

https://dspace.org/

Stories of liminal voyage in the Indian Ocean: Michael Ondaatje's The Cat's Table & Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea

Punt, Charli-Ann

2014-01-28
http://hdl.handle.net10539/13612

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Masters by Dissertation

Stories of Liminal Voyage in the Indian Ocean: Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table* & Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*

Charli-Ann Punt

Plagiarism declaration

1. I know that plagiarism is a serious form of academic dishonesty.
2. I have read the document about avoiding plagiarism, I am familiar with its contents and I have avoided all forms of plagiarism mentioned there.
3. Where I have used the words of others, I have indicated this by the use of quotation marks.
4. I have referenced all quotations and other ideas borrowed from others.
5. I have not and shall not allow others to plagiarise my work.

Name (Printed): _____

Signature _____

Table of Contents

1. Chapter 1: Introduction
   - The Indian Ocean and the Global South
   - Indian Ocean Scholarship: Some Trajectories
   - Scholarship on Anglophone Literatures of Indian Ocean Literature and the Story of Voyage
   - The Philosophy of Voyage
   - Methodology
   - Core Literary Texts
2. Chapter 2: Liminal Voyage as the Centre of Meaning in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*
   - Liminal Voyage aboard the *Oronsay*
   - Infinite Possibility in the Liminal Space of Voyage
   - Self-formation through Dissolving and Re-entering Duality
   - Voyage as Present: The Tying together of Past and Future
3. Chapter 3: On-going Damage and Partial Reparation in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*
   - The Lurking Possibility for Damage on board the *Oronsay*
   - The Liminal Island as Perpetual Voyage: The Importance of Personal Relationships
   - Damage in Displacement
   - Damage and the Trickster
   - Damage in Disguise
   - The Breaker's Yard: Partial Reparation
   - Concluding Remarks: Transformative Potential and Non-duality
4. Chapter 4: Liminal Voyage as Organizing Principle: The Indian Ocean Underworld and Duplicity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*
   - Liminal Voyage as Organizing Principle
   - Liminal Islands and Fragmentation
   - The Indian Ocean Underworld and the Rein of the Trickster
   - Duplicity and Displacement

5. Chapter 5: Alternative Strategies for Subjectivity and Stories as Ruins in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*
    - Configuring Subjectivity in *By the Sea*
    - Darkness and Silence: Markers of Subjectivity
    - Anchors in the Void
    - Concluding Remarks: Stories as Ruins
6. Chapter 6: Conclusion
    - Liminal Spaces in the Indian Ocean and 'Lateral Contrapuntalism'
    - Liminality and the Global South
    - Transformative Potential and the Story of Voyage: Moving beyond Duality

Chapter 1

Introduction

This thesis aims to explore two stories of voyage in the Indian Ocean. These stories are Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table* and Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*. The Indian Ocean has taken its place as an important emerging area of study as it provides a unique vantage point from which to view the emerging phenomena of the Global South. Furthermore, it has achieved significance as a site from which to approach changing geo-political world affairs. The Indian Ocean has also been a site of growing importance in South Africa as elucidating important elements of its history and establishing its linkages across the ocean. However, this growing body of scholarship takes primarily historical, political and economic form. There is as yet relatively little Indian Ocean scholarship on literature. This thesis, therefore, aims to extend that body of scholarship with its special emphasis on the story of voyage.

The story of voyage is useful as it seems to encompass some of the crucial features and themes of the Indian Ocean world. This thesis suggests that voyages operate within a liminal space in both novels. The concept of liminality, which will be unpacked thoroughly through the course of this thesis, refers to a state which operates between stable states of being. Literally, this concept can be used to refer to ship in voyage as physically situated between stable masses of land. However, stories of voyages can also be considered to be ideologically liminal where the physical realities of voyage are used to metaphorically communicate the characters' perceptions and experiences. In this way, stories of voyage in the Indian Ocean do not necessarily require the presence of a literal ship. This is sometimes the case, as in *The Cat's Table*, but not always, as in *By the Sea*. Regardless, in both novels the liminal space of voyage can be regarded as an ideological organizing principle which gives particular shape to the meaning expressed in the novels.

Furthermore, this thesis suggests that the stories of voyage in the novels engage a state of permanent liminality. That is, the conception of liminal periods as only temporary breaks from stability and order does not accurately reflect the experiences expressed in these novels. Rather, these novels speak to a condition in which liminality, as a state produced

by imperialism, is inescapable. The normative imperative that once a particular liminal rite of passage ends a new phase of ordered being must resume ignores the condition of many experiences of modernity which permanently registers this state. Furthermore, just as there is no end to liminality, there is no beginning. These novels both begin on islands which are spaces that in and of themselves have been repeatedly constituted by various runs of imperialism, and like voyage, can be conceptualized as operating within liminality. In this sense, the voyage does not begin once these characters leave the island, but on the island itself. In a state of permanent liminality such as this, the voyage never begins nor ends and becomes a permanent feature of the modern experiences of being expressed in these novels. In this way, the experiences conveyed in these Indian Ocean stories of voyage permit a deeper understanding of certain aspects of the Global South. The modern experiences of voyage in these novels provide an Indian Ocean view of certain subjective experiences of modernity, allowing not only an expansion of Indian Ocean scholarship on literature, but insight into the internal or subjective face of the Global South.

The Indian Ocean and the Global South

As the world begins to move out of the shadow of cold-war politics and American imperialism, demarcated power structures are shifting towards the rising economic powers of Asia, most significantly, India and China. Hofmeyr and Williams (2011: 11) highlight that as we begin to see changes precipitated by this growing shift, questions about the "Global South" become increasingly important. This term has come to refer to a "Third World" that no longer fits the scheme of stark opposition to a "First World" as it is being recognised that the "Third World" in itself is, and always has been, hugely stratified and complex. As Braveboy-Wagner (2009: 2) explains, the term "third world", as coined by Alfred Sauvy in 1952, referred to Africa, Asia and Latin America, that is "people of the countries located roughly in three southern continents and sharing a history of underdevelopment and colonialism." These countries were all multi-ethnic and multi-cultural and most of them moved into being independent nation states between the 1960's and 1980's (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009: 2). Furthermore, as Braveboy-Wagner (2009: 2) explains, "The North-South conflict based on development differences became intertwined with the more prominent East-West ideological divide as the "'West'" and

the "'East"' both competed to grant favours to their respective political allies in the south."

Both before, but especially after the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1989 the Cold War's three world model shifted towards a two world model of developed and developing nations or 'North' and 'South'(Hofmeyr and Williams, 2011: 17). According to Braveboy-Wagner (2009: 3) although the waning of the term "'third world"' can be linked to the global changes of the 1990's "that eliminated the second world as an analytical concept", dissatisfaction with the term began to surface in the 1970's as it seemed to be associated with "stagnation and inequality". Therefore the term "'global south"' began to appear more regularly in UN documentation by the 1970's and by the 1990's and the term "'third world"' became practically obsolete (Braveboy-Wagner, 2009: 3). Although different political emphasis has been placed on different strands of the Global South, it seems evident that there are mutual interests that bind this region (Hofmeyr & Williams, 2011: 17). As Braveboy-Wagner (2009: 3) states, bearing the particularity of each of these nations in mind:

> ….the term "'global south"' is a useful handle by which to analyze a group of countries that –notwithstanding the forces of globalization and the aspirations of liberalisms and forms of cosmopolitanism – continue to see their problems and to construct their narratives, quite differently from those of the developed nations of Europe, North America, and Asia.

While the term itself was not as yet used, early conceptions of the Global South begin to emerge in the Bandung conference held in Indonesia in 1955, where 29 Asian and African Countries gathered to discuss the future of a postcolonial world. It was at Bandung that important ideas of "Third World" solidarity and non-alignment were discussed. For Lee (2010: 16-17), Bandung can be seen as "a pivotal moment placed in the mid-century between colonial and postcolonial periods, between the era of modern European imperialism and the era of the cold war." What was important about this historical meeting point, according to Lee (2010: 9) was that "it summarized an alternate chronology of world events by intellectuals and activists of colour who had been subjected to forms of colonialism, racism and class oppression." Lee (2010: 10) further elucidates that, "at a deeper level, Bandung also served as a culmination of connections and relationships that had crossed the Indian Ocean World for centuries" and that while

attendees of the conference acknowledged immense factors of division between them, their solidarity rested on a "sense of purpose on a shared history of Western aggression".

Therefore, without overstating solidarity between the South or overplaying division, Bandung served as a call for more complex political histories which could accommodate the diverse interactions between East and West across the Global South. These histories have long been subordinated in favour of histories of vertical interactions between the North and South, between coloniser and colonized, which tend to ignore the stratified and complex power relations within the Global South. The idea of the Global South has been accompanied by the rise of transnational studies that transcend the boundaries of conventional area studies and the dualisms of nationalistic postcolonial studies. According to Lee (2010: 21-22) these emerging studies "have shared a common purpose to work against conventional analytic binaries and to push geographic boundaries through critical explorations of how political space is defined." Lee (2010: 22) furthermore indicates that these models can produce new ideas of "political community", i.e. "what its contours, content and viability have been in the context of a postcolonial world beyond the archetype of nations state."

The idea of non-alignment with the West, that is both the first world capitalists and the second world communists, featured importantly in discussions at Bandung and culminated in the formation of the Non-Aligned Movement in 1961, which advocated non affiliation with the demarcated power structures of the cold war and emphasised "Third World" solidarity. However, as Braveboy-Wagner (2009: 2) points out, the term "global south" should not automatically be equated with membership to the Non-Aligned movement as not all third world countries were part of it. Ghosh (2009: 37) notes that the Non-Aligned movement has often been discredited and dismissed "not just as a political failure, but as a minor footnote to the great power rivalries of the Cold War". Ghosh (2009: 37) further states that while it is true that the movement had its shortcomings and failures, "it is also worth remembering that the Non-Aligned Movement as such was merely the institutional aspect of something that was much broader, wider and powerful…the post-war ethos of decolonization, which was a political impulse that had historical roots and powerful cultural resonances." Ghosh (2009: 37) states that "it represented an attempt to restore and recommence the exchanges and

conversations that had long been interrupted by the long centuries of European imperial dominance." What Ghosh's observation points to is that the emergence of the notion of non-alignment, was not only rooted in new found political commonalities between emerging post-colonial states, but a much deeper history that binds parts of the Global South. It is precisely the uncovering of these deeper histories that has given weight to the importance of Indian Ocean studies.

Like Ghosh, other scholars recognise that non-alignment has appeared to become redundant, yet "these nations continued to share strategic objectives and interests" (Hofmeyr and Williams, 2011: 17). This is evidenced by the fact that the Non-Aligned Movement held their tenth summit in Jakarta in 1992 to discuss the changing position of developing countries in the Global South. What emerged from this conference was "the continued need for collective action among these nations" as demonstrated by the "persistence of the Non-Aligned Movement and the growing important of the G-77 group" (Hofmeyr and Williams, 2011: 17). Therefore, according to Hofmeyr and Williams (2011: 17), "The idea of the Global South…will continue to be an important concept that will shape intergovernmental activity, non-governmental organisation priorities and trade agendas."

As previously highlighted, the Indian Ocean is an important arena in which many of the latitudinal, as opposed to the more well documented longitudinal, histories take place. As Hofmeyr (2010: 721) states, "…the Indian Ocean offers a privileged vantage point from which to track a changing world order. The view from the Indian Ocean permits us to look at the lingering effects of the cold war and forward to what some are calling a '"post-American"' world."

Indian Ocean Scholarship: Some Trajectories

The Indian Ocean world has given rise to rich traditions of scholarship some of which have questioned whether the Indian Ocean can be regarded as a unified system for analyses. This work explores whether the Indian Ocean, as an analytical unit, can explain flows of goods, people and ideas as and, therefore, whether or not it can be used to explain social, cultural and historical phenomena. Vink (2007: 41) attempts to define "the numerous, often flexible and permeable, spatial and temporal boundaries or 'frontiers' of

the Indian Ocean world(s)" and surveys the strengths and weakness of using the Indian Ocean as an analytical category. Similarly, Bose (2006: 6) works to define the spatial boundaries of the Indian Ocean which he comes to theorize as an "interregional arena of political, economic and cultural exchange". Kresse and Simpson (2011: 1) emphasize method as they consider some of the epistemological consequences that have abounded in using a comparative approach in the Indian Ocean scholarship.

Furthermore, Indian Ocean scholarship focuses on different sub-regions such as East Africa which from an Indian Ocean perspective forms part of a vibrant set of public spheres which widens understanding of colonial and postcolonial dynamics. This scholarship engages a broad range of concerns. For example, Bertz (2011) considers the role of Hindi Film in Tanzania and the ways in which this opens Tanzania up to the Indian Ocean world, while Brennan (2011) explores the ways in which Indian newspapers open up business opportunities in Africa and Aiyar (2011) looks at the connection between political movements across the realm of the Indian Ocean amongst Africans and Indians. There is also focus on southern Africa, where while there is a long standing tradition of scholarship regarding Indian communities in South Africa (Dhupelia-Mestrie, 2007), it is being recognized that there is much to gain in taking southern Africa's lateral interactions (in addition to the more focussed upon vertical interactions) across the Indian Ocean into account. These include focus on questions such as littorals and port cities, religion and trade and Islam (for some general Indian Ocean discussion of these themes see Pearson 2006, Risso 1995, Bang 2011).

For our purposes, there are two important vectors in this scholarship that pertain to the themes of the Global South set out above. The first relates to the scholarship on the ancient and early modern Indian Ocean world as home to the earliest long-distance, transoceanic networks that were not backed or indeed controlled by one polity or army (in contrast to the Portuguese and subsequent European invaders who made their way in the Indian Ocean world from the late 15th century onwards (Ho, 2004, Bose 2006). This key factor of the Indian Ocean world has famously attracted discussion on the nature of the cosmopolitanism which enabled these long distance circuits. Amitav Ghosh's seminal text *In an Antique Land* (1992) deeply explores this early modern Indian Ocean world in relation to the realities of the modern nation state. Part ethnography, Ghosh

tells the story of the 12th century Jewish merchant Ben Yiju and his slave Bomma. The easy flow of movement and cosmopolitanism in this early modern Indian Ocean world is contrasted with Ghosh's own travelogue which recounts his anthropological fieldwork in Egypt in the 1980's. His account tells of the difficulty faced by rural communities in the crossing of national frontiers. While concentrating on a different part of the Indian Ocean world, Engseng Ho (2004) has examined the workings of the Hadrami diaspora from Yemen. Extending this work, he attempts to articulate the relationship between American imperialism and Al Qaeda by unravelling the deeper entangled histories between Western powers and transnational Muslim diaspora in the Indian Ocean.

This scholarship has established the Indian Ocean arena as a zone with a massive 'archive' of pre-European mobility and movement. The age of European empires extended the volume and extent of this migration. As Lake and Reynolds (2008: 133) have noted, European imperialism occasioned the largest migration in human history with 50 million Europeans, 50 million Chinese and 30 million Indians moving on a forced, semi-voluntary or voluntary basis. The Indian Ocean received a share of this movement which as several scholars have noted, produced concentrations of diasporic intellectuals in most Indian Ocean port cities (Frost 2004, 2002, Bose 2005 and others). This makes up the second important vector in Indian Ocean scholarship that pertains to the themes of the Global South. Summarizing this scholarship, Hofmeyr (2010: 724) states that these public spheres "were rooted in the intellectual and religious activities of the crosscutting diaspora that gathered in the port cities of the ocean…Dedicated to reform, these intelligentsias pursued a variety of universalisms…which they formulated by sharing ideas in periodicals and with visiting intellectuals". The universalisms (which included projects as diverse as Hindu reformism, pan-Islam, and ideals of imperial citizenship) were articulated in the emergent public spheres of the Indian Ocean and produced a world of transnational ideals and global idioms.

This being said, it is important to bear in mind that the emergence of universalisms in the Indian Ocean arena also bears its counterpart of emerging fundamentalisms. As Ghosh (2009: 41) notes "…in many parts of Asia and Africa, we have seen dramatic rise in violent and destructive kinds of fundamentalism, some religious, some linguistic. These movements are profoundly hostile to any notion of dialogue between cultures, faiths and

civilizations." This forms an important part of the emergent Global South and the roots of these contradictions and hostilities may very well be found in a deeper understanding of the histories of the Indian Ocean.

Scholarship on the Anglophone literatures of the Indian Ocean and the Story of Voyage

As the Indian Ocean itself has gained prominence, so has scholarship on the Anglophone literatures of the Indian Ocean world. While this scholarship has yet to be closely systematized, it has started to take shape around a number of nodes and themes. In part, this scholarship has drawn together existing work on different sub-regions of the Indian Ocean world. These include work on South Asian diasporic literatures especially of southern Africa and east Africa (Frenkel 2010, Ojwang 2010) as well as literatures of island regions especially Mauritius which supports a tradition of Anglophone writing as seen in a special issue of *Wasafiri* dedicated to Anglophone writing in Mauritius. As well as publishing English poems by an array of Mauritian writers, this issue focuses on such subjects as the development of English writing in Mauritius (Bhautoo-Dewanarain 2008) and Mauritian writers' relationship to Shakespeare (Toorawa 2008). One Mauritian novelist who has received particular attention is Lindsey Collen who has received two Commonwealth prizes for best book in the African region for the *Rape of Sita* in 1994 and for *Boy* in 2005. The controversy surrounding much of Collen's work has drawn attention from scholars such as Felicity Hand (2011). Another focus has been on the East African littorals, Zanzibar and the literatures (either in English or translated into English) which examine the oceanic themes of this region. This importantly includes the work of Gurnah and its associated scholarship (Seel 2008, Steiner 2010, Helf 2009, Masterton 2010). Equally important has been work from scholars like Tina Steiner (2010) and Meg Samuelson (2010) that examines oceanic and maritime themes in southern African literature.

Alongside this regional emphasis has been scholarship which explores themes of mobility, migrancy and movement in the Indian Ocean arena. As Hofmeyr (2007: 10) notes, the pertinent Indian Ocean theme of "people and passages" "seeks to investigate the movement of slaves, indentured labourers, settlers and migrants over the last three

centuries." As previously mentioned, Ghosh's *In An Antique Land* as well as his novels *The Circle of Reason* and *Sea of Poppies,* are examples of texts that deal with these themes. Much of this literary scholarship inherently incorporates aspects of the story of voyage as it is deeply linked to issues of movement in the Ocean. This work has been pursued under a number of rubrics. Those that are particularly pertinent, and share touch points with the story of voyage are islands and creole identities; the chronotope of the ship and the story of shipwreck.

Much like a ship, an island is a compact space where the omnipresence of the ocean is keenly felt. According to Hofmeyr (2007: 9), "one broad theme in Indian Ocean studies has been the idea of the island as an epitome of Indian Ocean experiences of slavery and indenture." Similarly, the space of the ship also often functions as an embodiment of various forms of migration. According to Gupta (2010: 276), it may be useful to think of the Indian Ocean islands as a "regional cultural corridor", that is, "as a space of changing flows and circuits (both local and global) of people, things and ideas." Once again, the space of the ship also operates as a space for these sorts of flowing circuits. Therefore, it is possible to see that the narratives of islands and ships may intersect in many ways.

Other important island themes in the Indian Ocean include that of trying to uncover various creole identities. Hofmeyr (2007: 9) notes:

> Much scholarship has sought to understand the islands as Creole spaces, as the histories of people without reference to nation: a kind of ultra-Caribbean model of European, African and Asian traditions being violently brought together.

Furthermore, Hofmeyr (2007: 9) elucidates that these creole identities include Caribbean ideas such as 'creolite' or 'antillanite' which are made inclusive to Indian Ocean experiences. Other more indigenous Indian Ocean ideas include the Mauritian idea of 'Indienoceanisme' and 'coolitude' (Hofmeyr, 2007: 9). Hofmeyr (2007: 9-10) further explains that the concept of 'coolitude':

> …shapes itself in relation to 'negritude', but recognizes that 'negritude' does not account for the complexity of post-abolition societies, particularly as these developed in the Caribbean and Indian Ocean. It seeks to revalorise the term 'coolie', turning a term of abuse against itself in a form of empowerment.

Markedly, Bragard notes, "Coolitude is not based on Coolie as such but relies on the nightmare transoceanic journey of Coolies, as both a historical migration and a metonymy of cultural encounters" (Bragard qtd. in Carter and Torabully, 2002: 15). In this way, there seems to be an intrinsic connection between the stories of islands and voyages. While the themes of migration, and its resulting diasporas, and islands play a pertinent role in the literature of the Indian Ocean and has interesting touch points with the idea of voyage, there are specific instances of literary criticism which point to some deeper features of the story of voyage.

Steiner (2009) uses the chronotope of the ship in Mahjoub's 1998 novel *The Carrier* and Gurnah's 2001 novel *By the Sea* to test the "…intriguing conception of an Indian Ocean culture of compromise and relational multilingualism…" as derived from the multilingual littoral trading networks described in Ghosh's *In An Antique Land*. She posits:

> The space between languages then could become the site of alternate subjectivities, for transformation and self-translation, because it resists the limitations imposed by possessive communities of belonging. (Steiner, 2009, 50)

What is noteworthy about the transformative possibilities of multilingualism put forth by Steiner (2009: 50) is that she sees these possibilities as "encapsulated in the chronotope of the ship, carrying and connecting, moving to and fro, traversing literal and metaphorical borders." Steiner (2009: 50) suggests that the particular conditions that exist in the space of the fictional voyages under discussion, that is, "conditions of disorientation, physical violence and the impact of regimes of power", "assert the limits of relation…which discursively regulate and curtail the space to imagine alternate subjectivities." It is within the chronotope of the ship that the possibility for creating alternate subjectivities resides. In other words, it is the chronotope of the ship that lends these fictional voyages their transformative power.

Bakhtin describes a chronotope as "organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel" in which the knots of narrative are "tied and untied". It is to chronotopes that Bakhtin endows "the meaning that shapes narrative." (Bakhtin in Steiner, 2001: 49) In this way, the chronotope of the ship is one that shapes voyage narratives in such a way that it opens up transformative possibilities.

Titlestad's and Kissack's (2007: 214) work on shipwrecks, specifically an enquiry into the narratives of the wreck of the Grosvenor, reveals the way in which shipwreck "functions as a trope in South African literature and historiography in order to facilitate varied enquiries into the actual, potential and hypothetical relations between colonisers and colonised." Titlestad and Kissack (2009: 214) are interested in the ways in which the trope of the shipwreck unsettles the power dynamics between white settlers and black inhabitants as "the situation both resembles and differs from the organized arrival of white settlers from the sixteenth century on." Titlestad and Kissack (2007: 214) continue:

> The narratives reiterate the symbolic moment at which colonialism begins, but also present temporary inversions of the colonial economy power. The demotion of white individuals to abjection, this stripping them of the trappings of power and civilization on which settler ontology depends, creates a crisis which is overcome either through a melancholy fate (death or disappearance into the interior), or through a robust assertion of power even in such adversity…

While Titlestad and Kissack seems to be concerned with the trope of the shipwreck as the embodiment of the limits of civilization and the inversions which happen in this undefined space, some parallels may be drawn with the story of voyage and the possibilities it holds.

Titlestad and Kissack point to the dual possibilities that arise in the trope of shipwreck: that is both the possibility of "a melancholy fate" and the possibility of "a robust assertion of power". While a story of voyage does not operate at the same limits of civilization that is invoked by the trope of the shipwreck, it nonetheless operates in a space unhinged from society. There is an in-between-ness in both the space of shipwreck and in the space of voyage in that the possibilities for destruction and transformation co-exist. This seems to be an important feature of the space of voyage, that is, the coexistence of dual possibility.

Samuelson's (2010: 258) investigation into the trope of charades in M.K. Jeffrey's body of work on "South Africa's creole, oceanic heritage" also points to a pertinent feature of the story of voyage. Samuelson (2009: 259) asks:

> To what extent can the act of oceanic travel between locations, and that which it freights, be illuminated through a trope that speaks of standing temporarily in an-

> other place and enacting a range of roles in order to produce a shared word (and, perhaps, shared world)?

The notion of "temporarily standing in another space" in which you are expected to enact a number of roles to convey meaning acts similarly to the space of voyage. Voyage stands outside of society and its norms, yet at the same time imposes a set of accepted behaviours and duties in order for the "world" of the voyage to make sense, or if one likes, for meaning to be conveyed. Samuelson (2010: 259) discusses the way in which charades sets in motion a scene "in which a range of readings are thrown into play as the meaning of the word is dislocated into its syllabic constituents." She continues to describe this process as follows:

> Docking, like successful voyage, on the solid ground of a single meaning, yet one that by being returned to the signifier of the word remains in turn opaque, it will slip along a signifying chain or depart on another passage, before coming in to port once again, ad infinitum. (Samuelson, 2010: 259-260)

The metaphor invoked here between arriving at the signified word in a game of charades and a ship docking ashore is revealing. Both the space of charades and the space voyage seem to operate outside any notion of fixity. There is flexibility to the boundaries out at sea as there is when playing a game. However, Samuelson points to another interesting feature here which seems transferable to the story of voyage. She invokes the idea of infinity, that is, that the signifier sought in a game of charades will perpetually move through meaning. Another way of getting at this would be to say that the game of charades only exists or is only possible, in the moment in which it is played. In this sense it exists in an infinite space. Similarly, a voyage only exists when it is in a state of motion. It ceases to exist when it docks and hence will forever be departing "on another passage." This quality of infinity and eternity seems to be an important feature of the space of voyage and will play an important role in the meanings that the story of voyage will give rise to. Furthermore, the notion of the infinity also ties into the idea of presence. In other words, voyage only exists in a constant state of motion and this motion is something that can only be fully experienced and comprehended within the present moment. This too seems to be a feature which occurs in the story of voyage.

Clearly broad Indian Ocean literary themes such as migration and islands have important intersection points with the story of voyage. Yet there seem to be deeper features which

exist within the space of voyage itself which will influence the way in which the story of voyage will generate meaning in the selected novels. These features include the notion of voyage as a space of transformation and alternative subjectivities, voyage as a space of dual possibilities as well as voyage embodying certain conceptions of infinity and presence.

The Philosophy of Voyage

While it is possible to distinguish some of these features from scholars who have dealt with parallel or intersecting literary themes, there is not as a yet a direct investigation into the story of voyage in literature of the Indian Ocean. However, there is work on the voyage fiction in other academic traditions, predominantly in relation to the ancient Mediterranean and the modern Atlantic. In order to get a better handle on some of the deep features of the story of voyage, that is to say those features which may be applicable to a range of oceans, it may be useful to examine some of the elements of voyage that have been uncovered in these traditions.

Much of the work of voyage fiction centres on a particular work or author, such as *The Odyssey* or Joseph Conrad. There have however been a few attempts to consider this body of work as a whole as a way to gain insight into the meaning yielded by stories of voyage. One such attempt is seen in Gove's 1975 book *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction*, which attempts to define the notion of the "imaginary voyage" and to create an annotated checklist of 215 Imaginary Voyages from 1700 to 1800, which he sees as the age of imaginary voyages. He endeavours to debunk some of the rigid and contradictory definitions of the genre at this time. Gove (1975: vii) admits that while no definite definition is possible, "the imaginary voyage constitutes an organic, shifting division of fiction, recognizable, but indefinable as a static, fixed, exclusive genre." In describing his research journey, in the third person, Gove (1975: 3) states that:

> …many of these voyages were unified not so much by the fact that they were voyages as by the fact that they were evidence of the activity of the human mind, and he found that the voyage-form was basically an often-employed vehicle which took all knowledge to be its province. Its study became a part of the history of locomotion and of human aspiration, and its scope led into the realms of geographic knowledge and discovery, of philosophy, of political science, of sociology, of religion, and, in addition, of such a comparatively minor matter as

> the development of fiction from folklore to geographic myth through romance of adventure to novel.

What a hundred years of voyage narrative seems to reveal to Gove is that it is a genre as mutable as the sea itself, the tide constantly changing to reflect particular historical concerns. The imaginary voyage as a literary trope become vessel for human consciousness as it attempts to make sense of the world it is faced with. What Gove reveals is a broader concern than the growth of voyage texts as the story of voyage comes to reflect much larger patterns of human development.

A more recent book by Margaret Cohen (2010), *The Novel and the Sea*, attempts to understand the history of the novel in relation to the sea as opposed to the more established practice of viewing novels in relation to nations and territories. Her investigation encounters the rise of the novel as part of a transatlantic history from Robinson Crusoe, to James Fennimore Cooper's modernizing of the adventure novel in postcolonial America, to Jules Verne's development of the adventure novel at sea into science fiction. She further considers Melville, Hugo and Conrad and the rise of spy fiction in novels of the sea. Cohen (2010: 10) notes that the "while sea adventure novels evolve into other genres, "sea fiction remains alive into our present" (Cohen, 2010: 10). She continues:

> While the ethos of craft [that is, seafaring craft] continues to appeal to the twenty-first century, its significance is now nostalgic. Rather than modelling the capacity needed to practice modernity's emerging frontiers, sea fiction yearns for embodied, multidimensional human agency in an increasingly abstract and specialized world, dominated by vast forces of society and technology beyond the individual's comprehension and control which are the man-made equivalents to the world's oceans. With this last nostalgic turn of craft, path-breaking Odysseus becomes exiled Odysseus longing to return home. (Cohen, 2010: 10)

Cohen makes a similar point to Gove here in her recognition that sea voyage narratives reflect the ideological voyages through which people make sense of their particular agency. Sea voyages have lost their literal impetus in signalling the physical imperative towards expanding geographical frontiers, yet they remain stories which signal the unknown. The vast mystery of the ocean's waters has been replaced by the indefinite and incomprehensible texture of the modern world. In this light, stories of voyage can very well be seen to incorporate stories where there is no literal presence of a ship, as we will

discuss in relation to *By the Sea*, but rather ideological stories of voyage which engage characters coming to terms with the way in which they inhabit a fragmented world.

A particular useful study, Robert Foulke's 2002 book *The Sea Voyage Narrative* explores the various voyage narrative traditions that have manifested in Western thought including navigation and the oral narratives in *The Odyssey*, the sea quest *Moby-Dick* and *The Old Man and the Sea*, voyages of endurance in Conrad's *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* and brief look at voyage narratives in the twentieth century. From this body of enquiry, Foulke (2002) draws out some ideas about the nature of voyaging, that is, an examination of the deep features of voyaging.

Foulke (2002: 1-2) begins by unravelling "human attitudes toward the sea" which reveal the sea as both attracting and repelling, "calling us to high adventure and threatening to destroy us through its indifferent power." Conrad's *The Mirror of the Sea* captures a range of human attitudes' to the sea from its unfriendly nature to the ominousness of vanishing ships (Foulke, 2002: 2-4). There is also a sense of having to escape the bondage of the sea as seen in *The Odyssey*, juxtaposed with Tennyson's *Ulysses* eager to set off for adventure (Foulke, 2002: 5-6). Furthermore, *Moby Dick* plays with the motif of the sea as haunted (Foulke, 2001: 7). Foulke (2002: 7) suggests that these continuous attitudes may account for some of the "the persistent themes of voyage narratives." Furthermore, these themes seem to develop into a series of literary paradigms (Foulke, 2002: 10). While some of these paradigms have lost their impetus, many are still prevalent in stories of voyage in the Indian Ocean.

