PART III

LOOSENING THE FETTERS OF RACE
When confronted with the unknown, many societies tend to transfer observations of unfamiliar phenomena onto their mental map of what is already known. Just as twenty-first century’s effort to search for extra-terrestrial life forms on other planets is based on the idea of “life as we know it,” ideas of people of other races have historically been based on what is familiar, what is considered to be “known.” Race as a category is entangled with empirical knowledge, misinformation, and ideology, all of which seek to justify and sustain particular beliefs. This chapter will explore how knowledge about otherness is socially constructed and justified in the areas of drama and literature. Knowledge of race results from taxonomical observations made for colonial, medical, bureaucratic, or other purposes such as political movements. This knowledge is often articulated in the form of inaccurate stereotypes deriving from perceived behavioral patterns, political shorthand that condenses biological features such as skin color and other bodily characteristics, racialized cultural artifacts such as hip-hop or chopsticks that are associated with particular groups or cultures, and check boxes on government forms that require information that encode racial characteristics.
Race is an inescapable part of social life but it takes on particular and disturbing meaning when it becomes absorbed into the hierarchical structures of institutional life as reflected by politics and bureaucratic procedures. In contemporary United States, it is common for governments and educational institutions to compile statistics of the number of members of specific races and ethnicities with the aim of formulating policies designed to increase cultural diversity. In addition to the U.S. Census, a decennial census mandated by the U.S. Constitution, on bureaucratic forms it is common to find a box labeled race or ethnicity that the citizen is expected to fill in. In contrast, while contemporary France has its unique racial problems and vocabulary, French bureaucratic forms are generally averse to categorizing citizens based on race. For historical reasons after World War II, the French government goes to great lengths to avoid identifying racial differences in order to deter racial profiling. Whether race as a category is customarily articulated, as is the case of the United States, or remains unarticulated, as is the case of contemporary France, latent and explicit forms of racism continue to exist, and information gathered for an ostensibly laudable political purpose is sometimes used to exacerbate racial difference. Indeed, at times, racism can be obscured by superficial measures of “diversity” that are used to show that the institutions are free from racial discord, as Sara Ahmed suggests. She writes: “A stranger experience can be an experience of becoming noticeable, of not passing through or passing by, of being stopped or being held up.” One does not become a stranger until the moment of epistemological impasse. This is why understanding the production and circulation of what we might call epistemologies of race can be socially productive in laying bare opaque institutional processes and analyzing unexamined assumptions about otherness.

In this chapter we will consider narratives that reflect the impact of epistemologies of otherness upon our understanding of race. We shall begin by examining how race intersects with other social factors such as class, cultural citizenship, and gender. We draw on case studies of artists in exile or diaspora who interrogate their own identities, because exile brings racial tensions into stark relief. Exile highlights race in personal identities. We will then explore how narratives engaged with epistemologies of otherness inform works about exile and works produced in exile. We will consider how the
recent emergence of whiteness changes notions of race. Lastly, it is important to take a step back and examine the process of knowledge production. We will explore select cases of intellectuals in diaspora and in exile, particularly those who are located within the Western metropolis, and whose work is at the same time marked by the experience of their multicultural backgrounds.

**Signifying relationally: race and nation**

As is often the case, without contact with or the threat from other groups, there is generally no perceived need for self-definition. Is one born black, or does one become black? European observers associated red with American Indians’ skin color because of their war paint and because of the sun-screening substance they used to anoint themselves. American Indians became red when the need for distinction between the European settlers and the natives arose. Meanwhile when the West encountered African culture in the sixteenth century, “the most arresting characteristic of the newly discovered African was his color. Travelers rarely failed to comment upon it.” In pre-modern China, peoples of many ethnicities and cultural origins became black in the Chinese consciousness. Increased cross-cultural contacts seemed to have only broadened the idea of blackness. Numerous peoples were given the label “black.” Initially the Nam-Viet peoples and Malayans, China’s Southeast Asian neighbors, were designated black in the Tang dynasty, but with China’s increased encounters with slaves from Africa (modern-day Somalia, Kenya, Tanzania) from the seventh to the seventeenth centuries, the “blacks” in Chinese consciousness expanded to include peoples from various parts of the world, including Bengali peoples of the Indian subcontinent, who were deemed different from the local population.

Likewise East Asians became “yellow” after the eighteenth century physician Johann Friedrich Blumenbach categorized them as such. The pseudo-scientific classification of human features during the enlightenment and epistemologies of race derived from them formed a mutually validating and energizing synergy. The system of knowledge that emerges from this combination is then put to political use. As Michael Keevak observes, “there was something dangerous, exotic, and threatening about East Asia that yellow … helped to
reinforce, [as the term is] symbiotically linked to the cultural memory of a series of invasions from that part of the world.” In many contemporary societies across the globe, skin color “as a biological concept,” as K. Anthony Appiah notes, is shorthand for racial identification along with “a few visible features of the face and the head.”

However, as we will show in this chapter, linguistically constructed epistemologies of race play an important role among strategies of racialization both for the purpose of solidarity, of binding groups together, and alienation or the exclusion of individuals or groups from the mechanisms of power.

Epistemologies of race signify relationally, which means a group that suffers from discrimination can themselves discriminate against other groups based on any combination of the factors of race, class, gender, religion, and politics. Take East Asia for example. While Taiwanese women are fighting for economic and social equality, at the same time they are known to mistreat their darker-skinned live-in Indonesian and Filipino maids. Pei-Chia Lan’s ethnographic study, *Global Cinderellas: Migrant Domestics and Newly Rich Employers in Taiwan*, argues that “the integration of the global economy has simplified the gendered household burden for more privileged women by complicating the racial and class divisions of domestic labor on a global scale.”

Along similar lines, there is the phenomenon of what is sometimes called internal racism, or intra-group hatred as we examined in Chapter 4, where a community has internalized its former colonizer’s outlook. In politically post-colonial but culturally colonial societies such as Singapore, where the state apparatus openly uses race as a category in its promotion of institutionalized multiculturalism, whites are typically placed above the local race in the social hierarchy while darker-skinned migrant workers are placed below.

As fundamentally personal forms of self-expression, arts and literature are a fertile area to explore the expressions of racialized experience. During the early twentieth century, images of cultural others arising from exile or displacement were central to the brutalities of World War I and the decline of imperial power. The experience of exile and diaspora informed writers’ and artists’ responses to socially constructed cultural otherness. Who is an insider, and who is an outsider? To whom do these categories apply? For example, the
modernist movement registered a predominantly conservative sense of the breakdown of traditional conceptualizations of order. The Irish poet W.B. Yeats who famously observed in his poem “The Second Coming” (1919) that “[t]hings fall apart; the centre cannot hold” lived most of his life in exile from his native Ireland. The experience of living and writing outside his culture shaped Yeats’ writing and worldview. The phrase “things fall apart,” echoed in Nigerian novelist Chinua Achebe’s novel *Things Fall Apart*, depicts the clash between Nigeria’s white colonial government and the Igbo people, although Achebe’s verbatim use of Yeats’ line raises complex questions about the extent to which the novelist’s experience has been absorbed into a colonizing culture.

