

## The World's Other: Othering through a Literature of History and Ethnography

*There is no more effective way of bonding together the disparate sections of restless peoples than to unite them against outsiders*<sup>1</sup>  
– Eric Hobsbawm

*The only homeland, foreigner, is the world we live in; a single Chaos has given birth to all mortals*<sup>2</sup>  
– Meleager of Gadara

In an introduction to *Nation and Narration*, Homi Bhabha speaks of those “discourses that signify a sense of ‘nationness’”<sup>3</sup>:

the *heimlich* pleasures of the hearth, the *unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other; the comfort of social belonging, the hidden injuries of class; the customs of taste, the powers of political affiliation; the sense of social order, the sensibility of sexuality; the blindness of bureaucracy, the strait insight of institutions; the quality of justice, the common sense of injustice; the *langue* of the law and the *parole* of the people<sup>4</sup>

Utilising those categories of Bhabha's which embody alterity, but recognising that the Other<sup>5</sup> is constructed along more varied borders than those of nationhood, this paper studies how different writers narrating “The World's Story” have represented “Others”<sup>6</sup> in their literature of history and ethnography. The paper examines the impact that such representations could be said to have upon the self-identity of individuals and groups, before examining the possibilities for identification with the other.

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<sup>1</sup> Eric J. Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism Since 1780*, (Cambridge, 1990), p.91; quoted here from Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992) p.368

<sup>2</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) p.56

<sup>3</sup> Homi K. Bhabha, ‘Introduction: narrating the nation’, *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990) p.12.

<sup>4</sup> id.

<sup>5</sup> hereafter simply: the other

<sup>6</sup> hereafter: others

## The *unheimlich* terror of the space or race of the Other

What is meant by the other? In *Strangers to Ourselves*, Julia Kristeva writes, “At first one is struck by his peculiarity – those eyes, those lips, those cheekbones, that skin unlike others, all that distinguishes him and reminds one that there is *someone* there ... “I am at least as remarkable, and therefore I love him,” the observer thinks; “Now I prefer my own peculiarity, and therefore I kill him,” he might conclude”<sup>7</sup>. The other is an encounter with foreignness, a defining and epiphanic moment mirroring the Lacanian mirror stage in which we are confronted with an image of ourselves which prompts us to distinguish our ego.

The other is furthermore a symptom of a process. The construction is an alienation process inalienable from the requirements of colonialism and nationhood. Although the other always exists as a consciousness of difference, it is in imperialism that it is actively constructed as an ideological apparatus. Edward Said explains the other of Orientalism as emerging from the need to justify and sustain existing power relations. He writes of Orientalism as an intellectual power framework preceding colonialism which presents self-affirming, reinforcing ideas of the East and Asia; a situation by which textual authority, prior knowledge and the assumption of knowability are “*contained and represented by dominating frameworks*”<sup>8</sup>. The Orient thus became something which was required to be judged, studied, disciplined and illustrated by virtue of that superiority which was an unspoken corollary of the “normality” of the West. Whereas the East becomes different, irrational, childlike and even depraved, the West, by contrast must come to be synonymous with the virtue, reason and maturity from which the other was observed. Under colonialism, Said sees Orientalism as having become a regulating system by which knowledge was harvested and then, that which conforms to the sustaining of empire was promulgated<sup>9</sup>. In *Covering Islam*<sup>10</sup>, he writes of how such processes continue beyond the bounds of overt imperialism.

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<sup>7</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) p.3

<sup>8</sup> Edward Said, *Orientalism, Literary Theory: An Anthology*, ed. by Julie Rivkin and Michael Ryan, (London: Blackwell, 1998), p.880

<sup>9</sup> id. p.883

<sup>10</sup> Edward W. Said, *Covering Islam: How the media and the experts determine how we see the rest of the world*, (New York: Vintage Books, 1997)

Internal similarity, common traits and interests emerge most powerfully for our dialectically structured imaginations, when differences are dwarfed by the sheer alterity of the other. Linda Colley emphasises this source of self-identity building in its operation at the national level, writing that a national identity, an understanding of nationhood in Britain emerged most prominently as a result of confronting the Catholic other of Napoleonic France. Colley illustrates her point with reference to the painting by Sir David Wilkie, *Chelsea Pensioners Reading the Gazette of the battle of Waterloo 1822*. She writes: “conflict with a dangerous and hostile Other has glossed over internal divisions and fostered union of a kind, making it possible for him, a Scot, to paint a London street scene in celebration of a victory won by an Anglo-Irishman Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington”<sup>11</sup>.

