

Other-languagedness in Stories by R.K. Narayan, Saadat Hassan Manto, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala

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Recommended Citation

Djorić Francuski, Biljana. "Other-languagedness in Stories by R.K. Narayan, Saadat Hassan Manto, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala." *CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture* 20.1 (2018): <<https://doi.org/10.7771/1481-4374.3197>>

This text has been double-blind peer reviewed by 2+1 experts in the field.

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CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture

ISSN 1481-4374 <<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb>>
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Volume 20 Issue 1 (March 2018) Article 2
Biljana Djorić Francuski,
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<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss1/2>>

Contents of **CLCWeb: Comparative Literature and Culture 20.1 (2018)**
<<http://docs.lib.purdue.edu/clcweb/vol20/iss1/>>

Abstract: In her article "Other-languagedness in Stories by R.K. Narayan, Saadat Hassan Manto, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala" Biljana Djorić Francuski examines, within a comparative framework, the concepts of otherness and other-languagedness as expressed in three short stories by authors from separate but interconnected cultures: an Indian English writer, Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan; a Pakistani writer, Saadat Hassan Manto; and a writer of European origins who lived in and wrote about India, Ruth Praver Jhabvala. The author analyzes, within the context of the (post)colonial discourse, the instances of misunderstanding resulting from binary oppositions between the interlocutors, due to their mutual otherness.

Biljana DJORIĆ FRANCUSKI

Other-languagedness in Stories by R.K. Narayan, Saadat Hassan Manto, and Ruth Praver Jhabvala

In his historic work, *The Dialogic Imagination*, Mikhail Bakhtin demonstrates that in the domain of polyglossia (*mnogojazyčie*), context has primacy over text, since a word uttered in a certain place and at a certain time has a different meaning than it would have had under any other conditions, in another "dialogizing background" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 357-58). And thus, other-languagedness (*inojazyčie*) in any form and at any level becomes an integral part of otherness, as perceived by postcolonial authors within the framework of ideological discourse. In fiction, one of the reasons for the existence of the other is so that the real or the projected central character may have a mirror in which to look at the self, with the intention of illuminating the self more fully. This has the effect of letting the reader understand the relationship between the character and its other, and thus, by identifying with them, also comprehend one's own authentic self. As Bakhtin says: "To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly and throughout his whole life: with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invests his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters into the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium" (*Problems* 293). As a consequence, in life as well as in fiction, which is nothing else than artificial life, the central character and the other dance around that looking glass, letting the context within which they view each other determine the meaning of the words they utter or fail to.

A recurrent motive within (post)colonial discourse is the dialogue, or rather, an attempt at dialogue, between a native, Oriental protagonist and a foreigner, the latter being of European or American origin, but mostly British (which means the colonizer), or in other words, just simply a Westerner. The impossibility of such couples of characters to understand each other is due to their differences and the ensuing constraints, while binary oppositions stem from both sides of the mirror, not only distorting the picture of the other in the eyes of the colonizer, but also reflecting cultural bias on behalf of the indigenous persona.

In all the three stories that will be analyzed in this paper, there are elements of polyglossia as Bakhtin defined it: "The simultaneous presence of two or more national languages interacting within a single cultural system" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 431). But, a fact which is very odd is that even in the case when both characters apparently speak the same language, the source of their misunderstanding can be pinpointed within the realm of non-verbal meaning, as the background for their thoughts. And this is precisely what Bakhtin underlines, that "Form and content in discourse are one, once we understand that verbal discourse is a social phenomenon — social throughout its entire range and in each and every of its factors, from the sound image to the furthest reaches of abstract meaning" (*The Dialogic Imagination* 259).

