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HYBRIDITY, IDENTITY, AND MIGRATION IN POSTCOLONIAL FICTION AND CRITICISM

A THESIS APPROVED FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

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Preface

In this thesis, I have attempted to provide an explanation of various interrelated topics that are placed under the rubric of postcolonialism. My analyses of Salman Rushdie's Satanic Verses and Sara Suleri's Meatless Days entail an exploration of their respective positions as expatriates which empowers them to negotiate the space between two cultural realities.

The formerly colonized population of South Asia constituted the space in which conflicting discourses had been written and read. Colonial powers reconstructed cultural notions of the formerly colonized in image and word to emphasize the bias that reinforced the propagandist agenda of the hegemonic powers. This populace had an ambivalent role in its complicity with and resistance to the forces that jeopardized its existence.

An application of various theoretical and methodological approaches has enabled postcolonial writers to analyze the processes and aftermath of the incursion to which colonized territories had been subjected in order to formulate structures of cultural critique and cultural logic. The use of such theoretical and methodological approaches elucidates the development of critical projects

to expound on the relationship between ideological values and interpretive practice, which is responsible for either the depletion or the perpetuation or the hybridization of a culture.

I have attempted to explore the variability of the spaces that postcolonial subjects occupy, in which diverse possibilities of interpretation are generated by the competing discourses of the hegemonic order; a nationalism that is created by an indigenous elite; and a cultural hybridity that repositions the postcolonial subject. Rushdie's focus on the position of South Asian immigrants in England proclaims a reinscription of rigid dichotomies as the prerequisite to regeneration. Suleri's avows a similar reinscription of postcolonial identities, but her portrayal of entities in the formerly colonized culture of the Indian subcontinent is not reductive nor does she obscure pre-colonial literary and cultural forms. Both these writers revive the genre of fragmented history in order to formulate a "viable alternative to the deadlock of Manichean binaries."

Rushdie and Suleri employ visibly different methods of including the repressed voice from the non-European world in order to foreground the cultural and historical

perspective which is "other" to Europe. These two texts strive to reform the exclusionary and assimilationist tactics of the former colonizer. This strategy enables postcolonial writers to put forth their cultural knowledge as an oppositional discursive system that would generate a dialectical interplay. These writers recognize the centrality of certain non-Western epistemologies that have been diminished as "marginal" by the West. Rushdie is unable to assume as clinical an attitude in relation to the norm of Western reasoning as Suleri, who clearly engages with historicized and contextualized South Asian knowledge systems.

I have endeavored to elucidate this re-etching of hierarchical structures that does not validate either the marginalization of the East or the construction of an inverse hierarchy that vents its wrath by rendering Western knowledge and culture as "other."

Ambivalent Subject Status: Theories of Postcolonial Subjectivity

Colonial Ideology and Discourse

The intricate relationship between the imperial power that emanated from metropolitan centers and the colonized territories in which it manifested itself entailed the formation of cultural practices that sustained the persistent disparity in power between imperial Europe and the subjugated "peripheral world." In the nineteenth century, the motivation to create empires brought major parts of the earth under the dominance of a few European nations (Said, Culture 20). As Michael Doyle puts it:

> Empire is a relationship, formal or informal, in which one state controls the effective political sovereignty of another political society. It can be achieved by force, by political collaboration, by economic, social, or cultural dependence. Imperialism is simply the process or policy of establishing or maintaining an empire. (45)

Imperialism became an accretion of diverse elements which acquired coherence and sustained the presence of the ruler and the ruled within the same culture.

After the minimal deployment of direct colonial tactics, imperialism continued to exist in its most potent

manifestation in ideological and cultural practices. The institutions of colonialism used "discourse" to disseminate the values that molded the racial and cultural identities of the colonized as well as the colonizer. For these institutions, culture determined the values that became axiomatic in a given society, and therefore was a formation shaped by various historical and political forces that suffused colonial activity with meaning. Imperialism and colonialism, thus, were not mere acts of acquisition. Both were buttressed by ideological formations that institutionalized notions of certain people as inferior, who required imperialism as a redeeming force (Said, Culture 8). This strategy of fortifying domination with certain structures of knowledge created an unbridgeable gulf between the "center" and the "margin."

In order to accentuate the sovereignty of Europe, the dominant colonial regime underscored the idea of oppositionality between various binary divisions: black and white, the savage and the civilized, silent and articulate, rational ruler and irrational ruled. This totalizing form of the discourse of Europe, and its overpowering impulse to exclude, repress, and incorporate threatening forces generated a dichotomy between the authorized notion of

empire and the disillusioning reality of the colonized world (Said, Orientalism 16). The legacy of this polarization is a strongly bounded area of social and cultural knowledge that produces the veneration for empire and the servile obedience of the subject races to it. The practice of colonization is ratified by the authority of academics, institutions and governments that formulate a methodology, "surrounding it with greater prestige than its practical successes warrant. In time such knowledge and reality produce a tradition, or what Michel Foucault calls a discourse" (Said, Orientalism 877).

The ideology that was propounded by the imperial order reflected and produced the interests of the colonizer. The imperialist couched the debased language of exploitation in the language of culture and religion, which led to a relegation of the subjectivity, historical understanding, and traditions of the subjugated populace. As Edward Said notes, "All human activity depends on controlling a radically unstable reality to which words approximate only by will or convention" (Culture 29). The representatives of the privileged center of the discourse of power silenced the voices that were on the fringes of society. A configuration of the outer boundaries of "civilization" as

chaotic and unwieldy glorified the dominance of European cultures. In order to achieve this outcome, the dominant order created structures that catered to its unquestioned authority. This imaginary ideal brought about a transformation in the real conditions of existence of colonized peoples. Reality was perceived as an effect of the theoretical and philosophical tenets underlying the exploitation of the natives (Slemon 410).

The colonizer based his subjugation of the natives on a fabulated representation of the world, which he concocted to dominate the imaginations and lives of the colonized. This strategy entailed

> A distribution of geopolitical awareness into aesthetic, scholarly, economic, sociological, historical and philological texts; it is an elaboration not only of a basic geographical distinction but also of a whole series of "interests" which . . . it not only creates but maintains. It is, rather than expresses, a certain will or intention to understand, in some cases to control, manipulate, even incorporate, what is a manifestly different world. (Said, Orientalism 12)

This enabled the dominant power to appropriate the East in order to diminish the threat it posed to European civilization.

The colonizer constrained reality by imposing his ideological schema on it, which underpinned his powerful

positionality. His ability to conjure images and re-etch boundaries that served his set of beliefs, rendered him a force to reckon with. The discursive formations that were forged by the colonizer determined the limits and boundaries of representation in a society. As Leela Gandhi says, "Orientalism becomes a discourse at the point at which it starts systematically to produce stereotypes about Orientals and the Orient" (77). The stereotype of the silent colonized was made available to imperial Europe for the interpretive practices that enabled it to fathom the "barbarity" of the subject race. These ideas were expounded by the imperial power to attribute to the colonized an inferior intellect, a lineage, and a mystique that allowed the dominant regime to manipulate the colonized "Other" as a stereotypical and predictable entity (Said, Orientalism 881). By ascribing a set of beliefs to the native population, the European colonizer typically created a binary division between the "Orient" and the "Occident," and painted a picture of the native as irrational, depraved, and juvenile, requiring the rational European to discipline and redeem him. The rebelliousness of the colonized subject was to be contained by a recognition of his nature which was said to be structured by contraries:

savagery and obedience, satyriasis and innocence, mysticism and manipulation.

The positional superiority of the dominant power was validated by a political structure that affirmed the difference between the familiar European "Us" and the strange Oriental "Them." The coupling of the categories of "Oriental" and "European" polarized the distinction between the two oppositional cultures, traditions, ideologies, and social structures of the colonizer and the colonized. The use of these categories to determine public policy, research, and analysis has informed them with an authenticity that is indelible (Said, Orientalism 248). The rhetoric employed by the colonizer became the authoritative discourse of officialdom that separated itself from the realm of the colonized. It is a dogmatic discourse that has been used to assert its ascendancy among other verbal and ideological points of view.

Imperialism generated the discourse that was dispersed by the European overlord, who required a prescriptive order to classify discordant entities. This classificatory method is not an abstract system of normative forms, but has overtones of the European tendency to manipulate the Orient by imposing its political and social allegiances on it. A

rendition of the mysteries of the East in the "authentic" discourse of imperialism rendered them plain and tangible for the colonizer to analyze. This strategy inevitably led to the disarticulation of the established linguistic practices of the indigenous populations of colonized places.

Syncretistic Counter-Discourse and Subjectivity

Although the cultural identity of colonized peoples was damaged by the experience of colonization, they could not obliterate the legacy of that experience. They sought to reinterpret it, while remaining critical of it (Boehmer 187). Orientalist discourse was strategically available to anti-colonial nationalists to assert an authentic indigenous cultural identity, which stood in opposition to the pejorative stereotypes legitimized by European civilization. According to Homi Bhabha, the Orientalist stereotype is a potentially disruptive site which can push the boundaries of colonial rule "to the colonial periphery; to that limit where [a colonized people] must face a peculiarly displaced image of itself 'in double duty

bound,'at once a civilizing mission and a violent subjugating force" ("The Other Question" 148).

