

Tracing Ruth in the Straits and Islands of Im/emigrant Blood:
Be/longing in Rootedness and Routedness

A Route/Root Guide

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Postlude

This thesis is submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements of the degree of Masters of Philosophical Foundations in Philosophical Theology and Biblical Studies at the Institute of Christian Studies.

An Opening Statement of Purpose and Methodology

The Biblical story of Ruth seems to me from the start to be a story of Naomi migrating with her family from Bethlehem in Israel to Moab and their assimilation into Moabite life through intermarriage. Following Naomi's bereavement of spouse and children, it is her return to Bethlehem with Moabite daughter-in-law Ruth; and Ruth's assimilation into Israelite life and history. In other words it is a story of migratory hope for better things, bereftness of things left behind, and bereavement of family. In all the pain, there is a continuing thread of hope in mutual faithfulness.

Similarly Cinderella is a hopeful folktale found in numerous versions worldwide. It often begins with bereavement; in the ashes of life we find the heroine having moved from a happy state to facing trials. Through the fidelity of helpers, whose aid, which is often supernatural, a meeting occurs and she leaves the Old World behind and migrates to a new hope-filled place. As metaphor Cinderella epitomises at least in the pioneer spirit of North America, a rags-to-riches journey, that one called the American dream.

In this thesis I am examining the migrants' experiences against the backdrop of bereavement and bereftness. To explore this I have taken as a primary text the Biblical story of Ruth, and as secondary text Cinderella, but I have also drawn on a wide variety of autobiographical and biographical works by Chinese and Oriental writers. Furthermore to understand bereavement and

bereftness I have looked at the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross¹ and together with writers in the area of culture shock and acculturation. As I pursued my research, I realised a number of significant concerns. Not only are Ruth and Cinderella stories about women, (regardless of whether authorship is male or not), but the Oriental writers and playwrights were predominantly female.

How then can I read a story of women and then write about it given that I am a male with a Post-Modern consciousness of the violence of appropriation?

How can I give legitimacy to my own voice within the interpretive process and avoid excluding and denying other experiences with the definitions I use?

Given the context of the first question and specificity of the second, I perceive it necessary to present aspects of myself as a male of colour, and give a version of my own family history with allusions to Ruth/Naomi and Cinderella. Thus I am declaring at least part of the ground upon which I stand, which is my own interpretation of the routes/roots by which I have come to be where I am. I draw on the writings of other oriental migrants as examples of others of my colour, not to generalise but rather enable the reader orientation in the oriental immigrant world. The interpretive process by necessity involves a vocabulary of experience, thus there is a problem in presenting and granting the reader access to experience.

¹ I have recently become aware of challenges to Kübler-Ross's five-stage theory of dying. In particular, thanatologist Michèle Chaban has raised issues on the originality of the theory, and her professionalism. Others have criticised the whole scale adoption of the theory into a five-step recovery programme. Whether theories should ever be prescriptive at all, and in particular Kübler-Ross' theory, is not a debate I intend to do more than recognise. My

The danger of making definitions advises caution. Definitions and generalisations can not only exclude and deny other experiences in prescribing only one way, but they can also paralyse you into inactivity. The deconstructive methodology of Jacques Derrida alludes and avoids contact and yet demonstrates him and at the same time opens up rather than closes down everything to a mere personal definition. Here we find is an invitation to movement. Poignantly Derrida the displaced and dispossessed Jew has given us glimpses of himself within his book *Cinders*. He opens up Cinderella, lostness and dilemmas of identity to the reader would encounter him. However meetings in meaning are in Derrida's world violent graspings hence his illusiveness to readers, consequently I have chosen a resonant contextual reading, and hopefully have widened the glimpse of the migrant world into a window.

I invite you as reader to also resonate in life experience rather than to appropriate, thus in the vulnerability of bereavement we may walk together to hope where a miraculous meeting can occur. Meeting and meaning-transfer should not be reduced to a merely rational event, rather they ought to be found in the intersections of life, namely in a fidelity of the meeting place.

Adeline Yen Mah closes her harrowing autobiography, *Falling Leaves* with a Cinderella story told to her as a child by a dear faithful aunt. The story, 'The Incurable Wound', tells of a stepmother who maliciously inflicts a wound which never heals but instead of weakening it empowers Ling-ling the young talented painter who will eventually marry the Emperor. Adeline's own story of pain inflicted by her stepmother is re-interpreted through meeting again her aunt's gift of the story of 'The Incurable Wound', in a cathartic moment. This moment

enables the reader to glimpse a deeper mystery of the traces, which have formed us. Consequently the reader has the opportunity to encounter Adeline in resonating with her pain and hope.

I have chosen to work with a number of key words, *be/longing*, *heart(h)*, *hesed*, *im/emigrant* and *root/route* which bear some explanation together with some quotations which will repeat themselves meeting and interacting with the main text in this thesis. Bearing in mind the danger of definition, which might exclude or deny other expressions, my explanations are contextually explored.

Be/longing defies simplistic definition. We

could translate it as a, longing-for-home, or a yearning for better times in the lost past or dashed dreams of the

"...the immigrant can develop images of place that become cankers of irritation. Some mass or weight of space, arena, feels heavy with the debt of the new. Bitter Gold Mountain." Fred Wah : *Diamond Grill*. p27

future. The *be-* is an intensification found in bereavement and bereftness, within a sensibility of disconnection or disorientation. *Be/longing* is a bitter-sweet word because it reminds the reader of belonging

(having), but also a thorough longing for (not-having). even so it can be a mark of kinship also. *Be/longing* draws

"To remain with the dead is to abandon them ... like other ghosts, she whispers; not for me to join her, but so that, when I'm close enough, she can push me back into the world." Anne Michaels: *Fugitive Pieces*. p.170

on Derrida's illusive terms *lac(k)*, *trace*, and *spectre*, though yet it is the quest for reconnection of Adeline Yen Mah and many others and similarly my own..

Heart(h) starts from an etymological exposition of the Latin word *focus* and reflects the multiple meanings of heart and hearth, moving from fireplace and funeral pyre, to home and family. My reading of Jacques

Derrida's *Cinders* follows the thread of *be/longing*, constantly alluding to the ashen faced spectres of the past, present or future. Through *Cinders* we

"Pure is the word. It calls for fire. Cinders there are, this is what takes place in letting a place occur, so that it will be understood. Nothing will have taken place. Cinders there are: Place there is ([Il y a là cendre:] il y a lieu)." Jacques Derrida: *Cinders*.p.37

can hear a particular understanding of home both as heart and hearth, where the migrant's disappointed realities and their Cinderella rag's to riches dreams which are both found in

the ashes and embers of the fireplace. Pure and pyre emphasise the fragility of the heart(h), which is not a land to be possessed, nor an individual's or a group's claim to exclusivity.

Hesed is often translated as love, loving-kindness, or faithfulness. It has key aspects in its expression in how freely given it is and how extraordinary or supernatural. There is a sense of Derrida's *aleatory*, the impossible found here and I consider it fleeting and miraculous yet it occurs in the meeting and recognition of kith and kin. It is a call to join together in the quest of be/longing, the earnest search for connection.

"The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications." *Fugitive Pieces* p.37

"Actually I think that meeting British born Chinese makes me more Chinese ... we're exactly on the same level. When you're with another BBC you're like kindred spirits." David Parker: *Through Different Eyes*. p.189

Im/emigrant seeks to recognise there is no one who belongs to a place, nor a place that belongs to them. They are migrants from somewhere else; to be immigrant you have to have emigrated. In using this word I recognise the hegemonic power of being-at-home, and that it is an illusory authority.

"Do not ill-treat immigrants who are living in your land. Treat them as you would a fellow-Israelite, and love them as you would love yourselves. Remember that you were once immigrants in the land of Egypt." Leviticus 19:33-34

"Migration is a one way trip. There is no 'home' to go back to." Stuart Hall: *Minimal Selves* ICA Document 6

Root/Route is the end of the trail where we are because of our own and our familial

wanderings. They are like the tributaries that form a river, or roots that nourish a growing plant. A rootedness/routedness is to have

"For as surely as the repressed material of the subconscious reasserts itself in the individual as dream, obsession, metaphor - so does it come back to haunt the assimilated ethnic."
Myrna Kotash : *Pens of Many Volours*. p.153

access to and to be nourished by the story of the journey that formed us and to be able to tell that story. We are our life stories. However we are composed of threads with many loose ends. We ought not to be dis-posed to dispose of loose ends and threads, but recognise and mourn the discontinuities, and in that act we may stand alongside each other and hope, attending the wake which is *be/longing's* meeting place.

The im/emigrant conscious of *be/longing* earnestly desires to answer the question "Who am I in this context?" To answer it there have to be intersections; meeting in stories like Adeline Mah's; meeting in hope like Naomi and Ruth.

Ruth has been popularly preached and interpreted as a text of *hesedic* covenantal faithfulness and viewed as archetypical of trothful relationship by feminists.² Cinderella, like Ruth, is a story of the journey from bereavement and despair to new hope. However we also need to have an ear to them as stories indicative of migratory bereavement and loss. Without hearing *be/longing's* voice we can fail to hear the call of *hesed*, a call to the chance of the meeting place, a place of meeting family or reunion at the wake.

²

See Elizabeth Cady Stanton, Carol Meyers and Phyllis Tribble to name just a few.

This aspect of loss is reflected in the three sections which compose this thesis, namely *Be/longing in the Blood*, *a Tale of Be/longings*, and *Be/longing's Wound*, each close with the aspects of meeting both in continuity and discontinuity. The first section highlights themes of *be/longing*, tracing them in my particular story, then in the Bitter Medicine of Chinese experience of migration, and a more general Cinderella/trace/migrant experience. The Middle section is a close reading of the text of Ruth followed by the final section "Ruth and *Be/longing's Wound*" specifically addresses the risks of the meeting place.

Be/longing's bitter-sweet medicine is to be found poignantly in the voices of migrants, not solely first-generation immigrants but succeeding generations in their meeting with others. The Chinese, as the "Jews of the East", represent one of the most globally active migrant nations, and thus their experience and my own voice can illustrate and expose these ghosts of *be/longing* in migratory encounter.

With a hearing attuned to *be/longing's* voice, rereading Ruth can become an exercise in resonance; we risk that attuned glass might crack or be shattered on being exposed to hearing, or risk loss of power. Forgetfulness of an immigrant's unsettledness is non-*be/longing*, and can be a failure to give thought to homelessness and to deny your own im/emigrant experience. It is being deaf to the unsettled voices within and without. It can be a hegemonic silencing by a louder voice, perhaps as a loud denial of our ghost of past, both individually and communally.

"No ...
Moabite ...
may be
included
among the
Lord's
people."
Deuteronomy
23:3

Ruth as im/emigrant text raises to audibility
the small voice of the minority, of the alien,
stranger, and outsider. In the borderland, she is
fragile yet she demonstrates a gentle power by
the way she deconstructs the metanarrative of

"Do not ill treat foreigners
who are living in your
land. ... Remember that
you were once foreigners
in the land of Egypt."

Leviticus 19:33-34

a pure Israel by her very presence reminding Israelite of his or her own im/emigrant status. Ruth asserts no new power, rather dares to ring the fragile glass bell, we normally keep hidden in its protective lined box. In listening and being aware of resonance, we recognise of the authenticity of kith and kin, which are revealed in the tensions between longings-for-home and calls-to-be. *Hesedic* meeting, meeting in faithfulness, meeting in the *impossible* moment, a fragile fleeting meeting offers hope, fresh hope. Rereading Ruth becomes a hope-filled enterprise, in a post-colonial world.

Luo ye gui gen (Falling leaves return to their roots.) The dry dead leaves can nourish and provide for a future, they leave their trace. Thus the past nourishes the present, and the present the future.

Ruth and Be/longing in the Blood

A personal be/longing :
Naomic repetition

Fred Wah, Canadian miscegenation poet of Chinese-

"Biology recapitulates geography; place becomes an island in the blood." *Diamond Grill*. p.22-23

Scottish-Irish and Swedish blood, tells of migratory traces in his and the blood of many migrants. His piece simultaneously resonances and invades others' stories. In his biotext (Wah's term), he tells of one thread of his own migration.

"These straits and island of the blood can be recognised as those very shores and lands we encounter in our earthly migrations. Places become buttons of feeling and colour. ... I know, for example, the coagulation of Victoria on Hong Kong Island and Victoria on Vancouver Island have become in my inheritance, planetary junctures of emotion. Both British Victorias, these new-world cities must have seemed to my ancestors two ends of the same rope."³

For many migratory Chinese genealogies, it is common for many family members to have experienced discrimination and incarceration. In North America the Chinese were held for interrogation over extended periods and held for the collection of head taxes prior to admission. Even after the payment of extravagant racially-linked admission taxes the Chinese were denied full admission into citizenship thus they were unable to vote.

The scrawled poetry of imprisoned Chinese on Angel Island Immigration Station Barrack 37 bears witness of dashed migrant dreams, as much as the Cantonese folk rhymes of Chinese labourers, both ring of the experience of being different and deprived of home, and provides a distinctive colouring of vision.

³ *Diamond Grill*. p.22-23

"The moment I hear we've entered the port,
I am all ready;
 my belongings wrapped in a bundle.
Who would have expected joy
 to become sorrow:
Detained in a dark, crude, filthy room?
What can I do?
Cruel treatment,
 not one restful breath of air.
Scarcity of food, severe restrictions
 - all unbearable.
here even a proud man bows his head low."

Angel island: *The Big Aiiieeeee!*. p.143

Toiling in pain, east and west, all in vain;
Hurrying about, north and south,
 still more rushing.
What can a person do
 with a life full of mishap?...
Eyes brimming with tears:
O' I just can't get rid of the misery.
My belly is full of frustration and grievance;
When life is at a low ebb, I suffer dearly.

Sojourner rhymes: *The Big Aiiieeeee!*.p.167

Reading with a Chinese immigrant consciousness, with its swallowing of the bitter medicine of loss and disconnection, highlights the be/longing experience of the im/emigrant in Ruth. This is literally his or her *unheimlichkeit*, of being simultaneously at home and homeless. Confronted by bereftness, and the voice of homelessness, only through *hesed's* hope can the bitterness of estrangement found between the lines of being-at-home and being-home-less have some resolution. Cinderella's hopes are frequently met with adversity, found in imprisonment, non-acceptance or exploitation.

Many migrants experience loss and disconnection on a multitude of different levels. This can be familiarly in sons and husbands, socially in friends and extended family clan, culturally moving back and forth just as Naomi did between Moab and Israel, economically in leaving land and losing providers, even religiously in moving away from a familiar faith community. This is the be/longing experience of

"...as dream, obsession,
metaphor - so does it
come back to haunt the
assimilated ethnic".

'Pens of Many Colours'.p.153

the migrant.

This experience lingers and does not go away. Myrna Kotash asserts that

"[f]or as surely as the repressed material of the subconscious reasserts itself in the individual as dream, obsession, metaphor - so does it come back to haunt the assimilated ethnic. To my parent's generation, it came back as nostalgia - that melancholic yearning for the unrecoverable. To an older generation ... it came back as a figure of speech, as though metaphor could transform the conflicted self into well-being. For my generation ... it has reasserted itself as politics, specifically the politics of the inside agitator."⁴

Many immigrants live in the borderlands between the traditions of their ancestors and/or the land of their birth and the culture of their new country of residency. Often a struggle with personal identity has to be waged not only by first-generation immigrant parents, but also by succeeding generations of immigrants struggling with translating identity and being. To be a migrant of whatever generation is a matter of struggling with be/longing. It is a matter of mourning, simply experiencing the senselessness of what was, what might be, and what is. For each generation the manner of grieving is expressed differently and varies whether its is a lingual comfort, or melancholic nostalgia, or anger or whatever. Yet it is still yearning, a be/longing,

⁴ 'Pens of Many Colours'. p.153

Excursus - Developing A Chinese Migrant vocabulary

L Ling-chi Wang in his essay 'Roots and Changing Identity' suggests that there are "five types of identity [or survival strategies as he says elsewhere,] that have appeared among the Chinese in Diaspora: (1) the sojourner mentality; (2) assimilation; (3) accommodation; (4) ethnic pride; and (5) alienation."⁵

The *sojourner* mentality is tied to roots (*gen*) somewhere else, in another soil and "is the basis upon which many overseas Chinese have structured their existence and identity particularly in the early days of emigration from China. Its apposite is the *assimilationist* mentality which rooted in the here, is found frequently in the locally-born second generation. They become "ashamed of their appearance, the values and behaviours they were taught by their parents, and the communities from which they emerged; self-hatred and the need to be accepted by white [or host] culture"⁶. Possesors of this mentality have vulnerable false roots. Critically in the West we can see the tensions between sojourner and assimilationist in the expression of the sojourner's deepest fears for their children become like the *gwai lo* (the white people), and have this the second generation children who are like the *gwai lo*..

The *accommodation* strategy is not a polar opposite like (1) or (2) rather it is fluid. It is an adaptation, which may mean pragmatically accepting one is unable to leave, and it may call "for a commitment to permanent settlement".⁷ This soil is a rocky arid medium. *Ethnic pride* and ethnic consciousness is a pride of heritage not only of China or Chinese culture and tradition but

⁵ 'Roots and Changing Identity': p.188-189

⁶ 'Roots and Changing Identity': p.202

also the migrant journey. Not a transplanted root, rather a hybrid rootstock. The *alienation* mindset is that of the uprooted. Wang views this as epitomised in the student/intellectual migrations, and highlights the refugee students who "have lost their faith not just in governments ... but also in the viability of Chinese elite culture."⁸

In a similar way J W Berry has developed a four-point scheme for general psychological acculturation; they are *assimilation*, *integration*, *segregation/separation*, *marginalization*. Significantly there is no category matching Wang's *accommodation*. Perhaps because those within this group are hard to mark as different from the *sojourner* and from those in *ethnic pride* categories, and perhaps the key is Berry does not differentiate between generations. In *marginalization* circumstances occur where groups and individuals "lose cultural and psychological contact with both their traditional culture and the larger society".⁹ This might be illustrated with the Anglicisation of aboriginal peoples, or the removal of Chinese identity in Indonesia with forbidding Chinese to be taught and the removal of Chinese names. A structuralised powerlessness, this is hegemonic homelessness: as is *assimilation* for which there are no traditional cultural values maintained, and one would be "relinquishing one's cultural identity and moving into the larger society."¹⁰

Drawing on my experience of others' stories: The *assimilation* strategy can be demonstrated by a Chinese family who on arriving in Canada changed their diet and studied ice hockey to be able to enter conversation with others. In contrast the *separation* option can be seen in the existence of

⁷ 'Roots and Changing Identity': p.206

⁸ 'Roots and Changing Identity': p.209

⁹ 'The Role of Psychology in Ethnic Studies' : page 15

¹⁰ 'The Role of Psychology in Ethnic Studies' : page 15

so many Chinatowns and Chinese shopping malls in Toronto, or in the results of Statistics Canada surveys which showed significant numbers of Chinese in Ontario, Canada with little or no English or French language. Berry describes this type of situation as a "desire to lead an independent existence".¹¹ *Marginalization* can be seen strategically in the history of stringent immigration controls on Chinese in Canada and America both in the application of head tax and quotas. *Integration* is supposedly the *Mosaic* strategy cherished in Canada. However like Wang's ethnic pride, there is no manner by which a citizen easily identifies with the country, while self and communal identity is couched in race or ethnicity. Here there is a significant risk of the exoticisation of the im/emigrant by the "host" group. Thus the Chinatown ghetto, existing for simple survival and protection become the exotic district of the multi-cultural city.