Exile can take many different forms, ranging from forced movement across geopolitical borders in order to escape an oppressive government, to distancing oneself intellectually from undesirable ideologies or even self-exile. Beyond Yeats and Achebe, some other twentieth and twenty-first century writers and theatre directors who are exiles or descendants of diasporic parents include Bertold Brecht, Salman Rushdie, Eugenio Barba, Ariane Mnouchkine, Suzuki Tadashi, Ong Keng Sen, and French-Chinese Nobel laureate Gao Xingjian. While the project of Anglo-European modernity and modernism is often defined by the emergence and struggles of the individual against the society, Gao’s works examine the moral agency of the collective by activating what he calls apolitical, personal voices that are placed in opposition to institutionalized national and racial identity. In this context he wishes to be seen as an individual rather than as a Chinese artist in more limiting ethnographic imaginations.

The modernist belief in decaying values was paradoxically combined with an unexpected readiness to experiment with the aesthetic forms that might give expression to the apprehension of a disintegrating value system. T.S. Eliot, who was born in North America but who lived most of his life in London, registered the decline in traditional values after World War I in “The Waste Land” (1922), by way of experimental, fragmented language. The poem projects a persistent but obscure apprehension of loss when, for example, it asks:

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What is that sound high in the air
Murmur of maternal lamentation
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Who are those hooded hordes swarming
Over endless plains, stumbling in cracked earth
Ringed by the flat horizon only
What is the city over the mountains
Cracks and reforms and bursts in the violet air
Falling towers
Jerusalem Athens Alexandria
Vienna London
Unreal\textsuperscript{12}

Eliot’s citation in his notes to these lines indicate that the earth over which sinister undecipherable “hooded hordes” swarm alludes to the Swiss writer Hermann Hesse’s (1877–1962) sense of the decay of Eastern Europe.\textsuperscript{13} The allusion is however mingled with images of spiritual loss suggested in phrases such as “maternal lamentation,” or the dryness of the “cracked earth,” or the featurelessness of the “flat horizon.” Such phrases resonate with the loss of the Son in the narrative of the Crucifixion of Christ even as they point to a spiritual dryness that can only long for, but is unable to realize in the poem’s present, its original religious signification. Thus the “violet air” that should be indicative of spiritual wholeness, “cracks” even as it “reforms” and then “bursts.” Such intimations of a wholeness that is glimpsed but simultaneously lost emerges again in Eliot’s lines, which present a disjunctive collocation of cities important to European notions of civilization. The past “real”-ness of the social, historical, and spiritual city glimpsed within the word “unreal” is threatened by the coexistent and barbarous condition of unrealizability, in which the negative and the positive are suggested within the same word.

During the modernist period, many other so-called English writers had non-English origins or followed in their life experiences non-English trajectories. Like Yeats, the Irish-born writer James Joyce (1882–1941) lived most of his life in self-imposed exile, in Joyce’s case, in Europe. The Polish-born writer Joseph Conrad (1857–1924) took British citizenship out of necessity. As we noted above, T.S. Eliot can be considered a displaced North American electing to live most of his life in London. Ford Maddox Ford (1873–1939), who experimented with the use of unreliable narratives in \textit{The Good Soldier} (1915) and who collaborated with Joseph
Conrad in the writing of three other novels, was born in England. His father was German and his mother English. But he spent much of his life abroad, in the company of émigré writers during the modernist period in Paris, later teaching in Michigan and finally living in France where he died. The writer D.H. Lawrence (1885–1930) whose father and mother both came from the mining town of Eastwood in Nottinghamshire, traveled widely, but was very critical in his writings of the English world he grew up in, a world which T.S. Eliot, who also engaged in travel writing, reviled in *After Strange Gods*. After 1922, and largely as a result of the hostility his work met with in Britain, Lawrence spent most of his life in self-imposed exile including Australia and New Mexico. Travel narrative involves the fragmentation of shared values and foregrounds the subjective encounter with difference. A more sympathetic view of unconscious bias against racial others or “unintended racism” might be Eliot’s own theory that all knowledge is simply “a matter of degree,” because “you cannot put your finger upon even the simplest datum and say ‘this we know’.”

The imagined superiority of the national category of English, which was used during the modernist period to describe such writers, who were actually in one way or another displaced from their countries of birth, implicitly devalued in their lived experience of ethnic and racial malleability and diversity. As Brian Niro observes, “in modernism, the exoticism of difference … internalized with a desire for a ‘new’ method of expression … brings the exiled, the colonial, the displaced, and the other into the discursive fold.” Despite their incorporation into English culture, otherness remained apparent from the evidence of their life experiences, and in their writings.

Narratives of otherness also characterized the movement known as Négritude during the twentieth century. During the 1930s the North American writers Langston Hughes (1902–1967) and Richard Wright (1908–1960) described to several Francophone African writers gathered in Paris the significance in the 1920s of the cultural, social, and artistic explosion in which they had been involved known as the Harlem Renaissance. This movement advocated a revised cultural assessment of blackness. In so doing African-Americans proposed racial difference as the starting point for a new cultural, rather than biological, understanding of black consciousness.
Taking its inspiration from the Harlem Renaissance, Négritude also considered blackness as a given. The African writers Aimé Césaire (1913–2008) from Martinique, Léopold Senghor (1906–2001) from Senegal, and Léon Damas (1912–1978) from French Guiana together proposed renditions of their identities that were based on their own racial humanity that existed independently of colonialism’s demonizations of them.

In this way these writers, poets, social activists, and intellectuals hoped to counter the Western world’s negative cultural constructions of their blackness, by means of their own equally cultural, but positive conceptions of, African consciousness and philosophy. Césaire noted

we thought that Africa was not some sort of black page [but that] our Negro heritage was worthy of respect and that this heritage was not relegated to the past [so that] its values ... could still make important contributions to the world.  

Later the French philosopher, activist, and novelist Jean Paul Sartre (1905–1980) argued provocatively that the movement exemplified an “anti-racist racism.”

This “anti-racist racism” can lead to nationalist sentiments. Perhaps not surprisingly, in early twentieth century China, sociopolitical reformers took a similar approach to the self-definition of the Chinese race. According to Frank Dikötter, nationalism articulated as racial cohesion and the discourse of race as nation was seen as a key to the country’s survival. Radical magazines between 1903 and 1915 often hailed the Yellow Emperor (Huangdi, reign 2697–2597 BC), a mythical figure, as the point of origin of the Han race, the dominant ethnic group in mainland China. Sun Yat-sen (1866–1925), leader of the Republican revolution in 1911, resorted to biological purity to define the Han group in opposition to other ethnic groups within China and the result is an argument for racial nationalism:

The Chinese race totals four hundred million people; of mingled races there are only a few million Mongolians a million or so Manchus, a few million Tibetans ... These alien races do not number altogether more than ten million, so
that, for the most part, the Chinese people are of the Han … race with common blood, common language, common religion, and common customs—a single, pure race.\textsuperscript{19}

In contrast, though also similar in some aspects, to the Négritude movement, Sun and his fellow reformers focused on the Han in their construction of a territorially and biologically predetermined Chinese race. Sun’s theory echoes the Romanticist idea of *Volksgeist* (national spirit) proposed by Johann Gottfried Herder (1744–1803), who has commonly been regarded as the originator of modern nationalism and the first person to articulate elements of *Volksgeist* in a coherent manner, which we examined in Chapter 3.

