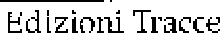
Renzo D'Agnillo

BRUCE CHATWIN

Settlers, Exiles and Nomads



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collana diretta da Francesco Marroni

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To my parents

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R. D'Agnillo

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INTRODUCTION

"Your fascination is people?" asked Gori.
"Yes, in the end. It took rather a long time to discover that"[1].

Bruce Chatwin's assertion that "literature itself is the invention of settlers"[2] is tellingly self-revealing. The view it implies, that narrative activity functions primarily as an outlet for the frustrations and constraints of immobility, is one that lies at the heart of his writing. In this therapeutical concept of the narrative process as imaginative substitution for physical movement, both writer and reader are mutually dependent, so that not only the act of narrating but also the act of reading, as Paul Fussell puts it, "[...] becomes a surrogate, even a trope for the act of travelling"[3]. Such a notion eschews any association between evasion and 'escapism', since Chatwin, as has been universally acknowledged, invariably constructs his narratives in terms of a teasingly ambivalent interplay between fact and fiction — a connection escapism essentially seeks to elude. The constant paradox in his writing, where "facts shimmer on the edge of fiction and fiction reads like fact"[4], where what can be seen as fact always looms discreetly behind what is presented as fiction and vice versa, has become a common hallmark that critics have pinpointed as almost unique to Chatwin alone! Yet, as Percy Adams reminds us: "Travel writers have always been condemned as embellishers of the truth or as plain liars"[5], so that rather than being an exponent or initiator

of some new literary fad, as many would have him, Chatwin, (and not only in his travel writings) should be seen as consciously working within a literary tradition that depends on the lies, tall stories, anecdotes etc, that all of us inevitably use whenever recounting moments or events of our everyday existence to others. It is a mark of our common humanity that our own real life accounts are no less immune to fictitious elaborations! At the same time the question of referentiality is one of the great paradoxes of literature in general, in spite of semiotic and deconstructionist attempts to detach the latter from the objective/external world. As Kathryn Hume says: "Literature bears an inescapable resemblance to reality, and the more the work tells a story, the more necessary the presence of the real"[6]. In his deliberate manipulation of the categories of 'reality' and 'fiction' Chatwin exposes the tenuous nature of their relationship, thereby making the reader simultaneoulsy aware of the fictionalising of facts as well as of the attempt to maintain the essential core of the facts the fiction is constructed upon. For he never completely allows us to forget that his narratives are, for a good part, grounded on his own experiences and that they were actually lived out before they were set down on paper. This sense of first-hand experience, the result of "a genuine passion to inquire"[7], is on the one hand an attempt to remedy the shortcomings of the writer's state as settler, and on the other to provide an extra-textual frame to heighten the verisimilitude of each work. Such an approach has obvious consequences for the communicative role and the nature of the narrator in each text. The sense of the first-person narrator in *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* for example, is

simultaneously that of a real author engaged in a real search (both physical and existential) as well as a textualised self acting within the fictional dimension of the narrative. Likewise, behind the different geographical contexts of his works there is the implicit idea, derived from their semi-documentary approach, of a real author researching material, reflecting on his own ideas, or retracing his own experiences. Therefore, *In Patagonia* is a partly fictional account of a real journey; *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, although more obviously fictional, is based on a real-life character on whom Chatwin himself conducted research in Africa and Brazil; *On The Black Hill*, is a revisitation of the Welsh village of his boyhood where he actually returned to write the novel; *The Songlines*, like *In Patagonia*, is also about a journey Chatwin himself undertook to Australia; and finally *Utz* draws on some of his own personal experiences while working at Southeby's art gallery in the 1960s. Therefore, subjective experiences implicitly form the basis for his narratives and become a mirror to the subjective preoccupations of the author/narrator himself.

The geographical variety of Chatwin's books is an indication in itself of his strong sense of wanderlust — in spite of his own irritation at being defined a travel writer — and that only two of his works (with the exception of his essays and articles) are travelogues proper. The heterogeneity of the countries (all, significantly, non-English) represented in his fiction — Patagonia, Brazil, Africa, Wales, Australia and Czechoslovakia— contributes in no small way to a thematic and stylistic diversity which gives each work a unique form of its own, an aspect that has caused much bewilderment to

many a critic and library cataloguer! This is reinforced by his attempt to portray a given country from an internal perspective, rather than through the detached filtering consciousness of an alien observer (the latter being an approach more typical of the Anglo-Saxon tradition). Nevertheless, in spite of their apparently bemusing diversity in terms of surface representation, on a deep level Chatwin's works paradigmatically reiterate the basic thematic concerns that constituted what he called his "searches"; namely, the nature of man's restlessness, the conflict between settler and nomad, and the question of exile and marginality. Such concerns, besides being recurrent obsessions of Chatwin's own life, are intrinsically bound with his conception and presentation of his characters which can be seen to fall into the three anthropological paradigms of SETTLER, EXILE and NOMAD. The fact that these categories may often overlap in more than one character is a reflection of the complexity and imaginative dynamism of Chatwin's vision, though it in no way undermines the possibility of a coherent discussion of his works. The following study is an attempt to trace Chatwin's representation and dramatisation of these three figures in his main works[6].

NOTES

1 From an interview with Uki Goni, quoted in Nicholas Shakespeare, *Bruce Chatwin*, London, The Harvill Press, 1999, p. 291.

2 Bruce Chatwin, *What Am I Doing Here*, London, Picador, 1990, p. 218.

3 Paul Fussell, *Abroad: British Literary Travelling Between the Wars*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 7.

4 Colin Thubron, "Bruce Chatwin: In Love with Fantastical Tales", *The Sunday Times*, 22 January, 1989.

5 Percy Adams, *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*, Kentucky, The University Press of Kentucky, 1983, p. 85.

6 Katheryn Hume, *Fantasy and Mimesis: Responses to Reality in Western Literature*, New York, Methuen, 1984, p. 4.

7 Nicholas Murray, *Bruce Chatwin*, Bridgend, Seren Books, 1993, p. 12.

8 For reasons of space and organisation discussion is limited to the following five works: *In Patagonia*, *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, *On The Black Hill*, *The Songlines* and *Utz*. References will be made to articles contained in *What Am I Doing Here* and *The Anatomy of Restlessness* whenever occasion arises.

Settlers

Natural and Unnatural Settlers

Chatwin's complex thematisation of immobility undermines his own apparent contempt for sedentary life. Far from receiving a unilaterally negative representation, his settlers can be seen to fall into two diametrically opposed categories; on the one hand, NATURAL SETTLERS, who whole-heartedly and unconditionally embrace the values of settlement, and on the other UNNATURAL SETTLERS, who are, to various extents, forced into a condition of stasis against their will. Thus, immobility is either conceived as a positive state, consciously sought by a character, or imposed by external circumstances beyond a character's control.

Among the settlers whose lives are the result of a conscious choice are solitary characters, living outside society in a solipsistic world of their own. The poet the narrator visits in *In Patagonia* is a case in point. An eccentric, hermit-like figure, he lives in a lonely spot along a river, having decided to stay put in the country forty years previously. Besides the almost archaic nature of his spatial-temporal withdrawal, and besides the fact that his intense stare and over-assertive voice suggest that the narrator is in the presence of a madman, the poet reveals a lively intellect and eclectic culture, as testified by the objects cluttered around his hut:

> The room was dark and dusty. At the back, shelves made of planks and packing cases bent under the weight of books, mineral specimens, Indian artefacts and fossil oysters. On the walls were a cuckoo clock, a lithograph of Pampas Indians, and another of Gaucho Martín Fierro[1].

Withdrawn into a warm, cosy world of daydream, the narrator listens in spellbound awe as the poet reads out the weighty stanzas of his cosmic verse while the rain batters harshly on the tin roof. Completely at home in a country from which his imagination has reaped much poetic stimulation, the poet's two-fold discovery of a geographical dimension (Patagonia) and an artistic vocation (poetry) unites subjective and objective worlds as represented successively by the internal intimate sphere of his hut and the vastness of the external landscape. However, the poet is also one of several characters in Chatwin's works who cannot be exclusively confined to a single condition, for, besides being a settler, he is also essentially an exile and this aspect will be considered in the appropriate chapter.

A similarly solitary character is the 73 year-old communist Jim Hanlon in *The Songlines*, whose old and rusting tin bungalow displays forlorn traces of his militant past:

> In the yard out front there were a stack of empty oil-drums and another stack of ex-Army surplus. At the back, under a squeaky wind-pump, there was a dead Chevrolet with silver-grass growing up through it. A faded poster, pasted to the front door, read 'Workers of the World Unite'[2].

Like the poet, Hanlon is outspoken, and cocksure and retains all the cynicism and bitterness of a man abandoned to himself and to his memories. Thus, the unexpected adjective "dead", applied to the Chevrolet, (a past symbol of modern technology) is poignantly appropriate, and the silver-grass growing through it anticipates the invasion of plant-life in Mama Wéwé's house in *The Viceroy of Ouidah*. Both elements underline the futility and fatalism of human vanity and endeavour, here represented by such 1960s icons as the Chevrolet (a status symbol of the time) and the placard recalling radical protests for equal rights. But the latter values have by no means died out in the man who, instinctively suspicious of Bruce, denounces him as an upper class snob. Indeed, Jim's hostility towards him contrasts sharply with the poet's hospitality towards the narrator in the previous passage. As a consequence, Bruce feels a growing sense of discomfort and embarrassment the longer he remains in his presence and it is not until he and Arkady decide to leave that Hanlon's attitude changes into a desperate and regretful plea for them to remain, revealing him for what he really is; a frightened and well-meaning old-man with an underlying sympathy for human suffering and solidarity.

In his second work, *The Viceroy Of Ouidah*, Chatwin is primarily concerned with the unnatural settler and explores the destructive nature of settlement through the two opposite poles of civilisation and primitivism. Joaquim Coutinho, a wealthy Brazilian landlord who hosts Francisco on his father's plantation, embodies the sly cunning and hypocrisy of civilised man. Unaccustomed to going on long journeys in a saddle, he

is a source of amusement to the slave boys as they watch him dismount from his horse. Whilst Francisco teaches him the various skills regarding horse-keeping, Joaquim holds him spellbound with vivid and detailed descriptions of his possessions, and persuades him to visit his plantations, which is something Francisco is initially loth to do since it means going down to the coast and he has inherited the Sertanistases fear and mistrust of the sea. It is when he arrives at the Coutinhos' plantation house, of which the Simbodji he later builds in Ouidah is an almost direct replica, that Francisco is initially seized by the settler's desire to accumulate material wealth:

> The Coutinhos' plantation house had cross-lattice windows and walls of pink stucco. Green silk curtains rustled in its flower-stencilled apartments. On the verandah there were aviaries of song-finches; and in the dining room vases of blue-glazed porcelain, gilded pilasters and panels the colour of lapis lazuli [...]
>
> And Francesco Manuel imagined he had stumbled on Paradise[3].

Chatwin's dense prose, which is paradigmatic of the whole book, with its catalogueing of items in parallel phrases of adjective + adjective + noun together with the sickly clashes of colour, effectively captures the almost overbearing abundance in the plantation house. On a rhythmic level, the syntactic construction consists of clauses with a series of heavily stressed syllables in juxtaposition ("cròss-làttice wìndows [...] Grèen sìlk cùrtains [...] flòwer-stèncilled apàrtments [...] blùe-

glàzed pòrcelain") that produce a clogging effect as well as suggesting, on a rhythmic level, Francisco's own breathless excitement. The colonel, Joaquim's father, who, with his greed and monomania, embodies the worst aspects of the settler, was, when still a young man, "frenzied at the thought of horizons unpopulated by his own cattle" (VO, p. 60) and consequently extended his ranches into infinity. However, his horses all die together with his ranch hands and he begins to accumulate debts he is unable to pay. The following paragraph is a sardonic resumé of his now utterly immobile condition:

> Fifty years of peppery food and pitching in the saddle had so inflamed his haemorrhoids that he could move from his hammock neither to dine, to sleep, to shit, to pray nor play cards with his chaplain. His one pleasure was to have his hair washed by a lovely mulatta, who would run her fingers through the stiff waves as if peeling the outer leaves of a cabbage (VO, p. 60).

The laconic explanation of the Colonel's malady: ("Fifty years of peppery food and pitching in the saddle") is wickedly condemning in its conciseness (note the teasingly alliterative /p/ in "peppery" and "pitching"). His present state also bears interesting comparison with the King of Dahomey when he eventually appears before Francisco: "The King lay lounging on a bolster of carmine velvet, thronged by naked women, who fanned him with ostrich feathers and wiped the perspiration from his forehead" (VO, p. 84). Both the Colonel and the King are lathargic figures attended on by females and their laziness is the result of permanent settlement. In the

Colonel's case, inertia has led to physical suffering whilst in the King's it has induced him to acts of buffoonery and abuse of power. The native's condemnation of him as a coward and a drunk who has "failed to 'water' with blood the graves of their ancestors" (VO, p. 73) also reveals a barbarism on their part that is a result of the physical and psychological immobility of their lives, governed by the primitive, unchanging practices of tribal warfare and human sacrifice which, for them, constitute natural laws to be passively obeyed.

Francisco himself is ambiguously caught between mobility and immobility and, by extension, barbarity and civility. In this sense, analogies may be made with Jemmy Button in *In Patagonia*, though, unlike Button, who was kidnapped from his island by the Chief Officer of "HMS Beagle" and taken to England where he "grew up an educated man only to revert to savagery almost overnight" (IP, p. 122) on his eventual return to his island with Charles Darwin, Francisco's journey from Brazil to the African jungle represents the inverse course. Also, not only does he continually vacillate between mobility and immobility, but he also casually alternates between civilisation and barbarism while his slave trade is still thriving: "Each year, with the dry season, he would slough off the habits of civilization and go to war" (VO, p. 96). The phrase "with the dry season" recalls the periods of drought which characterise Francisco's early life of poverty and squallor, where his mother "spent most days crouching in the speckled shade of an acacia, smoking a stone pipe" (VO, p. 47). Ironically, the dry season here is synonymous of a temporary moment of mobility which serves to give

vent to the suffocating nature of Francisco's immobility. It is as if the very memory of the drought triggers off violence and destruction. Thus, as a paradigmatic feature of Francisco's early sedentary life, the dry season exposes the ultimately negative effects immobility induces in him, as well as demarking the ruthlessly repetitive and cyclic nature of his existence. Indeed, it is no accident that images of the drought obssess Francisco throughout the novel[4]. Also, in spite of the intrinsic interrelation between immobility and mobility on a formal level, Francisco only seems to recognise a duality between the two states (although this notion is really filtered through the point of view of the narrator) so that immobility and settlement are seen as synonymous of civilisation, whereas mobility is expressed in terms of barbarity. This is why, when he settles down as the Viceroy at Ouidah, he sets about literally eradicating the savage aspects of the landscape:

> He gave Ouidah the air of a civilised town by ordering drains to be dug and streets cut through its maze of pestilential alleys. He planted oil palms and coconuts, and introduced the pineapple. The flatlands were a sea of maize and manioc, and there were rice-paddies along the lagoon (VO, p. 95).

It is an ultimate irony that his encouraging the Brazilians to settle in Dahomey leads to his monopoly being eventually broken and thus to his final undoing. In this sense he is ultimately at the mercy of both the civilised and the primitive world.

Francisco's urge to wander is always initiated by

tales that excite his imagination: firstly, when as a young boy, he hears the cowhands' stories of bandits and pumas and later, when on Joaquim's estate, the black slave Jeronimo tells him his tales of Africa which make him become conscious of his own restlessness, so that when he first comes into contact with the negroes he compares their "uncreased foreheads with the battle raging inside his own" (VO, p. 53). Francisco's ramblings in the first part of the story appropriately end on "a grey, stifling day that held out the promise of rain" (VO, p.54), where the adjective "stifling" hauntingly recalls the droughts of his boyhood, as well as anticipating the overbearingly oppressive nature of his married life with the potter's daughter (which incites in him feelings of rage and violence only sleeping rough can control). His sedentary life grates on his nerves to such an extent that it accentuates his already overpowering urge to murder his wife and child. After venting his blood-lust on their pet cat instead, he leaves the house and takes to his solitary wanderings again: "Believing any set of four walls to be a tomb or a trap" (VO, p. 56). But just as his married life is characterised by oppression, so does the jungle life in Dahomey become, for him, a prison: "The sound of the drumbeats pressed against his temples and he had a presentiment that he would never get out of Africa" (VO, p. 78). Finally, after his abortive attempts to return to Bahia, Francisco spends the rest of his days as a sad pathetic figure, to the extent that "even his own sons spoke of him in the past tense" (VO, p. 119). Immobilty in a country alien to him is evidently the price he has to pay for a life of violence and exploitation. When he disappears after the death of his last wife, Dona

Luciana, he is found crouching in the bushes with a bird perched on his shoulder (an ironic symbol of the freedom denied him). There is also a final poetic justice in the fact that Francisco is forced to resign himself to submission by the use of chains, which were the very symbol of his initial fortune. Thus, the novel enacts a circular process: IMMOBILITY- MOBILITY-IMMOBILITY, starting from one topological representation (Brazil), and concluding in another (Africa); the first representing civilization, the second barbarity.

Undoubtedly, Chatwin's most exhaustive exploration of the theme of immobility can be seen in *On The Black Hill* which was written in reaction to attempts at categorising his works, as he himself revealed: "It always irritated me to be called a travel writer. So I decided to write something about people who never went out"[5]. Chatwin had always intended to write a book about the Welsh border country of Radnorshire in which, as a child, he had spent happy summer holidays, and he considered the area as "a sort of metaphorical home base"[6]. It is also perhaps not without a streak of irony that when he returned there to start work on the novel he discovered that very little had changed in the customs and manners of the people since he was a boy. Thus, the sense of reassurance and stability a life of stasis can provide becomes a central aspect in the novel, where the psychological security it offers the twins is their compensation for resisting an outside world characterised by constant flux, which, for them, only breeds confusion and misery. Yet not only the twins, but virtually all the main characters in the novel barely move beyond a range of very narrowly defined spatial

boundaries, (within the village of Rhulen) the sole exception being their sister Rebecca who is cast out of the family in disgrace by Amos after becoming pregnant and who, significantly, disappears from the novel altogether. The incipit of the novel immediately anticipates its main themes and perspectives: "For forty-two years, Lewis and Benjamin Jones slept side by side, in their parents' bed, at their farm which was known as 'The Vision'"[7]. In a few strokes the whole scope of the novel is laid bare: the condition of immobility of the twins ("slept side by side") together with the long time lapse ("forty-two years") which measures out the immutability of their lives. Their claustrophobic relationship is further heightened by their telepathic abilities, (particularly evidenced in Lewis's ability to draw physical pain from his brother) and the self-enclosed environment of their farm and the limits of their own home ('The Vision') which becomes the receptacle of their domestic dramas and the perspective from which they perceive as well as absorb experience from the external world. Their sleeping together in their parents' bed is a ritual re-enactment of their eventual reunion on the night following their mother's funeral, and is indicative of the sense of continuity they embody as they carry out the very same pattern of life as their parents. But, from another perspective, it can also be seen as an act of renunciation and acceptance: renunciation on Lewis's part of the possibility of being able to choose any other alternative existence to that confined to the farm, and acceptance on both their parts of the impossibility of being separated from each other or away from 'The Vision', which, as Murray notes, is

itself "an ironic name for a place so circumscribed and harshly quotidian"[8]. The conflicting relationship between Amos and Mary occupies approximately the first third of the book. This relationship, which gradually grows from initial incomprehensions to eventual open hostility, is paradigmatic of the struggle between the settler and the nomad. It is significant that the rift between them begins to widen when Mary begins experimenting with extravagant and exotic dishes which only serve to increase Amos's exasperation. His reluctance at any changes she attempts to make to the house together with his repugnance of her cooking, especially her "filthy Indian food" (OBH, p. 33), illustrate the settler's refusal of variation and difference which he sees as a threat to the ordered and uniformed patterns that make up his daily existence. Food, in this sense, is intrinsically interlinked with the culture and customs of the community. For Amos, to accept foreign food is to acknowledge foreign influence and so upset the psychological security of his fixed order. For one thing, he sees all foreign influence as synonymous of a social class (the gentry), which is Mary's class, and one to which he feels hostile towards. The case is similar with the twins' education. Amos is dead set against them going to school for precisely the reason that education is a product of the upper classes and the only thing he considers useful for the twins' future is farm work. The differences between their outlook concerning the twins is already evident during Mary's pregnancy where Amos pictures "a brawny little fellow who would muck out the cowshed" while Mary imagines plans for his career "as a statesman or a lawyer or a surgeon who would save

people's lives" (OBH, p. 37). As with Walter and Gertrude Morel in D.H. Lawrence's *Sons and Lovers*, the male/female polarity dramatises the contast between blind physical force as represented in the land on the one hand, and intellectual enlightenment as represented by civilisation on the other. Amos's physical violence, which the death of his first wife attenuates but does not completely purge, is the natural outcome of the brutality of his views[9]. Like Dom Francisco, his violence seems a product of his life as a settler[10]. He is permanently rooted to the spot, for example, by his obsessive thirst for vengeance in the feud with Watkins, as they both carry out an almost unending series of harsh vendettas over possession of the Vision Farm. Such incidents are symptomatic of the tensions generated by people living in close proximity and in this case there ensues "a ritual war of raid and counter-raid" (OBH, p. 78). The feud with Watkins becomes his *raison d'etre* to the point that, when he discovers Mary's successful attempt in eventually purchasing the farm for a much lower price than the exaggerated one reached at the exasperating auction out-bidding with Watkins, he is so furious that he refuses to have anything more to do with it and turns all his thoughts towards his only daughter, Rebecca, whom he cast out of the house in disgrace years previously. His venomous outburst, the result of years of pent up resentment, is at the same time a concession of self-defeat:

> It had been her connections that got them the lease. Her money that stocked the farm. Her furniture furnished the house. Because of her, his daughter had run off with the Irishman. It

> was her fault that his sons were idiots. And now, when everything'd gone to whinders, it was her class and her letter that had saved all that he, Amos Jones — man, farmer Welshman — had worked for, saved for, ruined his health for - and now did not want!
>
> Did she hear that? DID - NOT - WANT! Not at any price! Nor at any price! And what did he want? He knew what he wanted! His daughter! Rebecca! He wanted her. Back. Back home! (OBH, p. 147).

The use of free indirect discourse ironically weakens the counter attempt to render Amos's rage through short graphic units, capitals and verbal repetition. Whilst inflicting the blame on Mary, the effect of the reiterated feminine possessive adjective "her" is so forced that it eventually turns back to the real cause of what Amos is complaining about; himself: "'Why did I put her out?' he whimpered. He clung to Mary as a frightened child clings to a doll, but to his question she could find no answer" (OBH, p. 147). The comparison of Amos to a frightened child appropriately underlines how he has become unmanned by his own narrow and mean temperament that is a product of the confinement and rigidity of his sedentary existence.

Mary suffers pangs of frustration both as a result of Amos's physical bullying and narrow-mindedness as well as of her limited and cramped existence on the farm. In spite of Amos's pride in the fact that she has "been to the Holy Land and walked in the very same places Jesus himself did", any consolation for her is meagre. Her experiences of India are also something she cannot share

with anyone since India is "too far, too big and too confused to appeal to the Welshman's imagination" (OBH, p. 35) — all adjectives here representing a threat to the smallness and intimacy that, on the other hand, characterise the Welsh community. Mary, therefore, remains essentially an outsider, embodying all that is alien to the villagers' limited perspective, not only in terms of her social status and geographical origin, but, more importantly, of her cultural background. Time and time again she is forced to realise that she has resigned herself to living in a trap: "There were days when it occured to her that she had sat for years in the same damp dark room, in the same trap, living with the same bad-tempered man. She looked at her chapped and blistered hands, and felt she would grow old and coarse before her time" (OBH, p. 88). For Mary the nightmare lies in the 'sameness' of the sedentary life she leads (note the word "same" reiterated three times here), and this sameness is equated with the process of growing old as well as being synonymous with death. The passage bears an interesting contrast to a later one describing Benjamin's ideal horizons in a rare moment of free indirect discourse in which the notion of sameness is given a very different value: "He never thought of going abroad. He wanted to live with Lewis for ever and ever; to eat the same food; wear the same clothes, share a bed; and swing an axe in the same trajectory" (OBH, p. 88). The two points of view expose two belief systems which give a contrasting evaluation of the concept of 'sameness', to create, in the words of Bachtin, "a dialogic tension"[11] between mother and son. For in Mary's eyes, the constrictions of settlement represent the very negation

of life, although she only realises this when it is too late. The ultimate irony lies in the fact that not only does the very twin she bestows most of her attention on completely endorse the values of the settler, but also that she is the one who unwittingly induces him into living such a life. There is furthermore a final irony in Mary's eventual concession to attend the services at the chapel, which, until that moment, she sees as embodying everything that is "harsh and cramped and intollerant" (OBH, p. 84), for it leads to the revelation that great cathedrals were built just as much for man's vanity as for praise to God, and it is this particular revelation that provides her with the spiritual sustenance to bear the dull, grind of her daily existence. The patchwork quilt she embroiders before her death acquires a symbolic importance in the novel, since it not only represents a spatial/temporal unification between the two parts of her life (India/The Black Hill), but also, after her death, acquires the force of a symbol of unity for the twins themselves. Mary's embroidering of the quilt is directly linked to the episode in which her mother-in-law, Hannah, sits in uncanny silence darning a sock, a few days before her own death, and this is further reflected by the synonymous phrases in direct speech alloted to the two women, Hannah's "not long now" (OBH, p. 40) and Mary's "I shall only go to one funeral now [...] and that will be my own" (OBH, p. 172). Such apparently mundane domestic activities recur throughout the novel, and create a circularity that reinforces its sense of insularity. The activities of sewing and darning here move beyond their practical purpose and become a means through which the two women consciously measure out the time remaining for them to

live. Finally, the description of Mary's last days shows her tied down to her fate as settler at the Vision whilst she indulges in reveries over her past life in India:

> To take her mind off her misery, Mary wore herself out with housework; she darned every moth-hole she could find in the blankets; she knitted socks for both her sons; she stocked the store-cupboard and cleaned the dirt from hidden crevices — as though she were preparing before leaving on a journey. Then, when she could work no more, she would collapse into the rocking chair and listen to the beating of her heart. Images of India kept passing before her eyes. She saw a shimmering flood-plain, and a white dome afloat in the haze [...] (OBH, p. 181).

The negatively charged elements, "her misery", "moth-hole", "dirt" which characterise the sordity of her present life at The Vision, contrast with the romantic evocation of the "shimmering flood-plain" and "white dome afloat in the haze" of India. The illusory quality conveyed in the lexemes "shimmering", "afloat" and "haze" also appropriately underline the irretrievable nature of her past as well as enacting her weakening hold on life.

Although both twins choose immobility, they do so for quite different reasons. Benjamin, as a result of his weaker constitution and frequent illnesses, is constantly confined to the house. He is the very embodiment of Chatwin's sense of the inextricable association between the condition of settlement and physical and mental illness[12] as his transformation shows:

> [...] By Christmas he had come back to life — though not without a change in his personality.
>
> 'Oh, we know Benjamin', the neighbours would say. 'The one as looks so poor.' For his shoulders had slumped, his ribs stuck out like a concertina, and there were dark rings under his eyes. He fainted twice in church. He was obsessed with death (OBH, p. 64).

Benjamin's illness differentiates the twins not only from a physical point of view, but also from an existential one. The last two paratactic clauses introduce the paradigm of death with which Benjamin, and, by implication, the condition of settlement, is associated. It is no accident that Benjamin's love for Lewis is at one point described as being "murderous" (OBH, p. 181). Unlike Lewis, he becomes particularly devoted to the intimate sphere of the home, carrying out the household chores with relish and clockwork regularity. However, in spite of his physical weakness, he exerts a powerfully emotional influence over his brother which he takes no hesitation in using to supress his nomadic impulses and blackmail him into resigning himself to sedentary life on the farm. The narrative seems to anticipate this by immediately exposing Lewis's geographical ignorance in its opening pages, his knowledge of the world being limited to "a Bartholomew's atlas of 1925 when the two great colonial empires were coloured pink and mauve, and the Soviet Union was a dull sage green" (OBH, p. 13). Now that the world is "full of bickering little countries with unpronounceable names" (OBH, p. 13), he significantly resorts to chanting lines from Longfellow's Hiawatha as if to suggest that real journeys only exist in the

imagination — his geographical awareness being based on such an obsolete source, it is appropriate that he conjures up a vision of a shadowy and vague dream-world in the first place. Lewis's natural attraction for all that is 'other', is overpowered by his love for his brother and it is this unbreakable tie that causes his ultimate defeat as a wanderer. In Lewis's subjection to Benjamin, therefore, there is an explicit critique of the settler's repressive influence on the nomad and although it is not initially apparent, the diegetic level of the novel gradually exposes Benjamin's role as prime cause of their essentially negative experiences outside the farm. Whereas the visit to the flower exhibition, which constitutes their first real contact with the outside world, shows them mutually responding to the curiosity of the village people by fleeing and hiding under a table where they "[...] so much enjoyed the view of the ladies and gentlemen's feet that they went on hiding until they heard their mother's voice calling and calling [...]" (OBH, p. 44), subsequent experiences merely serve to accentuate their already divergent traits, as when Benjamin is singled out as Miss Clifton's favourite pupil, and Rosie Fiefield takes a special liking to Lewis and Benjamin, as a result of his delicate health, is chosen by Mary as her favourite son[13]. Benjamin's 'tyrany' over Lewis culminates in the fairground scene in which, after their encounter with the two girls, he forces Lewis to follow him home.

Benjamin's own negative experiences of the outside world come to a climax after his subscription into the army during the First World War when he is tormented and tortured by his comrades at the Hereford barracks. After his discharge he avoids showing his face in public

and after the peace celebrations both twins withdraw into a closely confined world which is contracted to the few square miles around their farm. Their only mutually pleasant experience with the outside world is their trip to the seaside, (although it is Lewis who is completely fascinated by the tales of the lobsterman they befriend): "Listening to his stories, Lewis's jaw would drop with wonder, and he would go off alone to daydream" (OBH, pp. 70-1) and it is significant that neither Amos nor Mary take much notice of him when, on returning home, he announces his intention to become a sailor, as if his destiny as a settler were already tacitly acknowledged by everyone. It is no accident that when Lewis is sent to Rhydspence soon after the outbreak of the First World War Benjamin experiences a sense of dissolution that threatens loss of identity:

> Though he ate his food, the thought of Lewis eating different food, off different plates, at a different table, made him sadder and sadder and he soon grew thin and weak [...]
>
> One day, staring into the shaving mirror, he watched his face grow fainter and fainter, as if the glass were eating his reflection until he vanished altogether in a crystalline mist (OBH, pp. 98-9).

