

BETWEEN THE GLOBAL AND THE LOCAL: OODGEROO NOONUCCAL AND THE POETICS OF NEW INTERNATIONALISM

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ABSTRACT

The closely guarded aboriginal cultures across the world are facing grave difficulties in sustaining their identity, as well as their land before the cataclysmic advance of globalization in a 'dramatically delocalized world' (Arjun Appadurai). Such cultures are steadily losing their ontological moorings under bipartite forces of oppression instituted by agencies of global-consumer-capitalism and the local governing bodies of the nation-state, which more often than not work in tandem with the transnational forces. In the light of these issues, my paper first locates the works of the Australian poet-activist, Oodgeroo Noonuccal within a broader framework of resistance literature against 'domestic tyranny and global disempowerment' and then goes on to explore how the corpus of Oodgeroo's works, an extension of her struggle to preserve the tribal land and ecology becomes an inspiration for all who envisions a 'globalization based not on free trade (that is not free) or open markets (which are not open), but on the true community of living things on a living planet' (Shiva 154). Finally, the paper interrogates how Oodgeroo attempts to integrate the polarities of global and local in her writings not only by charting a visionary blueprint for a glocal (global + local) society, but also by proposing a more inclusive rhetoric of 'new internationalism' beyond cultural essentialism and through the dilution of binaries as ideological formations of knowledge production generated by the 'West' to define the 'Rest'.

In the age of *late capitalism*, the spatial expansion and deterritorialization of production and economic activity with the acceleration of transnational, international and multinational linkage in every sphere, cultures are steadily losing their epistemic and ontological moorings and the idea of 'locality' is under solemn threat in a 'dramatically delocalized world' (Appadurai 178). Thus the closely guarded aboriginal cultures across the world are facing grave difficulties in sustaining their identity, as well as their land before the catastrophic advance of a profit-driven corporate globalization backed by the economic policy of neo-liberalization. In the light of these issues, my paper aims to look at the poems chiefly from the collections, *We Are Going* (1964), *Dawn Is At Hand* (1966) and *My People* (1970) by Oodgeroo Noonuccal which depict a curious mélange of Aboriginal folk traditions and modern environmental concerns. The corpus of Oodgeroo's artistic creations at once shows a marked predilection for returning to one's roots and simultaneously, mirrors the 'concerns of an international, increasingly a globalized modernity.' (Hugan 3) What is perhaps remarkable about much of the poems in these anthologies is that while they were sculpted by the global dissent of the 60s and a more immediate resistance against the domestic tyranny in Australia, they still manage to hold their relevance nearly fifty years later, at a time when the world had witnessed yet another global conjuncture popularly termed as the 'Arab Spring'¹. The causes and concerns of the rebellion differed

substantially from country to country, but what interests me is the spirit of the time, which stimulated the fundamentals of change by virulently voicing their demand for ‘Freedom, Social Justice, Dignity’ against the manifold violation of human rights, steady economic decline and the ever-increasing hiatus between wealth and poverty, and thereby heralding an end to several regimes of terror run by autocratic governments with their vicious corporate sidekicks. Like the 60’s when Mark Kurlansky observed in his book, *1968: The Year that Rocked the World* that saw ‘a spontaneous combustion of rebellious spirits around the world’ with people ‘rebellious over desperate issues and had in common only that desire to rebel... a sense of alienation from the established order, and a profound distaste for authoritarianism of any kind.’ (Introduction xvii), once again we saw men and women from Egypt to Morocco, and from Syria to Yemen taking to streets with the slogan *al-Sha’b Yurid Isqat al-Nizam*, (‘People Demand the Overthrow of the Regime.’) by seizing this extraordinary revolutionary moment in history, motivated by desire that echoed what one of the prominent songmakers of our times had said: ‘The wind is knocking on the window pane, a wish, a wish to change again’.