Peter Adler posits yet another similar five-stage model which describes culture shock in developmental terms leading to adjustment, yet is quite applicable to understanding the migrant's psychological moves. The initial *contact* stage, where there is a tourist like interest, "differences are intriguing. Perceptions are screened and selected."¹² The *disintegration* stage is where "the individual is overwhelmed by the new culture's requirements"¹³; and tends to self-blame which is not unlike Wang's *assimilationist* position. This is followed by *reintegration*. Those found here can function, but tend to be angry or resentful towards the new culture. This militant attitude is reminiscent of Myrna Kotash's "*politics of the inside agitator*". This rolls onto a stage of *autonomy*, where the individual is more "assured of ability to survive new experiences."¹⁴ The final stage of *independence* is where "the person has achieved biculturality [though]...there is

¹¹ 'The Role of Psychology in Ethnic Studies' : page 15

¹² A Furnham: *Culture shock*. p.130

¹³ P Pedersen: *The Five Stages of Cultureshock*. p.3

¹⁴ *Culture shock*. p.130

some controversy about whether this stage is an unreachable ideal".¹⁵ It is significant that biculturality is absent from Wang's and Berry's models, though Wang's category ethnic pride has some similarity. However what I understand here as *ethnic pride* is often expressed as being an inhabitant or prominent member of the Chinese community, while *independent* biculturality might be seen in the child who lives a secretive Jekyll-and-Hyde existence being quite Chinese at home, and more western independent away from the home. This is frequently seen reflected linguistically, with Chinese only spoken in the home. Significantly this hybridity can be a self-significant threat to purity and matters of authenticity. Furthermore there are clearly always problems in the bicultural or biracial marriages and the miscegenation children of such who are para-sites, (marginal site of identity) being dependent on two cultures/sites for identity.

Adler's model unlike Wang's and Berry's presupposes that people can achieve acculturation as independence. Be/longing, I suggest, will always haunt even the most acculturated im/emigrant. A traditional Chinese survival having a collective worldview, with self-sacrifice and fatalism at its core has enabled a significant global migration history for many multiple first generationers.

Myrna Kotash's reflections on three generations assimilated ethnic's repressions of longing suggests to me that multiple migrations may drive that constant search. At the heart(h) is the migrant's be/longing longing and it is this I address in my own family's multiple migrations, reflecting Naomi's own wanderings, with perhaps Cinderella's hopes.

(To be continued)

¹⁵ *The Five Stages of Culture Shock*, p.3

I am ethnically Chinese, but what else am I?

A im/emigrant?

My maternal grandfather, "Ma Timothy Kiang Wou came to Canada in 1899 to preach the gospel to the Chinese immigrants working in mines and on railways."¹⁶ He arrived in Toronto around 1905 having literally worked his way eastward from Vancouver. He graduated initially from Toronto Bible Training School in 1908, and in 1910 he became Toronto's first Chinese minister, "ordained in the Presbyterian Church after attending Knox College". He returned to China in 1914 bringing his bride Anna Lee to a new strange land. Being a minister he was exempted the *impossible* head tax applied to Chinese.¹⁷ Thus my mother and her brothers and sisters were born in Canada.

This new land did not really want its new inhabitants, having made entry almost impossible.

In the late forties, following the repeal of the Chinese Immigration Act in 1947, my mother left for the United Kingdom ostensibly to further her musical studies.

My paternal grandfather Lai Chao-Chou, "is remembered as a follower of the founding father of the republic Dr Sun Yat-sen, for whose cause he battled [as an army commander leading the 14th Army] in the provinces of Kuangtung, Kuanghsi, Fukian and Kianghsi ... [later] he was to become the victim of a knavish assassination."¹⁸ Thus my grandmother "Mrs Lai, [who] came from Pakuei ... [had to endure] great hardships, in lands where survival could be only precariously maintained, she raised her orphaned children ... She set up home in Hong Kong.. until the War of Resistance against Japan drove her to a life of wandering in Yunnan and Kuangshi."¹⁹

Widowed with two young sons she survived the upheaval of the Second World War and returned to Hong Kong.

In the early fifties, as the British Nationality Act of 1948 tried to limit immigration, leaving Hong Kong behind, my father slipped into the United Kingdom to study electrical engineering.

¹⁶ 'Dan's dad was City's first Chinese Minister': p.A22

¹⁷ The Chinese identity experience in North America is characterised through exclusion; In the case of America, the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882 and later quota systems; whilst and in the case of Canada an immigration "Head Tax", reaching the \$500 level in 1903; and later the Canadian Immigration Act of 1923. It is significant that these experiences in the past are formative in a Chinese identity, and can be seen even in the children of recent Chinese immigrants, particularly in Canada.

¹⁸ extract from "A summary of the scroll inscribed to Mrs. Chang Yuan-Cheng (Mrs. Lai) on her 60th birthday: trans. P Crooke

¹⁹ extract from "A summary of the scroll"

My parents²⁰ met in the UK, married and settled down in their palatial home. Changing their status from sojourning students, with the prospect of returning one day to their respective families, to being residents of a third culture. A year or so later I was born followed twenty months later by my sister.

My father died unexpectedly in the spring of 1975. Leaving my mother *naomically* with two children in a strange uncomfortable land.²¹ She later passed away and my sister then moved away.

In 1995 by moving across the Atlantic, I became simultaneously a first, second, and third generation immigrant living in Canada. Being the child of a second generation Chinese Canadian, I am a third generation son, but having moved to Canada for the first time I am a first in the same instant. Yet I am also a second generation immigrant to the United Kingdom, being the child of my two first generation immigrant parents.

Like Naomi I have returned to the family, like Ruth I'm coming to a strange new land, like Cinderella I have high hope for a new life in *Gum San* (Gold Mountain). But there are no guarantees even for Cinderella, Naomi or Ruth that life in the palace will be any better.

²⁰ Excursus: Political Belonging History in the United Kingdom

Before the British Nationality Act of 1948, most who had a right of abode in the United Kingdom were covered by the category of British Subject. However this Nationality Act created the new status of "Citizen of the UK and Colonies", separate from the "British Subject" (with right of abode), and 'British Subject without citizenship' (without right of abode). Cohen notes that this last category "applied mainly to people from India and Pakistan, who were henceforth subject to immigration controls." (*Frontiers*: p.18) You could be subject to the British Government, live in its Empire/Commonwealth, but not be a citizen with all that entails.

The later 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act required a Ministry of Labour employment voucher. In a later Conservative Political Centre pamphlet, William Deedes admitted, "The Bill's real purpose was to restrict the influx of coloured immigrants... the restrictions were applied to coloured and white citizens in all Commonwealth countries – though everybody recognised that immigration from Canada, Australia, and New Zealand formed no part of the problem." (*Frontiers*: p.18) Not only were they white governed colonies but numerically they were predominantly white with minority indigenous peoples. For my mother moving from Canada, the expectation would be for a white woman, since Canada's own immigration controls already limited non-white migrants significantly.

The revision in 1968 supposedly recognised the special status of the Colony of Hong Kong as set aside 300 vouchers a year. However this also set "an absolute limit of only 300 new workers each year". (J L Watson p.98) This revision also put an end to free entry for youths under 16, the conditions under which only one of my Hong Kong cousins was able to enter the UK

²¹ In a personal letter to Mrs Alice Yeh dated 6 January 1980, my mother confirms her discomfort by writing "I am still contemplating whether I shall return to Toronto to live." The immigrant will always feel uncomfortable, upset by the *unheimlichkeit*, the familiar/strangeness of the world they find themselves in however long they live there. Naomi must have had similar feelings living in Moab, even in Israel after her sons were dead.

The spectres of past, future and present loiter in the dark shadowy places and I bring to Ruth a preoccupation with home, migration, and a search for senses of be/longing and identity. The story of Elimelech, Naomi, Mahlon, Chilion and Ruth is not merely a story of movement, but is also a story of bereavement, of insecurity in the gap. In juxtaposition with reflections on the wider global migrations of people and my own interests and reading in the Chinese Diaspora in dialogue with the book of Ruth, there is a significant highlighting of the migrant experience of family Elimelech. All these together offer a be/longing perspective on Ruth rarely acknowledged by commentators.

With my own story and the migrant stories of others, literary and personal; I can hear and wish that others may hear the echoes, see the traces, and feel the now familiar resonances of the migrant experience of Naomi and Ruth. I seek to persuade others to recognise their own ghosts; that they be/long, that they are im/emigrants, that *hesed* is the call of faithfulness to the other.

In reading one cannot stand apart from one's own rooted/routed-ness, only declare it. The past can richly colour or invigorate what seem monotonous or mundane. This is what I seek in my reading of Cinderella and Ruth. I do not seek to universalise, nor appropriate, or indulge in trying to define be/longing, nor do I carry out a cold exegetical exercise. It is an attempt at an empathic/resonantal reading of Ruth, trying to recognise be/longings voice and *Hesed's* call.

Im/emigrant Loss:

Be/longing as Bereavement and Bitter Medicine

"The poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications."
Fugitive Pieces. p.109

"...hope is a mystery, its mystery can be ignored or converted into a problem."

Gabriel Marcel 'On the Ontological Problem'.p.29

Be/longing exposes mourning as a lament in the mystery of loss, just as mourning unmasks the longing in being as something that cannot be rationalised. Loss is senseless, and bereavement without meaning. An im/emigrant's loss is just as illusive to the microscope of analysis, yet some access is to be found through the poet and writer in their storytelling.

Grief and grieving are an important part of the migrant experience, which is made all the poignant by the history of harsh treatment of Chinese in their global migrations.²² A Cantonese proverb, *Leung Yeuk Foo How. Jung Yuen Yik Yee Ley Yee Hung*²³ expresses well the typical response. Bennett Lee explains this proverb's quiet endurance as "[t]he ability to "eat bitter

²² Thomas Sowell in his detailed economic study, *Migration and Cultures* notes there has been a general hostility towards Chinese because of their middleman economic role irrespective of assimilation. "Resentments against the overseas Chinese have been quite real, however little relationships these resentments have had with the reasons given for it." (p.228) Whether the non-assimilation accusation in the Western stereotype of the *Yellow Peril* who did not put down roots or were an economic drain, or "the Chinese in Indonesia [who] have long been considered the most assimilated Chinese community in Southeast Asia but this has not prevented them from being also the most repeatedly and violently attacked." (p.205) While Sowell's analysis is confined to the economic it still remains true that the overseas Chinese are viewed as a threat because "immigration can profoundly affect the fabric of a society and even dissolve the ties that hold a nation together." (p.387) The excuse for reactions has been that the Chinese have not been that loyal to their new countries, often sending money back to China, or that their ghetto chinatowns have been "dens of iniquity". Thus they can be a threat to the authenticity and purity of a people.

medicine" - to bear hardship without complaint, to bend to authority without breaking, to internalize grief while presenting a calm and dignified face to the world, to suffer, to endure and to survive - is regarded by the Chinese as a special talent native to the Chinese soul."²⁴ Loss and pain, bereavement, separation and homelessness are woven together with classical Oriental fatalism and the-ability-to-endure survival threads to perhaps become an Oriental be/longing. To demonstrate these we will hear two retellings of folktales and by contrast an excerpt from a more reactionary story.

Amy Tan opens her best-selling novel, *The Joy Luck Club* with a sad folktale of be/longing. A Chinese mother remembers buying a mundane bird symbolically a hope for better things, which became a swan. Arriving in *Gum San, Gold Mountain*, (The promised land of North America), the swan is taken from her by the immigration officials, and metonymically in forgetting her dreams the swan is reduced to a feather, which she desires to pass on to her daughter.

"Now the woman was old. And she had a daughter who grew up speaking only English and swallowing more Coca-Cola than sorrow. For a long time now the woman had wanted to give her daughter the single swan feather and tell her, "This feather may look worthless, but it comes from afar and carries with it all my good intentions." And she waited, year after year, for the day she could tell her daughter this in perfect American English."²⁵

The spectres of be/longing metaphorically and nostalgically haunt the mother in the feather. Unfortunately the daughter is conscious only of the sweet and in-your-face-caffeinated drink,

²³ "Good medicine has bitter taste. Open words are not good to hear in good daily living". A Cantonese proverb often only cited in brief. My own translation with the assistance of Cowan Leung who also provided the full proverb.

²⁴ *Many-Mouthed Birds*: p.5

²⁵ *The Joy Luck Club*: Amy Tan p.3-4 But the pathos is in the realisation that day will never arrive! For unless the daughter asks for the feather, there will be no passing on of the dreams of a past and future. The mother will always have an accent and so never speak "perfect American English". This is the experience of many a second-generation immigrant, and the pain of a first.

and cannot taste the bitter and spectral. She is oblivious of the feather and its memories, and her own be/longing.²⁶

Likewise Maxine Hong Kingston closes her popular novel, *The Woman Warrior*, with an equally haunting retelling of the classic legend of Ts'ai Yen, a young Chinese woman kidnapped by barbarians to live in an alien land, where she bore two children by a chieftain. "[H]er children did not speak Chinese. She spoke to them when their father was out of the tent, but they imitated her with senseless singsong words and laughed."²⁷ Then one night the barbarian's music broke through to her, and she broke through to them, as she began to sing.

"Ts'ai Yen sang about China and her family there. Her words seemed to be Chinese, but the barbarians understood their sadness and anger. Sometimes they thought they could catch barbarian phrases about forever wandering. Her children did not laugh, but eventually sang along".²⁸

The Barbarians, with their assured-at-homeness, displaced and alienated Ts'ai Yen, and yet she and her miscegenated children met in that miraculous moment around the camp fire, the heart(h). As she was heard by her barbarian abductor family and heard by her own children separated from her by language and culture, a greater mystery of be/longing was glimpsed.

The migrant experience is one of opposites; of pain and comfort, familiarity and alienness, hope and hopelessness. It can be a violent experience of opposites, feelings of aporia. Sometimes with pain also comes anger, rather than conditions

"...the immigrant can develop images of place that become cankers of irritation. Some mass or weight of space, arena, feels heavy with the debt of the new. Bitter Gold Mountain."
Diamond Grill. p.27

²⁶ I am surprised by the stories I have been told of Oriental mothers and daughters who together went to see the movie of Joy Luck Club in an effort to understand each other.

²⁷ *The Woman Warrior*: p.185

²⁸ *The Woman Warrior*: p.186

of sadness and depression. Sometimes another's self-confessed comfort will incense and rankle as another's loud assertion of belonging exposes be/longing in the homeless one.

In his polemical parody *Donald Duk*, Frank Chin presents this contrast. Bitterness is not a medicine taken lightly, rather it is spat out angrily and politically. The title character is a bright and gifted Chinese-American twelve year old, struggling to deal with cultural baggage attached to the Disney character, and with being labelled Chinese.

"The Chinese in America were made passive and nonassertive by centuries of Confucian thought and Zen mysticism, they were totally unprepared for the violently individualistic democratic Americans. ...

The teacher takes a breath and looks over his spellbound class. Donald wants to barf up pink and green stuff all over the teacher's book.

"What's he saying" Donald Duk's pal Arnold Azalea asks in a whisper. "Same thing thing as everyone else - Chinese are artsy, cutesy and chickendick." Donald whispers back."²⁹

Frank Chin's agitation against stereotyping and what he sees as the acceptance of majority cultural projections, causes him to attack the spectres of past and future, and the authenticity of be/longing's expression in Asian American authors.

"What seems to hold Asian American literature together is the popularity among whites ... Kingston, Hwang and Tan are the first writers of any race ... to so boldly fake the best-known works from ...Asian literature and lore in history. And to legitimate their faking, they ... argue that the immigrants ... lost touch with Chinese culture."³⁰

²⁹ extracted in *Hear My Voice*, p.293

³⁰ 'Come all Ye Asian American Writers': p.2-3. Frank Chin is not alone in raising these issues though unusual in being Chinese. Rey Chow raises these issues in her book *Writing Diaspora*, with Sinologist Stephen Owens has been polemical against the poetry of Bei Dao a mainland Chinese poet, and others who "are sacrificing the national cultural heritage for a *translation* that commodifies experiences of victimization." (p.1) (I heard similar preservation sentiments expressed by a Russian Sinologist at a conference on "The future of Chinese Philosophy".) Interestingly Rey Chow diagnoses anxiety on loss, which is based on Freud's work on melancholia. "[T]he unique feature of the melancholic, who differs from other kinds of mourners, is that [s/]he exhibits the symptoms of a delusional belittling of himself. Because the nature of the loss remains unconscious to the patient, the loss is directed inward, so that [s/]he becomes convinced worthlessness as if [s/]he has been unjustly abandoned."(p.3) In *Donald Duk* a temporary respite or relief from struggle is achieved by parodying himself with a Donald Duck voice. But this is no solution. In life there is an alternative to internalisation. As Chow indicates, "China melancholia is complicated

Maxine Hong Kingston and Amy Tan are both second generation immigrants to America, with a crisis of identity seeking reconnection or reconciliation with the past. But Frank Chin is apparently a fifth-generationer but expresses his disconnection and pain, less with *Leung Yeuk Foo How*, and more with anger and irony, "the politics of the inside agitator". By *be*-rating the other writers for their lack of authenticity, and *be*-mocking majority appropriation, Chin *be*-longs just as authentically in longing thoroughly he *be*/longs. In doing these things he confronts and wrestles with *be*/longing's homelessness.