Just as sameness characterises Benjamin's proximity to Lewis, here it is difference that heightens the agony of his separation from him. Benjamin's pain in 'The Vision' contrasts with Lewis's pleasure in Rhydspence, where he is quite unoccupied with thoughts of his brother: "He liked his job. He liked to tinker with the new fangled

machinery [...] He liked looking after the pedigree Herefords. He liked the Bailiff [...]" (OBH, p. 99). Lewis's pleasure in his new surroundings (rendered all the more insistent in the reiteration of the phrase "he liked") culminates on his day's outing to Hereford where, after being accosted by a woman for being in civilian clothes instead of fighting in the war, he runs away and loses himself in the sights and sounds of the town. The following passage describing the excitement of the traveller is one of the unique moments in the novel which foreshadows that of the plane flying sequence:

> He nipped off down an alley in the direction of the market. An aroma of coffee beans caused him to halt before a bow-fronted window. On the shelves sat little wicker baskets heaped with conical mounds of tea: the names on the labels — Darjeeling, Keemun, Lapsang, Souchong, Oolong — carried him away to a mysterious east. The coffees were on the lower shelves, and in each warm brown bean he saw the warm lips of a negress.
>
> He was daydreaming of rattan huts and lazy seas, when a butcher's cart rolled by; the carter yelled 'Watch it, mate!' and chutes of muddy water flew up and dirtied his breeches (OBH, p. 100).

In this rare moment of sensually charged reverie, words lose their value as signifying signs to become metonymical representations of a fascinating, forbidden world characterised by warmth and abundance. The comparison of each coffee bean to a negress's lips indicates the extent of Lewis's sexual frustration, and

the brusque interruption of his daydreaming by the muddy water (an ironic counter image for coffee and tea) brings him round to a familiar, but harsh world. This episode anticipates the moment in which Lewis needs to be literally reminded of Benjamin by means of a telepathic message that he is dying from the cold in a snowstorm. A similar pattern of separation followed by reunion occurs in the episode in which Benjamin discovers his brother's sexual liason with Joy Lambert and after a period of self-exile characterised by physical and moral degeneration in which he is reduced to a "[...] bony, sunken eyed man in dirty dungarees [...]" (OBH, pp. 180-1). Finally Lewis returns to reconcile himself with his brother on the day of their mother's death. However, living with his brother inevitably entails renouncing much of his independence, for Benjamin insists on handling his money, refusing even to allow Lewis to buy a tractor, until the Inland Revenue force them to make a purchase of farming equipment when it is discovered that they have not been paying taxes. Nevertheless, Lewis reveals just as strong a sense of the couveteousness and possessiveness typical of a settler to match Benjamin's meanness. When he is finally allowed to purchase the very latest tractor, he jealously guards it as if it were a woman, rarely removing it from the garage. The tractor itself acquires a two-fold significance as a sex surrogate over which Lewis constantly frets, as well as presaging his death at the end of the novel: "Her engine too, was perplexing as a woman's anatomy! He was forever checking her plugs, fiddling with her carburettor, poking his grease gun into her nipples, and fretting about her general state of health" (OBH, p. 201). The

above passage slips almost unnoticeably from metaphor ("her plugs [...] her carburettor") to metonymy ("her nipples") in a grotesque opposition between vehicle (mechanical) and tenor (natural), and in doing so tellingly points to Lewis's own thwarted sexuality. This sexual connotation is all the more significant when it is recalled that the purchase of the tractor is insisted on by Lottie after Lewis's attempt to bestow affection on her.

The daily life of the twins takes on a ritualistic pattern that excludes all external influences to the point that when the Second World War breaks out it "washed over them without disturbing their solitude" (OBH, p. 183). In their strong attachment to the land, they share certain affinities with the aboriginals in *The Songlines* (although their attachment to the land is narrowly circumscribed whilst the Aboriginals' is extended to include the whole of Australia). Also, similar to the Aboriginals' mystical respect of the rituals of their ancestors, the twins religiously preserve the ritual pattern of daily life handed down to them by their parents. In conserving this intimate bond, not only through their innate fear of the outside world but, ultimately through force of habit, they implicitly defy outside historical events to which they live at a tangent. The episode concerning their experiences during the First World War show how harshly the objective world of political events clashes with their subjective, intimate world which is characterised by a warm, physical connection with the land[14]. In this light their apparent cold-heartedness in their response to the Coventry air raid is appropriate: "And when, one November night, Benjamin saw a red glow on the horizon and the sky lit up with incendiary

flares — it was the Coventry Raid — he said, 'And a good job t'isn't we!' — and went back to bed" (OBH, p. 183). As with the Aboriginals, the twins' inherent mistrust of outsiders is accentuated whenever these come into their confidence. But at the same time Chatwin counteracts any simplistic equation outsiders = threat by representing a number of positive encounters: notably Manfred Kluge, the prisoner of war who is assigned as a helper on their newly acquired farm at the Pant, Lottie, the Jew refugee who is conducting a survey on twins and who soon easily manages to gain their trust (it is she who buys Lewis the tractor) and Mrs Redpath, Rebecca's daughter who introduces them to their long-lost sister's son Kevin. Last but not least, there is the South African nomad Budhist, Theo the Tent. An idealistic Chatwinian character who echoes Chatwin's own eclectic culture and intellectual curiosity. The latter functions as an important parallel as well as a contrast to the twins. For, similarly to them, he has also turned his back on the modern world, though in a very different way. He is one of those free spirits, so central to Chatwin's works, for whom such traps as material possession, rivalry and jealousy — typical features of the settler and of the twins themselves — are alien. He constitutes an alternative means of escape from the outside world through an embracing of its spiritual-intellectual values and although his wide ranging speculations go way over the twins' heads, they heighten the verisimilitude of the scenes between them, which, in turn, serve to dramatise the contrast between two alternative choices; that of the nomad, characterised by the search for inner knowledge and a mystical communication with the universe, and

that of the settler by a cramped and limited existence, dominated by petty squabbles and greed for possession and thus to finally expose the limitations and defects of the latter. Theo also functions as a contrast to Amos. Indeed, the binary opposition represented by Theo and Amos is an important one, even though the two characters never actually meet, because by symbolic extension they generate the positive and negative natures of the paradigms of mobility and immobility. As a result the twins, who have inherited none of their father's violent nature, at least manifest an interest, even a sympathy, for the poetry Theo recites and some of the views he expounds upon — something Amos would have been loth even to listen to. Theo is therefore a necessary figure to drive home the point that the twins, for all their limitations, never go as far as assuming the negative traits of their father, and this factor is certainly an important one in inducing a sympathetic response towards them on the part of the reader.

Besides the twins, several of the other characters in the novel, are also marked by their eccentricity. Meg The Rock is no exception. As Nicolas Murray suggests, she appears to have been constructed in terms of Chatwin's admission that "he consciously employed a Celtic inspired imagery to give the book a kind of moral framework"[15] and that as a result, she can be identified as a wood-spirit or dryad[16], as the following metamorphic description confirms: "Her skin was plastered with reddish mud. Her breeches were the colour of mud. Her hat was a rotting stump. And the tattered green jerseys, tacked one to the other, were the mosses, and creepers, and ferns" (OBH, p. 210). Although, as a settler, Meg's

daily horizons are confined to the world of the Rock, she is paradoxically the least self-centred character in the novel. Her natural goodness, is particularly bestowed on animals — a trait she shares with Jim the Rock — with which she communicates so sympathetically as to be able to perfectly mimick their sounds. As a generous, life-giving spirit it is no accident that Meg's only lengthy speech is an assertive celebration of life: "'[...] Let 'em live, that's what I say! Let 'em live! Let 'em rabbits live! And 'em hares live! Live 'em stoats go on a-playin'! Aye, and 'em foxes, I won't harm 'em. Let all God's creatures live!'" (OBH, p. 211). The paradigmatic nature of the otherwise obsessively reiterated phrases reveals Meg's language to be as simple as her generosity is spontaneous and selfless. Her lack of self-interest goes to the extent of her even refusing to be hospitalized after becoming seriously ill for fear of leaving the animals without food. Meg's real shortcoming is her almost total ignorance of the everyday world of human experience. She is unable to do the simplest sums or read or write, and when Kevin and Lewis visit her on her farm she can only dimly remember how to lay the table. She represents nature as opposed to 'nurture' and it is perhaps appropriate that Theo, being her direct opposite in this sense, sympathises with her suffering and innocence and chooses her as his companion. For Meg is completely oblivious of the misery and degradation of her life on the farm with Jim, who frequently mistreats her but towards whom she expresses a staunch fidelity. A comparison between Meg and Marta in *Utz* is more than inviting. Like Meg, Marta is also abandoned as a child and sleeps rough on a farm where she looks after a flock of geese. Like Meg

also, she is considered to be a simpleton and her fondness for animals can be paralleled with Marta's affections for birds, in particular the snow-white gander with which she actually falls in love. Just as Meg represents a dryad-like spirit, Marta lives out the mythical dimensions of a fairy tale, but whilst the natural world in which Meg lives is a harshly physical one (as the young Kevin all too quickly learns!), Marta seems to lives in an ethereal idyllic dream world not untinged with eroticism:

> She had reared him as a gosling, and whenever she approached, he would let fly a low contented burble and sidle his neck around her thighs. Some mornings, at first light when no one was about, she would swim with her lover in the lake, and allow him to nibble her long fair hair[17].

The ultimate question with which the reader is left at the end of *On The Black Hill* is to what extent it can be considered a condemnation of the ways of the settler. The problematics behind such a query regard Chatwin's own narrative method, which creates a balance between impersonality and compassion. This is a quality he has in common with Lawrence, particularly the Lawrence of *Sons and Lovers* with which the novel shares other things besides[18]. Unlike Lawrence, however, Chatwin's characters are revealed in their two-dimensional aspects and almost entirely through an external persepective. There is very little analysis or psychological penetration into their actual thoughts, rather, the narrator reveals their traits either through narrative report or through their patterns of behaviour. Thus, for example, the twins' repeated habits are rendered in such unconscious or

deliberate acts as Lewis's removing his hat from his head everytime he meets a stranger, or Benjamin's strict application of his mother's rota of household chores. It is precisely the balance between impersonality and familiarity that engages the reader's sympathy with Chatwin's characters. Indeed, there is hardly a main character in the whole novel who is not seen both in positive and negative terms. This allows for credibility as well as a suspension of judgement which, if anything, is a responsibility that is shifted onto the reader. It is also evident that since Benjamin and Lewis essentially engage the reader's sympathy any final condemnation of them appears to be most problematic. Chatwin's vision is above all a compassionate one and any moral judgement can only be externally imposed rather than formulated in terms of the fictional representation of the world of the novel itself. Nor does Lewis's death imply the final defeat of the nomadic spirit and the triumph of the settler, for without his brother Benjamin becomes completely confused and lost and is reduced to silently and helplessly witnessing the last outsider to enter his home, Kevin's wife Eileen, not only selling off all the old furniture of his house, but also entirely redecorating it and replacing the family photos with pictures of the Royal Family. Thus the impersonal outside world of objectivity takes over the intimate, subjective world of family affections. There is, therefore, no final victory on either of the twins' part precisely because they are both each other's half — and by symbolic extension, the two halves of the same humanity which cannot function in isolation but only by inter-relating with each other.

Utz, one of Chatwin's most enigmatic characters,

finds himself faced with a dramatic choice in which his destiny as exile or settler is at stake. After a temporary escape to Switzerland from the torments of the Communist régime, he soon becomes disgusted with his materially comfortable but useless existence as an exile and returns to Prague. His decision to return there has a two-fold significance. First, it is an ironic defiance to accept the absurdity "to live within the lie" (U, p. 82) of a repressive régime. For Utz's recognition of the symbiotic relationship between his own melancholy temperament and that of Prague underlines the inevitability of his ironic submission of which Prague's is an extension. Second, irony apart, it is simultaneously an act of deliberate resistance towards the authorities who intend laying their hands on his collection of porcelain after his death. This resistance is also revealed in his insistence upon the small details of his everyday life. The following passage shows precisely the extent to which Utz's destiny as a settler depends upon the incongruence of having chosen such a life of repression in which apparently elementary and trivial factors acquire the force of a moral victory:

> She (Marta) understood, by instinct, why he insisted on the details: the sauce in a sauceboat; the starching of shirt cuffs; the Sèvres coffee cups on Sunday for a coffee composed of roasted barley and chicory! the minor acts of style to demonstrate that he had not given in (U, p. 84).

Utz's destiny as settler is further underlined by his family heritage, his ancestors having been relatively wealthy landowners in the Sudetenland. Alongside this,

various factors regarding his own life are anticipated in the figure of his grandmother who, significantly, like Mama Wéwé and Benjamin and Lewis, embodies the settler's apparently staunch denial of the passing of time (evident in the fact that "her skin refused to wrinkle or hair turn to grey" (U, p. 17), but simultaneously bears the marks of time through her crippling arthritis. Similarly to the Patagonian woman and to Mama Wéwé, she also fills her home with an incongruous combination of objects, in this case religious paintings on the one hand and suits of armour on the other. Finally, the investments she has made in various countries which, as she consults them on her globe of the world, she gleefully imagines increasing after her death, anticipates Utz's fretting over his own investments in Switzerland and his similar preoccupations over their destiny after his death. The description of the old woman casually spinning her globe of the world is later echoed when Utz buys a pocket atlas and flicks through it at random in the desperate search for a suitable country in which to live. Ancestral patterns of behaviour thus reinforce the idea of impending destiny that looms throughout the novel.

Utz's annual trip to Vichy, while being on temporary release from the harassment he is forced to undergo at the hands of the Communists, is characterised by a decisive lack of adventure, apart from an initial sense of expectation (soon thwarted) of making some kind of romantic attachment there, and only brings home to him the unreality of such an exilic existence. The novel reveals the cyclic pattern which is the symbolic re-enactment of the inevitable fatality of his existence which revolves around his annual pilgrimage to Vichy and his

inevitable return to the claustrophobia of Prague. This pattern can be outlined in the formula: ESCAPE-FREEDOM-REPRESSION; temporary escape towards a freedom that soon turns stale and return to the condition of repression from which he initially seeks to escape. His exilic life in Vichy becomes a wandering, limbo-like state where things gradually lose all sense of reality. As with Francisco, Utz finds it impossible to break away from his destiny as a settler. Just as Francisco longs to return to Bahia, Utz finds himself pining to return to Prague (in spite of his sense of acute claustrophobia in "living at close quarters with Marta and his lifeless porcelain" U, p. 88) — neither of these places, it is to be noted, being, strictly speaking, their home towns —. But whereas Francisco never realises his dream, Utz is able to ply his apparently negative situation into one that becomes beneficial for him. As a result of his obsession over his porcelain collection, Utz's world gradually becomes circumscribed to the two essential presences in his life: the porcelain collection itself and Marta, his wife-servant, who is his only real accomplice in this obsession and the only human being in whom he can completely trust, with the exception perhaps of his friend Dr Orlick with whom he has dined every thursday since 1946 — an example of fixed regularity worthy of the Jones twins! —. As in *On The Black Hill*, there is a gap between the private world of the main character and the political world of events. Like Benjamin and Lewis and Francisco, Utz is a loner, who espouses no political creed in spite of the fact that his life is irrevocably altered by political and social revolution. Nevertheless, his non-commitment and aloofness from world events do not

prevent him from exploiting both the Second World War and the Communist Revolution for the benefit of his collection. His initial befriending of the communists is undertaken with this very aim in mind and is an example of his essentially unscrupulous nature. He finds in Marta a woman willing to serve him and tolerate his sexual liasons, which are categorically confined to female opera singers. It is, incidentally, significant that Utz's obsession for porcelain finds a corresponding obsession in his sexual preferences, for it shows that his monomania for objects is also extended to the human world.

The real author's conflicting attitudes towards Utz are filtered through the point of view of the narrator. As with Francisco and Benjamin and Lewis, it is clear that Chatwin does not entirely endorse Utz's way of life or his views. For one thing, Utz inherits the settler's sin of lust for material possession which, as a collector, becomes his mania and in this sense his condition of settlement is equated with madness. This is ironically confirmed when Utz's mother questions the family physician about his obsession and is told that it is a perversion. Furthermore, the very name 'Utz' has a series of negative connotations including 'drunk' and 'dimwit' and therefore the choice of such a name surely belies an inherent criticism, which the narrator's partly objective point of view is not loth to reveal. It is, of course, tempting to see in this a negative evaluation of Chatwin's own past occupation of collecting paintings for Sotheby's Art Gallery[19]. In this respect, the narrator's description of a research holiday he himself once undertook in Prague with the aim of writing a work on "'The

psychology — or psycopathology of the compulsive collector'" (U, p. 12) is teasingly autobiographical. Utz's own notions on the significance of collecting are outlined in a quotation from one of his own articles in which he decries the existence of museums and their attempt to de-naturalise objects. Collecting the Meissen statues becomes, for him, synonymous with rescuing them. Just as they were made in the same factory, so should they all return to one place, and that place is not in a museum, but in the house of a passionate collector who with "his eye in harmony with his hand, restores to the object the life-giving touch of its maker" (U, p. 20). This idea of rescue may be connected to Utz's humanitarian actions during the Second World War in which he helps to save the lives of some jews in return for information of the whereabouts of certain works of art: "What, after all, was the value of a Titian or a Tiepolo if one human life could be saved?" (U, p. 24). The free indirect discourse reflects Utz's own thoughts and throws a sympathetic light on his enigmatic character, if only for the fact that it seems to go against his anti-historical/anti-social vision. This latter aspect of Utz is something the narrator-protagonist himself realises in a moment of revelation as he watches him performing a mock dance with his statues:

> And I realised, as Utz pivoted the figure in the candlelight, that I had misjudged him; that he, too, was dancing; that, for him, this little world of figures was the real world, and that, compared to them, the Gestapo, the Secret Police and other hooligans were creatures of tinsel (U, p. 114).

But Utz's delight is simultaneously tainted with an inner anguish, for in turning his apartment into a home for the porcelain collection he both forsakes his own personal freedom as well as negating the world of human affections. His eventual acceptance of Marta as his lawful wife is seen by the narrator as a recognition of this lack on his part and his ultimate desire to compensate for the fact. However, autobiographical analogies aside, the narrator does not necessarily voice the real author's opinions and the open-ended interpretation as to the final outcome of the porcelain collection reinforces the confirmation of a suspended judgement rather than an outright condemnation or expression of sympathy. The final sense is that, like Benjamin and Lewis and Mama Wéwé, Utz lives outside time and history, but, unlike them, he chooses to remain within it in order to be outside it, because to remain within it he has to pretend it does not exist. The ultimate paradox of his condition lies in the simultaneity of choice and refusal, in which a morose misanthropy co-exists with an acute consciousness but ultimate scorn of outside events. There is an ambivalency about Utz's existence, a fact that depends upon his own deliberate withdrawal into a self-created world which leads to an extreme limit in which the conditions of exile and settlement overlap.

Settlers' Homes

Homes are emblematic of sedentary existence and Chatwin devotes considerable attention to descriptions of his settlers' homes. He shows a particular interest in

the various ways they choose to inhabit their private spheres and the extent to which their choices reflect their desire for security, as well as their fears and dreams. To recall Bachelard: "A house constitutes a body of images that give mankind proofs or illusions of stability"[20] and Chatwin himself reveals an awarenes of how powerful a metonymic representation of the settler's physical, psychological and spiritual condition a home is. These three aspects are also interrelated to the parallel features of reflection, expression and foreboding, in which more than one may be simultaneously present in the same character. This is the case in the first example, from *In Patagonia,* where the permanent allocation of each object in Mrs Davies's living-room reveals her to be a woman dead set in her ways, with an obstinate resistance to a changing outside world which she watches go by in almost abstract apathy (the description is also an interesting anticipation in embryo of that of 'The Vision' in *On The Black Hill*):

> In the afternoons she sat on the east porch, out of the wind, and watched the hollyhocks and the peonies changing day by day. The living room hadn't changed since she came here as a young bride in 1913. The pink walls were the same. The two Sheffield-plate trays — they were wedding presents — were on the mantlepiece, and the two pottery pugdogs. On either side of the dresser were tinted photographs of her husband's parents who came out from Ffestiniog. They had always hung there and they'd hang there when she'd gone (IP, p. 29).

But this description also discloses a material and spiritual condition that depends upon the notion of stability and security which in turn presages the changeless nature of the woman's life beyond the room ("[...] and they'd hang there when she'd gone"). The passage pivots around the repetition of the verb "change" provoking a counter shift from CHANGE to NON-CHANGE ("Changing day by day [...] the living room hadn't changed"), thus equating the external world with change and flux and the internal world with immobility and stasis. To reinforce the sense of immobility, the repetition of the short atomic sentences, together with the reiteration of the definite article, creates the effect of a list underlining the familiarity and permanency of each object. The stubborn and matter-of-fact tone of the last sentence also suggests a free indirect report of Mrs Davies's own words and this is qualified by the narrator's discrete admiration of what he sees as her inner strength ("You could tell she was tough underneath" p. 29), confirming an overall impression evinced from the passage of the woman's firm-mindedness. The objects exhibited in her home, therefore, embody constants that protect her vision of internal stability and order from the threat of external change and flux.

In contrast, by becoming prey to time and circumstance, homes can also fail to provide protection from the outside world. Chatwin's description of the Chilean Indian woman's rotting cabin is eloquently antithetic to the security, comfort and solidity of Mrs Davies's sitting room:

> Segñora Sepúlveda had boarded up the living-room windows when the glass fell out. She had pasted newspapers over the cracks, but you could still see scraps of the old flowered wallpaper. She was a hard-working, covetous woman. She was short and stout and had a bad time with her husband and the rotten cabin (IP, p. 42).

The description reveals a quasi-visceral struggle between Segñora Sepúlveda and her cabin in which the irrevocable laws of change are manifested in terms of imminent decay. Her frustratingly unsuccessful attempts to combat the harsh natural elements that threaten to destroy it are rendered all the more poignant by her own physical toughness ("hard working [...] short and stout") — a toughness similar to Mrs Davies and that is such a recurrent trait in Chatwin's female characters — and the ineffective remedy she uses: "She had pasted newspapers over the cracks". Far from providing for the most elementary functions of stability and protection, the log cabin has become a trying test of endurance. Chatwin also compounds the further irony that in spite of her awarenes that the cabin has a certain distinction she is totally ignorant about the identity of its builder (Butch Cassidy) which is the reason why the narrator has visited her in the first place.

The house in which Francesco de Manuel is born in *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, manifests a similar naked symbiosis between natural and human world:

> The house had a grass roof and walls of packed mud and scantlings and stood in open country

> in a clump of umbu trees. The shutters were painted a cool blue, but the coolness was an illusion (VO, p. 47).
>
> [...]
>
> The three rooms were bare, whitewashed, flyblown. Folded hammocks hung like hams from the rafters: the saddles, hats and halters hung in the porch. There was a statuette of Onuphirius to guard the door and one of St Blaise to keep off ants. The woman kept a white cloth on the alter table long after she had stopped praying for anything in particular (VO, p. 48).

The Sertanistas are a wild and poor people whose lives are bedevilled by drought. The lifelessness and apathy of their existence is effectively captured in the second quotation in which apathy and expectation co-exist. Religious elements (the statuette and the alter) are placed alongside common everyday items ("hammocks [...] saddles, hats and halters") and link back anaphorically to the episode in which Francisco's daughter is later to fill her home with religious and profane objects to a much less harmonious effect. The sense of emptiness and apathy is particularly emphasised in the reference to the objects hanging uselessly in the bare, whitewashed room and the comparison of them to hams is a cruel evocation of the absence of food and ironically, points to their condition of poverty and deprivation together with the fact that Francisco's mother has given up all hope of expecting any practical or spiritual comfort.

Chatwin also shows a concern for the way in which homes constitute icons for self-expression. In this case

the characters exploit their homes as a means of asserting, rather than merely reflecting, their personalities. This is paradoxically the case with Utz. In converting his apartment into a home for his porcelain collection, he apparently seems to be denying himself his own living space and to be creating his own prison: "It was a narrow room, made narrower by the double bank of plate-glass shelves, all of them crammed with porcelain, that reached from floor to ceiling" (U, p. 49). But this sense of confinement contrasts with the illusion of a "'dream palace' multiplied to infinity", created by means of a mirror, in which human presences move "like insubstantial shadows" (*Ibid*). The contrast metaphorically alludes to the limitless space of Utz's subjective world represented by the statues and the limitations of the objective world represented by the poverty and suppression of Prague. Therefore, although Utz's statues are the main cause of his being physically a prisoner in his own home, they are also the means through which he vindicates a personal freedom and moral superiority with regard to the outside world. Utz's home becomes "the non-I that protects the I" in his daydreaming[21]. The narrator's role as prying outsider is exposed by the intimidated and awkward manner with which he moves around the interior space of Utz's home: "You had to watch your step for fear of tripping over one of the white porcelain statues [...] (U, p. 49) I picked my way around [...] (U, p. 52) I rose to join him, almost barking my shin on the corner of the Mies Van der Rohe table [...]" (U, p. 96). Likewise, when he pauses to take in the details of the contents of Utz's bedroom, the latter, irritated by his curiosity, impatiently waits to

hustle him out. The narrator's penetration of Utz's rooms becomes the most accessible means for him to acquire the appropriate clues that allow for a gradual understanding of the man. Thus, the decorated silk dressing gown in the bathroom that he understands as belonging to Marta and the apparently incongruous elements in Utz's bedroom, form parts of a puzzle that he has to continually piece together in the attempt to arrive at a composite picture of this mystifying character. The narrator also more than once entertains the idea of a mutual relation between people and their homes. Thus, on being informed that Orlik is a collector of flies, he instantly conjures up a mental image of his home: "The unmade bed and emptied ash-trays; the avalanche of yellowing periodicals; the microscope; the killing jars [...]" (U, p. 33) as a reflection of his stereotype idea of the absent-minded scientist.

The following description is also a fine example of Chatwin's fine eye for incongruous detail:

> The woman had covered the walls of her room with collage. Her surroundings had enflamed her imagination. The showpiece was a painted plaster head of a Japanese geisha, haloed like a madonna, with the hairy thighs of Argentine footballers. Above this was a pottery dove, emblem of the Holy Ghost, now converted to a bird of paradise with blue plastic ribbons and dyed ostrich plumes. She had placed a photo of the Patagonian fox next to a crayon drawing of General Rosas (IP, p. 79).

Here, the inventory of inanimate objects serves to expose the decadent nature of their owner. There is again a sense of incongruity in the incompatible juxtapositioning of the religious and the secular, ungraciously interrelated throughout the passage, which reveals an aesthetic and moral confusion that foreshadows Mama Wéwé. The plaster head of the Japanese Geisha, combines female and male eroticism with its being, on the one hand, "haloed like a madonna", and on the other rendered grotesquely masculine with the hairy legs of a footballer. Likewise, the dove has been reduced from a symbol of Christianity to a mere colourful, tropical ornament. The baroque style of this passage, with its juxtaposition of lexical elements from contrasing codes (religious/secular) also foreshadows the sumptuous language of *The Viceroy Of Ouidah*.

A similar description characterised by images of abandon and decay is contained in *On The Black Hill*, when for the first time, Amos and Mary visit the place that is to become their home:

> They went into the kitchen and saw a bundle of the old woman's possessions, rotting away in a corner. The plaster was flaking and the flag stones had grown a film of slime. Twigs from a jackdaw's nest up the chimney were choking the grate. The table was still laid, with two places, for tea; but the cups were covered with spiders' webs, and the cloth was in shreds (OBH, p. 27).

This description alludes to what is in effect chronologically antecedent to the main narrative. It is thus void of human associations, since the previous

owner has no existence in the novel. Yet its sense of abandon and decay also cataphorically alludes to the poverty and squalor Mary resigns herself to in marrying Amos, and their hard work in renovating the house becomes synonymous of the hardships and struggles she has to endure in her life on the farm. Later in the same novel, Lewis and Benjamin clutter the house with objects of every kind that become symbolic representations of significant moments in their lives:

> Nothing in the kitchen had changed since the day of his funeral. The wallpaper, with its pattern of Iceland poppies and russet fern, had darkened over with smoke-resin; and though the brass knobs had shone as brightly as ever, the brown paint had chipped from the doors and skirting. [...]
>
> On the mantlepiece stood a pair of Staffordshire spaniels, five brass candlesticks, a ship-in-a-bottle and a tea caddy painted with a Chinese lady. A glass-fronted cabinet — one pane repaired with scotch tape — contained china ornaments, silver-plated teapots, and mugs from every Coronation and Jubilee [...] The Georgian pianoforte was proof of idler days and past accomplishments (OBH, p. 12).

Similarly to Mama Wéwé, the twins turn their house into a 'shrine' in honour of their parents, unable as they are to renew anything for fear of obliterating their memory. In doing so they retain a sense of poetry for the things that have passed and are able to relive memories of protection that constitute the essentially anti-historic dimension of their existence[22]. The first part of the

description is characterised by the frequent use of the definite article which, similarly to the description of Mrs Davies's room in *In Patagonia*, underlines the familiarity and 'homeliness' of each object. Although the objects bear the marks of the passing of time, this reflects a casual neglect rather than a total indifference or abandon, as is the case with Mama Wéwé's rotting and decomposing surroundings, here, the only signs of decay are represented by nothing more disagreeable than smoke resin, chipped paint and a pane repaired with scotch tape. The second catalogue links the items by using the indefinite article which has a more distancing effect. The house is also 'invaded' by other objects which become the twins' imaginative connection with the outside world, such as the photographs and postcards pasted all over the walls which, whilst forming an intrinsic part of the limited boundaries of their frozen, protective domestic world, also elude their attempt to transfix time:

> Each time they tore a page from the calendar, they had forebodings of a miserable old age. They would turn to the wall of family photos — row on row of smiling faces, all of them dead or gone. How was it possible, they wondered, that they had come to be alone? (OBH, p. 203).

In protecting them from the outside world the house becomes an intimate embodiment of their dreams[23]. Therefore, Benjamin's disappearance just after Eileen starts to replace the furniture and redecorate the house after Lewis's death, is tragically inevitable. To alter one particle of the house is analogous to destruction and

death. Therefore, the only place in which Benjamin is content to be at the end of the novel is appropriately beside Lewis's grave.

Another description in the same novel reinforces the idea of a bond between people and their homes. The deterioration of Jim the Rock's house coincides significantly with the death of his mother as well as the departure of all the Watkins girls, apart from Little Meg:

> A big bulge had appeared in the gable-end, and the whole wall seemed likely to collapse. Some rafters had given way under the weight of snow. The icy water had steeped through Jim's stuffed animals, and poured from the attic into the kitchen [...] When the spring came, he tried to buttress the wall with stones and railway-sleepers, but so undermined the foundations that it caved in completely (OBH, p. 196).

The physical disintegration of the house parallels the death of the woman who had kept such a strong hold over it and the resulting sense of dejection is particularly rendered through the metaphorically allusive lexical items "collapse", "weight" and "poured". Both animate and inanimate features are linked here through the paradigm of decay (culminating grotesquely in the combination of "icy water" and "stuffed animals") in terms of a vertical movement ("collapse", "given way", "caved in completely") symbolically represented by winter time.

NOTES

[1] Bruce Chatwin, *In Patagonia*, London, Picador, 1979, p. 31 (hereafter IP). Page numbers will henceforth be given in the text.

[2] Bruce Chatwin, *The Songlines*, London, Picador, 1987, p. 88 (hereafter SONG). Page numbers will henceforth be given in the text.

[3] Bruce Chatwin, *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, London, Picador, 1980, p. 59 (hereafter VO). Page numbers will henceforth be given in the text.

[4] When enchained in the King of Dahomey's prison, Francisco significantly recalls all the moments that mark his periods of settlement: "Memories of Brazil kept passing before his eyes: the miserable mud house, the pendulum of his dead mother's leg, the cries of his child, the penitents of Monte Santo, the treasures of the Coutinhos [...]. "VO, p. 88.