Other instances of lived, embodied experiences of one’s own and others’ races use metaphors of illness to describe an entire people, because “the body [is seen as] a model for political community” in the metonymic frame of understanding race.\textsuperscript{20} In 1895, after China’s defeat in the first Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895), both Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany and the Chinese scholar Yan Fu used the phrase yellow peril and the metaphor of a “sick man” (*die gelbe Gefahr* and *bingfu*) to describe East Asian and particularly Chinese people. In 1898, the concept became the title of British novelist M.P. Shiel’s short story *Yellow Danger*.\textsuperscript{21} Resistance of this metaphor of an ill race took center stage in an anonymous poem in Chinese that was very widely circulated over the Internet in the months leading up to the 2008 Beijing Olympics. Entitled “To the West,” the poem self-consciously comments on the contradiction behind the image of a threatening sick man: “When we were called the Sick Man of Asia, we were also called the yellow peril. Now when we are billed as the next superpower, we are called a threat.”\textsuperscript{22} The biopolitics and the colonial history of the metaphor continue to inform modern day encounters between Asian and Western epistemologies of race.

**Signifying relationally: race and gender**

Race and gender are interconnected categories. Similar to other categories of identity, racial difference is often imagined as an inversion of what are perceived to be gender norms. Ania Loomba points out that “patriarchal domination … provided a model for establishing
racial hierarchies and colonial domination,” as evidenced in a number of once prevalent beliefs, such as the ideas that Jewish men menstruate, Egyptian women urinate standing up, and Muslim men engage in sodomy. In terms of the “yellow peril,” which we discussed earlier, the concept has intersected in twentieth century United States with gender stereotypes: yellow fever. For example, punning on the disease of the same name, David Henry Hwang uses yellow fever in his play M. Butterfly (1988) to describe white men with a sexual fetish for East Asian women who are imagined to be subservient, dainty, and more feminine than their Western counterparts. In contemporary American media and popular discourse on dating, the term is used to identify and sometimes to critique the social phenomenon of white men exclusively preferring East Asian women. This Orientalist tendency is captured in Debbie Lum’s 2012 documentary film, Seeking Asian Female, in which the director interviews white men who exhibit “yellow fever” in San Francisco. The fetish makes Asian women interchangeable. East Asian women are seen as erotic because they are perceived to be exotic in physique and manners. The interviewees pointed to East Asian women’s facial features: “it’s the long black hair that is really eye catching.” They also mentioned their love interests’ perceived submissive personalities: “they are kind of subtle and kind of quiet,” as reasons for their dating preference. In Lily Wong’s study of the role that Asian women are compelled to perform in this context, she argues that racial and sexual discourses repurpose and recode Asian-ness “from legacies of colonial discourse” to govern and consume the Asian female body.

Not all critics believe that sexualized depictions of Asian-American women in popular culture can only be understood in a negative light. In The Hypersexuality of Race, Celine Parreñas Shimizu makes a case for a more nuanced approach to understanding the self-performance and public perception of sexuality. In an attempt to move beyond denunciations of sexualized representations as necessarily demeaning, Shimizu believes that the female “productive perversity” allows women of color to lay claim to their own sexuality and desires as performers and spectators. The political and emotional landscapes of race and gender have changed dramatically since Shimizu’s 2007 book. In the wake of the vote for Brexit in the UK, a referendum for Britain to withdraw from the European Union, and the U.S.
In the 2016 presidential election, prominent groups known as white nationalists emerged. The racialized myth about Asian women provides a partial explanation for the baffling phenomenon of white supremacists exclusively dating Asian women. This phenomenon has only recently begun to attract journalistic attention.

Richard B. Spencer, known for declaring the United States a “white country designed for [the whites] and [their] posterity,” has dated a series of Asian-American women. Spencer told the progressive magazine *Mother Jones* (founded in 1976) during a 2016 interview that “there is something about the Asian girls. They are cute. They are smart. They have a kind of thing going on.” Likewise, Mike Cernovich, John Derbyshire, and Kyle Chapman are all married to Asian women or have a partner who is an Asian woman. Audrea Lim’s January 6, 2018, op-ed in the *New York Times* is one of the latest attempts to explain the “confusing mix” of “the white supremacists on the far right’s yellow fever.”

The exceptionalism that white nationalists have granted to Asian-Americans falls neatly along a gendered fault line. While Asian-Americans are often seen as the hard-working model minority who assimilate well into North American society, it is specifically, and only, Asian women who are embraced by white nationalists. On the one hand, mainstream society has the prerogative to determine who is sufficiently well behaved to deserve acceptance, hence the label of “model minority.” On the other hand, a form of racially inflected misogyny informs the alt-right’s imagination of Asian women as subservient and hypersexual individuals who are “naturally inclined to serve men.” This perceived quality sets Asian women apart from white women.

There is a long legal and institutional history behind the phenomenon of yellow fever and the idea of yellow peril. The United States’s often self-contradictory, love–hate relationship with female Asian immigrants can be traced back to the era of the Chinese Exclusion Act, which was in force from 1882 to 1943, a time when whiteness became the dominant racial norm in the United States. It was also a time when, as Frank Dikköter observes, the country’s “Anglo-Saxon foundation coalesced with other ‘assimilable’ European immigrant ethnicities.” Lily Wong has argued that the legalization of discrimination effectively marked Chinese workers “unfree and feminized.
laborers who undermine white workingmen’s ownership of their ‘free’ labor.” Chinese immigrants were both the desirable other in service of the United States and a codified threat. Female Chinese immigrants were assumed to be sex workers unless proven otherwise under the Page Act (1875) which was enacted under the guise of anti-trafficking laws. Similar restrictions were imposed on Indian women in British colonial Caribbean. At work here are both the “yellow peril” discourse and an imperial civilizing rescue mission. Before 1922, if a female U.S. citizen married a foreign man, she would assume the citizenship of her husband and lose her U.S. citizenship. The Cable Act of 1922 partially amended the situation by allowing married women to retain their U.S. citizenship if their husbands were “aliens eligible to naturalization.” Asians were not eligible for U.S. citizenship, and American women who married Asian men would not be protected by the Cable Act.

The intersectionality of race, gender, and nation is articulated in the context of colonial India by E.M. Forster in his novel *A Passage to India*. Drawing on the author’s own trips to colonial India in 1912 and 1921, the novel offers both a critique and inadvertent affirmation of racial stereotypes of both Indians and the British colonizers. Even as Forster attempts to unravel the stereotypes of the “Orientals,” his novel is marked by broad generalizations about British and Indian sexuality and by its implicit acceptance of an Anglo-European epistemology of race. For example, in some instances the narrator seems to agree with the stereotypes of the “Orientals” circulating among the colonizers. The narrator suggests, for example, that the local doctor, Dr. Aziz, is in touch with his own sexuality despite the pressures imposed upon him by the colonial “European” social order:

His mind here was hard and direct, though not brutal. He had learnt all he needed concerning his own constitution many years ago, thanks to the social order into which he had been born, and when he came to study medicine, he was repelled by the pedantry and fuss with which Europe tabulates the facts of sex.