In ancient Rome, the position voiced in opposition to the ethnic other of the Northern and Central Gauls being allowed to stand for office, is one more familiar in the context of contemporary debates regarding immigration. Tacitus narrates a speech protesting that “importing foreigners in hordes”<sup>12</sup> into the senate could increase unemployment and betrays the honour of those who had fought against the Gauls. Most seriously, the argument arises that somehow Roman identity could be diluted, become less valuable as a result of such diversity: “Let them, by all means, have the title of Roman Citizens. But the senate’s insignia, the glory of office, they must not cheapen”<sup>13</sup>.

In this discourse, Roman senatorship gains status via its exclusivity and on the principle of worth conferred by the blood shed in the name of empire. In a socio-psychological analysis, this anxiety of identity arises from the encroaching social value orientation of an inclusivist group self-definition which threatens to undermine distinct identity – Claudius vows to “adopt the same national policy, by bringing excellence to Rome from whatever source”<sup>14</sup>. Jetten, Spears and Manstead, in a paper entitled *Similarity as a source of differentiation*, write, the characteristic that “groups feel threatened when

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<sup>11</sup> Linda Colley, *Britons: Forging the Nation 1707 – 1837*, (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 1992), p.366

<sup>12</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.242

<sup>13</sup> id., p.243

<sup>14</sup> id.

groups become too similar, and want to restore clear water between them, was referred to by Freud (1922) as “the narcissism of small differences”<sup>15</sup>.

A process of othering can similarly be observed in the successive dynastical reinterpretations of the *Book of Songs*, the *Shi Jing*. Each successive dynasty between the Han and the Qing appears to have positioned itself in relation to and usually in opposition to earlier interpretative systems, rendering them other whilst claiming authentic selfhood in their true kinship with the text. The Neo-Confucian movement of the Song dynasty saw the publication of the *Shi ji zhuan*, compiled by Zhu Xi, which rehabilitated “licentious” interpretations of the text, whilst the Qing dynasty followed by returning to Han and pre-Han interpretations of the text.

In each case, successive appropriations of the text and the claim to serving as the only valid intermediary for this aspect of nationhood, both rendered obsolete an othered past dynasty and could be said to have redefined connection with authentic “Chinese” identity. In his essay ‘What is a nation?’, Ernest Renan underscores this necessary rendering obsolete of past distinctions and categorising systems. “The essence of a nation is that all individuals have many things in common, and also that they have forgotten many things. No French citizen knows whether he is a Burgundian, an Alan, a Taifale or a Visigoth ... Forgetting ... I would even go so far as to say historical error, is a crucial factor in the creation of a nation”<sup>16</sup>. If this process of successively re-inventing the quintessence of Chineseness in reinterpreting the *Shi jing* could be characterised as reconstruing the forgotten, the drawing together of this text of forgotten origins and disparate tribes becomes an appropriate metaphor for the formation of the Chinese state – as a simultaneous recognition and disavowal of difference with relation to an authentic and normal root.

We might add, that it is largely in consequence of such an othering at a national level that it becomes possible to use discourses such as that of all “right-thinking people” supporting a given public policy or foreign policy initiative. In the case of an aggressive action directed against an external other, to be in dissent is to necessarily be “wrong-

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<sup>15</sup> Sigmund Freud, *Group Psychology and the Analysis of the Ego*, (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1922); quoted here from Jolanda Jetten, Russell Spears and Antony S. R. Manstead, ‘Similarity as a source of differentiation: the role of group identification’, *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 31, (2001): pp.621 – 640, DOI: 10.1002/ejsp.72, p.622

<sup>16</sup> Ernst Renan, ‘What is a nation?’, *Nation and Narration*, ed. Homi K. Bhabha (London: Routledge, 1990), p.11

headed” – to be as irrational as those who are themselves to be dominated. As Baudrillard observed, there is no alternative to the dictum “support our troops”. Homi Bhabha modifies and develops Said’s interpretation of the operation of Orientalism. As Christine Holmlund relates, instead of “unchanging dichotomies of difference”<sup>17</sup>, Bhabha sees “a form of knowledge and identification that vacillates between what is always in place, already known, and something that must be anxiously repeated”<sup>18</sup>. The unheimlich terror of the space or race of the other is a compulsion emerging out of disturbing differences of appearance and reinforced by systems with a vested interest in cultivating prejudices of inferiority. At its mildest it narcissistically looks for small sources of differentiation, at its most powerful it can serve to erase historical traces of diversity in the process of mobilising patriotic aggression or building a sense of nationhood.