While, the decade of the fifties in the last century, witnessed a radical transformation the colonial geography as the African nations lowered the European flags, the emancipatory whirlwind that took the sixties by storm was charged by Che’s clarion call for freedom: *Until victory Forever*, a global outrage against the Vietnam War, and most significantly *The Civil Rights, The Black Power* and *The Black Arts Movements* in United States. Oodgeroo’s writing is partly inspired by the persuasive Black poetics of the ‘60s and the subsequent *Roots* Movement in the post-colonies as an attempt to ‘rediscover’ ‘the memory of’ one’s blood’ (Diop)ⁱⁱ from the nadir of cultural amnesia, and partly by the drift of anti-authoritarian resistance across the world associated with the disintegration of the colonial regimes in the previous decades of ‘40s and 50s. Hence Oodgeroo’s first anthology of poems, *We Are Going* (1964) appropriately culminates with a “Song of Hope” for the ‘Dark Freedom-lover’: ‘New rights will greet us / New mateship meet us [...] In our new Dream time’, ensconced in the futuristic vision of another ‘Black’ poet David Diop in Senegal, who believed that ‘the keen clamour’ of the Blacks from ‘Africa to Americas’ ‘is the sign of the dawn/ The Sign of brotherhood which comes to nourish the / dreams of men.’ⁱⁱⁱ Oodgeroo’s protests enunciated in her deeply evocative “Aboriginal Charter of Rights” that urges the White Australians to take a ‘second look at assumptions long left unquestioned’ (Page 4) were primarily ramified by the counterproductive political dialogues between the White Australian government and the disgruntled Aborigines in their homeland. Interestingly, this “Aboriginal Charter of Rights”, penned in the era of the *Civil Rights Movement* and presented at the 5th Annual General Meeting of the Federal Council Aboriginal Advancement in 1962, where she stridently demands:

‘Make us neighbours, not fringe-dwellers;
Make us mates, not poor relations,
Citizens, not serfs on stations.
Must we native Old Australians
In our own land rank as aliens?
Banish bans and conquer caste,
Then we’ll win our own at last’,

still has the firepower to blow with the new winds of change, as it had for the Australians at the time when they were written, in this spring of change.

However, because of the obvious political overtones, Oodgeroo’s poems were often discredited as ‘Civil Rightish’^{iv}, confrontational and ‘sloganic’. Jettisoning such reductive labeling Oodgeroo was nevertheless steadfast in her determination to espouse the cause of the Aborigines who were pushed to the very brink of existence under the juggernaut of White injustice. Thus when questioned how she responded to the critics who thought she was a writer of propaganda, Oodgeroo reposted: ‘I agreed with them because it was propaganda. I deliberately did it’. By clearly articulating this

position in favour of rejecting the art for art's sake argument she acceded to the views of another writer who was her contemporary and compatriot in ways more than one— Toni Morrison in her essay “Rootedness: The Ancestor as Foundation” opines unequivocally:

If anything I do, in the way of writing novels (or whatever I write) isn't about the village or the community or about you, then it is not about anything. I am not interested in indulging myself in some private, closed exercise of my imagination that fulfils only the obligation of my personal dreams—which is to say yes, the work must be political. It must have that as its thrust. That's a pejorative term in critical circles now: if a work of art has any political influence in it, somehow it's tainted. My feeling is just the opposite: if it has none, it is tainted... (344)

Madrooroo has in fact, introduced the term *Poetemics* (a portmanteau of poetry plus polemics) to describe the poetical outputs of Oodgeroo that were backed by her political pragmatism. While discussing the merit of Oodgeroo's poetic output Geoff Page thus succinctly posits that ‘If as a poet she was “lost to activism”, that is more of a problem for her non-Aboriginal Australian audience than it is for Aboriginal people who, for the most part, tend to see poetry and politics as two sides of the one thing anyway.’ (5) Foregrounding the centrality of living oral tradition in Aboriginal culture kept alive in years of struggle with Whiteness, Oodgeroo claimed: ‘I felt poetry would be the breakthrough for the Aboriginal people because they were storytellers and song-makers, and I thought poetry would appeal to them more than anything else.’ (429)^v In Australia, as elsewhere, precontact Aboriginal culture relied exclusively on oral performances that operated outside the domain written words, or what the Ghanaian poet Anyidoho termed as ‘the world of ear witness’, for transmitting the community's core values verbally across generations. Indeed, a significant reason for the wide-ranging popularity of Oodgeroo's verses is the rich performative as well as subversive potentials that are integral to many of these poems. For instance, while talking about the previously quoted poem, the “Aboriginal Charter of Rights”, Anne Brewster observes:

The oratorical skill of “Aboriginal Charter of Rights” is evident. It is an energetic and rousing manifesto whose iambic tetrameter invokes the marching rhythm of protest rallies, whose powerfully interrogative penultimate lines underscore Aborigine's frustration over the fundamental injustices of the pre 1967 constitution... The insistent repetition of binary opposites names both the injustices of the past (for example, Aboriginal people were “serfs on stations” and the white settlers “slavers”) and the reforms that were needed. The repetition of “not” in almost every line creates a powerful effect of refusal and resistance. (92-103)

Noonuccal, who according to Shoemaker was a consummate performer, in best sense of the word often assumed the role of a chronicler and a performer of stories in the Aboriginal society where acting is both sacred and essential to the life-function of the community. Her poems pulsating with a throbbing immediacy could elicit spontaneous response and draw the audience into the vortex of the issue by giving them an agency—often turning them in ‘spect-actors’ from spectators, as Augusto Boal would call it in the *Theatre of the Oppressed*, to initiate them into performing their own tale before the White audience. ‘Written poetry has often been seen as an elitist form. It has been seen to exclude people who do not conform to its norms in terms of race, class and intellectual capacity and also as being individualistic and unrepresentative of the masses’ (Barasa 168). But by infusing elements of oral culture in her poems Oodgeroo managed to reinstate the communal participatory structure of storytelling, for ‘in the In the Aboriginal world’, asserted Oodgeroo in her interview with Jim Davidson, ‘we don't think as individuals, we think as a group’ (429). Oodgeroo, often deemed as

the ‘people’s poet’ and the representative of the Aboriginal experience to the White world, is here not only a creative artist but, simultaneously a custodian of the ancient wisdom of her tribe, as she herself claims in the forward to *Dawn Is At Hand*: ‘Neither are the old tribal tales here my own invention, but were heard from the old people when I was a child’ and goes on to say in yet another interview: ‘I’m putting their voices on paper, writing their things. I listen to the Aboriginal people, to their cry for help—it was more or less a cry for help in that first book, *We are Going*. I don’t consider it my book, it was the people’ (ibid 429). Of course, Oodgeroo who often found herself straddling in the buffer zone between her culture and the white world knew well that this act of shuttling between the two worlds is not an easy task. According to Mudrooroo, the aboriginal writer is a *Jenus-type* figure (24) who must vie for cultural space in an almost schizophrenic attempt to gratify both Aboriginal and white audience (125) and simultaneously capture the imagination of a wider readership across the globe. It is interesting to note how she integrates the polarities of global and local in her writings when she asserts ‘My love is my own people first, /And after that, mankind’, and simultaneously ‘I am international, never mind place; / I’m for humanity, all one race’. Though apparently paradoxical, her works actually provide a visionary blueprint for a *glocal* (global + local) cosmopolitanism in a bid to resist the liquidation of one’s identity in this total hodgepodge and also oppose the exercise of cultural hegemony of the First-World over peripheral communities.

Australian Aboriginal literature in English ‘is a distinctively, even a defiantly national achievement’ but writers like Oodgeroo, posits Graham Huggan in *Australian Literature: Postcolonialism, Racism, Transnationalism*, ‘unmistakably belong to the wider world’ (3), particularly in their association with the world’s indigenous peoples who are bound by the common experience of being ‘discovered’ by the colonizers, and who share some common values, including ‘sometimes fragmented but still very present sense of reciprocity and a clear understanding that their lives are a part of and inseparable from the land’ (Mankiller)^{vi} on which ‘various kinds of human action (productive, reproductive, interpretative, performative) can be initiated and conducted meaningfully’ (Appadurai 184). However, modern nation-states, posits Appadurai in his book *Modernity at Large*, depend for their

legitimacy on the intensity of its meaningful presence in a continuous body of bounded territory. It works by policing its borders, producing its people (Balibar 1991), constructing its citizens, defining its capitals, monuments, cities, waters and soils, and by constructing its locales of memory and commemoration, such as graveyards and cenotaphs, mausoleums [...] and [other] homogeneous spaces of nationness [...] the nation-state creates a vast network of formal and informal techniques for the nationalization of all spaces considered to be under its sovereign authority. (189)

