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1 Courageous, Proud, and Frightened – African-American Narratives of the Vietnam War

Chris Dixon

African Americans have traditionally regarded military service as a means of achieving individual self-advancement and an opportunity to demonstrate their patriotic credentials. From the Revolutionary War through to the Korean War – the first conflict in which African Americans fought in integrated, rather than segregated units – Blacks supported their nation's increasingly confident role in global affairs. But United States intervention in Vietnam, premised on the Cold War misperception that Vietnamese nationalism was one manifestation of monolithic communism, raised troubling questions for African Americans. As the American commitment escalated after 1965, and as the very nature of that commitment, with its near-obsessive reliance on an often indiscriminate use of firepower, appeared to contradict the stated objectives of American involvement, increasing numbers of Black Americans challenged their nation's intervention in Indochina. That disillusionment was contemporaneous with a sense that African Americans were doing a disproportionate amount of the fighting – and dying – in Vietnam. As the war dragged on, and as success became ever more illusory, African Americans were increasingly certain that involvement in Indochina was a costly diversion of national attention, and resources, from a whole array of domestic issues within the United States – of which the Black struggle for civil rights was the most urgent.

Yet, even as increasing numbers of Americans repudiated the Cold War assumptions upon which their nation's flawed attempt to thwart Vietnamese nationalism were premised, Black Americans continued to volunteer, and be drafted, for service in Vietnam. With the notable exception of Colin Powell, former United States Secretary of State, however, this group has remained largely within the historiographical – and cultural – shadows. Amongst the plethora of books, articles, movies, and television programs devoted to the Vietnam War, remarkably little attention has been paid to African Americans' attitudes toward the conflict, or to their experiences whilst in Vietnam. To date, there have been just three book-length studies of this subject. *Bloods: An Oral History of the Vietnam War*, edited by Wallace Terry, is a collection of African American veterans' recollections of the war and its impact (Terry, 1984). James E. Westheider's *Fighting on Two Fronts: African Americans and the Vietnam War*, published in 1997, is a comprehensive and incisive analysis of Blacks' experiences in the military during the Vietnam era (Westheider, 1997). Most recently, Herman Graham, III, has published *The Brothers' Vietnam War: Black Power, Manhood, and the Military Experience*, which focuses particularly on the relationship between military service and black masculinity (Graham, 2003). Whilst each of those studies is a useful addition to the literature on the Vietnam War, the underlying paucity of material pertaining to Blacks' roles in the conflict suggests that there are still significant gaps in African American historiography, despite the upsurge in Black Studies since the rise of the civil rights movement of the 1950s and 1960s.

Alongside the mass of historical analyses of the Vietnam conflict, hundreds of veterans – and other observers of the conflict – have published "personal narratives" of their experiences during the war. The quality of these books varies greatly, from the

work of writers such as Tim O'Brien and Michael Herr, which can be ranked alongside the best writing to emerge from any war, through to books that are nothing more than shoot-'em-up adventure stories, replete with American heroes and one-dimensional Vietnamese characters. Again, however, African Americans are dramatically under-represented in the literature. By considering two Black narratives of the Vietnam War, this paper aims to cast light on a significant aspect of African American history and memory, a topic rendered all the more significant because the era of the Vietnam War was also the era of the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, movements which tested – and then challenged head-on – the political, economic, and cultural bases of American racism and discrimination.

There are some similarities between David Parks's *GI Diary*, published in 1968, and Samuel Vance's *The Courageous and the Proud*, published in 1970, (Parks, 1968; Vance, 1970). Not the least of those similarities is the fact that both books are characterized by a self-consciousness that was probably unavoidable for any African American writing during the turbulent 1960s. In that sense, both books should probably be seen as contributions to the long tradition of African American literature – of which the slave narratives of Frederick Douglass, and others, are probably the most famous – which seek to turn an individual's transformative or liberation experiences into a kind of morality play for other Black Americans to emulate. Particularly in Vance's *Courageous and the Proud*, but also in Parks's narrative, there is not only an awareness of the power of "race" and racism in American society, but also an explicit call for individual self-awareness and self-improvement. From adversity, so the theory goes, one can develop the character traits that will earn the respect of white Americans. Having acknowledged Blacks' abilities and capacity for self-improvement, it has been argued, white Americans will be willing to concede social and civic equality to African Americans. These have been recurrent themes in African American culture, even as many Blacks embraced more activist (some would say 'militant') means of achieving their rights. Significantly, of course, the notion of individual self-improvement is a quintessentially American one, which transcends race.

Alongside those similarities, however the are profound differences between the two texts. One important distinction is that the two texts are presented differently. As the title implies, Parks's *GI Diary* is just that – a diary. Although he does not provide an account of each day's military service – obviously, the nature of military life would preclude that, and he notes too, that, one of his sergeants stole his diary whilst Parks was completing basic training – he does include diary entries for many of the days he spent in the army (Parks, 1968, p. 40). We do not know, of course, the extent to which *GI Diary* was edited, first by Parks, and subsequently during the process of publication. Nevertheless, the diary style provides a sense of immediacy, and at least an impression of authenticity. (It is useful to note that authenticity was also a much valued quality in the slave narratives of the antebellum period.) Vance presents his memories of the war in a different way. Making clear that he is writing with an explicit purpose – some might say an 'agenda' – in mind, Vance has written his book "largely in terms of conversations." "Of course," he notes in his Introduction, these conversations are "not verbatim." Nevertheless, despite omitting "most of the less acceptable expressions that characterized much of the original dialogue," he insists that the conversations he recounts "accurately reflect what was said" (Vance, 1970, p.10). Given the stilted nature of some of the conversations Vance chose to include, *The Courageous and the Proud* has a self-conscious, didactic feel about it, that occasionally made this reader feel

as if he was reading a 'Handbook for Black Masculinity', which took little account of the realities of American racism, as it was experienced and understood by young black men during the late 1960s and early 1970s. The irony, of course, is that Vance had much closer experiences with those manifestations of institutional and individual racism than was the case for Parks, at least until he served in the Army.

Both of these books include considerable detail about the battles in which their authors participated. Both authors capture something of the chaotic, panic-stricken moments when battle is joined. And both books offer graphic detail about the impact of the war on all those, civilian and combatants alike, who were caught up in the conflict. Parks's account, however, is the far more plausible of the two. Not only is he a better writer – even in the abbreviated, rushed style that characterizes many of his diary entries – but he avoids writing in clichés, and offers more nuanced descriptions of events and people. Where Vance's account reads in part like a cross between a Horatio Alger tale and a John Wayne-style story of heroics, Parks does not speak down to his audience: at the same time as he avoids presenting himself as the only victim of the conflict, he does not pretend to have all the answers.

To better appreciate the differences between *GI Diary* and *The Courageous and the Proud*, it is valuable to provide a brief discussion of the authors' backgrounds. In the early sections of *The Courageous and the Proud*, Vance explains that he was from "the 'other' side of the tracks" in the small town of Douglasville, Georgia. Emphasizing that despite poverty and hardship, he "loved his childhood," Vance regarded military service as an opportunity to ensure he would not have to "live in a divided town or a half world forever." The day he enlisted – April 20, 1960 – was for Vance "certainly a day to remember" (Vance, 1970, pp. 21-22). Vance, of course, was just one of millions of young Americans who regarded military service as an opportunity to escape poverty and deprivation. That determination to use military service as a means of self-improvement sat easily alongside the culture of the Cold War, which not only placed renewed emphasis on the traditional American sense of individualism, but which also stressed that the United States was involved in a do-or-die struggle against Godless communism. Vance returns to these themes a number of times in his narrative.

David Parks's background provided a dramatic contrast to Vance's. Touching on an issue that has long been regarded as central to the alleged "failure" of the Black family, and by extension, the African American community, Vance emphasizes that he "didn't have a father" when he was growing up, Conversely, Parks's father, Gordon, is a well-known photographer, composer, writer, and filmmaker – an "American renaissance man" (Vance, 1970, p. 22; Norton Museum of Art, 1999). Growing up in a relatively affluent, famous family, David Parks inevitably had a different perception of American racism to most Blacks. Clearly, for middle-class Blacks such as Parks, American racism is experienced differently than it is by the larger number of poor Blacks like Vance. When the twenty-one year-old Parks was drafted into the army, he did not hesitate to serve, despite the knowledge that some African Americans were describing the conflict in Vietnam as a "white man's war." As one observer has noted, Parks was willing to go to Vietnam "because he was an American," who "believed in America" (Lester, p. 2).