## The sensibility of sexuality

And yet, to return to Kristeva, is this titillation of patriotism not an excitement in the face of the different, is otherness one way of understanding the roots of arousal, a displacement of repressed fear? Kristeva writes:

a foreigner seldom arouses the terrifying anguish provoked by death, the female sex, or the “baleful” unbridled drive. Are we nevertheless so sure that the “political” feelings of xenophobia do not include, often unconsciously, that agony of frightened joyfulness that has been called *unheimlich*, that in English is *uncanny*, and that the Greeks quite simply call *xenos*, “foreign”.<sup>19</sup>

For Tacitus in *The Annals*, Agrippina is terrifying not solely by virtue of her actions. Her failure to conform to a gender role makes her especially troubling: “Complete obedience was accorded to a woman – And not a woman like Messalina who toyed with national affairs to satisfy her appetites. This was a rigorous, almost masculine disposition”<sup>20</sup>. Elsewhere Tacitus writes, “actually Agrippina knew no feminine

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<sup>17</sup> Christine Anne Holmlund, ‘Displacing Limits of Difference: Gender, Race and Colonialism in Edward Said and Homi Bhabha’s Theoretical models and Marguerite Duras’s Experimental Films’, *Otherness and The Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*, ed. Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), p.6

<sup>18</sup> *id.*

<sup>19</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991), p.191

<sup>20</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.255

weaknesses. Intolerant of rivalry, thirsting for power, she had a man's preoccupations"<sup>21</sup>. As Crick wrote in *Explorations In Language and Meaning*, "A change in the value of the "self" invariably alters the image of the "other" and visa versa ... "<sup>22</sup>. By othering her otherness, Agrippina the manly woman threatens the selfhood of Tacitus' masculinity.

The Zhou State portrayed in Song 264, 'High Regard', is also "injured and exhausted" by the internal other of a woman who disrupts classical binary opposition. "Oh, that clever woman, / She is an owl, she is a shrike,"<sup>23</sup> laments the song. She explicitly does not "stay with her weaving and her loom," but instead, in her difference she is a force for disorder. "The wagging tongues of women / Are the instruments of our decline. No, disorder does not come down from Heaven, / Rather it is the spawn of these women / ... They attack others in anger and spite, / Slander arises, backs are turned."<sup>24</sup> Whereas woman is irrational, spiteful and destructive, man – in opposition – is rational, constructive: normal. This is most clearly presented in the juxtaposition, "A clever man builds a city / A clever woman tears it down"<sup>25</sup>. Suspicion of this demonised other is rooted in the fear of lack. In the lines, "You can neither teach, nor instruct / Women and their eunuchs"<sup>26</sup>, the two phallus-lacking others are allied and equally incapable of ever attaining maturity. The phallus becomes the normalised motif for sexual and psychological progress beyond childishness.

Tacitus speaks politically as a former consul, and when he writes *The Annals*, his text of history will build a cultural cohesion of values and normative assumptions rooted in and established upon the precedents of history. Thus when Tacitus describes how Suillius Caesoninus escapes the death sentence "because of his own vices – at that repulsive gathering his had been merely a female part"<sup>27</sup>, we are observing part of a discourse of social consensus formation. This formation of a social sexual identity, a body of attitudinal assumptions, occurs in the face of a sexual other. Tacitus describes

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<sup>21</sup> id., p.212

<sup>22</sup> M. Crick, *Explorations in Language and Meaning: Towards a Semantic Anthropology* (London: Malaby Press, 1976); quoted here from *Cultural Encounters: Representing "Otherness"*, ed. by Elizabeth Hallam and Brian V. Street, (London: Routledge, 2000), p.6

<sup>23</sup> *The Book of Songs: The Ancient Chinese Classic of Poetry*, trans. Arthur Waley, ed. Joseph R. Allen, (1996, Grove Press, New York), p.284.

<sup>24</sup> id.

<sup>25</sup> id.

<sup>26</sup> id.