For a first generation immigrant grief and pain of leaving home is to be expected but it is perhaps surprising for succeeding generations yet as we can see they seem to face similar ambivalent tensions. Perhaps sometimes over generations the aporias of home and homelessness, familiarity and alienness, comfort and pain, hope and hopelessness, are intensified and not diminished. This may be due because assimilated im/emigrants have to deal with pressure from cultures on two sides.

I have not intended to pursue a politically agitated hermeneutics of suspicion, exercising postcolonial analysis to discern hegemonic ideologies, but political observations are unavoidable.³¹ Pain, lostness, *be*/longing has to be recognised as existential realities otherwise the minority voice cannot be heard. These readings have sought to focus upon the existential

by the presence of a third party - the living members of the Chinese Culture". They serve as a constant reminder. Thus blame, as expression of anxiety and denial of loss/bereavement, can be directed outward and into the politics of identity, and be a loss of loss, a bereftness of bereavement..

³¹ In the background remains a post-colonial critical response. It is a given side-effect that if the position is taken that the Bible is a metanarrative legitimating some forms of ideological hegemony, then the presence of texts of pain and survival, given voice will have a significant role in the destabilising of positions empowered by given interpretations. I also acknowledge the work of Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak on the voice of the subaltern, and am

results of migration, and in particular Chinese migration. They were given not to define, nor to generalise be/longing, rather allow the reader to accept and embrace the faces of alienation, pain, lostness, and of anomie in migration. What ought to unite generations of im/emigrants in community are the results of disconnection, be/longing. This is a hermeneutics of survival: A hermeneutics of good grieving, a singing together of Ts'ai Yen and family around the heart(h) , the place of fire.

"If members of a family can *share* the reality of impending separation and they will come to an acceptance of it *together*."³² Hope, *mysterious hope*, is essential to good grieving as Elisabeth Kübler-Ross in *Death and Dying* writing on hope asserts that isolated hope is by nature weak. Yet grieving with hope together is an act of mutual *hesed* and it offers sustenance in surviving grief. The models of Wang, Berry and Adler fail to give much attention to societal and communal concerns. Of course being descriptive they focus on an individual and their relationship with the host group, and in doing so they can supposedly avoid prescribing. Yet the bitter pill needs gilding, with burdens borne together. Community building would seem a necessary for survival.

"[t]he Bible offers us insights for our survival. ... It is the commitment of ... groups ... that justifies sharing and hearing the biblical story in our mutual search for a collective new religious imagination."³³

conscious that within her analysis once the minority voice is heard it is no longer truly a minority voice. Because of this appropriation, I seek for an empathic hearing rather than rational.

³² *Death and Dying*: p.170 The italics as emphasis are mine. The detachment of the loved one from the family ought to be accepted, not as rejection but as the finding of peace in acceptance. "It should be a source of comfort and solace to them and not one of grief and resentment." (p.170) Kübler-Ross suggests each generation has a need and right to their own lives and privacy, and the fulfilment of their own needs. But I return to her whole overall belief that acceptance of death and bereavement is better dealt with corporately, with patient, caregivers, and family.

³³ *Discovering the Bible in the Non-Biblical World* : p.19 While the sentiments are admirable, caution still needs to be exercised since who decides "a new religious imagination". The problem with liberation and exile motifs are their intrinsic violence and retaliatory content.; e.g. the taking of the Promised land, the anger and desire for revenge in exile. (see Psa 137:8-9) Jacques Derrida's preoccupation with the inevitability of violence, exposes us to the understanding that there are very few if any who are fully powerless. If Kwok's invocation "[s]tudying the Bible with integrity is a radical demand" (p.95) is to be taken seriously; then recognition has to occur at some point, of the power-over another exercised and its intrinsic violence to another. This we have seen exposed between different

Kwok Pui-lan like many has called for communities of hope to re-envision a collective new religious imagination. In a Post-Colonial sensibility, grieving, grief/pain and hope in togetherness, ought to be found together as unifying forces. We find both inextricably woven together in the Biblical story of Ruth, in Naomi and Ruth.

Be/longing should be a longing for home together, it ought to be good grieving which addresses the spectres or ghosts by name not as exorcism rather in familiar familial terms. It is the ability to receive the metonymical feather of Amy Tan with all that it means past and dreams for the future. It is hopeful but recognises the pyre. It recognises that there is no purity, and that there is no home, only im/emigrants. *Hesed's* hopeful call needs to be answered that grieving together can unite. The heart(h) is a fragile place which we might call home or family, but too strong a grip disintegrates it.

second-generationers, and sojourner parents and assimilationist children who can expose in each other the grief of disconnection. The risks of violence in meeting I shall address specifically in the final section The Wake, and I will illustrate both with Cinderella's sister's self-mutilation and the Bethlehelem Road exchange between Naomi and Ruth at the appropriate times.

Heart(h) medicine:

Meeting in a Derridean moment

Every migration story is a Cinderella story. Not merely the American dream characterised in a Hollywood rags- to- riches tale of success: but a descent or fall and hope of rising: Cinderella is a loss mourned by sitting in the parlour

"Derrida says, life is a kind of wake, a watchfulness over death (*veiller à mort...*)"

John Caputo *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*. p.191

of place expressed with disappointment, bereavement, grief and sadness. The ashen trace living between living space and the hearth is a significant way to understand the trace of place, "islands in the blood" of which Fred Wah writes. The finding of place is to be found in the sadness of the fire-place, not in the Prince's palace.

Il y a la cendre, writes Jacques Derrida. There is "no cinder without fire [*feu*]" *C'est là la*

"Who is Cinder[s]? Where is she? Where did she run off to at this hour? ... it was surely "there," *là*; someone vanished but something preserved her trace and at the same time lost it".

Cinders.p.33

cendre. Yet for fire to be, for c/Cinders to be there has to be a place of burning, a *focus*. Focus exposes and opens our ears to hear of the "fire-place, hearth; firepan, altar; funeral pile; home, family;"³⁴ the place of ashes, the focus of be-ing.

Joseph Rykwert states "Home is where one starts from. ... [yet] Home could just be a hearth, a fire on the bare ground by any human lair."³⁵ Home and roots are synonyms for be/longing as security and safety. The heart(h) is a point of focus, a metaphor of home, but it is also non-home, a place of no-thing. You cannot possess the place of ashes, only be marked, to bear the trace.

³⁴ *Langenscheidt's Pocket Latin Dictionary* :

³⁵ 'House and Home': p.47

Therefore, just as the burnt circle of ground reminds us of Ts'ai Yen and her family's meeting place, so *focus* as heart(h) in its plenitude reminds us of meanings and yet is empty itself. To fence it in and preserve it is nonsense. It is not home nor is it not-home., it can only be non-home. It can only be a memory, a trace, an ashen mark on the ground. It is merely and completely heart(h).

Whatever she is called the world over, whether Aschenputtel, Cinderella, La Gatta Cenerentolla, or affectionately Cinders - "That Cinderella is the guardian of the hearth is well proven."³⁶ She has identity firstly because of the Hearth-abode motif,³⁷ and secondly because she leaves it, initially to adventure, returns and leaves later to live in the palace.³⁸

Lukacher writes in commentary, "Cinderella is one name among others for the still withheld essence of the cinder friend that is borne along with Dasein."³⁹ Dasein's fall is to the mundane,

³⁶ *Cinderella, Three hundred and fortyfive Variants:* p.xxxvi

³⁷ Marian Rolfe Cox's significant work *Cinderella*, and Anna Birgitta Rooth later work *The Cinderella Cycle*, both recognise the hearth-abode motif as an essential element in the classification of Cinderella and variant stories. I list below for current and later reference the Grimm and Perrault versions.

Aschenputtel - Ill treated heroine (by stepmother and step-sisters - Hearth-abode - Gifts chosen by three daughters from father. Heroine choses hazel-branch and plants it on mother's grave. Help at Grave - Task (grain sorting) - Task performing animals (birds)- transformed mother help (bird on tree) - magic dresses- Meeting Place (ball)- threefold flight- Pitch trap- lost shoe- shoe marriage test- Mutilated feet- False brides- Animal witnesses (birds)- Happy Marriage- Villain Nemesis. (Cox p.17)

Cendrillon - Ill treated heroine (by stepmother and step-sisters - Menial- Hearth-abode- Fairy godmother- transformation of pumpkin, mice, rats, lizard and heroine's rags- Magic dresses- Meeting place (ball)- threefold flight- Heroine must leave ball before midnight, when the fairy equipage is re-transformed- Lost shoe- shoe marriage test- Happy Marriage. (Cox p.36)

It is not insignificant that "the nickname which alludes to the heroine's place at the hearth occurs only in the European tradition" (Rooth p.110) and is conspicuous in its absence in the Oriental tradition with only one recent exception (noted later in this paper with Ash Boy). Space does not permit more than a passing additional comment that the western image of sitting by the fire is a powerful icon of being-at-home. But this is less so to the person who had the dirty job of clearing and cleaning the fireplace of ashes each day.

³⁸ We can see a similar story shape in Ruth. Jack Sasson's Proppian Folktale analysis in *Ruth: A new Translation* seems perhaps more forced than those in the Cinderella Folklore tradition.

³⁹ "Mourning Become Telepathy". p.14

the everydayness of life. Cinderella is not magical nor a goddess such as *Hestia*. She is mundane and everyday; while *Hestia* as child of *Kronos* and *Rhea* is divine and *is* the fire [*feu*] within the hearth. *Cinders* carry that trace of that consumed by the fire.

Without the fire, without the place of burning, the heart(h), without *focus*, as Derrida continues in his usual convoluted way,

"everything we will say ...concerning the legal signature that he pretends to undermine, he will re-instate it, he will take it back again, will give it to the hearth of its own burning - or of its own family. There are cinders only insofar as there is the hearth, the fireplace, some fire of place. Cinder as the house of being..."⁴⁰

To be im/emigrant is to be/long, is to long for the house of being and yet to see you only have a handful of ashes, grey traces of home.

All the im/emigrant has, practically all that anyone can have, are traces, namely the cinder or ashes of life, symbolic of mourning. Both cinder and ash leave traces, traces of the past in the psyche. They make their mark, but one still acknowledges where cinders and ashes came from. One has heat and colour, yet the other is cool and lifeless. As Derrida continues, warm cinders or cold ashes, "depending whether the fire still lingers there or no longer stirs. But there?"⁴¹ To be cold is to be grey and colourless. Then "(i)f you no longer recall it, it is because the incineration follows its course and the consummation proceeds from itself, the cinder itself. Trace destined, like everything, to disappear from itself, as much in order to lose the way as to rekindle a memory."⁴² The warm memory is sad but life-giving, a cold denial is no more. Thus in the

⁴⁰ *Cinders*. p.41

⁴¹ *Cinders*: p.49

⁴² *Cinders*. p.57

cinders is the potential for a new fire and therefore a return after the burning and an opportunity for leaving a mark. (*Luo ye gui gen* - Falling leaves return to their roots)

"There, *là*, an incineration of the definite article leaves the cinder itself in cinders. It disperses it and thereby [*par là*] preserves it, preserves her, in an instant."⁴³

"The word [recollection] means what it says - the act whereby I re-collect myself as a unity; but this hold, this grasp upon myself, is also relaxation and abandon ... The way stops at the threshold."
'On the Ontological Mystery' p.23

To be by the fireside, in the ashes, to be nicknamed Cinders can bring a new awareness which "must include the realization that she has become property. While at one time she may have been a loving daughter helping an agrieved father, the stepfamily had changed all that."⁴⁴ Objectified as *Ash girl*, she is a thing, apparently a non-being. Paradoxically in non-being, she has come to be. She has a home, a heart(h), a *focus*, and therefore has a fragile dwelling for being. The role of memory as recollection dis-integrates the trace as it becomes, i.e. comes into being and flashes like a bolt of lightening which strikes the ground and raises the possibility for future fires.

Our heart(h) is seemingly composed of traces or threads, whether acknowledged or not. There is no absolute forgetting, "what is repressed is still kept in memory"⁴⁵ remaining present, so is there as trace. However if there were truly the destruction of memory, its loss would still leave its trace and a deeper distress; the non-sense bereftness of succeeding generations. In fact, "our entire world is the *cinder* of innumerable *living* beings; and what is living is so little in relation to

⁴³ *Cinders*. p.49

⁴⁴ *Cinderella's Housework Dialectics*: p.58

⁴⁵ The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida: p.164

the whole, it must be that, once already, *everything* was transformed into life and it will continue to be so."⁴⁶

Our presence at the heart(h) is to live. It is to feel the heat, but it is to sit in the ashes, and allow them to leave their trace. All we need to do is fan the embers, the cinders, to see the colour and life. To feel the life-giving heat-presence of divine being is to feel the presence of thereness, of the other and be aware of the cinder-constructed others and their warmth or chill.

"It is the call of the cinder, the coming of *il y a la cendre*, that leads... from the graphics of supplementarity to the thought of the nonpresent Other."⁴⁷

An unexpected arrival sometimes *la* is *le cendre*, and doesn't wear the dresses nor dance with the prince. *Hai-bo*, (Ash boy), is cast out by his stepmother. He is employed to tend the bath water fires. A rich man's young daughter falls in love with him and they marry.⁴⁸ Even in strongly patriarchal Japanese culture the unexpected other appears, as hope.

⁴⁶ Derrida citing Nietzsche: *Cinders*: p.69

⁴⁷ 'Mourning Becomes Telepathy'. p.10

⁴⁸ 'The Study of the Cinderella Cycle': Archer Taylor: p.125. Taylor records this version collected in Japan by Keigo Seki and published over a decade after Rooth's observations. I list below for information, in my own motif abridgement.

Ash Boy (Hai-Bo) - Ill-treated hero (either cast away by his stepmother, or sent away from his home) - Hearth-abode -employed by richman as a servant in charge of heating the bath - Meeting place - At a play the daughter see a fine young man and discovers him to be a menial servant from her home - She is love sick - Outside help and marriage test - According to fortune-teller's advice, all the servants are led before her so she can choose the one she likes - Happy Marriage (Taylor p.125 abridged)

Building a fire-place as identity, gives focus to the spatial dynamics of a room and life. It brings attention to itself. Discarding the every day, mundane steel, brick, and even ceramic tile, and choosing the best, an edifice in marble, it can become a monument and remains a cold

"... for the relationships between the living and the dead... A presence to which we are faithful is not at all the same thing as the carefully preserved effigy of an object which has vanished."

'On The Ontological Mystery'. p.36

construction, a life-less thing. It needs the presence of fire, the divine in the heart(h); in future/past/now-event, in the coming of the spectres, as traces. The traces of past fires, cinders and ashes, in past fireplaces can bring *focus*, in new rooms, new contexts. Perhaps the place of fire is less enclosing than fireplace, like the distinction between garden of remembrance and funeral urn.

"To remain with the dead is to abandon them ... like other ghosts, she whispers; not for me to join her, but so that, when I'm close enough, she can push me back into the world."

Fugitive Pieces p.170

We cannot stay by the first *focus*, watching the cinders die. The colours disappear turning to grey. The *focus* is also a pyre, a funeral pyre, a place to leave behind. Good grieving moves. She has a ball to go to, a place of meeting, to dance with a prince and ultimately the hope

of a new home in the palace. But in identity's limited rapid economy of return, coach, horsemen etc, are no longer available. All that is left is a trace, a metaphor, and a drop back into the world; walking quietly rather than the mad dash through the night.

After the fall back to the mundane Cinders cannot tell, when, or why, but simply that which simply is. *Il y a la cendre*. There is a *lac(k)* exposed by *la cendre*. This in-completeness is un-measurable except by referring back to what was before. Derrida's creations consistently contain

dualities of meaning, exposés of binary oppositions. *La cendre*, known through its acronym *lac* also finds meaning in another Derridean term, *supplement*. *Supplement* is both the filling of a *lac(k)*, as an insufficiency and also the excessiveness of a sufficiency.

Is the having of the shoe, or the loss of the shoe more important? Shoe can be seen as *lac(k)*, the absence announces hope as something, while possession is nothing.

Cinderella's lost shoe is pivotal. Without the lost there is no finding, the story requires it.

In yet another Chinese Cinderella story so similar to so many other global folktales, Sheh Hsien lost her golden shoe, this time at the cave festival. It was found and it was sold to the king of the distant island kingdom of T'o Huan. This led to his hunt for the foot to fit it and its pair. In the finding the King brings rescue from ill-treatment at the hands of a stepmother.⁴⁹ The shoe is symbolic, reaching out beyond the situation. In its loss is hope for the reader, and yet despair for the ash girl.

⁴⁹ Recorded by Tuan Ch'eng Shih in the ninth century AD, cited by R D Jameson. "Cinderella in China": p.74-77 I record my own motif abridgement below for information.

Sheh Hsien - (From barbaric Cave people) - Ill-treated heroine - (by stepmother after mother's and latterly father's deaths) - Menial and dangerous tasks - Helpful animal - (fish - killed and eaten by stepmother) - Male spirit - (probably father tells of location and magic in bones) - Magic dresses and jewellery - NonMeeting Place - Cave Festival - lost shoe - sold to powerful civilised king of T'o Huan - Shoe test within kingdom - which all fail - torture salesman - the pair found - shoe fits - Happy Marriage - Villains Nemesis - (but made goddesses of Marriage matchmakers by cave people). King exhausts power of bones- burys them but washed out to sea. (Jameson p.74-77 abridged)

The lost shoe, is a symbol of the small foot, a trace of the small foot that will fit into it.⁵⁰ The shoe marriage test proved false brides or perhaps is indicator of the true husband as for Ruth. The violence of mutilated feet attempting to fit the shoe shows a "counterfeiter's forgery" of *lac(k)* and intrinsic violence. A desperate demand for self-authenticity necessitates the fraudulent as self-mutilation.

"(T)he two pigeons cried out,
"Look, look! There's blood in the shoe! The shoe's too small. The right bride's still at home. [they] pecked out one each of ... [the false sisters'] eyes. Thus for their malice and treachery they were punished with blindness for the rest of their lives.""

Grimm's *Ashenputtel* p.28

This forgery brings consequences of sensory deprivation, albeit seeing or hearing. A transparent slipper, present-at-hand, is symbolic trace of the nonpresent, the loss of the small delicate foot that filled it. At midnight all fades into memory: a broken pumpkin, three large rats and a few homeless, lost, and scurrying mice left to their own devices. But this trace is gift; a pure gift freed of self-interest, a *be/longing*.