From early on, the novel makes numerous connections between race and gender, showing how they signify relationally. The intertwining
signifiers of race and gender create a complex landscape of self-identification and social hierarchy. For example, Mrs. Turton tells the more open-minded Adela that she should regard herself as superior to the Indians: “You’re superior to them, anyway. Don’t forget that. You’re superior to everyone in India except one or two of the Ranis, and they’re on an equality [sic].”

Meanwhile, from the Indian perspective, the colonizers display a new attitude of entitlement upon arriving in India. In Hamidullah’s brutally honest words: “They all become exactly the same, not worse, not better. I give any Englishman two years, be he Turton or Burton. It is only the difference of a letter. And I give any Englishwoman six months.” Hamidullah receives more dignified treatment when he visits England as a guest. In India, however, the English administrators and their wives tend to be more hostile towards the local populace, and the Englishwomen, whose interactions with locals are mostly in the domestic setting in the novel, are even more class conscious, treating Indians as servants.

Here imperialism and sexuality intersect to form a space where identities are reexamined and could be reformulated. The friendship between Dr. Aziz, the Muslim Indian surgeon, and Cyril Fielding, a British Principal at the Government College, is subjected to stress on several occasions. Fielding believes in Aziz’s innocence during the trial of his alleged rape of Adela. Later, after Adela changes her testimony, Fielding is the only one to take her in as she faces a backlash against her actions. Consequently, Fielding’s friendship with Aziz suffers as a result. Clearly in Forster’s novel, the concepts of race and nation operate on a delicate and nuanced scale.

One of the most challenging and controversial events in the narrative is Adela Quested’s false accusation, and subsequent retraction of the allegation, of Aziz’s attempted rape of her in the Marabar Caves. In a conversation with Fielding, Aziz expresses in direct terms his frustration with English stereotypes of Indian men, and their consequences:

“We will rob every man and rape every woman from Pesha-war to Calcutta,” I suppose, which you get some nobody to repeat and then quote every week in the Pioneer in order to frighten us into retaining you! We know!”
In this way, the trial of Aziz is not about admissible evidence but rather about solidified, ideologically over-determined epistemologies of race. The popular racial discourse of the time demands that Aziz be classified as a rapist, and positions Adela as an emblem of white feminine victims under Indian threat. The trial sets in opposition rapacious Indian masculinity at odds with fragile white womanhood. Yonatan Touval speculates that the

imperial misogyny fuels this fantastical chain from the start with sincere wishes that Adela had been raped—or how else to read the aftermath of a trial in which everyone’s greatest irritation seems to lie less in the fact that Aziz is vindicated than that Adela wasn’t raped after all?\textsuperscript{39}

As such, the trial espouses journalistic racism and racially inflected sexism directed at both Aziz and Adela. Aziz is framed as the ultimate other who preys upon innocent white women, while the case affirms that Adela is nothing more than a weak female prone to hysterical illusion. The novel makes clear that Adela is vexed because “she was both in India and engaged to be married, which double event should have made every instant sublime” in her pursuit of the understanding of the exotic and of an ideal life with her future husband.\textsuperscript{40} She and Mrs. Moore, of course, never come to understand India, and they never achieve their dream of building an ideal family, either. Adela’s allegation of rape may be her hallucination that emerges as she pursues the sublime. She is on the lookout for some sort of sublime experience to make up for her bland engagement. The immateriality of Adela’s account of what happens in the cave fuels and authenticates the court’s verdict:

\begin{quote}
I went into the detestable cave. ... There was this shadow, or sort of shadow, down the entrance tunnel, bottling me up. It seemed like an age, but I suppose the whole thing can’t have lasted thirty seconds really. I hit at him with the glasses, he pulled me round the cave by the strap, I escaped, that’s all.\textsuperscript{41}
\end{quote}

Before Adela walks in to explore the caves she laments that “Not to love the man one’s going to marry! Not to find it out till this moment!
Not even to have asked oneself the question until now! Critics have linked Adela’s indeterminacy and frustration in her romantic relationship to her fantasizing of an attack while in the caves because we first learn of the accusation only when Aziz is arrested. All that is revealed is that Mrs. Moore becomes ill in the first cave, and Adela and Aziz carry on exploring deeper caves with their guide. At one point Adela asks Aziz if he has more than one wife, a suggestion that the doctor thought was appalling and hideous. There are reasons to believe that Adela, as an Englishwoman, has a particular set of preconceptions about Indian men.

Historically, scholars have debated whether the rape actually does take place in the novel, and why Adela later retracts her accusation. June Perry Levine argues that the assault is entirely imagined, because Adela’s breakdown is a result of her confusing mental turmoil with physical assault. Brenda Silver, on the other hand, suggests that while in the cave Adela realizes in terror what it means to be “rapable”: “Before the caves, Adela had defined herself, as Fielding does, through her intelligence. After the caves, having been absorbed by the male discourse that surrounds rape, she herself disappears.”

In connection with readings of the veracity and impact of Adela’s claim, Forster criticism has devoted substantial energy to interpreting the metaphorical significance of the caves as the location of the alleged rape. Frances L. Restuccia notes that the Marabar Caves are “female morphologically.” She also notes that the caves are also configured to be female linguistically. Yonatan Touval believes that the caves are a queer space that thrives on indeterminacy, which parallels the ambiguity in Adela’s account. The indeterminacy itself constitutes the possibility of the attempted rape. Building upon her reading of the caves, Restuccia suggests that the “Eastern indeterminacy … keeps alive the theoretical possibility of an attempted rape whose vagueness precludes the act from being prosecutable.”

It is useful to consider Forster’s drafts of this particular episode in the novel. His manuscript describes Adela’s assault in the Marabar Caves in greater detail than the final published account, and from the narrator’s point of view:

She struck out and he got hold of her other hand and forced her against the wall, he got both her hands in one of his, and
then felt at her breasts. ... The strap of her field glasses tugged suddenly, was drawn across her neck, she was to be throttled as far as necessary and then ... silent, though the echo still raged up and down, she waited and when the breath was on her wrenched her hand free, got hold of her glasses and pushed them into her assailant’s mouth.48

It is notable that the published version of Forster’s novel erases these details of physical violation and offers only Adela’s ambiguous words that could be read as her hallucination in the caves. Thus, Aziz’s alleged attempted rape of Adela is symbolic in the published version. The racially inflected hostility between Indian men and white women reaches a climax when Adela goes public with her accusation. In the published version, Adela’s accusation is a self-fulfilling prophecy about Indian masculinity. The English characters support Adela during the trial not because the violation is or can be substantiated, but because they are invested in the veracity of the idea that an Indian man would rape a white woman.