Nevertheless, the fact that Vance volunteered to join the Army, whilst Parks was drafted, is perhaps indicative of the choices the two men perceived in their lives. It is telling, too, that Parks and Vance served in Vietnam at different stages of the war. Drafted in 1965, Parks was in Vietnam during 1966 and 1967, whereas Vance was "in

country" during 1968-1969. If one can generalize about the attitudes and experiences of the nearly three million Americans who were sent to Vietnam during the 1960s and 1970s, it could be said that those who saw service during the earlier stages of United States involvement in the conflict – the period when Parks was in Vietnam – tended to be more optimistic about American objectives. Those Americans who served later, particularly in the period following the Tet Offensive of early 1968, which did so much to shatter the illusion of American progress in the war, and which highlighted the futility of trying to defend a regime that never enjoyed the support of the majority of South Vietnamese, were more likely to express doubts about United States involvement in the conflict. Significantly, however, in the case of Parks and Vance, that generalization is turned on its head. Parks was soon disillusioned by what he saw and experienced in Vietnam, yet Vance continued to express confidence about the righteousness of America's cause, even as the Vietnamese communists' ability to launch the Tet Offensive in early 1968 suggested the war was fundamentally un-winnable for the United States and the regime in Saigon. Despite appreciating his Army's tactical and strategic failings, Vance concluded that the United States ought to see the war in Vietnam through to the end. "If we pulled out now," he tells another Black veteran late in his account, "all the men who had died for" South Vietnam, and for "our nation would have died in vain." Drawing an analogy from an earlier period of American history, Vance responds to those who declare the United States has "no right" to be in Vietnam: "But did the French have a right to ship arms to America during their struggle with the British?" (Vance, 1970, p. 159-60).

Writing after his service in Vietnam, Parks presents a contrasting view to that expressed by Vance. Whereas most of Vance's memoir is set during his service in Vietnam, one-third of Parks's narrative details his military service prior to his departure for Vietnam. Whilst Vance recalled that joining the military was a liberating experience, Parks notes that as soon as he had taken the oath by which he was inducted into the Army, he "felt trapped." The shock of basic training, with its physical and emotional stresses, was particularly traumatic for Parks, who had "goofed off after two years in college" (Parks, 1968, p. 12). Concerned about the prospect of being "sent down South" for his basic training, Parks noted that the "farthest south he'd been" was "Greenwich Village" and he was keen to "keep it that way" (Parks, 1968, p. 16). Sent to Fort Riley, Kansas, for his basic training, Parks noted that while it could be cold during winter, "anything's better than cotton country" (Parks, 1968, p. 18). Unlike Vance, who determined early on that life in the military could be his means of individual salvation, Parks concluded during basic training that he was "not good army material" (Parks, 1968, p. 22). Alienated from many of his fellow recruits – "they have the worst habits I've ever seen," he wrote – Parks lamented he had never "had such bad feelings against white guys before." However, he placed the responsibility for that antagonism squarely on the shoulders of the whites: "I've never met white guys like these before" (Parks, 1968, p. 34).

Vance, too, acknowledges the presence of racism within the Army. Yet he insists that expressions of racism should not alarm Blacks, who should use such displays as a means of demonstrating their moral worth and sense of self-respect. After declaring that he wouldn't be "bothered" if someone in the Army called him "nigger," Vance recounts that he responded to the taunts of one soldier – "Do you understand me, boy, do you understand" – with equanimity and patience. "I feel sorry for you Mitchell, I really do." Referring to a theme that is obviously of deep personal significance, Vance

tells his protagonist: "You're not a man." Central to Vance's construction of Black masculinity was the need to *earn* the respect of all his men. "I felt my men respected me and looked up to me, whether they were white, black, or brown," Vance took the role of platoon sergeant very seriously (Vance, 1970, pp. 22, 26, 30).

Parks reacted differently to white racism. Whereas Vance presents military life as a microcosm of the melting pot – "men of all races, and from all walks of life" – Parks notes the differences between various groups:

> It's strange, all these guys gathered here from all over the States. It's stranger still when you think that we are all going supposedly for the same cause – when half of us don't have a decent word for the other half. When we stand out there and salute that flag, or march down the road to cadences, we're together. Other times – forget it (Parks, 1968, p. 40).

At the risk of over-simplifying, Vance's description echoed the more optimistic, integrationist vision of Martin Luther King, Jr., whilst Parks's views reflected the realities of white racism as they were described by Malcolm X. The war in Vietnam provided a context in which those differences, and the broader contradictions in American, and African American culture, were most sharply exposed.

Malcolm X, and other Black leaders, emphasized the importance of individual African Americans realizing they were not alone in encountering racism within the United States. It was crucial, they argued, that Blacks understand their own experiences as part of the larger pattern of American racism. Parks was under no illusion in that regard. In December 1966, as he traveled by train across the United States to Oakland, California, from where his unit would embark for Vietnam, Parks was able to share his experiences with "Tubbs," a "very intelligent" African American. Tubbs's "experiences with white sergeants and officers," Parks explains, were "almost identical with" his own. Indeed, all "the souls" on the train talked "about the hell they caught, the nasty details, and the browbeating" (Parks, 1968, pp. 51-2). If nothing else, then, for Parks and tens of thousands of other African Americans, military life was a consciousness-raising experience, which alerted them to the possibility of collective action.

In Vietnam, Parks and Vance encountered many of the same fears and frustrations as other Americans. A constant refrain from American soldiers and their officers was the enemy did not act as an enemy should, by joining a set-piece battle. Within a month of his arrival in Vietnam, Parks encounters a "couple of VC" who had been "captured." "They were just children," he recorded in his diary, "not more than fifteen or sixteen years old, short and skinny." "If this is what we're fighting," he continued, "I wonder why the war is taking so long" (Parks, 1968, p. 62). Like his compatriots, however, Parks soon appreciated that the enemy was an elusive one, who fought on their own terms. As Vance put it: "Charlie is shrewd in many ways; he fights only when he wants to, and when he feels sure of victory" (Vance, 1970, p. 138).

More generally, however, Parks and Vance had relatively little to say about the Vietnamese they encountered. Both men were witness to acts of brutality against Vietnamese. Explaining why his unit was under investigation after allegations that it was responsible for acts of atrocities, Parks referred to the mutilation of Viet Cong corpses by Americans: "I've seen Sergeant Young wearing a pair of dried-out VC ears around his neck on a string. I've heard others were cutting off privates." He also noted that he had "heard" that his "new platoon leader" – and he specifically identified this

man as a Southerner – was being prosecuted for “making an old woman crawl through the mud with his gun pointed at her head.” “He’s got to be sick if it’s true” reflected Parks (Parks, 1968, pp. 108-9).

The Vietnam conflict was not the first time Americans were responsible for the mutilation, or even murder of enemy soldiers. Such practices have taken place in almost every war, by combatants from all sides. Arguably, however, the scale of the brutality in Vietnam exceeded that of many other conflicts. Some observers have suggested that the degree of brutalization that was evident in Vietnam – most notoriously associated with the My Lai Massacre – can be attributed to Americans’ contempt for those they considered to be “lesser” races.

This suggestion raises several interesting issues. The first point to make is that despite all of the attention that has been paid to the consequences of the American conduct of the war, it has been claimed that the most brutal units in the Vietnamese conflict, were not the Americans, nor their enemies, but the South Korean units who fought on the American and South Vietnamese side. It is not well known that at the height of the war, there were approximately 50,000 South Korean troops serving in Vietnam, a significant force, whose contribution was praised by William Westmoreland and other Allied officers (Westmoreland, 1976, pp. 256-8). The zeal with which the South Koreans prosecuted the war suggests the limitations of a simplistic, racially-based explanation for the brutalities and atrocities of the war.

To return to accusations of American atrocities, attributing American brutality as simply a consequence of white Americans’ contempt for those they often derided as “gooks” is ultimately an unsatisfactory explanation for Americans’ actions. Both Parks and Vance provide evidence that African Americans, too, participated in acts of cruelty against the Vietnamese, including civilians. Of course, war is fundamentally a brutalizing process, and there is no reason to assume Black Americans were adequately trained or prepared to deal with what they would encounter in Vietnam. African Americans, moreover, were exposed to, and participants in the same culture of violence as their white compatriots. Nor should we forget that some of the worst acts of violence in Vietnam were perpetrated by Vietnamese against other Vietnamese.

One group for whom both Parks and Vance expressed considerable contempt was the South Vietnamese Army (Army of the Republic of Vietnam, or ARVN). In this respect, their conclusions were no different to the mass of Americans, who routinely derided the ARVN, for their alleged unwillingness to engage the enemy. Besides remarking upon the failings of the ARVN, Parks also criticized young South Vietnamese men who avoided military service. After a visit to the South Vietnamese capital, he noted that “Saigon is full of young men running around on motorbikes. I wonder why they aren’t out here fighting with us [?]” (Parks, 1968, p. 114). Vance, too, remarked that the South Vietnamese “weren’t doing their share of the fighting” (Vance, 1970, p. 59).

Despite their refusal to stand and fight, enemy soldiers – usually labeled “Charlie” – did earn the grudging respect of American servicemen. The ability of the Viet Cong and North Vietnamese to withstand the ordeal of American firepower, and their willingness to fight to the war’s conclusion, contrasted to what might be called the American way of war, which meant that at any given moment during the period of large-scale United States involvement, no more than 15% of service personnel were in front-line roles.

