

English and Mobility: Linguistic and Stylistic Transformations in New Anglophone Literatures

Esterino Adami

Abstract (English)

This article investigates the interconnected themes of language, mobility and identity and their narrative renditions in the anglophone context by providing an interdisciplinary analysis of some extracts from two recent novels, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2008) and *We Need New Names* (2014), respectively written by Xiaolu Guo and NoViolet Bulawayo, who resourcefully elaborate new linguistic and textual forms to express the plural questions of identity. The helpful notion of 'language and mobility' discussed by Pennycook (2010) lends support to the argument that language, identity and mobility represent coterminous cultural forces at work in the constant shaping and changing of the contemporary globalised and postcolonial world

Abstract (Italiano)

L'articolo prende in esame l'intreccio tematico fra lingua, mobilità e identità, e delle sue rese testuali nel contesto anglofono, in particolare attraverso un'analisi di taglio interdisciplinare di due recenti romanzi, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*, di Xiaolu Guo (2008) e *We Need New Names*, di NoViolet Bulawayo (2014), che affrontano il nodo plurale dell'identità elaborando nuove forme narrative e giochi linguistici. L'articolo adotta la prospettiva critica promossa da Pennycook, attraverso il concetto di *language and mobility* (2010), quale utile strumento analitico per esplorare le sovrapposizioni di lingua, identità e nomadismi/migrazioni che costantemente hanno luogo nei mutamenti del mondo contemporaneo, globalizzato e postcoloniale.

1. Introduction

The aim of this article is to explore the dialogic interplay between English and the sense of mobility, namely how complex notions regarding the power of language(s), the possibility of movement and the significance of body discourse that govern our contemporary age are combined, negotiated, overlaid and manipulated in a variety of contexts. To investigate these concepts I will use as a case study two recent anglophone narrative texts, *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* (2008) and *We Need New Names* (2014), respectively authored by Xiaolu Guo and NoViolet Bulawayo, who resourcefully elaborate new linguistic and textual forms to express the plural questions of identity. My methodology is based upon an interdisciplinary approach that combines the tools provided by an assortment of fields such as postcolonial discourse, variational sociolinguistics, critical applied linguistics and stylistics (Ashcroft 2009; Blommaert 2010; Jeffries 2010; McArthur 2003; Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008; Pennycook 2010; Oboe 2013), but I will specifically adopt and adapt the considerations provided by Alastair Pennycook in his groundbreaking volume *Language and Mobility. Unexpected Places* (2012), an essay that deliberately challenges the restraints of academic writing by using an assortment of various materials and genres and provokingly interrogates important issues of language, power, identity and belonging.

The pivotal element of my argument lies in the recognition of agencies functioning in our postcolonial and postmodern world, where the multiple roles of English, the migratory movements and the access to resources as well as the configurations of identity constitute centripetal and centrifugal forces within a globalised scenario. Narratives, in the fictional domain too, constitute a starting point for this type of investigation and provide a wealth of perspectives, meanings and discourses as they reinterpret reality through the resources and potentiality of language. In this article I also advocate the need for new methods of investigation with the aim to update labels, notions and interpretations in an integrated fashion, thus considering the contribution deriving from studies and perspectives of various nature and going beyond strict disciplinary boundaries.

2. Moving English in the world: breaking standards, breaking boundaries

Language is a key aspect of this debate and in the case of English a proliferation of labels has been proposed, for example English as first language, English as second language, English as a foreign language, English as lingua franca, or more recently Postcolonial English and Lingua franca English (see for example Canagarajah 2013; Sharifian 2009; Schneider 2007; Kirkpatrick 2007; Jenkins 2003). Here I will take up the notion of English Language Complex (ELC) as an interpretive framework to account for the manifold manifestations of English in the world. This label, originally coined by McArthur (2003, 56), is also employed by Mesthrie and Bhatt (2008, 3) with the aim “to comprise all subtypes distinguishable according to some combination of their history, status, form and functions”. These numerous subtypes testify to the different diachronic, diastatic and diatopic transformations of the language and include definitions such as metropolitan standards, colonial standards, regional dialects, social dialects, Pidgin Englishes, Creole Englishes, ESL, EFL, immigrant Englishes (Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008, 3). Within this framework, the notion of immigrant English is particularly useful since it covers a range of socio-cultural and sociolinguistic elements such as the role of English, the influence of English dialects, the formality of language methodology and acquisition, the interference of the mother tongue (and possible of other dialects) of the migrants, but also the desire to either integrate in a new society or return to their homeland after a certain period (Mesthrie and Bhatt 2008, 9-10).