"Life is a pill which none of us can
bear to swallow without gilding"
Dr Samuel Johnson

There is no magic pill for *be/longing*. For Derridean medicine *Pharmakon*, is both poison/bitterness and

⁵⁰ The shoe, whatever it was made of glass, fur or even gold, maybe attributed as symbolic of the female genitalia.(see Rooth *Cinderella Cycle* p.104). But a stronger possible reading if we accept Anna Birgitta Rooth's, and R D Jameson's belief (to name two of the most prominent supporters) that the story is truly of Chinese origin; is the importance of foot size in defining beauty within the Chinese cultural context. Foot-binding seemingly a uniquely Chinese practice continued right into the twentieth century. Through the crushing and breaking of young feet and then binding, a footprint of three inches could be attained. Photeine Bourboulis notes "the painful fashion of artificially small feet ... was general in the 10th century, but must have started, according to some scholars as early as the fifth or sixth century AD"... "the social idea [was] that small feet were a mark of beauty and gentility."("The Bride-Show Custom' : p.103-104)

medicine/sweet hope. *Leung Yeuk Foo How. Jung Yuen Yik Yee Ley Yee Hung*⁵¹ Hope is a necessary gilding or sweetener for the bitterness, not revenge nor restitution. You can never go home! *There is no home to go back to!*

Focus as home, family and be/longing as space, site, resting place, are both full and empty. The place of fire reveals a *lac(k)* by refering back to that there (*là*), which was before, yet was and is not here.

The Hearth-abode motif, while being constitutive of the Cinderella story, is eventually left for the meeting-place. This motif is seemingly at least as important. The meeting places are sometimes a ball, a dance, a festival, or play, occasionally a church,⁵² are the places that lead to the place of first disclosure, a place of dis-placement, where the beggar, the ash maiden, or cave girl can be seen in a different light. She is called to responsibility, to be an empowered responsible self and before the end of story she has the gift of a vision of hope.⁵³

⁵¹ 'Good medicine has a bitter taste' or 'medicine is good and tastes bitter'. Honest or open words are not good in daily living." Bennett Lee introduces The Chinese Canadian writers in an anthology as "*many-mouthed birds* because they are breaking a long and often self-imposed silence. We should not be surprised to find that what they have to offer is not shameful at all, but only a few songs straight from the heart." (p.8. *Many-mouthed Birds*)

In 'Mourning into Telepathy', N Lukacher writes: "The spoken voices begin, as Derrida remarks, to say something about the experience of cinders and song. The song of poetic saying would thus sing to and of the inaudible nonpresent incineration that burns within every experience: this experience of incineration that is experience itself."(p.14) Which when thinking about the otherness of the inaudible voice "is always inseparable from poetic saying."(p.14)

"*Feu la cendre* [the French title of *Cinders*,] indicates by virtue of its double displacement of the two meanings of *feu* ... fire, but also deceased or departed." (p.11) Likewise *focus* as heart/h discloses both home/family and the funeral pyre as ash memory of belonging, (*idem*). *Focus* reveals not being and not non-being, but refers to something beyond. It is neither *ipse*, difference nor *idem*, sameness. As cinder is the "remain of what lies beyond the ring, remain of what is not and was never in the world."(p.11)

⁵² Marian Roalfe Cox records versions of Cinderella where the meeting place is a church from places such as Poland, Finland, Denmark, Russia, France, in her book *Cinderella 345 variants*.

The meeting place is not a philanthropic charitable gift (not even in magical events), but it is the miracle/gift of meeting. The gift is *aleatory* in Derridean terms, requiring the miraculous. "[M]iracle stories are stories of chance of the moment, of the *aleatory* gift, writ large, in stunning tales and gilded letters."⁵⁴ '*You shall go to the ball*' is not the gift, nor the transport nor clothes; it is to be found in the place of meeting.

In Perrault's version where the fairy godmother runs out of ideas, and is at a loss for a coachman, Cinderella says "I will go and see... if there is not a rat in the rat trap- we may make a coachman of him". [To which her godmother replied] "Thou art in the right... go and look."⁵⁵

⁵³ We can see this in the Ruth story as she increasingly exercises initiative, and of course the threshing floor is a significant meeting place for Ruth and Boaz.

⁵⁴ *The Prayers and Tears of Jacques Derrida*: p.187-8

⁵⁵ 'Cinderella, or the Little Glass Slipper': C Perrault: p.18. Frank Zipes in his ideological critical work *Fairy Tales and the Art of Subversion*, suggests that Perrault's tellings were aimed at "providing behavioural patterns and models for children" (FT p.23), and Cinderella was one among others for a female audience. Zipes asserts that "Cinderella's transformation from 'slutty/maid' to 'virtuous/princess ... was in part an exercise in fashion design." (FT p.27) Furthermore for Zipes in Perrault's version "Cinderella is changed to demonstrate how submissive and industrious she is. Only because she mind's her manners is she rescued". (FT p.30) Contrary to a rugged individualism Cinderella in her fall to being a menial servant, "bore all patiently and dared not tell her father". (CLGS p.16) but given opportunity she has idea's and initiative, in rising does not extract retribution from her sisters. Instead there is reconnection or reconciliation. "Cinderella took them up, and, as she embraced them, cried that she forgave them with all her heart, and desired them always to love her." (CLGS p.21)

Zipes levels similar criticisms against publishers of the other Western Cinderella classic. "Essentially, the Grimm Brothers contributed to the literary 'bourgeoisification' of oral tales which had belonged to the peasantry and lower classes ... They wanted to foster the development of a strong national bourgeoisie". (FT p.47) "the tale does provide and reflect upon the cultural the boundaries within which the reader measures and validates his or her own identity." (FT p.55) Aschenputtel's filiality to both her late mother and even to her father is exceptional. Cinderella consistently is not revengeful nor hateful. Redress is never extracted by her but by others.

Jane Yolen adds her voice and critiques in 'America's Cinderella', the modern sugary wishful passive Cinderella together with the "poor girl can grow up and become the president's wife" thinking. "She has been unjustly distorted by storytellers, misunderstood by educators, and wrongly accused by feminists." (p.297) Disney and others have made her less than she is; into a "weepy prostrate young blonde" (p.299), whose best/only friends are mice. We have lost sight of Cinderella who speaks to us of, "the child mistreated, a princess or highborn lady in disguise bearing her troubles with patience and fortitude... [who] makes intelligent decisions for she knows that wishing solves nothing without the concomitant action." (p.298)

"How I did wish to
go to the ball"...
"But it is no use.
Wishes never
come true."

America's Cinderella
p.303

By contrast Jane Yolen bemoans the lost power and assertiveness in Random House's *Walt Disney's Cinderella* and Golden Press' versions. Both are critiqued for a heroine who is "pitiable and useless. She cannot even perform a simple action to save herself ... she is off in a world of dreams. [She] begs, she whimpers, and at last has to be rescued by -guess who- the mice!"⁵⁶ You are left asking, 'Who is the hero/heroine?', and the answer the mice!! Even the fairy godmother is relegated to back stage. In this version this victim of be/longing is accommodated with the worst of learned powerlessness.

The magic or the mystery of it all is, "in fairy tales wishes have a habit of happening - *wishes accompanied by the proper action*, bad wishes as well as good."⁵⁷ It is not a mere matter of intention nor duty rather responsibility beyond duty which does not self-serve, but rather enables godmother to be godmother. Cinder's fidelity is *heseḏic* in response.

"Cinderella is *not* a story of rags to riches, but rather riches recovered; *not* poor girl (or princess) rescued from improper or wicked enslavement ... but shrewd and practical girl persevering and winning a share of the power."⁵⁸

Cinderella deals with grief and loss and is not paralysed; she accepts and moves on in both mourning and hope. Life's pill is bitter but sweetened by hope.

There is an uncanniness to the cinders, and an element of lifelessness to the ashes. Cinders reminds us of the home fire's heat, and they mark the heart(h). Without the responsible venture out, away, there is no adventure, no story to tell. The "Here I am" is not the futility to trying to

⁵⁶ 'America's Cinderella'. p.302-3.

⁵⁷ 'America's Cinderella': p.303.

⁵⁸ 'America's Cinderella': p.296 I would prefer if Yolen had used agency or voice here rather power though I think that is her sentiment.

hold or possess ashes, nor to remain sitting among them paralysed by the cold dualism of being and action. Sometimes the spectres push us back out, and onwards, in a repetitious return towards the meeting place. For Naomi and even Ruth it begins in Bethlehem and goes to Moab. Then from Moab back to Bethlehem, moving from field to threshing floor and ending up at the wedding and the birth of Obed.

* Ruth- a Tale of Be/longings *

The first Be/longings:
Being faithful to your ground

Now it came to
pass, in the days
when the judges
judged..

Within nostalgia is a longing for the past, where someone perceives an absence within the present. The setting of Ruth is clearly back in a time before there was a king in Israel. This may have been a time when "the

people judged, criticized, flouted their judges."⁵⁹ Or perhaps better, a time when God ruled through his Torah/law judges, and raised his own liberator charismatic judges.

The doubling of judgement in noun and verb forms (the judges judged) is found both in the Masoretic and LXX Greek texts. This is clearly emphatic, but leaves the question whether it is sarcasm because there was no real law, literally a period of lawlessness, or the doubling is a nostalgic reflection of a bygone era, when things were done right. In the latter the narrator's tone would then be one of longing. The Rabbis seemingly favoured the first situation in which either there were no judges or the judges were lax in their keeping and teaching of Torah; yet by contrast the *Midrash* states that "a famine comes only upon a strong and righteous people who can withstand the test."⁶⁰ Also Boaz is identified with the judge, Ibzan (Judges 12:8) by some Rabbis. Perhaps the interpretations are expressive of the spectrum of emotions attached to be/longing in exile/dispersion. In these alternative tellings it is possible to see a commentary in the ever present moment of something missing or lost and hence a bereftness. This would be quite an obvious condition for Israelites in exile or diaspora. The reflected experience was

⁵⁹ Citation of Talmudic interpretation in *Megillas Ruth* : Rabbi Meir Zlotowitz:

⁶⁰ *Megillas Ruth*: p.60. This is ascribed to Iggeres Shmuel, that God knew "they [this generation] would withstand the test ... No one left Eretz Yisrael - except for the single family mentioned".(p.61)

appropriate for Jewish author, redactor or interpreter/commentator, even not unexpected for a twentieth century displaced dispossessed French Jewish philosopher named Jacques Derrida.

Those experiencing dispersion tend to have an ambivalent nostalgic which is a coloured tint in their affinity to the homeland and the past. William Safran suggests that those in diaspora amongst other characteristics, would "retain a collective memory, vision or myth about their original homeland".⁶¹ I suggest that a people would and do idealise certain periods or emphasise certain versions of a people's history, and in removing tensions between various strands of their history, they can end up in the dangerous creation of a golden age.⁶² We can see this in the perspectives of the conquest of the New World, which gloried in the pioneer spirit: But Postmodern sensibilities now recognise the oppression and destruction of native peoples. Significantly aboriginal peoples became supplanted by new hosts, who claimed the land belonged to them. Similarly when we examine exilic Israel and Roman Israel what we can see is that the reign of King David and King Solomon was more viewed as the golden age rather than the

61 'Diasporas in Modern Societies: Myth of Homeland and Return': William Safran: p.83

62 Excursus - Ruth as counter-text

David Jobling in 'Ruth finds a Home' offers an interesting idea that Ruth offers a canonical alternative or shortcut. "For this book achieves *exactly the same journey* that 1 Samuel does - from the days when the judges rules to David." But significantly because of this and an allusion to Genesis 38, he sees that Ruth intrudes into the overall Biblical story that traces the genealogy from Judah to the house of David. In this he can then state, "I believe that it represents a canonical alternative to 'going down to Egypt'; and I further suggest that Ruth confirms the alternative belonging... that does not include having been 'brought up from Egypt'. These 'intrusive' elements *subvert the main Heilsgeschichte* story, hinting that we could do without exodus, conquest, Moses".(p.131-132)

Similarly Mieke Bal in *Lethal Love* offers the view that Ruth together with the stories of Rachel and Leah, and Tamar became the *mis en abyme* of the history of Israel. In this reflection or mirroring, "(t)he dramatic confrontation with the *same* by the perception of the *different* is staged in the *mis en abyme*. The identity [in fact all identity] is constructed by a dialectic between the unique and the identical." (p.88) Aristotelian concepts of *genus* and *species* in dealing with sameness and difference allows for one to identify or classify some thing, so Paul Ricoeur in *Oneself As Another* speaks of this tension as between *ipse* and *idem* in personal identity terms.)

Ruth highlights and exposes Israel to a Moabite heritage, and offers an alternative history to Israel's faithful and faithless migration of Exodus and male violent conquest of the land, by a tale of a family's quiet migration which demonstrates both faithlessness and faithfulness. There is a risk for Francis Landy who notes that a *mis en abyme* "may redeem or reverse the greater story."('Deconstructing History" p.292) But surely the risk is worth taking since the cross-cultural *hesed* of Ruth is preferable to Israel's destructive nationalism.

preceding period of the Judges. Perhaps the old Davidic Empire ruled and was dreamt of because it seemed secure, when compared to the fragility and vulnerability of the predynastic era, where there was a greater dependency on Yahweh. In exile there must be a tendency to adopt the value system of the host, thus empire thinking would be reflected in nostalgia.

Looking through Derrida's medicine, *pharmakon* we can see the new host country's population has a duality. The New World in migratory terms is the Old World for someone else, and the arrival of newcomers is both good news and bad news. They bring with them not only their richness in cultural and financial ways, but also their differences in value, which disrupt and threaten the old.⁶³ The new host confronted with the difference of the *other* often hegemonically either trying to make them the same, or treating them differently through segregation. In the latter they can become exoticised as temporary refugee or sojourner.

Why did the family Elimelech move and what were their hopes and dreams?

that there was a
famine in the land.

"Like millions of other families throughout history they migrated to an alien land in search of better living conditions ... conditions must have

⁶³ With the recent mass immigration of Hong Kong Chinese to Canada, there have been substantial impacts upon communities in British Columbia and Southern Ontario. Local residents complain of Malls with no access to non-Chinese speakers, as they aim to cater to an exclusively Chinese consumer. In Vancouver the demolition of heritage homes for square monster homes built right to the edge of the plot, has raised uproar. Of course ironically the gross national product improves with the influx of foreign money, and local economies improve.

Bonnie Honig in her essay 'Ruth. The Model Emigree' reveals in two readings of the Biblical Book of Ruth by Cynthia Ozick and Julia Kristeva, the tensions of a Ruth -the model immigrant, assimilated convert to Yahweh, and a Ruth -the one who personifies otherness in being Moabite. "Either immigrants are valued for what *they* bring to us... or feared for what they will do to us", in change. (p.116)

been really bad leaving behind the property that was their inheritance".⁶⁴ In fact, "(t)he family renounced its citizenship in Israel".⁶⁵ Migration is the same the world over. People move because something is wrong with where they are, at that moment, but they can lose, and over generations lose the ties and bonds with home country. Right from hunter-gatherer times the need to move on is often food or resource driven.

Similarly historical "emigration from China, like mass emigration anywhere, required the juncture of bad times at home with good times abroad. Expatriation was the resort of the desperate, but large numbers of Chinese were also tempted out by news of boom and gold rush..."⁶⁶ The desire for land and work, and the need to flee war, famine and oppression are the most common reasons for migration whether temporary or permanent.

In the Ancient Near East, and its preoccupation with fertility through gods and goddesses, and in the Biblical story itself, famine is at worst a divine curse, or at least divine inactivity. For the Israelite, famine was from *El Shaddai*, the God-who-provides, the God of Fertility.⁶⁷ This particular famine is narratively an ironic famine in the land of plenty, of milk and honey, in God's own country and in Bethlehem, the house of bread.

64 *Women of Faith and Spirit*: M Wold: p.55

65 *Reclaiming Her Story*: JL Berquist: p.142

66 *Sons of the Yellow Emperor*: Lynn Pan: p.53

67 Mollenkott in *The Divine Feminine*, asserts *Shaddai*, should be understood as "The God with Breasts"(p.57), whilst Bledstein ascribes the title "The Nurturer"(p.121). This rather than the traditional translation of "The Almighty", markedly impacts Naomi's assertions at the end of chapter one that *Shaddai* the provider has dealt bitterly and afflicted her. (Though the narrator comments that it is Yahweh who visits his people to give food to them in chapter 1 verse 6.)

The cause of the famine is not mentioned. Whether it was crop failure because of drought or locusts, or the activities of the "marauding Midianites described in Judges 6"⁶⁸, is not identified. Though the reasons for the famine are understood as the activity of Yahweh (Leviticus 26:14ff). Hunger, the absence of food, can drive people to all sorts of actions.

And a man from Bethlehem in Judah went to sojourn in the country of Moab, he and his wife and his two sons.

"When the basic needs of life clamor loudly enough people give up their basic rights and other benefits of legal abstraction in order to find things such as food and shelter... This family marched off into a new land with little to show..."⁶⁹ But according to the *Targum* this is not a mere man

(*ish*), but a great man (*gadol rava*). He is a man of means, with great wealth and leadership. Yet he was going temporarily to live as an alien in Moab, to sojourn there. Could he expect the same sort of welfare provisions as Israel made for the disadvantaged. Or did he hope to work for food? It would seem reasonable that perhaps he had sufficient resources to buy food, or to trade for food. Perhaps he was looking for some form of marriage alliance, as we shall see later.

The name of the man was Elimelech

This man's name traditionally is theocratically understood to mean "God is King"⁷⁰. However

more recently it has been translated as "my divinity rules"⁷¹ or, "to me belongs royalty"⁷² or, "to me shall kingship come".⁷³ These newer etymologies revealed through his action the sub-version

⁶⁸ 'Ruth': J J Slotki: *The Five Megilloth*: p.41. Yalkut Shimoni cited in *Megillas Ruth* notes an implication of two famines, "a famine for bread and a famine for Torah... [and] in any generation where there is a lack of Torah, famine must ensue." (p.61)

⁶⁹ *Reclaiming Her Story*: p.142-143

⁷⁰ *BDB* (1968 ed): p.45

⁷¹ 'Female Companionship': A J Bledstein: p.131. This title takes new meaning if Elimelech is seen to be leaving, taking *El Shaddai*'s role of provider for his family.