The American ability to prosecute war effectively – based in part on an underlying confusion between military and political objectives – was often further constrained by the poor tactical judgment shown by officers. Both Vance and Parks remark upon this shortcoming. In part, the problems reflected the practice of rotating officers through Vietnam postings. For junior officers to achieve promotion, battlefield experience was almost essential. Consequently, officers frequently commanded units for just a few months, "punching the ticket" as it was commonly known. On the battlefield, this inevitably meant there was a lack of institutional or organizational memory concerning the best ways to locate and close with the enemy. The equally inevitable result was that American units suffered unnecessary casualties. Near the end of his narrative, Vance notes that "Over and over again we had been ignoring a basic law, which is never to walk on roads and trails" (Vance, 1970, p.141). Parks was no less blunt. Following an episode in which several Americans were killed by a mortar round fired by other Americans, Parks recorded in his diary that "Somebody just goofed" (Parks, 1968, p. 84).

Determined to avoid such mistakes, and to teach other soldiers of the importance of conducting the war carefully, with due regard for the lives of their men and those of the people they claimed to be defending, Vance was in effect calling for better leadership within the Army. Implicit, perhaps, is a suggestion that if African Americans could achieve higher ranks in the Army, it would be possible to prosecute the war more effectively. Juxtaposing the non-commissioned officers in his own unit, who developed "the habit of reviewing combat situations and the way things were going" to the actions of some white soldiers – including a white man who had "chickened out" – Vance suggested that the pressure of having to perform above the level required of white men was bringing the best out of his Black troops (Vance, 1970, pp. 86-7). No doubt, by the time *The Courageous and the Proud* was published in 1970, by which time Richard Nixon had already commenced winding back the American commitment in Vietnam, and conceded, in effect that the war could not be won, many of the men serving under Vance cared little about the conduct of the war. Instead, they focused on ensuring they were not killed in a war their nation had long since repudiated. In that regard, Parks was effectively vindicated. Although he, too, acknowledged that he was going to be a "different man" if he left Vietnam "in one piece," he left the war disillusioned with the Army, and, by extension, with white America. Upon his arrival in San Francisco in September, 1967, he noted "I'm a Negro and I'm back home where color makes the difference" (Parks, 1968, p. 133). Nearly four decades later, despite a growing Black middle class, and despite significantly greater opportunities for many African Americans, Parks's conclusions remain valid for millions of Black Americans.

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2 Lazarillo in Limerick – *Angela's Ashes* and the Shadow of the Picaresque Tradition on Contemporary Literature

Ivan Cañadas

In writing his acclaimed autobiographical work, *Angela's Ashes: a Memoir of a Childhood* (1996), a book characterized by irrepressible humor and the spirit of survival in the face of adversity, Frank McCourt has re-popularized a picaresque tradition in literature. [1] Indeed, *Angela's Ashes* highlights a profound preoccupation in much contemporary writing with 'true-life', as well as marginal individualism, concerns which underpinned the very emergence of the European novel as manifested in the prototype of the picaresque genre, the anonymous *Lazarillo de Tormes* (1554).

Angela's Ashes has produced some controversy in Ireland, particularly in Limerick, which is the main setting of the novel. Kevin Cullen attributes this controversy to a contemporary 'resent(ment)', in the context of Ireland's recent 'economic renaissance', towards McCourt's portrayal of a less-than-appealing past; Cullen cites the role of the *Limerick Leader* in seeking to undermine McCourt's credibility −interviews of people named in the novel, and the printing of a photograph of McCourt as a Boy Scout, presented as evidence that the author did not endure as deprived a childhood as he depicts in his novel (*Limerick Globe*, October 29, 1997). Such criticism of *Angela's Ashes*, manifested in terms of attacks on the author's portrait of a city and time, illustrates a tendency for factuality that Edward A. Hagan rejects as absurd in the light of such patently creative touches as McCourt's description of his own mother's birth, "told as a present-tense re-creation … [of] events that Frank obviously never observed" (Hagan, 2000, p. 43). Hagan expands on his defense of *Angela's Ashes* by arguing a distinction between terms biography, and memoir: "it is possible … to point out that the term 'memoir', as opposed to "autobiography", implies invention, or that a memoir may embody the truth of fiction" (p. 51).

Evidently, decorum, as much as factuality, underpins some adverse responses to the novel. As reporter Gerard Hannan explains, "For many older residents," McCourt's claims that his destitute mother entered into an adulterous relationship with her brutal cousin, Laman Griffin, is "beyond the beyonds"; a former neighbor of the McCourts told the *Irish News* that McCourt had "prostituted his mother" in *Angela's Ashes*, an accusation which he tellingly raised to a national and religious level when he confronted the author at a book signing: '''You're a disgrace to Ireland, the Church and your mother''' (Hannan, Online, Ch. 13). As we shall see, controversy – the disturbing portrayal relationship to the harsher, less presentable, realities of life – and a parodic, subversive relationship to "official" discourses and genres were characteristic of the picaresque genre from its earliest days – and it is within this tradition that *Angela's* Ashes unfolds. But, first of all, we should address those literary forebears.

[1] An earlier version of this paper was presented at the Fourth Conference of ANZAMEMS, University of Melbourne, 2003. This research was supported by Hallym University Research Fund, 2002 (HRF 2002 - 03).

The Life of Lazarillo of Tormes, and of his Fortunes and Adversities was first published in 1554, the author's anonymity reinforcing the book's claims to verisimilitude. While *Lazarillo* was indebted to many literary fathers, religious and secular, above all, it looked back to *The Golden Ass* of Apuleius, in which Lucius, transformed into a donkey, experiences the worst of the Roman imperial world (Fiore, 1984, p. 82). On the religious side, *Lazarillo* could count Saint Augustine's *Confessions*; indeed, one critic has argued that the *secularization* of the confession theme was the most important contribution of the Spanish picaresque genre to European literature (Zahareas, 1979, p. 103); another has labeled the picaresque novel 'a *paradigm* for the novel as a whole' (Freedman, 1968, p. 75). Perhaps one of the most comprehensive yet workable definitions of the picaresque novel is that provided by Robert Fiore:

> The picaresque novel, which begins with *Lazarillo de Tormes*, emerges as a 'slice-of life' pseudoautobiography in which the *pícaro,* an eyewitness narrator and frequently a social delinquent, is a *histor*. He is an enquirer and observer who examines the past, and presents the reader with his version of the truth (p. 6).

Thus, picaresque novels present a satirical vision of society through the autobiographical narrative of a marginalised individual, whose experience of hardship generally results in cynicism or disenchantment. In additon, despite the sheer range of characters who interact with the protagonist, there is an essential theme of human isolation. It should be noted that constant movement was not an essential feature of the picaresque genre in the period. This point is worth stressing because the sense that a picaresque novel must be a *road* novel – not just a *rogue* novel – characterizes English descendants of the Spanish picaresque, including such eighteenth-century English novels as Tobias Smollet's *Roderick Random* (1748). There is a disparity between English literary scholarship and its Hispanic counterpart where the picaresque is concerned, a divergence which sees the term applied, rather loosely, to the modern American *road novel* – and even the *road film* – sometimes described as picaresque merely on the basis of comic, *picturesque* characterization and episodic structure. (For an example of this, see Sherrill, 2000).

Above all, the picaresque *antihero* is an outsider. Although geographical movement may signify this exclusion, in *Lazarillo* itself – the primary model for the subgenre – much that is alienating occurs in the place to which the roads led: the early modern city. For, as Franco Moretti has argued, the road, at the core of 'the very beginning of the European novel', points in the direction of the essentially *secular* world represented by the new urban centers:

> Castile works here as a sort of large funnel, that, between Salamanca and Alcalá de Henares, collects all the main characters and channels them towards Madrid, Toledo, Sevilla … . These novels turn their back to the pilgrims of the *Camino de Santiago* for roads that are much more worldly, and crowded and wealthy (Moretti, 1998, p. 48).

The link between the picaresque novel and the carnival tradition must also be stressed. Although the *pícaro*'s experience may seem appaling, the theme of survival –

manifested, ultimately, in the simple fact that the *picaro* is left to tell the tale – makes that experience paradoxically comic (Pope, 1994, p. 72). The picaresque is an essentially parodic form, involving the subversion of ideals in such literary traditions as chivalric romance, as well as religious and moral literatures, and the conventional assertions of honor and social distinction. The realities of the body, namely the facts of pain and hunger, in turn, constitute an assertion of a shared humanity that cuts across social distinctions: we all have bodies. There is, furthermore, an emphasis on the body's grotesque potentialities – the belly and the genitals, famously defined by Mikhail Bakhtin as 'the material bodily lower stratum', which, Bakhtin argued, plays a dual function, both 'degrading and regenerating' (*Rabelais and His World*, 1968; 1984, p. 79). The contrast between the 'classical' body of high culture and the 'grotesque', or 'festive', body has been elaborated upon by Stallybrass and White (1986):

> The classical statue has no openings or orifices whereas grotesque costume and masks emphasize the gaping mouth, the protuberant belly and buttocks, the feet and the genitals. In this way the grotesque body stands in opposition to the bourgeois individualist conception of the body, which finds its image and legitimation in the classical (pp. 21-2).