Reading the contrast between Forster’s draft and the published version of this event in the light of the post-Kavanaugh, post-#MeToo movement era gives us pause for thought. The new cultural context compels us to examine more closely the weight given to the presumably masculine narrator’s voice in the draft and readers’ and characters’ suspicion of Adela’s own statement in the final version of the novel. The phrase “me too” was first proposed by Tarana Burke. Following the revelation of sexual misconduct allegations against American film producer Harvey Weinstein, actress Alyssa Milano popularized the phrase in October 2017 to encourage women to tweet their own experiences of sexual assault in order to “give people a sense of the magnitude of the problem.”49 The core message is to turn the tables and have the court of public opinion, and by extension the legal system, trust women when they come forward with accusations of sexual assault. The clarity in the description of Adela’s assault in Forster’s draft is informed by a colonial rescue narrative that echoes the long literary tradition of pitching men of color against white womanhood. In contrast, Forster’s published version amplifies the indeterminacy of Adela’s experience and invites questions about the validity of her account. Aziz emerges as the victim when Adela retracts her accusation and it appears
that in the novel Forster is attempting to avoid a sexual critique of imperial racial discourses while struggling to engage with an intertwined racial and gender identity politics. More importantly, it is likely that Forster and his narrator do not wish to look at their own society’s colonial practice, instead preferring to locate the origin of patriarchal domination in India, in a world elsewhere, beyond England. Time and again *A Passage to India* points to Indian colonization of women, or claims that the feeble mind of the Indian is the problem to be remedied by a Western civilizing mission. The same pattern of evasion can be observed in Western anthropology as a field of academic study, where scholars neglect the inequality at home “out of a more or less conscious fear of having to take into consideration … the society of the colonial power to which they themselves belong.”

In the novel, male friendship between the colonizer and the colonized seems to be complicated, if not threatened, by English women, such as Adela and her chaperone Mrs. Moore. The English bureaucrats in India are torn between alliance with their wives and befriending Indian men. Through his friendship with Aziz, Fielding becomes a traitor to the British empire, while Mr. McBryde, the District Superintendent of Police, believes that Aziz did sexually assault Adela, even though she merely implies that such an attack took place. McBryde’s attitude is evidenced by his clearly orientalist remark that: “The darker races are physically attracted by the fairer, but not vice versa—not a matter for bitterness, not a matter for abuse, but just a fact which any scientific observer would confirm.”

There is a long history of cultural anxiety concerning the threat from hypersexualized racial others to white women who are in need of protection throughout Anglo-American drama and literature from *Othello* to contemporary romance. The language of predetermined criminality permeates *A Passage to India* and other texts in the literary tradition of depicting non-white masculinity as threatening and the defense of white womanhood as the West’s collective responsibility. In her study of inter-racial sexual relationships in Anglo-American literature, Celia R. Daileader argues that from the Renaissance onward,

> the masculinist racist hegemony used myths about black male sexual rapacity and the danger of racial “pollution” … to
Loosening the fetters of race 
exorcise its own collective psychological demons: the slave-
master’s sexual guilt, and his fear of the products—filial and 
social—of the inter-racial trysts.\textsuperscript{52}

All of these cases show again and again that the Western epi-
stemology of race is predicated upon a gendered presence of other-
ness, and the cultural anxiety that this produces.

**Double consciousness**

This duality of racialized existence between two communities has 
been articulated by various critics, most notably by W.E.B. Du Bois. 
In 1897, Du Bois used the term “double consciousness,” or a double 
life, to describe the black experience in the United States a “peculiar 
sensation … of always looking at one’s self through the eyes of 
others, of measuring one’s soul by the tape of a world that looks on in 
amused contempt and pity.” He speaks of the black community’s two 
irreconcilable strivings and compares the “history of the American 
Negro” to a history of the struggle between “two souls, two thoughts, 
two warring ideals in one dark body … [as one attempts to be] both a 
Negro and an American without being cursed and spit upon by his 
fellows.”\textsuperscript{53} The repression of black identity in the United States has 
made it difficult for African-Americans to unify their black and 
American identities.\textsuperscript{54}

How do white Americans react to the black community’s double 
consciousness? Whiteness as a racial category emerged in public con-
sciousness and journalistic discourse after white supremacist Dylann 
Roof murdered several African-Americans in one of the United 
States’s oldest black churches in Charleston, South Carolina, in a 
mass shooting in June, 2015. A series of violent clashes occurred at a 
white-nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in August, 2017, 
which initiated more public discourse about whiteness and race. As 
one of the usually unmarked identities, whiteness has not been 
regarded as being in need of analysis or definition simply because it is 
the default mode of existence. In his study of the agency of black 
workers during the Civil War and Reconstruction Era in late nine-
teenth century United States, Du Bois argued that the black emanci-
pation movement clashed particularly with whites who were poor. Du
Bois suggested that the white working class was progressively manipulated into racism.\textsuperscript{55} David Roediger pinpoints the Reconstruction as the time when the white working class “comes to think of itself and its interests as white.”\textsuperscript{56} While blackness is a burden for African-American laborers, whiteness provides, in Du Bois’s words, “a public and psychological wage” to compensate for the low wage for white workers. This package and its benefits come in many forms. For example, the workers “were admitted, with all classes of white people, to public functions and public parks.” Historically, their votes “selected public officials.” This is an example of how race is often privileged above other factors of self-identification such as class. The white working class distinguishes itself from the non-whites in the same class, but while its votes do not necessarily improve the personal economic situation, “it had great effect upon their personal treatment.”\textsuperscript{57} In the twenty-first century, even as the white working class is repeatedly betrayed by politicians, they are manipulated into deriving a sense of superiority and psychological satisfaction by placing their whiteness above their own socioeconomic inequality. This cultural “schizophrenia” is captured by U.S. President and Southern politician Lyndon Baines Johnson. He told journalist Bill Moyers in 1960 upon seeing some racial epithets in Tennessee that “if you can convince the lowest white man he’s better than the best colored man, he won’t notice you’re picking his pocket. Hell, give him somebody to look down on, and he’ll empty his pockets for you.”\textsuperscript{58} So powerful is race as a category of self-identification that it supersedes socioeconomic forces of socialization.

The double-consciousness of the black community is sometimes captured in code switching and choices between the colonizer’s language and the native tongue. This can be seen in the dilemma that has been vividly articulated by Chinua Achebe. While Achebe concedes that he must write in English due to the history of colonialism, he laments “the fatalistic logic of the unassailable position of English in our literature.”\textsuperscript{59} If early modern geo-humoral theory defines a person’s race by their “native habitat” and its climate, the modern era defines a person’s identity by their languages and accents. For people in the diaspora, in exile, and in minority communities, language is both a unifying force and an unbearable burden as they oscillate between the imperialist tradition and a resistance tradition.\textsuperscript{60} Asian
accents are depicted as interchangeable and can be consolidated into one unifying identity, as in the film *Falling Down* (dir. Joel Schumacher, 1993). The white-collar worker William “D-Fens” Foster lashes out at a Korean shopkeeper:

*D-Fens:* You give me seventy “fie” cents back for the phone. What is a fie? There is a “V” in the word. Fie-vuh. Don’t they have “v”s in China?