Paradigms that share touch points with the concerns of this thesis include the notions of the small world of the ship representing the institutions of larger society; "a microcosm for society as a whole" (Foulke, 2002: 11). Foulke (2002: 11) explains that "the usual action is a sudden increase in entropy, a revolution – or mutiny in shipboard terms…" There are elements this paradigm in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table* if one is to regard the boys' interaction with the adults on board as representations of interactions with "types" of people to be found in society, thereby informing their larger education. Yet this does not seem to account for the main thrust of the novel which is more

introspective in nature. Regardless, it is worth noting how this classic paradigm appears in modern stories of voyage in the Indian Ocean.

Another literary paradigm that has relevance to this thesis is that of initiation. Foulke (2002: 11) states, "in its simplest form, an initiation at sea puts a young person (usually a boy until recent decades) into an unfamiliar situation, tests his or her worth in crisis, and rewards those who pass muster with full acceptance as adults." There are very important manifestations of this paradigm in Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*. As will be later discussed, the idea of voyage as liminal that is, moving from one state to another is important for an understanding of how meaning unfolds in this novel. While these paradigms provide some touch points, these novels seem to revitalize and complicate these paradigms within its particular Indian Ocean context. What is more germane to these stories of voyage is a discussion of the nature of voyage uncovered in these traditions, as these deep features may have a wider berth of applicability.

Within in all these attitudes to the sea and literary paradigms, there seems to be a sense of being caught between dual states. Furthermore, the dualisms that abound in stories of voyage seem to be intrinsically entangled with the experience of being at sea. As Foulke (2002: 9) states, "Although the vision of those at sea is bounded by a horizon and contains a seascape of monotonous regularity, what is seen can change rapidly and unpredictably." The seafarer is forever caught between the monotony and danger of the sea. Foulke (2001: 9) makes the observation that these contradictions also appear in seafarers sense of time and space. He states:

> Unlike the land, the sea never retains the impress of human civilization, so seafarers find their sense of space suggesting infinity and solitude on the one hand and prisonlike confinement on the other. That environment contains in its restless motion lurking possibilities of total disorientation: In a knockdown walls become floors, doors become hatches…. [Yet at the same time] Voyages also suggest larger patterns of orientation because they have built-in directionality and purpose, an innate teleology. We embark on voyages not only to get somewhere but also to accomplish something… (Foulke, 2001: 9-10)

Foulke (2002: 9) suggests that seafarers conception of time is equally caught between opposing forces as time at sea is both linear and cyclical. He states:

> Time is linear in the sense that voyages have beginnings and endings, departures and landfalls, starting and stopping points in the unfolding chronology of time; yet time is also cyclical, just as the rhythm of the waves is cyclical, because the pattern of a ship's daily routine, watch on and watch off, highlights endless recurrence. (Foulke, 2002: 9)

This then makes tangible the persistent feeling of being 'caught between' which seems to be a feature of many stories of voyage. Contradiction is writ into the very perception and construction of time and space, the two axes by which humans have learned to make sense of their world. Space is at once limited and infinite while time is both regulated and eternal. The space of voyage forever navigates between these dualities.

However, just as duality seems to be a prominent feature of the story of voyage, so too is the possibility to dissolve opposites or move toward non-duality. Within the dual constructs of language we are programmed to think of finite space and infinity and transient time and eternity as opposites. This seems to misconstrue the essential nature of infinity and eternity. As Wilbur (1977: 77) explains, the finite is not the opposite of the infinite, rather it is "but an excerpt from it as infinity is all inclusive [and] has no opposite." He continues:

> Thus the "spaceless" Infinite, in its entirety, is present at every single point of space, and therefore, to the Infinite, every point of space is absolutely HERE…. The infinite is thus not the opposite of finite being, but rather its "ground", and so between the infinite and the finite there is absolutely no boundary. (Wilber, 1977: 77)

In much the same way, eternity is present at every point of transient or linear time. As Wilbur (1977: 79) states, "…Eternity is to time what Infinity is to space…. Thus, from the viewpoint of Eternity, absolutely all time is now." This is reminiscent of Wittgenstein's conception of the eternal. He states, "if we take eternity to mean not infinite temporal duration but timelessness, then eternal life belongs to those who live in the present "(Wittgenstein in Wilbur, 1977: 86). The space of voyage, in constantly moving between opposing forces, seems to possess the ability to break the boundary between these forces. A voyage only exists in a perpetual state of motion, that is, it is always present. In this way, voyage is able to approach the infinite and the eternal, not as a counterpoint to the finite and transient, but as an embodiment of the HERE and NOW. While it is impossible to articulate a place of non-duality within the dual

constructs of language, it is possible to appreciate the ways in which the boundary between dualisms have the potential to collapse in the space of voyage and move toward non-duality.

The reason why it is so difficult to speak of the non-dual is that it is rooted in the HERE and the NOW, in other words, it is rooted in experience and not in the representation of experience as this automatically implies the introduction of the dual structures of language and thought. One way of anchoring the ways in which the space of voyage is able to move toward non-duality is by recognising the close relationship that exists between representation and experience in stories of voyage. Foulke (2002: 12-13) observes that throughout literary paradigms of voyage and their modulations:

> An unusually close relationship exists between historical accounts of voyages and literary fictions based on them…. They seem to be isomorphic with the experience of voyaging itself, in the sense that a map resembles the landscape it surveys.

Titlestad (2009: 1) reiterates this sentiment in recalling Philip Edwards 1994 book on *The Story of Voyage: Sea Narratives in Eighteenth-Century England* in which the examples Edwards considers:

> reveal the textual mediation of the experience of voyaging: in all of their aspects, journeys are understood through – if they are not directly guided by – prior descriptions. Voyaging and narrating are, it seems from his case studies, inextricable.

What is significant about the close relationship between stories of voyage and the experience of voyage is that is holds the possibility of collapsing duality and moving toward non-duality. This is precisely because of the primacy of experience in stories of voyage. This too seems to be a deep feature of voyage and will be important for understanding the ways in which meaning is realised in Indian Ocean stories of voyage. As Foulke (2002: 13) states, "Some of the classics of sea literature have been forged nearly whole in the smithy of experience."

In addition to the existence of dual possibility and the potential to move toward non-duality in stories of voyage, the possibility of configuring alternate ways of being or alternate subjectivities is also a prevalent feature. In step with Blumenberg, Titlestad (2009: 5) states:

> …voyages provide a matrix of metaphors for the representation of a variety of ontological and epistemological dispositions and practices. Journeying across the vast expanse of the ocean – traversing the formless liquidity of the depths in the fragile form of a ship – can suggest anything from the glory of providence to the unutterable terror of skimming across a void. As travellers contend with the peril of voyaging, they harness their inner resources: their faith, their science, their hubris and their politics. As we travel, so we are. We can, in other words, trace a history of subjectivity, faith, knowledge and existential convictions by considering the ways in which voyagers have given meaning to their experience, or, in one version at least, have been willing to face its meaninglessness.

"As we travel, so we are." The existence of voyage in the present, the here and now, the non-dual space of experience, seems to indicate a certain way of being. As seafarers navigate between the dualisms present in the space of voyage, they move between different conceptions of themselves or alternate subjectivities. In this way, the space of voyage can be seen to hold possibilities of creation and destruction, of regression and growth and, ultimately, the possibility of transformation. These deep features of voyaging will be essential for achieving a more complete understanding of the way in which meaning is realized in the selected texts.

As previously mentioned, these theorisations of the voyage have largely been formulated in relation to the ancient Mediterranean or the modern Atlantic. To what extent can we apply them to the Indian Ocean world with is traditions of dhow cultures and Muslim seafaring (Pearson 2003, Sheriff 2010), followed by European sailing and steam ships (Hyslop 2009, Wenzlhuemer & Offerman 2012)? These different sets of seafaring technologies all accompany particular sets of Indian Ocean politics as they relate a very specific context of voyage. How can the deep features of the story of voyage, uncovered in relation to other oceans, relate to these different sets of Indian Ocean seafaring traditions? In other words, how do we distinguish Indian Ocean stories of voyage from stories of voyage in other oceans?

Pearson (2003) uncovers certain distinguishable elements of the Indian Ocean, what he calls "deep structure". The elements of this deep structure include certain topographical and climatic characteristics. These include monsoons, climatic changes, currents, tides and waves which all "facilitated and constrained the circulation of people, who carried with them goods and ideas." (Pearson 2003: 18-27). It is possible to conceive of a particular Indian Ocean voyaging experience as assembled by these deep structures in

constant interplay with the particular sets of people traversing its waters. For example, Pearson (2003: 44) discusses the fact that "Normative statements in both Hindu and Muslim cultures reflect a profound hostility to or distrust of the sea." In fact the Manusmriti imposes certain penalties for crossing the Black Waters. This introduces the characteristic Indian Ocean seafaring phenomenon wherein travel of the ocean was predominantly practised by Hindus of lower caste (Pearson, 2003: 44). Another particular Indian Ocean seafaring experience is uncovered by Hyslop (2009: 49) who discusses the advent of steam ships as introducing new sets of labour (African and Asian) on board British steam ships which undermined British seamen's established positions. For Hyslop (2009: 49), this "steam empire" created a "set of overlapping webs, comprising the shipping companies, British diasporic labour and Indian Ocean seafarers" which generated racialized politics giving rise to much conflict. This too, in conjunction with deep structural elements of the Indian Ocean would have shaped a particular Indian Ocean seafaring experience. In this way, it is possible to see how Indian ocean voyaging experiences in and of themselves can be deeply disparate, an another example of which is uncovered by Pearson (2009: 680) in addressing the differences between class, authority and gender on European as compared Asian ships in the early modern period. Wittgenstein's notion of family resemblances is useful here. It argues that things may not be connected by one essential common feature but rather by a series of overlapping similarities (Mandelbaum, 1965: 219-220). In this sense, the Indian Ocean is not unique unto itself, but consists in a series of features, not all of which have to be present at one time.

Other oceans too can be said to have specific deep structures (some of which will be the similar to the Indian Ocean) which create a particular voyaging experience in tandem with the particular sets of people (some of which will be similar to the Indian Ocean) who cross its waters. In this way, it is possible to consider that all oceans have pools of features which intersect with or differ from features of other oceans. Similarly, the features of stories of voyage uncovered in relation to other oceans will overlap with features of stories of voyage in Indian Ocean. This being said, it is important to bear the particular Indian Ocean context of each novel in mind when considering these deep features of voyage.

It is also important at this point to draw attention to an important semantic distinction. This thesis seeks to examine stories of voyage IN the Indian Ocean and not to examine Indian Ocean stories OF voyage. This distinction is important because Indian Ocean stories OF voyage suggest that Indian Ocean voyages need to be theorized as distinct from voyages in all other oceans. As discussed, the Indian Ocean has both similarities and differences with other oceans and to theorize its particular set of voyages as analytically distinct is a task that lies beyond the scope of this thesis. Instead, this thesis seeks to examine stories of voyage IN the Indian Ocean. Rather than having to theorize an analytically distinct category which pertains only to Indian Ocean voyages, examining stories of voyage IN the Indian Ocean allows this thesis to look at how these two particular stories of voyage function within their Indian Ocean contexts, whilst drawing on overlapping deep features of voyage uncovered in other traditions. Historians of the Indian Ocean have made a similar distinction (Horden and Purcell: 2000). As Hofmeyr, Kaarsholm & Frederiksen (2011: 4) explain, writing histories "of" the Indian Ocean implies an ambitious project which must "explain the ocean as a unified and discreet system." On the other hand, histories "within" the ocean refer to "a slice explained in arena of the ocean" (Hofmeyr, Kaarsholm & Frederiksen, 2011: 4). The latter is a much more manageable project and is in line with the aims of this thesis. That being said, it is important to mention that the stories of voyages in these novels do extend beyond the bounds of the Indian Ocean. Both novels begin on Indian Ocean islands and end up in England, ultimately including several different oceans in their geographic trajectories. As discussed, the features of stories of voyage overlap with features of stories in voyage in other oceans. Therefore, this thesis aims to examine stories of voyage in their particular Indian Ocean context whilst comparing and contrasting these experiences of voyage across the different sets of oceans that these novels traverse, both physically and metaphysically.

Furthermore, while cognisant of this issue as a historical problem, the thesis argues that we can usefully apply larger ideas of voyage to the novels under discussion on several grounds. Firstly both texts are novels rather than historical treatises and they hence deploy the idea of voyage narratologically and aesthetically. Indeed as we argue in relation to *By the Sea*, the novel does not devote any attention to scenes on board ships.

Sea voyages are certainly important in setting the plot in motion and driving it forward but the actual historical details of these voyages are not important. With regard to *The Cat's Table*, the voyage is undertaken on an ocean steamer, the experience of travelling on which would have been largely similar across seas. However, within this framework, Ondaatje does highlight Indian Ocean themes, namely that of the island while the geography of passing from the Indian Ocean to the Red Sea to the Mediterranean form part of the novel's architecture, as the chapters on the novel indicate.

Methodology

The logic of selecting the texts has been driven by a number of considerations. The first of these is the informal anglophone 'canon' on the Indian Ocean that is starting to emerge and which generally comprises Conrad, Ghosh and Gurnah as its core. However, given that studies of Anglophone Indian Ocean literatures are in an early stage, it seems useful to keep the field open and to extend the range of texts that could possibly be included. This thesis consequently uses one 'canonical' text by Gurnah and matches it with a recent novel by Ondaatje which the thesis suggests, could be as worthy an entrant in the 'canon' as the names listed above. The choice has also been dictated by a concern with islands – both novels are on some level stories originating and ending on islands – Zanzibar, Sri Lanka and Great Britain. Clustering these texts enables a wider exploration of this theme.

The concerns set out earlier with exploring lateral relations within the Indian Ocean world have likewise informed the choice of texts. The trajectory of Indian Ocean scholarship and its associated ideas are useful to the particular aims of this thesis in that it invokes a special type of reading. This reading requires attention to the detailed connections across the ocean and do not rest within the dualisms of postcolonial discourse and area studies. Without negating the importance of the history of North to South relationships across the ocean, the antique histories of the Indian Ocean have prompted an interest in the neglected histories of colony to colony and South to South interactions. The complex and cross cutting nature of these horizontal interactions have meant that scholarship of this region has had to find new ways to speak. When reading texts within the Indian Ocean arena, there is a need for a patient appreciation of the

complex nature of these lateral relationships. To simply read in one direction, that is, from the perspective of North to South, or coloniser to colonised (or vice versa) does not suffice as it ignores the reality of the complexity of the Indian Ocean arena. There is always a counterpoint, not to be used as a stagnant frame of opposing definition, but rather to be incorporated in a constant flow of counter relation. Furthermore, these counterpoints flow in multiple directions simultaneously. In music, counterpoint refers to "having two or more independent but harmonically related melodic parts sounding together" (www.thefreedictionary.com/contrapuntal, accessed 2012/08/14). The relations across the Indian Ocean can be thought of in a similar way. Every point is independent in having its own particularity or context, yet cannot be fully understood without its requisite "melodic parts."

This method of comparison in the Indian Ocean world could well be termed a 'lateral contrapuntalism' sounding off Said's original conception of the term. The concept of contrapuntal reading was first used by Said in his essay 'Reflections on Exile' and later developed in *Culture and Imperialism* (Chowdry, 2007: 104). Edward Said's idea of contrapuntal involves reading in which metropolitan and colonial/post-colonial sound off each other and has been widely used across disciplines. Chowdry (2007: 104) explains that Said's development of the concept of contrapuntality was developed in response to critics of Orientalism who argue that Said focuses primarily on Western culture thereby ignoring the "resistance and agency of the colonized." Chowdry (2007: 104) continues:

> Through a contrapuntal reading, Said engaged in a 'reading back to uncover the 'submerged but crucial presence of empire in canonical texts' and to demonstrate 'the complementarity and interdependence instead of isolated, venerated or formalized experience that excludes and forbids the hybridizing intrusions of human history.' Unlike univocal readings in which the stories told by dominant powers become naturalized and acquire the status of 'common sense', a contrapuntal reading demonstrates 'a simultaneous awareness both of the metropolitan history and of those other histories against which (and together with which) the dominating discourse acts.'

Michael Titlestad has recently applied contrapuntalism to the Indian Ocean. He read Amitav Ghosh's Indian Ocean detective novel *The Circle of Reason* by comparing Assistant Superintendent of Police Jyoti Das to Sir Arthur Conan Doyles' Sherlock Holmes (Michael Titlestad, 2010: 363). Titlestad (2010: 363) recognizes the distance and

differences between these narrative traditions and is prompted to ask the point of comparing these two figures. He answers as follows:

> A contrapuntal reading - which places the epistemological and political aspirations of metropolitan nineteenth-century detective fiction in relation to a specific post-colonial counterpoint – allows us to discern, in the way that they sound off one another, a range of themes. (Titlestad, 2010: 363)

This is precisely the sort of strategy that is prompted in the complex arena of the Indian Ocean comprised of multiple connections. The complex links across the ocean means that texts can be illuminated in all sorts of new and cross-cutting ways. Titlestad (2010: 363) continues:

> Contrapuntal enquiry, as elaborated by Edward Said, acknowledges that colonial and post-colonial intellectual history is best understood in terms of overlaps, entanglement and circulation, rather than more regulating dynamics of dependence, inheritance, influence, derivation and mimicry.

Titlestad's contrapuntal enquiry into Ghosh's *The Circle of Reason* is an example of having to find new strategies for speaking to the complexities of the Indian Ocean arena which draw on multiple traditions which resonate in this space. Furthermore, it points to the need for more nuanced investigation into the colonial and post-colonial histories of the ocean which does not solely reside in the binary models of "dependence, inheritance, influence, derivation and mimicry" as these dynamics indicate a one way relationship or static counterpoint. Rather, it is the dynamics of "overlaps, entanglement and circulation" which will offer a more complete appreciation of the Indian Ocean arena and its texts. This thesis extends the idea of contrapuntalism from a north/south, metropole/colony axes to the rich world of lateral networks within the Indian Ocean world by comparing and contrasting two texts which might otherwise not be drawn together.

This comparative impetus has been recognized as important in Indian Ocean studies. Burton (forthcoming: 2-3) in line with Kuasn-Hsing Chen's 2010 book, *Asia as Method*, suggests that the Indian Ocean, like Asia, has always been defined in relation to somewhere else. That is, neither Asia nor the Indian Ocean has been regarded as sites of comparative studies in their own right. These sorts of comparative studies are vital to build knowledge in a particular field. As Chen states, "Asia refers to an open-ended imaginary space, a horizon through which links can be made and new possibilities can be

articulated" (Chen in Burton, forthcoming: 3). The Indian Ocean arena operates in much the same way. As Burton (forthcoming: 2) states in reference to the Indian Ocean:

> Were it not so self-evident, one might venture to say that this combination of worldliness and water represents, if not a new wave of historiographical possibility, then at the very least a major investigative current for 21st century historical studies seeking to think beyond the landlocked nation-state and beyond terra firma that has been its presumptive ground.

In terms of literature, the Indian Ocean opens up an experimental ground upon which Indian Ocean texts can be placed alongside each other, in their own right, to see what emerges. This is the method that this thesis will employ. These two contemporary Indian Ocean novels will be placed alongside each other with close attention to what these stories of voyage reveal about the experience denoted in each text. Furthermore, each text will be closely considered in terms of its Indian Ocean context, which is deeply invested in both lateral and vertical connections, and associated themes. This thesis will also employ a method of close reading. Whilst tracing the significance of the features of the stories in voyage in each text, we will also attend to the unique vision of each writer by paying close attention to the particularities of the experiences denoted in the texts.

Such comparative work is important since it becomes one way of enriching and extending our understandings of the Global South. Thus far, this category has largely been used by disciplines like International Relations and Development Studies. We need to claim the term for literary studies which can in turn enrich the idea by adding affective and aesthetic substance to notions of the Global South which will otherwise remain a 'thin' concept with limited purchase.

Core Literary Texts

The first text under discussion is Michael Ondaatje's 2011 novel *The Cat's Table*. There has as yet been no published criticism of this text. However, there have been several online reviews which have pointed out some key features of the novel. Freedenberg of the Bookreporter (www.bookreporter.com/reviews/the-cats-table, accessed 2012/04/18) points out the way in which "The ship functions as both a classroom and a laboratory" for the boys on the *Oronsay*. This points the way in which the space of voyage may act as a space of learning and experimentation which opens up infinity possibility. L'abbe of

The Globe and Mail (www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/the-cats-table-by-michael-ondaatje/article, accessed 2012/04/18) observes the way in which "Ondaatje insists that the most truthful looking is often done from the lowliest positions." This highlights the possibilities for social inversion that exist in the space of voyage. Schillinger of the Sunday Book Review (www.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/books/review/th-cats-table-by-michael-ondaatje, accessed 2012/04/18) describes Mynah's voyage on the *Oronsay* as "a passage that would lead him from his past to his future self." This touches on the way in which the story of the voyage in *The Cat's Table* works to weave together the past and the future from the position of the present.

A useful concept for understanding the story of voyage described in *The Cat's Table* is that of liminality, that is, a space situated between the sureties of the past and an unknown future. We would like to explore the way in which the story of voyage operates within in a liminal space in *The Cat's Table* and how this liminal space is linked to the Indian Ocean world. Furthermore, we would like to investigate the ways in which an exploration of the liminal voyage in the text may illuminate Mynah's experience on board the *Oronosay*. The liminal space of voyage is one that seems to hold infinite possibility for self-formation as well as a capacity for the tying together of past and future experience. This not only sheds light on the possibilities that exist within the story of voyage, but may also help unravel the way in which meaning is ultimately realized in the novel.

The second text under examination is Abdulrazak Gurnah's novel *By the Sea*. This novel has received a fair amount of critical attention primarily in terms of the difficulties facing refugee communities. For example, Helff (2009) has attempted examine the representations of African refugees and illegal diaspora in the novel. Helff (2009: 1) examines "narrative modes through which illegality and the limits of hospitality are negotiated" and the ways in which this "challenges common stereotypical images of the African refugee in Britain and Europe by revealing national and societal inclusion and exclusion strategies." Masterson (2010) explores the novel by looking at the negative and positive aspects of the migrant experience. He argues that Gurnah's text provides "a necessary "re-grounding" to some of the more romanticizing tendencies in writing on diaspora and dislocation" (Masterson, 2010: 1).

However, we are more interested in the scholarship that has sought to touch on themes of voyage in the novel and how this may open up the text in new ways. As previously discussed Steiner (2009: 56) uses the chronotope of ship to uncover the possibilities of multilingualism in the *By the Sea*. She discusses the ways in which the narrative recognizes the importance of "polygot encounters", yet still "constantly draws attention to the threat of nationalism when it becomes 'monolingual' in its zeal for a self-reliant nation" (Steiner, 2009: 56). However, it is Steiner's (2009: 54) observation that while there are often descriptions of ancient merchant voyages in the novel, "it is one such voyage and its consequences that structure the narrative of *By the Sea*" that opens up the possibility of exploring voyage as an organizing principle in *By the Sea*. The idea of voyage as operating within a liminal space seems to be equally useful in the examination of this text; therefore regarding the implications of regarding liminal voyage as organizing principle in the novel may yield new insights.

Seel (2008: 21) is concerned with the ways in which *By the Sea* is an expression of "new concerns and new locations regarding African cultural identity and subjectivity." Seel (2008: 21) questions the ways in which in the more recent postcolonial and postmodern eras, "there has been an effort to look beyond the paradigm of colonial experience, and issues of authenticity, difference, nation and language have been superseded by concerns with the fragmentary processes of globalization such as rapture, migration, displacement and diaspora." The issues of having to find alternate strategies for identity in *By the Sea* opens up questions of the ways in which strategies for configuring subjectivity operate in the novel.

Furthermore, we would like to extend the exploration of the role that the story of liminal voyage plays in *By the Sea*, by examining the repetitive representations of Indian Ocean glamour verses an Indian Ocean underworld. This split also seems to manifest in the duplicity of trickster figures in the novel which garner much power in liminal situations. Furthermore, we would like to explore how this duplicity gives rise to a sense of displacement which is deeply registered throughout the novel.

Chapter 2

Liminal Voyage as the Centre of Meaning in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*

In Michael Ondaatje's novel, *The Cat's Table*, a young boy, Michael (nicknamed Mynah), embarks on a voyage from Sri Lanka, in what was then Ceylon in the 1950's, on the luxury passenger ship, the *Oronsay* to join his mother in London. On the way, a series of fascinatingly oblique characters are encountered as Mynah and his friends, Cassius and Ramadhin, are placed at the lowly 'Cat's Table', navigating their way through a ship filled with treacherous wonder. The boys become caught up in the fascinating worlds of the adults that surround them at the Cat's Table while the ship becomes an object of exploration and discovery. Their adventures, at first manifest expressions of childhood and freedom become increasingly complex as a plot of the prisoner escape on board the ship insidiously unfolds, inducting Mynah and his friends into a darker and more complex adult world. As the novel progresses and Mynah feels himself forming more fully, episodes of his past and present are tied together through his experience of voyage on board the *Oronsay*. Mynah links together stories of his childhood in Ceylon with explorations of his adult life through this central experience. Furthermore, it is not just Mynah who is affected by what transpires during this voyage. It is revealed that many of the characters are forever shaped by this journey as we learn more about their lives. Ultimately, it is through the centre of voyage that Mynah is able to understand his life in new ways.

The materiality of the space of the ship as a contained space unhinged from the stability of land and surrounded by a mass of water, is one which acts as a metaphor for the ideological or metaphysical space of voyage. The space of voyage is ultimately also unanchored from all sense of surety as it moves towards the unknown. This chapter suggests voyage operates within a *liminal* space in the novel and that it is ultimately through the liminal space of voyage that new meaning is realised in the novel. While the concept of liminality has taken form within various different schools of thought, we are interested in how the liminal space operates in the novel as part of Mynah's journey

toward self-formation. Furthermore we are interested in how the liminal journey becomes the centre from which Mynah infers meaning in his life. We draw on several strands of this concept which will be elucidated in the course of the chapter.

The first section, entitled, 'Liminal Voyage aboard the *Oronsay*', considers the ways in which voyage can be considered to operate in a liminal space in the novel. That is to say, if we consider Mynah's voyage as some kind of rite of passage or induction into adulthood, the geographical trajectory of the novel reflects an intensification of Mynah's experiences as he moves from childlike freedom to the experience of more complex adult emotion. This invokes the liminal voyage as a rite of passage in which there is much transformative potential. In the second section, entitled 'Infinite Possibility in Liminal Space of Voyage', the ways in which the liminal space of voyage opens up infinite possibilities for self-formation is discussed. Particularly, light, music and perspective are discussed as reoccurring motifs in the novel which convey a sense of infinite possibility. In the third section, entitled 'Self-formation through Dissolving and Re-entering Duality' the voyage as caught between the pull of opposing forces is discussed. Furthermore, it is suggested that while the liminal space of voyage is situated between opposites, it also possesses the possibility to dissolve these opposites. The boys on the ship, not fully initiated into selfhood, are able to traverse the boundaries of divide that others are not. Yet, these structures do not remain in a state of dissolution forever. At some stage, the boys begin to incorporate *certain* structures in their process of self-formation. That is not to say that liminality ends, but that liminality plays a part in the structuring of the boys' growing sense of self. The fourth section, entitled, 'Voyage as Present: The Tying together of Past and Future', addresses the ways in which the narrative of *The Cat's Table* is involved in the process of weaving together the past and the future with voyage as its centre. It is due to the fact that the liminal space of voyage only exists in the present and in a constant state of motion that it is able to act as the centre from which the past and the present may be understood in new ways. In this way, Mynah's key to understanding meaning in his life lies within the liminal space of voyage aboard the *Oronsay*.

Liminal Voyage aboard the *Oronsay*

In *The Cat's Table* a young boy embarks on a voyage, leaving behind much reference to prior ways of knowing the world, towards an unknown future. If one is to regard his voyage on the *Oronsay* as the passage through which he must pass in order to arrive at his new life, from the known to the unknown, then the voyage can be seen as situated in a *liminal* space; a space situated between the polarities of departure and arrival; between old and new ways of knowing the world. As the voyage advances, Mynah's experiences seem to deepen and intensify signalling some move towards adulthood. Voyage as situated in the liminal, can be considered to facilitate this shift from one state of being to the next.

The geographical trajectory of the voyage in the novel moves from the Indian Ocean, to the Arabian Sea, to the Red Sea, to Mediterranean and finally rounds the corner into the Atlantic. During the early stages of the journey on board the *Oronsay*, Mynah experiences an immense sense of freedom and possibility as he and his friends explore their new environment. This sentiment is captured when Mynah states:

> If anyone wished to capture the daily movements on our ship, the most accurate method might be to create a series of time-lapse criss-crossings, depicted in different colours, to reflect the daily loitering. (Ondaatje, 2011: 84-85)

The web-like movements of Mynah and his companions reflect an infinite sense of movement, freedom and possibility.

As the *Oronsay* moves away from the open waters of the Indian Ocean, this sense of freedom seems to recede. The tone of the narration changes when the *Oronsay* enters the narrower straits of the Red Sea, the story emotionally intensifying as stable structures of the land creep closer. As Mynah states:

> No, being within the stricter confines of the Red Sea was not an easy time for some of those at our table. Perhaps emotionally we felt landlocked after all the freedom that came with the wilder oceans we had crossed. And Death existed after all, or a more complicated idea of Fate. Doors were closing, it seemed, on our adventurous travels. (Ondaatje, 2011: 118)

It is in the Red Sea that Mynah has an intense emotional exchange with Emily. He states, "When I left Emily's room…, I knew I would always be linked to her, by some underground river or seam of coal or silver…" (Ondaatje, 2011: 124). He continues, "In

the Red Sea, I must have fallen in love with her" (Ondaatje, 2011: 124). It is nearer the stable moorings of land that Mynah is able to feel this more powerful, and adult, emotion. This is the first time that Mynah experiences desire. There is deep imprinting that takes place here as Mynah states it was, "…it was the first time I looked at myself with a distant eye" (Ondaatje, 2011: 124)… This more concrete perspective of himself is something that becomes possible when closer to the firmness of land, "within the stricter confines of the Red sea."

The intensification of the narrative continues when the *Oronsay* enters the increasingly confined Suez Canal. Mynah states:

> We approached the canal in darkness, at the stroke of midnight…This night turned out to be the most vivid memory of the journey, the time I stumble upon now and then in a dream. We were not active, but a constantly changing world slid past our ship, the darkness various and full of suggestion." (Ondaatje, 2011: 137-138)

It is when land is nearest that Mynah has his most vivid experience on the *Oronsay*. It is as if Mynah's experience of the world around him intensifies the closer he gets to land and away from the instabilities of the ocean. Mynah states, "So we entered the Mediterranean with our eyes wide open." (Ondaatje, 2011: 140) There is increasing awareness as the *Oronsay* nears the Atlantic and the manifold possibilities of the Indian Ocean recede.

Finally, the *Oronsay* enters the Atlantic as it reaches London. It is in the Atlantic that Mynah must once again set foot on dry land, leaving behind the perpetual flexibility of the ocean world. In this way, Mynah's liminal voyage aboard the *Oronsay* can be considered to usher him from one state of being to the next. As important transformative rites of passage take place during his voyage, he moves from the boundless possibilities of childhood to narrower and more concrete perceptions of himself as an induction into a more adult world.

That is not to say that liminality ends once the *Oronsay* docks. Rather, as we will come to see, Mynah's voyage on board the *Oronsay* will continue to bear on the way he makes sense of his life, and hence, liminality continues. However, liminality serves as a useful concept from which to consider Mynah's developing sense of selfhood as a rite of

passage aboard the *Oronsay*. It is the liminal space of voyage in the novel which acts as a transformative space in which personality is shaped.