<sup>27</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.250

Tiberius: “Freeborn children were his victims. He was fascinated by beauty, youthful innocence, and aristocratic birth”<sup>28</sup>. Yet at some level, the reader too is morbidly fascinated. In a process described by Bhabha as recognition and disavowal, what is “normal” is sustained by the fetishisation of difference. Holmlund mediates, “fantasies of an original similarity – to paraphrase him: “All people have penises” ... / “All people have the same skin/race/culture” coexist with fears of lack and difference – “some people do not have penises” / “Some do not have the same skin/race/culture”<sup>29</sup>. These contradictory ambivalences which sustain sexual fetish and racial stereotype “function to recognise and disavow difference at one and the same time”<sup>30</sup> and thereby ensure the continuation of “normal” sexual and political relations. In his portrayal of reprehensible sexuality and corrupt political power, Tacitus is working to build consensus, social truths and identity – by implied opposition – of honourable Roman selfhood, founded upon the disavowal of an illicit and fetishised other.

Whilst Herodotus is able in *The Histories* frequently to appreciate and praise the virtues of the othered tribes which he describes, there is nonetheless a pattern that when describing the sexual practices of other peoples, he probes that vulnerable site at which those others are most susceptible to accusations of irrationality, of animality. Thus while the Assyrians are admired for their engineering skill, for their treatment of the sick, their freighting on the Euphrates, and even their social mechanism for auctioning wives, the sexual practice associated with the cult of Aphrodite is “disgraceful” in the eyes of Herodotus. What seems to disturb Herodotus in this instance is both the impersonal nature of the sex and its brazen solicitation along “Plumb-straight lanes”<sup>31</sup>: “men they have never met before walk along these lanes and take their pick of the women”<sup>32</sup>.

What Herodotus learns of the peoples of the Caucasus – that they “are said to have sex out in the open, as herd animals do”<sup>33</sup> – seems to him to merit mention as much

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<sup>28</sup> id. p.200

<sup>29</sup> Christine Anne Holmlund, ‘Displacing Limits of Difference: Gender, Race and Colonialism in Edward Said and Homi Bhabha’s Theoretical models and Marguerite Duras’s Experimental Films’, *Otherness and The Media: The Ethnography of the Imagined and the Imaged*, ed. Hamid Naficy and Teshome H. Gabriel (Switzerland: Harwood Academic Publishers, 1993), p.6

<sup>30</sup> id.

<sup>31</sup> Herodotus of Halicarnassus, *The Histories*, trans. Robin Waterfield (New York: Oxford University Press Inc., 1998), p.88

<sup>32</sup> id.

<sup>33</sup> id. p.89

as the cloth-dyeing techniques and the diet predominantly consisting of wild plants, in a short paragraph on the peoples of the Caucasus region. In almost exactly the same terms, but with greater conviction, Herodotus relates of the Indian tribes, that they all “have sexual intercourse in public, as herd animals do”<sup>34</sup>. This is hardly the substance of “important and remarkable achievements produced by both Greeks and non-Greeks”<sup>35</sup> to which Herodotus has pledged himself at the outset, yet as he concedes by Book Four with regard to the question of conceiving mules in Elis, “(this may be a digression, but then this account has sought out such digressions ever since its beginning)”<sup>36</sup>. As with Tacitus’ descriptions of Tiberius’ sexual deviance, what is presented here as fascinating, as remarkable, is also animal and shameful. A normal sexuality – whose Greekness, it appears, is merely incidental – emerges out of this contact with the wildness of these uncivilised masses; that self-same Greek sexuality which allows Herodotus to assert with what seems no small degree of pride that the Persians, “learn and then acquire the habit of all kinds of *divertissements* from various parts of the world, including the practice of having sex with boys, which they learnt from the Greeks”<sup>37</sup>.

In these characterisations of a coherent sensibility of sexuality, the recognition and disavowal of deviant others affirms culturally “normal” sexuality and gender roles. In this context, the word deviant bears consideration. Whereas what is physically or socially transgressive is, I argue, the root of arousal, the transgression itself is delineated by social bounds beyond which it becomes deviant. Thus non-deviant sexuality can be thought of as socially condoned transgression: authorised, endorsed and acceptable modes of “misbehaving”. The “frightened joyfulness” in the face of the other characterises this ambiguous region where behaviour which is socially ostracised from the public arena is at once feared and fetishised; where to encounter the other of a gender outgroup or a social outgroup is to confront a *xenos* in an *unheimlich* affirmation of one’s own distinct nationhood.

