

No. 158

THE MYSTERY OF THE POSTCOLONIAL WOMAN*

Woon-Ping Chin

Department of English
Dartmouth College
6032 Sanborn House
Hanover, New Hampshire 03755
Telephone: (603) 646-2316
Fax: (603) 646-2159

E-mail: Chin.Woon_Ping@dartmouth.edu

* This paper was presented in a Seminar at the Department of Sociology, National University of Singapore on March 25, 1999.

ISSN0129-8186
ISBN 981-3033-52-5
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The Mystery of the Postcolonial Woman*

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How is historical agency enacted in the slenderness of narrative? How do we historicize the event of the dehistoricized?-- Homi Bhabha¹

That the first postcolonial Malaysian novel in English by a woman was only published in 1994, nearly thirty years after Independence, speaks surely to a kind of silence or silencing, a lack in representation. What, we might ask, are the psychic and material considerations, the failures of impetus, support or recognition, that account for this lacuna in the Malaysian literary landscape? To what extent is this silence indicative of an absence of agency in the nationalist project on the part of the English-speaking woman? How are we, in Pierre Macherey's phrase, to *measure* this silence?² "If, in the context of colonial [and we might add, postcolonial] production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak, the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow," says Gayatri Spivak³ Where, then, has the "shadow of the presence"...fled to?⁴ What are the restorative gestures available to us and how are the aporias, the effaced or subjugated knowledges, to be named?

At issue chiefly are the history and identity of the subaltern postcolonial woman as actor, and acted upon⁵. We must ask first, however, if it is possible to speak of the subalternity of the English-educated Chinese woman, someone who generally enjoys privilege of class and profession; or, might we suggest that, like the Black woman in America, by virtue of her being a member of a minority group and in the gender that has the least power, she is--to borrow a phrase--"doubly disadvantaged" and "doubly ignored"?⁶ In Malaysia, the English-speaking female can only be constructed as an unstable, ambiguous subject, inheritor of benefits available to those using the colonizer's language (with its accesses to international knowledge and marketplaces), viewed sometimes as regressor and even traitor in the decolonizing imperative, yet often coerced into the masculine, hegemonizing mechanisms of nation-building. (Deniz Kandiyoti

points out, "The apparent convergence between the interests of men and the definition of national priorities leads some feminists to suggest that the state itself is a direct expression of men's interests."⁷) Such women, living under a government whose dominant language and religion are non- and even anti-Western, face daily the intrusions of the state apparatus into their private lives. Whether and how they are integrated into the nationalist project are constant sources of tension. As Kandiyoti remarks, "...it is an entirely different matter for a woman to be subject to the customary strictures of a community which happens to be Hindu or Muslim and quite another for her to live under a regime that has adopted one or another faith as a source of public policy, social legislation and national identity⁸."

Like women of color in America, postcolonial minority women in Malaysia are "multiply interpellated," called by many names, constituted in and by that multiple calling," having to negotiate the domain of state-legislated, socially-instituted, racializing norms "existing not merely alongside gender norms but...articulated through one another⁹." How, for instance, does a woman from a minority Malaysian racial group--whether Chinese, Indian, Eurasian or Orang Asli--respond to the state's ideological construction of the modern woman, to Malay sisterhood, "purdah", the Arabization of feminine identity and the policing of women's sexuality? In the transition from near-feudalism to a version of Asian democracy, how are her own cultural mores to be negotiated amidst the competing versions of modernity?