Frantz Fanon, in particular, espoused the attempt to refurbish social and political consciousness in order to undermine racist stereotypes. Although Fanon's theories were specifically geared to the Algerian national struggle, his characterization of culture as the contentious site where psychological and spiritual emancipation might be achieved is relevant to the South Asian context as well. In the case of South Asia the pervasion of prejudicial notions scathed the self-representation and self-construction of colonized peoples. Rebellious movements in colonized territories forged discourses in order to oppose the discourse of discrimination that created a self-loathing in the subjugated race. I will provide examples of the psychological effects wreaked by the discourse of racial prejudice on the formerly colonized people of South Asia in chapter 2. The colonized sought to negate the malignant inheritance of colonialism and to reconstruct their histories, which comprised fragments of cultural memory and myth. In order to fabricate a national identity that was not molded in the image of the colonial power,

> postcolonial writers concentrated on developing a symbolic vocabulary that was recognizably indigenous—or at least other to European representation—and yet at the same time intelligible within a global grammar of postwar politics" (Boehmer 187).

Postcolonial writers endeavored to underscore the cultural oneness of the formerly colonized nation.

In most European colonies, this attempt to create a unitary cultural identity was bolstered by nationalist politics. Nationalism challenges and overthrows the hierarchy of the ruling ideologies by enhancing a unity among all socioeconomic classes of the former colony. This revolutionary act eliminates the petty feuds that exist in an area and replaces them with a sanctified notion of nation (Fanon, Wretched 111). Fanon propounds an anti-colonial nationalism as a therapeutic device to cure the psychological and historical torture inflicted by the dichotomies of colonial culture. According to Fanon, the fallacy of the racial and culture privileging of the colonizer is confounded when the native refuses to follow the trajectory charted out for him by the discursive practices of colonialism (Wretched 117).

In order to assume agency after the end of colonial rule, postcolonial writers have inverted the dominant

representation of formerly colonized cultures as degenerate. The interpretative practices that painted the colonized as epitomizing "heathen incorrigibility," which ought to be repressed, have now been exposed as false. As articulated by Elleke Boehmer, most postcolonial narratives construct plots that bear a wider national reference (192). Such narratives enable formerly colonized peoples to take charge of their social and political destinies. History is no longer imposed on them; now they are able to wield temporality as a powerful tool. In this process of nationalist self-imagining, the deployment of allegory can be used to re-create and preserve a jeopardized way of life. Post-independence narrative, thus, is characterized as the rewriting of history and the creation of symbols of nationhood. The causal narrative in this kind of framework imparts resolvability to a disharmonious history.

Postcolonial writings locate a site of distinctive cultural reality by abrogating the privileged centrality of English. This is done by adapting it to fit the environment of the margins to form a new syncretistic whole. The English language itself is thus "acculturated." As Salman Rushdie points out, "We can't simply use the language in the way the British did . . . it needs remaking for our own

purposes" (Imaginary Homelands 45). According to Bill Ashcroft et al., the postcolonial writer wrenches dominant assumptions by appropriating the language of the colonizer. The effect of the deployment of this strategy is to "propose a metaphoric entry for the culture into the 'English' text" (Empire 51). The postcolonial writer employs the process of tropes and imaginative usage to create the postcolonial world. The array of neologisms and innovations that postcolonial writing draws on reconstructs the normative form of the English language. This insertion of language variance incorporates and foregrounds cultural difference: "The variance itself becomes the metonym, the part which stands for the whole" (Ashcroft et al., Empire 77).

Paul de Man underwrites the distinction between metaphor and metonymy by aligning analogy with necessity and contiguity with chance (14). For Bhabha, metonymy is a preferable trope to metaphor because a metaphorical reading of a text is essentializing and universalizing with respect to social and cultural forces, whereas metonymy addresses the cultural specificity of texts ("Representation" 64). The insertion of indigenous words and expressions, some of which are untranslatable, have the potency of the culture

they represent: "metaphoric in their 'inference of identity and totality'" (Ashcroft et al., Empire 52). This syncretism enables the transmission of the cultural body through language and creates the perception that a people have of themselves and their political and social relationships. I will develop this claim further in chapters 2 and 3 below.

Though language is responsible for the diffusion of a culture, the two are inextricable. This view is essentialist because it endows language with a cultural essence, but the adapted form of the dominant language is metonymic of the cultural difference between the former colonizer and the formerly colonized. The postcolonial writer appropriates and adapts the language of the colonizer to signify the reality of a different culture that is validated by the linguistic variation. The existence and dispersion of the syncretic character of the linguistic medium, which articulates a cultural reality, diminishes the role of subjective consciousness in rendering the hegemony of the colonizer contingent. After the employment of "the rhetorical connective tissue of early postcolonial literature: synecdoche" (Boehmer 191), the subtle and inclusive power of the colonizer over

cultural assumptions and social discriminations is neither accepted as indubitable, nor is it regarded as the common interest.

The metamorphosis in the English language effected by the incorporation of variance into it validates the claim of postcolonial discourse theory about the subtleties of subject-construction in colonial discourse. It insists that the concept and use of Standard English by the colonized subject leads to the perpetuation of a hegemonic rhetoric. The entrenchment of this hegemonic rhetoric in culture and literature creates an unbridgeable gap between the center and the periphery even in postcolonial times.

As a vociferous condemnation of the practices that denigrate the values and traditions of the subservient colonized, the postcolonial writer's adaption of the dominant language into a vernacular form exemplifies the creation of subjectivity. This is compatible with Michel Foucault's analysis of subjectivity as historically constructed (64). Foucault's analysis of subjectivity as constructed by various discourses of power, which vie with each other to control it through systems of domination, applies to the subjectivity of colonized natives. The individual is determined by ideology and discourse, which

establishes identity as an outcome of these factors. Various discourses are produced by those who rule the roost in order to circumscribe the subject by producing and inscribing "reality" on the parchment of knowledge and truth. The historical context over which the subject has no control positions and objectifies him.

In order to render this defunct, the decolonized subject espouses a "strategic essentialism" that enables him and her to explain the existence of an entity. The colonized subject employs essentialist discourse strategically for the purpose of liberating him/herself from colonial constructs, which threaten to enslave his/her essential subjectivity by a complex of signs and practices. The détente between various fractions to form a national consciousness annuls the cartography of empire, and "names its insurgent cultural alterity through the nation--as 'Indian,' 'Kenyan,' 'Algerian'" (Gandhi 113).

This is aptly reflected in Gloria Anzaldua's theory of language as an equation to which people connect their identities, and as a discourse that is "capable of communicating the values and reality true to themselves" (895). The onslaught of colonialism brought about the supersession of the language of the colonizer over the

language of the subjugated people. Natives were made to feel inferior for using an idiom that could not be adequately rendered in the autocratic voice of the colonizer. The development of English into a vernacular form privileges the experience of a submerged voice that breaks the shackles of the "standard":

> English is adopted as the national language, so its local development into vernacular form is one of both evolution and adaptation. In this process of 'becoming', english, by asserting its opposition to the centre and constantly interrogating the dominance of the 'standard', establishes itself as a contrastive or counter-discourse. (Ashcroft et al., Empire 56)

The insertion of language variance diminishes the marginalized status of the "Other." In its evolved form, english thwarts the rabidity of the center by establishing itself as an oppositional discourse that does not unquestioningly accept the dominance of the "norm."

In order to comprehend the untranslated words or events of local significance in a text, the postcolonial reader is now required to delve into the intricacies of an alien culture. The inclusion of indecipherable cultural situations in the text enables the postcolonial writer to assert his/her identity as the center, whose reality can be interpreted only by him/herself. Similar to the

synecdochic function of language variation, allusion creates an impregnable barrier between the "center" and the "margin". The employment of the device of allusion might generate a plethora of cultural signifiers that remain obscure to the reader. Such writing creates meaning and is "a constant demonstration of the dynamic possibilities available to writing within the tension of 'centre' and 'margin'" (Ashcroft et al., Empire 59). Syntactic fusion in the postcolonial text is compiled from a vast array of cultural influence which reincribes categories that were officially sanctioned.

In the postcolonial writer's acquisition of the new language and culture and recognition of the old, he or she creates a site on which indigenous thought-patterns, structures, and rhythms are accompanied by the delineation of an alternative social reality. In short, the postcolonial writer's appropriation of the former colonizer's language amounts to its large-scale "mongrelization."

"Mongrelization"

The disharmonious history begotten by this "mongrelization" comprises the irreconciliability of two opposing discursive systems. As Ashcroft et al. argue,

> The use of english inserts itself as a political discourse in post-colonial writing, and the use of english variants of all kinds captures that metonymic moment between the culture affirmed as "indigenous" and "national" and that characterized as "imperialist", "metropolitan." (Empire 67)

The installation of the linguistic variant as the medium of a counter discourse is not merely a reaction to the colonial order, because it avails itself not only of neologisms but also of indigenous languages and dialects that are signifiers of the existence of cultures other than the dominant one.

The sustained opposition between the two opposing discursive systems prevents the text from kowtowing to a canonical system of representation. A disarticulated self seems inevitable for the formerly colonized subject, specifically in the South Asian context, where the vigor of a literate culture resisted the deracination that pervaded creolized societies. The dilemma in which colonized nationalists find themselves causes this disjuncture: the inability to articulate the ideologies and traditions that have been bequeathed to them by their forefathers, in a

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world pervaded with British colonial structures. This engenders the predicament of perceiving reality with a double vision. This double vision creates a binary opposition in language, which is conveyed in the magic realist mode in certain postcolonial narratives:

> In a postcolonial context, then, the magic realist narrative recapitulates a dialectical struggle within language, a dialectic between "codes of recognition" inherent within the inherited language and those imagined, utopian, and future-oriented codes that aspire toward a language of expressive, local realism, and a set of "original relations" with the world. (Slemon 411)

The two oppositional systems in the language of narration of a postcolonial text are commingled.

