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ASIAN MIGRANT WRITERS IN AUSTRALIA AND

THE NEGOTIATION OF THE THIRD SPACE

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a comparative study of three selected texts by Australian novelists Yasmine Gooneratne, *A Change of Skies,*(1991) Adib Khan, *Seasonal Adjustments* (1994) and Brian Castro, *Birds of Passage* ((1983). All three writers explore the experiences and perceptions of their protagonists in relating to the landscape, people and cultural traditions within the Australian context into which they have migrated from different Asian countries. Brian Castro's central characters, Lo Yun Shan and Seamus O'Young, are drawn from two contexts, the former from the 19th century China while the latter is a contemporary Australian born Chinese. Gooneratne's and Khan's protagonists hail from South-East Asian contexts, which are again interestingly different, Gooneratne's character being from Sri Lanka and Khan's from Bangladesh. From the multiplicity of cultures from which these texts emerge with their inevitable movements of the protagonists between the originary and adoptive homes, there seems to be a reaching towards a necessary 'inter' space, what Homi Bhabha calls the 'Third Space.' In terms of perception of identity and belonging this borderline position would appear to be crucial to the diasporic condition. (1994, p. 53) While this study explores the problematics, accommodations, resolutions and synergies involved in the experience of negotiating this liminal space and living what Rushdie calls a 'translated' existence, (1991, p. 17) the focus is on particular processes crucial to that translation.

My study will suggest that the arrival at the 'Third Space' is represented neither as a benign experience of adaptation to a different sense of home nor a sense of being relegated to a state of permanent loss and alienation. Rather it will be apparent that the migrant experience is more mosaic than formulaic resisting neat definitions of movement from an initial sense of estrangement from the host nation to accommodation and assimilation within the new society. It seems that each individual character is poised on different and differing configurations of cultural allegiances and identities within the' Third Space'. The representation and perception of the' Third Space' 'in relation to the performance of identity as

iteration and the recreation of self…[particularly in terms of] the desire for recognition' (Bhabha, 2004, p.12) appears more diverse than originally envisaged by Bhabha. There appears to be a plurality of articulations within this formulation, suggesting it is not a single, homogenous in-between space but a constellation of 'Third Spaces', fluid and changing, overriding the possibility of a 'happy hybridity' which, in any case. most theorists in the field find an untenable concept. The tracing of this highly complex . inter-related and entangled plethora of experiences which constitute the fate of the migrant will be explored in depth and detail in this thesis. Finally, no arrival at certain certainties is promised at its conclusion; only, possibly, a heightening of awareness, an expansion of understanding.. This provides an opportunity to revisit, indeed to rethink the complexities of migrant experience as not only transcending dichotomies of insider/outsider, belonging/alterity which are encoded in the narrative of a nation, while simultaneously affirming the processes of hybridity as crucial to the formation of a 'double selved' identity.

DECLARATION

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INTRODUCTION

People are always very curious about nationality. They will go to great lengths to pigeonhole someone. They think this knowledge gives them *power*.

Birds of Passage, (Castro, 1983, p. 8)

Until we choose where we shall settle, and decide (in our own time) to make ourselves known, displaced people such as ourselves enjoy a liberty that others may well envy.

A Change of Skies, (Gooneratne, 1991, p. 281)

I am a variable without a constant to measure myself against, a changing shadow whose exact composition cannot be determined.

Seasonal Adjustments, (Khan, 1994, p.9)

Salman Rushdie, in his essay '*Imaginary Homelands*' (1991), quotes these well known words from L P Hartley's novel *The Go-Between*: '…the past is a foreign country, they do things differently there' but he goes on to state that this idea should be inverted, that instead '...it is the present that is foreign and the past is home, albeit a lost home in a lost city in the mists of lost time' (Rushdie, 1991, p.9). Granted, individuals carry what Said identifies as an 'infinity of traces' (1978, p. 25) regarding the past, but for a migrant, the experience of disorientation and loss is particularly acute on account of being 'out-of-country' and even 'out-of-language' (Rushdie, 1991, p.12). Rushdie goes on to state that individuals in diaspora become hybridised, radically altered in translation, and it is only through this hybridisation that innovation can surface.

The hybridity of diasporic peoples across the world has been an insistent trope in literary studies over the past two decades, mainly because the study of race has radically altered critical interpretations of literature. T.S. Eliot (cited in Bhabha, 1996, p.54) states:

> The migrations of modern times…have transplanted themselves according to some social, religious, economic or political determination, or some peculiar mixture of these...The people have taken with them only a part of the total culture…The culture which develops on the new soil must therefore be bafflingly alike and different from the parent culture: it will be complicated sometimes by whatever relations are established with some native race and further by immigration from other than the original source. In this way, peculiar types of culture-sympathy and culture-clash appear.

Thus these 'partial cultures' and the people who articulate this difference and similarity to originary, host cultures are the 'links, the boundary between often different cultures, the hybrids that confound any essentialised notion of purity or nationalism' (Bhabha, 1996, p.57). The migrating experience therefore occupies a central position of scrutiny in contemporary literary studies, precisely because it is fragmented, it is 'different yet similar' to the originary cultures and the host culture, and it incorporates elements of both in the performance of identity.

Like Rushdie, it could be speculated, the three writers focused on in this study, Yasmine Gooneratne, Adib Khan and Brian Castro, were born in different geographical and cultural spaces, constrained to negotiate the tensions between nostalgia for the past and the needs of the present which could possibly have affected their notions of home and belonging. This movement is perhaps refracted in the experiences of the protagonists who move across spatial and cultural boundaries, reconfiguring notions of home and locatedness in what Homi Bhabha refers to as the 'Third Space' which can be considered as an 'interstitial space' where a 'profound process of redefinition' of identity begins (1994, p. 5).

This thesis will investigate the 'uprootings and regroundings' (Ahmed, S. 2003, p1), which include the synergies and metamorphoses, the bereavement and problematics involved in the experience of migration. It seems that approaches to the 'Third Space' are circuitous, even fraught:

> The borders between home and world become confused … [forcing] upon [migrants] a vision that is as divided as it is disorientating, while paradoxically also opening up 'a vision…[to] transform our sense of what it means to live, to be, in other times and different places, both human and historical. (Bhabha, 1994, p. 13:367)

The story of migration is not a clear cut, linear narrative following a trajectory of dislocation from a former homeland followed by adaptation, reorientation and accommodation to another space. Often there is movement back and forth between one or more of these 'cross-cultural initiations' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 13). A study of migrant writers and their protagonists and the realities they encounter requires a frame of reference that incorporates not only the socio-historical conditions of the sending societies at the times of departure but equally those of the receiving society – in this case, Australia. Before tracing the Asian migrant story in Australia as reflected in these texts, it will be necessary to glance briefly at the earlier story of European settlement in the land. This would require sketching in broad outline, the evolution of the nation to the point where its consciousness of being a 'white' outpost in a non-European region of the world

led to the enunciation of a series of xenophobic measures to preserve Australia for the White Man. Richard White has outlined this evolution with considerable acuity in his work *'Re-inventing Australia'* (1981). Alison Broinowski, in her extensive work *'The Yellow Lady: Australian Impressions of Asia'* (1992), has examined the power of images and notions of Asians that proliferated earlier and continue to impact on the Australian psyche. These representations have often perpetuated inadequate and obsolete clichés and truisms about Asia as a whole, that Said outlined as part of the discourse of Orientalism. (1978, p. 2-3).

The strategies employed in investigating these works are broadly based on Edward Said's suggestions for evaluating the Orientalist ideology of a text as he describes these in his classic work, *Orientalism*. (1978). The background of the host society is examined in the first half of Chapter 1. The remainder of that chapter examines the characters' originary cultures so as to provide some context for the difference between these and the host culture as experienced by the protagonists. Chapter Two begins with a scrutiny of the landscape that initiates change and hybridisation in migrants who redefine themselves when they take up their lives in a new location. This includes a consideration of the positioning of the narrator or the experiencing consciousness in relation to the cultural space being focused on: the 'here' which is often the adoptive home as contrasted with the 'there' which is the recollected homeland. This chapter also explores the representation of physical space – the sights, the smells, the sounds and the features of landscape, of the flora and fauna as these appear in the perception of the central characters both in the originary home and in the adoptive land. Chapter Three traces how the protagonists mediate and conceptualise this change in the formation of new relationships in the diasporic space. There appears to be a negotiation of their place in the new context through the gaze turned by the migrant 'self' on the Australian 'Other' and the returning gaze of the Australian on the migrant 'Other'. Family and friends from both contexts are subjected to this scrutiny. The fourth chapter deals with the adoption and adaptation to customs and rituals, for the new context necessitate a fusion of the old and new cultural practices. The reaction to the new way of life, to cultural rituals around

sport, education, celebrations, religion and food, and the way these rituals can exorcise or enhance perceptions of Otherness, is examined within this chapter. The use of language including the motifs and epithets circulating in the texts will be crucial to assessing these varied stages. The paradoxes, the ambivalences and the challenges of the migrant experience are set against reflections and remembrances of the first 'home'.

Once contrasts and synergies are traced, the crux of this thesis is the exploration of the evolution of cultural identity in another space and the possible transformations that ensue. My study will show that the migrant experience does not lend itself to a patterned mosaic of neat binary oppositions but rather presents a kaleidoscope of changing, fluid impressions which do not permit tidy resolutions. The representation and perception of the Third Space 'in relation to the performance of identity as iteration'; and the recreation of self, particularly in terms of 'the desire for recognition' (Bhabha, 1994, p.12), are the central foci of this investigation.

Stuart Hall (cited in Ang, 2001, p. 150) asserts:

> 'Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialised past, they are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture, and power'.

In this context it is important to consider how the experience of migration imposes upon migrants a sense of 'not-being-at-home' in the host culture, especially when faced with a plethora of difference in every area of life. One needs to consider how this prevailing feeling of displacement and loss is ameliorated in the homes these people make for themselves, the relationships they form and the cultural practices they jettison or hold onto. A number of questions may be asked about the homes the migrants create for themselves in the host country (Ashcroft et al, 1995, p. 209): Are these replicas of their old homes or refuges built to keep out what can sometimes be seen as a hostile and antagonistic society? What does 'being-at-home' mean in Bhabha's famous 'Third Space of Enunciation' for the

diasporic individual and community?

Pandurang notes that 'critical readings of migrant narratives…more often than not operate exclusively in terms of the discourse of *dis-placement, dislocation and dis-ease* within a specific cultural – racial paradigm' (2007, p. 32). It appears that all three novels trace constant shifts and accommodations as the protagonists move back and forth between homeland and adoptive homes in Australia. For second and ensuing generations like the children Edwina in Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies* and Nadine, in Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments* who move confidently through the Australian landscape and culture, there appears to be a clearer sense that the move back to their parental homelands of Sri Lanka and Bangladesh are only temporary and would constitute yet another formation in belonging not accessible to the original migrant. Castro's Seamus O'Young also embodies an aspect of this kind of freedom, although his quest is a move towards the originary society, focussed more deliberately on tracing his ancestral orgins which have been lost to him. Therefore Bhabha's 'Third Space of Enunciation' (1994) appears to be a contentious concept, always and already open to multiple transformations and elisions. This will be the contention explored in this thesis.

CHAPTER 1

CONTEXT: HOST AND ORIGINARY CULTURES

There is no country from which I came and there is none to which I can return.

Birds of Passage (Castro, 1983, p. 8)

Exile creates its own hazards, its own dangers of desiccation.

A Change of Skies (Gooneratne, 1991, p.283)

I am a variable without a constant to measure myself against: a constant shadow whose exact composition cannot be determined.

Seasonal Adjustments (Khan, 1994, p. 9)

There is no space in this thesis to explore in detail European colonisation of a land that has belonged from time immemorial to the Australian Aborigines. This introduction must however begin with an acknowledgement of Indigenous Australians, as the original owners of the land. My study will commence with a general account of the European settlement of Australia as being directly germane to the subject of this thesis. Castles states unequivocally that 'for Australia, immigration has been a crucial factor in economic development and nation building ever since British colonisation started in 1788' (Castles et al, 1993, p.57). It appears that immigration into Australia over the last two hundred years can broadly be divided into at least three distinct phases.

The British settlement of Australia began with its establishment as a penal colony with the first group of immigrants being the transported convicts and the New South Wales Corps being the authorities charged with monitoring them (Dunlop & Pike, 1960). This group could be identified as the first European immigrants, along with groups of free settlers from the urban and rural working classes from the British Isles. Despite rigid policies of exclusion of Asian immigration, cheap indentured labour was still recruited from India, Sri Lanka, China and the Pacific islands between 1868 and 1876 (Rivett, 1975, p. 14-19). Furthermore, in the first hundred years of settlement cheap labour was a requirement, particularly in those industries that were extremely labour intensive, such as the Queensland sugar cane plantations. The prospect of attracting Europeans to such rural industries was negligible, given the low wages to make 'white sugar' a viable operation. Indentured labourers were brought to Australia by agents. They worked for pitifully low wages and were frequently housed in sub-standard conditions for a period of five years before being given paid passage back to their land of origin.

By 1880, with the great success of the pastoral industry and the opening up of large areas of land suitable for farming, it was believed that a constant stream of industrious and skilful Asians could supply the much needed labour (especially with the winding down of the convict system) to convert the 'enormous wilderness of Australia' into a 'fruitful garden' (Willard, 1967, p. 1–2). However,

strong sentiments against the influx of Chinese and coloured labour were simmering, especially among the working classes who believed their interests were being threatened. This resulted in occasional riots incited by insistent racist media interests. This is the environment that Edward, the ancestral figure in Gooneratne's text *A Change of Skies* steps into when he lands in Queensland with a group of 'coolies' bound for the cane plantations to the north of the colony. If one accepts that Australia is an immigrant nation established as a colony of British settlers, dispossessing the indigenous people as was the case with other settler colonising societies such as the USA and Canada, then it is equally clear that the discourse of racial and ethnic differentiation must have underpinned the nation from the earliest days. Jayasuriya (citing Barker, 1998, p.39) refers to the early colony as a 'segmented' society, that is, one composed of mutually exclusive social groups of whites and non-whites (1998, p.39).

The Gold Rush (1851–1860) saw thousands of prospectors from all over the world, including many from China, arriving here to make their fortunes. Social values of mateship and equality fuelled by the perceived inequality between the "diggers" and the political and social privilege accorded to particular groups such as the squatters fuelled the Eureka Movement of the 1850s. This protest mainly focussed on the licensing laws imposed on the miners, and was fuelled by an implacable hatred of the police, who enforced these measures. However, once these licenses were removed, the passions and obsessions of the miners found another target – the Chinese prospectors who arrived in large numbers on the gold fields around 1855–56, when income from alluvial diggings was declining (Clarke, 1963, p.115). The Chinese became the convenient scapegoat accused of 'crimes of great magnitude' from debauchery and immorality (caused by the absence of women), to leaching the country of its resources, wealth and particularly gold. This would lead, it was believed, to the 'Gold Fields of Australia Felix becoming the property of the Emperor of China and of the Mongolian and Tartar hordes of Asia' (Clarke, 1963, p. 115). Among the possible reasons for this attitude were, first, that mainstream Australians tended to see themselves as intrinsically superior to the yellow, brown and black peoples they

were geographically situated among. Another reason was that they were 'British themselves, a chosen race…belonging to the British Empire' and a third that they were also unique in being 'Australian', carving out an identity that was even superior to what the influential *Bulletin* called 'the cosmopolitan and nigger infested England' (Jamrozik, 2004. p.29). Within a century in the evolution of the colony into a nation (historians differ on the actual time periods), Australians came to see themselves as different from the British nation and this was evident in the art, literature and other cultural artefacts that indicate this emergent self-consciousness as a nation. Benedict Anderson posits that all nations are 'imagined communities…conceived as a deep, horizontal comradeship' (1983, p. 7). This is reflected in Richard White's (1981) summation of Australian identity in his chapters tracing Australia's growing awareness of its own image as 'a working man's paradise' (p.29), 'a refuge for the poor' (p.33) and 'a New Society' (p. 47).

By 1895, political awareness and the escalating federation movement coupled with rapid industrialisation of agricultural production had galvanised support from mainstream Australian society for ridding the colony of the 'leprous curse of black labour…with the deadly coloured alien biped …lurk[ing] in the scrub with a cane knife waiting to butcher the first white man who came along' (Clarke, 1963, p. 150). It is possible to chart the development of Queensland provincialism in the morphing into Australian patriotism (Clarke, 1963, p.150). The exclusionary boundaries of the emerging Australian nation drawn on racial lines were one of the first Acts of the new Federal Parliament in 1901. Thus the introduction of the Immigration Restriction Act, popularly known as the White Australia Policy came into being (Castles & Miller, 1993, p.57).

Australia was declared a nation by the Commonwealth of Australia Constitution Bill on 'the first day of the new century' (White, 1981, p. 111). The sense of nationhood, rooted in the new political entity and its constitution was predicated on 'the theme of a twin identity both Australian and British' (White, 1981, p. 112). Loyalty to the British monarch and empire, a single language, and an

obsessive desire to protect the 'Coming Man' from the dread of miscegenation led to the evolution of the image of Australia as 'young, white, happy and wholesome' (White, 1981, 110). Clarke details the various provisions of the Act which aimed at preserving the integrity of the 'only pure white nation to be found outside Europe' (1963, p. 176). Under Section 3 of the Immigration Restriction Act or White Australia Policy, any candidate for immigration had to pass a dictation test of fifty words in a European language, failing which s/he could be prohibited from entering as a migrant. The Act remained in force until 1957. Furthermore, the Act was also retrospective in the sense that any immigrant who had resided in the country for less than five years could be given the test and deported on failure. In 1905 the Act was amended, with the words 'prescribed language' substituted for 'European language' to avoid giving offence to the Japanese. However, under Section 3 of the Act, no Indigenous, Asian, African or South Sea Islander was permitted to participate 'in the carriage of mails', or entitled to vote or claim the pension. The objections of liberals were drowned out by a coalition of trade unions and Christian factions which saw 'the preservation of a white Australia as an economic and moral imperative' (Easson, 1990, p. 11).

Events in the 20th century saw a major shift in Australia's relationship with Britain. The First World War (1914–1918) cemented ties with the Empire, but the tragedy of Gallipoli and the subsequent campaigns saw the birth of the archetypal Australian hero – the digger who came to embody all that was 'decent, wholesome and Australian …tested and not found wanting'(White, 1981, p. 125). The emergence of the Anti-Conscription movement backed by the trade unions challenged the sacrifice of Australian youth in an imperialist war which had no relevance to Australian interests. The idea of Australia's innocence and purity (and this meant racial purity) was pursued with great zeal in the intermediary years between the World Wars but ties with Britain were viewed as imperative to Australian security. In World War II when the British navy was shown to be inadequate to the task, and faced with the imminent threat of Japanese invasion after the fall of Singapore, Australia was forced into closer alliances with the United States (Grimshaw et al, 1994, p. 259).

Alison Broinowski states that 'Australia was born fighting,' having engaged in eight armed incursions before 1901and eight wars by 1991 and in eight of them the enemy was Asian' (1992, p. 16). These included the campaigns against the Boxers in China, the Korean War and the Vietnam War, to name a few. Factoring in the residual effects of war propaganda on the perceptions of successive generations of Australians, it is no wonder that historical images of Asian threat and domination continued to resurface periodically in nationalist discourses. However, changes in the national self-concept were taking place.

The post war immigration from European countries, with the intake of displaced persons and refugees from Italy, Germany, Greece, Northern Europe and Eastern Europe irrevocably changed the demographic of the population: 'the Australian nation was no longer 98 percent British' (Lewocki & Kassis, 1990, p.155). The national type as emblematic of race was discredited because of its resonances with Hitler's Aryan race and instead the emphasis shifted to a belief in 'the Australian Way of Life', a view that urged assimilation of migrants from disparate origins into a national homogenous culture (White, 1981, p.160).

From the 1950s there was a dramatic change in the infamous White Australia policy with the abolition of the Dictation Test in 1958. International ties with the other nations such as the United States led to the ANZUS treaty and the formation of the SEATO (South-East Asia Treaty Organisation). This led to the Colombo Plan in 1950, where the Australian government along with other Western nations pledged eight million pounds sterling 'over three years to train people from south-east Asia and to send instructors, expert missions and equipment to countries needing them' (Clarke, 1963, p. 221). By the terms of the Plan, over six hundred South-East Asian students were granted entry into Australian institutions and Australian experts served in several South-East Asian countries. This was seen as a way of mitigating the attraction of Communism to the poverty-stricken masses. Ties between Australia and Asia were developing apace.

The outbreak of the Vietnam War saw the theatre of conflict shift much closer to Australia and in 1965, to honour the ANZUS alliance, Australian troops were despatched to Bien Hoa. The conflict was to prove remarkably divisive in Australian political life. Besides decrying the depletion of Australia's pitifully small troop supplies in the pursuit of an ideological war, dissenters called for an end to the use of massive war machines by a technologically advanced Western country to pulverise a small nation. With the close of the Vietnam War and the election of the Whitlam Labour Government in 1972, the White Australia Policy was formally revoked in the same year. The old quota system aimed at preserving racial homogeneity was replaced by a 'selective selection' policy with migrants chosen for personal, social and occupational attributes. The following year Al Grassby declared Australia a multicultural nation, with the institution of the Australian Citizenship Act of the same year which granted all migrants equal treatment (Castles et al, 1992, p. 129).

The next decade saw huge numbers of Asian migrants, particularly from Vietnam, Cambodia and other conflict zones such as Bangladesh (which had become a nation in 1971). This was also the scenario that Bharat and Navaranjini Mangala Devasinha, the protagonists of *A Change of Skies* first faced when they initially arrived in Sydney. Adib Khan's protagonist, Iqbal Chaudhary, also arrives in 1972, as a refugee entering a vastly changed Australian environment that articulated the principles of ethnic diversity and of cultural and structural pluralism. Nevertheless, several attitudinal studies in the 1980s and the 1990s indicate 'the continuation of earlier unfavourable and negative attitudes on items such as ethnic groups and migration' which gave rise to outpourings of Anti-Asian racism over the arrival of 'boat people,' refugees and asylum seekers. (Jayasuriya, 1997, p. 71). The Hansonite backlash against Asians and Indigenous Australians continued to shadow the national agenda right up to the present day. At least two of the novels invoke recollections of early antagonism against Asians, Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies* and Brian Castro's *Birds of Passage*.

Alan Lawson's exploration of settler societies in the postcolonial era investigates settler/Indigene relations and issues in these cultures and provides helpful insights into the project of nation building. Anxieties about 'moral, spiritual and cultural belonging', about authenticity and difference– particularly in terms of boundaries and proximal sites of occupancy within the nation – have produced repetitive tropes about who belongs to the narrative of nation and who is excluded from it (2004, p. 1219). Writers Castro, Gooneratne and Khan recuperate the tensions and struggles of migrant subjects in claiming a space in this nation. By highlighting the sustained cruelties and xenophobic exclusion faced by various marginal groups such as the Chinese prospectors and the indentured labourers as well as the sporadic encounters with instances of racism even in a multicultural Australia, they re-inscribe these stories into the historical domain.

Sneja Gunew argues for the particularity of migrant writers to be acknowledged in terms of ethnicity and cultural difference, in order to 'explore other landscapes (spatial representations) and literatures, to rediscover the cultures and languages in which such concepts as the nomadic, displacement, identity and gender are figured differently' (1992, p. 43). Castro, Gooneratne and Khan appear to be engaged in precisely this articulation, demonstrating a need to trace previous allegiances to the originary context, while simultaneously shaping the contours of identity and social relations in the hostland. Slemon underlines the importance of Second World literary writing as 'occupying the vanguard of a Second World post-colonial literary theory' because it is about 'internalised conflict' offering a 'necessary entanglement of anti-colonial resistances within the colonialist machineries they seek to displace' (2004, p. 110). This is apparent in all three novels which record a resistance to an essentialised or homogenous notion of their positionality within Australia. They appear to focus on the 'ambivalence of their placement' at the borderlines of Australian culture in order to signify the validity of their experiences in relation to the land, the people and the cultural practices that prevail here. Castro (1999) highlights this ambiguous project of the migrant writer stating 'I am not in the mainstream of Australian literature. I do not want to be there…Yet when I speak of dissent, I speak not of some kind of facile

opposition…but of forcing a presence and variation upon old acceptances and prejudices' (1999, p. 32-33). Khan (2001) recognises that his writing emerges in a 'kind of no- man's land, wedged between polarised cultures'…which prohibits 'any sense of permanence or belonging'. Yet in all three novels there are episodes that register what Paul Carter identifies as 'haptic connection' to the land in the protagonists' perceptions of their new location within Australia. Iqbal Chaudhary confesses to being touched by 'an indescribable communion with the emptiness of the continent', musing that 'There's space out there for the expansion of one's vision of self renewal [for] … its vast empty centre…[is] like the microsmic eye of the universe– mysterious and full of wonder' (p. 124) On a drive from Twin Groves to his home in the city, Seamus O'Young reflects 'I thought how this emptiness within me was extended by the environment'(p.66). Towards the end of the narrative after his mystical encounter with his ancestor Lo Yun Shan, he registers 'a lightness where the cool air entered, flowing down the mountain of his will, looming up behind [him] snow-covered…ushering him along, light as a leaf, spinning, floating, scraping against the rocks, the wind making a sound like soft bursts of laughter – or was it sobbing or both…(p.144). Bharat/Barry reflects on his changed perception of Australia, marvelling at his ability to feel 'in the unexpected lash of climatic change, to hear in the overwhelming crash of waves and the silence of the wilderness alike, expressions of power, of discipline and of tranquillity that [he] had been hitherto unable to recognise anywhere but in [his] native land' (p. 286).

Awareness of the context of the host society is only part of what is needed in order to make sense of the events of the three novels; some knowledge of the contexts of the sending societies – namely, China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh – is also pertinent. Castro's novel is set in a landmark era (1840–1870) of Chinese history which also reveals the trajectory of the European imperialist project, that is, the evolution of imperialism from being 'more than just about 'guns and goods' to a cultural process involving resistance to, and accommodation of, forces or entities attempting to assume hegemonic control over geographic spaces (Hevia, 2003, p. 3). The main source of contention was the exclusionary and

isolationist policies of the Q'ing government, which restricted foreigners to one port of call and repudiated all free trade ventures on the grounds that this would lead to the infiltration of pernicious influences on Chinese culture and financial exploitation. This set up the conditions for what came to be known as the Opium Wars. Previously, the Chinese had only imported a small quantity of opium for medicinal uses but, with the British government's cancellation of the East India Company's trade monopoly, other companies flooded the Chinese markets with cheap opium from Bengal. The result was an unprecedented increase in the number of users by 1830. This move, which constituted a direct challenge to Chinese sovereignty, led to the First Opium War (1840–42) and the consequent opening up of five ports, introduction of the Principles of Extraterritoriality and Most Favoured Nation Clauses, and expansion of the 'coolie' trade, all of which effectively nullified the Q'ing government's control over its domestic and foreign policies, customs, excise and legal system.

The Second Opium War now seemed almost inevitable. With the Q'ing government unable to withstand the military might of the Western powers, Christian missionaries were granted protection, a move that further exacerbated relations and resulted in the springing up of anti-imperialist and anti-Christian secret societies such as the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, commonly known as' The Boxers.' The wars subsequently saw the fragmentation of the Chinese nation politically, the slow strangulation of its economy and, ultimately, the collapse of the Q'ing dynasty. These are apparent in the scenes of abject poverty and deprivation, famines and riots that Shan, the ancestral figure in *Birds of Passage*, describes when he observes the appearance of the British ship:

> A tall ship appears…under two small sails. Huge as a temple, like a whale surfacing, among the sardine-shaped fishing boats, it symbolizes the powerful ingress of a foreign race… [whose] industry is a hundred times vaster and more precise than ours…[and whose] penetration of China this time will be deeper and more violent (p. 7).

The diplomatic, economic and cultural penetration of China was made possible by what Hevia identifies as the 'violence of arms and the violence of language' (2003, p. 4), for with the combined use of military force and unequal treaties, Western encroachment into China was effectively accomplished. It could be posited that 'guns not only force compliance, they also persuade. Words and images not only persuade, they also coerce' (Hevia, 2003, p. 3). This was especially true of China where warfare and treaty making marked critical moments of British imperialism. On his journey to Australia, Shan records that he had been 'learning English… in spite of [himself] in fits. And starts'(p. 48). Here is highlighted yet another strategy of imperialism: its civilising mission. It appears to have been aimed at enticing and seducing the colonised into compliance with, and acceptance of, Western standards of taste and value. It must also be noted that Shan is a teacher – a highly respected occupation in traditional Chinese culture – and his understandings of imperialism, after a period of living under British occupation following the First Opium War, are remarkably prescient:

> It did not take me long to determine that the English are addicted to a principle called service. They are born and bred for it. It is like our filial duty, only they serve masters unquestioningly and loyally (p. 48).

When Shan returns to China after his brief sojourn in Australia he finds himself 'returning to death…to something which did not remotely resemble a village'. His father's house is a burnt out shell, the people 'like ghosts, thin, dirt covered beings, sick and weak from years of war and famine' (p. 157). The transformation is so stark and sweeping that he realises that he once again faces a new reality. The China he knew has disappeared and the 'newly terraced hills' attest to this altered reality.

The experiences of Edward, the ancestral figure, in *A Change of Skies* highlight yet another key moment in the evolution of Australian colonial history. He lands at the port of MacKay in eastern Queensland in 1880 with a group of indentured workers aboard the '*SS Devonshire'*, bound for the huge sugar plantations. En

route they encounter the 'Anti-Coolie Leaguers' who attempt to stop them. In this instance, another imperialist strategy of moving cheap overseas labour from one part of the empire to another is uncovered.

