

Excerpt from

WRITING SRI LANKA

LITERATURE, RESISTANCE AND THE POLITICS OF PLACE

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PART I

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Literature and Territoriality:
Boundary Marking as a Critical Paradigm

Etymologically unsettled, ‘territory’ derives from both *terra* (earth) and *terrēre* (to frighten) whence *territorium*, ‘a place from which people are frightened off’.

Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*ⁱ

Sri Lankan literature in English constitutes an emergent canon of writing that has yet to find settlement in the field of postcolonial studies.ⁱⁱ It occupies an uncertain territory, which, in recent years, has itself been marked by the competing ethnic nationalisms of civil war and of contestatory constructions of home and belonging. The upsurge of literary production in English in the last thirty years has corresponded with the dynamic growth of postcolonial studies from the metropolitan centre, the international acclaim granted to writers such as Michael Ondaatje and Romesh Gunesekera, and, as significantly, with a period of heightened political unrest in Sri Lanka - a context of production and reception that is shaped by a politics of affiliation and competing claims to cultural authority. It is worth reminding ourselves that unlike most postcolonial nations, Sri Lanka’s national consciousness developed significantly after Independence and did so along communal lines.ⁱⁱⁱ The 1950s witnessed the dramatic decline of Ceylonese or multi-ethnic Sri Lankan nationalism in favour of Sinhala linguistic nationalism along with the sharpening of Sri Lankan Tamil nationalism^{iv} – a combination

that culminated in the communal violence of 1983 and the start of the military conflict. As a result, the accelerated production of Sri Lankan literature in English is historically situated within a context of evolving and contested claims to cultural legitimacy. The precise location of Sri Lankan writers within postcolonial studies and the extent to which their work is domesticated and habilitated within a corresponding emergent Sri Lankan canon, thus depends on a complex range of social, cultural and historical factors demarcating different lines of affiliation from diverse and divergent sites of production, reception and accommodation. In determining the boundaries of what constitutes 'Sri Lankan literature in English' therefore there is a need to engage with the contexts of cultural contestation in which postcolonial canonization meets the legitimating strategies of national affirmation – a context of social and cultural instability whereby a resident writer may well be rendered an outsider, and a 'Sri Lankan' writer abroad may find himself deemed a foreigner in his native land.

Chelva Kanaganayakam's nuanced consideration of some of the difficulties of evaluating the emergent canon of Sri Lankan writing raises several important issues that are pertinent here. Having attested to the crucial role played by the literary critics in 'filtering' Sri Lankan literature for an international audience – a task that directly affects the pedagogic construction of the canon – he reveals the radically different evaluations of a Sri Lankan writer which puts him in the 'awkward situation of being praised for [his] Sri Lankan sensibility by one critic and condemned for not being Sri Lankan by another' so that a non-Sri Lankan reader 'would have a hard time deciding whether a writer is a

traitor or patriot, an essentialist or an authentic voice'.^v It is a critical context in which, according to Kanaganayakam, 'the line that separates aesthetic criteria and political conviction becomes extremely thin'. It is notable that he is conspicuously attentive to the role of critics in Sri Lanka, 'a small group' of people working within the context of conflict and violence in which 'the polarization that has taken place between the major ethnic groups has made a common ground increasingly difficult', so that 'what is offered as literary criticism may well be the expression of a personal bias'.^{vi}

Drawing together the many strands of Kanaganayakam's cautious and considered evaluation it can be seen how the ideas expressed in his essay could be taken further. It could be argued that, given the context of cultural contestation that marks Sri Lanka's recent political history, the literary criticism generated by 'personal bias' does not merely constitute an isolated expression of a subjective opinion operating within a culturally conflictual context, but rather enacts a form of discursive 'boundary marking' that engages in a politics of inclusion and exclusion that has a symbiotic relationship to the politics of cultural nationalism that informs – and is in turn shaped by – current political events. Before I continue, I would like to stress that this in no way is intended to represent Kanaganayakam's critique. Rather it constitutes a re-settlement of some of his observations within the context of territoriality – a cultural and political dynamic that I aim to use as a critical paradigm on the basis that it informs the discursive register of both literary texts and critical responses. While it has been argued that writers in English are operating in fields that are remote from political realities,^{vii} the terms on which their work

is assessed both from within and outside Sri Lanka are largely based upon discursive constructions of allegiance, affiliation and legitimacy that serve the needs of various forms of cultural reclamation. While all literary criticism is by definition discriminatory, the practice of critical territoriality enacts a practice of inclusion and exclusion that works not so much to interrogate or deconstruct difference, not so much to draw lines of affiliation between diverse contexts of belonging and thereby create contexts of accommodation, but instead works to further generate a practice of cultural boundary marking that has its political corollary in cultural nationalism.^{viii} I am not suggesting that all Sri Lankan literary criticism is marked by such a manoeuvre – later in this chapter I will show how this is clearly not the case – but rather that there is a discernable tendency to invest in such critical practices that need to be identified and addressed at this early stage of Sri Lankan literary emergence in postcolonial studies, if the concept of a Sri Lankan literary ‘canon’ is to have any useful meaning at all.

This is not an appeal for critical consensus – the sheer range of critical responses to the work of Sri Lankan writers both inside and outside the country could be read as an indication of plurivocity – nor does it stake an interest in the questionable value of canon-formation itself, rather it is a call for identifying the salient critical strands engaging in specific strategies of exclusion so that the ‘boundaries’ of Sri Lankan writing, the sites of cultural contestation and resistance, are exposed in ways that allow for a more inclusive practice of cultural accommodation that might, in turn, feed into a politics of accommodation. The increasing polarization in Sri Lankan literary studies, with writers

subject to analysis of their work on the basis of what Graham Huggan calls ‘invidious questions of “eligibility”’,^{ix} reveals the urgent need to generate a mode of critical inquiry that works to dismantle cultural prescriptives of authenticity and allegiance and engage with a mode of discourse attentive to alternative lines of affiliation and, as significantly, to one that is sensitive to the varied and contrastive dynamics of belonging to be found in the texts themselves. Such an inquiry is particularly pertinent given that writers are increasingly scripted as cultural ambassadors, both within the country - where Anglophone writers are in the privileged position of having the potential to reach an international audience^x - and abroad - where such writers effectively do. It is necessary therefore to analyse the terms that demarcate the authenticated ‘Sri Lankan writer’ from his or her ‘expatriate’ counterpart – a subject central to this chapter. This process is enabled by a critique that draws into alignment ‘resident’ and ‘expatriate’ writers creating a context for comparative analysis that is nevertheless attendant to their radically different sites of textual production and reception – an approach that informs this study as a whole, shaping its structural dynamics. The need for such an engagement, addressing and deconstructing critical territoriality, can be seen when the cultural contradictions underpinning accommodation into an authenticated Sri Lankan experience are exposed – evident here in a Sri Lankan critic’s consideration of the emergent canon:

The responsibility for that part of the post-colonial struggle which involves the making of the Lankan canon in English falls very squarely on bi-culturalists who more obviously than most others are characterised by their symbiotic natures.

These biculturals are called upon to engage with the relationship/tensions between the two aspects of their symbiotic personalities in a manner that allows what can be felt to be an authentic contemporary Lankan experience to emerge with conviction.^{xi}

Here the mediatory position of those who occupy a borderland identity are re-coded and ruptured into the dualistic logic of ‘bi-culturalism’ – a term split in its conscription to the service of an essentialised ‘authentic Lankan experience’. I will be analyzing this passage in more detail later, but use it here to reveal the way in which the very terms of accommodating culturally liminal subjectivities have, as their basis, a monocultural centrism that resists rather engages with the complex sites of affiliation that such subjectivities can occupy.

In a different vein, another Sri Lankan critic – resident outside the country and alert to the significance of Sri Lankan ‘expatriate’ literary production – has marked a distinction between these literary products and their counterparts from within the country in terms that could be interpreted to privilege a specific reading of culture:

The 1980’s [...] witnessed instances of expatriate activity that reveal a deep-reaching sensitivity to specific events at ‘home’, that have either had significant effects on the ‘home’ culture or other potential for such effects. [...] Opinions may vary regarding the value of these activities. I must it leave [sic] to my readers

to determine whether some of them are contributory to, or destructive of, Sri Lankan national culture.^{xii}

This observation is attentive to the impact of ‘expatriate activity’ on the ‘home’ culture – implicitly acknowledging the close connection between these two spaces of representation and the transformative potential of literature, its destabilizing effects. It forms part of a detailed and extensive analysis of the English-educated community which gives numerous examples of the socio-cultural and political role of Sri Lankan expatriates, effectively demonstrating the gradual fragmentation of ‘national culture’ and its expansion into what the critic calls the ‘periphery’.^{xiii} Yet the terms of evaluation cited here have been re-sited by a resident critic to invite an evaluation of ‘expatriate’ literature on the basis of its impact on an authenticated ‘Sri Lankan national culture’ in ways that *resist* critical mediation between these sites.^{xiv} This refocalisation of the original terms of analysis effectively creates a context in which literary products from outside the country can be screened – or ‘filtered’ to use Kanaganayakam’s felicitous phrase - on the basis of authentication by a Sri Lankan cultural ‘centre’.

While there are numerous distinctions to be drawn between ‘expatriate’ texts and literary products from ‘home’, and there is certainly a need to address the impact of literary products legitimated in metropolitan centres on the marginalized national centres at ‘home’, what interests me here is the basis on which some of these distinctions are made. Exile and expatriation are not simply a question of geography; writers, as this study

emphatically shows, can be displaced in a myriad ways at home. I will return to this point later, but now wish to raise an issue that directs much of this study – the process of expatriating texts, excluding them from the borders of authenticated belonging, in ways that might transform the ‘expatriate’ – or even the self-exiled resident writer - into an *expatriot*. Both the cited passages above enact a form of critical boundary marking that operates within a discursive paradigm which repeats and revises broader claims to national affiliation that are themselves the subject of literary representation in the work of writers both in and outside Sri Lanka. The literature ‘of’ Sri Lanka (and what a burden of significance this small word carries) can thus be subject to conscription on the basis of contested notions of belonging in which ‘home’ and ‘homeland’ stand as symbolic markers of inclusion and exclusion. As will be seen in my analysis of the work of individual writers in succeeding chapters, texts from both inside and outside the country reflect complex negotiations of territory and identity, and reformulations of the constructions of the insider and outsider which intersect with - and can entrench or challenge - cultural formulations of national identity and belonging. Thus, within the contestatory dynamics of the postcolonial positioning of Sri Lankan writing in English, literature and the critical reception of texts do not simply reflect but are themselves constitutive of territorial relations in ways that intersect with the divisive discourse of competing constructions of the national space and the very real displacements and geopolitical ruptures generated by political violence. Yet while literary texts may engage with varieties of displacement, opening up for analysis the multiple mediations of belonging and affiliation and thereby revealing the contingent boundaries of ‘home’ and

‘homeland’, critical territoriality – by which I mean the overdetermined evaluation of texts in terms of an authenticated national culture – works to constrain these areas of debate, regulating the boundaries of belonging in ways that serve a specific politics of location. The interconnected dynamics between territoriality as a political strategy, as a critical manoeuvre in literary studies, and as a defining framework for literary production in the context of nationalist activism thus require closer analysis. What follows is a brief consideration of these connections that works both to contextualize critical territoriality by revealing some of its social and political co-ordinates, and to outline some of the connections between different readings of territoriality in order to show the ways in which they might collectively work to demarcate the boundaries of belonging in which Sri Lankan literature is evaluated.

The Politics and Practice of Territoriality

‘The term “border villages” is a misnomer. [...] Sri Lanka is a single unitary state and has no borders within it.’

D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke^{xv}

‘Territory is no doubt a geographical notion, but it is first of all a juridico-political one: the area controlled by a certain kind of power’.

Michel Foucault

Foucault's definition clearly links spatial practice with the practice of the state and highlights the normative role played by the state in enforcing and simultaneously disguising boundary markings. Territory is here defined performatively in that it is through the self-determining act of territorialism – the control and ownership of land - that it gains definition. For others territory is defined through the spatial idiomatics of territoriality – encompassing terms such as 'territorial integrity', 'hallowed ground' and 'homeland' – which, according to Ericksen, are linked to sensitising concepts that explain how people tie themselves to the land.^{xvi} In a different vein, political geographers such as Michael Shapiro have focused on cultural difference in claiming that territoriality can be marked ethnocentrically, in that it is ethnographically constructed reflecting how collectivities locate themselves and construct cohesive identities.^{xvii} While these definitions of territory and territoriality help define the differing disciplinary boundaries of their interlocutors, they also serve to highlight the complex connections between territoriality, spatial idiomatics and ethnocentricity which have all been central in shaping both political history and literary production in Sri Lanka since Independence, and come to prominence in the last twenty years since the start of the civil war.

