

Résumés : Atelier n°5 : Société d'Études Anglaises Contemporaines (SEAC) / La nouvelle de langue anglaise (*Journal of the Short Story in English*)

Congrès de la SAES. Lyon, 2-4 juin 2016.

Responsables :

Catherine BERNARD, Université Paris Diderot — Paris 7, présidente de la SEAC

Michelle Ryan-Sautour, Université d'Angers, directrice de la publication de *The Journal of the Short Story in English*

Jeudi 2 juin: 16h00—19h00

Présidence Catherine Bernard, Université Paris Diderot — Paris 7

16.00: Adèle Cassigneul, Université de Bordeaux: "Mrs Dalloway's Party: Twilight Encounters"

For I feel as one feels on a switchback railway when the car, instead of sinking, as one has been led to expect, swerves up again. Mary is tampering with the expected sequence. First she broke the sentence; now she has broken the sequence.

Virginia Woolf, *A Room of One's Own*, 88.

She thought of the dry, thick, well-built house, stored with valuables, humming with people coming close to each other, going away from each other, exchanging their views, stimulating each other.

Virginia Woolf, "A Summing Up", 55.

The seven stories of Mrs Dalloway's Party all converge on a magnetic centre, the Dalloway festive drawing-room, thus operating the "fusion" (xv) Woolf wrote about in her preparatory notes. Driven by the centripetal force of recurring themes and motifs, all end up "taking hands and danc[e] in unity" (Diary 2 13-4). Yet, nurturing a dynamics of ambivalence, the short story sequence also breaks up into a constellation of separate autonomous narratives, thus fuelling a contrary centrifugal energy which undermines the cycle's wholeness. Indeed, just as Woolf pictures "vacillating character[s]" (47), she created a vacillating collection which fathoms varied "states of consciousness" (xii) and unrolls her idiosyncratic flowing-yet-jerky style.

My aim in this paper is to ponder over this paradoxical and unsettling double movement (convergence-divergence balance), to start from this troubling formal fault line, to see in what ways it reflects Woolf's contemporary unsettled post-war world, the "social machine" (Moments of Being 153) she wishes to expose, as well as the "twilight existence" (51) of her vulnerable characters.

To do so, I shall see how the "social bouquets" (Proust) she describes are composed of "observant spectator[s]" (Moments 134) whose accurate scrutiny of others bears some marks of photographic intermediality. I shall then analyse in what ways the characters' challenging and agonistic twilight encounters drive them to liminal places of existence (corners, windows, back gardens), to finally underline Woolf's depiction of a community of mainly female outsiders – a flock of "widow bird[s]" (57) – yearning to break free from their condition and let go something wild and raging while at once desiring to belong to a single human community.

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16h30: Frédéric Regard, Université de Paris-Sorbonne : « Translation sans bords : W.H. Auden et Louis MacNeice, *Letters from Iceland* (1937) »

En septembre 1932, Auden s'éprit de l'un de ses élèves, Michael Yates. Il devait retrouver le jeune homme, alors âgé de seize ans, en 1936. Celui-ci évoqua pour l'été suivant une randonnée à cheval en Islande, en compagnie de l'un de ses professeurs et de trois autres camarades. Auden, dont le nom était d'origine scandinave (Audun), décida de se joindre à la petite équipe, bien déterminé à entamer un pèlerinage vers cette "terre sacrée" (avant-propos à l'édition de 1966). Il réussit à persuader Faber and Faber de financer son séjour au prétexte d'en tirer un récit de voyage, et parvint également à convaincre MacNeice, camarade d'Oxford, de l'accompagner et de collaborer à l'ouvrage.

Souffrant d'une inadéquation chronique au monde dans lequel il cherche à prendre pied, malade, ivre, désinvolte, négligé, mal équipé, provocateur, Auden campera un personnage en porte-à-faux. Sur le plan structurel, le fil attendu du récit de voyage se distendra pour offrir au lecteur un livre présenté comme un album de découpages en tous genres, dans la tradition du *scrap-book* ; sur le plan stylistique, *Letters from Iceland* réunira un assortiment de modes d'écriture, assemblés selon le principe du collage. Le poète lui-même ne trouvera pas lieu d'être : hésitant entre les bords, il ne trouvera jamais sa place, alors même qu'il se sera rapproché des origines.

C'est qu'il n'y a jamais dans *Letters from Iceland* un sens unique ; tout est "déplacé", à double sens, traduction sans origine et sans arrivée, translation sans bords, confluence.