A thumbnail sketch of the history of Sri Lanka, particularly of the various socio-political influences that shaped the nation, is needed here in order to provide the characters of Gooneratne's text with a necessary frame of reference. The island of Ceylon gained independence from British rule in 1948 and was renamed Sri Lanka in that same year. The original name was 'Sinhaladwipa', land of the Sinhalese since it was first settled in the 6th century BC.. The arrival of Theravada Buddhism, the original and simpler form of the religion, in the 3rd century from the Indian sub-continent was a seminal event in its early history, largely due to the missionary efforts of the Indian ruler Ashoka. This is the religion of Bharat Mangala Devasinha, the contemporary protagonist of the novel. The main threats to the early ruling families, based in Anuradhapura in the north of the island were from the Dravidian kingdoms of South India, whose language was Tamil, and whose religion was Hinduism. By the 12th century the Sinhala government was ousted by the Tamils, who set up their permanent presence in the north; the two Buddhist kingdoms relocated to the central hill country and a small island stronghold off the coast of Colombo. Navaranjini, the wife of Bharat, is a Tamil and a devout Hindu, who frequently invokes the deities Shiva and Arjuna the archer from the *Mahabharata*, to protect her husband and herself from the onslaughts of a 'terrifying Unknown' (p. 69).

From the 16th to 18th century successive waves of European invaders – the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British – gradually conquer the Kandyan and Kotte kingdoms as well as the Tamil kingdoms in the north, until Ceylon became a British Crown Colony in 1801 (Peebles, 2006, p. 41). All three colonial administrations established several layers of government departments, officials and supervisors to 'control the population and exploit the export trade' (Peebles, 2006, p. 42). Foremost among these were the *Mudaliyars* who very much like the *Zamandari* caste in India, were given vast tracts of land and entrusted with legal

and judicial powers and revenue collection for the British. Edward, the ancestral figure in *A Change of Skies*, is the son of an influential *Mudaliyar* and therefore heir to the privilege and status of this elite group. His affiliations with the colonial powers are evidenced in his celebration of his Classical education and in his recollections of the lavish feasts at the *Walauwa* honouring the English colonial officials.

All three European powers – the Portuguese, the Dutch and the British – exerted a lasting influence on Sri Lankan society economically. They established a plantation economy, converted large sections of the people to Catholicism and Protestantism and created a hybrid mixed-race groups such as the Dutch Burghers, whose identity was largely shaped by the colonisers. In Gooneratne's novel, the Perth couple, Johannes and Wilhelmina Breudher, refuse to acknowledge any connection with Sri Lanka or hear any 'mention' of it … 'or indeed any other Asian country' (p. 205). They are good examples of this hybrid group. Most importantly the Tamil/Sinhala civil conflict, the source of terrifying violence and hostility in recent years, and surfacing briefly in the novel, can also be traced back to colonial intervention, which divided the country into rigid ethnic categories ruling through them, which facilitated governance in the short term but created immense problems for the future (Peebles, 2006, p. 54). The discord between Sinhala and Tamil people is a case in point, but colonial intervention also set caste and class hierarchies hard and fast, and this kind of division, too, continues to erode national cohesion.

Adib Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments* briefly recalls the turmoil and violence that marked the creation of Bangladesh. At the time of Partition in 1947, following the end of the British Raj, the Muslim minority were vociferous in defending their interests against a predominantly Hindu population. Their call for a separate state led to the creation of Pakistan, 'the land of the pure'. In a sense, the Partition was predicated specifically on religious and ethnic grounds with a Muslim state of Pakistan for Islamic peoples and India for all the others. In effect, Hindu India was flanked in the north by the two states of Pakistan – West Pakistan, which

incorporated areas of the Punjab and the North West Frontier, and East Pakistan, which constituted the Bengal, Bihar and other regions including present day Orissa in the east. At the time of Partition, approximately 4.6 million crossed the borders between Pakistan and India in an attempt to flee the horrifying inter-communal violence and brutality that claimed about 200,000 lives. Partition effectively created a nation of refugees and migrants on both sides of the borders.

From the outset one of the main issues facing Pakistan was the language question – Urdu was spoken by the elites of West Pakistan while Bengali was the language of East Pakistan. But there were other major points of difference, between the two ancient cultures of the Punjab in the West and Bengal in the East – separated by a distance of 2000 kilometres. These differences were both geographic and cultural.In the ensuing tensions, the Bengalis vigorously affirmed their 'linguistic and cultural identity against the Punjabi oligarchy' (Jaffelot, 2004, p. 60). East Pakistan resented the fact that it was not given an equitable share in the benefits of nationhood politically and economically, following the granting of independence to India in 1947 by the British Government. Other inequities in the public sector and military jobs led to an escalation of hostilities. It was a situation poised for conflict, which erupted with the formation of the *Awami League* – led by Sheikh Mujibur Rahaman – in the wake of the 1971 general elections.

Demands for autonomy were met with the brutal repressions of the indigenous Bihari population, the imposition of martial law and finally an all-out attack sanctioned by the West Pakistani leader, General Yahya Khan. From the beginning of the armed struggle India supported the fighters of the *Mukti Bahini* (the liberation army) with arms and military training. The independent country of Bangladesh was created in 1971. The Bangladeshi government later allied itself more closely with the Islamic countries, pledging itself to the re-instatement of an Islamic state. All moves towards secularism envisioned by Mujibur Rahman were abandoned.

This is the context of Adib Khan's protagonist, Iqbal Chaudhary, in *Seasonal Adjustments*. As a refugee, he is plagued by the memory of 'a nation born in agony, its soul deformed by loathing'. He is haunted by grim memories:

> [In] a world turned upside down one dark night in March 1971 …Pakistani troops 'tumble[d] onto the streets to unleash the demonic wrath of Yahya Khan' against a people who dared to dream of freedom from the yoke of Pakistani military rule. (p. 111)

With the collapse of his marriage to Michelle, a Catholic Australian schoolteacher, he returns to his homeland of Bangladesh after an absence of eighteen years to find himself floating between two spaces, homeland and adoptive land. He is now 'a variable without a constant…a changing shadow' unable to determine where he belongs (p. 9). His relationships with his family and friends seem to have irrevocably broken down. His family embrace his young daughter, Nadine, but count him 'a traitor' for betraying his country and family in their hour of greatest need, a betrayal further exacerbated by his long silence in reconnecting with them. There is, in this instance a particularly strong sense of estrangement, a distancing from his former place of origin that makes his return to Australia almost inevitable.

Jane Mummery's (2005) insightful article '*Being Not-not-at-Home: a Conceptual Discussion'* considers the implications of 'home' for people in diasporas across the globe. It is commonly accepted that migration imposes on individuals a constant redefinition and refashioning of selves, a 'diasporic vision of hyphenated identity' and consequent hybridisation (2005, p.28). The crucial point to be noted here is the ways individuals ground themselves in places and spaces where they are 'not at home in any single community or eventuality' or 'holding onto a sense of identity' despite an 'inability to sustain older styles of identity' (Mummery, 2005, p. 27). In considering this notion it is perhaps necessary to understand what home means to an individual's sense of belonging, of groundedness not just in a place but also in the community that one knows and where one is known. It implies the social and psychological bases for the formation of identity and

knowledge of the world and is perhaps the bedrock of one's sense of security and familiarity with an experiential world. Several thinkers and philosophers have examined this notion of 'not-being-at-home' either within oneself or within society. It appears that for the diasporic individual 'not-at-homeness is indissociable from a desire for' at-homeness' (Mummery, 2005, p. 38). This can invoke a different sense of 'home'.

Often 'not-at-homeness' is apprehended as a sense of estrangement or distance from a host society or by identification with the originary society either through memories, rituals, narratives and more recently the media and the World Wide Web. However, the process of 'being-at-home' and 'not-being-at-home' are two sides of the same coin and therefore need to be considered together rather than as separate states of being, as the theorists such as Freud, Heidegger and Sartre remind us (Mummery, 2005, p. 29-34). Some philosophers theorise this is intrinsic to the existential human condition, but since the focus of this study pertains to the lived life of the migrant reality, the theories offer prescient insights into the diasporic condition, in that these states are often experienced simultaneously. The duality of experience, the sense of estrangement from a known context and familiarity with the new society often pervades the consciousness of the migrant, imposing a hybridised vision of reality.

The significant point to be noted here is that both Gooneratne's and Khan's characters emerge from societies and national identities that are vastly different from the Western models of sovereign states. In the artificial states bequeathed by colonising powers, whose interests were to maintain centralised control over populations from metropolitan centres, the interests of minority groups like the Tamils and the Bengalis were largely overlooked. These people witnessed their different histories, languages and cultures being drowned out by those of the majority intent on maintaining its own cultural identities and affiliations. The concept of a unitary state hardly corresponds with these circumstances and the resulting conflicts in Sri Lanka and Bangladesh affected the people's understandings of identity, culture, home and belonging. These ethnic conflicts

are often categorised as 'sub-nationalisms' or even tribalistic insurrections or insurgencies, but they could equally be read as a minority group's yearning for autonomy and self-expression within complex heterogeneous polities (Wilson, 2000, p. 6).

Australian historians chronicle the Chinese occupancy on the gold fields of Victoria as 'a source of conflict' (Ryan, 1997, p. 71). Mention of indentured labourers identifies the various groups by nationality – Afghan camel drivers, Kanaka sugar cane workers, Chinese and Indian labourers and so on – each as a homologous group with no differentiation or sub-divisions acknowledged to recognise social, ethnic, religious or even cultural variances. These groups of people were here in Australia from the earliest days of settlement, yet 'their multidimensional histories have been obscured in the layers of these records' (Ryan, 1997, p. 73). Perhaps, as Castro (1991) notes, 'transplantation and dissonance and the need to make oneself heard in a host country whose blindness to alterity [runs] parallel to identitarian politics framed by exclusion' (1991, p.1) creates gaps and silences. This needs to be addressed in the textbooks that are read and taught in schools from the early years of education. In this way, the contributions of the marginalised could be absorbed into the host society and validated, becoming as much a part of the narrative of the nation as those of the bushman and the digger. These novels constitute a 'writing back' or more precisely 'writing in' of the experiences, the struggles, the defeats and the triumphs of the excluded and the different. By writing these stories into the literature of a nation the authors are claiming a voice and an agency for minoritarian identities; they are inserting the 'evocative "I' which should not be passed over' in the discourses of a nation (Bhabha, 1994, p. 5).

Petersee argues that while these protagonists are hybridised the 'real problem is not hybridity but boundaries and … [the tendency] to boundary fetishism' (2001, p. 220). These writers and their protagonists demonstrate, in their mobility and constant changes, the porosity of boundaries. The fluidity and permeability of the characters' transformations are soon internalised and even in some cases

consciously acknowledged. Thus the notion of 'critical hybridity' as involving 'a new awareness of and a new take on the dynamics of group formation and social inequality' (Petersee, 2001, p. 239) expands Bhabha's position of 'cultural hybridity' by focusing on the processes of hybridisation, evoking 'The Third Space of Enunciation' in terms of '*positionality within* this 'interstitial space' (Bhabha, 1994, p.5). Seamus O'Young, the young contemporary protagonist in Castro's *Birds of Passage*, articulates this very indeterminacy in his questioning of identity and culture. His interrogation of origins and nationality – 'There is no country from which I came, and there is none to which I can return' – seems to highlight the dilemma of 'critical hybridity' (Castro, 1983, p. 8).

CHAPTER 2

NEGOTIATING LANDSCAPE

I thought how this emptiness within me was extended by the environment …

Birds of Passage (Castro, 1983, p. 42)

How much time, I wonder, does it take for an unfamiliar landscape to invade an individual's mind, take possession of his imagination, and change the colour, not only of his words but of his soul?

A Change of Skies (Gooneratne, 1991, p. 280)

What I lack is the weight of emotional anchors. There is nothing which binds me to a place.

Seasonal Adjustments (Khan, 1994, p. 28)

In the three novels selected for this study there is a juxtapositioning and interweaving of vastly different perceptions of the foreign and the familiar, particularly in the representations of the land. The sights, the smells and the sounds, the features of 'here', the motifs of flora and fauna at 'home' are interlaced with descriptions of another landscape that are at times hostile and at others reassuringly familiar and recognisable. This interweaving lends a palimpsest-like quality to the works. The remembered homes of the protagonists Lo Yun Shan in China, Iqbal Chaudhary in Bangladesh and Edward, Bharat and Navaranjini in Sri Lanka seem to pervade their memories even after they are re-located within the urban and rural areas of Australia – in Sydney, Melbourne, Queensland and Ballarat. Indeed, as Russell West-Pavlov asserts, 'there is a continuous intersecting, shifting and colliding of cultural boundaries which one could assume is inevitably a part of the migrant condition – 'inside, outside, crisscross, inside out' (2007, p. 11).

The environing landscape can operate dualistically as a place of exile or as a place of nurture and acceptance. Carter comments that 'the meaning and significance attributed to our life are closely bound up with a sense of place and places and spaces… [which] gives us a sense of orientation' (Carter, 1992, p. 9). This is achieved haptically, for without this sensory experiential dimension individuals often feel physically and emotionally disorientated. This appears to be the case with Iqbal Chaudhary, Khan's protagonist, who ruminates over 'the pain of endless journeys' (p. 28) not only between places but in his psychological grounding in a space where he feels he belongs.

Beginning with journal extracts, both Castro and Gooneratne historicize Chinese and Sri Lankan landscapes respectively by evoking images of lands that are steeped in tradition and yet poised on the moment of transformation resulting from colonial intervention. Castro's *Birds of Passage* begins in the Kwangtung province in 1856 in a village nestling below Tai Mo Shan:

> Big Mist Mountain…is constantly shrouded in cloud and mist. The village people say that the Buddha lives on the mountain and from there he maintains his indifferent gaze on the valley below. (p. 1)

A small temple jutting out of the rock perched on the eastern boundary is visited by devotees including Lo Yun Shan, the only son of a wealthy landowner. The description of the landscape is redolent with images of farm life, of tiny hamlets scattered across the landscape, of jasmine petals floating in the soft breezes in summer and further out 'bare hills dotted with boulders leading down to the sea, the windswept headlands fringed with soft green stretching like fields to the horizon' (p.1). Juxtaposed with this idyllic landscape is his description of the port of Canton:

> I saw the port below me like something the sea had vomited up, rejected, cast upon the beach. The town was piled upon itself in a hotch-potch of shacks, shanties, two-storeyed wooden buildings in disrepair. Narrow alleyways and streets ran in no rational manner, some turning around upon themselves, like the people who walked with heads turned backwards; poverty-stricken, belligerent, mistrustful. (p. 5)

The scenes of the growing despair of people caught in the grip of famine, poverty and the unrest of the Second Opium War following European penetration into China foreshadow the grim future that lies ahead. The juxtaposition of the two spaces highlights not only the gulf between a centuries' old traditional way of life and the cataclysmic impact of colonial intervention into this culture, but provides a frame for viewing the context of the protagonist before he leaves his home for the foreign land where gold was to be found in abundance.

Pandurang asserts that 'negotiating processes between estrangement and comfort are already in motion before departure with migrants often repudiating the changing geographies of the sending culture for the freedom and opportunities offered by the receiving society' (2007, p. 24). This would appear to support Lo Yun Shan's decision to board the British ship *Phaeton,* bound for Australia – a place known to him only as The Great South Land. For 'the first time in [his] life

[he is] filled with a sense of freedom…a strange premonition of being in touch with and confident of the future' (p. 21). He brings with him 'a small bundle of clothes…[an] earthenware stove, the two pots [he] found in the kitchen and the meat-cleaver [he] used for slaughtering chickens' (p. 20).

In the chapter ironically entitled 'The Promising Land', Shan journeys overland to the Ballarat goldfields, a makeshift tent city:

> The sick afternoon light penetrated his head, and it seemed like a presentiment of death, the blinding harshness of it mixed with the cold end of the day. The land smelt of eucalyptus, like the anointing oil his countrymen used for the sick, balms for the dying; it smelt of the dusty eeriness of primitive history … He began to erect a tent in the scrub not far from the beach. (Castro, 1983, p. 73)

Said's reminder of how the use of epithets functions, is crucial here in the descriptions of the landscape and its imagery so evocative of death and sickness.(1978, p.94). The place is a nightmarish conglomeration of dirt roads, ruts and holes:

> Nothing in the landscape is familiar to me…There is a gully sparsely timbered with iron bark trees. All around there are grey and brown tents. The ground is completely dug up as though giant rodents camped below while an invading army bivouacked above. Mud and clay stuck to our feet. Walking a short distance in this terrain is like making a day's journey along hard ground. Running water is three miles away. We are not allowed to use the stream that the whites are using, though we may buy their water for one shilling a bucket. (p. 89)

Carter commenting on the experience of R. A. Baggio (1989) highlights the poignancy of the migrant experience in connecting with an unrecognizable space after his relocation in Australia. These afford an insight into the perceptions of the Chinese prospector at the goldfields. Like Baggio, Lo Yun Shan appears to be disorientated in the goldfields which offer him 'no mothering space that both nurtures and helps him define his own difference' (Carter**,**1992, p. 12). His sense of being 'out of place' appears to be equally compounded by a sense of being 'out

of language' (Rushdie, 1991, p. 12) which is apparent in the perplexity implied by the spatial description. Furthermore, in the Australia of the 1850s he remains the unnamed *Other*, unable to communicate with the other diggers, so he falls back on his own language (recorded in the journal) to provide him with the shelter to articulate his perceptions of the place.

However when he enters the township of Cheswick Creek he finds a grid reference, a space which bears indications that the Chinese miners had settled in and were in the process of rebuilding their lives. The language seems to convey the sense of exhilaration at finding that the place is marked with the visible presence of his people who appear to have entered into a kind of mutual exchange even when their cultures and languages are so vastly different. He records:

> It was a canvas town filled with bustling Chinamen. Here and there wooden shanties had sprung up among the tents, evidence of a less itinerant population of shopkeepers. The town even boasted of a rudimentary main street, lined with shops that supplied everything from pickaxes to jars of preserved ginger. (Castro, 1983, p. 93)

This representation effectively debunks the myth of Australia as a homogeneous society from its inception in 1788, for it is clear that 'the Chinese were vital makers of history as well as its objects and victims', working as market gardeners, share farmers, traders, shopkeepers, cooks, hoteliers and rice farmers to mention just a few occupations (Thompson, 1994, p.50). Bendigo, 'the town named after a prize-fighter' shows further evidence of the Chinese presence with 'seven Chinese camps nestl[ing] in gullies and perch[ed] on hill sides' (p.100).

Shan comments on the gravesites of the Chinese diggers: he notes that the new alien environment contains sites of another people, his people.

> Already I have noticed on the hilltop above our camp, the three graves marked with stones. Such a frail thing, human life, such loneliness, the sunken graves of three old men who survived the journey only to die here. (p. 89).

The isolation of the graves indicates that there are no sacred spaces afforded the Chinese diggers in this new environment. It also registers the incoherent fears of the white settlers who felt they were 'besieged, threatened by a close-knit group of competitors…[who] look different…[and whose] numbers are so great (p.116). Equally the episode highlights one of Castro's enduring preoccupations – death and suffering, which surface consistently in this novel. Castro has stated that in detailing the lives of the 19th century Chinese miners he is rewriting their place into Australian folk lore:

> *Birds of Passage* was not an elegiac response to the suffering of Chinese gold miners in 19th Century Australia, but a rebuttal of their marginality. Their melancholic presence on the Australian landscape was a glaring one, so much so that it had to be made invisible and unexpressed. They had no rights and their passage was described as migratory, bird-like, in an attempt to wipe away their presence. But they left a powerful stain on the white cultural landscape. (Castro, 2009)

The recurrent motif of the weather – either the 'freezing cold' or the 'warm sun' – is used to recuperate the physical environment that Lo Yun Shan passes through. The summer is recreated in deft strokes of 'an unusually hot day… [with] a bee float[ing] lazily among bottlebrushes….the smell of wild honey in the heavy air' (p. 111). His intuition of the place is imbued with recognition of a place that he could possibly inhabit even as he acknowledges: '…he knew he was crazy…when he was blinded by every rock, every stone, every pool of water, blinded by a golden light' (p. 138). It seems to suggest a rare moment of connection with the environment. Incidentally, shortly after Shan frames his idea of getting 'enough gold to buy some land, somewhere far away from here – just as Wah did…..[where he] could farm…raise some sheep…[since] he didn't wish to return to China. There was nothing for [him] there' (p. 113). He reasons that if he had gold he 'could live with resentment.' He seems to believe that despite the hatred and animosity of the people, they will eventually come to 'respect wealth and ownership' (p. 114). The yearning for permanence even in the midst of antagonism and resentment seems to generate a different sense of 'being-at-home' and the possibility of accommodation to an unalterable reality seems to emerge

within this pragmatic character. . Equally, it also constitutes Shan's break with his past context, his father's home, his country, his community and, most significantly, his cultural traditions where complex familial ties and obligations ground individuals in their society. He realizes quite dispassionately that home for him lies elsewhere and despite 'being-not-at-home' in Australia, he needs to construct a place for himself within it, from where he can make coherent meaning of his life Shan's stay at Bathurst, where he hopes to build a life for himself with the young prostitute Mary Young and his unborn child, away 'from the stranglehold of Clancy's jealousy' is bathed in 'warm sunshine'. During his headlong flight from a pursuing Clancy, Shan enters the bush, graphically depicted as a primordial space into which he makes his entry:

> [It was] like parting the curtains at the entrance of a vast labyrinth. The deeper in he went, the more alive the bush became…every rock, every tree glowed with a pure light. (p.152)

This apprehension of the Australian landscape as a living entity appears to highlight an affiliative connection to the alien space, indicating that the process of translation and transformation has begun.Despite brief moments such as these, a sense of melancholic estrangement and disjunction within the Australian context pervades the entire novel and also surfaces in the consciousness of the contemporary protagonist, Seamus O'Young, Shan's descendant. Moreover, the power of home to ground the psyche can be matched by an equally disruptive sense of its absence, a sense of an ancestral place that by its very elusiveness creates an unwelcome yearning' (Ashcroft, 2005, p. 50).

Seamus O'Young's search for a nurturing place to belong appears to pervade his consciousness persistently, despite the fact that unlike Shan he is at home in the language and culture. As an orphan he is consigned to a Boy's Home where on the basis of his appearance he is deemed a 'Mongoloid'. His next home is with his foster parents Jack and Edna Groves in a 'Sydney suburban cottage' bearing a brass plate inscribed 'Nirvana' (p. 13). It was a 'dark brick house with an iron roof that sloped down on to the oleanders near the front fence'. The atmosphere

in the house is clearly oppressive, 'always dark' with 'pastel-coloured walls and blue linoleum floor' and a front room that housed 'Jack's rack of shotguns' which 'shared the wall with his wife's glass-fronted book cases. Plastic ducks flew across the gunsights' (p.13). Seamus' description of this first real home is perhaps his way of 'structuring reality...for the naming of things like the imposition of perspective, is a means of defining one's own place and identity' (Gunew and O'Longley, 1992, p. 12). For the first time he has a home and a familial group from which he can create both a past and a future, particularly given his status as an orphan and child of mixed descent. His foster parents' unequivocal acceptance of him into their home appears to mitigate his yearning for an ancestral place that had plagued him throughout his childhood.

From here the family moves to the country to a 'corrugated-iron farmhouse that was exposed to the bitterness of winter and the seething irritation of summer'. It was a property left to Jack and was called 'Twin Groves', where incidentally Mary had given birth to Shan's child (p.15). Here he begins his new life in a 'fug of depression', on the 'unproductive soil' yet asserting that he loved the 'chalky sterility of the land' (p.15). In the Australian context, this is a wretched place where, despite the 'backbreaking work' expended on it, 'everything fell to pieces or was tied with wire, makeshift stays for a makeshift existence' (p. 15). He observes 'on cold, cloudy mornings, when the wind is crisp and the dust is blown off the sides of the hills, foxes trot[ting] up to a whistle, cocking their heads and presenting their white chests to the terrible force of bullets' (p. 17).

After Jack's death, Seamus returns briefly to the Boy's Home and 'wander[s] through the wet streets along the harbourside thinking of foxes' which Jack had taught him to trap and skin. So it appears that he has established a connection to this place and 'the power of the home to ground the psyche is matched by the equally disruptive sense of its absence...' (Ashcroft, 2005, p. 50). It is significant that he returns to Grove Farm, for it appears to be intimately bound up with the idea of security and comfort. It is also where Edna gives him the fragments of Lo Yun Shan's journal and it is full of the overtones of being the place where the

story first begins, the place from which Seamus sets out on his journey into the past, to uncover the secrets of his identity. Grove Farm acquires an aspect of 'home', since he keeps returning to this particular place over and over again.

Seamus travels through the Australian landscape, through urban and rural settings, with the surefooted confidence of the native Australian.. At Surry Hills he lands his first job in a 'shabby, run-down factory-cum-warehouse' taking the lift up 'a dark stairwell' to the fourth floor into the office and factory of Mr. Feingold 'where rows of women…who looked like migrants, sat behind sewing machines, the rhythmic vibration of their machines funneling down the corridor…making the wooden floor hum' (p. 25). During his brief period of homelessness, he 'hung around bookstores' reading what he could before being evicted. He rides on trains where he can remain invisible to hostile or even curious stares which he speculates are prompted by outright hostility or fears of miscegenation because of his blue eyes and Asiatic features. On train journeys he fancies 'nobody watches [him] because he is 'on a floating island of metaphors' (p. 37). He runs along tracks 'criss-crossing the pine forest' near Grove Farm, noting that 'everything has grown over, the past is covered with a new skin' (p. 47). To escape the magnetic pull of his past and his affinity with the Chinese prospector, he travels overseas to Paris where he obtains a teaching post in a 'ghetto surrounded by cemeteries' (p. 66). In London he travels on trains with 'people banked up like bottles at the end of a production line' (p. 67). On his return to Sydney he marries Fatima in 'a grey registry office lined with filing cabinets smelling of disinfectant…on a fine, cloudless day [when] suddenly it began to rain' (p. 79).

This constant travelling between places and spaces highlights what Stuart Hall refers to as a process of hybridisation – the 'process of becoming' as well as of 'being'. More explicitly the motif of travel recuperates the indeterminacy of the hybridised identity which always confounds binaries set up by nation states. As an Asian-Australian Seamus appears to be aware that with his background of hybridity and mobility between actual locations within the Australian and European environments constitute the uncertainties of a divided self. In this

context it is interesting that his travels do not take him to China where the secrets of his past are to be found.

The merging of Seamus' and Shan's realities takes place in Twin Groves' 'harsh brown and red soil [and] gnarled trees' (p. 39), towards the end of the novel. The final confrontation between the two characters happens after Seamus sets off to discover what had happened to Shan and Mary in their last days. He finds his answer on the banks of a river near the tailings of an old mine. Here amid the 'huge smooth rocks and tussocks of dry, bristling grass' Seamus traces Shan's desperate dash for the safety of an abandoned mine (p. 140-141). In this dark subterranean world he plunges headlong for safety, (p. 141) fleeing his pursuers before turning on them and killing them. He seeks safety in the mineshaft after staggering to the bank, leaving the bodies behind in the shallows. Hence Seamus' earlier intuition of displacement is resolved, for the answers he has sought so unremittingly have been finally revealed in this psychic experience. He finds the secrets of his ancestry.

The novel ends in Kwangtung province, the same place where it began. The year is 1863 and Shan is now a hermit living in a Buddhist hermitage, where 'with rain and wind gusts beating at the window' he glimpses 'Australia…illuminated, thousands of miles away, like a golden myth, harsh in its reality, gentle in its tranquil isolation'. He 'sees his descendants (presumably Seamus) and feels the 'presence of the future, hear[ing] a voice cutting across [his]' (p. 156). Thus the continuity of life is affirmed as he awaits death. What seems apparent here is that while the process of 'migration involves a displacement from one social environment to another', after landing in Australia Shan's later departure from it also involves 'an ontological and psychological severance which is irredeemable'. (Papastergiadis, 1992, p.153).

The reader is left to wonder whether Seamus' quest for 'at-homeness' will remain forever elusive to him. Or has the final imaginative, even mystical experience given him the answers he has sought so assiduously? It appears to have done so,

because he finally returns and builds a new and different home with the small group of women – Edna, Anna Bernhard and Fatima – in his home in the city. Like birds of passage Seamus and Shan have finally returned, but not to the same place: one has gone back to China while his descendant remains in Australia.

Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies* catalogues the experiences of three generations: there is Edward, who migrates to Australia for five years (1882–1887); his grandson Bharat and his wife Navaranjini, who visit Australia in 1964 on a teaching fellowship, returning eight years later to take up permanent residence; and their Australian-born daughter Edwina, who returns to Sri Lanka 'on a field trip.' Like Castro's *Birds of Passage,* Gooneratne's text operates on a dual time-scale, interlacing the complex threads of different lives and narratives. It provides a parallel to the experience of the ancestral figure, Edward, in Sri Lanka and Australia in the 19th century, when it presents the later experiences of his descendants in both places a century later. Edward is firmly grounded in his father's vast estate, the *Walauwa*, in the Matara district.

> Edward had grown up…in a country where the line between fact and fiction, history and legend – if such a line exists – tends to blur and fade to nothing. (p. 4)

The estate, with its sprawling mansion wrapped around by wide verandahs and surrounded by fishing and farming villages, is owned by the *Mudaliyar*. This title designates an official appointed by the British to administer the land. The estate is represented in telling detail. The scenic description of the landscape as darkness falls illuminated by 'the tiny tongues of flame that turn the shoreline into a necklace of flickering lights' indicates a deep psychic connection to the place.

This is worlds apart from the reality Edward faces when he comes to Australia aboard the *SS Devonshire*, in 1882, to work with the contracted labour force on the property of Mr. Frederick Nott-Herring, a sugar cultivator of Bundaberg. On board ship, the fate of a 'young mynah bird' injured when it plummets into the ship's sail and tenderly nursed to health by Davith, his former servant conjures up images of exile and rupture from a familiar landscape. Despite Edward's

misgivings about the bird's chances of survival in a distant place, Davith reassures him: 'Never fear. These birds are great survivors. He'll fly again. But whether he will learn to talk in a foreign language, Hamu, that is a different matter" (p. 63). The episode underscores the reality of loss and adaptation to changed circumstances for some migrants whose voice, culture and identity are imperilled or at least muted. The other incident happens on the docks when Edward lands in Queensland and one of the women in the group, 'known for her knowledge of the medicinal properties of herbs', responds to the injuries sustained by an Anti Coolie Leaguer. 'Plucking some leaves from an overhanging creeper...she recognised as growing also on [our] island…'she instructs him to "Put it on the wound and the blood will cease to flow" (p. 76). The text draws attention not only to the similarities between two environments but also to the fact that knowledge of the environing landscape is portable and valuable.