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<sup>34</sup> id. p.212

<sup>35</sup> id. p.3

<sup>36</sup> id. p.245

<sup>37</sup> id. p.62



## The comfort of social belonging

Wu-k'ung's personal development is closely tied to othering from the outset. He is of uncategorisable lineage – being born of a rock – and he becomes elevated to king status by ordinary monkeys when he distinguishes himself by bravely jumping through the waterfall into the Water Curtain Cave. Wu-k'ung's competence to lead is later affirmed by the distinguishing feature of his Compliant Golden-Hooped Rod which pervades the text as a giant phallus. When Wu-k'ung returns with his compliant rod, his subjects, later referred to as ““Little ones””<sup>38</sup>, express a prepubescent awe for the weapon. ““O Father, it's so heavy!””<sup>39</sup>, they shout, ““Biting their fingers and sticking out their tongues””<sup>40</sup>; ““Great King! Take it out and play with it some more””<sup>41</sup>, they implore. Wu-k'ung seems to be experiencing the “heimlich pleasures of the hearth” during his pre-lapsarian existence at the Flower-Fruit Mountain, yet he is nonetheless othered from any true fraternity of contemporaries.

Subsequently, his declaration of himself as “The Great Sage equal to Heaven” pits him in opposition to the existing institutional power. Whilst he is allowed into heaven, rebels, and is readmitted with a higher station, monkey's position is still somewhat Nietzschean, gaining validation from his individual strength of will rather than subscribing to a social value system. His is a personality which has not transcended the adolescent certainty of mastery of and by the penis, by the libidinous inclination towards sensuously engorging himself upon peaches, stunning the fairy maidens, brandishing his powerful rod and stealing elixir. In this psychological position of “might is right” Wu-k'ung cannot, and will not, identify himself with a group. He is an autonomous agent, his kinsmen are in fact his vassals and the complacent power structure of heaven in which he is offered a group to which he may build allegiance, is to him a place of individuals who are easily duped for his own gain.

Yet Wu-k'ung reaches a point where he begins to identify completely with the quest, advocating its continuance and fighting for its success. What is remarkable in this

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<sup>38</sup> Vol. 2, p. 38

<sup>39</sup> Vol. 1, p. 107

<sup>40</sup> id.

<sup>41</sup> Vol. 1, p. 108

is the ideological identification which the gods instil in Wu-k'ung. He is not acquiescing to the orders of the Bodhisattva merely on account of the tight-fillet which gives him no other option. Certainly the tight-fillet as a punishment mechanism is a strong incentive for Wu-k'ung to conform, yet is this pavlovian association of pain with subversive thoughts – in a process akin to electric shock therapy – enough that Wu-k'ung changes his entire value system? I would argue not.

Wu-k'ung moves through the following stages. At first, he resents the quest, he requires coercion through pain to work for the pilgrim group, and he is unrepentant for his past behaviour for he still believes that he deserved what he had sought, by virtue of his power. This position is characterised by Wu-k'ung's words: ““when I, old Monkey, was king on the Flower-Fruit Mountain five hundred years ago, I killed I don't know how many people. I would not have been a Great Sage, Equal to heaven, if I had lived by what you are saying””<sup>42</sup>.

Then Wu-k'ung reaches a pragmatic mode of compliance, by which he is ambivalent about the quest but is prepared to identify with it albeit as a self-enhancement strategy for earning his own freedom. In this phase, Wu-k'ung recognises that his previous actions were bad. Upon being banished by Tripitaka, Wu-k'ung secures a certificate to ensure that the T'ang monk will not use the Tight-Fillet Spell, and then adds, ““Master I have followed you after all for all this time because of the Bodhisattva's instructions. Today I have to quit in midjourney and am not able to attain the meritorious fruit. Please take a seat and let me bow to you, so that I can leave in peace””<sup>43</sup>.