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17h00: Christian Gutleben, Université Nice Sophia Antipolis: "'Urban Palimpsests': When novelistic and architectural languages merge in Penelope Lively's *City of the Mind* (1991)"

The concept of 'urban palimpsests' is used by Andreas Huyssen to convey "the conviction that literary techniques of reading historically, intertextually, constructively and deconstructively at the same can be woven into our understanding of urban spaces as lived spaces that shape our collective imaginaries" (Huyssen 7). Such a perusal of the city combining literary and architectural tools is precisely what Penelope Lively undertakes in *City of the mind* (1991) and it is this confluence of city and mind, space and imagination, urban planning and fiction planning which this paper sets out to analyse. The historical and aesthetic plurality inherent in the trope of the urban palimpsest constitutes the most obvious aspect of the postmodern city conceived as "both material and imaginative spaces" (Bentley 186). Thus focusing on various urban pasts may well represent an indispensable memory work but, as Madhy Dubey perceptively warns, to read the city metaphorically as palimpsest, kaleidoscope, collage or pastiche also means "to read it fetishistically [and] to become blind to the coordinates of power", these metaphors suggesting misleadingly "a utopian space of free play between heterogeneous social elements" (Dubey 105, 198). In *City of the Mind* on the contrary, because the narrative focus is on an architectural project in the Docklands, the epitome of a Thatcherite venture, and because the urban witnesses originate from diverse social strata, the political and ethical dimensions of the cities of the mind are foregrounded and will be similarly emphasised in this study proving that "urbanism forms the inescapable horizon of any ethical vision of contemporary social life" (Dubey 230).

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17h30: Diane Gagneret, ENS Lyon: “‘The Tangled Confluence’: Hybrid Accounts of Madness in Will Self’s *The Quantity Theory of Insanity* and Ian McEwan’s *Enduring Love*”

Both Will Self and Ian McEwan choose to place highly rationalist protagonists at the heart of their fictional account of what is commonly considered to form the underside, even the outside, of reason. Joe Rose’s frantic research on De Clérambault’s syndrome (also known as erotomania) in *Enduring Love* (1997), and Harold’s eponymous “quantity theory of insanity” in the collection of short stories which marked Will Self’s fictional debut in 1991, offer prime examples of what one of Self’s characters calls “the tangled confluence” of science and literature in these works – not merely a confluence of disciplines or mindsets, but also of genres, as both authors interweave literary and scientific style, sometimes incorporating yet other forms of writing into their narrative.

Such generic hybridity may well derive from the considerable difficulty of the task at hand: how can one produce a satisfactory, if not comprehensive account of the experience or nature of madness, when madness is traditionally perceived as the unspeakable epitome of otherness? Combining fiction and science, in what Jonathan Greenberg calls a “philosophical dialogue”, might offer a solution to this conundrum. However, we will see that in both works, the confluence of different genres (not all of which are literary) may not aim primarily at a faithful depiction of a condition, or an extreme state of mind, since the protagonists more often witness than experience insanity. Instead, taking into account society’s age-old devising of categories to define madness by and confine madness to, the “tangled confluence” in both texts here seeks to question, even subvert existing categories. Ian McEwan’s and Will Self’s metafictional experiments in genre, including pastiche and parody, may also foster the emergence of new generic forms more suited to such an intricate theme as insanity – thus, to Marco Roth, *Enduring Love* “effectively inaugurates the genre of the neuronovel”.

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18h00: Mark Davies, CPGE, Université Sorbonne Nouvelle — Paris 3: “Avartisation and Contingency in the Narrative Worlds of Wyndham Lewis and Will Self”

Wyndham Lewis’s 1928 novel *The Childermass* stages an apocalyptic voyage through an overtly false and oniric landscape inhabited by animated simulacra in the place of characters, and imitates other fictions, paintings and supposedly ‘real’ life in its construction of a nervy, confrontational and problematic buddy narrative. Its questioning of intra- and extra-diegetic suspension of disbelief finds an echo in Will Self’s generically unstable *Walking to Hollywood* (travelogue, autobiography, satirical opinion piece), which in its turn interrogates the viability of modern narrative and representation through a playful bric-a-brac style and dynamic use of cinematic tropes and techniques.