Infinite Possibility in the Liminal Space of Voyage

As we have discussed, *The Cat's Table* can be read as a story which incorporates notions of rites of passage. A young boy embarks on a journey that will essentially change the way he sees the world forever. As Mynah states:

> The three weeks of the sea journey, as I originally remembered it, were placid. It is only now, years later, having been prompted by my children to describe the voyage, that it becomes an adventure, when seen through their eyes, even something significant in a life. A rite of passage. (Ondaatje, 2011: 58)

The concept of liminality has a long history of thought attached to it with its roots in anthropological ideas of rites of passage. Liminality begins with the work of anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep in *Rites de Passage* in 1909. Van Gennep used the term 'liminal' in order to describe the middle stage of rites of passage situated between rites of separation and rites of incorporation (Thomassen, 2009: 6). According to Thomassen (2009: 6), van Gennep was not trying to provide an explanatory framework for all rites, but rather, he "detected a pattern, a sequence, a ritual from" which appeared to be universal in all rites demarcating transitions. This work was later continued by Victor Turner who wrote the famous essay "Betwixt and Between: The Liminal Period in Rites of Passage" in *The Forest of Symbols* published in 1967. According to Thomassen (2009: 14), "Turner realized that "liminality" served not only to identify the importance of in-between periods, but also to understand the human reactions to liminal experiences: the way in which personality was shaped by liminality, the sudden foregrounding of agency, and sometimes dramatic tying together of thought and experience."

The idea that the liminal space somehow possesses the ability to tie together thought and experience in such a way that it shapes personality and affords agency is an idea that was taken up in the field of psychology, specifically by Jungians in reference to the process of individuation. The process of individuation refers to "the process by which a person becomes a psychological "in-dividual," that is, a separate, indivisible unity or "whole". (Jung, 1939: 212) As Miller (2004: 104) states, "This "between-ness" serves as an

invaluable psychological purpose: to transition psyche from a conflicted set of circumstances to one that allows us to resolve…the conflict."

Therefore, whether one regards the liminal space as an important part of rites of passage on a collective anthropological level or individual psychological level, it performs the same function. The liminal space acts a passage from a prior state of being into a new state of being. It is a space in which personality and agency can be shaped unbounded from restricted or fixed ways of being. According to Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 17):

> Liminality is a paradoxical state, both at the individual and societal level. At the level of the individual, it is the destruction of the identity, while at the level of society it involves the suspension of the structure of social order. However, whether in the case of rituals or crises, the aim is to return to conditions of stability and normality. This happens by forging a new identity in the individual case, reflecting a shift of one's position within the social order; while in the case of society new common bonds are formed through the cathartic experience of *communitas*. Both processes involve the social and the a-social, and re-draw the boundaries between them.

Here Horvath and Thomassen introduce the assumption that the novel critiques, that is, that "the aim is to return to conditions of stability and normality." This aim invokes a normative standard by which an individual or society will be judged if not realized. In *The Cat's Table,* while characters undergo a process of transformation during this voyage, the assumption that this transformation is a linear process, moving from conditions of stability through instability and back to stability, is undone. Rather, voyage persists as the centre from which meaning is inferred in the novel which suggests that transformations in liminal rites of passage do not take place in a linear fashion, but in a circular one. The liminal voyage is forever doubling back (and forward) as the centre of meaning in these characters' lives.

In literature, we are dealing with imagined characters and situations which are nonetheless reflective of psychic and societal processes through the real or imagined experience of the author. The differing perspective that literature affords us when looking at the liminal, is that we are not trying to describe objective phenomena; rather we are dealing with the denotation of internal experience; an internal impression of this liminal space. The voyage on the *Oronsay* was a significant event in the narrator's life because it acted, and continued to act, as an important transformative experience in his

life. The novel reflects the process through which Mynah moves from the blank canvas of childhood towards a more fully fledged agency or structured self, and furthermore shows the way in which this transformation circularly continues to have an impact on all his life, not merely ending once the rite of passage is completed. It is the unrestricted space of the liminal voyage that ushers him into a new phase of being and continues to bear on the way he understands his life. At the very start of his journey, there is no hint of what lies ahead. The future is completely unknown. Ondaatje (2011: 4) describes the moment that Mynah goes up the gangplank, "watching only the path of his feet – nothing ahead of him existed – and continued till he faced the dark harbour and sea." Mynah states:

> I try to imagine who the boy on the ship was. Perhaps a sense of self is not there in his nervous stillness in the narrow bunk, in this green grasshopper or little cricket, as if he had been smuggled away accidently, with no knowledge of the act, into the future. (Ondaatje, 2011: 4-5)

Here Mynah recognises that he has no stable sense of self to operate from as he embarks on his journey. This lack of self-awareness is emphasized when Mynah recalls his childhood in Colombo, racing down the water channels (Ondaatje, 2011: 28-29). He states, "What was I in those days? I recall no outside imprint, and therefore no perception of myself" (Ondaatje, 2011: 29). Furthermore, Ondaatje describes the fact that the boys did not share much about themselves with each other. Mynah states, "It had been Cassius who recommended we keep our backgrounds to ourselves. He liked the idea, I think, of being self-sufficient. That is how he saw our little gang existing on the ship" (Ondaatje, 2011: 44). This reiterates the idea that Mynah, and his companions Cassius and Ramadhin, chose to see themselves as clean slates, fully open to the experiences on the ship.

It is on the *Oronsay* that Mynah is confronted with the possibilities of being "imprinted upon" for the first time and this is because he is allowed to enter the world of adults in the confined space of the ship. In recalling this past, Mynah states:

> Who realises how contented feral children are? The grasp of the family fell away as soon as I was out the door. Though among ourselves we must have been trying to understand and piece together the adult world, wondering what was going on

> there and why. But once we climbed the gangplank onto the *Oronsay*, we were for the first time by necessity in close quarters of the adults. (Ondaatje, 2011: 30)

It is the confined material space of the ship that allows for the array of vibrant adults that Mynah encounters. From the eccentric Mr Mazappa the pianist who "took the boys under his wing and advised [them] to keep [their] eyes and ears open, that this voyage would be a great education", to the Mr Nevil , the retired ship dismantler who clarifies to the boys "all the dangerous and not so dangerous possibilities" (Ondaatje, 2011: 10-11). In imparting one of his life wisdoms, Mr Mazappa warns Mynah about the perils of woman, but Mynah states, "…as an eleven-year-old I do not feel protected, I feel wounded in advance with possibilities" (Ondaatje, 2011: 31). All these adult characters can be read as manifestations of possible futures and lives available in adulthood. Here, the possibilities evident on the space of the ship can be read as a metaphor for the ideological possibilities in liminal space of voyage; as available fragments for the construction of a self. It is the liminal space of voyage, as unbounded from a fixed state of being, which allows Mynah to contemplate and incorporate the various impressions to which he is exposed.

Two reoccurring motifs in the novel which capture the feeling of the endless possibilities available in the construction of self-hood, are music and light. Like the water upon which the voyage takes place, music and light speak to the fluidity of the liminal space. They have the ability to bridge, to tie together, to flow and to be cut off. Musical notes can be arranged in infinite ways, just as the forms in which light can manifest are limitless. Mynah states, "I had by now come to love the slow waltz of our vessel from side to side" (Ondaatje, 2011: 27). The very movement of the ship becomes music here. Mr Mazappa constantly shares his passion for music which is said to invigorate their table (Ondaatje, 2011: 35). When Mynah recalls his past life in Colombo with Emily he states:

> What did bring the two of us together more than anything was Emily's record collection, with all those lifetimes and desires rhymed and distilled into two or three minutes of a song. (Ondaatje, 2011: 13)

Here, music becomes the bearer of vast memory, displaying its power to convey infinite meaning.

When Mynah enters the harbour for the first time it is described as being lit "with a string of lights along a distance pier" (Ondaatje, 2011: 3). The light from the blue bulb in Mynah's cabin is described as making the men playing bridge below look like they're in an aquarium (Ondaatje, 2011: 24). When Mr Daniels, the botanist, takes the boys into the bowels of the ship to see the gardens, the scene is described as follows:

> Then we saw a golden light. It was more than that. As we came closer it was a field of colours. This was the 'garden' Mr Daniels was transporting to Europe…How big was this garden? We were never certain, because not all of it was ever fully lit at the same time…And there must have been other sections we never saw during that journey. I don't even recall its shape. It feels now as if we dreamt it, that it possibly did not exist at the end of that ten-minute walk in the darkness of the hold." (Ondaatje, 2011: 51)

Here light comes to demarcate the possibility of a whole other world within the world of the ship. There is something mind boggling about the expanse of this garden in the hull of the ship through the eyes of a child. These enthralling possibilities that exist in the material space of the ship once again relate to infinite possibilities that exist in the liminal space of voyage. Here, universes can literally exist within universes.

The motif of music and light are beautifully interwoven when Mr Mazappa invites Mynah to his room one afternoon to listen to records "pointing out the impossible descants and swaggers." (Ondaatje, 2011: 35) Mynah further recalls:

> I did not understand but was in awe. Mazappa signalled to me each time Bechet made the melody reappear, 'like sunshine on a forest floor', I remember him saying. (Ondaatje, 2011: 35)

The permeability of light and music make tangible the infinite possibilities available in the liminal space of voyage.

Another motif which Ondaatje repeatedly makes use of is that of perspective. The perspective from which the world is regarded constantly shifts suggesting that the world can be viewed in many different ways. Voyage as a liminal space is open to infinite possibility. In reference to the affect that Cassius had on him, Mynah states: "I suppose he changed me during those twenty-one days, persuading me to interpret anything that took place around us with his quizzical or upside-down perspective" (Ondaatje, 2011: 45). In the liminal space, there is always the possibility of looking at something in a

different way. In terms of physical perspective, Mr Nevil informs the boys that it is safe to enter the highly perched swaying life boats which become the vantage point from which the boys spy on many of the passengers below throughout the novel (Ondaatje, 2011: 11). Later, when Mynah recalls going to see Cassius' art exhibition in London he recognizes that Cassius had painted the scene of them entering the Suez Canal from the exact angle that they had observed it from that night, "An angle of forty-five degrees or something like that" (Ondaatje, 2011: 143). It is because of this particular perspective that he states he felt as if he "...was back on the railing, watching, which was where Cassius was emotionally, when he was doing these paintings" (Ondaatje, 2011: 143). In this way, physical perspective comes to inform emotional perspective. There are not just boundless perspectives from which to view the action on board the *Oronsay*, there are endless emotional perspectives that come to inform the boys' development in the liminal space of voyage.

Another way in which perspective manifests in *The Cat's* Table is in a constant uncertainty of what does and what does not really occur. There is a continual instability to knowledge and flexibility in the terms the plot can be interpreted. As Mynah states, "Looking back, I am no longer certain who gave me what pieces of advice, or befriended us, or deceived us. And some events sank in only much later" (Ondaatje, 2011: 214). Small inferences such as Miss Lasqueti remarking to Mr Daniels, "'You're a complicated man…You could poison someone with those innocent looking leaves'" makes the reader later question whether or not he could have anything to do with Emily's poisoning (Ondaatje, 2011: 189). Or was Emily even poisoned in the first place? Cassius and Michael see Miss Lasqueti cleaning what appears to be a pistol, but it was "a moment so hallucinatory that it could actually have been remembered from a dream…"(Ondaatje, 2011: 227). And does Mynah in fact see Miss Lasqueti throw the gun overboard during the prisoners escape or was it just another one of her mystery novels (Ondaatje, 2011: 262)? As Michael states, "Did I witness something else below the surface of what happened that night? Was it all part of a boy's fervent imagination?" (Ondaatje, 2011: 263). Again, Mynah states, "We were never sure of what we were witnessing, so that our minds were half grabbing the rigging of adult possibility" (Ondaatje, 2011: 57). All these elements remain unresolved and, once again, are open to endless interpretation. There is no linear

narrative in *The Cat's Table* or a single way of understanding the story. Rather, in the liminal space of voyage, there exists an infinite network of entanglements and possibilities.

According to Thomassen:

> Liminality is indeed not any concept. Liminality does not "explain". In liminality there is no certainty regarding the outcome. Liminality is a world of contingency where events and ideas, and "reality" itself, can be carried in different directions. But for precisely these reasons, the concept of liminality has the potential to push social theory in new directions. (2001: 5)

It is the uncertainty and instability of the liminal space which creates a realm of infinite possibility. The Indian Ocean world is much more about circuits and webs of interaction than it is about linear interaction between fixed centres. As Bose (2006: 6) states "The Indian Ocean is best characterized as an "interregional arena" rather than as a "system," a term that has more rigid connotations…Tied together by webs of economic and cultural relationships, such arenas nevertheless had flexible internal and external boundaries." Just as liminality centres on contingency and can carry events, ideas and reality in multiple directions; it is the large array of connections that can be made across the complex arena of the Indian Ocean which opens endless possibilities for the way in which this ocean world can be understood. Taking into consideration the infinite array of possibilities that exists in this space, it is indeed possible to push social theory in new directions.

One such enterprise is seen in a special Indian Ocean issue of the *Journal of Social History*. Anderson states that this issue seeks to explore "the life histories of men and women who were mobile in an around the Indian Ocean during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries…as a means of exploring historically the nature, meaning and lived experiences of empire in the Indian Ocean: Dutch, French, British and Malagasy" (2011: 335). Anderson explains that in order to use life histories "as a critical perspective to explore the practices and processes associated with imperial expansion in the Indian Ocean and the ways in which individuals live them", "the often marginal or marginalized position of the volume's subjects is of enormous significance..." (2011: 226). The reason why marginal position of these subjects is important is that it speaks acutely to "complexities of shifting identity as well as the oft-times indistinct tags 'colonized' and 'colonizer'"

(Anderson, 2011: 336). Looking at life histories becomes a way to complicate received binaries about fixed centres of identity which are only understood through linear interaction.

What is pertinent about this enquiry is that the method employed, that is, considering marginal identity rather than grand narratives, raises questions about the nature of history and the ways in which historical knowledge is produced. There seems to be much power in engaging marginal identities to achieve a more nuanced and complete picture of reality. In *The Cat's Table*, marginal characters come to occupy a much more important position in Mynah's developing understanding of the world than so-called important characters that we would ordinarily read about in the history books. It is those on the periphery that come to shape Mynah's perspective of the world. As Mynah states:

> …it seemed to us that nearly all at our table…might have an interesting reason for their journey, even if it was unspoken or, so far, undiscovered. In spite of this, our table's status on the *Oronsay* continued to be minimal, while those at the Captain's Table were constantly toasting one another's significance. That was a small lesson I learned on the journey. What is interesting and important happens mostly in secret, in places where there is no power. Nothing much of lasting importance ever happens at the head table, held together by a familiar rhetoric. Those who already have power continue to glide along the familiar rut they have made for themselves. (Ondaatje, 2011: 81)

It is Mynah's position at the "minimal" position of the Cat's Table that allows him to see beyond the "familiar rhetoric". Rather, it is a much more nuanced and complex picture of life that is painted for him by those that he encounters at the Cat's Table. Much like the intellectual arena of Indian Ocean, Mynah's voyage on the *Oronsay* is one that moves us away from "familiar ruts" or entrenched ways of seeing the world and allows the opening of new perspectives. As Mynah states, "Perhaps we had by then outgrown our curiosity about the powerful….It would always be strangers like them, at various Cat's Tables of my life, who would alter me" (Ondaatje, 2011: 211). It is the infinite possibility in the liminal space of voyage that enables these new insights.

Self-formation through Dissolving and Re-entering Duality

One consequence of having multiple perspectives and endless possibilities available in the liminal space of voyage is that contradiction and paradox arise. The *Oronsay* is riddled

with them. In our first introduction to Mynah's companions, Ramadhin and Cassius, one is described as "quiet", the other "scornful" (Ondaatje, 2011: 9). Mr Hastie, Mynah' cabin mate, is described as constant talker, yet he becomes a courteous whisperer at night when Mynah is trying to sleep (Ondaatje, 2011: 23). When passing through the Suez Canal, Mynah states, "I could not tell whether what was taking place was carefully legal or a frenzy of criminality" (Ondaatje, 2011: 138)… The contradictions here are evident.

The feeling of being caught between opposing states is palpably captured when Mynah describes standing against the railing and watching the sea rush past. He states:

> At times it appeared to rise almost to my level, as if wishing to pluck me away. I would not move, in spite of this havoc of fear and aloneness in me…When I could not see the ocean, the fear was not there, but now the sea rose in the half-dark, surrounding the ship, and coiled itself around me. No matter how scared I was, I remained there, adjacent to the passing darkness, half wanting to pull myself back, half desiring to leap towards it. (Ondaatje, 2011: 37-38)

Caught between the stable moorings of land, the ocean is a space of in-betweeness, instability and the unknown. This feeling of half wanting to pull back from the unknown and half wanting to merge with it captures the feeling of a constant pull between opposites which the space of voyage continuously navigates. It is a place of constant dual possibility, but more importantly, it is space that contains the possibility of dissolving these dualities. Mynah does not jump and he does not pull back. He stays where he is. It is in this moment of in-betweeness that the fixed boundaries of time and space cease to exist. Furthermore, it is through the present and constant state of motion on board the *Oronsay* that these boundaries collapse.

The possibility for the dissolution of opposites within the liminal space of voyage can be linked to it as a space where there is a breakdown of fixed boundaries. Thomassen (2009: 15) explains that, Turner, in his work on Christian pilgrimage notes that "pilgrimage shares aspects of liminality because participants become equal, as they distance themselves from mundane structures and their social identities, leading to a homogenization of status and a strong sense of *Communitas*." Thomassen further states:

> The playfulness of the liminality period is at one and the same time unstructured and highly structuring: the most basic rules of behaviour are questioned, doubt and scepticism as to the existence of the world are radicalized, but the

> problematisations, the formative experiences and reformulations of being during the liminal period proper, will feed the individual (and his/her cohort) with a new structure and set of rules that, once established, will glide back to the level of the taken-for-granted. During liminal periods, characterised by a wholesale collapse of order and a loss of background structure, agency is pushed to the forefront and reorientations in modes of conduct and thought are produced… (Thomassen, 2009: 20)

Here, the assumption emerges that the individual or society will move beyond liminality once a new way of being is achieved, their transformative experience resuming the level of "the taken-for-granted." However, what this passage does reveal is that a liminal space holds the possibility of the dissolution of fixed hierarchies which can be viewed as rooted in dualisms. In this way; it becomes a space in which it is possibility to move toward the dissolution of duality. It is the permeability of dual boundaries that allows the subject to form new agency and to embark on a process of self-formation.

In the novel, the dissolution of dualities can be linked to the space of the Cat's Table itself. Mynah states, "It had been Miss Lasqueti's remark about our being 'in the least privileged place', with no social importance, that persuaded us into belief that we were invisible to officials…" (Ondaatje, 2011: 11) It is the lowly status of the boys at the Cat's Table that allows them to traverse the boundaries that ordinarily would remain fixed. Once again, the material possibilities of the space of the ship come to inform the ideological possibilities in the liminal space of voyage. As Mynah states, "On the *Oronsay*, however, there was the chance to escape all order. And I reinvented myself in this seemingly imaginary world…." (Ondaatje, 2011: 14)

Interestingly, it is children and dogs that are able to transgress the strict dividers of status delineated on the ship. Even though "it had always been difficult to penetrate the barrier that separated [the boys] from First Class." Ramadhin's dog still manages to do this and finds his way to Hector De Silva cabin (Ondaatje, 2011: 115-116). They are able to find the secret passages that others, fully initiated into adulthood, and more importantly, selfhood, are not able to do. Mynah describes how the boys sneaked into the first class swimming pool. He states, "First Class was an unguarded palace at six in the morning, and we arrived there even before a fuse of light appeared on the horizon…" (Ondaatje, 2011: 25). The boys are able to find a loophole to enter this restricted space.

Cassius is described as an "iconoclast" in the novel. (Ondaatje, 2011: 42) Mynah states:

> I never saw him side with anyone in power. He drew you into his perspective of things and you saw the layers of authority on the ship through his eyes. He relished, for instance, being one of the insignificants at the Cat's Table. (Ondaatje, 2011: 42)

Mynah, too, fully takes advantage of his invisible status at the Cat's Table when the Baron employs him to aid his thievery. The Baron lathers Mynah in thick black oil which allows him to slip through the horizontal bars to get to the other room (Ondaatje, 2011: 89). Again, it is his smallness as a child that enables him to cross this boundary.

With regards to liminal periods in whole societies, Thomassen explains that liminality can be seen as identical to what philosopher Karl Jaspers terms 'axial moments'. An axial moment is explained as:

> …an in-between period between two structured world-views and between two rounds of empire building; it was an age of creativity where "man asks radical questions", and where the "unquestioned grasp on life is loosened"; it was an age of uncertainty, where possibilities lie open… (Thomassen, 2009: 19-20)

Once these periods of liminality end it is thought that "the ideas and practices that have become established therein will tend to take on the quality of structure" (Thomassen, 2009: 19-20). Rather than signalling an end to the liminal period, the boys' experiences of their voyage on board the *Oronsay* which they subsume into their adult selves has continual transformative resonance throughout their lives. While, their physical and literal journey on board the *Oronsay* ends, the metaphysical liminal voyage continues to shape them. However, what Thomassen makes clear here is that the liminal space can be seen as a rite of passage, on an individual or collective level, which deals simultaneously with the dual processes of dissolving and re-establishing agency. Regardless of the outcome, the individual or society will be fundamentally altered or transformed. Szakolczai (2009: 158) explains that within liminal situations "there exist formative experiences, where the subject's identity is altered" which sheds light on the nature of transformative events. He continues:

> A transformative event, as a technical term for social analysis, can be defined as something that happens in real life, whether for an individual, a group, or an entire civilization that suddenly questions and even cancels previously taken for granted certainties, thus forcing people swept away by this storm to reflect upon their

> experiences, even their entire life, potentially changing not only their conduct but their identity.

In this way, Mynah's voyage on board the *Oronsay*, not only ushers him from an old state of being to new state of being, it irrevocably transforms him as he moves from childhood to adulthood. Furthermore, his voyage on board the Oronsay finds its significance in the fact that it is an entirely transformative event in his life which continues to bear on the way he makes sense of the world. In this sense, his voyage on board the *Oronsay* is continuously transformative as it forever remains the centre from which meaning in his life manifests and transforms.

However, the novel, as read in engaging liminal rites of passage from childhood to adulthood, signals the ways in which the boys begin to incorporate various structures into the developing adult versions of themselves. That is not to view their adulthood as signalling the end of the liminal period, but to recognize the way in which structuration takes place during this liminal voyage. Traces of structures they encounter begin to be imprinted upon a persevering sense of self. After completing a job for the Baron, Mynah states:

> I walked into one fully mirrored bathroom and suddenly saw receding images of myself, semi-naked, covered in black oil, just a brown face and spikey hair. There was a wild boy in there, somebody from the Jungle Book stories whose eyes watched me, white as lamps. This was, I think the first reflection portrait that I remember of myself. It was the image of my youth that I would hold onto for years – someone startled, half formed, who had not become anyone or anything yet. (Ondaatje, 2011: 90)

Here, although Mynah says he has not become anything or anyone yet, we start to see the first traces of self-consciousness. He is aware of himself for the first time, "half formed". After the boys find out about the curse of the wealthy philanthropist, Hector de Silva, Mynah states:

> The surreal revelations about the man with a curse on his head thrilled us…For the first time we were interested in the fate of the upper classes; gradually it became clear to us that Mr Mazappa and his musical legends and Mr Daniels with his plants, who had been like gods to us, were only minor characters, there to watch how those with real power progressed or failed in the world. (Ondaatje, 2011: 74)

What this reveals is that the boys are slowly starting to take aboard lessons rooted in the structures of the real world.

Another crucial moment in which Mynah has an experience which allows with self-formation is when he sees Emily's semi-nude in her cabin. He states:

> She half sat up, then remembered the robe and reached for it. But what I saw hit me at the base of my heart. There was a tremor within me, something that would be natural for me later but at that moment was a mixture of thrill and vertigo. Suddenly there was a wide gulf between Emily's existence and mine, and I would never be able to cross it. (Ondaatje, 2011: 121-122)

This is the first time that Mynah experiences desire; an indelible sign of approaching adulthood. For the first time there is gulf that he will never be able to cross; a boundary which he will not be able to breech. The structure of the real world is beginning to creep in.

It appears, then, that the liminal space of voyage as a space of infinite possibility gives rise to a series of paradoxes and contradictions. It is between the constant pull of these opposing forces that the liminal is situated. Furthermore, it is children, those without a stable sense of a structured self that are able to traverse boundaries that others are not. In this way the child acts as a figure that stands in opposition to stringent and delineated notions of adult selfhood. At the same time, the liminal voyage ushers an old state of being into the new; from the unknown into the known, in a process of transformation that is continuous. In this way, by the end of the journey, Mynah begins to incorporate elements of the vast array of structures or possible ways of being in the world which are available to him on the *Oronsay*, in order to dock and once again set foot on solid ground. However, his voyage on board the *Oronsay*, as a continuously transformative event in life, has enduring importance and in comes to inform the way he understands the past and future events in his life.

Voyage as Present: The Tying together of Past and Future

The liminal voyage exists between two fixed points. Therefore, anything that exists in a liminal space of voyage will be in a permanent state of transition. What this state of transition essentially points to, is that the liminal voyage can only exist in the present

moment and in a constant state of motion. The metaphor of the ship works well here. A ship is only fulfilling its purpose as a ship when it is in a present state of motion, moving from one point to the next. This is an important feature of the liminal story of voyage. This turns out not only to be an important feature of Mynah's experience aboard the *Oronsay,* but a continuous feature of Mynah's life as the narrative in *The Cat's Table* is constantly engaged in weaving together the past and the future through the present centre of voyage. More importantly, voyage is the centre from which new meanings and elucidations of the past and present is inferred. In this way, voyage can be regarded as the centre or the present moment from which the past and future are understood. This once again points to the way in which liminality perseveres in the novel. The present is always here and liminal voyage as the occupant of this present state, signals the never ending nature of the voyage on board the *Oronsay*, and indeed, liminality.

The feeling that voyage only exists in the present moment is captured when Mynah says he goes to his cabin in late afternoons because it is the only time he can be alone. He states, "I needed to think backwards for a while. Thinking backwards I could remember the comfort of being curious and alone" (Ondaatje, 2011: 37). There seems to be importance attached to looking back here as if it provides some sort of anchor. Yet, it doesn't appear to come naturally. It is something that requires effort when in the state of liminal voyage where everything only exists in the present moment.

Various episodes of Mynah's' past and future are woven together through his experience on the *Oronsay*. Furthermore, it seems that Mynah is able to understand these episodes in new ways as regarded from the present centre of voyage. It is precisely the persevering centrality of his experience of liminal voyage which allows these events to reveal themselves more fully. When recalling Ramadhin's funeral and his later relationship with his sister Massi, Mynah states:

> Every immigrant family, it seems, has someone who does not belong in the new country they have come to…I've met many who remain haunted by the persistent ghost of an earlier place. And it is true that Ramadhin's life would have been happier in the more casual and less public world of Colombo. (Ondaatje, 2011: 151)

This insight about Ramadhin's life comes from the perspective of their voyage on the *Oronsay*. It is because Ramadhin had to leave his prior life behind, the physical enactment of which manifested on board the *Oronsay,* that he suffered a sense of displacement in his later life. In a sense, Ramadhin too was never able to disembark the *Oronsay*. That is not to say that the metaphysics of the liminal voyage was only set in motion when Mynah and his friends left the island and that there would not have been equally strong forms of displacement had Ramadhin stayed at home. Rather it is the intense transformative nature of this liminal voyage which allows Mynah to regard what came before with new eyes.

Another revelation which Mynah makes in connection to his voyage on the *Oronsay* is that he, like Ramadhin, in some ways longed for the comfort of his prior life in Sri Lanka. When recalling his later life and connections he was to make, he states, "I see now that I married Massi to stay close to a community from childhood I felt safe in and, I realised, still wished for" (Ondaatje, 2011: 155). Once more, Mynah is only able to make this connection in his own life from the central perspective of voyage. Rather than signalling the island as a utopia of wholeness in contrast to an experience of departure and displacement, this could in many ways be regarded as linked to a nostalgic remembering of childhood. It was the loss of his childhood which began on his passage on the *Oronsay* that inadvertently acted as a catalyst for later choices in his life, although he did not know it at the time. Mynah states, "Ramadhin's heart. Ramadhin's dog. Ramadhin's sister. Ramadhin's girl. It is only now that I can see the various milestones in my life that connected the two of us" (Ondaatje, 2011: 159). Voyage is the centre from which Mynah is able to understand his choice to marry Massi and his relationship with Ramadhin in new ways.

Another later event in Mynah's life which he only comes to fully understand through his voyage on the *Oronsay* is when he saw Massi dancing with someone else during their marriage. The strap of her dress fell off her shoulder and she moved her hand to lift it up and"…she was glancing down at it, as he was. And she knew he was" (Ondaatje, 2011: 166). Mynah goes on to question, "What was it that made me recognise something in that gesture? (Ondaatje, 201: 167) But then he remembers:

> …Emily in the darkness of the *Oronsay*, leaning back against the railing with her beau, when she glanced for a moment at her bare shoulder and then up at the

> stars, and I remembered the sexual knot beginning to form in me as well. All of eleven years old. (Ondaatje, 2011: 167)

Mynah is only able to make sense of this later event in life through the memory of an earlier event on the *Oronsay*. Seeing Emily with the The Hyderbad Mind is intrinsically linked to the earliest emergences of his sexuality. It is the power of the liminal space as a space of formation that allows for the presence of this image in the blueprint of his reading of sexual cues. Therefore, his experiences on the *Oronsay* persevere as the centre from which he comes to decode the meaning of this later event in his life.

Later in the novel, when Mynah is recalling a dream he had about Massi, he states:

> I must have been taught, or somehow learned early in my life, to break away easily from intimacy…Massi said that sometimes when things overwhelmed me, there was a trick or a habit I had: I turned myself into something that did not belong anywhere. I trusted nothing I was told, not even what I witnessed. It was, she said, as if I had grown up believing that everything was perilous. A deceit must have done that. (Ondaatje, 2011: 218)

The tendency to turn himself "into something that did not belong anywhere" and not trust anything, even if he witnessed it can be linked to a profound experience of displacement which powerfully manifests in his voyage on the *Oronsay*. As we will come to discuss, Mynah's experience of displacement is not born from a literal cutting of ties with his island home and starting again elsewhere, but has deeper roots in the Indian Ocean world where displacement is part of the way in which identity comes to be constituted. What is important is that Mynah's voyage aboard the *Oronsay* forms the centre from which he draws connections in his life. It is the ever-present transformative centre through which meaning unfolds. Therefore, it is through an exploration of his experience of voyage on board the *Oronsay* that Mynah is able to reflect upon this deep feeling of displacement.

Mynah recalls Massi saying to him, "Someone damaged you. Tell me what happened when you came to England." To which he replies, "I went to school." Massi responds, "No, when you *came*. Because something must have happened." (Ondaatje, 2011: 219) Mynah misinterprets Massi's question when he responds that he went to school. He is assuming that she is referring to what happened to him only when he arrived and not during the crossing itself. Here, it is the crossing on the *Oronsay*, the present centre of

voyage, which acts as centre through which the significance of past and future events in his life is recognised. The liminal voyage perseveres as the blue print which shapes his life.