Beneath the façade of degradation, parody and laughter, lies the positive, or serious function of facing, and, in a sense, prevailing against, the fears of death, hunger, and suffering:

> Folk-festive culture had evolved specifically to combat this dread [of the elemental and destructive forces of nature and the supernatural], and to bolster a 'true human fearlessness' via a celebration of the immortal, collective human body (Gardiner, 1992, p. 51).

In *Lazarillo*, the narrator, a grown-up *Lázaro* de Tormes, gives an account of his life, commencing with his humble birth. His father ran a mill on the side of the Tormes River, that being the sole basis of the narrator's aristocratic-sounding name, *de* Tormes – in fact, a nickname; caught stealing grain from his clients, Lazarillo's father faced interrogation and punishment. Sentenced to banishment, the disgraced miller joined a campaign against the Moors – in the menial capacity of mule driver – in which service he died (p. 25). Already, we may recognize the pattern of ironic subversion – in a context of social degradation – which is characteristic of the picaresque.

Struggling to make a living, Lazarillo's mother became involved with Zaide, a black slave employed nearby. But, the birth of their child saw the relationship exposed, followed promptly by punishment when the petty thefts through which Zaide supported the family were discovered (p. 26). His mother both destitute and socially disgraced, Lazarillo's narrative commences in earnest, when, aged ten, he enters the service of a blind man, the first of a string of unnamed masters. Lazarillo's relationship with these exploitative men, who impart upon him an education in wiles and hypocrisy, constitutes a critique of the decline in social bonds between masters and servants (Maravall, 1986, p. 212). Though the Blind Man "earned more in one month than a hundred blind men usually do in one year" (p. 28), the boy was hard-pressed to survive, for the man was also extremely miserly. In Spain, hunger is proverbially said to sharpen the wits; to this day, an intelligent person is praised for being "*más listo que el hambre*" (sharper than

hunger). Lazarillo is an exemplar of that notion. Thus, the reader learns of Lazarillo's struggle to survive. But, although Lazarillo's frequently ingenious schemes to trick his master are humorous, the situation also suggests the grim realities of poverty and famine. Moreover, the relationship between Lazarillo and his master deteriorated into mutual acts of cruelty after the Blind Man caught him drinking his wine and broke the pot over his face (pp. 30-31). The boy would lead his master through the worst roads – even though it meant having to share his hardships – while the Blind Man, in turn, beat him at every opportunity. In the end, Lazarillo fled, only to find an even more miserly master – the Priest.

Leading the boy to the brink of starvation, the miserly priest violates a religious bond, a breach represented through a symbolic contest for the bread he keeps locked in a chest – an implicit refusal of the body of Christ and of communion (Fiore, pp. 53-4). Lazarillo's moral perceptions and spiritual outlook were also warped by the experience, as illustrated when he prayed for people to die, as the food at a wake was his only means of keeping body and soul together (p. 40). The parodic, carnivalesque features of the picaresque tradition are illustrated in the treatment of religious convention. In a chapter defined by religious innuendo, Lazarillo describes how he obtained from an "angelic tinker" a key to the Priest's "breadly paradise" (p. 41). Then, to account for the missing bread, he bore holes in the chest, and picked at the bread to simulate a rodent's gnawing (p. 43). Thus, did he raise the specter of a voracious mouse, in time transformed, in the Priest's imagination, into a serpent, which had entered his distinctly earthly paradise and the ark of bread in it (pp. 44-6).

Finally caught and driven, the worse for wear, from this *paradise*, Lazarillo served the Squire, an impoverished minor nobleman, who could barely maintain appearances. Lazarillo was astonished to discover that this man, who paraded grandly about town, had little more that a sword and the clothes on his back. Indeed, the Squire shared the bread that the boy obtained by begging, while he still demanded Lazarillo's discretion: "there's one thing I want you to remember: nobody must know that you're living with me, it's a question of my honour you see" (p. 56). For all that, the grown-up Lázaro continues to have a soft spot for the man; though occasionally exasperated by the Squire's refusal to accept material realities, he suggests that "nobody can give what he hasn't got" (p. 58).

Lázaro's description of the last years is swift. He served a friar, then a seller of indulgences, who rallied his clientele by staging fake exorcisms; there was also a chaplain – an entrepreneur for whom Lazarillo sold water around Toledo on commission – and a bailiff, whom he left to his fate at the first sign of danger. After some years, Lazarillo was able to buy himself a flashy suit of used clothes and an old sword to swagger in; and, noting that he now resembled one of "the good", he promptly left what he evidently considered base labour: "I told my employer to take his donkey as I did not want that job any longer" (p. 76). Lazarillo's evident social pretensions, particularly the importance he attaches to appearances, make him an ironic analogue of the Squire (Fiore, p. 71). Such was Lazarillo's education, after all; and it is such details that make this anonymous work a unified, coherent novel, rather than an episodic collection of tales.

In the end, Lazarillo found what he calls "a government job" (p. 77); in fact, as town-crier, he leads felons to punishment – a disreputable occupation, which echoes his own father's judicial troubles. However, Lázaro's ironically inflected entrance into the ranks of respectable society would be incomplete while he remained unmarried.

Engaged to hawk the wines of a prosperous archpriest, the last of his masters, Lázaro and his new bride – the Archpriest's former *maid* – dine most nights with this 'kind' man (p. 78). And, although people warn Lázaro that his wife has borne the clergyman three children, after so many hardships, Lázaro will not allow 'evil tongues' to ruin his *happy* marriage (p. 78). Therefore, Lázaro distorts the Renaissance honor code by hypocritically threatening to kill anyone who questions his own honor. So concludes this *pseudo-autobiography*, at 'the height', our narrator says, 'of [all] good fortune' (p. 79).

Neither a romance of chivalry, nor a historical chronicle of noble people and national events, *Lazarillo de Tormes* privileges the domestic and marginal as the subject of a new narrative form, the novel. Some critics argue that the picaresque genre was only truly born when *Lazarillo*'s style and themes were reprised in Mateo Alemán's *Guzmán de Alfarache* (1599), Francisco de Quevedo's *El buscón* ('The Swindler', 1626), and some two dozen other books (Parker, 1967). The sheer self-reference of the Spanish picaresque is illustrated, for example, in Juan de Luna's sequel of 1620, which was promptly translated into English as *The Pursuit of the Life of Lazarillo de Tormes* (1622). There, the once-proud Squire, wears 'ragged and tottered Garments', and 'his Hat (right Beggers Block)', with 'no Crown, the better to evaporate the humours of his head' (*The Pursuit*, L8r). While the *raffish*, eccentric character of the figure is evident enough in this early translation, the *picturesque* status of the *pícaro* is better highlighted in the original Spanish, where the Squire is, in fact, said to wear his hat '*a lo picaresco*' ('in picaresque fashion'; p. 13). Having discussed some of the aspects of this seminal picaresque text, I would like to focus on a highly successful recent example of this genre in contemporary literature.

First published in 1996, Frank McCourt's Pulitzer-winning novel, *Angela's Ashes: A Memoir of a Childhood*, presents many continuities with the picaresque genre as manifested in *Lazarillo*. *Angela's Ashes* traces the childhood of the Irish-American author, whose family left New York for the poverty and squalor of Limerick, where they spent the 1930s and 40s, before he returned to New York, at the age of nineteen. One reviewer, for instance, praised *Angela's Ashes* in terms which highlight McCourt's links to the archetype of the *pícaro*:

> It makes you smile at the triumph of the storyteller, a tougher specimen who escaped Limerick's teeming alleys through intelligence and cunning and lived to tell the tale (Penny Perrick, *The Times*, Oct. 28, 1996, p. 9).

Frank's feckless, hard-drinking father presented all the charm and ultimate disappointment of a man who told fascinating tales but failed to provide for his children. But, like Lazarillo, who retained considerable sympathy for the Squire, McCourt recalls his childhood attitude towards his father:

> I think my father is like the Holy Trinity with three people in him, the one in the morning with the paper, the one at night with the stories and the prayers, and then the one who does the bad thing and comes home with the smell of whiskey and wants us to die for Ireland (p. 239).

This passage, of course, illustrates an important analogy with *Lazarillo*; for the very form of this blasphemously carnivalesque simile, which is a means to deal with hardship

and deeply conflicting conditions, is analogous with the bread-ark metaphors discussed above.