⁷² 'A thematic approach to Ruth in Rabbinic Literature': L L Bronner: p.154. Of course Elimelech is an ancestor of David and the Davidic lineage! If Ruth exists to connect the period of the Judges to Kings, and/or to

of his name. Elimelech should have been a leader of his people, but "according to the Rabbis, [he] is ... a leader who will not lead. They identify him as a man of substance, distinguished, well-off, an eminence; but arrogant and selfish."⁷⁴ It is conjectured that, "so esteemed was the family of Elimelech that the royal family of Moab wanted two of its daughters to marry the newly arrived Jewish brothers."⁷⁵ But this man was not up to the job of leadership in Israel and supposedly left in Israel's time of need. "Trying to conserve his fortune and peace of mind he lost both - and his Jewish identity."⁷⁶

Frankiel notes that "while it is permissible for a Jew to leave Israel in time of famine (on the model of Abraham and the sons of Jacob), Elimelech left not out of actual need but out of fear and selfishness."⁷⁷ A leader whether economic, political or religious has responsibilities, so the Rabbis would assert, which is why Ozick notes that he is called "a dead stump" by them. In fact his whole lineage became a stump according to Isaiah 11:1. Ozick condemns him for his opportunism, desertion, derogation of responsibility, - for throwing away "the country of aspiration".⁷⁸ Elimelech significantly grasps and holds tightly to what he deems important. In doing so he displaces himself and his family. Clearly he stopped being a Jew when he abandoned others in their need of his leadership, guidance, or financial resource. He placed his personal hope not in Yahweh, but rather in migration and the provisions of Moab. He cut himself and his family off from *home*. His lack of trust and faithfulness to covenant is distorted and contrasted

legitimate a royal house then his name has symbolic meaning. However Ruth being a Moabitess would tend to threaten this whole structure.

⁷³ 'Ruth': C Ozick. p.197; *Megillas Ruth*: p.63 This as with Bronner's translation, can also be seen against the *Targum*'s assertion that Ruth and Orpah were both daughters of Eglon, King of Moab.

⁷⁴ 'Ruth': C Ozick: p.197

⁷⁵ *Megillas Ruth*: Introduction p.I

⁷⁶ *Megillas Ruth*: Introduction p.xxxiv

⁷⁷ 'Ruth and The Messiah': T Frankiel: p.322

by that of Ruth later. Ruth is a corrective *mis en abyme* to Elimelech. She is also instrumental in the recovery of the family land.

He clearly must have sold-up totally and moved out, otherwise Naomi would not have been left to survive by gleaming on her return.⁷⁹ This appears to be decidedly sojourning with no view to

78 'Ruth': C Ozick: p.199. Elimelech is thinking only of his own immediate family, in doing so he "shrugs off the community at large." (p.198)

79 Excursus - Home and Ancestral Village

If Elimelech was bad enough to leave Bethlehem, Israel for Moab, he was bad enough to sell the land as well. *Megillas Ruth* asserts Ruth 4:3 literally means **Naomi has sold**. The Hebrew verb is generally viewed as in the perfect though consonantly it could be a participle. Generally a 'perfect of certainty' enables a reading that Naomi will sell i.e. is selling. Yet the motif of redemption is an important one for the whole book. It is not clear what the land was doing, lying fallow, or being worked by another who now owned it? But clearly it is not available to Ruth and Naomi, and needs redeeming. Naomi sold simply because Elimelech's name is no longer significant. The land is therefore most likely to be in the hands of another, waiting the year of Jubilee for its long-term return. However the short route is the call of covenantal duty; "If one of your countrymen becomes poor and sells some of his property, his nearest relative is to come and redeem what his countryman has sold". (NIV Lev 25:25). Naomi is simply, "an impoverished landowner" in name alone, since why else would she and Ruth need "to make use of the pauper law on gleaming (Deut 24:19) in order to stay alive". (J A Loader p.129)

Elizabeth Cady Stanton's suffragette reading of Ruth requires that "Naomi owned a small house, lot and spring of water on the out skirts of the town." (cited in *Women on the Biblical Road* p.75) But even the possession of a roof and land does not preclude a need for welfare and support, after all to harvest requires a sowing early enough in the season.

Bethlehem is an ancestral village, an important one for Israelite history. Ancestral villages are important to the Chinese, and loyalty extends back to them from their children overseas. The resulting financial support tends to lift the life of the community, both if the sojourner returns to retire, and during the migrant's time away. James Watson notes in his 1977 study that "many Hong Kong villages, such as San Tin, subsist almost entirely on emigrant remittances" (p.207). But also "besides investing in their own homes, almost every year the absentee workers are asked to contribute to the construction of new public buildings or other civic projects" (p.208). This request is virtually impossible to ignore, the call is to obligation and duty, to be faithful to your origins. This is a *pharmacological* gifting/giving without will or intention, nor return to self.

However this loyalty can contaminate the relations with the im/emigrant' host group. Any new country allegiances are viewed as impure because of the clear signal of money sent abroad, i.e. back home. Thus they are sojourner and not authentic loyal immigrant. This reading is obviously a distortion when confronted by my understanding of heart(h).

I recall a conversation with Mary Ko Bong, a Canadian Born Chinese who returned to the family village in Mainland China a some years ago, and recounted being shown her family's (i.e. those of her parents') house and fields by the villagers. For many the connection is important. Ken Hom, the well-known Chinese-American TV cook, has written of his adventure returning to the family village Kaiping for the first time. "Our driver located the family house and my mother and I walked through the gates of the field into the courtyard where we were met by our assembled relatives ... Photographs of the American members of the family ... were on display. To announce our arrival to the village at large, my cousin and his son set off strings of firecrackers... It really was as if I had been there before." (p.5)

returning, i.e. emmigration out of Israel. It is ironic that we know Elimelech would not return only Naomi would make it back.

and the name of his wife was Naomi; and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Chilion.

Naomi⁸⁰ meaning pleasantness is mother to her husband's two sons; Mahlon, "the sickly"⁸¹ or "weakness"⁸² is obviously not expected to live long;

and Chilion, variously translated as, "[t]he one who came to an early end"⁸³, "consumption"⁸⁴, or "emptying out."⁸⁵ Similarly Chilion's demise is already ordained, though of course his line will die out as the widowed Orpah turns to return home. Here are the given ironies of a migrant's life's risks exposed in the *lovely one* and her expiring children. The children are *his* sons. Naomi already exhibits the separation to come as the text records it.

They came to the fields of Moab and there they remained.

There they were, moving from sojourner, temporary resident to a state of being. They were not resting but rather they settled. "The *Targum* translates ... this as follows they became officers there",

In very many cases, as with Ken Hom's grandfather, money is sent back by Overseas Chinese and thus the bond maintained. Naomi had to return, when in need, back to the ancestral village, but all Elimelech had done was to take money away. Ruth is then a story of being faithful to your origins, the dust, the ground from which you came. Be/longing admits the spectral trace of root and route.

⁸⁰ Jack Sasson in a brief essay suggests that Naomi's name means "winsome" or "my lovely one". (1987 p.322) While laCocque associates it with Naamah "which is the same word in Hebrew, was the sister of Tubal-Cain (Gen. 4:22), and more interesting for us, the Ammonite wife of Solomon, mother of the future king Rehoboam." (p.114) By this association Naomi as one descendent of Lot represents one of Lot's daughters as Ammon and Ruth the other as Moab. "So, in the Book of Ruth, Ammon and Moab are joined together with Israel again." (p.115) This is an interesting idea drawn from Jewish tradition, though weak when confronted by the text. In a canonical setting, Mieke Bal's work with *mis en abyme*, allows the possibility of this association, when redemption is seen ultimately to be for all peoples.

⁸¹ 'A thematic Approach to Ruth': L L Bronner: p.154

⁸² *Israel's Mysterious God*: B P Robinson: p.33

⁸³ 'A Thematic Approach to Ruth': L L Bronner: p.154

⁸⁴ *Israel's Mysterious God*: B P Robinson: p.33

⁸⁵ *The Feminine Unconventional* : A laCocque: p.116. He views this name symbolically as a sign of dispersion through exile.

and we can understand "that they integrated themselves socially and militarily into the culture of Moab."⁸⁶

"Mobility has brought [together] a mixture of people, religious and philosophies. This brings a loneliness which people have more or less difficulty in coping with. The family, sometimes shrunk to just a couple and their children, can no longer be self-sufficient."

Jean Vanier *Community and Growth* p.1

Though Jean Vanier can state "(t)imes have changed ... Nowadays, people who live in the same area are no longer part of a homogeneous group",⁸⁷ migration has always happened! These Moabites were not one either. It is a matter of scale, both in distance terms and numerically.

When Elimelech died and she was *left*; not just left but left behind; she was forsaken and abandoned. What options are open to her? She and her two sons, are Elimelech-less. They are exposed and vulnerable. The situation of a widow alone in a strange land in a patriarchal time calls for desperate measures.

Inter-marriage with locals always offers a secure route to integration and acceptance. As Lynn Pan notes in the experiences of the Chinese Migrant, "a go-getting people, naturally opted for integration

Elimelech Naomi's husband died and she was left;

... they took wives of the women of Moab.

with the ruling class - the indigenous aristocracy in the case of Thailand, Dutch and Eurasian in the case of Java."⁸⁸ This might be true of Elimelech's family, since both Orpah and Ruth are in Jewish tradition understood to be princesses of Moab.

⁸⁶ *Megillas Ruth*: p.65

⁸⁷ *Community and Growth*: J Vanier: p.1

⁸⁸ *Sons of the Yellow Emperor* : p.167

Who was to arrange this other than Naomi herself. Security into old age, in many cultures is in the family and extended family. But why did she not return to Bethlehem, (house of food or

They married Moabite women ... and lived there about ten years. The both of them ... also died and the woman was left behind by her two children and her husband.

bread) while she still had two sons or send home for suitable wives? Instead she allowed or arranged for them to marry out! Perhaps the sons were old enough in this patriarchal world to have made their own decisions or

having grown up in Moab they were fully assimilated. Beauty is frequently conditioned by the world you grow up in and a mail-order bride is not a real option without a father around to organise it (see Genesis 24 and 28).

Then as the story continues Naomi is abandoned by her sons in death. Perhaps their brides were child brides who brought dowries with them, that would have meant her young sons and the hope invested in them died with them.

Things are really desperate for Naomi. Seemingly only now is migration back to Israel an option for her. She has been left behind by her husband and children. Whether it was the confirmation of food now available, or the end of the Torah famine and therefore a return to law and order, or the desperateness of her situation, is not clear but a decision is made. In fact the situation now demands action. There is no time for paralysis, sitting by the fireside. Phyllis Tribble writes, "(t)he security of husband and children, which a male-dominated culture affords its women, is hers no longer ... Stranger in a foreign land, this woman [Naomi] is a victim of death - and of life."⁸⁹ Naomi finds herself displaced and distanced from the folk of Bethlehem and Moab. Seemingly she is alone, an alien. But this will be no real homecoming. She cannot go home, she can only

⁸⁹ "Two Women in a Man's World": Phyllis Tribble: p.253

acknowledge the ground from which she came from. After all she has lived abroad, and her children have married out. Naomi is a displaced and dispossessed symbolic for the many.

The Second Be/longing:
Being an alien is inevitable

Many a Chinese parent, especially a mother, is worried their child will marry outside. Many a child is blind to the distance between them.

"when I married Jim - married out - I was disowned ... When I was growing up, I almost forgot that I was Chinese. It never occurred to me that my parents would disapprove. When I brought him home, that's when it really hit home base. "

Shirley Welsh in *Jin Guo: Voices of Chinese Canadian Women* p.182

Parental concerns about the distance and possibility of exogamy are made all the more real when Joel Crohn states that "most recent statistics show that over 40 percent of all children born to an Asian or Pacific Islander parent also have a white parent."⁹⁰ How does a mother cope with it when it happens? In one of Amy Tan's dramatisations the mother thinks, "I smile. I use my American face. That's the face Americans think is Chinese, the one they cannot understand. But I am ashamed she is ashamed. Because she is my daughter and I am proud of her, and I am her mother but she is not proud of me."⁹¹ The stereotypical inscrutable face of the oriental is in one way reinforced, and in another way is given a voice in *bitter medicine* eaten.

⁹⁰ *Mixed matches*: J Crohn: p.14. Amy Tan exemplifies a mother's concerns in Rose Hsu Jordan's story, in *The Joy Luck Club*. "My mother must have noticed these differences after Ted picked me up one evening at my parents' house... 'He is American,' warned my mother, as if I had been too blind to notice, 'A *waigoren*.' 'I'm American too,' I said. ' And it's not as if I'm going to marry him or something.' (*JLC* p.123-124) But of course she does.

By contrast her mother's story An-Mei Hsui is a graphically painful demonstration of faithfulness of one generation to the next. As a gesture of sacrificial love "my mother cut a piece of meat from her arm ... [she] took her flesh and and put it in the soup. She cooked magic in the ancient tradition to try and cure her mother... Even though I was young, I could see the pain of flesh and the worth of the pain. This is how a daughter honors her mother. It is *shou* so deep it is in your bones ... Because sometimes that is the only way to remember what is in your bones. You must peel off your skin, and that of your mother, and her mother before her. Until there is nothing." (*JLC* p.41)

⁹¹ *The Joy Luck Club*: p.291

It is obviously something hard to come to terms with when the child marries outsiders, because it is not a private event. The family itself has also to deal with it. In the non-individualist world, shame and loss of face is a public matter.

"we mourned when our children chose non-Jewish mates. ... I found myself thinking about Naomi in Moab, wondering is she had feared for her sons in a place where there were no Jewish girls to marry. Had she wept or danced at their weddings? ... My protracted quarrel with myself was especially painful because I was genuinely fond of the mates my children had chosen. They were no abstract non-Jewish adversaries but good people who had done what I wished my children to do, namely chosen Jewish mates."

Sylvia Rothchild 'Growing Up and Older with Ruth' p 154-5

Initially an immigrant mother's be/longing is at least deepened, if not challenged by the assimilation of child into this new culture. The child is no longer a mother's own, rather they are formed and shaped by a world not her own, such that the familiar is no longer familiar. Ts'ai Yen and her non-Chinese speaking children experienced a gulf between them. So also is the experience of the Chinese mother who dearly

wants to communicate with her Americanised daughter. The distancing for Naomi is completed in death and it is a bitter void between mother and children.

Grieving can mean a lashing out to create even more space and depth to the chasm of pain. We can see this in Gerry Brenner's literary *transcription* of an interview with Ruth, which demonstrates well the family divide. "Did she [i.e. Naomi] pause to reason with us, to explain the difficulties of being aliens in Bethlehem? or did she abruptly begin to insult us? ... Did she, in her alleged mordant self-deprecation, show concern for our recent loss, the freshness of our grief? or did she ... rub salt into the disgrace of our childless marriages."⁹² This is a poignant insight. Even

before her arrival in Bethlehem, Naomi is no longer pleasant, rather she is plainly already Mara, (which means bitterness).

Nancy Lee suggests that "she has been immobile in shock, grief and depression", and that perhaps she is in the anger stage of the mourning process.⁹³ Naomi hits out at those left closest to her. She is determined to wallow alone in her grief, and to make that walk home a solitary one. She, in her almost pathological self-absorbed grief, wishes to take that narrow road of pain alone. She lets out a little of the bottled-up emotions. In that moment all she wants is to be left alone by herself. Therefore she tells the daughter-in-laws to go home to their mothers for the first time.⁹⁴ Is this a sensible voice of concern, telling them the obvious; or a bitter voice trying to drive them away?

Why should you go with me?

Superficially an interrogation, Ronald Hyman suggests a triple transformation to a corrective meaning: "You are

⁹³ 'Choices in the Book of Ruth': N V Lee: p.235. The five stages of mourning, taken from the work of Elisabeth Kübler-Ross, are denial, anger, bargaining, depression and acceptance. "And in going through this process, the living are not only healed but enabled..."(p.235) However the progression is not necessarily always in order nor stage to stage according to Kübler-Ross, and those grieving will return to various stages. This seems to make better sense than the traditional Jewish interpretation that Naomi is going through the standard Proselyte conversion formula. An abandoned woman is going to be bitter even to those closest to her. It seems here is the test of the faithfulness of the relationships with Orpah and Ruth.

⁹⁴ The call for Ruth and Orpah to return to their mother's house seems significant particularly in a patriarchal culture. Carol Meyer's study in 'Returning Home: Ruth 1:8 and the Gendering of the Book of Ruth' offers a fascinating but also convincing interpretation in the light of Naomi's activities throughout the middle and end section of the story. "Israelite women apparently had a role equal if not greater than their husbands in arranging the marriages of their children ... Naomi hopes to send Ruth and Orpah home in order that ... they will secure new marriage liaisons; and, unsuccessful ... Naomi instigates Ruth's conjugal pairing."(p.112-113) It is not insignificant that Naomi at no time meets nor communicates with Boaz, her activities are reduced to advising and correcting Ruth. Sasson's attributed Proppian *dispatcher* role seems reasonable in this light though I am less convicted of a "Naomi as fairy godmother" parallel. With her two sons it is quite possible they might have more voice in spousal selection in the absence of their father, though it is not impossible that a desperate Naomi would seek the solution of marrying into security through her sons.

wrong to go with me; you should not go; there is no point to it."⁹⁵ However I believe this is an imperative to match the earlier; a second instruction to Orpah and Ruth to go away and leave Naomi to her pain. *Why can't you two just leave me alone!*

Only Orpah exhibits apparent filiality and is obedient enough to turn her back and return to home.⁹⁶ After all, the only sensible thing is to stay at home where everything is supposedly familiar and secure. Home is the only place to be when crisis strikes. Migration is a risky business and not to be taken lightly. Except that Orpah has already migrated by marrying out, and there is no home truly to go back to. We ought not to see Orpah as abandoning Naomi, nor necessarily repressing this be/longing but rather, sometimes the sensible thing is to go on out and face the world again⁹⁷.

In fact Ruth Moynihan asserts that "there is nothing wrong with Orpah's choice, but Ruth, on the other hand ... was actually asserting her individuality. She disobeyed Naomi, and probably her own Moabite people".⁹⁸ In doing so she becomes the epitome of *hesed*, of faithfulness; except she is a Moabite.⁹⁹ She is the *mis en abyme* of Orpah's filiality when she chooses to migrate

⁹⁵ 'Questions and Changing Identity': R T Hyman: p.190

⁹⁶ Orpah's name, notes Bronner in 'A Thematic Approach to Ruth', "is said by the sages to refer to her turning her nape [of her neck] to Naomi when she agrees to return to Moab." (p.155) Bronner also notes the *Midrash* embroiders her story as mother of Goliath, opponent of David and enemy of Israel. Yet Orpah is the sensible one, redeeming her from merely being Ruth's counterpart, the one who abandoned Naomi, M T Winter in *WomanWisdom* writes, Orpah emerges ... as an ordinary woman, a good, solid, sensible woman, the kind that families and cultures depend on from one generation to the next." (p.286) Whilst she might been seen to be gold-digging in returning home, Orpah in Tribble's eyes is "one who chooses her destiny", (p.256), and that "she is a paradigm of the sane and reasonable; she acts according to the structures and customs of society." (p.257)

⁹⁷ Like the elder brother of Luke 15, she stays behind faithful to her homeland and watches the prodigal one march off, though this time mother/parent goes as well!