What this chapter has hoped to show is that voyage operates within a liminal space in the novel. What the concept of liminality useful contributes when regarding Mynah's voyage on board the *Oronsay,* is a deeper understanding of the way in which liminal spaces, as situated between dual forces, open up infinite possibilities for the process of self-formation during an important rite of passage from childhood to adulthood. While these infinite possibilities make way for self-formation, they also give rise to contradiction and paradox. Mynah is able to traverse the boundaries of these dualities due to his invisible status at the Cat's Table and lack of initiation into a structured selfhood. While Mynah and the boys eventually do incorporate certain structures into the blueprint of their eventual selves, this is not a stagnant process which merely ends when the boys dock ashore. Rather, the liminal voyage persists as the present centre through which meaning is unravelled in the novel. In this way, the novel points to the limitations of the concept of liminality as it stands by showing that liminality does not end, but rather persists as the centre of meaning through which Mynah links together his past and future. Voyage as that which exists in a constant state of motion is only viable in the present moment. It is from the position of the present that voyage becomes the centre which weaves together the past and the future and in which the meaning to decipher these events in new ways, is ultimately rooted. In this way, it is through his voyage on the *Oronsay* that Mynah is ultimately able to realise new meaning in his life.

Chapter 3

On-going Damage and Partial Reparation in Michael Ondaatje's *The Cat's Table*

Underscoring all the realizations that Mynah comes to about his life through the present centre of voyage is a sense of damage. As Mynah states, "Some events take a lifetime to reveal their damage and influence" (Ondaatje, 2011: 155). The possibility of damage not only exists on board the material space of the *Oronsay*, but within metaphysical space of voyage which often resides in the realm of personal relationships. Damage acts as both a physical and a metaphysical threat as the novel weaves the potential for damage that exists in the material space of voyage with the potential for damage that exists in the interior spaces of personal relationships. The damage that occurs in the novel is on-going and permanent and the possibility for reparation is only partial. While *The Cat's Table* engages with the possibility of putting things back together, these things always remain broken fragments that can never be fully reconciled; the seams always remaining visible. Furthermore, this partial reparation is only possible through the characters being deeply and irrevocably altered, forever bearing the fragmentation of damaging experiences. This on-going damage can be seen as a permanent form of liminality or *schismogenesis*. This, according to Bateson, is a state "in which erratic, and even clearly violent and self-destructive, actions committed in a liminal situation of crisis…can be turned into lasting practices or cultural models" (Horvath & Thomassen: 2008: 3). It is the immense transformative power of liminal voyage that seems to allow for both the on-going possibilities of damage and partial reparation.

Ondaatje investigates these processes of on-going damage and partial reparation from the position of Ceylon, an Indian Ocean Island with a deep history of migration and consequential displacement in which much of the damage in the novel can be seen to find its roots. In order to investigate the way in which the island of Ceylon contributes to damaging experiences which Ondaatje unpacks through the centre of voyage, his creative autobiographical 1982 work *Running in the Family*, which is a composite of Ondaatje's two return journeys to the island in 1978 and 1980, will be used as a bridgehead.

The first section of this chapter entitled 'The Lurking Possibility for Damage on board the *Oronsa*y' explores the ways in which physical danger and possibilities for damage manifest during Mynah's voyage. These dangers seem to always lurk beneath the surface and are a constant undertow in the novel. In this way, the hidden danger on board the *Oronsay* comes to inform the potential for damage that resides in the realm of personal relationships. The second section entitled 'The Liminal Island as Perpetual Voyage: The Importance of Personal Relationships' considers the relationship between space of voyage and the space as islands as manifestations of permanent liminality. Furthermore, it seems that Ondaatje's tendency to uncover processes of damage and reparation through the interior space of personal relationships is linked to his experience of compacted island society. The third section entitled 'Damage in Displacement' looks at the ways in which the characters', specifically Ramadhin and Mynah's, experiences of displacement manifests as a sort of damage which plays off in the realm of their personal relationships. The damage in displacement is something Ondaatje sees as a part of an experience of modernity as expressed in the novel, which possibly suggest a form of permanent liminality or *schismogenesis*.

The fourth section entitled 'Damage and the Trickster' looks at the stories of Emily and Miss Lasqueti and the damaging relationships they both have with older men who exemplify elements of the archetypal trickster figure. Trickster figures are particularly dangerous if encountered during liminal periods where there is complete loss of structure during transformative processes. Emily and Miss Lasqueti both bear the scars of their encounters with the tricksters in different ways. The fifth section entitled 'Damage and Disguise' explores the role that imitation plays in Emily and Miss Lasqueti's damaging relationships. Imitation and trickster figures are closely associated and manifold processes of imitation seem to inform the way that damage is done in these relationships. Emily and Miss Lasqueti are genuinely altered by these damaging encounters due to the immense transformative power of liminal spaces, yet there is no repercussion for tricksters. This means that these characters and the tricksters must part ways. Ultimately, the damage done to these characters is connected by their liminal experiences on board the *Oronsay* and therefore the key to uncovering this hidden and on-going damage lies in the remembering of this voyage.

The sixth section entitled 'The Breaker's Yard: Partial Reparation' explores the possibility for partial reparation in the novel which coexists with the possibility of damage. It appears that the only way that reparation is possible in the novel is through transformation although the scars of damage always remain visible and irreversible. The final section entitled 'Concluding Remarks: Transformative Potential and Non-duality' explores the transformative potential that exists in liminal spaces as the very ground of liminality. That is, the transformative potential of liminal spaces is that which allows for both the possibilities of damage and reparation. It is the unstructure of liminal spaces that allows structure to emerge and in this way, unstructure and structure become one and the same, the ground out of which everything is born. This "ground" or "origin" seems to be beyond both damage and reparation. What this does is open a doorway into an experience of the non-dual in the novel which is intricately related to the primacy of experience in the liminal space of voyage.

The Lurking Possibility for Damage on board the *Oronsay*

On board the *Oronsay*, there is a constant dangerous undertone which signals the possibility of damage. Mr Nevil is the first to point out "all the dangerous and not-so-dangerous possibilities" when he takes the boys to the "Hades level" of the ship, there where all the base mechanisms of the ship becomes visible (Ondaatje, 2011: 11). The introduction of the prisoner who resides in the deepest part, most hidden, part of this ship also speaks to the lurking presence of danger.

> Late at night, after the specially invited first Class passengers had left the Captain's Table, and after the dancing had ended with couples, their masks removed, barely stirring in each other's arms, and after the stewards had taken away the abandoned glasses and ashtrays and were leaning on the four-foot-wide- brooms to seep away the coloured swirls of paper, they brought out the prisoner. (Ondaatje, 2011: 15).

It is after the jovialness and dancing couples and "coloured swirls of paper", that the prisoner emerges. His presence after all the lightness and gaiety acts as a reminder of the dangerous unknown that always lurks below. Just as the ship forever floats above dark waters. Mynah states, "Once, before I left Ceylon, I saw an ocean liner being burned at the far end of Colombo harbour…I realised that the ship I was now on could also be cut

into pieces" (Ondaatje, 2011: 38). The possibility for real damage to occur on board the *Oronsay* is ever present.

The sequence in which Mynah and Cassius get caught in the storm is probably the most tangible manifestation of the possibility of damage that lurks on the *Oronsay*. During the build-up to the storm, the boys attend a screening of a film on one of the decks on the ship (Ondaatje, 2011: 93). Cassius picks up a phrase used in the film and "would go around for days claiming to be part of 'the Oronsay tribe – irresponsible and wiolent"' (Ondaatje, 2011: 95, *spelling mistake in original*). This of course perfectly describes Mynah's and Cassius's behaviour when they ask Ramadhin to tie them to the ship in order to watch the storm (Ondaatje, 2011: 98-9). When the power of the storm is finally unleashed, Mynah states that "There was only noise. We could not tell if we were screaming or only trying to" (Ondaatje, 2011: 98). He describes the event as follows:

> With each wave it sounded as if the ship was breaking apart, and with each wave the wash covered us until we were tilted upright again. We were aware of a constant rhythm. Whenever the ship ploughed into the oncoming sea, we were swept around within the surf, unbreathing, while the stern rose into the air, the propellers out of their element screaming till they fell back down into the sea, and we on the bow leapt up again, unnaturally. (Ondaatje, 2011: 98)

If the materiality of the space of the ship acts as a metaphor for the metaphysical space of voyage, then the physical and metaphysical entirely merge in this moment. Mynah and Cassius' experience of danger physically merges with the physical reality of the ship as they experience the immense power of the storm from its perspective. There is a complete emergence into an experience of the power of the storm and the damage it can render as "the gale hit and pulled the air out of [their] mouths" (Ondaatje, 2011: 98).

The immense power of the damage that can occur in the liminal space of voyage hits home, however, as Mynah realizes, this storm is only that which resides on the surface. There are unfathomable depths to this lurking danger beneath the ocean's waters:

> What we had witnessed was only what had been above the sea. Now something took itself free and came into my mind. It was not only the things we could see that had no safety. There was the underneath. (Ondaatje, 2011: 104-105)

Here once again we move into the realm of metaphor. It is not just external and the visible that is susceptible to damage, but that which cannot be seen beneath. Much of the

damage that manifests later in Mynah's life happens within the realm of personal relationships; that which reside in deep interior spaces and which cannot be seen. Some of the roots of these interior damages can be found in interactions that are described on the *Oronsay*, the present centre of voyage.

The Liminal Island as Perpetual Voyage: The Importance of Personal Relationships

The importance of interior spaces of personal relationships and the damage which occurs there, seems to be linked to the compacted and layered nature of island society. The complex set of identities in island society finds its roots in the multiple migrations of the imperial era in which, as we have mentioned, 50 million Europeans, 50 million Chinese and 30 million Indians were involved in voluntary, semi-voluntary and forced forms of migration (Lake and Reynolds, 2008: 133). Islands served as contact zones for many of these migrations which meant people were constantly being thrust up against the unfamiliar. In a situation such as this, there is continuous involvement in the processes of finding similarities and differences with those you encounter as a way of relating to the unfamiliar. As previously discussed, this has given rise to scholarship which concerns the universalisms which emerged in Indian Ocean public spheres from the latter part of the 19th century to the First World War (Hofmeyr, 2010: 724). These public spheres emerged "in the intellectual and religious activities of the crosscutting diaspora that gathered in the port cities of the ocean…" (Hofmeyr, 2010: 724).

Furthermore, as previously discussed, these emergent universalisms bear their counterpoint of damaging fundamentalisms. People do not only define themselves in terms of each other, but against each other, as we see in Sri Lanka's recent history of inter-ethnic conflict. In Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* the complexity of island identities and relations is seen in his description of Nuwara Eliya in the twenties and thirties:

> Everyone was vaguely related and had Sinhalese, Tamil, Dutch, British and Burgher blood in them going back many generations. There was a large social gap between this circle and the Europeans and English who were never part of the Ceylonese community. The English were seen as transients, snobs and racists, and were quite separate from those who had intermarried and who lived here permanently. My father always claimed to be a Ceylon Tamil, though that was

> probably more valid about three centuries earlier. Emil Daniels summed up the situation for most of them when he was asked by one of the British governors what his nationality was – 'God alone knows, your excellency'. (Ondaatje, 2009: 31-32)

According to Gupta (2010: 276) one important factor which relates to the uniqueness of Indian Ocean island experiences is "the interstitiality of island-ness in the Indian Ocean", which involves "many layered colonial histories". These layered histories include north to south movements of colonisers and colonised, as well as the histories of slaves and indentured labourers on the Indian Ocean islands (Gupta, 210: 276). Gupta (2010: 276) further states that islands need to be understood "as sites of multiple 'contact zones'" that played off over time. Therefore:

> We must also take into account the ways in which multiple cultures of imperialism (the British, French, Portuguese and Dutch) all have varying investments and contacts with these islands at different moments in time, and in relation to different waves of slaves and indentured labour groups (Indian, Chinese, African, Malagasy, Comorean)… (Gupta, 2010: 276)

Ondaatje's description of Ceylonese society above speaks to these multiple imperial occupations across time in which Dutch, British and Portuguese influence form part of long history of imperial north to south relations as well as the movement of indentured labour groups on the south to south axis. This creates a complex situation in which imperial presence both stands outside Ceylonese community in the form of those "Europeans and English who were never part of the Ceylonese community", yet is deeply connected to Ceylonese society through long histories of intermarriage. So much so, that it is impossible to pin point exact Ceylonese nationality.

The many layered colonial histories of Sri Lanka are also made manifest in Ondaatje's (2009: 171) description in *Running in the Family* of his visit to Sir John Kotelawala, the former Prime Minister of Ceylon serving from 1953 to 1956. Ondaatje (2009: 172) describes the visit "a Victorian dream". He continues:

> While we eat, an amateur theatre group from Colombo which is producing Camelot receives permission to be photographed on the grounds. The dream-like setting is now made even more surreal by Sinhalese actors wearing thick velvet costumes, pointed hats and chain mail in this terrible May heat. A group of black knights mime festive songs among the peacocks and fountains. Guinevere kisses Arthur beside the tank of Australian fish. (Ondaatje, 2009: 174-5)

The glaring juxtapositions of Sinhalese actors wearing thick velvet costumes in the blistering heat of Ceylon as they pose for photographs next to the ex-prime minister's collection of Australian fish, sums up the way in which multiple and layered histories create a situation in which divergent and unfamiliar elements are constantly placed alongside each other.

The ship as the material space of voyage acts as a contact zone in much the same way. Voyage is the way in which many people come to be islanders. It is on the initial departure that the original contact between strangers takes place. The idea of interstitiality of island-ness in the Indian Ocean is intimately connected to the interstitiality of voyage. In this way, it is possible to see Mynah's story of voyage on board the *Oronsay* in *The Cat's Table* as deeply imbedded in the experience of the island of Ceylon.[1] In other words, the *Oronsay* comes to act as a contact zone for Mynah in a similar way to his island home.

Another, perhaps more direct way, to conceptualize the link between the space of islands and the space of voyage is with Anderson's (2011: 343) insight that the idea of crossings may in fact be better suited to the Indian Ocean than the idea of contact zones, i.e. the notion that identity or subjectivity is made in the actual crossing of the ocean as opposed to arrival at a destination. As Bragard (2005: 225) states in reference to the ship:

> It is a site of memory of the unspeakable. It is the place where people started exchanging, fighting or helping each other, a microcosm of hybrid communities to come.

It is on the initial crossing in voyage that one is first confronted with strangers, i.e. the impulse to define oneself in terms of others and against others begins here. Once arriving on the island, this process simply continues in a new context. In other words, islands can be seen as sites of continual crossing, the ship serving as a microcosm for the hybrid island community. If this is the case, islands can be seen to occupy a liminal space in similar ways as voyages. An island, like a ship, too is forever caught between bodies of water, always detached from the mainland. Whereas a ship will eventually dock, an island remains in this in-between space. The island space can then be conceptualized as an

[1] The names 'Ceylon' and 'Sri Lanka' are used interchangeably in this chapter. *The Cat's Table* and *Running in the Family* both reference time periods before the official name change in which case the name 'Ceylon' is the preferred term. When speaking of Sri-Lankan politics and history more generally, the name 'Sri-Lanka' more appropriately frames these issues.

incarnation of a perpetual voyage or permanent liminality where one is perpetually bound in the crossing. As previously discussed, there is a sense in which Mynah's voyage on board the *Oronsay* can be seen as continuing long after the physical voyage ends as it remains the centre from which he unravels meaning in his life. Mynah will forever be aboard the *Oronsay*, caught in perpetual voyage. If the island space is an incarnation of perpetual voyage, it means that his experience of his home island of Sri Lanka will too come to bear in the way in which Mynah understands his life. In this way, there is an intimate connection between voyage and island that cannot be severed.

There are indeed some touch points between the characters Mynah encounters on the *Oronsay* and the characters that Ondaatje describes in *Running in the Family* which suggests a connection between Ondaatje's experience of voyage and his experience of island. In a description of a map of the island Ondaatje (2009: 59) states that, "Ceylon floats on the Indian Ocean." In this image the island literally drifts across the ocean as a ship does. Ondaatje's image (2009: 13-31) of the human pyramid and description of the circus that visits Nuwara Eliya in *Running in the Family* is reminiscent of the Jankala troupe in *The Cat's Table* and Emily volunteering to be part of the human pyramid act (Ondaatje, 2011: 252). Ondaatje (2009: 31) also describes a T.W. Roberts in *Running in the Family* being bitten by a rabid dog and thereafter going to London. No-one bothered to tell him the dog was rabid and most assumed he had survived (Ondaatje, 2009: 31). In *The Cat's Table*, the wealthy philanthropist Hector de Silva also gets bitten by a dog, but we are told his fate and a funeral is held for him aboard the *Oronsay* (Ondaatje, 2011: 135).

There are also several names which appear in *Running in the Family* which attach themselves to various characters in *The Cat's Table*, for example Francis Foneska is described as the most extreme alcoholic in *Running in the Family* and is the same name given to the teacher in *The Cat's Table* (Ondaatje 2009 & Ondaatje 2011). There is also mention of the Prins family in *Running in the Family* and we meet Flavia Prins on board the *Oronsay* (Ondaatje 2009 & Ondaatje 2011). Furthermore, in *Running in the Family* Ondaatje (2009: 81) describes his ancestor, a botanist named William Charles Ondaatje, who "knew of at least fifty-five species of poisons easily available to his countrymen…" This is reminiscent of the suggestion that the botanist Mr Daniels in *The Cat's Table* could have poisoned Emily (2011: 189). The name Daniels is also used in *Running in the Family*

to name Lalla's neighbours' on the farm (Ondaatje, 2009: 118). These touch points, while not pointing to clear pattern of how to conceptualize particular societal relations in *The Cat's Table* in terms of specific Ceylonese societal structures described in the *Running in the Family*, do point to the way in which the space of voyage and the space of the island imaginatively inform each other. Ondaatje clearly draws on his experience in Ceylon to inform his creation/"re-imagining" of his experience on board the *Oronsay*. This reinforces the connection between the space of the island and the space of voyage. Therefore, it is possible to link Ondaatje's exploration of personal relationships in *The Cat's Table* with the compacted and complex nature of island society where one is constantly negotiating your position amongst strangers.

The compacted and intertwined nature of Ceylonese society is palpably captured in the image of a human pyramid in Ondaatje's *Running in The Family* through which he describes his island family:

> I see my own body straining which stands shaped like a star and I realise gradually I am part of a human pyramid. Below me are other bodies that I am standing on and above me are several more, though I am quite near the top. With cumbersome slowness we are walking from one end of the living room to the other. We are chattering away like the crows and the cranes so that it is difficult to hear. (Ondaatje, 2009: 13)

Throughout *Running in the Family* there is a sense in which one is caught up in the gossip and exaggerations of island community; everybody knowing everybody else's business. The way in which rumour and uncertainty travel on board the *Oronsay* can be read as reflective of this sort of island society. Ondaatje's depiction of this sort of closely entangled island community on board the *Oronsay* can be read as linked to the deeply compacted nature and interstitiality of island community.

It seems then that the connection between the space of voyage and the space of the island means that Ondaatje's experience of voyage on board the *Oronsay* is inextricably linked to that of the island of Ceylon. Both Mynah's experiences on board the *Oronsay* and experience of the island of Ceylon represent permanent forms of liminality in that they mutually inform each other as the centre, the space of permanent crossing, which forever informs the way in which Mynah infers meaning in his life. In other words, Mynah's deeply entangled experiences of voyage and island is not a mere phase through

which he must pass, but a persevering centre through which he makes sense of the world. Furthermore, Ondaatje's experience of compact island society informs his tendency to seek meaningful truth or insight, in regards to the damage that has occurred in several of the characters' stories in *The Cat's Table*, through an exploration of personal relationships. It is from the perspective of personal relationships that Ondaatje is able to uncover processes of on-going damage and the possibility of reparation. Some of the damage that Ondaatje engages in the novel is deeply linked to the experience of displacement.

Damage in Displacement

Ondaatje explores the on-going damage in Ramadhin's life by delving into the interior space of his personal relationship with his student, Heather Cave. This on-going damage manifests as a permanent sense of displacement as Ramadhin struggles to live in a post-imperial society which makes it difficult to belong, and furthermore, struggles to reconcile certain aspects of himself. Ondaatje describes his death as follows:

> He had been found with his heart stopped, a knife beside him. That was all. He had gone into the darkness of one of the communal gardens in the city, near the girl's flat. Massi told me he was supposedly obsessed with her, someone he had been tutoring. But when Massi looked into it, there was only one girl, fourteen years old, Heather Cave, who he gave lessons to. If she was the one Ramadhin was enamoured of, he would have had an overwhelming guilt that must have filled him like dark ink. (Ondaatje, 2011: 150)

The heaviness of this guilt and the fragility of Ramadhin's heart are incommensurable. As the story of the incident leading to Ramadhin's death unravels it is said he goes to the boy Rajiva on Heather's behalf, to bring him back to her, yet the situation reveals itself darkly. Rajiva touches a blade above Ramadhin's heart, "the heart that Ramadhin has protected all his life" (Ondaatje, 2011, 162). Rajiva slips the knife into Ramadhin's pocket for him to give to Heather, "it is as intimate as if he had slid it into him" (Ondaatje, 2011, 162). Ramadhin does not know what it means, but "it is a dangerous yet formal gesture" and there is "an unstoppable shudder in Ramadhin's heart" (Ondaatje, 2011, 162). The perverse feeling surrounding this interaction, which leads to Ramadhin's death, can be read as linked to Ramadhin's perception of darkness in himself. An infatuation with a fourteen year old girl is something which he cannot square. It is a sort of displacement within; a displacement that can read as linked to the pervasive feeling of displacement as

a feature of certain modern experiences. Massi says that Ramadhin "would have been more content with a career and home in Colombo" (Ondaatje, 2011: 150). While his sense of displacement from "home" may have been less profound had this been the case, what Ondaatje shows, is that there is no escaping the damage born of displacement. Rather, there is no authentic internal residence or "home" for anyone anywhere. The damage in displacement can be linked to fact that Ramadhin, as an immigrant, was never able to fully escape the liminality of voyage on board the *Oronsay*, and more pointedly, the liminality of his island home. Rather than regarding the voyage on board the *Oronsay* as a break from some authentic internal inhabiting of the island which introduces damage, Ondaatje explores a continuum of damage through the story of voyage as manifest in the character of Ramadhin.

Thomassen (2009: 22) states:

> In ritual passages, liminality is followed by reintegration rituals that re-establish the order of the new personality as a part of the social order he or she re-enters with a new role, stamped by the formative experience. This is a critical passage, but without reintegration liminality is pure danger.

It would seem that Ramadhin never completes these rites of incorporation, opening his life up to danger of continued liminality. What this normative assumption invokes is judgement that any state of continued liminality is somehow representative of a defective society comprised of defective individuals. Schismogenesis automatically signals violence and self-destruction. True, there is a link between Ramadhin's deep experience of displacement and the presence of danger. His defective heart serves as a constant reminder of the danger in his life and ultimately cannot survive the trauma of the internal displacement done by his relationship with Heather Cave. Death, the most irrevocable form of damage, becomes Ramadhin's only way out of permanent liminality. In this way, while Ramadhin's sense of displacement possibly suggests a form of permanent liminality, the experiences of this character are by no means reducible to mere dysfunction rendering him sad and lacking. Rather than viewing Ramadhin as a migrant caught in the danger of liminality due to the incompletion of reintegration rituals, the point Ondaatje is making is that there has never been integration in the first place. In his final conversation with Emily Mynah admits, "We don't belong anywhere I guess" (Ondaatje, 2011: 272). *The Cat's Table* speaks to a modern experience of all-encompassing

displacement, without beginning or end. Rather than having an authentic home from which we can be displaced, Ondaatje expresses the feeling that we are all thrown into being. The novel points to the limitations of liminality in viewing schismogenesis as normatively undesirable thereby painting all experience with the same dysfunctional brush.

In terms of Sri Lanka, islanders have been undergoing processes of displacement through centuries of migration and interstitial existence. In this way, displacement comes to form a constituent part of Indian Ocean islands and indeed, the modern experiences of displacement which the novel addresses. *The Cat's Table* explores liminality as an indelible part of modernity in the set of displaced experiences it explores. Displacement in *The Cat's Table*, in its close connection to island experience, can be viewed as linked to the processes of displacement which are deeply linked to imperialism. Therefore, one way of uncovering the damage done in displacement, is to consider the imperial legacies of Sri Lanka.

In *Running in the Family*, Ondaatje highlights the displacement that occurs in Sri Lankan identity when the island becomes an object to be owned externally. That is not to assume that there is some essential island identity that is able to authentically inhabit the island from within. Rather, what Ondaatje relays is the imbalances of power which meant that some had more say in the construction of the island's narrative than others. The island becomes the bearer of superimposed imperial visions and imagination, leaving the story one sided. Ondaatje describes the "false maps" of Ceylon that hang on his brother's wall in Toronto (Ondaatje, 2009: 59). He states:

> The maps reveal rumours of topography, the routes for invasion and trade, and the dark mad mind of travellers' tales appears throughout Arab and Chinese medieval records. The island seduced all of Europe. The Portuguese. The Dutch. The English. And so its name changed, as well as its shape – Serendip, Ratnapida ('island of gems'), Taprobane, Zeloan, Zelian, Seyllan, Ceilon, and Ceylon – the wife of many marriages, courted by invaders who stepped ashore and claimed everything with the power of their sword or bible or language. This pendant, once its shape stood still became a mirror. It pretended to reflect each European power till newer ships arrived and spilled their nationalities… (Ondaatje, 2009: 60)

The island becomes an object of seduction on to which imperial fantasies are projected. Ondaatje compares that island to a woman, "the wife of many marriages, courted by

invaders" only to be become subject to various mechanisms of power. Like a woman's body becomes an object to be owned in a variety of discourses, "This island was a paradise to be sacked. Every conceivable thing was collected and shipped back to Europe…" (Ondaatje, 2009: 81) The island is nothing more than "a mirror", its only job to reflect the imperial power to which is belongs.

As imperialism progresses, the delineation between those connected to imperial power as "outsiders" and islanders as "insiders" recedes further. As previously discussed, Ondaatje's complex picture of Ceylonese society in *Running in the Family*, means imperial power remains external whilst being deeply incorporated. So much so that is near impossible to distinguish precise Ceylonese nationality. In a situation such as this, the image reflected in the mirror becomes much more obscure and fragmented. The multiple and layered experiences of this Indian Ocean island has meant not only displacement from the superimposed visions of the imperial other, but displacement from your neighbour as the divergent and unfamiliar live alongside each other. Most profoundly, the interstitiality of island experience born from imperialism, where it becomes impossible to figure your own particular place and connection to all, results in a displacement within.

In this light, the damage in displacement we see in characters such as Ramadhin can be viewed as part of much larger processes of continuous displacement on the island of Sri Lanka which comes to resonate internally in the inability to belong anywhere. As Ondaatje (2009: 80) states in *Running in the Family*, "We own the country we grow up in, or we are aliens and invaders." The sentence could well imply that if we are owners we probably seized the land from someone else in the first place. In this sense, Indian Ocean islands reflect the reality of modernity where everyone always comes from somewhere else rendering the notion of authentic internal residence for anyone obsolete. There are deep schisms of internal displacement which Ramadhin is never able to reconcile. This internal form of displacement and its associated damage most pronouncedly shows itself in the realm of personal relationships, where, when the other becomes the mirror, there is nowhere to hide from your own displaced image.

Damage and the Trickster

While, on the face of things, *The Cat's Table* can be read as an adventure or rites of passage story centred around three young boys, it is particularly the story of the female characters that delve into the deep interior spaces of personal relationships. The theme of older men having the ability to inflict damage on younger women is made manifest in the stories of Emily and Miss Lasqueti. They both have encounters with older men that ring notes of destruction and sadism. There is a deep sense of the damage that can occur in these sorts of relationships. Interestingly, both Emily and Miss Lasqueti are engaged in liminal experiences when they encounter these men. Emily is on board the *Oronsay* when she meets the Hyderbad Mind, also known as Sunil, and Miss Lasqueti meets Horace on a trip to Italy to improve her Italian where she temporarily works as a translator at a Villa (Ondaatje, 2011: 234). Both these men can be read as embodying certain features of the trickster figure. Szakolczai (2009: 154) explains that trickster figures occur in the folktales and myths of all cultures representing an archaic and universal figure. Granrose (1996: 14) notes that the trickster figure in mythology and folklore primarily entered psychological vocabulary through Jung's essay "On Psychology and the Trickster-Figure" and that Jung describes the trickster as a summation of the inferior character traits in individuals. Szakolczai (2009: 154-5) offers the following description of trickster figures:

> Tricksters are always marginal characters: outsiders, as they cannot trust or be trusted, cannot give or share, they are incapable of living in a community; they are repulsive, as – being insatiable - they are characterized by excessive eating, drinking, and sexual behaviour, having no sense of shame; they are not taken seriously, given their affinity with jokes, storytelling and fantasizing. However, tricksters can suddenly become dangerous: in a situation where the attention of the community is on the wane, in an instant the trickster can capture the occasion and institute a lasting reversal of roles and values, making himself the central figure in place of the marginal outcast. The condition of possibility for such trickster takeovers is a liminal situation where certainties are lost…

Thus, Szakolczai (2009: 155) states that "Tricksters and liminality are closely connected." As we will come to see, certain of these features manifest in the Hyderbad Mind and Horace.

It is within profound liminal experiences that damage occurs in Emily and Miss Lasqueti lives. Thomassen (2009: 17) notes that liminal periods can be experienced at different

levels of intensity, for example, if individual and societal liminal experiences converge. This is indeed the case with Emily and Miss Lasqueti. Not only are they engaged in liminal activities in their lives, that is, travelling on a ship and visiting Italy, but as young women they are still transitioning into fully adult versions of themselves. This speaks to a particularly intense liminal situation in which the potential for influence, and damage, is great.

As previously discussed, the liminal space is one in which there is particular proneness to re-incorporate structure in the process of forming a new identity. The newness of deep emotional experiences, often tied up with sexual experiences, that are seen in both Emily and Miss Lasqueti's stories invoke a deep degree of vulnerability and susceptibility. The intensity of these liminal experiences are dangerous because as Szakolczai (2009: 154) points out, "the structure on which "objective" rationality was based [has] disappeared; and second, because the stressful, emotive character of the liminal crisis prevents clear thinking." In this way, the trickster figures encountered by Emily and Miss Lasqueti have the potential to incur deep and on-going forms of damage.

Consider the developments in Emily's story. Mynah observes an interaction between The Hyderbad Mind and Emily. There is a subtly menacing tone throughout:

> I suppose it was his more adult self that fascinated and then tempted my cousin. I could always recognise Sunil from a distance – his thinness, his acrobatic walk. Watching them I'd see his hand move up her arm and disappear into her sleeve, holding her in a controlling way, all the time speaking about the intricacies of a world she must have desired. (Ondaatje, 2011: 184)

Here the fact that it is the Hyderbad Mind's "adult self" that intrigued the younger Emily is highlighted. She is captivated precisely because she thinks he is showing her elements of a "grown up" world into which she is being initiated. This gives the Hyderbad Mind much power as seen in his control over Emily. It is worth noting that the Hyderbad Mind is a circus performer, in particular, an acrobat. Circus and carnival figures often function at the margins of society in step with the archetype of the trickster. Furthermore, as Szakolczai (2009: 155) notes above, tricksters are often engaged in "jokes, storytelling and fantasizing". Besides the Hyderbad Mind's profession as an entertainer, Mynah speaks of how he must have told Emily about "the intricacies of the

world she must have desired". The Hyderbad Mind's lure lies not only in his seemingly superior knowledge of the adult world, but in his propensity as an entertainer and storyteller. These qualities are particularly seductive in the liminal period in which Emily encounters him.

