

Mapping the Land/ Body/ Subject: Colonial and Postcolonial Geographies in African Narrative

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I

It is no accident that maps and metaphors of mapping abound in postcolonial studies, because colonialism as a regime of power was largely organised through spatiality and subjectivity: spaces to capture, subjects to control. To capture the land, it first had to be explored and mapped, literally and figuratively. For the subject to be controlled, she first had to be contained, not only in terms of physical containment within subject territories—colonies and protectorates for example—but also contained in 'tribes', territorially demarcated, defined and culturally described. Physical containment was necessary to circumscribe the natural mobility of the body (in space) and discursive containment served to define the limits of the cultural (identity) mobility available to the subject. To appropriate the subtitle of Carole Boyce Davies' (1994) book, colonial mapping rested on the denial of 'migrations of the subject'. The surveillance and control of land, body and subject was the object of colonial geographies and, in securing this objective, the map as text, as model, as document and as claim was central to its project (see Huggan 1994:3-11). In the travel accounts of explorers and traders, the ethnographies of anthropologists, missionaries and administrators, the map, as cartographic representation and metaphor, was a dominant trope and topos in the production of imperial(ist) knowledge/power.

Colonial conceptions of space and people, and thus colonial mapping, were premised on a Cartesian logic which foregrounded the fantasy of an autonomous subject with a privileged view casting his [sic.] eye over transparent space. This Master Subject—often European and male—supposedly inhabiting an Archimedean position outside of discourse with a supposedly unmediated access to transparent space—created what Mary Louise Pratt (1992:201) describes as the 'monarch of all I survey' mode of Victorian exploration and travel writing. The positional authority of this Master Subject was constituted, first, by a division of the world into subject and

object with all the dualisms involved in this process (e.g. mind/matter; nurture/nature; civilised/savage) and then by a configuration or mapping of space to consolidate this visual authority. In *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, Michel Foucault (1977) uses Jeremy Bentham's eighteenth-century design of a prison—the Panopticon—to discuss issues of power and surveillance. Bentham's architectural design for a circular prison with individual cells which can be seen and monitored from a single vantage point consolidates containment and control by a spatial arrangement in which the observed is firmly placed within the visual power of the observer. Proceeding from this image of a prison with a central tower from which everything can be observed, and from Foucault's analysis, David Spur (1993:16) in *The Rhetoric of Empire* concludes that 'For the observer, sight confers power; for the observed, visibility is a trap'. Spatial arrangement thus becomes strategic and plays a determining role in the unequal economy of exchange between the observer and the observed. If, for the colonised, visibility is a trap, concealment and/or continual mobility become a strategy of escape.

Colonial mapping functioned within an Enlightenment logic that subordinated the world to the frames of representation designed by the (European) Subject. The Cartesian revolution in modern conceptions of subjectivity and representation created

... a new worldview defined by the theoretical priority of the subject and the reduction of the world to an image. As representation, the world takes on the character of an image, the result of the systematic projection of a mathematical perspective upon nature (Judovitz 1988:2).

Premised on this Cartesian perspectivalism, the underlying logic of these conceptions of the subject and representation generated the need to map, name and describe the world in certain terms which led, in the age of exploration and imperialism, to a 'scramble for maps' which, in its turn, created institutions and institutional practices and a whole series of events which in our day may look quite simply ridiculous. In *Territorial Disputes*, Graham Huggan (1994:7) provides a general picture of the intrigues and dangers associated with maps during the age of exploration and discovery:

Mapmaking could hardly be considered a frivolous activity, however; the Spaniards, leaders in the Renaissance exploration of the New World, are known to have destroyed, or to have brought up and hidden, whole editions of books and maps because they were thought to disseminate the wrong kind of information. As the historian of cartography, Lloyd Brown, wryly

remarks, 'there was always a prison cell or a little machine waiting for the author and publisher of confidential maps and charts'.

Lloyd Brown's *The Story of Maps* (1979) presents some interesting stories of the adventures and dangers associated with maps. But the dangers that maps (re)presented were more fully felt by those who came under their power because maps not only contained but also actively constituted their subjects. Following upon Foucault's assertion that institutions and institutional practices like prisons simultaneously contain and create prisoners, colonial maps not only contained the colonised but actually created colonial subjects. Colonial resistance was thus often primarily, in a broad sense, a resistance to colonial maps and the mapping of the colonised body/subject.

Colonialism is, at this deeper level, a discourse of maps and power. The importance of the geographical imagination and the discipline of geography to the project of colonialism has been copiously documented by geographers, artists and critics. (See for instance Rabassa 1985:1-16; Carter 1987; Harley 1988:277-312; Driver 1992:23-40; Huggan 1989:115-31; Huggan 1994:3-11; Ryan 1994:15-30; Smith 1994:491-500, among others.) In their essay, 'Design on Signs: Myth and Meaning in Maps', Denis Wood and John Fels (1985:54) assert that:

... every map is at once a synthesis of signs and a sign in itself: an instrument of depiction—of objects, events, places—and an instrument of persuasion—about these, its makers, and itself. Like any other sign, it is the product of codes: conventions that prescribe relations of content and expression in a given semiotic circumstance.

J.B. Harley in his chapter on 'Maps, Knowledge and Power' highlights the signifying strategies which maps employ in their cartographic constructions of space. Some of these strategies which he identifies as the 'hidden rules' of cartography are 'silences', 'positional enhancements' and 'representational hierarchies' (Harley 1988:292). 'Silences' refer to the little omissions or significant exclusions of material which may undermine the supposed objectivity of the map; 'positional enhancements' ensure that the map-reader's attention is oriented towards a centre, thereby covertly promoting the authority and supremacy of a particular worldview; while 'representational hierarchies' confirm certain cultural and ideological stratifications by the ranking of visual signs within the map. Beyond these cartographic practices, Chandra Mukerji (1984:31) goes further to claim that 'the meaning of land as property to be consumed and used by Europeans is written into the language of maps'. And Richard Phillips (1997:6f) in *Mapping Men and Empire* elaborates:

Imperialism went hand-in-hand with mapping, by which Europeans imaginatively and materially possessed much of the rest of the world, including the 'New World' (Livingstone 1992). Cartographers and other mapmakers, including adventure story writers, charted areas of geographical knowledge and *terra incognita*, and through their maps they possessed real geography. In cartographic and literary maps, Europeans charted the world then colonised it (Said 1993). The late nineteenth-century scramble to map was also a scramble to colonise and consolidate imperial power. European imperialism and mapping reached a simultaneous climax at the end of the nineteenth century.

While it is true that traditional assumptions about the cartographic map in which—as S.K. Andrews puts it—'space is used to represent space' (quoted in Phillips 1997:14) and the 'aura of knowledge' (Alpers 1993:133) which maps possess because they are seen 'to depict the world as it "really is"' (Smith 1994:449) have been called into question by contemporary re-examinations of forms of representation and knowledge, the fissures and fractures these maps created in the subjectivities and identities of the colonised are only just being investigated.