[5] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 59.

[6] From an interview with Melvyn Bragg on London Weekend Television's "South Bank Show", quoted in Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 60.

[7] Bruce Chatwin, *On The Black Hill*, London, Picador, 1982, p. 9 (hereafter OBH). Page numbers will henceforth be given in the text.

[8] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 68.

9 Bruce Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness,* ed. Jan Borm and Matthew Graves London, Jonathan Cape p. 100, where Chatwin in his essay "It's a Nomad Nomad World" cites an experiment conducted by American brain specialists which concluded that: "Monotonous surroundings and tedius regular activities wove patterns which produced fatigue, nervous disorders, apathy, self-disgust and violent reactions".

10 The episode in which Amos is on the verge of striking Mary before crying out: "I won't hit you!" (OBH, p. 35) may be compared with that in which Francisco stops himself crashing his guitar down onto his crying baby (VO, p. 56).

11 M.M. Backtin, *The Dialogic Imagination,* ed. Michael Holquist, Translated by Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Texas, University of Texas, 1981, p. 314.

12 B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness,* cit., p. 100: "Without change our brains and bodies rot".

13 There is another interesting analogy here with *Sons and Lovers,* in which Gertrude Morel also singles out the frail, sick Paul as her favourite child.

14 Antonella Riem Natale, *La rabbia innaturale: l'opera di Bruce Chatwin,* Udine, Campanotto, 1993, p. 40, notes that such historical events are excluded from their immobile universe because they threaten to contaminate or corrupt the primordial innocence of their world.

15 N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 78.

16 *Ibid.*, p. 79.

17 Bruce Chatwin, Utz, London, Picador, 1989, p. 62 (hereafter U).

18 There are various analogies that can be made between the two novels. For example, the conflict between Amos and Mary

Jones, is the result of their different class backgrounds, just as it is with Walter and Gertrude Morel. They also share similar themes such as the conflict between mind and body, masculinity and femininity, natural world and community etc. They also both deal with a community that lies outside the main political/ cultural centre.

[19] B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness*, cit., p. 172: "The art collection, then, is a desperate strategem against a failure, a personal ritual to cure loneliness [...]"

[20] Gaston Bachelard, *The Poetics of Space*, Boston, Beacon Press, 1994, p. 17.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 5.

[22] *Ibid.*, p. 6.

[23] *Ibid.*, pp. 8-9. The following comment seems directly applicable to the twins: "[...] the calendars of our lives can only be established in its imagery".

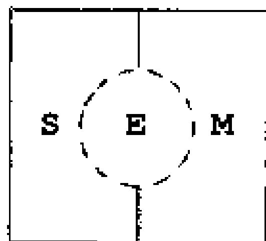
Exiles

The significance of Chatwin's interest in the theme of exile is twofold. First, from a biographical point of view, it must be remembered that his books are always grounded on the subjective experience of the real author's exilic condition. This is seen in Chatwin's own deliberate choice to write both in and about non-English contexts as a part of his quest for a 'nomadic alternative'[1] (It is no accident that all of his central characters are people living either outside or on the margins of society)[2]. Thus, Chatwin's exiles not only exemplify his own natural curiosity for all that is 'other', but are also paradigms of a self-predicament that was to haunt him all his life. Second, from a textual point of view, the doubleness implicit in the co-existence of presence and absence which characterises exile, is also paradigmatic of literary creation itself. For literature likewise involves a duplicity in the absence evoked by the blank page and words which fill that absence. From the moment the literary writer projects his imagination onto the text, he necessarily exiles himself from the 'real' world. The condition of exile can be considered as analogous with the special logical status of the fictional text which is neither true nor false, suspended between belief and disbelief[3]. Speaking on behalf of himself and his fellow travel-writer Paul Theroux in *Patagonia Revisited*, Chatwin revealingly alludes to a *tabula rasa* that, whilst recalling

the nuclear war fantasy of his boyhood, simultaneously evokes the blank page that both represents and, in being 'filled', contains fundamentally exilic experience:

> We are also both fascinated by exiles. If the rest of the world *blew up* tomorrow, you would still find in Patagonia an astonishing cross section of the world's nationalities[4] (my italics).

Also, since an exile is someone who "inhabits one place and remembers or projects the reality of another"[5], the potential afforded by this suggestion of imaginative projection is a gold mine for a writer whose work favours such "outlandish and disquieting juxtapositions"[6]. Whereas the conditions of the settler and the wanderer are exclusively restricted to either mobility or immobility, the condition of the exile comprises both stasis and movement, and it is precisely upon this polarity that Chatwin weaves his narratives of exile in order to create a mythology that reflects his own inner restlessness. To adopt Lotman's semiotic model, we may note that whereas stasis and movement are at opposite poles, exile comprehends either one and thus becomes the boundary through which both spatial states converge.



This spatial representation may be summarised by means of a simple equation: S ↔ E ↔ M where the arrows show exile intersecting either with the dimension of movement or that of stasis.

Chatwin's exiles fall into three categories: those exiled from their country, those from their community and those from events, according to the nature of displacement regarding the individual exilic experience. A tripartite sub-division also reveals the nature of each exile as being either ACCIDENTAL, VOLUNTARY or ENFORCED. Chatwin's works will be seen to explore the multifold aspects of exile on a macro-level in terms of one or more of these three types.

In Patagonia focuses on the first category of exile (country), but within it Chatwin portrays a variety of characters in terms of the above three sub-types, for just as Patagonia is a home to a heterogeneous mixture of peoples, so do the causes of their exile vary, from political or economic motives to fate or circumstance. As Nicholas Shakespeare points out, Patagonia is not a precise region on the map. It is a vast vague territory that encompasses 900,000 square kilometres of Argentina and Chile, a sort of no-man's land from a geographical point of view, and yet, since it spans two nations and contains people from so many different countries, becomes one of those fertile territories of fantasy[7], as well as an emblematic example of the "euthenasia of ancient nations" as foreseen by Stevenson[8]. The notion of the border or threshold is not only a geographical concept but also takes on existential implications. Patagonia is a vast complex of threshold experiences, precisely the kind of marginality to which Chatwin is attracted, and can be seen to constitute what

Cousineau describes as "a mythological image that evokes the spirit of existence"[9]. With the notable exception of *The Songlines*, *In Patagonia* is, without doubt, Chatwin's most 'crowded' book and, as Murray notes, the characters come so thick and fast that the 'eccentric' can, after a time, come "to seem the norm"[10]. The narrator encounters well over fifty people and their appearance in continual succession does indeed produce the impression of a constant flux of humanity which is further heightened both by the accelerated pace of the text with its organisation into short sections and the elliptic style of Chatwin's prose. Together with the apparently impressionistic quality of Chatwin's writing, this variety and complexity of characterisation, together with the shifts of perspective and the blurring of national identities and geographical confines, creates a patchwork effect, which he himself preferred to call his 'cubism technique'. This is one of the book's unique aspects from a structural point of view, for cubism presents objects through their mode of perception in the mind in contrast to impressionism which merely captures the fleeting moment[11]. In parallel with this organisational principle, is the narrator's constant interplay between fact and fiction. Indeed, the very essence of the text depends upon the fictitious or quasi-fictitious rendering of factual occurrence and the presentation of real people who are partly transmuted into fictions alternated with the narrator's attempts to retrace (thus re-write), in an investigative narrative-documentary style, the lives of the country's historical figures and legends (although most of these being nomadic spirits will be left for the next chapter). The choice of Patagonia is intrinsic to Chatwin's

subject and method, being, as Paul Theroux describes "a forcing house of legends, half-truths and misinformation"[12]. As a result, there is a double representation of myth and reality regarding both Patagonia the country as well as its inhabitants. The actual physical dimensions of travel itself are invariably underplayed. Thus Theroux's own irritation at certain omissions in Chatwin's text, notably details of how he had travelled from here to there[13], (which Theroux himself provides sufficient examples of in his book *The Old Patagonian Express*). Whilst Theroux deliberately seeks a 'neat' summing up in order to give some sense to his apparently non-sensical journey (as evident in his paradoxical conclusion: "Nowhere is a place"[14]), for Chatwin, travel is a means to an end, not an end in itself. As Julian Cowley perceptively notes, 'not only does Chatwin's 'I' blur into an undelineated character but also the book itself is not a record of Patagonia, but a writing in it'[15]. Chatwin's textual mapping of the country lies in his attempts to trace its mythical dimension as he proceedes on his own real/physical journey and the theme of exile is the link in this interpenetration of the internal and external fields of reference represented by the textual and real world. In a sense these two worlds can be seen as possessing, in the words of Hrushovski, "a dual referential allegiance"[16], and rather than contrasting or conflicting with each other they help to highlight a plurality of microcosmic experiences which reflect the various realities of exile intrinsic to the macrocosm of Patagonia.

The story of Charley Milward's finding of the 'brontosaurus' skin, with which the book opens and

closes, provides a structural frame that constitutes the personal myth of the narrator in which two interlinking purposes are at work; the unveiling of a mystery (the 'brontosaurus' skin turns out to be a mylodon skin), and the deflating of the young boy's naive, romantic notions of his roving grand-uncle; "a god among men [...] tall, silent and strong, with black mutton-chop whiskers and fierce blue eyes" (IP, p. 5). The narrator's personal demythologisation, through the demystification of the origins of the skin and the unveiling of his grand-uncle's true interests, (economic profit) and identity (after surviving a shipwreck he settled down in Punta Arenas where he ran a ship repairing yard) runs against his mythologisation of Patagonia, a mythologisation originating from his childhood fears of nuclear war and the decision made with his schoolfriends that Patagonia would be the best place in the world in which to take refuge if such an event were to occur (a belief which, as the first quotation of this chapter testifies, Chatwin still fondly held onto as an adult!):

> I pictured a low timber house with a shingled roof, caulked against storms, with blazing log fires inside and the walls lined with the best books, somewhere to live when the rest of the world blew up (IP, p. 7).

Patagonia is therefore immediately established as a place of refuge and isolation. Not only, but the first section presents a series of circumstances which sees the narrator's own special condition as outsider and therefore 'priviliged candidate' as traveller to Patagonia. First, his desire to possess the piece of skin is frustrated by the fact

that it lies behind a glass cabinet, out of his physical reach; second, the finder of the skin is a long since dead distant relative who lived away from home and who, therefore, exclusively belongs to the world of the narrator's imagination rather than his memory; finally, after the death of Stalin, he finds himself alone and preparing to undertake, with the spirit of a pilgrim, a quest that has no meaning for anyone but himself.

The first paragraph of section two departs from the subjective considerations of the first to present Chatwin's theme of exile in embryo:

> The history of Buenos Aires is written in its telephone directory. Pompey, Romanov, Emilio Rommel, Crespina D. Z. de Rose, Ladislao Radziwil, and Elisabeth Marta Callman de Rothschild — five names taken at random from among the R's told a story of exile, disillusion and anxiety behind lace curtains (IP, p. 7).

Although specifically referring to Argentina's capital city, these faceless names find their embodied counterparts in the heterogeneous mixture of exiles the narrator later encounters on his travels. The telephone directory metonymically points to the official appropriation of the emigrant, into a new, multi-ethnic society, but, at the same time, its facile availability encourages the deceitful nature of his pithily cocksure suppositions. As he is to discover, disillusion and anxiety are not the whole story and his 'skimming' of their names as random but emblematic examples is only a cursory reading of the diverse realities of exile he is about to encounter.

Political Exiles

A recurrent typology among both the voluntary and involuntary exiles in *In Patagonia* appears in the form of the political refugees. The Welsh community is the first example of this category. As a result of unemployment and after the failure of the Welsh Independence Movement and the parliamentary ban on Welsh in schools, "a hundred and fifty-three evacuees combed the earth for a stretch of open country uncontaminated by Englishmen" (IP, p. 24) until they came to Patagonia which they chose for its absolute remoteness and foul climate. Their elation at their new-found land was reflected in the providential belief that it had been given to them by God rather than by the Argentinian government. Here they had at last found a place in which to live according to their own cultural and religious values. The Welsh people's exilic experience is therefore characterised by a rejection and negation of English political and cultural dominance through a spatial freedom which has allowed them to reappropriate their own culture. However, as Seidel points out:

> Especially if exile is the result of contingent political circumstances or self-imposed ideological ones, its victim claims to possess the values of his native place, as it were, by proxy — he is the truer version of the place from which he is barred[17].

The stress is on *claims*, for this *truer version* (a relative concept) becomes necessarily static in exilic conditions because no longer strongly influenced by the processes

of transition from the mother culture and gradually with each successive generation dwindles into a faded memory[18]. Also, that even in such a remote corner of the world a people cannot remain uncontaminated by change, is evident when, on the night of his arrival, the narrator sleeps at "a Welsh Guest House owned by Italians who played Neapolitan songs on the juke box late into the night" (IP, p. 25). The modern technological world represented by the juke box clashes with the stiff sobriety of Welsh tradition (as well as the loose continental life style of the Neapolitans indicated in *into the night)*, and is already an example of the process of cultural disintegration that the narrator witnesses pulling against cultural resistance. Port Madryn, the original Welsh colony, proves to be the bleakest of places[19]: "a town of shabby concrete buildings, tin bungalows, tin warehouses and a wind flattened garden and its cemetry of black cypresses and shiny black marble tombstones" (IP, p. 24) and this is further reinforced in the following passage through the repetition of the lexeme "grey" which, together with the flatness of the even line of cliffs and the dead penguins, confirms the sense of a drab, lifeless landscape, and one not void of Hardyan echoes:

> I walked along the esplanade and looked out at the even line of cliffs spreading round the bay. The cliffs were a lighter grey than the grey of the sea and sky. The beach was grey and littered with dead penguins (IP, p. 24).

The village of Gaimán is a cheerful contrast to Port Madryn, reinforced by the pleasant symmetry (a topographical aspect which the eye of Chatwin the

photographer continually delighted in) of its "net of irrigated fields and poplar windbreaks and the red brick houses with their neat vegetable gardens and ivy trained to grow over the porches" (IP, pp. 24-5) and it is here at Mrs Jones teashop that the narrator meets his first Welsh exile. Mrs Jones, who arrived from Bangor sixty years previously, has not left the valley since. A recent flood in which she was trapped, has inflicted her with a crippling arthritis and the narrator tellingly reveals the contrast between the old woman's physical condition and her gay, resolute temperament through her discourse, which is made up of unflinching remarks on her disability punctuated by terms of endearment:

> 'I can't move, my dear', she called through. 'You'll have to come and talk to me in the kitchen'.
>
> She was a squat old lady in her eighties. She sat propped up at a scrubbed deal table filling lemon-curd tarts. [...]
>
> 'I can't move an inch, my darling. I'm crippled. I've had arthritis since the flood and have to be carried everywhere' (IP, p. 25).

Chatwin's narrator soon becomes a witness to the negative consequences of the exile's fate as a settler. The effects of cultural disintegration within the Welsh community can be seen in the fact that among them there are people for whom any nostalgia towards their homeland has by now become a blurred memory. Mrs Jones' grandson, for example, is unable to utter a word of Welsh or English other than 'granny', and Mrs Powell has never been able to discover where Caenarvon, (her

Grandfather's home town) is on her map of Wales. Here, geographical identity becomes a fragmented memory reduced to the impersonality of a tourist map (printed on a tea-towel!) which is too small to contain the town of her origins. Not only, but the tea-towel itself being a tourist souvenir mocks any notion of cultural affiliation. One of the consequences of the exiles' ignorance of their roots, which is a charactersitic of first generation Patagonians, is the growing phenomenon of inter-racial marriages which lead, in turn, to national-cultural disintegration. Thus, Mrs Ivor Davies, an Italian woman from Genoa, is unable to make her boys speak Welsh, in spite of the fact that she herself speaks and sings in this language. As Gwynneth Morgan comments: "'When Welshmen marry foreigners, they lose the tradition'" and therefore, as a result, the Welsh valley is now "all going to pieces" (IP, p. 30), in spite of the strong nationalistic feelings that still prevail in certain individuals, such as Ivor Davies, for example, who maintains a staunch religious faith and whose dresser is covered in pamphlets from the Welsh Bible Society. Chatwin skillfully captures, in these brief, vivid sketches, the gradual decadence of the Welsh community in Patagonia, made all the more poignant in their attempts to uphold their cultural identity, as seen in their chapel services and the concrete monument they have erected representing barbarism and civilisation and in which they are self-depicted as embodying the latter, in the smug stereotypes of "greybeards, young men with scythes, and big-breasted girls with babies" (IP, p. 24). The fixity of the stereotype is therefore played against

the mobility of change. As Alun Powell points out to the narrator:

> 'Not even the birds are the same. The Ouraka came down from Buenos Aires thirty years back. That just shows you. Things change with the birds as they do with us' (IP, p. 27).

The negative influences of settlement are also perceivable in the shape of the landscape, as is revealed in the Englishman Bill Phillips' sardonic account of his Italian neighbours whose initial political unison has ceded to individual greed and their splitting up the land into smaller and smaller lots.

Besides the Welsh, the Italians and (later) the Boers, for whom exile is a shared communal experience, Chatwin's other political exiles in *In Patagonia* are isolated individuals. The first of these is the Russian doctor who tends to the narrator's cut hand after he falls from a horse. Her outward appearance immediately betrays her national origins: "She growled at me in English but I knew she was Russian. She moved with the slow fluidity that saves Russian women of bulk from ungainliness" (IP, p. 59). That she chooses to 'growl' in English bespeaks her reluctance to use the language. This initial impression of hostility is later confirmed when she expresses her utter contempt of both Argentina and Western Europe as examples of moral vacuity:

> In Argentina there was nothing — sheep and cows and human sheep and cows. And in Western Europe also nothing.
>
> 'Total decadence', she said. 'The West deserves

> to be eaten. Take England for example. Tolerating homosexuality. Disgusting!' (IP, pp. 59-60).

However, her harshness is soon exposed as a way to conceal her sadness which, to the narrator, can only be the result of an enforced exile. Indeed, he even goes further to suppose that she must have been a victim of Stalinism after the Second World War and that her amputated legs saved her life. In an interview, Nicholas Shakespeare, travelling in Chatwin's footsteps through Patagonia in search of material for his biography, confirmed the accuracy of the description of the woman, but says that his claim that the names of Russian authors came 'rolling' off her tongue is far from the truth. When, for example, Shakespeare himself asked her about Mandelstam she answered: "No, I never heard of him". For Shakespeare, this is a case of Chatwin wishing that this Russian exile in a backward place would have read Mandelstam[20]. It is one case of several in which he partially foresakes the truth for artistic purpose and certainly the portrait of the exiled Russian nurse gains much in psychological insight from this process of re-elaborated fictionalisation, for it captures an inner conflict between bitterness and despair, the latter coming to the surface in her momentary interest in the narrator as someone who can bring her up to date with the situation in her country.

Chatwin's political exiles are often trapped within their own anachronistic ideals. Anton Hahn and the Castilian, for example, are both disillusioned monarchists who, in different ways, lament the passing of an old order. Hahn, who was forced to immigrate from Germany after the First World War, manifests, similarly to the

after the First World War, manifests, similarly to the Russian nurse, a bitter disappointment with Western civilisation, though bemoaning its downfall:

> 'The war was the biggest mistake in history,' Anton Hahn said. He was obsessed by the war. 'Two peoples of the Superior Race ruining each other. Together England and Germany could have ruled the world. Now even Patagonia is returning to the *indigenas*. This is a pity' (IP, p. 63).

Hahn's nostalgic monarchism, expressed in his exclusive loyalty to the memory of King Ludwig, (a romantic eccentric who would surely have made a fine subject for a Chatwin novel!), is synonymous of the static vision of the disillusioned exile and the product of an irretrievable past — or hopeless ideal since Ludwig was a peace-loving king — which he attempts to revivify in a melodramatic and anachronistic toast: "'To the king! To the last genius of Europe! With him died the greatness of my race!'" (*Ibid*). The Castilian, on the other hand, reluctantly went out to Patagonia after the King of Spain left Madrid "preferring to live in a Republic other than his own" (IP, p. 78). Behind his voluntary exile lies a profound disillusion whose masochism is measured by the fact that it represents no political solution or even compensation since Patagonia is governed by the very system he so despises. His shifting of the problem in geographical terms, seems to be a means of venting his disappointment by using the new country as a scapegoat. Altogether different in temperament is the Lithuanian Casimir Slapelič. Although all of the books in his library concern the struggle for the independence of Lithuania,

his home country, he enjoys the privilege of being "the town's most distinguished citizen" (IP, p. 68), as well as having a dinosaur which he discovered named in his honour! Slapelič, being in his mid-eighties, is one of the oldest flying pilots in the world. Exile, rather than repress his zest for living seems to have intensified it. Indeed, there is a strong sense throughout his portait that any notion of his exile has been practically eradicated:

> Each morning he put on his white canvass flying-suit, pottered down to the Aero Club in his Moskva and hurled himself in his antique monoplane to the gales. The risk merely increased his appetite for life (*Ibid*).

Slapeli© plays cheerful host to the narrator and accompanies him on a venturesome visit to the Boers who, similarly to the Welsh, emigrated to Patagonia as a result of their hatred of the British Empire. Naturally enough, the Boers prove to be most hostile to the Englishman and he finds only one woman who is willing to talk, though for money and in the presence of her lawyer! It is a sign of the extent of his self-detachment that Chatwin's narrator never openly takes offence to such hostilities and that any such feelings are purged to almost grade-zero in the textual reductions prompted by the narrator as selecting eye.

Political exile can also represent a utopia for those who have fled from a tyrrannical system. Thus, the German expatriate Herman Eberhard, the original finder of the skin of the Mylodon cave, left his home country for ever after serving a prison sentence inflicted on him by his own father for having deserted the German military

family and homeland in which his initial disgrace is later resolved in fortune when a Lord squeezes an envelope containing a $1,000 cheque into his hands for piloting his yacht to Valparaíso.

Finally, Prince Philippe of Araucania and Patagonia, unlike the other political exiles, actually suffers exile from Patagonia! He is one in a bizarre line of self-claimed royal figures, the first of which, Orélie-Antoine, a French freemason, "got it into his head that the Araucanians would elect him king of a young and vigorous nation" (IP, p. 20), and after making no less than three unsuccessful attempts to return to his country, died in poverty in a French village. To reach the Prince, the narrator has to go by means of a bizarre route which takes him through a Marxist paper's headquarters, a cinema and a shop. Prince Philippe, who anticipates Francisco Da Silva, has inherited a phoney claim to the throne of a native tribe and the attitude of a royal figure in exile and the narrator consequently exposes the pretentious and self-illusive nature of his exile.

Through the perspective of his political exiles, Chatwin offers a moral and ideological critique of the Western world, particularly the British Empire. But it is also significant that the narrator endorses very little of their criticism, almost as if his ultimate intention is to suggest the obsolete nature of their visions. If *In Patagonia* is a post-modernist text, it is so to the extent that it depicts a fragmented world of disintegrating national borders where individuals have either largely turned their backs on Western society or have been rejected by it. Disaffection, or indifference, towards Europe is also solicited by economic necessity, as Bill Philips

sardonically confesses to the narrator: "'[...] Do you know what we pray for down here? Pray for sadistically? Bad winter in Europe. Makes the price of wool go up'" (IP, p. 14). The intermingling of different nationalities and the 'importing' of their communities also denies the idea of a distinct geographical identity so that, rather than being seen as located in Argentine territory, Patagonia becomes an indeterminate macro-universe subject to the influences of its internal micro-worlds where the land itself bears the imprints of a geographically multifarious humanity. The Patagonian desert, lying in-between, acquires particular status as original, primeval locus of the land to which the narrator, ever faithful to the essentially objective tone of his narrative, deliberately avoids revealing his own emotional reactions, shifting these onto external sources (Charles Darwin and W.H. Hudson) and merely limiting himself to recording factual sense impressions. Although a desert, on the one hand, "seduces us with the idea that we can start out over again, begin from zero", on the other it is also "a place where we get lost, where our existence is swallowed up and cancelled"[21]. In this sense, Patagonia offers itself as a space in which exiles can either realise their suppressed political ideals or project a future in which such a possibility exists, or as in the eerie case of the German Nazi criminal, Walter Rauff, seek a scandalous political asylum. But it is also a space in which cultural disintegration finds fertile ground and where individuals, (as shall be seen later), can easily lose their cultural identities.

Other Exiles in *In Patagonia*

One of the most colourful characters among Chatwin's exiles in *In Patagonia* is undoubtedly the eccentric poet from Buenos Aires. Having succumbed to the mysteriously powerful charm of the country, which has held him in its grasp for over forty years, the poet has accepted Patagonia as his spiritual 'mate' and pays homage to 'her' in his verse. The narrator instinctively warms to this literary raver as he listens, astonished by the scope and technicalities of his verse skills, to his descriptions of the extinction of the dinosaurs and the geographical transformations of the country, (the latter of which may be seen as parodied by the transformations made by the various communities of exiles who have appropriated and transformed the landscape according to their own practical and cultural needs). The poet, as has already been pointed out, lives alone in a hut along a stretch of river, outside society and time. The image of a recluse poet living in a hut is, of course, an ancient one and, as Anne Cline observes: "The function of the hut is to heighten the poet's participation in life"[72]. His mythical interpretation of Patagonia as a female body undergoing perennial transitions is part of the mosaic of impressions that makes up the various 'readings' of the country in the book and whose wide empty expanses have been filled by literary imaginations throughout the ages; a Patagonia the narrator, who shares the exiled poet's imaginative vision, also feels an affiliation towards.

Similar to the poet, though a more pragmatic character, Archie Tuffnell also has a fondness for Patagonia, or as he affectionately calls it, "Old Pat": "He

loved the solitude, the birds, the space and the dry healthy climate" (IP, p. 90). After retiring from an English land company he has set up his own farm to avoid the unpleasant prospect of returning to his home country, which he equates with laziness and torpor. The respectful manner in which he treats his workers shows a keen understanding and adaptability to his environment:

> "You've got to keep your distance or they think you're a toady. I do it by speaking lousy Spanish on purpose. But you've got to do what they have to do. They don't give a hoot what you've got in the bank as long as you eat what they eat" (*Ibid*).

Ironically, Tuffnell has the best of both worlds, living a relatively wealthy and healthy life in a predominantly English part of the country, its settlers being descendants of 'kelpers' from the Falklands "who fenced the land and set up a wool trade in the 1890s and which still resembles an outpost of the Empire, administered by Spanish speaking officials" (*Ibid*) and where the peon migrants spend most of their time complaining about their despotic employers. Whereas the poet finds the country necessary for his poetic inspiration, for Tuffnell, it is important for him to maintain an active and lucrative existence. In both cases, Patagonia fully satisfies very different needs on the part of the exile, whose inner struggle is characterised by a resistence to self-effacement.

In a sense, it is ironic that Anselmo is the person who encourages the narrator to visit the poet, for there could be no two people more dissimilar; the one, introverted and nervous, the other, outspoken and eccentric. Also,

Anselmo is a first generation Patagonian whose aspirations are oriented back to his father-land:

> Anselmo had a passion for the culture of Europe, the authentic, blinkered passion of the exile. When his father stopped him playing he would lock himself in his room and read sheet music or the lives of great composers from musical encyclopedias (IP, p. 27).

The narrator's admiration of Anselmo's piano playing, as he listens spellbound to his performances of Beethoven's 'Pathétique' and one of Chopin's Masurkas, echoes his similar admiration of the poet's verse. But for the latter, Patagonia represents a self-discovery, whilst for Anselmo it evokes an absence which he fills with an obsessive longing to 'repossess' a culture, that is a part of his original heritage. Yet, at the same time, as the product of a German mother and an Italian father, Anselmo is a divided soul, a cross breed between a Germanic and Mediterranean culture, and the contrasting elements in the narrator's description which, on the one hand, point to the fact that he is "a thin nervous boy with a drained face and eyes that watered in the wind", and on the other, that his hands are "strong and red" (*Ibid*), are the outward manifestations of a raging internal self-conflict. Anselmo may also be seen in opposition to another artistic figure, the Swiss soprano, who made the opposite journey (from Europe to South America) in her search for fame and fortune. Whereas Anselmo's dreams are launched towards the future, the soprano's are now buried in the past. The narrator effectively captures the woman's underlying

melancholy in the image of her "white face behind a dusty window" (IP, p. 61) — white and pale being recurrent features in her description. His observation of her painted mouth "unfurling as a red flag caught in a sudden breeze" (*Ibid*) contains a telling allusion to her country's flag. Of Switzerland she retains a poignant nostalgia, but her French is now halting and slow and the Geneva she reminisces over is a pre-war Geneva, before the time her life took a negative turning point after which she met her husband with whom she "joined two failures in one and drifted towards the end of the world" (*Ibid*). Like the poet, the soprano also retreats into the world of the imagination covering every wall of her cottage with colourful murals of her own creation (see p. 108). In what is her favourite painting she portrays herself as a frightened girl with a white face being saved by a guardian angel. This self-generated image exposes the difference between herself and the poet, for whereas the latter has merged his poetic imagination with the external universe of Patagonia in his verse with an almost Wordsworthian zest, the soprano uses her artistic imagination to escape from it. The revealing detail of her half-painted fingernails recalls the black spaces of the broken piano keys as well as explaining her insecurity on a symbolic level. The fact that her fingernails are only half-painted besides revealing the partial loss of her cultural identity underlines the inconclusiveness of her life, which is also succinctly conveyed in the songsheet of her own 1932 composition "The Pale Bride" lying abandoned on the music stand of her piano.

The episode with the American miner, a tax-exile from San Francisco, is a good demonstration of Chatwin's

ability at producing humour, which is otherwise not an immediately obvious quality of his writing:

> He had blond hair and was travelling south. The hair flopped over his face and he flipped it back with a shake of his head. His body was soft and girlish. He held back his smile to hide a set of discoloured teeth. He was a miner, he said. He was looking for work in a mine (IP, p. 54).

The description of the man's soft, feminine body, and the delicate vanity with which he seeks to conceal his discoloured teeth, may confirm the reader's idea of a prototype hippie, but seems at odds with the physical masculine strength that is equated with working in a mine! The ex-hippie has discovered a fascination for mines that attracted the pioneers of the 1800s. Not only is there a re-evocation of a 'romantic' past associated with the Gold Rush ("There was a gold mine at Rio Pico" IP, p. 54) but there is also his sense that a mine, rather like a hippie commune, offers security, providing there are no social obligations attached!:

> There was something elemental, he said, about mining. Mines gave him a feeling of security. Working in a mine in Arizona he had himself a house and a fine living wage, that is, until they came after him for taxes. Those darned taxes [...] Man, he'd be alright. It was simply a question of finding the right mine (IP, pp. 54-5).

The use of free indirect discourse satirically mimicks the miner's tone as well as suggesting the repetitive nature of his speech, as when it is iteratively narrated that he

continually mentions a memory of when he had been so hungry he had once picked up a half-eaten chocoloate bar from the street. In one of the few instances in which he is allowed direct speech his exclamative reaction provides a lightly comical touch, heightened by verbal repetition and Chatwin's graphological renderings of his voice: "'White what? D'ye say white? White? Cheesus! A white mine! Where d'ye say that mine was?'" (IP, p. 54). The miner's condition of exile is manifested in his search for a primeval underground world which offers security and obscurity in which he can be free from social ties and obligations.