The menacing tone described above seems to underscore much of Emily's relationship with the Hyderbad Mind. In the scene in which Emily volunteers to be part of a human pyramid in a performance put on by the Jankla Troupe, she is given a small award and Sunil closes a silver bracelet onto her wrist (Ondaatje, 2011: 252). Mynah describes how "She winced as the clasp cut into her skin, and there was an awkward moment when her knees almost buckled" (Ondaatje, 2011: 253). Mynah continues, "I saw a show of blood on her arm. Sunil held her steady with one hand, and put the palm of his other hand against her forehead to calm her….and Emily bravely held up her arm up for us all to see the bracelet, or whatever it was, there on her forearm" (Ondaatje, 2011: 253). Here the Hyderbad Mind's control over Emily turns into something dangerous and subtly sadistic.

Earlier in the novel, Mynah states that meeting The Hyderbad Mind was how Emily "went on to live a life different from the one that was expected" (Ondaatje, 2011: 50). There seems to something shadowy awakened in her through her relationship with this controlling and charismatic man which perseveres in her later life. It is precisely the liminal period during which this relationship took place that affords it so much power. Later when meeting with Emily in London, Mynah states, "Early on she had confessed a pleasure in danger. She was right about that. It was there like a joker, something that did not quite fit her nature" (Ondaatje, 2011: 126). This dangerous part of Emily, the joker inside her, can be read as somehow connected to her relationship with the dangerous trickster she encountered on the *Oronsay*. The incorporation of influences is an indelible feature of a liminal space. Just as Mynah has to incorporate elements of the vast array of structures made available to him on the *Oronsay* in order to re-enter the world, so too Emily is profoundly affected by her experiences in this liminal story of voyage.

Miss Lasqueti seems to share a strong kinship with Emily in her recognition of a similarly destructive relationship. In a letter that Miss Lasqueti sends to Mynah in his later life she states in reference to wanting to protect him from the Baron:

> It has been a wish of mine for quite some time to get in touch with Emily. I think of her often. For there was something I had wished to say to her during that journey but did not. I had thought that afternoon of simply removing you from the clutches of the Baron. But it was Emily I should have wanted to save. For I had run into her with the Jankla Troupe chap a few times and her relationship with him seemed fraught and dangerous. There was also something I had promised myself to give her that might be useful to her, to help her out, but again I never did. (Ondaatje, 2011: 232).

Enclosed in the package that Miss Lasqueti sends to Mynah is another letter she wishes him to forward to Emily. It is in this letter that Miss Lasqueti's story about her relationship with the married older man, Horace Johnson, is told (Ondaatje, 2011: 233-4). She recalls how upon the first time he spoke to her; he took her elbow, "carefully, precisely, as if this was one place on the anatomy which was socially acceptable to touch and therefore take ownership of" (Ondaatje, 2011: 237). One cannot help but be reminded of the way in which the Hyderbad Mind moved his hand up Emily's arm disappearing under her sleeve and "holding her in a controlling way" (Ondaatje, 2011: 184). Already there are similarities evident in the controlling qualities of these men.

Horace takes her to the tapestry she loves so much and lifts up the corner to look at the underside where colours are more vibrant (Ondaatje, 2011: 237). He states, "This is where the power is, you see. Always. The underneath" (Ondaatje, 2011: 238). This once again signals then importance of hidden spaces in the novel, that which resides beneath. Horace continues to tell Miss Lasqueti that what gives the tapestry truth and depth is the more than a hundred women who worked on it during the 1530's Flanders winter and in this way fed them and kept them alive (Ondaatje, 2011: 238). It is possible these are the same sort of "intricacies of a world" that the Hyderbad Mind spoke to Emily about and that she so desired. As Miss Lasqueti states:

> When he talked like that I could have slid with ease into his assured pocket. I was very young the first time he spoke to me. The thing that men, with the kind of power that comes with money and knowledge, assume the universe. It allows them an easy wisdom. (Ondaatje, 2011: 238).

Like the Hyderbad Mind, it is Horace's knowledge of the world and the telling of stories which is seductive to the young Miss Lasqueti. Just as the lurking danger of the prisoner who resides in the "underside" of the ship and his hypnotic voice poses the threat to lure you into a false sense of security, these older men seem to have some dark power which

draws these women into their worldview. It is within this false sense of security that danger lurks. As Miss Lasqueti states:

> But such people close doors on you. Within such a universe there are codes, rooms you must not enter. In their daily life there is always a cup of blood somewhere. He was aware of that. Horace Johnson knew the kind of animal he was riding. There's a brutality that comes with such knowledge. (Ondaatje, 2011: 238-239)

This brutality, captured in the image of "a cup of blood", is tied up with knowledge of the world that turns out to be somehow false and deceptive. The power of the trickster to mislead becomes further pronounced in liminal situations where the dissolution of order means that the truth is up for grabs.

Damage in Disguise

The idea of damage in *The Cat's Table* also manifests in relation to the notion of disguise. Disguise can be linked to internal displacement, as seen in Ramadhin, as it involves a move away from a clear or truthful depiction of the self. Miss Lasqueti describes how she attends a fancy dress party for the staff dressed as Marcel Proust (Ondaatje, 2011: 240). She describes how she became conscious of Horace circling her (Ondaatje, 2011: 240), just as a predator circles its prey. The idea of disguises once again speaks to the idea of that which is hidden or cannot be seen. In reference to Emily's propensity to keep to herself, Mynah refers to her as someone who dons a disguise when he states, "and I have come to realise the gentleness of manner I spoke of must have grown naturally out of a disguised life" (Ondaatje, 2011: 127). Disguise, like displacement, involves processes of obscuring the self. In the case of Emily and Miss Lasqueti, the internal sort of damage seems to manifest as dislodgement from self in the form of taking on other identities or *imitating*.

Imitation is intrinsically associated with the trickster figure. Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 13) explains how in most trickster tales and legends, the trickster is the vagrant who appears in a village and tries to gain the locals trust by telling jokes and provoking laughter. Therefore, Horvath and Thomassen explain, "the Trickster is on one hand an outsider who has no home, no existential commitments; on the other, he is a mime." They continue:

> This defines at the core of the figure a particular, positive connection between rationality and imitation; two features that are considered to be radically opposite, at the level of a single human being (one is either rational, or simply imitates others); but that are brought together as two alternative responses particularly present in liminal situations (such situations on the one hand provoke escalating processes of imitation; on the other their solution requires rational thinking that manages to overcome emotional distress and find a way out). However, not having a home, deeply felt human relationships and existential commitments, the Trickster is not interested in solving the liminal crisis either. Quite on the contrary, being at home in liminality, or in homelessness, his real interest lies in its opposite, in perpetuating such conditions of confusion. (Horvath and Thomassen, 2008: 13-14)

Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 14) state that while imitation is a normal aspect of learning and social activity, this is only true if we are not aware that we are imitating otherwise we are merely miming in which no learning or pleasure can take place. This is the world of the trickster, where while he acts like everybody else, he "never fully participates in what he does, abandoning himself to the pleasure of being alive, carried away by the experience of the moment; always stays cool, performs everything only as a boring routine or painful duty" (Horvath and Thomassen, 2008: 14).

Miss Lasqueti imitates Proust, literally taking on a disguise at the start of her courtship with Horace. This imitation could be read as a manifestation of the learning or experimentation that takes place during liminal periods of transition. However, she questions whether it was her disguise that interested him (Ondaatje, 2011: 240). She states, "Did this allow a disguise for his intentions?" (Ondaatje, 2011: 240) Here it seems that the trickster, Horace, is drawn to Miss Lasqueti whilst she is engaged in imitating, an activity that he as an outsider he is perpetually and consciously engaged in. It is indeed the disguise that interested him. Miss Lasqueti states:

> And I, in order to hesitate at the start of this courtship, wore for the first few days my Proust moustache, so that as he greeted me in the studio, he had to embrace me with the moustache between us. I wore it for some days in his company, forgetting I had it on as we spoke and as I shared stories of my youth with him. I handed all that information sleepily over to his great generosity. (Ondaatje, 2011: 241)

The disguise comes to somehow facilitate the relationship between Horace and Miss Lasqueti. Miss Lasqueti describes how he kissed her with the moustache between them. In this moment, the disguise becomes both that which brings them together and that

which acts as a boundary between them. It is precisely the transformative power of the liminal that allows this for this collapsing of boundaries. Miss Lasqueti is at once herself and the imitating trickster.

Szakolczai (2009: 154) states:

> …the term "liminality" helps us to understand that such major events literally and effectively transform every mode of being of those individuals involved. Putting it as clearly as possible: it is not the "I" that loves the "you"; rather it is the "it", the love itself that emerges in the "in-between" of two human beings, forming and transforming both, by creating a single unit that cannot be separated without a tragedy; a kind of "death".

It is this dissolution of subject and object positions within the liminal space which allows for transformation. It is also the collapse of these boundaries that makes the liminal space so precarious and potentially damaging. Miss Lasqueti states, "I thought I was being loved because I was being altered" (Ondaatje, 2011: 243). The collapse of boundaries and the manifold processes of disguise in which she is involved means that not only can the situation irrevocably alter her, but also damage her.

While it is possible for Miss Lasqueti and Emily to be altered during their liminal experiences, the same is not true of the trickster figures. Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 14) explain that eventually the mimetic nature of the trickster becomes a genuine problem for others "as a Trickster character cannot be altered, so there is genuinely no solution". They continue:

> The Trickster cannot be punished, as not being authentic is not a transgression of the law; even further, any punishment is only meaningful if there is a chance of correction and improvement, which is hopeless in the case of the Trickster character. So eventually the ways of the community and the Trickster must depart – and here we have the figure of the Trickster as the eternal migrant and wanderer. (Horvath and Thomassen, 2008: 14)

The most palpable damage to Miss Lasqueti manifests in her physical confrontation with Horace. During this interaction she also recognizes that Horace is beyond remand. She prepares to confront Horace after discovering that he had unfairly punished his young son Clive for brushing the image of a dog on the tapestry, an innocent story she had told him as "a little pre-coital anecdote" (Ondaatje, 2011: 244-245). She states:

> I had prepared my anger and had come to wound him in any way I could for what he had done to the child. I saw him for what he was, a bully, who hid in his courteous power and authority. And I knew he would slip that way through people all his life, learning nothing. (Ondaatje, 2011: 345)

Miss Lasqueti recognizes Horace's inability to learn. She tries to strike Horace when she realizes her "words would not hurt him" (Ondaatje, 2011, 245). But he catches her fist and swerves it back towards her and "The scissors I held pierced the side of my belly with all the force and hate I had flung towards him" (Ondaatje, 2011, 245). The damage she intended for the trickster turns into self-damage, once again obscuring the boundaries between them.

Miss Lasqueti continues:

> I was bent in two, my head, my hair, almost down to my heels, the scissors still in me. I was silent. I was not moving and most of all refusing to cry. I was just like the boy….I suspected there was even a thrill in him for what had happened, and given a different response from me that involved helpless weeping and clinging to him, we would have attempted to make love again, perhaps, for a last time, as if solidifying our completion with the past. (Ondaatje, 2011: 245-6)

While the stakes are significantly raised here, this echoes the scene in which the Hyderbad Mind pins the bracelet onto Emily's wrist making her bleed. The sadistic edge is further sharpened in Miss Lasqueti's perception that Horace found a thrill in this, a thrill that could lead to physical passion. While Horace escapes all learning and consequences, Miss Lasqueti will forever bear the scar of her interaction with the trickster. Similarly, the Hyderbad Mind escapes all repercussions for his involvement in the escape of the prisoner while Emily bears the wound of believing that she killed Mr Guneskera through her involvement with him (Ondaatje, 2011: 275). Furthermore, the prisoner who serves as a constant reminder of danger that lurks bellow also escapes the ship (Ondaatje, 2011: 26). As there are no repercussions for tricksters, they will remain forever unchanged so inevitably, "the ways of the community and the Trickster must depart" (Horvath and Thomassen, 2008: 14). Emily and Miss Lasqueti are never to see the Hyderbad Mind or Horace again. They alone must carry the scars of the relationship.

The lurking possibility of physical damage on board the *Oronsay* mirrors the potential for damage in personal relationships. On both a physical and metaphysical level, this potential for damage is something that always remains disguised. Ramadhin is unable to

overcome his internal sense of displacement which is linked to larger processes of displacement in the Indian Ocean arena and provides a valuable lens for unravelling the dislodged experiences of modernity expressed in the novel. Emily and Miss Lasqueti are both deeply damaged by their interactions with trickster figures during important liminal periods in their lives. Ultimately, it is from the present centre of the voyage on board the *Oronsay* that Ondaatje is able to uncover this hidden damage. Miss Lasqueti too encounters Emily during her voyage and recognizes important touch points with liminal experiences in her own life. It is those encountered during liminal periods that come to have massive bearing on the character's later development. The complete loss of structure and the high emotional stakes that exists in liminal spaces of voyage means that those encountered in this space have the power to exert lasting, and often damaging, effects on characters in this vital period of self-formation. As Mynah states when recalls Ramadhin's heart ailment:

> …how many of us have a moved heart that shies away to a different angle, a millimetre or even less from the place where it first existed, some repositioning unknown to us. Emily. Myself. Perhaps even Cassius. How have our emotions glanced off rather than directly faced others ever since, resulting in simple unawareness or in some cases cold-blooded self-sufficiency that is damaging to us? Is this what has left us, still uncertain, at a Cat's Table, looking back, looking back, searching out those who we journeyed with or were formed by, even now, at our age? (Ondaatje, 2011: 278-279)

It is the liminal space of voyage on board the *Oronsay* that connects these characters through recognition of damage done to them in this tenuous space. It is damage that is difficult to uncover because it seems so slight, "a moved heart…some repositioning unknown to us", yet it is enduring. It is a damage that is hidden and disguised. The powerful transformative potential of the liminal voyage not only allows these characters to form, and damage, each other in essential ways, but the act of remembering the liminal voyage becomes the key to uncovering the damage that was done.

The Breaker's Yard: Partial Reparation

While it is evident that *The Cat's Table* is engaged in uncovering the deep and persevering damage that occurs during the liminal voyage on board the *Oronsay*, it also explores the possibility of things being put back together, even if only partially. The possibility for

reparation is something that exists despite the constant undertow of damage that exists in the novel. However, what Ondaatje seems to be suggesting in *The Cat's Table* is that this partial reparation is only the placing together of fragments where the seams always remain visible. The damage that occurs in the liminal is on-going and can never be fully reversed.

Mr Nevil, the ship dismantler, tells Mynah "how an ocean liner could be broken down into thousands of unrecognisable pieces in a 'breaker's yard'." Mr Nevil admits that this is of course "a dangerous profession" (Ondaatje, 2011: 77). For Mynah, "it was painful to realise that nothing was permanent, not even an ocean liner" (Ondaatje, 2011: 77). Mynah continues:

> He had been there to help dismantle the *Normandie*, - 'the most beautiful ship ever built' - 'But somehow even that was beautiful…because in a breaker's yard you discover as it lay charred and half drowned in the Hudson River in America. 'But somehow even *that* was beautiful…because in a breaker's yard you discover anything can have a new life, be reborn as a part of a car or railway carriage, or shovel blade. You can take an older life and you link it to a stranger.' (Ondaatje, 2011: 77-78)

Despite the danger involved and the painful realization of impermanence, the utter and complete damage done to the *Normandie* is somewhat repaired through the possibility of finding new life in new forms. While the *Normandie* will never again be what it once was, it can still be partially put back together. Here Ondaatje highlights a key concept in the understanding of the novel, that is, while the *Normandie* can find new life in a new form, it will always be linked to a "*stranger*". This partial reparation is only possible through an irrevocably alteration into a new form where the presence of the unfamiliar will always be present. As previously discussed, this notion of constantly being thrust up against strangers is an intrinsic part of Indian Ocean islands such as Sri Lanka and the space of the voyage where the initial contact between strangers takes place. The island as a space of perpetual voyage means that this confrontation with the unfamiliar never ends and that fragments will remain fragments placed alongside each other.

Miss Lasqueti too alludes to the scarce possibility of putting things back together in her interactions with Mynah on board the *Oronsay*. She invites Mynah for tea one afternoon in her cabin with Emily, a meeting intended to warm Mynah about the Baron, she tells

him of, "her love of languages, how she got in trouble in the early days, 'until something happened that allowed [her] to save [herself]" (Ondaatje, 2011: 226). Mynah notices a "mannequin-like-statue" in the corner of Miss Lasqueti's room with "a scar on the alabaster belly that looks as if it has been drawn or painted by a recent hand" (Ondaatje, 2011: 226). We know now that the scar on the mannequin mirrors the scar on Miss Lasqueti's belly. Miss Lasqueti moves the piece of transparent clothing that has been covering the scar and states, "'See this? You get over such things in time. You learn to alter your life'" (Ondaatje, 2011: 226). Once again, Miss Lasqueti has to remove the cloth to reveal the scar. The damage is hidden once more. It is by making the damage visible that Miss Lasqueti states it is possible to get over old wounds, but this is only possible by altering your life. However, what is also apparent in this scene is that it is a scar that Miss Lasqueti will have to bear all her life; always visible beneath the surface.

While the characters in the novel are able to partially repair the damage done to them during their transformative liminal voyage, they will be deeply and irrevocably altered, the scars of the damage they've encountered remaining. It is in the chapter of the novel entitled 'The Breaker's Yard' that Mynah visits Emily and some final pieces of the puzzle of their experiences on board the *Oronsay* are addressed. Like the *Normandie* was able to find new life in the Breaker's Yard, Mynah and Emily are only able to repair some of their internal damage by returning to the original site of this damage: their voyage on board the *Oronsay*. Mynah states, "Had she become the adult she was because of what had happened on that journey? I didn't know. I would never know how much it had altered her" (Ondaatje, 2011: 268). The fact that it is by revisiting their shared time on the *Oronsay* that Mynah and Emily are able to repair pieces of their lives, suggests that the journey had indeed altered Emily and significantly so.

They recall elements of that final night on board the *Oronsay* before the prisoner's escape. It was the Hyderbad Mind that asked Emily to get the key from Perera, the supposedly mute tailor Guneskerea turned out to be the undercover man and there is the further revelation that Emily could have been drugged by something in Mr Daniels garden (Ondaatje, 2011: 273-275). Finally, Mynah tells Emily that he doesn't believe she killed Guneskera and Emily thanks him (Ondaatje, 2011: 275). There seems to be some closure in revisiting these events. Mynah and Emily have both come a long way in their lives.

Mynah recognizes this when he states, "We had each changed places. She was no longer the focus of obsessed swains. I was no longer at the Cat's Table." It is only through remembering their shared journey that this recognition is possible. Mynah recalls the opposing forces he had always detected in Emily. It is as if her encounter with a dangerous man during an important liminal period in her life caused a schism in her perception of herself. Mynah states:

> A writer, I cannot remember who, spoke of a person having 'a confusing grace.' With uncertainty alongside her warmth, that is how Emily has always been for me. You trusted her but she did not trust herself. She was 'good', but she was not that way in her own eyes. Those qualities still had not balanced out somehow, or agreed with each other. (Ondaatje, 2011: 277)

While in their later lives Ramadhin was unable to square opposing feelings in himself and Mynah struggled to find a sense of belonging Emily is unable to see herself as others see her. This was her damage.

It is only after she meets with Mynah and revisits her voyage on board the *Oronsay* that there seems to be the possibility of some reparation. Mynah wakes the next morning and sees Emily. He states:

> Her face in the morning light was beautiful in a more human way. What does that mean? I suppose it means I could read all the aspects of her beauty now. She was at ease, her face reflected more of herself. And I understood now that the darker aspects of herself were folded within that generosity. They did not negate closeness. I realise that for most of my life the one I have never been able to let go of is Emily, in spite of our disappearances and separations. (Ondaatje, 2011: 277)

It is after their conversation that Mynah detects that Emily is more at "ease". The image of her face reflecting more of herself suggests that there is some reconciliation between Emily's skewed self-perception and how Mynah perceives her. The divergent and damaged aspects of Emily find some reconciliation. Furthermore, Mynah realizes that despite his inability to feel at home; his tendency to turn himself "into something that did not belong anywhere" it is in Emily that he finds some sense of stability and mooring (Ondaatje, 2011: 218). "I realise that for most of my life the one I have never been able to let go of is Emily, in spite of our disappearances and separations" (Ondaatje, 2011: 277). This inability to let go of Emily could be read as rooted in their intense personal

exchange on board the *Oronsay* after which Mynah admits, "I knew I would always be linked to her, by some underground river or seam of coal or silver" (Ondaatje, 2011: 124). What is revealed in this moment is that in the attempt of repairing things, that is, placing these broken fragments alongside each other, new patterns of connectivity can emerge. Personal relationships are not only the site in which damage occurs in the novel, but the site in which it is possible to once again find some sense of belonging. Just as characters are able to damage each other within the liminal space of voyage, they are also able to help each other. Things will never be what they once were, but through the process of transformation, a possibility which is always powerfully present within liminal spaces, things can take new form.

What Ondaatje is interested in is exploring a continuum of damage through a liminal story of voyage. This means that the way in which damage manifests and the way in which it shows itself is constantly transforming. While it appears that the fallout produced by imperialism and its associated damage cannot be reversed, the way in which fragments are placed alongside each other yields some insight into the condition of modernity. By insisting that liminality must end, schismogenesis signalling only a state of defect, one ignores the nuances through which people make sense of their lives. By exploring the way in which his characters attempt to put their lives back together, Ondaatje reveals affective truths about the way in which people attempt to find meaning in an increasingly fragmented modern world.

Concluding Remarks: Transformative Potential and Non-duality

It is the immense transformative potential that exists within the liminal space of voyage which makes both damage and reparation possible. This transformative potential forms the very ground of liminality. As Thomassen (2009: 24) states:

> While liminality is "unstructure", a lack of fixed points in a given moment, it must at the same time be considered the *origin* of structure….the stuff out of which everything is born, that formless reality out of which forms emerge, the beginning of everything.

Similarly, just as the trickster figure is the manifestation of the total unstructure found in liminal spaces, as David (1991: 63) recognizes, the trickster is also "the light-bringer, as

Lucifer…sometimes credited with creating the world itself, always credited with creating an individual part of it…This anti-social being is also creator." David (1991: 63) explains that the reason why creation is associated with this rebel figure is explicable by the hypothesis that the trickster is the creator of consciousness. According to David (1991: 63-4) the trickster "makes consciousness because he is the outsider, the outside point – for consciousness". David (1991: 63-4) continues, "The Trickster is a primitive form of the principle of individuality" and this is the reason why he is so important in all cultures. In the same way, it is the unstructure of liminal spaces that allows structure to re-emerge once the liminal period is over.

After her intense physical confrontation with Horace, there is a moment where Miss Lasqueti seems to recognize this base origin of it all. Part of this recognition means the realization that while damage has been done to her, there is a part of her that can never be damaged or repaired. It is what Turner refers to as some kind of "original state" (Turner in Thomassen, 2011: 23). This can be thought of as the place of the non-dual where boundaries between positive and negative forces cease to make sense.

Miss Lasqueti attends the end of year function at the villa after much deliberation. She watches chamber music on the terrace. Once again the images of music and light come together as an expression of infinite possibility. This rings of a new start and a new life. She states:

> A pianist and a cellist were just beyond the gathering, beneath the lit trees. And in the third movement, as it all melded and the music swept through the garden like an ordered wind and carried us within its arms, I was suddenly joyous. I felt contained, as if wearing a coat of music. (Ondaatje, 2011: 248)

Swept up in the stream of the infinite, Miss Lasqueti finds joy and containment. She is being transported to the recognition of a deeper truth. She watches Horace in his total focus on the cellist. She states:

> I assumed at first she was his sexual prey. But this was, I had to admit, more. Horace might just as easily have been infatuated with the pianist, whose adept fingers raced along the cello music and carried it without any gravity, in the act of an engineer as much as a hypnotist. Their art was this shared skill made up of coils and screws and resin and chords and learned pace. These rooted this nondescript cellist in black sensually to the earth. And it made me feel deeply content that she was in a realm Horace could never enter with all his power and wealth. He could

> seduce her and hire her and toast her with his wit. He could collect her and swan around her, but he could never reach the place she was in. (Ondaatje, 2011: 249)

It the cellist's rootedness to the earth, a connection to the original state of the world, that make Miss Lasqueti feel content. It is also this rootedness to this base of all experience that makes the cellist untouchable. Not Horace or anyone else could ever "reach the place she was in". She is beyond all damage and all reparation.

This space of non-duality hinted at in the text, of "original stuff" is impossible to describe within the dual constructs of language. Furthermore, it cannot be represented, in language or any other form, because it is something that can only be verified through experience. Miss Lasqueti experiences this non-dual place during a liminal period in her life and it is precisely the primacy of lived experience in liminal periods that leads her to this experience. Knowledge as only verifiable through experience is an almost impossible idea to sell in a system of thought that prides itself on rationalization and abstract thinking which are activities that uniformly ignore the importance of lived experience as it is lies outside of objectification and analysis. Szakolczai (2009: 163) argues that, "The striking receding of rituals in the modern world is nowhere more visible than for rites of passage themselves, the most evidently transformative rituals." For example, Szakolczai (2009: 163) notes that marriage rituals as important rites of passage have been reduced to "mere 'living together'". Szakolczai (2009: 163) continues:

> This is not simply "rational" behaviour, taking into account sky-rocketing divorce rates and legal costs, but is fuelled by a Romantic conviction that "true love" does not need ceremonies; a conviction that ignores deep human wisdom about the significance of transformative rituals.

What this sort of "rational" thinking does is ignore the transformative potential of experience in liminal situations. As Szakolczai (2009: 163) states:

> Even further, just as experience is linked to liminality and rites of passage, ignoring rites and liminality can be correlated with the similarly modern ignorance of experiences themselves. This seems to be contradicted by the general importance attributed to experience by modern thought, from Bacon and Descartes onwards. However, modern empiricism and rationalism are interested in experiences only in so far as these can be reduced to sense perception, and connected to the search for pleasure. Experiences as genuinely transformative moments that can change one's life, are systematically ignored.

What *The Cat's Table* shows are that experiences, especially those during liminal periods of rites of passage, are indeed transformative. The characters' are changed by their experiences on board the *Oronsay* with deep and durable effects.

Experience as a transformative event is deeply linked to liminality. Voyage is by definition a liminal experience, and as has been uncovered, voyage on board the *Oronsay* certainly functions within a liminal space. As previously discussed, Foulke (2002: 12-13) observes that throughout literary paradigms of voyage and their modulations there exists a close relationship between stories of voyages and experiences of voyages in historical accounts. As noted, "They seem to be isomorphic with the experience of voyaging itself, in the sense that a map resembles the landscape it surveys" (Foulke, 2002: 12-13). The link between experience and liminality accounts for the close relationship between experience and voyaging. It is precisely the close relationship between experience and the liminal voyage in *The Cat's Table* that allows for a moment in which Miss Lasqueti experiences the collapsing of duality, not only as a doorway to infinite possibility, but as way into glimpsing a moment of non-duality, a moment in which "it all melded and the music swept through the garden like an ordered wind…"

Chapter 4

Liminal Voyage as Organizing Principle: The Indian Ocean Underworld and Duplicity in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*

Like *The Cat's Table, By the Sea* engages a liminal story of voyage. While the story does not unfold on a ship at sea, the narrative is deeply invested in the metaphysics of voyage. Furthermore, like Ondaatje, Gurnah seems concerned with the permanentization of liminality. He explores a world in which his characters are caught in conditions of liminal confusion whilst seeking some way to reconfigure their lives. Like in *The Cat's Table,* there is no end to liminality as Gurnah speaks to the conditions of a post-imperial world where the chaos of liminality is a significant feature. Furthermore, in line with *The Cat's Table*, the fragmentation of the characters' lives in *By the Sea* cannot be undone. The damage born of their experience is ineffaceable and forever visible. Yet there is an attempt to work with these fragments; to see what emerges if they are held alongside each other. In this way, *By the Sea* too sets up the limits of the concept of liminality in undoing the normative assumption that liminality must pass. Rather, like Ondaatje, Gurnah suggests that much of modern experience finds itself in this inescapable state.

Furthermore, like *The Cat's Table*, *By the Sea* is deeply invested in island spaces. Its characters migrate from Zanzibar, an island constituted by various imperialisms (Omani, British, and Soviet-American) to Great Britain, another island space. Similarly to *The Cat's Table*, the novel suggests that liminality is not set in motion by voyage, but rather, has been there from the beginning. In this way, the liminality of island spaces gives us a valuable lens from which to observe the fragmentation of modernity, and more importantly, what people do with these fragments. What liminality usefully offers in regards to this novel is a possible explanation for the way in which conditions of liminality are perpetuated and escalated in Zanzibar. Like *The Cat's Table*, the trickster figure emerges and plays an important role in the creation of conditions of confusion with which the characters are faced.

By the Sea does not employ a narrative which unfolds linearly giving rise to any authoritative derivation of meaning. Rather, two stories that of Saleh Omar and Latif Mahmud are told alongside each other across time and space intersecting at various points and at various angles. Saleh Omar, the once owner of a prominent furniture shop is imprisoned for eleven years as a result of a family feud with the Mahmud's, set in motion by a deception constructed by the illustrious merchant voyager, Hussein. Latif, only a young boy at the time, manages to obtain a scholarship to study dentistry in East Germany from where he escapes to London. Here he becomes a poet and professor of literature. During Saleh's time in prison, he loses both his wife and daughter and when eventually released, he is once again threatened by the continuing feud between the two families with the return of Latif's brother Hassan to Zanzibar. Having lost his faith in the post-colonial government, he flees to England seeking political asylum. Once Saleh and Latif are both in England, they eventually meet up through a series of suspicions and suppositions and slowly begin to unclad elements of their tangled lives.

Due to the complex, overlapping and intersecting narrative in *By the Sea*, there is no singular way in which to read the novel. Rather the tide pulls in various directions, laying open a vast arena for reading. In the first section of this chapter entitled 'Liminal Voyage as Organizing Principle', we suggest that one strategy for reading may be through the story of voyage. Voyage is not only the catalyst which sets the narrative into motion, but it also provides a trajectory along which the turbulent lives of Saleh and Latif can be read. The second section of the chapter entitled 'Liminal Islands and Fragmentation' discusses the ways in which the liminal space of islands too provide a trajectory along which it is possible to understand the continuation of liminality in the novel. Furthermore, the continuum of island spaces in the novel speaks to the continuation of an experience of fragmentation. The third section of the chapter entitled 'The Indian Ocean Underworld and the Rein of the Trickster' discusses the extent to which Gurnah exposes the dark side of the Indian Ocean world. This is discussed with particular reference to the character of Hussein as a trickster figure in the novel. The ways in which Hussein engages the process of "mimesis", that is, the continual copying of his troublesome image as a way of perpetuating the confusion of the liminal situation, is investigated. The final section of the chapter entitled, 'Duplicity and Displacement', discusses the ways in which the

duplicitous images of the Indian Ocean underscore a sense of displacement, which can be tracked through a series of double edged histories in Zanzibar. It is this long trajectory of duplicity which eventually leads to an extreme form of displacement, that of migration.