The study of variation in English has brought to light the dynamic realities of language and the role that speakers actually play in reshaping textual and stylistic features. Going beyond the vision of English as a monolithic and unitary entity, and embracing the vision of a language system that favours plurality rather than prescriptivism, hence the plural term Englishes, it is worth reflecting on the mobility of English in its global diffusion, a topic that recently gained scholarly attention (see for example Cimarosti 2014). In order to unearth the various cultural stratifications of the language, Pennycook (2012) examines a range of different types of material such as personal accounts, autobiographies, family diaries, and even photographs, which collectively bespeak colonial and postcolonial memories. In this light, he introduces the notion of ‘trace’ as a token of additional meanings inscribed in signs and objects, which are often obliterated for ideological purposes. However his cultural project shows a broader scope and intends to revive these elements: “When I talk of traces, of retracing history, therefore, I intend much more than finding objects in the past, of walking along pathways previously walked; rather, I am to invoke those absences that are part of the

present, past and future” (2012, 14). Traces are the heritage produced by the mobility of people and languages and, as such, they encapsulate values and meanings in ‘unexpected places’ by promoting the rejection of purism in favour of hybridity and dynamicity. Consequently their textual renderings may be found in fictional works by postcolonial authors, who engage with the process of re-inventing language, memory and identity as they influence and partake in the outcomes of the English Language Complex.

Place deixis, i.e. the geographical and implicitly cultural anchoring of voices and perspectives emerges as a salient component of Pennycook’s agenda, especially with regard to “how we relate affectively to particular places and how travel, movements and mobility are essential for an understanding not only of the contemporary world but also of how our conditions came to be” (2012, 17). These domains are essential paradigms in the writings of both Guo and Bulawayo as they question the sense of travelling, being, becoming from the periphery of the world to the metropolitan centres of power. Pennycook’s reflections also draw attention to the need of new ways to approach the current global scenario and to interpret the authenticity of language, and its traces, across boundaries and behind boundaries, from China to Britain, from Zimbabwe to America, in search of ‘imagined homelands’ and ‘imaginary communities’, to misquote some key notions of postcolonial and postmodern discourse.

Moving across borders and spaces, as happens in the case of migrants or diasporic writers, is part of those fluxes that through globalisation are reshaping the world in its economical, social and cultural dimensions, and from which translocalised and deterritorialised forms of language emerge. The semantic shade of flux, in fact, concerns not only a continuous movement but also endorses a sense of change, and this of course affects language too. With reference to the intertwining diversity of linguistic communication today (in particular as far as English is concerned), Blommaert (2010) speaks of two paradigms: sociolinguistics of distribution and sociolinguistics of mobility. Whilst the former belongs to a traditional view of the use of language in society, the latter indicates the potential of language as a resource that can be adapted to suit a variety of purposes. This approach thus sheds light on the capacity of moving subjects to redesign speech and discourse and express the dynamics of identity in motion. Incidentally, it might be argued that one of the most pervasive and rooted cognitive metaphors, i.e. those knowledge structures that are used to indicate broad conceptualisations of life and the world (Jeffries and McIntyre 2010), reads *LIFE IS A JOURNEY*, and therefore it produces a mental mapping of life and its various stages as legs or parts of a (long) journey. Consequently the idea of movement appears to be fundamental to human culture, in its double physical and mental dimension, when travelling subjects, namely people and identities, go through the diaspora experience, and transform cultures and languages.

Bearing in mind such premises and adopting Kachru and Smith’s (2008, 168) contention that “literary works in English are a valuable source of sociocultural knowledge not easily recoverable from grammars, dictionaries, and textbooks” in the following sections of the paper I will focus on how the manifold question of language and mobility is stylistically and textually rendered in two recent novels by anglophone writers, in which various cultural processes indicate the repositioning of subjects and identities. Although language in narrative texts of course is mainly grounded upon the use of constructed quality, many recent studies (e.g. Jeffries 2010; Stockwell 2002) have pointed out the proximity of literary and non-literary domains, which rather than being oppositional are in

reality coterminous and share many features, structures and meanings. Moreover, the choice of analysing the fictional work by Guo and Bulawayo is also justified by the interpretation of their novels as examples of ‘translational writing’, i.e. narrative texts that stem from the interplay or translation of different languages (Gilmour 2012; Moji 2015), as well as cultures and even individuals that metaphorically or pragmatically move from one position to another, from one context to another, engendering a pregnant movement of transnational and transcultural belonging. Translation as a cultural concept can in fact be akin to migration and it “may be seen as recreation and renewal” (Gilmour 2012, 211) as exemplified by the structural linguistic patterns of the two novels under discussion in this article.