⁹⁸ 'Ruth and Naomi': R B Moynihan : p.43

⁹⁹ K Sakenfeld in *The Meaning of Hesed* indicates two key aspects of acts of *hesed*, the freely givenness of it, and the extraordinariness of mercy or compassion. As Phyllis Tribble puts it in 'Two Women in a Man's World', "Ruth stands alone; she possesses nothing. No God has called her; no deity has promised her blessing... She lives and chooses without a support group". (p.258) We can see a Ruth empowered, somewhere between sojourner and

when she is not driven by famine, nor war nor oppression. In fact as a Moabite she risks all to go to Israel. This is the *aleatory* moment of Derrida, the impossible. She is faithful to Naomi in her disobedience to her. In her denial to leave Naomi alone, Ruth intersects with her. The miracle of meeting occurs.

Here there is a significant dilemma "Naomi in Moab is in an alien country. She was an alien before the death of her husband and sons, but now her situation has become parlous ... given the fact that Ruth insists on staying with Naomi there is bound to be *someone* who is an alien - either Naomi ... or Ruth."¹⁰⁰ The ambivalence of the relationship between mother-in-law and daughter-in-law is that at least one if not both of them are going to feel homeless if they are not already homeless. In bereavement they both experience be/longing in loss of family (son and/or husband) and dislocation, and begin the journey meeting each other in be/longing.

Ruth significantly has broken with family, country, and faith. She and Orpah already made that first move by marrying cross-culturally Mahlon and Chilion. In these exogamous relationships they transcend the cultural definitions of separation. At core these are issues of otherness. They are Jews, and you are Moabites. Joel Crohn writes, "Mixed matches are more complicated relationships than those between people from similar backgrounds. ... Differences in cultural and family styles may be fascinating, but they are also alien."¹⁰¹ Already Ruth, by marrying outside her ethnic group, has separated herself, and generated a first-level crisis. Married to Mahlon they

accommodation mentalities. The extraordinariness of it all, that without compulsion, makes this miraculous! *Hesed* fidelity can only be the aleatory event.

¹⁰⁰ "New Life amid the Alien Corn": M E W Thompson: p.200

¹⁰¹ *Mixed Matches*: J Crohn: p.24. Israel and Moab were neighbours, and it can be claimed that the cross-cultural gap was therefore not significant. Crohn claims "the three cornerstones [which] have always formed the foundations of identity [are] - family, culture, and religion". (p.10) It is reasonable to believe that all three were significantly different even in the times of the Judges; religiously, aesthetically, politically even dietarily, because

together, or perhaps Mahlon and family have to decide "how to define a family faith, celebrate holidays, carry cultural traditions and deal with the reactions of family and friends to their relationship."¹⁰² Perhaps there was solidarity in relationship for Naomi and Ruth, because Ruth moved into Jewish tradition in her home life, and therefore experienced being an alien while Orpah remained solidly a Moabitess in self-identity.

"Cross-cultural relationships reveal the kinds of problems and possibilities that are created when people bring different pasts to the task of shaping a new future."¹⁰³ In communication terms, the clarity in the exchange on the Bethlehem Road is suspect! Whether each understood the other fully even after 10 years together is up for debate. Misunderstanding is always a possibility, always already there as *là*. However migration as movement always has a hope for better times, and for each them, Naomi, Orpah and Ruth, they hoped for something better than their current situation. Ruth saw something in or through Naomi, enough to send her along on that long journey.¹⁰⁴ Ruth answered the call to join together in the quest of be/longing, that is the earnest search for connection and the meeting place. Something that Naomi will hear in due course, which shall see shortly.

of Torah. In fact existentially closeness often drives difference to polemical extremes, such is found in the political realities of the Balkans and Central Africa.

¹⁰² *Mixed Matches*: p.24

¹⁰³ *Mixed Matches*: p.302

¹⁰⁴ Ruth in Gerry Brenner's interview, asserts that something was in her "pluck - brass, to some... Even before I became her daughter-in-law she had agreed to the risky venture of leaving Bethlehem ... showing she was game to wrest with... My oath, part curse that it was, also contained a pledge to what Naomi represented: her aggressively irascible independence."(p.241) Challenged by the interviewer, Ruth further comments that people "should begin to suggest what it was in Naomi's character which won my loyalty. In my oath was a pledge of obedience - to a principle of assertive independence."(p.242) I would suggest that what commentators do comment on is the strength of the bond, the faithfulness of one to another, rather than the mere qualities of one person. After all both women are bereaved.

The Third Be/longing:
Bethlehem The Meeting Place

"Families now are different from before. In the olden days, the family always had to stay together. This was not necessarily good because in families like ours, the father had to be solely responsible ... old people would get upset if their children didn't look after them."

Grace Lee in *Jin Guo*.p.200

Clearly Naomi suffered much loss in her life; the loss of a home in Bethlehem, loss of friends and community; significantly the loss of the familiar. She must have been grieving badly.¹⁰⁵ She had been uprooted by her travels, by her husband's decision to

move Moab. After all, in a patriarchal society, Elimelech would have made the decisions. Perhaps then the security of someone else making decisions is lost with his death.¹⁰⁶ She had the quiet strength to survive this time. Her sons go onto marry. Then there are new disappointments because her sons married outside, but she learns to accept this and they enjoy again a modicum of security in this strange land. But then her dear children die, leaving her abandoned. Her exchange with Ruth seems so clearly to betray a deep grief in *anger*. Perhaps it is unfinished business from Elimelech's earlier death, or perhaps as Ruth Sohn suggests this is a double bereavement. "Why does the verse say **then those two - Mahlon and Chilion -also died?** Isn't this repetitious? This is to teach us that they died together on the same day."¹⁰⁷ At this level of shock and loss, a quick adjustment is not easy. Also the very presence of these foreign women are reminders of her personal estrangement.

¹⁰⁵ I mention again Kübler-Ross' model of grieving and acceptance of death. Her model views adaptation as a process of moving through the stages of denial, anger, bargaining, depression, and acceptance. The adapatee may not necessarily work through in sequence. She notes the importance of the role of hope in facilitation through the process of grieving.

¹⁰⁶ Within my own roots/routes my grandfathers' premature deaths left widows struggling as did my father's death at age 43.

¹⁰⁷ 'Verse by Verse. A Modern Commentary': Ruth Sohn: p.17

Orpah seems to have made an easy transition to *acceptance*, the final adaptation, or perhaps she is in *depression*, with no fight left she simply follows Naomi's instructions to go home. Whatever the case, she leaves the story promptly on cue.

Where then is Ruth? Which stage of the bereavement process is she in? She betrays no *anger*, nor any *acceptance* of the situation. She might still to be in *denial*, isolating herself from that which is most familiar. "From a cultural perspective Ruth has chosen death over life. She has disavowed the solidarity of family; she has abandoned national identity; and she has renounced religious affiliation."¹⁰⁸ She has chosen the path of longing, called be/longing. Whether she has put herself here, or she has merely found herself here is not important. Like Cinders' fall she has the opportunity to recognise this place as the focus of life which is heart(h).

Now Kübler-Ross's model of bereavement seemingly overlaps with that of Peter Adler's culture shock model, which is one of cultural adaptation.¹⁰⁹ Ruth adds to the loss of her husband, and the bitterness of childlessness, one of moving cultures. Yet by the time we meet Ruth in the barley fields of Bethlehem she has already achieved the stage of *reintegration*. She already knows the system of gleaming leftover grain from the fields (Ruth 2:2). However she is still expressing the nervousness and anxiety of this stage. The text comments almost to confirm this that even at the end of the barley and wheat harvest **"she lived with her mother-in-law."**

Where else would she be living after the earlier oath of commitment? For Ruth soon enough

Wash and perfume, put on best clothes and go down to the threshing floor.

¹⁰⁸ 'Two Women In A Man's World': p.257-258

¹⁰⁹ For Peter Adler's five-stage model which describes culture shock in developmental terms leading to adjustment, see earlier Excursus - Developing a Chinese migrant vocabulary.

she moves on to being able to go out to the meeting place of the threshing floor. This displays an ability to deal with and survive very new situations, characteristic of the *autonomy* stage. What possessed the young woman to put herself in such a compromising situation?

The debate as to whether any sexual irregularity took place, and whether Ruth uncovered Boaz's literal feet or legs, or genitals will continue, and offers little to the current project. Nevertheless we cannot ignore the risks of the situation. That Ruth was a young naive woman is mere conjecture, because she seems to be functioning confidently within the Jewish setting. Though even regardless of this possible naive confidence, Paul Pedersen's casebook amply demonstrates that in cross-cultural situations, regardless of the problems of miscommunication, young women seem to realise they are at risk fairly quickly.¹¹⁰

Neither can we say Naomi is trying to provide Boaz with sex. "Naomi is no Madame" as Andre laCocque puts it, rather she is the matchmaker, or "dispatcher". For the objective of the story is the successful fulfilment of tasks. Jack Sasson sees them as a number of fairytale like tasks. "Poverty [and] insecurity is resolved: [the] *sought for person* (i.e the *goel*) is obtained for the *dispatcher* (Naomi)" and "childlessness is resolved: [the] *sought for person* (i.e. the child) is pledged and assigned to Naomi [and, of course, the] hero is wedded."¹¹¹

¹¹⁰ See *The Five stages of Culture Shock: Critical Incidents Around the World*: P Pedersen

¹¹¹ *Ruth: A new Translation with Philological Commentary*: p.213. It is possible to read Ruth successfully through Cinderella. However it is perhaps possible to read Cinderella into almost every story. Barbara Hernstein Smith challenges the dangers of the folklorist approach which can project a Platonic version on other stories. Thus "all of Charles Dickens novels are basically versions of Cinderella." As are "*The Divine Comedy, Pilgrims Progress, King Lear, and the Aeneid*." ('Afterthoughts' p.216) But this is problematic of all hermeneutics. Yet folklorist Photeine Bourboulis among others is willing to entertain interesting ideas. "If the story of Cinderella is truly of Chinese origin, as we have grounds to think, it is not possible to say how it reached Europe." ('The Bride-Show custom' p. 107) In contrast to mythologists who argue for universals elements in human cultures, folklorists fascinated by oral transmission seek to track the geographic roots/routes as the tales are assumed to migrate with peoples. Significantly the routes between Europe and China tend to include the Middle East.

May Yahweh make the woman who is coming into your house like Rachel and Leah, who together built the house of Israel.

The Elders and chorus at the gate proclaim this anthem. Though addressed to Boaz this

seems to be the acclaim needed to make a person feel accepted and a member of the new culture. It is a welcoming wedding chorus, but also affirms and confirms Ruth for all time. She will leave her mark for all time on Israel, the lineage of David, and the Messianic dynasty. Ruth rises from the ashes to the palace to give a root/routedness to Israel.

Ronald Hyman traces "how she has progressed from a young Moabite woman to a foreigner in the Land of Israel, to someone lower than Boaz's servants, to Boaz's handmaid with a name and therefore an identity, to a relative whom he is obligated to marry. ... [In fact] (s)he goes beyond Naomi's instructions to her. She is her own person with her own ideas about what Boaz should do."¹¹² Hyman views Ruth as having shed her old identity, but using Adler's model I suggests that she has achieved the stage of being bicultural. She is able to accept social, psychological and cultural differences. But also she is an "individual is capable of exercising choice and responsibility and able to create meaning for situations."¹¹³

Metaphorically, Ruth is now bicultural and can never go home. There is no going back. She is no longer and

"The Poet moves from life to language, the translator moves from language to life; both, like the immigrant, try to identify the invisible, what's between the lines, the mysterious implications."

A Michaels *Fugitive Pieces* p.109

But then I can also assert that every tale of migration is also a story of *rags to riches*, as also is the migratory story of Ruth. The motifs of poverty to marriage, advice and help given, significant meeting places are always motifs of hope. However as the global list of parallel Cinderella stories continues to grow so perhaps is my belief in stories of miraculous hope and faithfulness.

¹¹² 'Questions and Changing Identity': R T Hyman: p.198

¹¹³ *The Five Stages of Culture Shock*: p.249

yet is still a Moabitess. Her personal experiences and cultural adaptation will always separate her from others. She will always like many immigrants, who live in the borderlands between, the traditions of their ancestors and/or the land of their birth, and the culture of their new country of residency. But now she has *shalom* a right functioning in dealing with the world. This is not one of rigidity and fixed thinking, but one strong and able to make sense of the world in which she finds herself.

How is this achieved? Pedersen suggests through "giving and inspiring trust and confidence, establishing a basis for mutual liking and respect, caring for culturally different people, and acting in ways that are both truthful and sensitive towards the feelings of others."¹¹⁴ How does one experience Biblical *shalom*, except through the experience of faithfulness, *hesed*. Not by nationalistic, or tribal exclusivity, but a sharing of self. Naomi offers this to Ruth, but at the same time must remember for herself that this journey was and is hers also. She left Bethlehem former land of plenty for a land of plenty in Moab, but found a land of emptiness and abandonment only to return eventually to the house of bread. She, having lived in Moab does not return unchanged. She also is a stranger, the im/emigrant in Israel, yet welcomed by the Bethlehemites, who later do this for Ruth.

"No ...
Moabite ...
may be
included
among the
Lord's
people."

Deut 23:3

Acculturation is not one-sided, and occurs between groups of significantly different worldview, both majority and minority. J Berry notes, "change occurs in both groups; but in practice, more change

"your daughter-in-law
loves you and has
done more for you
than seven sons."

Ruth 4:15

¹¹⁴ *The Five Stages of Culture Shock*: p.16

occurs in the non-dominant than in the dominant group."¹¹⁵ Yet there is significant change in the microcosm of Bethlehem, and hopefully for Israel.

Both Naomi and Ruth can be said to have influenced and changed the worldview of the people of Bethlehem and particularly Ruth ultimately by being the great grandmother of King David. Both women demonstrate acts of *hesed* freely given and extraordinary in compassion.

Problems can occur for individuals who consciously or unknowingly follow different routes from others. The projections of assumptions, that others have had the same experience, is basically the same as making definitions and generalisations. Unfortunately Berry and others¹¹⁶, while recognising the stresses of acculturation in feelings of confusion, anxiety and alienation, have failed to note the cultural adaptability of the members of some cultural groups by becoming bicultural to alleviate these feelings. In contrast Adler's model does account for the one who has to live two worlds, between two lines, but even this does not recognise the unsettling nature of this existence.

In particular the Chinese and Asian minority groups are frequently portrayed as paragons of successful acculturation in their ideal integration into North American culture.¹¹⁷ But is this true integration and is it desirable? It would seem not! It is the hegemonic projection of those perceiving themselves as host, illustrated in Donald Duk's disgust with his teacher. It is a repression of memory that settles in the deep secret place but is not a secret. For it rises in spectral traces and haunts whether as "dream, obsession or metaphor". For not until Naomi

¹¹⁵ 'The Role of Psychology in Ethnic Studies' : page 14

¹¹⁶ See Excursus - Developing A Chinese Migrant Vocabulary.

¹¹⁷ See Rose's essay, 'Asian Americans from Pariahs to Paragons'.

recognised her own mixed cultural experience, and embraced her own migratory mourning of the lost, could she and Ruth reach out to each other. Only with Naomi's meeting with herself over the course of the story, could they both meet in the ambiguities of be/longing.

The sacrificial acts of *hesed* by each to each other at different times during their life journeys were the meeting places of be/longing; sameness and difference, the pain and comfort, familiarity and

Pure is the word. It calls for fire. Cinders there are, this is what takes place in letting a place occur, so that it will be understood. Nothing will have taken place. Cinders there are: Place there is.

Jacques Derrida *Cinders*. p.37

alienation, hope and hopelessness, home and homelessness, of being the immigrant. Without this meeting of polar opposites there is no meeting place in the Bethlehem, symbol of Shaddai's provision. The miracle of meeting happens in Bethlehem, and the aleatory occurs. Moabite meets Israelite, being reconciled to each other in the incineration of self-justifying self-interest, the purifying fire of self leaves merely a trace.

But in being-settled, or beginning to become settled comes a risk, the danger of forgetfulness, the danger of violence.

Later a generation on, what of Obed the child of miscengenation?

How well is he remembered and how much did he as bicultural and biracial child remember his own root/rooteness as im/emigrant?

Did belonging silence be/longing?

* Ruth and Be/longing's Wound *

Be/longing's Lac(k):
Forgetfulness or Repressed Memories

Gayatri Chakravorty

Spivak writes "[i]t

is becoming commonplace to say that, for the
migrant or nomad or yet hybrid, land or space

Remember that
you were once
gerim in the land
of Egypt.
Leviticus 19:34

I really didn't notice that he had a funny
nose. And he certainly looked better all
dressed up in fancy clothes. He's not
nearly as attractive as he seemed the other
night. So I think I'll just pretend that this
glass slipper feels too tight.

Judith Viorst 'And Then The Prince Knelt Down' p.73

is now being transformed into a script, not a containing system of signs."¹¹⁸ She seeks to create space for the subaltern's aporia, inability to choose for one identity. "I saw through the long-distance theorist's dismissal of aporia ... I knew the ways of cutting the drift or *dérive*, of course. Silence the subaltern by talking too much."¹¹⁹ The host or the majority's voices are by implication, voices of those who are forgetful of roots/routes. They are those who are deaf to be/long's voice within. In other circumstances their voices might say "I know how you feel" and in that moment appropriate or steal the experience of the outsider or im/emigrant. This theft has an ultimacy, an invasive removal of the thread, the vestige of a trace, which is the removal of nothing, rather the final incineration of self, to leave nothing.