Edward's journal, unlike Lo Yun Shan's, does not paint such a bleak picture of the living conditions in Australia in the 1880s. On arrival at the plantation he observes:

> Our new living conditions are not uncomfortable …[with] a store of medicinal herbs that Davith's father preserves in the airy space beneath his house [along] with his little library of religious texts written on palm leaves & bound between carved wooden boards. (p. 73)

On his travels Edward happens upon 'white stretches of sandy beaches' that revive memories of home. Nevertheless, there are darker moments, as when he is in a town in Western Australia named Badagini, which in Sinhala means 'hunger…literally, fire in the belly' (p. 164). There, a group of Sri Lankan workers attracted by the prospect of owning land but with no knowledge of the landscape or climatic conditions had perished in a terrible drought. His affinity with these people evokes a sense of pity and sorrow as he meditates on their fate in 'an alien and hostile land' (p. 165). Later, on a cattle station, he observes 'swollen creeks ….inundate many properties prompting the movement of panic stricken livestock to higher ground' (p. 166). It is at this juncture that he decides

to return to his home in the *Walauwa* and to his family obligations acknowledging that 'I have seen enough, & learned enough of myself too, to understand that a life lived here is not for me' (p. 166).

Bharat and Navaranjini travel to Australia in 1964, a few years before the ending of the White Australia policy, where he takes up a position as Visiting Professor of Linguistics at the Southern Cross University in Sydney. Bharat has been educated at Cambridge but professes to know 'London, its Dickensian fogs, its murky river, the Shakespearean Tower…' (p. 12) long before he set foot there. For these sophisticated cosmopolitan travellers, movement from one space to another does not pose a great challenge, or so they initially believe. However, on their way from the airport, soon after their arrival they are confronted with anti-Asian and racist graffiti splashed across brick walls demanding 'Asians Out' and 'Bash a Pak a day'. That same night a hailstorm, which Navaranjini mistakenly believes is a repetition of the Anti Coolie reception that their ancestor encountered a century earlier, exacerbates her fears of 'the land of the duck-billed platypus where reality is stranger than fiction' (p. 67) until their neighbour Bruce Trevally arrives to fix their shattered windows. This earlier fear nevertheless reveals a projection onto the environment of an inner sense of dislocation and rupture with a known sense of home.

This feeling of bonding, of groundedness within an ancestral home, is apparent in Bharat's nostalgic recollections of Sri Lanka when he is transplanted into a different context, Australia. Like his grandfather Edward, his memories centre on the ancestral home in the *Walauwa.* Bharat ponders:

> …for a person like myself, I realize, place is – or used to be – everything. Generations living and dying in the same ancient house… (p. 152)

He fondly recollects the 'unchanging landscape' with 'green fields…stretching further than the eye can see,' the breakers 'pounding on a wide beach fringed with palms' and a certain rhythm and symmetry to the seasons, a design to the seasons as they passed' (p. 152). The family's tea estate, St Cloud, overlooking a

‘spectacular view of the Haputale Valley and run by Ashoka, Bharat’s younger brother, is described as ‘a green-carpeted kingdom ruled by a genial monarch,’ with ‘the factory…the pluckers’ quarters…[and] splendid bungalow [with] immaculate lawns and carefully tended rose beds’ (p. 303) recall a lifestyle inherited from the British Raj. The sense of place is directly linked to inscriptions of imperialist thinking, embedded in the consciousness of these ‘mimic men’ who have yet to shed the yoke of their past (Lokuge, 2000, p. 18). Despite this, there appears to be an equally physical and emotional attachment to this lived-in space, providing the individuals with a grounded sense of home indelibly memorialised.

The landscape can work as an alien and frightening place where every aspect of the environment – its geography, its climate, its fauna and flora – presents a bewildering profusion of difference. On the other hand, it can also be a nurturing and familiar space where one can anchor oneself. For Asian migrants from the tropics the warm Australian climate, the vegetation and landscape do not appear to be as daunting as for their European counterparts. For example, David Malouf in *Remembering Babylon* (1994), records the initial reactions of Scottish migrants Jock McIvor – who longs for the freezing winter snows (p.69) – and his wife Ellen, homesick for the ‘ghosts’ of the close neighbourhood she lived in as a girl (p.100). For Navaranjini by contrast the initial anxieties about Australia are relatively short-lived with her writing to her mother of her delight in finding ‘Sri Lankan herbs growing in Australia…plants I have known all my life…frangipani…blue hydrangeas…white jasmine…the lillypilly tree (p.17). During a visit to her neighbour’s garden she spies a mynah which makes her wonder whether this bird could have arrived with her husband’s ancestor, and during a visit to the Blue Mountains she reports that ‘there exists an Australian version of the Ice Cave at Amarnath’ (p.172). This suggests a haptic connection to the landscape, experienced as a space ‘to embrace and inhabit, [a] place that speaks to [her]’, indicating the formation of tenuous links with the adoptive land. (Gunew & O’Longley, 1992, p. 9). Bharat rapidly familiarises himself with the geography of Southern Cross University, established in 1950. It is described as ‘a tall building, patchily covered with ivy…beginning to turn crimson…flanked by

two more buildings…one octagonal in shape, the other somewhat boxlike [and] as yet incomplete' (p.104). In this context the striking feature to be noted is the contrast in their responses to place; where he looks at the man-made landscape, she looks at the natural landscape, which is more enduring. It is also significant that where he sees incompletion, she sees connections. This difference in perception not only highlights the divergence in the gendered perspective but also foreshadows the adaptations that the couple will make in Australia. While Navaranjini focuses on the timeless quality of the Australian landscape, which allows her to make a connection between the past and the present, between Sri Lanka and Australia, Bharat appears to concentrate on differences from other landscapes, both in Sri Lanka and Britain. Perhaps this is the reason why his feelings of being in exile are exacerbated over time, the longer he lives here. His wife on the other hand accommodates to Australia seeing it as a place she will eventually come to call home.

By the time of their first return to Sri Lanka it is the home scene that has taken on aspects of alienness. After an absence of eight years Barry and Jean [who have reinvented themselves to fit into the Australian context] are assaulted by a bewildering reality of profound change on several levels:

> Ancient trees which had stood as landmarks at the corners of well-known streets for generations had been felled to make room for wider roads. The low garden walls… pillared verandahs of venerable houses…had...disappeared …replaced by high brick walls surmounted by broken glass… (p.234)

They are struck by the 'houses or apartments…newly built…on the site of some recently demolished old family home… [barricaded behind] soaring walls…broken glass… [and] massive gates…all forms of security' (p. 234). The sense of estrangement from their original homeland is obvious in their reaction to the environment. The devastation wreaked on the city of Colombo fills them with horror as they witness the consequences of the civil conflict. This changed perception brings to mind Radakrishnan's notion that 'places are both real and imagined,' which seems to intimate that romanticised notions of place often

become enshrined in the memory as idealised locations offering certainties that no longer exist. In fact, the only place that remains 'unchanged and unchanging' is their family home in the *Walauwa* at Matara (p.235). White (1995) asserts that the experience of returning to one's 'own' place is rarely fully satisfying, because 'circumstances change, borders in all senses are altered, and identities change too' (p. 14). Faced with this disillusionment the couple decide to return to Australia, Barry reflects:

> It became clear to me…that in moving away so light-heartedly eight years ago, Jean and I had unwittingly shut invisible gates behind us forever. Our future now lay elsewhere (p.271).

Their return to Australia sees more changes to their situation.; the major changes being the birth of their daughter, Edwina, and Barry's decision to 'move to another state after giving up his university position to teach ESL courses to foreign students at a high school. They relocate to Queensland and set up of 'two superb eateries BABA-G and BABA-Q' and 'The Asian Sensation…a sparkling new restaurant…on the Golden Road to the Sunshine State'. This ushers in a new period in the lives of the couple. At this juncture *A Change of Skies* ushers in yet another transformation in the process of hybridisation. Barry and Jean appear to be enculturated into the Australian way of life. They traverse the continent with relative ease, relocating from NSW to Queensland, inhabiting very different spaces and making these their own. Indeed one could almost assert that they 'have become part of the Australian landscape' (p.181) with a vested inerest in this country. Sri Lanka appears to have faded from their consciousness and the issue now is 'how Australian can one get, for heaven's sake' (p. 189). They now own the large home, complete with swimming pool, large garden and two lucrative businesses – all visible status symbols of social success.

However, as ethnic disturbances in the originary homeland intrude on this ideal existence to create a rift in their relationship. As Jean observes, they are obliged to contend with 'not a marital but a national problem.' Television images of' familiar shops burning in the Pettah, the destruction of their 'ancient city of Jafna,

once a city of musicians, now echoing only to the sound of gunfire, bring the war into their living room and into their lives. In their new home in Coolongata, in the 'lillypilly tree…camouflaged by a screen of glossy, dark, green leaves', a small black mynah bird takes up residence in their backyard (p.308). Its presence is one of several reminders of the homeland. The couple's tragic end in a plane crash and subsequent disappearance from the novel could indicate that for these characters there is no final resolution of the ambiguities arising from the psychological rupture from the homeland that has plagued them most of their lives. Their relocations in Australia, from one home to another, from one state to another, from job to job and from one country to another and back again represent a continuing quest for a sense of belonging where they can establish meaningful connections with the people and the place they finally inhabit. Perhaps for some individuals, diaspora is the journey between the memory of an originary home and a new space that only future descendants can claim as 'home'. Bhabha (1994) highlights this sense of suspended at-homeness as 'the condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations'.

> To be unhomed is not to be homeless, nor can the 'unhomely' be easily accommodated in that familiar division of social life into private and public spheres. The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself…taking measure of your dwelling in a state of incredulous terror. (1994, p.13)

Equally it should be noted that the diasporic existence is always fraught with ambiguities and uncertainties, that hybridity operates not as some linear narrative but could also incorporate a doubling back to an original ethnicity or subjective consciousness of home that had been left behind. This would reinforce the central argument of this thesis that the 'Third Space' is not just one homologous space but a number of poly-faceted sites along multiple contiua.

The novel ends with the couple's daughter, Edwina, en route to Sri Lanka where she proposes to conduct research into 'Third World Societies'. She plans a visit

to Matara to 'check out the old house', for she recollects her father's description of the place as having 'solid walls that were meant to last' and rooms and courtyards 'that could accommodate whole families' and with 'wide cool verandahs…[where] a hundred people were served *dhana'* (p.325). However, she also believes that the place will be overrun with vermin and that 'the magic world' created in her mother's stories was very different from [her] everyday world at Coolongata. Edwina leaves for Sri Lanka promising her foster parents, Bruce and Maureen Trevally, 'There's no way I'd forget to come home' (p.326). Thus the novel juxtaposes and interweaves the attempts of these protagonists 'to engage, inhabit and dissolve the boundaries of home, to disrupt the borders of subjectivity, community, nation, self, race, history – all the regulators of time and space' (Ashcroft, 2005, p.53).

A Change of Skies can be characterised as a novel about journeys – departures, returns and accommodation – between two spaces: Sri Lanka and Australia. In this novel, Gooneratne examines the transformation of immigrants, their re-invention of identity and sense of self as people who yearn to belong to the alien space they come to inhabit, yet are haunted by a lingering nostalgia for the home they left behind. The major point to be considered here is that 'home' for migrants in the Third Space, in the words of bell hooks, (cited in Ashcroft, 2005, p.49) 'is no longer just one place':

> It is locations which people settle in temporarily en-route to other destinations [accepting] dispersal and fragmentation as part of the construction of a new world order that reveals more fully where we are, who we can become.

In *Seasonal Adjustments* Iqbal Chaudhary's attitude to home in Bangladesh is characterized by the vacillation between the familiar and the unfamiliar, between Australia and Bangladesh. It is Bangladesh which has become the unknown territory after two decades of absence. This novel differs from the other two in that Khan seems to be writing what Aijaz Ahmad calls a 'nationalism of mourning' (cited in George, 1991 p.2). Like Rushdie, Adib Khan is engaged in exploring what the process of decolonisation has meant for a subject people and

the gains, if any, since independence. Iqbal Chaudhary is a descendant of the affluent and influential landlord class. He seems intent on following the footprints of power from the period of zamandari privilege to the constant surveillance of the populace, of dissenters by a vigilant, revisionist government. At the same time he is aware of, and appalled by, the continuing legacy of poverty, corruption and violation of minority rights that have continued unabated in a nation born with such great hopes for the future. Nowhere is this more clearly represented than in the urban and rural landscapes he traverses.

The novel opens with Iqbal, the returnee from Australia at a teashop by the river, where he pays his respects to the elderly tenants of the Chaudhary estate and surveys the 'sustained grimness about life here (p.11). He finds that the ancestral homes he once knew in the village of Shopnoganj and later in Dhaka are unfamiliar, with 'nothing which binds [him] to a place' (p.9). He muses on the lack of progress or development in Shopnoganj:

> [It is] a replica of the thousands of villages which confirm the rural primitivism of Bangladesh. Bamboo shacks teeter on the edges of uneven dirt roads while the 'privileged and exclusive side of the village' is clean and 'uncluttered (p11)

He visits his 'sprawling, double storeyed' ancestral home surrounded by lychee and mango trees standing like an abnormal growth …a mirage…an awesome symbol of the Chaudhary empire' (p.11), but he stops short of visiting the graves of his ancestors whose debauchery and brutality had traumatised the village population for decades. The sense of estrangement is equally present in his representation of the family's town house in the suburb of Banani:

> The suburb of Banani is a bastion of a lifestyle uncommon in the subcontinent. It is carefully hidden away from the damning marks of abject poverty that plagues the country… [beyond] 'an unofficial dividing line between the privileged few and the millions out there. Somewhere. Out of sight. Beyond conscience (p.31).

He notes the 'dreary homogeneity' about the houses there – 'pretentious and uniformly vulgar…surrounded by tropical fruit trees, exotic shrubs and vines camouflaging the lack of architectural imagination…[where] rich is big…and most of the houses are not entirely visible from the streets' (p.31). Travelling through the 'crazy, cart–wheeling world of man–made chaos' that are the Dhaka streets to the suburb of Estrakon to visit the esteemed 'God man' Maulana Khawja Rahmatullah Azad, the Imam, he observes the scene:

> [There are] narrow dirt lanes which branch off the main road and end like amputated limbs of undernourished war children. The thoroughfare pulsates with the 'discordant jangle of blaring horns, bells, smoke-belching vehicles and brittle tempers. Trucks, buses, cars, cycle rickshaws, bicycles, hand-pushed carts, scooter taxis, pedestrians and animals mingle and move without the aid of lights or any awareness of traffic rules (p.43)

The *Imam* lives in a massive 'triple-storeyed mansion surrounded by an unscalable brick wall which is topped with pieces of broken glass and rusty barbed' (p. 43). Inside the residence there are the obvious trappings of wealth: 'the waxed mosaic floor…covered with a vinaceous Shiraz carpet…satin-covered bolsters' and ninety-nine framed photographs of dignitaries and political leaders (p.46). The scene highlights the vast gulf between two sections of the Bangladeshi society. This telling recreation of place exudes not only a sense of revulsion and antagonism to the blatant opulence in the midst of poverty and despair, but also a repudiation of religious leaders who prey on the faith of simple people. All places revisited seem to exemplify the social inequities that Iqbal has spent eighteen years trying to escape.

For Iqbal, home has become a foreign – even a despised – location, for it contravenes the social conscience of this protagonist, who perceives only too clearly the yawning chasm between the wealth of a few and the degradation of the many, and this is the reality he is confronted with everywhere he goes. He appears not only 'deterritorialized' but 'psychologically destabilized' (Appadurai, 2009, p.16). For him 'the past is now not a land to return to in a simple polemics of memory' (Appadurai, 2009, p. 29). One could almost suggest that he has

acquired a distanced gaze through this focus on difference but such a stance would presuppose a positioning on a moral high ground and Iqbal does not take this attitude. He is riven with guilt and an overwhelming sense of powerlessness at the nation's [and his own] betrayal of the values of social justice and equity that were at the forefront of the idealistic student movement that he had supported so ardently in his youth. This intuition appears to be borne out in his ruminations about the homes of his boyhood friends when he visits them there, yet there still appears to be an almost haptic connection to the environing landscapes which underlies the felt revulsion.

The trip to Wari to meet his old boyhood friend, Iftiqar, is a grim journey into his guilt- ridden past. In the slum of Wari he encounters the shadow of a man he had known in his youth, living in a hovel in unmitigated squalor amid 'the sheaf of unopened letters…..teabags, a manual typewriter, cigarette packets….a bar of soap touching a mouldy loaf of bread…[and] on either side of a small bed…rusty trunks crammed with books' (p.118). His visit to the newspaper offices of *The Voice*, once the hub of left-wing activity, reveals a building gutted by fire . The room resembles a

> neglected godown…with cobwebs hanging from the ceiling'. Everything about the place speaks of impermanence – books in cardboard boxes and massive tea chests, heavy rolls of newsprints, envelopes, glue, manual typewriters scattered across the room' (p.264).

If Iqbal needed any further sign of the erosion of idealism and the insidious manifestation of power, then the empty room in the office with a noose dangling from the ceiling is the tangible evidence of the failure of the glorious promise of a new society. It was the place where their friend Ajit, a Hindu and a Communist, was strangled by the investigating officers after the death of Mujibur Rahman.

The Australian landscape that these Asian protagonists encounter is marked by the process of "deterritorialisation" and "displacement", that is, by the movement and shifting from a grounded sense of place to an unfamiliar and strange space

(Appadurai, 2009, p.16). Iqbal's isolation and loneliness is also evident in Australia, particularly after the breakdown of his marriage to the schoolteacher Michelle. His recollections of his home in the 'wintry city' of Ballarat with Michelle and Nadine are imbued with a palpable sense of nostalgia:

> I think of the weekends that used to be. A Saturday awakening with Nadine's cold nose and hard elbows urging me out of bed. The comforting awareness of Michelle sleeping next to me… Arguments over the Friday evening dishes in a sink full of greasy cold water….Now [I] miss the secure boredom of the familiar routine (p.61)

Said in *Orientalism* quotes the French philosopher Gaston Bachelard in describing what he calls the 'poetics of space', where 'the inside of a house acquires a sense of intimacy, secrecy, security, real or imagined, because of the experiences that come to seem appropriate to it' (1978, p.54). Thus the home acquires 'an imaginative or figurative value' that can be named and felt and consequently experienced as 'haunted or homelike, or prison-like or magical … [thus] acquiring an emotional even rational sense by a kind of poetics of space' (1978, p.55).

Juxtaposed with these are the flashbacks to Iqbal's father-in-law's home in Camberwell, Victoria, where he feels unwelcome and even judged as different, the outsider in an Anglo-Celtic world, barely tolerated and forced to endure gatherings with people who resent his intrusion into their world. Michelle's fateful conversation about their imminent separation takes place at the Jam Factory on a 'tempestuous Melbourne day… [as] the wind howled and tore through the streets' (p.67). These memories are mitigated, however, by his trip with his good friend Theo to Geelong along the Great Ocean Road and the balmy September in Apollo Bay where even a sunset is attributed the feelings of gloom and depression that haunt him continuously. Intermingled with these memories are his impressions of another place and another time, of 'the insecurity of curfewed nights. The darting shadows. Gunfire and explosion. The dreaded knock on the door'(p.119). All of these memories plague him like grim voices from a benighted place.

Despite his aversion to the blatant displays of wealth and his acute awareness of his family's insulation from the grim realities of poverty, he registers a strong objection to the sale of the ancestral estates at Shopnoganj. He experiences 'anguish and frustration, a frantic desire to claw and destroy the intruders… [and a longing] for a restoration of the pristine order and the ancient cycle of life' (p.279). He yearns 'for the security [he] once knew' (p.279). It is also in this final return to the home of his childhood the last time that he finally visits the graves of his ancestors 'cordoned off by a low cement wall, cracked and broken at the top and the sides [with] weeds and grass [sprouting] from crevices'. Here he contemplates the headstone of the most notorious of the Chaudharies, fabled for his wealth and arrogance and finally realises that death has 'deprived him of his legendary powers, turning him into a helpless mortal, 'humbled to the commonality of a resting place he shares with his lesser known relatives' (p.289). For Iqbal this appears to mark reconciliation with his past and he makes his decision to return with Nadine to Australia.

Iqbal's Australian-born daughter, Nadine shows the same confident ties to Australia that are evident in Edwina, Gooneratne's youngest protagonist. Granting that she is still too young to forge strong affiliations with Bangladesh, it is equally apparent that for her this is a merely a visit to another place, negotiated under the watchful presence of family, who attempt to shield her from the visible evidence of poverty and destitution. Except for her one encounter with a woman breaking stones in the street en route to the newspaper offices, her experience of the place is confined to shopping sprees and celebrations in the ancestral homes of her family. Home for her is most definitely Australia and it is apparent that Iqbal's decision to return here is predicated on his desire to provide her with the security that this implies.

This novel seems to present contradictory understandings of identity, location and cultural distancing. Ledgister (2001), in an incisive analysis entitled *Growing up in Two Elsewheres* states:

> I found myself struggling to explain that where my parents live was not "home", that where I was born was not "home", that the places I had lived had never been "home". In clearer words, that home for me was wherever I happened to be…Home is what I carry with me…elsewhere is everywhere (Ledgister, 2001)

Where are you from? This is a question frequently asked of the diasporic individual. For the migrant though, the more fundamental question asked of him/her, as in the case of Iqbal Chaudhuray seems to be "Where do I belong?' as he undertakes 'the pain of endless journeys' first leaving his homeland for Australia and then returning to Bangladesh to visit his family after an absence of eighteen years. It is the same question that he takes away when he makes his decision to return. In this context it must be noted that he does not record the same sense of rejection that Castro's ancestral figure experiences or the ambivalences of the Sri Lankan migrants. For him Australia appears to be the place he seems more nearly to regard as ' home'.

The accommodation to the 'Third Space' is not a simple choice of acculturation to a new and different destination, but rather a spectrum of positions within this final positioning as is apparent in the experiences of the protagonists discussed here. For Lo Yun Shan, the ancestral figure *in Birds of Passage*, it is a return to China, despite his professed desire to settle here. His flight from the law after the murder of the two miners, despite the fact that it was an act of self-defence makes that dream impossible. For Edward, Gooneratne's ancestral protagonist, the return is to Sri Lanka, to the duties and responsibilities of his inheritance. However, he returns as a translated and transformed individual, both literally and figuratively. Embracing the cultural diversity of his native land, his translations of Sanskrit and Buddhist texts into Tamil, Sinhala and English indicate both a re-reading of ancient traditions and a liberal humanism that transcends hierarchies of Eurocentric imperialism and colonisation which had coloured his perception initially.

For first generation migrants like Bharat and Navaranjini, there appears to be no closure. They depart from Australia expecting to make their home in Sri Lanka

only to find that their homeland is irrevocably changed. Their return to Australia appears to be a deliberate choice, but for Bharat the nostalgia and longing for the lost home constantly intrudes on his consciousness. Navaranjini appears more settled here, going on to become the model migrant – successful, confident and recognised for her achievements. Their tragic deaths in a plane crash seem to suggest that adaptation to their final destination must remain unresolved, perhaps highlighting the tensions involved in finally accepting Australia as the place where they belong.

For Iqbal Chaudhary the same quandary appears to underlie his decision to return to Australia. Although he reconnects with his family in Bangladesh, his decision to return to Australia is motivated by his need to create a home of his own, for his daughter Nadine, with a second chance possibly, of salvaging his marriage. He has a network of friends and a community that he belongs to, but his memories are haunted by the home that he has forfeited in making this choice. Perhaps for him the future will be a constant search for a horizon, but that search will be enunciated from his Third Space in Australia. In an article written for the *Australian Humanities Review* (2001), Khan stresses:

> Those of us who have reluctantly experienced displacement or willingly shifted our cultural base, find our own private ways of locating and perceiving ourselves beyond the obvious co-ordinates of a street, a suburb, a town or a passport. I am no exception in this quiet search and my vehicle of travel is writing fiction (Khan, 2001)

In Gooneratne's novel *A Change of Skies* and Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments t*he male characters appear to focus on landmarks in urban Australia, those associated with power and control such as the university, media outlets, the mosques, the schools, all of which appear to destabilise their sense of belonging to Australia. Bharat in particular appears to register little interest in the natural landscape, although it must be acknowledged that Iqbal mentions excursions into the bush, the desert and the ocean. Within Australia this placement could foreshadow these characters' diminishment and subordination within the landscape, for they appear

to develop few experiential relationships with place. In their representation of the landscape they appear to be pitting themselves against an environment that is going to make them withdraw into what appears to be uneasy even defensive positions, and project their feelings of otherness in either detachment from community or in violent outbursts apparently reflecting the frustrations of a marginalised group. In fact, the male characters' desire to control the landscape appears to diminish them. In Navaranjini, however, there is an apparent connection to the natural environment, which appears to provide a deeper, more haptic sense of connection to place. It seems that she has negotiated the uncharted territory of the Third Space relatively successfully, in accommodating to her new homes in Australia. That happier accommodation renders her erasure from the novel a tragic waste, precluding the possibility perhaps of exploring further transformation in the Third Space and whether that transmutation is more accessible to the female migrant.

For the second-generation migrants, Seamus and Edwina, Australia is their home. With the latter there is no equivocation about her realisation that she belongs in Australia. Her trip to Sri Lanka is only a planned temporary encounter for purposes of a field study before a return 'home' to Australia and her adoptive parents. Seamus and Edwina move through the landscape with the confidence of the native-born. Both have strong familial ties to Australian adoptive parents that anchor them to this continent and provide them with the emotional stability to conduct an exploration into their past. In this way they appear to connect the tenuous threads that still link them to another space, another culture and another landscape. So in effect they represent what Rushdie and Bhabha characterise as 'translated' individuals. However, there is need for a more nuanced approach to this move of drawing boundaries between homeland and diaspora, between citizens and displaced persons, between home and away, for in a transnational world, border crossings appear to highlight far more complex entanglements and interdependencies than is offered by polarities.

CHAPTER 3

REPRESENTATIONS OF PEOPLE

'These voices you hear are the accumulation of the imaginations of all your predecessors. You are picking up signals reaching you from well beyond your childhood, far back from your ancestry'.

*Birds of Passage (*Castro, 1983, p.51*)*

'…the truth is I've rather come to like Australia and Australians'

A Change of Skies (Gooneratne, 1991, p.198)

'…there is an unfamiliarity about everything I hear and see. It is like looking at life with borrowed eyes'.

Seasonal Adjustment (Khan, 1994, p.7)

Edward Said in his memoir *Out of Place* confesses to a persistent sense of dislocation, an enduring sensation that he was 'out of place' (1999, p.1), unable to 'fit in' with the world of his parents and four sisters, with the American school that his father sends him to or, later, as an academic in the US. Homi Bhabha asserts that understandings of cultural displacement of various minority groups do not always 'follow a centre and peripheral mode but rather in another's country which is also your own [you] encounter yourself in a double movement (2004, p. xxv). In this context, it is essential to consider the positioning of the narrator or the experiencing consciousness in highlighting 'conflicts, inconsistencies and silences under the smooth textual surface [and foregrounding] what is lost and what is gained in the translation of life in a written text' (Ommundsen, 2004, p.71).

In the three novels there are definite congruences, resonances and dissimilarities in the perceptions of the Chinese, the Sri Lankan and the Bangladeshi migrants – the gaze turned by the alien *Other* – on the dominant cultural group and the returning gaze of the Australian on the migrant *Other*. Equally, this perceptual gaze is also trained on a network of family and friends in the former homeland as also on parallel figures in the new context. While the narrators are given representational roles as members of particular Asian migrant communities, there are obvious perceptual differences in countering stereotypes arising from relocation within a profusion of cultural groups with different and differing perspectives of the migrant and vice versa. vanden Driesen states that 'within these texts the Australian is not only construed as the antagonistic and rejecting Ugly Australian but also as friend, neighbour, lover, wife, surrogate parent or teacher, an important acculturating factor inducting the Asian into the Australian way of life' (2005, p.224).

In *Birds of Passage* there appears to be a distancing in the reactions of the ancestral figure Lo Yun Shan to the patriarchal figure in his family, although there is also an unambiguous sense of filial respect for elders. Lo Yun Shan's description of his father as an opium smoking elder, in his long embroidered

gown inviting his son to listen to the drift of jasmine petals (p.2) or to acquire opium in the market place of the port appear indicative of the degeneration of the old codes of family and moral responsibility to the social group. Far from being the source of wisdom and patronage Shan's father appears derelict in his duty as the patriarch of the clan in his son's view. On Shan's return from one of his trips, his reaction to the news of his mother's death is one of inarticulate grief. He ruminates that in the last years of her extended illness she seemed to have become a 'shadow' living as women do 'with anxieties that are unfathomable to men', silently bearing 'the terrible responsibility of life' (p.10). Men, on the other hand, abound with the 'pragmatism of life' (p.10). These perceptions register not only a breakdown of those family structures that give coherence to people's lives, but a psychological rupture indicative of what Castro calls 'melancholy', a 'dissonance' (2008, p.1) regarding the traditional society whose rules Shan knows and, more particularly, the people that connect him to it.

