [...] it was not because I was unhappy. (p. 21)

On the contrary he was, he says, extremely happy, remembering himself here ‘between the ages of four and six, when as a bright, well-behaved child I felt the love of nearly everyone I met’ (p. 21). It would be the family’s declining financial situation that would later intrude on this happiness. He writes of the sorrow brought on by the failures of his father and his uncle to make a success of business after business, eventually causing what had been a substantial family fortune to dwindle to almost nothing. With this failure, he says ‘quarrels over money grew more intense’ and thereafter:

Every visit to my grandmother’s apartment brought me sorrow and a step closer to a realization. It was a long time coming, arriving by a circuitous route, but the cloud of gloom and loss that the fall of the Ottoman Empire had spread over Istanbul finally claimed my family too. (p. 16)

Pamuk as storyteller is attracted to the tense for ‘I have been told’, saying that he would like to have used it to explain his life as if it were ‘something that happened to someone else, as if it were a dream in which I felt my voice fading and my will succumbing to enchantment’ (p. 8), a mythical enchantment perhaps. Much as he loves hearing stories (about himself), though, Pamuk says that ‘beautiful though it is, I find the language of epic unconvincing, for I cannot accept that the myths we tell about our first lives prepare us for the brighter, more authentic second lives that are meant to begin when we awake’ (p. 8). This is because ‘for people like me, at least - that second life is none other than the book in your hand’ (p. 8). Having asserted that hearing one’s own story through someone else’s eyes is a form of enchantment, he then questions the language of epic, asserting that its fictions cannot compete with the more authentic life that for him takes its form in the creative act. He asks in later life was he attached to the ‘bleak museum house’, but thinks

he is attached not to the house itself, but rather to the role it serves as a centre, or home, for the world in his mind:

As an escape, in the positive and negative sense of the word. Instead of learning to face my troubles squarely, whether awareness of my parents' squabbles, my father's bankruptcies, my family's never-ending property squabbles, or our dwindling fortunes, I amused myself with mental games in which I changed the focus, deceived myself, forgot altogether what had been troubling me or wrapped myself in a mysterious haze. (p. 79)

He avers that this 'confused hazy state of melancholy, or perhaps we should call it by its Turkish name *hüzün* [...] denotes a melancholy that is communal rather than private' (p. 79). But he portrays it as both, since he introduces it first of all as emanating from within his family. This then is private *hüzün*. He next draws on *hüzün* when he describes the decrepit mansions of the Ottoman pashas, now fallen into disrepair, where they have not already been burned or demolished, to be replaced with modern apartment blocks. The Pamuk family apartments had been built on land that once had been the garden of one of these pashas, and Pamuk had attended school in a building that had formerly belonged to a Grand Vizier. These are remnants of glorious old buildings, slowly being obliterated to make way for the new - just as elsewhere he writes that in contrast to western cities - where history is placed in a museum - 'here in Istanbul, the past is present in the present, in the crumbling walls, and fountains sitting underground and around which roads have been built' (p. 63). There is then a greater sense of loss implied in the destruction of the mansions as buildings alone, since the Nisantasi community watched the last remnants of that particular part of their history being razed, in the face of which, Pamuk says:

My family maintained a stony equanimity - much as we had done in the face of all those stories about crazy princes, opium addicts in the palace harem, children locked in attics, treacherous sultan's daughters and exiled or murdered pashas - and ultimately the decline and fall of the Empire itself. As we in Nisantasi saw it, the Republic had done away with the pashas, princes and high officials and so the empty mansions they had left behind were only decrepit anomalies. (pp. 26-27)

Despite their equanimity, there is no doubt that the burning of the mansions caused pain even if only because 'the melancholy of this dying culture was all around us' (p. 27). The

effect on families like Pamuk's was the void described earlier, since the push to Westernise 'amounted mostly to the erasure of the past – like a lover throwing out clothes and photos' pushing away, but unable to dispel 'all the bitter memories of the fallen empire' (p. 27). Since Westernisation seemed to involve 'erasure' of the past more than anything else 'the effect on culture was reductive and stunting, leading families like mine, otherwise glad of Republican progress, to furnish their houses like museums' (pp. 26-27).

Pamuk writes that what he would later 'know as pervasive melancholy and mystery' was experienced in childhood 'as boredom and gloom, a deadening tedium I identified with the "*alaturka*" music to which my grandmother tapped her slippared feet: I escaped this state by cultivating dreams' (p. 27). In my reading of Pamuk here the tense 'I have been told' and the notion of *hüzün* seem to mesh together and, combined with his belief that the epic form is unconvincing, all three serve to create a liminal space that is both negative and positive. The combination is produced by Pamuk's saturated self, not quite in the sense that Gergen describes, which is related to the information age, but rather a saturation of opposing narratives upon which Pamuk draws and through which he filters a new subjectivity, creating at the same time a new discourse.

The word itself has, Pamuk says, an Arabic root, possibly contributing to the melancholy since this script had been 'replaced' with Latin script, which Pamuk asserts diminished the symbolism of devan poetry thereafter. *Hüzün* appears in the Koran and as used by the Prophet Mohammed – 'Senettul huzn' or the year of melancholy – conveys a feeling of deep spiritual loss and agonising grief' (p. 81). This grief and loss are surely akin to the issues Said identifies in *Orientalism*, the split between East and West, loss of culture and language, and the question of a rift in the Western psyche raised by Childs and Williams.