The aim of this paper is to explore the epistemological mode of dialogism positioned in the specific background of the Indian subcontinent just prior to and after the Partition in 1947. The discussion will focus on race, power, and gender relations, illustrated by examples from three short stories written by Rasipuram Krishnaswamy Narayan (1906-2001), Saadat Hassan Manto (1912-1955), and Ruth Praver Jhabvala (1927-2013). In each of the stories, a couple of characters are seen through each other's eyes, as reflected in the double mirror of antithesis and stigmatized by the differences between the self and the other. Nonetheless, though they all contain the quintessence of one of the above-enumerated types of binary oppositions (and precisely in that order), their implications are not limited only to the separate instance of the selected barrier, since the three areas of differences causing polyvocality are intertwined in each story.

The ambivalence and the complexity pertinent to cross-cultural perception will be revealed through investigation of language constraints, cultural differences, occurrences of misunderstanding, and the ways in which "the other," both Indian and Western, is perceived through the prism of the opposed protagonist. And finally, this paper will raise the question whether the dialogue between the East and the West is always impossible or maybe sometimes possible, even if not through conventional means only, and whether it has to be partial or it may at times become impartial. It will be demonstrated that the source of its impossibility and partiality need not always be at the side of the colonial master, since occasionally it is also the Oriental persona who generates disagreement.

Narayan, who is considered to be one of the greatest Indian modern authors, was a prolific novelist, short story writer, and journalist, and he wrote solely in English though he grew up and spent his entire life in southern India. His novels and stories, mostly set in the fictional town of Malgudi, are marked with bright humor, realistic simplicity, and down-to-earthness of his well-portrayed characters. "A Horse and Two Goats," the title story of a collection originally published in 1970, has a very simple plot, developed on the basis of a credible meeting between an old Indian peasant and an American tourist visiting the subcontinent. Though comical and buoyant in tone, the story still reflects a deep gap existing among the two worlds and the huge cultural differences between the two protagonists. The setting itself is torn between the two extremes: the Indian, Muni, lives in the tiny and remote village of Kritam, consisting "of less than thirty houses, only one of them built with brick and cement" (5), while the American comes from no less than the megalopolis called New York.

Muni and his wife are old and live in utmost poverty, at times not having to eat anything else than boiled drumstick leaves or mullet. Though Muni used to possess forty goats and sheep, all that remains are only two old and skinny goats that he takes out to graze along the highway, while he himself rests on the pedestal of a life-scale horse statue made of clay. That horse is the guardian of Muni's village, so important culture-wise that even an old man like himself knows many mythological epics implicating its figure, but in the everyday life it blends in the surroundings and has no special role for him, apart from being a shelter against the scorching Indian sun. However, one day a van stops right in front of the spot, having run out of gas, and its American driver, on holiday in India, assumes that Muni is sitting on the pedestal because he is selling the horse. Negotiations to that effect are lengthy and hilarious since the Westerner speaks only English, of which the old man, whose mother tongue is Tamil, knows just a few simple phrases. Naturally, the Indian could never even dream of selling such important cultural heritage, and thus takes it for granted that the foreigner wishes to buy his goats, which he seemingly sells to him for a hundred rupees. What he has sold in fact is the horse, taken away by the American as a souvenir from his Oriental trip.

But even before the two men start actually speaking in their two different languages, misconstruction already begins without waiting for the involvement of other-languagedness. As communication systems also employ signs, the initial gesture of the stranger and his attempt at politeness are immediately misinterpreted with anxiety by the other. Namely, when the American presents his card, Muni shrinks away thinking that the foreigner wants to arrest him, as the old man is frightened of the other because he doesn't even know what a visiting card is. Their occupations are also contrasted in black and white extremes: while Muni has nothing else to do but take his two scraggy goats to graze "to the foot of the horse statue on the edge of the village" (11), where the word "foot" implicates that he leads a humble life close to the Earth, at the bottom of the occupational ladder; the American works day in day out in his office "on the fortieth floor of the Empire State Building" (16), which is obviously a privileged existence high up in the sky, at the very top; and they are only brought together on the same scene of events due to his decision to go on his holiday eastwards, in order to "look at other civilizations" (16), "other" in this sentence being the crucial word for it is the root of both otherness and other-languagedness.