Both texts also contain a challenging approach towards selfhood and the depiction of space that suggests two overlapping reactions to the communication and value of sense data. Where Lewis demands of his reader that s/he question the self’s viability, Self engages in a chaotic and burlesque reworking of

Hollywood tropes and clichés that takes the fracturing of this self/Self as its starting point. Published over ninety years after Lewis's text, *Walking to Hollywood* returns to many of Lewis's preoccupations with a more manic and media-parodic approach, leading us to consider whether Lewis's automata characters in *The Childermass* are open to a renewed interpretation in the context of new media forms. The question of destabilized narrative rules and their application to alternative forms of world-creation will enable a somewhat ironic vision of the reader's engagement in both texts to emerge.

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18h30: Anne-Laure Fortin-Tournès, Université du Maine : « Confluences du corps et des signes dans 253 de Geoff Ryman »
 Résumé définitif à suivre.

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Vendredi 3 juin: 9h00 — 10h30

09h00 : Armelle Parey, Université de Caen : "Confluence in Dickensian"

"Dickensian" is an adjective "relating to or associated with Charles Dickens (...)" ; relating to conditions, esp. squalid social or working conditions, like those described in his novels » but it is also a noun that refers to, as the Chambers dictionary states, "an admirer or student of Dickens". This word is the title of a 20-part-drama series currently being shown on the BBC that retrieves characters from Charles Dickens's novels and combines them in an intrigue of its own and one may wonder which part or parts of the Chambers definition the series illustrates. Transferring characters from one novel to another text is a regular instance of character migration or transfiction but scriptwriter Tony Jordan ambitiously takes on a whole universe, the one created by Dickens, with characters from various novels now all featuring and interacting in the same filmic text.

I propose to examine what Dickensian makes of the rich Dickens material, first, in terms of structure, when the amplex of the series format echoes the Victorian multi-plot novel as well as serialization principles. It will then be rewarding to focus on the characters that migrate with identifiable characteristics but that also acquire new ones in the course of their migration as the series builds up on the blanks left by Dickens and develops unmentioned aspects of a character that help to account for what the character is like. In other words, how does this migration modify or adds to the original character ?

The characters and the stories they originally belong to are the threads that the BBC series takes up to knit together a new story. How Dickensian is this new story?

To what extent does this mix of characters reveal anything new about the Victorian era or fit with our contemporary idea of the Dickensian and the Victorian?

9h30: Alain Blayac, Université Paul Valéry — Montpellier 3: “From Divergences to Confluence or the Confluence of Opposites: the Case of George Orwell and Evelyn Waugh”

Never have there been such two dissimilar men and writers as Orwell (1903-1950) and Waugh (1903-1966), with one major common point their early love of writing. Except for their precocious vocations, they stand apart in most fields of life, at least until the end of World War II: physically, psychologically, intellectually, philosophically.

Yet some common points can be found within their very differences: both are physically courageous and intellectually committed to their principles, both feel outsiders in the world they live in (Orwell anxiously imagining the future, Waugh nostalgically revering the past), both adamantly defend opposite views of the world.

Their works are simply constructed, both remain independent of political power, illustrating humanistic values and refusing to subordinate writing to official ideologies. In fact, both men are brought to a certain confluence of views by the cataclysm of World War 2 (through different itineraries, Orwell being primarily moved by ‘feeling’, Waugh by ‘faith’). At the same moment both writers feel the need to get in touch and communicate, as is shown by their more and more frequent epistolary contacts in a correspondence which creates an unexpected confluence and a genuine reciprocal esteem transcending their irradicable differences (analysis of the correspondence given here).

All things considered one may say that they embody the strangest occurrence of cross-cultural encounters. Both men are positioned at the crossroads of cultures but display no hybridity although they share an identical nature. The confluence of Orwell and Waugh’s trajectories eventually materialises a wealth born of the diversity they imply.

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10h00: Emilie Walezak, Université Lumière Lyon 2 : “The Confluence of Naturalism and Modernism in Rose Tremain’s *The Swimming Pool Season*: a Post War Feminist Approach to Realism”

