

PREFACE

"We come to this space through suffering, pain, through struggle. We know struggle to be that which pleasures, delights, and fulfills desire." (Bell Hooks 1990).

*"The margin is narrow, but the responsibility is clear."
(John F. Kennedy 1961)*

It can be argued that the study of margins and peripheries forms the backbone of current research in literary and cultural studies. What was once considered mainstream has now become marginalized and that which was considered peripheral has become mundane, even quaint. To quote the old English saying, "That which is new has become old and that which is old is new again."

Throughout the history of science numerous arguments have been formulated in support of the contention that both language and human cognition are based on the core-periphery opposition. We believe the peripheries of language and culture are far from being their "dead ends". Therefore, the following articles devoted to literary and cultural studies include but are not limited to: marginality, experimentation, reactionary literature and the 'backlash' phenomenon, shortened peripheries and re/reading marginality, if such a thing can exist in a culture where every act is more or less tolerated. An equally broad range of topics is covered with regard to linguistics.

For practical reasons the articles have been grouped in two sections according to their thematic focus. The first section, devoted to culture and literature, deals with the concept of marginality in various ways: cultural, mental, interpersonal, political and artistic. In the first article Anna Bysiecka-Maciaszek provides a brief analysis of Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Esmond in India*, focusing on the problem of doubles and parallels both at the level of the fictional and the real. Tomasz Gornat takes us to early 20th century Ireland in order to discuss Austin Clarke's "Celtic Romanesque". Ksenia Olkusz and Aleksander Rzyman seem to be very inspired by the contemporary Polish speculative fiction. Aleksandra Lubczyńska, in turn, focuses on the significance of the marginal heteroscopic space in John Cameron Mitchell's controversial movie *Shortbus*. Agnieszka Woźniakowska looks for the Old Testament motifs present in American Drama, particularly in *J.B.* by Archibald MacLeish and *God's Favorite* by Neil Simon, both plays being adaptations of the "Book of Job". In the last article of this section Jakub Grzegorzek investigates the significance of saintliness in modern times, reminding us of two great figures: Joan of Arc and Mary MacKillop.

The section containing articles from the field of linguistics and translation starts with Joanna Bielewicz-Kunc's examination of compliments in Czech and English. It is followed by Miroslav Černý's thorough analysis of the status of English as a lingua franca in today's Malaysia. Justyna Jarska discusses the role of the speaker in the formation of the deictic and epistemic dimensions in English past and present forms. Szymon Domański turns to music and writes about the musical-rhetorical figures and the scope of meanings that they can carry. Finally, Teresa Włosowicz concentrates on the possibilities of transferring marked structures and meanings from one foreign language into another.

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LITERATURE AND CULTURE

The Figure of (a) Double in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's *Esmond in India*

1. Introduction

Ruth Praver Jhabvala's fiction serves as an interesting alternative for the colonial worlds from Edward M. Forster's and V. S. Naipaul's novels. Neither bound by imperial heritage nor drawn to India by ancestry Jhabvala presents a different view of this place. Her double loyalty (the European roots versus a Parsi husband and over twenty years of living in Indian society) places her somewhere in-between two cultures – she becomes an outside insider and an “inside-outsider”¹. Written from a female perspective her “Indian” novels focus on the personal experience of being stranded and marginalized in a foreign country before making herself familiar with the land and its people. Her novels form a double with her life – the transition from the initial dazzle and sensuous delight to the gradual tiredness with life in the adopted home and the struggle to keep her own personality. With time Jhabvala's fascination with India's novelty – “I loved everything [...]. I really loved it and was widely excited by it and never wanted to go away from here” (Agarwal 34), turns into indifference – “My husband is Indian and so are my children. I am not, and less so every year” (Jhabvala 1989, 13), and finally gives way to some confusion that results from the double loyalty:

To live in India, and to be at peace, one must to a very considerable extent become an Indian and adopt Indian attitudes, habits, beliefs, assume if possible an Indian personality. But how is it possible? And even if it were possible – without cheating oneself – would it be desirable? Should one want to try to become something other than what one is? I don't always say no to this question. Sometimes it seems to me how pleasant it would be to say yes [...]. Other times it seems worthwhile to be defiant and European and – all right, be crushed by one's environment, but all the same have made some attempt to remain standing. (Jhabvala, 1989, 21)

The disturbing feeling of living a double life is so prevailing that it seems impossible to fight it back and one has to give in to being “possessed” by India.