But aboriginal neighbourhoods have their ‘special sites of sacredness, their special tests of loyalty and treachery, their special measures of compliance and disorder’ (ibid 190) and their own totems and taboos by the virtue of which these neighbourhoods produce their ‘own contexts of alterity (spatial, social, and technical), contexts that may not meet the needs for spatial and social standardization that is prerequisite for the disciplined national citizen’ (ibid 191). Anne McClintock called them ‘anachronistic spaces’ (30) of the colony, for such ‘neighbourhoods as social formations represent anxieties for the nation-state as they usually contain large or residual spaces where the techniques of nationhood (birth control, linguistic uniformity, economic discipline, communication efficiency and political loyalty) are likely to be either weak or contested [...] for the project of the nation-state neighbourhoods represent perennial source of slippage and entropy’(190-191). And the state always fears such dissent from the margins, which challenge the limits of state’s authority though their autonomous and often oppositional socio-cultural practices that suspend its law of governance. Thus through multifarious ‘regimes of truth’, Foucault tells us, disseminated through diverse disciplinary

mechanisms and all-pervasive institutions of coercion—schools, prison, birth control, both physical and political *bodies* are controlled, or made to behave in certain ways. ‘...often it is the refusal of the Aboriginal body to observe the disciplinary regimes of white society (its notions of etiquette, quietness, and polite speech) which outrages those who require this body to show proper deference and respect to white culture and white bodies’ (Lattas 242). For nation-states always have a homogenizing tendency that emphasize on the policy of *assimilation* to bring the recalcitrant population under its control and those who refuse to submit, as Arundhati Roy in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice* puts it, are broken: ‘Day by day, river by river, forest by forest, mountain by mountain, missile by missile, bomb by bomb - almost without our knowing it, we are being broken’ (136), till we conform and cower under the absolute despotism of the state that ‘is couched between the lines of noble-sounding clauses in democratic-sounding constitutions. It’s wielded by the elected representatives of an ostensibly free people. Yet no monarch, no despot, no dictator in any other century in the history of human civilization has had access to weapons like these.’ (ibid) It is perhaps this straitjacketing of difference and the forced conformity to the White laws which the aboriginals vehemently tried to resist. Here it may be cogent to remember that the Aboriginal people were not included in the census until 1967 in white Australia as they were deemed fundamentally incompatible to the idea of ‘subject-hood’ or citizenship in a modern nation state. Prior to that ‘special laws set Indigenous Australians apart from other colonial citizens for their ‘protection’: the purpose of this can be interpreted optimistically as either a means to prepare Aborigines for future full citizenship or to ‘smooth the pillow for a dying race’ (Altman & Martin 20). Strategically, essentialist identities such as ‘good aboriginals’ and ‘bad aboriginals’ were created by the colonists and the *rite to passage* to the White society was a privilege granted only to those Native Australians who showed ‘so-called good character’, and were ready to divorce themselves from native associations by holding ‘the good white hand stretched out to grip the black’ (Oodgeroo: “United We Win”). This notoriously paternalistic policy of assimilation into the dominant culture, a ‘soothing and dying pillow’ in the famous words of Daisy Bates (1938) was something that Oodgeroo was fighting against. ‘Pour your pitcher of wine into the wide river/ And where is your wine? There is only the river’ (Oodgeroo: “Assimilation-No!”). Oodgeroo pitted ‘local’ as a site of liberation and resistance to domination (Dirlik 22) with the emergence of global capitalism, by repudiating the ideology of the foundational metanarratives which have framed the history of modern societies by masking the violent contradictions inherent in history. She in a way advocated what Jean-Luc Nancy calls ‘Gemeinschaft’ i.e. small, ‘immanent’, self-enclosed, pre-Modern communities like brotherhoods or families that was bound to harmonious bonds in which above all it played back to itself, through its institutions, its rituals, and its symbols, the representation, indeed the living offering, of its own immanent unity, intimacy and autonomy’ (Nancy 9), rather than large, dysfunctional ‘inoperative’ societies where contradictions are forcibly synthesized by reductive cultural forces under a single socio-political rubric.