Narayan skilfully presents the utmost disparity reflected in their efforts to produce mutually comprehensible speech, which itself is at the heart of all culture. And yet, since Muni speaks nothing but Tamil, and the American understands none of it, the final result of their sincere attempts is a total lack of communication. Their only successful interaction was the greeting: "Now the other man suddenly pressed his palms together in a salute, smiled, and said, "Namaste! How do you do?" At which Muni spoke the only English expressions he had learnt, "Yes, no." Having exhausted his English vocabulary, he started in Tamil" (13). A further instance of understanding occurs when the American mentions coffee, which brings together people from different cultures and completely opposite backgrounds: "'I am not a millionaire, but a modest businessman. My trade is coffee.' Amidst all this wilderness of obscure sound Muni caught the word 'coffee' and said, 'If you want to drink 'kapi' drive further up, in the next town, they have Friday market, and there they open 'kapi-otels' — so I learn from passers-by'" (21).

In depicting the encounter between the Oriental and the Occidental protagonist, Narayan also illustrates their completely different attitudes towards each other's language. On the one hand, there is the American, who admires Tamil spoken by Muni: "'Your language sounds wonderful. I get a kick out of every word you utter, here' — he indicated his ears" (18); while on the other, there is the Indian, who loathes everything foreign, and thus uses the pejorative word *Parangi*, which is a colloquial term for everything of foreign origin, especially for anything coming from Britain, and in this case for the English language: "'I don't know the Parangi language you speak, even little fellows in

your country probably speak the Parangi language, but here only learned men and officers know it" (19).

The two men also use signs, which sometimes help them communicate: "Suddenly remembering the courtesies of the season, he asked, 'Do you smoke?' Muni answered, 'Yes, no.' Whereupon the red-faced man took a cigarette and gave it to Muni" (14). At times, however, even the gestures mean nothing and are not helpful at all in the process of failed communication: "The foreigner nodded his head and listened courteously though he understood nothing" (15). On the contrary, when gesticulation becomes extreme, they find the common tongue easily, despite the fact that understanding again occurs only partially and apparently: "The stranger almost pinioned Muni's back to the statue and asked, 'Isn't this statue yours? Why don't you sell it to me?' The old man now understood the reference to the horse, thought for a second, and said in his own language, 'I was an urchin this high when I heard my grandfather explain this horse and warrior'" (17-18).

Another example of gesturing towards understanding are facial expressions: "... said the red man and smiled ingratiatingly. Muni reacted to the relaxed atmosphere by smiling himself" (15). At a certain point the Westerner impatiently adopts an openly Orientalist position of a cultural colonizer expecting the colonized to follow the generally accepted rules: "Now the red man implored, 'Please, please, I will speak slowly, please try to understand me. Can't you understand even a simple word of English? Everyone in this country seems to know English. I have gotten along with English everywhere in this country, but you don't speak it'" (16). Here again gestures help to forward the message to a certain extent: "Muni made some indistinct sounds in his throat and shook his head. Encouraged, the other went on to explain at length, uttering each syllable with care and deliberation" (16). Though the Oriental persona cannot follow the Occidental discourse, there is a certain willingness to compromise, and so "Muni looked reflective at the end of this long oration and said, rather feebly, 'Yes, no,' as a concession to the other's language, and went on in Tamil" (16).

All of this continues until they reach the stage in their communication when there is no more sense at all — when the American asks "'Boy, what is the secret of your teeth? How old are you?' The old man forgot what he had started to say and remarked, 'Sometimes we too lose our cattle'" (17). And so they go on following two parallel tracks — while the American is talking about having a party around the horse statue, Muni is telling him something much more serious. The American says: "'I'm going to keep him right in the middle of the room. I don't see how that can interfere with the party — we'll stand around him and have our drinks.' Muni continued his description of the end of the world" (20). While Muni is describing the avatars, the American is explaining the process of advertizing his company: "His thoughts went back to the avatars. ... Once he had launched on the first avatar, it was inevitable that he should go on to the next ... The foreigner said, 'I repeat I am not a millionaire. Ours is a modest business, after all, we can't afford to buy more than sixty minutes of T.V. time in a month'" (21-22).