The objective of this article, therefore, is not to explore the discursive production of colonial space/maps, an illuminating and fascinating object of study in itself, as evidenced in John Noyes's book *Colonial Space: Spatiality and the Discourse of German South West Africa 1884-1915* (1992). Rather, my objective is to interrogate the discursive space produced by these maps, to explore the ways in which the maps became instruments for the production of colonial and postcolonial subjectivities by constituting and constraining what could be enunciated within their discursive space. In the process, I briefly describe colonialism's production of the category of the spatially and culturally bounded African 'native' through colonial geography and other practices and then focus on the subject formation of the 'natives' themselves within the cultural economy authorised by colonialism. (I put the term 'natives' in inverted commas this once, but subsequently leave them out in the hope that the reader will keep them imaginatively intact.) I note that the colonial 'staging' of the world as a set of geographically demarcated and bounded places created the necessity—within the dynamics of the African search for agency and subjecthood—for subject formation along certain lines, already pre-scripted within the colonialist archive. And thus followed the territorial staging of self, culture and identity in colonial and postcolonial narratives. In colonial discourse the demarcation of the physical landscape went hand-in-hand with the demarcation of the social and cultural landscape and this invariably led to the creation of new subjects, new subjectivities and the inscription of new identities. In short, the new processes of

subject formation and agency, developed in response to the new geographies into which the body was placed or dis-placed, are the primary focus of this paper.

In exploring these processes as encoded in contemporary African narrative, I begin, by way of background, with two passages from Graham Greene's *Journey Without Maps* (1936), which I employ as conceptual frames for the subsequent discussion of Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1964) and Nuruddin Farah's *Maps* (1986). The passages from Greene highlight the colonial anxiety about maps and underscore the necessity of appropriate mapping. Because maps make certain claims about the world, their unreliability becomes a cause for concern and this concern generates a need for more rigorous mapping. The need for more detailed mapping translates in colonialism into an obsession with mimetic accuracy which takes the form of demarcating boundaries, establishing ownership, numbering, and defining. A vast amount of literature, for example, exists on colonial attempts to describe, define and number the native and native populations. A good instance is the eight-volume work by Watson and Kaye (1868-1875); an analysis of the function of enumeration in colonialism can be found in Appadurai, (1996:114-135). This obsession for accuracy set the stage for the tragic narratives of new subjectivities and agency explored in Achebe's *Arrow of God* and Farah's *Maps*.

II

In *Journey Without Maps*, a journal of Greene's trek through the West African territory of Liberia in 1935, the idea of the map as a mimetic representation of space and a pathfinder for the traveller is foregrounded in the title of the book and the body of the text itself. Setting out, the author-protagonist laments the absence of reliable maps:

It would have been easier if I had been able to obtain maps. But the Republic is almost entirely covered by forest, and has never been properly mapped, mapped that is to say even to the rough extent of the French colonies which lie on two sides of it. I could find only two large-scale maps for sale. One, issued by the British General Staff, quite openly confesses ignorance; there is a large white space covering the greater part of the Republic, with a few dotted lines indicating the conjectured course of rivers (incorrectly, I usually found) and a fringe of names along the boundary. These names have been curiously chosen: most of them were quite unknown to anyone in the Republic; they must have belonged to obscure villages now abandoned. The other map is issued by the United States War Department. There is a dashing quality about it; it shows a vigorous

imagination. Where the English map is content to leave a blank space, the American in large letters fills it with the word 'Cannibals'. It has no use for dotted lines and confessions of ignorance; it is so inaccurate that it would be useless, perhaps even dangerous, to follow it, though there is something Elizabethan in its imagination. 'Dense Forest'; 'Cannibals'; rivers which don't exist, at any rate anywhere near where they are put; one expects to find Eldorado, two-headed men and fabulous beasts represented in little pictures in the Gola Forest (41f).

This passage reproduces and satirises some of the cartographic practices we have identified as characteristic of mapping, especially in the imperial context. It is important to note that both maps, the British and the American, are products of military establishments, which expose the relationship between the imperial gaze, colonial maps and military power. Both maps are grossly inaccurate, thus undermining the assumptions of mimetic adequacy on which maps rely for authority.

The dotted lines indicating the 'conjectured course of rivers' graphically capture the uncertainty and thus the colonial anxiety occasioned by the unknown. In fact, Greene gestures at the dangers posed to the explorer, traveller or coloniser by inaccurate maps when he says that the American map is so inaccurate that it may be dangerous to follow it. Although he does not spell out what these dangers may be, he comments wryly on 'two-headed men and fabulous beasts' and thereby evokes the textual tradition of mapping the Other in European culture—a tradition which provides the subtexts for his own map. Throughout his narrative, Greene is in constant dialogue with these other texts, variously confirming and contesting their claims and thus establishing the authority of his own narrative mapping of the land/bodies/subjects of this area of the 'African jungle'.

Moving from the coloniser to the colonised, Graham Greene speaks of the 'fringe of names along the boundary' which were known to no one in the Republic. From his perspective, these names are read as having belonged to obscure villages that have now been abandoned. Placed beside the uncertainty about the course of rivers, this speculation—'must have belonged'—about the existence of the villages, their obscurity and their having been abandoned is, to say the least, curious. This reading of the signs, I suggest, could have come only from knowledge about which the narrator is silent. It is easy to understand that the villages were obscure because they were obscure to the European gaze, but the narrator's wager on the probability of their existence and their abandonment even when they 'were quite unknown to anyone in the Republic' can be read in any number of ways. An ungenerous reading would simply see an example of the usual colonialist arrogance. But that, I believe, would be ignoring the fact that many African villages chose to resist 'visual capture'

or 'discovery' by explorers and colonial administrators by retreating further in to the forests, and that constant and continual mobility was one of the strategies of colonial resistance. Like the proverbial bird of Igbo lore, Eneke-nti-oba (quoted by Ezeulu in Achebe's *Arrow of God*), for whom constant mobility became a way of life, the villagers may have chosen to live their lives on the move, so to speak. In this Achebe novel the bird is portrayed in the following manner: 'When his friends asked him [the bird] why he was always on the wing he replied: "Men of today have learned to shoot without missing and so I have learned to fly without perching"' (45). We will return to the issue of mobility and containment within the colonial space later. For now let us simply say that Greene's speculation about the villages can be read as arising from this knowledge of the mobility of communities and locales fleeing the impositions of colonial regimes.

To return to the maps: while the British map leaves the blank spaces unnamed to denote unknown territory, the American inscribes 'Cannibals' over them. Simon Ryan has identified this double manoeuvre, split, in this instance, between the British and the American maps, as a 'cartographic double movement, of erasure and projection, creating a blank, and filling in that blank with a legend' (1994:124). Greene ridicules the vigorous Elizabethan imagination underlying these maps, a satirical take somewhat similar to Jonathan Swift's famous ridicule of seventeenth-century cartographers who:

... in Afric-Maps

With savage pictures fill their Gaps:

And o'er uninhabitable Downs

Place elephants for want of towns

('On Poetry' in Swift 1983:526).