Frank's father, Malachy McCourt would wear a collar and tie, even when he sought work as a farmhand. When Frank's mother, Angela, was reduced to picking up coal scraps fallen from passing coal trucks, Malachy, reproached her for behaving 'like a common beggar' and setting a bad 'example for the boys' (p. 72). Yet, for all his seeming high-mindedness, his weakness for alcohol made him neglect his children, three of whom died in childhood. In these terms, he would squander occasional earnings on drink; nor would he bring back any farm produce because, as McCourt explains, illustrating his poignant use of the historical present tense:

> he'd never stoop so low as to ask a farmer for anything. … He says it's different for a man. You have to keep the dignity. Wear your collar and tie, keep up the appearance, and never ask for anything (p. 103).

Peter Lenz, in making a case for the author's debt to, or, at least, familiarity, with the "Irish literary tradition", argues that Frank's father "is *the* sample of the stereotypical *noble peasant*, a tragicomical figure, unrealistic and often groundlessly haughty, that occurs in Anglo-Irish literature from Edgeworth, Carleton, Synge and others" (Lenz, 2000, p. 414). I would contend, however, that the stereotype is much older. Malachy's position is very similar to the situation in *Lazarillo*, where the Squire wants to conceal that the beggar-boy is his servant, though he will share the food gathered by Lazarillo. There is more than a simple analogy between the two texts; the Squire in *Lazarillo* was an early modern archetype which entered the European imagination. As Fiore points out, early translations were read as a source of insight into an enemy nation; this is certainly illustrated in a statement in the 1616 Paris edition of Adrian Tiffaine – referring to the figure of the Squire – that "all Spaniards are the same and would rather die of hunger than take up a trade" (Fiore, p. 20). The influence of this stereotype – and the style and themes of the picaresque tradition – is also borne out in Shakespeare's *Love's Labour's Lost* (1594; 1598), in which the Spanish gentleman, Armado, is forced to reveal that he has no shirt beneath his cloak, but, rather, a dishcloth given him by Jacquenetta, who is herself not a fair lady in a tower, but a peasant girl of easy virtue (V. 2. pp. 703-8).

To return to *Angela's Ashes*, although McCourt's novel presents many examples of social prejudice and iniquity, the failure of care inside the family itself stands out most starkly. For instance, Frank is exploited by his own uncle, "the abbot", through the machinations of his grandmother; paid "a few pennies" to do the lion's share of his uncle's work on a paper-round, he must work in the rain without a raincoat, and later, hungry, he watches his uncle wolf down a large meal that the grown man refuses to share (pp. 194-7).

In the picaresque tradition, the grim realities of exploitation and survival are causally linked to the narrator's development of an ethos of egotism and cunning. Frank realizes that his uncle, despite being slow-witted, is, ironically, wily enough to hide the bread. There are clear similarities between this and Lazarillo's situation in the house of the miserly priest. Indeed, beyond the simple matter of alienation and material want, the reader may appreciate the peculiarly comic nature of the wiles needed to survive. After searching the house, Frank deduces that 'the abbot' carries the bread 'in the pocket of the overcoat he wears winter and summer'; the boy therefore waits for his uncle to remove his coat to go to the lavatory, and then cuts a single a slice of bread, both to

avoid suspicion and to refute any accusations, because, he reasons: "You'd have to be a thief of the worst class to steal a single slice of bread" (p. 357).

If *Lazarillo* is framed by accounts of dysfunctional or dishonorable parentage, and other social bonds, McCourt's 'memoir' is no less so. McCourt even addresses his ancestry in such terms, tracing his family history back to his mother's birth and the marital breakup of *her* parents. The opening chapter, therefore, addresses, in carnival terms, factors which play a grim role in the lives of the McCourts. Presented as farce, the drunkenness of Frank's absent maternal grandfather, for instance, foreshadows the deficiencies of Frank's own father. The drunken grandfather drops his infant son (p. 3); this becomes the defining incident in the life of 'the abbot' because – as the reader is reminded throughout the novel – he "was dropped on his head" (pp. 196, 357, etc). Also a result, Frank's grandfather deserts the family; driven away by his indignant wife, who threatened topsy-turvy domestic violence against him, what was he to do, in this carnivalesque episode in the Irish diaspora, but to leave for Australia? (pp. 5-6). Thus, by means of a rapid-fire tragicomic style, the novel's distinct comic tone is established, even while serious matters are introduced. Angela's birth, in turn, is treated as an inconvenience by an ill-humored nurse. Taken from New Year's celebrations; she labels Angela "a time straddler, born with her head in the New Year and her arse in the old" (p. 5). This inversion of the expected sentimental reverence towards newborns establishes the novel's peculiar carnivalesque tone. Tellingly, when McCourt was asked about the kinds of literature that had influenced him, he described reading Swift and Rabelais 'all the time' (Harper Collins Reading Groups; Online).

Such antiheroic, farcical aspects already established with regards to his maternal forebears are reinforced when McCourt introduces his own conception out of wedlock, and the *shotgun wedding* that followed. If the epic form required the hero's noble –if not supernatural – origins, this convention is subverted in the picaresque tradition through the exposure of a conversely shameful family history. While, as we have seen, Lazarillo reveals his father's thievery and his mother's illicit union, in *Angela's Ashes* McCourt describes his own conception in the course of a 'knee-trembler', an act defined as follows:

> A knee-trembler is the act itself done up against a wall, man and woman up on their toes, straining so hard that their knees tremble with the excitement that's in it (p. 6).

Also in line with the popular tradition of carnival, and its influence on literature from Rabelais to the present, McCourt constructs himself as an antihero. Tormented by want, he suffers illnesses, from a bout of typhoid fever, which causes him to bleed from nose and anus (pp. 215-16), to the perennial frailty of his eyes, red with conjunctivitis (pp. 289, 303).

McCourt is, literally/literarily speaking, an antihero. It is the point of this article that McCourt's self-construction, in fact, makes him a close analogue of the prototypical antihero, the *pícaro*. The claim to truth implicit in the novel's subtitle, 'A *Memoir* of a Childhood', in turn, highlights the book's sustained continuities with the picaresque genre – and the comic, *carnivalesque* propensities of the grotesque body noted above:

> If my clothes are bad I'm worse. No matter how I drench my hair under the tap it sticks out in all directions. The best cure for standing up hair is spit,

> only it's hard to spit on your own head. … My eyes are red and oozing yellow, there are matching red and yellow pimples all over my face and my front teeth are so black with rot I'll never be able to smile in my life (p. 356).

Angela's Ashes also addresses the alienating effects of poverty through a gallery of *pícaros* that eventually includes young Frank himself. Among them, there is a fifteen-year-old boy, dubbed Quasimodo, who symbolically pimps his own nine sisters by charging other boys money to spy on them as they bathe (p. 213). Quasimodo's motivation makes him part of a broader satirical mosaic that reflects on the nation's lack of self-confidence. While his dream of becoming a BBC radio announcer – for which he secretly develops "a BBC accent" (pp. 212-13) – may seem absurd, the ideal of the boy's elders during World War II is to secure a job in an English factory in order to send home five pounds a week – money earned, ironically, by aiding the war efforts of the nation that formerly colonized them (pp. 246-52); and fathers, drunk on their advances, board ships to England, "promising to send so much money" to their families that "Limerick will be turned into another New York" (p. 251).

In yet another perversion of piety, there is the grotesque *success* of Mickey Spellacy, who *profits* from the deaths of his relatives as they succumb to 'the galloping consumption', allowing the boy to miss school and to receive money and sweets (p. 192). Indeed, in a grotesque act of would-be patronage, Mickey extends his apparent good fortune to Frank and the other boys, inviting them to the imminent wake of his dying sister. In yet another revealing parallel with Lazarillo – who prayed for the deaths of the ill, as he dreamt of the wake-banquet (p. 40) – Mickey urges the other children to second his prayers for the swift demise of his own relatives, offering his *well-wishers* not only food, but, even, ironically, the communal bonds sadly deficient in their everyday lives:

> Ye can come to the wake and have ham and cheese and cake and sherry and lemonade and everything and ye can listen to the songs and stories all night (p. 193).

Here, the narrator pipes in with an ironic wink at the reader: 'Who could say no to that? There's nothing like a wake for having a good time' (p. 193).

Like Lazarillo's tersely described last years, the last years addressed in *Angela's Ashes*, leading to this Irish *pícaro*'s ultimate cynicism as a self-sufficient adult, are also telescoped; these years are spent in the service of Mrs Finucane, an archetypal miserly moneylender, who counts her money daily, and records transactions in a ledger kept locked 'in the trunk under her bed upstairs' (pp. 389-90). Mrs Finucane is instrumental in McCourt's final plans to escape from the lanes of Limerick to the opportunities which he envisages in America. Supplementing his savings by stealing small sums, he rationalizes: "What is a few pounds after the way the Church slammed doors in my face?" (p. 390). Like earlier acts of 'borrowing' bread and milk from shop doors and the gates of the rich, such rationalization has been identified as "the core of Frank's survival strategy, both physically and morally … [a] kind of pragmatic versatility", which represents the narrator-hero's appropriation of the 'hypocritical morality' of the adult world (Lenz, 2000, p. 417).