The 1957 novel *Esmond in India*, written within the first years of Jhabvala's stay in India, mirrors the times of marvel, bliss and intoxication with the smells, sights and sounds of the country: “the mango, the jasmine on hot nights – the rich spiced food – the vast sky – the sight of dawn and dusk – the birds flying about – the ruins – the music” (Jhabvala cited in Jones, 1999, 224). Though Jhabvala is very critical of the new bourgeois class in post-Independence India, her satirical portrayal of the country is humoristic and the

¹ Richard Rorty enlists Jhabvala among the authors who manage to mediate encounters between cultures by means of their novels and memoirs. Like V. S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie and Kuzuo Ishiguro, Jhabvala's life involved “a tension between cultures” (Rorty 593) and, therefore, she had to find a way to blend them.

discrepancies between the rich and the poor are less disturbing than in her later works². Even if towards the end of *Esmond in India* the place loses its romance, it is because of Esmond's light-hearted attitude and boredom with the place rather than the place itself. With time, the feeling of homeliness and familiarity gives way to the alienation and hostility of the surrounding world which "dwarf[s] all human life into insignificance" (Jhabvala, 1980, 202). Reflecting on her 1960 visit to England (her first visit after many years spent in India) Jhabvala confesses:

I was no longer immersed in sensuous delight but had to struggle against all the things people do have to struggle against in India: the tide of poverty, disease and squalor rising around; the heat – the frayed nerves; the strange, alien, often inexplicable, often maddening, Indian character. (Jhabvala cited in Jones, 1999, 228)

This altered attitude can be observed in the globally-acclaimed novel *Heat and Dust* (1975), where India strikes as a different reality³ with its harsh climate that changes people and makes life in the constant heat and dust unbearable.

Although Jhabvala claims to be interested in herself in India rather than in India itself⁴ her earlier novels are indicative of the West-East relationship (at the social rather than political level) and the colonial mechanisms of othering and stereotyping native subjects. The author shows some incongruities of characters and situations that result from the meeting between East and West once the initial fascination with otherness turns into disillusionment and widens the cultural gap. Even if in Jhabvala's post-Independence India there are no colonial authorities, there are still some colonial mechanisms in operation – the English travellers objectify the natives and the new bourgeois class becomes the ghost of colonial domination. Jhabvala shows "the mutual impact of India and some European expatriates" (Williams 10) and offers the unsentimental portrayal of post-independence India and an acute and fresh observation of contemporary life where exotic appeal is only marginal (9). Violence, usurpation, seduction and depersonalization add a gothic quality to the text, marring the image of the exotic India which is desired by all newcomers to this country.

2. Englishmen in India

Esmond Stillwood is a transplanted Englishman who earns his living by teaching European expatriates and tourists about Indian culture, literature and language. Jhabvala presents this character as an Orientalist – a European with a pre-set knowledge of India and its people, who views the country less as a place and more as a *topos*, a set of references (Said 177): a place of romance, exoticism and remarkable experiences (1). As Edward Said

² Jhabvala's novels show the middle-class inhabitants of Delhi – the society of the nouveau riche of the capitalist system that is set against the misery of the overwhelming majority of Indian society. In her earlier novels, for example *The Nature of Passion* (1956), the place may be bleak and poor, the characters – evil and devoid of respect for moral or spiritual values but these images usually do not intrude. See Jones (in Stade and Goldstein 1999) and Singh (2005).

³ When comparing England and India Jhabvala observes: "Everything in India was so different. You know, the way people have to live. Human beings shouldn't have to live like that, from birth to death. In India the degeneration starts from birth. You have no choice" (Grimes 14).

⁴ In the essay "Myself In India" published in 1966 Jhabvala writes: "I must admit that I am no longer interested in India. What I am interested now is myself in India" (Jhabvala, 1989, 13).