As Martin Stoddard observes: "Going away from home may create an impulse to reproduce one's national characteristics more intensely"[23]. This may explain why certain characters in *In Patagonia* are seen as caricatures of their nationalities, straining against what Eliot calls the "lethean influence of exile"[24] to maintain some sort of connection between themselves and their homeland, whether this be the temporary or permanant loss of a known dimension or a dimly remembered inheritance. As the historian Keith Robbins points out: "Our own sense of place determines our own preconceptions more often than we care to admit"[25]. Thus, Sonny Urquhart, a fourth generation Patagonian, preserves such caricature facets of Scotland as a certain pride of blood and a dim memory of kilts and pipes, but, as the narrator teasingly adds: "those were the festivities of another generation" (IP, p. 15). In another instance, remnants of a culture that the Scottish farmer at Rio Pico, on the other hand, has rediscovered on a recent holiday to Scotland with his wife where "he became familiar with the things his

mother spoke of gulls, herring boats, heather, peat — and he had felt the call" (IP, p. 67), have transformed him into an enforced exile who yearns to leave Patagonia but has no idea how — a central dilemma also, as will be seen, in *The Viceroy of Ouidah* —. His desperation is symbolised in his attempt to plant a thistle which dies in the harsh Patagonian climate. Similar attempts to partially retrieve what result as "images of distant familiarity"[26] are the Welsh people's family clocks and the sprig of mint the Arab owner of the restaurant at Perito Moreno keeps on his bar "to remind him of a home he had not seen" (IP, p. 73).

An example in which national affiliation is expressed in terms of overt caricature can be seen in the two old English spinsters with their "nice ladylike accents" (IP, p. 112) and their extravagantly colourful make-up, specifically designed to conceal their age:

> The elder sister was blonde, bright gold to be exact, and white at the roots. Her lips were a scarlet bow and her eylids were green. The younger one was brunette. Her hair, eyebrows, suit, handbag, and spotted silk cravat were a matching shade of chocolate; even her lips were a kind of reddish brown (*Ibid*).

The narrator's attention and precision in defining the colours flaunted by the old women, apes the meticulousness with which they have been chosen — but the eye-aching chromatic clashes of gold, white, scarlet, green and chocolate brown make them resemble two lifeless puppets. Another caricature which displays a scrupulousness to detail, and whose target is again an

English person, is that of Jim Ponsby who the narrator notes is:

> [...] certainly, the perfect English gentleman, of middle height, with thick grey hair and a close clipped moustache [...] His dress was the result of meticulous planning: the Norfolk jacket in brown herring-bone tweed, the hardwood buttons, the opennecked khaki shirt, the worsted trousers, tortoiseshell bifocals and spit and polished shoes (IP, p. 33).

Chatwin's reiteration of the definite article denotes familiarity as well as reinforcing the propriety of his dress sense (these are the items he would necessarily expect an English gentleman to wear). Ironically, this perfect English gentleman is to reveal himself as being somewhat deficient in English matters not concerning his outward appearance:

> 'And what part of the old country d'you come from?' He asked.
> 'Gloucestershire'.
> 'Gloucestershire, eh! Gloucestershire! In the North, what?'
> 'In the West'.
> 'Damn me, so it is. The West. Yes. Our place was in Chippenham. Probably never heard of it. That's in Wiltshire'.
> 'About fifteen miles from me'.
> 'Probably a different Chippenham. And how is the old country getting along?' He changed subject to avoid our geographical conversation (IP, p. 34).

Ponsby uses typically bourgoise stock phrases ("'the old country [...] what? [...] Damn me [...]'") but his geographical ignorance of his home country finds an ironic confirmation in the narrator's laconic replies, making his outward appearance and behaviour acquire all the more the character of emulation. What this episode reveals is one of the inevitable dangers of exile — loss of memory. For what has happened, of course, is that Ponsby has, in his absence from his country, quite simply forgotten such things as geographical locations, whereas the clothes he is wearing have continued to be a part of his everyday existence.

Finally, distance, and the disintegrating influences of Patagonia itself lead to the total loss of identity in Robbie Ross, the 'Scott', who is not only Patagonian-born and bred but has "no words of English" (IP, p. 76). He addresses the narrator solely in Spanish, as he vaguely seeks "to feel out affinities of race and background with a mixture of curiosity and pain" (*Ibid*). His inability to distinguish between England and Scotland, which for him — as the narrator says — are "merely an indivisible blur" (*Ibid*), is indication enough of this cultural loss and is further increased by his being singled out as a figure of fun by the other members of the road gang who are otherwise all Latins or Indian half-breeds. His attempt at demonstrating some sort of pride before the narrator, whose account of him is void of any sympathetic note, by attacking one of them when he jokingly calls him a drunk, painfully exposes the contrast between his lack of articulation and brute strength and his emotional fragility: "The others overpowered him and he began to cry. In the night I heard him crying and in the morning

he wouldn't even look at another Englishman" (*Ibid*). The last phrase ironically discloses a willful necessity to transform any sense of affiliation into the ultimate finality of non-recognition which is the dead-end zone of exilic experience.

Exiled From Community

If he is anything, Francisco Manuel da Silva is the prototype exile. Born into a community of settlers who prefer to endure severe poverty in the harsh and thorny land of the Sertao rather than live in the alien dimensions of the city and sea of San Salvador da Bahia, he "never knew a time he was not a stranger" (VO, p. 48). As a result of being forced to wander away from his home region after the early deaths of his parents, he becomes essentially exiled from the human community at large and although the places through which he moves are topologically defined, in reality they delineate the spatial co-ordinates of a ruthless metaphorical itinerary which point to the recesses of his own barbaric nature. Therefore, Brazil and Africa are the geographical paradigms of the conflict in Francisco between civilsation and barbarity, both to which, as already seen, he displays an uncanny ability to adapt. But Francisco attains to his dream for wealth and power only to forfeit his freedom, and to find himself exiled in the very country in which he initially sought his fortune. Like Conrad's Kurtz, he lacks the restraints of civilisation and succumbs to what Conrad himself calls the "heavy, mute spell of the wilderness"[27]. Any sense of humanity, such as his remorse after the

massacre of small children[26] or the following non-articulated guilt feelings over his slave trade, are few and far between: "Often on sleepless nights he would lie and listen to the groan and clank of the barracoon, only to remember the sweet singing in the chapel at Tapuitapera and roll over with his conscience clean" (VO, p. 75). Home and exile are linked here by two emblematic images of imprisonment and freedom; the temporary limbo of the barracoon and the security of the chapel. The cacophonic effect of "groan" and "clank" perversely evokes the euphonious "sweet singing", the latter of which provides Francisco with a self-justification that gives him psychological solace as he recalls "his heaven-sent vocation to fuel with black muscle the mines and plantations of his country" (*Ibid*). Ironically, his nostalgia for Brazil and his dreams of a future life there are concentrated not on his home in the Sertao, but on San Salvador de Bahia (initially introduced to him by the tales of his guardian, the Portuguese exile Father Menes Brito), which is the very place that his fellow village people regard as a taboo. Furthermore, his feelings of exile in Ouidah are also undermined by the fact that even when he is in Brazil his isolation is continually reiterated:

> And in the evenings he would stroll past houses and peer in to the lamplit rooms, where fathers played with children, men played cards and women smiled as they braided their hair. He craved their simple pleasures of touch and trust; but if a woman saw the green eyes glinting in the darkness, she closed her shutters and bars of light slid through the

> jalousies and striped his face. [...]
>
> He never passed a village without dismounting to watch a congregation at prayer — yet he could never join them (VO, p. 57).

A final sense of isolation is also indicated in the phrase "his own sufferings had hardened him to the sufferings of others" (VO, p. 52), which tellingly explains his indifference towards others as originating in an apparent self-indifference. Set beside this, the distortion of the following reverie is most revealing:

> And da Silva was always dreaming of Bahia. Whenever a ship sailed, he would watch the yardarms vanish into the night, then light a pipe on the verandah and sink into a reverie of the future: he would have a Big House, a view of the sea, grand-children and the sound of water tinkling through a garden. But the mirage would fade. The sound of drumbeats pressed against his temples and he had a presentiment that he would never get out of Africa (VO, p. 78).

Chatwin's use of free indirect discourse here offers a rare moment of internal focus as the repetition of the conditional "would" underlines the frustrated nature and repetitivity of Francisco's habitual thoughts as well as showing them gradually dissolving from the positivity of a future dream into the negativity of a future reality ("he would watch [...] he would have a Big House [...] the mirage would fade [...] he would never get out"). Indeed, Francisco's recollections of his former life can never erase images that continually underline his sense of isolation and exclusion:

> Memories of Brazil kept passing before his eyes: the miserable mud house, the pendulum of his dead mother's leg, the cries of his child, the penitents at Monte Santo, the treasures of the Coutinhos... (VO, p. 88).

The repetition of the definite article reinforces the persistently haunting rhythm of the paratactically co-ordinated clauses which act like a series of blows to his tormented mind. Indeed, any attempts to retrieve some sort of connection with his home country are finally defeated:

> Facing his bed, he hung up a panorama of Bahia, but the sight of it made him homesick [...] His desk was stacked with old Brazilian newspapers. He tried to puzzle out the politics of the new Empire. The names meant nothing. He gave up and only read the advertisements (VO, p. 100).

Nevertheless, it is also true that Francisco's sense of Africa as a prison from which he cannot escape is, to a certain extent, itself an illusion. In the first case, he is given the chance to leave but pride and greed hold him back. Also, his naïve idea of himself as a sort of hero serving his own country, completely backfires since, as a result of the clandestine nature of his slave trade, he is either ignored by his fellow countrymen, particularly his old 'friend' Joaquim, or patronisingly humoured by them so that he does not realise until it is far too late that he has been completely isolated by the very people he believes he has been serving so 'gloriously'. Ultimately,

he is not only exiled from his own country, but also from himself. The fact that he displays such an uncanny ability to shift nonchalantly between habits of civilisation and barbarity leads to a sense of self-estrangement that points to his fundamental inhumanity and also justifies the narrator's frequently associating him with the devil. His exile is further reinforced on a textual level through the distancing effect of the third person extradiegetic narrative voice which presumably does not share Francisco's code and not only allows him a strictly limited verbal autonomy (reduced to a handful of phrases in direct speech and a few snatches of letter writing) but also provides a general lack of a psychological or emotional one at the expense of an aesthetic perceptual focalisation in an attempt to produce a distancing effect on the reader.

Dahomey, similarly to Patagonia, represents an extra-territorial dimension for people from other countries. But whereas Patagonia hosts the oppressed or the refugee, Dahomey is a territory for exploitation on the part of Portuguese, French and British colonisers. Francisco himself entertains the French, the British and the 'Brazilians' respectively. The 'Brazilians' are the children of ex-African slaves who have managed to buy their freedom and, enticed by the idealised descriptions of their exiled relatives, arrive with one-way passports and all the legitimate curiosity of first generation immigrants only to discover that: "the fetid swamps were far from the paradise of their grandmothers' tales" (VO, p. 110). It is one of the ironies of the novel that Francisco takes pity on them and conceeds them plots of land when he hears of the threats to their lives on the part of the African

natives. As a result the 'Brazilians' turn Ouidah into a colourful and cheerful Little Brazil:

> The whole town changed colour. Instead of dull pinks and ochres, the houses took on the hues of a Brazilian garden; and as the women leaned over their half-doors, they seemed to be wearing them as an extension of their dress (VO, p. 110).

The total metamorphosis of the town is underlined in the humerous symbiosis between the women's dresses and the doors of their houses. However, the Brazilian exiles represent a disruptive and ultimately negative force for Francisco as well as the community at large. Their lack of cultural memory is such that that they have completely forgotten the plight of their ancestors and display an utter insensitivity towards the passing slaves being shipped off to Brazil whom they regard with a callous nostalgia as they ironically bid them 'Boa Viagem'! Jacinto is the epitome of their hypocrisy, sighing over the fate of his 'black brothers', then, later, breaking his partnership with Francisco and selling slaves himself to the Americans. It is also Jacinto who persuades the King to confiscate Francisco's gold which leads to the latter's final undoing. The presence of the 'Brazilians' also results in the yellow fever epidemic in which hundreds of blacks and mulattos die, including ten da Silvas.

The beginning of the novel is crammed with detailed descriptions that do not exclude elements of decadence and decay as if to underline the bigoted pride and conservatism of the da Silva family who, although they

have lost all association with their country of origin, continue to identify themselves with it as well as annually celebrate Francisco's death in order to recall "a lost Golden Age when their family was once rich, famous and white" (VO, p. 14):

> They called themselves 'Brazilians' though they had lost their Portuguese. People slightly blacker than themselves they called 'blacks'. They called Dahomey 'Dahomey' long after the Head of State had changed its name to Benin (*Ibid*).

The novel outlines the family's mutation from exiles into emigrés and there is a final poetic justice in the fact that they are ultimately seen as an expression of Francisco's own rootlessness. The 'Brazilians' have 'metamorphosed' into African citizens to the extent that none of them (besides Mama Wéwé) can speak their native-language. Thus, the novel traces a circular process from SETTLEMENT to MOBILITY to EXILE to SETTLEMENT which is countersigned by loss of original cultural identity. Francisco, the ancestor of a family of settlers, who himself comes from a community of settlers, is destined to live as a wanderer in exile and to find in his exile his final condition of immobility and it is in this condition his family now lives. In this light, there is an ultimate irony that the marble plaque the family erect under the statue of St Francis gives more details regarding the time and place of their ancestor's death than his birth, in particular his birthplace in which only his country is given:

FRANCISCO MANUEL DA SILVA
Nascido em 1785 Brazil
Falecido a 8 de março 1857 em Ajuda (Ouidah)
(VO, p. 21).

The latter omission is appropriate and reinforces the fact that Francisco ultimately never really finds a home anywhere.

Although Mama Wéwé is, on one level, a sedentary character, on another she also represents a continuation of her father's exilic existence. She is distinguished from the rest of the family in being not only Francisco's sole remaining direct descendent, but also, ironically, its only white member. Her appearance after the first section, which is characterised by the noise and boisterousness of the multitude of family members gathering together to celebrate the anniversary of Francisco's death, reinforces, by contrast, her loneliness and alienation within the community. Whereas the rest of the family superficially flaunt their 'difference' before the other Africans as a sign of their superiority, she is the only one who actually retains the memory of their origins and is therefore closest to the reality of their exile. Her very last words to them on her one hundredth birthday, before she falls into silence, are a reminder that they are Brazilians, a fact they have inevitably neglected since none of the family are able to understand her when she speaks Portuguese on her deathbed. Mama Wéwé's disillusions and disappointments in life force her further and further into the abyss of a state of exile characterised by immobility and her surroundings reflect the obstinacy of her proud withdrawal from the outside world with all

of the objects that surround her, as is discussed in the first chapter, converging upon the one obsessive idea of venerating the memory of her father. The gradual intensity of this voluntary withdrawal from the rest of the family, which concurs with their fearful avoidance of her, is progressively delineated in the narrative:

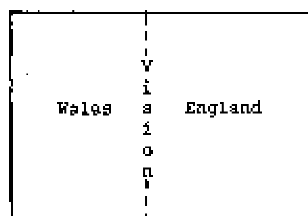
> She shut herself in her room and lay face downward [...] Only when her pillow was wet through did she realize the extent of her loneliness (VO, p. 32).
>
> [...]
>
> One by one, her acquaintance narrowed to her maid, her Mahi slave-boy, her father and the red-haired stranger (VO, p. 35).
>
> [...]
>
> The next few years washed over her without disturbing her solitude (VO, p. 40).
>
> [...]
>
> Mama Wéwé sat another sixty years in the curdled odour of rotting brocade, her eyes glued to her father's portable oratory of the Last Supper. (VO, p. 42).

Mama Wéwé's gradual isolation is characterised by a ruthless process of exclusion to the point of her being finally unable to distinguish between "the living, the absent and the dead" (VO, p. 35) and with her only

absent and the dead" (VO, p. 35) and with her only visual prospect being her father's painting of the "Last Supper". This regression leads to a limbo-like state in which her hold on life becomes as tenuous as her hold on death (it is no accident that she is presented by the narrator as "a skeleton who happened to breathe", VO, p. 29). The vision she has on her death bed is a confirmation of this, for its descriptive elements reveal her confusion between the English lieutenant, with whom she falls in love as a girl, and the Christ figure in the "Last Supper"; on the one hand, the fact that the man is described as having eyes of the "colour of the market-women's beads" (VO, p. 31) recalls the former, and on the other, that he has red hair, the latter. This confusion is significant since she ultimately lives more in the fantasy world of the painting than she does in the real world. In this way, her death becomes the final refusal of the objectivity of the real world for the subjective world of the imagination.

Exiled From Events

Although the internal world of 'The Vision' in *On The Black Hill* represents comfort and security for the twins, at the same time it marks a boundary between England and Wales: "The border of Radnor and Hereford was said to run right through the middle of the staircase" OBH, p. 10. The land around their farm also represents a boundary between the intimacy of their microworld



and the external world and constitutes the barrier that maintains the twins' exilic condition from that world: The boundary of this outer region can also be characterised in terms of hostility (as in Amos's feud with Tom Watkins), but it is also, objectively, a barrier from the outside world itself as represented by the rest of Wales and England. It is therefore significant that, although the twins love to go on walks, these walks are defined within spatially limited destinations (ironically named 'Welsh' and 'English'). In the 'Welsh walk' up the mountain, and the 'English walk' to Lurkenhope park mobility is restricted to a 'knowable' area which constitutes a borderline territory that corresponds to the borderline represented by their own home. At the same time the borderline county of Radnorshire in the novel has been described as a strange world, set apart from the flow of history[23]. Certainly, historical events are narrated in such an oblique and laconic manner that the community is seen at a tangent to them. The outbreak of World War One, for example, is introduced by someone casually "calling over the hedge that the Germans had marched into Belgium and rejected England's ultimatum" (OBH, p. 90); the end of the Second World War is referred to in a short column on the far side of a page of the local newspaper in which the main headlines concern

of Lewis's scrapbook as years of "spectacular air crashes" (OBH, p. 203). As has been seen, the twins' negative experiences of the First World War only increase their mistrust of the ouside world. The external world of the events of the Second World War "washed over them without disturbing their solitude" (OBH, p. 183). It may be noted how the active construction of this sentence in reversing its subject, reinforces their isolation in its implication that it is the outside world that consciously avoids conflicting with their world rather than vice versa. In contrast with the rest of the community, the twins' isolation from external events is the consequence of a deliberate choice that is not entirely unproblematic. On the one hand, their 'conservation' of 'The Vision' indicates a resistance to the passing of time and an attempt to create their own private, mythical realm. Even their temporary interest in archeology and Celtic saints is essentially a-historical. On the other, the objects they accumulate in the house and to which they become so attached (family photographs, paintings, Lewis's scrapbook, etc) are not only connected with the intimate sphere of affections, but are also products of the external world they apparently repudiate. At the same time Lewis's frustrated passion for the outside world, which finds an outlet in his scrapbook of airplane disasters, is finally resolved on an empirical level in the plane flying sequence towards the end of the novel.

In *The Songlines,* exilic experience is intrinsically connected with the condition of mobility and regarded as the ultimate form of escape from civilisation and its "mindless materialism" (SONG, p. 3). The symbiosis between exile and mobility is embodied in Arkady

(Chatwin's Ideal Nomad) and the songlines that so fascinate the narrator and Arkady are the symbol of the condition of exilic liberation the latter incarnates. As the son of a Russian refugee, he has no predisposition to live a conventional life in suburban Australia and this is something the narrator, quick to point out qualities that distinguish him from the other white Australians, immediately realises:

> He had a flattish face and a gentle smile, and he moved through the bright Australian spaces with the ease of his footloose forebears.
>
> His hair was thick and straight, the colour of straw. His lips had cracked in the heat. He did not have the drawn-in lips of so many white Australians in the Outback; nor did he swallow his words. He rolled his r's in a very Russian way (SONG, pp. 1-2).

This description characterises Arkady in terms of association and dissociation, where his associations with the aboriginals and his Russian heritage are set against qualities that dissociate him from the other Australian whites. From the initially deceptive trait "flattish" the description unfolds a series of positive semes that cluster around the binary qualities of gentleness ("gentle", "bright", "straw",) and roughness ("footloose", "thick", "cracked"). Arkady is made to feel his difference towards the other Australian people more than once in the book, particularly in the following exchange with a Police Patrolman:

'You're not Australian', he said to Arkady.
'I bloody am Australian'.
'No, you're not. I can tell you're not Australian'.
'I was born in Australia'.
'That doesn't make you Australian', he taunted.
'My people have lived in Australia for five generations. So where was your father born?'
Arkady paused and, with quiet dignity, answered, 'My father was born in Russia'.
'Hey!' the policeman tightened his forelip and turned to the big man.
'What did I tell you, Bert? A Pom and a Com!' (SONG, p. 137).

The policeman's sense of right of citizenship and cultural affiliation is measured in terms of a temporal factor, the arbitrariness of which is ironised by his exact numbering of "five generations". The fact that Arkady is a first generation Australian does not make him Australian in the policeman's eyes. The expletive "bloody" in Arkady's reply indicates both his indignation and hyper-sensitivity which is also evident in the air of quiet dignity with which he unflinchingly reveals his father's origin in a complete, rather than elliptic sentence. However, unlike his father, who expresses a belated nostalgia for his fatherland, and his mother, who reads Russian novels and folktales and sends her children to Orthodox Mass, Arkady, although he exhibits a degree of pride in his Russian heritage, shows few signs of having inherited the exile's nostalgia for his home country. In one rather rare insight he discloses his sense of unease at being a Russian in a country of Anglo-Saxon prejudice and bemoans the fact that Eastern Europeans did not arrive

in Australia first since they are the only people who "could cope with wide horizons", in contrast with the Anglo Saxons who, being islanders, have a fear of space: "'We', he added, could have been proud of it. Loved it for what it was" (Song, p. 142). There is a strong sense that Arkady's pride in his Russian origins in reality serves to intensify his own self-pride fostering a determination, common sense and sensitivity that make him an ideal mediator between the Aboriginals and the white men which reinforces his psychological association with their mythological world.

The Songlines also deals marginally with the concept of exile in terms of the aboriginals' special relationship with the land. For the aboriginals, the land is not only a geographical reality, but a complex series of invisible pathways. Thus, they make no distinction between the metaphysical and the physical, for they see these two aspects as interchangeable. Not only, but the notion of the dreaming is also synonymous with the law (as is pointed out in the first chapter), it is the "Way of the Law" (SONG, p. 2), in which each tribe has its part and "is responsible for maintaining and enhancing itself and the whole, while respecting the other parts that do likewise"[30]. Since this poses no physical resistance to the white man's progress, it follows that the Land Rights Act concede the aboriginals the title to their country "providing it lies untenanted" (SONG, p. 4). For the aboriginals this simply means preserving their liberty, which, in most cases, is "the liberty to remain poor" (*Ibid*), and it is Arkady's job to mediate between the white men and the aboriginals and assure that no sacred rights are being destroyed along the path of the white

man's progress. In spite of this intrusion on the part of civilisation, however, it is the aboriginal who ultimately owns the land because his hold on it transcends the materialistic[31]. Paradoxically, the aboriginal's very existence depends upon a state of exile in which to feel at home in a country depends on being able to leave it and this is why every tribe has to cultivate relations with its neighbour. It is also why, although the aboriginals do not conceive of territory as "a block of land hemmed in by frontiers" (SONG, p. 62), they do see it as "an interlocking network of 'lines' or 'ways of thought'" (*Ibid*). As part of their oral culture, territory, for the aboriginals, "tends to be conceived, perceived and represented in graphemic terms"[32]. Therefore, their very existence hinges on this special form of exile in which belonging to the land essentially means not to possess it materially. In this light, what constitutes exile is very different to Father Terrence's sense of it as being the result of the aboriginals' isolation from civilisation. As Father Flynn explains the consequences of the aboriginal who strays from his path to Bruce:

> "To sing a verse out of order", Flynn said sombrely, "was a crime. Usually meant the death penalty".
> "I can see that", I said. "It'd be the musical equivalent of an earthquake".
> "Worse", he scowled. "It would be to uncreate the creation" (SONG, p. 64).

The aboriginal's concept of exile is connected with the idea of his totemic identity which allows him to transcend ordinary reality by relating to something other than

himself. It is his totem that orients him while he is alive so that to 'uncreate' it, in the way described by Father Flynn, is to disobey the 'law' and to lose his own way and therefore his own life. To trespass on another's songline becomes the ultimate form of exile; death.

Like Benjamin and Lewis, Utz also has the same "selfish abstraction from the demands of time"[33] preferring to elude the outside world, towards which he manifests a cold aloofness, by retreating into the static world of his porcelain statues. The description of Utz joyfully parading them before the intrigued narrator to the accompaniment of a classical music record may expose the excessive love of the collector which borders on childishness, but it also serves to underline the a-temporal dimension of the world to which he has withdrawn. The description becomes an elencation in which each sentence is temporally marked by the auxilliary 'would' as if to reinforce the habitual nature of the permanent activities of the statues — a permanent present: ("Scaramouche would strum on his guitar. Brighella would liberate people's purses. The Captain would swagger childishly like all army officers [...]" U, p. 113). But the point of view of the description is, of course, the first-person narrator's and he observes Utz's enjoyment with the melancholic recognition that: "Things are the changeless mirror in which we watch ourselves disintegrate" (*Ibid*) in spite of the fact that "for him, (Utz) this world of little figures was the real world" (U, p. 114). Yet Utz himself is not completely unaware of the painful paradox that the collection holds him a prisoner. His continual wanderings between Switzerland and Czechoslovakia are the product of a double urge: an

urge to escape the claustrophobia of Prague and life at close quarters with Marta and the lifelessness of his statues and an urge to escape his phoney existence in Vichy where food loses all taste, recreation all interest and where people are suspicious or irritating presences. After a series of negative experiences, including his failed attempt to court the Belgian woman and his dissatisfaction with his culinary experiments, he comes to the ironic conclusion that "luxury is only luxurious under adverse conditions" (U, p. 80). Paradoxically, the possibilities of freedom offered by exile fill Utz with sheer dread:

> Why, he asked himself, when he had steeled himself to the horrors of war and revolution, should the free world present so frightening an abyss? Why, each time he sank onto the mattress, did he have the sensation of falling, like the elevator, through the floors of the hotel? In Prague he slept soundly. Why did sleep elude him here? (U, pp. 80-1).

The reiterated paradigm of dejection ("abyss [...] sank [...] falling" and later "shrunk") refers both to Utz's sensations as well as his sense of a lost hold on things. He is therefore caught in a binary conflict between the Eastern and Western world; the outside world of objective reality and the subjective world of his porcelain statues. He eventually realises that the West is a false alternative to the East, "that anti-Communist rhetoric was as deadly as its Communist counterpart" (U, p. 87), but this does not completely restrain him from his fretful annual pilgrimages to Vichy. At the same time he is engaged in

a struggle against the outside world which concludes in his final triumph in eluding the state museum from taking possession of his statues after his death. Utz's relation to the paradigms of the settler, the exile and the wanderer are ultimately complex since all three states are made to converge in him. Yet, because everything depends upon his increasing his collection of porcelain statues, he necessarily embodies a paradoxical attempt to reconcile a strong sense of place with an equally strong conviction of displacement and temporal restlessness. Therefore, although his acceptance of a period of reluctant exile in Vichy followed by a period of reconciliation in Prague becomes the paradox around which his life revolves, the fact that he learns to accept this paradox is also his triumph.

Exiles' Homes

As with his settlers, Chatwin's descriptions of his exiles' homes offer significant insights, in this case by primarily underlining the essentially binary nature of their existence. For the exile's home can manifest two opposing tendencies: on the one hand, by experiencing home as a negative space, a means of reaffirming a lost cultural heritage: on the other, by re-creating "a version of home abroad"[34], an expression and testimony of cultural loss that leads to rejection and even self-abnegation.

In *In Patagonia*, Chatwin frequently reveals the extent of the exiles' bonds with their origins by representing the home as a space in which they continue to dream and live in their native lands. After all, as Bachelard observes,

"the house we were born in has engraved within us the hierarchy of the various functions of inhabiting"[35]. Whereas, for the settler, the home underlines continuity in time and space, for the exile it becomes the embodiment of a dissociation between time and space. Therefore, the home as re-creation of the absent native place, represents a physical means of contact with the motherland. Architectural style and interior decoration and design, together with personal possessions, take on an important function as objective correlatives, so that the exiles' homes become icons of their cultural identity such that cultural affiliation is frequently represented in terms verging on cliché and caricature. The homeliness of the Englishman Bill Philips's house, for example, lies in the fact that it has been constructed precisely as "a prefabricated cottage with big windows and a wonderful view" (IP, p. 13), typical of an English country cottage; the room in Sonny Urquhart's house contains Victorian easy chairs with rings made by damp whisky glasses on their wooden armrests; Anton Hahn's home is practically a replica of a South German village house with "the half-timbering infilled with white plaster, the grey shutters, the wicket fence, scrubbed floors, painted panelling, the chandelier of antler tines [...]" (IP, p. 62); Casimir Slapeli©'s cheerful room with its decorated curtains and flowers, "all made in the Baltic way" (IP, p. 68) is a direct reflection not only of his own homeland but also of his lively temperament and open generosity; Archie Tuffnell's house, on the other hand, displays a spartan pragmatism worthy of an English puritan: "His domestic arrangements were a lesson in asceticism; a shower, a narrow bed, a desk, and two camp stools but

no chairs [...]" (IP, p. 90); Clarita Goodhall's house is literally an English import with "green windows and a soft red roof and has retained the plumbing and the upright presence of a Victorian parsonage" (IP, p. 127); Mr Hobbs's house, likewise, looks like "a gentleman's shooting lodge", and is full of English flowers which still grow "long after the English themselves had gone" and shreds of William Morris wallpaper still stubbornly adhere to the upper landing (IP, p. 85); finally, Herman Eberhard leads the narrator into his 1920's style German house containing steel chairs by Mies Van der Rohe. Such an elencation shows how architectural design serves to re-affirm national identity as well as reveal aspects of the exile's own personality. But the narrator also uses another recurrent descriptive element in his descriptions of homes to expose the exile's fear of cultural loss, namely in his descriptions of drawings, paintings and photographs which serve to fire their imagination in their attempt at cultural retrieval. Sonny Urquhart's prints of willowy gentlemen and ladies in crinolines and Archie Tuffnell's photographs of ladies and gentlemen in hunting gear, for example, reveal a quaint nostalgia for a comfortable middle-class existence of bygone ages that contrasts with the harshness and loneliness of life in Patagonia; Ali, the cocksure Persian, crams his place with objects representing middle-class Teheran including "cigarette boxes painted with scenes from the Shahnama" (IP, p. 35) that recall his country's more glorious past and which he evidently feels the need to reaffirm; the Russian woman's "two paintings of Russian subjects daubed landscapes dimly remembered by a fellow exile" (IP, p. 59) reinforce the agony of her exile

(as evinced in her persistent questions to the narrator of the plight of her fellow exiles) precisely because the romanticised landscape of the painting is the result of a distorted vision through temporal and spatial absence and exclusion. The murals painted by the Swiss soprano, on the other hand, are more cheerfully assertive:

> She had covered every inch of wall with murals, some in paint, some in coloured crayons [...]
>
> A yellow sun [...] played over the sail of yachts drifting on a summer's day; on cafés hung with Japanese lanterns; on the Chateau de Chillon, mountain chalets and the Ile des peupleirs (IP, p. 61).