The subaltern may not be external, but rather a voice or voices from *straits and islands in the blood*. Spivak goes on to say "[t]he notion of origins is as broad and robust and full of affect as it is imprecise. History lurks in it somewhere, I had written, but now I think that sentence would

¹¹⁸ 'Acting Bits/Identity Talk': p.778

¹¹⁹ 'Acting Bits/Identity Talk': p.779

have to be revised: History slouches in it, ready to comfort *and* kill."¹²⁰ To seize it and make it mine, makes it be/long to no-one. It justifies one to the detriment of other, thus comforting one and demeaning another. History and we ought to ask "*Whose version?*" is often a hypostasization of origins into a metanarrative, concretising ashes and cinders into a dangerous edifice of identity which is the fireplace, that is the place of burning – for Derrida it is Holocaust.

The power of the making of the New World metanarrative has almost killed aboriginal voices, as voices. In multiculturalism appropriation or exoticisation is a dangerous domestication of the stranger, even worse when they were the earlier hosts This is a loss-from-sight of one's own fragile origins is non-be/longing.

Stuart Hall, a British Jamaican scholar writing on identity in the Anglo-European setting asserts that historically European nation states have never been pure in any sense. "(T)hey are without exception ethnically hybrid - the product of conquests, absorptions of one people by another."¹²¹ They are distinctively reflective of their colonial histories. Hall describes them as "*diaspora-ised* beyond repair ... inextricably multicultural - mixed ethnically, religiously, culturally and linguistically".¹²² This has dramatic consequences when inserted into the North American situation, where Italian, German, Dutch, Irish or English defines essentially an ethnic group. These are *non-visible* minority immigrants who frequently lose sight of their origins as immigrants, adopting the homogenising pioneer myth. Yet still the unifying strategies of ethno-

¹²⁰ 'Acting Bits/Identity Talk': p.781

¹²¹ 'Our mongrel selves': p.6: Due to some curricula accident in my school education in English history, there have been repeated studies of the Roman and Norman invasions, and the First World War periods which has ensured an awareness of the absurdity of an English purity.

¹²² 'Our mongrel selves': p.6

cultural allegiances are avulsed as islands in a river delta. These islands are so vulnerable and fragile and so easily swept away.

As soon as one feels at-home and comfortable, at home in the land, there is a danger to the other as stranger or *gerim*. Walter Brueggemann notes that for Israel's memory, land could affirm "the abrasive historicity" of getting there. "But land can also be ... the enemy of memory, the destroyer of historical precariousness. The central temptation of the land for Israel is that Israel will cease to remember and settle for how it is and imagine not only that it was always so but that it will always be so."¹²³ The danger of being-at-home is the denial of one's own root/route-

¹²³ *The Land*: p.54. Excursus - Being sacrificed or sacrificing to the gods of the land

Discussing the Deuteronomic passage just prior to entry to the land, Brueggemann after asserting "The temptation to private well-being is a way to death"; asks "The central question at the boundary is this: Can Israel live in the land without being seduced by the gods, without the temptation of coveting having its way?" (p.59) The place where your faith lies is the place of the gods of a land. The values, the priorities which shape life in the new land in the migrant's acculturation are these lethal sirens of the heart(h).

This is the challenge every immigrant faces for his or herself and for their family. The seductive power of alien gods is often overwhelming. *Blessings* a play by Korean Canadian playwright, M J Kang, emotively explores the migrant generational divide. Travelling to Korea to find her roots, the Canadian-reared Soo discovers how Canadian she is yet. Returning to Canada in the second act "we see the situation that has impelled her to go ... Soo hasn't lived at home for four years and can't relate to her parents." Jon Kaplan in his article goes on to cite Sally Han's analysis. "They're hard-working and self-interested, though they might not admit it to themselves. They came to Canada with the classic immigrant idea of a life that had more and was better, and in pursuing that dream they lost contact with their own child."

Soo: "I used to be scared of the rain. I lived in a condominium way way northwest. And my dad worked downtown, he works down town. And so whenever it rained, I used to sit by the window and pray, pray to God that he wouldn't take my parents away, that my parents wouldn't die because a tree had fallen on them, or die because dad couldn't see where he was driving to and would drive off a cliff. And [I] would promise to be a good daughter, a perfect student, a fantastic debater, writer, runner, piano player, Korean folk dancer, violin player, and promisepromisepromise if only if only my parents would come home Okay. And I would sit there until I felt from God that he wouldn't let my parents die. That I would be blessed. For a long time, I kept my promises." (*Blessings* p.47)

Soo is so very much a Cinderella figure, as her monologues delivered from the lonely home, from loneliness itself. A shadowy childhood-created friend Luigi-Dad provides some limited support which eventually pushes her back into confronting her situation her lostness in her family Canadian and Korean. Soo's oriental family is dysfunctional at the least by Oriental standards, but not so far from the immigrant experience, because in doing everything for her their value system has been displaced. Perhaps in her parents personal sacrifices of hard work and making enough money she has been sacrificed to them. But there is hope "towards the end of the play Soo recognizes she's not always right. It's painful discovery, but it allows her to start to accept the love her parents are able to show her." (Kaplan) Soo's journey of grief includes as we can see Kubler-Ross' stages of *bargaining*, *depression* and on

edness, the precariousness of identity as be/longing. The palace for one person can be a prison or dungeon for another, or grow from irritant to become one later.

Was Ruth the immigrant ever really at home in Israel and was Israel really at ease with her Moabite ancestor? Or did they accommodate themselves?

"My mother tongue, a rural dialect of Toisan, is quickly being lost to Cantonese, the city dialect, in Toisan city and the outlying villages and [is] being lost to English here in Canada."

Brenda Joy Lem 'Artist statement'

The language of invitation has often been used by majority groups in the host culture in reference to the immigration of minorities. Contrary to popular belief as already asserted acculturation is not one-sided. Change occurs in both in the meeting. The dominant/strong does not remain untouched. Yet apparently the only ways open to avoid or reduce the effects of

the change would be to assimilate her, marginalise her or leave her as the sojourner. After all she should be assimilated to conform or be ghettoised or exoticised to remove the threat to host. As a result an immigrant's move to live in a hopeful new land can become a place of despair. Very much the experience of the supposedly invited professional to Canada who frequently finds their qualifications invalid and they are forced to more menial labour and the margins of society.

towards *acceptance* and hope of reconnection in this case. Here exists the potential for *ruthean* fidelity, rooted/routed in belonging, that might transform her parents own bereftness.

Ruth as Moabite in Bethlehem, as much Naomi/*Mara* recently returned or Naomi the Israelite in Moab, must have been in some ways a lone figure whether assimilated, or even integrated and allowed a place. The *different* immigrant is never truly at home, however well treated.¹²⁴ There are always those around to remind you, about where you came from. Stuart Hall explains,

"For as surely as the repressed material of the subconscious reasserts itself in the individual as dream, obsession, metaphor - so does it come back to haunt the assimilated ethnic."

'Pens of Many Colours' p.153

"The classic questions which every migrant faces are twofold: 'Why are you here?' and 'When are you going back home?' No migrant ever knows the answer to the second until asked. Only then does she or he know that really, in a deep sense, she/he's never going back. Migration is a one way trip. There is no 'home' to go back to. There never was."¹²⁵

The trouble in all of this is as Hall identifies "the instant one learns to be an immigrant, one recognises one can't be an immigrant any longer: it isn't a tenable place to be."¹²⁶ It becomes either a matter of mourning; grieving the lost and what we cannot have even as an immigrant; or the feeling of belonging is a masking over of be/longing.

This is why Ruth's untimely disappearance at the end of the book is so disconcertingly and uncomfortable. The bride and bridegroom leave the stage and we are left with the village women's chorus, Naomi and *her* son Obed; whose name means guardian, redeemer, or server. Are we

¹²⁴ I have gained from old letters of my late mother, and from accounts of other Canadian migrants to the UK, stories that they are and were never at home. But as I now acknowledge, they can never go home either.

¹²⁵ 'Minimal Selves': p.44

Stuart Hall continues by asking "But why are you here?" ... "It wasn't a joke when I said that I migrated in order to get away from my family. I did. The problem ... is that since ones' family is always in here, there is no way you can actually leave them. Of course sooner or later, they recede in memory, or even in life. ... I wish they were still around, so that I didn't have to carry them around, locked up somewhere in my head, from which there is no migration." (p.44-45) Identity for Hall is relationships, present and non-present, "formed at the unstable point where *unspeakable* stories of subjectivity meets the narratives of history, of a culture." (p.44) We can only ever speak seemingly prosaically or allude poetically of this point, or the Derridean trace. Only the canker or irritation, the spectre bespeaks, which is be/longing's trace or whisper.

¹²⁶ 'Minimal Selves': p.45

pained by Ruth's conspicuous absence at the end? What are we to make of the mixed race kid called redeemer?

autobiography is a wound where the blood of history does not dry

GC Spivak 'Act Bits/Identity Talk' p.795

Spivak invokes the understanding of "[i]dentity as a wound" from the work of Assia Djebar, "exposed by the historically hegemonic languages, for those who have learned the double-binding practice of their writing."¹²⁷

Ruth's story heard as the voice of the subaltern means it is no longer the minority voice. The cut is an excision for the voice is removed from the speaker. Has Ruth been displaced that she might leave us longing for her? The cut is a wound that does not heal. Like Adeline Mah's folktale *The Incurable Wound*, the leaking of blood signifies a non-present, a loss which might unite. Thus for Spivak "in the field of rational analysis, a feeling of recognized kinship is more desirable than nationalism."¹²⁸ Family is the quest not the territorialism of nationhood for 'Blood is thicker than water'.

One of the dimensions of counterstories is the stranger's ability to vocalise their condition. However the only effective counterstory is one that is also heard.

¹²⁷ 'Acting Bits/Identity Talk': p.770

Spivak attacks Derrida's explanation in *Glas* of the excision of wounds; "This is not postmodern practice. There is none of that confident absolute citation where what is cited is emptied of its own historical texting or weaving. This is citing that invokes the wound of the cutting from the staged origin.." (p.795) Brenda Joy Lem's recent photo exhibit *Ngukkei: Family House Home*, a photoprint documentary of personal family oral histories illustrates a sympathetic expression of the oral retelling of her Toisanese origins. Significant as Toisan dialect has no written language, and was the major Chinese spoken dialect in Canada until recently when Cantonese immigration predominated. It is from Lem I attribute my usage of be/longing, though the emphasis on longing and loss is my own.

¹²⁸ 'Acting Bits/Identity Talk': p.773

Brueggemann writes of the stranger or outsider in the Biblical narrative with whom -

"[t]here is an unsettling which unnerves, threatens, and sometimes undoes the imperial system.".. "The gift of power for life given outside the control of the empire depends on the stranger bringing hurt, hate and grief to public speech in the midst of a community. Public sharing of pain is the means whereby power and courage well up among the strangers."¹²⁹.

Thus kinship can be recognised without appropriation, either as violation or theft. But as Spivak has already pointed out the condition of possibility for this must be a willingness to receive, namely to be receptive, for it to be felt and shared. In Ruth God "moves against exclusionary monopoly permits strangers and outsiders fresh access to land and to life."¹³⁰ In doing so God reminds and brings to memory that there is only divine monopoly. "Yahweh your God ... shows no partiality and accepts no bribes, executes justice for the orphan and the widow, and loves the im/emigrant [*ger*] providing food and clothing. You shall also love the im/emigrant [*ger*] for you were im/emigrant [*gerim*]."¹³¹

Strangely enough Ruth makes no verbal claim on the Israelite divinely ordained welfare state. In her first meeting with Boaz she exclaims "Why have I found favour in your eyes that you notice me a foreigner an outsider [*nokriy LXX - Xene*]." Boaz's foreman regards her as an ethnic,

¹²⁹ 'Welcoming the Stranger': p.295-6

¹³⁰ 'Welcoming the Stranger': p.297

Brueggemann is working here in the context of divine destabilisation of Egyptian and Babylonian settings of Empire, but of course Israel can be just as guilty of empire thinking, and nationalism. But "[t]he hear-cry structure of biblical faith is irreducible". (p.297) In the same way I see that Ruth's inclusion, in Brueggemann's words "decisively changes the entire process of public life for everyone, the newly included and the always included. No one any longer has life in the old terms." (p.297) That is the threat to preserve supposed old order and structure.

¹³¹ Deuteronomy 10:19:

Frank Spina in 'Israelites as gerim' suggests that immigrant is an acceptable translation for [*ger*] though normally rendered as stranger or alien, immigrant would embrace the nuances of a migrant vocabulary including assimilated and accommodated. Additionally drawing on work from Mendenhall and Gottwald, Spina suggests that "Israel's birth as *Israel* resulted from a coalescence of peoples with widely differing backgrounds". (p.332) These were basically refugees, fugitives, even raiders. They included rebellious indigenous Caananite peasants, various groups under the classification *habiru*, dissenting pastoralists leaving urban centres, some "Sea Peoples", plus the group from Egypt. Thus any claim to purity is suspect.

resident alien when he allows her request to glean. Yet Ruth in her exchange with Boaz instead of referring to herself as *ger* Ruth uses *nokriy-Xene*, disconnection language. Language which can make no demands.¹³² As a Moabitess she is truly an outsider, or perhaps as im/emigrant she realises the desperate need for *hesed's* expression. One which can only be extraordinary and freely given without compulsion.

She is making no ordinary claim, but a public cry. An outcry that she the outsider is bereft of all. "Me, the Outsider!" Me the abject one, the victim - the oppressed!¹³³ As a *mis en abyme* this retelling of Exodus is a mirror image, for the voice is no longer the Israelite in Egypt, but the Moabite in Israel.

"By the intervention of Yahweh, the God who hears the cries of the stranger, the outsider acquires a new status."¹³⁴ She literally enters the assembly and joins the harvest meal. The *aleatory*, the impossible is found in an action which finds *hesed's* origins in the Divine.

¹³² Deuteronomic invocations are towards the *gerim*. We can see the implications for Ruth in Deut 23:3 'No Ammonite or Moabite shall be admitted to the assembly of the Lord'. Four verses later in Deut 23:7b "You shall not abhor any of the Egyptians, because you were an alien [*ger*] residing in their land".

¹³³ Francis Landy describes Ruth as "the embodiment of what Julia Kristeva calls the *abject*, that which is cast out (ab-jected) of the self and considered loathesome, so as to create a space for the ego and its objects, and because it is dangerously attractive." (p.294) Landy is preoccupied with the threshing floor scene. However this early meeting-place in the field, as if dancing at the Ball seems at least as important as the glass slipper fitting, or the threshing floor at night, to demonstrate Ruth's self perception as abject. In all this she is heard and not excluded but invited to eat with them, enjoy their protection, to enjoy the fecundity of the harvest.

But she remains Ruth the Moabitess to the narrator (Ruth 2:21). Citing Kristeva, Landy illustrates Ruth's otherness, "[t]he abject confronts us, on the other hand, and this time within our personal archeology, with our earliest attempts to release the hold of *maternal* entity even before the existing outside of her, thanks to the autonomy of language." (p.295) Summarised "the abject is the first object of primary repression." In the politics of identity she and all she represents as *other*, as im/emigrant is and will always be vulnerable to op/re-pression: Invisible and unseen, unacknowledged as cinder or island/strait.

¹³⁴ 'Welcoming the Stranger': p.297

Ruth is the wound of biography *where the blood of history does not dry*. She "is the very nature of the Derridean trace, the woman/object/stranger who semiologically set in motion language and time, only to disappear behind her signs, actions and words."¹³⁵

Without Ruth, without otherness there is no identity. Yet not until she is *in the blood*, until she has a public voice, until she is felt and recognised within the assembly can meeting occur.

W Davies in his study *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*, notes that *detrterritorializing peoples* -

"cut[s] their deepest psychological and cultural roots. ... Many Christian peoples in the West have often been able to ignore these consequences and escape conceptually into an unrooted universalism. But this is because they have for the most part been able to assume their rootedness and have never known any territorial break".¹³⁶

In being a part of the dominant group's metanarrative, they fail to recognise their hybridity, their mixed genetic/genealogical heritage, and their root/routed-ness.

But Ruth like other countertexts is anti-territorial, anti-nationalistic but it cannot be conceived as anti-relational. "Ethnicity *can* be a constitutive element in the most viciously regressive kind of nationalism or national identity"¹³⁷ as Hall asserts. But the point is it doesn't have to be so. Everything, everyone, every person, every statement comes from somewhere, from a particular. Hall wants to affirm that ethnicity as identity can "insist on specificity, on conjuncture ... not

¹³⁵ 'Deconstructing History': p.312

¹³⁶ *The Territorial Dimension of Judaism*: p.136

¹³⁷ 'Minimal Selves': S Hall: p.46

[being] armour-plated against other identities ... not wholly defined by exclusion."¹³⁸ It is to realise this is not *your* home. It is for the questioners who ask, 'When are you going home?' to realise their own condition, that they came from somewhere else, their own be/longing. When they become intimate with being an im/emigrant themselves, then the hope of meeting appears.

For Hall it is "that immense process of historical relativization which is just beginning to make the British [or for that matter anyone else], at least, feel just marginally 'marginal'."¹³⁹ It is to remind everyone that they are *diapora-ised* whether as migrant or an influx of migrants, physically and culturally. Ruth in her Biblical context serves this purpose very well for her Jewish reader. She counters the territorialism of her audience; as Outsider she and Naomi in their story live out Hebrew wisdom in *hesedic* relational terms as the route to Torah, through privation and suffering, in present life if not just in memory.

¹³⁸ 'Minimal Selves': S Hall: p.46

¹³⁹ 'Minimal Selves': S Hall: p.46. Of course the project isn't isolated to the UK for it is all part and parcel of the *decline of the west*, and the Western world.

Canonical Reflections:

A mask of Belonging or Be/longing's Shadow

There was no king in
Israel at that time and
everyone did just as they
pleased
Judges 21-25

We have seen Ruth as face of *other*, as *mis en*
abyme for at-home-Israelites, but additionally
Ruth as text which disrupts and displaces

a time
when
judges
judged
Ruth 1:1

adjacent texts, i.e. counters-narrative. Ruth in its differing

canonical locations can and does expose tensions between the belonging mask and be/longing.

Within the Greek and Latin canon Ruth is found sandwiched between Judges and 1 Samuel. This juxtaposition highlights two opposing worldviews: One looking forward, optimistic of monarchy and presumably the dynastic era, the other pre-monarchial when Israel's leaders did their task of leading. Dangerously a monarchial dynastic canon without the latter would justify a king's possession of land. King of a land conquered and owned, and a king who would be gloried in an earthbound lineage. With Ruth Israel's dynastic illusory at-home-ness is continually threatened by Moabite blood. Spectres of past and future are allowed to linger. The reflection in the mirror is always of an-other. Whichever is original or reflection, either may claim primacy.