The gesture of textually emptying territories and creating virgin lands waiting for European penetration is a well-worn colonialist strategy as is the projection of fantasies of savagery and cannibalism upon unknown territories. These gestures are some of the ways in which the insecurities arising from the physical terrain are transferred into the domain of textuality and some illusion of security is achieved by textual stability.

Greene's dismay at the fact that the Republic has not been adequately mapped is coupled with a slight admiration for 'the French colonies which lie on two sides of it' which have been mapped to a 'rough extent'. And later in the narrative we come to one of these French colonies:

That afternoon we went for a walk into French Guinea with the engineer.

The border is the Moa River, about twice the width of the Thames at Westminster. We crossed in a dug-out canoe, standing and balancing with the roll. It was quite easy, only a little frightening because there were alligators in the Moa. The curious thing about these boundaries, a line of river in a waste of bush, no passports, no Customs, no barrier to wandering tribesmen, is that they are as distinct as a European boundary; stepping out of the canoe one was in a different country. Even nature had changed; instead of forest and a rough winding road down which a car could, with some difficulty, go, a narrow path ran straight forward for mile after mile through tall treeless elephant grass (62f).

Here we encounter the boundary between the Republic and a French colony. This boundary, it would appear from Greene's narrative, is both real and unreal. It is only 'a line of river in a waste of bush' from which are noticeably absent all the modern protocols for marking national boundaries and inscribing citizenship: 'no passports, no Customs'. In spite of these absences, the European traveller realises that he is in another country and curiously enough remarks that 'Even nature had changed'. Despite the fact that the wandering tribesmen do not recognise it and it is not officially marked in identities and identity documents, it is, he says, 'as distinct as a European boundary'. With these absences and the non-recognition recorded by the narrator, it is pertinent to ask what makes this boundary as distinct as any European boundary, if only because European boundaries are not marked by changes in nature. The appeal to nature is, of course, consistent with the rhetorical strategies of colonial discourse but, in this instance, Greene goes somewhat further by appealing to the modern discourse of nation and nationality as inscribed in European boundaries. So the question remains pertinent to the figuration of colonial space: why is this nondescript boundary as distinct as a European boundary?

To answer this question, it is useful to bear in mind Mukerji's assertion quoted earlier that 'the meaning of land as property to be consumed and used by Europeans was written into the language of maps' (1984:31). And, in another context, with reference to *Robinson Crusoe*, Mike Marais (1996:19f) argues that:

Despite the realist illusion of immediacy, this representation of the subject's encounter with colonial space unconsciously reveals that the former's knowledge of the latter is mediated by European discourse, and not determined by the actual physical terrain. For instance, what Crusoe is described as seeing is not a neutral space void of all presuppositions but a *property*—that is, a highly specific construction of space which, as Lennard Davis argued, is related to the development in Europe in the seventeenth

and eighteenth centuries of a transcendental subject who evinced a strong desire to dominate space.

I have earlier referred to this positioning of the European subject in relation to colonial space, but the notions of property and ownership that go with it in colonialist discourse still need to be elaborated and established in relation to my argument. In her essay 'Putting Ireland on the Map', Mary Hamer (1999:184) states: 'An abstracted and standardised representation of terrain challenges direct local experience and removes, as it were, the terrain from the cognitive ownership of those who inhabit it'. It is therefore not only physical ownership that is at stake here but also discursive ownership. By relegating local experience to inconsequence, as Greene does in this text with the experience of the wandering tribesmen, cognitive ownership of the European subject is established. In his book, *Topographies*, J. Hillis Miller (1995:3f) offers an idea of how landscape may become a virtual text when a place and a narrative converge in its naming: 'names make a site already the product of a virtual writing, a topography, or, since the names are often figures, a 'topotopography'. The experience of moving across the boundary from the Republic to French Guinea is an experience thoroughly mediated by European discourses. It is only within the context of these inter-texts that we can understand how Greene's narrative has been overdetermined by a teeming underlay of antecedent discourses. This may be why Simon Gikandi says that Greene's "journey without maps" has been pre-mapped all along' (189). The boundary between the Republic and the French colonies is as distinct as a European boundary not because there is a line of river in the bush or because nature changes. The boundary is distinct because the contesting narrative of local experience has been displaced or suppressed and a new hegemonic narrative signified in the European map has been written over it. Perception of the physical terrain is now mediated by a European discourse whose pre-eminent sign is the map. The line of river in the waste of the bush produces meaning for the narrator because of this mediation. At this point of the colonial project, the wandering tribesmen have not been integrated into this discourse and their incorporation into it was to be one of the major preoccupations of colonial administrations.

As the difference between Greene's experience and that of the tribesmen shows, it is one thing to draw a map but it is quite another to get people to accept and internalise the map. Colonial powers in several parts of the colonised world made strenuous efforts, first, to ensure the accuracy of their maps and, second, to 'fill' the colonised into them. Rigorous attention had to be paid, at the level of physical terrain, to the demarcation of boundaries, the establishment of 'true' ownership, the structuring of terms of habitation and belonging and, at the level of

identities, to the classification, enumeration and description of peoples. The desire to know by demarcation and definition was paramount, because the unknown and the unknowable presented a threat to the security of colonial rule and carried the potential of unravelling the lines of the map. The struggle to inscribe space, bodies and subjects was sometimes pursued to absurd lengths. According to Governor D'Urban in his report to the colonial office in London, Shrewsbury, the head of the Wesleyan mission in the Cape, wrote in January 1835 that 'all Africans should be registered—every man wearing on his neck a thin plate of tin containing his name and the name of his chief—to identify offenders and enable the British government to know the number and strength of frontier tribes' (quoted in Lalu 2000:54). The production of colonial space was thus tied up in many ways with the production of the colonised native. Indeed, the very category of native depended upon notions of a fixed place within the map (a demarcated land) and a fixed place in the world (membership of a fixed kinship system/clan/tribe and a pre-defined orientation to the world). Colonial mapping represented landscapes of mobility for the coloniser, but for the colonised it presented a circumscribed landscape of constraint.

Chinua Achebe's *Arrow of God* is located at this point, where territorial demarcation and the production of the native—the anxieties of Greene's narrative—have become an obsession for colonial administrators. Within the metaphors of mapping and Greene's text with which we have been working, we may safely say that the primary colonial objective in *Arrow of God* is to correct the lacunae in Greene's maps and get those 'wandering tribesmen' incorporated into them. We must recall here that these geographies were closely allied with the dominant ideas of culture and identity within the emergent discipline of Anthropology. Douglas Kellner (1992:141) summarises these anthropological conceptions of identity in traditional societies in this manner:

According to anthropological folklore, in traditional societies, one's identity was fixed, solid, and stable. Identity was a function of predefined social roles and a traditional system of myths which provided orientation and religious sanctions to one's place in the world, while rigorously circumscribing the realm of thought and behaviour. One was born and died a member of one's clan, a member of a fixed kinship system, and a member of one's tribe or group with one's life trajectory fixed in advance. In pre-modern societies, identity was unproblematical and not subject to reflection or discussion. Individuals did not undergo identity crises, or radically modify their identity. One was a hunter and a member of the tribe and that was that.