In contrast with the Russian woman, whose past remains a dark enigma of which the narrator can only make certain assumptions, the Swiss soprano reveals a vivid memory of the scenes of her youth through her bright, colourful and energetic compositions which reflect a zest for life which still prevails however much part of an evocation of an irretrievably lost world. In keeping with the Germanic style of his house, Antohn Hahn displays antler tines and lithographs of the Rhineland while, not altogether incongruously, the Lithuanian Casimir Slapelic has a signed photograph of Neil Armstrong. In contrast with these various examples of intimate recollections and attachments is the old man's pictures of Hitler and General Rosas pasted on a bare wall and which have becomed browned over with the passing of time, a spatial-temporal description that foreshadows that of the Jones twins' kitchen.

At the opposite end of such descriptions of preservation and accumulation, the Canary Islander's home (ironically located on the site of a mythical Golden City) is characterised by disintegration and evacuation, the result of an indifference and neglect brought on by incurable homesickness:

> He sat in a pink-washed kitchen, where a black clock hammered out the hours [...] The house was all passage and unused rooms. In the salon a settee flaked patches of guilding to the floor. The optimistic plumbing of half a century had collapsed and reeked of ammonia (IP, p. 82).

The chromatic contrast between the pink-washed kitchen and the black clock, together with the disturbing manner in which it "hammers" out the hours, indicate an underlying tension which accompanies the limbo-like atmosphere of abandon reinforced by the unlived in rooms and rotting furniture. Furthermore, the elements in decay are rendered as the prime *actants* of this process, as evident in the transitive (where one would normally expect an intransitive) use of the verb 'flake'. The irrevocability of the process is also underlined by the appalling conditions of the plumbing where even the basic necessities of civilisation fail to operate. The narrator adds a final blow to this depressing description, which may be seen as a metaphor for the old man's self-abandon and lost hold on life, with the hailstones battering the currant bushes of his garden.

The extreme alternatives of preservation and accumulation on the one hand and disintegration and evacuation on the other are recurrent paradigms in

Chatwin's descriptions of his characters homes in general and effectively symbolise their contrasting dilemmas. This is eloquently illustrated in Mama Wéwé. The description in *The Viceroy of Ouidah* in which she converts her father's bedroom into a shrine in his honor exposes the insanely obsessive side of accumulation and preservation:

> She and Roxa made rosaries. They made reliquaries. They made wreaths of artificial flowers from sea shells and they improvised a Holy Ghost from a Pirevitte teapot in the form of a chicken. They hung up the panorama of Bahia, the picture of Judith and some religious colour prints: Santa Marta with a pair of bleeding hearts; Santa Luzia smiling at her own two eyes lying in the palm of her hand.
>
> The head of the Baptist they set on the alter table (VO, p. 41).

The inappropriacy of dedicating such a place of worship to a slave trader is later pointed out to her by one of the missionary fathers. But Mama Wéwé's hysterical reply ("But he sent them to PARADISE!" VO, p. 42) exposes her total ignorance of Christian religion and the iconic value of its symbols, as seen in the fact that the two women make the religious blend in grotesque juxtaposition with the barbaric. Thus, the canvass of Judith and Holophernes, for example, is in strident contrast with the rosary beads and wreaths of artificial flowers with which the room has been decorated. Mama Wéwé's shrine is an attempt, to cherish the memory of Dom Francisco by freezing the moment when his

influence and power were at their height. In doing so she superimposes Francisco's 'image' on her own surroundings and succumbs to a form of utter passivity to the point of obliterating her own self. As a result, accumulation and preservation paradoxically lead to evacuation and disintegration as her house gradually falls into a state of ruin:

> The years slipped by and nobody repaired the house. The thatch rotted, the shutters splintered and, when ants undermined the floor, her rocking chair would no longer rock. Weeds sprang up in the rainy season, bleached for lack of light. Patches of mould spread over the walls; a delta of red streams fanned out from the wasps' nests in the rafters and cut across the termite trails [...]
>
> Dom Francisco's wardrobe held together by its paint surface alone, lasted until 1957, when it collapsed, revealing a wreckage of whale bone stays and shreds of black taffeta that fluttered upwards like flakes of carbonised paper.
>
> Spiders had turned the parrot cage into a grey tent. The pictures were peeling, and all twelve Apostles eaten away to leprous stumps (VO, p. 43).

Apart from the verbal accumulation which, particularly from an aural point of view through the juxtapositioning of plosive consonants, creates an overbearingly clogging effect, the description is riddled with lexemes referring to the paradigms of DESTRUCTION and DECAY: "rotted", "splintered", "undermined", "bleached", "cut", "mould", "collapsed", "wreckage", "shreds", "flakes", "carbonised", "peeling" and "leprous". The struggle

between man and nature takes on Darwinian implications as the overgrown plant-life gradually invades and irradicates the various parts of the house and the humanity it embodies. Initially an extension of Mama Wéwé's self-assertion, the house finally collapses and rots, with its leprous stumps being at once connotative of her own physical decay as well as, by extension, that of the family's in general.

NOTES

[1] It is more than tempting to make analogies between Chatwin's 'Nomadic alternative' and Lawrence's 'Savage pilgrimage'. Both writers share an acute awareness of their essentially exilic condition whilst seeking, in an albeit faithful attempt to recognise the uniqueness of the 'other', their own private mythology of spiritual redemption.

[2] The following comment by John Livingstone Lowes seems directly applicable to Chatwin's approach: "One of the touchstones of supreme imaginative vision lies in its unerring recognition of what is universal in the remote and strange". John Livingstone Lowes, *The Road to Xanado: A Study in the Ways of the Imagination*, London, Picador, 1978, p. 104. Lowes' book also constitutes one of the intertexts of *In Patagonia*.

[3] Brian McHale, *Postmodernist Fiction*, London, Routledge, 1987, p. 33.

[4] Bruce Chatwin and Paul Theroux, *Patagonia Revisited*, London, Picador, 1985, pp. 7-8.

[5] Michael Seidel, *Exile and the Narrative Imagination*, New Haven, Yale University Press, 1986, p. ix. Seidel also comments in his conclusion: "The narrative imagination inhabits exilic domain where absence is presence, or to put it the other way round, where presence is absence" (p. 199).

[6] Colin Thubron, "Chatwin and the Hippopotamus", *London Review of Books*, 22 June, 1989, p. 18.

[7] N. Shakespeare, *Bruce Chatwin*, London, cit., p. 290.

[8] Robert Louis Stevenson, *The Silverado Squatters*, St Helena, California, The Silverado Museum, 1974, pp. 20-1.

[9] Phil Cousineau, *The Art of Pilgrimage: The Seeker's Guide to Making Travel Sacred*, Shaftesbury, Element, 1999, p. 83.

[10] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

[11] Michael Bell (ed.) *The Context of English Literature: 1900-1930*, London, Methuen, 1980, p. 14.

[12] B. Chatwin and P. Theroux, *op. cit.*, p. 11.

[13] Quoted in Susannah Clapp, *With Chatwin*, London, Jonathan Cape, 1997, p. 40.

[14] Paul Theroux, *The Old Patagonian Express*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1980, p. 429.

[15] Julian Cowley, "Pataphysical Patagonia: Bruce Chatwin's Distantly Interrogative Somewhere", *Critique*, vol. xxxvii, n. 4, Summer 1996, p. 302.

[16] Benjamin Hrushovski, "Fictionality and Frames of Reference: Remarks on a Theoretical Framework", *Poetics Today*, 5:2, 1984, p. 250.

[17] M. Seidel, *op. cit.*, p. 9.

[18] P. Theroux, *op. cit.*, p. 424, observes of the Welsh community that: "They are tough, independent and undemonstrative people, not the singers and dreamers one associates with Wales, but a different breed altogether, church-goers, sheep farmers, tenaciously protestant, with a great sentiment for a homeland they have never seen and for a language few speak".

[19] The Welsh verb 'madru' means 'to putrefy'.

[20] Uki Goni, "In Patagonia: Fact or Fabrication?", *Buenos Aires Herald*, 24 April, 1994.

[21] Ian Chambers, *Border Dialogues: Journeys in Postmodernity*, London, Routledge, 1990, p. 87.

[22] Anne Cline, *A Hut Of One's Own: Life Outside the Circle of Architecture*, Massachusetts, The Mit Press, 1997, p. 4.

[23] Martin Stoddard, *The Great Expatriate Writers*, London, Macmillan, 1992, p. 5.

[24] George Eliot, *Silas Marner*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1996, p. 15: "[...] this lethean influence of exile in which the past becomes dreamy because its symbols have all vanished, and the present too is dreamy because it is linked with no memories".

[25] Keith Robbins, *Nineteenth-Century Britain: England, Scotland and Wales: The Making of a Nation*, Oxford, Oxford University Press, p. 9.

[26] M. Seidel, *op. cit.*, p. 4.

[27] Joseph Conrad, *Heart of Darkness*, New York, Bantam, 1969, p. 112.

[28] *Ibid.*, p. 118. Where Francisco's cry "'No, not the children!'" (VO, p. 97.) echoes Kurtz's last words ("'The horror! The horror!'").

[29] Dafydd Johnston, *The Literature of Wales*, Cardiff, University of Wales Press, 1994, p. 127.

[30] Eugene Stockton, *The Aboriginal Gift — Spirituality For a Nation*, Alexandria, Millennium Books, 1995, p. 61.

[31] This is seen also in certain episodes in which the Aboriginals

invent dreamings for aspects of the white man's universe such as Joshua's Quantas dreaming and his humerous dreaming of a scientific experiment he once took part in (see SONG, pp. 172-4).

[32] Graham Huggan, "Maps, Dreams and the Representation of Ethnographic Narrative: Hugh Brody's *Maps and Dreams* and Bruce Chatwin's *The Songlines*", Ariel, January 1991, p. 63.

[33] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 112.

[34] M. Seidel, *op cit.*, p. 35.

[35] G. Bachelard, *op. cit.*, p. 15.

Nomads

False Nomads

In *Patagonia Revisited,* Chatwin affirms: "If we are travellers at all, we are literary travellers. A literary reference or connection is likely to excite us as much as a rare animal or plant"[1]. This exposes a paradox, for in his underlining of the centrality of literature in the traveller's experience, Chatwin is paying indirect homage to its inventor, the settler. At the same time, since literature is the invention of settlers, "the nomadic record looks black in writing"[2] and, as a result, Chatwin is at pains in his essays to vindicate nomadic existence to the extent of defying the settler's smug yet fearful attitude towards "the savage wrecker of progress"[3], by evoking a personal myth of nomadism as a preferable alternative to sedentary life. Chatwin's thematisation of the nomad in his works takes root in his idea that restlessness is intrinsic to man, though only overtly evident in certain individuals or communities. Furthermore, this restlessness is manifested in terms of a binary opposition: on the one hand, it expresses the release of pent up feelings of negativity and rejection (anger, frustration, etc) which lead to violence and destruction, and on the other, it is an expression of an all-embracing acceptance and sympathy and is synonymous of physical and spiritual liberty. Thus, the idea of the nomad's moral superiority continually stressed in Chatwin's essays and articles—together with the spiritual and intellectual

gratifications of travelling as a form of liberty and escape from the trappings of sedentary life — is not altogether the straightforward concept it initially seems, because the nature of Chatwin's nomadic characters depends on the very different types of restlessness they manifest as well as the diverse influences that motivate them. In fact, a progression may be delineated in the nomadic typologies of his works from *In Patagonia* and *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, in which outlaw, renegade, or fugitive figures, prevail, to *On The Black Hill*, and *The Songlines* which are almost exclusively concerned with natural nomads whose styles of life reflect a spiritual or moral choice. In the first category, the nomad's opposition to the community comes in the form of rebellion and in this sense is a false form of nomadism leading to anarchy, whilst in the second it comes in the form of spiritual withdrawal and self-isolation. This recurrent polarity, which distinguishes 'false' nomads from 'real' ones, can be detected throughout Chatwin's works. Another aspect which further complicates matters is precisely what constitutes a nomad. In commenting on Chatwin's own synopsis of his never-published book "The Nomadic Alternative", the author of *The Naked Ape*, Desmond Morris, detects a self-contradiction in Chatwin's idea of the presence or non of a fixed base[4] and Chatwin himself wrote in one of his notebooks of his compulsion to wander being counterweighed by an equally strong compulsion to return[5]. The idea of return implies a base from which one can start off in the first place, and the question is whether real nomads can be said to have such a base. It is one thing to consider wandering as an urge to "break away from the stultifying habits"[6] of daily life,

as Cousineau expresses it, it is quite another for this notion of wandering as temporary escape to constitute a permanent condition. Also, although some of Chatwin's nomadic characters function in terms of a base (even if in a figurative sense), the real nomad has no need of one, since the world at large becomes a substitute for home. Furthermore, there is the question of whether nomadism is actually something so instinctive and inbred in man as the narrators of *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* would have us believe, or whether it is culturally dependent. The latter aspect is frequently manifested through tales and stories which have an important function in generating the wanderlust of Chatwin's nomadic characters. As regards Chatwin himself, journeying meant almost as importantly, returning with stories to tell and his own journeys must be seen in this light ("If we are travellers at all we are literary travellers").

In the previous chapter it was noted that the first-person narrator's journey in *In Patagonia* is paralleled by his intertextual mapping of the country and that this feature is characterised by a combination of factual investigation and imaginative reconstruction. In this work, "the narrator deconstructs the spatial linearity of his journey into a patchwork landscape of Patagonian fragments"[7] whose narratives he attempts to piece together. This process of construction/deconstruction, together with the continuous shifting of perspective and interlinking, underline the importance of mobility as a structural principle of *In Patagonia*. Indeed, for Chatwin, a fundamental point to grasp in understanding the book is the fact that Patagonia represents a symbol of man's restlessness being "the farthest place to which man

walked from his place of origins"[5]. It is significant that, whereas the majority of Chatwin's exiles are comprised of the people the narrator actually encounters on his travels (they inhabit the dimension of the 'real' journey), almost all of his nomads, although non-fictional, happen to be historical characters or legends (people whom the narrator cannot meet in the flesh), and thus their portrayal depends precisely on the blend of imaginative re-creation and factual/historical accounts sustained by documentary sources that are the product of this context-shifting and interlinking. Therefore, although having actually existed, they are textualised to the extent of becoming quasi-fictitious, enigmatic and illusive figures that inhabit the dimension of the narrator's imaginary journey. From his first work onwards, Chatwin's portrayal of his nomads is grounded on this mythologisation of tangible evidence that entails an apparently plausible balance between 'indisputable' facts and their imaginative re-elaboration. The narrator's handling of his first two false nomadic characters in *In Patagonia* is particularly symptomatic of this method. Both of them are introduced from an internal point of view providing documentary evidence through the quotation of a letter. Their stories are then narrated from the external perspective of the narrator to proceed more and more speculatively and with a strong reliance on imaginative intuition. The first of these accounts regards Martin Sheffield, a Texan adventurer of self-illusions who, besides seeking childish amusement by shooting off the high-heels of ladies' shoes, "styled himself sheriff and wore a star and a sheriff's hat to prove it" (IP, p. 40). The second concerns the famous outlaw Butch Cassidy,

whose gang the Wild Bunch performed the most spectacular train robberies in the history of the Wild West — it was, incidentally, Chatwin's interest in Butch Cassidy that initiated his friendship with the Peruvian writer Luis Sepúlveda. Sheffield's letter to the director of a national zoo, Dr Clemente Onelli, in which he claims to have spotted an unknown beast and asks for funds in order to have it captured, is as matter-of-fact in tone as it is approximate in its description of the mysterious creature the man purports to have seen (a cross between a swan and a crocodile!). Sheffield begins by slyly pampering Onelli ("knowing of your concern to keep the Zoo in the public eye" *Ibid.*), and then inciting him in a somewhat imperative manner to send material aid for an expedition ("in case it proves impossible to capture the beast alive, you should send embalming fluid" *Ibid*). As a result, Onelli wastes no time in calling a press conference and announcing the plesiosaurus hunt, and the episode takes on such prominence that it becomes mixed up with the country's political elections:

> Two old age pensioners escaped from the Hospital de la Mercedes to fight the monster. The plesiosaurus also lent its name to a tango and a brand of cigarettes [...]
>
> Meanwhile the country was paralysed by a general election which would decide whether to unseat its Radical President, Dr Holipólito Yrigoyen, and some how the plesiosaurus managed to insert itself into the campaign as emblematic beast of the right (IP, pp 40-1).

As is evident, the plesiosaurus itself (a figment of Sheffield's imagination, or the result of his tomfoolery)

interests the narrator less than the impact it had on Patagonian society. As a result, Sheffield comes across as a sketch and the account is more interesting for what it reveals of the narrator and other people's reactions towards him. His conclusion that "the animal's non-existence must have been evident to whoever stood on its bank" (IP, p. 41) is already hinted at in a chain of cataphoric references, first in the deflating description that begins this section:

> The 'lagunita' lay under a mountain of red screes. It was little bigger than a pond and not more than a metre deep. Its unruffled surface reflected the black conifers that grew round the edge. Coots were swimming in the reeds. It was hardly a place to attract world headlines (IP, p. 39).

then in the villagers mockery of his interest in Sheffield in the first place:

> 'Bah!' said Teofilo Breide, 'Sheffield! Fantasia! Cuentero! Artista! You know the story of the plesiosaurus?'
> 'I do'.
> 'Fantasia' he roared and launched into an anecdote that made the gauchos laugh (*Ibid*).

The narrator's reconstruction of selected episodes from the life of Butch Cassidy occupies a total of six sections distributed in different chapters in the book. As with Sheffield, he commences his account from the internal point of view of a letter, in which Cassidy gives a detailed description of his daily life while in hiding from

the Pinkerton Agency in Cholila. Its lengthy nature belies Cassidy's apparent disinclination for writing and reflects the slow monotony of a lonely existence. Much of the letter's syntax consists of strings of long sentences linked by commas rather than full-stops, to create an informal, conversational tone as well as denoting the loose and rambling nature of the wanderer:

> The only industry at present is stockraising (that is in this part) and it can't be beat for that purpose, for I have never seen finer grass country, and lots of it hundreds and hundreds of miles that is unsettled and comparatively unknown, and where I am is good agricultural country, all kinds of small grain and vegetables grow without irrigation but I am at the foot of the Andes Mountains (IP, p. 44).

Cassidy's roving, lawless life began as a reaction against the stifling and corrupting influence of his Morman upbringing and his paradoxical realisation that "right lay the wrong side of the law" (IP, p. 45). Like Francisco da Silva, his wanderings owed their inspiration to adventure stories: "He dreamed of being a cowboy and, in dime novels, read the ongoing saga of Jesse James" (*Ibid*). Cassidy's emulation of his hero is synonymous of the way in which his own life was to become a blend of fiction and reality, commencing with his name: *Butch*, being that of a borrowed gun and *Cassidy*, that of a young outlaw he befriended when he ran away from home at the age of eighteen. He also undertook a variety of activities: "drover, horse-wrangler, mavericker, part-time bank robber, and leader of men" (IP, p. 46). Like

Cobra Verde in *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, who only robs rich women, Cassidy was also selective about whom he robbed and, as a result, was dreaded and hated by the authorities but loved by poor Mormons to whom he gave financial aid with Robin-hood like generosity. Another ambiguity about him that fascinates the narrator is the legend that he never killed a man and that "his friends' murders drove him to fits of remorse" (*Ibid*). These two traits of generosity and self-guilt contribute to reveal a psychologically puzzling personality that overrides the simplicity of the stereotype anti-hero and Chatwin uses an intriguing blend of omniscience and internal point of view in his account to underline Cassidy's enigmatic nature. Two chapters are taken up by the narrator's lengthy speculation on the problematic connection between Butch Cassidy and the Sundance Kid and two other outlaws, Wilson and Evans, which the narrator solves to his own satisfaction after realising that people's descriptions of them and their adventures coincide so perfectly, that the names 'Wilson' and 'Evans' could only have been necessary cover-up identites for two men so desperately sought after by the law. Likewise, the stories regarding Cassidy's death are also the terrain of contradiction and speculation, one source suggesting he was killed in a shoot-out in 1908, and others siting him as being alive and well as late as the 1930s. The narrator, relishing in these conflicting reports, is well aware of the fact that they heighten the aura of mystery surrounding the man (the air of immortality that always surrounds people whose deaths have not been recorded or witnessed). Doubtless, Cassidy's nomadic existence contributed much to his illusory personality, since

nomadism eludes historical record and social appropriation and in this sense tends to myth. As with the episode concerning Martin Sheffield, there is also a section anticipating the narrator's account of Butch Cassidy, in the description of the Indian woman's rotting cabin (see p. 50), the builder being Cassidy himself and the cabin his temporary home while he was in hiding in Cholila (and from where he wrote his letter). Chatwin's beautiful photograph shows it nestling quaintly among tall grass and trees, the perfect idyllic hideout[9]. But the rotting cabin is also a functional device and synonymous of the fragmented landscape of Chatwin's narrative which, in turn, reflects the fragmented nature of his stories, the impossibility of constructing definite versions or final truths from them. In a sense, Segñora Sepúlveda's' struggle in preventing her cabin from falling to pieces anticipates and parallels the narrator's struggle in constructing a definite, 'true' version of its builder's life-story. The irony behind this parallelism, of course, being that the narrator's struggle is the product of a playful engagement with the imagination which costs him nothing.

The narrator's account of the Patagonian revolution on the part of the Chilean estancia-workers, led by Antonio Soto, occupies the central section of the book. It is a condensed version of a long review Chatwin had previously written in 1976 and which was published posthumously in *Anatomy of Restlessness*. In yet another instance of self-irony, the narrator finds his almost romantic expectations regarding the revolution dampened by the Englishman Archie Tuffnell:

> I bought the three volumes in Buenos Aires and read them, fascinated; for this revolution in miniature seemed to explain the mechanics of all revolution.
>
> I asked Archie Tuffnell about it and he scowled.
>
> 'Bad business. Bunch of Bolshie agitators came down and stirred up trouble. That was one thing. Then the Army came down and that was another. Shot good men. They shot good, honest, reliable men. They even shot my friends. It was a filthy business from start to finish' (IP, p. 95).

But his apparently anachronistic interest in Antonio Soto's revolution is, of course, far from political. For he sees it as paradigmatic of the conflict between the nomad and the settler, represented here by the Chilean Peons on the one hand, and the wealthy estancia-owners on the other. The notion of revolution, therefore, takes on an a-historical bias that contrasts with the immediate concerns of the migrants who "had a more recent revolution to think about" (IP, p. 102). In his essay "It's a Nomad Nomad World", Chatwin implicitly justifies revolution as part of a natural process intrinsically connected with the idea of mobility:

> The word 'revolution', so offensive to the persecuters of Galileo, was originally used to denote the cyclical passage of celestial bodies. When the geographical movements of people are tampered with, they attach themselves to political movements[10].

At the same time, however, the narrator does not elude the elements of parody that bedevil Soto's rebellion. As

a result of years of repression, the Chilotes evidently lost something of their original proud nomadic spirit for there are few signs of the moral integrity that should characterise them. Rather, the Peons are depicted as dumb followers of a charismatic figure, who repeats stock phrases from Marxist and Leninist creeds in parrot-fashion and is himself indoctrinated by two men who are his superiors in intelligence. Soto's was a restless spirit and, like Cassidy, he assumed several different guises: prop boy, mine-worker, restaurant owner and anarchist leader, the latter perhaps being more consonant to his air of "Celtic vagueness and fanaticism" (IP, p. 95) which was coupled with a strong puritanical streak. In spite of the fact that the revolution freed the Chilotes from their inhibitions, it only led to murder and destruction. The energies of years of repression that were liberated proved to be lethal and, only resulted in triumph for the cunning forces of civilisation, as the Chilotes were captured, rounded up like cattle and executed en mass. The truth of the matter is that Soto's inheritence of a fiery Gallicean temperament was quite at odds with the placid and fatalistic temperament of the other Chilotes who had singled him out as "the white saviour promised in their folklore" (IP, p. 97). Soto himself escaped from the country leaving his comrades to their fate, thus revealing a disconcerting selfishness hardly worthy of a real leader: "But Soto said he'd run for it, said he was not made for dog-meat, said he'd continue in the mountains or abroad" (IP, p. 99). Soto's self-vindication is made all the more brutal here by Chatwin's use of free indirect discourse, which comes unexpectedly given the objective tone adopted for most

of his account. The last part of Soto's life completes a circle in that it followed the nomadic pattern of his first in which he assumed a variety of professions: miner, trucker, ciné-projectionist, fruit-vender, farm-worker and restaurateur, as well as working in Mrs Charles Amhurst Milward's iron foundry. The fact that "his earlier incarnation" (IP, p. 95) — as the narrator significantly calls it — was spent as a prop-boy for travelling actors in which he took small insignificant parts from time to time, foreshadows the sham acting involved in his playing the anarchist orator.

Similar to Soto in his "limited intelligence and boundless conviction" (IP, p. 116), Simon Radowitzky nevertheless exhibited far more daring in his selfless acts of rebellion. After dropping a bomb into a car, which killed the Director of State Prisons, he was jailed for life and deported to a prison in Ushuaia in Patagonia. Since he became so popular with his inmates, he was constantly victimised and tortured by his jailers. Nevertheless, with stoic determination and self-pride he "greeted each new indignity with a smile" (IP, p. 118). Eventually, two Argentine Anarchists hired Pascualino Rispoli, "a Neapolitan 'pirate' open to any kind of commission" (*Ibid*), to help Radowitzky escape, but he was captured shortly after. Twelve years later, Radovitzky was pardoned by President Yrigoyen as a symbolic gesture to the working classes and on his release was welcomed by a crowd of cheering anarchists who were later, however, to become dismayed by his mild manners and complete ignorance of current political affairs. The main purpose of Radowitzky's story is to illustrate Chatwin's paradigm of the old quarrel between Abel, the wanderer,

and Cain, the hoarder of property, with Abel "taunting Cain with 'Death to the Bourgoise'" (IP, p. 118). Radowitzky, like Abel, is seen as a victim of the bourgeoise, and this differentiates him from the other renegade figures of the book. He was abandoned by society, exploited and manipulated by his friends who, after his release from prison, used him as an errand boy for their clandestine messages to Brazil. In fact, it was during one of these errands that he was caught again and put under house arrest but, with no possessions and no home, was forced to go back to prison. Since Radowitzky derived much purpose and moral sustenance from his long period of confinement, prison ironically became his true home base, so that: "Once free [...]" he "sank back into obscurity and nervous exhaustion" (IP, p. 119). As with Soto, here also nomadism offers the renegade no way out of his existential dilemma, but only increases his sense of self-loss.

The traits of ignorance and brutality that constitute the negative paradigms of Chatwin's 'false' nomadic characters are particularly evident in Jemmy Button, a Fuegian native captured by British seamen, who, like Francisco da Silva, demonstrated an uncanny tendency to alternate between civilisation and barbarism. With respect to the previous nomadic characters, the narrator renders his imaginative reconstruction even more vivid, particularly in the sequence describing Jemmy's early life:

> His birthplace was an arbour of green saplings, sods and rancid seal-skins. His mother cut his umbelical cord with a sharp mussel-shell and

rammed his head against her copper-coloured teat. For two years the teat was the centre of his universe. He went everywhere with the teat: fishing, berrying, canoeing, visiting cousins, or learning the names — as complex and precise as Linnaean Latin — of everything that swam or sprouted, crawled or flew.

One day the teat tasted horrible, for his mother had smeared it with rancid blubber. She told him to play with boys his own age, now he could chew a steak of seal (IP, p. 120).

An interesting intratextual background to the above passage is Chatwin's essay "It's a Nomad Nomad World", in which he expresses the belief that babies of the bushmen hunters never cry and are among the most contented babies in the world as a result of being rocked into contentment by their mothers' swaying walk[11]. His imaginative description of Jemmy Button's infancy, however, is far from idyllic and the brutal matter-of-factness of his birth and the inflexible discipline with which he is brought up is rendered in an incisive, uncompromising prose. Its style foreshadows that of *The Viceroy of Ouidah,* consisting, as it does, of short atomic sentences reinforced by lexical items connotative of violence and aggression ("rancid", "cut", "sharp", "rammed"). The description of the mother's copper-coloured breast is not only indicative of the colour of her skin but, in evoking the metal, also appropriately underlines her lack of motherly tenderness. The conscious attention Chatwin always devotes to the verbal texture of his prose can never be insisted on enough, and here the predominance of the sibilant /s/ and plosive /k/ in

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the first two sentences effectively conveys the harshness of the boy's life on a phonological level. Jemmy's kidnapping by Captain Robert FitzRoy, is also imaginatively rendered in a series of semantic transferences (UNIFORM → COSTUME, COIN → DISC and PADDLES → WHITE WING), that create an almost idyllic vision which is the result of the internal point of view of a primitive mind: "A tall person in costume beckoned him and he leapt aboard. The pink man handed the uncle a disc that shimmered like the moon and the canoe spread a white wing and flew down the channel towards the source of pearl buttons" (IP, p. 121). The second phase of Jemmy's life was characterised by the influence of civilisation which became his new home base and in which he was sent to a boarding school where he learned "to preen before mirrors and fuss over his gloves" (*Ibid*). Such petty vanities are a grotesque contrast with the savage barbarism that resurfaced in him almost overnight on his return to his island on Charles Darwin's "Beagle" and the stoning to death of eight white people he later planned "out of anger at the miserable presents sent him from England" (IP, p. 125) can be seen as another anticipation of a similar episode in *The Viceroy of Ouidah* in which the King of Dahomey goes to war against the British after being shocked by the measly presents he receives from them. The narrator speculates on the nature of nomadism through a consideration of the opposite views of Charles Darwin and Robert FitzRoy and suggests, debatably, that Jemmy Button helped Darwin initiate his theory that man had evolved from an ape species (Darwin was certainly nowhere near such a conception at that time). His reaction

towards these savages, "'the most abject and miserable creatures' he anywhere beheld" (IP, p. 122) is, for the narrator, typical of the naturalist's contempt of mankind. FitzRoy, who was equally puzzled by them, was particularly preoccupied by a temporal-spatial problem that led him to form a fable-like theory of migration as having its origins in rebellion:

> Somewhere, under the canvass of Asia Minor, the sons of Shem and Japheth loved some black slave girls, of the cursed line of Ham and Cush, and fathered the race of reddish mulattos, who, would people Asia and the Americas. Naturally the fathers preferred their legitimate offspring to half-castes, and the latter, chafing at their bondage, walked out. Their craving for freedom stimulated emigration in all directions 'and eventually perpetuated that passion for wandering which we see today in the Arab, the migratory Malay, the roving Tartar, and the South American Indian' (IP, p. 122).

Thus, FitzRoy explained the degenerate condition of the savages as a consequence of the brutal change in climate they were forced to endure coupled with their gradual loss of cultural memory. This is in part offered to elucidate the enigmatic Jemmy Button who, like Francisco da Silva, displays an uncanny ability to switch from barbarism to civility:

> In 1855, the Patagonian Mission Society's schooner 'Allen Gardiner' anchored in the Murray Narrows and hoisted the Union Jack.

> On impulse her captain, Parker Snow, shouted 'Jemmy Button!' and a shout rang back across the water: 'Yes! Yes! James Button! James Button!' A stout man paddled up, asked for clothes, and, 'looking like a baboon dressed for the occasion' took tea in the captain's cabin as if twenty-one years had melted away (IP, p. 124).