A sense of negativity also pervades Shan's intuitions of people in the wider Chinese context. The scenes of abject poverty assail him everywhere he goes. With each visit to the port he notices a 'worsening despair on the faces of the people'. He adds:

> Children defecated in the streets. Old men, finding the squat beyond their years, and without a thought of modesty, urinated thin, yellow streams pulsing from their cupped hands. (p.5)

These signs indicate the slow erosion of a society that is under threat. He observes the fishermen whose 'harvest from the sea seems…a harvest of violence, of thievery, of piracy' intuiting an apparent disconnection from the age-old values of balance and harmony (p.11). The urban dwellers he observes are far removed from the people of the village 'constrained to live within a social framework' that respects the 'sanctity of life' (p.10). With remarkable perspicacity he observes the Westerners in China as 'a foreign race…whose industry is a hundred times vaster and more precise' (p.7) and which therefore poses a threat to an ancient society with no experience of dealing with such a contingency. Increasingly, being a

teacher, he comes to think independently and make his own decisions to come to Australia in search of gold. He acknowledges:

> In this I shared the characteristics with the Kwangtung people. We are businesslike; we want to get on in the world. We live for barter, trade, catties of rice – the essentials of society and communality (p.2).

The voyage to Australian shores aboard the *Phaeton* is a grim matter of survival with the men crowded below decks, subsisting on meagre rations and very little water. He registers admiration for the unnamed Shanghainese man who 'struggled from among this mass of bodies, like a leviathan' (p.34) to save the group from being smothered by massive tea chests and admits to a deep sorrow for the old man, his immediate neighbour, who dies and is buried at sea.

Shan disembarks at a town called Robe to encounter the ostracizing gaze of the local people who come in droves to gawk at 'all these moon-faced men with pigtails stepping ashore from another age (p.73). The moment of arrival on the Australian mainland seems not only to capture the tensions of a border crossing in both the literal and metaphoric sense, but also to highlight what Rey Chow refers to as 'the politics of admittance' (Khoo, 2003, p.101). Chow argues that this implies a two way exchange, 'a process of recognition and acceptance' as well as 'an act of…surrender of oneself in recognition of the rules of the [host] society (Khoo, 2003, p.101). This appears to be the situation confronting the two groups. The Chinese prospectors barter and buy supplies from a local population who seem 'friendly and helpful', but they stop short of venturing the four or five hundred miles to Ballarat 'leading a hundred Celestials on a pilgrimage to the Gold Mountain' (p.78). This seems to indicate that the problems of entry are problematised by negative stereotypes embedded in the consciousness of the Australian society of that period. Lawson's argument regarding settler/Aboriginal relations could be applied equally to the context of Asian migration. He states that within settler cultures 'mass anxieties about boundaries…"threw up" the nation's inability to read coexistence, to understand the grammar of proximity … signalling…the reinvocation of the old tropes…that viscerally register the anxiety,

the horror of proximity.' (2005, p.1212). These recurrent themes and images are urgently resurrected within this novel, perhaps to register Castro's understanding that 'culture is absorption and a surrendering, a dynamic give and take, not a static decree' (Castro, 1999, p.27).

Shan falls in with three other prospectors: a Shanghainese whom he now comes to know as Tzu – 'a great optimist and a good worker', Wang – 'a wily Northerner with a pockmarked face', and Ah Pan – 'a sweet-faced boy who dreams a good deal and is totally useless in practical matters' but who keeps up their 'spirits with his constant singing' (p.78). In this instance, Castro foregrounds a perspective that emphasises very human and humane perceptions of the Chinese negating the barrage of racial stereotyping they faced from the mainstream Australian population of the day.

There are parallels and echoes, contrasts and patterns that emerge and dissolve into each other in the course of this novel. The text traces the expedition of Lo Yun Shan from China to Australia and back again to a monastery in China which is a mirror image of Seamus' journey from a perceived alienation in Australia to Europe and back again to Australia where he is finally located. The echoes and patterns in Shan's life – the racial '*othering'* and the downright bigotry and intolerance faced on the Victorian goldfields – reflect what Abdul Jan Mohammed alludes to as the 'Economy of the Manichean Allegory,' a code of signification which validates the superiority of the European while denigrating the 'worthless alterity' of the 'racial Other' (Ashcroft et al, 1995, p.18-19). On arrival at Ballarat he learns of the situation for the Chinese diggers from a successful entrepreneur, Big Wah (a relative of his mother's):

> There is a license of £1 a month for diggings. Some people haven't been getting this license. The Chinese have been blamed…there is talk among the whites of forming an anti-Chinese league that means we could be chased out and our gold confiscated…That would be the end for some of us. You'll never go home and you'll become slaves. (p 76)

Shan observes the hatred of the Australian miners that spirals out of control at the

Lambing Flats riots. The description of the attack, saturated with images of brutality, seems to stem from the Manichean perception of the Chinese as 'irremediably different' and therefore deserving of their fate.

> A brass band led the mob into battle…There were shouts. Confusion. A fire was started…A horseman picked up a Chinaman by the pig-tail at full gallop. It was skilfully done except the pigtail came off in his hand… [and] one of the leaders of the mob, a gap-toothed Irishman kneed his horse into a struggling shape under piles…of canvas. He whooped with pleasure. (p.113)

The gap-toothed Irishman, Clancy, Shan's nemesis, is a potent figure in the novel, especially in the context of the Eureka Stockade. The name invokes a recollection of Banjo Paterson's character Clancy, an iconic figure of Australian bush lore, commemorated in film, television and even the ten-dollar note. Louie asserts that in the characters of Clancy and Shan, Castro is setting out to 'debunk… populist cultural myths' (2005, p.201). The Clancy we meet on the goldfields is no hero; he is a fugitive from justice, abandoned by his mistress Mary Young who is with child, Shan's child. The irony here is that Mary describes him as 'full of depression, moping about feeling sorry for himself', a man who has never recovered from the defeat of the Eureka Stockade, who exorcises his eroded self-esteem by getting 'savage', by taking a whip to her and then 'following her around like a dog begging forgiveness' (Castro, 1983, p.123). He has substituted for his glorious ideals of an utopian future (espoused by the supporters of Eureka) this relentless pursuit of Shan and Mary, a pursuit prompted by fears of miscegenation and notions of protecting white women from a dreaded fate. This further indicates the fear and loathing of Asians in that period.

Clancy's perceptions of Shan are marked by an ambiguous recognition of his essential humanity on the one hand and an incoherent fear of his alienness. A nascent understanding of Shan that emerges in his observation that 'the Chinaman looked lonely and isolated, a human being like himself, lost in the current of ignorance that was sweeping the goldfields' (p.117) is swept away in the xenophobic hysteria of the Lambing Flats riots where he hunts down the fleeing

Celestials with a singular virulence. This seems to be instigated not only by the frenzy of the mob but also by his own psychological need to inflict pain, for he acknowledges: 'Cruelty was like an itch. The more you scratched, the itchier it became' (p.133).

Clancy's ideals for the great egalitarian society that was the dream of Eureka are clearly enunciated in a conversation he has with Shan at the diggings. He expounds his 'ideas of brotherhood' that 'made no distinctions between race and religion' and emphasises the hardship they all share:

> [This] shared experience should unite them, give all men, white, yellow and black a common cause in forming a new society. (p. 115)

However, shortly after, he aligns himself with the organisers of the attack who publish a notice that declares all diggers were 'morally justified in driving out the hated Heathen' (p. 118).

Louie observes that 'Castro's apparently marginal and vulnerable heroes in *Birds of Passage* betray a deliberate attempt by their creator to question accepted cultural norms and symbols of manhood in both the Chinese and Australian traditions' (2005, p.186). In doing so, he invents his own cultural icons and myths as a 'disturbance to the core,' because these men operate from the peripheries of their societies (Louie, 2005, p.186). Although they themselves are 'detached from the societies in which they live' they nevertheless represent a 'march from the margins' towards the centre (Louie, 2005, p.187). Lo Yun Shan for instance creates instability within the centre as Clancy acknowledges. He is not the unrepresentable '*Other'* as the racist epithets directed at him seem to insinuate but a man 'lonely and isolated, a human being like himself' (Louie, 2005, p.117). Clancy could not dismiss them as 'a blot on the landscape [that] he could ignore quite easily… [because] they worked most of the time…never made much noise…never lazed around…abided by the law, had some sort of reverence for old age… [they] kept to themselves' (p.113). In view of these sterling qualities, he 'wonders why they were hated to the point of violence' (p.113).

Lawson's notion of the way 'cultural rhetoric' functions in settler narrative tropes by 'rearranging the circumstances of [their] history and of [their] social relations…to foreclose on certain possibilities for social relations' is particularly pertinent (2005, p.1216). Clancy's recognition 'that what is "ours" may also be "theirs" plays into the settler anxieties' over the issue of possession of land, community, of who is included and who is denied entry into the nation (Lawson., 2005, p.1214).

Despite his rational and moral sensibility telling him 'it was wrong', he shapes up for battle, unable to exorcise the binarisms embedded in the myth of racial purity. Clancy recalls the historical, cultural and ideological concepts that inform the thinking of his peers, 'the brotherhood of all men', yet goes on to say: 'but they are not like us…they have lower standards…Is that arrogance? Yes, they are poor men. Better them than mandarins' (p.113). Their final confrontation is equally ironic, for Shan overpowers and kills Clancy, an event that, as Ouyang (cited in Louie,2005, p.205) points out, 'is perhaps the only instance in Australian fiction where a Chinese kills a white man fighting in his own defence'. In the later story of Seamus, it is equally interesting that Bill Groves, the twin brother of Jack, is also known as Fitzpatrick or Clancy 'with a past as shadowy as the pine forest bordering the house' (p.15).

Castro's contemporary protagonist Seamus O'Young candidly states:

> I'm not Irish. I am in fact an ABC: that is, an Australian-born Chinese…Yes ABC: There is no country from which I came and there is none to which I can return. I do not speak Chinese …I am a little strange' (p.8)

This intuition is predicated on his appearance – a hybrid of Australian and Chinese descent – so that as an orphan he is consigned to a special school because 'they thought [he] was mentally handicapped on account of (his) Mongoloid appearance (p. 9). In fact his best friend at the Catholic orphanage describes him as having "a moonface, with black hair sticking out of the top… eyes [like]slits…flat nose and …yellow skin" (p.10).

A sense of estrangement from the society is deeply rooted in the psyche of this protagonist. His stay, at the Boys' Home, is a grim matter of endurance as he copes with racial taunts ('Ching Chong Chinaman'), which go largely ignored by Father O'Shea who is deaf to the relentless bullying. Later, during a period of homelessness in the metropolitan centre of Sydney, he takes refuge in libraries, bookshops and park benches, and becomes what Giese calls one of the "lost souls" (Ommundsen, 2004, p.70), marginalised by continuous racist invective: 'You bloody Chink. Garn. Go back to where you come from' (p.36). During bus rides, he endures the speculative gaze of people who constantly stare at him: 'Some were gazes; flickering, momentary, unpractised. Others ranged from aggression to curiosity' (p.37). Seamus O'Young identifies his reaction to the exclusion, clearly noting: 'That was my first lesson in learning how to be ignorant. It was a form of alignment. I got along better then' (p.36). His observation shows how the traces of past events infiltrate into personal consciousness and last long after a particular occurrence.

Ien Ang identifies this 'curious double bind…as the common experience of members of the Chinese diaspora [with] the diasporic imagination…steeped in continuous ambivalence…highlighting the fundamental precariousness of diasporic identity construction, its positive indeterminacy' (1997, p.1).This perhaps is the fundamental reason for Seamus O'Young's quest for knowledge of his identity, of the past which constantly intrudes on his consciousness and underlines his affinity to the Chinese prospector whose journal fragments he finds quite by accident in the home of his foster parents, Edna and Jack Groves. Ang also asserts that 'this exclusion provokes similar perceptions of segregation and alienation among people 'when they feel ostracized in the place "they're at" as a result of rampant racial discrimination – an experience any person of Chinese descent living in the West will know. That is to say, their permanent visibility, like that of blacks, renders their integration and assimilation into mainstream culture problematic' (1997, p.2). On the subject of hyphenated Chinese identities – Chinese-Americans or Chinese-Australians – Seamus O'Young definitely fits this category with his blue eyes and Chinese appearance. Lata Mani (cited in Ang

1997, p1) avers that these individuals labour under 'an abstract, depoliticized, and internally undifferentiated notion of "difference" in the course of their daily lives'. Brian Castro reinforces this understanding, asking 'What did it mean to look Chinese?' and goes on to explain that he 'became from that moment a 'Chink', defensive, anxious, unsure'. He states quite explicitly that with his 'cultural background [he] was an outsider within outsiders (Castro, 1999, p.11).

On the other hand Seamus' relationship with his Australian foster parents, Edna and Jack Groves, proves that familial relationships can fulfill an individual's demand for stability, allowing one to mark out a space that is distinguishable and safe. They are viewed as 'well meaning but incompetent foster parents', the latter working 'regular hours…doggedly from 5p.m. …[being] at work by six and by eleven he would have drunk almost half a bottle of whisky which he kept on a shelf behind his bench' (p.13). Edna takes 'frequent nips out of the brandy bottle she kept in the cistern in the toilet' until by three in the afternoon 'she was quite happy as a drunk' (p.14).

These perceptions are juxtaposed with the warm reception he receives when he first makes the transition 'from a boy's home to the Groves' suburban cottage' (p.12). Jack extends a huge hand the size of a shovel, greeting him with the words "Welcome to the family" before handing him a whisky although he was twelve years old at the time. (p.13). Edna 'prepares rice dishes' until she is told that 'he did not like rice' (p.14). Later he is taken to the country property, Twin Groves, which Jack has inherited and where Seamus learns the rudiments of farming the 'unproductive soil' (p.15). Jack teaches him how to skin foxes, in a rare moment of father/son bonding. Edna imparts a love of books; it is she who finds the fragments of Shan's journal and affectionately welcomes Seamus back on his return from the Boy's Home, where he is sent after Jack's death, exclaiming 'Seamus, my darling boy….. Welcome home' (p.42). She traces his tenuous link to his Chinese ancestor during her trip to Hong Kong and informs him that she did 'find out something while she was in China ...his real name…the name was Sham or something like that…They were a clan of Tongs, these people from Kwangtung

province…a secret society' (p.135).

Edna also 'invites herself to stay with him in Anna Bernhardt's house (p. 146) during his hospitalisation following a psychotic episode during which the 'spectre of Shan', whom he comes to believe is his ancestor, haunts his consciousness. Despite the initial distanced response that characterises Seamus' perception of Edna, he admits: 'Eddie was the name I had always called her. She was never mother to me, though I could have called her that through affection' (p.42). She does indeed remain the most significant anchor in his life, her home becoming the centre of psychological security and comfort. This is particularly significant given his status as an orphan and a hyphenated Chinese Australian, lacking a definite sense of connection to people to help anchor him to a particular context. There is a gradual movement from isolation to connectedness with familial networks that serve to attach him to a sense of family which provides a sense of a real home.

In this respect he is noticeably different from Lo Yun Shan, the ancestral figure whose passage through Australia is a lonely quest to belong and further to establish meaningful family connections in the hostile space of 1850s Australia. For him there are no welcomes, no kinship groups who recognise and accept him or who teach him how to adapt and live in the new space. Despite the misery and isolation of life on the goldfields Shan's yearning for friendship and familial connections is articulated in his poignant comment on the community he can only observe from a distance. He states 'But there is this warmth of human beings, this throbbing life that attracts me. I know not why' (p.104). In this context Freud's notion of the 'uncanny' is very effective in highlighting the double pull of contradictory impulses showing that 'contradictory impulses and directions' often arise not only from the 'conscious mind but also from the unconscious or repressed desires' (Mummery, 2005, p.29). So it seems that Lo Yun Shan's desire to remain in Australia, to make his home here appears perplexing, even incomprehensible, especially in view of the relentless exclusion and cruelty visited on the Chinese in the goldfields.

In considering Seamus' attachment to an erased Chinese identity, Ien Ang highlights 'the strong emotional pull China exerts on its diaspora…[a] passionate attachment to the homeland' despite the lack of any tangible links with the imaginary homeland of China (Ang,1993). One reason offered is that migration has imposed on diasporic subjects a 'double bind' which arises from 'the compulsion to explain, the inevitable positioning of oneself as deviant vis-à-vis the taken-for-granted' hegemony of the nationality' (Ang, 1993). This is apparent in Castro's *Birds of Passage.* On the one hand Seamus is '*othered'* on the basis of his appearance, his body carrying the visible traces of his Chinese inheritance, and yet, as a child of mixed parentage, his blue eyes indicate his Anglo-Celtic heritage. During his sojourn in Chinatown 'he feels one with the people but then the strange tones of their language serve to isolate him further. Thus one observes in Seamus O'Young, the 'strange fusions' that Rushdie identifies when he states:

> The effect of mass migration has been the creation of radically new types of human beings who root themselves in ideas rather than places, in memories as much as in material things: people who have been obliged to define themselves – because they are so defined by others – by their otherness: people in whose deepest selves strange fusions occur… between what they were and where they find themselves (Rushdie, 1982, p.124-25).

The sense of disconnection and aloofness from others is also apparent in Seamus' relationships with other Australian characters he encounters, such as Mr Feingold, his first employer at Surry Hills who hires him to work in his garment factory. There he works among 'women in rows…most of them middle aged' and looking 'like migrants' (p.12). He confesses to 'powerful interlinked attributes of freedom and invisibility' issuing from his awareness 'that his appearance creates around him a desolation, a metaphysical landscape as barren as the Sahara' (p.12). Seamus sees himself 'as a foreigner' although he does admit that this is 'due more to his penchant for isolation than to the boundaries marked out by reality' (p.12). This perception of 'being foreign' evokes an almost obsessive curiosity about what he calls 'the secrets of place', for he loves 'to gaze into the dark secret places in houses, behind curtains, under covers, sheets, skirts-in short, inside the skull' (p.22). Thus he becomes a 'voyeur'. This psychological shift in perception

coincides with 'the explosion of [his] sexual life, an internal masturbatory instinct linked to the need to see'. The Freudian notion of the repressed self, unable to articulate the desires and feelings that are grounded in the psyche, is apparent here and this transfers into other intimate relationships that he forms, most notably his marriage to Fatima.

Seamus O'Young describes his marriage to Fatima, a woman he meets on his travels to Europe, as a quest for a 'conjoining of…minds but never [of] our bodies'. The two 'never really discover each other sexually',their union being 'rational, seemingly dispassionate' (p.8). In fact one could almost see this relationship as bearing a curious similarity to his previous voyeuristic gaze fixed on the young female co-worker in Feingold's factory, for he acknowledges an almost accidental 'peering through a gap in the wall, or a crack in the door' at Fatima lying naked on the bed. There he sees her 'arranging her body in different positions: propping herself up on her elbows and knees so that her pendulous breasts grazed the silken bed sheet' (p.81). There appears to be almost a neutering of sexual energy that Seamus himself recognises as a form of absence.

> The absence of touch, the absence of proximity, the absence of any possibility of sexual contact, was what created Fatima's wholeness for me (p. 81)

When Fatima's new lover, the painter Marietta, moves into the home, Seamus simply observes their growing intimacy with detachment, watching 'them with their arms around each other' and even 'walking in on their lovemaking' (p. 99). He appears to be passive and almost 'neutered' by this experience. Perhaps Castro is engaged in subverting a common fallacy underlying Australian reactions to Chinese (especially during the Gold Rush period) as posing a great risk to white women of the colony. The stereotype of the lascivious, cunning Asian corrupting the morality of colonial women is neatly overturned in this representation of Seamus O' Young.

In fact Seamus turns out to be ill. One cannot tell if his impotence can be attributed to this, but he is diagnosed with 'Thalasaemia…a blood

disorder…peculiar to people from the Mediterranean'. He adds that it is also found in China, Indonesia and India, and its 'symptoms include Mongolism, enlarged spleen, folded eyelids, indented bridge of the nose' (p.86). These are the same racial characteristics that were used to identify the Chinese as the inalienable '*Other'* in colonialist discourse.

Incidentally, on a train journey through Europe, in a literary sleight of hand so characteristic of Castro, Seamus notices the literary theorist Roland Barthes who exerts such a powerful influence on Castro's writing. The final chapter of Shan's life is written in a post-modern flourish by his descendant. Seamus glimpses his ancestor briefly, hailing him before he flees into the bush in terror. The two men's lives and narratives inextricably merge over time and space. Shan 'has seen his reader, a wriggling, blind, white-haired man spawned by the future on a river bank' (Brennan, 2008, p. 28). Seamus who has translated the life experiences of his ancestor becomes the author of the story thus proving Barthes' theory. The reader takes control of the narrative piecing together the threads of different lives. This demonstrates that enunciation in the Third Space as Bhaba conceives it 'is a process [that] estranges any immediate access to an originary identity or a 'received' tradition (1994, p. 3). In other words Shan's story is collapsed into Seamus' with the latter articulating another version of the narrative from yet another site.

In *Looking for Estrellita*, Castro confesses to an abiding interest in 'the particularity of language… [and] the tensions whether productive or destructive of the lived experience of cultural displacement'(1999, p. vii). These tensions are apparent in the dual narration of Seamus O'Young, an Australian-born Chinese, and Lo Yun Shan, the ancestral figure. Both narrators exhibit a sound understanding of the Australian way of life which is demonstrated in the dexterous use of the dual homodiegetic mode of narration. In fact this novel is unique in its blending of foci on both content and form of telling, revealing Castro's stated purpose of writing from the 'inside' to the 'outside' – from the private to the public domain (Castro, 1999).

The artistry of Castro's language, the melancholic descriptions of diffident and anxious protagonists and the range of other characters like Clancy and Tzu, particularly in the representation of their psychological states, resonates with readers in the ways he creates the realities of displaced, disorientated individuals struggling to survive marginal existences. The adroitness of his word play, Sham/Shan, indicates the instability of identity. Shan's final representation of Australia as 'a golden dream' indicates his original purpose in coming here, but equally it connotes an illusion of what might have been. As a post-modern writer, Castro deliberately avoids the marked linearity of the realist novel, choosing instead the playfulness, the inventiveness, the wizardry of magic realism in the construction of his central protagonists who have a long conversation with each other across time and space (a century in fact). The blending, fusing and reinvention of each, the collapsing of one identity into the other before yet another recreation of self illustrates his stated purpose that 'writing, like ordinary life is actually a muddle and a feeling of one's way through darkness…a making of incisions against the determinisms of God or Nature or whatever limits that have been imposed upon us' (Castro, 1999, p.186).

In Gooneratne's novel, *A Change of Skies*, Edward (the ancestor of the Sri Lankan academic Bharat Mangala Devasinha) is aware, like Lo Yun Shan, of his privileged background. He knows he will inherit the *Walauwa* and the extensive tea estates of his father, the Mudaliyar. His expedition to Australia takes the opposite route to the one mapped out for him, which was an English education in the imperial centre – London. Bharat observes:

> His departure became in time, part of [the] family's history, part real and part as fantastical as the tale of the invisible prince(p 6).

In Edward's journey to Australia aboard the *SS Devonshire* in 1882 he hears Capt. Flathead speak disparagingly of this [traditional] style of dress and ornament as being unduly effeminate, causing him to wonder 'whether that --- is an Arthur or a ---ing Martha' (p.50). For his part, he regards the Captain as 'rough and uncultivated, lacking in education and deep thinking' but good-

humoured and kindly (p.53). However, like Castro's ancestral figure, Lo Yun Shan's attitude to the working class, there is simultaneously an interrogation – one could even assert, a rejection – of norms of class hierarchies in Edward's undoubted empathy with the inferior classes of his people over the 'gross injustices and inequalities' that appear to be endemic in the Sri Lankan society (p.55). He cannot recall his father or many *Mudaliyars* among the clans seriously discussing issues pertaining to the tenants who work their estates (p.55). His encounter with a petitioner seeking redress 'in a matter relating to the allocation of land' and later his admiration of Australian society, where 'men meet apparently on equal terms' and their behaviour is 'unlike the subservient and fawning manners of the counter clerks at Cargill's and Miller's in Colombo' (p.103), represent a critique of his people for their unquestioned acceptance of imperial authority and class-based hierarchies.

Edward's sojourn in Australia brings him face to face with the fear and loathing of the Anglo-Australian majority in Bundaberg after a group of Sri Lankan indentured workers are confronted by a group of enraged locals determined to stop the import of cheap labour. His account of the 'altercation at Bundaberg' when a crowd of locals gather on the wharf at MacKay to vigorously protest and hurl considerably large stones at the disembarking labourers is initially interpreted as an 'outlandish custom of Queensland' before realisation of the hostility dawns on the group. In this context, it is necessary to acknowledge that imperialism has long-term effects in many different kinds of societies including those settler/invader societies like Australia where 'the continuing process of imperial suppressions and exchanges' work' to reinforce denigration of the *Other* (Ashcroft et al, 1995, p.3). These negating processes tend to surface periodically in successive generations. Both Castro and Gooneratne trace the impact of this recurring antagonism on the descendants of the ancestral figures who are the first to come to Australia.

From a post-colonial perspective Edward's description of the response of the 'embattled [Sri Lankan] coolies' to the Anti Coolie League attack, with the men

drawing their knives from their belts and 'rushing upon the Leaguers with truly bloodcurdling cries' (p.77), underscores a subtle resistance to colonialist perspectives. This resistance critically undercuts – thematically and formally – the discourses that support myths of power, the race classification and the imagery of subordination. Like Castro with his protagonists, Lo Yun Shan and Seamus O'Young, Gooneratne is engaged in mapping the dominant discourse, exposing the underlying assumptions of imperial superiority and anxiety and dismantling these assumptions from a cross-cultural standpoint. This is particularly significant in the representation of the 'coolies' as acting purposefully in defending themselves against an onslaught from hostile settlers, another situation that is rarely depicted in Australian fiction.

Edward's intuitions concerning the Australian people change dramatically as he travels around the country. In MacKay, he registers the hostility and suspicion towards the indentured labourers, who are seen as posing a greater threat because of their 'greater fluency with the English language and competent knowledge of mental arithmetic', than the 'illiterate, pig-tailed yellow-skins… whose patient industry in the goldfields of Victoria have been the cause for considerable irritation…among the inhabitants of that district' (p.75). While he marvels at the inability to distinguish between 'two such different civilisations as the Sinhalese and the Chinese, he nevertheless acknowledges that similar prejudices exist among his own people (p.75). At Badagini in Western Australia and elsewhere he encounters 'great kindness in many places especially from Joe, who 'despite differences in background and education … becomes a good companion' (p.164-165). Similarly, his close bond with Davith , a former worker on his father's estate who provides him with a home for the first few months of his residence on the cane fields, indicates an overturning of the old mythologies of class and privilege embedded in Sri Lankan culture, when transplanted into an Australian context.

It is important to note that Edward ultimately returns to his family at the *Walauwa* with a remarkably expanded vision of Australian society and its people. Unlike

Lo Yun Shan, who entertains hopes of remaining here, Edward has no intention of residing in Australia permanently. His encounters with mainstream Australians are generally more benign than Lo Yun Shan's and on the whole they indicate a changed perception of the Englishman (or Australian, for he does not differentiate between the two) 'as human as other mortals…[looking] upon the world about them as their education has taught them to look' (p.161). Perhaps the knowledge that he will go back also enables him to look on the Australians more benignly.

In the novel's younger protagonists there is a clear and perceptible movement from an initial period of bewilderment and estrangement before mainstream culture to a desire for assimilation into mainstream Australian society. This is foregrounded in the position of the dual central narrators, Bharat Mangala-Devasinha and his wife Navaranjini, who make the journey from Sri Lanka to Australia when the former is offered a position as linguist at the Southern Cross University in Sydney. There is in Bharat – even within his own Sri Lankan context – a kind of distancing that underpins his ironical comments on his wife's attempts to 'create something unique', which turns out to be a romance novel based on the popular magazines she reads. His acerbic remarks to the young Australian tourist Sandra Coquelle about his wife's relatives, his mother-in-law in particular, foreshadow the faint faultlines of ethnic difference that are to plague the marital relationship later in the novel. He observes:

> Baba's mother, unlike mine, leads a very active social life in Colombo…She likes to introduce foreign visitors to Sri Lankan life by taking them to a coffee morning at a Colombo hotel or a fashion show (p.23)

The unmistakable trace of patriarchy, masked as humour, is just as apparent here as are his ethnic prejudices.

Interestingly, it is Bharat who makes the decision to take up the post at the Southern Cross University as a visiting professor of linguistics, setting in motion the deterritorialisation' and 'displacement' that is to mark both his and his wife's existence for the next five years. In the first years of his tenure at the University,

he panoptically views his university colleagues, his neighbours and his friends – especially the Koyako's, migrants from Sri Lanka like himself – through the prisms of exile/belonging, cultural differences and similarities that inevitably mark the hyphenated Asian-Australian identity (Tan, 2002, p 241). His introduction to the staff – to professors and secretaries enigmatically named after marine life by Gooneratne (Angel Fysshe, John Dory, Kingsley Fysshe, Francesca Sweetlips) – is convivial and relaxed, with none of the formal protocols of behaviour that mark 'practice at Cambridge (and) Colombo' (p.107), where use of a professor's first name by a secretary or acknowledgement of a colleague's work was unthinkable (Lokuge, 2000, p.19). The inevitable comparison of the two contexts of Sri Lanka and Australia characterises both Bharat's and Navaranjini's perceptions of the Australians they encounter in the initial days in their new environment.

Navaranjini is consumed by a need to learn the rules of the society they immigrate to. The feelings of incomprehension, arising from such passing experiences as the lack of decorum perceived in a truck driver's casual wink and the sight of a young man with 'brightly coloured parrots swinging from his ear lobes' (p.66), capture the sense of disorientation felt by migrants displaced from a familiar sense of home into an alien space. On their first day in Australia, Navaranjini's terror over hailstones which shatter her window panes is confused with Edward's encounter with the Anti-Coolie riots, and, arming herself with a kitchen knife, she attempts to defend her husband and herself from further assaults. Even their neighbour Bruce Trevally's intervention in temporarily mending the window does little to mitigate her initial feeling of being under siege in her home, despite his breezy greeting: 'Name's Trevally. Next door, number thirty-two. Maureen and Bruce. Welcome to Australia' (p.83).