In his extensive explanation of *hüzün* Pamuk identifies two shifts in philosophical meaning over the following centuries. In the first, *hüzün* denotes too much investment 'in worldly pleasures and material gain' and is somewhat condemnatory, with the implication being that 'if you hadn't involved yourself so deeply in this transitory world, if you were a good and true Muslim, you wouldn't care so much about your worldly losses' (p. 81). The second version of *hüzün* is more compassionate, he says, 'arising out of Sufi mysticism's understanding of the place of loss and grief in life. To a Sufi:

Hüzün is the spiritual anguish we feel because we cannot be close enough to Allah, because we cannot do enough for Allah in this world. A true Sufi follower would pay no attention to worldly concerns like death, let alone goods or

possessions; he suffers from grief, emptiness, and inadequacy because he can never be close enough to Allah, because his apprehension of Allah is not deep enough. (p. 81)

Hüzün, then, suggests a number of discourses, the complexity of which helps fill in the contours of Said's East and West, self and other, matters of religion, of grief, of abstention from worldly pleasures, of illness, of loving and being loved, the materiality of daily living. Moreover, it is the 'absence of *hüzün*, not its presence', that causes distress: the 'Sufi suffers because he has not suffered enough' (p. 81). Islamic culture he says has come to hold *hüzün* in high esteem, but to understand how it affects the present as 'a cultural concept conveying worldly failure, listlessness and spiritual suffering' it is necessary to know more than its meaning, he must 'describe the history of the city following the destruction of the Ottoman Empire – and, even more important – the way this history is reflected in the city's 'beautiful landscapes and its people' (p. 82). So *hüzün* acts perhaps as a counter discourse to not only an outsider's view (as discussed below) but also from an insider's perspective as a discourse perhaps of a loss of subjectivity. Pamuk shows that the *hüzün* of Istanbul is not just to be found in its music and poetry, it is a way of life that implicates everyone, spiritually, and also as a state of mind, that is 'ultimately as life affirming as it is negating' (p. 82).

Rose has useful things to say about the different 'publics' who do not come into being until they are 'addressed' by a particular discourse (usually through the media and through photographs) seeking to create a particular public (her example is the July 2007 bombings in the UK).¹⁰ I wonder if Pamuk's assertion that *hüzün* is felt by all Istanbulis works in the same way? Certainly, the black and white photographs of Istanbul create a very particular mood, and suggest that the public he intends is not Istanbulis, but rather the outsider who sees only the 'tourist' skyline.

Pamuk's concern with Western perceptions of his city first emerges in his appreciation of the work of Melling, the artist mentioned earlier. Employed by the royal court, Melling painted scenes that for Pamuk represented the city as no other artist had been able to. He considers that this was because Melling lived in Istanbul for many years and so had the perspective of an insider. Because he had lived long enough in the city – and engaged with the court presumably – he was able to see the city through acquired Istanbulis eyes. This allowed him, according to Pamuk, to paint the city like 'a clear-eyed Westerner', so that

¹⁰ Gillian Rose, *Doing Family Photography*, pp. 77-78.

‘Melling’s Istanbul is not only a place graced by hills, mosques and landmarks we recognise, but a place of sublime beauty’ (p. 67). Pamuk’s observation introduces a different context to notions of the sublime, in that it works as an *aide memoir* of immense value. Although the combination of ‘an acquired Istanbul eye’ with those of ‘a clear-eyed Westerner’ sounds like a contradiction in terms, I take Pamuk to mean that Melling, because of his experience, combines both East *and* West and thus paints from a richer perspective in a mutually beneficial and informing self-other relationship. There is no central over-riding perspective in Melling’s gouaches and Pamuk points out that in one of his harem paintings two women are kissing on the lips, but unlike exoticised portraits that were the subject of Said’s *Orientalism*, in which this would be front and centre, they are simply a part of the scene.

Because Pamuk’s apprehension of the *hüzün* of Istanbul comes first through Western eyes, he finds that Tanpınar and Kemal were only able to write about such squalid backstreet areas as being picturesque because they lived elsewhere, in wealthy neighbourhoods such as Pera and Beyoğlu and in effect were viewing these streets from the perspective of strangers (p 232). He says they wrote nothing about the minority cultures that had been such a part of Istanbul life – the Greeks, Armenians, Jews and Kurds who had been forced to flee with increasing nationalisation or Turkification of Istanbul, just as at the same time Muslims were fleeing the Balkans as ethnic cleansing following World War I took hold in those areas. Nonetheless, they were part of the group of four ‘melancholic’ writers ‘whose poems, novels, stories, articles, memoirs and encyclopedias opened my eyes to the soul of the city in which I live’ (p. 99). He suggests that this was because these writers:

Drew their strength from the tensions between the past and the present, or between what Westerners like to call the East and West; they are the ones who taught me how to reconcile my love for modern art and Western literature with the culture of the city in which I lived. (p. 99)

Of the Western works influencing his view of *hüzün*, Pamuk cites Burton’s *The Anatomy of Melancholy* (1621) stating that Burton ‘believed that melancholy paved the way to a happy solitude;’ and ‘because it strengthened his imaginative powers, it was, from time to time, to be joyfully affirmed’, (p. 83). *Hüzün*’s ambiguity, Pamuk says, lies in the fact that as well as being a ‘poetic concept or a state of grace’ it was also considered by earlier thinkers such as El Kindi to be an illness ‘associated with other spiritual afflictions like anger, love, rancour and groundless fear’ (p. 82). For Ibn Sina [Avicenna], to

understand someone afflicted with *hüzün*, one need only ask for the name of the girl - so it is related also to love. Defining *hüzün* then, is no easy matter, even for Pamuk. Complexly, as well as defining a 'sense of community', *hüzün* encompasses both insider and outsider perspectives, through 'those Istanbul writers and poets who are excited by Western culture and wish to engage with the contemporary world' since they 'also aspire to the rationalism of Montaigne and to the emotional solitude of Thoreau', (p. 96). From this perspective, the notion of *hüzün* may contribute to that necessary extension of travel writing studies that Thompson identifies, by widening its range and offering a new lens – one that loops from self to other and back again, circulating the views of many.