The incongruity of the scene is underlined by the captain's impulsive cry and the blend of animal-like elements in the description of Button ("paddled up [...] looking like a baboon") with the nonchalant matter-of-factness of his asking for clothes and the formality of the phrase "took tea". The juxtaposition here of Button's real home base (savagery) with his acquired home base (culture), makes this sudden transformation in him all the more grotesque. The narrator concludes the chapter with a succession of images paradigmatically associated with the civil/savage aspects of Jemmy's life and the rhetorical nature of his questions as to which of these images he remembered most as he passed away from the world only confirms his sense of the ultimately perplexing nature of this character: "We cannot know what he remembered as he passed from the world — a copper coloured teat? The stomach of a man called Majesty? Or a man - eating lion on the steps of Northumberland House?" (IP, p. 125).

The episodes narrating the life of Henri Grien, certainly one of the most curious characters of *In Patagonia*, are spread over four separate chapters and interlaced with the narrator's account of Charley Milward. This structurally appropriate procedure evidently intends to underline Grien's almost comical tendency to pop up at any time and in the most unlikeliest

of places! Grien possesses all the picaresque qualities of the classic scoundrel, and his presence, particularly his continual encounters with Milward, provide a comical element to the narrator's otherwise earnest account of his Great-Uncle. Like some of the previous false nomadic figures, Grien was born into a family of poor peasants from which he ran away at a very early age. For seven years he lived on the fringes of a theatrical group as the footman of an ageing actress, after which he "assumed the career of the drifter" (IP, p. 157) taking on a head-spinning array of professions: butler, cook, dish washer, photographer, landscape painter, business salesman, waiter and quack-spiritualist. He is another character who incarnates a blend of fiction and reality that is consonant to Chatwin's narrative method in *In Patagonia*. It may not be going too far to assert that, in a sense, he can be seen as a 'malignant' parody of the narrator himself. He certainly shares Chatwin's deliberate mystification of the categories of fiction and fact. When, for example, a journalist suggested his life story would make a best seller as fiction Henri would not hear of this: "by now dream and reality had fused into one" (IP, p. 157). Later, under the false name of Louis de Rougemont, he gave a totally invented account of his experiences as a castaway in Australia, living among Aboriginals and becoming a tribal chief. After this was hacked into a book, becoming an instant best-seller, Grien's real identity was uncovered by suspicious journalists. Yet in spite of being howled out of academic society: "The traveller withstood the attacks with unblushing calm and resumed the theatrical career of Henri Grien" (IP, p. 159). The fact that the man was not totally void of self-irony is apparent in the title

of his show, "The Greatest Liar on Earth", as well as his anglicising of his fake name into Louis Redmond! However, unlike the previous renegade and rebel characters, Grein, in spite of treating the world as a stage and people as his fools, was ultimately harmless and, if anything, only his own worst enemy.

The correlation between wandering and acting is, as has been seen, a recurrent one among Chatwin's false nomads and it primarily serves to reinforce their lack of integrity. At the heart of what differentiates his false and real nomads lies the fact that real nomads "never roam aimlessly from place to place"[12] and that for them movement is morality. The real nomad, unlike the false nomad, remains true to his own self. On the contrary, the aimless wanderings of Chatwin's renegade characters, rather than consolidating their identity, lead to self-disintegration. Cassidy, Soto and Grien assumed a variety of disguises to conceal their real identities; Button's introduction into civilised society generates a culture clash which caused a split in his personality and Radowitzky paid the price for his liberty and eventually sank into obscurity.

As with Butch Cassidy, adventure stories serve as an impetus for Francisco da Silva's wanderlust. It is another case where story-telling exposes a restless character to his dissatisfaction with the world he inhabits by opening up the possibility of other worlds. As one critic has expressed it: "[...] far from being an innocent activity, storytelling not only derives significance from situation but also has the power to change human situations"[13]. In Francisco's case, adventure stories initially open his eyes to his innate loneliness and desire to escape from

the poverty and squallor of life in the Sertao. However, that his nomadic impulses clash with his instinctive urges can be seen in the fact that neither is his restlessness cured by travelling nor is it relieved when he settles down to married life. If anything, it becomes even more exasperated and threatens to release pent-up feelings of bloodlust and violence. In fact, he soon comes to the maddening realisation that he can only give vent to the negative aspects of his personality through mobility, but that at the same time mobility itself cannot annihilate them. Francisco's nomadic experiences can be divided into three distinct phases, each constituting a progression towards a certain kind of self-knowledge. The first phase occurs when, as a boy, he rides away from the convent on the dying Manuelzhino's horse and spends seven years drifting through harsh barren landscapes knowing happiness "only if it was time to be departing" (VO, p. 53). Chatwin's prose is particularly terse and paratactic in describing this period of Francisco's existence:

> Duststorms burnished his skin. His clothes reeked of sour milk and horses. When drought tore at his throat, he soothed it with an infusion brewed from the tail of a rattlesnake.
>
> Faces he forgot, but he remembered the sensations: the taste of the armadillo meat roasted in clay: the shock of aguardiente on the tongue; the pleasures of hot blood spurting over his hands, or of pissing down the leg of his horse (VO, p. 53).

Although Francisco experiences worse hardships during the drought, this initial nomadic phase not only renders him conscious of his isolation and loneliness, but also

underlines the intensity of his physical sensations, both pleasant and unpleasant. The images are ennumerated in a series of flashes, as if to suggest the transitory nature of each moment, but the iterative nature of the passage indicates a recurring pattern. Francisco's second nomadic phase follows his abandoning of his wife and child. In this sequence his wanderings become a necessary alternative to his bloodlust which is increasingly aggravated by the sedentary existence of married life. To save his family from his wrath Francisco needs to undergo self-punishment by wandering through the harsh landscape again so that his 'escape' becomes a necessarily self-imposed exile. Consequently, his sense of self-mistrust while living in civil society precipitates his eventual choice to live in the African jungle:

> He passed through valleys of white dust where men in white went digging for tubers. Jerked beef was his food, dried fruits and wild honey: water he pressed from the roots of the umbu.
>
> Sometimes there was no grass, but sharp sedges only and the horses falling from hunger. The journeys were endless, over empty horizons: the sound of hoofs on chips of silica, the crack of dead branches, the crack of rainless thunder, the shriek of a vulture — whatever broke the silence was sadder than silence (VO, p. 56).

The above description is partly mock-biblical. The function of the desert as a means of purging the individual soul (the references to wild honey, for example recalls John the Baptist[14]) and fasting are religious concepts. But the eeriness of the landscape is somewhat reminiscent of

the final section of T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* and its whiteness renders man and environment uniform and lifeless. Lexemes referring to dryness ("jerked", "dried", "no grass", "chips of silica") and the insistent rhythm of the parallell clauses ("the crack of dead branches", "the crack of rainless thunder" and "the shriek of a vulture"), together with the cacophonic combination of "crack" and "shriek" recall the drought during Francisco's boyhood, as well as indicating his own spiritual and moral void. This stage culminates in a scene of extreme bloodlust in which, to give further vent to his violence, Francisco works alongside butchers and salters as if to "purge himself in blood" (VO, p. 58). In the third phase of his wanderings, before he leaves Brazil for Dahomey, story-telling again serves as the initial impulse for his desire to travel to Africa:

> Jeronimo told him stories of mudbrick palaces lined with skulls, of tribes who exchanged gold dust for tobacco; a Holy Snake that was also a rainbow, and kings with testicles the size of avocados.
>
> The name 'Dahomey' took root in his imagination (VO, p. 62).

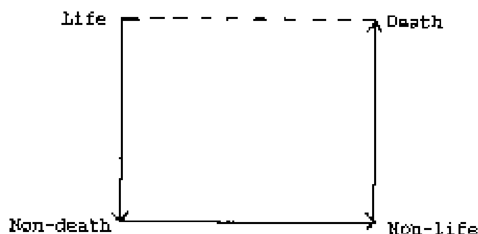
The amalgam of randomly juxtaposed exotic images are like the indeterminate matter of a pre-creation chaos in Francisco's mind until they acquire a semantic unity in 'Dahomey', which is appropriately 'called into existence' in a separate paragraph. The actual sea-journey to Dahomey is excluded from the syntagmatic chain of narrated events and reduced to a summary in which preparation for the voyage concludes chapter three and

Francisco's arrival opens chapter four. This strategy is justified by the fact that mobility is by now, for Francisco, only a means to an end. Also, this third nomadic phase, unlike the second, is not motivated by guilt, (Francisco is ordered to leave by Joaquim and feels an almost inhuman indifference towards both himself and the things around him). "Drifting aimlessly round the City of All Saints in a suicide's jacket of black velveteen bought off a tailor's dummy" (VO, p. 63), Francisco seems to become a substitute for the dummy itself as he drifts mechanically and aimlessly round the city, a prey to little urchins who kiss him on the lips and pick his pockets. The main paradigm of this phase is death, as opposed to the lifelessness that characterised his previous limbo-like, nomadic existence:

> His principle amusement was to follow funeral processions. One day it would be a black catafalque encrusted with golden skulls. The next, a sky-blue casket for a stillborn child, or a grey corpse wrapped in a shroud of banana leaves (*Ibid*).

Francisco's attraction for funerals may be explained by the fact that he unconsciously sees them as a mirror of his own spiritual death. It may also be significantly recalled that when he is given his assignment for Ouidah "all present congtatulated the man they knew would be a corpse" (VO, p. 65). It is therefore no accident that the narrator, at this point of the novel, gives a description of the final form his lineaments have taken, as if to drive home the impossibility of any redemption from the fate he is falling into. For already, he is like "a man who is

lying at the bottom of a precipice where the sun never shines"[15]. In the above passage, the juxtapositioning of the contrasting lexemes "golden"/"skulls", and "sky-blue"/"stillborn child", recalls the strident contrasts of the African jungle, and Francisco's detached amusement anticipates the nature of his cruelty as a slave trader. It is particularly significant that, on his arrival in Africa, Francisco lies down to listen to a symphony of frogs, the same animal he had previously "smashed to a blood-streaked slime" (VO, p. 55), and that their presence no longer disturbs him now as he rocks himself to sleep in his own rhythm — as if to suggest that he has put himself entirely into the hands of his own fate. Finally, the nomadic phases that demark the processes of Francisco's self-knowledge ironically conclude with his spiritual and civil death and his thwarted attempts to escape from Africa and to return to his home base in Brazil merely underline the irrevocability of the fact. By plotting their spatial/structural progression using Greimas's semiotic model the relations of contrarity, contradiction and complementarity which delineate the course of Francisco's plight in the novel will become all the more evident:



The three phases of Francisco's wanderings can thus be schematised as follows: Phase one = ESCAPE FROM DEATH, phase two = RETREAT FROM LIFE and phase three = DRIFT TOWARDS DEATH (L → -D → -L → D). The mobile dimension of his life stops at the third stage of the values charted on the semiotic square. This is the stage in which he decides to live in the paradoxical situation where "the dead were more alive than the living" (VO, p. 88), and where he himself lives a living death. Thus, this state may be seen as an oscillating between D and -L. Although it is true that the quasi degree-zero narratorial tone of Chatwin's novel means there is the lack of an inherent or explicitly moral framework of values to guide the protagonist, these values are not completely absent — as evident in such instances as Francisco's momentary guilt feelings (see pp. 88-9). The fact that the omniscient narrator chooses to almost completely shun the idea of an internal psychological/moral penetration of his character, makes such isolated moments all the more eloquent and further reinforces the hard and alien quality of the book.

Whereas Francisco's wanderings ultimately confirm his state of forced exile, Utz's annual trips to Vichy merely consolidate his predilection for a life of settlement in Prague. The essentially alienating experience of these sojourns only leads him to recognise, not without a touch of cynicism, that his real destiny lies in that city since "it suited his melancholic temperament" (U, p. 82). The spatial coordinates that constitute Utz's journeys (Prague → Vichy → Prague) reiterate a frustrating oscillation between newly acquired freedom and consequent boredom with that freedom, together with a

paradoxical longing to return to a claustrophobic existence with Marta (faithful guardian of Utz's home base) and his collection of porcelain statues. Not only, but his return journey also represents an act of perversity in being the opposite route taken by all the other Czech citizens. The recurring nature of these journeys causes the idea of mobility, for Utz, to become equated with uniformity and sameness:

> The journey was always the same: to Geneva, for meetings with his bankers and an antiquaire: on to Vichy, and to Vichy only, to taste the waters, to breathe the fresh air of freedom that rapidly went stale, and order more expensive meals which would disgust him.
>
> He would then bolt for home like a man pursued by demons (U, p. 89).

The iterative style of the narrative here emphasises the routine nature of all of Utz's trips to Vichy. The sense of sameness that results leads to a reversal of the Chatwin creed that travelling constitutes a beneficial stimulus for the brain. Utz's pilgrimages offer no development or moral improvement and their repetitive, cyclic nature merely confirms his isolation from the external world. Not only, but Utz is caught in a double dilemma because he also suffers the same symptoms of madness and introspection during his sedentary periods at home. His feelings of fury recall those of Francisco after he marries the potter's daughter, and it is interesting to note that in each case the presence of a woman and an innocuous object (in the case of Francisco not an object as such but his baby child, and with Utz the porcelain statues) only

serve to aggravate the situation. Nevertheless, the sameness that characterises Utz's exile in Vichy is quite different to the monotony that characterises the sameness of his sedentary life in Prague, for in Vichy he is continually made aware of his loneliness, his only contacts being formal encounters with bank men and art dealers. It is perhaps no accident that what preys on his mind most is not his collection of porcelain statues so much as the thought of Marta left behind alone in the apartment, and this feeling of remorse makes him realise the extent to which his exile is fundamentally lacking in the warmth of human companionship and affection, which only she can provide. It is therefore significant that almost all of Utz's direct discourses during this sequence express negativity and rejection: "'It could never have happened in Czechoslovakia'. [...] 'No,' he told himself. 'I am not enjoying this'. [...] 'No, no', Utz repeated. 'I am certainly not enjoying this.' [...] (U, pp. 68-9) 'But I won't be going home,' (U, p. 71) [...] 'This is disgusting', Utz muttered. 'No, it is impossible I should stay here'". (U, p. 87). Utz's rejection of the outside world is further evinced in his apparent indifference, similar to the Jones twins, towards the Second World War which, compared to the world of his porcelain collection, is so many 'noises off' (U, p. 114). It is also evident in the episode in which he pores over a pocket atlas pondering on the possibilities of living in another country. This particular moment enacts a conflict between the physical and imaginary dimensions of geographical space, in which Utz, the fireside traveller, is no longer prepared to take the risks that real travelling, embodied by the atlas, involves:

> Switzerland? Italy? France? Three possibilities. None of them inviting. Germany? Never. The break had been final. England? Not after the Dresden raid. The United States? Impossible. The noise would depress him dreadfully [...] Australia? He had never been attracted by the colonies. Argentina? He was too old to tango (U, p. 81).

The use of free indirect discourse and the paratactic structure of the interrogative + explanatory clauses here is suggestive of Utz's casual dismissal of each country. This hostile attitude corroborates the prejudices of his own mental mappings which are partly based on first-hand experience and partly on mere hearsay with some countries reduced to single semantic associations: England = "Dresden raid"; The USA = "noise"; Australia = "colonies"; Argentina = "tango". Whereas Utz reduces such large scale things as countries to superficial stereotyped images, he is obsessively meticulous regarding the tiny and intricate details of the microcosm of his porcelain statues and engages in a complex discussion with the narrator on the origin of the word 'porcelain' and the historical associations regarding its properties. Any sense of liberation for Utz from his confined world is contained in the novel's ambiguous ending where the possibility of his having destroyed the collection is contemplated. But this allusion remains ambiguous, and because Utz represents an aspect of the real author himself, ultimately reflects Chatwin's own attraction/repulsion for possession which is a constant problematic in his works.

A False-Real Nomad: Lewis Jones

On *The Black Hill* explores the effects of enforced settlement on what is essentially a nomadic sensibility. Lewis Jones can be seen to represent a link between Chatwin's false and real nomads because, in spite of the dominant traits of mobility in his character, these are never allowed to be expressed to their full potential. These traits are evident from the narrator's opening description of him which is a composite of semes equating mobility and physical strength stretching across time, so that while as a young man he is both "tall and stringy", and has "a steady long limbed stride" (OBH, p. 10), also "even at the age of eighty he could walk over the hills all day, or wield an axe all day and not get tired" (*Ibid*). Lewis's constant urge to communicate with the external world is metonymically conveyed by the description of his hat, which has become worn by his fingers as a result of continually lifting it to every stranger he meets. His grey and dreamy eyes are, significantly, "set well back into the skull" (*Ibid*) as if to underline the finality of his withdrawal from the outside world. His "yearning for far-off places" (OBH, p. 13) is all the more inflamed by his "passion for geography" (*Ibid*), although his knowledge of the subject is ironically limited to "a 1925 atlas when the two great colonial empires were coloured pink and mauve, and the Soviet Union was a dull sage green" (*Ibid*). Like Cassidy and Francisco, both Benjamin and Lewis are fascinated by adventure stories, particularly Sam's tales of local folklore. But it is Lewis on whom such stories make a lasting impression. During

their sea-side holiday, for example, it is he who is enraptured by the tales of the lobsterman:

> He pictured himself on the crow's-nest of a full-rigged ship, scanning the horizon for a palm-fringed shore. Or he would lie among the sea-pinks, stretching his eye to the skerries where seagulls wandered like patches of sunlight, while green rollers thumped on to the rocks below, and sent up curtains of spray (OBH, p. 71).

The interrelation between reverie and reality can here be detected in two sequences ("he pictured himself"/"or he would lie among the sea pinks"). The first, concerning Lewis's reverie, is characterised by the dimension of the SEA, whilst the second, which describes the external reality around him, by the AIR. It is no accident that the two sequences are demarked by the conjunction "or" to indicate alternation and interchangeability. For the fact that Lewis's day-dreamings are conditioned by vividly felt external circumstances renders them all the more tangible. The gerund "stretching", deviantly applied to Lewis's eyes, is particularly forceful in underlining the extent of his desire to reach the heights of the seagulls as well as significantly anticipating the air as the dimension that is to occupy Lewis's daydreamings: ("Lewis still dreamed of far-away places but his interest had shifted to airships" OBH, p. 88). Thus, all of Lewis's movements away from the farm are presented in terms of escape. The first instance in which he is sent to work at a nearby farm in order to avoid conscription during the First World War induces an immediately noticeable transition in him:

> He kept them all amused with stories of life on a big farm. He liked his job. He liked to tinker with the new-fangled machinery, and had driven a tractor. He liked looking after the pedigree Herefords. He liked the bailiff [...] (OBH, p. 99).

The paratactic clauses here elicit the four times repeated "he liked", so that there is no question at all that Lewis enjoys this first experience away from home. It is Benjamin who begins to pine and become obsessed with the reality of their separation, eventually enticing his brother home through a telepathic message when he almost freezes to death in a snow blizzard. Lewis's second move away from the farm is after his sexual encounter with Joy Lambert. However, this ironically produces the opposite effect, for although he escapes Benjamin's wrath, Lewis is nevertheless "drawn irresistibly in the direction of home" (OBH, p. 180). His return to his home base, when Mary dies, is therefore already an inevitable outcome, so that any mobility on his part only finds its realisation within the limited cyclic movement represented by the pattern ESCAPE = SEPARATION / RETURN = REUNION which is paradigmatic of his conflicting yet inextricable relationship with his twin brother. The home base is always something to which Lewis reacts and to which he has to finally succumb. In the first chapter it was suggested that this may be seen, on a symbolic level, as a dramatisation of the repressive influence of settlement. In fact, Lewis suffers in stasis almost to the same extent that Benjamin suffers in mobility. In spite of this, he is eventually vindicated for his cramped existence on the farm when Kevin arranges the plane flight for them on

their eightieth birthday. Here the chronotopic dimension of the novel (at least from Lewis's perspective) is reduced temporally to 10 minutes and collocated in an extra-spatial dimension (above the Black Hill):

> And suddenly he felt — even if the engine failed, even if the plane took a nose dive and their souls flew up to Heaven — that all the frustrations of his cramped and frugal life now counted for nothing, because for ten magnificent minutes, he had done what he wanted to do (OBH, p. 240).

Lewis's euphoria, here rendered in free indirect discourse, is a culminating point in his life, so that it is perhaps appropriate that the following chapter concludes with his death. As already noted, Lewis's departures from the farm are transitory and lead to his inevitable return. During his second and final 'escape' the farmers who encounter him are "astonished by the blankness of his stare" (OBH, p. 180), the lexeme "blankness" fittingly underlining his loss of identity and threat of self-annihilation. However, in contrast with Lewis's eventual reconciliation as permanent settler, Rebecca, who is thrown out of the house by Amos in disgrace, after becoming pregnant is never heard of again. The description of the 1909 photograph in which "she appears as a whitish blur" (OBH, p. 59) while Benjamin tries to stop her wriggling, is a poignant anticipation of her textual annihilation.

Real Nomads

In his essay *Nomad Invasions*, Chatwin makes the point that since the nomad is a mobile pastoralist, his hunting techniques are concerned with keeping animals alive, unlike the hunter whose techniques are for killing animals. Furthermore, he scoffs at the idea that nomads roam aimlessly from place to place and rather than being the symptom of an innate neurosis, a nomadic migration is "a guided tour of animals around a predictable sequence of pastures. "It has the same inflexible character as the migrations of wild game [...]"[16]. As a result of such a patterned life-style, nomads are "resentful of, and resistant to, change", and at the same time "notoriously irreligious"[17], though their migrations are a form of catharsis which, like religion, satisfy a human need brought on by anxiety. Consequently: "[journeying] contributes towards a sense of physical and mental well-being, while the monotony of prolonged settlement or regular work weaves patterns in the brain that engender fatigue and a sense of personal inadequacy"[18]. Such anthropological issues aside, the quality of "well being", which is certainly not an inherent feature in all of Chatwin's nomadic characters, becomes a means to distinguish false nomads from real ones. It is also a quality intrinsic to the sense of his own nomadic condition. Indeed, it is difficult to discuss the nomadic theme in complete dissociation from the real author since it is so central to his own nomadic experiences which served to perpetrate a self-mythology.

Florentino Solis is a prototype of the kind of ideal nomadic figure that becomes so central in Chatwin's

works and is also the first real nomad the narrator meets in *In Patagonia*:

> His face was burned a bright even red, and when he took off his hat, there was a sharp line where the red ended and the white began. He was a wanderer, without wife or house, owning nothing but two sleek criollo ponies, their saddles and a dog (IP, p. 57).

Although this is little more than a sketch — it is typical of the concern with visual surface structure present throughout the book — there are two significant details that capture the main paradigms of nomadic existence here. First, the sharp line dividing the red and white parts of Florentino's head (a chromatic contrast which recalls the red and white fingernails of the Swiss Soprano) symbolically highlights the intensity of a life of wandering — red being indicative of exposure to the elements and thus synonymous of vitality, whilst white, by contrast, hints at the relative non-exposure which would be characterised by a life of settlement[19]. Second, the narrator mentions Florentino's almost complete lack of possessions and human ties — a recurrent motif with all of Chatwin's nomadic characters. In spite of the apparently neutral tone of this description, there is the narrator's concealed approval that the man's only other possessions — "a few cattle stamped with his brand" — are left alone to freely wander the rough camps of the frontier, as well as his possibly endearing observation that Florentino is "awkward in company" (*Ibid*). The reader is also given a glimpse into the light-hearted nature of this apparently humourless man when the

narrator, who falls from his horse, on looking up sees "the sad mask of Solis break into a smile" (IP, p. 59). The discrete, non-aggressive traits "sad" and "smile" reflect the essential composure of a nomadic spirit living in quiet serenity with the universe.

In contrast with the anti-social Florentino is the cheerful, idealistic modern-style nomad Paco Ruiz, an eighteen year-old lorry driver and Ché Guevera look-alike with "the beginning of a beer stomach" (IP, p. 76). Paco, dislikes walking, but loves driving and his passion for his lorry, Rosaura, anticipates Lewis's tractor as sex-surrogate in *On The Black Hill*: "He and Rosaura had been on the road for three months. When she wore out, there'd be money for a new Rosaura and they'd drive on and on forever" (IP, p. 77). Such morbid attachments to machines in Chatwin prove ultimately negative. Lewis becomes a fatal victim of his tractor. Less dramatically, Paco's lorry 'betrays' him by bursting a tyre:

> He was caked with grease and dust, red in the face, and showing signs of losing his temper. He dug a bigger hole under the axle, got the chasis jacked up so far, and even got both wheels back. But they were askew and he couldn't tighten the nuts and he started booting the wheel and screaming: 'Puta... puta... puta... puta... putana... puta... puta...' (*Ibid*).

However, Chatwin's theme of the idead nomadic condition is most extensively explored through his three main nomadic figures: Charley Milward, Theo The Tent and Arkady. They are the three central figures in Chatwin's works through which he attempts to construct his myth

of the Ideal Nomad. All three share the common traits that constitute this ideal figure: physical strength and resistance, gentle or gentlemanly manners, self-pride and disarming honesty and sincerity. Together, they can be seen as representative of the three approaches Chatwin generally adopts for all of his characterizations: biographical, fictional and 'biographical-fictional' and each represents a particular stage in his exploration of the ideal nomadic character. In spite of the decidedly imaginative embellishments to his portrait, Charely Milward is grounded on a real person, what is more a member of the author/narrator's family; Theo The Tent, on the other hand, is essentially a fictional character with a precise functional role in the novel, and Arkady, although a blend of factual and fictional elements whose real life-model has been the object of much speculation — is ultimately a fictionalised presence that serves to consolidate the author/narrator's theses on human restlessness.

Charley Milward, who besides initiating a recurrent problematic in Chatwin's writings regarding the nature of the distinction between fact and fiction[20], has a two-fold function: one, as flesh-and blood character and the other as textual construct. Both aspects are characterised by a mythical representation which is indicative of the narrator's sense of pride in sharing the hereditary trait of his restlessness with one who, for him, was "a god among men" (IP, p. 5), as well as his idealisation of a kind of nomadic existence Milward exemplifies and upon which he models his own text. There is a double subjectivity in the intertextual interplay between the narrator's own narrative of Milward, and his

transcriptions from his journals, to the effect that both textual levels are made to corroborate towards a sympathetic view of the roving sea Captain. The intradiegetic function of the narrator's account, however, belongs to the first level because he is responsible for selecting the textual elements necessary for the diegesis he presents, which is an already subjective (and therefore biased) account. His portrayal of Milward can be divided into two sections. The first — (Ch 72-82), the lengthiest, is characterised by a 'faithful' and detailed transcription of the events narrated by Milward in his journals on the part of the intradiegetic narrator, who, in this way, liminalises his own authority as narrating presence. The second (Ch 83) is paradigmatic of the textual process at work throughout *In Patagonia*. Here details dwindle to make way for fragmented pictures and images, together with scraps of information based mostly on hearsay, in which the narrator attempts to construct a final picture of his relative in old age. As a result of the diegetic account, the mythical stance with which Milward is viewed at the beginning of the book, is transformed into a less personalised myth, so that he becomes gradually more sympathetic to the reader. At the same time, although the almost constant adoption of Milward's point of view creates a restricted focalisation that somewhat undermines any attempt to render the character in terms of real psychological penetration, his traits, in which the paradigms of mobility and immobility are in continual conflict, reveal an ultimately enigmatic nature. The trait of immobility is evident in his sincerity, moral uprightness and stubborness, whilst that of mobility in his generosity, sense of humour and natural

curiosity. The first three characteristics, synonymous of fixity of purpose, are not without negative consequences. Milward's slow climb up the ranks of the service, for example, is qualified in terms of litotes: "he was not brilliant and his tongue did not endear him to his superiors" (IP, p. 145). Also, his stubborness is no aid to him when his ship's engine breaks down. His refusal to accept defeat and to sail on regardless ends with the ship smashing against a rock and everyone on board forced to evacuate. Not only, but even his firm refusal to take a percentage for himself from the salvage merchants after his shipwreck reveals an honesty that had no place in the world of the navy, and for which he is inevitably punished:

> '[...] I left the office after an interview with the manager that lasted a few minutes, sacked-sacked after twenty years service, on account of my engine breaking down'.
>
> He also reported to a Mr Lawrie of the London Salvage Association and asked for £3 reimbursement for his bill at the hotel Kosmos.
>
> 'Captain, I think you've made enough from your wreck to pay your hotel bill' [...]
>
> 'I nearly told the man I could have made £2,000 but I was honest. Then I saw it was useless to speak to a man like that about honesty. He wouldn't know the meaning of the word' (IP, pp. 155-6).

On the other hand, his stubborness comes in the form of bravery when he single handedly salvages goods from the wreckage, after the Chief Officer's unsuccessful

attempt with a party of men. Also, his determination to relieve the boredom of long days at sea by organising amateur theatrics, and his sense of honour towards the two women passengers who are involved in the shipwreck, exemplify respectively his sense of humour (which comes to the surface on more than one occasion in his bizzare encounters with Henri Grien), sensitivity and generosity. These qualities, which imply an open amiability towards others as well as being indicative of adaptability and moral improvement are recurrent traits in Chatwin's real nomads. Yet, at the same time, his generosity in donating a plot of land to the Anglican Church, is somewhat mitigated by his controversial accusation of the vicar's selecting obscure hymns so as to show off his solo voice! His upright honesty also comes into question when he deviously strikes on a plan to "line the Straits of Magellan with blue and white enamel billboards [...] not principally for the benefit of steamer passangers and then to write articles of protest in international newspapers calling the public's attention to 'the desecration of beautiful scenery by advertising fiends'" (IP, p. 155). The narrator, with significant sparseness of comment, adds: "For this scheme he did not find a backer". Concealed admiration is still evident even at this advanced stage of his account. It is Eberhard who eventually jolts the narrator out of his romantic musings over Milward before he reveals to him the truth behind the mylodon skin: "'So', he said in English, 'you are of the family of the robber'" (IP, p. 174). Similar to Chatwin's outlaws and fugitives, Milward undertook a vast variety of activities which the narrator mentions in the second, impressionistic part of his portrait. The

enumeration of the following is, on the one hand, presumably due to lack of detailed information, but its cumulative effect also makes Milward's activities seem all the more impressive:

> The course of his second career is clouded by time and distance. I have had to reconstruct it from faded sepia photographs, purple carbons, a few relics and memories in the very old. The first impressions are of an energetic pioneer, confident in his new handlebar moustache; hunting elephant seals in South Georgia; salvaging for Lloyds, helping a German gold-panner dynamite the Mylodon Cave; or striding round the foundry with his German partner, Herr Lio [...]
>
> The second set of images are of the British Empire's southernmost Consul, a senior citizen of Punta Arenas and director of its bank (IP, p. 159).

The impersonal constructions "the [...] are of [...]" underline the fact that the portrait is based on hearsay rather than actual documented accounts. One point, which relates Milward to all of Chatwin's major characters, is his political non-committment. His haughty refusal of the war, which echoes Amos Jones's in *On The Black Hill* as well as Utz's, seems admittedly inappropriate for a Consul, however distant he was geographically from the conflict: "Charley hated the war: 'So many people cutting each others' throats and not knowing why'. He wasn't going to stoop to war hysteria" (IP, p. 161). Similarly to Benjamin and Lewis, who befriend Manfred during the Second World War, Milward

continued to cultivate regardless a friendship with his German business partner arousing suspicions in everyone as to the real nature behind his institutional role.