It is also significant that after he has lived in Australia for a short time, with his sense of self eroded as a result of being relegated to a racialised subject position in the perception of individuals like Professor Blackstone and other supporters of assimilation, Bharat's desire for acceptance and normality lead to his need for a

‘change of image’ as he initiates a change of their Sri Lankan names for the generic Australian names, Barry and Jean. He informs his wife that after investigating ‘user-friendly models’ (p123) to replace a burden ‘conferred on one of his ancestors in the fourteenth century’ (p.122), they would be calling themselves ‘ “Mundy” from now on. Mangala–Day”, Mun–Dy, get it?… a highly respected Australian name’ (p123). The slow erosion of his confidence and self-belief is apparent in his response to the anti-Asian diatribe which surfaces in the media. Jean remarks: ‘ “Why should you care what Blackstone says? Your eyes aren’t slits and your head doesn’t slope. It’s obvious he doesn’t mean you” ’. But his response is to snap back: “Want to bet? …Look, *We’re* Asians. *They’re* Australians. When Australians meet us, that’s what they notice first. Difference” (p.118). Later, while attending a conference at Melbourne University, he is suddenly made aware of his alienation from other delegates based on racial stereotyping:

> Nobody recognised me. Not a soul there (all of whom were WASPs, mostly Americans or Australians, though there were some Scandinavians among them, and a sprinkling of Brits (p 227)

This experience of Bharat’s seems illustrative of the theorists’ view that ‘a valid and active sense of self may have been eroded by migration’ (Ashcroft et al, 1989, p.9).

However, this very erosion of a sense of self must also be attributed, at least in part, to the awareness of difference. Stuart Hall notes: ‘Thinking about my own sense of identity, I realise that it has always depended on the fact of being a *migrant,* on the *differenc*e from the rest of you’ (cited in Crane, 2000, p.1). What Bharat/Barry appears to be wrestling with, in effect, is the ‘in-betweenness’ of his identity, which manifests itself especially during their trips between Australia and Sri Lanka and back again. This vacillation between one identity and another, between a former home and the present one in Australia, is symbolic of ‘the postcolonial condition of dislocation and cultural expatriation, a sense of belonging to one place and the simultaneous refusal to accept another’ (Crane,

2000, p. 4) that is inevitably the reality of diaspora. Navaranjini's movement from incomprehension of the Australian people to a gradual acceptance and even confidence with the people she encounters attests to her resilience and grounded sense of self. Some time after her initial culture shock regarding Australian social mores, manifested in her responses to Maureen and Bruce Trevally and her tentative initiation into suburban life (the neighbourhood barbecue, the Christmas party) Navaranjini is consumed by a need to learn the rules of the society they migrate to. However, being a full time home-maker, she is obliged to chart a different course.

Navaranjini's initial feeling of being under siege in her home is gradually dissipated by the breezy friendliness of their neighbours, the Trevallys. She notes that they do not like 'immigrant mynahs and immigrant crows', but do think 'kindly of *us* as exotics who are having difficulty sending roots into alien ground' (p. 87). Her moves toward acculturation include listening to talkback radio, where she learns of the Anti-Asian debate encouraged by academics like Professor Blackstone of the University of Woop Woop, who refers to the Sydney suburb of Cabramatta as Vietnamatta and all Asians as a blight on the homogeneity of the Australian nation. This position she fiercely repudiates, believing that Sri Lankans and Indians are the '*real Asians*' unlike the 'Far Eastern people, the Ching Chongs' (p.118).

Navaranjini's insistence on the distinctiveness of her identity as a Tamil is clearly evident in her confrontation with Professor Blackstone:

> How *dare* you!...*You*, a so-called sociologist who should know that *real* Asians would *die* before they touched charred pig meat, *you* polluting the air with meat fumes from your filthy, smelly barbie in your weed-ridden backyard…you ignorant, non-vegetarian racist. I am a Tamil…and a Hindu. Pure veg, and proud of it. What do you take me for? A pork-eating Ching Chong? (p.128).

Her diatribe, threaded as it is with Australian terminology, is a masterly subversion of the Australian idiom and colloquialisms. More importantly, it is the

cultural translation that Bhabha argues 'desacralizes the transparent assumptions of cultural supremacy and in the very act, demands a contextual specificity, a historical differentiation within minority positions (1994, p.327). Ironically, this very claim also uncovers the inherent racisms in all subjects, which Fanon asserts consign other lives to 'a state of absolute depersonalization' (cited in Bhabha, 1994, p.58). This episode, hilarious as it may be, underlines the fact that racism appears in many guises. There is no single form or direction to racial bigotry and stereotyping, but a 'range of racisms' that affect different groups in different ways (Tan, 2000: p.235). These protagonists demonstrate the remarkable jockeying for power and precedence among minority groups, who often seek to validate themselves while denigrating another still more marginal group, in a bid to prove their credentials as valid or even superior.

Another manifestation of Orientalism is the deliberate eroticisation of the 'Other' in that both Bharat/Barry and Navaranjini/Jean are subjected to the Orientalist gaze. Barry is observed as being 'distinctly boyish' as well as 'witty and charming', gaining legions of female fans after his appearances on television, all of whom are attracted not so much by his erudite explanations as by his appearance. Similarly, Jean is subject to the Australian gaze from Bruce Trevally, who confides to his friend, Jim:

> Ever seen a sari, Jim, on a good-looking girl? Well let me tell you son, there's a bare midriff on it that's God's gift to every deserving male (1994, p.101).

Maureen speculates: 'Maybe they have their tea reclining on divans and leaning against tasselled cushions like Marlene Dietrich and the Sultan in *The Garden of Allah'* (p. 99). Barry's university colleagues decry Professor Blackstone's attitudes and behaviour concerning Asians: 'Slay Asians one minute, lays them the next' (p.130). They are highly critical of the way he parades around town 'with a luscious bit of foreign exotica on his arm' (p. 131). However, while this may be the case, one needs to bear in mind the multiple and very different representations of gender.

> Gender is constituted and represented differently according to [the] differential locations within the global relations of power' and therefore 'cannot be analysed in isolation from the national and international context of inequality (Brah,1996, p.102).

Vijayasree states that women often labour under 'a sense of perpetual elsewhereness' and this 'internalised exile' is often externalized by diasporic women writers in a number of ways (2000, p.124). It is one of the modes in operation here. By giving Navaranjini a voice through the device of first person dual narration which both comments on and often refutes the perceptions and conclusions of her husband, who is the other narrator in this section of the novel, Gooneratne challenges the structure of social relations and in doing so confers agency and validity on the woman. Her letters to her mother and to her sister-in-law Vera are full of confidences, intuitions and perceptions, not only of the society and people she lives amongst in Australia but also of her husband's struggle to find stability and coherence in his new context. She ironically muses:

> From the moment we arrived in Australia, my husband started having problems with his image. Before we came to Australia, I'd no idea he *had* an image, apart from his reflection in the mirror or his shadow on the grass. But now it seemed he'd acquired one, and with it he'd acquired problems: problems connected, as far as I could make out, with the various aspects in which, he felt, he appeared to the Australians around us (p.118)

By the same token she does not appear to be as traumatised as her husband is by seeing herself in a secondary or subject position. Since she does not move in the mainstream, she remains unaware of the sexist and racist stereotyping of the Asian woman. Lokuge's view is that when Navaranjini speaks out against the racist slurs, she does so in defence of her husband, who has been devastated by what he perceives as the 'othering' gaze of the Australian on himself': 'She appears to dismiss it, dealing with it ironically and in doing so diminishes it' (Lokuge, 2000, p.30).

On their return to Sri Lanka on the eve of the civil war, both Barry and Jean appear to direct a distanced gaze upon their own people. They are appalled by the

violence of the ethnic riots, the vulgar materialism of their old friends and the erosion of cultural values, especially the values of family, manifested in the high divorce rate. Jean is confounded by her old friend Rohini's confidences that her marriage to her husband Raj is over, after learning of his infidelity via the television news. She goes on to state that she had no intention of joining 'the dreary souls playing bridge and mah-jong' having acquired a 'young man' of her own, 'the beautifully groomed Personnel Manager of the nearby Topaz Hotel' (p.241). The couple realise that nothing stays the same; home, like everything else, has changed. Barry is irked by the local bureaucracy – particularly when he is unable to even photocopy his course outlines for his classes – and by the social hierarchies in the university that need to be placated.

On his return to Australia he changes once again, abandoning his tenure in Southern Cross University to teach English as a Second Language at a Queensland University. It is a significant move that can be interpreted as a desire to make a contribution to the new homeland, but it is equally apparent that this move issues from his identification with other marginalised minorities (Lokuge, 2000). The most profound change in his life is the birth of his daughter, Edwina, and his total absorption in childrearing. However, towards the end of the novel, we witness the slow erosion of his identity with the escalation of Barry's rage at the senseless violence perpetrated by the Tamil Tigers in the civil war which breaks out in Sri Lanka and the painful barbs and slights he begins to direct against his own wife. His alignment with his Sinhala identity manifests itself in remarks on the motives of Tamil parents in Australia celebrating a genius son.

> My God, Jean, don't you see what he's getting at? A *Tamil* writes a letter about a *Tamil* child genius, who's the grandson of a *Tamil* civil servant – what's wrong with that? I'll tell you what's wrong. The bastard…is telling the world that all *Tamils* are intellectual prodigies (p.300)

One sees here the trace of demarcated borderlines of ethnic tensions erupting in the lives of individuals. Barry who was once the indulgent if paternalistic husband, in control of his life, his career, his position in society, is now a man

adrift. He no longer sees himself as the suave cosmopolitan he once was in Sri Lanka, being 'invited to tea at the Australian High Commission' (p.29) or in Australia as the media's 'Asia Expert …a human encyclopaedia containing information on everything from Abu Ben Adhem to Zen' (p.215). After resigning his position as Professor of Linguistics in Southern Cross University he becomes an ESL teacher and a restaurateur, inhabiting a domestic space which he had previously evinced no interest in or inclination to venture into.

His wife's success with the publication of her 'innovative cookbook, *Something Rich and Strange'*, which 'started screaming off the shelves from day one of publication' (p. 293), has eclipsed his earlier publication, *Lifelines*, which once attracted avid media interest. Her success and business acumen in running two eateries, *'Baba-G and Baba-Q',* and a restaurant, '*The Asian Sensation'*, appear to have superseded his academic accomplishments, judging by the fulsome account in the *Queensland Courier*, which lauds her book.

> [This is a] wholesome synthesis of East and West….Exotic ingredients drawn from many parts of the world blend with the best of wholesome, healthy Aussie tucker to create unforgettable dishes (p.293)

Destabilised and unable to re-invent himself, Barry attacks the one area of difference - his wife's ethnic identity as a Tamil, although that had not previously seemed to impact on his consciousness. In this action one can see a degree of unravelling of this character in diaspora. Bhabha describes the 'repeated negations of identity' in a diasporic individual as similar to the 'colonial identification of the subject, the splitting of the subject in his historical place' (1994, p.67). Barry appears to have reached a new psychic point in his reinvention of self, by seeing himself as marginal in the gaze of mainstream society, he projects onto his wife the same marginality that he is struggling to come to terms with. It could be speculated here that Gooneratne is celebrating the resilience and gentle good sense of Jean (foregrounding another take on feminism) while simultaneously highlighting the destabilising effect of migration on the diasporic male.

The Koyakos – also migrants from Sri Lanka – who befriend Bharat and Navaranjini when they initially arrive, can be considered another type of migrant group that are calcified in the past, consumed with Sri Lankan cultural identity, especially with morals and traditions that they believe are under threat from the contaminating, threatening and dangerous influence of Australian social values. They are determined to arrange the marriage of their daughter to a suitable Sri Lankan man. Jean observes 'the Koyakos don't like any kind of foreigner much at all and that goes for Tamils like me as well as for Australians' (p.202). Rushdie warns that those migrants who are continually haunted by their homelands or imaginary homelands face the peril of being 'mutated' and turning into 'pillars of salt' (1982, p.10).

The novel concludes with daughter Edwina's musings about her proposed trip to Sri Lanka. Here there can be found a remarkable shift in perception in the second-generation migrant. She comments on the crowd of fellow travellers observing that they are 'mostly Asians, it looks like, probably hyphenated Australians' like herself, noting ironically: 'at least twenty of the people I'd taken to be passengers aren't passengers at all, they've come…to see off a single traveller, evidently a relation. She's a white haired old lady…arms full of small parcels' (p.312). The messages to 'Auntie This' and 'Uncle That' and 'Cousin Someone Else' fill the air and the old lady promises to carry the good wishes back. Edwina notices the anxiety in her foster parents' demeanour as they caution her against eating fruit on the island and drinking unboiled water, and concludes that their apprehension is centred on her and her return to Australia. She muses that 'living between two cultures' means that she has to do 'a bit of acting…to protect [her] image'. (p. 316). She deflects the attentions of the 'pop-crazy lonely hearts from Fiji who flock around her the moment they catch sight of the *tilak* on her head' flattering her with the old lines 'You're so beautiful…you fascinate me' (p.312). Conversely, she recollects smiling vaguely at the questions of the 'Golden Oldies' who gush over her visit to her family in the old country, refraining from telling them 'there's no "family" left over there' (p. 317).

Hers is a distinctly irreverent Australian gaze, particularly in her discernment of the British colonial figures of the past and the legacy of British colonial history in Sri Lanka, an attitude probably acquired from her father, who takes a woman to task for lauding the colonial legacy: 'the history you're sitting on, Polly, is a history of colonial occupation and international bullying. Picturesque as it is, I find it quite easy to live without it' (p.270). Edwina has shortened her name to Veena 'like the musical instrument' to preclude any allusions to 'Edwina Mountbatten, the last Vicereine of India'; she insists when questioned that 'Edward' was a 'family name…my family not a British family' with no connection whatsoever to 'Edward the Seventh,' and she emphatically reinforces the point that 'Dad's grandfather's name was Edward' (p.315). She dismisses Bruce Trevally's list of the old colonial British in Sri Lanka.

> [They] went out to Sri Lanka, fell in love with the place and never went home again – George Turnour and Sir Francis Twynham and old Tom Skinner and Sir John D'Oyly and Peter Ackland' (p.313).

Edwina's perception of Maureen and Bruce Trevally is affectionate but this does not eliminate her satirical awareness of their romaticised view of Sri Lanka, particularly in their reflections about its historical past. Her laconic comment that she 'wouldn't have it any other way' living with Australians rather than her relatives in Perth reinforces Bhabha's argument of cultural transition and translation through which 'newness comes into the world' (1994, p.326). Since she is cut loose from original, familial ties, her orphan status gives her the freedom to choose where she belongs and in choosing the Trevallys as foster parents, she situates herself firmly in Australia. Furthermore, her perception that her paternal relatives, Ashoka's and Rosalie's 'fussing' over the arrangement was 'more for the look of things …than any other reason…[because of] the explaining they would have to do to all the inquisitive old ladies in the Sri Lanka Association'(p.314) indicates that her allegiances are definitely with her adoptive family. On the other hand, her ironic commentary on the Trevallys' view of Asia as 'pure fantasy land' replete with 'Maharajas and marble palaces and magic carpets' instigates a desire to puncture the 'exotic fairy tale' with revelations of

the grim reality, in which the beggars are actually 'crooks and con men', and the tea estates are run down with most of their workers seeking their fortunes in, of all places, the Middle East. (p.318). Edwina also reveals that the Koyakos' return to Sri Lanka resulted in Mr Koyako being appointed 'Minister for the Arts, Cultural Affairs and Tourism in the new government' (p.319). One could conclude that, for this family at least, the yearning for home has been assuaged with their return to the homeland.

Finally, Edwina reminisces about her parents, her grandmother's death and her mother's grief that 'there's no one left there now to call [her] Navaranjini' (p. 321). She recalls with unmistakable yearning, her mother's presence and her tenderness, her transformation from being her husband's 'shadow' to someone who struck out on her own, becoming a different person without grandstanding, 'especially not to Dad' (p. 321). Her memories of her mother's stories and her father's caustic jokes are tinged with longing for what has been lost, but her final promise to Bruce Trevally, to whom she is obviously very attached, is: 'There's no way I'd forget to come home' (p.326).

In *Seasonal Adjustment*s, Iqbal Chaudhary is a complex representation of the dislocated individual, whose responses to people in his native Bangladesh are as problematic as his perceptions of Australians. His experiences with his in-laws, particularly his father-in-law, Keith Harrington, are negative and mistrustful. He notes the latter's barely concealed prejudices. Keith hates the Japanese, but at least concedes their separate nationality.

> As for the rest of us, from the dark unknown regions of the north, we are lumped together as Asians, recognisable by [the] absence of Christian principles which outweighs any discernible difference in ethnic characteristics (p.86).

He is aware of being 'in conservative territory' (p. 145). During his meeting with friends of Michelle's family he rehearses possible topics of conversation, speculating on whether to 'discuss the stock market…or antiques…furniture restoration or beach houses or cars' all of which do not interest him in the least

(p.145). He 'braces' himself to meet 'the bland smiles and wary inquisitive eyes – the guarded expressions of polite welcome reserved for ethnic strangers' and launches into 'feigned animation about the Taj Mahal and Kashmir (p.145).

Counterpoised with this scene is his recognition of his distance from his former friends on his return to Bangladesh after an absence of eighteen years. At his parents home, over 'fizz and exploding bubbles in half-full tumblers' he observes the group with almost clinical detachment.

> [It is] a group of men locked in animated conversation…Munit, Haroon, Shafiq, Naseem, Taufiq, Khorram…most of them from university days...intelligent, ambitious and dedicated in their pursuit of bureaucratic prestige' (p.138)

Both Bhabha and Rushdie perceive the migrant position as being at the vanguard of cultural borderlines representing 'innovative potential …for change for their access to several cultural traditions' (Alexander, 2008, p.86). However, this is not the voice articulating a 'happy hybridity' with the 'felicitous suggestions that the term conveys.' (vanden Driesen, 2005, p.231). Rather it foregrounds the ambivalence of positionality with reference to both 'here' and 'there'. Furthermore, his eighteen year separation from his Bangladeshi context, from family and friends, has created a vacuum about where he belongs or more precisely how to conceptualise a valid identity in the in-between space between homeland and adoptive land.

He regards Keith Harrington, his father-in-law, as upholding what he considers to be the best qualities of the Australian:

> [He had] the immutable virtues of every decent Australian – a blind devotion to the monarchy, an active support for the policies of the RSL, a lifelong membership of the Liberal Party and an undying belief that Australia should continue to draw all its spiritual and cultural sustenance from Europe, even in the distant future. (p.86)

This pervasive feeling of alienation highlights the areas of tension arising from

belonging to both opposing sides of the cultural divide. Malak asserts that 'the structural framework of *Seasonal Adjustments* is informed by a binary conception of the hero's experiences shifting contrapuntally between two societies of diametrically diverse ethos (2005, p. 83). In fact, while it appears at first that the novel is foregrounding 'perceived irreconcilable polarities' between two vastly different and differing cultural contexts – namely Catholic/Muslim, insider/outsider, Australian/migrant – the text gives way to a multiplicity of affiliations and a 'profound preoccupation with liminality and shifting boundaries'. Malak says of these 'ambivalent affiliations' that they are embedded in the consciousness of the central protagonist (2005, p.66).

The perception of the Harringtons of Camberwell as antagonistic is explicit:

> What irks me is the calm certainty with which Keith expounds his extreme views against a changing world moving rapidly beyond his understanding and exposing him to the foreigness of secularity (p.87)

This antagonism propels Iqbal Chaudhary's determination to prevent his daughter Nadine's baptism in the Roman Catholic rite, on the grounds that adherence to a single tradition 'could impede her development as an adult', a position furiously repudiated by Keith who believes that 'if she lives here it is only right that she be brought up in the mainstream of Australian life. There is no advantage in being a fringe dweller' (p.85). This objection appears to be predicated on his earlier experiences of the sustained proselytising attempts of the 'Brothers of the Holy Cross' at the Catholic school he attended 'to brainwash…young infidels…into accepting *the true ways of our Lord Jesus Christ* (p.91). In this protagonist, there appears to be a constant overlap of experiences in Australia with earlier parallel encounters in Bangladesh in the past. In fact it could be said that his antagonistic responses to followers of Christianity are echoed by an equally fierce repudiation of institutional Islam and its adherents. He recalls that his parents also employed a Peshwari mullah 'to indoctrinate' his brother Hashim and himself in Koranic lessons 'at home after school had ended for the day' (p.89). Iqbal's scepticism about religion both Christianity and Islam appears to interrogate and redefine the

notion of spirituality as founded on a single faith system. He appears to be arguing instead for a humanism that transcends dogma and ritual to engage meaningfully with the poor, the disenfranchised and the downtrodden.

His understanding of Colin, a 'very old friend' of the Harringtons who offers Michelle a retreat 'somewhere out of Australia' where she could 'have time to think and sort out the jumbled mess she was in' is similarly characterised by his own sense of alterity from the mainstream culture (p.7). His derisive judgments of the 'rich, balding accountant with his white shirts, pinstriped suits and the silk Italian ties could perhaps also spring from a very human reaction of jealousy. However his assessment of the dear old chap with the fake accent and a perpetual pining for jolly old England where he spent several years with his parents when he was a teenager (p.71) ironically shows the same arrogance that he objects to in his dealings with his father-in-law. It can be asserted that 'his splintered life…as a result of migration' and his colonial legacy have skewed his sensibility regarding his position within a society that deems him different. There appears to be a characteristic ambivalence in the reactions of the central protagonist to different characters in the Australian environment. This is perhaps the underlying reason for his quest for knowledge of 'the multiple dimensions of identity, especially when he transcends boundaries and leaps across cultures' (Khan, 2009, p.3). It is demonstrated in his consciousness of his past which constantly intrudes on his present, underlining his affinity to some and his distance from others.

These differences are further exacerbated by the values that each group hold dear. 'The Harringtons prided themselves on their self-control. Emotions were carefully monitored and rarely allowed unrestricted expression' (p.82). Ironically, this is the same quality that his wife Michelle and his younger sister Nafisa diagnose in Iqbal's reactions to people, an emotional distance 'from people who should matter' to him. Nafisa's accusation that he 'has become callous…selfish…emotionally stagnant' (p.47) is juxtaposed with Michelle's censure that he 'never expresses affection' (p.48). He seems estranged from people within both cultural groups.

Iqbal responds affectionately only to his daughter, Nadine, for example, shopping on Orchard Road and in Little India in Singapore, he relaxes the 'constraints of daily rituals' and acknowledges that 'there were no rules between equals' (p. 33). He rejoices in the signs that 'for several hours she was a carefree little girl without the surliness which has blighted our relationship since Michelle left for Italy' (p.81). There can be no doubt about his commitment to Nadine, whom he views as a child, patiently answering her questions about family protocols and protecting her from the harsh realities of life in Bangladesh when he takes her to visit his family there.

Iqbal acknowledges an affinity with the Harringtons' family pastor, Tom, who constantly mediates in the heated debates between Keith and his son-in-law. He confesses to a genuine affection for the old priest, issuing from mutual respect and shared interests. This affection can also be discerned in his interactions with his friend Claire from Ireland, whose 'migrant's…spirit is forever tormented…by childhood songs' from the old country. (p.1). She urges him to 'go back home, to heal himself .(p.2).

Iqbal also recalls with affection Theo, his Australian friend:

> [He is] garrulous…full of cynical wisdom. Authoritative and irritatingly smug. A verbose school master bursting with experience, eloquently expounding his views about the pitfalls of relationships and legalising emotional involvements to a dazed pupil (p.54)

In these encounters there is a sense of amelioration of his outsider status, although it must be noted that the characters that Iqbal connects with are also marginal in many ways. Theo is a divorced man who assuages his loneliness with alcohol and transient sexual encounters. Claire is confined to a wheelchair, living among 'rich neighbours' (p.1), and Tom's 'questioning mind…disadvantages him from attaining the higher ranks of clerical hierarchy (p.88).

Iqbal strikes no connections with other Muslims in Australia to afford him a

community within which he can find comfort. He recalls the frosty reception he receives during a visit to the Preston mosque in Melbourne earlier; he believes that he was viewed as 'an untrustworthy distant cousin the family preferred not to know' (p.196). The visit begins with a confrontation on the pavement outside with 'a red-haired man' who pushes a *burqa*-clad woman against a fence and proceeds to taunt her with racial abuse. He muses that in the scheme of things 'dark-skinned foreigners' were expected to 'subject themselves passively to verbal insults and physical abuse for the privilege of living in his country. They were not expected to retaliate and yell' (p.196). However, if he expected to be welcomed into the Muslim brotherhood of 'Lebanese, Syrians, Palestinians, Egyptians, Iranians…men disconcertingly different in speech and mannerisms' (p.196) he was quickly disabused of the idea Many, especially the Arabs, were unsympathetic towards Bangladesh.. He believes:

> They had swallowed the fabricated tale of religious betrayal and treachery against Islam. The Bengalis had been in cahoots with the Hindus. An Islamic state had been dismembered and weakened (p.196)

He confesses to an abiding sense of disconnection from Michelle's family friends' reactions to the news of their marital difficulties and separation.

> I can hear the smug voices. Their voices. They echo all around me. They were right all the time, weren't they…Keith and Sarah, Martin and Judy, Lisa, Michael, Bev and Peter…Those other aunts and uncles. Cousins…Names I don't care to recall. It is a shame it happened. But we tried to tell you, love. It couldn't work. He is… he is different. It doesn't matter how long he's been here and how educated he is. He doesn't think the way we do. Our ways are different. (p. 66-7,:114)

Iqbal's encounter with a policeman represents the mainstream Australian at his racist worst. He recalls not only the confrontation but his resistance to the homogenising stereotype that brackets all Asians as 'Other' on the basis of colour.

> Of all the days to be stopped by an aggressive weekend cop on the prowl… "Put you blokes in the driver's seat and you're a

> bloody danger!" he sneers. "You darkies are all the same, aren't you?" "No we're not" I reply tonelessly. "There's mahogany, walnut, teak and ebony. The variety is great." He stares at me…the rudiments of a conditioned mind notes that I have spoken in English…the bulldog jaws wobble…I have offended him by contradicting a sacred belief" (p.145)

Khan notes that 'the conceptual and emotional difficulties that a migrant faces in coming to a singular understanding of the term *identity* is akin to standing in the middle of a chamber of mirrors that are in constant slow rotation. One catches glimpses of transient reflections without ever settling on a fixed image'. He goes on to state that mainstream perceptions of a single 'heroic' identity undermine meaningful explorations of these issues (Khan, 2009).

Iqbal's marriage to Michelle is clearly problematic. On the one hand, he acknowledges that their relationship was initially characterised by a 'sense of enhanced freedom as [they] spent most of [their] free time together' (p.243). When he first meets her at a party, he marvels at his blindness to her beauty and strength.

> The ash blonde, shoulder-length hair framed a lightly freckled no-nonsense face…It wasn't a soft, seductively submissive face. There was too much strength and independence in the crystalline blue eyes... [where] 'I saw the mischief of Puck lurking behind their calm seriousness (p.242)

They share similar interests and acknowledge their many differences: 'She confesses her ignorance about Bengalis' although she had followed the events in the subcontinent with interest (p.242). He accepts that 'all Catholics didn't share the cloistered, sanctimonious world of nuns and priests' (p.243). This negotiation of difference initially enables them to create 'a private space to let [their] individuality grow' as they come to view 'the future as an extension of the present' (p.244). Even after their relationship deteriorates, he asserts: 'No… she had never been unfaithful to me in our married life' (p.72).

When difficulties arise over their differences, their inadequate cross-cultural

communication appears to exacerbate their marital conflicts. This is apparent in Michelle's decision to separate, citing that they have 'few common interests'; he 'wasn't interested in spending time together…[and] took things for granted' (p. 70). However, her accusation of selfishness, of a constant emotional distance cuts him deeply, and he is 'vehemently aggressive in [his] denial (p.48). There is in this instance a certain ambivalence towards his wife, as he finds it 'impossible to react to [her] with any degree of consistent hostility' (p. 66), an ambivalence that may explain his decision to return to Australia with the slim hope of a reconciliation.

Nadine's perception of Bangladesh is that of the second-generation migrant firmly rooted in the Australian context. Being a child of only twelve, her intuitive reactions to the people in Bangladesh change from initial surliness to a shy ease with her father's family. Her gift of 'twenty takas' to an 'emaciated old woman…breaking bricks', who blesses her kindness, attests not only to a changed perception of the people of her father's homeland but to an empathy with the poorest of the poor. Iqbal observes that the old woman 'in a simple act of selflessness…has taught Nadine what [he and Michelle] have been attempting for the past few years with little success' (p.258). By the end of the visit, Nadine's awareness of people appears to have altered. She has connected with family – with grandparents, aunts, uncles and friends of her father's – and this new connection indicates that despite the poverty, the desperation and the squalor, she has established links that will give her an understanding of another place and people.

The constant use of flashback and flash forward in the recording of specific events gives the impression that the recording consciousness is in a constant state of flux – never completely 'here' and most definitely not 'there'. Iqbal's perception of his family is one of estrangement bordering on alienation; he is almost like an observer watching the tensions circulating around him and at times exacerbating them with his indifference and even outright hostility. His initial estrangement from his family appears to be predicated on the childhood apprehension that

‘failure of any kind was not permissible in our family. We were the Chaudharies – rich, clever, industrious. Infallible. Without human weakness’ (p.45). He cringes in shame over the memory of his ‘great-grandfather…a bit of a scoundrel…[who] spent his days riding his horse through the fields, looking for young peasant girls who could be trained as dancers for his nocturnal revelries…in the dance house’ (p. 20).

Iqbal’s reunion with his family is an encounter filled with bitter recriminations on the one hand and a heavy burden of guilt on the other. He acknowledges that ‘eighteen years is a very long time, long enough to realise that for a migrant, the word *home* is fraught with ambiguities’ (p.61). He is ‘troubled by [his] lack of tenderness for the portly, grey-haired woman,’ his mother. Iqbal recalls his visits to his father’s study as a boy when ‘he had been summoned to explain his misconducts’, usually involving neighbours’ complaints (p.235). As a child, he was intimidated by his father’s long stare, ‘pinning [him] with unstated accusations’ (p.234). Now, he observes, his father’s emaciated body speaks of death, ‘of the ephemerality of passions and achievement, of the echoing hollowness of vanity and the madness of unopposed power’ (pp.235–236). He sees his father as ‘a fragile and suffering symbol of mortality’, the skin on his hands and face hanging loosely and his face ‘etched with lines of disappointment…buffeted by the tidal strengths of pity and guilt’ (p.236).