With such characters as Gervaise or the Maréchal exclaiming over ‘la comédie humaine’, Tremain pays homage in *The Swimming Pool Season* to the tradition of the great realistic novel. Her portrayal of the mid-life crisis of middle and lower class characters impacted by their ‘milieu’ – the social, economic,

national components of their identity – within a causal plot matches the conventions of the realistic novel, more particularly of the naturalistic school. Her character study, however, also incorporates modernist issues of the exile of the self and the disjunction between one's perception and the world's judgement with a gallery of migrant and local characters gathered together in the made-up French village of Pomerac. Although postmodernist thinkers were highly critical of realism, *The Swimming Pool Season* may be an example of the 'the synthesis or transcension' of the modes of writing of traditional bourgeois realism and modernism that John Barth foresaw for postmodernist fiction. Tremain's brand of realism adopts feminist and psychoanalytical concerns with the instability of gender signifiers depicted in this polyphonic novel through marital crisis and a variety of love triangles. Larry and Miriam are a British couple in crisis while Gervaise, her husband Mallélou and her lover Klaus are involved in a 'ménage à trois'. Hervé, the village's bachelor misogynist doctor, is wooed by the Polish woman Nadia whose husband resides in an Adjustment Home. Xavier, Gervaise's son, falls in love with the doctor's niece who is engaged to well-off Luc. It is also modified by postcolonialism and post war issues with the fabrication of a cosmopolitan village against the historical background of the French collaborationist past. The novel opposes the patriarchal figure of the Maréchal and the obscene figure of Pétainist Mallélou. The aim of this paper is to demonstrate the vitality of the realistic genre and attempt to answer the charges against it of conservatism, especially when written by a woman.

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Samedi 4 juin : 9h00 — 10h30 — 11h00 — 12h30

Présidence: Michelle Ryan-Sautour, Université d'Angers

09h00: Florence Marie, Université de Pau : « À la confluence des discours: *Pilgrimage* de Dorothy Richardson »

Pilgrimage de Dorothy Richardson (le cycle compte 13 volumes mais nous nous intéresserons à *Deadlock* [1921], *Revolving Lights* [1923] et *The Trap* [1925]) est majoritairement situé dans le Londres des années 1895-1905, capitale devenue lieu de confluence en raison des nombreux immigrés y affluant et des sphères culturelles y coexistant (cercles artistiques et littéraires, clubs pour les *New Women*, groupuscules d'anarchistes etc...). Et c'est dans ce contexte que Miriam, la principale protagoniste du cycle évolue au gré des rencontres et tente de trouver une place qui lui appartienne, elle qui a quitté celle qui lui était assignée par sa naissance.

Le texte comme matériau littéraire se fait reflet de ces flux d'influence en donnant à lire aux lecteurs des pages où se mêlent langues (anglais, allemand, français) et idiomes divers. Il devient se faisant le véhicule d'une esthétique de la diversité et du cosmopolitisme.

En parallèle à cette problématique de la jonction, se greffe celle du flux de conscience, de son fonctionnement sous la plume de celle qui fut la première à l'introduire dans la fiction britannique et de l'articulation de ce flux avec les divers flux de subjectivité qui se joignent dans ce moi toujours en mouvement, ce moi moderniste, confluent d'une myriade de moi-s potentiels que Miriam tente de mettre en mots.

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09h30: Adeline Arniac, Université Paul Valéry — Montpellier 3 : « Confluence, exposition et rencontre manquée dans *Moonlight* de Harold Pinter »

« Confluer », c'est pour des cours d'eau, « se réunir », mais aussi « se diriger vers un même lieu ». A l'aune de ces définitions, se fait jour un écart : la confluence serait à la fois le processus qui mène à la rencontre et son aboutissement, la réunion en elle-même. Cette notion contient à la fois la rencontre, certes, mais aussi son en-deçà, donc la possibilité d'un échec, ou à tout le moins d'un inaboutissement.

Afin d'explorer cette idée, je propose de me concentrer sur *Moonlight* (1993), car cette pièce est fondée sur une logique de la rencontre manquée. La pièce tout entière porte l'espoir d'une réunion familiale entre Andy, le père mourant, et ses enfants, exposant ainsi le risque que cette rencontre n'ait pas lieu. Malgré la distance qui sépare le père de ses fils et de sa fille Bridget, les trois espaces qui leurs sont consacrés sont réunis sur le même plateau, et les divers mouvements scéniques esquissent une éventuelle rencontre. Ces déplacements n'aboutissent pas, mais ils sont sans cesse initiés, et sont entretenus par une conception particulière de la rencontre comme exposition à l'autre. En effet, l'impulsion vers la confluence trouve son origine dans l'exposition du sujet – à la mort pour Andy et Bridget, à la maladie pour Fred, à l'autre de manière plus générale – et la rencontre est vouée à être profondément asymétrique. L'un est toujours tributaire de l'autre, et, si cette asymétrie originelle est appel à la confluence, elle peut également être vecteur d'échec.