Here, I must add a qualifying note, namely, that we must not assume tradition in Malaysia to be a static system of regulations but rather (as suggested by Lloyd and Suzanne Rudolf) a new, recent construct in which women become complex signifiers and manipulators¹⁰. Nor should we take industrialisation and modernization to be synonymous with progress and egalitarianism but on the contrary, a fraught transition, from a gendered to a capital-intensive sexist economy, often leading to increased discrimination and frustration¹¹. The specific, local context in which Chuah Guat Eng's novel, *Echoes of Silence*, was written suggests some of the tensions mentioned. Compelled to withdraw savings from her retirement fund to finance the writing of her novel, she has hitherto received scant state recognition or support for her efforts (as opposed, say, to the encouragement given to both male and female authors writing in the

national language, Bahasa Melayu)¹². Her success in the private commercial sector as a copywriter but exclusion from the public channels of discourse and power associated with the media, government and universities speak to evident marginalization in the national arena. The choice to write a mystery novel--which she tells me was a pragmatic one, namely, to select a popular genre that would "sell" --suggests an overdetermined anxiety of success. In my paper, I will interrogate the implications of this choice of genre and examine how it is deployed, perhaps undermined, and how much symbolic meaning related to the Malaysian scene has been accommodated. I will suggest that Chuah has written a work exceeding the expectations and limitations of the genre, readable as an allegory of postcoloniality, a parable of alterity or "search for subaltern consciousness"¹³. In uncovering the mystery at the heart of this mystery novel --Who is the killer?--we are presented with another enigma, the mystery of the postcolonial woman: Who is she, and what does she want?

Chuah's plot begins with a death, that of the narrator's former lover, Michael Templeton:

The telegram came just as I was leaving for the airport. In the taxi I tore it open. Michael Templeton had died of leukaemia in London; I was to contact his solicitor. From my hotel in Zurich I called London to set up a meeting. The following week I learned I was the sole beneficiary and executrix of Michael Templeton's will¹⁴.

From this point on, the narrative shifts backwards and forwards in time to reveal a convoluted network of liaisons, secrecies and jealousies, at the heart of which is the question of inheritance as the major site of contestation and around which a series of murders is committed. Property, filiation, affiliation and violence then, are the controlling thematics of the novel.

The narrator is Ai Lian, a Chinese Malaysian who flees from Malaysia after the May 13 riots, having lost her "faith in a future." In her quest for "a safe, orderly, predictable place to live in," she is a political and cultural as well as a linguistic exile.¹⁰ As narrator and especially as investigator, she comes across as a highly vulnerable and unreliable character, one who is romantically and familially entangled with key characters, given to moments of self-consciousness, weakness and doubt and racked by ordeals of race and class consciousness. In all these aspects, she breaks decidedly from

the convention of the detective as a cool and objective watcher whose "authorial/authoritarian gaze" upholds the "bourgeois order" and-- in the words of a critic-- "restrains the liberal humanist text from surrendering its cultural capital to the margins."¹⁵ Ai Lian, daughter of a civil servant and schoolteacher, and therefore enjoying the privileges and comforts of the middle class, is a snob who hides her humble peasant origins from her lover, Michael, and lies to him about the real source of her wealth (her grandmother, who raised pigs, left her a small legacy to further her education, but she fabricates an origin of genteel wealth). She is acutely conscious of her own cultural and political displacement, of being what I would call a cultural mulatto, namely, a person trapped between binaries or "stranded in cultural ambiguity" -- a state described by Hortense Spillers as being "a neither/nor proposition--inscribed in no historic locus or materiality" and therefore "evasive and shadowy on the national landscape"¹⁶. There is no doubt that this sense of deracination is directly related to the "psychic and social reflexes" (Spiller's phrase) produced by the events of May 13:

Whatever my parents' reasons for breaking away from their past, the result was the same: stranded in a cultural vacuum, we began to absorb the only set of values and traditions made available to us by an understood language and its pervasive media. We became westernized not by choice but by default. The racial riots of May 1969 forced us to rethink our position. Besieged and beleaguered but emotionally unable to take sides, we came face to face with the misfortune of being Chinese without feeling particularly Chinese, in what suddenly appeared to be an anti-Chinese world¹⁷.