As Pamuk travels around the city he seeks visual clues that might help him describe what *hüzün* means to someone who does not know either it or the city in the same way that he does, recreating a modern version of Melling's work. He lists in short sentences a sweeping panorama, both intimate and expansive, of the people, signs, sounds, smells, foods, notices, houses, dirt of Istanbul. Here he emulates Western taxonomic discourse and at the same time undercuts it by focusing not on heroes, or conquest, but on humanity and the material conditions shaping people's lives, so that 'the city itself becomes the very illustration, the very essence, of *hüzün*'. He is speaking now, he says, of:

Evenings when the sun sets early [...] fathers under the street lamps in the back streets, returning home carrying plastic bags [...] old booksellers who lurch from one financial crisis to the next and then wait shivering all day for a customer to appear [...] children who play ball between the cars on cobblestone streets [...] covered women who stand at remote bus stops clutching plastic shopping bags and speaking to no one as they wait for a bus that never arrives; [...] patient pimps striding up and down the city's greatest square on summer evenings in search of one last drunken tourist [...] crowds rushing to catch ferries on winter evenings [...] women peeking through curtains as they wait for husbands who never manage to come home until late at night [...] old men selling thin religious treatises, prayer beads and pilgrimage oils [...] the girls who read Big Sister Guzin's column in the *Hurriyet*, Turkey's most popular newspaper; of the reddish-orange glint in the windows of Üsküdar at sunset [...] bored high-school students in never-ending English classes where after six years no one has learned

to say anything but ‘yes’ or ‘no’ [...] of the apartment buildings in the side streets where during my childhood middle class families – doctors, lawyers, teachers and wives and children – would sit in our apartments listening to the radio in the evenings, where today the same apartments are packed with knitting and button machines and young girls working all night long for the lower wages in the city; [...] everything being broken, worn out, past its prime [...] I speak of them all. (p. 84-89)

Spread over four or five pages, this affecting panorama is held in check only by commas, semi-colons, colons and, finally, a single full stop. Like Pamuk, the reader feels at the end that ‘*hüzün* is everywhere’ (p. 89).

While in the real world Pamuk, too, lives in a wealthy area and is extremely privileged, his point seems rather to be that he does not try to make of *hüzün*, or of Istanbul, an exotic Saidian Other. He does not try to elide whatever does not ‘fit’ in this pre-imagined and therefore inauthentic image. In the process of trying to create a new Turkey, for example, Tanpınar and Kemal ‘expressed their patriotism in a poetic language far removed from decrees and force’ (p. 226). Kemal had lived in Paris, and ‘thinking like a Westerner [...] longed to make nationalism “look more beautiful”’ (p. 226). If, as Pamuk says, the work of these Turkish writers was ‘vexed by contradictions they felt between these two injunctions - to be Western, and yet, at the same time, to be authentic’, it is exactly that tension that leads him to the main lesson he takes from the Turkish writers – that ‘great writing was original, authentic and truthful’ (p. 101). The notion of home surfaces again and if it does not encapsulate *hüzün*, it does suggest what is longed for in the search and the desire for authenticity. The Turkish writers Pamuk honours so much were all influenced by the Western writers Nerval and Gautier, whose influence, in turn is channeled through their works in Turkish into Pamuk’s psyche. In his critique of these Western travellers’ accounts he asks:

What happiness do I derive from such confirmations of Istanbul’s *hüzün*? Why have I devoted so much energy to convey to the reader the melancholy I feel in the city where I’ve spent my entire life? What I have been trying to explain is that the roots of our *hüzün* are European: the concept was first explored, expressed,

and poeticised in French (by Gautier, under the influence of his friend Nerval).

(p. 209)

Pamuk outlines how when Tanpinar and Kemal were ‘looking for an image of the city and a literature in which Istanbul could see themselves’ they studied ‘Nerval’s and Gautier’s travel notes with great care’ (p. 211). Tanpinar found some of their work ‘less than penetrating’ since they were journalists whose readers “had made up their minds”, giving them no option ‘but to tell them what they wanted to hear’ (p. 211). The ‘uneasy ambivalence’ brought on by trying to make Western interpretations of Istanbul acceptable to Istanbulers meant that the ‘the love-hate relationship with the West became all the more convoluted’ (p. 211-212). Pamuk returns to the tense ‘I have been told’ saying he sometimes lulls himself into ‘believing the accounts of Western outsiders are my own memories’ (p. 218). Any sadness or grievance he feels stems from ‘hindsight: many of the local features that these observers, some of them brilliant writers, noted and exaggerated were to vanish from the city soon after having been remarked’ (p. 218). This is an interesting comment, because he writes that viewing one of Melling’s gouaches was destabilising because Pamuk’s present day home was absent from Melling’s parklands and hills.