As a textual construct, Milward's significance transcends the confines of Chatwin's narrative. This is mainly due to the intertextual interplay between the two first-person narrations as well as the thematic concerns the character of Milward introduces. The aura of mystery in which he is initially shrouded is sustained beyond the narrator's decidedly non-romantic discovery regarding the mylodon skin. Indeed, in no way does he feel discouraged about relentlessly persuing his quest to retrace Milward's path and find a replacement for the lost piece. Milward's role soon shifts from that of mysterious long-lost relative to alter-ego in which he effectively becomes a literary surrogate for the narrator. In a letter to his wife, Chatwin himself wrote: "The diary of Charlie Milward is fantastic [...] The story of the wreck, of Louis de Rougemont, of Indian massacres, of life at sea on the Cape Horners is exactly like something out of Conrad"[21]. The appreciative comparison to Conrad significantly underlines Chatwin's need to endorse the textual qualities of Milward's stories to the extent of the narrator's condensing and literally copying lengthy, detailed passages from his journals and diaries as intrinsic parts of his own text. Milward's stories thus assume the icon of a literary model, particularly since their style is in the anti-confessional mode Chatwin himself favoured. Furthermore, in being crowded with people and events, Milward's sea-stories constitute a partially paradigmatic model for *In Patagonia*:

> He put down on paper all he could remember, of ships and men, at sea or in port; the train journeys; the dismal ports of Northern England [...] the wet cobbles, the bed bugs in flophouses, and the crews coming aboard drunk. And then out in the tropics, riding the bowsprit, the sails slack and the white bow wave cutting the dark sea [...] (IP, p. 140).

'Partially', because Chatwin's attempt to reduce the narrator to a selecting eye contrasts with Milward's attempt to meticulously write down all he could remember. Nevertheless, the narrator's cataloguing of the elements of Milward's narratives reflects his breathless excitement at the variety and dramatic potential of their content.

It is also through Milward that Chatwin presents his theme of restlessness. A quotation in the former's scrapbook (under the appropriate title "This Freedom") expresses the dilemma between wandering and settlement in terms of a rigid male/female polarity: "A man rides away, a tent-dweller, an arab with a horse and the plains about him. Woman is a dweller in a city with a wall, a house-dweller, storing her possessions about her, abiding with them, not to be sundered from them" (IP, p. 147). Although these words refer to dominant preoccupations of Chatwin's fiction, nowhere else in his works is the dilemma between wandering and settlement presented in quite such explicitly sexist terms. Indeed, almost in answer to Milward's theory, one of his notes in *The Songlines* shows him all too keen to avoid such a simplistic dichotomy: "One commonly held delusion is that men are the wanderers and women the guardians of

hearth and home. This can, of course, be so. But women, above all, are the guardians of continuity: if the hearth moves, they move with it" (SONG, pp. 197-8). The association between woman and hearth hinges on the paradoxical idea that even nomads have homes. As a result, the woman's role becomes two-fold, for in following her man she maintains her role as guardian of the home, and at the same time provides the moral and physical support to his nomadic existence; in effect, she sanctions it. Certain female characters in Chatwin's works, however, appear more as an ironic comment on this figure of the psuedo-nomadic guardian of the nomad's base. Marta, in *Utz*, is an example. While Utz is restlessly wavering between East and West "like a man persued by demons" (U, p. 89), Marta sits alone in their Prague flat patiently waiting for his inevitable return. She never follows him, neither does he invite her to. Mama Wéwé also enacts her role of faithful guardian of the hearth to the long-dead Francisco in *The Viceroy of Ouidah*, without once leaving the fort. These instances seem, more than anything, to confirm the lack of real nomads among Chatwin's female characters[22].

Theo The Tent in *On The Black Hill* is characterised in terms of parallel and contrast to the Jones twins. Similarly to them he has also opted to withdraw from society, but his choice, dictated by mobility, constitutes an alternative means of 'escape' to theirs. He may also be seen as a fictional confirmation of Chatwin's thesis that travelling broadens the mind[23]. Living essentially detached from the rest of humanity and in close contact with the natural world, this "red-bearded giant" (OBH, p. 227) is Chatwin's fictional embodiment of the Ideal Nomad.

His roving nature is indicated in his nickname, "The Tent", owing to the odd dome-like construction of birch saplings and canvass that makes up his home (one may recall, in passing, Chatwin's own love of tents as an ideal home-base)[24]. Born into a family of "hard-nosed Afrikaners" (OBH, p. 228) — similar to those in *In Patagonia* — who are the owners of a fruit farm, Theo's break with his family arises during his quarrel with his father over the eviction of workers from their land. His implied support of the workers hints cataphorically at a sympathetic understanding and sensitivity of others which is confirmed when he drops out to become a Buddhist and later joins a hippie commune. His negative experiences there come as a result of the fact that, in spite of his frightening size, Theo is incapable of hurting a fly (*Ibid*), and being trusting and gentle, is heartlessly exploited by the other members[25]. It is only when, losing himself in reverie while he is contemplating the natural scene around him, that Theo, becomes suddenly aware of the vacuity behind his life in the commune:

> On his way to Rhulen, he stopped by the pine plantation and stretched out on the grass. The sky was cloudless. Harebells rustled. A peacock butterfly winked its eyes on a warm stone — and, suddenly, everything about the monastery disgusted him (*Ibid*).

As a result, he retreats to an idyllic pastoral-like existence, reminiscent of Orlando's in Shakespeare's *As you Like It*:

> Year in, year out, he roamed the Radnor Hills, played his flute to the curlews, and memorized

> the tenets of the 'Tao Te Ching'. On rocks, on gate posts and on tree stumps, he would carve the three line 'haikus' that came into his head (*Ibid*).

With only a mule and a donkey for company, Theo's solitude recalls that of the nomad Florentino Solis. His memories of nomadic tribes in Africa confirm his realisation that all men are meant to be wanderers and this leads to the pantheistic notion that "you could find the Great Spirit everywhere [...] in the smell of bracken after the rain, the buzz of a bee in the ear of a foxglove, or in the eyes of a mule, looking with love on the blundering movements of his master" (OBH, p. 229). At the same time, however, Theo does not relinquish his wide ranging interests and speculations and these are comically played off against the limited understanding and ignorance of the twins:

> He showed them his celestial globe, his astronomical tables, a sand glass, some reed pens and a bamboo flute. On a red-painted box sat a gilded statuette. This, he said, was Avalokitesvara, the bodhisattva of Infinite Mercy.
>
> 'Funny name,' said Benjamin. [...]
>
> Theo then reached for his bookstand and read his favourite poem. The poet, he said, was a chinaman who also liked to roam around the mountains. His name was Li Po.
>
> 'Li Po', they repeated, slowly. 'That's all?'
>
> 'All' (OBH, pp. 234-5).

The humour of the above passage is further compounded by the poem's contents being presented through the baffled point of view of the twins ("There were lots of funny names in the poem and the twins made neither head nor tail of it till he came to the last few lines" OBH, p. 235). Theo and the twins represent the contrast between nomadic existence, characterised here by the search for inner knowledge and a mystical communication with the universe, and settlement, as represented by spatial limitation and dominated by petty squabbles and material greed. Theo not only indirectly exposes the moral and spiritual shortcomings of the confined world to which the twins belong, but, more importantly, by functioning as a contrast to Amos, he also serves to highlight otherwise half-concealed traits of the twins. Even though the two characters never meet (Amos dies long before Theo's appearance on the farm), the binary opposition Theo/Amos is an important one since, by symbolic extension, the two characters represent the positive and negative paradigms of mobility and immobility. The sympathetic link which is created between the twins and Theo, is confirmation of their sensitive reception of other people and their fundamentally good-natures. It is thus not inappropriate that the twins frequently find themselves in agreement with Theo upon matters which Amos himself would have been loth even to listen to. Their willingness to at least listen to Theo's ideas shows how they have inherited none of their father's "angered response to the frustrations of confinement"[26]. They manifest a shared sentiment with him, for example, however non-verbal, after his reading of the poem by Li Po: "And when Theo

sighed, they sighed, as if they too were separated from somebody by thousands and thousands of miles" (*Ibid*). This little episode poignantly binds both settler and nomad into a common destiny and alludes to a sub-text behind all of Chatwin's works whereby settlement and nomadism are fundamentally a means of combating loneliness as well as a means of staving off 'ennui' or spiritual enrichment. In a sense, Theo becomes a surrogate father-figure to the twins, whose radically opposing vision to their biological father's is important in driving home the point that, for all their limitations, they themselves never go as far as assuming Amos's negative traits, and this factor is important in the extradiegetic narrator's sympathetic portrayal of them.

Both Theo The Tent and Meg The Rock have a symbolic function that looms large over the whole novel. Their mutual attraction can be seen, by extention, as a symbolic union between the male nomad and the female settler. Like Theo, Meg is characterised by her nickname, 'The Rock', which is particularly appropriate since 'Rock' not only, by implication of its hardness, designates the steadfastness of the settler, but in Meg's case is also an indication of her absolute and stubborn refusal to leave the farm. In Theo, she discovers a man who can protect her from outside threats in the form of her envious sisters or men from the Ministry. Here, Chatwin reverses roles in the opposition nomad/guardian of the hearth by making Theo, the nomad, a temporal guardian of the female settler's home-base: "As long as her gentle giant was around she felt herself safe from Sarah, or Lizzie, or any outside threat" (OBH, p. 230). Interestingly, both characters contain a parallel blend of paradoxical traits:

Theo, physically frightening, but underneath gentle, Meg apparently helpless but ultimately tough, as Theo himself immediately discovers:

> She showed not a trace of being tired. Now and then, as she pitched a forkful of muck through the door, the bows on her sweaters came undone. He could see that, underneath, she had a nice tidy body.
>
> He said, 'You're a tough one, Meg'.
>
> 'Avetobe', she grinned, and her eyes narrowed down to a pair of Mongolian slits (*Ibid*).

Their relationship, initially a working one (as with the Jones twins) in which odd jobs performed by Theo are promptly rewarded with a ten-penny piece from Meg, develops as a consequence of their philanthropic feelings for the natural world, particularly animals. Their first encounter occurs with the inevitability of a magnetic attraction, and the narrator deliberately alludes to their simultaneous awareness of each other through the synchronous use of simple past and past perfect tenses: "He decided to pay her a visit, unaware that Meg had already been watching him (OBH, p. 229)". From a cultural point of view, however, they could not be further apart. Indeed, their union, rather than being realisable on a horizontal level, is only possible on a verticle plane, for just as Theo has to physically descend from the hill in order to approach Meg, he also has to condescend to her intellectually in order to relate to her. Thus when they are together, it is he who succumbs to her presence:

For hours on end, he used to sit by the fire listening to the harsh and earthy music of her voice. She spoke of the weather, the birds and the animals, the stars and phases of the moon (OBH, p. 231).

The seventeen-syllable haiku he composes in her honour: "Five green jersies / A thousand holes / And the Lights of Heaven shining through" (*Ibid*), represents the cultured man's recognition of the woman's poverty, goodness and innocence. Similarly, their union has strong symbolic overtones extending to that between nature and culture. Thus, it is no accident that during the service, which Theo attends as a surrogate husband for Meg, they are both described as emerging almost larger than life, Meg's ringing voice filling the church and Theo's faultless and moving reading of Chapter 21 of the Book of Revelation, one of the most hopeful chapters of the Bible, holding the congregation spellbound. The religious theme is, of course, central to the novel, and here lends a certain sanctimony to the harmonious union between nomad and settler which culminates in the vision of the rainbow seen from the church windows arching over the valley. Analogies with the explicit of D. H. Lawrence's *The Rainbow* may be pertinent. As in Lawrence, the rainbow symbolically represents a reconciling force, in this case uniting the binary opposites of nomad and settler into a sort of harmonious marriage, whilst simultaneously underlining their autonomy[27]. Indeed, it confirms the recurrent sense in Chatwin that nomadism and settlement are necessary reactions to each other and that neither is ultimately *the* ideal condition. However,

the impossibility of a permanent reconciliation between these two forces is confirmed at the end of the novel when Theo, in true nomad style, leaves the village for the Himalayas whilst Meg continues to live at the Rock.

Arkady Volchok is the last in Chatwin's trio of ideal nomads. Much speculation has been made regarding the original model for this character[28], but extra-textual curiosities aside, what ultimately interests the reader is his two-fold significance in the text, since he is not only essential for the development of the 'plot', but also for the expansion of Chatwin's central ideas regarding nomadism[29]. On the one hand, he is the means through which Chatwin expands his concepts dialogically; and on the other, by guiding the narrator Bruce through the bush and initiating him into a glimpse of Aborignal life, he embodies the archtype intellectual guide of traditional travel literature (a guide which *In Patagonia*, interestingly, lacks). Arkady's importance is already apparent in the novel's incipit which, as Nicholas Murray shrewdly remarks, demonstrates Chatwin's own ability "to 'sing into being' the observed world"[30]: "In Alice Springs — a grid of scorching streets where men in long white socks were forever getting in and out of Land Cruisers — I met a Russian who was mapping the sacred sites of the Aboriginals" (SONG, p. 1). The incipit already prepares the reader for the contrast between two worlds represented in the novel: the civilised world of the white settler and the primitive world of the Aboriginal nomad. The white men are characterised impersonally, in a parenthetical statement, by their similarity of appearance ("long white socks") and action ("getting in and out"). The Land Cruiser is an eloquent symbol of the white

man's material comfort and detachment from the natural but harsh landscape and climate. Also, the grid of scorching streets represents an ironically alternative landscape to that of the Aboriginals' and the monotony of continuous, purposeless movement ("forever getting in and out"), a frenetic, modern day parody of the cosmic world of the aboriginals' dreaming tracks. The contrast between the white man's townscape and the Aboriginal's landscape is also rendered by the phonetic parallelism/contrast of the phrases "SCorching STreeTS/ Sacred SightS" (my emphases). Both are connected by the same number of syllables and stresses and the sibilant | s |, but whilst the first syllable in the former is cut short by the harsh plosive consonants | k | and | t |, in the latter it is followed by the smooth dipthongs | ei | and | ai |. If we recall again Chatwin's acute attention to the aural quality of his prose, these phonetic contrasts are clearly intentional. The world of the Aboriginals, on the other hand, is introduced through their staunchest defender, Arkady. The delayal of his introduction in the syntagmatic chain (after the subordinate statement regarding the white men), appropriately underlines his essentially exilic condition. But although his name, a deliberate pun on 'arcadia', suggests an idealistic nature, Arkady is worldly-wise, sensitive and practical. His self-invented job as a mapper of sacred sights demands fine skills as a moderator between white man and Aboriginal which he displays with an exceptional competence. Similar to Charley Milward and Theo The Tent, he is also a composite of contradictory semes: "He had a flatish face and a gentle smile [...] Only when you came up close did you realise how big his bones were"

(SONG, p. 2). However, unlike Theo, Arkady's largeness of build is not his most immediately perceivable feature, and is only evident on a close contact. Theo's presence, on the other hand, initially intimidates people until they discover his gentle nature. Like Milward and Theo, and true to the nature of Chatwin's real nomads, Arkady lives alone with few possessions. Also, as with Theo, Chatwin uses Arkady to make an association between nomadism and music. In contrast to Theo's simple bamboo flute, a portable instrument which he plays on his roamings along the Welsh hills, Arkady owns an admittedly more eccentric harpsichord on which he celebrates the union between music and the land by playing Buxtehude and Bach after coming home from one hundred-mile walks in the ranges: "Their orderly progressions, he said, conformed to the contours of the Central Australian landscape" (*Ibid*). On the one hand the harpsichord which, unlike the flute, is not portable, symbolises Arkady's reconciliation with his state as settler; on the other, it can be seen as an actual response to the Aboriginal's concept of *The Songlines*. Like Chatwin's other two ideal nomadic characters, Arkady's reclusive tendencies in no way undermine his tenderness towards his fellow men. Indeed, it is this natural sympathy and compassion, for which all three at one moment or another pay a price, that makes them such essentially positive figures. But Chatwin goes further in his portrayal of Arkady to suggest that the ideal nomadic state depends on a healthy balance between commitment and detachment. This is reflected in Arkady's attitude in his self-invented job (that of interpreting "'tribal law' into the Language of the Law of the Crown" (SONG, p.

4), for his compassion towards the Aboriginals never once degenerates into sentimentalism. His is the wisdom of a man who has acquired a bilateral perspective. But this sagacity has not come to him without a sense of frustration and disillusion, for previous to the meeting with Bruce, Arkady is the subject of a row following his unwitting betrayal of an aboriginal secret to a reporter, after which, in disgust, he temporarily throws in his job to travel abroad. Arkady's subsequent journey through a mindlessly materialistic Europe (which, to his disappointment, leaves him "feeling flat" (SONG, p. 3) is an essentially illuminating one and assumes the significance of a spiritual pilgrimage:

> Often, in Australia, he had had to defend the Aboriginals from people who dismissed them as drunken and incompetent savages; yet there were times, in the flyblown squalor of a Walbiri camp, when he suspected they might be right and that his vocation to help the blacks was either wilful self indulgence or a waste of time. Now in a Europe of mindless materialism, his 'old men' seemed wiser and more thoughtful than ever (*Ibid*).

Arkady's self-criticism ("his vocation [...] was either wilful indulgence or a waste of time" *Ibid*) is indication of an authentic coherence and seriousness of intention[31] and in spite of the fact that he represents a bridge between two cultures, the possessive adjective in "his old men" underlines where his real allegiances lie. Indeed, the new perspective of his journey paradoxically reveals to him a deeper understanding of the Aboriginals

as well as restoring the full significance of his own role with regard to them. At the same time, he begins to feel the sense of autonomy necessary to liberate himself from the pernicious influences of, what Antonella Riem Natale calls, "the paralysing cage of power"[32]. A touching example of Arkady's tenderness and solidarity towards the Aboriginals can be glimpsed in the following scene:

> [...] Arkady said softly, 'Don't worry, old man. It'll be all right. Nobody's going to touch the Babies'.
>
> Alan shook his head despairingly.
>
> 'Are you happy then?' asked Arkady.
>
> No, he wasn't happy. Nothing about this wicked railway was going to make him happy; but at least the Babies might be safe (SONG, pp. 128-9).

Arkady is the most erudite and intellectual of Chatwin's nomadic figures for the very reason that he represents his fictional double[33]. Milward's curiosity for things and people is more or less the reflection of direct, first-hand experience. Theo's knowledge is similarly selective according to his own inclinations. But Arkady displays an intellectual acrobatics that challenges Bruce's own and leaves him dazzled by its speed[34]. Some of the exchanges between them, however, are not without a certain pretentiousness:

> 'Rilke', I said, 'had a similar intuition. He also said song was existence'.
>
> 'I know', said Arkady, resting his chin on his hands. "Third Sonnet to Orpheus"' (SONG, p. 13)

On another level, Arkady functions as a check, to the over-enthusiastic and impatient Bruce, and by continually frustrating his attempts to find simple, clear cut explanations confirms the authenticity of the complexities and mysteries of the Aboriginal's cosmic vision:

> 'So a Dreaming is a clan emblem? A badge to distinguish "us" from "them"? "Our country" from "their country"'?
> 'Much more than that', he said [...]
> 'So a song is a kind of passport and meal ticket?'
> 'Again, it's more complicated' (SONG, pp. 15-6).

The elliptic nature of many of the exchanges between Bruce and Arkady suggests an almost telepathic communication whilst reflecting their shared intellectual and cultural interests. It is no accident that Chatwin originally intended the book to be cast in the form of a neo-platonic dialogue, for the continuous debate between the two characters is what gives the narrative part of *The Songlines* its dialectic tone, though, in a sense, Arkady anticipates the polyphonic orchestration of voices and opinions in 'The Notebooks' section that is so central to the overall structure of the book which depends upon an interplay of ideas and associations through time and space.

NOTES

[1] B. Chawin and P. Theroux, *op. cit.*, p. 7.

[2] B. Chatwin, *What Am I Doing Here*, cit., p. 218.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 218.

[4] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 218: "'What exactly is a nomad? It gets a little confusing at times as I read his chapter summaries'. It seemed to Morris that there was a fundamental difference between wandering away and then back to a fixed base, on the one hand, and wandering from place to place without a fixed base, on the other. Morris's conclusion is that man, from the moment he became a hunter, needed a place to go back to when the hunt was over. Thus, since a base became natural, we lost our ape-like nomadism".

[5] B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness*, cit., p. 76.

[6] P. Cousineau, *op. cit.*, p. 23.

[7] J. Cowley, cit., p. 303.

[8] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 311.

[9] Bruce Chatwin, *Photographs and Notebooks*, ed. David King and Francis Wyndham, London, Jonathan Cape, 1993, p. 96.

[10] B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness*, cit., p. 103.

[11] *Ibid.*, p. 102.

[12] B. Chatwin, *What Am I Doing Here*, cit., p. 219.

[13] Ross Chambers, *Story and Situation: Narrative Seduction and the Power of Fiction*, Manchester, Manchester University Press, p. 7.

[14] "And the same John had his raiment of camel' s hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey", (Matthew, 3, 4) *The Bible*, "Authorised King James Version", Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1997.

[15] J. Conrad, *op. cit.*, p. 117.

[16] B. Chatwin, *What Am I Doing Here*, cit., p. 219.

[17] *Ibid.*, p. 220.

[18] *Ibid.*, pp. 221-2.

[19] B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness*, cit., p. 100. Chatwin describes the need in settlers to revitalise their nervous systems that have been cushioned from the cold by central heating, and from the heat by air conditioning.

[20] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 317. Reports Milward's daughters' shock at his portrait of their father: "'He described my father as tall, having startling blue eyes and black mutton chops, with sailor's hat at a rakish angle. He was short and red-headed and bald by the time he was 30, and always wore a black tie. And he was not this sickly old man. He died very suddenly of a heart attack'". The narrator's own statement that this is "the Charley Milward of my imagination" IP, p. 5. (my underlining) is sufficient justification to minimise such concerns for realism which, however distressing they may be for those involved, have little bearing on the text.

[21] *Ibid.*, p. 228.

[22] In another comment in the same book the narrator postulates a possible working out of the Hero Cycle for the Heroine,

SONG, p. 242. Such a problematic may be interesting to explore from a feminist perspective, but goes beyond the scope of this study.

[23] B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness*, cit., pp. 100-1.

[24] See B. Chatwin, *Photographs and Notebooks*, cit., p. 50 where Chatwin himself describes his own love of tents: "The happiness that is to be found sleeping under tents is unbelievable. One night in tents is worth three in town".

[25] Something about Theo's naïvety in such episodes recalls Charley Milward, though Theo lacks Milward's sense of self-righteousness and callousness.

[26] B. Chatwin, *What Am I Doing Here*, cit., p. 222.

[27] D. H. Lawrence *The Rainbow*, Harmondsworth, Penguin, 1949, pp. 495-6.

[28] Salmon Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands*, London, Granta Books, 1991, p. 233: "Later, after the book is published, Bruce tells someone that 'of course' I am Arkady. This isn't true. I know one person in Alice Springs, like Arkady an Australian of Russian descent [...] who is a much more obvious model". Shakespeare identifies this model in his biography, *op. cit.*, p. 414: "Bruce would base the central character of 'The Songlines' on a man about whom he knew surprisingly little. Toly — short for Anatoly Sawenko was the Australian-born son of a Ukrainian immigrant [...]".

[29] Such is his importance that Chatwin had originally intended to title the novel "Arkady".

[30] N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 93.

[31] A. Riem Natale, *op. cit.*, p. 92, rightly underlines the qualities

of humility, sincerity and selflessness in Arkady's dealings with the Aboriginals.

32 *Ibid.*, p. 12.

33 Whereas 'Bruce' is the fictional representation of Chatwin. The distinction is important because Arkady, from this point of view, becomes an Ideal figure, precisely his 'alter-ego', so that through the two characters Chatwin dramatises two sides of a self-debate.

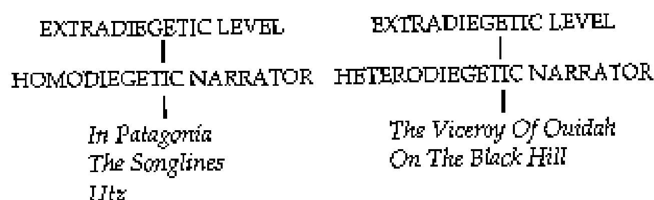
34 N. Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 94: "Arkady is two steps ahead of Bruce but treats him with an aimiable indulgence".

Chatwin's First-Person Narrators

Besides being a functional device for the presentation and exploration of his thematic preoccupations, Chatwin's use of the first-person narrator is symptomatic of the kind of overlapping that occurs within his narrative method. For by occupying the cardinal point at which fact and fiction ambivalently converge, the first-person narrator, on the one hand, endorses the attitudes and viewpoints of the real author himself, whilst on the other, is an inevitably textual construct whose semes are intrinsically integrated within the semantic context of each work. Thus, as one critic points out the "'I' itself becomes make-believe, a simulacrum informed by the fictionalisation of reality"[1]. In *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines*, Chatwin creates an ideal self based on the culturally erudite and existentially restless man he himself was, in his attempt to come to grips with the dilemma of his own restlessness. At the same time, since both works offer so many deliberately explicit parallels to the real author, the association between the autobiographical 'I' and the textual 'I' seems initially unavoidable. Granted, the author, in the words of Bachtin, should be seen as essentially "located outside the chronotopes represented in his works, and as it were tangential to them"[2], but Chatwin's attempts to blur the distinction between the real author and his fictional participation in the text means that, on the one hand, as

teller, he is inevitably external to the temporal and spatial dimension of his narratives, and on the other, that the reader, is continually reminded of an imaginative power struggle between the 'I' of the real author and the 'I' of the text as actual subject of the stories.

In terms of the narrative voice adopted, the five texts under discussion fall into two basic categories: those in which the narrator is homodiegetic and those in which he is heterodiegetic:



The rather restrictive definition of homodiegetic narrator for the first category (which is really confined to a narrator who is part of the diegesis), admittedly fails to acknowledge the fact that the first-person narrators are rather different figures in each book and that they participate in each text in significantly different ways. But it serves my purpose here as a means of distinguishing between two types of text that are characteristic of Chatwin: one, in which overtly autobiographical features are partly transmuted into fictionalised elements and the other in which the narrative is presented from an essentially detached viewpoint, albeit in terms of a combination of documentary realism and lyrical evocation. This chapter focuses on Chatwin's representation of the first-person narrator as 'character',

and therefore as a textual construct, in his three I-narrated works: *In Patagonia*, *The Songlines* and *Utz*.

Two interrelated aspects regarding the first-person narrator may be immediately observed with regard to the three books in question. First, although his function as *actant* remains substantially the same in each, his role as *actor* differs significantly and reveals an oscillation in his actantial relationship between world and work. Second, he also acquires an increasing dramatic autonomy as fictional character, for, from the partly autobiographical presences of *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines*, the narrator becomes an essentially textual construct in *Utz*, exiled, as a voice, within the domains of his own story. In *In Patagonia* the narrator relinquishes his demiurgic function by incorporating other stories narrated on an intradiegetic and metadiegetic plane, as part of a deliberate attempt to efface himself and to limit his presence to that of an 'anonymous' visual perceiver (to the point of never even being named). In *The Songlines*, on the other hand, his role as fictional representation of the real author is heightened since he interrelates with the other characters on a decidedly more dramatic level. Furthermore, the sense of realism induced by the correspondence between author and narrator, is reinforced by Chatwin's intra/intertextual device of incorporating extracts from his own notebooks which all deal in some way with the main themes of the book. Thus, whilst on a deep level, the *actants* of *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* remain fundamentally the same, both of them being *searchers* — one, on a personal quest for a piece of skin, and the other on a quest to confirm a long-held conviction and explore a mysterious concept — on

a surface level the nature of the *actors* of the two works differs significantly. Another main difference between the two texts is the absence of a travelling companion in *In Patagonia* in contrast to *The Songlines* in which Arkady plays a central functional role as *donor* and guide to the narrator's 'initiation' into the mysterious world of the Aboriginals. The sense in *In Patagonia*, on the other hand, is that the narrator is always and essentially alone[3]. In contrast to these two works, in *Utz*, the narrator actually becomes a fictional presence *per se*. Similarly to *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* his actantial role remains that of *searcher*, but as *actor* his function is intrinsic to the vicissitudes of Utz as he obsessively traces his story and seeks to discover the secret behind the missing porcelain collection.

Chatwin's intention in *In Patagonia* is to undermine the subjectivity of his text and to make of the narrator the thinnest presence. As he himself declared: "I'm not interested in the traveller [...] I'm interested in what the traveller sees"[4], and indeed, the narrator is essentially non-intrusive offering little narratorial comment or criticism (besides occasional hints of self-criticism, as shall be seen). Indeed, in his concern to highlight visual surface, Chatwin is intent on foregrounding everything except the narrator. Consequently, what we learn of his background is reduced to the opening three-page account of his childhood fascination for Charley Milward's 'brontosaurus' skin and a few sparse comments scattered throughout the text, so that he ultimately remains an enigmatic presence. On a textual level, Chatwin adopts various strategies in his particular dramatisation of the narrator. One of these is to objectify or nullify his

emotional response. The following is a representative example:

> The playing was remarkable. I could not imagine a finer Pathétique further South [...]
> And he played the mazurka that Chopin dictated on his death-bed. The wind whistled in the streets and the music ghosted from the piano as leaves over a headstone and you could imagine you were in the presence of a genius (IP, p. 28).

The 'neutral' quality of the description of Anselmo's piano playing here lies in the choice of abstract phrases. Thus: "The playing was remarkable", which makes no explicit reference to a subject or a perceiving agent and the negatively expressed understatement "I could not imagine a finer Pathétique" in place of a superlative adjective: furthermore, the use of the impersonal pronoun "you" and the conditional and subjunctive tenses in "you could imagine you were in the presence of a genius"[5]. Elsewhere, the narrator's reactions also remain Hemingwayesquely below the superficial surface structure of the prose, as in his tense exchange with the homosexual Persian:

> 'How you like my friend?' asked Ali.
> 'I like him. He's a nice friend'.
> 'He is my friend'.
> 'I'm sure'.
> 'He is my very good friend'. He pushed his face up to mine.
> 'And this is our room' (IP, p. 35).

This short dialogue pivots obsessively around the possessive pronouns "my" and "our" which are almost menacingly reiterated until the final stark but revealing phrase "our room". But this impression is only actually felt after the sentence: "He pushed his face up to mine", which is the really functional element, introducing a tone of menace and without which the previous sentences, together with the narrator's obviously embarrassed "I'm sure" would remain innocently neutral. Even in moments of complete desolation any response in the narrator is completely nullified:

> Senor Naitane, in whose house I had hoped to pass the night, pushed me out into the street and bolted the door. The generator cut out. From all directions I heard the sound of hooves dwindling into the night. I slept behind a bush (IP, p. 39).