3. Language and mobility in *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers*

I will briefly introduce the novel by Xiaolu Guo¹, whose first-person homodiegetic narration belongs to a young Chinese girl that moves to London to learn English and begins a love affair with a nameless older English man. The novel is presented as a kind of personal diary written in a variety of registers and styles, including immigrant English and instances of code switching with Chinese, and is openly addressed to the narrator’s partner thanks to the use of direct personal pronouns as in the following example: “I not met you yet. You in the future” (Guo 2008, 3). The story chronicles the protagonist’s linguistic and cultural transformation, in a kind of socio-emotional development of identity that entails various levels (i.e. the encounter with the western world, the difficulties and the frustrations of the language barrier, but also the irruption of sentiments and the exploration of feelings), and in fact, according to Oboe (2013, 267), it regards “the formation of an idiosyncratic idiom, an in-between language which is a daring experiment in transcultural communication”. In other words, this text can function as an example of heteroglossic postcolonial discourse envisaging a city that “is a complex and ever-shifting contact zone: a crucible for bilanguaging, code-switching, linguistic creativity and cross-‘infection’; as well as for miscommunication, noncommunication, and various kinds of linguistic separatism and essentialism” (Gilmour 2012, 210). To a certain extent all these linguistic and cultural dimensions will engage Zhuang in her new migratory condition.

Before addressing the intertwined themes of language, identity and mobility, it is worth considering some textual and paratextual elements that the author employs: first of all the deft combination of styles and registers, which draws from the use of immigrant English, code-switching with Chinese, eye-dialect forms, as well as other semiotic and graphological resources, such as the use of various fonts, the non-uniform layout and the insertion of sketches and editor’s notes. A characteristic example can also be found in the opening epigraph, not only for the message that reads “Sorry of my english”, disclaiming responsibility for the lack of language proficiency, but also because of the typeset which reminds of real-life handwriting, thus suggesting a sense of authenticity in the text. The emerging result in this and many other strategies is of course an effect of marked

¹ Xiaolu Guo is a British-Chinese writer, essayist, screen-writer and film-maker. Her filmography includes some documentaries such as *Far and Near* (2003), *How is your Fish Today?* (2006), and *She, a Chinese* (2009), whereas her narrative production includes *20 Fragments of a Ravenous Youth* (2008), *UFO in Her Eyes* (2009) and *I am China* (2014). *A Concise Chinese-English Dictionary for Lovers* is her first novel written in English (see also her website: <http://www.guoxiaolu.com/index.htm> as well as Zhen 2008).

defamiliarisation, which somehow challenges the reader to decode information and elaborate on meanings and implications. Moreover, the narrative arrangement of the text as a fictionalised diary allows each chapter to start with an English word, followed by a denotational definition, that the protagonist encounters in her life and that she tries to understand, acquire and discuss. These lexical terms refer to a variety of semantic contexts and meanings, including words such as “prologue”, “beginner”, “free world”, “romance”, “nonsense”, “pathology”, and symbolically function as clues in the building of the plot, or traces in Pennycook’s critical vocabulary.

The issue of identity is central in the novel and even touches on onomastic references, since the narrator’s real name, Zhuang Xiao Qiao, appears to be too difficult to be used by people in London and thus she decides to shorten it into the letter Z, a drastic clipped form that may actually have negative connotations, being the last letter of the alphabet: “I say name start from Z, ‘But please no worry to remember,’ I say, ‘my name too long pronounce.’” (Guo 2008, 48). To a certain extent this process of name reshaping also indicates a violation of identity, or at least a levelling and marginalisation of the subject, who is even not allowed to have a full name, a fundamental element for the sense of personhood. In her exploration of language, culture and feelings, through the mechanisms of migration and confrontation, Z offers a reflection on the changes, permutations and aspirations of identity, which are often communicated in the verbal medium, thus investigating the boundaries, clashes and stratifications of languages: “Every night, when I write diary, I feeling troubled. Am I writing in Chinese or in English? I trying express me, but confusing – I see other little me try expressing me in other language” (Guo 2008, 38). In fact, in recording her diary, initially by means of non-standard, almost ‘broken’ English, the girl on the one hand acknowledges the puzzling and shocking experience of “re-writing” one’s identity in another code, thus manipulating the very sense of the self and its constraints, and on the other endorses the polyphonic idea of the correlation between language and identity. From this perspective, English in particular, in the light of its colonial, postcolonial and globalised discourses, disrupts the monolithic unity of language as a fixed system and favours the playful dimension of language in use, especially in unexpected places and sites, to borrow Pennycook’s vision.