In the mixed, heterogeneous space of postcolonialism, cultural and linguistic authenticity is a pipe dream. The binary structures created by the colonial encounter undergo a process of dialectical interplay in which each term makes incursions into the other. The commingling of genres enables the postcolonial writer to defuse the elements of "otherness" that are created by the silenced voices of totalizing systems. The mediation of genres is a "strategy of liberation" (Afzal-Khan 154). The capacity for transmutation into the dialogic continuity of community and

place is a strategy that enables postcolonial writers to revise dogmatic categorizations:

> Any postcolonial culture's literary tradition as "discontinuous," one in which writers find no "usable past" in the apparently colonized literary productions of earlier times, may itself be blind to modes of continuity that can prevail beneath the surface of established generic classifications. (Slemon 422)

This process of fabulation does not falsify history but allows the latter to be derived from the former.

The imaginative reconstruction of history seeks to represent a multiplicity of voices within the text to blur the boundary between self and other, and the idea does not conform to the linear narrative deployed in English canonical texts. The thematization of social relations in a magic realist text, as enumerated by Stephen Slemon, is particularly relevant to the delineation of cultural reality in Salman Rushdie's The Satanic Verses. As Slemon suggests: (a) although the site of the text is described in regional terms, it is metomynic of the postcolonial culture in its entirety; (b) the time frame of the novel is a metaphoric representation of the interminable process of colonization and its aftermath; and (c) the magic realist text foregrounds the canonical assumptions of the center and the margins, and it destabilizes them (412). The magic

realist novel dramatizes the "hybrid" perceptions of postcolonial cultures. By mingling the phantasmic and the plausible, postcolonial writers "demand the prerogative of 'redreaming their own land'" (Slemon 419). Instead of a contemptuous dismissal of the power of myth and fetishes, writers explored these as repositories of culture. This process of recuperation makes the hitherto lost voices of the margin audible. This multiplicity of voices and perspectives shuns decoding.

This polyphony of voices is an augmentation of the dialogic quality which Mikhail Bakhtin characterized as an element of the novel (64). A similar counter discourse is created where the specific cultural information in the text is not accessible to a reader who does not possess the requisite background information. These polylithic forms of recognition dismantle the monolithic codes of officialese that meticulously avoid a betrayal of their latent "otherness".

The pluralistic vision of the world that this genre invokes seeks to show how this process of domination and control does not leave the colonizer in a "pristine" "white" culture. Colonialism engenders "the unhomeliness – that is the condition of extra-territorial and cross-

cultural initiation" (Bhabha, Location 34). The colonial encounter made the boundaries of racial and ethnic identities permeable. This contiguity between mutually antagonistic histories disabled the exoticization of ethnic identities.

Postcolonial writers achieve a reversal by adopting a discourse of "ambidexterity" (Dharwadker 120) that seeks to annul the recognition that the marginal location of a being is validated by the center which requires an "identifiable margin" (Spivak, Outside 5). This echoes Sara Suleri's perceptive observation of the creation of a counter-culture, which is not always explicable in terms of an allegory of otherness (Rhetoric 4). I will explore narratives inscribed by ambidexterity in chapter 3.

Colonialism and Feminism

Despite the resistance to imperialized formations, postcolonialism, as Said argues, is circumscribed by its authoritarian and chauvinistic boundaries. These demarcations incarcerate the postcolonial subject much as the old colonial structures did. Thus the aftermath of the

obliteration of the hierarchical structures created by colonial rule ought to lead to a revisioning of society and culture. Postcolonialism needs a comprehensive consideration of every revolutionary movement, including movements that revolutionize the positions of women. Such movements render the rhetoric of authoritarian patriarchy precarious (Said, World 56).

Colonized women were marginalized on grounds of their race, social class, and gender. In the postcolonial phase of nations, gender divisions were reinforced by the contentious figure of the "third-world woman" (Gandhi 83). The discourse of nationalist movements and literatures of independence placed women on a pedestal as icons of cultural preservation. Sara Suleri opposes this debilitating iconicity for its portrayal of "woman" as passively inhabiting the space of marginality created by patriarchy. As Gayatri Spivak suggests, the marginal placement of the third-world woman is created by the center: "When a cultural identity is thrust upon one because the center wants an identifiable margin, claims for marginality assure validation from the center" (Outside 55). The gaze of the Western feminist can be construed as the "power ploy of the culturally privileged Western elite

to produce a discourse of the Other that reinforces its own power-knowledge equation" (Bhabha, Location 98). The rich complexity in the social and cultural positions of native women is ignored in order to manufacture her "as a singular monolithic subject in some recent (Western) feminist texts" (Talpade Mohanty 196).

The representation of women, who are still in the process of breaking the fetters of colonization, as degraded, repressed, domesticated, illiterate, and traditional, fortifies the neo-orientalism of Western feminism that portrays itself as the liberated savior of the crestfallen ex-colonized woman. Chandra Talpade Mohanty sees the remnants of colonialist power-knowledge in

> [the] appropriation and codification of "scholarship" and "knowledge" about women in the third world by particular analytic categories employed in writings on the subject which take as their primary point of reference feminist interests which have been articulated in the US and western Europe. (196)

Western knowledge retains the cultural prerogative of representing the less "fortunate" other.

However, Leela Gandhi sees the essentialization of the identity of the third-world woman in the critiques of Mohanty and Spivak as reinforcing the iconicity of the "other" woman. Spivak argues that the gendered subaltern is

unable to represent herself within liberal feminist discourses. European and Anglo-American literatures annul the ground-breaking experiences of decolonized women by subscribing to exclusionary tactics:

> As the female individualist, not quite/not male, articulates herself in shifting relationship to what is at stake, the "native female" as such is excluded from a share in this emerging norm. (244-5)

This claim ignores the assertion of feminist individual rights that was more affirmative in the colonies than in the metropole (91).

This assertion of feminist subjectivity stresses the mosaic quality of postcolonial women's writing: the commingling of forms derived from indigenous, nationalist, and European literary traditions. These women were intent on foregrounding their own "distinct actualities" (Minh-ha 5).

Postcolonial Female Agency

In order to underwrite their privileged position, Western feminists have created the negative figure of the "third-world woman" (Gandhi 83). The female subject in formerly colonized places is not given that reductive label of

"third-world woman" by the discourse of indigenous revolutionary movements in South Asia but is apotheosized by them. Sara Suleri sees the liaison of postcolonial and woman as the valorization of oppression, "elevating the racially female voice into a metaphor for "the good" (Woman Skin Deep 759).

Western feminists augment their exclusivity by rendering pervasive the discourse of their politically-conscious subject position in order to marginalize the stereotypically "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, and victimized third world woman." Suleri recognizes that if postcolonial cultural studies is to obliterate a dichotomy whose perpetuation would cause it to wallow in its pigeonhole, "it needs to locate an idiom for alterity that can circumnavigate the more monolithic interpretations of cultural empowerment that tend to dominate current discourse" (Rhetoric 4). This idiom would not relegate women to the fringes, but would create a polylithic space by eroding the essential concept of identity.

Conclusion

As the foregoing discussion suggests, the four major topics in our understanding of colonial and postcolonial structures are as follows: the ideology and discourse disseminated by European colonial hierarchies; the counter discourse that either already exists in an indigenous form or is generated as a strategy to reinscribe the normative forms created by colonial ideology; the postcolonial writer's appropriation of the former colonizer's language to construct his or identity subjectively; and the postcolonial female writer's deployment of positions to reconstruct her subjectivity, and to demand a revisioning of culture and society in order to ascribe agency to the doubly marginalized "third world woman."

In the next two chapters, I will demonstrate how this framework of issues will apply to a thorough understanding of Rushdie and Suleri.

The Reinscription of Dichotomies in Rushdie's Hybridized Protagonists

Introduction

The upheaval that was caused by the publication of The Satanic Verses has continued to generate interest in the book. The Islamic furor surrounding the novel affected the fate of the author, and since February 1989 his life has been in jeopardy. The decision to ban the book was taken by some countries to quell the unrest that was caused by the vociferous protests of the Muslim community to the ostensibly blasphemous "Mahound" and "Ayesha" sections (Pipes 112).

The purpose of this chapter is not to explore whether the references to Islam in the novel are deliberate attempts at blasphemy. My focus will be on the agency assumed by South Asian immigrants in the host nation: England. I have attempted to analyze the novel as the author's endeavor to negotiate and undermine the dominant discourse from "within" (Moore-Gilbert 85). Rushdie uses this strategy as a postcolonial subject to construct the

identity of the colonized subjectively in the section entitled "Mahound." This section corroborates my contention that, although colonized people identified "themselves in the vocabulary of their oppression, they also upturned dominant meanings" (Boehmer 183). The colonized populace sought to reinterpret the material conflict caused by the negation of colonial identity. In order to reject these forms of objectification that denied the colonized a subjectivity, they reinscribed the paradigmatic structures of the colonial regime by maintaining a discursive distance from it. Salman Rushdie explores this reinscription of dichotomies in his book: it is his attempt to resist decoding.

The narrative of <u>The Satanic Verses</u> begins with the embrace of the two protagonists:

> For whatever reason, the two men, Gibreelsaladin Farishtachamcha, condemned to endless but also ending angelicdevilish fall, did not become aware of the moment at which the processes of their transmutation began. (5)

Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha are entangled in a series of racial and political complexities.

As one of the novel's protagonists, Saladin Chamcha personifies the desire of the postcolonial subject by adopting everything that the colonizer represents and detesting his Indian past, which is epitomized by his father and the house that reeks of his childhood memories. Saladin strives to emancipate himself from a past which values "pristine" ancestry over an eclectic culture. As an actor, Saladin is much in demand on radio and in television commercials: "Once in a radio play for thirty-seven voices, he interpreted every single part under a variety of pseudonyms and nobody ever worked it out" (Verses 60-1). In his professional life, Saladin inadvertently enacts the differential position of the migrant which entailed a ludicrous mimicry of the cultural and social values of the colonizer. By portraying Saladin as a versatile mimic, is Rushdie mocking the displaced migrant who doubles the white man's image, without the aim of subverting his authority?