Within the discursive space produced by the map and these ideas of culture and identity, so aptly condensed by Kellner, the conflict between the two communities of Umuaro and Okperi in *Arrow of God* and then the conflict between Ezeulu and his community that ends so tragically almost appear to have been pre-programmed. For neither Ezeulu nor either hapless community play any originary role in setting in motion the territorial dispute which provides the motive force for the events recorded in the narrative.

III

In his first novel, *Things Fall Apart*, Chinua Achebe touches upon the manner in which the Christian missionaries unsettle traditional conceptions of space in one Igbo village. The missionaries who come seeking converts among the people of Mbanta ask the community for a piece of land on which to build a church. After due consultation, the leaders of the community decide to offer them a portion of the 'evil forest', believing that they will reject it because the evil forest is a place 'alive with sinister forces and powers of darkness' (1958:107). The evil forest is the place where all those who have died of evil diseases such as leprosy and smallpox are buried; it is the place where those who have committed abominations against the earth, those who break potent taboos and every kind of potent fetish and unwanted evil are dumped. Within the local geography of the people, it is a place apart, the location of all forces inimical to the well being of the community. When the missionaries accept the offer and start building in earnest, their act of supreme folly is met with consternation by the people of Mbanta:

The next morning the crazy men actually began to clear a part of the forest and to build their house. The inhabitants of Mbanta expected them all to be dead within four days. The first day passed and the second and the third and the fourth, and none of them died. Everyone was puzzled. And then it came to be known that the white man's fetish had unbelievable power. It was said that he wore glasses on his eyes so that he could see and talk to evil spirits. Not long after, he won his first three converts (1958:108).

This incident, narrated with such subtlety and irony, depicts the manner in which the colonial presence, by way of the missionaries and the Christian church, subverts the physical, metaphysical and cultural geography of the people of Mbanta. The physical space defined as evil within their conceptual mapping of space into good and evil places in the culture unravels. Achebe, however, does not pursue this issue of contested geographies much further in this novel, except to integrate it within the

novel's symbolic structure of reversals and its dense texture of ironies. For what could be more ironic than ceding possession of your own evil forest to your enemies when you had merely intended to do away with them by allowing them to build on the tabooed piece of land. By giving away this piece of land, they have unknowingly given away the authority and control over the evil forest which is needed to keep its dangers at bay. Thereafter, they become its victims rather than its guardians.

Unlike the muted significance accorded the land issue in *Things Fall Apart*, in *Arrow of God*, a territorial dispute between two communities brings to the foreground the issue of contested geographies and the mapping of land, body and subject in colonial and postcolonial narratives. We may briefly recall the dispute over ownership of a piece of farmland which leads to fighting between the villages of Umuaro and Okperi in the novel. Even though the details of what led to the demand for more rigorous demarcation of boundaries and establishment of property and ownership rights are not finely spelt out in the novel, it does not take great imagination to deduce the immediate cause of the dispute. On the mission to Okperi, one of the two companions tells Akukalia that all he need do is ask the people of Okperi one simple question which he believes will resolve the dispute and put an end to the conflict.

'What you should ask them', said the companion who had spoken very little since they set out, 'what they should tell us is why, if the land was indeed theirs, why they let us farm it and cut thatch from it for generation after generation, until the white man came and reminded them' (1964:20).

This statement implies that the white man must have played a role in setting the conflict in motion by 'reminding' the people of Okperi that the land belonged to them. If we accept this, the question to ask is: 'why was the white man interested in who owned the land over which there had been no ownership dispute for generations?' And the answer that immediately suggests itself is that the colonial desire to map and demarcate its territories accurately must have been responsible. But then this colonial desire meant introducing new conceptions of land, property and ownership that were basically alien to the communities. The fluidity and ambiguity of native notions of land ownership and property had to be replaced with the fixity and certainty of European concepts. To put it in another way, the dynamic orality of traditional concepts of land and ownership must be replaced by the stasis of the written document; and this, not because the old ideas have failed but because a new discursive regime is being put in place. This is the larger context of what on the surface looks like a minor dispute over a piece of land and it is this context that gives it the resonance it acquires in the novel.

The two communities seemingly engaged in a land dispute are in reality engaged in a much larger struggle of which they are not fully aware. Beneath all the rhetoric and the marshalling of 'evidence' displayed at the council of Umuaro elders, the people do not notice that they are being force-marched into a different discursive order in which all their evidentiary procedures and debates will be undervalued if not completely invalidated. (On evidentiary procedures and colonialism, see Lalu 2000:45-68). In the first instance, all the evidence they invoke can be easily dismissed as hearsay. We must remember that this kind of hearsay evidence is undervalued within what Martin Jay (1992:178-195) calls the 'scopic regime of modernity' and that the higher valuation of eye-witness accounts in the absence of written documents undermines the very basis on which these communities build their claims. And, indeed, the white man Winterbottom, who is later to preside over the inquiry set up by the colonial administration, summarises this by saying that all the witnesses who testify at the hearing perjure themselves. He explains to Tony Clarke, his new Assistant District Officer:

I went into the question of the ownership of the piece of land which was the remote cause of all the unrest and found without any shade of doubt that it belonged to Okperi. I should mention that every witness who testified before me—from both sides without exception—perjured themselves. One thing you must remember in dealing with natives is that like children they are great liars. They don't lie simply to get out of trouble. Sometimes they would spoil a good case by a pointless lie. Only one man—a kind of priest-king from Umuaro—witnessed against his own people (1964:38).

Again it is easy to see Winterbottom's colonialist arrogance—'I know my natives'—and spot all of the colonial stereotypes in his statement; but what is more difficult to detect because it is embedded beneath this surface is the discursive incommensurability of the world of the natives and that of Winterbottom. And the classic example that brings this to light is the 'good case', to use Winterbottom's own expression. Winterbottom does not just say that all the natives are liars, he also claims that even when they have a good case they throw it away by introducing a pointless lie. Surely no one wants to throw a good case away just like that. But then what if the defendant or plaintiff and judge have different criteria for measuring a good case? Is it possible that one of the parties does not recognise that he/she has a good case when he/she sees one, because the procedures for producing a good case differ from culture to culture? Perhaps Jean-Francois Lyotard's (1988:9) concept of the *differend* will help shed some light on this.