In this state of utter confusion, even gesturing no longer helps, because when the American sees Muni inquire about numbers with his fingers, he misinterprets the very sign and offers his price for the statue, while Muni is asking him for the number of his children: "Noting the other's interest in his speech, Muni felt encouraged to ask, 'How many children have you?' with appropriate gestures with his hands. Realizing that a question was being asked, the red man replied, 'I said a hundred,' which encouraged Muni to go into details. 'How many of your children are boys and how many girls?'" (23). Nevertheless, they go on without noticing the absurdity of such a conversation, until Muni starts talking about the *Mahabharata* and demonstrates the bosom of the demoness: "He indicated two mounds with his hands. The stranger was completely mystified by the gesture. For the first time he said, 'I really wonder what you are saying because your answer is crucial. We have come to the point when we should be ready to talk business'" (23).

In spite of being aware that he is almost completely at a loss due to this ridiculous situation, the American soon paradoxically concludes: "We can do anything if we have a basis of understanding.' At this stage the mutual mystification was complete, and there was no need even to carry on a guessing game at the meaning of words. The old man chattered away in a spirit of balancing off the credits and debits of conversational exchange, and said in order to be on the credit side, 'Oh, honourable one, I hope God has blessed you with numerous progeny'" (23). Seemingly, they go back to the right track of conversation, when Muni inadvertently casts a look at his goats. "The foreigner followed his look and decided that it would be a sound policy to show an interest in the old man's pets. He went up casually to them and stroked their backs with every show of courteous attention. Now the truth dawned on the old man. ... He understood that the red man was actually making an offer for the goats." (24).

In this last example a sign of mere politeness and courtesy is interpreted as true intentions of "the other," due to the impossibility of communication. Furthermore, these false intentions, which are welcomed by the Oriental persona, are to be reinterpreted by the other as the former's genuine motivation — also by fault, since both characters regard each other through the distorted prism of their respective individual consciousness. And so, "the red man shook his hand and left on his palm one hundred rupees in tens now, suddenly realizing that this was what the old man was asking" (25), though it was definitely not what the Indian was asking, since the American just misjudged the entire situation and got the wrong idea about Muni wanting the hundred-rupee note changed.

During the culmination of this charade, both men surprisingly interpret the same gesture in the same way, just the object of the action is not the same: "The old man pointed at the station wagon and asked, 'Are you carrying them off in that?' 'Yes, of course,' said the other, understanding the transportation part of it" (25). Despite this partial understanding, the American is referring to the statue, whereas Muni is talking about the goats, whom he believes to be the focus of the bargain. That is how he sells, without even realizing it due to cultural and linguistic constraints, the guardian of their village meant to "trample down all bad men" (9) when the end of the world comes. This is the climax of cultural misunderstanding in Narayan's masterpiece, which results from what Homi Bhabha names "'fixity' in the ideological construction of otherness" (Bhabha 66) — since the focus of attention for the Indian man is his cultural heritage in its dimension which includes spiritual values, while the Westerner is concerned only with the financial aspect of that same cultural heritage.

The second story, "The New Constitution," includes a wonderful portrayal of the interaction between the colonizer and the colonized, as the two protagonists of the colonial drama. The story was written by Manto, another very prolific writer of the subcontinent, who created his works in the Urdu language. Though he was born not much later than Narayan, he lived less than half of the latter's life, but even so, he produced over 250 stories, a novel, many essays and radio plays, as well as film scripts, and also worked as a journalist. Having spent the most productive days of his career in Mumbai, after Independence he left India and moved to Lahore, a border city in Pakistan. He is best known for his stories about violence and devastation created by the Partition, and considered to be the short-story writer who captured with the greatest success the absurdity of the events at that time, though with lots of humane feeling and compassion for the ordinary man struck by that disaster.