En soulignant, à différents niveaux, l'importance des tentatives, même frustrées, de rencontrer l'autre, et leur origine dans l'exposition du sujet, *Moonlight* révèle la dépendance des personnages, et les présente comme doublement vulnérables. L'analyse de la confluence dans la pièce à travers le motif de la rencontre manquée entrera ainsi en résonance avec l'éthique de la vulnérabilité, qui expose elle aussi à la fois le lien inévitable et la fragilité radicale de ce dernier.

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10h00: Julia Siccardi, ENS de Lyon : « Confluences et divergences dans *The Thing Around Your Neck* de Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie »

En géographie, la confluence est la jonction de deux cours d'eau, mais aussi le lieu de cette jonction. Elle est donc à la fois mouvement fluide et lieu fixe. Cette notion apparaît parfois dans le contexte de la diaspora et des mouvements migratoires, où deux cultures divergentes confluent lors d'une rencontre ou d'une migration. *The Thing Around Your Neck*, recueil de nouvelles de l'auteure nigériane Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, est situé à la confluence des cultures américaine et igbo. Nous allons tenter de démontrer en quoi la confluence (narrative, culturelle, thématique) naît de la divergence et s'en

nourrit, et comment ces deux termes sont indissociables dans le genre de la nouvelle, et plus spécifiquement dans le recueil d'Adichie.

Le recueil de nouvelles crée un flux narratif dans lequel on observe autant de convergences que de divergences. Chez Adichie, certains fils rouges sont tressés d'une nouvelle à l'autre (l'homosexualité, la disparition...), d'autres (le viol, la guerre du Biafra) ne surgissent qu'une seule fois et sont alors d'autant plus frappants. Si la nouvelle est « enracinée dans le *hic et nunc* d'une situation particulière » (43), comme l'écrit Pierre Tibi, ce *hic et nunc* se définit par la crise : chez Adichie, les personnages se trouvent souvent à un point de basculement, et la nouvelle explore cet instant fragile.

Mais la confluence, par sa nature même, suppose une divergence, voire un éclatement antérieur : pour qu'il y ait confluence, il faut qu'il y ait eu divergence. Il s'agit donc d'étudier comment les deux notions s'entremêlent dans le recueil de nouvelles, comment l'une peut mener à l'autre. Ainsi, dans « A Private Experience », c'est la panique d'une émeute sanglante qui mène l'un des personnages féminins à se réfugier avec une inconnue, pendant plusieurs heures : de l'éclatement initial naît un moment de convergence où deux femmes, que tout oppose, s'entraident et se protègent mutuellement. Finalement, les divergences de voix narratives propres au recueil de nouvelles, qui toutes confluent dans le récit d'un même décentrement, amènent à envisager la confluence comme un espoir d'un vivre-ensemble transculturel.

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10h30 — 11h00. PAUSE

11h00: Jaine Chemmachery, Université Paris 1 — Panthéon Sorbonne: « "Au croisement des langues, des genres et du poème" : Confluences à l'œuvre dans la pratique anthologique sur une sélection de nouvelles contemporaines indiennes de langue anglaise »

Comme le suggérerait la référence à Anna Snaith dans l'appel à communications, il est essentiel de penser les flux d'influence culturels au sein d'un espace impérial complexe, et en particulier si l'on songe à celui auquel a donné lieu l'Empire britannique. Dans la littérature anglo-indienne du XIX^e siècle, de tels flux pouvaient être repérés dans des trouvailles linguistiques hybrides qui visaient parfois à rappeler le rapport de force entre langues indiennes et la langue anglaise comme dans l'expression « she jawabed him » (Kipling, « Bitters Neat », *Plain Tales from the Hills*, 58) ; mais parfois, la confluence des langues a permis de créer des énonciations inédites, littéralement inouïes, donnant à voir une « étrangeté » absolue que l'on peut retrouver dans l'écriture contemporaine indienne de langue anglaise.