Oodgeroo’s life-long struggle has been to protect tribal land and identity from the encroachment of the White settlers. In the 1960s when the poems in *We Are Going* were anthologized, the land right campaigns assumed a new dimension with the emerging trend of globalization that caused mass-scale displacement of the Black Australians as a result of the expropriation of their ancestral lands particularly by the mining industries, thereby opening up a paroxysm of violence. Oodgeroo watched with a growing sense of anger the moral anomie of the urban, industrial encroachers into the Aboriginal heartland. She thus purported in her conversation with Jim Davidson how land has ‘been handed over to the mining companies, who usually aren’t mining it, they’re just sitting on it, tying it up so their rivals won’t get it. A lot of land could be allocated to the Aboriginals without any trouble whatsoever. But they’re not doing this. They’re now afraid to give us Land Rights in case they’re giving us the minerals under the ground.’ (431). She had earlier defended the Aboriginal Land Rights in *My People* by exhorting that: ‘There is an urgent and immediate need to work towards a policy of

salvation of the Australian land. Australia is in the grip of soulless, greedy, overseas monopolies, aided and abated by our own politicians...’ This excruciating experience of the eviction from the land under political duress and the trauma of dispossession are also given an eloquent expression in the title poem of *We Are Going* where poet depicts a ‘semi-naked band of Aborigines’, ‘subdued and silent’, observing the last vestige of their culture razed down by urbanization. They watch with alarm the White incursions on the detritus of their consecrated lands. In their sacred *bora ground* of *sacred ceremonies* and *the laws of the elders*, white men scurry about like ‘ants’ and the ‘Notice of the state agent reads: ‘Rubbish may be Tipped here’’. The poem ends with the despairing words of the last few *remains* of the ancient race: ‘The scrubs are gone, the hunting and the laughter. / The eagle is gone, the emu and the kangaroo are gone from this place. / The bora ring is gone. / We are going.’ Faced with ‘dispossession, disease and death’ (*My People* 47), the last, lingering *voices* fade into obscurity and gradual oblivion. Again In “Municipal Gum” Oodgeroo visualizes the gum tree, emaciated and alone, as the lonely remnant of a lost world:

Gumtree in the city street,
Hard bitumen around your feet,
Rather you should be
In the cool world of leafy forest halls
And wild bird calls
Here you seems to me
Like that poor cart-horse
Castrated, broken, a thing wronged,
Strapped and buckled, its hell prolonged,
Whose hung head and listless mien express
Its hopelessness.’

However, in these cases the ‘nostalgia for the local community appears as something more than a mere fabulation of a past irrevocably lost; it appears as a nostalgia that becomes an active ingredient in the formation of a contemporary discourse on local which has rescued “fabulation” itself from the opprobrium of a more “realistic” time to render it into a principle for the reconstruction of the local’ (Dirlik 22) against the tyranny of the global and the total, particularly, the destructions done by the invasive forces of modernity. Talking about civilization she says: ‘When you came we marvelled and admired, / But with foreboding. / We had so little but we had happiness, / Each day a holiday, / For we were people before we were citizens’. However, Oodgeroo is not advocating a neo-Luddite revolution that is immured in an Arcadian, pre-industrial dream or an illogical Anti-Development’ resistance, governed by a retarded political sensibility. She acknowledges:

...all the new wonders,
Stocks and shares, real estate,
compound interest, sales and investments.
Oh, we have benefited, we have been lifted,
with new knowledge, a new world opened.
Suddenly caught up in white man ways.
Gladly and gratefully we accepted,
And this is necessity.

But for those who overstate ‘rural stagnation against the dynamism of the urban’ (Dirlik 23) she has a warning: ‘But remember, white man, if life is for happiness, / You too surely have much to change’ and tells them that: ‘Take time you earth fullas/ Let the spirit of this mighty / Land touch you as it/ Touches my people.’