Significantly, this passage does not contain a single adjective and it may be worthwhile to recall Susannah Clapp's observation that, while editing the book with her, Chatwin "derived as much pleasure from ejecting an adjective from his manuscript as he did from expelling an ornament from his flat"[6]. It is precisely this shearing of textual elements with the aim to create what Shakespeare calls "a desert sensibility"[7] that characterises the narrator's subjective consciousness in *In Patagonia*. Meanwhile, one feels a deliberate attempt in the matter-of-fact tone of the above passage to invoke sympathy and admiration in the reader of the narrator's placid and manly acceptance of his bleak situation. But at the same time, the description is a further instance of his self-

satire, coming as it does at the end of the section on Martin Sheffield in which his interest in this character is, as seen in the previous chapter, ridiculed by the villagers, creating a double perspective with regard to the reader's perception of the narrator, where the infallibility of his reliablity clashes with his cocksure convictions. A similar ambivalency arises during his adventurous twenty-five mile walk through forest and marshland to Lake Kami in which he is at one point attacked by condors. The following passage is also a fine example of the rhetorical skills of Chatwin's craft:

> A shadow passed over the sun, a whoosh and the sound of wind ripping through pinions. Two condors had dived on me. I saw the red of their eyes as they *swept* past, banking below the col and showing the grey of their backs. They glided in an arc to the head of the valley and rose again, circling in the upthrust, where the wind pushed against the cliffs, till they were two specks in a milky sky.
>
> The specks increased in size. They were coming back. They came back heading into the wind, unswerving as raiders on target, the ruff of white feathers ringing their black heads, the wings unflinching and the tails splayed downwards as air-brakes and their talons lowered and spread wide. They dived on me four times and then we both lost interest
> (IP, pp. 132-3).

The scene is lyrically evoked in terms of sound and rhythm (note the consciously alliterative patterning of "Shadow [...] WooSHed [...] souNd [...] Wind [...]

pINioNs")[6] (my emphases). Everything in the description is reduced to the visual/aural perception of the condor's flight. In the first paragraph cause and effect are reversed through the use of the past perfect tense ("had dived") and this mitigates the effect of the attack even more. The intensity of the narrator's perceptual focus also decelerates the rhythm of the prose to produce an effect of slow-motion. Not only, but the element of fear which would be expected on such an occasion is completely absent. If any feeling is conveyed it is one of boredom, as confirmed in the phrase: "They dived on me four times and then we both lost interest". However, the initial impression of the narrator's machismo is undermined by his implicit self-criticism in the description of the guanaco shortly after this incident: "He was a single male, his coat all muddied and his front gashed with scars. He had been in a fight and lost. Now he also was a sterile wanderer" (IP, p. 133). The adverb "also" makes this a moment of self-confrontation, leading the narrator to the recognition that he himself is a single male and a sterile wanderer condemned to a loneliness of which his apparent lack of emotional response seems all the more synonymous. This self-criticism becomes even more blatant later in the text when he gradually realises the absurdity of his relentless persuit of stories and anecdotes while tracing the path of a long-dead distant relative and culminates in the concluding episode in the cave at Last Hope Sound in which he finally manages to find a few hairs to replace the long lost mylodom skin:

> 'Well,'I thought, 'if there's no skin, at least there's a load of shit'.
>
> And then, poking out of a section, I saw some

strands of the coarse reddish hair I knew so well. I eased them out, slid them into an envelope and sat down, immensely pleased. I had accomplished the object of this ridiculous journey (IP, p. 182).

Self-irony is here reinforced by the syntactic juxtaposition of the two phrases "immenseley pleased/I had accomplished the object of this ridiculous journey" which, although they would function as effectively without the division of the full stop, the latter, by being a separate clause, underlines even further the apparent absurdity of the narrator's quest. However, beyond the rather non-committing adjective "pleased", no further insight is given into the narrator's emotional or cognitive point of view (apart from the sarcastic comment: "'at least there's a load of shit'"), confirming the impression that any psychological or existential component regarding the nature of his 'quest' stops short at the notion of retrieval. It seems significant that his self-satire is here directed at his own restlesseness, and that this aspect, which is an obsessive preoccupation with the narrator in *The Songlines*, is only very occasionally and obliquely referred to in *In Patagonia*. Indeed, hardly any mention of the dilemma is made at all until the following short passage in chapter 44:

The resident ornithologist, a severe young man, was studying the migration of the Jackass Penguin. We talked late into the night, arguing whether or not we, too, have journeys mapped out in our central nervous system; it seemed the only way to account for our insane restlessness (IP, p. 83).

Even here the note of self-parody can be easily detected, with the adjective "insane" echoing the adjective "sterile" in the earlier passage. Also, the suggestion of the predestined nature of man's restlessness is merely posed as a brief interrogative with no further comment, nor is there any discussion or questioning on the theme until the following chapter, and even here the narrator objectifies the dilemma by initially transferring it to his narrative of the wandering Sea Captain John Davies and subsequently to his comments on Samuel Taylor Coleridge:

> Coleridge himself was a 'night wandering man', a stranger at his own birthplace, a drifter round rooming-houses, unable to sink roots any where. He had a bad case of what Baudelaire called, 'The Great Malady: Horror of One's Home'. Hence his identification with other blighted wanderers: Cain, the Wandering Jew, or the horizon-struck navigators of the sixteenth century (IP, p. 87)[v].

Chatwin reutilises the myth of Cain and Abel in *The Songlines*, where he reworks them into a private mythology of the settler and the wanderer, though here it is almost flippantly referred to. His own self-identification with Baudelaire's horror of home is also a recurrent motif, that is present in *The Songlines*. To a great extent these are references that haunted him. Yet here, if the narrator's observations on Coleridge's horror of sedentary life are self-referential, they curiously contrast with his declared fondness for the territorially jealous and monogomous penguins in the previous

chapter: "Albatrosses and penguins are the last birds I'd want to murder" (IP, p. 84). However much the narrator's preoccupations may be intended to reflect Chatwin's own, there is little indication that the real author and narrator in the text are one and the same person. Indeed, difficulties in reconciling the narrator of the book with the real author abound and they also reside in Chatwin's own remarks and comments during his journey through Patagonia which poignantly contrast with the dryness of the narrator's observations. The following extract from a letter to his wife is an illustrative example of Chatwin's own response to his experiences of travelling around the country:

> Dying of tiredness [...] Have just walked 150 odd miles. Am another 150 from the nearest lettuce and at least 89 from the nearest canned vegetable. It will take many years to recover from roast lamb [...] I want a salad. Cannot face any more meat. Dust in eyes. Feeling rather weak of hunger[10].

Interestingly, the only extract included from Chatwin's notebooks (in contrast to their extensive use in *The Songlines*), is analogous in tone to the rest of the book:

> Walked all day and the next day. The road straight, grey, dusty and trafficless. The wind relentless, heading you off. Sometimes you heard a truck, you knew for certain it was a truck, but it was the wind. Or the noise of gears changing down, but that also was the wind [...] (IP, p. 74).

The deceptive mirage-like noises in this description evoke the illusiveness of the Patagonian landscape, a quality which did not escape Darwin who, in *The Voyage of the Beagle* described "the free scope given to the imagination" by the boundless Patagonian plains[11]. But the description also reflects the narrator's loneliness. For, as in the empty desert, there is no single living figure who emerges as a constant companion in the book, as in *The Songlines*. The narrator rather pursues a course which focuses on an engagement with other narratives tied up with his own personal mythical quest, reader regardless. This is what makes *In Patagonia*, in a sense, an anti-travel book. In his biography, Nicholas Shakespeare amply illustrates Chatwin's loathing of actual travelling[12], and indeed Chatwin's text is almost completely void of those details (train times, fleeting impressions, landscapes, changing emotional states, reveries etc.) which Theroux's account of his journey to Patagonia in *The Old Patagonian Express* abounds in. With Theroux one feels that there is a correspondence between author and first-person narrator and that the experiences are recounted in such a direct and intimate way that the reader can do nothing but succumb to him and be either charmed or repelled. The narrator of *In Patagonia* is more 'alien' precisely because he is part of the textualisation of Chatwin's landscape and in this sense he ultimately relates sympathetically with his external surroundings without necessarily engaging the reader's sympathy.

In *The Songlines* Chatwin deliberately creates a teasing association between the first-person narrator and the real author, thereby establishing a double subjectivity: one fictional and the other meta-fictional. Instances in

the book that can be directly referable to the real author, Bruce Chatwin, abound. One specific example is the well-known account of his becoming temporarily blind from examining too many paintings close up when working at Sotheby's and his doctor's suggestion that he visit a country with wide horizons. The verisimilitude created by these 'real life' analogies is further heightened when the 'Bruce' of the narrative incorporates numerous extracts from the notebooks of Bruce Chatwin which constitute at least a third of the text. The matter is further complicated by the fact that not only do the first-person narrator and real author ambivalently converge, fictionally and non-fictionally, but each assumes the guise of the other. 'Bruce' suggests an authentic correspondence to Chatwin whilst Chatwin, in interviews and letters, insisted that 'Bruce' was a fictional self-representation. Either way, in a literary text, however authentic the link between author and narrator may appear, the authorial self becomes necessarily alienated from his narrative self so that, in the words of Robert D. Newman, the latter must be "ironically distanced as Other"[13]. The fact that this *Other* is a deliberately fictionalised portrait of Chatwin himself does not detract from his essentially textual role. Indeed, it corroborates the self-myth Chatwin seeks to project in the text. For it cannot escape the reader's attention that this figure is constructed around a paradigmatic accumulation of positive semes. First, the narrator Bruce is a decidedly more sensitive presence than the narrator of *In Patagonia* and assigned a far more active actantial role. Second, the fact that the book's autobiographical details exceed those in *In Patagonia* betrays an anxiousness on Chatwin's part

to project a particular image of himself through a narrator rather than use this figure as a perceiving consciousness alone. Thus, the account in the second chapter of his early childhood can be seen as an attempt to establish from the beginning the narrator's sense of his own association with the theme of the book: "I remember the fantastic homelessness of my first five years. My father was in the Navy, at sea. My mother and I would shuttle back and forth, on the railways of wartime England, on visits to family and friends" (SONG, p. 7). This image of mobility characterised by "the frenzied agitation of the times" (*Ibid*) interestingly contrasts with the domestic immobility evoked in the description of the narrator's grandmother's dining room of *In Patagonia*, in which the glass cabinet, ("a sustaining metaphor" for Chatwin, as Nicholas Shakespeare notes, and a repository for the three aspects of his writing, collecting, movement and story[14],) awakens a merely implicit longing to see other places. If anything, it is qualified by the need to escape the eventuality of a nuclear war. In *The Songlines*, however, this desire is evident from the beginning and is further compounded by the narrator's self-identification with the aboriginal child in his aunt's book on Australia[15]. The implication is that his rootless childhood in itself justifies a claim to explore a people whose lives are likewise characterised by wandering. As a result, the psychological intimacy inherent in the home, is rendered in terms of parody: "Home, if we had one, was a solid black suitcase [...] in which there was a corner for my clothes and my Mickey Mouse gas mask" (*Ibid*). The narrator (Chatwin?), therefore offers his own experiences as a westernised counterpart of the nomadic

myth he seeks to explore in his writing[16]. He does this no more explicitly than in the following passage where first-person narrator and real author coincide:

> One day, Aunt Ruth told me our surname had once been 'Chettewynde', which meant 'the winding path' in Anglo-Saxon and the suggestion took root in my head that poetry, my own name and the road were, all three, mysteriously connected (SONG, p. 11).

The verisimilitude is not undermined by the fact that the actual surname 'Chatwin' is not referred to. If anything, 'Chettewynde' points implicitly to it without the need for it being explicitly mentioned[17]. The narrator's dramatic autonomy in *The Songlines* is further heightened by his being assigned a significant share of direct discourse in contrast with *In Patagonia* which mainly renders his speech through indirect discourse. The following two passages, both dramatising similar moments of hostility, the first with the Russian exile, the second with Jim Hanlon, are representative examples of these two different approaches:

> I said Patagonia reminded me of Russia. Surely Rio Pico was a bit like the Urals? She scowled. Patagonia did not remind her of Russia. In Argentina there was nothing—sheep and cows and human sheep and cows. And in Western Europe also nothing[...]
>
> In conversation I made some slight reservation about Solzhenitsyn.
>
> 'What can you know about it?' she snapped (IP, pp. 59-60).

[...]

> 'So your a writer, eh?' Hanlon said to me.
>
> 'Of sorts'.
>
> 'Ever do an honest day's work in your life?'
>
> His blue eyes were watering. His eyeballs were suspended in nets of red wire.
>
> 'Try to', I said.
>
> The withered hand shot forward. It was purplish and waxy. The little finger was cut off. He held the hand to my face, like a claw.
>
> 'Know what this is?' he taunted.
>
> 'A hand'.
>
> 'A working man's hand'.
>
> 'I've done farm work', I said. 'And timber-work'.
>
> 'Timber? Where?'
>
> 'Scotland'.
>
> 'What kind of timber?'
>
> 'Spruce... Larch...'
>
> 'Very convincing! What kind of saw?'
>
> 'Power-saw'.
>
> 'What make, you fool?'
>
> 'Can't remember'.
>
> 'Very unconvincing', he said. 'Doesn't sound right to me' (SONG, p. 91).

This is not to suggest that one passage has more merit than the other, of course, for the aims are very different. The indirect discourse used in the first passage creates a sense of distance which effectively conveys the sadness of the exile and perhaps for that very reason, mitigates the nurse's aggression. The exchange has a distanced quality, as if recollected in calm. The aggressively hostile tone of Hanlon's questions and remarks in the second

passage is contrasted with the narrator's self-defensive replies. The short atomic sentences resemble a series of cuts and thrusts as in a sword fight. The dramatic effect is extended to the final scene of the chapter (with Bill's apology to the narrator and distress when he and Arkady leave) which becomes all the more poignant in contrast. Bruce's dialogues with the dazzlingly brilliant Arkady also augment his dynamic role designed, as they are, to illustrate his capacity at being mentally sharp and competitive with the latter, indeed, all too eager to display his own knowledge:

> 'You like Russia?'
> 'The Russians are a wonderful people'.
> 'I know that', he answered sharply.
> 'Why?'
> 'Hard to say', I said. 'I like to think of Russia as a land of miracles. Just as you fear the worst, something wonderful always happens'.
> 'Such as?'
> 'Small things, mostly. Humility in Russia is endless'.
> 'I believe you', he said. 'Come on. We'd better get going' (SONG, p: 44).

Bruce's comment that "the Russians are a wonderful people" is not sufficient evidence, for Arkady, that he has acquired a real understanding of his country. This is why his sharply interrogative "why", has all the force of a threat. Indeed, more than once do Bruce's conversations with various characters assume the tone of a cultural initiation test. The episode with Father Flynn is another illustration:

Flynn turned to face me.

'You know what our people call the White man?' he asked.

'Meat', I suggested.

'And you know what they call a welfare cheque?'

'Also meat'.

Bring a chair', he said. 'I want to talk to you' (SONG, p. 62).

In such instances the narrator is defined in terms of the point of view of those around him. This kind of objectified stance is precisely what is absent in *In Patagonia,* because the narrator's interlocutors are not really made to show any more curiosity towards him beyond the simple fact of his geographical origins. But in *The Songlines* his Englishness is repeatedly thrown in his face, so that, whether threateningly or in jest, he is always made to feel an outsider, a foreigner, and therefore an intruder:

'This is a Pom', he (Arkady) said to the secretary. 'A Pom by the name of Bruce'.

The girl giggled, diffidently, dumped the papers on the desk, and dashed for the door (SONG, p. 5).

'Are you English?

'Yes'.

'Why don't you go back home?'

He spoke slowly in clipped syllables.

'I just arrived', I said.

'I mean all of you'.

'All of who?'

'White men', he said (SONG, p. 34).

[...]

> 'And what makes you think you can show up from Merrie Old England and clean up on sacred knowledge?' (SONG, p. 35).
>
> [...]
>
> 'Who the hell does he think he is?' he turned to Arkady.
>
> 'Who asked him to poke his upper-snotty-class nose in here?'
>
> 'You did', said Arkady.
>
> 'Did I? Well I made a mistake'.
>
> 'I'm not upper class', I said.
>
> 'But a touch too classy for my little luncheon party! Luncheon! That's what they call it in Pongleterre! Luncheon with the Queen! What!' (SONG, p. 93).

Yet there is a simultaneous sense that, in spite of this frequent hostility, the narrator enjoys his privileged role as outsider. For one thing it differentiates him from the others and for another it frees him from his own cultural ties, providing him with the necessary objectivity to conduct his quest. However, it is also true that both *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* never really give a sense of the narrator actually belonging to an original home base. In spite of the hostility and prejudice he receives, that would normally artificially augment a sense of belonging, the narrator seems to strive against being the hero, to paraphrase Lotman, of an "immobile locus", and there is no sense of his own homeland, as organising centre for the point of view with which alien lands and cultures are perceived[16]. Nowhere can one find a racist or prejudicial remark, apart from the preconceived notion of concepts the narrator is setting out to verify. This sense of

'openness' is undoubtedly rendered by the intertextual nature of his discourse, for *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* both rely heavily on intertextual elements for their construction, although in very different ways. Whereas *In Patagonia* is a centripetal text (in the sense that its intertextual elements are intrinsic to the nature of the book's internal structure), *The Songlines* is centrifugal; the intertextual elements not only reflecting the narrator's own existential inquiries, but also extending beyond the confines of the actual narrative, enhancing the sense of a direct correspondence between real author and first-person narrator, as well as providing an intellectual extension of the notion of journeying itself[19]. "The notebooks" section intensifies the polyphonic structure of the text at the same time as testifying to the cultural eruditeness of the narrator. On the one hand, the notes may be seen as the latter's attempt to construct his own songline (similar to his earlier attempt to write a myth on the creation of the universe in the chapter entitled "In The Beginning")[20], but at the same time they are a product of a rational, intellectual mind, and the apparently casual nature in which they are presented, together with the variety of fields to which they refer, (literary biological, archeological, psychological and philosophical etc.) in reality reveals the culturally eclectic narrator as a conscious 'shaper' of the text and not 'merely' one of its main 'voices'[21]. The following summary (with numbers and topics) shows how deliberately and artfully these passages are selected and structured. The numbers represent quotations against which is indicated the general thematic concern of each section:

1-156	Mobility/immobility.
157-192	Human instinct. Fear and aggression.
193-206	Beneficial aspects of movement.
207-255	Man and the beast. Aggression and evolution.
256-267	War and aggression.
268-279	Mobility and poetry and language.
280-285	Struggle and survival. Mobility/immobility.

The circular structure of the sequence which begins and ends with the themes of mobility and immobility, exposes the narrator's intellectual preoccupation to construct a tentative theory around the idea that immobility negatively breeds aggression, whereas mobility inspires positive feelings of religion, spirituality and harmony. The narrator is therefore bestowed with the intellectual responsibility for the theoretical issues propounded in the book. But that this is not always the radical way in which Chatwin himself presents them in his fiction is a point that has hopefully been made in this study. Nevertheless, it is at this moment that the distinction between narrator and real author apparently collapses to the extent that the reader may legitimately question the efficacy of the semi-fictional device in the first place. For in reading the passages from the notebooks are we not conscious of reading Chatwin rather than 'Bruce'? Is the attempt not that of inserting these notes into a quasi-fictitious context in which they take on new meaning in that context? It is certainly a way of finding an alternative terrain in which these quotations can be juxtaposed, and therefore take on new life. In foregrounding the self-referentiality of these inter/intratexts the narrator takes

on a responsibility analogous to that of the real author and by performing such a process of selection also assumes the role of editor of his own work.

With the narrator of *Utz*, Chatwin turns to the theme of collecting, an old passion he had scornfully rejected before taking up writing as a profession. For Chatwin himself, collecting came to be synonymous with death and he regarded the desire for the possession of objects as the ultimate sin of the settler. Nevertheless, his attitude towards collecting was ultimately as ambiguous as his attitudes towards settlement and nomadism[22], and whilst it may be possible to see in *Utz* a sardonic self-portrait, this is true only to a certain extent and is undermined by the essentially sympathetic treatment[23] of his main protagonist. The narrator's actantial role is, as in the previous two texts, that of *searcher*, but here it is realised in terms of a textual dynamics which is not so much a metaphysical or existential inquiry on his part than a sense of brooding curiosity regarding the workings of a particular psyche. As *actor* he participates in the text almost as an illusive presence. It is perhaps no accident that, as with the narrator of *In Patagonia*, he is never even named[24]—. His intradiegetic function is, as in *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines*, undermined by the fact that he is an outsider to the micro-world he participates in and narrates. Also, in contrast to the narrative figures of the previous two texts who are characterised by mobility and a thirst for knowledge, the narrator of *Utz* emerges at the beginning of the novel, if anything, as a lazy intellectual parasite: "[...] due to idleness and my ignorance of the languages, this particular forray into Middle European studies came to nothing. I remember

the episode as a very enjoyable holiday, at others' expense" (U, p. 12). Although he is also a collector of stories and information, which he is always ready to jot down in his notebook at the first opportunity, these are almost entirely related to or derive from Utz himself, and are not the source of his own original or acquired knowledge. Thematically, the narrator is associated with Utz not only because of his profession (art dealer) but, more importantly, as a result of his growing obsessive curiosity regarding Utz's life and the eventual mysterious disappearance of his porcelain collection. The functional ambivalence of his role provokes a split personality: as *actor/character* he never externally manifests affection or sympathy for his protagonist[25], but as narrator he reveals a 'disinterested sympathy' for him. These two dimensions are reconciled in the following passage which strikes a chord between aesthetic detachment and detached sympathy:

> I am not an expert on Meissen porcelain — although my years of traipsing round art museums have taught me what it is. Nor can I say I like Meissen Porcelain. I do, however, admire the boisterous energy of an artist such as Kaendler [...] and I entirely side with Utz in his feud with Winckelmann — who, in his 'Notes on the Plebian Taste in Porcelain', would supplant this plebian vitality with the dead hand of clasical perfection (U, p. 135).

Both the narrator's actantial role, as well as his function as narrative voice, are linked by the concept of mobility. As in *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines*, movement and

story-telling are intrinsically interconnected, each, in turn, informing the other. But the narrator's mobility in *Utz* is tightly conditioned, controlled even, by the vicissitudes of the main protagonist. As Antonella Riem Natale rightly observes, the narrator is prisoner in his condition as literary traveller and is continually forced to repeat another person's journey and story[26]. He is no longer a restless presence, as in the previous two works, since all of his journeys, however apparently casual, have an ultimate purpose and the horizontal dimension of his wanderings continually intersects fatalistically on a verticle plane with Utz's story and culminates in his penetration of the interior dimension of Utz's home:

> In the summer of 1967 [...] I went to Prague for a week of historical research [...] (U, p. 12).
> On my way to Czechoslovakia [...] (U, p. 13).
> My years of traipsing round art museums [...] (U, p. 50).
> But one night as I drove into Paris [...] (U, p. 116).
> [...] I happened to pass through Prague on my way back from the Soviet Union [...] (U, p. 118).
> A month or so earlier I had called on Dr. Marius Frankfurter in New York [...] (U, p. 125).
> The village of Kostelec lies close to the Austrian border [...] (U, p. 153).

These references are comparable to the elliptic spatial-temporal references in *In Patagonia*, although their significance as a functional device is more important, not so much to inform the reader where the story is leading, for the narrator never diverts his focus from

Utz. Indeed, there is an intensity of concentration on his subject that is typical of all of Chatwin's novels — a quality that differentiates them from the digressive nature of his travel books —. The spatial-temporal references rather serve to reiterate the narrator's continual 'collisions' with the story that so intrigues him. Ultimately, the functionality of these intersections between the narrator and Utz is to create the conditions for a bond of sympathy that overrides any intentions of satire on the part of the real author. Whereas the narrators of *In Patagonia* and *The Songlines* relinquish a good deal of their narrative authority to inter and intratextual fragments, the narrator in *Utz* claims full responsibility for the narrative he tangentially participates in. Nevertheless, his reliability is often put into question, for his 'limited' viewpoint — which is the price he has to pay for his intradiegetic role — creates a textual dynamics in which story elements are revealed gradually and enigmatically and need to be continually reconstructed and reformulated so that the reader is also made to participate in decoding the hermeneutical gaps with the narrator along the linear sequence of the narrative discourse. The apparently trivial matter with regard to Utz's moustache is emblematic:

> Did he have a moustache? I forget. Add a moustache, subtract a moustache: nothing would alter his utterly nondescript appearance. Supposing, then, we add a moustache? [...]
>
> On reflection, I think I'd better withdraw the moustache (U, pp. 27-8)

[...]

> He trimmed his moustache. (I still cannot be certain if I'm imagining a moustache) (U, p. 86).

[...]

> But I can state categorically, that Utz did have a moustache.
>
> Without the moustache, he might have remained in my imagination another art-dealer, of fussy habits and feminine inclinations, whose encounters with women were ambiguous.
>
> With the moustache he was a relentless lady-killer (U, p. 135).

The question of Utz's moustache is paradigmatic of the narrator's gradual understanding of his protagonist, so that only when its functional importance is fully realised is its existence finally acknowledged. Parallel with the revelation of Utz is the narrator's growing confidence in himself as a story-teller. It is no accident that his narrative concludes with a series of problematic proposals all of which he answers with an imperative self-assurance:

> Had Utz or Marta smuggled the collection abroad? No. Had the museum officials smuggled it abroad? No. Dr. Frankfurter would have known. Did Utz destroy his porcelains out of pique? I was doubtful. He loathed museums, but he was not a vindictive man [...]
>
> Or was it a case of iconoclasm? Is there, alongside the tendency to worship images [....] a counter-tendency to smash them to bits? Do images, in fact, demand their own destruction?

> Or was it Marta? Did *she* have a vindictive streak? Did she connect Utz's love of porcelain with his love for opera singers?
>
> No. My impression is that none of these theories will work (U, pp. 151-2).

Such earnest speculation reflects a human curiosity that ironically contradicts the narrator's previous lukewarm reaction to Utz's death after receiving a card from Orlik with the words "'Our beloved friend Utz is dead [...]' The word 'beloved' seemed a bit strong: considering I had known Utz for a total of nine and a quarter hours, some six and a half years earlier" (U, p. 117). In spite of the fact that these certainties are partially undermined by his inability to "vouch for the authenticity of Utz's title 'baron'" or to be certain "that Utz's annual pilgrimage to the West was quite so 'pure'" (U, p. 134), once he feels he has understood essential truths about Utz (such as his passion for opera singers and his marriage to Marta) he allows himself the liberty to invent his own ending, which consists of a happy reconciliation between Utz and Marta with Utz destroying the porcelains as they are "bits of old crockery that just had to go" (U, p. 152). Yet this narratorial liberty is paradoxically undermined by the narrator's condition as 'prisoner' in the text. For as fictional character/intradiegetic narrator and outsider to the world he depicts in the novel, not only is his own perception conditioned by his limited and partial viewpoint, but also his 'happy ending' appears as a need to reach a consoling, tidy version with which to round off his tale, and this version is ironically thwarted by the ultimate mystery regarding the whereabouts of Utz's precious porcelain collection.

NOTES

[1] Catherine Bernard, "Bruce Chatwin: Fiction on the Frontier", in *Theme Parks, Rainforests and Sprouting Wastelands, European Essays on Theory and Performance in Contemporary British Fiction*, ed., Richard Todd, Luisa Flora, Amsterdam, Editions Rodopi, 2000.

[2] M. M. Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, edited by Michael Holquist, Translated by Carlyl Emerson and Michael Holquist, Austin, University of Texas Press, 1981, p. 254.

[3] It is, of course, significant that the only other main character in the book, Charley Milward, whose actantial role is that of ('oblivious'?) *donor*, is a long-dead relative of the narrator.

[4] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

[5] The neutrality of the passage is all the more interesting in the light of Chatwin's own comment on what he took out of the scene: "[...] the head falling backwards at the end of the mazurka [...] and lifting him off the piano stool into the bedroom". N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, pp. 293-4.

[6] S. Clapp. *op. cit.*, p. 31.

[7] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 292.

[8] Chatwin's consciously striving for a particularly aural quality in his prose cannot be sufficiently repeated. See Clapp, *op. cit.*, p. 33; Murray, *op. cit.*, p. 67; Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 306.

[9] Certainly, one may see an element of self-identification on the part of Chatwin with Coleridge. His childhood wanderings characterised *by frenzied excitement* also made him a stranger at his own birthplace. Like Coleridge, he also spent a good deal of his time in other people's houses where he wrote most of his works.

[10] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, p. 295.

[11] Charles Darwin, *The Voyage of the Beagle*, Hertfordshire, Wordsworth, 1997, p. 477.

[12] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, "Travelling with Bruce was like travelling with your 88 year-old maiden aunt", p. 152. See also p. 113.

[13] Robert D. Newman, *Transgressions of Reading: Narrative Engagement as Exile and Return*, Durham, Duke University Press, 1993, p. 2.

[14] N. Shakespeare, *op. cit.*, pp. 35-6.

[15] This recalls Lewis's identification with the Indian figure in *On The Black Hill*.

[16] B. Chatwin *Anatomy of Restlessness*, cit., p. 22. Chatwin's comment on his inability to write in his own home further illuminates the predicament alluded to here: "'[...] there are those, like myself, who are paralysed by 'home', for whom home is synonymous with the proverbial writer's block and who believe [...] that all will be well if only they were somewhere else'". Paradoxically, he always needed other people's houses to write in, as the same essay testifies.

[17] Fernando Galván, "Bruce Chatwin's Travel Books/Travel Novels: a Troublesome Reading of *The Songlines*", in *Merope* n. 2, 1990, p. 104, notes how Chatwin's surname offers "indeed a

proof, although minor, of an identity that is not merely casual, but seems to have been sought on purpose, of a certain poetic determinism that is habitual in epics and in primitive legends: the hero is destined, since birth itself, and through the names that he receives, to a particular end".

[18] M. M. Bakhtin, *op. cit.*, p. 101. All of Chatwin's narratives can be interestingly compared to Bakhtin's definition of the Greek romance in which "everything is foreign [...] there is no implied native, ordinary, familiar world (the native country of the author and his readers) against whose background the otherness and foreignness of what is foreign might be clearly projected".

[19] F. Galván, cit., p. 106, notes that "far from being ornaments the wide ramifications of the notes possess a greater interest and significance than mere marginality and that they have something specifically musical associated to them, being harmonious with the theme and the development of the work".

[20] A. Riem Natale, *op. cit*, p. 62, notes that Chatwin's art consists in mixing these 'stories' to create a verbal musicality that in itself becomes a melody, where words can almost be separated from meaning.

[21] Eleanor Porter, "Nomadic Melodies" in *Textus: English Studies in Italy*, Genova, Tilgher, vol. X, 1997, notes how at this point of the book: "Physical fixty becomes the condition of intellectual freedom of movement".

[22] B. Chatwin, *Anatomy of Restlessness*, *cit.*, pp. 170-85. *See* essay "The Morality of Things" in which he clarifies his position with regard to collecting. On the one hand, "we feel obliged to enjoy it" (an object) " long after it has ceased to amuse [...]", pp. 170-1, and on the other generosity regarding things can bring them back to life: "[...] the 'thing' itself is alive. It does not like

being trapped and longs to return to its roots (and having got there to take off again)", p. 185.

23 An analogy can also be made between the young Utz's desire to possess the Harlequin (U, pp. 18-19) and the narrator's desire to possess the mylodon skin in *In Patagonia* (IP, pp. 5-6).

24 In the film version the narrator is replaced by an American auctioner named Miles Fisher.

25 The film version picks up on this aspect with the character of Miles Fisher actually manifesting visible signs of irritation and boredom while conversing with Utz.

26 A. Riem Natale, *op. cit.*, p. 121.

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