More significantly, Frank's very ethos changes, as, *pícaro*-like, he becomes progressively more self-centered – a change demonstrated most starkly in his declining concern for his own family:

> I'll have my escape money to America. If my whole family dropped from the hunger I wouldn't touch this money in the post office (p. 390).

Indeed, in his egotism, Frankie conforms to José Antonio Maravall's description of the *pícaro*'s fundamental social and spiritual isolation, whereby, to paraphrase this leading scholar: *the pícaro's solitude is a feature of the breach of solidarity, of altruistic bonds with others, with whom, nevertheless, one keeps coexisting* (1987, p. 315). Once Frank has reached this point – the sardonic attitude of the fully-fledged *pícaro* – little further development is to be had, and, not surprisingly, the novel moves to a seemingly hasty, end: "I'm seventeen, eighteen, going on nineteen, working away at Easons, writing threatening letters for Mrs. Finucane" (p. 416). The moneylender's death allows Frank to steal the remaining money he needs for a boat ticket to New York, bringing his picaresque journey as a child, growing up in Limerick, to a close.

Responses to *Angela's Ashes* are perhaps symptomatic of a broader, widespread phenomenon in contemporary letters. Looking at the place of literature today, it is striking to see the importance attached in modern writing, and in contemporary culture at large, to the concepts of 'true life' writing, 'reality TV', and so forth; perhaps it is a turning away from exhausted fictional forms and genres. Yet, in looking, at *Angela's Ashes* – subtitled, of course, "A *Memoir* of a Childhood" – it seems that current trends ironically point back to the very inception of the novel form, reproducing the claims to marginal truth of the picaresque genre. It is clear, of course, that writing *based* on fact is never entirely factual; its continuities with fiction – even the question of fabrication – are frequently an issue. But, as we have seen, the popularity of *Lazarillo* outside of Spain had much to do with anti-Spanish sentiments in England, France and elsewhere, where it was read not simply as a *good yarn*, but as an example of realist satire. By the same means, the success of *Angela's Ashes* – the work of an Irish-American author – is undoubtedly a product of the Irish diaspora, one which transcends conventional nostalgic archetypes of "the emerald isle" in order to speak eloquently of those who left Ireland, and to their descendants. A work of creative literature of the first order, *Angela's Ashes* has, at the same time, triumphed by speaking powerfully to a modern readership in terms of the style and themes that were established at the birth of the European novel, over four hundred years ago, in *Lazarillo de Tormes*.

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3 The Role of Language Education in an Intercultural Australia

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The study of languages additional to one's first language is widely believed to have a special role to play in promoting inter-culturalism. In considering this matter, I would first like to point out the limitations of Australia's policy of multiculturalism and argue that the notion of inter-culturalism represents an improvement on it. The connection between language learning and inter-culturalism, in particular the ability to move into an 'third place', will then be considered. Following this, consideration will be given to what sort of approaches can help make language education work most effectively for intercultural communication, since some common approaches appear to be ineffective. Finally the paper will point out practical problems with how languages education is often viewed and delivered. Especially to the extent it can make a valuable contribution to inter-culturalism it deserves to be treated more seriously that it sometimes has been.

The term "multiculturalism" tends to refer to positions that encourage cultural diversity, but with some variations. Parekh (2000, p. 338) claims that it should involve a "creative interplay of ... three complementary insights, namely the cultural embeddedness of human beings, the inescapability and desirability of cultural diversity and intercultural dialogue, and the internal plurality of each culture." Unfortunately, Australia's official policy of multiculturalism does not extend that far. The recent *United in diversity* document (Commonwealth of Australia, 2003, p. 6) bases Australian multiculturalism on four principles, namely civic responsibility, mutual respect for others and their cultures, social equity, and the benefits of diversity. What is missing here is anything close to promoting what Parekh calls inter-cultural dialogue. The document does make frequent mention of social harmony, but in a 'top-down' way. It is to be promoted by Government working with individuals and community, business and government organizations. The most specific Government effort mentioned is its *Living in Harmony* initiative that seems limited to providing grants to communities and to supporting an annual Harmony Day. The current New South Wales Government (2002) document on *Cultural harmony* does not go much further.

Apart from important issues of social justice, Australian multiculturalism does little more than to promote cultural tolerance. That is to say, it simply acknowledges that there are many cultures in Australia and that people should put up with each other's cultures. This is supported by provisions to promote some awareness of other cultures, but no systematic attention to developing people's abilities to not only intersect but also interact across cultures. In discussing this position of tolerance without engagement, Scarino and Papademetre (2001, p. 313) quoted a rather hesitant statement from a 1997 issues paper by the National Multicultural Advisory Council (1997):

> Cultural background is not a special feature of human life; it is just one aspect of the private lives of people and culture cannot be given a special place... [Some people argue that] an individual's language and culture will

> shape his or her identity, but we see this as a strictly private affair. (National Multicultural Advisory Council, 1997, p. 10)

One of the most promising approaches to intercultural education has been through the study of a second language. Such languages have often been called ‘languages other than English’, or ‘LOTE’, an interesting expression in how it treats such languages as “other” in relation to English as the norm. Even though Australia is one of the most ethnically diverse nations in the world, with 25% of all students coming from a non-English-speaking background, the teaching population is overwhelmingly Anglo-Australian (Santoro and Allard, 2003). Therefore, in both students’ and teacher’s eyes in schools, LOTE tend to be constructed as the ‘exotic other’ in opposition to the mainstream, with “normality” being associated with English.

The importance of learning additional languages has actually been a controversial issue for at least the past two decades, but most major curriculum statements, policies and plans assume that the study of languages other than English contributes to crossing cultures. Thus, they take languages education to be an important and legitimate part of the learning experiences of Australian students. As an example, the Catholic Education Office of the Canberra and Goulburn Archdiocese LOTE Policy Guidelines take language study to enhance students’ skills in cross-cultural communication by promoting awareness, understanding and appreciation of other cultures as well as their own, and to promote a wider world-view by demonstrating the interrelatedness of languages and cultures, and how different cultures and languages are linked with and borrow from each other (DEST, 2002, sec. 6).

In a recent review of LOTE education the Department of Employment, Education and Training (DEST, 2002, sec. 7) acknowledged that “the key rationale for learning a language other than English is to acquire and develop knowledge and skills for intercultural understanding and engagement.” The document accordingly proposed the development of a national strategic plan, which would establish the following targets for 2012:

- all students in primary and secondary years should participate in meaningful, effective and sustained programmes in one or more languages
- all students from Year 3 to Year 10 should display an appropriate level of communicative competence, linguistic awareness and intercultural understanding and skills related to a language
- through a variety of incentives, an increasing number of students are encouraged to continue language study in Years 11 and 12
(DEST, 2002, sec. 8)

The reason that languages education has a special role to play in intercultural education is because of the nature of intercultural interaction. As Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco (1999, p. 4) describe it, it:

> Is neither a question of maintaining one’s own cultural frame nor of assimilating to one’s interactant’s cultural frame. It is rather a question of finding an intermediary place between these two positions — of adopting a third place. The ability to find this third place is at the core of intercultural competence.

The notion of a “third place” was first developed by Kramsch (1993). It is an intermediate position that is distinct from both one’s own culture and anyone else’s. It is extremely important since what people need to prepare when dealing with other cultures is not only familiarity with other culture but also their ability to adopt an outsider’s perspective on their own culture, so that when they encounter difficulties, they are better prepared and appreciate the differences. As Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco (1999, p. 5) stated in reference to language as well as culture:

> In order to adopt an intercultural position it is not necessary to learn all of the languages of one’s potential interactants. The important learning which comes through the experience of difference through language comes through the analysis of one’s own culture and the ways in which language mediates this culture. As Boon ... pointed out: “Culture materialises (through language) only in counterdistinction to another (language)/culture”.

This ability to distance oneself from one’s own culture is thus actually more valuable than specific knowledge of another culture, whether or not it can develop very well without the latter. In fact, it seems that trying to interact within some other culture is the most promising way of distancing oneself from one’s own culture, since this is the only way to be sure that one has moved beyond the latter. Since major cultural differences tend to be accompanied by language differences, and mastering another language requires coping with such cultural differences, this is why language study seems the most promising approach to promote intercultural education.

Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco (1999) have discussed the connection between language learning and the ability to occupy an intercultural “third place”. They believe that multiculturalism without multilingualism promotes a passive form of multiculturalism that stereotypes cultures in terms of just those traits that can easily be observed by an outsider, such as its food, dance, music and arts. “Multiculturalism becomes a kind of voyeurism rather than direct experience, an aesthetic rather than a way of life” (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 2). They suggest that a monolingual approach to educating people for interaction across cultures simply:

> maintains the sense of the other and allows for interpretations of the cultural difference as recognisable deviations from one’s own approach. One’s own approach, however, remains both unanalysed and normative within such a framework. The participant in a multicultural interaction remains an external observer of difference. (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 4)

There is actually wide agreement that common approaches to the study of languages other than English cannot in themselves be expected to ensure effective intercultural education (e.g. McMeniman and Evans, 1997; Lambert, 1999). Research conducted by Ingram and others (2004, pp. 11-2) indicates that the situation is complicated. They found no correlation between either language learning or cultural knowledge and positive attitudes towards other cultures, and cultural knowledge alone can even lead to a worsening of attitudes. At the same time they found interaction with speakers of another language to be a key factor in attitude formation, and “celebration”, i.e. “giving learners the opportunity to externalise their own intuitive responses and attitudes for

examination and rational modification" (p. 12), to be a vital factor for the development of positive attitudes. This might be compared with Carr's (2005, p. 36) emphasis on the importance of authentic experiences and challenges for learners at different levels and with different interests. The research summary by Ingram and others (2004, p. 12) also noted that culture shock can play an important role in the process because it arouses awareness and can stimulate discussion. In his book on *Language Shock* Agar (1993) refined this notion by using the expression "rich points" to refer specifically to notable incidents of communication breakdown that not only alert us to cultural differences, but whose analysis may also provide bases for understanding their specifics.

There is a somewhat similar stress on the importance of "noticing" in an explicitly intercultural approach to language teaching being developed in Australia (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999) The teaching of the language should provide "opportunities to reflect on one's own culture, to experiment with the new culture and to decide how one wishes to respond to cultural differences" (Liddicoat, n.d.). However, even the supporters of this approach do not claim that it will automatically lead to "positive dispositions, regard, empathy and awareness in relation to others' ways of life" (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 4). They do maintain that:

> it is nonetheless clear that interculturally framed second language teaching offers learners a far richer possibility of direct, unmediated encounter with others, that, with good will and opportunity, they can utilise in explorations of human difference whose richness can only be appreciated by encounter and experience. (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 4)

They thus propose that language study "can certainly claim to be the most complete and versatile tool available to understand and to *experience* how language and culture shape one's and others' world views" (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 11), even though they would not insist that it is the only way of achieving intercultural competence.

So far we have outlined the strength and weakness of languages education towards promoting interculturalism. There is probably no way to guarantee the successful development of positive intercultural positions, However, the most promising approach would still seem to be some sort of culturally sensitive study of an additional language that involve authentic experiences and challenges for learners (Carr, 2005, p. 36).

Some documents may suggest that the study of languages other than English is in good shape in Australia, such as the excellent web pages on language curriculum in the Northern Territory (*NT curriculum framework: Languages learning area,* n.d.). However, the reality is rather problematic. After the publication of a *National policy on language* (Lo Bianco, 1987) considerable support was paid to the importance of teaching other languages, but practices often did not keep pace with policy. How much impact did the policy have on helping Australia moving towards interculturalism? Schiavoni (1991, p. 40) expressed skepticism after the event:

> Not withstanding the widespread and ready recognition that Australia is a multilingual and multicultural society, the acceptance of the value as well as the fact seems at times to lack firmness and enthusiasm. It is difficult to avoid the pessimistic conclusion that multicultural and multilingual policies are working merely as transitional measures that only serve to delay the

> process of assimilation that will fatally confront the second and third generations.

What is more, the policy showed its true colours in that same year with the publication of a second version of a national language policy with a distinctly singular title, *Australia's language* (DEST, 1991). As Scarino and Papademetre (2001, p. 307) describe it:

> In the 1991 policy, pluralism was replaced by economic rationalism which boldly prescribed a move towards what has been described as "economic assimilationism" for the common good... the resulting prioritisation placed literacy in English as the highest "priority", followed by learning any other language.

They claimed that the policy encouraged choices among languages for economic reasons, and simplified the interconnected objectives of the earlier policy as the voices of teachers and professionals were replaced by those of managers and businessmen (Scarino and Papademetre, 2001, p. 308). Lo Bianco (2001, p. 31) also states that, while a program known as NALSAS provided both financial support and valuable educational goals for teachers of Chinese, Japanese, Indonesian and Korean for ten years, the explicit motivation for this program was economic, based directly on trade volume statistics. This program also neglected the importance of relating the teaching to out-of-school opportunities for real communication, as some Australian community contexts might have provided (pp. 32-3), and as it approached its completion it seemed that few of its numerical goals would actually be achieved (Lo Bianco, 2001, p. 32).

The executive summary of a *Review of the Australian Government Languages Other than English Programme (LOTE)* (DEST, 2002, sec. 5) pointed out factors that were perceived to have hindered the implementation of the LOTE program:

- Funding for sustainability to ensure the delivery of good language programmes
- Shortage of suitably qualified, quality teachers
- Lack of teacher knowledge especially about Asia and resources
- Insufficiently trained LOTE teachers, especially those who can teach mainstream primary school
- Teacher isolation
- Perceived lack of importance of LOTE
- Rigid certification requirements in some states
- Assumptions that all languages require the same amount of teaching time
- Insufficient hours, particularly at primary level
- Timetable constraints (language is learnt best in an ongoing manner)
- Lack of continuity of language programmes
- Undervaluing of LOTE by parents, children, some educators and the general community
- Language teaching environment
- Class size/demographics
- Lack of a national approach

Many of those inhibiting factors reflect people's attitude towards languages education. In describing the experiences of two Japanese students undertaking practice teaching for Japanese in Australian schools, Hartley (2003, p. 31) noted that one was "completely unprepared for the level of resistance to learning Japanese among some groups of students" (p. 58), while the biggest disappointment of the other stemmed from "her realisation of the manner in which second language study was devalued in a number of the schools she attended" (p. 61). Problems of similar sorts were also listed by Carr (2002, p. 5) as reasons why languages education is generally not a high-profile option in Australian schools; these included lukewarm community support, misalignment between primary and secondary schools, low morale among language teachers, competing priorities in the curriculum, and "the nonsensical turn among the higher echelons of the tertiary sector to reduce support for languages".

I have also experienced such devaluing of language study in some schools. A typical example from a secondary school is that it not only scheduled the language class in the first period of the day, so that tardy students wouldn't miss 'more important' subjects, but on one occasion it replaced the first half of the language class by a science activity without informing the language teacher beforehand. Apparently, there was a guest speaker from Canberra and all year 8 and 9 students needed to attend 'the important' session. As for the language students themselves, they were in the class there by choice, but largely because some of those students disliked the teacher of the one alternative class they might have chosen. To give another example from primary language classes, language teachers tend to be called 'non-contact teachers since most of the classroom teachers use the language study time for doing photo copying, marking, planning or having a cup of tea or coffee somewhere else.

Some language teachers believe that languages education in Australia is gradually dying out since it has a lot more inhibiting factors than facilitating ones. Since 2000, we have seen the downsizing and even loss of programs for such languages as Indonesian in Australian universities as well as secondary and primary schools. It is especially difficult where I teach since the only university in the region offers only two languages. This does not enable students to continue further with any of the others they might study in school. Thus I have observed that my students of Japanese are having trouble finding a reason to study this language at school and ask me for help. The concept of "languages for all" sounds wonderful, but the reality is "languages for some if they are lucky and if they want to". There are problems coming from the provider's (schools') side but also from receivers' (students') as well. Carr (2002) points out that boys tend to avoid languages education, so those that continue into post-compulsory language study are almost exclusively female. To the extent that prolonged language study may prove valuable for intercultural education, is it perhaps destined to benefit just a certain half of the Australian population?

Another practical problem with languages education is the difficulty people educated overseas face in trying to become qualified language teachers in Australia. These can involve difficulties in coming to grips with the culture and language of Australian schools, classrooms and their general lack of power in these situations, not to mention racial or ethnic prejudice (Nakahara and Black, 2005). One Chinese teacher suggested that the greatest difficulties are suffered by overseas-educated teachers who are "not Australian enough" (Kamler, Reid and Santoro, 1999, p. 67), an interesting comment if languages education is supposed to help Australian students become better prepared to deal with other cultures.

To sum up, how well the study of languages additional to the first language has a special role to play in promoting inter-culturalism is rather problematic. However we have to start from somewhere, and it seems like the field of education is an appropriate place to start. Through language study, students encounter divergent beliefs and value systems, thus helping them reflect on their own society's beliefs and assumptions. Thus it is clear that "interculturally-framed second language teaching offers learners a far richer possibility of direct, unmediated encounters with others, that, with good will and opportunity, they can utilize in explorations of human difference whose richness can only be appreciated by encounter and experience" (Crozet, Liddicoat and Lo Bianco, 1999, p. 4). Therefore, language study is vital for intercultural education, although it may not in itself be sufficient to ensure intercultural success.

What is vital is a decision about how serious Australians, as a nation, are about becoming a truly multilingual society and moving towards an intercultural Australia, and the extent to which governments will commit to changing the current situation. If people in Australia should believe in the value of becoming an intercultural Australia for the next generation, and if education must play an important role in achieving it, then we might expect our educators to display it themselves by becoming intercultural first and then teaching the children. It would be totally reasonable to add a requirement for registered teachers to have attained some level of proficiency in at least two languages (one being English) and associated intercultural competence, so they would be better prepared to help their students attain a similar intercultural competence and experience in being the "exotic other" at least once.