An understanding of the aboriginal culture and cosmology shows that all indigenous people across the world share a deep spiritual communion with the land, which is imbued with special

meaning and encompasses the very substance of aboriginal lives, as their ‘life source’ ‘totem place’, ‘spirit centre’ all at once”^{vii}. Indigenous Australians too share this *topophilia* (from Greek *topos* meaning ‘place’ and *-philia*, ‘love of’), revealing what the Chinese-American geographer Yi Fu Tuan in 1974 book, *Topophilia: A Study of Environmental Perception, Attitudes, and Values* describes as a sense of being and belonging that forges an intense affective bond between ‘physical environment and human beings’, which instills a strong sense of cultural identity among certain people. Likewise, Oodgeroo’s umbilical ties cannot be readily dissociated from the land of her ancestors. In fact, the very gesture of embracing the native title Oodgeroo, meaning ‘paper-bark tree’, from Kath Walker testifies her love for the land that which is equally reflected in her aesthetic praxis—writing, paintings, sketches and doodles^{viii}. They are essentially shaped by the belief that everything in this world needs to be acknowledged, whether it’s a shell, spider, bug or a snake—are all integral part of the earth’s poetry. Thus about her painting of the *Lumerai* or the ‘Rainbow Snake’ who *can be either male or female, depending upon the context*,^{ix} Oodgeroo says:

The mother of life...

I love drawing her, because my totem is the carpet snake, I draw a lot of snakes. The rainbow serpent is very delicate and very strong and at the same time she is very beautiful.

[...]

In the dream time, the rainbow serpent lived under the earth, but nothing moved, they were all asleep.

Then the rainbow serpent broke through the crust of the earth and opened the way for all the creatures.

And the story of rainbow snake goes: ‘...she went back down into the Earth. She awoke and brought man and woman from the womb of the Earth itself. From the mother snake they learned how to live in peace and harmony with all those other creatures who were their spiritual cousins [...] She taught them to respect the spirit of all things: the trees, the rocks, and the creatures, because all have a spiritual dreaming.’ (Gadi Mirrabooka 42) Oodgeroo’s repeated allusion to the anecdotes of the *Dreamtime* or the Creation in her paintings, poem and most significantly, in the Australian Pavilion script which she co-authored with her son Kabul (Vivian) in 1988 during the country’s bi-centennial celebration, a mini son-et-lumiere titled as *The Rainbow Serpent*, is a part of her project of educating us that we should be rooted to our roots. Oodgeroo’s enduring battle to preserve the tribal ecology in a tenebrous time against the ravages of global modernity is revolutionary in its own rights. Her trenchant criticism of sandminers, particularly uranium mining on Australian soil: ‘stop all mining! Immediately, stop it!! [...] because Australia at the moment is all set to mine herself out of existence. She’ll get rich on it, but that’s a short-term thing’ (Davidson 433), is simultaneously predicated upon her environmental concerns and a disapproval of the spurious brand of global ‘localism’ where ‘production and economic activity (hence “economic development”) becomes localized in regions below the nation, while its management requires supranational supervision and coordination. [...] (It) renders irrelevant the notion of a national market or a national economic unit and undermines national sovereignty from within by fragmenting the national economy. (Dirlik 31) In other words, it is a strategy of the neocolonizers of the First World to bolster their own economy, by pillaging the natural wealth of economically underdeveloped or developing regions of the globe through a ‘subtle, calculated technology of subjection’ (Foucault 210) of the peripheral and the third-world population. By orchestrating a clever policy of outsourcing through a dense interconnected network of multinational corporate houses exercise their power from innumerable points at different levels. Oodgeroo was always suspicious of such asymmetrical or non-egalitarian trade relations: ‘When you see Japan saying right, we want your uranium and we want our waste stuck in your country [...] To me that’s a big warning; they’re not going to put the waste into their country, if anyone’s going to get blown up let the silly Australians get blown up — and they’re falling for it’ (Davidson 433). She

instead championed a different paradigm—an alternative discourse of ‘globalization based not on free trade (that is not free) or open markets (which are not open), but on the true community of living things on a living planet’ (Shiva 154).