This is also attested by the various parts actually written in Chinese and accompanied by the fictional editor’s translation, a metatextual strategy that in puzzling the reader questions the prototypical compositional arrangement of a novel by pointing out the proximity between fiction and real life. Writing therefore becomes a form of identity expression for the protagonist, who experiments forms of transnational communication and hybridity, but it might also be argued that the innovative style elaborated by the author concerns the hybrid genre of the novel, which for Oboe (2013, 269) traverses canonical genres and emerges as a form of “dialogical monologue”, because the book is presented as a diary, thus a personal, intimate account of one’s life, but in a paradoxical sense it becomes a public testimony because it is textualised, i.e. made into a format which is naturally meant to be read by someone. Moreover, it is also openly addressed to Z’s lover, therefore triggering a further comparison between the narrator and her English partner, or in cultural terms between the self and the other, a dialogue that necessarily implies a linguistic as well as cultural and emotional negotiation.

The discourse pivoting around mobility cannot ignore the meaning of the body because, as previously suggested, movements and migrations concern primarily a scattering of human beings, of

people that for different reasons move from one context to another and have to go through displacement and relocation. Such aspect is salient as it reveals the significance of embodied culture, the physical and cognitive experience of migrants and their appropriation and abrogation of language in complex and challenging ways. The verbal presentation and textual construction of the body also pertains to postcolonial criticism inasmuch as it evokes the ‘material’, i.e. flesh and body dimension of the individual from the periphery of the formal colony that strives to work out a form of non-verbal, emotional communication. Such an attempt also stands an indexical ability to convey meanings working in balance with the longing and exasperation of migrants, who, as second-language learners, are reduced to liminal positions, similarly to children who struggle to acquire a basic language:

I open my notebook again, looking at my everyday’s study, my everyday’s effort. I see myself trying hard to put more words and sentences into blank pages. I try to learn more vocabularies to be able to communicate. I try to put the whole dictionary in my brain. But in this remote countryside, in this nobody’s wonderland, what’s the point of this? It doesn’t matter if one speaks Chinese or English here; it doesn't matter if one is mute or deaf. Language is not important anymore. Only the simple physical existence matters in the nature. (Guo 2008, 283)

The quotation thus frames the vision of the protagonist for whom communication takes different forms and connects identities: in this light, by means of migrations and movements, it is possible to establish relations and go beyond the constraints of language competence by creating new forms of communication, not only such as uncertain varieties of English but also other types of contacts in a broader, holistic attempt to understand life and people.

The theme of mobility, in its various meanings, is often interpreted in terms of stantiality, so with reference to the idea of home, not only as a geographical location but also in the emotional perception. Z often compares her native China with the UK, but when she travels across Europe on her own, her action of wondering becomes a tool for further reflection on identity construction as well as a means to conceptualise the practice of reshaping life in novel ways: “I just want to go back to London, to my lover. Home is everything. Home is not sex but also about it. Home is not a delicious meal but also about it. Home is not a lighted bedroom but is also about it. Home is not a hot bath but it is also about it.” (Guo 2008, 212). From a lexical point of view the quotation appears to be rather simple, but in reality, to capture the various experiences rising out of the migratory process, the author employs narrative devices such as parallelism (home is) followed by adversative adverbs (but) that provide new perspectives, also alluding to material and/or corporeal aspects.

If mobility can be seen as paradigm-shifting and affecting people, cultures and languages, it is also important to consider another parameter, namely the speed of motion. In the globalised, twenty-first century, speed is a governing criterion in all contexts, but when Z returns to her country and thus ends her complex and sometimes contradictory love affair with the English anonymous lover for some time she still has an epistolary relation with the man, which may represent a form of ‘slow language’ (Oboe 2013, 278), almost in antithesis to contemporary media and computed-mediated communication: “This is the last letter i received from you. The last. [...] It is the best gift you ever gave me” (Guo 2008, 354). The unusual, nearly bizarre intention of penning down letters also carries a

symbolic counter-value in relation to the procedures of commodification of modern life and society as the gift disrupts economic dependencies and endorses free spontaneity.