Ai Lian, at the beginning of the novel, is Fanon's figure of the bourgeois national, caught in the first phase of postcolonial evolution, namely, that of unqualified assimilation and emulation of colonial values.¹⁸ When Michael, who was born in Malaysia and whom she meets during her exile in Germany, invites her to visit his estate in Ulu Banir, she reflects that she is "more of a stranger in my own land than Michael. " To her, the "ulu" or countryside conjures up wild and intimidating images of otherness, "images of brooding jungles, rushing mountain streams and aboriginal huts." It is Michael's intervening and civilizing discourse that tames these images for her:

But as Michael talked, the unruly, unruled jungle in my mind was cleared away, replaced by regimented rows of rubber trees, lines of dark-green wooden longhouses for the workers, and a reasonable network of laterite gravel roads. A mini-kingdom of straight trees and crouching tappers, Indian immigrants governed by an Englishman with a soldierly air, from his large, rambling, wooden bungalow-castle set on a gently rising hill¹⁹.

This idealization of the colonial master as a superior and benign military commander and bestower of order reflects to some extent the initial loyalty and subservience of the compradore class to the British, to whom they owed their privilege and very presence in the colonized land and whose language and experience constantly mediated the local bourgeoisie's own perception of the land. In the early part of the novel and her relationship to Michael, Ai Lian displays the pliability that feminists would recognize as an unliberated state of dependence on the colonizing male:

I loved him as clay must love its potter, because in a sense he made me. Seeing the desire in his eyes as he took pleasure in my body, seeing how much it pleased him to see me take pleasure in my own body, I assumed validity as a being²⁰.

As the novel progresses, however, and as she assumes the self-appointed role of a private eye, scrutinizing the history and geography of scenes of crime on the Templeton estate, she begins to realize her sympathy and connection with other people and grows increasingly confident and autonomous. It is interesting to note that the defining, self-reifying moments for Ai Lian have to do with doubt, namely her doubt of as to the integrity and power of her male lover, Michael. Especially noteworthy is the moment when Michael gives her the diamond necklace he has stolen for safe-keeping, which launches her on a relentless quest for truth. The necklace's function as a symbol of truth is traceable to its etymology (sutra, the Pali word for Buddhist scripture, originally referred to a silk strand on which gems could be strung). The description of Ai Lian stripping her clothes to put on the necklace, surveying herself in a mirror, can be read as as a conferral of full subjecthood. Her nakedness signifies the shedding of all psychological and cultural

baggage or adornment, as she faces herself in her own gaze, returning it whimsically and playfully in a moment of autonomous pleasure:

I took off the make-up and the dress. As I put the dress away, I caught sight of my image in the full-length mirror of the wardrobe door. Hair slightly disheveled, stark naked but for my panties and the necklace. And the necklace. Glinting gold and white on my bare skin. I stood looking at myself appreciatively for a few minutes. Then on an impulse I took off my panties. And there was I, a nude. If I struck one pose I might be Aphrodite rising out of the sea. If I struck another I could be Truth. But no, not a Botticelli, I decided, bringing my arm down. That necklace. That necklace made a Cranach out of me. Yes, definitely a Venus by naughty, crafty old Cranach²¹.

Ai Lian's detections lead to a series of revelations ending long-guarded, reverberative silences suggested by the title of the book. In this sense, *Echoes of Silence* can be read as a journey towards philosophical and political enlightenment, a recuperation of identity, agency and collectivity beyond what Helene Cixous aptly describes as colonialism's "inexorable plot of racism"²².

Upon arrival in Ulu Banir, Ai Lian is greeted by Michael and the news of his father's engagement to a mutual friend, Cynthia Wilkinson, whom they had both known in Europe. The latter, a beautiful blonde described as a white-suited "Barbie doll come to life," had previously been engaged to Hafiz, the son of Michael's former nursemaid, Puteh, but she had broken off the engagement and eventually fallen in love with Michael's father, Jonathan. Shortly thereafter, Cynthia is murdered after returning from a prenuptial shopping trip. A postmortem reveals that she was nine weeks pregnant. Two guns are found. A diamond necklace presented as a wedding gift by Jonathan to Cynthia is noticed to be missing, and Ai Lian suspects Michael of complicity in the theft or its coverup. Her suspicions leads eventually to her separation from him and, though pregnant with his child, to her choice to marry Jonathan. We are introduced to a range of suspects, including Yusuf, Puteh's husband, and Yew Chuan, a former guerilla in the Communist resistance. We learn also of an earlier murder of Jonathan's first wife. All suspects are subject to the cool and intelligent questioning of Inspector Tajuddin, while Ai Lian conducts her own investigation. The identity of the killer remains unknown until Ai Lian,