I would like to call a *differend* the case where the plaintiff is divested of the means to argue and becomes for that reason a victim A case of *differend* between two parties takes place when the 'regulation' of the conflict that opposes them is done in the idiom of one of the parties while the wrong suffered by the other is not signified in that idiom.

In her essay 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Gayatri Spivak (1988:300) explains the *differend* as 'the inaccessibility of, or untranslatability from, one mode of discourse in dispute to another'. If we read Winterbottom's conception of 'a good case' as radically, untranslatably different from what the natives consider a good case, then we may understand his statement a little better. While the natives build their good case on the highly valued, almost sacred, oral evidence received by the son from the father, whose evidentiary authority is unquestioned within the culture, this evidence is not much use to Winterbottom. Among the Igbo when a man says 'my father told me', his evidence is given much weight because within this culture it is known that a man never tells his son a lie. Eyewitness accounts do not command as much weight as this because the culture recognises that sight can be deceptive. In many proverbs and idioms the unreliability of sight as final arbiter of truth is repeated over and over. But for Winterbottom and the discourse he represents, truth claims made in the name of the father do not carry that authority. Does this not divest the communities of the means to argue their case? Does it not silence them or, at the very least, render them inarticulate within the evidentiary structures and judicial process over which Winterbottom presides?

Besides, since he finds that they are all liars, the fathers would in any case also have been liars. Therefore, he has to devise his own criteria for evaluating the evidence presented before him. There is, of course, his own bias, which may pre-incline him to favour the people of Okperi who have opened their borders to Christianity and commerce. But any judgement based on this can hardly be said to be objective and fair. Winterbottom has consequently to latch on to Ezeulu's testimony because Ezeulu provides him with the opportunity to appear disinterested by testifying against his own people. In testifying thus, Ezeulu believes that he is telling the truth as he has heard it from his own father, but that is not the basis of Winterbottom's acceptance of his testimony. In fact, Winterbottom's endorsement of the truth of Ezeulu's evidence presents problems for his own conception of all natives as liars. One native's truth telling becomes a paradox that must be explained, because it militates against the discursive stability of the colonialist text and its production of the native as innately a liar. Winterbottom tries to explain Ezeulu's difference by speculating about his origins:

I have not found out what it was, but I think he must have had some pretty fierce tabu working on him. He was very light in complexion, almost red. One finds people like that now and again among the Ibos. I have a theory that the Ibos in the distant past assimilated a small non-negroid tribe of the same complexion as the Red Indians (1964:38).

So, ironically, the basis of Winterbottom's acceptance of Ezeulu's testimony is that Ezeulu has undermined the authority and solidarity of the clan and thus the basis of his own identity. According to Kellner's statement quoted earlier, Ezeulu's action also undermines the whole structure of anthropological lore about pre-modern societies and identity. And this is only possible, as Winterbottom speculates, because the 'Ibos' had in the past assimilated some non-negroid blood. By such speculative sleights of hand, it is possible to maintain the stability of the colonialist script and contain the challenges that threaten to undermine its certainties. Ezeulu's 'identity crisis'—something alien to the native—is seen as a result of racial mixing. To Winterbottom, this makes him eminently suitable for co-optation into the colonial system of indirect rule. And it is not long before the offer of a warrant chieftaincy is made to him.

Ezeulu, however, sees himself as simply telling the truth. What he does not realise is that truth-claims can be made only within specific discursive structures which give them meaning and value. His 'truth' is highly valued by Winterbottom but not within the same structure from which Ezeulu is operating. The 'truth' within the cultural discourse of land ownership, private property, land tenure rights, and trespass of the Igbo does not translate into *the truth* within the European discourse of ownership within which Winterbottom is operating. This disjuncture between 'truths', occluded by mutual interest at the beginning, is later ripped open. Joined for the moment by mutual interest, they do not see the discursive disjuncture until Winterbottom, so impressed by this man's action, boasts that he has found a chief for Umuaro. He does not for a moment doubt that Ezeulu will accept his offer, even jump at it, and goes to great lengths to explain this to Clarke:

Well, I have now decided to appoint him Paramount Chief for Umuaro. I've gone through the records of the case again and found that the man's title is Eze Ulu. The prefix *eze* in Ibo means king. So the man is a kind of priest-king (1964:107).

He displays his knowledge without equivocation because he realises that more than mere force of arms, this knowledge is the ultimate power. He then sends for Ezeulu and offers to make him Paramount Chief of Umuaro. When Tony Clarke later makes

the offer to Ezeulu in person, his reply is as curt and definitive as the white man's reaction is uncomprehending:

'Tell the white man that Ezeulu will not be anybody's chief except Ulu'.

'What!' shouted Clarke, 'is the fellow mad?'

'I think so sah', said the interpreter.

'In that case he goes back to prison'. Clarke was now really angry.

'What cheek! A witch-doctor making a fool of the British Administrator in public!' (1964:175).

The recourse to the tropes of madness and prison, I believe, is familiar enough to students of colonial discourse. But what is significant here is that these tropes were not invoked in the first instance when Ezeulu broke the discursive rules and structures for defining the native by telling the truth and testifying against his own people. Winterbottom had found an explanation for that but here, where the transgression is not in the coloniser's interest, the disjuncture which had been previously masked is unveiled. Insanity is said to be the problem and the solution is incarceration. Foucault's *Madness and Civilisation* (1988) immediately comes to mind here in Clarke's invocation of madness and his recourse to carceral procedures for its 'treatment'.

To return to Lyotard's notion of the *differend* once again, what Ezeulu does not know—and cannot know—is that his 'truth' has galvanised an entire discursive chain of signifiers which effectively erase the ground on which his statement is based. Because truth claims can be made only within specific discursive structures, once integrated into these structures, these structures then regulate and define what can be enunciated within them. In these circumstances, Ezeulu is bound to lose out because the new discourse 'divests' him of that other ground from which his claim is made. The truth of the 'ownership' of the land within the histories of the two communities and their historical and cultural discourse of 'ownership' does not translate into the 'truth' within the European concept of ownership. Thus Ezeulu's attempt to articulate this 'truth' within another discourse becomes an instance of aporia, the moment when the truth lies. For the question to ask is not where the truth lies amid the conflicting testimonies of the various parties. The more appropriate question should be what 'ownership' means to these communities which recognise and acknowledge their own intricate and dynamic histories of migration and settlement, their fluid rather than fixed orientation to space, boundaries and demarcations, and their oral/aural modes of claims, evidence and validation. Once this context is taken away, it means that the conflict has been re-written into another code from which they are excluded. The idiom deployed is also inaccessible to them.

In this contest, therefore, in which the rules as written by the arbiter are alien to both contestants, only the arbiter can be the winner.