This war has been waged on the basis of the right to self-determination and territorial control resulting in competing constructions of nationhood, home and belonging. The Tamil demand for an independent homeland, Eelam, has been countered by the state assertion of the need to preserve the 'unity and territorial integrity' of the island. This

territorializing spatial discourse has been reinforced by material spatial transformation: the creation of new sites and boundaries such as militarized zones, checkpoints, and indeterminate areas – the ‘No Man’s Land’ - between army occupation and guerrilla control, internal and external migration of one and half million people,^{xviii} enforced population resettlement generated by war and - more recently - the South Asian tsunami, the LTTE practice of ethnic cleansing in northern areas since 1990,^{xix} the disfigurement of the landscape through the ravages of military conflict and natural disaster, and the breakdown of land links between the northern city of Jaffna and the south, which have collectively served to provisionally partition the country and generate an altered geography. As Chelva Kanaganayakam has pointed out in an article published in 2000, ‘in a country which measures approximately 250 miles between its two furthest points, more than ninety miles are not connected by roads or the railway’.^{xx} In the topography generated by the displacement of war, culturally hybrid borderlands have been replaced by military boundaries that reinforce ethnic difference thereby furthering the discourse of territoriality,^{xxi} leading one analyst to claim that ‘the current boundary is ethno-national in character’.^{xxii} Such discourse has also influenced economic and political development. The Mahaweli Project - Sri Lanka’s most expensive irrigation project made possible through massive foreign loans in the mid-70’s - was promoted on the basis of nationalist rhetoric that compared it to the ancient irrigation systems of Sinhalese kings.^{xxiii} This project was enforced through resettling nearly 130,000 families - including 100,000 Sinhalese peasantry into Tamil-dominated areas - and also resulted in the dramatic cultural and material dispossession of the indigenous forest dwellers of Sri Lanka whose

dwelling space and hunting lands were made into a national park.^{xxiv} The re-location of the capital from Colombo to Kotte also served to mark a shift away from the island's colonial past towards an identification and re-integration with the pre-colonial period of Sinhalese rule – a territorial project of nationalist reclamation replicated in a different form in the burgeoning discovery of ancient Buddhist relics that serve to reclaim the land as a sacred space.^{xxv}

These nationalist imperatives have gained particularly urgency in the twenty years of armed conflict when the cultural construction of what constitutes 'home' and 'homeland' has been foregrounded. Home is, as Rosemary Marangoly George points out, built upon 'a pattern of select inclusions and exclusions. Home is a way of establishing difference'.^{xxvi} It is within the trope of home that physical and psychic space converge and coalesce into a potent symbol of the circumscribed and situated self. The discursive construction of an 'imagined homeland' extends this symbol into a public, national space, but disturbs its apparent coherence by its very location within the textual imaginary. The terms overlap but draw upon different models of location and, as will be seen, for many it is the disjunction between the two that generates alienation, when one's home and one's homeland occupy different spaces of representation.

Soon after Independence in 1948, the spatialisation of the Sri Lankan nation inscribed a Manichean cartography based on what Sankaran Krishna has called an 'originary hierarchy of authenticity'. Quoting the islands' earliest texts written by Buddhist clergy,

political leaders repeatedly identified the island nation as ‘Dhammadipa’ and ‘Sihaladipa’^{xxvii} – the land of the Buddha’s teaching and of the Sinhalese people – entrenching a cultural homogeneity and exclusivity that have relegated the non-Sinhalese to the status of ‘permanent guests’, a people who are literally ‘out of place’.^{xxviii} As James Duncan has pointed out (in words that substantiate Dennis Austin’s claim that Sri Lankan history is ‘more made up than most’^{xxix}):

The written history of Lankan society is among the world’s most ancient. This unbroken record has been and is the venerated text, the ethnic scripture, of this passionately political people. To follow and fulfil this textual tradition was to have political legitimacy, thus it is written history and written mythology that provided the reference for the struggle for political power.^{xxx}

These lines reveal temporal instability - the historical record ‘*has been and is* the venerated text’ (my emphasis) and ‘provided the reference for the struggle for political power’ – indicating the author’s uncertainty over the political use of mythology in the present. A raft of separatist policies after Independence, most notably the ‘Sinhala Only’ Act of 1956 which made Sinhala the sole official language in the very year that commemorated the 2500th anniversary of the Buddha’s death with its attendant calls to make Buddhism the state religion, made it clear how national myths could be used in the service of exclusionary political objectives and reveal how the nation is culturally produced within specific codes of signification.

The discursive constructions of ‘nation’ and ‘homeland’ continue to be sites of contestation. One of the earliest initiatives in the peace negotiations of 2002 identified the need to construct a new spatial term, and the demand for an ‘independent homeland’ - with all its registers of secession and ownership – was replaced by the rather more fluid formulation: ‘areas of traditional settlement’. This term, while affirming the historical claims of the Tamil people to their ancestral home, simultaneously denies stability and coherence to the terrain over which they may be granted conditional control, and works to situate the Tamils in a system described by Deleuze and Guattari as ‘itinerant territoriality’ - a people whose settlement may well be temporary and subject to change.^{xxx} The new term, it could be argued, offers a precarious occupancy, with the Tamils marked as resident outsiders, bearing credence to Sankaran Krishna’s claim that in Sri Lanka the multiethnic state is incomprehensible to the popular mind and the writer Jean Arasanayagam’s assertion that in the country ‘each new settler [is] an invader’.^{xxxii}

The discursive registers of Tamil nationalism, on the other hand, tend towards a separatist logic that embraces irredentism, with its call for political autonomy in a region considered by Tamil nationalists to constitute a former independent Tamil kingdom – one unconquered by any colonial power apart from the Portuguese.^{xxxiii} Drawing largely upon a diasporic base for its financial support, Tamil nationalism in its militant form has gained demographic expression within the country in the systematic ethnic cleansing of the Jaffna Peninsula^{xxxiv} and a corresponding cultural expression in the call for a pure

Tamil movement purged of Sanskritic, Aryan and ‘northern’ influences. It is strengthened by major commemorative rituals inside and outside Sri Lanka that create and sustain a collective memory of warrior sacrifice, courage and honour, following a calendar whose printed form, in a 1998 version, marked the death of Hitler with explicit praise and admiration for the German dictator.^{xxxv}

Territoriality is thus not only a geographical inscription but a textual one, discursively shaped and itself shaping the discourse of belonging. It directly affects the political and cultural landscape of writers and the production and reception of literary texts. In Sri Lanka – where there has been a dramatic increase in literary production since the escalation of armed conflict – the link between literature and nationalist inscriptions of belonging is strong. Key issues such as the role of the writer, who has the right to write the nation, and how the nation should be written, have become sites of contention both within the literature and, equally significantly, in the critical reception of texts.^{xxxvi} Sri Lankan literature since the war thus brings to crisis many of the key debates in post-colonial studies reflecting struggles over issues of legitimacy, authenticity, canonicity and the politics and representation of belonging and exclusion. The literary territoriality marked by spatial configurations of nation, landscape, home and belonging, and by linguistic markers of geopolitical discourse and ethnically differentiated discourse, needs to be considered in relation to the boundary marking generated within critical practice and the politics of belonging and affiliation encoded in it.

It could be argued that this is particularly necessary given the radically different constraints within which Sri Lankan texts written inside and outside the country operate. The position of 'expatriate' literature is dictated by factors informed by its publication and ready availability within the metropolitan centres in which postcolonial studies has its base. Given that Sri Lankan texts written from within the country are almost entirely published locally - with little or no editorial support, poor distribution and a very limited print run^{xxxvii} - the constitution of 'Sri Lankan' literature outside Sri Lanka is coming to be increasingly dictated by the terms set by 'expatriate' writers resulting in a canon of writing *set apart* from the emergent canon in Sri Lanka which looks more to local writers and the work of selected non-residents for its base. The conditions are thereby being created for a polarised dynamic of competing claims to authority from outside and inside Sri Lanka in which the cultural mediations evident in the literature itself are in danger of being displaced or silenced.

'Expatriate' writers have an advantage over their 'resident' counterparts in that while their work may be – and often is - scrutinised in relation to constructed notions of cultural authenticity, these are not the only terms on which their work is assessed. Shyam Selvadurai is also situated as a Canadian gay writer, A. Sivanandan as a Marxist internationalist and Michael Ondaatje's work analysed from a range of poststructuralist perspectives incorporating metafictionality, the visual arts and chaos theory. What is more, polarised critical positions on, say Ondaatje, outlined by Chelva Kanaganayakam, or Selvadurai in Daniel Coleman's evaluation, describe tensions between clearly defined

critical positions or fields - the opposition between nativist or nationalist readings and migrant and exilic ones, or the intersecting marginalities attending post-colonial and queer studies in ways that bring into the open the process of critical arbitration and its terms of evaluation.^{xxxviii}

Resident writers, on the other hand, do not have the luxury of being positioned in such an open critical field. As Kanaganayakam has shown, their work, published and distributed locally, is not readily available to international readers who are almost entirely dependent on local critics to define and place the work in its cultural context^{xxxix} – critics who are influenced by and in turn influencing, the nationalist discourses of the day. Even in India, where Sri Lankan writers are increasingly being published, availability remains limited due to restricted distribution so the texts have yet to gain a critical base in literary studies there.^{xl} An exegetical study of textual territoriality thus requires a mediatory critical practice that moves between different poles of analysis: the locatedness of literary criticism and the territorial markers to be found in the texts themselves. These markers, are, as I will now show, multiple, varied and contestatory – resistant to domestication and any easy distinctions on the basis of domicile. In the next section, therefore, I provide an outline of some of the ways in which spatial idiomatics gain literary expression in a range of Sri Lankan texts.

Writing Space

Sri Lankan writing since the war has emerged out of a context shaped by a tension between an overdetermined spatial discourse – what political geographers describe as the ‘territorial trap’ on the one hand^{xli} - and cultural and spatial shifts of seismic proportions on the other. In the words of Sankaran Krishna, it is a situation in which the making of the nation ‘is coeval with its violent unmaking’.^{xlii} This disjunction between the fixity of territorial discourse and the dislocations of war has generative potential in providing the conditions of possibility for the emergence of new narratives of belonging. As anthropologists have observed deterritorialisation – and one can add to this, reterritorialisation – serves to unsettle and challenge accepted notions of nativeness.^{xliii} Given that in Sri Lanka nationalism has long been defined in communal terms and identities are increasingly communally based, the unsettling effects of a twenty-year war provide opportunities for identifying the boundaries of specific contestational sites between competing ethnic nationalisms - both of which draw upon the premise that the nation should be ethnically homogenous - as well as other forms of cultural contestation.^{xliv} In these terms Sri Lankan literature since the war could be seen as articulating and testing the viability of new formulations of belonging, mapping geographies that, in Cleary’s re-citing of Said, chart the desire “to reclaim, rename, and re-inhabit” the alienated landscape through the imagination’.^{xlv}

The tendency has manifested itself in both popular and literary fiction. The ‘national romance’ – that is, across the barricades stories of relationships that challenge the ethnic

divide (notably in Karen Roberts' *July* (2001)) - crime novels and the political thriller (for example Jeanne Cambrai's *Murder in the Pettah* (2001) and David Blacker's *A Cause Untrue* (2005)) are popular forms that work to critique the state-sanctioned cartography of the nation by drawing upon the discourse of justice and morality to re-align established boundaries, while detective fiction has elided into the literary uncanny in Michelle de Krestler's historical novel *The Hamilton Case* (2004).^{xlvi} This increasing focus on displacement has found expression in novels that focus exclusively on boundary crossing from the war zone such as Nihal de Silva's *The Road from Elephant Pass* (2003) and C. Suryakumar's *Kilali Crossing* (2002) and the exploration of indeterminate spaces and compromised alliances such as Chandraratna Bandara's translated novel, *Hostage City* (1993; trans. Vijitha Fernando). The political thriller, with its creation of an underworld marked by paranoia and subterfuge, is notable for sharing imaginative affinities with literary texts such as Ondaatje's *Anil's Ghost* (2000) and *Handwriting* (1998), which explore fugitive space and hidden history through metaphoric registers of excavation and burial, and Romesh Gunsekera's *Heaven's Edge* (2002), a dystopian fantasy set in a future marked by guerrilla warfare and random state violence – the latter sharing some of the apocalyptic drive of Rajiva Wijesinha's political satire, *Days of Despair* (1989), and Tennyson Perera's translated novel, *Thunder* (1999; trans. Tilak Balasuriya).^{xlvii} For both Ondaatje and Gunsekera the recourse to a subterranean mapping of the nation is influenced by the fact that in their reading of the nation political forces defy legibility. Other genres that have increased in popularity since the start of the war are the personal memoir, a form that can offer sanctuary in a hermetically sealed

past, distanced from the political discord and violent uncertainty of the present, and the short story. The latter form, one that invites plurivocity, has developed dramatically in recent years and has found notable exponents in, amongst others, Neil Fernandopulle and Jagath Kumarasinghe, while the innovative reach of Tissa Abeysekera's work resists categorisation altogether. The sheer range of writing and writers – with recent Gratiaen Prize winners drawn from the ranks of molecular biology and the aviation industry – reveals an increasing democratisation and pluralism in literary production in English that challenges the rather tired charge of elitism levelled at such work.

The development towards new cartographies can also be measured by a consideration of the work of the two writers who – according to one critic – kept Anglophone writing going during the dry decade following the 'Sinhala Only' Act.^{xlviii} Both James Goonewardene and Punyakante Wijenaiké show a shift in spatial register after the escalation in political violence in the 70's and '80's. Goonewardene abandoned his critique of the pastoral idyll for an engagement with ecology and the geopolitical construction of the state as an organism in *One Mad Bid For Freedom* (1990) and a focus on tribalism in his last novel. Wijenaiké, who, in her strongest novels, had explored the gendered space of the *walauwe* – or traditional ancestral home – reflecting on the alienation of women within their dwelling space, transferred this dynamic of estrangement to an explicitly political context in her award-winning novel *The Enemy Within* (1998), which focused on the Central Bank bomb explosion of 1996. Drawing upon the capital's spatial history as a former fortress, Wijenaiké explores the experiences

of a range of residents living in a state of siege, restricted as much by their own fear as by instruments of the state. Her work more than that of any other writer in English explores Homi Bhabha's formulation of the uncanny or 'unhomely' as the manifestation of an absent presence that serves to menace the scene of representation.

Both these writers work to deconstruct models of a unitary, homogenous nation and do so by re-locating national space as exilic space through mobile structurations of home and belonging. Their different spatial configurations do more than this; they work to confound assumptions underlying any easy distinctions between 'resident' and 'expatriate' writing by exploring diverse modalities of alienation. Much of this study seeks to dismantle polarised categorisations that conscript writing to critical territoriality, but for now, a brief comparison of boundary marking in the work of a 'resident' and 'expatriate' writer will further illustrate my argument on the urgent need for such a critical manoeuvre.