her own child Anna now grown, returns to the Templeton estate twenty years later. By now, with both Jonathan and Michael deceased, the Templeton estate bequeathed to Ai Lian and Anna, the necklace recovered and returned to its rightful owner, Ai Lian has gained poise, independence and generosity of spirit. The killer turns out to be Puteh, who had been Jonathan's mistress Michael's mother, and had killed both Cynthia and Mrs. Templeton because they had been pregnant and she wanted to guarantee Michael's inheritance of the estate.

Each event, person and object in the narrative turns out, upon investigation, to have a complex and intertwined genealogy, which, once revealed, produces a plethora of new and diverse identities and suggests -- in the Buddhist sense--that all appearances are illusory. Michael is not just the free-spirited English scholar as perceived earlier by Ai Lian: his mother, Puteh, is a native who sheltered and raised him during the war as a Malay, so he is in a sense Hafiz's half- brother and actually an Eurasian. Like Kipling's Kim, he has a particularly inflected relationship with the natives and the terrain. Cynthia, too, is revealed to have Malayan roots: her father, Sargeant Twickenham, was stationed in the country during the early years of the Emergency and her mother, Bridget van Tooren, is regarded as a local heroine who fought in the Resistance and underwent torture during the Japanese Occupation. Jonathan, it turns out, was also a fighter in the guerilla movement and has a special relationship with Yew Chuan as a comrade in the movement. More significantly, he was Puteh's lover when she joined his household as a maid and fathered their child, Michael, but was separated from her during the war. These revelations revise our concepts of imperial identities, operative color lines and ethical possibilities in the colonizer-colonized dyad²³. All these characters, (including Simon Fraser, the Assistant Manager who disappeared in the jungle and whose identity is only revealed upon investigation of the ownership of the two guns) are deeply implicated in the local environment and are prone to a deep ambiguity in their own colonial authority²⁴. They all have the capacity to interpret and control signs of the local landscape, often more capably than the native can. Jonathan, for instance, is able to write and explain the significance of Ai Lian's Chinese name, expostulating meanings that strike us as being particularly Orientalist²⁵. These inflections of colonial identities belong to a process of what Satya Mohanty describes as "racialization" whereby "whiteness becomes

constructed and formulated as the 'cultural' cement of colonial ruling relations" and point essentially to a history of appropriation²⁶.

That all these colonial personages perish in the course of events and the chief protagonists' estate is passed on to native inheritors locates Chuah's narrative as a tale of power in transition, a critique of decolonization and the death of whiteness. Even the handsome, hearty and well-meaning scion wastes away from leukemia, a trope surely for the demise of colonialism. What the novel presents are the problematics of decolonization and questions concerned with how power is handed over and what manipulations, negotiations or seizures are necessitated in the process. Decolonization, Fanon tells us, is always a violent phenomenon. It is, to extend his quotation, the "veritable creation of new men and new women. If we wish to describe it precisely, we might find it in the well-known words: 'The last shall be first and first last.'²⁷