As a young man at an English school, Saladin Chamcha spends ninety minutes trying to eat a kipper at breakfast. Though the experience is flustering, his peers don't help him. When he thinks about the incident in retrospect, he realizes that despite his tremendous efforts, he will never be a part of this society to which he has migrated. It is

at this point that he undertakes the task of establishing himself in English society as a force to be reckoned with (Verses 44). Prior to the hijacking of the plane to London that leads to the fall in which he and Gibreel are intertwined, Chamcha has all but renounced his native country to get integrated into the culture of the colonizer.

Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha, the "twin" protagonists of the book, undergo a reciprocal metamorphosis during which Gibreel acquires a halo and Saladin sprouts demonic horns, hair, and hooves. However, this transmogrification does not enable the reader to draw a clear distinction between the forces of good and evil. In the intertwining of the two protagonists during the course of their fall from the heavens, the prescriptive order is rendered fuzzy (Verses 9). After his metamorphosis, the British police and immigration officers accuse Chamcha of being an illegal immigrant. His transmogrification into a demonic character is treated by the police "as if it were the most banal and familiar matter they could imagine" (Verses 158). He tries to convince them of his innocence by referring to the hallmark of his authenticity as a British citizen: his job as an actor and voice artist on British

television, in the role of Maxim Alien (Verses 144). The irony is that the reference exacerbates his alienation, because as an actor he played the role of an alien. Chamcha's inappropriate demeanor threatens to disrupt one of the manifestations of established authority. The reaction of the policemen to this potential "menace" is the political and cultural crisis of a society that preserves its self-image by codifying its structures. As Rushdie points out:

> The British authorities, being no longer capable of exporting governments, have chosen instead to import a new empire, a new community of subject peoples of whom they can think, and with whom they can deal, in very much the same way as their predecessors thought of and dealt with "the fluttered folk and wild," the "new-caught sullen peoples, half-devil and half-child." (Imaginary Homelands 112)

Such ethnocentric assumptions valorize the values of European culture.

Chamcha's lack of simpatico with his indigenous culture is brought out vividly on his visit to a restaurant in India, where a cacophony is caused by the vociferous arguments between a group of armchair politicians about the turmoil on the subcontinent. This aggressive discussion sickens Chamcha: "He had to accept the fact that his blood no longer contained the immunizing agents that would have

enabled him to suffer India's reality" (Verses 58). Chamcha's antagonism toward his native country is explicitly brought out when he realizes that his wife has a sexual liaison with his friend, Joshi. This leads him to express his unmitigated hatred for all Indians: "Damn all Indians" (Verses 141).

Revisioning of Colonial Identities

Despite his anglicization, the metamorphosis that Chamcha undergoes leads to his being clubbed with the "black" community. In this scene, Asian adolescents don devil-horns as an assertion of pride in their identity, and as a refutation of the ideological schema imposed on them by the groups that rule the roost. Despite Rushdie's endeavor to render the abstract system of normative forms fuzzy by creating an ambivalence in the hegemonic discourse, he does not disavow the zeal of older generation Indians in the Asian ghetto to revert to pre-colonial cultural and political formations as a resistance to the rabidity of neo-colonialism. Is Rushdie's characterization of the black community as grotesque, an admission that "the idea of a

well-tempered balance is strictly utopian"? (Baudrillard 129). The self-assertion of the black community could be interpreted as the revenge of the former colonized that manifests itself as the autonomy of the subaltern.

A manifestation of the backlash that reverts to an essentialist identity in order to assert itself is the blind faith and unrelenting loyalty of the villagers in the "Ayesha" episode of the novel. By Rushdie's admission, this episode is based on an event that occurred in Pakistan, in which thirty-eight Shia' Muslims walked into the Arabian sea ("In Good Faith" 54). They performed this act of seeming ludicrousness, because they expected the waters to part to enable them to make their pilgrimage to Basra and from there to the hallowed site of Karbala.

Gibreel Farishta exemplifies the quandary that ruffles the positionality of the postcolonial when he finds himself torn asunder between an essentialist indigenous culture and the fragmentation caused by the dominant power. Gibreel belongs to the apotheosized class of Indian movie stars. He is a famous and flamboyant Bombay superstar, portraying the diverse deities of the Indian subcontinent in the "theological" genre. Farishta is tormented by the thought of being caught up between two irreconcilable worlds: "this

world and another that was also right there, visible but unseen. He felt slow, heavy, distanced from his own consciousness, and realized that he had not the faintest idea which path he would choose, which world he would enter" (Verses 351).

Gibreel's dilemma is manifested in his dreams. His identification with the Archangel Gabriel overwhelms him with a feeling of invincibility: "He would show them-yes!-his power.-These powerless English!-Did they think their history would return to haunt them? Then away with all fogs. He would make this land anew. He was the Archangel, Gibreel" (Verses 353). In his dreams, Gibreel sees himself as revealing divine messages to Mahound in the persona of the Angel Gabriel. At times, there is no distinction between himself and Mahound. These dreams, interpreted as hallucinations by the psychiatrists who treat him, lead to Gibreel identifying his " 'angel' self as another person: in the Beckettian formula, Not I. He" (Verses 350). Rushdie's obliteration of officially contrived binaries inverts the hierarchical structure that reinforces its control by classifying the colonized.

The potency of the pecking order is unequivocally explained to Chamcha in the section of the book entitled

"Ellowen Deeowen." Chamcha finds himself in a grotesque sanitarium transformed into a demonic creature. He is told that all the aliens and migrants in the institution are further excluded by the cultural assumptions of the colonizer, which are the prevalent ones. Chamcha interprets his magic realist metamorphosis as the power of conventional images of the "other": "They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct" (Verses 174). The conventional notion of the colonized or the formerly colonized entailed a characterization of the "other" as "primitive" and in need of "civilizing." The repressed others internalized the identity palmed off onto them by the colonizer. Chamcha's realization that the grotesque and degrading images of the immigrant community are created by the dominant discourse enable him to question the interpellation of subjects by the gaze of the Symbolic Order. Here Rushdie seems to be indulging in the postcolonial trick of fobbing off the colonizer, by playing up "the most modern and hypothetical of considerations: the irresolvability of any narrative, absolute doubt as to the origins" (Baudrillard 136). The discourse of the colonizer creates Manichean oppositions that instigate the immigrant consciousness to rebel against the rejection of dark-

skinned people by the law-enforcing machinery of the white race.

The plight of the postcolonial writer in this untenable situation is echoed by that of the satirist, Baal, in the Jahilia episode of The Satanic Verses. Baal is hired by the state to exercise the "art of metrical slander" (100). Baal perceives the employment of his art for political purposes as degradation. At this point the Grandee's response is that his only alternative is to work as a poet for professional assassins. The trauma of being caught in the dilemma of choosing between the politicization of his art and its commercialization enables Baal to detect the vanity in the desire to pursue "uncontaminated art." In order to survive, Baal would compose eloquent verses that minimized the challenges posed to the sustaining mythology of the normative center.

The dissemination of geographic, cultural, and political doctrines of empire in an apolitical aesthetic world engenders the predicament of perceiving reality with a disjoined or "stereoscopic" vision. In the disjoined and disharmonious world of Rushdie's novel, the ludicrousness of pretensions to heroism becomes obvious:

> The true djinns of old had the power to open the gates of the Infinite, to make all things possible, to render all wonders capable of being attained; how banal, in comparison, was this modern spook, this degraded descent of mighty ancestors, this feeble slave of a twentieth-century lamp. (Verses 546)

The dreams between the real and the unreal, the profane and the sacred, and the colonizer and the colonized seem to disintegrate.

A similar collapse of traditional edifices is reflected in Mahound's quasi-submission to the demand of the reigning order in Jahilia. Mahound's yielding to the Grandee's demand of bestowing angelic status on the three favorite goddesses of Jahilia, only if it is reciprocated by the wholesale conversion of that region, is Rushdie's attempt to challenge political and cultural domination and subordination by the application of a strategic essentialism. The strategic deployment of this essentialist discourse liberates Mahound from dominant constructs, whose praxis jeopardizes his essential subjectivity. What seems to emerge is a dismantling of barriers between monotheism and idolatry, "them" and "us", sacred and profane. The idea of oppositionality created by the rhetoric of the political structure is rendered tenuous.

The personification of the polarized distinction between the sacred and the profane, harem and brothel, is made in Gibreel's dream in which the whores of a brothel in Jahilia take the names of the prophet's wives. The men of the region allow themselves to be enticed by the namesakes of the prophet's wives. By doing so, they seem to share the aspiration of the keepers of the hegemonic order to emasculate the subservient race by possessing the woman who is the repository of the cultural heritage of that race. In the antithetical worlds of brothel and harem, the brothel is vanquished. By eliminating the "tainted" whores of Jahilia, is Rushdie denouncing the futile brutality of the colonizer?