'Resident' and 'Expatriate' Cartographies

Boundaries are central tropes to a range of Sri Lankan texts. David Sibley has shown how 'moral panics heighten boundary consciousness' and has claimed that boundaries 'assume considerable significance because they are simultaneously zones of uncertainty and security'.^{xlix} Boundaries figure prominently in both Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*

(1995) and Jean Arasanayagam's work. Selvadurai, the product of an inter-ethnic marriage, and Arasanayagam, a Burgher married to a Tamil, are both caught in the interstices of contested ethnic identities and both were displaced by the anti-Tamil violence of '83: Selvadurai as a political refugee in Canada and Arasanayagam as an internal refugee. Their work thus registers displacement in ways that accommodate it as not only external but also internal to the nation.

Selvadurai's novel *Funny Boy* depicts the coming-of-age of a cross-dressing Tamil boy, Arjie, who unwittingly gets embroiled in a range of inter-ethnic relationships, notably his aunt's inter-ethnic relationship with a Sinhalese man and his own affair with a Sinhalese boy, Shehan, just before the Colombo pogrom of 1983. The novel thus aligns itself with national romances such as Karen Roberts' *July* in which ethnic identity is marked in exclusionary terms in order to explore the possibilities for communal connection. What distinguishes Selvadurai's work is that the romance between Arjie and Shehan addresses the boundary-marking created by both ethnic intolerance and homophobia. Selvadurai's mediation of emergent homosexuality is played out through foregrounding the mobility of the desiring self across clearly defined ethnic and gender categories which are, in turn, given concrete spatial co-ordinates in the text. 'Most people marry their own kind,' Arjie is told, and he is left to consider the ways in which his own life inverts the terms on which the statement is made.

Charting a clearly segregated terrain of permitted spaces and forbidden zones, the focus of the novel rests on the negotiation, invasion and violation of politicized, gendered and socially-stratified spaces, mapping the larger struggle for territorial control in the country. The emphasis on essentialised ethnicities and segregated physical space allows Selvadurai to focus on the relative fluidity of relationships and the physical mobility of his central character, providing a context of constraint that allows us to witness the process of emergence of a bordered sexual identity. As a result there has been a tendency, both within Sri Lanka and abroad, to read Selvadurai's work as a diasporic reflection on migrant sexuality. Both Daniel Coleman and Raj Rao situate it in these terms, the latter claiming that '*Funny Boy* adds to the slowly growing body of gay writing on [rather than from] the Indian subcontinent' and concludes by dissociating it from what he calls the 'Sri Lankan literary tradition'.ⁱ It is, we are told elsewhere, 'the story of one young boy's interior formation and integration set against *the backdrop* of his country's disintegration' (my emphasis)ⁱⁱ – a backdrop which was almost effaced in Sri Lanka where the novel was primarily positioned as a gay text, and responses ranged from one writer's enraged evaluation of the novel as filthⁱⁱⁱ to a national debate on the need to repeal the anti-sodomy law after the Sri Lankan President read it.

My concern here is not that so much attention was granted to the novel's negotiation of gay identity, but with the use of exclusionary critical registers that fail to evaluate the construction of ethnicity that frame the conditions of emergence of mobile sexuality. The novel intersects with and interconnects gay, diasporic and Sri Lankan cultural registers

and the fact that, as Raj Rao points out, political events are presented ‘from a Tamil point of view, with no references to Tiger atrocities’ requires a reading of the way all identities get staged.^{liii} Kanaganayakam’s positioning of Selvadurai as a Colombo Tamil who has access to a syncretic linguistic register – in the novel *Arjie* is placed in the Sinhala rather than the Tamil stream – also needs to be brought into play here, as it helps identify the specific politics of location that activates the texts’ queer’ identity.^{liv} If ethnic essentialism is constructed from a syncretic cultural space – and there is plenty of evidence in the novel to support this – then the articulation of discrete Tamil and Sinhala identities is further problematised. To displace the text into a queer, diasporic space is to dramatically reduce its ideological investment in critiquing ethnically-bordered discourse and its role in determining the cultural matrices of an emergent Sri Lankan canon. It is perhaps through such manoeuvres that ethnic politics and displacement come to be de-linked in the work of a political exile.

In contrast, Jean Arasanayagam’s extensive oeuvre registers a different range of approaches to exile which collectively chart a development from a personal to a public voice. A writer of Burgher descent, she has acknowledged that her relationship to the land is marked by its provisionality – a sense of ancestral ‘tenantship’.^{lv} Her work registers alterity in three key ways: the critique of territorial discourse focusing on borders and boundaries in short stories and drama; the development of a fluid and mobile subject positioning, shifting between the boundaries of marginalized ethnic identities (Burgher and Tamil) in biographical prose (such as *Peacocks and Dreams*) and poetry;

and an unsettling internalization of difference resulting in the dissolution of boundaries and a mergence between speaking subject and landscape in verse. This generic diversity and subjective flexibility does not however ally itself with the post-modern celebration of liminal identity found in Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* or the delight in a hybridized, anarchic linguistic register found in Carl Muller's Burgher trilogy. Rather, as Neloufer De Mel has succinctly pointed out, 'her writings imply that syncretism is never an *equal* mixing of diverse inheritances, that cosmopolitanism is classed and raced, and that identity is as much about political exigency dictated by the dominant hegemony'.^{lvi} Yet while her work resists ethnically-marked readings there has been a tendency to ethnically overdetermine her work by emphasizing her mediation of Burgher and Tamil identity, detracting attention away from the focus of her writing which rests – as I show in a later chapter – on the broader dynamic of a subjectivity struggling against the erasure imposed by such territorial markings. These divergent scriptings of 'ethnicity' in the work of the 'expatriate' Selvadurai and the 'resident' Arasanayagam reveal that the textual accommodation of difference can be marked in ways that disturb categories of belonging bound by geographical readings of place. An engagement with the spatial idiomatics underpinning texts can thus challenge the overdetermined reading of texts in relation to their sites of production by revealing the contestatory boundaries in which belonging itself is enunciated. It is in these sites, I argue, that the 'nation' is opened up as a provisional, contingent and negotiated space.

There is clearly a need to find a critical discourse for the fractured spaces inhabited by Arasanayagam and Selvadurai, one that is responsive to the varieties of victimization, hierarchies within hybridity and to the contingency of contested frontiers. Dislocating the work of these writers from the polarized discourse of 'resident' and 'expatriate' readings and from interpretative strategies that write into or write over the exclusivity of ethnic identity markers remains a precondition for deterritorialising Sri Lankan writing from existing exclusionary binaries, challenging constructions of ethnicity, and enabling a transactional ethics to emerge from the violence of ethnic intolerance. Concomitant with this project is one that works to identify some of the specific strategies of exclusion through which critical territoriality is enacted. To reveal, in other words, the ways in which apparently divergent modes of critical evaluation of Sri Lankan literature in fact can delineate mutually reinforcing lines of affiliation. This is the subject of my final section, but before I begin identifying and analysing these different modes, it is first necessary to explore one of the key critical boundaries applied to the study of English writing from Sri Lanka, one based on the exclusivity of the English language itself.

The Edge of English

English is colloquially referred to as 'kaduwa' or 'sword' by Sinhala speakers, a term that reflects its status as an instrument of empire that effectively divides a subject peoples. Critics have contended that the term only got coined and gained currency somewhere

between the late 1960's and early 1970's,^{lvii} a decade or so after the 'Sinhala Only' Act, and that it originated among rural or semi-urban children and youth in their response to English classes in government schools where it was worn 'not as a badge of privilege but as a mask, and a very vulnerable one at that'.^{lviii} The term, then, does not so much discursively enact a decolonising strategy of cultural reclamation from the former colonial power, but rather registers an internalised counter-hegemonic resistance to the power of the English-educated who continued to hold key positions of power and influence in the country *after* the nationalist imperatives underpinning the 'Sinhala Only' Act had come into effect.^{lix} When situated in the political and historical context in which it evolved, the 'kaduwa' of English can be seen to be less a marker of cultural reclamation – a term wielded to minoritize the English language^{lx} - but rather a register of the very *uncertainty* of such reclamation within the context of cultural fragmentation in the nation, as fluency in English, the language of the international community, is seen to be indispensable for access to positions of social and material privilege in the country.^{lxi} Constitutionally recognised as a link language in 1978,^{lxii} this discursive *kaduwa* is clearly a sword with a double edge: one that both socially and culturally divides the nation in ways that create very real material inequities between peoples, but also one that effectively connects the English-speaking elite to other postcolonial elites within and outside the country and to the wider global community as well. Indeed its significance as a link language is such that it has been suggested that the very downgrading of the English language has been a contributory factor in the division between racial groups and religious communities such 'that the troubles of 1983 were largely due to the fact that this

important cultural function of English and the English-educated had ceased to operate effectively'.^{lxiii}

It is this unstable positioning of English as a language whose use works to both divide and connect peoples, creating alternative lines of affiliation, which is central to my analysis of cultural and critical boundary marking. The assumption that almost all resident Sri Lankan writers in English are from a materially privileged minority is not in dispute here: it is evident in the fact that the cultural effects of constitutionally enforced linguistic nationalism have for some time compelled those who wish to learn English fluently - and are not born into a family in which it is spoken at home - to pay for their own tuition.^{lxiv} But rather it is the assumption that the use of English itself has the *singular and unilateral* effect of social and cultural exclusion, that it marks a stable boundary and a determinable cultural centre, which I wish to challenge. 'English' is of course not itself singular or homogenous; its very insertion within a radically alter-native cultural context insists upon its mutation into multiple 'englishes'.^{lxv} What is more as a recent study of 'Sri Lankan English' has shown, all speakers of English in the country use a hybridised form of the language – a fact that is not only unacknowledged but actively resisted by members of the élite who prefer to believe they are using 'Queen's English'.^{lxvi} Yet the tendency to read the literary products of Sri Lankan writers in relation to the fixity of class difference and either their conformity to, and deviation from, a putative 'standard' English, not only assumes the stability of a medium that, like all linguistic mediums, is historically and culturally contingent (so that the 'standard' that is

referred to is subject to change), but also results in forms of evaluation that differentiates texts on a highly selective construction of difference and belonging. It results in markedly variant – and often contradictory - scriptings of the ‘place’ of English in Anglophone texts which can be used to arbitrate and determine cultural legitimacy. Hence it is possible for one critic to suggest that James Goonewardene’s lack of deviation from formal English and his inability to communicate ‘broken English’ are markers of his elitism, for another to claim that the morphological borrowings from the indigenous language register another writer’s alienation, and another to contend that the hybridised play of Jagath Kumarasinghe’s short stories effectively ground the work in Sri Lanka.^{lxvii} These readings register the ways in which linguistic markers of difference are scripted to serve specific readings of national culture and, when taken collectively, reveal that English in Sri Lanka does not in fact have a stable cultural base, centre or constituency at all.

The assumption of the singularity of English and its unilateral connection to the imperial centre is evident in the infamous statement by the young bilingual poet Lakdasa Wikkramasinha who contended in 1965:

I have come to realize that I am using the language of the most despicable and loathsome people on earth; I have no wish to extend its life and range, enrich its tonality.

To write in English is a form of cultural treason. I have had for the future to think of a way of circumventing this treason; I propose to do this by making my writing entirely immoralist and destructive.^{lxviii}

The denigration of literature in English through the 1960's and until the period of the JVP insurrection was in part facilitated by the failure of Anglophone writers to directly address some of the dramatic social upheavals affecting the country and choose instead to focus on rural themes in keeping with the nationalist project of connection with the masses. Rajiva Wijesinha has reflected on the social and cultural contradictions underpinning such efforts:

In the first few decades after independence we had the irony of the classes that spoke English striving desperately to describe village maidens flinging themselves into wells, while writers at home in Sinhala described the upper classes in unrealistic if not quite Dickensian terms – and in terms of their relationship with other classes, rather than their interactions amongst themselves.^{lxix}

This desire to *bridge* difference can demarcate an arena where contested and contradictory constructions of identity clash, a space of representation that actively engages with hegemonic political prescriptives in ways that, far from being external or peripheral to the discourse of ethnonationalism, instead articulates the very difficulties of accommodation within competing hierarchies of belonging. The instabilities of discourse

– as Bakhtinian analysis shows us - indicate sites of radical affiliative uncertainty in literature. Bakhtin's seminal analysis of the co-existence of linguistic forms and their contestation has specific implications for the study of English literature produced in Sri Lanka, for here the cultural conflicts of ethnic, class and gender differentiation are internally marked by the linguistic register of writers who are also almost all bilingual, familiar both with English and another tongue, familiar in other words with (at least) two distinct cultural registers and a historical and political context in which language-use has been contested on the basis of ethnicity. A consideration of linguistic hybridity in the work of Jean Arasanayagam and Carl Muller can be used to assess the level of cultural exchange, permeability and accommodation of difference in the country. As Burgher writers they belong to the one community distinguished on the basis of their hybridity, part of a mixed-race minority who are English-speaking descendants of the Dutch and Portuguese who had once ruled the island. As their first language is English the subversion of normative English discourse to be found in their work can be read as largely a conscious effort. What follows is a brief overview that attempts to open up the borders of 'English' writing, indicating some of the ways in which dialogism and discursive hybridity can mark the difficulties of cultural accommodation in the country.