Following Ruth in the Greek/Latin canon, 1 Samuel opens with the sad story of Hannah in her barrenness, which is relieved in the birth of Samuel, who is provided by God. Ruth opens with a barren land because of famine, three women bereft of husbands, two of whom are barren Moabite wives. These motifs would indicate that the story would fall within the common folklore motif though Mary Callaway herself fails to note that Ruth might fall within the

tradition of "so many of the important mothers in the Hebrew Bible [being] barren before they had children."¹⁴⁰ With barrenness as infertility, its binary opposite fruitfulness is always present.¹⁴¹ But the bearer of fruitfulness comes from Moab. Sufficiency and insufficiency are the realities of an agrarian culture, but Ruth Moabite remains an affront, a *mis en abyme* to disrupt any purity myth and the masking of be/longing by belonging. Moab should have no place in Bethlehem, which is etymologically symbolic of Yahweh's provision. Thematically harvest and fertility can be found in another canonical relationship, and the use of the text within Jewish liturgy.

Within the Jewish tradition and canon Ruth not only belongs to the *Writings*, which contain the Wisdom literature, but also belongs to the five Scrolls the *Megilloth/Megillas*, comprising the Song of Songs, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes and Esther. "Each of the scrolls is read at a particular festival; Ruth, during the Feast of Weeks."¹⁴² Judah Slotki notes not only the harvest festival aspects of the festival but also the commemoration of spiritual harvest in the Revelation on Mount Sinai and giving of the Ten Commandments.

"The bearing of the story on the festival, it [i.e. Midrash] declares, is the moral one which teaches that the Torah can only be acquired by those who tread the road of hardship and want. The Torah, personified, is made to plead with God in these terms, 'Put my lot among the poor, for if the rich apply themselves to a mastery of me they will become arrogant.'"¹⁴³

¹⁴⁰ *Sing, O Barren One* : M Callaway : p.4. Callaway's study examines the "tradition of the barren matriarchs [which] provides a feminine image in a religious context for which such imagery was rare. The tradition becomes more and more important in the second temple period and it appears to be cumulative; new uses of the tradition do not go back to the sources only, but build on the interpretations which had grown up around it." (p.5) If earlier datings for the book of Ruth are to be accepted we must suspect her influence upon the InterTestamental literature and perhaps upon Wisdom herself.

¹⁴¹ We can see a move in the opposite direction for "Michal daughter of Saul had no children to the day of her death". (2 Sam 6:23) But also Ruth presents an alternative perspective to famine and disobedience being simply understood in consequential terms: issues with which the writer of Ecclesiastes, another wisdom text, clearly wrestles.

¹⁴² *Ruth, Esther, Jonah*: J W H Bos : p.9

¹⁴³ 'Ruth: Introduction and Commentary': J J Slotki: p.36.

Torah cries to be with the poor, those with ears to hear, not with those who would master or oppress. It is possible to speak then of Ruth's Torah associations at least in liturgical terms, but of course liturgy invariably creates its own theology. A reminder that to keep Torah is to live Torah sacrificially with a human face. It is *hesedic*, not forgetful that you too were once *gerim*, im/emigrant for this is virtuous living.

Johanna Bos notes another significant juxtaposition "in the standard form of the Hebrew Bible, Ruth follows immediately after Proverbs. The content of Proverbs 31 can then inevitably provide a logical sequential link with Ruth. This chapter of Proverbs sings the praise of a "worthy woman" (Hebrew *'eshet hayl*) ... Ruth is even called *'eshet hayl* (3:11)."¹⁴⁴ This whole positioning cannot be understood apart from listening to, esteeming, embracing, being wedded to Proverb's Lady Wisdom. She is the epitome of living virtuously. Therefore "A wife of noble character is her husband's crown" (Prov 12:4); someone to be wedded, bonded, cleaved to. This uncovering of associations reveals Ruth to be Wisdom to whom both Naomi initially and later Boaz are to be bonded in expressions of *hesedic* relationship. Yet the *worthy woman*, the *par example* is in her reflection a Moabitess.

Isidore Epstein notes that "reminiscent of the preparations which the Israelites had to make for the receiving of the Ten Commandments, it has become customary since the sixteenth century to keep awake and spend the whole night in the study of Torah." (*Judaism* p.172)

¹⁴⁴ *Ruth, Esther, Jonah*: J W H Bos: p.9. While translating *'eshet hayl* as worthy woman in this article, Bos later in 'Out of the Shadows' uses the term "A Valiant Woman" (p.58), though other Bible translators have used good or noble wife.

Rabbi Ze'ira said: "This Scroll [i.e. Ruth] is not concerned with either purity or defilement, either prohibition or permission. Why, then was it written? To teach you of a magnificent reward to those who practice and dispense *chesed* (steadfast kindness)." (Ruth Rabba 2:15)¹⁴⁵

This dispensation is of course *aleatory*, miraculous. Ruth is a very gift to Israel, with the reminder that impossibility requires the divine fire. Ruth as be/longing's trace lurks in the canon to push the reader back into the world into a lived ethic. Living virtuously is hesedic living, being in harmony.

...like other ghosts, she whispers;
not for me to join her, but so that,
when I'm close enough, she can
push me back into the world.

Fugitive Pieces.p.170

The Cinderella hope rewards those who seek the meeting place. But the conditions for the possibility of meeting happening, for the meeting place, is be/longing's voice within. It is a recalling of an im/emigrant's root/routedness. Her fragile glass shell able to attune to the slightest cry, all the while fearful of forgetfulness of one's own be/longing, repentant of deafness and sometimes the power of hegemonic silencing by a louder voice.

¹⁴⁵ cited in *The Five Scrolls* ed. HN Bronstein and AH Frielander: p.214

The Wake:
Hesed's Meeting Place

Hesed, as Katherine Sakenfeld presents the work of Sidney Hill, whether human or divine "denotes action, not a psychological state." Yet on the human level it "denotes action which has its source in God."¹⁴⁶ This type of description itself denotes a preoccupation in separating person and deed. The Confucian worldview of filiality is superficially an ethical system; especially in Western formulations of Confucianism. Yet it is distinctively ontic if for no other reason than because the separation between person and action does not exist. Julia Ching, Chinese Canadian scholar asserts that Confucianism has had from its beginnings "a consciousness of a dimension of transcendence" ¹⁴⁷ and "Propriety carries a risk of mere exterior conformity to social custom ... [but] Confucius emphasized the need of having the right inner dispositions."¹⁴⁸ Rather than mere intentionality this is an orientation towards the aleatory, to beyondness. Though initially on a human level it is also a reaching out to the other.

With the Western Postmodern dethronement of metaphysics and ontology as essential sciences, the person and action distinctions have become at least blurred if not dissolved . Yet when ethics is rooted within an ontology of person this revision of the Western Modernist worldview allows us to radically apply *hesed* as an ethic of the person. The Confucian paradigm offers an important area for further reflection for the haunted oriental im-emigrant. "Confucius' central doctrine is that of the virtue of jen ... always concerned with human relationships. It is associated with loyalty (chung)-loyalty to one's own heart and conscience-and reciprocity (shu)-respect of

¹⁴⁶ *The Meaning of Hesed in the Hebrew Bible*: p.10-11

¹⁴⁷ 'Confucianism: Ethical Humanism as Religion?': p.89

¹⁴⁸ 'Confucianism: Ethical Humanism as Religion?': p.71'

and consideration for others ...[it] is translated variously as goodness, benevolence, humanity, and human-heartedness."¹⁴⁹

The struggle for the im/emigrant is in defining the virtues and values for their life. It is a struggle of being faithful to your ground, and in doing so experiencing the aporia of the old and new.

Hesed does not silence Be/longing's pain. This is not for the armour-plated identity, but risks self in encounter whether at the ball, the threshing floor or round the campfire. *Hesed* is the condition of possibility for hearing be/longing's voice, but risks the remains of deafness and of destructive labelling. Yet

"Another chip on my shoulder is the appropriation of the immigrant identity. ... Why be in such a rush to dilute? ... I don't want to be inducted into some else's story or project. Particularly one that would reduce and usurp my family's residue of *ghost values* to another status quo."

Diamond Grill. p.125

without hearing be/longings voice, *hesed* incinerates and is itself incinerated into a gray ashen sameness. An empathy can become an oppressive sympathy.

Western preoccupations with doing and having, the Protestant work ethic, and the competitive spirit have had a significant role in shaping the culture. They represent a dangerous threat to be/longing's voice. For a majority to claim "I am also victim" or "I have lost as well" is an intrusion greater than any political or racial discrimination; it is a violation. To claim, to speak sameness in grief and grieving is to appropriate, it is a *pyr-alysis*. Speaking is doing rather than being; while listening as empathising is being rather than doing. Listening or hearing allows the pain of the other to shape us and raise resonance within us. But resonance can never be louder than the speaker's voice, because it will shatter itself. Be/longing is a fragile thing.

Ts'ai Yen must have been tempted to cry out "Don't imitate me!" as her own children spoke in meaningless singsong tones. The line between imitation and parody is a fine one. So fine that often users become a painful intrusion. Be/longing is not a mark of authenticity, it should only be a sign of kinship. Yet this kinship is frequently denied, in the grieving Naomi who pushes daughters-in-law away. Perhaps sympathy or their actions were misconstrued, or perceived oppressive by the displaced Jewess in Moab, Naomi. There is always the risk of being misunderstood and misinterpreted.

Cinders for Derrida speaks not just of Cinderella but of the ovens of Aushwitz. His meeting with those Jews is in the ashes, in his realisation of the gulf and separation of himself from them. Not divorced, but left behind, growing up in the wrong place, (Arab North Africa and not France) he is *diasporised*. He is able to address be/longing, but probably does not want to.

This is the pain or bitterness of be/longing. For the changed, for the not-at-home, for Cinderellas among the ashes, for the not-Chinese rather than non-Chinese, the mixed culturally are often called *Juk Sing* or *Heon Jeo*. *Juk Sing* is the space, the gap between the two nodes of bamboo, and *Heon Jeo* banana. Generally they are labels given by those inside to those regarded as not Chinese enough. Names given to those who do not belong. Authenticity is an issue for many as an issue of Being as home, and a denial of be/longing. Being told that you don't be/long becomes a headache for many overseas-born Chinese around the world.

"Biology recapitulates geography; place becomes an island in the blood."

Diamond Grill. p.22-23

David Parker in his study of Chinese identity in Britain comments on the fact that some interviewed "disliked the way in which Hong Kong students could sometimes close ranks and

exclude them, for example by calling local Chinese [British-Born Chinese] "chop suey girl" or other uncomplimentary epithets."¹⁵⁰

Dealing with *Juk Sing* is to deal with the shame of empty space. Being neither one or other.¹⁵¹ Eugene Eoyang simplistically points to two labels in the US setting American Chinese and Chinese-Americans, "where the first ... refers to those who are American of ... Chinese descent but who grew up in the United States, the second set to those whose identities were already established in another culture".¹⁵² The dilemma is better highlighted by the hyphen. So many live on the hyphen because they are neither one nor other. They are torn with indecision, the aporia of cultural choice. They know the discomfort and bleeding wound. Yet those who have lost the hyphen have lost or denied the ability to empathise and resonate with be/longing.

Heon Jeo - banana, white inside and yellow outside, is to declare a latent hypocrisy, of not being what you seem.¹⁵³ Eoyang displays a naive liberal colourblindness when he asserts "The United States - note the plural singular - is a collective entity. A pluralistic one. *E pluribus unum* (out of many,one); *e pluribus pigmentis album* (out of many colors, white)."¹⁵⁴ The blandness can become an oppressive banal denial of difference, and the pain and struggle in facing the question

Who am I in this place?

¹⁵⁰ *Through Different Eyes*: p.189

¹⁵¹ I have heard varying translations and explanations for *Juk Sing*. The worst from an assortment of optimist Americans who suggest it means being the best of both worlds. Being the best of both cultures. I have to ask firstly who decides what the best is, and secondly as the term is used by those who perceive themselves more authentically Chinese, it isn't meant to be affirming. It sounds to me a little like "airhead!" or "You're a Nobody!"

¹⁵² *Coat of Many Colors*: p.134-5

¹⁵³ Banana as for *Juk Sing* is a derogatory term in the competition for authenticity. Elaine Chang, North American Korean, expresses it so poignantly. In the space beyond white cultural labelling encapsulated in that nasty rhyme "Chinese, Japanese, dirty knees, look at these"; "I am sometimes called a banana. ... *Banyukja* is a name I have not been called, yet it is one I will invoke in this context. Literally traitor in Korean ... I am *Banyukja*/banana I could say to myself- a synthesis or hybrid, an uneasy coalition of cultures, languages and communities." ('A New-So-New' p.260)

David Parker's study in the British setting can at first glance seem to be just as bad in ignoring important distinctions. He fails to differentiate between the Hong Kong born,

Actually I think that meeting British born Chinese makes me more Chinese than meeting Hong Kong Chinese because ... we're exactly on the same level. When you're with another BBC you're like kindred spirits.

David Parker 'Through Different Eyes' .p.189

the British reared, the BBC and others. Not until the closing pages does he say, I have an investment in marginality, hybridity and difference ... There may be some places where a focus is called for, but this mustn't rigidify and be held onto at all times. The quest should be for mobile groundings, not essences, defended situationally, not unconditionally."¹⁵⁵ The fireplace, the place of burning, the heart(h), altar, funeral pile, home and family as focus is never a place of self purity, self identity.

Identity is not something structural but rather liquid and flowing, something ashen and ungraspable. It is not something manageable. It is not even an island of identity, nor a river but an estuary. David Parker as child of miscegenation realises the need for channels and moorings, so poetically expressed by Fred Wah as *straits and islands in the blood*. By contrast Rey Chow, a Hong Kong Chinese scholar wants to remove even these while at the same time claiming for herself marginal status. "Perhaps more than anyone else, those who live in Hong Kong realize the opportunistic role they need to play in order ... to negotiate their cultural identity."¹⁵⁶ But this is a powerful statement that denies the hegemony of Hong Kong's cultural identity on the Chinese Diaspora. Brenda Joy Lem Chinese Canadian artist, among many Toisanese speakers in the world knows well the volume of the silencing Cantonese voice.

¹⁵⁴ 'Coat of Many Colors': p.170

¹⁵⁵ *Through Different Eyes*: p.251

¹⁵⁶ *Writing Diaspora*: p.25

Toisan was a prominent ancestral village among the early Chinese in Canada, and post-war immigration. Toisanese speakers of first and second generations have been overwhelmed by the more recent influx of Hong Kong Cantonese speaking migrants and their strong media based culture. Strangely enough this group can also unsettle the Mandarin speaking Mainland Chinese migrant, so loud is the accent.

A river often rises not from one source (though this is often claimed to be the case), but by numerous tributaries and it is arbitrary in many ways which is the river. In the same way a river can become a spreading delta of islands and channels. Roots and Routes are one and the same when it comes to realising an im/emigrant identity. Kith and kin are to be found by listening: Belonging through be/longing.

The irony of the Ruth story is the disappearing cast. Mahlon and the family Elimelech name disappeared, Boaz went, Ruth exited, and even Naomi becomes background. The centre stage at the end is occupied by Obed the mixed-race kid! One who will struggle with miscegenation and be/longing. Yet there is hope because his family, his genealogy, his root/routed-ness tell of hope in *hesed*.

For the Asian in the Western world there is a pull from the Old and New. The tensions are an experience of the aporia of the *ghost values* and the Cinderella immigrant's dream. Be/longing is not passivity, but active vulnerable listening. To understand *hesed*, one has to abandon a Hellenism and seek a more Eastern hospitality; a new meeting place. The meeting occurs

miraculously where orientation to beyondness, where be/longing's voices are ringing in the *aleatory's* fleeting moment.

Postlude : Generations can meet

In Ragtime: The Musical, the Landed WASP mother and her son meet Latvian Jewish Immigrant father and daughter at a number of critical stages during the story. They sing a duet called our children as they play together on the beach.

See them running down the beach.
Children run so fast.
Towards the future.
From the past.

There they stand.
Making footprints in the sand.
And forever hand in hand.
Our children.

<p>Hope springs eternal in the human breast. Alexander Pope</p>

They marry in the closing credits and introduce Coalhouse, the adopted orphaned son of the Musical's principle Black American characters.

Addendum: Intersections

Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin: Jacques Derrida trans Patrick Mensah Stanford. Stanford University Press 1998

Following the submission of this thesis Jacques Derrida's book *Monolingualism of the Other: or, The Prosthesis of Origin* became available. In it Derrida addresses the same issues that I have tried to access in this project and in my reading it invaded my world .

He writes of *Franco-Maghrebian* and the particularity of the label when applied to self. "To be a Franco-Maghrebian, one 'like myself,' is not, not particularly, and particularly not, a surfeit or richness of identities, attributes, or names. In the first place, it would rather betray a *disorder of identity* 'trouble d'identité'." (p.14) Namely the issue of hyphenated identity is problematic when there is a hegemonic identity that is at home or in-dwelling.

Furthermore one can not have an identity in who you are. Rather the very nature of living out is in fact indwelling. Flowing from the idea that language is the house of being, he counters that there is no at-homeness such that there is no such thing as mother tongue. "The language called maternal is never purely natural, nor proper, nor inhabitable. *To inhabit*: this is a value that is quite *disconcerting* and equivocal; one never inhabits what one is in the habit of calling inhabiting. There is no possible habitat without this exile and this nostalgia. Most certainly. That is all too well known. But it does not follow that all exiles are equivalent. From this shore, yes, *from this* shore or this common drift, all expatriations remain singular." (p58)

Derrida closes by saying "its living voice has grown husky, a very young voice, but it is not dead. It is not evil. I have the feeling that, if it is given back to me one day, I shall then see, for the first time in reality, as prisoner of the cave does after death, the truth of what I have lived: the truth itself beyond memory, as the hidden other side of shadows, of images, of images of images, and of phantasms that have filled each moment of my life."(p.73)

There are many influences within the formation of this thesis which are not reflected in the following Bibliography nor within the footnotes.

As Derrida says "I only speak one language, (and, but, yet) it is not mine", I attribute much to so many. However I mention Graham MacFarlane (LBC) for showing me Relational Theology and Philosophy, Brian Walsh and Jim Olthuis (ICS) for the space and guidance in pursuit of my quest, for Shirley Isaac (friend) for introducing Gabriel Marcel who lurks in the shadows, for Eugene and Nancy Fok (extended family) for gifting the hermeneutical key of Anne Michael's *Fugitive Pieces*, and God alone who made me who and what I am.

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