In this story, first published in 1937, Manto describes the pre-Independence times, somewhere in early 1935, before the Government of India Act was introduced as the last constitution of the British Raj. The plot takes place in Peshawar, the capital of the North-West Frontier Province, while the main character is Ustad Mangu, a tonga driver, who cherishes high hopes that the law which is about to come into force will change the lives of poor and needy people like himself. Though the draft Bill was passed on February 5, and the Act itself was proclaimed in July, Manto selected a completely different date, April 1, as a metaphorical instrument showing the gullibility of the local population, since this date is well-known as April Fools' Day, and marked worldwide by practical jokes. To that sense, the Constitution was a sham as well, because it changed nothing in the lives of the colonized people, and did not limit the rights of the rich elite. A true detail that Manto mentions in the story to add to its credibility is the fact that the Act proposed, among other things, a federal structure for the government, but this never came into operation: "'The second part of the new constitution envisages a federation. I've not been able to understand it. Never in history has such a federation been heard of. It's all wrong even from the political point of view; in fact it is no federation at all!'" (6-7).

Having realized that he and scores of other poor and oppressed people have been cheated out of the opportunity to reach a better life, the main hero avenges himself by beating up a British soldier, as the epitome of the colonizer. An extremely important fact is that the two protagonists of the story apparently do speak the same language, though it is not absolutely clear whether that language is English or Urdu, but it is almost certainly the latter, since from the following quote it is obvious that the Oriental persona is not quite fluent in English: "In their discussion the two barristers had used a very large number of English words, so Ustad Mangu could follow only the opening" (7). This means that, unlike in Narayan's story, the lack of communication between the protagonists is not due to language constraints, although the fact remains that their mother tongue is not the same, but to the differences in their social status and the asymmetric power relations existing between the ruler and the ruled, creating the unbridgeable gap that separates the colonial master and the colonized person. As Michel Foucault writes: "there are power relations. They are multiple; they have different forms, they can be in play in family relations, or within an institution, or an administration — or between a dominating and a dominated class" (*Politics* 38). In other words, such sets of binary opposites include the relations between those who are dominant, controlling, wealthy, and/or strong, on the one hand, and those who are dominated, subaltern, poor, and/or weak, on the other hand. These sets of binary

opposites can be appropriately illustrated by the roles of the two central characters in Manto's story, in such a way that the British soldier is dominant, controlling, strong, and has money, while poor Mangu is submissive, rebellious, weak, and wants the other's money.

Although he himself is just an uneducated and illiterate driver of the *tonga*, a light horse-drawn carriage, Mangu is being called by other drivers *Ustad* (meaning master, guru, teacher, or scholar) with admiration. From the other side of his distorted mirror of representation, that same primitive man spreads extremely negative views of the other by projecting his preconceived generalizations and stereotypes about the people superior to him in any way. Thus, for the educated people (whom he has absolutely no liking for) he uses the word toady, which he mispronounces as "Todies!" (7). He mockingly calls the British soldiers by the generic name tommy addressing one of them (his potential customer at that) contemptuously and sarcastically as *Sahib Bahadur* (a respectful term meaning "brave gentleman" when it is used without sarcasm). And finally, he even judges the college students as not elegant enough for the day on which the Constitution is supposed to be proclaimed: "The students near the college gates were well dressed, but for some unknown reason Ustad Mangu thought they looked shabby" (8-9).

It is not at all surprising that the asymmetric power relations and cultural interactions, originating from the structure of racial domination existing between the Westerners and the Orientals, resulted in creating the latter's hatred: "Ustad Mangu hated the British, because, as he explained, they held his country in subjugation and perpetrated countless atrocities on his countrymen. But why he despised them most was his ill-treatment by the British soldiers stationed in the Cantonement. They treated him as if he were a dog" (3). Such feelings corroborate Fanon's remark that "The problem of colonialism includes not only the interrelations of objective historical conditions but also the human attitudes towards these conditions" (Fanon 84).