Language, as Bakhtin has shown, is materially-produced and culturally-determined, an index of social change and conflict. Individual words and phrases both oral and written, are sites of cultural conflict, their juxtaposition embodying a clash of competing discourses and ideologies. Language, and in particular the discourse of novelistic fiction,

can thus be decentred, dialogic and hybridized, ‘a mixture’ as Bakhtin puts it, ‘of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor’. Bakhtin distinguishes between ‘polyglossia’, the interaction between two or more languages within a given culture, and ‘heteroglossia’, a diversity of unofficial forms of a particular national language leading to internal differentiation.^{lxx}

Jean Arasanayagam, as already indicated, occupies a nebulous borderland: as a Burgher woman married to a high-caste Tamil, she was rejected by her Tamil in-laws and, on the basis of her inter-ethnic marriage, was victimised during the anti-Tamil riots of 1983 during which she was forced to seek shelter in a refugee camp. This experience of double exclusion has a direct bearing on the construction of ethnic and cultural difference in her work. While her own social and cultural position may be liminal, in-between fixed identities, the linguistic registers of her prose are strikingly marked by their polyglossia, the juxtaposition of discrete languages. In *Peacocks and Dreams* (written 1984; published 1996), an evocative, mythopoeic reconstruction of her husband’s childhood in a Tamil village, Arasanayagam inserts Sanskrit terms into normative English, transforming the dominant English idiom by making interpretation dependent upon an understanding of Hindu myth and religion.^{lxxi} She further dialogises the work by rhetorically addressing the boy (who was her husband) directly in the opening story:

But you tasted nectar once and you were a deity too, let us give you a name -
Small god of the Grove. The trident twirled for you and Siva invited you into that
dream of *Kailasa*.

Why don't you return to your village, you had a home there once. Is it too late?
The black *naga* rears its hood, uncoiling itself. The sky darkens with the spread of
its malignant hood. Siva stirs the earth in his *tandava* dance but his thunderous
step can no longer destroy the evil *asuras* that ravage the land. Your prayers to
Ganesh, Skanda, Vishnu, Siva are as distant as a madman's mutter wandering
through its own confusions as shells fly cracking the roofs, skullblows smashing
the bone into smithereens. ^{lxxii}

This disorientating passage registers cultural difference through its dependence on Hindu ideas and terminology as individual words from the subaltern discourse are isolated, italicised and set apart from standard English. These words are integral to the meaning of the piece (which focuses on the way Siva's regenerative dance of creation and destruction has been stilled by the violence of war - how the divine order has been broken) but their very differentiation registers the fault-lines, fractures and disjunctures of the cultural world described. The text's plurivocality thus registers cultural dissonance by the self-conscious insertion and awkward accommodation of an alternative discourse into 'standard' English idiom. Even the promise of code-switching on a metaphoric level is not realised - the sky, we are told, is not itself analogous to a cobra's hood (a potentially

striking image) but only ‘darkens’ with it. The linguistic register of *Peacocks and Dreams* reveals an important aspect of her work that Chelva Kanaganayakam has observed: that the accommodation of difference is impossible for Arasanayagam within the Tamil context.^{lxxiii} It here reminds us that exclusion is not the preserve of one community and registers the extent to which Arasanayagam’s work is attentive to multiple faultlines.

Linguistic hybridity has the potential to subvert dominant discourses. As Homi Bhabha has shown, in hybridised discourse narrative authority is articulated ‘with a range of differential knowledges and positionalities that both estrange its “identity” and produce new forms of knowledge, new modes of differentiation, new sites of power’.^{lxxiv} But, as this passage shows, in Arasanayagam’s work dialogicality - also to be found in her poetry which sometimes draws upon a Sinhala and Dutch lexicon - is used to register the co-existence of discrete worldviews and their incommensurability.^{lxxv} While, on the one hand, her work unsettles the hierarchy of discourses through linguistic juxtaposition, discrete languages are held in tension, words connect only to collide, and cultures clash to produce an idiom in which there is no easy accommodation of difference.

In contrast to Arasanayagam’s polyglossic juxtaposition of different languages, Carl Muller’s work contains a syncretic linguistic register celebrating an anarchic, hybridised Sri Lankan English, or ‘Singlish’ as it is commonly called.^{lxxvi} His bawdy novel *The Jam-Fruit Tree* (1993) is fully heteroglossic, describing the contestation of voices and dialects

within a language, and, unlike Arasanayagam's work, does not require the reader to have a working knowledge of a subaltern discourse to understand its meaning. Here, an elderly Burgher couple, Maudiegirl and Cecilprins, contemplate the prospect of one of their daughters marrying a Sinhalese:

'I die and go and cannot see even one married,' Maudiegirl would grumble and Cecilprins would make the old rattan chair creak and say: 'What's this silliness you're saying. If anything wrong with you can bring doctor, no?' But he knew. Deep inside. Over fifty years of married life and all it stood for was not lost on this man. 'Anna doing the dance with Sinhalese fellow. So what to do? You want Sinhalese son-in-law, I suppose.'

Maudiegirl glared and let loose one of those rare shafts of wisdom that was based, even if she did not know it, on pure logic. 'So never mind. You thinking we are special or something? Good to go to top market buying *bombili* (the dried 'Bombay duck' - a thin eel-like fish that is found in abundance in Indian waters) from Sinhalese man. Good to get children's bicycle made by Sinhalese man. Good to eat rice and curry and *stringhoppers* (steamed circlets of flour - a favourite breakfast dish in Sri Lanka) like Sinhalese man. When want to cut tree in the backside you call Sinhalese man, no? Firewood bringing Sinhalese man. Plucking coconuts who? Dhoby who? All over people Sinhalese, no? Father telling in church love the neighbour. See, will you, who neighbour is. Sinhalese, no?'^{lxxvii}

The novel effectively parodies standard English idiom, using a mongrelised, dialogical discourse to reflect cultural negotiation rather than cultural conflict.^{lxxviii} Sri Lankan words are italicised *and* immediately decoded; they are culturally differentiated and unmarked (their etymology is not provided) simultaneously marking and crossing the lexical boundaries of a culture. Thus while Arasanayagam's work registers the difficulties encountered by the hybridised subject and the awkwardness of overcoming cultural boundaries, Muller's novels revel in the indeterminacy of their cultural location. Significantly, it is the Sinhalese subject who is displaced here, requiring translation, as mongrelised 'Singlish' takes precedence.

Between them Arasanayagam and Muller unsettle the hegemonising view of English as a singular discourse with a unilateral affiliation with the former colonial power and their neo-colonial successors. What is more, these brief extracts reveal the complex ways in which hierarchic constructions of difference can be challenged and transcended through unsettling linguistic registers, manoeuvres that call for pluralist readings of culture and identity. Between the clash of cultures found in Arasanayagam's reflections on childhood in Tamil Sri Lanka and the syncretism of Muller's reconstruction of a suburban past, the gap between alienation and accommodation is not only marked but mobilised into an articulation of the margins of national belonging. It reveals how those who are displaced or occupy cultural borderlands are creative agents in the construction of the nation.^{lxxix} Yet, as will be seen, literary manoeuvres can all too often be contained by critical

strategies that work to re-territorialise texts. Identifying strategies of critical exclusion thus remains a pre-condition for the process of creating a transactional ethics in literary studies in Sri Lanka. I will now attempt to identify some of the key modes of critical territoriality, revealing how apparently antagonist modes of analysis can work to reinforce exclusionary readings of the nation.

The Critical Field

It is my contention that the critical territoriality currently arbitrating the boundaries of 'Sri Lankan' literature falls into two distinct but related categories. While significant measures have been taken to counter critical territoriality – notably in the development of critical analyses foregrounding hybridity such as the essays in Neluka Silva's edited volume *The Hybrid Island*, the proliferation of literary translations (in which Halpé et al.'s *A Lankan Mosaic* stands as significant example) and institutional support for translational activity,^{lxxx} as well as the diasporisation of literary culture evident in canonising texts such as Yasmine Gooneratne's *Celebrating Sri Lankan Women's Writing*^{lxxxi} – these efforts to hybridise, dialogise and diasporise the critical boundaries of Sri Lankan writing need to be assessed against the background of the hegemonising forces of critical exclusion that work to define the field. Indeed it could be argued that the full significance of such counter-territorial manoeuvres can only be measured by identifying the critical constituents and cultural and political drives underpinning the

hegemonising prescriptives they appear to challenge. The two modes of critical territoriality demarcate different trajectories rather than exclusive and contained critical forms, outlining broad tendencies in a spectrum of discursive practices that may be invested in to different degrees. Like all typologies they are, by definition, reductive, and my scripting of them inevitably formulaic. Yet I use them, compromising as they are, to identify a fundamental tension in the evaluation of Sri Lankan literature in English: a tension that, I argue, demarcates the key co-ordinates of a critical matrix from which culturally hegemonising evaluative criteria in Sri Lankan literary criticism have emerged. My definition of these forms is modulated by an exploration of their articulation in critical texts in order to reveal more fully the cultural and political implications they contain.

The first mode of critical territoriality is directed by what I call *patrician* literary criticism: a mode of analysis that derives its authority broadly (but not exclusively) from a Leavisian approach to literature. Patrician literary critics privilege specific literary values. They engage in a universalising, humanist reading of culture, assessing literary texts on their ability to enhance 'Life' so that aesthetic criteria are connected to a text's perceived human importance. Their relationship to textual analysis is essentially paternalistic, marking an investment in their role as guardians of national culture. In their search to find the 'best' in literary culture, they operate in an implicitly hierarchic model of the world, but their position, within the postcolonial context, is a culturally unstable one. Drawing implicitly and explicitly from the European models of literary culture in

their evaluation of textual products from a postcolonial location, their authentication of national culture is based upon a borrowed aestheticism that destabilises the boundary of the 'national' that they seek to protect. The Leavisian lament on the decline of national culture has, therefore, in this postcolonial context, a neo-colonial basis, as the evaluations of the patrician critic are based on cultural criteria and authenticated products from the imperial centre. Theirs is not the 'oppositional humanism' described by Benita Parry, a humanism that works in the service of anti-colonial resistance and decolonisation, but rather a hegemonising humanism that works to stabilise the dominant cultural order.^{lxxxii}

The patrician deprecation of modern 'ills' such as alienation and anomy marks a communitarian ideology^{lxxxiii} – a factor that helps to situate their cultural politics. The emphasis here is on approval, authentication, and legitimation. Critics that follow a patrician line of evaluation feel most secure when undertaking a socially dispersive reading of texts, place an emphasis on literary history, class dynamics and 'community', and favour realist representation.^{lxxxiv}

The second form of critical territoriality is directed by a *nativist* critical approach. Nativist critics undertake a subaltern politics of cultural reclamation and irredentism that often leads them to reject the Western-orientated models of authentication promoted by patrician critical practitioners. They follow an isolationist cultural logic – one premised on the notion of cultural difference and dictated by the cultural politics of decolonisation - and undertake a form of critical territoriality that places value on a writer's place of residence, on origins and on 'tradition'. Their emphasis is on the indigene whom they

perceive as institutionally marginalised not only by the international critical community but also by the local critical establishment. Nativist critiques rely on a reading of the nation as a site of natally determined primary affiliation outlined by Raymond Williams in his observation that: 'Nation' as a term is radically connected with 'native'. We are *born* into relationships which are typically settled in place. This form of primary and 'placeable' bonding is of quite fundamental human and natural importance.'^{lxxxv} They share the patrician critic's interest in canon-formation, but aim to construct an alternative canon – one that privileges local, resident and culturally authenticated expatriate writers. There are two polar forms of nativism: one that emphasises inclusivity and one driven by a politics of exclusivity. Inclusive nativists are driven by the desire to transform the canon by incorporating hitherto marginalised writers from within the country; exclusive nativists focus more on filtering the work of writers resident outside Sri Lanka assessing them on the basis of their viability for inclusion in the canon. Underpinning the evaluations of all nativists is a primordialist hierarchy of value that underscores indigeniety, domicile and authenticity. Nativists have a tendency to label texts that fall short of their authenticating criteria as 'exotic' and 'orientalist' – terms that tend to be used by non-Sri Lankan critics in a more nuanced form to critique literary alienation or the dominant critical trajectories in metropolitan centres^{lxxxvi} - and are particularly alert to various forms of 'stereotyping'. Their evaluations are largely based on a representationalist assessment of a text – in other words on how an author appears to represent the country and its people.

These two modes of critical territoriality appear to contain diametrical approaches to cultural authenticity. Patrician critics, drawing as they do upon European literary and critical models in their evaluation of texts, appeal to a metropolitan base that works to undermine culturally exclusive readings. Nativist critics on the other hand, follow a centripetal logic in which cultural boundaries are determined by a putative national centre and appeal to a notion of the 'authentic' Sri Lankan voice. Yet both patrician and nativist critical practitioners clearly invest in a project of cultural guardianship that can – especially within the context of the cultural nationalism generated since Independence and the contestatory dynamics generated by political conflict – work towards a form of critical boundary marking that reinforce specific readings of the nation. Homi Bhabha's analysis of representation in the colonial text reveals how such convergence can come about and is therefore worth considering in detail.

Bhabha's essay initially focuses on the collaboration between historicism and realism both of which engage with 'the familiar quest for an origin that will authorize a beginning'.^{lxxxvii} He draws attention to the representationalist basis of both discourses and the fact that their "unmediated" and sequential progression to truth, the originality of vision – what Leavis would call the wholeness of their resolution – are historical and ideological productions [...] necessary fictions that tragically believed too much in their necessity and too little in their own fictionality'. (p.97) 'Their practices', he claims, 'can be seen to be unmediated and universal because the unity of tradition lies in an absolute presence – a moment of transcendent originality'. (97) The collusion between historicism

and realism constitute what Bhabha describes as a Leavisian Universalism which privileges the Transcendental subject, and the origin of writing as linear time consciousness (98).