Like the people of Mbanta in *Things Fall Apart*, Ezeulu unwittingly cedes discursive control of the mapping of land/body/subject to the coloniser. For the people of Umuaro, this is clear enough: Ezeulu has become the white man's friend. Ezeulu himself accepts this and has no problems with being called the white man's friend for taking a principled position. This friendship, as far as he is concerned, is contingent, not fixed and unchanging. In the context of what we may refer to as the epistemology of his own culture, this self-positioning presents him with no contradictions. As he sees it, it can only be beneficial. The foundational logic of his culture speaks of the world as mobile, shifting and continually changing and in similar manner location and positionality have to be equally mobile. Ezeulu has no qualms about this; in fact, he summons the appropriate proverbs to anchor his position within his culture and its epistemology:

I want one of my sons to join these people and be my eye there. If there is nothing in it you will come back. But if there is something there you will bring home my share. The world is like a Mask dancing. My spirit tells me that those who do not befriend the white man today will be saying *had we known* tomorrow (1964:45-6).

The idea of a singular, fixed position is anathema to this conception of the world as a dancing mask.

So Ezeulu quite justifiably believes that he can exploit the plurality of possible subject locations and positions which his culture enjoins him to adopt. But here he comes against the exclusivist, hierarchical and binarist structure of colonial discourse. Being a friend to Winterbottom cannot be achieved in isolation; it means activating and occupying the signs that make up *that* side of this structure and excluding the other. Stated in the language of the plot of Ezeulu's personal experiences, being Winterbottom's friend means sending Oduche to school, it means imprisoning the sacred python, it means becoming the white man's chief, it means refusing to name the date of the New Yam festival. Within the cultural economy of colonial discourse, his freedom to pick and choose, to retain and discard, is limited by this structure of discourse and power. His physical and positional mobility as 'body' and 'subject' is circumscribed and constantly under surveillance. And the more he struggles to escape the grids of colonialist representation the more he gets locked into them.

Ezeulu first realises the implications of this new space he occupies when he is summoned by the white man and again later when he is detained. All the same,

within this new space, he struggles to retrieve agency—to refuse to be the white man's chief and to remain Ulu's chief. For the first, he suffers incarceration and, for the second, he descends into madness. His detention is easy to understand, but his madness in the end is a little more complex and deserves some exploration. There are the usual explanations that focus on his psychological motivations, his selfish goals, his inability to separate his own interests from those of the god, his lust for power, and so on. These explanations which the narrative highlights mask the major issue which, I believe, is Ezeulu's cultural capture and imprisonment within a new discourse.

Although he may not know it at the time of his appearance before the inquiry, his testimony represents a deference to the unalterability of the written 'letter' rather than the reconstitutive potential of the spoken word. Having chosen the fixed 'letter' over the orality of the spoken wor(l)d, he loses the presiding spirit of his own culture. The split between the 'letter' and the 'spirit' in his wor(l)ding of the world, so to speak, was to return to haunt him in the end when he takes refuge in all kinds of legalisms in his refusal to name the day of the New Yam festival. Even when his six assistants and, later, the elders of the villages come to remind him of his duty to abide by the spirit of the law, he rejects their advice and sticks to the 'written' letter. In spite of the depth of his hatred for his adversaries and the strength of his other psychological motivations and hidden motives, the enabling space for this act of refusal is provided by his new positioning within a discourse in which the 'letter' is supreme and the evidence of sight takes precedence over every other. And Ezeulu takes full advantage of the evidence of sight by continually pointing at the uneaten yams which are there for every one to see. The visual evidence of the yams becomes the ground on which Ezeulu acts even when his assistants and the elders insist that this piece of evidence should not be overvalued. His insistence on the visual is just one other indication of his imprisonment within the visual regime of colonialism and European modernity. Seen from this perspective, it is easy to recognise that Ezeulu has lost the freedom of those 'wandering tribesmen' and has become fully incorporated into the colonial map. In his struggle to stay out of it, he continually slips back into it. Given Ezeulu's usual prescience, he may also be the only one who is fully aware of the catastrophic consequences of his actions and keenly feels the outcome:

Because no one came near enough to him to see his anguish—and if they had seen it they would not have understood—they imagined that [Ezeulu] sat in his hut gloating over the distress of Umuaro. But although he would not for any reason now see the present trend reversed he carried more punishment and more suffering than all his fellows. What troubled him

most—and he alone seemed to be aware of it at present—was that the punishment was not for now alone but for all time. It would afflict Umuaro like an *agulu-aro* disease which counts one year and returns to its victim (1964:219).

There can be no going back because the epistemic *coup d'état*, so to speak, has been accomplished and Ezeulu has unintentionally found himself a tool in its accomplishment. It is interesting that Tony Clarke has already declared him insane before he actually goes mad in the novel. When and where he finally does go mad is the point at which the local map collapses into the colonial and a new order emerges, its new mode of figuring land/body/subject becoming dominant, if not yet hegemonic.

IV

To master the threat that Ezeulu as a truth-telling native poses to the colonialist map of the African native, Winterbottom has to 're-inscribe' his body with some non-negroid blood from some distant past to secure the stability of its discursive mapping of bodies and subjects. Winterbottom's effort to give Ezeulu a discursively manageable identity leads to his being bodily re-marked and thus racially reclassified. But this kind of re-categorisation of bodies is not an invention of colonialism. Indeed, colonialism's obsession with bodies is anchored to the fact that the body is the ultimate sign upon which racist and sexist discourses are founded. Since the body 'presents itself' as a natural category, complete and united by its own boundaries, it is often made to function within these discourses as the model of a naturalised form of self and identity formation. Transferred thus to the colonialist context, the land is figured as a body and vice versa and they become the 'ground' on which identity 'grows'. Figures of woman as landscape and landscape as woman fill the works of travel and adventure writers of the age of exploration and colonisation and the rhetoric of nationalism has always depended on the deployment of the trope of nation as woman and woman as nation. (See Cobham 1991:83-98; 1992:52-59; Boehmer 1991:3-23).

But as land is never just transparently there but is culturally constituted, so also is the body never just naturally there. Perhaps even more than land, the body is always already contaminated by signification. The body as a visual sign has often functioned as a site for the cultural coding of a multitude of ideas, of beauty and ugliness, the normal and abnormal, self and other, the familiar and the exotic, and so on. In racist and sexist discourses, it has mainly served as the site for the visual coding of naturalised difference. In 'Mapping the Subject', Steve Pile and Nigel Thrift (1995:13) suggest that:

... power—whether organised through knowledge, class, ‘race’, gender, sexuality and so on—is (at least partly) about mapping the subject; where particular sites—for example, the body, the self, and so on—become ‘points of capture’ for power.

As we have seen, colonialism as a regime of power was obsessively concerned with mapping land and subject, and the body was one specific site which became a point of capture for colonial power. The centrality of bodies as sites of naturalised difference from the constitution of colonialist discourse cannot be overemphasised. There are bewilderingly numerous ways in which bodies were mapped for colonialist ‘consumption’, but it is beyond the scope of this study to go into many of these. In the rest of this article, I will only briefly explore some of them by reading Nuruddin Farah’s *Maps* as a postcolonial narrative which problematises colonialism’s and, by extension, nationalism’s mapping of the body. In my reading of this novel, my debt to the literature on the body in psychoanalysis and colonial and postcolonial discourses will be more than apparent in the concepts and terms which ground my analysis, and Freud, Lacan, Fanon and Bhabha present the entry points.