Therefore, even petty incidents like a quarrel with a drunken soldier would greatly upset Ustad Mangu and make him thus express the very essence of the racial and power oppression he and many other of his countrymen faced in front of the ruling foreigners: "They came for a night and stayed on as masters of the house! I'm fed up with these sons of monkeys. They order us about, as if we were menials in their father's service" (4). In this way, the author demonstrates that "The psychology of colonialism ... operated within a single culture in which a mutually responsive state of mind developed between colonizer and colonized. For both, colonial culture demanded a specific mind-set, with its own ideology, codes and rules that had to be learnt, distinct from the indigenous cultures of both" (Young 325). These rules of conduct were applied in interpersonal contacts between the two opposing sides, by hook or by crook. So, for instance, in Manto's story, in case of a fight with a white customer "the magistrates usually took a very severe view of the tonga drivers' behaviour" (12), no matter who was in the right and who in the wrong.

Though the Oriental protagonist of the story hates the colonizer in general, he above all abhors the soldiers, who represent in his eyes the most obvious symbol and personification of the occupier's power, hence Manto describes "the fire of the hate that burned in his heart" and the way in which "all his hatred for the British soldiers welled up in his breast" (11). The only satisfaction Mangu might get out of his dealing with the oppressors is the fact that he would take their money. He especially hates one soldier with whom he already had "an altercation" because the latter was drunk and abused him a lot. So, when that same soldier starts behaving contemptuously and showing off his colonial power, Mangu can no longer restrain himself, he starts beating the other ferociously, "like a maniac, his eyes blood-shot" and repeats every time when he hits him: "Still the high and mighty tone ... it's the first of April and now we are our own masters' ... 'Gone are the days of the British ... we now have a new constitution, brothers ... a new constitution'" (12-13).

Born in Germany, Jhabvala was of Polish-Jewish origin, but she emigrated to Great Britain with her family at the beginning of World War Two. Having graduated in English Literature at the University of London, she married an Indian architect and moved to New Delhi, where she spent more than twenty years, before settling permanently in the United States. Jhabvala is another extremely fruitful novelist, short-story author, and screenwriter from the subcontinent, whose oeuvre includes the Booker Prize-winning *Heat and Dust*. Considered to be among the world's best authors of short stories written in the English language, in her several collections of stories she primarily explores the complex relationship between the East and the West, especially the cross-cultural experiences of Indians aspiring to a modernized way of life, on the one hand, and Westerners striving to grasp an exotic insight into some higher form of existence which they seem not to be able to endure if and when they find one, on the other.

"The Man with the Dog" is one of the stories in *Stronger Climate*, a collection published for the first time in 1968. The two main characters are an elderly Indian widow and a Dutchman who has lived in

India for many years. The two meet by chance and develop a strange relationship, which is obviously pervaded by deep emotions but also full of misunderstandings and tainted by a distantness of a certain kind. Though the Westerner soon moves into his lady friend's house and thus supposedly assumes the "submissive" role, he still retains his position of a colonial master and continues to behave in the "dominant" manner not only towards the servants but also in relation to the woman whose house he inhabits. Despite the fact that she is pressurized by her children to put an end to such humiliation and degradation of herself, the female protagonist in the story cannot endure to be separated from "the other" and thus lets him stay in her house at the expense of eventually losing the love and support of her own offspring. Moreover, Jhabvala never lets the reader forget that besides being "a gendered subject" (Young 370), which results in her feminist oppression, the Indian lady is also greatly burdened by her role as a colonial subject in view of the racial, that is, national and ethnic differences.

In this story, same as in "The New Constitution," the problems in communication are not due to other-languagedness in the proper sense of the word, as Jhabvala's protagonists speak the same language — in this case English, in which they are both fluent. Furthermore, since she is obviously from a rich and well-educated Indian family, and he is also rather well-to-do, not only is the language not a barrier, but neither is class or social status. However, the couple clearly lead a dialogue of the deaf, although they address each other in the same language, unlike Narayan's protagonists. The two obstacles to their bilateral communication in this case may be: gender relations — because, unlike the previous four characters in Narayan's and Manto's respective stories, here we have a woman for the first time; and ethnic/race relations — that is to say, interaction of the local Indian protagonist and a foreigner belonging to another race, though he is apparently not perceived as a colonizer, which is in agreement with the actual fact that he is not British.