Bhabha's central argument rests on drawing correspondences between critics espousing Leavisian methods, or 'Universalist' critics, and the work of 'Nationalist' critics both of whom, he claims fight 'on the same aesthetic ground' (p.99). In a scrupulous evaluation of the representationalist basis of both these critical discourses he reveals how Leavisian standards have been propounded by one of the foremost Caribbean critics (at a time when postcolonial studies was in its infancy) in his evaluation of Caribbean texts. Universalism is, in Bhabha's terms, fundamentally content-based and privileges representativeness or 'the correctness of the image' (100). It is a mode of analysis in which 'the text as a *form of recognition*' is the central term, one in which the text is 'not seen as *productive of meaning* but essentially reflective or expressive' marking a preference for realist signification (100) (original italics). It prepares the way for 'a form of intuitionism of moral values'^{lxxxviii} which valorizes specific political and social values under the guise of pure criticism (pp.102 and 103). Given Leavis' parochialism, the use of Universalist methods are 'imbued with an ideological and cultural reference that would make its use critically prescriptive with a marked neo-colonial emphasis' (103). Its appropriation by 'Nationalist' critics clearly internalises colonial representationalism because, in this case, the critic is 'caught in the problem of image analysis, speaks against one stereotype but essentially, and inevitably, for another' (105). In a passage whose relevance to the field of

Sri Lankan literary criticism will shortly become clear, Bhabha is unequivocal in outlining the stultifying effects of such a critical discourse:

The demand that one image should circulate rather than another is made on the basis that the stereotype is *distorted* in relation to a *given* norm or model. It results in a mode of prescriptive criticism which Macherey has conveniently termed the normative fallacy, because it privileges an ideal 'dream-image' in relation to which the text is judged. The only knowledge such a procedure can give is one of negative difference because the only demand it can make is that the text should be other than itself. (105) (original emphasis)

This analysis of the inscription of Universalism within Nationalist criticism reveals not only its prescriptive basis – the reading of 'character' in terms of the Transcendental subject, the scripting of time and history in relation to linearity and origins, the privileging of realist inscription over postmodern play – but also, crucially and provocatively, the reactionary, neo-colonial underpinnings of putatively resistant (that is anti-colonial), nationalist readings of culture. It reveals how the boundary marking of nationalist criticism can serve to reinforce rather than challenge the lines of cultural inclusion and exclusion endorsed under colonial rule.

Bhabha's evaluation exposes the ways in which the neo-colonial drives of Universalist criticism are closely connected to nationalist imperatives. More, by identifying the

specific ideological underpinnings of these two critical modes – their investment in specific readings of history, subjectivity, agency and representation – he reveals the extent to which they promote a hierarchy of value that provides a sanctioned space for the ‘authentic’. His critical paradigm allows us to see not only the fundamental connections between Universalist and Nationalist criticism but also the ways in which they can work to reinforce each other in ways that prescribe how the ‘nation’ and ‘culture’ should be represented. Within the boundary marking of Sri Lankan literature, then, the Universalism of patrician critics and the Nationalism of nativists can be seen to work towards the same project of cultural reclamation. A detailed comparative evaluation of instances of patrician and nativist critical territoriality can serve to illustrate this. These are presented as instances – moments of connection with these critical trajectories. The cited examples are not meant to present complete embodiments or self-sustaining representations of critical territoriality – containing all the elements outlined in my broad definitions of patrician and nativist modes – but, rather, fluid and fluctuating formulations that substantially intersect with them in ways that reveal the broad tendencies of each.

Some of the clearest and most consistent examples of the patrician mode can be found in the work of one whose contribution to Sri Lankan literary studies can be measured by a career devoted to anthologising, documenting and contextualising the field in ways that have done much to bring the work of resident writers to international attention and chronicle the nation’s literary history.^{lxxxix} This life-long investment in the field, mediated by universalist critical standards borrowed from the metropolitan centre, has resulted in a

repeated lament that it is not worthy of critical attention. ‘The history of Sri Lankan literature in English,’ this patrician claims, ‘and especially of the novel – is so unrewarding that it gives new meaning to F.R. Leavis’ comment that “Literary history is a worthless acquisition”’.^{xc} Illuminated by Leavis’ vision and adopting the diagnostic moralising of his mentor, Sri Lanka’s failure to produce a great tradition is, it is suggested, a result ‘of a defectiveness of the novelists’ sensibility and their alienation’.^{xcii}

The patrician critic identifies class as a key factor in limiting the social vision of Anglophone writers, and in other instance, claims that they, even during the period of unprecedented violence marked by the war, ‘seem to write for one another, for the local critics, for a few readers of their own class, and for a corresponding class in the developed world rather than for those actively engaged or involved in the struggle’.^{xciii}

These reflections on the social and cultural insularity of writers are in alignment with the claims of local journalists such as Rajpal Abeynayake who have long insisted that Sri Lankan literary circles are ‘incestuous’.^{xciii} The difference however between these claims and those of the patrician is the basis on which they are made. While the claim of in-breeding and social exclusivity is presented by journalists as one of the means by which a self-appointed group of writers and critics maintain power (establishing a hierarchy of aesthetic value and promoting the work of friends), the patrician critique is based on a specific reading of national literature and the writer’s role which feeds into the very exclusionary dynamic that the journalists object to.

A striking example of the way political ideology affects the evaluation of texts in patrician criticism can be found in the essay 'Sri Lanka's "Ethnic" Conflict in its Literature in English', an essay that purports to situate the literature in its political context. Having contentiously asserted that the 'Tamil minority enjoys a much better position in Sri Lanka than most minorities in other countries' – a stand that effectively works to minoritize the Sri Lankan Tamils ^{xciiv} - and citing K.M de Silva's claim that the Tamils are 'a minority with a majority complex', ^{xcv} this patrician evaluation then proceeds to dissociate writers from the turbulence of war:

[W]riters in English are obviously on the side-lines, sensitive souls responding to a situation engendered by politicians, who are not likely to consider their viewpoints, and by militants and soldiers who do not read the language in which they write and in any case would not be influenced by either the pity or the propaganda of a comfortable and cushioned class who share neither their privations nor their perceptions. ^{xcvi}

We have an instance here of the way in which Leavisian universalism is scripted to serve specific readings of the nation as the majority-minority dynamic is used not only to naturalise Sinhalese hegemony but also to interpellate Anglophone writers as outsiders. ^{xcvii} It is an act of critical territoriality that effectively sections off and demarcates a sanctioned space for Sri Lankan literature in English while simultaneously silencing its political registers. This manoeuvre marginalises as it memorialises so that

the *political* import of work by writers such as Carl Muller, who wrote an article that led to his incarceration in prison, and Jean Arasanayagam, who has devoted herself to projecting the violence of war since her displacement, is suppressed or displaced. Thus, under the guise of claiming that all writers are ‘on the side-lines’, this critical evaluation enacts its own form of side-lining. What is more its hierarchic evaluation of writers in relation to their engagement with ‘Western traditions’, and its call for writers to present the ‘actual conflict in all its complexity’ is informed by a totalizing universalist impulse that works to obscure the contingency of its own cultural location.^{xcviii}

The patrician approach is fraught with paradoxes. The plea for a socially engaged vision is informed by a historically and culturally transcendent universalism that resists such social engagement. Within the context of Sri Lankan political conflict this can result in the presentation of politically prescriptive readings of the nation that appear to emerge from an evaluative space outside the domain of the political. Hence it is striking, but not surprising, that the patrician led editorial reviews on Sri Lankan writing in the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* in 1983 and 1984 – the only journal that regularly documents Sri Lankan literary developments for an international audience - make no direct mention of the anti-Tamil violence of 1983 and, simultaneously, reserves qualified praise for Colin De Silva’s flagrantly nationalist epic, *The Winds of Sinhala*.^{xcix} Succeeding reviews register the marked increase in literary production by clearly detaching it from the social and political context that activates it: ‘the cultural scene was remarkably active *despite* the turbulence and unrest in the country’ (my emphasis) we learn in 1989^c – the year in

which an escalation of extra-judicial killings led to an estimated 30,000 disappearances; and two years later we are informed of the extra-judicial killing of one of the country's most prominent writers - which shocked a people already inured to political violence^{ci} - in terms that effectively obliterate the writer's political and social role: 'Richard de Zoysa had mastered words, acquired skill and craftsmanship, but had not come into his strength as a poet when he was murdered'.^{cii}

The emphasis on literary quality and its dissociation from the political reveals another paradox in patrician evaluation: the analysis of writing in terms of its ability to successfully incorporate elements from 'Western traditions' and the denigration of literary work on this very basis. Thus the patrician critical study, monumentally entitled *Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People 1917-2003*, can on the one hand propose that 'the artistic weakness of [Sri Lankan] poetry is [...] because our recent poets do not draw upon the Western traditions available to them', and on the other claim 'the sensibilities of several English writers remain remote from Sri Lankan realities and remain Western. The anglicized Punyakante Wijenaikē, James Goonewardene and Romesh Gunesekeera in *Reef* see the villagers as not like their sensitive, educated selves, but as much the Other [...] as the natives were to the sahibs and the bwanas'.^{ciii} The patrician does not distinguish between writers on the basis of domicile as the nativist does - here resident and non-resident writers are drawn into alignment - but rather engages in an antinomian scripting of Anglicisation to mark boundaries of belonging in ways that reveal the profound uncertainty underpinning the project of cultural identification. A

patrician line of reasoning is trapped in the logic of its exclusion, thus able to claim of one Sri Lankan poet in terms that problematise the very reading of cultural difference, 'she masters an alien language and alien forms in her poetry with no problems being caused by their alienness'.^{ciiv} The West is here a negotiable marker of difference that is invoked in the cultural arbitration of texts, scripting their legitimacy in ways that can deny or grant entry to the Sri Lankan literary canon.

The ideological imperatives underlying patrician reasoning come out forcefully in the positioning of Jean Arasanayagam, a writer of Burgher descent, married to a Tamil, who experienced rejection by both the Tamil community she married into, on account of her Burgher ancestry, and by the Sinhalese community, on account of her marriage to a Tamil. Despite the assertion of the accommodation of ethnic pluralism in the country, she is introduced – in the same paper - as part of 'the smallest and most Westernised community in Sri Lanka, *very different from the mass of the people*. Thus', we are told, 'it is wholly natural for her [...] to feel herself an alien in *our* society and to be preoccupied with exploring her identity and heritage, adopting an anticolonial stance. She married a Tamil, and [presents ...] the problems caused by the hatred directed at her by her husband's family because she belonged to a different community. Still, she identifies herself with her husband's community to the point of being partisan on their behalf in her presentation of the "ethnic" conflict' (my emphasis).^{cv} The patrician mode thus serves to sanction an exclusionary model of the nation – one which outlaws difference and alterity - and simultaneously champions aesthetic criteria drawn from the metropolitan centre,

seemingly unaware of the contradictions of its own location. Worse, it works to efface the very experience of marginalisation expressed by Arasanayagam – a position she has described as being ‘divided among the divided’^{cvii} - by subscribing to a model of authenticity that positions *it* as partisan. The claim of bias is coeval with the aesthetic evaluation of her work as ‘high-pitched’ rhetoric and allows it to be aligned with the mass of literature that is ‘very openly and simply an attempt to express and generate pity and horror’.^{cvii} As Vasuki Walker has claimed, in terms that expose the way in which the humanist imperatives of patrician criticism are compromised when working in the service of a specific politics, ‘It is surprising that “shock” and “horror” are regarded as human reactions but not legitimate material for artistic creation’.^{cviii}

I have devoted extensive attention to these elements of patrician criticism to reveal the ways in which its terms of aesthetic evaluation can be deeply implicated in the production of exclusionary models of the nation, and to show how the putative objectivity of universalism does not so much mask but rather masquerades as a form of politically ‘correct’ cultural guardianship. Universalism here is a moral and ethical corrective, policing the boundaries of belonging in ways that serve specific readings of cultural legitimacy. It enacts a form of discursive territoriality that has much in common with the nativist critical approach, even though the latter openly engages in cultural reclamation in its provincialisation of the ‘Western’ literary and critical models selectively championed by patricians. Indeed the examples of nativist readings that I will now explore all, in their

different ways, mark a form of cultural agoraphobia – a fear of the space outside constructed cultural borders.