Liminal Voyage as Organizing Principle

Liminal voyage can be used as an organizing principle to understand the multiple processes and stories that are engaged in *By the Sea.* As Tina Steiner (2009: 54) notes, Gurnah's novels often describe merchant voyages during the musim, "and it is one such voyage and its consequences that structures the narrative of *By the Sea*." She is referring here to the arrival of the illustrious merchant voyager Hussein who performs a deceit that sets in motion the family feud which will come to consume both Latif and Saleh's families in different ways. It is after the voyage of Hussein that wheels are set in motion which will intricately intertwine these two men's families in Zanzibar and later, act as the catalyst for their meeting in London years later. The separate voyages of Latif and Saleh to London is also vital in them finally coming to tell their stories and seeking to reconfigure the fragments of their lives. In this way, voyage can be read as the catalyst which sets the narrative into motion.

Steiner (2009: 55) notes "The characters' diasporic transnational journeys are connected to, and entangled with, circular trade voyages across the Indian Ocean…" This is demonstrated through the arrival of the merchant voyager Hussein whose influence will weave itself through both Latif and Saleh's stories. However, this could also be read through the metaphor of voyage. A ship in voyage, moving between stable land masses, is washed by currents, swept by winds and is forever navigating unstable territory. Liminal experiences, such as voyage, signal dissolution of order in which endless possibilities for navigation emerge. Furthermore, these possibilities are bound up in the instability of the ocean and are often precarious and slippery. This is reflective of the many unexpected small turn of events and turbulent trajectories that both Saleh's and Latif's lives will take. Much like in *The Cat's Table,* the liminal story of voyage is one which introduces infinite possibilities and connections. It is often seemingly the smallest of events that have lasting and devastating effects. Saleh is imprisoned because Latif's mother, whom he had inadvertently angered, happened to be having an affair with the

Minister of Resources and Development, who had the power to discredit him (Gurnah, 2001). Latif manages to escape East Germany because of a connection he had with a pen pal from his childhood who he thought was a girl called Elleke, but who turned out to be a boy called Jan (Gurnah, 2001). Much like tides on the sea are able to sweep a ship in surprising directions, so too the lives of Saleh and Omar are caught up in blustery forces often beyond their direct control. In this way, voyage not only acts as a catalyst for the unfolding narratives, but its features act as an organizing principle through which the journeys of the characters in the novel may be understood.

Another element to consider in this regard is the title. Both characters begin their journeys by the sea on the shores on Zanzibar and end their journeys by the sea on the shores of England. They are not at sea in literal voyage, but are always by the sea where the effects of voyage are resonant and continue to be reflected in the turmoil of their lives. In this sense, like in the *Cat's Table*, the voyage in *By the Sea* never ends.

When Saleh travels to Malindi with his friends from university in Kampala, he states:

> Being back on the coast was like being at home, or more than that, like recognizing that here I had a place in the scheme of things. So much of what I had learnt in Kampala was crushing glimpses of the extent of my ignorance, and the self-assured puniness we lived with. Back on the coast, I felt part of something generous and noble after all, a way of living that had a part of me and which I had been too hasty in seeing as futile raggedness. (Gurnah, 2001: 175)

It is by the sea that Saleh finds a moment of reprieve and sense of belonging in and amongst the turbulence of his life. It is by the sea that Saleh finds some sort of reflection for the instability of his own life, and in this way, it becomes home. When explaining his current living situation Saleh states, "I live in a small town by the sea, as I have all my life, though for most of it was by a warm green ocean a long way from here" (Gurnah, 2001: 2) Now this "warm green ocean" has been replaced with "metallic water" of the Atlantic, yet he still ultimately ends up by the sea (Gurnah, 2001: 153). When Saleh is in England and staying at the halfway refugee house, he tries to escape the feeling of being penned in and watched, "I went out, to see where I was and to see if I could find the sea" (Gurnah, 2001: 4). It is the only site at which some sort of mooring seems possible; never far removed from the instabilities of voyage itself. In the same way in which islands and voyages are intrinsically linked through their occupation of the liminal, shorelines too

occupy in-between spaces. They are not entirely unhinged from the wild or the unknown seas beyond, nor are they deeply part of a regulated interior. In this sense, they share certain liminal attributes with voyage. These two characters are in ways defined by displacement, rupture, movement and dispersal which are intimately connected to voyages and shorelines. Considering this, it seems apt that they would find some possible mooring and sense of belonging in these unstable spaces. After Latif escapes Germany with Jan, he states, "I arrived in England at Plymouth, feeling as if I had circumnavigated the world's oceans" (Gurnah, 2001: 137). There is a sense in which the characters' journeys in the novel are perpetually shaped by shore lines and voyages.

Liminal Islands and Fragmentation

This circular nature of both Latif and Saleh's voyages is not only expressed in the consistent presence of shorelines, but in in the novel's deep investment in island spaces. As previously discussed, islands operate in liminal spaces in much the same way as voyages, so if we can regard voyages as an organizing principle in the novel, islands too can be considered to give shape to the narrative in meaningful ways. Saleh and Latif both emigrate from the island of Zanzibar to Great Britain; apparently the imperial centre but in fact, yet another island comprised of a society of people who come from elsewhere or who live elsewhere imaginatively.

When speaking of his new life in England, Saleh states:

> It is so different here that it seems as if one life has ended and I am now living another one. So perhaps I should say that of myself that once I lived another life elsewhere, but now it is over. Yet I know that the earlier one teems and pulses in rude good health behind me and before me. (Gurnah, 2001: 2)

Saleh would like to imagine his life in England as somehow new and cut off from what came before. Yet this sentiment does not hold as he cannot escape the knowledge that his old life still "teems and pulses" not only behind him, but before him. What this signals is that Saleh's liminal experience does not begin in transit from island to island, but rather the islands spaces themselves constitute a continuum of liminality. Saleh's previous life not only survives in the past, but into the future as one liminal island is replaced by another. When describing his arrival in England, Saleh states, "…the streets

were so silent and straight, it could have been part of that other town I once lived in" (Gurnah, 2004: 4). He then goes on to note some differences between his new home and Zanzibar and concludes, "No it couldn't be part of that town, but there was something alike in it because it made me feel hemmed in and observed." One again, Saleh highlights the continuities of his experience from island to island. A sense of claustrophobia and surveillance, pertinent features of his life in Zanzibar, persist and signal the continuation of liminal experience.

Like Zanzibar, the island of Great Britain, the so called imperial centre, is largely comprised of strings of migrations, often from places colonized by British Empire in the first place. As Saleh states:

> …the British government had decided, for reasons which are still not completely clear to me even now, that people who came from where I did were eligible for asylum if they claimed that their lives were in danger. (Gurnah, 2001: 10)

This was done as a show of disapproval for the Zanzibari national regime, a gesture aimed at the international community (Gurnah, 2001: 10). Yet Saleh notes the hypocrisy in this posturing. He continues:

> What did our government do that was worse than the evils it had done before? It had rigged an election, falsifying the figures in front of *international observers*, whereas before it had only gaoled, raped, killed or otherwise degraded its citizens. (Gurnah, 2001: 4)

Once again, the continuity between these islands is illustrated. Rather than signalling a radical break from what came before, postcolonial Zanzibar perpetuates the patterns of colonial brutality in new forms. Furthermore, the move to opening a door to previously colonized communities creates a pattern in which imperialism feeds back on itself, in that it not only yields deeply stratified and complex societies of people on the imperial periphery, but at home.

Kevin Edelman, the passport controller handles Saleh with much derision interpreting his decision to come to England as an attempt to gain prosperity in Europe (Gurnah, 2001: 11). Yet his own parents were Romanian refugees, but in his eyes this is different as they are European, "they have the right, they're part of the family" (Gurnah, 2001: 12). Edelman continues:

> People like you come pouring in here without any thought of the damage they cause. You don't belong here, you don't value any of the things we value, you haven't paid for them through generations, and we don't want you here. (Gurnah, 2001: 12)

However, as Saleh notes, "But the whole world had paid for Europe's values already, even if a lot of the time it just paid and paid and didn't get to enjoy them" (Gurnah, 2001: 12). What Edelman's attitude reveals here is a false casting of Europe as somehow separate from the previously colonized "third world", that "unruly and eternally bickering rabble that teem in those parched savannahs" (Gurnah, 2001: 4). It ignores the reality of the modern world where England is no less a composite of empire than its subjugated parties. When in the refugee "detention centre", Saleh notes that there are Algerians, Ethiopians, Iranians, Angolans, Indians and Sri Lankans (Gurnah, 2001: 44). In Cecila's "bed and breakfast" he meets Romanians and Czechs (Gurnah, 2001: 50). This gives a sense of the extent to which Great Britain has come to consist of international communities in stark contrast to Edelman's imaginary castings of Britain as the self-contained imperial centre.

There is an experience of uncertainty which registers in the liminal spaces of voyage, shorelines and islands as these spaces act as metaphors for the instability with which the characters in *By the Sea* are confronted. This feeling is captured in Saleh's attempt to account for the unfolding of his life:

> It is difficult to know with precision how things became as they have, to be able to say with some assurance that first it was this and it then led to that the other, and now here we are. The moments slip through my fingers. Even as I recount them to myself, I can hear echoes of what I'm suppressing, of something I've forgotten to remember, which then makes the telling so difficult when I don't wish it to be. (Gurnah, 2001: 2)

As in the *Cat's Table,* the instability of liminal spaces gives rise to a situation in which there is great uncertainty in determining what does and what does not actually occur. Furthermore, the continuity between island spaces expressed in the novel speaks to a continuation of doubt and distrust. The deep experience of uncertainty can be cast as a form of fragmentation in which there is an inability to see how things hang together as a whole. The slipperiness of these indefinite moments makes it difficult to know with any exactness how these fragments can be meaningfully assembled. Saleh continues:

> But it is possible to say something, and I have an urge to give this account, to give an accounting of the minor dramas I have witnessed and played a part in, and whose endings and beginnings stretch away from me. (Gurnah, 2001: 2)

Those "endings" and "beginnings" that Saleh is unable to take hold of speak to the continuity of liminal spaces in his life. There is not a definitive moment at which the uncertainty of liminal period ends or begins, but rather, endings and beginnings flow into each other in a continuous cycle.

Furthermore, the continuity between island spaces in the novel speaks to a continued experience of fragmentation. This feeling of pervasive fragmentation is captured when Saleh describes his fear of the new foreign world which appears as mere continuation of perplexing immobility (Gurnah, 2001: 68). He states:

> …I find fear in the stealthy passage of time, as if all along I have been standing still, loitering in one place while everything had slid past, at times going about its business, at other times jeeringly convulsed in silent laughter at all the numbed and abandoned cosmos like me. At those times I feel defeated by the overbearing weight of nuances that place and describe everything I might say, as if a place already exists for them and a meaning has already been given to them before I utter them. (Gurnah, 2001: 68)

Saleh feels himself stagnant, stuck in one place while a paradoxical life moves past him. This makes tangible the extent to which Saleh feels the continuum of fragmentation in his life as he moves from liminal island to liminal island. Furthermore, this feeling takes on universal proportions as the he compares himself to the "cosmos". Like him, the entire cosmos remains motionless as life moves by either indifferently or mockingly. Either way, Saleh feels himself, in line with the cosmos, as "numbed and abandoned". What this communicates is a sense of disconnect from his life; an inability to make anything hang together harmoniously.

The move between islands comes to stand for the continuation of liminality and an experience of fragmentation. Like *The Cat's Table*, the fragmentation incurred within the precariousness of liminal spaces cannot be undone and will continue to bear on the way characters attempt to make sense of the world. Caught in conditions of permanent liminality, these characters remain in perpetual voyage between liminal islands.

The Indian Ocean Underworld and the Rein of the Trickster

Gurnah seems to be caught between a fascination for a glamorous Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism and a disappointment in the treachery of its underworld. Ultimately, however, he is involved in engaging the latter; the dark side of the Indian Ocean. What Gurnah reveals is that fragmentation as a prominent feature of modernity experienced in the novel has always existed in the Indian Ocean and in this way, he signals the Indian Ocean Underworld as continuous with the present.

Writers like Ghosh have been particularly captured by the integrating and binding forces of the early modern Indian Ocean world, drawing attention to the occurrence of largely peaceable trade traditions which functioned without the backing or control of one polity or army. Ghosh (1992: 287-288) describes the interruption of this trade by European arrival and the advent of militarized trade as follows:

> Within the Western historiographical record the unarmed character of the Indian Ocean trade is often represented as a lack, or failure, one that invited the intervention of Europe, with its increasing proficiency in war. When a defeat is as complete as was that of the trading cultures of the Indian Ocean, it is hard to allow the vanquished dignity of nuances of choice and preference. Yet it is worth allowing for the possibility that the peaceful traditions of the oceanic trade may have been, in a quiet and inarticulate way, the product of a rare cultural choice – one that may have owed a great deal to the pacifist customs and beliefs of the Gujarati Jains and Vanias who played an important part in it….Unable to compete in the Indian Ocean trade by purely commercial means, the Europeans were bent on taking control of it by aggression, pure and distilled, by unleashing violence on a scale unprecedented on those shores….By the time the trading nations of the India Ocean began to realize that their old understandings had been rendered defunct by the Europeans it was already too late.

Here Ghosh seems to be swayed by the notion that the Indian Ocean's non-militarized trade traditions were led by a noble choice towards passivity in stark opposition to the West, who are characterized as violent and brute aggressors. However the claim that the early modern Indian Ocean was entirely peaceful has now been rejected. For example, Benton (2005: 701) highlights the presence of pirates in the Indian Ocean world as working against the flawed narrative which views "the uncomplicated role of oceans as forces of global integration in the early modern world."

By the Sea is riddled with examples of getting caught up in the fascination and intrigue of the ocean. These seductive fantasies of the ocean are powerfully caught up in the figure of Hussein. Once again, like in *The Cat's Table*, the trickster emerges. Like the Hyderbad Mind and Horace, Hussein is the epitome of seductive charm; his seeming knowledge of the world filled with wondrous fantasy. Hussein too is an outsider, only setting foot on the island for minimal periods. As previously discussed, Szakolczai (2009: 154-5) notes that tricksters become dangerous in liminal situations "where certainties are lost".

The fact that Saleh and Latif's narratives are perpetually shaped by the liminal spaces of voyage, shorelines and islands speaks to the inescapability of liminality in the novel. It is a context such as this that the trickster thrives in his perpetuation of disorder and chaos. As Szakolczai (2009: 155) reminds us, it is in conditions of liminality that tricksters are able to "institute a lasting reversal of roles and values, making himself the central figure in place of marginal outcast." It is the deceit that Hussein sets in motion that catalyses the schism between the Omar and Mahmud families which results in Saleh's 11 year imprisonment and the disappearance of the Latif's brother Hassan. Hussein becomes the central figure in the destruction that occurs in both families and it is precisely the continued conditions of liminality that grant him such power.

Hussein's trickster-like duplicity seems to be deeply entangled with romanticized notions of ancient Indian Ocean trade. His seductiveness is bound up in images of incense and monsoons which carry with them the glamour of an ancient veracity and charm lost to modernity. Saleh describes how he obtained his ud-al-qamari, a type of incense, from Hussein. He offers the following description of his arrival:

> The man I obtained the ud-al-qamari from was a Persian trader from Bahrain who had come to our parts of the world with the musim, the winds of the monsoons, he and thousands of other traders from Arabia, the Gulf, India and Sind, and the Horn of Africa. They had been doing this every year for at least a thousand years. (Gurnah, 2001: 14)

There is a sense of the romanticism of the long history of Indian Ocean trade carried on the back of the musim winds; an age old tradition that has been in place for thousands of years. Furthermore, there is a certain alluring exoticism to all the different and far off

places connected through this ancient trade. Hussein is introduced as deeply connected to the romanticism and exoticism of this ancient trade.

Saleh describes the moment that Hussein walks into his shop as follows:

> I recognised Hussein when he walked into the store, a tall unmistakable man with a look of the world about him. When he came into the store my head filled with worlds: Persia, Bahrain, Basra, Harun al Rashid, Sinbad and more. (Gurnah, 2001: 21)

There are alluring fantasies surrounding the figure of Hussein as seen through Saleh's eyes. He is intrinsically bound to fictions of ocean travel and far off, only imagined, places. The smell of the ud-al-qamari also becomes a carrier of these imaginations. Saleh describes this as follows:

> I thought I could catch the odour of the fantasy of those distant places in the dense body of perfume, although that was only because Hussein had bound the things together for me with his stories, and I had surrendered to both completely. (Gurnah, 2001: 30)

The smell of the incense intertwined with the allure of Indian Ocean turns fantasy into something visceral and seductive. The hypnotic image of incense wafting through the air together with the charm of Hussein's stories seduces Saleh to complete surrender. Like Emily and Miss Lasqueti, Saleh is overcome by a man who seems to know more about the world than he does.

When Hussein tells Saleh stories of his journey to Bangkok, Saleh gets caught up in his own wistful re-imaginings of these places and events. He states:

> To this day I imagine a walk he described across the courtyard of a temple on the royal island, I imagine the austere tranquillity he described, and the overwhelming authority of the temple dome. I have seen a photograph of the temple since coming here, but it revealed nothing of the beauty that Hussein described. (Gurnah, 2001: 29)

Here Saleh's imagining of the temple supersedes reality. What is revealed here is that these romantic images of voyages and far off distant places do not match the way that the world in fact actually looks. There are cracks between the imagined Indian Ocean and the real Indian Ocean. These cracks are subtlety reflected throughout the text. If one goes back and re-examines passages that initially seems to gloss the ocean, one discovers

that there are in fact cracks in this painted façade. The underworld of the Indian Ocean has a constant presence in the text. It is as if it is lurking in the dark waters bellow a tranquil surface as the seductiveness of the ocean seems to contain something much more treacherous.

After describing the old traditions of the Indian Ocean, Saleh goes on to describe the traders as "intrepid" and "barbarous" (Gurnah, 2001: 15). He describes how with their fantasies, they bring "their hunger and greeds" and their "lies and hatred", "leaving some among their numbers behind for whole life-times and taking what they could buy, trade or snatch away with them, including people they bought or kidnapped and sold into degradation in their own lands" (Gurnah, 2001: 15). This certainly paints a different picture to Gosh's notion of peaceful trade traditions in the Indian Ocean being led by "a rare cultural choice" towards passivity.

Furthermore, the lurking dangers beneath the fantasy of the ocean are highlighted in images of the ocean as haunted. This haunting quality is hinted at when Saleh describes the return voyages of the musim. He explains how in the early months of the New Year the winds turn around and were supposed to take the traders home, although this did not always go as intended. He states that South of the stretch Mozambique channel, "…the currents turned evil and cold, and the ships that strayed beyond there were never heard of again" (Gurnah, 2001: 15). He continues:

> South of Sofala was an impenetrable sea of strange mists, and whirlpools a mile wide, and giant luminescent stingrays rising to the surface in the dead of night and monstrous squids obscuring the horizon. (Gurnah, 2001: 15)

Here the dangerous possibilities of voyage are framed within the realm of the fantastical and mythical. The idea of a haunted ocean is also reflected in the image of jinns that reoccur throughout the novel. Jinns hold the promise of fulfilling your deepest wishes, yet the fulfilment of those wishes also holds the potential to turn on you and teach you a lesson. Saleh describes the old caretaker on the island on which he was imprisoned as living an "enchanted life" with his imaginings of "serpents and imprisoned women singing in the night air, and dark jinns that raced across the sea to rest from their immortal questing for mischief" (Gurnah, 2001: 230). While jinns form part of a language of fantasy and imagination surrounding the ocean, they also embody the lurking quality

of danger in the text. The jinn described to Saleh by the old man was said to steal a woman and keep her "in a casket for his pleasure" (Gurnah: 229-230). There is something simultaneously decadent and sardonic about this image.

When speaking to Saleh, Latif states:

> I think I imagined you as a kind of relic, a metaphor of my nativity, and that I would come to examine you while you sat still and dissembling, fuming ineffectually like jinn raised from infernal depths. (Gurnah, 2001: 169)

Latif goes on to describe how he imagines Saleh as being a jinn with a horn in the middle of his forehead (Gurnah, 2001: 170). Saleh states that this image reminds him of a jinni from the 'Quamar Zama' in A Thousand and One Nights, "an utter grotesque" (Gurnah, 2001: 170). Here, once again, the image of jinns aptly captures the dark side of the Indian Ocean.

Just as the surface glamour of the ancient Indian Ocean world is revealed as haunted, Hussein's seductive face too is not what it appears to be. The danger of Hussein's seductive power is realized with Latif's brother, Hassan's disappearance:

> He swaggered over the horizon with uncle Hussein and we never heard from him again….It seemed an awesome thought at the time, and it seems even more awesome now, that he was able to collect himself like that and follow a man as if he were a young bride. (Gurnah, 2001, 96)

While Hassan is described as following him freely, "as if he were a young bride", there is something dark about a young boy disappearing with this older man. The danger of Hussein's tremendous power as seducer is revealed in this moment.

Saleh describes Hussein's courtesy as "a gift, a kind of talent, an elaboration of forms and manners into something abstract and poetic" (Gurnah, 2001: 16). Yet Saleh states that this "combination of courtesy, affluence and unguents" makes him "slippery and dissembling" (Gurnah, 2001: 16-17). Again, there is something lurking beneath his seductive façade. This becomes clearer in later descriptions of Hussein. Saleh states:

> As I got to know him a little better I came to understand that so much of what he did was playful and mischievous, and when mischief led to a little havoc and rancour, his laughter thickened with unkind glee. At those moments I caught glimpses of something cruel in him underneath the courtesies and the gleeful chuckles, a sternness or cynicism that was uncomplicated and assured. I thought I

> could imagine him killing or causing someone unbearable pain if he felt it necessary to protect what he valued. (Gurnah, 2001: 32)

It is underneath the gloss of laughter and courtesies that Hussein's potential for cruelty lurks, just like the dark dangerous waters that reside beneath the calm surface of the ocean.

As previously discussed, the notion of imitation is intimately connected to the trickster figure. Furthermore, according to Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 13), laughter together with acts of violence and sexuality belong to "the most imitative aspects of human behaviour". Provoking laughter is also a means by which tricksters try to "gain the confidence" of those around them (Horvath and Thomassen, 2008: 13). The description of Hussein's laughter as consisting in both "gleeful chuckles" and "unkind glee" fully reveals the duplicitous nature of the trickster. This duplicity can be regarded as born from what Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 13-14) explain as a "positive connection between rationality and imitation; two features considered to be radically opposite" which define the core of the trickster. In this way, tricksters are able to at once dupe others with their versions of rationality whist perpetuating conditions of liminal confusion. As Szakolczai (2011: 155) states:

> Being outsiders, and incapable, of close, emotional involvement, tricksters can easily preserve their calm under liminal conditions and thus conjure up a cunning and calculative – thus formally "rational" – strategy by which people can be hooked. When this happens, liminality will not be restricted to a temporary crisis, followed by a return to normality, but can be perpetuated endlessly.

It is precisely the permanence of liminality registered in *By the Sea* that gives Hussein such tremendous destructive power.

Hussein's formally "rational" strategy involves careful manipulation through which he forges the pretence of intimacy with Saleh. Later when recalling his interaction with Hussein and the way in which he was seduced; Saleh admits that he was flattered by Hussein asking him for a loan (Gurnah, 2001: 159). He states:

> Here was a man who had stories to tell of those distant beautiful places that were only marks on a map for me, those places that were beautiful because they were so distant and fabled. Even if he had not been to all these places himself, the stories involved him and that made him seem part of the greater world. Also, he told me his stories with intimate fellowship…intensifying our sense of mutual

> difference from the place where we were. I thought we had become friends. I was seduced. (Gurnah, 2001: 160)

Here, Saleh is drawn into a false sense of security through the guise of friendship which ultimately allows Hussein to take advantage of him. The duplicity of the trickster is perfectly revealed in this moment. It is through "rational" strategy that Hussein is ultimately able to set the deceit into motion which will perpetuate the chaos and confusion of liminality.

This perpetuation of crisis is carried out through the process of mimesis, which involves perpetuating the troublesome image of the trickster. Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 15) state:

> …whenever a crisis breaks out where everyone loses one's real or symbolic home, the time of the Trickster might arrive, as he is not involved emotionally, and therefore might come up with a rational way of "solving" the crisis by turning things to his own image. This is the way in which schismatic doubling and copying escalated, and the erratic, even repulsive becomes normal.

As previously discussed, the concept of liminality as it stands commits the normative assumption that liminal conditions of confusion must end. Here, Horvath and Thomassen add to this the assumption that liminality begins once one is removed from some conception of "home", that is to say they assume that conditions of non-liminal stability and order exist prior to this separation. *By the Sea* calls this assumption into question by arguing that conditions of liminality exist from the beginning as the island space of Zanzibar as "home" is constituted by conditions of liminality. In this way, processes of "schismatic doubling" and "copying" takes place within the liminal space of the island. This happens quite literally when Hassan returns to Zanzibar years later as a sort of incarnation of Hussein. Upon first impression, Saleh describes Hussein as "a tall unmistakable man with the look of the world about him" and that when he entered his store his "head filled with worlds" (Gurnah, 2001: 21). When Hassan returns to Zanzibar after 34 years to claim the house after his father's death, Saleh states:

> He was a man of means now, a man of the world, you could see that, tall, beared, well-dressed, nothing of the youthful wayward lover left him. In the first days after he arrived, he dressed in the style of the Gulf, a long baggy kanzu of heavy bafta, the pockets bulging with a wallet and Filofax, a small cap on his head and his face wrapped in reflecting sunglasses. He was received with amazement, and

> strolled through the streets like a prodigal Sinbad back from his first voyage. (Gurnah, 2001: 237)

The similarities with Hussein are evident. Hassan too has a certain worldliness and distinctness about him. Like Hussein, he makes an impression with his tallness and dress invoking an aura of awe. Saleh states that Hassan looks like a man blessed with "prosperity and honour and knowledge" (Gurnah, 2001: 238). Like Hussein, Hassan is described as having knowledge of a wider world that remains beyond the grasp of others. Saleh further notes that "Hassan even looked a little bit like Hussein" (Gurnah, 2001: 238).

It is because of Hassan's return that Saleh finally makes the decision to flee Zanzibar. Saleh explains how Hassan sees him as an obstacle to his property rights and that he furthermore threatened to bring a case against him for the money he supposedly owed Hussein (Gurnah, 2001: 239-40). Saleh asks Hassan why he and Hussein have so much malice against him (Gurnah, 2001: 240). At this point, "He laughed, the big man laugh with which he announced his prosperity in the streets but which only thinly disguised the hatred and determination in his face" (Gurnah, 2001: 240). Like Hussein, it is Hassan's laughter that disguises his duplicity. After this, Hassan publicly threatens Saleh "with imprisonment or worse" (Gurnah, 2001: 240). It is at this point that Saleh decides to leave. He states, "I had no trust in our legal system, and no strength for more hurly-burly in my life, so I packed my casket of ud-al-qamari and left" (Gurnah, 2001: 241).

While revealing the limitations of liminality in its assumption of temporality, what the concept of liminality usefully offers is insight into the means by which conditions of liminal confusion are perpetuated. The processes of mimesis whereby the image of the trickster is continuously doubled or copied, offers a possible avenue for understanding the way in which the chaos of liminal situations intensifies in the novel. Hassan perpetuates the image of Hussein posing an escalating degree of danger. Unable to tolerate this mounting threat, Saleh's decides to seek refuge elsewhere. However, there is no escape from liminality, as Great Britain, yet another island space replaces the island before it. There is no end to the liminality as the novel continually negotiates the duplicity of the Indian Ocean world where tricksters reign.

Duplicity and Displacement

What seems to underscore the images of the Indian Ocean as both fantastical and treacherous, as well as images of the trickster as both charming and dangerous, is a sense of displacement. This displacement can be read as rooted in the duplicitous nature of the Indian Ocean world where the trickster reins. This duplicity which gives rise to the sense of displacement in the novel can be tracked through the series of double-dealings in Zanzibari history, from Indian Ocean trade, to British colonialism and to Zanzibari independence. Steiner (2009: 52) notes:

> … [*By the Sea*], while registering the utopia of a peaceful Indian Ocean history and an ethics of multilingualism, demonstrates the devastating effects of asymmetries of power embodied in the controlling norms or dominant discourses in most relations across the sea. And moreover, [the novel] speaks(s) of South-South voyages and of migrations to the North, hinting at multiple and complex intricacies.

What Steiner seems to be pointing to here, is that while the novel registers the fantastical side of the Indian Ocean, the underworld of Indian Ocean referred to in the text can also be read as rooted in sometimes unequal and often disingenuous power relations across the sea. These power relations manifest through both South to South and North to South relations. In this vein, Hussein, an Indian Ocean trader from Bahrain, can be read as a manifestation of duplicitous power relations on the South to South axis. Ultimately, he is able to manipulate Saleh and the Mahmud family through his seductive charm and thereby control them for his own financial gain. It is precisely this duplicity that creates the chasm in Saleh's impressions of the Indian Ocean as both glamorous and dark.

In terms of North to South relations, British colonial rule in Zanzibar ultimately also seduced, manipulated and controlled the islanders for its own gain. In this sense, the British regime too can be cast as occupying the duplicitous space of the trickster. In recalling his youth, Saleh states:

> …the British authorities had been good enough to pick me out of the ruck of native schoolboys eager for more of their kind of education, though I don't think we all knew what it was we were eager for. It was learning, something we revered and were instructed to revere by the teaching of the Prophet, but there was glamour in this kind of learning, something to do with being alive to the modern world. I think we secretly admired the British, for their audacity in being there,

> such a long way from home, calling the shots with such an appearance of assurance, and for knowing so much about how to do the things that mattered…. (Gurnah, 2001: 17-18)

Saleh admits to some kind "glamour" in British education and also a secret admiration for their seeming all-knowingness. This is reminiscent of the glamour with which Saleh is seduced in his interactions with the trickster Hussein. Much like the British, Hussein too seemed to know more about the world which resonated in the far reaches of Saleh's imagination. It is through this surface glamour that Saleh is seduced and it is ultimately this seduction that enables the colonizers to manipulate and control. Saleh continues:

> In their books I read unflattering accounts of my history, and because they were unflattering, they seemed truer than the stories we told ourselves. I read about the diseases that tormented us, about the future that lay before us, about the world we lived in and our place in it. It was as if they remade us, and in ways that we no longer had any recourse but to accept, so complete and well-fitting the story they told about us. (Gurnah, 2001: 18)

Through the telling of a one sided history, a history told through purely Western frameworks, the British are able to manipulate the islander's self-perception into one that they are essentially able to control. However, Saleh notes:

> But they left too many spaces unattended to, could not in the nature of things do anything about them, so in time gaping holes began to appear in the story. It began to fray and unravel under assault, and a grumbling retreat was unavoidable. (Gurnah, 2001: 18)

Cracks would inevitably emerge in this one sided history. Just like Hussein had to leave because his half-truths could not sustain him forever, the colonizers duplicity would inevitably end in retreat. However, Hussein is replaced by another trickster in the form of Hassan just as British colonial rule is replaced by a new duplicitous regime. In this way, mimesis is a process that can be used to understand not just the perpetuation of trickster figures in the novel, but the perpetuation of duplicitous regimes of control. It is through this process of schismatic doubling that liminality is sustained.

Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 12) note that both Plato and Girard regard imitation as playing a major role in "provoking and escalating violence". Combined with a liminal situation, which is particularly prone to mimesis and the escalation of violence, this can lead to what Turner terms a "mimetic crisis", previously discussed as schismogenesis or

permanent liminality (Horvath and Thomassen, 2008: 12) . Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 12) continue:

> The starting point to the intuition, radically different from the perspective shared by associationist psychology and classical Freudiansim, that desire is primarily elicited by the object. According to Girard, quite on the contrary, desire is primarily mimetic: subject B desires an object, living or inanimate, in the sense of wanting to possess it fully and exclusively as it is already desired by subject A; so, B is only imitating A's desire. The outcome inevitably is conflict…

This mimetic form of desire can partially account for the conflict between Zanzibari islander's self-image and the image superimposed upon them by the British. As Saleh states, the accounts of Zanzibari history told by the British seemed to be truer than their own stories (Gurnah, 2001: 18). It was the seeming all-knowingness of the British that made Saleh desire knowledge, in particular, *their* knowledge with its "glamour" and which inferred "something to do with being alive to the modern world" (Gurnah, 2001: 17-18). In this vein, Saleh is involved in a process of imitation in the moulding of his identity. As he states, "It was as if they remade us, and in ways that we no longer had any recourse but to accept, so complete and well-fitting the story they told about us" (Gurnah, 2001: 18). Saleh's desire to see himself through the colonizer's eyes can be read as mimetic of the colonial desire to cast the image of colonized into an image they could control. However, this image, based on a one sided and deceitful perspective, will inevitably crumble. Rather than signalling the end of the mimetic crisis, however, the new Zanzibari regime will come to mime the very duplicities of its colonizers.

Like in *Running in the Family*, where the "false maps" that hang on Ondaatje's brother's wall reveal only "rumours of topography" which acts as a mirror reflecting "each European power in turn" (Ondaatje, 2009: 59-60), Zanzibar too becomes only an emulate of various colonial agendas. Through the process of mimetic desire these colonial projections become inculcated into islander's self-perception and sense of identity. However, the process doesn't stop there, once the colonial powers retreats, the cracks in their duplicitous images becoming too apparent, the process of mimesis continues. This time it is through the new national regime which reproduces the brutalities of colonialism onto its own people in increasingly gruelling ways, as violence escalates in perpetual conditions of liminality. As Horvath and Thomassen (2008: 12)

explain, "acts of violence…belong to the most imitative aspects of human behaviour, where the performance of an act almost irresistible leads to its repetition, until a kind of climax is reached." In this way, the chaos of liminality is perpetuated by the Zanzibari national regime in its continual mimesis of the violence of colonialism.

Double-dealings in British rule is followed by the Zanzibari revolution in 1964 in which African revolutionaries overthrow the Sultan of Zanzibar and its predominantly Arab government. The Arab minority attained power after the establishment of Zanzibari independence in 1963, its power perceived in relation to Zanzibar's previous existence as a territory of Oman. In the aftermath of the revolution, tensions between citizens of African descent and citizens of Arab descent (as well as South Asian) come to a head. Thousands are exiled and killed. Even though the large majority of Zanzibari society is Muslim, dividing lines were drawn on the most subtle of ethnic differences. The fluidity and near invisibility of these ethnic differences is reflected in the novel. The feud between the Omar and the Mahmud household can be read as rooted in these emerging racisms. But if one examines the text carefully, it is very difficult to determine the particular ethnic lineage of each family. Furthermore, when describing the so called Omani prisoners who were being transported "*home"*, Saleh states:

> In truth, they were no more Omani than I was, except that they had an ancestor who was born there. They did not even look any different from the rest of us, perhaps slightly paler or slightly darker, perhaps their hair was slightly straighter or slightly curlier. Their crime was the ignoble history of Oman in these parts, and that was not a connection they were allowed to give away. (Gurnah, 2001: 225)

Despite these invisible "differences", Saleh goes on to describes the special torment ascribed to these prisoners at the hand of the commanding officer and his troops, "ordering them to do endless menial tasks, abusing them, and at all times beating them" (Gurnah, 2001: 225). This speaks to the fluidity of the boundaries between supposed ethnic groups whose histories are inextricably intertwined. Once again, there is duplicity in the boundaries which separate Zanzibari society.

Similarly, in *Running in Family*, Ondaatje registers the subtle ethnic conflict that played out in Sri Lanka between the Sinhalese and Tamil. He notes how Lalla, his grandmother was weary of her daughter marrying a Tamil. He states, "For the wedding ceremony she had

two marriage chairs decorated in a Hindu style and laughed all the way through the ceremony. The incident was, however, the beginning of a war with my father" (Ondaatje, 2009: 124). While this story has an air of humour and lightness about it, it foreshadows not only "a war" to come with Ondaatje's father, but inter-ethnic wars which would last decades. Like Sri Lanka, the island of Zanzibar participates deeply in the "interstitiality of island-ness" and registers the "many layered colonial histories" of the Indian Ocean on both horizontal and vertical axes (Gupta, 2010: 276). Furthermore, as previously discussed, displacement forms an intrinsic part of island spaces through centuries of migration and interstitiality. It is precisely in such spaces that tensions breed as a result of constant confrontation with the unfamiliar, registering the dark side of Indian Ocean cosmopolitanism, that of fundamentalism.

As Ghosh (2009: 41) notes "…in many parts of Asia and Africa, we have seen a dramatic rise in violent and destructive kinds of fundamentalism, some religious, some linguistic. These movements are profoundly hostile to any notion of dialogue between cultures, faiths and civilizations." According to Hand, "the immense hatred that the rest of the country felt toward the people of Arab descent [was] unleashed by the removal of the common enemy, the British" (Hand, 2010: 75). Another way of understanding this would be to say that the permanitization of liminality meant that the violence of colonialism had to be imitated. In other words, the removal of the common enemy meant that a new enemy had to be created in its predecessor's image.

Consider the fact that Saleh is imprisoned by the newly found independent Zanzibari government for 11 years on a false claim. This illustrates how Saleh is caught up the duplicity of the new state who is supposed to signal freedom in Zanzibar but in reality locks him away. When recalling the events of his prison sentence, Saleh describes them as "judgements of my time and of the puniness of duplicitous lives (Gurnah, 2001: 212). It is these events that reveal the duplicity of the new regime. Saleh survives his sentence only to be threatened by the return of Hassan. It is this final duplicitous re-emergence of Hassan that pushes Saleh to migrate. In a sense, the story has come full circle, from the original duplicity of Hussein to the arrival of his seeming protégé Hassan, intersected with the double dealings of both the colonial and the independent Zanzibari state. It is the long trajectory of duplicity which ultimately underscore both Saleh and Latif's sense

of displacement and which leads to the most conspicuous manifestation of displacement, migration.

What this chapter has shown is that the narrative in *By the Sea* can be understood as guided by the principle of voyage, that is, it is voyages and their consequences that set the narrative into motion. Furthermore, the turbulent trajectories of Saleh's lives can be understood as deeply linked to the liminal spaces of shorelines and islands. These spaces of in-betweenness, register deeply the situation of liminality. Furthermore, the move between islands comes to stand for the continuation of liminality and an experience of fragmentation. There is no escape from these liminal spaces in the novel as the characters' lives are continually shaped by the destructive forces that surround them.

Gurnah speaks to the permanitization of liminality in the novel by bringing to light the duplicity of the Indian Ocean world as both glamorous and dangerous. These duplicitous qualities are made manifest in the trickster figure Hussein who perpetuates the confusing and destructive aspects of the liminal situation through a literal copying of his troublesome face, born in the figure of Hassan. Once again, this signals the continuation of the chaos of liminality, a situation from which the characters are unable to escape.

The duplicity found in liminality, realized in the representations of the Indian Ocean world and the rein of the trickster figures, underscores a sense of displacement. Furthermore, the duplicity found in Zanzibari history encompasses the ancient Indian Ocean world, colonialism and post colonialism, each era seemingly mimetic of the previous in ever escalating degrees of injustice and violence. It is this long history of duplicity which stresses both Saleh and Latif's displacement in the world and which eventually leads to an extreme form of displacement, that of migration.

Chapter 5

Alternative Strategies for Subjectivity and Stories as Ruins in Abdulrazak Gurnah's *By the Sea*

While the previous chapter engages the darker elements manifest in *By the Sea*, this chapter seeks to investigate the ways in which Saleh and Latif seek to repair the damage done in their lives. Due to continual processes of duplicity and its resultant displacement, there seems to be the need to find some meaningful place in the world, that is, some notion of identity or subjectivity. *By the Sea* engages liminality as an inescapable feature of the characters' lives in which there is a profound experience of fragmentation. As discussed in the previous chapter, there is no beginning or end to liminality. Rather like the on-going nature of damage in the *Cat's Table*, the fragmentation of Saleh and Latif's life is ever-present. However, through the sharing of their stories, Saleh and Latif are able to hold these fragments alongside each other, not to repair them, but to find some relief in the holes they may be filled or in new configurations that may emerge.

The first section of the chapter entitled 'Configuring Subjectivity in *By the Sea*', considers Saleh and Latif's attempts to find some sense of subjective significance in their lives within continual conditions of liminal confusion. The role the Indian Ocean world plays in inserting Africa into an ancient web of interconnectivity gives context to modern experiences of displacement and movement and is discussed with a view to dismantling binaries between notions of subjective wholeness and emptiness. Furthermore, the ways in which continual conditions of liminality simultaneously produce both irreversible fragmentation and the possibility to transform fragments into new forms is discussed. The second section entitled, 'Darkness and Silence: Markers of Subjectivity' explores the way in which the novel utilizes the images of darkness and silence as reflections of the characters' vexed subjectivities. While in the beginning of the novel, the infinite quality of these images comes to reflect the limitless possibilities for Saleh's subjective being, as he and Latif begin to lay their fragmented stories alongside each other, there is some mooring which lessens the need for the infinite.

The next section entitled 'Anchors in the Void', discusses the profound existential meaninglessness with which the characters in the novel are faced. In a situation of perpetual liminality, the fragmentation of their lives cannot be escaped and anchors are sought to provide momentary reprieve and comfort. These take the form of objects such as furniture and maps. The final section entitled, 'Concluding Remarks: Stories as Ruins' investigates the way in which Saleh and Latif's stories can be regarded as forms of imperial ruins through which they both address the past and contemplate their present place in the world. It seems that the importance of finding some subjective hold in the world cannot be nullified through continual confrontation with displacement and meaninglessness. Like *The Cat's Table, By the Sea* sheds light upon the notion of telling stories as a way of dealing with the on-going forms of damage and the continuation of imperial ruin.

Configuring Subjectivity in *By the Sea*

Within a vortex of displacement in *By the Sea*, the question that arises is how it is possible to find some meaningful subjective foothold in the world, that is to say, how do the characters cultivate significance in their lives within the profound conditions of liminal confusion. *By the Sea* can be read as engaging with strategies for configuring subjectivity within the duplicitous and ultimately displaced domain of Saleh and Latif's lives.

The Indian Ocean space complicates the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed, and essentially, between notions of the self and the other through the matrix of intersecting relations which have been crossing its waters for millennia. This means any notion of identity will be equally intersecting and complex. Furthermore, as we have seen in *The Cat's Table,* the fluidity of boundaries in liminality means that there are infinite possibilities available for the configuration of identity. Therefore, it is within the complex arena of the Indian Ocean and the endless possibilities of liminality that Latif and Saleh venture to find alternate strategies for the configuration of their subjectivity.

Seel points out that with the supposed advent of globalization, scholars such as Rapport and Dawson, have theorized that "the ways in which contemporary movement in the world now 'overwhelms and relativizes' the conceptualization of time and space upon

which the image of socio-cultural 'place' rests (Seel, 2008: 21). She goes on to explain how these scholars have conceptualized migration as "'the quintessential experience" of the age' and [that] movement has become fundamental to modern identity…'" (Seel, 2008: 21). But Seel questions, "…is globalisation really such a recent phenomenon?" (Seel, 2008: 21). She continues:

> *By the Sea*…illuminates the extent to which colonialism has itself been a form of globalization which long opened up the self-contained African continent to the world…the notion of place no longer functions as a marker of identity; rather identity is something which must be created and recreated as the migrant 'places himself' within the global context. (Seel, 2008: 21-22)

The binary that Seel sets up here views Africa as somehow self-contained, only having been opened up through colonialism, in contrast to a globally connected "world" that somehow exists elsewhere. The whole point of Indian Ocean scholarship is to point to the inter-connectedness of the world which goes back millennia with Africa being part of these ancient cosmopolitan relations. In step with this, to cast Africa as self-contained ignores a history which connects Africa with the rest of the world long before the advent of colonialism. Implicit in the binary set up between a self-contained Africa and globally connected world is the assumption of a somehow authentic or complete African identity. Therefore, any move away from this self-contained space will be traumatic giving rise to only a partial or lacking sense of subjective place. While Rapport and Dawson's view, which sees movement and migration as fundamental to the modern experience and identity, recognizes the inescapability of liminal situations which are always in states of transition, it does not recognize an Indian Ocean history where this has largely been the case for millennia.

If we take our cue from the novel, which describes subjective experiences of continuous liminal fragmentation reaching well beyond colonialism to include ancient Indian Ocean histories, these binary models of characterization which move from wholeness to fragmentation no longer hold. Latif and Saleh's attempt to reconfigure a sense of subjective being does not assume that some authentic or complete notion of subjectivity is possible. Rather, their attempt recognizes that the continuum of fragmentation cannot be reversed, but at the same time, engages the transformative potential of liminality as ever present. That is to say, fragments can be hold alongside each other and it becomes

possible to see things in new ways. This is the strategy invoked by Saleh and Latif through the telling of their stories.

Seeing the novel is bound by liminal spaces, one of which is voyage, Steiner's conception of the chronotope of voyage offers insight into the way in which subjectivity can be given shape in liminality. Steiner uses Mikhail Bakhtin's idea of the chronotope in her conceptualizations of the possibilities of the space of the ship, or voyage. Bakhtin explains the chronotope as follows:

> From a narrative and compositional point of view, [the chronotope] is the place where encounters occur…What is the significance of…chronotopes? What is most obvious is their meaning for narrative. They are organizing centres for the fundamental narrative events of the novel. The chronotope is a place where the knots of the narrative are tied and untied. It can be said without qualification that to them belong the meaning that shapes narrative. (Baktin in Steniner, 2009: 49)

The chronotope of the ship can be viewed as the material incarnation of the ideological chronotope of voyage which both function within the liminal. As we have seen in *By the Sea,* the meaning of the narrative is intrinsically tied to the chronotope of voyage. As previously discussed, while there is not a literal ship in *By the Sea*, the narrative is both set in motion by voyages and is shaped in the liminal spaces of shorelines and islands. The characters are in a perpetual state of motion from which there is no escape and it is from these central organizing centres that meaning is shaped in the novel.

Steiner, within a discussion of the possibilities of multilingualism, goes on to argue that the chronotope of the ship, "moving to and fro, traversing literal and metaphorical borders" is a site of "alternative subjectivities, for transformations and self-translation, because it resists the limitations imposed by possessive communities of belonging" (Steiner, 2009: 50). As Steiner states:

> The moving to and fro between nations, the crossing of multiple borders, and more crucially the space of the ship itself represents a linguistic, intellectual and political transnationalism. It is also the site of slavery. Violence and death in the passage exist alongside transnational subjectivity. (Steiner, 2009: 51)

In *By the Sea*, these possibilities for the formation of new sorts of subjectivity can be read through the ideological chronotope of voyage. That is, the continually crossing of boundaries and borders and the lack of place as a marker of identity opens up the

possibility for a new form of identity, what Steiner above terms "transnational subjectivity". Furthermore, what Steiner highlights here is that the possibility for the creation of subjective place runs alongside the forever present possibilities of the dark side of the Indian Ocean, which she cites as slavery, violence and death. As we have seen in *The Cat's Table,* the damage done in liminality is on-going, yet the characters are partially able to repair their lives through transformation. Similarly, *By the Sea* explores the strategies by which new forms of subjectivity can be created through fragments.

In this way, the possibility for the reconfiguration of subjectivity can be read as rooted in the chronotope of voyage as occupying a liminal space. In liminality the possibility for transformation runs alongside the possibility of total dissolvent of any previous notions of identity. As previously discussed, there is immense transformative potential that exists within liminal spaces. In fact, "transformative potential forms the very ground of liminality" (Thomassen, 2009: 24). This is because liminality is not just the lack of structure, but at the same time must be considered as the very origin of structure as it is that which gives rise to new forms. It is "that formless reality out of which forms emerge, the beginning of everything" (Thomassen, 2009: 24).

In *The Cat's Table,* the breaker's yard is the site at which "You can take an older life and you link it to a stranger" (Ondaatje, 2011: 77-78). Things will never be what they once were. Within liminality, movement is the only constant and what has been done cannot be reversed. However, fragments can be transformed in the recognition of new configurations. Similarly, *By the Sea* lays open the strategies by which this transformation takes place, that is, the way in which its characters are able to configure a sense of subjective place in the world.

Darkness and Silence: Markers of Subjectivity

Two re-occurring images in the novel invoked during Saleh and Latif's attempt to find some subjective grounding are that of darkness and silence. The novel opens with Saleh waiting for Rachel, the refugee worker, to visit him in his new home in England. He states how he doesn't want her to turn up "in the deep hours of the night, shattering its pregnant silences…to take away more remaining hours of darkness" (Gurnah, 2001: 1). Immediately, there is a sense that there is something sacred that Saleh holds onto in these

moments of darkness and silence that he does not want lessened or disturbed. He continues:

> I marvel how the hours of darkness have come to be so precious to me, how night silences have turned out so full of mumbles and whispers when before they had been so terrifyingly still, so tense with the uncanny noiselessness that hovered above words. As if coming to live here has shut one narrow door and opened another into a widening concourse. In the darkness I lose a sense of space, and in this nowhere I feel myself more solidly, and hear the play of voices more clearly, as if they were happening for the first time. Sometimes I hear music in the distance, played in the open and coming to me to me as a muted whisper. I long for night each arid day, even though I dread the darkness and its limitless chambers and shifting shadows. (Gurnah, 2001: 1)

There is something ambiguous about Saleh's relationship with darkness and silence in this passage. It is both something precious to him, something that he longs for, and something which he dreads. Both the images of darkness and silence have an infinite quality to them. One cannot see the beginning or the end of darkness, nor can one determine the extremities of silence. The moment in which darkness and silence exist is infinite. Like a ship at sea, all that exists in the moment is the infinite motion of voyage. It is the uncertainty and instability of the liminal space which creates this realm of infinite possibility. Like in *The Cat's Table,* where Mynah is exposed to an infinite array of possibility in his process of self-formation, here too Saleh is able to feel some sense of his place in the world within the realm of the infinite. It is in these "limitless chambers" that he is able to feel himself more "solidly". This is possibly because the possibilities for his subjectivity are also limitless within in the constant motion of liminality. That is, it is in the moment of the infinite that he is most able to contemplate the "wreckage and the confusion" of his own being.

In the beginning of the novel Saleh notes the difficulty in recounting his story as "It is difficult to know with precision how things became as they have…" (Gurnah, 2001: 2). However, despite the fragmented nature of the story he wishes to tell, he states:

> But it is possible to say something, and I have an urge to give this account, to give an accounting of the minor dramas I have witnessed and played a part in, and whose endings and beginnings stretch away from me. I don't think it's a noble urge. What I mean is, I don't know a great truth which I ache to impart, nor have I lived an exemplary experience which will illuminate our conditions and our times. Though I have lived, I have lived. (Gurnah, 2001: 2)

It is this urge to give an account of his story which allows him to start viewing the pieces of his life in line with another, thereby opening up the possibility to see things in new ways and find some respite. Furthermore, he recognizes that this is not some "noble urge" capable of yielding "a great truth". He does not aim to reconfigure some complete version of himself in contrast to an incomplete subjectivity. Rather, Saleh collapses this binary by recognizing that the fragments are all he has to work with, and all he has ever had, and in laying these fragments alongside each other through the telling of his story there is some recognition of the fact that he has lived. It is through this recognition which happens through the process of subjective mirroring, that Saleh begins to transform the fragments into story which yields meaning.

As this process unfolds and Saleh and Latif begin to untangle and configure their stories through each other, Saleh becomes less comfortable in the darkness and silence. During one of their conversations, Saleh states:

> The room was now in the lingering dusk of an English summer evening, a light which first made me anxious and irresolute but which I was learning to tolerate. I was learning to resist drawing the curtains and flooding the room with light, just to expel the gloom of that slow leaden onset of night. I thought I should rise and make some more tea, put the light on the kitchen, break the grip of the silence in which we had been sitting for a few minutes. (Gurnah, 2001: 192)

Here, in contrast to the previous passage, Saleh wants to "slow the leaden onset of night" and "break the grip of silence". As Saleh begins to re-align some of the fragments of his life through the telling of his stories to Latif, darkness and silence become less desirable. For the first time there is a semblance of something to hold onto in Saleh and Latif's witnessing of each other's realities. Saleh and Latif are able to witness each other's fragmented stories, thereby creating a holding place for subjectivity. In this way, the infinity of darkness and silence are no longer the most complete reflections of their ruptured subjectivities. Latif speaks of this sense of relief on his second visit to Saleh. He states:

> …I've been thinking about the things you spoke about last time, trying to make them agree with what I remember and what I thought I knew. I know something in me resisted what you were saying, even though I was gripped by it. So I've been thinking about that and putting the stories alongside each other, and seeing the gaps that I will never fill….I feel worn out after all this time, after all these years

> of thinking about that time and that place. And living here with all the comings and goings, and the trooping of my life through all the hostilities and contempt and superciliousness….So I was looking forward to coming here, to hear you talk, for both of us to find relief. (Gurnah, 2001: 207)

There is sense in which being able to account for some of the cracks born from the duplicity of their lives is able to bring relief; some holding for their subjective experiences which dampens the need for the infinite.

The images of darkness and silence and Saleh's ambiguous relationship to these images as both desirable and undesirable, reflect the process whereby Saleh is able to find some resting place for his subjectivity in the sharing of his story. At the start of the novel, the infinite quality of darkness and silence allows Saleh to contemplate the multiple avenues for configuring an identity within the endlessness of his liminal experiences. Through the process of placing their fragmented stories alongside each other, Saleh and Latif are able to find some witnessing for their subjectivity and the need for the infinity of darkness and silence recedes. In this way, the images of darkness and silence signal the characters move towards finding some relief within endless turbulence of liminality which shapes the narrative in *By the Sea.*

Anchors in the Void

While the process of telling their stories brings some relief, like in *The Cat's Table* the damage incurred in liminality is irreversible and the characters in *By the Sea* will forever bear the scars of fragmentation born of their experiences. This is most aptly captured at the close of the novel. After a long day of difficult conversation with Latif, Saleh returns with him to his apartment in London. Saleh states:

> When I went into the apartment he lived in, it made me think of the room in my store where I had spent every night on my own for fifteen years. That room too had reeked of loneliness and futility, of long silent occupation. (Gurnah, 2001: 244)

Latif's life retains a feeling of isolation, despite having carved a place for himself in the world as a successful Professor of literature. There is an air of "futility" to it all that cannot be vanquished. As Titlestad (2009: 5) states, journeying across an ocean that is, being in liminality "can suggest anything from the glory of providence to the unutterable

terror of skimming across a void". Titlestad (2009: 5) suggests that it is the present experience of voyage that allows us to trace "a history of subjectivity, faith, knowledge and existential convictions by considering the ways in which voyagers have given meaning to their experience, or, in one version at least, have been willing to face its meaninglessness." It is a void of existential nothingness that is explored in the *By the Sea*. In this story of voyage, the way in which Saleh and Latif go about configuring subjective holding places in their lives is less about "giving meaning to their experience" and much more about a willingness "to face its meaninglessness". Despite trying to untangle their twistedly dishevelled lives and find relief, there is a sense in which they can never make sense of the chaos, the brutality and injustice that they have encountered. For whatever relief they may have found through the unravelling of their stories, chasms remain which resound in deep existential void.

The novel ends with Saleh investigating Latif's flat:

> looking into nooks and crannies, opening cupboards and doors, trying out windows to see if they opened, locating the place where he worked and wrote, looking to see if I could recognise the place where I would sleep, and while I was about it, researching the possibility of clean sheets and warm bedding. (Gurnah, 2001: 245)

This passage indirectly deals with the entire business of Saleh and Latif's relationship. That is, searching, looking, and hoping to find some place comfortable to rest. It is Saleh who says that "The most we can expect is a little kindness (Gurnah, 2001: 243). He says that big words like "honour and courtesy and forgiveness"…"are just part of a language of duplicity to disguise the nothingness of our lives" (Gurnah, 2001: 243). Some kindness is all they can hope for in face of the meaninglessness and nothingness with which their lives confront them. It is in this spirit that Saleh searches for some "clean sheets and warm bedding"; something to temporarily alleviate the loneliness.

However, Saleh states, "My subtle and courteous investigations had failed to raise even a sniff of clean sheets" and at this point he wonders whether Latif will "remember about going around the corner to get a takeaway" (Gurnah, 2001: 245). Again, Saleh searches for some sign of comfort in food, something to tie him to the world and verify his existence. He concludes, "I only ever had a light supper, anyway, and I had Alfonso's

towel with me if worse came to worse" (Gurnah, 2001: 245). He is referring here to the towel given to him while staying at the refugee "detention centre" (Gurnah, 2001: 48). Alfonso, a fellow refugee, had given him this towel as a way of keeping clean and preserving his dignity in light of all they would face (Gurnah, 2001: 62). By placing this towel on the floor Saleh claims some "place" within the uncertainty that surrounds him; that is by literally placing a towel on the floor and claiming its dimensions. It is the only way in which he is able to configure some sort of subjective place in the world. This speaks to profound and irreversible damage done during the turbulent liminality of Saleh's life. His towel comes to stand for the holding place for his identity.

This is reminiscent of the scene in *Running in the Family* when Ondaatje visits the old St. Thomas church in search of clues to his family history. Again, this is an activity that suggests trying to uncover a subjective hold in the world. He states:

> To kneel on the floor of a church built in 1650 and see your name chiselled in large letters so that it stretched form your fingertips to your elbow in some strange way removes vanity, eliminates the personal. It makes your own story a lyric. So the sound which came immediately out of my mouth as I half-gasped and called my sister spoke that excitement of smallness, of being overpowered by stone. (Ondaatje, 2009: 61-2)

This moment has such a profound impact on Ondaatje because it serves as a moment of recognition of his subjective existence. Saleh is never awarded a moment of recognition such as this, but what is highlighted here is the importance of having some anchor within the bafflement of modernity. This becomes particularly pertinent in a situation of permanent liminality where truth is forever up for grabs, nothing being certain.

The importance of objects in the novel speaks to the need for an anchor within continual conditions of liminal confusion. It is in a situation such as this where the fragmentation of the characters' lives signal an experience of existential void. Saleh's investment in anchors is manifest in his interest in furniture and maps. He states, "I have always had an interest in furniture. Furniture and maps. Beautiful, intricate things" (Gurnah, 2001: 19). When arriving in England he describes how he found the furniture shops by chance:

> …though I had always had an interest in furniture. At the very least it weighs us downs and keeps us on the ground, and prevents us from clambering up trees and howling naked as the terror of useless lives overwhelms us. It keeps us from

> wandering aimlessly in pathless wilderness, plotting cannibalism in forest clearings and dripping caves. (Gurnah, 2001: 3)

Saleh describes furniture as the anchor which keeps us from disappearing into the meaninglessness of our lives. It is an anchor in the face of infinite and pathless domain of liminality. Saleh describes how when browsing the furniture warehouses in London he feels "for a while a kind of content and the possibility of mercy and absolution" (Gurnah, 2001: 4). As we have discussed, it is impossible to repair the fragments of the characters' lives yet it is possible to find some relief in having a witness for their stories. Similarly, furniture acts an anchor which is temporarily able to bring some satisfaction in the possibility of release from the "terror of useless lives", yet there is no escaping the permanent conditions of liminal confusion in which Saleh finds himself.

In much the same way, maps provide Saleh with an anchor in face of existential void. He states:

> I speak to maps. And sometimes they say something back to me. This is not as strange as it sounds, nor is it an unheard of thing. Before maps, the world was limitless. It was maps that gave it shape and made it seem like a territory, like something that could be possessed, not just laid waste and plundered. Maps made places on the edges of the imagination seem graspable and placable. (Gurnah, 2001: 35)

Maps as anchors have the power to surmount the limitlessness of the world. In other words, they are able to place the overwhelming infinite into a frame that can be understood. Furthermore, for Saleh the shape that maps give to the infinite infer that this demarcated territory can be "possessed" rather than "laid waste and plundered". Here, the notion of possession rings positively in contrast to destructive forces as it seems to indicate the possibility of claiming something for your own, in much the same way Saleh attempts to claim some space for his subjectivity. In this way, maps can be thought of as anchors for Saleh's subjectivity in their ability to lessen the confusion and unknown of the infinite and to claim a space in the world which can be grasped and placed.

Despite the relief that Saleh and Latif find through placing their fragmented stories alongside each other, there is a sense in which the meaninglessness of their liminal experiences remains overwhelming. Confronted by a profound existential void, Saleh attempts to find comfort where he can. This often manifests in the form of anchors, such

as his towel, furniture and maps as these objects allow him to feel temporarily grounded in a world where the horror of the meaninglessness of his life is never far away. While it is possible to find moments of reprieve where there is some anchor for subjectivity, *By the Sea* communicates experiences of modernity as profoundly caught in liminal wreckage; a void which can never be fully eradicated.

Concluding Remarks: Stories as Ruins

At the start of the novel, Saleh states, "Sometimes I think it is my fate to live in the wreckage and confusion of crumbling houses" (Gurnah, 2001: 1). This situates Saleh's subjective hold in the world within *ruin*. As we have been considering the telling of Saleh and Latif's stories as an important part of the process in which they attempt to configure subjectivity, stories can be considered to function as ruins in the novel.

On the one hand, the stories that Saleh and Latif tell register the damage done to them in their liminal voyaging. As Saleh states, "I feel worn out and raw, livid with sores" after "all the comings and goings, and through trooping of my life through hostilities and contempt and superciliousness" (Gurnah, 2001: 120). Their stories can be regarded as the broken remains of their past. These stories are the ruins which persist in their memories over time, serving as markers of what they have lived through. However, rather than thinking about ruins mere nostalgic markers of the past long gone, with no real impact on the present, Stoler (2008: 194) sees ruination as "a corrosive process that ways on the future and shapes the present." Stoler (2008: 196) continues:

> But ruination is more than a process. It is also a political project that lays waste to certain peoples and places, relations, and things. To think with ruins of empire is to emphasize less the artifacts of empire as dead matter or remnants of a defunct regime than to attend to their reappropriations and strategic and active positioning within the politics of the present.

What Stoler is pointing to here, is that if we consider ruins as having an active impact on the present, this means that they will feature in the way the present is re-appropriated through "strategic and active positioning". She sees the "ruins of empire" as not signalling something dead and static, but rather as continuing to bear on the way the present is shaped. This can be reconciled with a reading of the *By the Sea* as representative of a permanent state of liminality in which the past is continually repeated and

reconfigured through the process of mimesis. The "ruins of empire", as such, are constantly re-appropriated in the present as each regime mimics aspects of what came before. In much the same way, ruins are regarded as active cites which the shape of the present.