The most advanced stage of identification with group goals reached by Wu-k'ung is where he no longer sees the Bodhisattva as an oppressive other, but rather as a group member, he begins to respect established hierarchies of authority and he identifies so utterly with the holy life of the pilgrimage and the worthiness of the quest that he cannot abide the thought of its failure – his own success becomes tied to that of the group. Chastising Tripitaka for his anxiety and his yearning after pleasures of the hearth, he addresses him regarding a sentence of the *Heart Sūtra*, “Old Master, you have forgotten the one about ‘no eye, ear, nose, tongue, body, or mind.’ Those of us who have left the

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<sup>42</sup> id., Vol.1, p.308.

<sup>43</sup> id., Vol.2, p.31.

family should see no form with our eyes ... How could you possibly get to the Western Heaven to see Buddha?"<sup>44</sup>.

In the last stage of identification, Wu-k'ung has come to identify with and situate himself in relation to the existing power institution – the religious hierarchy which he previously had defined himself against. In making this transition, he ultimately others himself. He must postulate that his entire value system was incorrect and that his previous behaviour was immoral rather than cunning. He must recognise and disavow his own tendencies for violence, however unsuccessfully, and consider the pilgrimage as the only valid goal for his life. In the face of the other of insurmountable institutional power, Wu-k'ung is faced with a negation of his *raison d'être*. Might is no longer right, and he is no longer equal to heaven for he has been subjugated first by a mountain, then by a headband, ultimately by a dogma. He is left with nothing but a journey, one which first appears pointless to him. Yet bereft of any other identifiers, it is likely that he will other his former self – even erase his true origins – to depend solely upon the story he incants like a mantra in order to identify himself to others and to self: "I am from the Great T'ang nation in the Land of the East, in the South Jambūdvīpa Continent, someone sent by imperial decree, to go seek ..."<sup>45</sup>.

The others who surround Wu-k'ung – these pilgrims who would once have seemed to be an imposition upon his autonomous self – become the self against which the other of the outgroup demonstrates opposition and alterity. The self has become the group: "When people have a strong sense of group identification, their self is defined at the level of the group, rather than at the level of their personal identity,"<sup>46</sup> write Cremer and Dijk in a study on 'Reactions to group success and failure as a function of identification level'. The goal-transformation hypothesis posits that a strong group identity transforms people's motives from the personal to the collective level, and Brewer observes that "when the definition of self changes, the meaning of self-interest and self-serving motivations also changes accordingly"<sup>47</sup>.

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<sup>44</sup> id. Vol.2, p.284

<sup>45</sup> *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony C. Yu (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), Vol.2, p.221

<sup>46</sup> David De Cremer and Eric van Dijk, 'Reactions to group success and failure as a function of identification level: a test of the goal-transformation hypothesis in social dilemmas', *Journal of Experimental Psychology*, 38, (2002): pp.435 – 442, p.436

<sup>47</sup> id.

I would argue that it is through repeated contact with the foreign others of successive monsters, demons and spirits, with errant monks and dissimulating bureaucracies that Wu-k'ung internalises the normalcy of those avowed values of the group – the pilgrimage and metaphor it provides for life as a spiritual journey. Thus when Sha Monk re-narrates the beginnings of each disciple's pilgrimage as a choice, “We willingly accepted the commission to protect the T'ang monk and follow him to the Western Heaven to worship Buddha and acquire scriptures, so that our merits would cancel out our sins”<sup>48</sup>, Wu-k'ung tacitly accepts this illusion of complicity and its myth of free choice, despite his original situation of duress beneath the Five-Phases Mountain. Hearing these words, he puts aside his doubts and resolves to battle on. Jetten, Spears and Manstead draw heavily upon the work of John C. Turner to describe the three stage process of conformity to group norms as understood by social identity theory. Wu-k'ung's initiation into conformity can be regarded in these stages:

First individuals identify with specific groups and may feel committed to them through self-categorisation processes in particular social contexts. They learn the social norms of appropriate behaviour in that group, and finally, they internalize these social norms and act in accordance with them.

It is in renarrating the past – immoral rather than cunning, complicit rather than coerced – that we adapt best to the practical goals of a present. Conversely, it is as we engage the practical life of the present that we renarrate our own past, othering ourselves in a simulacra of forgotten intents as Wu-k'ung did. Both willed and inadvertent, from this othered self emerges an ad hoc motivation to meet the necessities of the present moment. The success of the divine power framework in the universe of the *Xiyou ji* lies in acting as though such as conversion was always inevitable: ““Wu-k'ung, why aren't you leading Master Gold Cicada to the West to seek scriptures?” said the Bodhisattva. “Why are you here?””<sup>49</sup>.