Pamuk constantly weaves East and West into his text as he moves from author to author, such as the Turkish memoirist ‘Abdülhak Sinasi Hisar (1887-1963), whose *Bosphorus Civilisation* is studded with long sentences of a Proustian sensibility’ (p. 48), or Pierre Loti, who ‘made no secret of loving Istanbul and the Turkish people’ – in contrast to Gide, who used the term ‘Turk’ as ‘a racial slur’. Complexly, Pamuk writes that in any event he would rather hear bald criticisms of his city such as those of Gide, than the ‘condescending admiration’ of Loti (p. 213). He wonders why he and other literary Istanbulers had such a fascination with what Western travellers wrote about Istanbul in the nineteenth century. He recalls Flaubert’s novel in which he imagines a civilised Westerner and an Eastern barbarian slowly came to resemble each other and eventually changed places – and decides that it was by ‘falling under their influence and arguing with them by turns that I have forged my own identity’ (p. 260). Istanbul then is a book about seeing oneself through others’ eyes, and at the same time asserting a counter image to that captured by dominant discourses on the Orient (pp 258-264). Returning to Flaubert, Pamuk notes how he visited brothels, despite having syphilis, and studied patients with syphilis chancres in a Cairo hospital but ‘had no intention of exposing his own’ (p. 262-263). Pamuk continues:

Said in his brilliant *Orientalism* [...] makes much of the opening scene in the Cairo Hospital when analysing Nerval and Flaubert, but he fails to mention the Istanbul brothel where the drama ends; had he done so, he might have prevented many Istanbul readers from using his work to justify nationalist sentiment or to imply that, if it weren't for the West, the East would be a wonderful place. Perhaps Said chose to omit it because Istanbul was never a colony of the West and therefore not central to his concerns. (p. 263)

Pamuk considers himself and his city collectively as hiding from Western eyes, from the colonial othering that Said explores in his *Orientalism*. Interpreting the type of othering at play depends on social and historical contexts, as Mills shows when she writes: 'Said implies that "Othering" is an inbuilt psychological mechanism which is simply part of human nature. Every nation attempts to construct other nations with which it is in conflict as the Other'.¹¹ An opposing view is that of Levi-Strauss, for whom Mills says 'the concept of the Other is something which comes to the fore especially at certain historical moments, particularly in colonial expansion'.¹² It must be possible for both to be at play though, contingent on place, time, and context. But neither of the explanations Mills discusses are close enough to describing the notion evoked by Pamuk's melancholy. Even as he sees an affinity between *hüzün* and the melancholy of Levi-Strauss's *Tristes Tropiques*, for Pamuk there is a difference because, while poverty is a common theme to both, in Istanbul:

The remains of a glorious past and civilisation are everywhere visible. No matter how ill kept they are, no matter how neglected or hemmed in they are by concrete monstrosities, the great mosques and other monuments of the city, as well as the lesser detritus of empire in every side street and corner, the little arches, fountains and neighbourhood mosques, - inflict heartache on all who live amongst them.
(p. 91)

Nonetheless, Pamuk suggests that *hüzün* brings the gift of authenticity, saying towards the end of Istanbul that 'the city has no centre other than ourselves' (p. 316). He apprehends

¹¹ Sara Mills, *Discourses of Difference: An Analysis of Women's Travel Writing and Colonialism* (London: Routledge, 1991), p. 88.

¹² Mills, *Discourses of Difference*, p. 88.

this when, repeating the error he found in Tanpinar and Kemal, he tries to paint like Utrillo, whose work he admires (pp. 244-245), saying ‘I was someone who was trying to paint a painting like Utrillo’. It is in his recognition of what it is in Utrillo, the other, that he admires, but something he does not possess, and further still does not desire to copy, that he finds his own identity. He begins to question his love of painting, the creative act that until then would ‘take me to the second world’ (pp. 240-241). It was if someone else had taken up residence in his body:

As I marveled at his work, aspiring to become his equal, another part of my brain was busy inspecting the curves of the branches, the placements of the mountains the composition as a whole [...]. My mind was at the tip of my pen, acting before I could think; at the same time it could survey what I had already done.

But – unlike the chimera of my strange dreamworld - my drawings did not have to be kept secret. Instead I showed them to everyone, anticipating praise and taking pleasure in it. To draw was to find a second world whose existence was not cause for embarrassment.

The world I created through drawing, like the second world in my head, enriched my life; even better, it gave me a legitimate escape from the dusty, shadowy world of everyday life: not only did my family accept this new habit of mine, they accepted my right to it. (pp. 135-136)

There are three worlds at play here; the world he creates through drawing, the world in his head, and the life made richer because of these. But there is another element at play evident in Pamuk’s desire to become the equal of his other, Utrillo. The other here is inspiration for his self in that it will eventually reveal to him what his self should really be doing – writing. For Pamuk, writing creates a home, and a construction of the self as rich as any I have come across in the travel writing genre.