Stoler (2008: 194) states:

> "Ruin" is both the claim about the state of a thing and a process affecting it. It serves as both noun and verb….Imperial projects are themselves processes of ongoing ruination, processes that "bring ruin upon", exerting material and social force in the present. (Stoler, 2008: 195)

If "ruin" can be regarded as both a noun and verb, and we can regard stories as a form of ruin in *By the Sea*, then stories too can be regarded as both objects and active processes. On the one hand, Saleh and Latif's stories can be regarded as static objects in that they speak of a past that is cast in stone; its events unable to be altered. On the other hand, the active process of telling these stories seems to provide some realignment in the way that they are able to view and reconfigure their subjectivities in the present. It is by placing their stories alongside each other that they are able to see the "gaps" that will never be filled and that which "can't be helped" (Gurnah, 2001: 207). Telling their stories enables them to address that which cannot be altered in the past whilst negotiating their subjective place in the present.

In a broader sense then, by shedding light on this sort of strategy for the configuring of subjectivity, *By the Sea* asks us to consider the way in which empire continually lays down ruins through which people must gather the scraps in the creation of some sort of subjective embodiment of the world. Zanzibar has a history of imperial presence including the Omani, British and the Soviet and in this way, relativizes any easy notion of oppression born solely from Western imperialism and colonialism as its history of empire incorporates power structures on a range of axes. As part of the Indian Ocean world, the novel speaks to the multiple layering of empires both horizontally and vertically. The image of ruins works well here as it captures the sense in which history compounds upon itself; ruin comprised in layers of history.

In step with Eagleton and Cooper, Stoler (2008: 192-3) notes the sort of "historical blunting" that occurs in postcolonial scholarship through assumptions made about the

nature of colonial governance and postcolonial structures which do not pay real attention to specific relations. Stoler (2008: 193) continues:

> At issue is the political life of imperial debris, the longevity of structures of dominance, and the uneven pace with which people can extricate themselves from the colonial order of things. Rubrics such as "colonial legacy" offer little help. They fail to capture the evasive space of imperial formations past and present as well as the perceptions and practices by which people are forced to reckon with features of those formations in which they remain vividly and imperceptibly bound. They also gloss over the creative, critical, and sometimes costly measures people take to become less entangled.

Focussing on the notion of imperial debris allows scholars to take into account the longevity and continually mutating effects of empire. The important lens that literature provides in this respect is that it attempts to engage the actual lived experiences of people, whether real or imagined who are faced with the reality of these imperial formations in their daily lives. Both *The Cat's Table* and *By the Sea* register the ways in which its characters are bound to the damaging forces of empire and they do not "gloss over" the measures people take to become less entangled. As Stoler (2008: 196) states, "to focus on ruins is to broach the protracted quality of decimation in people's lives, to track the production of new exposures and enduring damage…." She explains that looking at ruins allows us to account for imperial remains in people's lives "and as importantly what they do with them" (Stoler, 2008: 196).

By the Sea deeply engages the notion of imperial ruins and what people do with them through the telling of personal stories. Stories as ruins allow Saleh and Latif to explore not only their past, but to contemplate their place in the present. Similarly, in *The Cat's Table,* the tenuousness of continual liminality in the novel allows the characters to both form and damage each other in enduring ways. It is a damage that cannot fully be repaired; but through the sharing of their important liminal experiences on board the *Oronsay*, characters are able to place their fragmented stories alongside each other as a way of partially repairing their worlds.

Both *The Cat's Table* and *By the Sea*, reflect a situation in which its characters do not remain only "vividly and imperceptibly bound" to imperial formations, but perpetually. These novels register the continual fall out of grand systems in which the danger of

liminality is continually perpetuated. Like strangers thrust up against each other, the fault lines between ruins of empire remain deeply entrenched, damage always remaining visible. In this vein, these novels give us insight into the way people go about making their way through the ruin in their lives. These ruins cannot be restored, but their layers can be uncovered in an attempt to contemplate the world and one's place in it. While the precarious continuation of liminality signals constant danger, it also signals the potential for transformation and it is novels such as this which give us a purview into what this transformation may look like.

Chapter 6

Conclusion

This thesis has argued that voyage operates within a liminal space in both *The Cat's Table* and *By the Sea.* In *The Cat's Table,* the transformative potential of liminality was explored in terms of rite of passage in which there is infinite possibility for self-formation. Furthermore, the possibilities present in the space of voyage were found to often exist between dual forces which were first dissolved and then later incorporated in the process of moving from childhood to adulthood. However, the *Oronsay* docking in England and the boys having grown up in meaningful ways during the voyage did not signal the end of liminality as it remained the present centre from which the characters continued to make sense of their past and their future. In this way, liminal voyage was uncovered to be the centre from which Mynah infers meaning in his life.

The on-going theme of damage in *The Cat's Table* was explored in terms physical dangers on board the *Oronsay* whose hidden nature came to act as a metaphor for secreted forms of damage that resided in the realm of personal relationships. The intrinsic connection between the space of voyage and islands as liminal was unpacked with a view to understanding Ondaatje's investment in personal relationships. This was linked to the compact nature of island society which in turn, informed the microcosm of compact society on board the *Oronsay*. Next, the damage in displacement was discussed as an experience of a post-imperial world. The damage found in displacement was cast as a form of permanent displacement where trickster figures become particularly dangerous. This damage was found to be profound and irreversible and reparation, albeit partial, was only possible through irrevocable transformation. Furthermore, the transformative potential of liminality was uncovered as the very ground for both the possibilities of damage and reparation, and in this way, the novel allowed us a glimpse of the "non-dual" as intrinsically linked to the primacy of experience in the liminal space of voyage.

Through using the liminal story of voyage as a way of navigating the multiple narratives in *By the Sea*, we were able to trace the turbulent and displaced trajectories of both Saleh and Latif's lives. Furthermore, the continuum of island spaces in the novel signalled not

only the continuation of liminality, but the continued experience of fragmentation. Furthermore, the duplicitous natures of the Indian Ocean world and trickster figures in the novel were found to underscore the long history of duplicity in Zanzibar. This duplicity was read to lead to a profound sense of displacement which was ultimately realized in migration.

By the Sea was discussed as engaging the attempt to find some subjective holding place within liminal conditions of confusion. The Indian Ocean, as a site exemplifying the infinite possibility of liminality in its matrix of interconnectivity, provided a framework in which to view modern experiences of rupture and displacement. Within the boundless possibilities which exist in the space of voyage, the characters were found to feel most solidly themselves in the infinity of darkness and silence. Yet, as they began to unravel their intertwined stories, there was a sense of relief found in the act of sharing these stories. It was clear that the fragmentation of their lives was ineffaceable and in the face of profound existential void, objects became anchors within a state of permanent liminal confusion. In this sense, we came to regard Saleh and Latif's stories as forms of imperial ruins which not only reflected on the past, but contemplated their present place in the world.

Liminal Spaces in the Indian Ocean and 'Lateral Contrapuntalism'

This thesis has aimed to examine two stories of voyage with a view to extending the body of scholarship on literature in the Indian Ocean. In addition to exploring the concept of voyages as operating within a liminal space, this thesis has argued that these novels both engage with the Indian Ocean as a way of demonstrating permanent liminality. In this way, both novels challenge the normative assumption that liminality must end as these characters are forever caught in liminal conditions where damage is irreversible and the possibility for transformation is ever-present. The story of voyage is useful as it encompasses some crucial experiences and themes of the Indian Ocean world. Of particular relevance to this thesis has been the connection between the space of voyages and islands as both operating within liminality. As we have discussed, islands in the Indian Ocean are constituted by multiple migrations in the imperial era which has resulted in a situation where there is continuous confrontation with the unfamiliar. In this

way, the space of the island comes to act as a contact zone in much the same way as the space of the ship. Anderson's (2011: 343) idea of "crossings" as the site at which subjectivity is made provided the insight that islands can be conceptualized as sites of permanent crossing and in this sense, are permanently caught in liminality. Mynah's experience of a microcosm community on board the *Oronsay* was shown to be intrinsically linked to his experience of the interstitiality and the compact nature of island society. We have seen that Mynah's experience of voyages and islands mutually inform each other as the centre through which he infers meaning in his life. In *By the Sea*, the circular nature of Latif and Saleh's voyages was found to not only manifest in the consistent presence of shorelines, as the title conveys, but in the continuum of island spaces in the novel. The characters' movement between islands spaces signals the continuation of their fragmented experiences born from liminality.

Both novels show how the islands on which they start have been constituted by endless flows of imperial activity from different parts of the world. Islands, as incarnations of permanent crossing, replicate liminal experiences of displacement and fragmentation found in voyage, where nothing is certain. In line with this, the novels argue that just as there is no end to liminality, there is no beginning as both stories of voyage move between liminal islands in the Indian Ocean. Both novels trace voyages from Indian Ocean islands to Great Britain, apparently the imperial centre, but as we have seen, it is in fact constituted by a society of people from elsewhere. In this way, the normative imperative that once a particular liminal rite of passage ends a new phase of ordered being must resume ignores the the experience of modernity expressed in these novels as permanently caught in this state.

In a recent paper, Meg Samuelson (2012: 499) applies Michael Pearson's notion of history of the ocean as amphibious to Gurnah's body of work. Samuelson (2012: 499) argues that the "layered and ambivalent histories of the Swahili coast" are inscribed in Gurnah's work "through a dual orientation fostered by the littoral." For Samuelson (2012: 499), it is "the vantage point of the beach" that allows Gurnah the "nuanced reflections" and "perspectival shifts" that constantly complicate fixed binaries. Drawing on Pearson and Denning, Samuelson (2012: 499-500) conceptualizes the space of littorals and the beach as transitive and permeable, signalling constant ambiguity and ambivalence. She states,

"Convening encounter, these mutable strips between land and sea are suggestive of "another side of the story" (Samuelson, 2012: 500). Like the liminal spaces of voyages and islands, beaches as in-between spaces act as contact zones where there will always be multiple perspectives. It is this other side of the story, born from being situated between, which infers counterpoint. Like the liminality of voyage, littorals and beaches as in-between spaces, are forever amphibiously navigating the interior and the oceans beyond in a constant flow of counter relation.

As we have discussed, the trajectory of Indian Ocean scholarship conducted thus far invokes a special type of reading which pays special attention to the detailed connections across the ocean on multiple axes. These complex sets of connections can be thought of as counterpoints which functions in constant flows of counter relation and has been termed 'lateral contrapuntalism', sounding off Said's original use of the term. This thesis has aimed to extend the idea of contrapuntalism from the more established trajectory of north to south to include the lateral networks within the Indian Ocean. In line with these aims, Samuelson (2012: 502-3) notes how Gurnah registers both the cosmopolitanism and the underbelly of ancient Indian Ocean trade. Furthermore, she notes the ways in which Gurnah both speaks to the overarching unity of Indian Ocean littoral societies whilst at the same time registering the problems that arise from casting the Swahili coast as separate from the hinterland. Therefore, she states "Gurnah's amphibian aesthetic with its bifocal lenses elicits a…conception of the coast as neither "foreign" nor "native but rather as troubling these very categories" (Samuelson, 2012: 504). Ancient Indian Ocean trade is cast as neither purely cosmopolitan nor merely dangerous while the Indian Ocean littorals are neither entirely separate from the interior nor deeply regulated. It is taking by taking a constant flow of counterpoints into consideration that it is possible to complicate these received categories.

Samuelson's application of an "amphibian aesthetic" to littoral societies can well be viewed as a form of 'lateral contrapuntalism' in which counterpoints, that is, the relationship between the ocean and the interior, is constantly negotiated. As Samuelson (2012: 500) states:

> Suggesting the limits of postcolonial theory and its regimes of recognition, in approaching littoral states with their entangled relations and layered histories, the

> amphibian aesthetic [Gurnah's] oeuvre advances is more appropriately calibrated to the Indian Ocean "interregional arena".

It is precisely the bifocal view enabled by Indian Ocean spaces such as littorals which complicated the binaries of postcolonial scholarship and area studies. Uncovering the ancient histories of Indian Ocean has highlighted the importance of taking colony to colony and south to south interactions into account, which is, the inclusion of lateral counterpoints. As Samuelson (2012: 509) states in relation to Gurnah, "Through the narrative counterpoints that inform his fictional structures, he brings the Swahili coast and its layered histories into view from various opposed and/or shifting perspectives."

What Samuelson conveys is the extent to which the amphibious location of littorals in the Indian Ocean invokes the need to consider a constant flow of counterpoints. As she states, "Poised between land and sea, ambivalently constituted and abjected by colonial and nationalist borders, the beach offers a complex vantage point in this fiction" (Samuelson, 2012: 506). It is this vantage point which invokes the need to look "both ways", not as a stagnant frame of opposing definition, but as a way of appreciating the way in which these in-between spaces are mutually informed and shaped. Samuelson (2012: 510) states:

> On this ambivalent, amphibious threshold there is a constant contrapuntal movement. Each critique presented is cast adrift allowing it to beach and be reviewed on another shore, from another perspective.

It is in the Indian Ocean that we find these ambivalent and amphibious thresholds. Samuelson has located these as littoral and beaches as we see strongly manifest in *By the Sea*. What this thesis adds to the notion of threshold spaces such as this in the Indian Ocean is the perspective that liminality deeply characterizes these spaces. That is to say, the lack of structure and endless possibilities in liminality allows for multiple counterpoints and flows of perspective. A littoral and a beach are both in-between spaces with the ocean and the hinterland acting as mutually informative contrapuntal points. By recognizing the in-between nature of these spaces, liminality allows us to meaningfully connect experiences between voyages, islands and shorelines.

Liminality and the Global South

Aligning the novels thus, that is, by considering the way in which the story of voyage resonates in the liminal spaces of islands and shorelines, we are able to recognize the continuation of liminality in both novels. Furthermore, what both novels seem to suggest is that liminality deeply characterizes modernity as made manifest in the experiences conveyed and is acutely linked to the layered histories of imperialism on both islands. The precariousness of liminal situations is realized in the in-between spaces of voyage, islands and shorelines as multiple intersection points of empire. In terms of Sri Lanka, Ondaatje captures this complexity in *Running in the Family* when he describes Sinhalese actors in a production of Arthur lining up for photographs in front of the prime ministers' collection of Australian fish (Ondaatje, 2009: 174-5). In terms of Zanzibar, Saleh's description of himself in *By the Sea* as indistinguishable from the Omani prisoners relates the fluidity of ethnic boundaries within these complex liminal spaces (Gurnah, 2001: 225). It is descriptions such as these which give affective and aesthetic character to these complex intersection points, without which, might otherwise remain theoretical.

In relating the pervasiveness of liminal experiences in modernity, both these novels speak to profound and irreversible forms of damage and fragmentation that are endured in these in-between spaces. One important emerging face of modernity is that of the Global South. As we have discussed, Indian Ocean scholarship has taken its place as an important emerging area of study as it provides a unique vantage point from which to view this emerging phenomena. As power structures begin to shift towards the rising economic powers of Asia, uncovering the neglected histories of the Indian Ocean have been important as a way of better understanding what this new power may look like. Furthermore, as we have discussed, the concept of the Global South has been predominately addressed by disciplines such as International Relations and Development Studies. The view that literature affords us is insight into the lived experiences of people who inhabit these parts of the worlds. As mentioned above, without the affective and aesthetic texture that literature provides, complex intersection points of empire, and indeed the face of the Global South, remains shadowy.

Both these novels engage the fragments of empire and impart the ways in which people attempt to make sense of them. In *The Cat's Table* the possibility for damage that exists aboard the *Oronsay* acts as a metaphor for the potential for damage that lurks in the dark waters of personal relationships. The possibility to put things back together remains partial as the characters find themselves irrevocably altered by their liminal experiences. As we have seen, Mynah and Emily are able to find some reprieve in revisiting the puzzling events that transpired on board the *Oronsay*, yet they remain irrevocably altered by their journey. While the characters in *The Cat's Table* are able to deeply damage each other in their encounters in liminal voyage, they are also able to help each other. Ondaatje's exploration of a continuum of damage in the novel is forever transforming as the transformative potential of liminality never ceases. In *By the Sea*, the characters too seek to repair the damage done within the intense conditions of liminal confusion that infuses their experiences. Like Mynah and Emily, Latif and Saleh are able to find a sense of relief in the act of laying their stories down beside each other. While the damage that has been incurred cannot be undone, by linking an old life "to a stranger" (Ondaatje, 2011: 77-78) new ways for configuring subjectivity emerge. This does not heed essentialist notions of wholeness verses emptiness as *By the Sea* demonstrates a world in which there are only fragments and explores what people do with them. Both these novels make the internal face of the Global South more tangible in adding the substance of subjective experience.

In speaking of the episodic nature of Gurnah's novels, Samuelson (2012: 511) notes Gurnah's refusal "to advance an all-encompassing narrative vision or to articulate a sense of wholeness; instead, the impression is of fragments of stories washing up on the beach." She continues quoting Gurnah:

> This amphibian aesthetic – constructing stories out of flotsam and jetsam – fulfils the authorial claim that "one of the ways fiction convinces is by suggesting that behind the surface lies an imaginatively more complex world which is construction in the narrative approaches but does not quite convey." (Samuelson, 2012: 511)

In this sense, the fragmentary nature of Gurnah's story telling does not act as a static counterpoint to the notion of wholeness, rather Gurnah is arguing for a world in which wholeness does not exist. It is by constructing stories out of fragments, "out of flotsam

and jetsam", that Gurnah is able to point to an imaginary complex world which lies beyond the surface of "truth" conveyed through dual binary models of understanding. In other words, the fragmentary nature of Gurnah's stories implicates a world in which binaries dissolve as static counterpoints through which the world is dualistically made sense of. *The Cat's Table* can be seen to exemplify an equally episodic and fragmentary structure. Some chapters are only a page whist others span as much as twenty-five. Mynah's voice dominates the majority of the narrative, spanning various episodes, past present and future, while the insertion of a letter from Miss Lasqueti introduces a new narrative voice. Like *By the Sea*, *The Cat's Table* disrupts any notion of wholeness verses emptiness as binary models do not suffice to capture the deeply complex and intertwined meanings conveyed. In this sense, Ondaatje, like Gurnah, speaks to reality constituted beyond dual structures.

By matching this recent novel with a 'canonical' text by Gurnah, this thesis shows that an Indian Ocean 'canon' is still in development and comparative studies such as these are crucial for building a body of knowledge within purview the Indian Ocean studies itself. That is, the Indian Ocean needs to be regarded as a site of comparative studies in its own right. Furthermore, comparative work within the Indian Ocean is important for developing our understanding of the Global South. What has been revealed by matching these two novels is that the meaning people seek within the damage and fragments of empire or 'imperial ruin' does not adhere to any binary generating models of understanding. In a post-imperial world, a dualistic understanding of phenomena misses an important part of the experience conveyed in these novels and indeed, an important subjective face of the Global South.

Transformative Potential and the Story of Voyage: Moving beyond Duality

As we have discussed, within in all the attitudes to the sea and literary paradigms, there seems to be a sense of being caught between dual states, often manifest in temporal and spatial terms. However, equally powerful in the story of voyage is the possibility to dissolve opposites or move toward non-duality. We discussed the ways in dual concepts of finite verses infinite and transient time verses eternity; misconstrue the essential nature

of infinity and eternity. Infinity and eternity, as non-dual concepts, form the very ground of all space and all time. Furthermore this thesis has discussed the close relationship that exists between historical accounts of voyages and literary fictions born from them, that is to say, stories of voyages are closely linked to actual experiences of voyaging. It is the primacy of experience in stories of voyage which means that like the infinite and eternal ground of reality, stories of voyage exist in the present, in a constant state of motion. It is this constant state of present motion which nullifies any fixity which resides in dual definition. In other words, the constant motion of the story of voyage born from the primacy of experience means it exists in the present, the here and the now, in which dual structure ceases to capture experience.

Within the conception of liminality as it stands, liminal experiences as rites of passage are cast as deeply transformative events. What the permanence of liminality in these novels conveys is that all experience can be transformative. The story of liminal voyage is important in the Indian Ocean as it speaks to these very experiences whereby dual structure is transformed. In much the same way as infinity and eternity form the ground of all temporal and spatial experience, transformative potential forms the very ground of liminality as it is both the origin of structure and unstructure. In *The Cat's Table*, we have seen the paradoxes that abound within the infinite possibility of the space of voyage which Ondaatje moves to dissolve. In *By the Sea* we have seen the ways in which Gurnah works to complicate received binaries, as manifest in the identity politics of the island. It is the transformative ground of liminality in the story of voyage, which allows for the collapse of duality.

What this shows is that the transformative nature of experiences in the liminal story of voyage allow for the collapse of duality, traversing binary models of understanding through a constant and present state of motion. The story of voyage is particularly pertinent in the Indian Ocean where liminal spaces, alive to both the past and the present through the ruins of empire, are prominent and there is need to look beyond the binaries of postcolonial studies which do not suffice to capture the fullness of transformative experience in these novels.

Bibliography

Aiyar, S. 'Empire, Race and the Indians in colonial Kenya's Contested Public Political Sphere,' *Africa, Vol. 81. Issue 1*, 2011, 132 - 154

Anderson, C. 'Introduction to Marginal Centers: Writing Life Histories in the Indian Ocean World,' *Journal of Social History Vol. 42. No. 2*, 2011, 35-334

Bang, A.K. 'Authority and Piety, Writing and Print: A Preliminary Study of the Circulation of Islamic Texts in the late nineteenth- and early twemtieth century Zanzibar,' *Africa, Vol. 81. Issue 1*, 2011, 89 - 107

Benton, L. 'Legal Spaces of Empire: Piracy and the Origins of Ocean Regionalism,' *Society for Comparative Study of Society and History, Vol. 47. Issue 4*, 2005, 700-724

Bertz. 'Indian Ocean World Cinema: Viewing the History of Race, Diaspora and Nationalism in Urban Tanzania,' *Africa, Vol. 81. Issue 1*, 2011, 68-88

Bhautoo-Dewanarain, N. 'Mauritian Writing in English: A Survey,' *Wasafiri Vol. 15 Issue 30*, 2008, 21-24

Bose, C. 'Space and Time on the Indian Ocean Rim,' *A Hundred Horizons: The Indian Ocean in the Age of Global Empire*, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2006, 1-35

Bragard, V. 'Transoceanic echoes: coolitude and the work of the Mauritian poet Khal Torabully', *International Journal of Francophone Studies Vol. 8. No. 2*, 2005, 219-233

Brennan, J.R. 'Politics and Business in the Indian Newspapers of Colonial Tanganyika,' *Africa, Vol. 81. Issue 1*, 2011, 42-67

Brave-boy Wagner, J. A. *Institutions of the Global South*, New York: Routledge, 2009

Burton, A. 'Sea Tracks and Trails: Indian Ocean World as Method, *History Compass*, forthcoming

Carter and Torabully. Coolitude: *An Anthology of Indian Labour Diaspora*, London: Anthem Press, 2002

Chowdry, G. 'Edward Said and Contrapuntal Reading: Implications for Critical Interventions in International Relations,' *Millennium – Journal of International Studies 36:101*, 2007, 101- 116

Cohen, M. *The Novel and the Sea*, Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press: 2010

Coovadia, I, *High Low In-between*, Cape Town: Umuzi, 2009

David, J. *Interweaving Symbols of Individuation: In African and European Fairy Tales*, Kaggen Press: Cape Town, 1991

Dhupelia-Mesthrie, U. 'The Place of India in South African History: Academic Scholarship, Past Present and Future,' *South African Historical Journal Vol. 57. Issue 1*, 2007, 12-34

Foulke, R. *The Sea Voyage Narrative*, New York: Routledge, 2002

Frenkel, R. *Reconsiderations: South African Indian Fiction and the making of Race in Postcolonial Culture*, Pretoria: Unisa Press, 2010

Frost, M, R. 'Wider Opportunities: Religious Revival, Nationalist Awakening and the Global Dimension in Colombo, 1870-1920,' *Modern Asian Studies, 36.4*, 2002, 936-67

Ghosh, A. *In An Antique Land*, London: Granta Books, 1992

Ghosh, A. 'Confessions of a Xenophile', *Chimurenga* 14, 2009, 35-41

Gove. *The Imaginary Voyage in Prose Fiction*, New York: Octagon Books: 1975

Granrose, J. 'The Archetype of the Magician' Diploma Thesis, C.G.Jung Institute, Zurich, available at www.voidspace.org.uk/psychology/wizard_archetype.shtml [Accessed 23 February 2011], 1996

Gurnah, A. *By the Sea*, London: Bloomsbury, 2001

Gupta, P. 2010, 'Island-ness in the Indian Ocean,' in Gupta, Hofmeyr & Titlestad, eds., *Eye Across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2010, 275-285

Hand, F. 'Lindsey Collen: The Courage to be Parochial,' *Wasafiri 26:2*, 2011, 41-45

Hand, F. 'Untangling Stories and Healing Rifts: Abdulrak Gurnah's By the Sea', *Research in African Literatures, Vol. 41. No. 2*, 2010, 74-92

Helf, S. 'Illegal Diasporas and African Refugees in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea', *The Journal of Commonwealth Literature Vol. 44 No. 1*, 2009, 67-80

Ho, E. 'Empire through Diasporic Eyes: A View from the Other Boat,' *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 2004, 210-246

Hofmeyr, I. 'The Black Atlantic Meets the Indian Ocean: Forging New Paradigms of Transnationalism for the Global South – Literary and Cultural Perspectives', *Social Dynamics: A Journal of African studies Vol. 33. Issue, 2*, 2007, 3-33

Hofmeyr, I. 'Universalizing the Indian Ocean,' *PMLA 125.3*, 2010, 721-29

Hofmeyr, I. & William, M. 'Introduction: South Africa – India: Historical Connections, Cultural Circulations and Socio-political Comparisons,' in Hofmeyr & William, eds., *South Africa and India: Shaping the Global South*, 2011, 2-18

Hofmeyr, I. Kaarsholm, P, & Frederiksen, B.D, 'Print Cultures, Nationalisms and Publics of the Indian Ocean', *Africa 81.1*, 2011, 1-22

Horden, P. & Purcell, N. *The Corrupting Sea: A Study of Mediterranean History, Vol.1*, Oxford: Blackwell, 2000

Horvath, A. & Thomassen, B. 'Mimetic Errors in Liminal Schismogenesis: On the Political Anthropology of the Trickster', *International Political Anthroplogy, Vol. 1. No. 1*, 2008, 3-25

Hyslop, J. 'Steamship Empire: Asian, African and British Sailors in the Merchant Marine c.1880-945,' *Journal of Asian and African Studies 44:1*, 2009, 49-67

Jung, 'Conscious, Unconscious, and Individuation,' in Anthony Storr, eds., *Jung: Selected Writings*, London: Fontana Press, 1983, 212-226

Kresse, K. & Simpson, E. 'Between Africa and India: Thinking Comparativley across the Western Indian Ocean', *Working Papers, No. 5*, 2011

Lake, M. & Henry, R. *Drawing the Global Colour Line: White Men's Countries and the International Challenge of Racial Equality*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2008

Lee, C.J, 'Between a Moment and an Era: The Origins and Afterlives of Bandung,' in Christopher, J. Lee, eds., *Making a World After Empire: The Bandung Movement and its Political Afterlives*, Athens, OH: Ohio University Press, 2010, 1-43

Mandelbaum, M. 'Family Resemblances and Generalization concerning the Arts,' *American Philosophical Quarterly, Vol. 2. No. 3*, 1965, 219-228

Masterson, J. 'Travel and/as Travail: Diasporic Dislocations in Abdulrazak Gurnah's By the Sea and Kiran Desai's The Inheritance of Loss ',*The Journal of Commonwealth Literature Vol. 45 No. 3*, 2010, 409-427

Miller, J, C. *The Transcendent Function: Jung's Model of Psychological Growth through Dialogue with the Unconscious*, New York: State University of New York Press, 2004

Ojwang, D. 'Memory, Migrancy and Modernity in M.G. Vassanji's The Gunny Sack and The Book of Secrets,' in Gupta, Hofmeyr & Titlestad, eds., *Eye Across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2010, 140-154

Ondaatje, M. *The Cat's Table*, London: Jonathan Cape, 2011

Ondaatje, M. *Running in the Family*, London: Bloomsbury, 1982 (Publishing details 2009)

Pearson, M. *The Indian Ocean*, London: Routledge, 2003

Pearson, M. 'Littoral Society: The Concept and the Problem,' *Journal of World History 17.4*, 2006, 353-73

Risso, P. *Merchants and Faith: Muslim Commerce and Culture in the Indian Ocean*, Boulder: Westview, 1995

Samuelson, M. 'Oceanic Charades: The Female Figures of M.K. Jeffrey's Passage to India,' in in Gupta, Hofmeyr & Titlestad, eds., *Eye Across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2010, 258-272

Samuelson, M. 'Abdulrakzak Gurnah's fictions of the Swahili coast: littoral locations and amphibian aesthetics', *Social Dynamics: A journal of African Studies*, Vol. 38. No. 3, 2012, 499-515

Seel, A. M. 'Displacement and Diaspora: New locations in African Writing', *Wasafiri, 19:41*, 2004, 21-24

Sheriff, A. *Dhow Culture of the Indian Ocean: Cosmopolitanism, Commerce and Islam*, New York: Columbia University Press: 2010

Steiner, T. 'Navigating Multilingually: The Chronotope of the Ship in Contemporary East African Fiction', *English Studies in Africa, 51:2*, 2008: 49-58

Stoler, A. L. 'Imperial Debris: Reflections on Ruins and Ruination', *Cultural Anthropology, Vol. 23. Issue 2*, 2008, 191-219

Szakolczai, A. 'Liminality and Experience: Structuring transitory situations and transformative events', *International Political Anthropology Vol. 2. No.1*, 2009, 141-172

Thomassen, B. 'The Uses and Meanings of Liminality,' *International Political Anthropology 2:1*, 2009, 5-27

Titlestad, M. 'The Limits of Detection in Amitav Ghosh's The Circle of Reason,' in Gupta, Hofmeyr & Titlestad, eds., *Eye Across the Water: Navigating the Indian Ocean*, Pretoria: University of South Africa Press, 2010, 363-374

Titlestad and Kissack, 'The Persistent Castaway in South African writing', *Postcolonial Studies, Vol. 10 Issue 2*, 2007, 191-218

Titlestad, M. 'Voyages and Stories: Considering the Wager', *English Studies in Africa 51:2, 2009*: 1-8

Toorawa, S.M. 'Strange bedfellows? Mauritian Writers and Shakespeare,' *Wasafiri Vol. 15 Issue 30*, 2008, 27-31

Vink, M. P. M. 'Indian Ocean Studies and the 'New Thalassolgy',' *Journal of Global History 2.1*, 2007, 47-62

Wenzlhuemer, R. & Offerman, M. 'Ship Newspapers and Passenger Life Aboard Transoceanic Steamships in the late Nineteenth Century.' *Transcultural Studies No. 1*, 2012, 77-121

Wilber, K. *The Spectrum of Consciousness*, Illinois: Theosophical Publishing House, 1977

Online References:

Accessed 2012/08/14:
www.thefreedictionary.com/contrapuntal

Accessed 2012/04/18:
www.bookreporter.com/reviews/the-cats-table
www.theglobeandmail.com/news/arts/books/the-cats-table-by-michael-ondaatje/article
www.nytimes.com/2011/10/16/books/review/th-cats-table-by-michael-ondaatje

Accessed 20-11-12
Olsen, E, 'Sri Lanka', New York Times, Last updated 14 November 2012 (http://topics.nytimes.com/top/news/international/countriesandterritories/srilanka/index.html?scp=1-spot&sq=sri%20lanka&st=cse)

Accessed 20-11-12
Ruwan, J, 'The Black July 1983 that Created a Collective Trauma', Posted on April 27th, 2010 (http://www.lankaweb.com/news/items/2010/04/27/the-black-july-1983-that-created-a-collective-trauma/)