The chief and surprise player in this transaction, we learn, is the once mute and victimized Puteh, also known as Charbo or Girl, and later as Marie. She is the last become first, the one whose narration ends the narrative, Freud's "silent Other of gesture and failed speech...the 'daemonic double of introjection and identification" who, in Bhabha's definition, "will not be contained within the *Heim* [or home] of the national culture and its unisonant discourse, but [is herself] the mark of a shifting boundary that alienates the frontiers of the modern nation"²⁸. How are we to read her name, except as the double for the White woman whom she rightly or wrongly perceives as her rival and must kill? In so doing, she inscribes on the national scene her differential against "the pedagogical knowledge and continuist...narrative" (Bhabha's phrase) of a pure Malay identity and uncomplicated historiography, whether colonial or neocolonial. She resurrects, in Fanon's phrase, the "zone of occult instability where the people dwell"²⁹. Orphaned, seduced, silenced, she emerges from a series of indeterminate identities as matriach and defender, bumiputra wife, princess of the soil. She is the survivalist postcolonial woman who is neither victim nor object, but a highly individuated, self-defining subject. Her strength and distinguishing mark is the ability to transgress boundaries, to stage her own agendas in the political economy of miscegenation and land. Whereas Jonathan had painted their liaison as the tragic, all-encompassing thwarted

romance, Puteh's version is light and pragmatic, reminding us that the colonizer's perception of the colonized is often no more than a fantasm:

"But he loved you so much," I say gently.

"What is love? I knew he would never marry me. Look at my mother's case. Her mother must have had her by a European man, but when she was born, they chucked her outside a convent."

"When he came back after the war, he wanted to marry you." I say this as much for Hafiz as for my aunt.

"By that time? By that time it was far too late. Yusuf had done so much for me. You just don't know what he had to do for me. ..."

"He had gone to Singapore to buy you this necklace."

"That's what he told me, but it was too late."

"But didn't you love him a little bit?"

"What is love? When he was sick I felt very sorry for him. He was like a little baby, and I cared for him. I wanted him to get well again. But what is love?"

"Didn't you love him when you were his...wife? I'm sure he was very kind and loving."

"He was always kind and loving. He was kind and loving with everyone. It was his nature. Like Michael. Like Yusuf. Like Hafiz. Like you.."

"What is love, I ask you? I only know I love my two sons. For them I am prepared to die"³⁰.

In the course of this dialogue, we learn that Puteh had urged Yusuf to negotiate a purchase of land from Jonathan so as to ensure their dignity and independence: "After that, he wanted to give land to Yusuf. But I said no, good or bad, hard or easy, we will pay for every acre of land we get from him. Otherwise, forever we will be his servants"³¹. In asserting their rights of ownership and sovereignty, she undoes the monolithic formation of the postcolonial woman as Third World object and scapegoat, just as she undoes the sentence formation and historical falsehood Spivak posits parodistically (to Freud's, "The child is beaten"), "White men are saving brown women from brown men"³². Indeed, Puteh's fierce guardianship of her children's inheritances resurrects local Malaysian practices of land ownership and matriarchy defying the hegemonizing allocations of colonialism. It might be fruitful, for instance, to read Puteh's agency against

the background of matriarchal and matrifocal society in Negeri Sembilan, the state in which Chuah was born and in which the novel's fictionalized town is set. A study of gender roles in Rembau, Chuah's hometown, reveals in fact that Negeri Sembilan's gender ideologies tend "to deemphasize gender and sexuality, and to highlight sameness, equality, and complementarity between the sexes..." Furthermore, as the same study by Peletz points out, "the system of marriage and affinity in nineteenth-century Negeri Sembilan centered on the de facto 'exchange of men' (transactions over men's labor power and productivity), rather than the exchange of women ..." ³³. While it may be a stretch to read exact equivalents in social practice between anthropology and fiction, it would be helpful to remember that the postcolonial woman can reclaim some of her precolonial prerogatives in the process of nation-building. What she wants, one might say, is to reclaim her lost prerogatives and her right of place.