Painting, perhaps because he finds himself needing constant admiration of his work – perhaps not believing in its quality – is supplanted by words, which are a recurring motif in Istanbul. As a five-year-old at the Cihangir House, for example, once Pamuk’s 12-year-old cousin had gone to school, he would take out an old book belonging to his cousin. Written as it is in gothic German script, he is unable to read or understand the words, but traces them by painting their images onto the page. Once he has finished, he ‘rests’ his eyes

by staring at the Bosphorus like the ‘Safevi miniaturists did after drawing thousands of leaves of a great plane tree one by one’ (p. 76). Similarly, when he begins to describe *hüzün* as softening the view like the condensation on a window – an image that recurs a little later when he describes ‘the smoky window between him [the poet] and the world’ (p. 93) – Pamuk says he still takes pleasure in getting up and tracing words on the window with his finger. As he traces out words and figures on the steamy glass ‘the *hüzün* inside me dissipates and I can relax [...] after I have done all my writing and drawing I can erase it all with the back of my hand’ (p. 79). It is as if the writing of these words, followed by their erasure, has psychosomatic effects. The existentialism implied here is apparent too in the chapter title ‘Esaelp gnittips on’ which looks at first glance as if it might be Turkish; in this chapter Pamuk describes all the signs and posters he sees as he walks along the streets of Beyoglu with his mother, and in which letters merge into blocks rather than individual words, causing a second glance at the chapter title, which then reads as ‘No spitting please’, a lovely little play on language as being a medium through which the self comes to know both itself and its other. This chimerical merging of words from the East and West parts at the end of the book, which has a Turkish Index and a General Index, but not before Pamuk has written of how when he is ‘already tired and depressed, the reading machine inside my head will remember every sign from every street [...] run together like a Turkish lament’ (p. 288). Escaping this ‘hybrid hell’ he tries to ‘conjure up a golden age, a pure shining moment when the city “was at peace with itself” when it was “a beautiful whole”’, the city he knows from the works of Melling and Gautier (p. 288), but reason takes over and he recalls precisely that he loves Istanbul ‘not for any purity but precisely for the lamentable want of it’ (p. 288). Writing and painting part ways too, when at the end of the book, he tells his mother he will not be an artist, he is going to be a writer. The catalyst for this revelation comes from his final – and happy – night walking the Beyoglu streets (p. 333). His happiness though, is tinged with great sadness for his mother, who has suffered as the other to Pamuk’s father’s supremely aware self throughout the whole of *Istanbul*, receiving only scant, if sympathetic, consideration from her son.

Pamuk’s physical movement through the streets and restless wandering from one side of the city to the other, tied to his always restless and melancholic mind, act as a balm. He loves the winter and he loves the dark, accustomed as he is to the museum house. He says too that it ‘comforts me to know that for the night at least we are safe from Western eyes, that the shameful poverty of our city is cloaked from foreign view’ (p. 32). The identity that emerges as he recalls and records his life is worked upon by a melancholy that is present at all levels – he says – of the social order, individual, community, nation and transnational. Of course, the flaneur figure springs to mind the more Pamuk walks the streets,

but very much a destabilised and paradoxical flaneur: he is privileged and wealthy and able to drop everything on a moment's whim to walk the streets whenever he chooses; however, he is less voyeur than abject if not clinically depressed wanderer, choosing nocturnally darkened streets rather than the bright city lights and spectacle normally associated with the flaneur. Consider for example some of the self-observations he makes as he wanders 'through the filth of the side streets, the foul smell from open rubbish bins ... disorder and chaos' wondering whether the 'city is punishing me for adding to the squalor' (p. 286). He is 'a corpse that still breathes, a wretch condemned to walk the streets and pavements that can only remind me of my filth and my defeat' (p. 286). The darkest moment for his identity comes when he is in a café and sees his reflection in a large mirror, 'noting how much I resembled Goya's giant – the one who ate his own son' (p. 278). He sees in the reflection too 'a memento of my crimes and sins, confirmation that I was a loathsome toad' (pp. 278-279). Pamuk's deep depression, as he looks at his self-reflection in the window and sees only Goya's brutal giant, is evinced through layers of separation – of the real self from the reflected self, of the cerebral from the corporeal, and viscerally conveyed through art, as the giant bites its own child's head off, an act of destruction through an act of representation. Of all the images and photographs in *Istanbul*, it is this one that conveys the unbearable pain of coming to terms with the self Pamuk is at this particular moment in his life. The words he asked of his Grandmother's photos – 'were you defying death, decay and the passing of time' (p. 13) – are recalled through this Janus-like counterpoint to the numerous photographs of Pamuk, also integral to the text and its movement.

Pamuk declares he is unable to make friends unless he forgets who he is, and when he does this he finds himself looking down on his own creation as if in a dream and 'recoil[s] at the sight of this pretentious idiot' (p. 290). The more he 'turns his gaze inwards, the more it was directed at my mother, my father, my brother and the hordes of relations' – and then abruptly Pamuk reminds us 'but these are the words of a fifty-year-old writer who is trying to shape the chaotic thoughts of a long-ago adolescent into an amusing story' (pp. 290-291). Again, this distancing himself from the text suggests a concern with what its effects might be when it is read by others, especially his Mother, a retrospective, subliminal apology perhaps that he chose his own way in the end, rather than followed her wishes. Nonetheless, he finishes this chapter by writing the words that perhaps the source of his misery was:

Neither the poverty nor the destructive burden of *hüzün*. If from time to time I wanted to curl up in a corner alone like a dying animal, it was also to nurse an

anguish that came from within. So what was this thing whose loss was causing me such misery? (p. 292)

What *does* help to dislodge his misery, though, is *hüzün*. Having laid the ground earlier in a brief aside – when he says Ibn Sina’s description of *hüzün* is to ask for the girl’s name – Pamuk reveals that *hüzün* is assuaged by love. The tone of this chapter, in which Pamuk describes his first love, relieves the melancholy pervading his subjectivity. His girlfriend’s name translates from Persian as the Black Rose, and he is proud that he is the only one who can translate this. Since they have known each other for three years, he thinks she has been attracted to him now purely because of the bad reputation he has cultivated in an attempt to feel part of the group of wealthy young classmates – whom he despises for their new money and brash ways – in his last year at the Robert Academy, an American institute serving the elite and wealthy of Istanbul (p. 294). He asks himself why he held back in this lovely relationship ‘all the impulses I would display so lavishly in future situations like this’ and the answer is because he knew that ‘if I ever married her, I would have to become a factory owner, not an artist’ (p. 299). He describes in exquisite detail how she is different around his friends, who try to establish a rapport with her by making ‘gentle fun’ of him; she ‘wouldn’t play along’ but later tries ‘to appease them’ – like a dance of sorts, in which the steps are out of kilter depending on the emotions that are present at the time. Pamuk writes that at this stage in his life, depending on who he was with, he ‘was a different person, with a different sense of humour, a different voice, a different moral code’, going on to say that he ‘had never set out to become a chameleon...these identities sprang up by themselves’ (p. 280).