4. Language and mobility in *We Need New Names*

The second literary text I intend to mine in this article to gain linguistic and narrative examples of the intertwined issues of language, mobility and identity is authored by Zimbabwean writer NoViolet Bulawayo (pen name of Elizabeth Zandile Tshele)². Originally published in 2013, the novel is a coming-of-age story revolving around a young girl called Darling, initially set in a small bush town in an unnamed country in southern Africa (provokingly renamed Budapest by the local children and clearly evoking Zimbabwe) and then in a metropolis in the USA (the wealthy urban context of Detroit, labelled as “Destroyedmichygen”). In cultural terms, naming is a powerful, meaning-making tool, especially in postcolonial discourse, since giving a name to a person, a place or an object implies establishing specific power relations (Ashcroft 2009), but it can also be employed as a textual practice to construct and validate a particular ideology through the mechanics of language (Jeffries 2010). In this novel, naming in reference to both people and places constitutes an important rhetorical resource for the author, who skilfully approaches and sensitively remoulds the topic of migration and cultural displacement. Moreover, some extra-textual onomastic items are worth noticing: the nom de plume NoViolet deliberately misleads and baffles the anglophone reader by virtue of its prefix, which is commonly interpreted as a negative element (no), but in reality the prefix derives from the author’s mother tongue (Ndebele) and conjures up positive connotations in memory of her deceased mother, Violet, as it means ‘with Violet’ rather than ‘without Violet’ (Moji 2015, 183). In this creative manner, English is subtly recoded and subjected to a process of Africanisation that translates and endorses a localised reality by manipulating semantic references.

Strategically the writer attributes the focalisation of the text to a ten-year-old child in her attempt to comprehend the weight of social and cultural frictions, as well as their inequalities. For a child, the interrelation between language and mobility is too large a concept to handle and therefore it is imaginatively constructed as a game, through which names are given to places and fancifully appropriated and recreated. Therefore, the country-game allegorically seems to draw from the idiomatic expression ‘to go places’, which means to become very successful, in order to evoke global scenarios that align with the modern structures of power in the world. A sense of bitter irony, however, marks the characterisation of those ‘peripheral’ countries that are presented as the opposite of the current ideas of welfare and wellbeing:

To play country-game you need two things: a big outer one, then inside it, a little one, where the caller stands. You divide the outer ring depending on how many people are playing and cut it up in nice pieces like this. Each person then picks a piece and writes the name of the country on there, which is why it’s called country-game. But first we have to fight over the names because everybody wants to be certain countries, like everybody wants to be USA and Britain and Canada and Australia and Switzerland and France and Italy and Sweden and Germany and Russia and

²NoVioletBulawayo is an anglophone writer from Zimbabwe, educated both in Africa and in the USA. *We Need New Names* is her debut novel and she has also published some short stories (see also her website: <http://novioletbulawayo.com/>).

Greece and them. These are the country-countries. If you lose the fight, then you just have to settle for the countries like Dubai and South Africa and Botswana and Tanzania and them. They are not country-countries, but at least life better there than here. Nobody wants to be rags of countries like Congo, like Somalia, like Iraq, like Sudan, like Haiti, like Sri Lanka, and not even this one we live in – who wants to be a terrible place of hunger and things falling apart? (Bulawayo 2014, 49)

The metaphor of the country-game brings to the fore the contemporary configuration of the relations between the different parts of the world, relegating most African and Asian countries to a marginal sector, which is often denied the possibility of mobility and progress. Against the predominance of Western countries, and in particular the Anglo-American axis, the ‘other’ countries are crystallised in their perennial crisis and hypocritically supported by aid agencies.