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Reviews

John Walter de Gruchy, *Orienting Arthur Waley: Japonism, Orientalism, and the Creation of Japanese Literature in English*, Honolulu: University of Hawaii Press, 2003, pp. vii-280.

Orienting Arthur Waley discusses Arthur Waley (1889-1966), "a younger affiliate of the renown Bloomsbury Group" (p. 1) who translated Japanese literature extensively between 1921 and 1933, including his celebrated version of the eleventh century masterpiece of court literature, *The Tale of Genji*.

In the past, Waley has been either ignored or undervalued as a "hermit Japanologist" (p. 12). Indeed, Waley's devotion to Japanese classical literature during the 1920s and early 1930s has sometimes been criticized as a form of escapism. However, *Orienting Arthur Waley* challenges this view and attempts to clarify his politics of translation, focusing on the ideas of anti-imperialism and anti-Orientalism. As a member of the Bloomsbury Group that believed that "art should play a leading role in the improvement of society" (p. 21), Waley attempted to challenge Eurocentric "assumptions of racial and cultural superiority" (p. 63). The means he chose in doing so was in and through the translation of – and thus an introduction to the cultivation and sophistication he saw in – classical Japanese literature.

> What was so interesting about East Asia at this particular time in history that so much attention was paid to its cultures? Why would anyone, like Waley, devote his entire life to the translation of Asian literature? What need had the market for his books? How did Waley's Japanese translations – most of which were hugely successful – participate in the construction in the West of a particular image of Japan? And why were they so successful? (p. 6)

To explain why Japan mattered, de Gruchy starts his book with a description of the historical background of the late nineteenth century. It was the age of Japonism and imperial competition. Western Powers attempted to demonstrate their domination of the world by means of exhibitions characterized by "the triumphal display of art, artifacts, and curiosities from the farthest reaches of the colonized globe" (p. 19). While Japan was not colonized in a military sense, it "certainly had fallen in the vast sphere of British hegemony" (p. 19). Thus Japan too was put on display, objectified as an effeminate Other by the masculine Orientalist gaze.

> Japonism began in France. At the time of the Paris Exhibition in 1867, Japanese art such as *ukiyo-e* was exhibited, having a notable impact on the French impressionists. In Britain, Japonism could be seen in Oscar Wilde's aestheticism and Gilbert and Sullivan's popular opera, *The Mikado* (1885). Aesthetic Japan was admired as "an imagined preindustrial European paradise" (p. 20).

This feminised image of Japan, however, was not one that modernizing Japan wished to promote. Indeed, through a concerted push to modernize, Westernize, and industrialize, Japan had endeavoured to demonstrate to the West that it, unlike other non-Western

countries, was "strong" and "rational" – a masculine rather than a feminine nation. This effort bore fruit (at least superficially) when Japan defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War in 1905, and came to be regarded as both as a military power and as "a serious economic competitor" (p. 26). Some Europeans interpreted this victory as the emergence of a "yellow peril". Others, including many Britains and members of left-wing circles on the continent, saw it as the emergence of a "yellow hope". Indeed, those Britains "who opposed British imperialism for various political and moral reasons (…) saw Japan as a possible leader of the East against the imperialist West" (p. 29).

Waley was one such individual who looked to Japan to play a leading role in fighting Western imperialism. However, as we will see below, like many other anti-imperialist thinkers in the West, Waley was forced to face the perturbing result of having regarded Japanese imperialism as "different" (and therefore not malignant) from Western imperialism. Waley clearly differed from many contemporaries in the form his anti-imperialism or anti-Orientalism took. Indeed, from first to last he adhered to the "feminine" field of art. That is, instead of lauding the rapid economic growth or military strength of masculine Japan, he praised the "delicate manners and highly cultivated aesthetic taste" of *Genji* (p. 119).

Waley's emphasis on an effeminate Japan might appear to make him an Orientalist rather than an anti-Orientalist. However, according to de Gruchy, to view him so would be wrong. First, we must understand "his cool unimpassioned approach" (p. 66) to the subject. Before Waley, however much Japan was admired, the "admiration was contingent upon an unshakable Victorian confidence in the ultimate superiority of western art and civilization" (p. 17). Japan enjoyed an "uncritical admiration" (p. 66), but this was only the reverse expression of the assumption of Western cultural superiority. Waley challenged this Orientalist attitude. Secondly, we must understand Waley's view of civilization, which he shared with the Bloomsbury Group. He did not assume civilization to be, or to be represented by, masculine industry and military power. For him, civilization was feminine, represented by the cultivation and sophistication he discovered in *Genji*. Locating femininity above masculinity, Waley reversed the schema of Orientalism into that of a civilized Japan and a "lamentably utilitarian" (p. 33), or uncivilized, West.

What drove Waley to anti-Orientalism in the first place? First, Waley was neither quite English nor quite "white", being of Jewish origin. He was born Arthur Schloss, changing to Waley when his mother resumed her maiden name in 1914 to hide their Jewish identity because of the anti-semitic mood of the time. Marginalized in British society, "Waley made the conscientious identification with victims of imperialism" (p. 54). Moreover, Waley was also an "outsider" in terms of his sexual orientation. Since "male-male sexuality had long been a part of the Japanese warrior tradition", Western homosexuals including Waley frequently viewed Japan as a place where a "different type of sexuality" could be practiced (pp. 47, 49). Needless to say, as de Gruchy notes, this view of Japan, where the sexual desires of the observer were projected back onto Japanese culture, could also be criticized as a type of Orientalism.

Waley's translations, and especially *The Tale of Genji*, were well received. His attempt to challenge Orientalism by introducing the sophistication of classical Japanese literature was (at least to a degree) realized. It is important to note that there were some precursors such as Ezra Pound who had introduced Japanese literature to the West. Unfortunately, however, Japanese translations before Waley were "not received with much enthusiasm". Indeed, it was Waley "who introduced Japanese literature to a wide

public" (p. 2). There is no doubt, as de Gruchy notes, that the high literary quality of Waley's prose contributed to his success. His prose was even described by Raymond Mortimer as "the most beautiful English prose of our time" (p. 120). His *Genji* was actually read by many of his Western readers as a modern "English novel" rather than as a "translation".

Moreover, there is another important element behind *Genji*'s success: the post-World War Ⅰ background. Since the post-war world was an "ugly, materialistic" one, Waley's *Genji* presented to Western readers an "alternative order" or "everything the modern West was not", that is, a "peaceful, civilized, nonindustrial society" which reminded his readers of a past "golden age" (pp. 138-39, 119). For example, Virginia Woolf, another member of the Bloomsbury Group, understood the work as one that carried an anti-war message. Genji, after all, was a very feminine male hero, someone who challenged the Victorian and then Edwardian "constructions of masculinity" that Woolf would have been so familiar with (p. 120). Japan was viewed as an "adult" country because of its feminine sophistication, while Europe, which lacked this, was depicted as a "child" in contrast. Here Japan is presented as superior because of its spirituality.

In the post-World War Ⅰ environment, the notion of a civilized Japan and an uncivilized West that Waley advocated proved to be an attractive one. It is interesting to note that this notion shares much with the Japanese World War Ⅱ ideology which Waley later criticized. This later ideology is based on the assumption that Japan's mission was to defend the spirituality of the East against the "material" West and justified Japan's territorial penetration of Asia. It is an irony that Waley foreshadowed this particular line of argument without knowing it. The post-World War Ⅰ pro-Japanese sentiments were soon to be replaced with an "anti-Japanese climate" and antagonism when Japan unleashed war on China in the 1930s (p. 157). Since Waley's motives in translating Japan were linked to a political sense of justice, he faced the embarrassment and disillusionment when the supposed "victim" of Western imperialism began to victimize others. Indeed, it was in the early 1930s that Waley switched his object of translation to Chinese literature and *Ainu* (Japanese aboriginal) literature, and began working with materials produced by those oppressed by Japanese. Remaining true to his belief in the importance of siding with the victims of oppression, he called Japan "the Nazis of the East" and called on the "People of Asia" to "unite against Japan" in a pamphlet published during the World War Ⅱ (p. 161).

The key concept of this book, as we have seen, is Orientalism. However, the usage of the word here leaves something to be desired. As de Gruchy notes, there is an "ambiguity" in Waley, which complicates the matter. Waley fought against Orientalism but at the same time played a part in it. Moreover, he himself was also an Orientalized object, being Jewish and homosexual. This ambiguity is not limited to Waley, but extended to the object he treated, Japan. Japan was sometimes Orientalized by the West, but at the same time it Orientalized people like the Chinese and the *Ainu*. As the only non-Western, non-Caucasian empire of the time, Japan was a paradox. Perhaps the major attraction of this book lies in its attempt to shed light on the ambiguity of both. It depicts very well the paradoxical existence of modern Japan and one individual who was involved in creating one image of this Japan.

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