In the closing paragraphs of the book, Pamuk argues with his mother about his ‘uncertain future’ (p. 322). It is uncertain because he wants to be an artist, a role his mother dismisses as a waste of time, humiliating in a city of ‘semi-literates’. She will not tell her friends that her son has left his architecture studies to be an artist. She tells Pamuk ‘I used to be like you, when I was young’ - and he is convinced she says this to annoy him (p. 322) implying he does not want to be like her, or, that he does not accept her values, especially in relation to artists. There is a sad contrast here in the apparent hopelessness of her position, as she spends her nights alone (while her husband uses any excuse to stay out late into the night, often staying with his mistress) playing patience ‘not to read my fortune ... I’m doing it to pass the time’ (p. 321), while she is at the same time trying to steer her son towards a bright future (pp. 322-329).

For Pamuk this bright future can only be realised through what he perceives as an authenticity to be found in the creative acts initially of painting, and later of writing.

Earning his living as an artist/writer contradicts the familial as well as social mores obtaining in a city which he says – or rather his mother does – is a place where ‘all artists are crazy’ and creative acts are not admired or deemed worthy of respect (p.326-329). In the end, his narrative prevails over his often-troubling lived experiences, which paradoxically are then the means through which he earns his living. Pamuk’s nocturnal walks through the streets of Istanbul, tied to his psychic melancholic meanderings, reveal how self and other, East and West, are symbiotic. For Pamuk, the act of writing leads to a rich blending of the two.

Istanbul is too, as Pamuk asserts, a ‘book about fate’ (p. 7). Fate colours all our lives. In *Istanbul* Pamuk creates a new discursive space that acknowledges difference and learning and blending with another culture, with all the conflict and problems that entails, ultimately leading to a subjectivity open to more than one worldview. Woven throughout *Istanbul* are complex and affecting notions of home. Istanbul as home, and centre of life is for Pamuk troubled by multiple and competing discourses:

Caught as the city is between traditional culture and Western culture, inhabited as it is by an ultra-rich minority and an impoverished majority, overrun as it is by wave after wave of immigrants, divided as it always has been along the lines of its many ethnic groups, Istanbul is a place where, for the past hundred and fifty years, no one has been able to feel completely at home. (p. 103)

It is clear from his words here just how elusive notions of ‘place’ and ‘home’ are for so many in the twenty-first century. But it is exactly this that helps Pamuk to see Istanbul through the eyes of a foreigner, and is vastly important to his subjectivity since ‘in no small part because it helps me fend off narrow nationalism and pressures to conform’ (p. 217). This comment is reiterated when Pamuk later discusses the Turkish writer Tanpinar and the poet Yahya Kemal, who paradoxically *are* from and do live in Istanbul but are unable to describe the ‘real’ Istanbul because they live away from the areas they are depicting. Pamuk writes:

To savour Istanbul’s back streets, to appreciate the vines and trees that endow its ruins with accidental grace [...] crumbling wall, a wooden tekke - condemned, abandoned and now fallen into neglect - a fountain from whose spouts no water pours, a workshop in which nothing has been produced for eighty years [...] a row of houses abandoned by Greeks, Armenians and Jews as a nationalist state

bore down on minorities, a house leaning to one side in a way that defies perspective [...] a row of houses with crooked window casings - none of these things look beautiful to the people who live amongst them; they speak instead of squalor, helpless, hopeless neglect. Those who take pleasure in the accidental beauty of poverty and historical decay, those of us who see the picturesque in ruins - invariably, we're people who come from the outside.

Pamuk writes: 'what makes the scene beautiful is not the architect's intention but its ruin', which explains why 'so many Istanbulis do not like seeing old wooden mansions restored: when the blackened, rotten wood disappears under bright paint that makes them look as new as they were at the height of the city's glory and prosperity in the eighteenth century, their lovely degenerative connection with the past is severed' (p. 239). Here, Pamuk could be channeling Morris in the value he placed on buildings as representing an important connection with the past, hence his passion that they not be restored into something they were not.

Istanbul also points, then, to the richness and possibility of new directions for the genre of travel writing. This is not simply because *Istanbul* encapsulates so many of the issues that trouble generic definitions – is it autobiography or memoir, fact or fiction, promiscuous or honourable, or, at its best, a form of expressive discourse that is most closely related to the self as constituted through its other, without subsuming difference? I find Pamuk's *Istanbul* richly suggestive of travel writing at its best, since through it he creates a new discourse, of reciprocity through difference, leading to a new, less polemical subjectivity, or at least paths to getting there.