When Darling finally emigrates to America to illegally settle in the Midwest, all her life is radically transformed, but the dream of and hope for a better life have to come to terms with strong intolerance and hostility, thus impinging on the construction of subjectivity: “The other kids teased me about my name, my accent, my hair, the way I talked about or said things, the way I dressed, the way I laughed. [...] in the end I just felt wrong in my skin, in my body, in my clothes, in my language, in my head, everything” (Bulawayo 2014, 165). All components of identity are here under attack: not only the physical aspect, the body features and the clothes one wears, but even the innermost sides such as language, thought and perception are rejected, annihilated and humiliated. The girl therefore has to face a painful identity crisis induced by the refusal orchestrated by the new surrounding community in which she now lives, but she will manage to respond to such harmful load and react keenly by mastering the English language and achieving educational goals, thus channelling the force that reverberates in dynamic phenomena such as migration and mobility in positive and creative ways. The many tribulations that Darling has to deal with reflect the negotiating mechanisms of subjectivity when eradicated from home and are rendered in a linguistic and narrative style that fractures social schemata. For Moji (2015, 182) for example “semantic and cognitive dissonance are read as textual markers of displaced sites of meaning and therefore symbolic of the psychic and social dislocation experienced by migrant subjects”, and the novel in fact recasts the child’s perception in terms of mobility between languages, cultures, contexts against the backdrop of globalisation.

5. Concluding remarks

In this article I have discussed the notions of English language, mobility and identity by turning a lens on how these issues resonate in narrative renditions from an anglophone context. The old Kachruvian taxonomy of outer circle and expanding circle turns out to be not applicable to writers such as Guo and Bulawayo, who innovatively appropriate, abrogate and reinvent languages, styles and themes by manoeuvring viewpoints, challenging ideologies and expressing new voices. One of the main principles on which this article is based regards the concept of mobility, in its broad, multiple and dynamic extensions, which according to Blommaert (2010, 22) “is the rule, but that does not preclude locality from being a powerful frame for the organization of meanings. Locality and mobility co-exist, and whenever we observe patterns of mobility we have to examine the local environment in which they occur”. Similarly to the perspective of language as local practice put

forward by Pennycook (2010), this vision recognises not only the effects of migration and diaspora, and their cultural, social and linguistic consequences, but also the key function of local contexts as a cultural laboratory, in which social practices are constantly negotiated and adapted. The experience of both Z and Darling in fact is highly influenced by the milieus in which they live: moving into London, adapting to the alien English world, surviving the dire conditions of Zimbabwe, migrating to the USA are all actions that cumulatively construct layers of meaning and shape forms of identity.

My argument has drawn extensively on Pennycook's language in unexpected places, namely how language material represents and is represented by a plurality of domains, genres and discourses. It is a significant reconfiguration of perspective because it highlights the dialogic relationship between subjects and their sense of expected/unexpected in places, as Pennycook (2012, 17) affirms that "how reflection on why languages, events, moments may be unexpected sheds light on the normative vision of the expected". The way in which the protagonists of the two novels use the English language does not conform to expected standards of proficiency and represents a minimal or non-standard form of English, or rather a type of immigrant English, but nonetheless it subtly delves into present-day socio-cultural and socio-political scenario and at the same time foregrounds alternative viewpoints and modalities, or in other words the 'unexpected'.

In closing, I argue that approaching the interconnected issues of language (spread and power), mobility and identity represents an important arena for a better understanding of the contemporary world and its many sociocultural and socio-political *equilibria*. However, it is also important to reflect on and refresh methodological tools and classificatory labels and concepts in order to grasp an ever-changing and ever-growing reality: paraphrasing the title of Bulawayo, it might be argued that today there is a need for new approaches that interpret the sense of mobility in relation to the value of locality and local contexts, thus acknowledging a network of cultural forces. This orientation is in line with Blommaert, who holds that "part of the shift we need to make is also a shift away from a metropolitan perspective on globalization, stressing the uniformity of such processes, towards a perspective that does justice to 'vernacular globalization', to the myriad ways in which global processes enter local conditions and circumstances and become a localized reality" (2010, 197). In constructing their narrative works, Guo and Bulawayo illustrate the poetics of mobility and identity as they refresh, reinvent and galvanise language in its systems, styles and manifestations, thus endorsing the potentiality of immigrant English.

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Esterino Adami is a researcher in English language and translation at the University of Turin. His main fields of interest include varieties of English, stylistics, postcolonial literatures, narrative renditions of specialised discourse and the semiotics of graphic narratives. He has extensively published on lexical and stylistic aspects of Indian English, the theme of identity in Anglophone fiction and language methodology in postcolonial contexts, and has co-edited (with A. Martelli) the volume *Within and Across. Language and Construction of Shifting Identities in Post-Colonial Contexts* (2012). He is currently working on the notion of 'split self' in Jhumpa Lahiri's non-literary writing and on the railway metaphor in the graphic novel *Snowpiercer*.