In the essay ‘Somali Powerscapes: Mapping Farah’s Fiction’, Derek Wright (1990:33) asserts:

In *Maps* Farah has written the first African novel of the body. It has a mass of body-literature behind it, some acknowledged in the epigraphs and Hilaal’s monologue, and some not: Freud, Wilhelm Reich, Otto Rank, the body-poetesses Sylvia Plath and Anne Sexton, the body novelists Gunter Grass and D.M. Thomas. Askar knows his adoptive mother Misra wholly through the body, which has a logic of its own and operates according to its own intuitive wisdom, making autonomous decisions that override the abstract intellectual hatreds of creed and country.

It can hardly be doubted that *Maps* focuses with relentless vision on the body; images of bodies, body functions and body parts take up a significant space in the novel. Blood and body fluids, menstruation, abortions, circumcision, mutilations, and semen are referred to again and again. These images so generously present in the narrative are not gratuitously deployed. Since colonial alterity was mapped on land and subject using the body as the site of its mapping, Farah, in this novel, chooses the body as the site from which to begin his interrogation of this mapping. Colonialist constructions of the land and the body functioned as figurations of culture and nation and anti-colonial nationalist discourses tend to take over these tropes and refigure them to fit the nationalist project. The object, of course, is to

change the defiled image of colonialist thought and imbue it with positive qualities, to make it more noble and dignified. The body as the predominant sign in the text is thus used as a site for reading and interrogating colonialist and nationalist/patriarchal geographies and their naturalisation of identity through the body.

But, as several critics have observed, anti-colonial nationalism has become complicit with colonialism in its construction of woman (Boehmer 1991:3-23; Cobham 199:83-98; 1992:42-59; Radhakrishnan 1992:77-95). The patriarchal turn in anti-colonial texts of cultural nationalism has been critiqued by female writers who have objected to the portrayal and troping of women in these texts as mother/motherland/mother-of-the-nation, and so on. There is objection to the biologism of such portrayals which see identity as pre-given and organic, flowing seamlessly from its origin in a body and a land in which are also enwombed a nation and a culture. These essentialisms of female body, land, nation and culture are the object of exploration in Farah's narrative. The focus on the body is thus a consequence of these discourses and by deploying the metaphor of maps and mapping, the author draws together the literal and figurative dimensions of his subject.

The subject of *Maps* is thus the nationalist subject of the maps of land/body/subject bequeathed by colonialism. The novel is set in the post-independence period when the colonial map with its narrative of identity has become the normative one. Its conceptions of land/body/subject have been consolidated and hegemonised, albeit unwittingly aided by nationalist re-figurations. This map, taken over at independence by the new nationalist elites, has been seen as masking at its core a gap, a blank space on which should be inscribed the 'truth' of origins suppressed by colonialism. Disturbed by the ruptures of colonialism, the yearning for ontological wholeness and certainty in the midst of what is seen as colonial fragmentation and alienation becomes the driving force of the early post-independence era. Lost origins have to be rediscovered through a recuperative journey back to the true sources of the self and the nation. Narratives of cultural identity premised on pre-colonial wholeness become the favoured genre of writing and the search for origins, authenticity, unity and coherence, its dominant themes.

As noted earlier, the privileged site of exploration is the body and the body as sign is usually deployed as iconic representation of a unitary, homogeneous, bounded self. Based on the model of the bourgeois subject, the body becomes the natural instantiation of the pure, uncontaminated essence. The Somali nationalist project in *Maps* appears predicated upon this denial of the heterogeneity that continually threatens its self-constitution. Somalis, we should bear in mind, are 'a people' spread across several countries such as Ethiopia, Kenya and Djibouti, and the Greater Somalia project of the Western Somali Liberation Front (WSLF) was to

bring together the 'scattered' parts of the national body to make a singular Somali whole. As Hilaal says in *Maps*, 'Truth is body' (1986:236) and the pursuit of this pre-ordained body-truth in the map of Somalia is at the core of this narrative. In his essay 'Nationalism, Irony and Commitment', Terry Eagleton (1990:28) captures this dynamic of nationalist thought:

The metaphysics of nationalism speak of the entry into full self-realization of a unitary subject known as the people. As with all such philosophies of the subject from Hegel to the present, this monadic subject must somehow curiously pre-exist its own process of materialization—must be equipped, even now, with certain highly determinate needs and desires, on the model of the autonomous human personality.

The protagonist of *Maps*, Askar, is a Somali born in the Ogaden region of Ethiopia. His father dies before his birth and his mother dies soon after he is born. Orphaned at birth in an area outside the national boundaries of the republic of Somalia, Askar enters into the world deprived of his natural parents and also orphaned by geography. In the novel Askar asks his uncle Hilaal:

'How would you describe the differences that have been made to exist between the Somali in the Somali Republic and the Somali in either Kenya or in the Ethiopia-administered Ogaden?' I said, again feeling that I had expressed myself poorly.

He answered, 'The Somali in the Ogaden, the Somali in Kenya both, because they lack what makes the self strong and whole, are *unpersons*'.

Silence. Something made me not ask, 'But what is an unperson, Uncle?' Now, years later, I wish I had told him I didn't understand the concept. Years later, I find it appropriate to ask, 'Is Misra a Somali?' 'Am I a refugee?' 'Am I an unperson?' 'Is or will Misra be an unperson—if she comes to Mogadiscio?' (1986:175).

Denied the illusion of origins on which nationalism thrives, Askar begins a struggle to secure the unstable map of his identity. His foster mother, Misra, is also a woman of scrambled identities. An Ethiopian woman of the Oromo ethnic group who lives in the Ogaden among a Somali-speaking populace, she speaks Amharic and an accented Somali. The linguistic 'impurities' which define her are mapped unto her body in successive abortions and her final inability to bear her own child. Rather than accept this heterogeneity as Misra apparently does, Askar seeks to shore up his

sense of self by recourse to nationalist discourses of a unitary nation and subject. In his search for a culturally uncontaminated self and nation, Askar, like the soldiers of the WSLF, becomes obsessed with literal and metaphoric maps.

In the language of psychoanalytic theory, Askar may be said to have tumbled straight from birth into the Symbolic order of language and signification. As the novel tells us, he was born 'adulted' (1986:11). And Misra explains this somewhat more flamboyantly:

To have met death when not quite a being, perhaps this explains why he exists primarily in the look in his eyes. Perhaps his stars have conferred upon him the fortune of holding simultaneously multiple citizenships of different kingdoms: that of the living and that of the dead; not to mention that of being an infant and an adult at the same time (1986:11f).