The comfort of social belonging derives in the case of Wu-k'ung, from continued contact with the pilgrim group which prompts him to abandon a Nietzschean autonomy, to internalise the group's behavioural norms and to identify the success or failure of the pilgrimage with his own success or failure. The goal transformation is extreme in the case of Wu-k'ung, yet it is convincing. It involves a fiercely independent and subversive actor

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<sup>48</sup> id. Vol.2, p.242.

<sup>49</sup> *The Journey to the West*, trans. Anthony C. Yu (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), Vol.2, p270.

othering his previous self and defining his self at the level of the group. In contact with oppositional others, in the continued reaffirmations of this new self through fighting, through introductions and with every step of the onward journey, and in a renarration of the journey's origin, it is at first a pragmatic attunement, and soon enough an article of self-belief that Wu-k'ung should change his goals. This instance of othering oneself is convincing, and from goal transformation hypothesis we may derive an explanation for such behaviour: whereby we see the self relinquishing some of its motives in order to gain the comfort – and motivation – of social belonging.

The *langue* of the law  
And the *parole* of the people

When in Tacitus' *Annals*, the Germans under Italicus' Roman rule are heard to speak in terms of freedom, even the liberty preaching Tacitus allows Italicus to ironize such arguments. Italicus counters that "the word freedom was hypocritically put forward by low characters whose politics were a menace and whose only hope was national disunion"<sup>50</sup>. As with Tacitus' attitude towards the Parthians, there is a sense that the barbarians could not be relied upon to truly understand freedom or order: – the prerogative of Romans. Of the Parthians, Tacitus writes, "Disloyalty was their national habit. Besides experience has shown that natives are readier to invite kings from Rome than to keep them"<sup>51</sup>. That the Roman empire is unquestionably reasonable, that the inscrutable barbarians are necessarily wilful, irrational and temperamental would be said by Kristeva to stem from an originally Greek understanding of the world.

The Median wars intensified the rejection of the barbarian, but this can also be understood as the counterpart to the remarkable development of Greek philosophy, founded on the *logos* seen both as the Greek's idiom and as the intelligible principle in the order of things. The barbarians are outside this universe on account of their outlandish speech and dress, their political and social peculiarities

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<sup>50</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.239.

<sup>51</sup> *id.*, p.258

This othering from the capacity to behave according to the dictates of reason thus pre-empts and proscribes what will be seen in barbarian nations. That Germanicus is fortunate enough to overwhelm the Germans beyond the Rhine on a festival day when they are found in “an uncontrolled drunken prostration”<sup>52</sup> becomes evidence of this other’s unthinkable laxity – contrasting with Roman rigorousness – rather than as a chance moment of weakness. Tacitus writes of this shambling inferiority, “The Germans were lying in bed or beside their tables, unafraid, with no sentries posted. There was careless disorganisation everywhere. Of war there was not a thought”.

## Othering the Self

Both identification with the other and the othering of the self cause a critical juncture of identity to arise. For Ibn Khaldûn – who is not, much as he would like to believe, a Bedouin – the opposition between Bedouin and sedentary people is one of frugality as opposed to decadence, of self-sufficiency as opposed to dependency (on militia), of alert faculties opposed to dulled sensibilities; and of coarseness as opposed to sophistication. It is the last opposition which generates a moral distinction. Khaldûn writes, “Furthermore, luxury corrupts the character, through luxury the soul acquiring diverse kinds of evil and sophisticated customs”<sup>53</sup>. Khaldûn’s is a rhetoric where contiguity takes precedence over causality, where one thing “points towards”<sup>54</sup> another. Thus it is a serious matter when what is sophisticated and what is evil are associated as above. It is also emblematic of the conclusions which he frequently draws in the *Muqaddimah*, mentioning those incidentals which require inclusion as fruits of the same tree, as both the causes and the symptoms of decline. His contact with the coarseness of the Bedouins reveals to him the evils of his own group’s culture and in this way, an association of qualities spells the privileged status of an outgroup. Khaldûn is unusual for

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<sup>52</sup> id., p.61

<sup>53</sup> Ibn Khaldûn, *The Muqaddimah*; trans. Franz Rosenthal, ed. N.J. Dawood (1967, Princeton, Bollingen Series / Princeton), p.135

<sup>54</sup> id.

identifying more strongly with an outgroup than with his own sedentary people; and as the outgroup is not one which Khaldûn could authentically embody, this identification serves to reduce his self-esteem and catalyses a contagious despair which pervades his analysis of “sophisticated” social power structures.