His younger sister Nafisa chides him for not caring: ‘You have become callous. Selfish. Emotionally stagnant.’ She accuses him of dereliction in his duty. While acknowledging that their mother can be difficult Nafisa nevertheless insists that she is ‘generous in her love…easily hurt’ (p.46). She berates him for his lack of respect in not informing the family of his marriage, and scornfully dismisses his letter sent ‘later’. She asks if he was afraid that they would embarrass him, concluding that he ‘has distanced himself from people who should matter’ and insisting that he has ‘always been cautious about loving… [treating] love as an investable capital’ (p.47). Her perception bears a curious resemblance to his wife Michelle’s accusation earlier. He is shaken by the perception of his callous

disregard for family, nevertheless admitting**:**

> Nafisa had already diagnosed and dissected me mercilessly. My ponytailed little sister is no longer the gullible child who adored me and believed everything I said. There are sharp cutting edges about her perceptions of people. I detect a bitter hostility she uses to ward off people if they show an interest in her. She has said very little to me about herself (p.47)

Later her confession of her sexual orientation shakes him to the core. This episode catches the reader by surprise as it does the narrator who is forced to confront his own prejudices. He was prepared for an admission that she was involved with a 'married man' or even a 'Hindu' but her admission that she 'doesn't like boys' and that their wanting to touch her makes her 'feel dirty' unsettles him deeply (p.221). He confesses to being dismayed by 'the revelation of [his] double standards', especially when he has been unequivocal in support of gay rights, but he is flooded with a 'nauseating revulsion which scythes through [his] being' that his sister is one of 'them' (p.221). This realisation of his own prejudices is perhaps one of the few moments where Iqbal confronts his own frailties, realising that he is powerless to comfort this loved sister and reassure her of his affection and support. Nafisa's position, however, in a deeply religious society that repudiates homosexual and lesbian relationships is fraught with danger. Despite her lively intelligence, her privileged background, her career as a university lecturer, her future seems bleak. For her silence and subterfuge will have to be her daily reality.

In his appraisal of his brother Hashim, a doctor who has returned from England to practice in Bangladesh, he is more guarded, having been warned by Nafisa not to enquire into his marital status especially since his wife and children have returned to Pakistan effectively signalling the end of the marriage. However, his memories of their boyhood escapades, the Islamic lessons with the *mullah* after school and the youthful idealism of his college years attest to a close bond stemming from their shared childhood. On his return to Bangladesh, Iqbal is curious about Hashim's conservatism and religious fervour and wonders if this is indicative of

his ‘craving for the communal acceptance’ that he was deprived of during his years in England (p.198). Hashim scornfully dismisses his brother’s ‘undergraduate stance of anti-religion’ demanding to know whether he is an atheist and summarily dispenses with Iqbal’s explanation that he is a ‘zetic…a skeptical inquirer’ who demands the fundamental right to choose is his identity’ (p.197). Hashim insists that Islam is Iqbal’s culture because it ‘defines him as a man and [he] cannot escape from his religion’ (p.198). ‘Many Muslims regard their religion as a key component of their identity that could rival if not supersede class, race, gender and even ethnic affiliations’ (Malak, 2005, p.3). Iqbal’s cynicism about Islam seems predicated more on his dislocation from his family context and his relocation in Australia than on any intrinsic failure of the religion for him. It is that dislocation/relocation that seems to have led to identification with Western secular culture and given him a different view of the world without necessarily bestowing on him the inclusivity that he desires.

Iqbal’s assessment of his cousin Mateen, who manages the family property in the village of Shopnoganj, as the ‘baronial chief of the village, a position ideally suited to his medieval view of the world’ (Khan, 1994, p.14) is highly cynical. While Mateen is a devout Muslim, who ‘agrees meekly with the teachings of the Koran’ – he prays five times a day, fasts rigorously, attends the mosque every day and is extraordinarily generous in contributing to its upkeep – the values of ‘Islamic egalitarianism’ (p.14) and social justice seem alien to him. Mateen sees the slightest deviance from old codes of traditional respect as an ‘all-out assault on his Zamandari privileges’ (p.15). Iqbal is also critical of Khuda Buksh, a village orphan adopted by the family as a playmate for his father. He recalls the old man as a captivating story teller but a fanatical Muslim:

> In his crippled perception of the world there was no space for Jews, Christians or even Buddhists. There were only Muslims and Hindus locked in a kind of Manichean struggle for the ultimate mastery of the universe (p. 37)

However, Iqbal’s most savage portrayal of religious hypocrisy is reserved for Maulana Khawja Rahmatullah Azad. His description of the *imam* as ‘a huge,

urceolate man with a belly which juts out in front of him like a balloon…[and] a 'grotesquely small head in proportion to his massive torso'(p.49)underlines his revulsion. His observation of the *Huzoor's* 'esurient hands [snaking] out like deep sea tentacles to snare the tendentious offerings' of a carton of cigarettes which his mother offers condemns his cynical and calculated preying on the naïve trust of believers.

Iqbal's perception of Islam is mediated through his memories of the ethnic conflict that preceded the birth of Bangladesh as a nation. He attributes the people's acceptance of abject poverty and deprivation to a failure of Islam to create a just and equitable society, evidenced in Amjad, the leper he encounters outside the mosque, and in the emaciated old woman breaking bricks for a living. He muses:

> It could have something to do with the acceptance of one's place in life determined by the Almighty in His infinite wisdom. Who is man to dispute His Will? *We created man to try him with afflictions.* I recall the Koranic words I struggled to understand as a young boy. It was drummed into me from an early age that submission was the defining quality of Islam. I have never reconciled myself to the notion of arbitrary suffering as a trial of faith (p.41)

This seems to be the core of Iqbal's complex and confused attitude to Islam. Malak states that 'his equation of Islam with submission' (which is a literal translation of the word *Islam)* is not accurate' (2005, p.84). In fact, it is apparent that his disenchantment with his homeland and the abject conditions he encounters has led to reductive assumptions about the role of religion in initiating social reform. While Islam demands submission to the will of Allah, it is equally true that it 'induces agency towards righting wrongs' (Malak, 2005, p.84). Iqbal here appears to be confusing the spiritual dimension of faith with the temporal realities he confronts all around him, especially in Bangladesh. It is apparent that in blaming the religion for the glaring inequities in society he is not only disenfranchised from his faith but unaware, after the absence of eighteen years, of the social and political realities of his homeland.

Iqbal's response to his closest friend, Iftiqar, a man 'grounded in both worlds – Dickens and Saratchandra Chattopadhay and Madhusudan Dutta – Bangali novelists (p.116) is complex. It is tinged with regret and shame over his affair with Shabana, the girl his friend had hoped to marry. While Iftiqar joined the *Awami League* to fight for the freedom and independence of his country from West Pakistan, Iqbal chose to leave the carnage and devastation for the safe haven of Australia, a move that was seen as a betrayal of his ideals and his family. Iftiqar chose to remain in his native land, championing the cause of the persecuted minorities, especially Hindu *Biharis*, stating: 'I am not resilient enough to take on another identity. I would feel as if I had betrayed myself' (p.118). It is apparent that Iftiqar represents the 'moral centre of the novel' (Malak, 2005, p.115).

Iqbal, on the other hand, is disillusioned with his life in Australia, which he had initially believed to be 'an ideal sanctuary', but then he knew nothing of the suffering of the Aborigines. It appeared 'a humane society, a just society – generous and friendly' but with time he has become aware of its flaws and come to realise that 'behind its ornate façade of wealth lay the weaknesses of any human society' (Khan, 1994, p.123). It is Iftiqar who offers him one of the most profound insights into his present condition: 'as a first generation migrant you probably sacrificed the right to belong' (p.117), while Iqbal confesses to a weary disillusionment with his teaching career, confiding that 'teaching has become a painful interlude between two holidays' (p.122). Iftiqar informs him of his job as a journalist and his voluntary work in a relief agency in the 'devastated coastal islands in the Bay of Bengal' (p.115). Iqbal is adrift, in the in-between space of belonging neither 'here' nor 'there'; unable to make sense of who he is or where he really belongs. Iftiqar by contrast, is home.

His attitude to family and community in Bangladesh is represented in his description of the guests at Nadine's *aqeeqa* ceremony:

> [The] privileged members of Dhaka's elite…the fat and the ulcerous, the rich and the fashionably grotesque, the proud and the powerful. To be invited by the Chaudharies it is mandatory

> for any self-respecting *bhodrolok* and his *begum* to grace the occasion (p.134).

He observes 'people in every corner of the house like excited flies crawling over a dead animal…The guests elbow, shoulder and shove their way…like hyenas feasting on carrion flesh' (p.135). The language and imagery used to describe the people is saturated with scornful revulsion.

However, Iqbal is also brought face to face with the 'infinity of traces' that Said identifies as being embedded in all identities (1978, p.25). The faultlines of patriarchy and elitist thinking are apparent in his response to his cousin Alya. Once 'a sullen, fair-complexioned girl epitomizing the Bangali ideal of beauty', she is now a 'plump, faded woman anxious to talk to [him]. His dismissal of 'her intellectual puerility' and her anxiety to secure a new husband is devoid of compassion or even understanding of the precariousness of her position in a traditional society where a woman's identity and her security is dependent on her marital status.

Iqbal's encounter with Nadira Hussein, his brother's friend and probably soon-to-be second wife after his divorce comes through, proves remarkably productive in the insights she offers into life as a former immigrant in Britain. Unlike Iqbal, she has chosen to return home to Bangladesh to practise medicine and perhaps marry Hashim. She states:

> To regret would be to go back and rummage among the junk I have discarded. I am living with a new set of principles. I am committed to them. Life can be such a creative act if you make the effort. I no longer treat living as if it is a treacherous enemy. It is subtle and full of obtuse meanings. I intend to devote my life to their discovery and understanding (p.173)

As an alter ego or feminine foil Nadira's purpose is in sharp contrast to Iqbal's own indeterminacy and ambivalence. Her decision to return home is an example of another choice within the Third Space. Unlike the return to homeland of the Koyakos in *A Change of Skies*, it is more reasoned, born not of nostalgia for the

lost homeland but of what Bhabha calls 'the emergence of another sign of agency and identity' (2004, p.331).

This encounter with Nadira and understanding of her decision to return home has a profound effect on Iqbal, especially in mitigating his adversarial attitudes to his family and his homeland, and a softening of attitude follows. When his daughter, Nadine, falls ill, the family rally around her, his father keeping a watchful vigil over her every night and his brother Hashim nursing her back to health. In effect, the family almost wills the child back to health. It is after this experience that Iqbal rediscovers the value and importance of family in grounding him to his reality, but despite their urgent pleas for him to remain in Bangladesh he decides to return to Australia after receiving a letter from Michelle that she, too, is returning home. Iqbal's return to his homeland has offered him productive insights into his own life, opening up a new space that is neither marginal nor estranged but a focus of hope for the future. His maturing insight is clearly represented in his altered perspective and his choice to return to Australia.

> It makes me think that perhaps the terms of life are negotiable. Maybe life was not meant to be a linear, one-way motion. There may be opportunities for U-turns and diversions, for slowing down, for pausing to search for a previously missed niche in the haste to keep going (p.173)

For Iqbal his Third Space of Enunciation is Australia, but he returns with an altered vision 'that [he] must not merely change the *narratives* of [his] histories but transform [his] sense of what it means to live, to be in other times and different spaces, both human and historical' (Bhabha, 2004, p.367).

Therefore, it is clear that all three novels record multiple pulls and allegiances, which not only are fundamentally and inextricably part of a hybridised life, but also indicate their 'unsettled' state with constant reminders and echoes of their past and present colliding, merging and separating as a result of divided loyalties and affiliations. In *Birds of Passage* there are two very clearly defined endpoints or Third Spaces, China for Lo Yun Shan and Australia for Seamus O'Young, his

descendant. For these two protagonists it is an affirmation of their hybridity in their respective locations. Shan, like the proverbial bird of passage, has finally returned home, albeit reluctantly. Seamus recognises anew the familial group that has provided him with the stability he has sought for most of his life. In a sense he too has come home to Australia, from which he can begin his own enunciation having finally picked up the 'signals' from his childhood, far back from [his] ancestry (p.51). In *A Change of Skies*, Edward, the ancestral figure, returns to Sri Lanka while his grand-daughter vows to come home to Australia. For Bharat and Navaranjini, their deaths in the skies above Australia appear to highlight the ambivalence of the first-generation migrant unable to finally resolve the conflictual pulls of home and hostland. All four characters profess an affection for 'Australia and Australians' and perhaps one could suggest that if it is people and community that finally bind one to a place, then in a sense Edward and Edwina have found their Third Space while Bharat and Navaranjini remain in perpetual transit. In *Seasonal Adjustments* , arguably the novel with the most contrast between the original and adoptive homes, Iqbal Chaudhary seems to willingly choose his Third Space of Accommodation in Australia with his wife and daughter after reconnecting with his roots and family in Bangladesh. All three novels demonstrate that the Third Space is not just one position but a continuum of spaces, calibrated by the life experiences of the protagonists.

CHAPTER

4

NEGOTIATING CULTURAL RITUALS

Different worlds open up. I inhabit all of them.

Birds of Passage (Castro, 1983, p.52)

There's so much to learn, the picture keeps changing all the time – and so do I.

A Change of Skies (Gooneratne, 1991,p. 294)

Now I know that the fabric of my life cannot be separated into…individual strands. They must remain interwoven in a complex texture…

Seasonal Adjustments (Khan, 1995, p. 296-7)

The three novels selected highlight the relationship of culture and identity in the trans-national context of immigration and diaspora**.** According to Kidd, culture embraces a wide range of social patterning such as the dominant values of a society, including the values that guide the direction of social change. Among these are the shared symbolic values such as language, religious rituals and socially acceptable codes of behaviour in people's daily lives; culture also dominates values that lead to judgments about the highest intellectual and artistic achievements of a social group including art, literature, music and science, and it is present in all formal behavioural traditions and rituals and dominant patterns of living, including architectural styles and patterns of land use (Kidd, 2002). 'If culture is the way of life of a social group, a massive social undertaking, the result of the collective, combined and interrelated efforts of all its members forming a sort of "macro pattern", then identity represents the "micro meanings" people form as individuals' (Kidd, 2002, p.7). Therefore culture and identity are frequently linked but equally they should not be seen as interchangeable concepts. This has varied ramifications for the immigrant who relocates himself/herself from one culture into another, a kind of transcription for the individual and his or her sense of belonging.

Russel West-Pavlov (citing Teo, 2007. p.9) observes that while immigrant Australian writers explore issues of trauma and dislocation from one culture to another, they tend to 'treat migration as a structural device linking two or more sets of stories, two or more sets of histories which are anchored firmly and finally in the Australian present.' It appears that migration and relocation have produced fundamental changes, not only in the psyches of the protagonists of these three novels but also in the nature of contemporary Australian society. This is borne out in the range of cultural rituals, social formations, sporting and educational exchanges, and diverse religious and other cultural celebrations, especially the culinary experiences described in the novels. These three texts demonstrate the shifts in perceptual understanding not only of the migrant characters living in Australia but also of the Australian society at large, which has been impacted on by the hybridised cultures that emerge here.

Said admits to a prevailing sense of cultural displacement in his own positioning between two cultures which provided the trajectory of his life's work, particularly his groundbreaking work *Orientalism.* Bhabha asserts that understandings of cultural perceptions of various minoritarian groups do not always follow a centre and peripheral mode but rather 'in another's country which is also your own, your person divides and in following the forked path (you) encounter yourself in a double movement.' (Bhabha, 1996, p.xxv). What matters here – is indeed fundamental in this context – is that the central protagonists of the three novels share a sense of what Robbie Goh calls a 'historical affectedness', always present in the 'hybridization' and 'translation' of migrants that both Bhabha and Rushdie refer to (Goh & Wong, 2004, p.8). Individuals are affected by their pasts, not just the near past but even the remote past. For all the main characters in these novels there is a sense of loss of the past, of exile from a past that that should have belonged to them. Within these protagonists a sense of 'rootedness' and 'home' is either absent or diluted, making 'hybridity…a metaphor…for a composite "form of living" and perception with numerous pulls and allegiances (Bhabha, 1996, p.139). There is nothing to replace it either while they feel the ambivalence about where they belong.

The process of acculturation to the new land can be broadly divided into distinct aspects relating broadly to dwelling place, food and culinary rituals, working life, and celebrations. These experiences are highlighted in all three of the novels but equally there is a mirroring, a reflection of the past cultural experiences and affiliations that have shaped the sensibilities of the protagonists. In Castro's contemporary character there appears to be what Said calls a yearning for a lost cultural heritage (Said, 1978, p.25). In *Birds of Passage*, this takes the form of a kind of subversion of dominant cultural myths, not only of the mainstream Australian culture in which the present day hybridised Australian Seamus O'Young lives, but also of the Chinese culture from which the ancestral character Lo Yun Shan originated. Yasmine Gooneratne's novel *A Change of Skies* also embodies the familiar sense of dislocation and confusion that is characteristic of migrant literature not only in terms of the two cultures but in a forward/backward

movement in the protagonists' search for a space in which to belong. However in Adib Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments,* , a journey of return, there appears to be a kind of rethinking of the original experience of immigration. The protagonist Iqbal Chaudhary undergoes a major change from an initial antagonism and aversion to affirmation that 'any attempt to evoke the past as a stable routine of familiar practices and call it tradition' (p.116) is an exercise in futility. Life changes dramatically and so do traditional practices but it is only by reconciling with the past, memorialising it and integrating it into the present that one can articulate a changed identity.

A fruitful analogy for this kind of transformation would be the learning of a second language which involves an immersion in an unfamiliar idiom in terms and concepts, understandings, articulations and intuitions which have to be revisioned and re-articulated in totally new formations. Obviously this will lead to a sliding scale of confusions and misapprehensions, a constant vacillation between the ordinary and normal rituals and the extraordinary and unfamiliar practices. This 'in-between space' therefore can be conceived as the precursor to the accommodations and adjustments necessary for living in new and strange environments, among new people and cultures. These three novels present a range of the formulations and re-formulations observable in the wider immigrant process.

A useful starting point for an analysis of the novels would be the experiences of the ancestral figures Lo Yun Shan in Castro's *Birds of Passage* and Edward in Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies* . Both belong to the privileged elites, the landowning class within the lands of their birth and both are heirs to their fathers' considerable wealth and property interests. However their initial decisions to come to Australia are differently motivated. Lo Yun Shan describes in great detail a society that is poised on a moment of transformation. The tranquillity of rural life – the floating jasmine petals, the patchwork of fields and orchards, the rhythms of rural life – are juxtaposed with the haunting misery and poverty of urban life. He perceives (and constructs) his father as emblematic of the former

lifestyle – totally out of step with the growing dissatisfaction and unrest of ordinary people. Shan's father spends his days dressed in long embroidered gowns smoking his opium pipe and more attuned to the sounds of the breeze and the falling of jasmine petals than to the increasing dissent in his own village. This depiction of Old China as effete and ineffectual, especially in contrast to the strident and barely contained violence of the foreigners who prowl the ports, is particularly effective in highlighting the moment of transition between the once great Middle Kingdom (soon to be humiliated most decisively) and the colonial reality. In this context it is equally important to consider descriptions of the death and burial customs delineated in such meticulous detail. Shan describes the banners of white cloths festooning the door of the ancestral home, imprinted with black characters announcing the solemnity of death (p.11). As he enters the passageway he is assailed by the pealing of bells and gongs rung by the monks and the wailing of 'paid mourners…vicarious purveyors of emotion and pathos' (p. 12). Little red envelopes of money, 'printed with prayers in gold letters', are flung towards the heavens before his mother's spirit could 'begin to be the object of [her family's] own worship and reverence', and food offerings at her grave to 'keep her spirit alive' (p.12) indicate the rituals of mourning in China. The portrayal of his father, dressed in the ceremonial funeral garments of mourning and with painted face and exquisite black and silver robes as he moves amidst the cacophony of wailing monks and mourners, appears to reinforce his son's view of these rituals and ceremonies as facile and ultimately futile. However, the lack of real emotion over the loss of the wife and companion of many years strikes the young man as horrifying, even while he questions his own feelings for his dead mother, who seems to have lived her life under the yoke of patriarchy in silent service to the empowered males. Despite the changing political and social circumstances, Shan is aware that the cultural rituals impart a coherence and significance to the lives of his people.

Shan's arrival in Australia is a brutal experience: a far cry from the life he has left behind. He steps into a culture of violence and savagery. This is the time of the Gold Rush when gold finds were increasingly rare and when the fear and loathing

of the 'Celestials' seemed to be rising exponentially. He arrives to witness the simmering xenophobia which manifests itself in sustained brutal attacks on them. Shan's description of the lonely Chinese graves being desecrated by drunken diggers who urinate on them serves as a timely metaphor for a doomed project. This is particularly poignant especially after the detailed account of his mother's funeral rituals. The Chinese miners were afforded no respect, no recognition of their humanity even in death which simultaneously highlights a scandalous break down of civilized codes of behaviour in the new space.

He records the extremely perilous existence in the tent cities of Ballarat and Bendigo, the difficulties of acquiring a license of £1 a month for digging, and blame falling on the Chinese when some people do not obtain this license. All the while the groundswell of support for the formation of an anti-Chinese league gathers momentum, culminating in the infamous Lambing Flats riots, characterised by brutal reprisals against Chinese miners, who are ruthlessly slaughtered on the goldfields of Bendigo and Ballarat. For these men life is a grim struggle. The problems of acquiring even the basic amenities like water, after Chinese diggers are denied access to running water, sees them travel three miles away from the streams used by the whites, but they can buy their water for 'one shilling a bucket' if they choose to do so (p 89). These descriptions of unrelieved hardship highlight the tragedy of their existence, where even water is denied to them.

Shan documents the exhausting work where men 'swing the pick in the eight feet square of ground, working through the sludge of others, seeing in every grain the dull yellow of [his] expectations' (p 89). His accounts register the extreme hostility of other diggers, particularly his nemesis, the 'bandy legged, gap toothed Irishman' Clancy, who views the Chinese with a mixture of aggressive antagonism and grudging admiration. This is evident in the contradictions of his strident abuse – 'Garn the bastards' – and his sympathy for the men, far from their 'homeland (and) loved ones' (p 91). The undeniable connection between Clancy and Shan bears out Said's theory of the West needing the Orient to define itself

(Said, 1978, p.67). Furthermore, this encounter stresses that neither of the characters can find a common ground, the lack of a common language making it virtually impossible to cross seemingly impassable cultural boundaries.

Yet, surprisingly, there are already signs that the Chinese culture has begun to percolate through to the Ausralian context. On his arrival at Robe Shan is heartened by the fact that the people there have developed a taste for Chinese 'preserved ginger' and 'opium for medicinal purposes. (p. 78). When he visits Ah Fung's store in Cheswick Creek he is jolted by 'a sweet smell…he had not smelt in a long time, the Chinese bean curd…and a mixture of smells [emanating] from herbs and dried pork sausages' (p.94). One observes that cultures are not self-contained, borders are porous and borderline engagements lead to a cross-pollination, mutual exchanges that imperceptibly alter the nature of both cultural groups.

At Ballarat, Shan's journal, translated a century later by Seamus O'Young, recounts the calamity at the Lambing Flats riots at Burrangong. The events of June 1861 are depicted in meticulous detail. It is in a carnival atmosphere that the diggers embark on the move to eject the Chinese from the goldfields: 'A brass band led the mob into battle [and they] spurred their horses into the tents. A Celestial was bowled head over heels by a blow from a club swung like a polo stick' (p.133).The chaos and confusion as the horsemen brutally attack the Chinese prospectors attest to the culture of violence that underpins social relations on the goldfields. Yet despite the hatred and revulsion levelled at the Chinese on the goldfields, there is, nevertheless, an inexplicable yearning for connection with this world which is apparent in Lo Yun Shan's desire for a life beyond the gold fields; his plan 'to buy some land, somewhere far away from here … just as Wah did…to farm, raise some sheep'. With regard to China, he thinks that there was 'nothing for me there' (p.113).

For Seamus O'Young, the Australian-born Chinese whose consciousness is always dominated by his feelings of marginality based on his appearance, it is his

Chinese heritage and culture that he seeks to recover in order to redefine, and provide a sense of coherence to, his hybridised identity. He has no substantial purchase on the Chinese language, yet he endeavours to study it attempting to 'give meaning to feelings in another language' (p.104). During visits to Chinatown 'he feels one with the people but then the strange tones of their language only serve to isolate him' (p.9). His first step in this direction is the translation of Lo Yun Shan's diary, giving a voice and agency to the unknown miner who flitted briefly through the Australian landscape like the proverbial bird of passage. Castro, in *Looking for Estrellita*, explains the faculty of language to work 'from the inside towards the outside…a process that continually re-made itself as an object in the space between events' (1999: p.27). Seamus' fluency in English, his acquaintance with the Australian cultural mores, despite the constant racial vilification, renders him a conduit for the translation of one culture into another. He traces Lo Yun Shan's steps, adopting his persona and fleetingly shedding his own until the moment of meeting his ancestor towards the end of the novel.

In his first real home with Edna and Jack Groves, in a suburban cottage in Sydney, he settles in with the minimum of fuss, asking Edna not to 'prepare rice dishes' for him because he liked 'pies, steak and chips (p.14). He sets about making his own meals and taking 'a big interest in food', finding great joy in eating and pride in the adroitness with which he prepares his food. It is also interesting that he recalls this period as 'the happiest days of [his] life' (p.14). Edna inculcates in Seamus an abiding love of books and reading and it is she who sends him the fragments of Shan's journal tracking down his ancestors to the Kwangtung district. Thus she provides a conduit into Australian culture and way of life. With her husband Jack, Seamus learns how to skin foxes when the family relocate to Grove Farm, developing an affinity for this place which coincidentally also happens to be Shan's final refuge before he leaves Australia for China. On his return and after his marriage to Fatima, he takes up a position as a teacher but finds himself increasingly isolated from his pupils, hearing 'the same sing-song voices he used to hear in the boy's home' chanting the same racial epithets that

isolated him as a child from mainstream society. Meanwhile his marriage begins to deteriorate and he withdraws from all human contact, opting for solitary haunts, observing passers-by 'through bamboo blinds' in the public library, consulting Chinese dictionaries; 'time exists only when it is accelerated or compressed' (p. 110). It is at this point that he begins his 'headlong descent into the past' (p. 120), straight into Shan's life.

The ideal of manhood throughout Chinese history – extolled by Confucius – has been the '*wen/wu'* man: a balance of mental and physical (and this includes sexual) prowess. Both Shan and Seamus are teachers, and so belong to a highly exalted and respected profession in Chinese tradition. By constructing Shan as not only a writer and a philosopher but also a man who can defend himself against violence, Castro challenges and subverts this traditional motif. According to the Chinese ideal of masculinity, 'Wen/wu men do not fight for their women… let alone kill. They do not engage in physical combat of any kind' (Louie, 2005, p.200). On the other hand, Louie also notes that Clancy as the 'quintessential Australian male should not have to fight a despised Chinese miner for his woman, let alone be killed' (Louie, 2005, p.201). In creating these two characters, Castro, in typical postmodern style, 'decentres…debunks, deconstructs diffuses and disperses …any fixed conception of masculine identity' (Louie, 2005, p.201). In doing so he constructs these characters as individuals possessed of the full spectrum of human qualities, not usually accorded the Chinese *Other* in mainstream Ausralian narratives.

An important point to be noted here is that despite the outright hostility and exclusion faced by the Chinese on the goldfields, significant cultural exchanges do take place, which convey the potential for reciprocal arrangements even in antagonistic societies. Clancy recognises the values of the Chinese miners, such as their strong work ethic, their reverence for elders, and their respect for the law, although it is equally clear that he is unable to shed his belief in the myth of the racial superiority of the European. The Chinese shopkeepers sell Chinese spices and foodstuffs, opium and other goods to European miners and buy small farms to

set up life in their new country. Seamus visits Chinatown and is overwhelmed at the Chinese languages spoken there, he reads Chinese texts in public libraries and Edna goes on an overseas trip to Hong Kong. So it seems that cultural negotiations and transcultural explorations of new ethnicities are opened up facilitating the move into the 'Third Space' of articulation.

In *A Change of Skies,* the broader context of the Sri Lankan family's migration to Australia is also viewed first through the prism of an earlier period of colonialism in Sri Lanka: 'Repetitions of patterns of history in the homeland and hostland emerge to suggest a cyclic view of history' (Bramston, 1996, p.22). In the case of Edward, the ancestral figure, there is an apparent disenchantment with the way of life of a member of an elite caste or 'Grandee'. His privileged life has assured him of a degree of comfort and wealth denied to the mainstream society, particularly the tenants of the *Mudaliyars.* While his father buys shoes from exclusive shops in Colombo that stock the very best goods from London and Europe, sends his son to his alma mater – an exclusive private school – for a British education, and treats the English delegate of the Raj to sumptuous banquets, the ordinary Sri Lankan worker is exposed to a range of inequities and indignities like whipping with a stock whip, not unlike the one used by the Australian settlers on the Indigenous people. A growing dissatisfaction with the restrictive conditions of the traditional life along with a real need to make his own way in life prompts Edward's decision to travel to Australia. He notes the unsuitability of the Sri Lankan labourers (most of whom were artisans and tradesmen) for the hard labour awaiting them in the canefields. Yet when he arrives in Australia he records how Davith's father has already created a home on Mr Nott-Herring's plantation in northern Queensland and has set up 'a little library of religious texts written on palm leaves and bound between carved wooden boards from which, seated before a framed picture of the Lord Buddha, he reads aloud in the evenings to a small group of people from his home village' (p.73).