CHAPTER 7

Conclusion: Travelling in Reciprocal Space

This thesis began by seeking a less polemical understanding of Said's self/Other binary. My prior comprehension of this binary as a textual concept was belied by my real and embodied experiences in Bombay and Istanbul. Destabilising and uncomfortable as these were, the recognition that they stemmed from the intersections of race, class, gender and place, led to the realisation that the self-other relationship was mutually constitutive, and, therefore, of the value in seeking out reciprocal rather than dichotomous engagements and encounters.

My thesis contributes to existing scholarship on travel writing in three ways. I first extend Said's binary beyond the hegemonies of race and class it implies, and secondly, beyond its gender bias by arguing not only its lack of address to gender, but also for a mutually constitutive self-other relationship. Third, I deploy Pratt's revised notion of 'contact zones' through a recuperative, somewhat radical, notion of reciprocity in order to posit the self-other relationship as mutually constitutive. Extending Said's insights and deploying Pratt's concept proved richly productive as I sought answers to my questions: What subjectivity does each author project at the start of their journey? How does the self-other relationship evolve in the intercultural spaces discussed in their travel writing? What changes in subjectivity are displayed by the returning self, as evidenced in their writing?

In exploring beyond prevailing theoretical co-ordinates, I drew on the rich work of feminist and postcolonial theorists, including Mills' analyses of how language structures the self in the world; Rose's notion of paradoxical spaces and the ways in which photography works to create a particular subjectivity; and Belsey's reading practice that opens up texts to multiple readings. In the process, I found the structure of Horrocks' edition of Wollstonecraft's *Letters* provided a valuable contextual framework for the other works I considered, along with her insights into Wollstonecraft's subjectivity. Drawing on these scholars enabled me to explore beyond prevailing theoretical co-ordinates. My findings indicate that seeking out reciprocal engagements in these authors' travel writings is a fruitful expansion in the field of travel writing studies.

I began with Wollstonecraft because she so powerfully evokes in *Letters* a will that refused to bend to the limitations her gender imposed on her, and an intellect that forces her reader to rethink assumptions so taken for granted that they are often invisible. As she travels through Scandinavia, at a time when it was still considered by some to be dangerous,

in her self-other encounters she juggles and struggles with: managing a complex, secret, business transaction; having to leave her infant daughter behind; writing well enough to win back the love of her un-named correspondent, as well as earning a living; and challenging almost hourly the dominant hegemonies that held limited views of the capacities of women that her journey utterly negates. She was extraordinary in her own time, not least because the issues she deals with in *Letters* – a work of travel that resonates and is affective on numerous levels – are still germane to the shaping of our own world, over two hundred and twenty years later. Writing becomes Wollstonecraft's home, as she points to the ways in which we might all find an enhanced home.

In my reading of Morris' *Icelandic Journals* I suggested that the reason for his journey would make Wollstonecraft's head and heart sing, because of Morris' concern for his wife, over and above his own feelings, and against prevailing social mores. However odd it may seem that Morris chose to leave his wife behind in their new home, along with her lover so that they could sort out their relationship, it cannot be denied that he, like Wollstonecraft, challenged the ways in which women might carry on their lives. In his intense focus on the Icelandic landscape, the different language he uses in letters to female as opposed to male correspondents, and his grappling with the real versus the imaginary world of the sagas, Morris' travelling and writing lead to a self-transformation that influenced in socially important ways how Morris later engaged in his own life, and his art.

It was art also that drew Byron to Persia, a place whose architecture and people drew from his pen some of the most evocative and scintillating prose I have come across in travel writing. I discussed how the self-other relationships that evolve as Byron attempts to gain entry to the Goharshad Mosque, receives charming and utterly altruistic hospitality as the guest of the Governor of Firuzabad, and fights with Herzfeld over entry to the site at Persepolis, portray the self-other relationship in numerous ways, at such intersections as race and class, and through imperial machinations. His abhorrence of these last, and especially the creeping Nazism he encounters, points to Byron's concern for humanity at large. At the same time, Byron's description of his Persian cross-dressing challenges or at least complicates my notion of reciprocal engagement, since the same mobility and representation available to him would not apply to the Persian teacher who helped Byron. Reciprocity then may shape some of the traveller's subjectivity, but may not be present all the time. I discussed how Byron's travel to and writing about India revealed his deep concern at how skin colour serves as a powerful, but reprehensible, determinant on the self-other dynamic, which he worked hard to subvert, even as he clearly was able to partake of its 'advantages' in gaining entry to the mosque, where reciprocity is subsumed by his Persian cross-dressing.

The subjectivity projected by Naipaul as he travels across and through his ancestral home is troubled, and troubling, to breaking point. From first setting foot in India he uses words to keep his distance from his others. He writes about, rather than for them. I have shown how for much of the time he is in India, he uses words to set up a distance between himself and his others, much as a camera sets up a physical distance between its operator and the subject it frames. This distance I see as being akin to the one he feels exists between his ancestral village and his childhood home, depicted in the photos from Trinidad still in his grandmother's possession. The 'hysteria' he says he feels on numerous occasions is, I have shown, indicative of this distancing. With its long history of being used pejoratively to contain female desire for something other than the known self, Naipaul's use of 'hysteria' suggests that he views a whole society and culture as being sick, a self-other relationship painful beyond endurance. The apparently dichotomous responses his works have drawn reflect a self-other dynamic that begs the question of responsibility for what is written, as well as for the need to view difference through reciprocity. Hoping to find a panacea for the self in his ancestral home, Naipaul is unable to find even a placebo for what ails that self. Perhaps more accurately, since his words evoke such powerful responses, he produces in his reader an awareness of the limits of reciprocity in the face of difference that can be viewed only as difference. It is his writing that saves Naipaul from his despair as he confronts himself and his ancestral other. I find in Naipaul's account of his first visit to his ancestral home another shift in understanding of the self, generated by his over-determined social history and literary brilliance. His use of 'hysteria' suggests that this concept can be applied in different contexts than in relation to the feminine.