The tale ends in the glamorous film city of Bombay, which is by implication the phantasmagoric city of delusions and melange. This is represented in a syncretistic view of fissured and fragmented reality in, to borrow Steven F. Walker's phrase, a "mythopoetic" world (351). The mode of magic realism enables Rushdie to portray a run-of-the-mill world as precariously positioned by the constant threat of hostility:

> Plus also: they had come into a demon city in which anything could happen, your windows shattered in the middle of the night without any

> cause, you were knocked over in the middle of the street by invisible hands, in the shops you heard such abuse you felt your ears would drop off when you turned in the direction of the words you saw only empty air and smiling faces, and every day you heard about this boy, that girl, beaten up by ghosts.-Yes, a land of phantom imps, how to explain. (Verses 250)

The racial harassment inflicted on London's immigrant community is a phantasmagoric attempt to retain the institutions of the former imperial power by jeopardizing the existence of any entity not quite like that of the English.

The discourse generated by the dominant power had an inevitable effect on the self-construction of colonized subjects (Fanon, Black Skin 140). The colonizer constrained reality by conjuring images that served his set of beliefs. In order to enhance the authority of the dominant European power, the representatives of the regime developed the idea of a discourse based on "the ontological and epistemological distinction between the 'Orient' and the 'Occident'" (Said, Orientalism 1). Edward Said propounds the notion of this totalizing form of the discourse of Europe as a means to create an impregnable boundary between various binary divisions: black-white, primitive-savage, silent-articulate, rational ruler and irrational ruled.

Said develops the institutionalization of Orientalism as a strategy to render the Orient wieldy,

> By making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism as a Western style for dominating, restructuring, and having authority over the Orient. (Orientalism 3)

Such knowledge produced a discourse that endowed the practice of colonization with a certain prestige that was validated by the authority of academics, institutions, and governments.

These ideas were circulated by the hegemonic power to place the "other" under Orientalist rubrics as a method of maintaining political control. The European overlord constructed a classificatory structure to manipulate the Orient by silencing the cultural and political voices of dominated territories. The stereotypes of the marginalized indigenous populations were devised by the imperial power for the interpretative practices that enabled it to pigeonhole the "alienness" of the subject race.

Such discursive formations were wrenched by anti-colonial nationalists to affirm a self-constructed identity, which eroded and dismantled deprecatory stereotypes objectified by Orientalist discourse. As I have already noted, according to Bhabha, the Orientalist

stereotype is a precarious site which can push the boundaries of colonial rule "to the colonial periphery; to that limit where [the colonizer] must face a peculiarly displaced image of itself 'in double duty bound,' at once a civilizing mission and a violent subjugating force" ("The Other Question" 148). Bhabha perceives stereotyping as a dynamic site that deploys the strategies of metaphor and metonymy as an entry for profound cultural, religious, and linguistic differences into the text ("The Other Question" 152). Formerly colonized subjects are portrayed as rearticulating themselves in, as Homi Bhabha says,

> Forms of social antagonism and contradiction that are not yet properly represented, political identities in the process of being formed, cultural enunciations in the act of hybridity, in the process of translating and transvaluing cultural differences. (Location 252)

The colonized seek to annihilate the eurocentricity of the European colonizer by reinscribing their marginalized plurality.

Hybridity and Ambivalence

The site of ambivalence created by the reinscription of the voices on the fringes of society is the space in which a cultural identity emerges. The "hybrid" subjectivity created in this contradictory space annuls the hierarchical purities of cultures. The notion of hybridity, as theorized by Homi Bhabha, negates the inequality between various cultural, linguistic, and political valences. The term is meant to suggest the leveling of oppositionality that generates "interstices" that constitute the terrain for the displacement of clearly defined boundaries. These interstitial passages which open up small and narrow fissures between seemingly intransigent identities supposedly create the possibility of the blossoming of cultural hybridities that undermine hierarchical structures (Location 4).

Bhabha contends that the concept of homogeneity in national cultures and in communities defined by their ethnicity is no longer indubitable, but is in the process of being redefined (5). The hegemony of the West is confronted by its postcolonial history that forms a crevice, which is "the space of intervention that introduces creative space into existence" (Location 9).

Rushdie's Satanic Verses endeavors to reinscribe and redefine categories that previously had seemed ineradicable. The inhabitants of Jahilia represent one of the nodes of contaminated hybridity of Bhabha's interstitial spaces, which is the "configuration of the disjunctive rewriting of the transcultural and migrant experience" (226).

By laying emphasis on the "third space" in which an equalization of cultural hierarchies takes place, Bhabha's concept of hybridity does not take into consideration the thematic and political connections that post-independence writers retain, while in the precincts of the Western metropolis. This experience of transculturation stimulates a hybridity that remains, as Elleke Boehmer puts it, "an aesthetic device" (23). Bhabha's de-historisized and de-contextualized hybridity espouses a mimicry of European ways by which the colonized subject supposedly creates a "double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (Location 88). The idea of mutuality suggested by the concept of "hybridity" does not entail an egalitarian exchange, nor does it erode the hierarchical structure created by

colonialism. This observation is corroborated by Bhabha's observation that

> For Fanon the liberatory "people" who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural exchange are themselves the bearers of a hybrid identity and they construct their culture from the national text translated into modern Western forms of information technology, language, dress [transforming] the meaning of the colonial inheritance into the liberatory signs of a free people of the future. (Location 38)

Despite the assertion of national identity, Bhabha's homogenized post-colonial subject is assimilated into Western discourse by concealing oppositional resistance or the negativism of Western forms of hegemonic control.

The term "hegemony" was coined by Antonio Gramsci to mean the power of the ruling class to augment its privileged position by encouraging the complicity of the dominated classes in their servility. This form of dominance does not require violence or active persuasion for its position on the highest rung of the hierarchy. On the contrary, hegemony is exerted by creating a strongly bounded area of social and cultural knowledge that produces the prerogative of the empire, and the servile obedience of the subject races to it. This discourse of expropriation was couched in the utilitarian discourse of the greater good, which catered to the sustenance of the imperial

regime. Imperialism and colonialism were fortified by ideological formations which, as articulated by Edward Said, include notions that for certain territories and people domination is imperative, as well as forms of literature associated with that governance (Culture 8). The following proposition makes explicit the Eurocentricity of Gramsci's view:

> Even if one admits that other cultures have had an importance and a significance they have had a universal value only in so far as they have become constituent elements of European culture, which is the only historically and concretely universal culture-in so far, that is, as they have contributed to the process of European thought and been assimilated by it. (416)

Eurocentric values and praxis were not accepted unquestioningly by all colonized peoples just because non-European cultures were pushed to the periphery. Such hegemonic forms of cultural practice serve particular interests and social constituencies.

Gayatri Spivak employs the term "subaltern" to designate "subsistence farmers, unorganized peasant labour, the tribals and communities of zero workers on the street or in the country side" ("Can the Subaltern Speak" 82). She directs her analysis at the doubly marginalized position of the female subaltern. Unlike Said, Spivak espouses the

tradition of Marxist political economy to theorize the subjectivity of the subaltern. Spivak's notion of the subject draws on the idea that the dominant power wove a fabricated picture of the world and embellished lies in order to convince the colonized races that by obeying the hegemonic power, they were placating god. This imaginary ideal brought about a transformation in the real conditions of existence.

Spivak argues that a counter-hegemonic discourse that does not effect a displacement of oppositional terms has the potential of being reappropriated by the center. She recognizes that postcolonial counter-hegemonic discourse is a "persistent critique of what you cannot not want" ("Neocolonialism" 234). In order to prevent this eventuality, Spivak advocates "negotiation" with Western cultural institutions, texts, values, and theoretical practices. The employment of deconstruction to subvert the binaries on which dominant discourses rely to validate their power, prevent an inverse valorization of East over West. The subject is constructed discursively and is not perceived as a "pristine" entity. As Spivak points out, the term "Indian" is the product of colonial discourse and as a category of identity entails a particular history of the

formation of subjectivity by a heterogeneous network of forces. Spivak corroborates the argument that the postcolonial subject cannot remove the indelible traces of colonialism and its legacy. She avails herself of the various "fictional constructs" in the work of Marx and Gramsci to create the idea of a "strategic essentialism" ("Criticism" 184). The deployment of a "pure" subaltern consciousness is "a strategic use of positivist essentialism in a scrupulously visible political interest" (In Other World 66). The concept of "strategic essentialism" is not an authoritative "truth," but a permissible method of de-hegemonizing subject-positions in order to wrench "particular images, ideas or rhetorical strategies out of their place within a particular narrative" (In Other Worlds 156).

A configuration of the outer boundaries of civilization as chaotic and unwieldy glorifies the dominance of European cultures. Abdul R. JanMohamad's delineation of the two categories of colonialist literature is particularly useful. He perceives the rigid dichotomy between the colonizer and the native as a "manichean allegory" (22), which performs the function that is radically opposed to the function of Bhabha's disruptive

stereotype of the colonized. The manichean allegory in "imaginary texts" is a fetishizing strategy that essentializes the conquered world. This domain of universal and metaphysical "truths" dehistoricizes dominated peoples, and maintains the illusion of a world that has no potential for transculturation or a mutually beneficial exchange. Although "symbolic texts" have emancipated themselves from the codes of the normative dehistorisied order, they continue to perceive the "other" "through self-understanding" (24). In other words, despite the recognition of socio-political-and cultural differences, the status quo remains unharmed. The metropolis labors under the illusion that the "civilizing" mission undertaken by it determines the periphery, but its negates the influence of the periphery on the center. JanMohamad's recognition of literary and cultural syncretism being the domain of third world writers, unlike the hierarchical nature of Bhabha's "hybridity," stresses the mutuality of cultures.

The deployment of indigenous narratives, which would be unfathomable to a reader unacquainted with these histories, is an assertion of the postcolonial writer's tool to silence the voices of totalizing systems. In order

to give a voice to the interstitial spaces of post-independence India, Rushdie foregrounds indigenous fetishes and vernacular histories. For instance, by enacting the reincarnations of figures in the vast array of Hindu idols, Gibreel is instrumental in bringing about a rapprochement between Hinduism and Islam. Is Rushdie's characterization of Gibreel as an icon of indigenous, "theological" films an affirmation of ethnocentricity, which resists easy decoding?