Si l'on considère que l'écriture novellistique à l'œuvre dans ce champ résulte, entre autres, de l'espace impérial complexe mentionné en amont – ne serait-ce que par « la langue » dans laquelle elle s'écrit, il est intéressant de voir le type de confluences à l'œuvre dans une anthologie de nouvelles d'auteurs distincts. Dans l'ouvrage *21 under 40*, ouvrage qui rassemble 21 nouvelles de jeunes auteures, la nouvelle « Murk of Art » de Madhulika Liddle oscille entre récit historique et aventure policière, renouant en cela avec la pratique de Poe tout en déplaçant son cadre à l'époque de l'Empire moghol. Mais d'autres expérimentations transgénériques produisent des nouvelles plus faciles, moins audacieuses, telles « The Suicide's Inbox » de Meena Kandasamy qui transpose l'écriture épistolaire à notre époque, nous donnant à lire une « nouvelle en courriels » ; courriels issus d'une seule personne mais qui nous laissent entendre

une polyphonie de voix. Face à des écrits où l'invention poétique est moindre, même si on peut leur reconnaître un courage certain sur le plan des thèmes abordés, le geste anthologique produit des effets de confluence tels que des nouvelles, placées à côté et donc en résonnance avec de moins bons écrits, surprennent alors par l'inventivité de leur écriture. Elles surprennent, tant par la manière inédite dont elles renouent avec l'écriture polyphonique ou le monologue intérieur que par le mélange des genres auquel elles se livrent, se positionnant ainsi à la confluence de multiples directions : au cœur de récits polyphoniques, mais aussi entre poésie et fiction, entre comique et tragique, voire entre prose et danse.

11h30 : Isabelle Roblin, Université du Littoral-Côte d'Opale : "Idiomatic Confluences: the Use of Xenisms in Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) and Kamila Shamsie's *In the City by the Sea* (1998)"

The Pakistani-born British novelist and journalist Kamila Shamsie, as many South Asian writers, has acknowledged Salman Rushdie's influence on her work. It is therefore not surprising that Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories* (1990) and her debut novel *In the City by the Sea* (1998), have a lot of points in common, even if their *genres* are somewhat different. This paper proposes to study the different ways in which in both cases, the authors incorporate foreign words and expressions (especially – but not exclusively - Hindustani ones), or *xenisms*, within their English texts. After a brief analysis of the points these novels have in common and of the question of their readership, I propose to study in some detail the literary devices used by both writers, through their use of xenisms, to both educate and entertain their Western readers as well as make them familiar with some aspects of South Asian culture and way of life and especially, in the case of Shamsie, her vision of Islam. It is also my contention that both Salman Rushdie and Kamila Shamsie are using intercultural elements of language as a strategy not only to promote the vernacular Hindustani to Western readers but also to revive and enrich the English language by incorporating these xenisms into it, inventing an original confluence of languages. They have indeed "creat[ed] a typical and distinct idiom which is at once (South Asian) and cosmopolitan" (Williams 175). And with the language it is the English novel itself which is being rejuvenated by writers coming from the fringes of the ex-British empire and becoming even more multi-cultural.

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12h00 : Helen E. Mundler, Université de Paris-Est Créteil : "'East is East': the Confluence of East and West in A.S. Byatt's 'Bag Lady' and Jane Gardam's 'Chinese Funeral'"

A.S. Byatt's "Bag Lady" has received little critical attention. It is generally considered an anomaly in this erudite writer's oeuvre, and can appear at first sight as an insubstantial text. It tells the story of an Englishwoman's misadventure in a shopping mall in the Far East: separated from her group, she is first robbed, then breaks her shoes, and finally finds herself, unkempt and penniless, outside the mall, and barred from re-entry, with no means of contacting her husband or group. The reader is at once invited to "read" Daphne – to participate in her construction and deconstruction as character, as the security guard who refuses her entry is unable to do – and to read the unstated subtext which comments on the shifting relations between dominated and dominant, subservient and served.

Jane Gardam's "Chinese Funeral" also turns on characters, generically defined as "English", in an Oriental environment. Led around by a guide who, although benevolent, decides what they may and may not see, and announces, or threatens, a great revolution to come, with China overtaking the world, the English group is diminished and destabilised, and, finally, excluded. As "the husband" comments, "After all, it's not our country. It has nothing to do with us". This story can thus be read as a subtle, intricate commentary on the undoing of imperial certainties.

Both these stories turn on a moment of what might be described as a return to identity of the neutralised, dominated other, previously subsumed into "English" culture. The Oriental is thus rediscovered in a new and disturbing light, and these stories capture, in different ways and with different narrative techniques, two subjective experiences of the dissonance between known and unknown, expected and unexpected, as the English characters reluctantly experience the alterities forced upon them as they navigate a postcolonial world.

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