The Sri Lankan rituals are transferred to Australia and Edward describes the lighting of oil lamps, the paper lanterns hung in trees during *Vesak* time and the group's intentions to build a Buddhist shrine with a sculptured image of Buddha, brought from Burma or Siam, and to invite a monk from Matra to visit the temple during various festivals. These descriptions indicate the setting down of roots, although admittedly tenuous, in a foreign land. More pertinently, it seems to highlight the movement across boundaries where migrants invented new forms of nationalism, 'transporting the concept of home, identity, community back and forth between old and new worlds' creatively re-imagining the ways in which nations and people traverse boundaries to explore 'the unfolding of identity' in another time and space' (Clingman, 2009, p.3). Edward's journal highlights the unfolding of Buddhist spiritual traditions in rural Queensland showing that borders are permeable, open to adaptive changes that allow innovation to emerge. This movement and metamorphosis of cultures in the diasporic space appear to be mapped out in the experiences of the other characters as well.

Edward travels across from Queensland to Western Australia where he witnesses unique differences in the way of life in Australia to that of his homeland. such as the people's reactions to their authority figures In Australia he acknowledges the camaraderie of men who treat their authority figures with an easy familiarity he could not have envisioned for his father's tenants, and he recalls the 'fawning service' of the clerks at Cargill's Department store. Despite their lack of formal education (his friend Joe is illiterate) and niceties of behaviour, Edward pays tribute to the courage of Australian station hands and drovers, their skill with livestock and their ability to live without the comforts and privileges he is accustomed to. However, Edward is essentially a traveller with no intention of settling here – his home is elsewhere and he is merely passing though. He feels no compulsion to change himself in any way in order to integrate with the Australian world. Interestingly both Edward and Lo Yun Shan return to their homelands in the end, Edward to willingly take up his family duty of running the *Walauwa* , Lo Yun Shan to withdraw to a Buddhist monastery to live out his days in relative obscurity.

In Edward's descendants, from the moment of their first arrival, the feeling of displacement and alienation from the mainstream Australian culture gives rise to an incomprehension and later restlessness. When Bharat Mangala Davasinha and his wife Navaranjini arrive in Australia, Navaranjini's initial reaction to the hailstorm brings a fearful remembrance of their ancestor Edward's encounter with the Anti-Coolie league until their neighbour Bruce Trevally comes over to help fix their shattered windows. The Trevallys open ways into life in Australian suburbia for the couple from Sri Lanka.. The well-meaning advice about gardening, the sharing of tools, the invitations to barbecues and the helpful support with tradesmen who work for a carton of beer provide Navaranjini, in particular with the friendship networks she needs in settling into Australia. Her neighbour Maureen spends hours at Navaranjini's house 'trying on clothes and shoes and what not … so involved with yakkety-yak' (p.102).

Bharat's position as the visiting Professor of Linguistics at the University of Southern Cross introduces him to a number of academics who greet him and his wife with an easy camaraderie, the morning meetings, the lack of hierarchical protocols between the academics and their administrative staff take him by surprise. He considers the practice of a secretary addressing her boss by his first name a 'source of wonder' (p.107). Their easy acceptance into university life is borne out by the hilarious episode of Navaranjini's exhibit at the University Open Day where she organises a book display that includes an illustrated copy of the *Kama Sutra*',raising ten thousand dollars for the Language and Literature School (p.137– 40).

There is some humour in the presentation of Navaranjini's determination to acclimatise to the Australian way of life. It is apparent that both she and her husband are very fluent in English but Navaranjini is interested in learning the nuances of the Australian idiom. She attempts to enrol at the School of Languages at the Southern Cross University as a student of Australian but finds that there are huge numbers of Japanese students queuing up to learn English and a similar number of Australians anxious to learn Japanese, and she notes, 'nobody seemed

interested in teaching or studying Australian' (p.120). So she falls back on talkback radio, jotting down unfamiliar words and lots of interesting words with hilarious results. Her amazement at the use of the word 'bastard' as a term of affection appears to stem from her acknowledgement that 'Asians respect genealogy' (p.121). When she greets Bharat with 'G'day darl. I've come to terms with my sexuality', she observes his look of alarm and notes that he avoids her for the rest of the evening (p.122).

Bharat migrates to Australia as a cultural sophisticate; he has been educated in England, about which country 'he knew everything.' (p.33). However, he finds on his arrival that he is relegated to a position indistinguishable from other Asian migrants. Shortly after his arrival he notes the refusal of a cricket commentator to pronounce the long names of the Sri Lankan Test players. The more overtly racist diatribe of Professor Blackstone propels a move to regain a sense of self by assimilating into Australian society.

The attempt at assimilation begins with Bharat's decision to change both his and his wife's names. Naming is in itself an important Asian cultural practice rich in overtones of ritual. Besides the obvious example of the Western practice of christening, there are the various customary ways of naming and name-calling, as well as of using names. Mention has been made of the first instance of different ways of naming that Bharat observes in Australia – the secretaries' use of first names in addressing their employers. He later comes across another colleague's unwillingness to acknowledge his identity by not bothering to learn his name, and wryly comments: 'For as long as I have known him, "King" Fysshe has never managed to pronounce my name correctly.' Fysshe settles instead for 'Err-hum': 'Found your way here alright, Er-hum?' (p.104). So it comes as no surprise that Bharat, in seeking to assimilate, takes advantage of 'the time-honoured Australian custom of name swapping'. In succumbing to the assimilationist trend and internalising a distorted image of himself, constructed by the mainstream Australian gaze, Bharat/Barry actually disfigures his identity.

In *A Change of Skies* the significance of naming is insistently invoked in defining identity in a new society. The ancestor Edward mentions the Australian settlers' custom of renaming the indigenous people after vegetables and trivial objects, thereby denying them their humanity. A century later in Sri Lanka Bharat's privileged life as a member of the elite class is epitomised by his name.;he is called Bharat after India, which Jean ironically refers to as the 'centre of culture after all', while Mangala Davasinha carries connotations of a valiant fighter – a lion. The new Australian names have ironically different associations. The word 'Mundy' means dregs while '*bari*' in Sinhala means impotent.

When Bruce Trevally greets Bharat's Sri Lankan friend, Mekaboru Kiyanahati Balapan Koyako, with 'that's some name you've got there Mate…almost a short story', Mekaboru's ironic response is caustic. He urges Bharat: 'Why should you bother your friend with my long name…Just call me Kojak' (p.97). These incidents demonstrate the continuous process of re-calibrating and revising one's identity to suit the exigencies of another group. Despite the humour of the scene, what is obvious here is the constant re-writing and re-conceptualising of self. Bharat admits to becoming very self-conscious about his]own name' after noting that 'Creuzoither becomes "Crew", Padapopoulous becomes "Pad" and Hashimoto becomes "Hash" ' and 'the very same sound may have quite different meanings in different cultures' (p.96).The switch to the anglicised names Barry and Jean Mundy is the couple's first attempt to accommodate to mainstream life in Australia. This provides the trigger for other changes. Barry's media role as an Asia expert explaining 'the experience of living in an ancient civilisation' (p.216), his enthusiastic adoption of materialist values as demonstrated in the move to Vaucluse because of its profitable re-sale value and his involvement in academic life seem to emerge from a desire to reposition himself as a model migrant close to the centre of the dominant culture.

Jean's fierce loyalty and support of her husband prompts her furious outburst at the anti- Asian sociology professor Ronald Blackstone from the University of Woop Woop when she encounters him at a social occasion.Underlying her rage is

her wrath against the loss of identity that the name-change triggered by her husband's need to conform to Western ideas , had occasioned in their own personal context. This episode brings to mind the notion of *unheimlichness*, the not being home that Bhabha speaks of:

> The unhomely moment creeps up on you stealthily as your own shadow and suddenly you find yourself …taking measure of your dwelling in a state of 'incredulous terror' (1994, p. 13).

This is the emotional undertow of this episode which, for all its hilarity, 'captures something of the estranging sense of the relocation of the home and the world', the 'unhomeliness that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross cultural initiations' (Bhabha, 1994, p.13). Furthermore, the mimicking of Australian slang – words like 'bastard' and 'claptrap' – along with Jean's own undeniable racism and othering of other Asians as 'slopes' and 'slit eyes' indicates 'a form of discourse crucial to the binding of a range of differences and discriminations that inform the discursive and political practices of racial and cultural hierarchiization' (Bhabha, 1994, p.96). It is noteworthy that when faced with the prospect of being relegated to the status of the lowest category of *Other* in the estimation of mainstream society, Jean seeks to differentiate her difference from other groups bracketed within this group.

Despite her initial misgivings, Jean is the first to acknowledge that she actually 'likes Australian culture and people', and this is clearly borne out in her engagement with the women at the university who approach her for advice on love, relationships and cookery. From being the housewife confined to the domestic sphere, revelling in turning out tasty morsels like fish curry and prawns cooked in coconut milk she embarks on a career of her own as the writer of a bestselling cookbook, *Something Rich and Strange*: 'Every recipe in her book reflects…the many-layered, transforming immigrant experience that is now an integral part of Australian life' (p.293). Her cookery book, which combines Oriental and Western ingredients, is symbolic of the 'strange fusions' of cultural hybridisation that Bhabha and Rushdie have discussed in different contexts..

On their return to Sri Lanka, Barry is infuriated by the lack of service and by the large expensive hotels frequented by 'expats.' The couple are aghast at the lack of civility in these Western returnees who 'just long for England' or any other foreign location. Bharat recalls the expatriate New York physician who 'spent the whole of his two-week vacation leaning up against the bar at the Hotel Oberoi' holding forth on his 'forchun' in the 'Yoo Ess of Ay' (p.259) They are distressed by the number of divorces among their close friends and the enthusiastic adoption of materialist values. Visiting old friends they are struck by their addiction to television programmes like 'Dynasty'. The frenzied pace of life, the giddy whirl of social engagements and the breakdown of old cultural proprieties indicate that his Sri Lanka no longer exists. Like Rushdie, he comes to realise it is now an 'imaginary homeland' that can only be revisited through memory and fiction. (1981, p.10). This realisation is powerfully evoked in the reality of the Tamil insurgency, which has spilled over into Colombo and is evident in the cordoned streets, constant security alerts and news reports of findings of mutilated bodies and devastated buildings. At the university he chafes against bureaucratic procedures that waste time and deprive him of the autonomy even to teach his courses. So it is with profound weariness that he decides to return to Australia 'aching for quite ordinary, elementary things' like regular rubbish collection and plumbing that was 'at least marginally reliable' (p.263).

On their final return to Australia they take determined control of their lives. As the owner of a restaurant and two eateries, which become highly successful business enterprises, Jean appears to have accommodated herself to the Australian way of life, after another relocation, this time to Queensland. However, despite the success of her enterprise it must be noted that she remains within the domestic sphere, her training as a librarian is never really put to use and her intellectual energy is not given an opportunity to manifest itself in the erudite circles that her husband moves in. She remains committed to her husband and later to her child. In this context one must acknowledge the difference in cultural mores that root women to their domestic roles. There are varied ideologies of feminism and what may appear to be a capitulation to patriarchal notions of a woman's place in the

scheme of things in one culture may not actually be the same in another. Women from different cultures carve their own space and create their own agency in remarkably different ways. As Mohanty argues the representation of Third World women in Western feminist discourse, as 'ignorant…tradition-bound, domestic, family-orientated, victimised…ignores the *value* …and status attached to such activities in other cultures' (1995, p.263)). This seems to hold true for this character who negotiates her role and agency within the interstices of paternalism. She appears to comply with the cultural expectations of a traditional Hindu wife, but in doing so she also acquires agency and power over her own life.

Other significant cultural affiliations to the homeland for Jean are her spirituality, her adherence to a strict vegetarian diet, her Hindu *prativata* (husband worship) and her constant invoking of the intervention of mythological heroes and deities in her moments of anxiety. During the taxi ride from the airport, she conflates the figure of a surfer she recalls from one of her mother's Australian magazines with the image of 'Arjuna, the archer of the *Mahabharata*', praying to him to protect her husband: 'May you stand always, his shield and his protector' between my husband and whatever is to come' (p. 68). Unlike Barry, Jean is always connected to her religious roots. When she visits the caves in the Blue Mountains she is certain 'the gods had walked there' and when she addresses a group of women at the university she speaks eloquently of her husband as the embodiment of the 'creative energy in a marriage' to the utter dismay of the feminist organisers (p.183).

On his return to Australia, Barry's growing disenchantment with an educational system in which no indigenous or South-East Asian student had ever aspired to any course other than basic English demonstrates his disillusionment with a multicultural project that promised much but delivered few of the promised benefits to the marginalised. His dissatisfaction with his fellow Sri Lankans who critique Western ways of life and bemoan loss of cultural identity while aspiring to the same affluence and material advantage available in the West appears to show a rejection of the capitalist values that he had embraced so wholeheartedly

during his initial period of enculturation. So it comes as no surprise when he gives up an academic career to teach the same disadvantaged groups that he had identified earlier as being locked out of the educational experiences of middle-class Australians.

However, Barry's attitudes and values especially in his marriage and relationships with family alter radically. As the Tamil riots escalate in Sri Lanka, Jean, who is Tamil, becomes the butt of his hostility. Thus there is a new and more complex kind of intrusion of the homeland into the consciousness of the diasporic individuals. Jean comments:

> Just about every topic we started on led us back without our being aware of it, to the same problem: our homeland, and our own feelings about it. Stepping back from that problem was, we discovered, almost impossible because Barry, a southerner born and bred, feels his heart beat faster at the mere sound of a Sinhala syllable, while I find it hard to hold back tears when I read what the civil war is doing to our ancient city of Jaffna, once a city of musicians, now echoing only to the rattle of gunfire (p. 298)

The child, Edwina, born and raised in Australia and fostered by their neighbours the Trevallys after the death of her parents, signals the potential for the future. A number of her actions and behaviours demonstrate that she is first and foremost a child of this land. Among these are her dismissal of the 'kids at Uni' who are 'enthusiastic gourmets, patrons and connoisseurs of the Thai and Lebanese restaurants' (p. 316), her observation of Maureen's attempt to add something 'a tiny bit exotic', the 'Curried Pups' to the 'array of lamingtons and melting moments and hand-made chockies on her party table' at Christmas and her perception of her fellow travellers as she boards the plane for Sri Lanka as being 'hyphenated Australians' like herself. Her blithe farewell as she embarks on a 'field trip' back to her parents' homeland seems to suggest another connection between two cultures, this time flowing in the opposite direction. In a sense she appears to be duplicating her great grandfather Edward's trip, this time in the opposite direction, and, like him, she too has chosen to return 'home' to family:

> I don't suppose there's much of the old life that Mum and Dad described left over there ….I think about Dad's description of the old Walauwa in Matara. I wonder if *that's* still standing. Probably not. I'll bet that the roof leaks, there'll be rats in the rafters….I wouldn't mind making a trip down south ….It would be….quite interesting….relevant to my project too. Yeah. Spot on…Declining Economies of the Third World: Case history No. 1…..wouldn't be able to stay long though. Once I've collected my material, it'll be back to Sydney for me (p. 325).

Therefore one observes in the second and later generation migrants the 'creation of agency though incommensurable… that identifies itself and creates its own agency' (Bhabha, 1994, p.331). Edwina belongs finally and unequivocally to Australia, it is her home.

Iqbal Chaudhary, the protagonist of *Seasonal Adjustments*, is ambivalent about his past as a member of an old and wealthy family in Bangladesh who enjoys the benefits of belonging to a privileged social class. He rejects the corruption and backwardness of the land of his birth but reminisces over the school holidays in Shopnoganj as a time when 'the house was the family's meeting place. Uncles, aunts, cousins, friends, servants, pets and cartloads of luggage arrived from distant parts of the country for a noisy month's reunion' (p.21). He remembers assemblies of farmers and their families paying their respects to his father, the *Boro Shaheb*, male relatives strolling along the river bank discussing political and business affairs while the women stayed together to cook, sew and gossip, and farmers with their wives and children, assembled in the front yard to pay their respects to *Boro Shaheb*. He recalls seizing 'the opportunity to civilise the locals by teaching them about cricket or asserting our superiority by thrashing them in a game of soccer' (p.23). The instinct of Orientalist assertion is counter-balanced with his status as a newly arrived member of the migrant community in Australia where, as his father-in-law reminds him, Iqbal is 'a fringe dweller' inhabiting the margins of Australian society. In his youth he was immersed in Western popular culture – movies, Micky Spillane, Radio Ceylon, Binaca Hit Parade, swimming at the Dhaka Club pool and leering at the American girls – but now he is a newcomer in a new land where old animosities and rivalries strangely resurface,

for instance in the way other Muslims – Middle-Eastern Arabs – treat him as a traitor to Islam because of his nation's war with Pakistan, another Muslim state. While he professes admiration for the heroic stand of his old friends Zafar and Iftiqar against a corrupt and brutal regime, he is equally appalled by their poverty and deplorable living conditions and way of life. He is indeed a man who belongs nowhere, for at the end of the novel, even as his brother Hasheem and family opt for the sale of their ancestral home to make way for progress, he is appalled at the prospect of losing his birthright. He visits the graves of cruel ancestors who had brutalised the Hindu minority and raped young girls in the seclusion of the infamous Dance House, where he muses on the fleeting nature of power. While his brother Hasheem , leaves England and returns to Bangladesh, divorces his wife and ends a meaningless marriage, Iqbal returns to Australia and to his estranged wife, Michelle, and fearfully contemplates an uncertain future. He wonders: 'So this is where it all ends. And begins? And if this is to be a beginning, am I to go forward haunted by the regrets of spurned opportunities?' (p. 297). For him home is the ever elusive horizon that is constantly moving beyond his reach.

When he first emigrated, Iqbal viewed Australia as a 'generous country…too good to be true … a huge dream, full of sharply defined rainbows and realisable wishes'. However, he acknowledges that he 'knew nothing of the Aborigines then' (p. 123). After eighteen years his perception seems to have altered radically, for he recognises 'an unfamiliar spirit of meanness' invading the Australian consciousness, especially in the speculation of falling standards of living, 'indignant hysteria' over competition with several Asian neighbours and a return to the 'fallacy of cultural superiority' (p. 32-33). He ponders:

> It is difficult to be positive about the Australia of the 1990s. Australians are learning about the commonality of the human flaws it shares with the rest of humanity….It is trapped in a cultural flux reluctant to shed a nostalgic ancestral image in favour of an evolving mixture whose shape and ethos cannot be predicted (p.114)

For Adib Khan's angst-ridden protagonist Iqbal Chaudhary there is no gradual transformation. He seems to oscillate between repudiating the Bangali culture and yearning for the Australian way of life, between an instant recognition of the traditions of his home with its rules governing etiquette and a fierce rejection of all attempts to homogenise and change his identity into an integrated migrant jettisoning all traces of his past. This is particularly obvious in his reaction to the food served to him at his cousin's household where, faced with 'an inviting array of curries. I eye them with some apprehension. I succumb to the prawns cooked in coconut milk…[and] mountainous serves of pilau and meat' (p.19). He eats 'cooked breakfast of puris and spiced omelettes, potato bhajie and jellabis washed down with tea served in a silver pot' yet simultaneously is also 'longing for a salad roll – a few whole meal rolls with ham and Top-hat cheese, lettuce, tomatoes, shredded carrots and alfalfa sprouts with a light topping of French mustard' (p. 19). He recalls breakfast at Apollo Bay near Geelong in Victoria with his friend Theo, 'watery eggs and crisp bread, laced with fresh parsley' and a 'bare hint of garlic' washed down by champagne and tea with cheap brandy (p.18). His choice of language in describing the Bangala food – 'I eye them with some apprehension' – and his 'revulsion at the slaughter of animals following the *halal* requirements – 'I felt like an accomplice to a heinous crime' – are symbolic of a rejection that spills over into other aspects of his birth culture.

In Australia he is keenly aware of his outsider status especially in his encounters with Michelle's family at dinners and barbecues, but on his return to Bangladesh he is equally resistant to the lavish celebrations that underline his family's privileged status. Perhaps his situation highlights the indeterminacy of the migrant position and demonstrates that while cultural translation can confer knowledge of different and differing cultural and social practice, this does not necessarily confer an easy transition and habitation of the 'Third Space.'

His fierce repudiation of the Islamic rituals is apparent when he recalls the boyhood memories of endless chanting of religious verses under the watchful eye of an *imam* and he is revolted by the presence of the beggars and the lepers

outside the mosque. He sings 'Onward Christian Soldiers' during Muslim prayer. His obdurate resistance to his daughter Nadine's baptism into Catholicism suggested by his father-in-law, Keith, seems to be at odds with his decision to allow Nadine's *aqeeqa* ceremony, a naming ritual to introduce her to the community. It seems that even as he ridicules the ritualistic observances of Islam, he is equally determined to resist all attempts to convert him to Christianity; while he repudiates militant Islam he is equally scornful of overt Christian practices; just as he rejects the corrupt 'Maulana Khawja Rahmatullah Azad, holiest of the holy, he also rejects all proselytising attempts by the priests at the elite Catholic boys' school he attends; he strikes up a friendship with his father in law's parish priest, Tom O'Linn in Australia. (p. 84). This sense of ambivalence and mimicry leads to what Bhabha calls a 'double vision' that both alienates and normalises the migrant as 'almost the same but not quite' (p. 127).

All three novels demonstrate vastly different perceptions of the new way of life showing: that 'culture as a strategy for survival is both transnational and translatable' in the Third Space of Enunciation (Bhaba, 1994, p.247). It is transnational because subjects like the protagonists from China, Sri Lanka and Bangladesh bring with them their own cultural practices, sensibilities, aesthetics and experiences, all of which signify their historical contexts and selfhood. After migrating to Australia these cultures are radically altered because the people, their beliefs, worldviews, indeed their very identities are translated, re-scripted in diaspora. The process works both ways, with observable transcriptions taking place in the Australian culture as well.

CONCLUSION

I see my descendant discovering transient moments of joy and laughter, executing portraits in his little book of a time and place with which I am already familiar. I feel the presence of the future, hear a voice cutting across time…

Birds of Passage (Castro, 1983, p.156)

…we do not choose the moments of departure or settlement, we are chosen by them. And also those moments, once they have touched us, make us different persons from the persons we were before, and place ceases to matter.

A Change of Skies (Gooneratne, 1991, p.152)

So this is where it all ends. And begins? And if this is to be a beginning, am I to go forward haunted by the regrets of spurned opportunities?

Seasonal Adjustments (Khan, 1994, p.296-7)

The attempt to interpret the 'Third Space' as any number of possible inner states and movements – whether it be, for instance, a sense of permanent exile and alienation, a more benign experience of adaptation to a different sense of home, or a more complex mix and interchange of varying forms of permanent destabilisation – has been at the centre of this study. Bhabha proposes the theory of the 'Third Space of Enunciation' (1994, pg.54) to show that cultures are not homologous or discrete entities. Rather, their performance is always constructed in this 'contradictory and ambivalent' Third Space which is defined as an 'interstitial' space beyond fixed cultural affiliations and norms including those of gender, class, and ethnicity. These identities are created through a process of translation and negotiation to produce radically new hybrid identities that represent a multiplicity of cultures. Bhabha argues:

> It is that Third Space, though unrepresentable in itself, which constitutes the discursive conditions of enunciation that ensure that the meaning and symbols of culture have no primordial unity or fixity; that even the same signs can be appropriated, translated, rehistoricized and read anew (1994, p.55).

Cultures, in other words, are not equal in terms of their merit or validity. It seems that cultures are not accorded hierarchical purity or essentialism. Rather, hybridity is enshrined as the radical alternative. All the characters examined in this thesis are critically hybridised, in terms of gender, class, ethnicity and racial and cultural affiliations, so the question to be asked here then is how does this impact on shaping location and transformation of identities in the 'Third Space of articulation' ? It is imperative to discover where and when this translation takes place, that is, to understand the actual spatial setting which is the final home and destination of the major protagonists. Is it Australia? Or is it somewhere else? China ,Sri Lanka or Bangladesh? What are the imbrications of originary social systems and beliefs in the hybridised identities that emerge in the Third Space?

In examining the three texts one finds that these accommodations or translations to a hybridised existence are evocatively suggested in the titles of the novels, *Birds of Passage, A Change of Skies* and *Seasonal Adjustments*. The titles refract

suggestions of processes laden with Bhabha's 'multiple pulls and allegiances' (1994, p. 101), manifested in perspectival shifts between a yearning for a lost home and an uneasy, tentative reconsideration of living in a new space. For each of the protagonists this means different understandings of relatedness to their final location, whether this is in the diasporic space or the original homeland, that is, either 'here' or 'there.' The experiences of landscape, people and the cultural rituals operating within the two societies and their corresponding impact on the consciousness of the protagonists are crucial factors in the formation of these new identities. Each protagonist appears to be situated at different points, in more than one continuum, each contending with differing degrees of crossovers and transformations resulting in a mosaic rather than a formulaic configuration. With each scene or moment, each individual character is poised at a different position in relation to cultural allegiances and identity, positioned to shift, perhaps, to yet another position that may hold no longer than the current one. Most significantly, for every individual, his or her hybridity seems to be the enduring trope of identity.

Lo Yun Shan, Castro's ancestral figure, leaves behind an idyllic rural landscape. While he is aware of the poverty and destitution of the port city, this desperation has not encroached upon the village. The culture and rituals Shan leaves behind in China are an ancient legacy, borne from a philosophical tradition that values balance and harmony. The breakdown in cultural mores, the savage beating of suspected rebels by the Imperial forces, and the fishermen who plunder the seas for profit are a far cry from the village traditions of silence and contemplation, of living in harmony with the seasons, 'watching jasmine petals floating' to the ground. For Shan, before setting out for Australia, a sense of disillusionment is mixed with a young man's sense of adventure. The fissures he sees in the family and the slow erosion of time-honoured obligations to people are epitomised by his father's slow deterioration into opium addiction and distancing from his duty as the elder of the clan. Shan's mother's and sister's deaths have perhaps helped to cut his moorings to a people whom he no longer identifies with. The premonition of Western 'penetration into China' and his nation's inability to withstand the

assault a second time direct his vision elsewhere, to a foreign land and the desire to live among strangers.

In Australia, despite the unrelieved harshness of the land on arrival, Shan decides to get enough gold to buy a farm, to make a home far away from the goldfields. With this character there is some evidence of the acceptance of the new space when he describes a devastating winter, with 'waterfalls frozen in mid-flight… revealing behind the crystal curtain bright green moss or purple flowers seeking refuge in the grotto from the merciless wind.' (p.127). The bush is depicted as a primordial space, 'like parting the curtains at the entrance to a vast labyrinth…every rock, every tree glowed with a pure light.' (p.153). The land, experienced as a living entity rather than a material environment, becomes a place that resonates at a deep psychic level, shielding him from his avenging pursuers. The language is saturated with the transformative imagery of light percolating through the trees, emanating from the very rocks almost like a beacon guiding this fugitive home. This haptic experience of a previously unknown place initiates a recognisable feeling of security. It is clear that he wants to belong, to set down roots and to make a home here. Unfortunately this is not to be, for fleeing from the law, after he kills his nemesis Clancy, he returns to China to live a solitary life. He is obliged to return like the proverbial bird of passage to his Third Space from where he contemplates that there are places in Australia that belong to him and to his countrymen who lived and died there. He has a descendant who has been born there and will become part of the fabric of the place he so longed to inhabit. For him the Third Space appears to be one of perpetual rupture not just from the place but from the family he could have raised there.

In Australia the 'gap-toothed Irishman' Clancy, a defeated and ruined figure becomes Shan's fiercest adversary, his *doppelganger*. After a life spent in the pursuit of learning and philosophy, Shan is forced to defend himself against deadly assault resulting in his enforced departure from Australia as a fugitive. For Shan there are no connections with the people he meets in the alien land. Pursued by relentless hostility and xenophobic hatred, he finds no community

where he is recognised and valued for his humanity. There are no mates – mateship was for others – and there is no love; even the woman he cohabits with, the prostitute Mary, betrays him to his enemies. Shan nevertheless leaves behind a reminder in the child he fathers. Castro's assertion that this novel was not an 'elegiac response' to the fate of these men but a 'rebuttal of their marginality' is particularly apt. (2007)

On his arrival in Australia Shan steps into a culture which is dominated , it appears,by the rules of the jungle – human beings are even denied access to water. Living on meagre rations of boiled rice, he is nevertheless struck with wonder that even here his people have left their mark. Preserved ginger, pickled pork and other Chinese delicacies have become part of the diet of this hostile nation. His return to China can be posited as a retreat, a return to a 'Third Space' of loneliness and solitude. He has no family, no home, only his contemplation of a 'golden dream' that the child he will never see remains in Australia.

Seamus O'Young, the contemporary character, appears to be the product of this legacy. Separated from Shan by almost a century, he bears the unmistakable marks of the 'strange fusions' that Rushdie identifies (1982, p.124). His 'blue eyes' and Chinese features are the unmistakable signs of his hybridised ancestry. Unlike Shan, however, he is not homeless; he belongs here. Though at first housed in a Boys' Home, he is fostered to Edna and Jack Groves and lives in their suburban cottage 'Nirvana' until they move to a farm in Twin Groves which he grows to love. In the Australian context this is a desolate place, exposed to the searing heat of summers and bitterly cold winters but curiously it is also the place where Mary, Shan's partner, had given birth to their child almost a century earlier. For Seamus it is the land of his origins where all the secrets of the past lie buried and where he is accorded an imaginative meeting with his ancestor and finds the culmination to his quest for knowledge of his identity.

Initially, Seamus expresses a very definite sense of displacement and estrangement within Australia, precipitated by the 'othering' gaze of the people he

encounters. Taunted by insistent racist epithets from childhood, he sees himself as emblematic of the 'in-betweeness' of identities that characterise individuals of multiple cultural affiliations. He has no purchase on the Chinese language and is unable to communicate with the people when he visits Chinatown. On the other hand, unlike Shan, he has a family, especially a mother figure in Edna, who welcomes him back warmly when he visits her, who nurses him to health and who finds the information about his ancestors. He has a kinship network, made up of women who rally around him when he falls into a psychotic state: Anna Bernhard , his neighbour, Fatima (his estranged wife) and of course Edna.