Creation of Centrifugal Transculturation

In order to carve a niche for themselves in the hierarchy that exists in the metropolis, postcolonial subjects make a deliberate attempt to incorporate European ways into their cultural and social practices. Despite this servile mimicry, imperial ideology marks them as inferior. As a strategy to debunk their marginality, they generate a "position for reconstruction" or "mongrelization" (Boehmer 117). Saladin Chamcha is an embodiment of the "mongrelization" of the immigrant.

For the immigrant, there remain "old selves, old selves erased in part but not fully. So what you get are

these fragmented, multifaceted, multicultural selves" (Marzorati 44). A disarticulated self seems inevitable for the immigrant. This disjuncture is generated by the dissemination of geographic, cultural, and political doctrines of empire in a world of national aspiration.

For instance, The Satanic Verses seems to be the embryo of a world in which boundaries have been blurred, and the reader is cast into "the world beyond the looking glass, where nonsense is the only sense" (Rushdie, "Pen Against the Sword" 57). Neat dichotomies are blurred from the novel's very inception. Rushdie consciously explores the sense of otherness, which is heightened for immigrants as a consequence of displacement. The fragmentation of the "Other" reduces the immigrant to a rubble involving the "debris of the soul, broken memories, sloughed-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes and extinguished fires" (Verses 4). He portrays a postcolonial world that rejects the marginalized position it occupies, and gains a perception of experience as being centrifugal and multifarious. The imagination presents avenues for escape from the stifling structures of dominance and servility. A reconciliation with the past and a melding of it with his present and future endows one of

the novel's protagonists, Saladin Chamcha, with the ability to develop a new world view. This perspective shuns the seemingly ineradicable polarities of language and culture and employs the values of European and Indian cultures to create a self in which determinate categorization and classification are not viable strategies. His subjectivity is fractured through his identification with metropolitan cultural norms.

The insipid response of the British authorities to Chamcha's bestialization is an example of the stereotype of the sexually potent "third world" immigrant, which is created by the former colonizer to diminish the threatening force of dissension. Edward Said's theory of the silencing of the margins by the privileged overlord is applicable here (<u>Orientalism</u> 356). By mimicking the European colonizer's fetishistic representation of the morally inferior native, Rushdie disarticulates the ideology that reinforces the European's moral superiority. Such a fetishistic portrayal of the native negates any specific subjectivity.

Here, Chamcha's connection with his nation of origin is relegated to a metaphorical position, which is an example of the quasi-dependent position of the postcolonial

writer. The clout exercised by the status quo in the work of "third world" writers, who do not preserve some form of cultural autonomy, affirmes the scrutinizing gaze of the Western tourist. Chamcha's lack of regional and local affiliations maintains the power hierarchies, which were established by the former colonizer.

An inversion of authority occurs in the Asian ghetto, where the stereotype of the migrant which is made available to the former colonizer for the interpretative practices that enable him to fathom the "savagery" of the immigrant condition, is appropriated by the margin. The ideology underlying this strategy of appropriation is dissension. Implicit in this dissension of the Asian community that clothes itself in the devil's garb, is loyalty to an immigrant who is allegedly a demented serial killer. But this form of egregious protest is an allegiance to race polarization, which the "third world" writer attempts to undercut. The demonization, which causes Chamcha to sever his ties with his host nation, erodes his resolution to thrive in an alien culture. This universe of the immigrant, particularly as portrayed in the melding of identities in The Satanic Verses, seems to be devoid of logical reasoning. This can be attributed to "diverse possibilities

of interpretation" that are generated from the migrants'"perspective of their cultural heterogeneity or hybridity" (Boehmer 173).

The temptation to objectify difference which is the corollary of the stereotypes disseminated by the discourse of orientalism, is the foundation of racial hatred in the novel. Chamcha realizes that his passionate hatred of Gibreel was an aspect of "a reality incompatible with his passionate desire to reestablish life" (Verses 422).

Essentialist Subjectivity and Subject Construction

An ineradicable subaltern essentialism is asserted in the pilgrimage that Ayesha leads. The group of villagers that undertakes this pilgrimage comprises people of two different faiths: Hindus and Muslims. In this devotional journey, Hindus and Muslims exemplify communal harmony by walking together to achieve a single purpose. This scene of cultural and national brouhaha forges a view of the world that is heterogeneous, but ultimately one. This episode terminates in the drowning of all the pilgrims in the Arabian sea. This debacle seems to be a disclaiming of the

essentialist metonymy that evokes the "economy of the Manichean allegory." Ayesha's rigidity seems to embody the intransigent insurgency of the colonized that wards off the dominance of the colonizer or neo-colonizer by adhering to an essentialist cultural identity. Gayatri Spivak identifies Rushdie's dilemma, between a metropolitan identity and a subaltern one, as an aporia in which he finds himself torn apart between two alternatives (Outside 222).

Rushdie struggles to dispel the impasse by his attempt to re-etch demarcations. This endeavor has motivated the postcolonial to wrench dominant assumptions by appropriating the language of the colonizer. For instance, in "In Good Faith," Rushdie states that his use of the satanic name "Mahound" for the prophet of Islam in The Satanic Verses is a move to reclaim language from one's opponents. In the book, Mahound represents a subaltern group that adapts the hegemonic discourse of its place and time to its position of subservience. Rushdie's use of the name "Mahound" can be construed as an erosion of canonical cultural assumptions within Islam as well as European Christianity. In this case it seems to be Mahound's attempt to reconstruct the polytheistic world of Jahilia that leads

to the appropriation of the name used by his opponents to refer to him. This strategic move destabilizes dominant assumptions that are the foundation of binary structuration, which is the basis of the pattern of conquest and domination in human history (Harris 124-5). The postcolonial appropriation of language is a tool used to create new cultural assumptions.

This form of subversion enables an infiltration of the dominant order which "sullies" the "naturalness" of a being. The inability to trace the etymology of an intrinsically "natural" entity is endorsed by Gayatri Spivak, who speaks of postcolonial claims to nationhood, democracy, and social and economic justice as "catachreses": the assigning of new and unfamiliar values to "concept-metaphors" of metropolitan culture (229). The representation of culture in <u>The Satanic Verses</u> "incorporates such acts of citation, of repetition with a difference" (Mufti 102). In the novel, Rushdie's avowal to an eclecticism, as Zeeny puts it to Saladin, is unequivocal:

> She was an art critic whose book on the confining myth of authenticity, that folkloristic straitjacket which she sought to replace by an ethic of historically validated eclecticism, for was not the entire national culture based on the

> principle of borrowing whatever clothes seemed to fit, Aryan, Mughal, British, take-the-best-and-leave-the-rest? (Verses 52)

The characters in The Satanic Verses who are able to form composite identities are the ones who manage to survive.

This is characterized as a counter-hegemonic activity in the Gramscian sense (Moore-Gilbert 165). For instance, Gibreel's masquerade as Rosa's husband causes a breach between the historical continuum of past and present, which is augmented by Rosa's fragmented experience as "the creature of cracks and absences she knew herself to be" (Verses 130). Gibreel, in his position as Rosa's ex-colonial husband mimics the "colonial ideologies of patriotism and patriarchy." His megalomania, which incites him to enclose himself in a delusionary atmosphere is a rendition of Fanon's observation: "the native is an oppressed person whose permanent dream is to become the persecutor" (74). But the interpretative ambivalence of mimicry is also a strategic inversion of the hierarchical structure that "turns the gaze of the discriminated back upon the eye of power" (Bhabha, "Signs" 112).

Is appropriation Rushdie's refusal of cultural dependence? His universe rejects categorizing. Is the bestialized Chamcha the epitome of good or evil? These

questions boggle the reader's mind. Is the inability to answer them the reader's debunking of binary oppositions? That confusion of categories is, for Rushdie, demystification, which has "set him free" (Afzal-Khan 180). Or is the strategy of demystification Rushdie's way of distancing himself from the postcolonial condition?

Composite Identity in Suleri's Meatless Days

Introduction

Nationalist movements and literatures of independence created from within colonized places tended to objectify women as the repositories of a pre-colonial cultural essence. Sara Suleri objects to this apotheosis of women, because she perceives it as reinforcing the post-independence patriarchal structure, in which "third-world" women occupied a marginal space. The force of Suleri's opposition is enhanced by her discernment of the liaison of postcolonial and woman as the valorization of oppression, "elevating the racially female voice into a metaphor for 'the good'" (Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep" 759).

Formerly colonized women, according to the discourse of Western feminists, were on the fringes of society on grounds of their race, social class, and gender. This disenfranchising of the "third-world woman" was caused by the interpretive practices of the authoritative culture.

Western feminists, for example, accentuated their position on the higher rung of the social and cultural

hierarchy by disseminating the unconditional form of the discourse of their redemptive political plenitude. This was done in order to exclude and repress the cliched "ignorant, poor, uneducated, tradition-bound, and victimized third-world woman."

Despite the resistance to imperialized formations, as Edward Said argues, postcolonialism is circumscribed by its authoritarian and chauvinistic boundaries (2). These demarcations incarcerate the subject as much as old colonial structures did. Colonized women were marginalized on grounds of their race, social class, and gender. There is no radical transformation of this situation in the postcolonial phase of nations, during which gender divisions are reinforced by the contentious figure of the "third-world woman," which is a construction of Western feminists (Gandhi 83). This marginalization of the "third-world woman" is not endemic to the non-Western world, but the role of the "woman" of former colonized places was foregrounded by the discourse of nationalist movements and literatures of independence, which placed her on a pedestal, as an icon of cultural preservation.