The nativist approach is a direct by-product of the nationalist impulse for cultural reclamation. Symptomatic of the process of decolonisation and national emergence in all postcolonial countries, its Sri Lankan variant is marked by a post-Independence, anachronistic assertion of cultural difference in terms that register not only external but also internal cultural boundaries.^{cix} Nativism in Sri Lankan literary criticism does not only delineate the boundaries of belonging in relation to the nation as a whole, but also works to delineate a highly selective reading of the subject constitution of the native itself. It thus has an ontological rather than an epistemological basis and is scripted by a reverse discourse of cultural development as a return to roots and origins. There are, as I have indicated, diametrically opposed tensions in the nativist approach: one drawn towards a reclamation and rehabilitation of the indigene and the other directed more towards a politics of exclusion. Both of these have as their premise an implicit or explicit investment in the ‘authentic’ which is demarcated from the ‘alien’ on the basis of a variety of factors: ‘truthful’ representation (in particular of rural and village life) marking an investment in what Bhabha referred to as a ‘representationalist’ approach,^{cx} use of vernacular or localised idiom or evidence of perceived proximity to Sri Lankan English, a writer’s class background and place of residence, and – in many cases- the presentation of a culturally affirmative or positive representation of the country. Indigeneity is granted a positive value in the autochthonous inflections of nativist critiques so that texts that lie

outside the boundaries of a constructed notion of national culture come to be critically expatriated and perceived in a negative light. There is evidence of overlap between the nativist approach and that of the patrician in the attention paid to perceived Anglicisation, but whereas a patrician evaluation may register a contradictory pull between connection to Western forms and culture and resistance to it, the nativist registers Anglicisation more emphatically as a cultural loss.^{cx1} The nativist aim is to promote that which is ‘distinctively Lankan’, that is writing that ‘remains very Lankan in subject matter, theme, method and texture’, and to distinguish between such work and the work of those who ‘try to make themselves as “native” as they can, seeking out this nativeness in some kind of “pure”, essentialist traditional reality which they presume pre-exists outside the realities they find themselves in’.^{cx2} Oblivious (as this quote suggests), or at the very least inattentive to, the essentialism underpinning their own enterprise, nativists tend to denigrate such ‘false’ representations of experience and ally them with the colonizing imperatives of the Western Other.^{cx3}

Such cultural discrimination is often made on stylistic or linguistic grounds. Hence James Goonewardene is chastised for his formal English idiom and his apparent detachment from ‘the living expression of the rhythms of Ceylonese life’.^{cx4} The attention paid to idiom marks a form of critical evaluation of the texts in relation to a hierarchy of authenticity – one in which linguistic codes themselves are perceived to grant cultural legitimacy - which can effectively serve to marginalise or silence the work of those who seek to write outside its borders. It enacts a form of boundary marking in which aesthetic,

ethical and political considerations coalesce to exclude work and ex-patriate writers. Thus Goonewardene, in a nativist evaluation, comes to be positioned as an exemplar of ‘negative writing’ which, we are instructed, ‘is *just not a valid style* for writers of English in Ceylon, *it is not true to their experience*, which has a positive aspect’ (my emphasis).^{cxv} Another critic who also denigrates Goonewardene’s work on the basis of his formal prose chastises him for his inability to write English in a style suitable to his subject.^{cxvi} The nativist search for authenticity thus leads towards a critical hierarchy in which linguistic connection to a putative national centre is a central criterion. Given the central role language has played in the development of cultural nationalism in the country and the fact that linguistics has for some time constituted a key component of English literary studies at degree level in Sri Lanka, this is not altogether surprising. Hence a critic who rejects the work of Burgher writers Rienzi Crusz and Michael Ondaatje on the basis of their perceived failure to address the local, can claim of another writer that ‘the feature that makes Weersingha [sic] a “Sri Lankan poet” in my opinion [...] is his attempt at the rhythms and the rhymes of Sinhalese poetry’.^{cxvii} While this may appear, at first, to be a relatively straightforward process of searching for equivalence between literary language and local idiom, the assumed cultural ‘centre’ on which this comparison is made bears scrutiny: in a troubling conflation between the national and the communal another poet is, we are told in the same piece, ‘no closer to being *Sinhalese or Sri Lankan* than Ondaatje’ (my emphasis). The precise cultural coding of this critic’s evaluation of Sri Lankan writers is manifest in the explicit consideration of their work in relation to ‘Sri Lankan historicity, sensibility and [...] worldview’ emphatically defined as ‘a 2000-year

old Buddhist culture, literally, esthetically, culturally, socially, economically, politically and spiritually'.^{cxviii} These comments collectively endorse Michael Roberts' observation that 'for some time in the modern era there has been a tendency among some Sinhala ideologues to subsume the category "Ceylonese" (or "Lankan") with the category of "Sinhalese" [...] I suspect that the equation of the Lankan with Sinhalese has been widespread at all levels of the Sinhala-speaking population. So one of the tasks for social science inquiries today is the investigation of the degree to which this occurs and the evaluation of the implications thereof'.^{cxix}

The exclusionary dynamic informing the nativist approach clearly shares many of the features of patrician criticism, converging here with its patrician counterpart in its homogenising and hegemonising drive to read the nation as, at base, a place in which Sinhala dominance is both natural and inevitable. It is a process in which the cultural dynamics of decolonisation are firmly linked to the politics of majoritarianism. In the case of those who do indeed try to acknowledge or accommodate cultural pluralism, the terms of inclusion can still serve to endorse a highly selective reading of affiliation on the basis of indigenisation. This is evident in a critique cited earlier that attempts to define the responsibilities of those who are engaged in the shaping of the emergent canon and to which I will now pay more detailed attention:

the responsibility for that part of the post-colonial struggle which involves the making of the Lankan canon in English falls squarely on bi-culturalists who more

obviously than most others are characterised by their symbiotic natures. These biculturals are called upon to engage with the relationships/tensions between the two aspects of their symbiotic personalities in a manner that allows what can be felt to be an authentic contemporary Lankan experience to emerge with conviction. For this, the two (or more) originally separate cultural voices that interact within them need to negotiate the relationship between (among) them in some kind of mutually satisfying way, not exclusive of their maintenance in creative tension or even antagonism with each other. *A major danger that these bi-culturalists face* and one that is illustrated in [Romesh] Gunesequera's writing among other writing discussed [...] *is that too often the formerly alien Euro-Americanized voice makes to overwhelm or negate or invalidate the other, originally indigenously rooted one. If a writer does not find this necessary to resist, it is her/his prerogative; but the resulting work will probably not qualify for inclusion in the Lankan canon in any significant sense.* (my emphasis)^{xxx}

This passage registers the contradictory drives of the nativist conscious of the unsettling drives of hybridity that lie at the heart of Anglophone writing from a postcolonial nation. On the one hand it attends to the 'bi-culturalism' that informs the literature, on the other hand it insists that this indeterminate cultural coding is split between 'alien' and 'indigenous' drives and demands that one should work in the service of the other to qualify for inclusion in the emergent canon. Such a reading is not only prescriptive, but it is also actively resistant to the very negotiation of belonging with which writers, as I have

shown, engage. Further, it assumes the primacy of a single cultural centre of gravity to which these writers should feel drawn, a pull that their mediatory texts – situated betwixt and between diverse and different cultural modalities – may well resist. Many Anglophone writers from both inside and outside Sri Lanka draw upon a pluralist, diasporic, inter- or intra-national cultural register; the context from which they write, particularly in recent years, is one in which the legitimacy of indigeneity is actively contested. To insist that literature must privilege an indigenous cultural voice not only assumes that such a voice can be retrieved through the polyphonic registers that inform the work of Sri Lankan writers in English but also, of course, that it exists in the first place. The process is one that appeals to the accommodation of cultural difference only to regulate it and require its sublimation within the terms of a dominant order. It delineates a process to be found in patrician criticism too, but, in the case of nativist evaluation, the basis of cultural legitimation is more insistently coded in terms of indigeneity with the result that ‘expatriate’ – or migrant – writers come to be subject to particularly close surveillance.

The negative critique of migrant literature contained within some nativist readings is partly due to perceived inequalities of reception in which the privileging of the work of migrant Sri Lankan writers in the West, where access to local Sri Lankan literature is curtailed, has led to an emphasis on their role as cultural representatives. It assumes, with good reason, that such writers are ‘viewed as preferred insiders and initiated informants on the affairs and culture of the East’ but also, rather more problematically, that a

Western readership perceives ‘their expatriation has conferred upon them the writerly virtues of detachment and objectivity’.^{cxxi} In other words the nativist critic can, all too often, assume that the representationalism contained within their own approach is in fact shared by readers outside Sri Lanka.^{cxxi} It is an assumption that underpins recent evaluations of Romesh Gunsekera’s work and the frequent charges of ‘exoticism’ and ‘orientalism’ to which his work and that of other migrant writers has increasingly been subject. Such evaluations – the claim that Gunsekera’s *Reef* is ‘guilty of recuperating and of perpetuating certain myths and stereotypes about Sri Lanka in its often jaundiced depictions of character, class and politics’ and that the novel is ‘an example of “expatriate activity” which is somewhat “destructive of [...] Sri Lankan national culture”^{cxixiii} – work not so much to silence a text’s complex mediation of belonging but rather to ex-patriate or banish it (*ex+ patria*: to drive a person away from his native country; to banish), situating it clearly outside the borders of legitimate cultural representation.

The negative criticism of the work of Romesh Gunsekera and Michael Ondaatje (in contrast to the generally more favourable reception of fellow ‘expatriates’ Shyam Selvadurai and A. Sivanandan) also rests in some measure on the formal properties of their texts which work to unsettle or actively deconstruct the realist representationalism favoured by nativists. These realist prescriptives are partly directed by critical familiarity and formal accessibility, and partly informed by the social and political conditions of the times. As Joe Cleary has shown, in situations of violent repression and cultural turmoil ‘social realism seems to answer more directly to the exigencies of political commitment

and protest writing than more experimental or modernist literary modes'.^{cxxiv} This wide range of interconnected factors that work to culturally dissociate writing from a putative national centre require us not only to attend to the very terms of the ex-patriation of texts from both inside and outside Sri Lanka, their implicit contexts and criteria of affiliation, but also to resist use of the term 'expatriate' literature which implies a context of writing within the ambit of the ex-patriot, the fallen, former native.

It is for this reason that I refer to *migrant* writing and writers and quarantine the term 'expatriate' literature by placing it within parenthetical speech marks. While the former term certainly has its limitations, it does have the advantage of insisting upon a politics of mediation, of negotiation betwixt cultures that might render the boundaries between them both porous and transactional in a way that allows for the kind of debates and dialogue with which writers are already engaging. Thus my use of the terms *resident* and *migrant* does not assume a polarised dynamic between them nor does it privilege a hierarchy of place – both of which this study explicitly contests – rather it is used more broadly and directly to distinguish between different contexts of production and reception. The division in this study between Parts II and III distinguishing between resident and migrant writers is intended to honour this material difference and also to enable the kind of transactional, comparative analysis that opens up the boundaries of the national imaginary, to facilitate movement across borders. It is enabled by an engagement – foregrounded in the final section analysing the migrant writers – with poststructuralist critical approaches which have been repeatedly resisted by critics within Sri Lanka.^{cxxv}

Poststructuralism, or ‘postmodernism’ as is it is more often called by such critics is, they contend, complicit with the hegemonising imperatives of dominant, alien, Western powers and therefore, at the very least politically suspect. The fact that these critics also draw on intellectual traditions borrowed from the West, that as a post-colonial nation Sri Lanka has a long history of vigorous and dynamic cultural interchange that problematises notions of cultural purity and authenticity and the kind of cultural distance that critical territorialists assume exists, and that political trajectories themselves are not necessarily determined by cultural and historical ‘origins’, serves to call into question the basis on which some of these charges are made. Certainly as a postcolonial, poststructuralist engagement this study is complicit with the ideological and cultural assumptions underpinning theoretical approaches that are most closely affiliated with metropolitan intellectual bases. Yet the distinction between such metropolitan centres and the margins of the postcolonial nation are not fixed or absolute; inequalities of power operate not only between these sites but also within them; and within the culture of contestation that arbitrates the boundaries of belonging that determine the Sri Lankan nation, it is possible to find in the discursive space of writing an effort at the exploration, mediation and reconciliation of difference that has repeatedly failed on the political level.

By unyoking spatial configurations in Sri Lankan literature from a polarised discourse, I make a case for reading it within the context of an emergent border culture shaped by multiple territorialisms, a culture in which ‘cultural syncretism takes place both at the margins and between the margins and a changing mainstream’.^{cxvii} This is not to efface

the specificities of social, historical and cultural contexts of textual production, or to argue for any easy political correspondences across differently fractured spaces, but rather to re-align locational differences so as to be able to discriminate, as Shohat has put it, 'between the diverse modalities of hybridity, for example forced assimilation, internalized self-rejection, political co-optation, social conformism, cultural mimicry, and creative transcendence'.^{cxvii} Such a reading of Sri Lankan literature engages in a 'rooted cosmopolitanism' in which the diasporic and global are read through the registers of local knowledge so that existing hierarchies of power can be effectively identified and contested. It is a negotiation of boundaries that is attendant to both the situatedness of diverse knowledges and to the creative possibilities of dialogue between them, to the national and the diasporic registers within and between texts.

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1. Literature and Territoriality: Boundary Marking as a Critical Paradigm

H. K. Bhabha, 'Sly Civility' in *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, pp.99-100.

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- ii My use of this term is informed by John Hay's observation that settlement may be the expression of psychological yearning towards stability. J. Hay, 'Settlement as Displacement: The Narratives of History', in E. Thumboo and T. Kandiah (eds) *The Writer as Historical Witness: Studies in Commonwealth Literature*, Singapore: Unipress, 1995, p.54.
- iii K.M. De Silva, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 1998, Chapter 1.
- iv M. Roberts, *Firstness, History, Place & Legitimate Claim to Place-As-Homeland in Comparative Focus*, Colombo, International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2005, pp. 2-3.
- v C. Kanaganayakam, 'Dancing in the Rarefied Air: Reading Contemporary Sri Lankan Literature', *ARIEL*, January 1998, 29:1, pp. 52, 57. For a contextually grounded consideration of related issues see Chelva Kanaganayakam, 'Literature and the Politics of Ethno-Nationalism in Sri Lanka', *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, 2000, XXVI, 1&2, pp.29-43.
- vi Kanaganayakam, 'Dancing', op.cit, pp. 58, 57, 62 and 57.
- vii D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka's "Ethnic" Conflict in its Literature in English', *World Literature Today*, 1992, 66:3, p. 451.
- viii I use the term 'cultural nationalism' in Michael Roberts' sense to embrace a range of linked concepts such as language, tradition, identity, history and race. See Michael Roberts, 'Sinhala-ness and Sinhala Nationalism', *A History of Ethnic Conflict in Sri Lanka: Recollection, Reinterpretation & Reconciliation*, Colombo: Marga Institute,

2001, p.1. Roberts contends that to counteract extreme forms of Sinhala nationalism, it has to be effected in and through the Sinhala medium, p.2.

^{ix} G. Huggan, *The Postcolonial Exotic: Marketing the Margins*, London: Routledge, 2001, p.173.