In the acknowledgements that preface the novel, Farah mentions Isidore Okpewho's *The Epic in Africa* (1979) as one of the texts to which he is indebted. It is easy to see why this is so, because the idea of the 'adulted' child aligns the novel structurally with the African epic in which extraordinary births and abnormal childhoods are regular fare. Askar's struggle is thus figured as a kind of epic struggle for the recovery of self and nation, though the author continually undercuts him by problematising the origins he seeks at every point. At the border, on the journey to Mogadiscio, all the male passengers in the bus get down, strip naked and dip themselves in the Somali end of the Shebelle River in a kind of symbolic cleansing and reunification with the 'homeland'. Askar is frightened because he wonders where this return to origins will lead him. And as he goes into the river at the border, his origins metaphorically materialise before him in the figure of Misra: 'there she was, real as the border; there she was, talking about how self-conscious he was on the day he was born, how he wore a mask of dried blood, how he appeared, or rather behaved, as though he had made himself' (1986:133). The 'loss' of origins symbolised in his birth haunts him and it is only by the erasure of this historical and material specificity of his own body and the suppression of its lived experiences that he can reinvent himself as part of the national(ist) narrative.

It is worth noting that the investment in this border is similar to the investment in the border in Greene's *Journey Without Maps*. In 'Diaspora, Border and Transnational Identities', Avatar Brah (1996:198) elaborates on the meaning and significance of borders:

Borders: arbitrary dividing lines that are simultaneously social, cultural and psychic: territories to be patrolled against those whom they construct as

outsiders, aliens, the Others; forms of demarcation where the very act of prohibition inscribes transgression; zones where fear of the Other is fear of the self; places where claims to ownership—claims of ‘mine’, ‘yours’ and ‘theirs’—are staked out, contested, defended, and fought over.

The ritual of cleansing undertaken at the border in Farah’s novel is both one of recognition and non-recognition: a recognition that they have crossed over to the ‘homeland’ (the republic of Somalia) and a non-recognition because they believe the Ethiopian Ogaden should be part of this homeland. The paradoxical narrative which this border encodes should lead us to question what borders—or this border—mean to nomadic peoples. Even more than in Achebe’s *Arrow of God*, where the contesting communities acknowledge their histories of migration and settlement, the Somali are a nomadic people. The manner in which their different and differentiated histories are collectivised through narrative is beyond the scope of this paper. It is important to note however that notions of a unitary Somali identity and Somali-ness cannot be divorced from the concepts of identity that underwrote the construction of the native in colonial discourse. The concepts of diaspora and migrancy and their effects on identity have received a fair amount of analytical and theoretical attention in recent times, due largely to the huge displacements occasioned by the dynamics of late capitalism. But nomadic identities which pre-date these modern diasporas and continue to impact upon identities in some parts of the world have not been as massively theorised. The impact of colonialism and its maps of identity on these identities needs to be more carefully studied. In my opinion, it is unlikely that borders performed for nomadic peoples the same functions they perform in colonialist and nationalist discourses.

This may perhaps be the reason why Farah’s narrative techniques continually foreground these questions. Although the colonial native—together with notions of singularity, fixity and place—remains the structure and thematic of Askar’s desire as played out in the novel, the narrative itself emphasises the uncertainties and instabilities of all such categories. From the ambivalences and instabilities of the ‘founding’ moment of Askar’s birth, Farah continually fractures the unitary narrative of Somali nationalism and its maps of land/body/subject. Just as the land is dispersed among several countries so also is Askar, the subject, dispersed at the point of his own enunciation. Askar is split between three narrative voices—the ‘I’ of the self, the ‘you’ of alienation, and the ‘he’ of the Other. Each of these subject positions presents its own map which leads to a destabilisation of the unitary subject, a blurring of boundaries, and an unravelling of the binaries of colonialist and nationalist maps. With the discursive map of the novel pulling in one direction and the protagonist’s in another, Askar, like Ezeulu in *Arrow of God*, descends into

madness. It is as if the main character remains firmly within an older map while the author assiduously sketches the contours of a new one—an outline map for truly emancipatory, postcolonial geographies.

V

On the evidence of the texts examined above, it would appear that colonial and postcolonial geographies (of the nationalist type) as presented in African narratives have not been particularly liberatory. It is understandable—given the objectives of colonialism—that colonial mapping tended to emphasise containment and surveillance, but the failures of nationalist mapping of land, body and subject require a little more understanding. Since nationalism has taken such a bashing in contemporary theory, it is often necessary to remind ourselves of its practical uses in the struggle against colonialism. With the end of official colonisation, we can say with the benefit of hindsight, as Mahmood Mamdani (1996:24) does in *Citizen and Subject*, that 'every movement of resistance was shaped by the very structure of power against which it rebelled'. The imbrication of anti-colonial nationalist thought in the structures of the colonial regime of power was perhaps inevitable and its consequences have not been completely unsalutary.

In 'Where Have All the Natives Gone?', Rey Chow (1993:29) highlights the 'problematic of *the image as a bad thing to be replaced*', which continues to haunt postcolonial discourses on the native:

I want to highlight the native—nowadays a synonym for the oppressed, the marginalized, the wronged—because I think the space occupied by the native in postcolonial discourses is also the space of error, illusion, and filth. How would one write this space in such a way as to refuse the facile turn of sanctifying the defiled image with pieties and thus enriching ourselves precisely with the surplus value of the oppressed, a surplus value that results from *exchanging* the defiled image for something more noble? (Chow 1993:30).

Throughout this paper, I have relied on the metaphor of maps and mapping to ground my analysis. But mapping is itself a problematic concept when applied to the human subject. As Pile and Thrift (1995:1) remark:

The human subject is difficult to map for numerous reasons. There is the difficulty of mapping something that does not have precise boundaries. There is the difficulty of mapping something that cannot be counted as

singular but only as a mass of different and sometimes conflicting subject positions. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is always on the move, culturally, and in fact. There is the difficulty of mapping something that is only partially locatable in time-space. Then, finally, there is the difficulty of deploying the representational metaphor of mapping with its history of subordination to an Enlightenment logic in which everything can be survey and pinned down.

There is, however, another way of thinking of mapping, as wayfinding.

These many difficulties and the patriarchal and colonialist ideologies which further compound these in the colonial and postcolonial space caution us to be more tentative than definitive in concluding. For, as the map seeks to enclose, so also do its subjects seek to transgress its borders and boundaries. Farah's attempts to sketch the contours of a new map signal a refusal of closure and the conception of mapping as wayfinding endorsed by Pile and Thrift. Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari (1987:12) state it in this manner:

The map is open and connectable in all its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual group or social formation.

Such a conception of mapping is what this paper gestures towards in its emphasis on the denial of heterogeneity and multiplicity which characterised colonial and nationalist maps of land/body/subject and the struggles to escape their discursive containment and closure in African narrative.

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