In order to combat this discursive formation, the aftermath of the obliteration of the hierarchical structure

created by colonial rule ought to be a revisioning of society and culture. Postcolonialism needs a comprehensive consideration of every revolutionary movement, including those involving women. As a strategy to discount the totalizing narrative of pre-independence and post-independence rhetoric, Sara Suleri's memoir, Meatless Days, confronts the repressive political and social apparatuses by engaging in more politically astute writing. By formulating a politically conscious subject-position, the "self" of the narrator assumes a discursively constructed agency:

> A subject-effect can be briefly plotted as follows: that which seems to operate as a subject may be part of an immense discontinuous network ("text" in the general sense) of strands that may be termed politics, economics, history, sexuality, language, and so on. Different knottings and configurations of these strands, determined by heterogeneous determinations, which are themselves dependent upon myriad circumstances, produce the effect of an operating subject. (Spivak, In Other Worlds 260)

Suleri is not produced by but creates the inevitable multiplicity of subject-positions for the purpose of liberating herself from the pre-colonial that reified the figure of "woman" and neo-colonial constructs, which threaten to manipulate her subjectivity by a complex of signs and practices.

Filiation and Affiliation

The narrator of Meatless Days is not only a woman, but a woman who traces her origin to the hegemonically identified "Third and First worlds." Suleri's father, Z. A. Suleri, was "Pakistani before Pakistan" existed (Meatless Days 115). He ardently advocated the logic of creating a separate homeland for Indian Muslims, in which they would be " 'a nation by any definition' " (Meatless Days 114). Z. A. Suleri's filial loyalties lay with the India that was the undisputed homeland of Hindus and Muslims, but he was affiliated to the proclamation of a nation-state for Muslims: "But the logic of arguing for independence unleashed odd thoughts in India, so that in 1930 the poet Iqbal's Allahabad Address to the Muslim League could contain visionary references to the idea of a separate Indian Muslim nation" (Meatless Days 114).

Sara Suleri's father propagated the theoretical construct of "Pakistan" in England, prior to its creation. The British orchestrated the partition of India in 1947. The aftermath of this historical catastrophe was a

traumatic dislocation of "farmers, villagers, living in some other world, [who] one day awoke to find they no longer inhabited familiar homes but that most modern thing, a Hindu or a Muslim nation" (Meatless Days 116). During that heart-rending period, the narrator's father celebrated the substantive reality of Pakistan "in postwar London, living with my mother now" (Meatless Days 116).

The narrator's mother was a Welsh woman, who was forced to lead an anomalous existence in "a brand-new nation," in which she discovered "an ancient landscape, feudal in its differentiation of tribes, and races, and tongues" (Meatless Days 163). Despite her zeal to adapt to a postcolonial culture, which is still in an embryonic stage, Suleri's mother, Mair Jones, remained "alienated" in a world that was tottering due to the ravages of colonial and pre-colonial structures. Mair Jones embodied a "disembodied Englishness" in this world that didn't know how to react to a "woman who called herself a Pakistani but who looked suspiciously like the past it sought to forget?" (Meatless Days 163). Mair Jones seemed to accept her share of the white people's burden with fortitude and made it bearable with her reserve and reticence. The narrator can imagine her mother claiming to have inscribed the

identities and destinies of her children: "I wrote Ifat and Shahid; I wrote Sara and Tillat; and then I wrote Irfan" (Meatless Days 184).

Suleri's move to New Haven further complicates her identity by declaring her affiliation with the "Third World" diaspora. This empowers her with agency to inhabit a sphere that slides "both geographically and linguistically" (Warley 113). The narrator of Meatless Days makes no bones about her privileged position as a Western-educated critic of a formerly colonized territory. This renders her location ambiguous, because it entails her complicity in a "workplace engaged in the ideological production of neo-colonialism" (Spivak, In Other Worlds 210).

As a postcolonial woman, who is rendered biracial, bicultural, and bilingual, the narrator is able to articulate the ideologies and traditions bequeathed to her by her father in a world pervaded with Western institutions. The narrator's location could have engendered the predicament of perceiving reality with a double vision, but Suleri steers clear of that danger by weaving the fragments of her memory to reconstruct or "memorialize" history. This enables the narrator to create a realm that she identifies as "ambidextrous," which comprises "a

heterogeneous, unintegrated mix of different cultures that dialectically inform one another" (Warley 118). This syncretism creates the perception that the narrator has of herself and her political and social relationships.

Suleri's strategy of negotiation with Western and postcolonial structures causes a disruption in the authority by which cultures categorize and buttress their own axioms. For example, despite the narrator's affiliation with the "third world," her entitlement to certain prerogatives in the social hierarchy of Pakistan as a result of filiation, and her prestigious position in the American academy due to her affiliation destabilize the self-representation of Western feminists. Western feminists portray themselves as "educated, modern, as having control over their own bodies and 'sexualities,' and the freedom to make their own decisions" (Mohanty 200). Suleri's efficacy in two domains renders ambidexterity as a viable identity for the "third-world" writer.

Hybridity and Ambidexterity

Suleri acknowledges that if post-colonial cultural studies is to shun a totalizing discourse that creates dichotomies, "it needs to locate an idiom for alterity that can circumnavigate the more monolithic interpretations of cultural empowerment that tend to dominate current discourse" (Rhetoric 4). As a strategy to demystify the sanctified role of "women," Suleri creates a narrative of reconstructed belonging. The autobiographical "I" in the realm of Meatless Days develops its perception of experience as centrifugal and multifarious.

This entity is rendered biracial, bicultural, and bilingual, which gives her access to the cultures of the metropole as well as the formerly colonized nation. The intersection of these disparate cultural ideologies creates fertile terrain for the reconfiguration of seemingly intractable identities. Suleri claims the discourse of "ambidexterity" to reinscribe the conventional narratives of belonging in order to accommodate them, while not being completely immersed in their "totalizable analytical foothold" (Spivak, In Other Worlds 149).

Ambidexterity, as suggested by Vinay Dharwadker, is a syncretistic discourse that enables a wholesome existence in multiple cultural positions (123). An ambidextrous

subject does not inhabit a site that can reductively be identified as either one of collaboration with colonial structures or that of resistance to them. Instead, the subject is able to forge a cross-cultural identity by bringing a critical perspective to two cultures so as to maintain positions of integrity in both without relinquishing either (124).

Meatless Days brings an ambidextrous space into existence. The espousal of ambidexterity seeks to annul the recognition that the marginal location of a being is validated by the center which requires an "identifiable margin" (Spivak, Outside 5). Unlike Homi Bhabha's notion of hybridity, the narrator's attempt to restore the voices of the women in her narrative recognizes the effects of colonial as well as indigenous society, which create frameworks for the intercourse of silenced "women" to be interpreted. The narrator does not attempt to neglect the adverse affects of domination or displacement, nor does she associate the authoritarian qualities of writing and pedagogy exclusively with the West.

Hybridity, as theorized by Bhabha, supposedly negates the inequality between various cultural, linguistic, and political valences. The term suggests the leveling of

oppositionality that generates "interstices" which constitute the terrain for the displacement of clearly defined boundaries. These interstitial passages open up small and narrow fissures between intransigent categories and create the possibility of the blossoming of cultural hybridities (Location 4). The postcolonial history of the West forms a crevice, which is "the space of intervention that introduces creative space into existence" (Location 9). Bhabha's concept of hybridity, however, fails to take into account the thematic and political connections that post-independence writers retain, while in the precincts of the Western metropolis.

Post-independence writers endeavor to negotiate the indeterminacies that exist in a decentered universe by conceptualizing culture as a dialogic and mobile experience. More over, contrary to Bhabha's suggestion, "third world" nationalism is not a unitary discourse

> The methodological question is whether Bhabha's cultural logic can be applied without modification either to nations whose histories do not mimic those of European models and "modular forms," or to historical periods, such as the colonial one, in which the conditions of cultural production may have been radically different." (Dharwadker 121)

This experience of transculturation stimulates a hybridity that remains, as Elleke Boehmer puts it, "an aesthetic device" (23).

Bhabha's dehistoricized and de-contextualized hybridity espouses a mimicry of European ways by which the colonized subject creates a "double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (Location 88). By conceiving cultures as commensurable and interchangeable, Bhabha creates a discourse that emphasizes homogeneity and a devitalization of those cultural identities which do not subscribe to the transformative impact of cross-cultural exchange.

On the contrary, the discourse that empowers Suleri and the relational experiences expounded in her memoir are accessible to a Western as well as an "ambidextrous" non-Western readership. Trinh T. Minh-ha's observation of the generic "third-world" women's seminar is relevant here

> We did not come to hear a Third World member speak about the First (?) World. We came to listen to the voice of difference likely to bring us what we can't have and to divert us from the monotony of sameness." (88)

The narrator's ambidextrous identity seeks a redressal of the reductive portrayal of the mute female subject of the "third-world."

The concept of the gendered inhabitant of the "unevolved world" is dispelled by the narrator's move to establish herself as a subject unfazed by the potency of competing discourses. Suleri asserts her individuality not in "isolationist admiration" but as a historicized moment in a geographical location. The respective positionalities of Suleri's parents seem to have enhanced her awareness of the historical space, which she inhabited:

> What sounds of conversation filled my infancy, patterns of urgent and perpetual talk! I heard my parents talking to each other all the time, but never of themselves, only about newspapers and circulations and odd names like Khwaja Nazimuddin and Mr. Liaquat Ali. For there was still a parliament in Pakistan: an abundant, talk-filled era, long before we had developed with such gusto our taste for censorship and martial law. (Meatless Days 117)

This sharpened sense of temporality enables Suleri to wield it as a tool to interrupt the abstract concept of a hybridity, which exists in a void.