Finally, to answer the question as to the identity of the postcolonial woman, there is Ai Lian, Puteh's niece, and there is her daughter, Anna. They too, the narrative tells us, are the inheritors of the estate and the daughters of the soil. The excavation of Ai Lian's repressed family history has given us the unforgettable portrait of the migrant Chinese grandmother, Por Por, vegetable gardener, keeper of pigs, a bondmaid turned freewoman with a legacy of riches to bestow. Dehistoricized, effaced as a player on the national stage, this portrait of Por Por reminds us of the role of the migrant woman in cultivating and building the land, in staking a claim as a "productive agent" (Peletz's phrase ³⁴) beside that of her indigenous sister. If, as Sara Suleri reminds us, "solidarity is all," ³⁵ then we must read the ending of *Echoes of Silence* as a felicitous one, with Ai Lian's and Puteh's mutual acknowledgment of kinship and solidarity:

"...Now Hafiz tells me [says Puteh to Ai Lian] you have inherited his money. That's okay with me. You are Hood's daughter. You are my niece. I can still go to my grave satisfied."

But I cannot let her die thinking she has only half-succeeded. I take her hands in mine and kiss them. My daughter's grandmother. My aunt. My sister in womanhood. My guru. "Actually," I say, "Anna is Michael's daughter." She smiles at that. Then she laughs. A gentle gurgling laugh ³⁶

In this embracing and honoring of their connection, Ai Lian discovers the Other as Self, a way out of colonialism's and neo-colonialism's binarisms and structures of alterity. The novel's deepest message is a Buddhist one, celebrating the interrelatedness of all people and phenomena in the face of the Emptiness the novel's opening epigraph (from the *Diamond Sutra*) expounds: "Not in form, not in sound/Is true enlightenment to be found"³⁷.

In closing, it may be fair to mention some of the novel's flaws. There is no doubt that the *Echoes of Silence* has imposed a heavy burden of meaning on the genre of the detective novel, a genre designed originally against a background of nineteenth-century urbanity and patriarchal, disciplinary codes³⁸. At times, Chuah's diversions and exegeses are diffusive, its seemingly postmodern fragmentations of time and subject somewhat distracting. The dominant mode of the novel remains, in my mind, however, a modernist one, that is, with a controlling albeit initially alienated subject at its center. More seriously, the novel poses a problematically tender picture of the colonizer--especially of its men--that might be summed up as a glamourisation of the colonial period, perhaps even a nostalgia for its defining moments. Key female characters in the novel, we should note, battle to ensure the proper execution of the colonizer's will and inheritance rights³⁹. Whether this nostalgic tone (the reviewer's blurb on the book jacket correctly reads it as projecting a "personalized Raj") reflects a feeling of abandonment and disenfranchisement, a yearning for past privilege, on the part of the English-educated in Malaysia marginalised in the nationalising project remains an open question. Moreover, we might ask, why does Puteh go unpunished for her two murders? Has she not, in surreptitiously seizing power for her children, established what Anne McKlintock calls a "kleptocracy"?⁴⁰. How is justice figured in the conflictual structure set up in the novel? If the new order established at the end of the novel is indeed a kleptocracy, how much of it is a reflection of historical fact--so that we might ask if Chuah is not simply writing a repressed fact of the national political unconscious? These questions rely, of course, on my reading of the novel as a parable of postcolonial resistance and reinstatement, the thesis I set out at the beginning of my paper. No matter how we read the novel, though, it remains a remarkably dense and rich story of postcolonial desire, with Ai Lian's journey

generalizable as a trajectory of liberation and discovery of collectivity. In identifying with Puteh and her struggle, and in donating her necklace to Hafiz as an endowment for the Al-'Alim College of Science, Ai Lian fulfills Fanon's prescription for an awakening to national consciousness, namely to "Work and fight with the same rhythm as the people to construct the future and to prepare the ground where vigorous shoots are already springing up"⁴¹.