*Shopkeeper:* Not Chinese. I am Korean.

*D-Fens:* Whatever. What differences does that make? You come over here and take my money and you don’t even have the grace to learn to speak my language.

Accents, particularly those that distort the predominant language in a community, are intimately connected to racial thinking, and identities become collapsible. As this scene shows, the burden of communication is typically placed on the non-native speaking diasporic subject who exists between two accents and two cultural realms. The protagonist has been unemployed, and his family has disintegrated. His life story is a snapshot of the breakdown of society. The final shoot-out on the pier enacts a perverse fantasy of the American dream, the kind of death-wish that is there at the end of Willy Loman’s life in *Death of a Salesman*. As Kenyan writer Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o opines, “language has always been at the heart of the two contending social forces in the Africa of the twentieth century,” namely using the colonizer’s language as a vehicle to reach a global audience and privileging the local language as a tool of resistance, such as Gikuyu and Kiswahili, in the case of Ngũgĩ after 1977. It is with this in mind that Ngũgĩ gave up writing in English.

These writers’ anxieties about the uses of language can be traced back to the Classical era. Skin color may be privileged as the primary signifier in the modern understanding of the racialized body, but language and accent have always been important denominators in the formation of political solidarity and fictions of racial differences. Ian Smith’s research shows that the Greek and Roman empires defined aliens “not because of their color but as a result of their language difference or errors.” Indeed as Anthony Pagden summarizes, in the eyes of Hellenistic Greeks, a barbarian, or *barbaros* in Greek was,
“before he was anything else,” someone “who was a babbler, one who spoke not Greek but only barbar.” In early modern England, language supersedes color as the primary factor used to distinguish race. For example, Rosalind remarks in *As You Like It* that the affective power of language outweighed physical appearance “such Ethiop words, blacker in their effect/Than in their countenance” (4.3.). The characters mock the Ethiop’s language, believing that the effect of linguistic transgression is “blacker” than their complexion. Language here is taken to be an important marker of racial difference. Portia in *The Merchant of Venice* tells her waiting woman Nerissa that one of her suitors, Falconbridge, the baron of England, is “a dumb show” with whom she cannot converse. Falconbridge “hath neither Latin, French, nor Italian.” Portia unabashedly admits that she has “a poor pennyworth in the English” (1.2.65–1.2.69), but places the blame of non-communication on her suitor. Patricia Akhimie points out there is a “system of social differentiation that … intermingles [the] two categories [of] class [and] race.” As Portia’s bias attests, “systems of social differentiation are cultural specific rather than universal.”

### Race and hospitality

The examples above demonstrate a long history of institutionalized racialization of strangers, strangers considered necessary as political and cultural supports, or those who seek shelter or hospitality. The relationship between race and hospitality has been taken up by French philosopher Jacques Derrida in the following question: “Isn’t the question of the foreigner [*l’étranger*] a foreigner’s question?” he asks. It is a question that is a challenge from “the foreigner, from abroad [*l’étranger*].” In their book *Of Hospitality*, Derrida’s co-writer, Anne Douformantelle argues that “the question of the foreigner is a question asked [about] the foreigner, the one who brings [my] identity into question.” For Derrida, the mere presence of the other puts into question our own identity, and since genuine hospitality operates as a gift whose very nature is that it is only possible on condition of the impossibility of reciprocity. The idea of hospitality and accommodation in the context of race theory refers to a sense of belonging, a mode of belonging that enables “cultural, linguistic, or historical participation” in a community, as Derrida writes in *Monolingualism of the Other*. While
one’s native language, like one’s skin color, has often been assumed to be one’s inborn features and even birth right. Derrida demonstrates that linguistic purity, and by extension racial purity, is a fiction, for “every culture institutes itself through the unilateral imposition of some politics of language.” We master our native language, or any language and culture, “through the power of naming, of imposing and legitimating appellations.” Here Derrida registers the challenge of the intersection of the discourses of race, prescriptive markings, and the concept of hospitality. Drawing on his own experience as a Maghreb-Algerian and a naturalized citizen of France, Derrida reminisces that “never was I able to call French ‘my mother tongue.’” While French is supposed to be his “maternal” language, its “source, norms, rules and law were situated elsewhere.”

In the context of asking for hospitality and for accommodation from their newly found local communities, diasporic and intercultural subjects face a dilemma, because they are caught between pursuing authenticity and “selling out.” A recent example of the Royal Shakespeare Company’s (RSC) English-language productions of two plays, one Chinese and the other Shakespearean, have reignited debates about cultural authenticity. The first is Gregory Doran’s adaptation of Orphan of Zhao with an almost exclusively white cast of 17. British actors of East Asian heritage have spoken out against the practice of what Doran calls “non-culturally specific casting,” or colorblind casting. The politics of recognition can be a double-edged sword. One the one hand, intercultural theatre is an important testing ground for ethnic equality and raises equal employment opportunity questions in the UK. On the other hand, we might pose the following question: can an all-white cast not do justice to the Orphan of Zhao just as a performance of Richard III by an all-Chinese cast performed at the London Globe and in Beijing cannot? We may go on to ask: why would an English adaptation of a Chinese play have to be performed by authentic-looking East Asian actors?

Another production that poses relevant questions is Iqbal Khan’s Much Ado About Nothing that was set in contemporary Delhi and staged at the Courtyard Theatre in Stratford-upon-Avon in August, 2012. In her essay in the RSC program, Jyotsna Singh reminds the audience that “the romantic, sexual and emotional configurations underpinning the centrality of marriage in Shakespeare’s romantic
comedies” are elements that “richly resonate within the Indian social and cultural milieu.” Clare Brennan, writing for the Guardian, believed that the transposition of Messina to contemporary Delhi worked well, because it “plays to possible audience preconceptions about the communality and hierarchical structuring of life in India that map effectively onto similar structuring in Elizabethan England.” Performed by a cast of second generation British Indian actors to Bollywood-inspired music as part of the World Shakespeare Festival (WSF), the “postcolonial” production (in Gitanjali Shabani’s words) was quickly compared by the press and reviewers to the two more “ethnically authentic” productions at the Globe from the Indian Subcontinent (Arpana Company’s All’s Well That Ends Well directed by Sunil Shanbag in Gujarati, and Company Theatre’s Twelfth Night directed by Atul Kumar in Hindi). Cultural, linguistic, and ethnic pedigrees are part of the picture, but some critics questioned the RSC’s type of internationalism. Birmingham-born director Khan’s treatment of Indian culture was regarded as too simplistic in that it occluded historical differences, and modern cultural complexities of hybrid Anglo-Indian identity.

It should be pointed out that Khan resisted the perception that his production offered “any kind of Best Exotic Marigold Indian Shakespeare experience.” RSC artistic director Michael Boyd suggested to Khan that one possible concept for the production might be an adaptation in “an Indian setting” since it was to be part of the WSF. It was clear, however, that the possible direction of adaptation was never to be a “condition of employment” of Khan who wrote that “all my experiences of Shakespeare as a practitioner before Much Ado had little to do with being Asian.” There was, nonetheless, clearly a gap between the production’s intention and its reception by the general public and media.