The persona of Seamus is collapsed into that of Shan and vice versa, in a trope of blending and fusing identities, thus evoking the suggestion that the 'Third Space 'is where all notions or claims to an essentialised identity become blurred'. For Seamus Australia appears to be the Third Space of articulation. He has found his bearings, his search for knowledge of his past appears is fulfilled and he can finally begin to set down roots, shedding the sense of alienation and estrangement that has dogged his consciousness from childhood. He is finally where he should be. He belongs here and Australia will be the space from which he can begin to negotiate other trajectories into the plural identities to which he is heir.

The culture that Seamus knows and understands so well is that of contemporary Australia. He works in a factory, is fond of meat pies, loves books, haunts libraries, travels on trains; these are very much the fabric of daily Australian life. Seamus both interrogates and redefines the location of the hybridised subject within a cultural discourse fixated on binarisms of self/other, insider/outsider, Australian/foreigner. Bhabha asserts:

> The myth of historical origination – racial purity, cultural priority – produced in relation to the colonial stereotype functions to normalise…the multiple beliefs and split subjects…as irremediably different and yet entirely known (1994, p.106)

In this context, the complexity of Seamus' origins, his hybridity and his status as an orphan with no knowledge of his context or background makes his intuitions of

the Third Space particularly resonant, given the present composition of the Australian nation. His quest is for the past, for the lost lineage, the ancestry that he seeks to locate and get to know. In Seamus, one sees the recovery of past history, for it is only by knowing, and connecting with the past that he can move into the future. Therefore Seamus' Third Space of Enunciation is the recovery of a lost tradition, of a language that he sets out to learn and a history he studies as both an outsider and an insider. His cultural links, tenuous as they seem to be, are slowly but surely reinforced by the kinship group he returns to, the women who ironically are also marginally positioned in this society. So Lo Yun Shan's 'golden dream' of belonging to this nation is in a sense, finally realised in Seamus.

Edward, the ancestral figure in Yasmine Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies,* visits Australia as a tourist in a curious replication of the continental journey lauded by the Romantic poets he knows so well from his colonialist education. The only difference is that his journey is in the opposite direction, away from the centre, as well as away from the location of cultural ancestry; he comes to Australia. Like Lo Yun Shan he leaves behind the privileged lifestyle of the *Walauwa* at Matara with its lush green fields bordered by the sea and the old house, where generations of his family had lived and died, to sojourn in the canefields of Queensland. In Edward's case, he finds curious resonances here in Australia with the land of his birth. The white beaches at Fraser Island remind him of home; the vegetation, the herbs and the flora are instantly recognisable. It is only when he goes to the heart of the continent, to Badagini and to the lonely cattle stations, that he witnesses the ravages of a harsh and inhospitable land. And it is here that he decides to return home, to his roots, to the land of his forbears, for he had seen and learned enough 'to understand that a life lived here is not for me' (p.166). For him the Third Space represents a return to a place he knows and loves – he was always a traveller in the unknown land. His 'home' is firmly grounded in Sri Lanka..

Edward's perception of the people he meets in his sojourn has a dramatic effect on both his sense of who he is and where he belongs. In Colombo he is moved by

the plight of ordinary people exploited by the Mudaliyars who run the colonial administration for their European masters. His rebellion against his father is that of a youth testing his independence and autonomy against the restrictions of a system run by a benevolent despot. Landing in Australia, he is struck by the ignorance about people from other parts of the world and most particularly from Asia. However, he meets with a more congenial reception than Shan, despite the initial skirmish with the Anti Coolie League. He is befriended by stockmen like the good-hearted Joe and is cared for and mentored by his former servant, Davith. He writes of the people that they are warm and generous in their acceptance of him. Far from being pursued as the inalienable 'Other', he leaves for home with a strong belief in a shared humanity.

Lokuge's reading of Edward's relationship with Davith and his subsequent Orientialist response to the Australian people and the landscape which she attributes to his privileged status and colonial education within his Sri Lankan context, overlooks the closeness of the original relationship between the two young men in their childhood and his friendships with other working men who would normally have been completely outside his range of affiliates. Furthermore, it is obvious in Davith's response to the *Mudaliyar* and his determination to seek his fortune elsewhere, as his father had done before him, that the old class boundaries have been breached, for the fifteen-year-old Davith and his decision to migrate is as 'hot as fire' (p. 47). Therefore in recuperating the voice of the subaltern, however briefly, Gooneratne highlights the changes that are afoot in Sri Lanka following the massive flow of labour from one colonial centre to another, with successive waves of indentured Sri Lankan workers arriving in Australia.

Edward's cultural experiences in Sri Lanka are governed by the rules and mores of an ancient culture that have been irrevocably changed by the process of colonisation. His British education and his Christian faith, which he counts as his most prized possession along with his exposure to both Buddhist and Hindu rituals, highlight cultural transcriptions and configurations that have had a critical

bearing on his view of the world. Here one could perhaps point out that all cultures are porous, all borders have been breached and the Third Space is the new reality. His journey through Australia enriches him, for it is important to recognise that on his return to his homeland he translates from ancient Sanskrit and Buddhist texts which attest to a new vision of cultural plurality. The official sent by the National Archives, Mr Doraisamy, counts Edward's manuscript a 'treasure…because it is rare' (p.38) for he 'not only translated from Tamil, he *wrote* in Tamil…with a corresponding version in Sinhala and a *translation* in English' (p.37). Contrary to his earlier assertion about the primacy of the Christian tradition, he is indeed a transformed and translated man. The point to be remembered here is that this translation, both literal and figurative, has been processed in Australia but finalised in Sri Lanka, which becomes his 'Third Space of Enunciation.'

In his grandson, the movement into the Third Space is a more complex doubling upon itself, and ultimately moving in the opposite direction. The academic Bharat Mangala Devasinha and his wife Navaranjini return to Sri Lanka after eight years in Australia only to find that they do not belong there either. In these characters one encounters 'plural social identities co-existing and interacting with each other' (Goh, 2004, p.5), but equally there are remarkable similarities in the arrivals and returns (to Australia and to Sri Lanka) of these characters, who make incursions into different geopolitical spaces, either as permanent residents or as travellers. Their experiences encapsulate the explicit issues of diasporic consciousness, namely, location, dislocation, adaptations, memory, transformations and hybridity in their movements between 'here' and 'there.'

Initially Bharat has no intention of settling in Australia. He answers his sister's solicitous queries with a glib 'Does it matter…if we are unhappy, a few years of exile and then it'll be back to civilisation' (p.226). From the moment Bharat lands in Australia he realises that in the speculative gaze of the Australian he is seen as part of the homogenous mass from areas outside Australia that are lumped together as 'Asia'. Despite his knowledge of Western mores and cultural codes,

his erudite scholarship, his many accomplishments – notably the publication of his grandfather's journal *Lifelines* – his moves to reinvent himself in a bid to merge with the Australian society are indicative of 'a grotesque mimicry or doubling that threatens to split the soul' (Bhabha, 1994, p.107). His action of trading in their names Bharat and Mangala Devasinha and Navaranjini (with their resonances of past genealogy) for the generic names of Barry and Jean Mundy, is the outward sign of a psychic bruising of the spirit. The adjustments Bharat is obliged to make physically, emotionally and psychologically, in order to redefine himself in a new geopolitical landscape, resonate with the reconfigurations that migrants must make in order to negotiate a new and different sense of belonging. These changes are characterised by the tensions and anxieties of rooting oneself in a new land, of adopting diverse and innovative ways of perceiving oneself (as a member of a discrete minority), of adjusting to the community within which one lives and of acquiring, in the process, another identity.

In the period of adjustment to the new culture, Barry demonstrates an eager willingness 'to shed the past and begin anew', making several concessions to assimilation. Several theorists have pointed to the assimilationist project as a powerful means of disciplining and dominating minorities and asserting the power of the hegemony. 'In the Australian context, the non- white minority have been subjected to the processes of "racialisation" as a means of controlling and subordinating them to the interests of the dominant group' (Tan, 2002, p. 235). Inevitably in changing his name and transforming himself physically and psychically to meet the norms of the people he lives and works with, Bharat/Barry actually loses connection with relationships and values that have shaped his life thus far. Despite his need to belong, in his moves towards acculturation he remains Other, a fact that he acknowledges when he attends an academic conference where he is the only Asian.

Despite his prevailing sense of exclusion Bharat identifies with Australian academics when an American professor is lambasted by members of the audience. 'Thank the Lord the poor dope's an American, and not Australian', he says, then

is amazed to discover that the voice is his own (p.228). This reaction signals what Hall posits as the 'necessary heterogeneity and diversity' that attends the diasporic subject's conception of self and leads to 'double or even plural identifications that are constitutive of hybrid forms of identity' (cited in Evans et al, 2003, p. 7). This highlights the ambivalence of diasporic identity, for even while Barry is keenly aware of his exclusion from the Australian academic community, he nevertheless claims affinity with this very group. Perhaps one could speculate that this equivocation is a part of the uncertainty of being 'out of place', of 'unhomeliness', which constitutes diasporic identity.

The couple's return to Sri Lanka for a short period only reinforces the sense of disjuncture and alienation. The Sri Lanka they knew has changed drastically. Inter-communal riots, the forces of globalisation and escalation of development have transformed the homeland irrevocably. Besides being disappointed by the changes in his homeland, he is surprised to find himself missing the comforts of his Australian life (p.263), but the move back to Australia, this time as a permanent resident, appears to be prompted mostly by disillusionment and weary acceptance of a changed reality.

The numerous transformations that he initiates on his return, such as the relocation from Sydney to Coolongata and from the university to a language school for ESL students, posit a deliberate choice to belong to a society where he wishes to make a philanthropic contribution. However, his collaboration in the restaurant business established by his wife appears to signify a longing for the place he left behind while simultaneously showing the resigned acceptance of a man yearning for a sense of belonging. His musing 'that he has been 'chosen' and remade by a particular moment of 'departure or settlement' (p. 152) can be read as a token of the weary fatalism of the exile condemned to spend his days outside the Promised Land. His Third Space is not Australia per se, and he is left suspended in that sense of exile towards the end of the novel when he and his wife die in a plane crash en route from Queensland to Sydney.

In the case of Navaranjini, her initial move into the 'alien land' is characterised by insistent disorientation and palpable fears about 'the land of the duckbilled platypus… where anything can happen' (p.67). These feelings of displacement are ameliorated in her delight over the flora and fauna that she finds, which remind her of home. Her transition to the Third Space appears to be far more smoothly negotiated than her husband's, perhaps mediated by her almost haptic sense of connection to the landscape and the resonances these have for her. When they return to Colombo she is devastated by the changes. The homeland has become a foreign space and the urban landscape bears the marks of this altered reality. On her return, her move to Queensland marks another transition to yet another terrain, but even there she nurtures the flock of mynahs and embarks in another reinvention of self. Her restaurant business flourishes and she appears to be the 'translated…rehistoricized' hybrid that Bhabha envisions.

Her apparent accommodation to the new country is equally obvious in her shifting perspectives of Australians. In her letters home she confesses that she actually 'likes Australians', and she forges networks of friendship within both the Australian and Sri Lankan communities. She is very aware of the ethnic prejudices of their Sinhala friends, the Koyakos, but equally she is also guilty of her own form of racism towards the Chinese. However, the most significant change in Jean comes about in her perception of her husband. Loyal and devoted to him until the end, she privately questions his decision to change their names. She reflects: 'after all it was my name too.' (p.123) Most importantly, in this character can be seen an incisive interrogation of the cultural norms that she was born into. Her interrogation of the systems of patriarchy and elitism serves as a reminder that the migrant woman has to negotiate not only the world outside her home, but also the rules of engagement within the domestic space. She does not like his infantilising of her, as is obvious in the name he calls her – *Baba* meaning baby – although she 'actually liked it' until they came to Australia (p.157). Being a Tamil, she openly challenges his reactionary construction of Tamils and Tamil culture after the civil war begins. Thus, as mentioned earlier, with Jean the Third Space offers broader horizons, new visions about connecting and being connected

to people in the Australian context. With the opening of her restaurants and the publication of her cookbook she asserts more clearly the new hybrid identity that Bhabha posits. Her relocation does not follow the trajectory of her husband, for she has no intention of altering her life or traditions. She remains devoted to her husband, her daughter Edwina and her Hindu faith till the end. However, she creates an alternative vision of what living in the Third Space entails. It is tragic that her ending is so final. Perhaps she would have been the figure to 'not merely change the narratives of [her] history but transform…what it means to live, to be, in other times and different places, both human and historical' (Bhabha, 1994, p. 367).

In Edwina, their daughter, one observes a completed process of transformation. She truly is a child of this place, demonstrating an insider's knowledge of people, culture and space. For her the alien land is her parents' homeland, recreated in stories and in the mass media. Hers is an Australian gaze as is obvious in her intuitions about Sri Lanka, which she views as the Third World: poverty-stricken, devastated by war and governed by a corrupt, exploitative government. She believes that the wildlife must be reduced almost to extinction, the place must be overrun with vermin and even the family home in the *Walauwa* must have fallen into decay.

Ashcroft, in *Home and Horizon,* asserts that for those from second- and third-generation diasporas, 'questioning the boundaries of identity themselves' implies 'seeing identity as rhizomic rather than historical' (2005, p.48). Home then becomes a search for an imaginary location – a yearning for a place where one is 'at home' within oneself and within a community where one is recognised, acknowledged and indeed affirmed. The acknowledgement, then, is for embodying 'all the practices of hybridity, impurity, intermingling, and the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, politics' (Mummery, 2005 p.39). Edwina's 'Third Space' appears to be the hybridised reality of the second generation migrant. Unlike Seamus, she knows where she comes from, she has tangible roots in the community, and a

sound knowledge of her ancestry and her heritage. She is not an uprooted figure continually yearning for home. She is always already at home in Australia.

Ien Ang asserts:

> Cultural identity, in this second sense, is a matter of 'becoming' as well as of 'being'. It belongs to the future as much as to the past. It is not something which already exists, transcending place, time, history, and culture. Cultural identities come from somewhere, have histories. But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation. Far from being eternally fixed in some essentialized past, they are subject to the continuous 'play' of history, culture, and power (2001, p.150)

The fate of the protagonist in Adib Khan's *Seasonal Adjustments* does not follow the same trajectory of experience as those of protagonists of the other novels examined here. His middle-aged protagonist, Iqbal Chaudhary, is full of doubts and uncertainties about issues of identity, dislocation, ambivalence and cultural alienation both in Australia as well as in his former homeland. On his return to Bangladesh with his daughter, Nadine, after an absence of eighteen years, he is forced to confront his ambivalence about his identity. This protagonist articulates the condition of migrants who are permanently in transit between dual or even multiple homes and identities. However, since individuals must locate themselves somewhere, the movements between original homeland and hostland are particularly crucial. One observes in this character a challenge and subversion of Bhabha's theory of the 'Third Space of articulation.' There is what Iqbal Chaudhary refers to as the 'weight of emotional anchors'. These are not anchors that steady or stabilise. On the contrary, because of their conflicting 'pulls', Chaudhary finds himself 'buffeted by a cross-current of conflicting emotions – regret, relief, nostalgia, anger, sadness' and, underlying all these, the persistent voice that asks '*Where do you think you belong?'* (p.9) However, what he finds are 'fragments of a nearly forgotten age' (p.2) which serve to remind him that the home he remembers and yearns for has disappeared, and what remains is an alien space that no longer offers the assurances that he seeks.

Iqbal Chaudhary's initial perceptions of Australia take the form of a kind of relief, even euphoria, at having escaped the traumas of a brutal war that preceded the formation of the nation of Bangladesh. By contrast, Australia is represented as a 'generous country' to the confused young man who seeks refuge there. It is a land with a beguiling 'huge dream, full of sharply defined rainbows and realisable wishes for those who cared to pursue them' (p.32). However, eighteen years later, this perception has dissipated and he observes that 'a spirit of meanness has begun to shadow the vision of a carelessly spendthrift nation' (p.32). Iqbal observes 'the tumorous growth of the fallacy of cultural superiority' evident in the 'communal consternation' that Australia's 'living standards will be overtaken by several neighbouring…Asian countries' like Singapore and South Korea' (p.32). There is also 'a familiar jingoistic hearkening back to the 'good, old days when everything moral and righteous was with God, monarch and country' ((p.33). Iqbal's altered perception of life in Australia is predicated on several encounters with both overt and covert forms of racism in his relationship with his father-in-law Keith Harrington, whose insular view of 'foreigners' and other cultures leads to silly and nasty verbal jousts intended to assert cultural superiority.

The recurring motif of home/houses in Bangladesh and Australia typifies the representation of the domestic space as a way of expressing a search that is synchronously geographical, cultural, intellectual, emotional and creative, a search for a space to belong.. Khan's descriptions of the family homes also reflect the class hierarchies inherent in both locations – Bangladesh and Australia. In the former he critically scrutinises the homes his family occupies both in the village of Shopnoganj and in the suburb of Banami, in Dhaka, commenting on the 'unofficial dividing line between the privileged few and the millions out there':

> Somewhere out of sight. Beyond conscience…a bastion of a life style uncommon in the subcontinent…carefully hidden away from the damning marks of abject poverty that plagues the country' (p.31)

Juxtaposed with this opulence is his description of his friend Iftiqar's home in 'the sprawling suburb of Wari where the 'houses look dangerously fragile'. (p.100).

In a neighbourhood that resembles 'the deformities of a physical hell' (p. 101) he finds his friend living in absolute squalor. Everything about his home indicates a marginal, a temporary existence served out in a country that has turned its back on its freedom fighters.

Contiguous with these representations of homes in Bangladesh are the various domestic spaces in Australia. His home in Ballarat, which he nostalgically recalls after his separation from Michelle, is a familiar space where the routines of daily life offer a structure and pattern to his existence. Despite his disillusionment with what he terms 'the broad streak of narcissism in [Australia's] extroverted personality' (p.123) and his discovery that beneath the veneer of its wealth lies the 'weakness of any human society', he nonetheless confesses to Iftiqar that it is 'still a liveable country'(p.124). This perception of life in Australia recalls Rushdie's notion of the migrant writer (and, it could be said, the broader group of migrants) whose identity is 'at once plural and partial… sometimes [straddling] two cultures…at other times falling between two stools' (p.15). However, this ambivalent and changing position within what one could term the Third Space is not necessarily unproductive, for it allows individuals to recalibrate new visions, new insights and understandings about life and reality precisely because of their shifting geographical position.

It is apparent that Iqbal has reconstructed a new identity in the adoptive home. He reveals to Iftiqar that he believes 'there is space out there [in Australia] for the expansion of one's vision and for self renewal' (p.124). His lyrical description of the vast desert heartland as resembling 'the microcosmic eye of the universe – mysterious and full of wonder' (p.124) attests to a definite connection to this land and clearly foreshadows his final decision to return to it. The problem for Iqbal appears to lie in his consideration of which aspects of his past culture he should jettison and which aspects he should retain and nurture, particularly given that his identity, his thinking, and his worldview have now been shaped in part by Australian culture. Rushdie shows that this kind of 'looking back' is a painful guilt-ridden experience exacerbated by the fact that there are times when the

move to the diasporic space seems all wrong (1991, p.15). It is apparent that Iqbal's accommodation to this Third Space is reconciliation with the conflicting tensions that have destabilised his existence thus far. These include, most notably, a coming to terms with the erosion of the idealism of the *Awami League*, which fought for a separate nation, and the failure of Islam to unite its followers into a cohesive brotherhood.

At his first meeting with the old men of Shopnoganj, those 'custodians of the past', he 'listens with a growing sense of sceptical amusement', acknowledging: 'I am uncomfortable here in the village of my birth. I can discern no changes in the years I have been away' (p.7). He finds the restrictions of social conventions both meaningless and burdensome, as is obvious when he pays his respects to his departed relatives in the family graveyard, when he teases his cousin Mateen, a devout Muslim, about his religious orthodoxy and when he forgets the rules of decorum which forbid establishing 'even a conversational aspect of a friendly relationship' with women like his cousin's wife, Rehana. Spliced and interwoven with the first-person narration are his memories of his boyhood in the village of Shopnoganj, a replica of the thousands of villages that confirm the rural primitivism of Bangladesh (p.11) and his memories of the suburb of Banani in all its wealth and affluence. Iqbal belongs to the minuscule elite class that guards its wealth and privilege with a fierce tenacity. His family members believe that 'a farmer's existence can only be justified by the menial work he does for the Chaudharies' (p.14). For Iqbal there is never going to be a home either 'here' or 'there'. Rather he is constantly re-conceptualising notions of belonging, of identity and home. The undeniable love for his daughter and the hope of reconciliation with his wife impels his return to Australia. His sense of being 'trapped between polarised worlds of disenchantment' gives way to a melancholic belief that the strands of 'the fabric of my life' must remain 'interwoven in a complex texture'(p.8).

The Third Space of Enunciation as identified by Bhabha defies a final analysis. It is not a clear-cut transformation within another space, but a place of ongoing

transformation and change inevitable and vital in accommodating to a new reality. For Lo Yun Shan this is predicated on an awareness of waiting for a future which he will not experience himself but hopes will be delivered to his descendants, this dream of living in 'another place and time' is one which he can only imagine. This is exemplified in his descendant Seamus' understanding that he has found the answers to the questions that have plagued him all his life – here in Australia. At the end of his sojourn in Australia Edward, in *A Change of Skies*, uses a Buddhist text to articulate his intuition: 'Subject to changes are all component things' (p.239). His grandson Bharat comes independently to a similar understanding towards the end of his story: 'We do not choose the moments of departure or settlement, we are chosen by them. And also those moments, once they have touched us, make us different persons from the persons we were before, and place ceases to matter (p.152). For Iqbal Chaudhary the moment of epiphany is when he grasps that he cannot separate his life into tidy compartments – his past and his present, Bangladesh and Australia. His life consists of inextricably woven threads which will continue to haunt his consciousness as he makes his decision to return again to Australia while continually wondering at the opportunities he has forfeited or rather 'spurned' in making this choice.

The poet Horace's understanding, (cited in Gooneratne's novel) that the individual remains essentially unchanged despite a 'change of skies' is radically subverted, in the experiences of all protagonists of these novels. For these diasporic individuals, the Third Space involves alternative, evolving and transfigured identities because their homes, their contexts and their lives are irrevocably changed. The central dilemma of the settler subject as articulated by Alan Lawson: in his seminal essay, 'The Discovery of Nationality in Australian and Canadian Literatures is': ' Who am I when I am transported?' (Lawson, 1995, p.168) can be seen to be an endemic question for all migrants; one that is perhaps even more exacerbated as all of the preceding discussion emphasises, in the case of the migrant from Asian cultures who relocate into the predominantly European culture of white Australia. For them their hybridity, indeed the ongoing process of hybridisation, becomes – as Hall, (cited in Bhabha 1994,

p.359) posits – 'the political space to articulate and negotiate such culturally hybrid social identities'. For these characters the very indeterminacy of their position, their constant movement across geographical and cultural boundaries, the invention and re-invention of identities, highlights the kind (and process) of transformation involved.

For first-generation migrants it appears that the' Third Space "is not a homogeneous location arrived at by accommodation to a diasporic existence but rather a configuration of spaces that vary and move depending on the characters' experiences within the hostland. Exposure to ordeals such as confrontations with discriminatory and exclusionary practices appear to undercut a sense of belonging while positive encounters reinforce an affiliative solidarity with a society that embraces the cultural translation of hybridity and plural identities emerging from minority cultures. This is apparent in the positionality of Gooneratne's contemporary protagonists Bharat and Navaranjini and in Khan's Iqbal Chaudhary within Australia. These protagonists record encounters with Australians as foster parents, friends, neighbours, colleagues, mentors, partners and lovers who provide the impetus for 'being at home' within the community, the workplace, the neighbourhood and the actual dwelling. In this sense home is not merely a spatial location or a remembered space, isolated and relegated to the past, but a lived space with its resonances of comfort and safety, and of physical and emotional attachments to family. Australia appears to be the place where they choose to make their homes. However, the attachment to the homeland, particularly the childhood home, appears to be deeply rooted in their memories that are ever intruding on their consciousness, resurrecting images of the past.

The characters' experiences with sporadic acts of discrimination appear to destabilise their sense of home, place and belonging, indeed their very identities. This emerges in Bharat's and Iqbal's reactions to the overt and covert forms of exclusion by family and other members of the dominant culture. In this context the point that is often overlooked is the particular positionality of a migrating subject in relation to the specific socio-historical conditions in a nation state

where exclusionary laws and practices operate to limit or suppress the political and legal rights of particular individuals. All Asian migrants were not positioned in the same way and this is apparent in Castro's ancestral figure, Lo Yun Shan, who arrives as an unwanted 'Celestial', denied all legal, economic and political guarantees accorded to the later immigrants. In Australia his specific (Chinese) racial origins are used as the basis for a denial of his rights of access and mobility within colonial Australia. He is relentlessly pursued by xenophobic paranoia and accepts a marginal existence in order to survive. Ironically, it is this character who professes a desire to settle in Australia, to buy a farm and begin to set down roots. Yet Edward, Gooneratne's ancestral figure, after an initial confrontation with members of the Anti-Coolie League, finds friendship and hospitality that he recalls with affection, noting: 'I have met with good fortune and kindness in many places' (p. 166).

For the second-generation migrants, the younger protagonists of the three novels, their 'Third Space of Enunciation' is Australia. Twelve-year-old Nadine's home is definitely with her mother in Australia, although her trip to Bangladesh has acquainted her with her father's relatives there. Seamus' voyage of discovery is into the past and (given his status as a hyphenated Australian and an orphan) into the genealogy and history that are hidden from him. Edwina, 'practical and down-to-earth…interested in reality' (p.318), realises that she has no emotional investment in her parents' homeland, which she only knows from stories. For these characters there are no memories, no ghosts, no recollections or attachments to places or people in the Old Country; they have only the stories. All their memories are finally and firmly grounded in Australia. This is apparent in the representation of the three children – Seamus, Edwina and Nadine – who are rooted in Australia and the Australian culture. For them the journeys back to their ancestral homelands take the form of learning a language and taking 'field trips' and holidays back to another unfamiliar space which could represent yet another translation in their own Third Spaces.

The purpose of this thesis has been a comparative study of three novels by Asian-Australian writers Brian Castro, Yasmine Gooneratne and Adib Khan, who explore the issues of diaspora: location, relocation, loss and accommodation within the Australian context through the perceptions and experiences of their protagonists. It has been observed that these processes of change and adaptation between the originary homes and the adoptive homes equate to an ongoing quest, seeking for a 'Third Space' which Homi Bhabha identifies as a liminal 'political space to articulate and negotiate such culturally hybrid social identities' (2005, p.358). This study has revealed that the adaptation to the Third Space is more complex than originally envisaged, with a range of differences occurring in the first and second generation migrants' notions of the homeland and the diasporic space.

The writers selected for close study appear to set up structures to map the result of the human experience of migration. The experiences of these characters, as analysed in this thesis, are literary representations of diasporic people who are in perpetual motion between multiple identities, constantly creating and recreating, assembling and reassembling their identities in the multidimensional Third Space. The negotiations of cultural differences seem to yield patterns of identification and patterns of experience that are overlapping as well as digressive, as is apparent in hybridity. As Walter Benjamin (cited in Bhabha, 1994, p.303) states: 'translation passes through continua of transformation, not abstract ideas of identity.' The Third Space therefore appears to be not just one shifting space but a multiple continua of spaces, where problematic questions arise. There is a need for new questions to be asked, for new investigations to be conducted, far more productive for the present reality, while recognising paradoxically that these may never yield the final answers. The Third Space for each of the protagonists of all three novels is not a a static entity but a kaleidoscope of changing, moving, fluid, even contradictory, complex of emotions, attitudes, responses. Stability is yearned for but is a never ending state of deferral especially

for first generation migrants. For some it is a process of acculturation to a different sense of home, for others, a relegation to a sense of permanent loss and alienation. For Iqbal Chaudhary, it is apparent that the 'Third Space of Enunciation' is one of 'endless journeys': as his friend Iftiqar observes: 'As a first-generation migrant you have forfeited the right to belong.' (p.117). While there are movements towards acculturation and belonging, the nostalgia and memories of that other place intrudes into the consciousness in ways too numerous to mention. Yet the need to be recognised and validated, to be known and to know one is finally home remains powerful. Because the experiences of the protagonists have resonated with the circumstances of my life as a migrant, I wish to conclude this thesis with a ficto-critical piece of my own that addresses and explores the notion of the' Third Space' that has been the focus of this thesis**.**

Other Selves, Other Lives

Can we who masquerade as duplications of dubious origins
Claim a space somewhere in the jigsaw puzzle of life?
We are the replicas of numerous visitations:
Indians, whose language we spurned and traditions we erased
For foreign forbears – French, Portuguese, Dutch, English.
These left behind names and language, few imprints of another heritage,
And abandoned destitute children to orphanages and schools
Run by Reverend Irish sisters and Reverend fathers, where we recited rosaries
And long litanies praying for release into the Promised Lands
We could not locate on maps.
We rejoiced in *Diwali*, were fed at *Eid* and frolicked in *Holi* colour,
Yet scorned these age-old rituals
For our *chutnified* inheritance.

Now another metamorphosis waits.
Chameleon-like,
We regain a Queen we've disinherited, saluting another flag,

We feast our eyes on red earth, golden wattle and blue festoons
Of jacaranda blossoms on newly greened trees,
We step lightly through the mottled sunlight
Refracted onto dim forest floors,
We stare up at freeways that thread the landscape
Like concrete skeins.
And we don the tribal colours each weekend
To pledge allegiance in ovals honouring bronzed gods.
Cobbling belonging with hesitant gestures …
Knit one, purl another, pick up a connection, drop that …
We believe we have been minted anew.

So why, when we stride through the promised space,
Do the scent of jasmine, the oozing sweetness of mango,
The sounds of a *mullah* calling the faithful to prayer still puncture the heart?
We are haunted by the ghosts of long ago:
The *ayah* who crooned us to sleep, the maiden aunt we left behind,
The brother who did not make the border crossing.
We are the chosen ones, who now claim an ancestry long forfeit.
Living in the shadow lands, retranslated, once again,
We are recycled, Anglo-Indian, but now more Indian than, Anglo,
Frantically scrambling for yet another utterance to define
The migrant self.

Jacqueline Highland, 2010

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