To the extent that *Echoes of Silence* locates the agency for change in its female characters, it tracks the growing politicization of the colonized woman and may be read as a process of what Gramsci calls *elaborare*-- or elaboration--a working out of consciousness⁴². Ai Lian's journey from alienation to self-awareness, achieved through a "series of negations," and through an assiduous series of detections, reintegrates her into the socius, reconciles her to the Mother and Motherland (figured in Puteh) and repositions her towards local knowledge, thus undoing the epistemic violences of colonialism, sexism and racism. As Gayatri Spivak reminds us, "...consciousness is *the* ground that makes all disclosures possible"⁴³. The "Chinese" woman embraces the "Malay" woman who turns out not to be Malay but something Other, yet the Same. If the new millenium heralds the feminization of society, as Francis Fukuoka proclaims, what role must the postcolonial woman play if not that of a self-determining actor and nurturing warden of indigenous epistemologies and histories--the flora and fauna of a de-exoticized and a re-eroticized local landscape-- all integrated by a compassionate humanity overriding rhetorics of nation, race, religion and class?

Notes

* Based on a paper presented at a National University of Singapore Sociology Department Seminar, March 25, 1999. An earlier version was presented at the Asian Women Writers' Conference ("Re-cognizing Language, Culture and Identity"), Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia, January 9, 1997.

¹ Homi Bhabha, *The Location of Culture*, Routledge: London, 1994, p.198.

² Pierre Macherey, *A Theory of Literary Production*, trans. Geoffrey Wall, Routledge: London, 1978, p.87. Cited by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, "Can The Subaltern Speak" in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, eds. *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, Columbia Univ. Press: New York, 1994, p. 81.

³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Ibid.*, 83. See also Robert Young's definition of subalternity in *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, Routledge: London, 1990, p.159, Footnote 7.

⁴ Homi Bhabha, *Ibid.*, p. 198.

⁵ I realize that the term "postcolonial" is itself a problematic one, subject to multiple interpretations and, as Anne McClintock points out, "prematurely celebratory and obfuscatory in more ways than one" reducing its subjects to "prepositional time." The term becomes especially problematic when applied to women: "In a world where women do two thirds of the world's work, earn 10 % of the world's income, and own less than 1 % of the world's property," says McClintock, "the promise of 'post-colonialism' has been a history of hopes postponed, suggests a moment of historical rupture that in effect has not really happened." (Ann McClintock, "The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the Term 'Post-colonialism' in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, pp. 293 and 298.) I use the term in the unhyphenated way to refer to what Hennessy and Mohan call a "literature of subjugation" marked by a "systematic process of cultural domination through the imposition of imperial structures of power." See Rosemary Hennessy and Rajeswari Mohan, "The Construction of Woman in Three Popular Texts of Empire: Towards a Critique of Materialist Feminism" in *Colonial Discourse and Post-Colonial Theory*, p. 284. I apply the term "subaltern" across ethnic and gender lines to refer to those lacking in access to power, whether political, knowledge- or capital-based.

⁶ Julianne Malveaux, "The Political Economy of Black Women" in *The Year Left 2*, Verso: Stonybrook, NY, 1987.

⁷ Deniz Kandiyoti, "Identity and Its Discontents: Women and the Nation," in Patrick Williams and Laura Chrisman, *Ibid.*, p. 376.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 378.

⁹ Judith Butler, *Bodies That Matter: On The Discursive Limits of 'sex'*, New York/London: Routledge, 1993, p. 182. Cited by Terry Threadgold, *Feminist Poetics*, Routledge: New York/London, 1997, p. 6.

¹⁰ A point underscored by Dr. Wong Soak Koon of Universiti Sains Malaysia at a talk given at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, titled, "New Perspectives on Malaysian Feminism," March 22, 1999.

²⁸ Homi Bhabha, "DissemiNation" in *Nation and Narration*, pp. 315 and 316.

²⁹ Frantz Fanon, *Ibid.*, p. 303.

³⁰ *Echoes of Silence*, pp. 336-337.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 337.

³² See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's "Can the Subaltern Speak?" *Ibid.*, p. 92.