Kate Rumbold wished that the production had “ironized the company’s inevitable second-generation detachment from India.” Moreover, taking issue with the production’s “pastiche of ‘internationalism’, with apparently second generation British actors pretending to return to their cultural roots in a decidedly colonial way,” Kevin Quarmby thought that the production offered “the veneer of Indian culture, served on a bed of Bradford or Birmingham Anglicized rice.” He concluded that “as the World Shakespeare Festival and Globe to Globe seasons have shown,
‘international’ is best understood in the context of the nations who embrace Shakespeare as their own.” The more difficult part of these debates concerns commercialized cultural and ethnic identities. Obviously art and commerce are not antithetical activities, but they have become inescapable predicates in the debates about the sociological and expressive values of touring and intercultural Shakespeare performances.

**Identities in exile**

Some artists in the diaspora or in exile deliberately maintain an ideological and psychological distance from their homeland. Born in Jiangxi province in China in 1940, Gao Xingjian is a prolific playwright, director, poet, novelist, and painter based in France, and who writes in French and Chinese. He fled from China to Paris through Germany in 1987. He had enjoyed a successful career in mainland Chinese theatre before his exile. In France, he was honored with the title Chevalier d’Ordre des Arts et des Lettres in 1992. He was awarded the Nobel Prize for Literature in 2000. Despite Gao’s statements in interviews and in his theoretical writings that he does not seek to embody an authentic voice of the Chinese diaspora or China per se, the award of the Nobel Prize has initiated heated debates about his identity politics.  

His post-1987 theatre works challenge national and nationalist paradigms. He coined the term “cold literature” (leng de wenxue) to describe his philosophy, which he defines as “a literature that regains its original nature,” that is, a literature that differs from “the literature of moral teaching, of political criticism, of social engagement.” He defines literature as “a personal affair.” Gao’s stance can be traced back to his time in China when he believes that he was prevented from using theatre as a medium to search for alternative voices that have been alienated in the process of Chinese modernization.

Although Gao feared political attacks and prosecution in China, once he was in France, he found it difficult to deal with the excessive amount of freedom that he now had. A different type of pressure emerged; seeing how fellow Asian diasporic artists catered to the European appetite for traditional Chinese cultural relics (especially the Chinese opera, feng shui, qi gong, and kung fu) that had become
the hallmark of “Chinese-ness,” Gao asked: “Can a Chinese intellectual living abroad preserve his spiritual independence without embracing a nationalist doctrine, or seeking solace in traditional Chinese culture?” He observed that the Chinese diasporic artists often sell Chinese “antiques” that fuel and reinforce essentialized views of cultural difference. He criticized the opportunist tendency, writing that “an artist … does not need to sponge a living off [his] ancestors … He should not sell himself as a local product or handicraft.” In short, Gao has refused to become a native informant. He believes that “the most important thing for a writer is to keep aloof above himself, that is, not selling the inheritance passed down from his ancestors.” He champions the dearly bought opportunity to “record one’s personal voice through arts and literature.” He believes pursuing this new path could counter what he recognizes in the history of modern and contemporary Chinese literature as nationalistic obsession. Gao posits that literature provides the “fragile individual or writer” with the opportunity to find his own voice. This leads to a much larger question that is beyond the scope of this book: to what extent is the “individualism” that Gao has encountered in Europe part of an alternative ideology that now leads him to recognize a “double” identity, that leaves him open to the pressures of hybridity, or the simultaneous inhabitation of the values of two cultures?

Nevertheless, what Gao relinquishes is a nostalgia for an “imaginary” China that is common not only among the early twentieth century reformers, but also among his fellow Chinese diasporic artists. His theory of “cold literature” is defined by its resistance to being “strangled by society in its quest for spiritual salvation.” Or, to put the matter a little differently, because of its independent non-utilitarian nature, cold literature has to flee “in order to survive.” His emphasis on artistic individuality and personal voice rather than collective cultural identity is most evident in his 1993 essay on nationalist myth:

Chinese intellectuals have never been able to separate the idea of the State from the idea of their own. They have been extremely timid in freethinking. ... While there have been quite a number of heroes in the past century who willingly sacrificed themselves for the Party or the State, there have
been extremely few who dared to challenge the entire society in defense of individual freedom of thinking and writing.\textsuperscript{86}

As an émigré, Gao turned his gaze away from a racially defined, ideological China to an aestheticized personal voice. He further elaborated this position in his Nobel lecture in December 2000, emphasizing that he wanted to use the opportunity to “speak as one writer in the voice of an individual.” He went on to argue that

literature can only be the voice of the individual. ... Once literature is contrived as the hymn of the nation, the flag of the race, the mouthpiece of a political party or the voice of a class or a group, it can be employed as a mighty and all-engulfing tool of propaganda. Such literature loses what is inherent in literature, ceases to be literature, and becomes a substitute for power and profit.\textsuperscript{87}

Gao’s, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o’s, and Chinua Achebe’s resistance of the imposition of a racially determined national culture is understandable when we see even scholars trained to analyze social discursive practices make assumptions about national heritage. Stephen Owen, for example, criticizes Chinese poet-in-exile Bei Dao and many “third world” poets for pandering to Western tastes and by abandoning their “national identity.” Owen believes that is why some works lend themselves to easy commodification and translation for cross-cultural consumption.\textsuperscript{88} The idea of a national cultural heritage, when framed in this way, is problematic in that it assumes an alignment between cultural affiliation and race.

**Coda: locating the epistemology of otherness**

Who produces knowledge about race? In what context? The material we covered in this chapter might be summarized by the concept of hybridity, which is one of the terms that have been widely employed in postcolonial studies. As a practice in horticulture, hybridity is a cross-breeding process in which two species are grafted or cross-pollinated to form a new species. Frequently associated with the work of Homi K. Bhabha, the idea of hybridity refers to the interdependence of the colonizer and the colonized. In Bhabha’s framework, all
cultural identities exist in the ambivalent “third space of enunciation” and cultural purity is untenable. Examples of hybridity, as we mentioned in this chapter, include pidgin and creole languages.

Each of the co-authors of this book has his and her origins outside Anglo-European metropolitan centers. Martin Orkin writes, self-consciously and critically, about race from Haifa, Israel, though he grew up in South Africa and was educated in Johannesburg and London. Born in Taiwan, educated in the United States, Germany, and the United Kingdom, and married to a Frenchman, Alexa Alice Joubin is based in Washington, DC, where she is conscious of her positionality as a diasporic subject—on both sides of the Atlantic and the Pacific—in her writings on globalization in a number of different languages. John Drakakis, the general editor of the Routledge New Critical Idiom series, of which this book is a part, is half Italian and half Greek in heritage and culturally Welsh and British.

Consideration of the interplay between their current positions within the Western academic metropolis and the implications for markings of race of their particular non-Western origins characterizes the crucially significant intervention of a group of scholars working on theoretical narratives concerned with identity and difference during the mid- and late twentieth century. We will examine only selected aspects of their substantial contributions to this debate, in order to suggest the kind of impact they had in the specific registering of epistemologies of otherness.