Here at the end of the thesis journey, it seems appropriate to finish with Pamuk's marvellous *Istanbul*, for the richness, sensitivity and clarity with which Pamuk makes it clear that we are all *both* self and other, not one *or* the other. I have shown this by examining his interpretation of the notion of *hüzün* and the Turkish tense for 'I have been told' and the potential both hold for pointing to different perspectives and understandings of the world. I discussed Pamuk's portrayal of himself through Goya's giant as being endlessly suggestive, in the art work's brutal separation of the cerebral from the corporeal, echoed by the Pamukian self both reflected in and separated from its other in the café window. and re-joining them through writing, seeing the self in the other, and recognising that the self must always be other to anyone but that same self, thus decentering both. I show how Pamuk's travelling through and writing about his home, Istanbul, seeing it through the eyes of Istanbulis interwoven with many others, serves to heal the psychic split caused by and through the self/Other binary Said identified. Within the pages of *Istanbul* Pamuk examines that binary relationship, without prejudice or malice, only reciprocal or at least

empathetic engagement with all those elements, tropes, and visions through which he portrays his subjectivity. His work in particular has great potential to answer the question not only of whether there is a ‘rift in Western civilization’, posed by Childs and Williams, but in any civilisation. Early in his memoir, Pamuk writes:

I sometimes think myself unlucky to have been born in an aging and impoverished city buried under the ashes of a ruined empire. [...] Mostly I am disinclined to complain: I’ve accepted the city into which I was born in the same way I’ve accepted my body (much as I would prefer to have been more handsome and better built) and my gender (even though I still ask myself, naively, whether I might have been better off had I been born a woman). This is my fate, and there’s no sense arguing with it. This book is about fate (p. 7).

I have explored, then, how these writers perform critical interventions either while they travel, or post-travel, into their own lives and their wider social formations. While it may seem counter-intuitive to have put these seemingly disparate works together, their juxtaposition has revealed surprising links between them, and how their subjectivities are changed as they travel. The Northern landscape, for example, is experienced in quite different ways by Wollstonecraft and Morris; while both travel in part because of troubled relationships at home, Wollstonecraft travels to Scandinavia and writes to earn a living, while Morris travels to experience the landscape evoked in the sagas he loved so deeply. As well, they both portray differing characteristics of the sublime, Wollstonecraft seeking to topple Burkean notions of it, making it more human, while Morris finds the savageness of the Icelandic landscape forces him to question whether he has valued artistic creation over real life. Landscapes then are shown to have agency, even the ability to induce reciprocity.

All of these writers are at times overwhelmed by the landscapes they traverse: Wollstonecraft’s despair, Morris’ depression brought on in part by windchill, Byron’s being ‘overcome’ by endless mud, Naipaul’s hysteria and Pamuk’s ‘monstrous’ reflection in the café window. As Wollstonecraft sits alone in her hotel room in Copenhagen, too depressed to venture out even though the place is new, so too with Naipaul who, threatened by his own hysteria, feels the need to retreat to darkness and anonymity. Where Wollstonecraft feels like an outsider who yet wants to be on the inside, Naipaul projects himself as outsider who wants to retreat even further from the world. Unlike Morris, Naipaul seems compelled to choose his literary creations as an escape *from* ‘real’ life. In

Naipaul's hysteria, and the fact that Morris too uses different language to female correspondents than to males, there is also the suggestion that masculinity is a troubled aspect of the self-other relationship, and one area I think worth further research.

Notions of home, too, recur throughout. Morris voices deep anxiety about just 'how far away I was, unable to get home', and then once he does get home, is 'hardly able to buy his train ticket' so unsure is he of his destination.¹ Wollstonecraft despairs at having no idea of where home might be while at Tonsberg, and there is tension apparent in Byron's fretting about 'the immobility of the loved home to which one returns', destabilising the notion even of what a *loved* home might mean, in the face of returning and changed subjectivities.

By comparing and contrasting the changed subjectivities of the departing with the returning selves depicted by Wollstonecraft, Morris, Byron, Naipaul and Pamuk, I have analysed how their travelling and writing reveal the self-other relationship to be mediated in a range of ways: through landscape, sagas, art and architecture, ancestry, space and place, at the intersections of gender, class, and race and across time. The range of intellects and periods, selves and others, the works encompass has allowed for an exploration not only of works that resonate meaningfully in the twenty-first century as personal works, but which point at the same time to a relationship between self and other that has the potential to heal rifts, if not change worlds. Travelling, and writing about that travelling, and the intercultural engagements it makes possible, is one rich and rewarding path to getting to reciprocal space. The Pamukian self, most of all, with its other reflected in the café window, indicates not only that the relationship between self and other is mutually constitutive, but also points to the richer life that recognition brings. It is his recognition of what it is in the other that he admires, and that he does not possess, and further still does not desire to copy, that Pamuk finds and chooses his subjectivity. Reflections in the window, the self's gaze returned by its other, leads to a transformation of Pamuk's self and a much richer subjectivity. Pamuk's *Istanbul* points to the value of reciprocity in the face of difference, to a new way of looking and being in the world.

¹ Andrew Wawn, *The Vikings and the Victorians: Inventing the Old North in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: D.S. Brewer, 2000), p. 275.

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