^x Wilfrid Jayasuriya has observed that ‘it is the possible prospect of an international audience which spurs the energy of writers in English now’. W. Jayasuriya, *Sri Lanka’s Modern English Literature: A Case Study in Literary Theory*, New Delhi: Navrang, 1994, p.102.

^{xi} T. Kandiah, ‘Towards a Lankan Canon in English Creative Writing: Subversions of Post-colonialism and the Resisting Representations of Chitra Fernando’s Fictional Voice’, *Phoenix: Sri Lanka Journal of English in the Commonwealth*, 1997, vols.5&6 p.68.

^{xii} Y. Gooneratne, ‘The English Educated in Sri Lanka: An Assessment of Their Cultural Role’, *South Asia Bulletin*, 1992, 12:1, p.24.

^{xiii} Ibid., p.21.

^{xiv} W. Perera, ‘Images of Sri Lanka through Expatriate Eyes: Romesh Guneseckera’s *Reef*’, *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1995, 30:1, pp. 63-77.

^{xv} D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature and the Sri Lankan People 1917-2003*, Colombo: Vijitha Yapa, 2005, p.113. Goonetilleke makes this observation in the process of evaluating a literary text that considers the plight of those living in border zones. It is worth noting that there has no been no official recognition of a border zone in

the country. According to Darini Rajasingham-Senanayake the government has not admitted to its existence because it would constitute a recognition of the LTTE's partial victory in its separatist cause. D. Rajasingham-Senanayake, *Identity on the Borderline: Multicultural History in a Moment of Danger*, Colombo: Marga Institute, 2001, p.8.

^{xvi} E. G. Ericksen, *The Territorial Experience: Human Ecology as Symbolic Interaction*, Austin and London: University of Texas, 1980, pp.33-4. In a related vein, Jayadeva Uyangoda has contended that the two central components of foundational myths are centralized sovereignty and fixed border territory. J. Uyangoda, 'Biographies of a Decaying Nation-State', in M. Tiruchelvam and Dattathreya C.S. (eds) *Culture and Politics of Identity in Sri Lanka*, Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1998, p.176.

^{xvii} M. J. Shapiro, *Violent Cartographies: Mapping Cultures of War*, Minneapolis and London: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, p.xi & Chapter One.

^{xviii} N. De Mel, *Women & the Nation's Narrative: Gender and Nationalism in Twentieth Century Sri Lanka* Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2001, p.235.

^{xix} D. Rajasingham-Senanayake, *Identity on the Borderline: Multicultural History in a Moment of Danger*, Colombo: Marga Institute, 2001, pp.21-2.,

^{xx} C. Kanaganayakam, 'Literature and the Politics of Ethno-Nationalism in Sri Lanka', *The Sri Lanka Journal of the Humanities*, 2000, XXVI, nos. 1-2, p.33.

^{xxi} D. Rajasingham-Senanayake, 'Identity on the Borderline: Modernity, New Ethnicities, and the Unmaking of Multiculturalism in Sri Lanka' in N. Silva (ed.) *The Hybrid Island*, Colombo: Social Scientists' Association, 2002, p.47. In a project closely

affiliated with the critical impulses directing my study, this essay explores the connections between spatial, territorial and ethnic categories in the context of the political conflict.

^{xxii} D. Rajasingham-Senanayake, *Identity on the Borderline*, op.cit, p. 20.

^{xxiii} S. J. Tambiah, *Buddhism Betrayed?: Religion, Politics, and Violence in Sri Lanka* Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992 p.111.; N. Serena Tennekoon, 'Rituals of Development: The Accelerated Mahavali Development Program of Sri Lanka', *American Ethnologist* , 1998, 15:2, pp. 294-310.

^{xxiv} D.R.I. B. Werellagama, L. Herath, J. Manatunga and M. Nakayama, 'Health and Sanitation Aspects of Communities Displaced by the Mahaweli Multipurpose Development Project'. Online. Available HHTP: <http://www.asiaoceania-conference.org/abstract/HS/2nd%20Round/HS10/58-HS-Ao8o4.pdf>; B. Refslund Sørensen, 'The experience of displacement: Reconstructing places and identities in Sri Lanka', in K. Fog Olwig and K. Hastrup (eds) *Siting Culture: The shifting anthropological subject*, London:Routledge, 1997, p.142; Wiveca Stegeborn, 'Indigenous Rights in Sri Lanka: Assimilation of the Wanniyala-Aetto (Veddahs)', March 2002. Online. Available HHTP: <http://www.cpsu.org.uk/downloads/wiveca_s.pdf>.

^{xxv} S. Kemper, *The Presence of the Past: Chronicles, Politics, and Culture in Sinhala Life*, Ithaca and London: Cornell UP, 1991, pp.133 and 206.

^{xxvi} R. Marangoly George, *The Politics of Home: Postcolonial Relocations and Twentieth Century Fiction*, California: University of California Press, 1999, p.2.

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- xxvii Michael Roberts has pointed out that ‘questioning this tradition sometimes evokes apoplectic responses of the same order as the apocalyptic fears aroused by striking Tiger successes’. M. Roberts, *Burden of History: Obstacles to Power Sharing in Sri Lanka* Colombo: Marga Institute, 2001, p.23.
- xxviii S. Krishna, *Postcolonial Insecurities: India, Sri Lanka and the Question of Nationhood* New Delhi: OUP, 2000, pp. 54 and 51.
- xxix D. Austin, *Democracy and Violence in India and Sri Lanka*, London: Pinter, 1994, p.61.
- xxx J.S. Duncan, *The City as Text: The Politics of Landscape Interpretation in the Kandyan Kingdom*, Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1990, p. 25.
- xxxi Deleuze and Guattari use this term to describe the position of tribal peoples. See Shapiro, op. cit, p.196.
- xxxii Krishna, op.cit., p. 72; J. Arasanayagam, *The Captain Has Come*, unpublished play; p.48.
- xxxiii Q. Ismail, *Abiding by Sri Lanka: On Peace, Place and Postcoloniality*, Minnesota and London: University of Minnesota Press, 2005, pp.104-5.
- xxxiv It has been pointed out that the only non-Tamils now in the north are Sri Lankan military personnel who effectively constitute an occupying force. D. Rajasingham-Senanayake, *Identity on the Borderline*, op.cit., p.22.
- xxxv R. Cheran, *The Sixth Genre: Memory, History and the Tamil Diaspora Imagination*, Colombo: Marga Institute, 2001, pp. 21, 16-7, and 22. Cheran cites the annual national Tamil calendar, *Thamil Thaay Naat Kaatti* (The Mother Tamil Calendar),

issued simultaneously from France, Germany and Canada: ‘Hitler transformed a weakened and dishonoured Germany into a powerful state, he aspired to win the world’.

^{xxxvi} For an illuminating exploration of some of these issues from the perspective of a non-resident Sri Lankan writer see Shyam Selvadurai, ‘The Influence of Canada in *Funny Boy*’, in N. Silva and R. Wijesinha *Across Cultures: Issues of Identity in Contemporary British and Sri Lankan Writing*, Colombo: The British Council, 2001, pp. 3-10.

^{xxxvii} Aparna Halpé has pointed out that local presses are largely dependent on state or institutional funding (such as the International Centre for Ethnic Studies or the English Writers’ Cooperative) or the beneficence of wealthy entrepreneurs, and that the average print run for a book is about 2000 copies. A. Halpé, ‘Inclusion and Exclusion: The Impossibility of South Asian Literature in the Classroom’, unpublished graduate paper, University of Toronto, 2003. pp. 2-3.

^{xxxviii} C. Kanaganayakam, ‘Dancing’, op.cit., pp. 55-6; D. Coleman, *Masculine Migrations: Reading the Postcolonial Male in ‘New Canadian’ Narrative*, Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1998, pp.105-130.

^{xxxix} Ibid., p.63.

^{xl} Penguin India and Indialog are two of the main publishers outside Sri Lanka that publish the work of local writers. Meenakshi Mukherjee has pointed out how few Sri Lankan texts are available in India. M. Mukherjee, ‘A Blighted Garden’, *The Hindu*, Sunday April 1, 2001. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.hinduonnet.com/2001/04/01/stories/1301067j.htm>> pp.4-5.]

^{xli} This has been described as a condition in which the state-centred account of spatiality intimately links power and territorial sovereignty. See A. Paasi, 'The Political Geography of Boundaries at the End of the Millennium: Challenges of the De-territorializing World', in H. Eskelinen, I. Liikanen and J. Oksa (eds) *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Interaction*, Aldershot: Ashgate, 1999, p.10.

^{xlii} Krishna, *op.cit.*, p.77.

^{xliii} A. Steen Preis 'Seeking Place: Capsized identities and contracted belonging among Sri Lankan Tamil refugees' in Olwig and Hastrup, *op.cit.*, p.86.

^{xliv} The choice, as Joe Cleary points out, lies between nationalist homogenisation through cultural assimilation of minorities, or the territorial division of the ethnic communities into separate states which, too, leads to nationalist homogenisation. J. Cleary, *Literature, Partition and the Nation State: Culture and Conflict in Ireland, Israel and Palestine*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002, p. 21.

^{xlvi} *Ibid.*, p.193.

^{xlvii} I am indebted to Joe Cleary's engagement with these genres for my evaluation in this section. *Ibid.*, pp. 112-3 and 120-1.

^{xlviii} Yasmine Gooneratne has noted the rise in satiric fiction in Sri Lanka and observed that such work invites moral regeneration through ridicule. Y. Gooneratne, 'Making History in Sri Lanka: Comic Modes of Satire and Fiction' in Thumboo and Kandiah, *op.cit.*, p. 378.

xlvi R. Wijesinha, *Editorial, Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1998, vol.33; 1, p.2. Also see R. Wijesinha, 'Sri Lankan Fiction in English' (1989) in *Breaking Bounds: Essays on Sri Lankan Writing in English*, Belihuloya: Sabaragamuwa UP, 1998, pp.26-39.

xlvi D. Sibley, *Geographies of Exclusion: Society and Difference in the West*, London: Routledge, 1995, pp.39 and 183.

¹ R. Raj Rao, 'Because Most People Marry their Own Kind: A Reading of Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy*', *ARIEL*, January 1997, vol.28:1, p.127.

ⁱⁱ Harry Thomas, 'Shyam Selvadurai', Fall 1997. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.emory.edu/ENGLISH/Bahri/Selva.html>>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Cited in R. Wijesinha, 'Oddities and Excesses: Sri Lanka Substantiated by the *Funny Boy*' in Wijesinha, *Breaking Bounds*, op.cit., p.85. Wijesinha quotes Maureen Seneviratne's letter: 'Make no mistake – homosexuality is unnatural. It is immoral and goes against all religious teachings as well as civil law [...] The very heart of all our religious and moral teachings is at risk, and we would be wanting in our religious duty to future generations of unspoilt children if we were, not only to condone these practices, but also legalize them [...] [A] strong stand must be taken against deviants who would worm themselves into and destroy the very fabric of society'.

^{liii} Rao, op.cit., p.126.

^{liv} Kanaganayakam, 'Dancing', op.cit., p. 61.

^{lv} J. Arasanayagam, 'Ancestors' in *Reddened Water Flows Clear*, London & Boston: Forest Books, 1991, p. 25. Neloufer De Mel also comments on the significance

of tenantry in Arasanayagam's work. See 'A Question of Identity: Jean Arasanayagam's Landscape of the Nation' in De Mel, op.cit., p.187.

^{lvi} Ibid., p.163.

^{lvii} D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature*, op.cit., p.50; T. Kandiah, "Kaduwa": Power and the English Language Weapon in Sri Lanka' in P. Colin-Thomé and A. Halpé (eds) *Honouring E.F.C. Ludowyk: Felicitations Essays*, Dehiwela: Tissa Prakasakayo Ltd.: 1984, p.117.

^{lviii} Ibid., p.135.

^{lix} The Act, which made Sinhala the sole official language, effectively disenfranchised ethnic minorities (most notably the Burgher and Tamil communities) who were dependent on their knowledge of English for access to employment in the civil service and administrative sectors, and created a form of pedagogic apartheid in the streaming of education into Sinhala and Tamil mediums.

^{lx} R. Wijesinha, *Breaking Bounds*, op.cit., p.73.

^{lxi} For a personal reflection on English as marker of exclusion see Sasanka Perera, 'The Hegemony of Language Imperialism and the Colonization of the Mind' in *Living with Torturers*, Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1995, pp. 37-45. Also Regi Siriwardene's poem 'Colonial Cameo', in R. Wijesinha (ed.) *An Anthology of Contemporary Sri Lankan Poetry in English*, Kelaniya: English Association of Sri Lanka: 1991, p.114. Aparna Halpé has also observed that the student journal *Kaduwa*, established in 1980, served as an alternative press for radical critics of the times. A. Halpé, 'Inclusions and Exclusions', p.10.

lxii S. G. Samarasinghe, 'Language Policy in Public Administration, 1956-1994: An Implementor's Perspective', in K.N.O Dharmadasa (ed.) *National Language Policy in Sri Lanka: 1956 to 1996, Three Studies in its Implementation*, Kandy: International Centre for Ethnic Studies:1996, p.88.

lxiii Y. Gooneratne, 'The English-Educated', op.cit., p.21.

lxiv The English literate community constitute less than 10 per cent of the population, whereas the literacy rate for the country as a whole is over 90%.

lxv See B. Ashcroft, G. Griffiths and H. Tiffin, *The Empire Writes Back: Theory and Practice in Postcolonial Literatures*, London: Routledge, 1989, Chapter 2.

lxvi M. Gunesequera, *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English*, Colombo: Katha Publishers: 2005, pp. 24 and 39-42. Gunesequera distinguishes between four types of Sri Lankan English: prestigious Standard Sri Lankan English (based on Sinhalese and spoken by the elite who have been introduced to the language from birth); non-standard Sri Lankan English; Tamil English; and Burgher English, pp. 34-7.]

lxvii T. Kandiah, 'New Ceylon English: *The Call of the Kirala*, A Novel by James Goonewardene', *New Ceylon Writing*, 1971, p.92; M. Gunesequera, 'Language and Identity: In a Class of their Own', in Silva and Wijesinha, op.cit, p.84; R. de Chickera, 'Preface', *Kider Chetty Street* by Jagath Kumarasinghe, Kelaniya: Sooriya Publishers, 2005, pp. 7-9.

lxviii L.Wikkramasinha, 'Note' in *Lustre: Poems*, Kandy: Privately published, 1965, p. 51, cited in D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature*, op.cit., p.49.

lxix Wijesinha, *Breaking Bounds*, op.cit., p.72.