Conversely, if individuals are able to ascribe motivation to an inclusivist group identity, it becomes possible even for an other inimical to the ideological foundations of the group to be successfully incorporated. Whilst this act of incorporation involves redefining the self and thus othering the group, it is founded upon a more refined distinction between those groups who were in opposition to the ingroup, and the individual others who could be seen now to subscribe with conviction to broadly defined norms of the ingroup. It is Claudius who claims of the descendants of former immigrants that “they love Rome as much as we do”<sup>55</sup>. The others have become “us” in this instance and in the process of identification with the former other, the basis for Roman identity has had to be shifted off grounds of ethnicity onto the broader bases of a Romanness of character and affinity. Confrontation with and enfranchisement of this visually distinct “long-haired”<sup>56</sup> other requires Claudius (or Tacitus) to use the criterion of loyalty to empire as the primary discourse for creating a common bond. “Now that they have assimilated our customs and culture and married into our families, let them bring in their gold and wealth”<sup>57</sup>, he argues.

The confrontation between Claudius and Caratacus is interesting for the opportunity it allows the British chieftain to speak. Here, the voice of the other at the foot of the dais, asks the emperor, “If you want to rule the world, does it follow that everyone else welcomes enslavement?”<sup>58</sup>. Tacitus generates anticipation before Caratacus’ only speech, telling us that “These people were curious to see the man who had defied our power for so many years. Even at Rome his name meant something”<sup>59</sup>. His words are those of the vanquished and yet, refusing to exhibit “downcast looks” or to behave like his compatriots who “degraded themselves by entreaties”, Caratacus retains the respect of his victors and he speaks with pride. The Romans are for once shown a credible portrayal

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<sup>55</sup> Publius Cornelius Tacitus, *The Annals*, trans. Michael Grant (London: Penguin Books, 1996), p.243

<sup>56</sup> id., p.242, footnote 2.

<sup>57</sup> id., p.244

<sup>58</sup> id. p.267

<sup>59</sup> id.

of how they are perceived by the world and are forced to understand themselves as the oppressors of a noble and brave rebellious tribe. In this context, the versatility of the Roman group identity – as the assimilation of diverse excellence – is made clear in the pardoning of Caratacus and his family. This tradition, enshrined in the words, “it was against whole nations and kingdoms, not individuals, that Triumphs were earned”<sup>60</sup> – the policy of showing “mercy to suppliants no less than resolution against enemies”<sup>61</sup> – dictates that whilst the empire defines itself in opposition to other groups, the defeated individuals can be swiftly accepted and appropriated for the Roman cause. As Claudius approvingly remarks, “Our founder Romulus, on the other hand, had the wisdom – more than once – to transform whole enemy peoples into Roman citizens within the course of a single day”<sup>62</sup>. Considered as a brand rather than as a nation, the strength of Romanness for expansionist purposes resides in this capacity for inclusivist re-interpretation.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, in a literature of history and ethnography, otherness is inevitably a common theme. This study has observed how the texts could be said to build cultural cohesion, even a sense of nationhood, in opposition to an unsettlingly different other; and that it is not unreasonable to impute to this trope a motive of justification for the continued superiority of ingroup power structures. Thus the phallus-lacking other of woman is recognised and disavowed just as the *logos*-lacking barbarians are, and such a phallogocentric imperialism serves to fetishise the other in the same movement of circumscribing it as irrational, depraved and immature. I have argued that complicitly or otherwise, we other our past selves and our intents, as our goals transform with group socialisation; And I have equated patriotism with an unheimlich arousal in the face of the other, the self-destabilising difference which requires a response but which could also be

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<sup>60</sup> id. p.260

<sup>61</sup> id.

<sup>62</sup> id. p.244



the foundation for an othering of the self by means of an inclusivist ingroup. In the context of narrating the world's story, the words of Meleager of Gadara in the first century BC adequately represent the pervasiveness of the other: "The only homeland, foreigner, is the world we live in"<sup>63</sup>.

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<sup>63</sup> Julia Kristeva, *Strangers to Ourselves*, trans. Leon S. Roudiez, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1991) p.56

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