In “Let Us Not Be Bitter”, Oodgeroo tells her people: ‘Away with bitterness, my own dark people.../Let us try to understand the white man’s ways/ And accept them as they accept us / Let us judge white people by the best of their race,’ Identity simultaneously becomes the site of collaboration and contestation as Oodgeroo speaks of integration, while resisting assimilation. In a *postnational* world, her views unfurl the recurrent undercutting of political boundaries as she pins her commitments to a syncretic vision of a global society in “All One Race” anthologized in *We Are Going*: ‘Black tribe, yellow tribe, red, white or brown,/ From where the sun jumps up to where it goes down,/ Herra and pukka-shahibs, demoiselle and squaws,/All one family, so why make wars.../ I’m for all humankind, no colour gibes;/ I’m international, and never mind tribes’. The egalitarianism embedded in the poem, “All One Race” from the anthology appropriately named *The Dawn Is At Hand* promises a new geography of liberation by rebuffing ‘colour gibes’, or through depletion of the binaries such as ‘black’ and ‘white’, ‘Sahibs’ and ‘tribes’—ideological formations generated by the imperial discourses of the ‘West’ devoted to the project of ‘knowing’ and thus defining (denigrating) the ‘Rest’ of the world. Also by eschewing the fixation with one ‘place’ over the ‘other’ (‘never mind place’) or by flattening the ‘centre-margin’ spatial dynamics which is so fundamental to the discourses of colonialism, and postcolonialism by extension as its combative yet dependant counterpart, Oodgeroo dislocates her narrative from the European anchorage, promoting a cultural imagination about emerging new worlds beyond the presumed centre of the metropolis or the periphery of the postcolonial. Here the imagined centre/margin becomes fluid, unlike postcolonialism which retains the difference. Her transcultural poetics thus unpacks a ‘new internationalism’^x in favour of a cosmopolitan consciousness that would move beyond cultural essentialism or originary politics to embrace the ‘dissident histories and voices’ (Bhaba) of disenfranchised minorities and marginalized groups without quelling their individuality (“Assimilation-No!”). So in her narratives that advocate a critical inclusiveness, the plural world becomes an integrated world without suppressing the difference. It is vision of a *cosmopolis* where rich, ‘and varied history of ideas’ (Niezen 11) co-exists with a ‘longing for a fully integrated global society’ (ibid).

ⁱ I use the label ‘Arab Spring’ with certain reservations, for it’s a misnomer in certain sense of the term, as many like Aijaz Ahmed had pointed out that this revolutionary wave of public outrage is not restricted to Arab countries alone. We have had public demonstrations in Russia, Israel, Turkey, Pakistan and Bangladesh when people took to streets protesting against fundamentalist regimes, autocratic governments and the all pervasive corruption in political practices. Hamid Dabashi, the author of *The Arab Spring: The End of Postcolonialism* thus puts it cogently: ‘The winds of the Arab Spring have travelled way beyond the Arab world, indeed have altered the very domain of the Arab world, and projected the revolutionaries beyond their identity politics as ‘Arabs.’”

ⁱⁱ Diop, David: “Your Presence”. *The Penguin Book of South African Verse*. Ed. Jack Cope & Uys Krige.

ⁱⁱⁱ Diop, David: “Listen Comrades”. *The Penguin Book of South African Verse*. Ed. Jack Cope & Uys Krige.

^{iv} Wright, Judith. *A New Literature: The Voice of the Australian Aboriginals*.

^v Jim Davidson, “Interview: Kath Walker. Meanjin, 36.4 (1977):428

- ^{vi} Wilma Mankiller in “Indigenous People in the 21st Century”. (2009)
 <<http://iipdigital.usembassy.gov/st/english/publication/2009/06/20090617112528wrybakcuh0.70245.html#axzz2SplDknha>>
- ^{vii} W.E.H. Stanner: *After the Dreaming*.
- ^{viii} Many of these private paintings were published in *Quandamooka: The Art of Kath Walker* where she added a note to each of her paintings.
- ^{ix} *Quandamooka: The Art of Kath Walker*, p. 36
- ^{xii} Bhaba in his introduction to *The Location of Culture* originally defines ‘new internationalism’ as the ‘history of postcolonial migration, the narratives of cultural and political diaspora, the major social displacements of peasants and aboriginal communities, the poetics of exile, the grim prose of political and economic refugees.’(5)

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