All the same, he is still someone who unambiguously not only prefers not to have anything to do with the local population, but also despises them in general, which is most evident by his attitude towards the servants, when he poses as a real master, in an imperial manner: "he shouted abuses at Ram Lal in English" (184). Of course, the white Sahib always has a pretext for his rude behavior, which must have been provoked by the colonized: "Sometimes he will say the washerman did not press his shirts well, another time that his coffee this morning was stone cold; or he could not sleep all night because of noise coming from the servant quarters; or that a telephone message was not delivered to him promptly enough, or that it looked as if someone had tampered with his mail" (188).

In relation to the attitude of the dominant white man towards the native servants, we can again pinpoint the source of alienation as other-languagedness, and attribute the impossibility of a dialogue between them not only to race and power differences, but also to language constraints: "It started off with his shouting at the servant, very loudly and rudely, as he always does, nobody minds this, I don't mind it, the servant doesn't mind it, we are used to it and we know it never lasts very long, in any case, the servant doesn't understand what is said for it is always in English, or even some other language which none of us understands" (196). In addition to all the above-said, this Westerner also deliberately remains the other, by mingling only with his own circle of friends and speaking only the language of the colonizer: "India was home for him, although he had not learned any Hindi except 'achchha' which means all right and 'pani' which means water, and he did not know any Indians. All his friends were foreigners; his lady-friends also" (186).

And what is more, he behaves towards his Indian hostess as if she were the other although she is in fact his mistress: "he also sometimes gives parties in there for his European friends, to which he may or may not invite me. If he invites me, he will do it like this: 'One or two people are dropping in this evening, I wonder if you would care to join us?'" (186) — thus excluding her from "us", that is, the white-European people. On top of it, he treats her as a stupid native woman, which is in conformity with the stereotype that the Orient is primitive and backward (Karkaba 153), and thus, for instance, "he never lets me look at the album for long, because he is afraid I might spoil it" (191). Other Westerners, his friends, copy this pattern of behavior, and they think that she is "too stupid to be good company for him" (190). Within the framework of such "circulation and proliferation of racial and cultural otherness" (Bhabha 68), the Westerner disseminates his despise to all the natives, for instance when he bellows enraged by a servant of the household: "The whole country is like that! Idiots! Fools! Not fit to govern themselves!" (197).

On the other side, there is the Oriental female who feels pity for the colonizer since he is out of place in the Orient, and he has "no contact with India or Indians, no words to communicate with except 'achchha' (all right) and 'pani' (water); no one to care for him as he grew older and older, and perhaps sick, and his only companions people just like himself — as old, as lonely, as disappointed, and as far from home" (203). Such relations between the Oriental woman and the Western man recall

the following E.M. Forster's thesis: "I have never known anything but disaster result when English people and Indians attempt to be intimate socially. Intercourse, yes. Courtesy, by all means. Intimacy — never, never" (Forster 164), as well as Edward Said's subsequent conclusion that establishing a friendship of that kind is "forbidden by the code" (Said 243).

Faced with this double, gendered plus racialized oppression, the Oriental character in Jhabvala's story has only two ways out, which are either reticence coupled with inner speech: "I answer him shortly, or sometimes not at all, only go on looking into the garden; ... and talk to him in my thoughts, and likewise in my thoughts he is answering me and these answers make me even more angry" (189); or, at the other extreme end, resorting to violence: "then I go on shouting about other things, and I advance towards him and he begins to retreat backwards ... he can't be heard because I am shouting so loud and the dog too has begun to bark ... I'm very excited by this time and no longer know what I'm saying" (189). In postcolonial fiction, turning to aggression is a very frequent act on behalf of the colonized character who often seeks physical vengeance, which can be interpreted as a sign of feeling inadequate and inferior when compared to the colonizer. Thus, in Manto's story the tonga driver beats the tommy, and in Jhabvala's story the Indian protagonist's son almost does the same: "Shammi jumped up. His fists were clenched, his eyes blazed" (197). Being a member of the weaker sex, however, when the Indian lady herself wants to exert strength in an act of confronting the other, she simply makes use of the language he doesn't understand: "I went up close to him and shook my fist under his nose. 'Fool!' I said to him, in Hindi and with such violence that he took a step backwards in fear" (197-98).