The French philosopher Jacques Derrida (1930–2004), who was Director of Studies at the École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris and a Professor of Humanities at the University of California, Irvine, considered in his writings the impact on him of his experiences as a Jewish native Algerian. Similarly the U.S. literary theorist Edward Said (1935–2003) who was a Professor at Columbia University, New York, repeatedly figured his birth in Palestine/Israel as a crucial marker of otherness. The French writer and essayist Albert Memmi (1920–) who is a Professor of Sociology at the University of Paris, Nanterre, also considers the impact of his conception of race on the fact of being born in Tunisia. Aimé Césaire was similarly concerned with the consequences of having been born in Martinique, another place of “otherness.” The French Afro-Caribbean psychiatrist and social activist Frantz Fanon
Loosening the fetters of race (1925–1961) who worked in Lyon, France, and Algiers, also regarded his birth in Martinique as formative. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (1948–) the U.S. literary theorist who is a Professor at Columbia University, writes of the continuing importance of aspects of her birth and early experiences in Kolkata, India. And the U.S. critical theorist Homi K. Bhabha (1949–) who is a Professor of literary studies and of Postcolonial Studies at Harvard University has developed crucial literary and post-colonial notions in his conceptualization of the markings that are the result of his experience of being born in Mumbai, India.

Locations matter and locations of knowledge matter. Racial identities evolve and move with various types of immigration. Critical theorists of the Frankfurt School, led by Max Horkheimer, relocated to Los Angeles in 1941 during the war. Walter Benjamin, on the other hand, refused to leave Europe, while the new cultural location and vantage point of Herbert Marcuse and Theodor Adorno affected their writings on mass culture. For instance, Adorno and Horkheimer’s concept of the “culture industry” as mass deception (Kulturindustrie), as outlined in their book, Dialectic of Enlightenment (1944), reflects their diasporic positionality. Their view that popular culture operates in the form of a factory churning out standardized products is influenced by their experience of Hollywood which was dominated by studio monopolization. As Jewish German émigrés, Adorno and Horkheimer were both outsiders in U.S. culture and insiders with regard to the operating principles of global entertainment industries. Likewise, after June 4, 1989, Chinese intellectuals working in the West have been unwilling or unable to return to China and instead remain in the diaspora.

Rey Chow self-consciously reflected on the evolving relationship between diasporic scholars and their objects of study “at home.” She wrote that “internationalized Chinese women intellectuals” may become “a privileged class vis-à-vis the women in China.” The study of race takes on an ethical urgency as Chinese women’s writings are used as the “raw material” for research in the West. Scholars in the metropolitan West who study race are both insiders as native informants and outsiders as supposedly impartial observers. The imbalance within the relationship between diasporic scholars and their subject positions echo the relationship between a master narrative and native
informant. On the one hand, readers sometimes defer to, or even privilege, a racially charged perception of diasporic scholars’ ethnic authenticity. On the other hand, the re-inscription of their alterity by others and by some diasporic scholars themselves encourages the production of unexamined assumptions of the production of specific epistemologies of otherness.

We have spoken of border crossings of all kinds, and nowhere is racial discourse more palpable and visible than at airport checkpoints. We will conclude this part of the discussion with an anecdote offered by Madhavi Menon in her book Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism. An immigration officer who quizzed Menon on her profession revealed his preconceptions of the naturalized alignment of race and subject of study. Upon hearing that Menon taught English literature, the officer asked if she specializes in V.S. Naipaul and Salman Rushdie. Because she was Indian and held an Indian passport, he was surprised to learn that she was a Shakespeare scholar. The assumption here is English literature scholars from India should teach Indian authors. Menon stated in the autobiographical opening of her book that she has frequently encountered this kind of surprise when traveling. At times she has been asked if she “worked on Indian authors who’d traveled out of India,” because the immigration officer “wanted to know about traveling Indians from a traveling Indian.” Once again, the location of knowledge is the key. As Menon concludes, “despite being motivated by a desire for difference, this thirst for knowledge detailed in advance the parameters within which that difference could be known and disseminated.”

Epistemologies of otherness are invigorated and challenged at once by the cultural locations from which they emerge and to which they are transported.

Notes


6 Keevak, Becoming Yellow, 4.


16 Cited in Niro, Race, 141.

17 Niro, Race, 141–142.

18 Frank Dikötter, The Discourse of Race in Modern China, Hong Kong: Hong Kong University Press, 1992, 107–108.

19 Sun Wen (Sun Yatsen), San minzhuyi [The Three Principles], Shanghai: Shangwu yinshuguan, 1927, 4–5; translation from F.W. Price, San min chu i: The Three Principles of the People, Shanghai: China Committee, Institute of Pacific Relations, 1927, 11–12; and Dikötter, The Discourse of Race in Modern China, 124.
24 Debbie Lum, dir., * Seeking Asian Female: A Documentary*, Chicken and Egg Pictures, 2012, DVD.
38 E.M. Forster, A Passage to India, New York: Harcourt Brace, 1924, 312.
40 Forster, A Passage to India, Part 2, ch. 14, para. 2.
41 Forster, A Passage to India, 184–185.
42 Forster, A Passage to India, Part 2, ch. 15, para. 4.
47 Restuccia, “A Cave of My Own,” 111.
48 Quoted in Levine, “An Analysis of the Manuscripts of A Passage to India,” 228.
51 Forster, A Passage to India, Part 2, ch. 24, para. 47.
53 W.E.B. Du Bois, The Souls of Black Folk, New York: Dover, 1903, 2–3. The term was first used in an Atlantic Monthly article titled “Strivings of the Negro People” in 1897.
57 Du Bois, Black Reconstruction in the United States, 700–701.


68 Derrida, Monolingualism of the Other, 39.

69 Derrida, Monolingualism of the Other, 41.


the combination of the distinctive space of the Globe, the otherness of its foreign visitors, the absence of English language, and even the Globe’s seeming proximity to Shakespeare, has evidently ascribed to participants in the “Globe to Globe” festival in particular a new degree of “authenticity”.


77 Rumbold, Review of *Much Ado About Nothing*.


82 Gao’s discontent with the role frequently assigned to writers in the exilic realm is shared by many diasporic intellectuals. One recent example is Sylvia Molloy’s illuminating article on the topic, in which she recalls her experience as an Argentine and Latin-American studying in France during the 1960s. Her dissertation advisor assigned her a dissertation topic: the reception of Latin-American literature in France. Despite having trained in French and knowing very little about Latin-American literature, she “was … assigned the role of the native informant, a role

84 Gao Xingjian, “Meiyou zhuyi.”
91 Madhavi Menon, Indifference to Difference: On Queer Universalism, Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2015, 1.
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Martin Orkin is a Professor at the University of Haifa in Israel, where he teaches in the departments of Theatre and English.

Alexa Alice Joubin is a Professor of English, Theatre, International Affairs, and East Asian Languages and Literatures at George Washington University, USA, where she co-founded the Digital Humanities Institute.
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