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- ^{lxx} M. M. Bakhtin in M. Holquist (ed.) *The Dialogic Imagination*, Austin: University of Texas Press, 1981, pp. 358 and 67.
- ^{lxxi} Unusually for Arasanayagam, a glossary is provided; but this is rudimentary and incomplete.
- ^{lxxii} J. Arasanayagam, 'Mythologies of Childhood' in *Peacocks and Dreams*, New Delhi: Navrang: 1996, p.6.
- ^{lxxiii} C. Kanaganayakam, 'Jean Arasanayagam (1930-)' in Jaina C. Sanga (ed.) *South Asian Novelists in English*, Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 2003, p. 17.
- ^{lxxiv} H. Bhabha, 'Signs Taken for Wonders' in *The Location of Culture*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.120.
- ^{lxxv} See for example 'Destroying the Enemy' and 'Ancestors' in Arasanayagam, *Reddened Water*, op.cit., pp. 15 and 23.
- ^{lxxvi} Gunesequera has qualified this in claiming that Muller's rhetorical strategies capture the flavour of a variety of Burgher English, a form that is largely a mixture of Portuguese Creole and English. See M. Gunesequera, *The Postcolonial Identity of Sri Lankan English*, op.cit., pp. 59 and 37.
- ^{lxxvii} C. Muller, *The Jam-Fruit Tree*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 1993, pp. 42-3.
- ^{lxxviii} Bakhtin has contended that parody is a central to heteroglossic linguistic struggle and forms an intralinguistic, intentional dialogized hybrid. See Bakhtin, op.cit., pp.76-8.
- ^{lxxix} See Olwig and Hastrup, 'Introduction', op.cit., pp. 1-14.

^{lxxx} For example the Gratian Trust's award of a translation prize and the establishment of Three Wheeler Press.

^{lxxxi} While Gooneratne's text has a diasporic reach, its cultural coding endorses a communitarian ethos.

^{lxxxii} Benita Parry, 'Resistance theory/theorising resistance, or two cheers for nativism', in F. Barker, P. Hulme and M. Iversen (eds) *Colonial Discourse/postcolonial theory*, Manchester: Manchester UP, 1994, p.193.

^{lxxxiii} N. Rapport and A. Dawson make the same observation in 'Home and Movement: A Polemic' in *Migrants of Identity: Perceptions of Home in a World of Movement* ed. Rapport and Dawson, Oxford: Berg, 1998, p.32.

^{lxxxiv} The term 'community' is often used euphemistically in Sri Lanka to denote caste difference – a form of boundary marking that deserves further analysis but lies beyond the scope of this study. My own use of the term is broader and more general, and is intended to foreground the practice of discursively creating and generating affiliative ties by alluding to discrete cultural networks.

^{lxxxv} Williams goes on to observe: 'Yet the jump from that to anything like the modern nation-state is entirely artificial'. Cited in in Mike Featherstone, 'Localism, Globalism and Cultural Identity', in R. Wilson and W. Dissanayake (eds) *Global/Local: Cultural Production and the Transnational Imaginary*, Durham: Duke University Press: 1996, p.53.

^{lxxxvi} For example Arun Mukherjee's critique of Michael Ondaatje's work as Orientalist serves not only to align his texts with colonial prescriptives but also to

foreground the radical instability of his cultural position as a Canadian author. Her argument that he misrepresents the past in *Running in the Family* is used to support her case for the need for a more inclusive approach in Canadian literary studies – one that is open to overtly political writing. In making it she draws upon a nativist Sri Lankan critique, thereby revealing how Sri Lankan nativism can be used in the service of a very different cultural politics in the West. See, A. Mukherjee, ‘The Sri Lankan Poets in Canada: An Alternative View’, *Toronto South Asian Review*, 1984, 3:2, pp. 32-45. Similarly Gautam Kundu’s critique of Gunesekera’s work as ‘exotic’ is attentive to its place in the dynamics of mediating migration and alienation. Such critical positionings reveal the instability rather than the fixity of these migrant subjects and are attentive to the positioning of the ‘exotic’ as a marketable producer of domesticated difference. See G. Kundu, ‘Romesh Gunesekera (1954-)’ in J. C. Sanga, op.cit., pp. 93-99. These critical analyses need to be distinguished from publicity blurbs on dustjackets that refer to the exotic, as the primary purpose here is to market the text rather than subject it to literary evaluation.

^{lxxxvii} H. Bhabha, ‘Representation and the Colonial Text: A Critical Exploration of Some Forms of Mimeticism’, in F. Gloversmith (ed.) *The Theory of Reading*, Brighton: Harvester, 1984, p.96. Bhabha mentions in his first footnote that the essay was written in mid-1980. All subsequent references are from this volume.

^{lxxxviii} Bhabha is citing Mulhern here.

^{lxxxix} Many instances of patrician criticism are to be found in literary reviews which do not lend themselves to extended or detailed evaluation. I have therefore chosen to focus on the work of one prolific literary critic in my consideration of this mode.

^{xc} D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, 'Novel (Sri Lanka)', in E. Benson and L. W. Conolly (eds) *The Encyclopedia of Postcolonial Literatures in English*, vol. 2, London: Routledge, 1994, p.1155.

^{xcii} *Ibid.*, p.1159.

^{xciii} Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka's "Ethnic" Conflict in Its Literature in English, *World Literature Today*, Summer 1992, 66:3, p. 451.

^{xciv} Abeynayake's criticisms are addressed not only to critics but to the English-speaking literary community as a whole. R. Abeynayake, 'Gratiaen Award: a few owe so much to so many', *The Sunday Times*, 10 March 1996. Online. Available HTTP: <<http://www.lacnet.org/suntimes/960310/oped/gratiaen.html>>. Ajith Samaranyake also refers to the literary élite in these terms in 'James Goonewardene and the English Language Novel', *Sunday Observer*, 25 May 1997. Also see James Goonewardene's essay, 'Nationalism and the Writer in Sri Lanka' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, August 1974, IX: 1, pp.50-6. Here he cautions against cultural nationalism where 'the ground was being prepared for artistic inbreeding', p. 54.

^{xcv} Qadri Ismail refers to this in his consideration of the interpellation of Tamils as a minority in his study *Abiding by Place*, op.cit., p.xxvi.

^{xcvi} De Silva puts it in a rather more counterpoised form. 'The conflict', he argues, 'is between a majority with a minority complex, and a minority with a yearning for majority

status, a minority with a majority complex'. K.M. De Silva, *Reaping the Whirlwind: Ethnic Conflict, Ethnic Politics in Sri Lanka*, New Delhi: Penguin India, 1998, pp.303-4.

^{xcvi} Goonetilleke, op.cit., p. 451.

^{xcvii} For a political analysis that effectively uses the majority-minority dialectic to reveal the significance of its impact on the scripting of democratic relations in Sri Lanka see J. Uyangoda, *Questions of Sri Lanka's Minority Rights*, Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 2001. Uyangoda observes that the denial of the existence of an ethnic conflict by the intelligentsia curtails political pluralism, p.101.

^{xcviii} Goonetilleke, op.cit., p.453.

^{xcix} It is described as the 'outstanding novel' of the year but reservations are expressed on the basis of its divergence from historical accuracy. The piece also refers to Ondaatje's *Running in the Family* in terms that clearly indicate critical discomfort with its postmodernist drive. See D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1983, XVIII: 2, p. 139.

^c D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1989, XXIV: 2, p.120.

^{ci} Meenakshi Mukherjee has observed that de Zoysa has become an iconic figure in Sri Lanka. M. Mukherjee, 'A Blighted Garden', *The Hindu*, Sunday April 1, 2001. pp. 3-4.

^{cii} D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1991, XXVI: 2, p.152. Elsewhere Goonetilleke does acknowledge the prophetic role of de Zoysa's work but precedes it with this reflection on the 1983 violence that triggered the

armed conflict: 'It was no Holocaust, negligible compared to the number of Sinhalese and Muslims villagers/ civilians massacred by the LTTE'. Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature*, op.cit., p.83.

ciii Goonetilleke, *Sri Lankan English Literature*, pp. 45-6]

civ D.C.R.A. Goonetilleke, 'Beyond Alienation: The Efflorescence of Sri Lankan Literature in English' *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1986, XXI: 1, p.30.

cv Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka's "Ethnic" Conflict', op.cit., p. 452.

cvi J. Arasanayagam, *A Nice Burgher Girl* cited in N. De Mel, op.cit., p.174.

cvii Goonetilleke, 'Poetry (Sri Lanka)' in Benson and Conolly, op.cit., p.1281.

Goonetilleke, 'Sri Lanka's "Ethnic" Conflict', op.cit., p. 452.

cviii V.Walker, 'Woman, Identity and the Other in Jean Arasanayagam's Fiction', *Navasilu: Journal of the English Association of Sri Lanka*, August 2000, 17, pp.140.

cix It is worth noting that Benita Parry's positive evaluation of nativism is alert to its openness to abuse by reactionary forces. Benita Parry, op.cit., p.174.

cx Sasanka Perera has made a similar observation in his analysis of Sri Lankan art claiming that representationalism is a key feature of work defined as authentic. S. Perera, 'In Search of Authenticity: Politics of Inclusion and Exclusion' in *The World According to Me: An Interpretation of the Ordinary, the Common, and the Mundane*, Colombo: International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 1999, pp.137-8.

cxii This view is clearly expressed in Rajiva Wijesinha's essay 'Spices and Sandcastles'. Here the presentation of Sri Lanka as the most colonized nation in the world – which implicitly recognises the high degree of cultural syncreticism in the country – is

mediated in terms that call for a resistance to such cultural domination through the reflection that Romesh Gunesequera's novel *The Sandglass* marks the destruction of 'identity' in the Sinhalese elite. R. Wijesinha, 'Spices and Sandcastles', in Silva and Wijesinha, op.cit., p.20.

cxii T. Kandiah, 'Towards a Lankan Canon', op.cit., pp. 62, 55 and 64. Also see R. Wijesinha, 'English Poetry in Sri Lanka' in *Breaking Bounds*, op.cit..

cxiii See Kandiah, *ibid.*, p.68. Also see W. Perera, 'The Perils of Expatriation and a 'Heartless Paradise: Romesh Gunesequera's 'The Sandglass'', *Commonwealth*, Spring 2000, 22:2, pp. 93-106, and 'Images of Sri Lanka through Expatriate Eyes: Romesh Gunesequera's *Reef*', *Journal of Commonwealth Literature*, 1995, 30:1, pp. 63-78; R. Wijesinha, 'Spices and Sandcastles' in Silva and Wijesinha, op.cit., pp.11-20.

cxiv Kandiah, 'New Ceylon English', op.cit., p.91.

cxv *Ibid.*, 93.

cxvi R. Raheem, Book Review 'James Goonewardene: *The Awakening of Dr Kirthi*', *Navasilu*, December 1979, 3, pp.117-9.

cxvii Suganasiri, 'Sri Lanka' Canadian Poets, 1992, p. 69.

cxviii *Ibid.*, pp.67 and 74.

cxix M. Roberts, 'Language and National Identity: The Sinhalese and Others over the Centuries', *Nationalism and Ethnic Politics*, Summer 2003, 9:2, p. 92.

cxx Kandiah, 'Towards a Lankan Canon', op.cit., p.68.

cxxi R. Ranasinha, 'Romesh Gunesequera's *Reef*: Writing Expatriation', *Phoenix: Sri Lanka Journal of English in the Commonwealth*, 1997, vols.5&6, p.87.

cxxii Often the assumption that Western interpretations of a text are representationalist are based upon synoptic book reviews which serve to popularise and market a text. This is evident in Rajiva Wijesinha's analysis of Gunesequera's *The Sandglass* which cites such paratextual sources in order to establish the text's exoticism, but, paradoxically, goes on to diminish the impact of these reviews outside Sri Lanka by pointing out that the text is likely to appeal to a literary rather than a popular market. Wijesinha's main concern is with the influence of Western adulation on literary culture in Sri Lanka and the fact that they 'will not only sell better than those by more genuine writers, they will be promoted more, by book sellers and even by academics'. Wijesinha, 'Spices and Sandcastles' in Silva and Wijesinha. op.cit., p.14.

cxxiii Perera, 'Images', op.cit., pp.76-7.

cxxiv J. Cleary, op.cit., p.194.

cxxv See T. Kandiah, 'Towards a Lankan Canon', p.48; Regi Siriwardene, 'Politics of Literary Criticism Today' Speech delivered at the International Centre for Ethnic Studies, 25-10-1995, published in instalments in *The Island*, 31 October 1995, 1 November 1995 and 2 November 1995; Robert Crusz "'Politics of Literary Criticism" – a response', *The Island*, 3 January 1996.

cxxvi E. Shohat and R. Stam, *Unthinking Eurocentrism*, London: Routledge, 1994, p.237.

cxxvii E. Shohat cited in Roger Bromley, *Narratives for a New Belonging: Diasporic Cultural Fictions*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2000, p.8.