Within the framework of the obvious mutual misunderstanding in the dialogue between the East and the West, as presented in the three analyzed stories, but also within a much wider setting of cross-cultural awareness, it can be noticed that in all the three couples both protagonists regard each other through the two-sided prism which influences their judgment by producing a slightly shifted image of, reciprocally, the self and the other. The emergence of postcolonial oppositions stemming binary thinking from both sides — East and West, which inevitably distort each other's picture of the other, has been illustrated in this paper by exemplifying the sets of binary opposites for each of the stories, to include not only the fundamental one related to the origin of protagonists (metropolis = center vs. colony = periphery), but also the gender issue (male vs. female in Jhabvala's story), the generation gap (young vs. old in Narayan's story), and availability of resources (rich vs. poor in Manto's story). This is all in conformity with Said's claim that "There Are Two Sides" (230), and the two sides of the prism which distorts the reciprocal opinions of the Westerners and the Orientals are maybe best illustrated by a negative association found in two of the analyzed stories: while Manto's Oriental hero refers to the British as "these sons of monkeys" (4), Jhabvala's European protagonist uses the very same animal to show his contempt for the native people: "Monkeys! Animals!" (197).

In conclusion, I shall again highlight several important theoretical premises in order to clarify my final statement. I want first of all to emphasize the fact that Bakhtin did not use the term "dialogic(al)" only in reference to literature, because for him everything related to language, and even more generally to thought — as the two traits which differentiate man from other animals — qualified as dialogic. In other words, all that anybody has ever said will always exist as a response to something that was said before that, and it will also foresee something that will be said as a response to that. This is precisely the reason why language is so dynamic and the reason for its crucial role in the process of continual redefining of everything that surrounds us. According to Bakhtin, existence, culture, and communication are "inherently responsive," while dialogic interaction between two beings takes place only if "the other" participates actively. It is not the sender of the message who can on his own determine the meaning of what is being said, because the recipient of his words will also provide the final, though subjective, meaning of the utterance, thus endowing it with wholly real results.

Nonetheless, since proper dialogue should extend in both directions, as it must be at the same time responsive and complementary, due to the fact that it represents a dualistic process and not a one-sided track, it can be deduced that in the analyzed stories the communication between the protagonists is not at all dialogic but monologic. In other words, the goal of a dialogue is not only to accomplish coexistence of various approaches but also to achieve mutual and active interaction between the interlocutors, who enter a dialogical relationship not only with the other's words, but also signs, gestures, and facial expressions. In the presented instances of an attempted dialogue, however, there is no real communication in the sense of interaction, because each of the protagonists is not even being understood by the other, let alone being a part of an interactive dialogical team. The same as there is the "dialogical self," there might also exist the "monological other" because, although there are two participants in an argument or a conversation in each of the three stories, only one of them carries on an "external monologue" which can be taken as the opposite of Bakhtin's "internal

dialogue." Therefore, on the basis of the supplied illustrations I shall conclude that in the case of these three stories we can only speak — to paraphrase the title of Bakhtin's work *The Dialogic Imagination* — about "imaginary dialogue," since the colonial discourse is always represented in literature as biased, though sometimes the prism is held by the hand of the colonizer and at other times by the hand of the colonized — whatever the case may be, the undisputable fact is that East and West are never on the same side of it.

Note: Research for this article was funded by *National, Regional, European and Global Framework of Social Crises, and Contemporary Serbian Literature and Culture* financed by the Serbian Ministry of Education and Science (Project No. 178018).

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