³³ Michael G. Peletz, *Reason and Passion: Representations of Gender in a Malay Society*, Univ. of California Press: Berkeley, 1996, pp. 2 & 3.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

³⁵ Sara Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep: Feminism and the Postcolonial Condition" in *Colonial Discourse and Postcolonial Theory*, p. 249. Says Spivak, "...solidarity is seen as a 'signifier of consciousness.'" *Ibid.*, p. 10.

³⁶ *Echoes of Silence*, p. 338.

³⁷ Chuah has said that the construction of *Echoes of Silence* is based on the Diamond Sutra.

³⁸ Rosemary Hennessy and Rajeswari Mohan, *Ibid.*, pp. 467-469.

³⁹ I am grateful to my colleague, Philip Holden, for raising this question during our discussion of Chuah's work.

⁴⁰ See Anne McClintock, *Ibid.*, p. 300.

⁴¹ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, p. 233.

⁴² See Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak's discussion of Gramsci's theory of consciousness in "Subaltern Studies: Deconstructing Historiography" in *Selected Subaltern Studies*, New York/Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988, pp.3-15.

⁴³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Ibid.*, p. 10.

36. Eddie C.Y. Kuo, *"Field Theory as a Conceptual Framework for Divorce Study"*, 1974, 25pp.
37. Riaz Hassan, *"International Tourism and Intercultural Communication: The Case of Japanese Tourists in Singapore"*, 1974, 23pp.
38. Riaz Hassan, *"Towards a Dialectic Anthropology -- A Comment on Professor M. Freedman's Paper, Social and Cultural Anthropology"*, 1974, 7pp.
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- ¹¹ See Ivan Illich's arguments about gender inequalities produced by the "nether economy" of industrialisation in *Gender*, Pantheon: New York, 1982, pp. 50-52.
- ¹² See Tham Seong Chee's essay on the discriminatory effects of government policies on language use in Malaysia, "The Politics of Literary Development in Malaysia" in *Literature and Society in Southeast Asia*, Singapore: Singapore Univ. Press, 1981, pp.216-252 . See also Ee Tiang Hong's essay, "Literature and Liberation: The Price of Freedom" in *Literature and Liberation: Five Essays From Southeast Asia*, Solidaridad: Manila, 1988.
- ¹³ Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Ibid.*, p. 81.
- ¹⁴ Chuah Guat Eng, *Echoes of Silence*, Hologram Books: Kuala Lumpur, 1994, p. 3.
- ¹⁰ A point underscored by Dr. Wong Soak Koon of Universiti Sains Malaysia at a talk given at the National Institute of Education, Singapore, titled, "New Perspectives on Malaysian Feminism," March 22, 1999.
- ¹⁵ Sally Munt, *Murder By The Book? Feminism and the Crime Novel*, London; New York: Routledge, 1994, p. 92.
- ¹⁶ Hortense Spillers, *Ibid.*, p. 176.
- ¹⁷ Chuah Guat Eng, *Ibid.*, p. 25.
- ¹⁸ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, 3rd. edn, tran. Constance Farrington, Penguin: Harmondsworth, 1990, p. 222. Albert Memmi speaks of the "social and historical mutilation inflicted upon the colonized by the process of colonization." See Albert Memmi, *The Colonizer and the Colonized*, Beacon: Boston, 1967, p. 96.
- ¹⁹ *Echoes of Silence*, p. 9.
- ²⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 10.
- ²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 230-231.
- ²² Cited in Robert Young, *White Mythologies: Writing History and the West*, London: Routledge, p. 2.
- ²³ See Satya Mohanty's definition and discussion of "racialization" in her essay, "Perspectives on Hegemony and Resistance" in *The Bounds of Race*, Ithaca: Cornell Univ. Press, p. 314.
- ²⁴ Satya Mohanty, *Ibid.*, pp. 311-343.
- ²⁵ See Robert Young's "The Ambivalence of Bhabhaism" in *White Mythologies*, pp. 153-155.
- ²⁶ Satya Mohanty, *Ibid.*, p. 335.
- ²⁷ Frantz Fanon, *The Wretched of the Earth*, pp. 35 & 37.