The narrator, for whom history is apocryphal and home is "located precisely where you are sitting" (Meatless Days 20), combats essentialist discourse by leading a

syncretistic existence. For instance, despite the racially mixed and anglicized upbringing of the Suleri children, the narrator's tribute to the poet laureate, Mirza Ghalib, and her brother's predilection for Urdu poetry "propose a metaphoric entry for the culture into the 'English' text" (Ashcroft et al., Empire 51). This insertion of indigenous literary forms articulates a cultural reality that dehegemonizes the privileged position of any one discourse to delineate the "self."

The narrator's acquisition of the language and culture of her Welsh mother and recognition of her father's subcontinental heritage allow her to create a site on which indigenous thought-patterns, structures, and rhythms are accompanied by the identification of an alternative social reality. The narrator's social reality endorses her habitation of two separate realms

> Urdu like a reprimand disturbs my sense of habitation: "do you think you ever lived on the inside of a space," it tells me with some scorn, "you who lack the surety of knowledge to intuit the gender of a roof, a chair?" (Meatless Days 177)

Suleri's ambidexterity in the worlds of her first language, English, and her father's and paternal grandmother's language, Urdu, enables her to inhabit an idiom in which

she employs the metaphorical use of language to create a perception of the social and political nexus of women.

The narrator recalls that "When we were children, we learned to write that magnificent Persian script with pen and ink upon a wooden board" (Meatless Days 180). The narrator's equal intimacy with the English language and the poetic derivative of Persian, Urdu, enriches her metaphorical applications to traditional practices in order to reveal new layers of meaning: "it takes me by surprise to recollect that I need not feel grief, I can eat grief; that I need not bury my mother but instead can offer her into the earth, for I am in Urdu now" (Meatless Days 177). While inhabiting the milieu interlaced by Urdu, the narrator learns to "become that enviable personage, a khala, mother's sister, and . . . we reveled in the exercise of khala love" (Meatless Days 9). This is an instance of Suleri's development of a symbolic vocabulary that is "recognizably indigenous—or at least other to European representation—and yet at the same time intelligible within a global grammar of postwar politics" (Boehmer 187). I perceive the articulation of this vocabulary as an expression of Suleri's palpable ambidexterity.

Female Subjectivity and Subject Construction

The discourse of post-independence literatures seemed to ignore the "epistemic violence" involved in forging the postcolonial subject (Spivak, Outside 234). This lop-sided vision circulates a discourse that clings to the notion of an "authentic" consciousness. The narrator of Meatless Days, who is biracial, bicultural, socially and politically mobile, disrupts the subject constitution that reinforces this essentializing monolithic discourse. Her position makes the boundaries of racial and cultural identities permeable, which engenders the creation of a counter-culture that is not always explicable in terms of an allegory of otherness (Suleri, Rhetoric 4). This effect is achieved by the perception of the narrative as a site where multiple discourses intervene to create a polyvalent space. It is in this space that the material history of subject-constitution can be read via and in opposition to hegemonic structures (Warley 111).

The women who create the framework for Suleri's narrative — Dadi, Mair Jones, Ifat, Tillat, Nuzhat, and

Mustakori - have material existences. Their status as "women" in a "third-world country" has neither disenfranchised them nor has it rendered them powerless. These women are portrayed as intelligent and articulate persons whose subjectivity cannot be split into simplistic binaries: literate-illiterate, urban-rural, affluent-impoverished, repressed-emancipated, domesticated-professional. As Samir Dayal points out, Suleri's women characters do not fit the notion of the gendered subaltern in the "third-world" (264). Generic constructions of the "third-world woman" create an essentialist entity, whose unprivileged position of playing second fiddle to men imposes restrictions on her identity. Such iterative gender and class oppressions further distort political and social systems by minimizing the threat of cultural difference posed to the normative center.

Suleri recognizes her discursive formation of the "third-world" as a "discourse of convenience" (Meatless Days 20). Such a discourse comprises statements that generate the existence and knowability of the "third-world." The narrator's recounting of political and social events establishes these statements and the subjectivities they shape as liable to change as the frameworks of their

possibility also change. Linda Warley argues that "despite the very real women that the narrator knows experientially, discursively speaking, 'there are no women in the third world'" (109). Suleri denies this unrealized existence of women, which discounts her appropriation into a Western idiom "to ensure the elimination of any oppositional or alien attitudes or tendencies" (JanMohamad 297). According to Gayatri Spivak,

> If one looks at the history of post-Enlightenment theory, the major problem has been the problem of autobiography: how subjective structures can, in fact, give objective truth. During these same centuries, the Native Informant [was] treated as an objective evidence for the founding of the so-called sciences like ethnography, ethno-linguistics, comparative religion, and so on. So that, once again, the theoretical problems only relate to the person who knows. The person who knows has all the problems of selfhood. The person, who is known, somehow seems not to have a problematic self. (Spivak, Critic 66)

Suleri foregrounds the subject constitution of the women in her narrative as "distinct actualities" that avert the debilitating iconicity of "third-world" women.

Suleri combats the alterity of her paternal grandmother, Dadi, and her mother, Suraiya Suleri nee Mair Jones, by reconstructing them in her memoir. Dadi represents Suleri's traditional Muslim heritage. Dadi's existence is unique in its lack of affiliations to

institutions other than the self-referential discourse which she generates. All historical and social events, for Dadi, can be understood within the explanatory frameworks of religion and filial obligation. For instance, Dadi disseminates her religious ideology by creeping down "the driveway unperceived to stop cars and people on the street and give them all the gossip she had on God" (Meatless Days 3). Although Dadi seems unable to forego these ossifying grand narratives, she is able to use them to articulate her presence: " 'And heaven is the thing Muhammad says (peace be upon him) lies beneath the feet of women!'" (Meatless Days 7). The narrator condones Dadi's reprehensible matriarchal behavior at the death of her mother. Suleri reminisces, "Some sweet reassurance of reality accompanies my discourse when I claim that when Dadi died, we all forgot to grieve" (Meatless days 19). The narrator articulates Dadi's idiosyncrasy as "a question mark interested only in its own conclusions," and Dadi's defiance of an identifiable category places her "outside our ken, an anecdotal thing" (Meatless Days 19).

Despite Dadi's disconcerting habit of sewing "for her delight tiny and magical reticules out of old silks and fragments she had saved" (Meatless Days 6), she is able to

keep a part of her identity unfragmented and intact. Suleri's grandmother's resilience seems to be one of the frameworks within which the narrator constructs an unfragmented ambidextrous identity.

Although Suleri's portrayal of women is a tad facetious, this strategy enables her to shelve the blinkered perception of the gendered subject's existence: "there's imperial Ifat, there's Mamma in the garden, and Halima the cleaning woman is there too, there's uncanny Dadi with her goat" (Meatless Days 20). This female subject is not a monolithic "Other," but a heterogeneous figure whose richness and complexity cannot be compressed into pigeon-holes that are created either by pre-colonial indigenous discourse or the neo-orientalist strategy of the Western feminist:

> Without the overdetermined discourse that creates the "third-world," there would be no (singular and privileged) first world. Without the "third-world woman," the self-representation of western women would be problematic . . . the definition of the "third-world woman" as a monolith might well tie into the larger economic and ideological praxis of "disinterested" scientific inquiry and pluralism which are the surface manifestations of a latent economic and cultural colonization of the "non-western" world. (Mohanty 215-16)

The narrator of Meatless Days disavows the attempt of Western feminists to theoretically construct the "third-

world woman," so as to reaffirm their position of privilege.

Suleri's disavowal of the grand narratives of Western feminism, nationalism, and patriarchy begins when she chooses not to be an empowered citizen in a nation, but a minority in the American Midwest. The narrator recognizes the benefit of inventing an identity that the lack of pre-ordained relations and allegiances in her new location would give her: "To be engulfed by grammar is after all a tricky prospect, and a voice deserves to declare its own control in any way it can, asserting that in the end it is an inventive thing" (Meatless Days 155). Despite this assertion, the identity that Suleri forges without conforming to an institutionalized ideology does not lose a sense of history and context.

In her memoir, Suleri employs the method of playing up "the most modern and hypothetical of considerations: the irresolvability of any narrative, absolute doubt as to the origins" (Baudrillard 136). The problematic structure of the plurality of meaning and existence is manifested, for example, when the narrator realizes that her concept of an indigenous dish was incorrect

> Something that had once sat quite simply inside its own definition was declaring independence from its own name and nature, claiming a perplexity that I did not like." (Meatless Days 22)

The narrator's realization that the dish, kapura, was not "sweet-breads" but testicles invokes a vision of the world that is amenable to the reformulation of singular categories.

This potential within entities for re-manufacturing pre-fabricated rhetoric reveals the assumptions that have been suppressed, because "certain other things have been imposed on thought instead" (Said, World 189). Suleri is encouraged in her endeavor to construct an identity that is a composite of various influences by her mother.

Although Mair Jones "intended to become herself in every available manner, be one with her own history, her own dust," she insisted that her progeny live "outside historical affection" (Meatless Days 169). Suleri's parents are "rhetorically so different, always startling each other with their difference of speech" (Meatless Days 157). Mair Jones's solution to this is her advice to her children to determine their affiliations by defining their own parameters.

Despite Mair Jones' ostensible espousal of her husband's racial and religious identity, she remains alienated in her refusal to be completely assimilated into a culture, the intricacies of which are beyond her areas of recognition:

> For my mother loved to look at us in race. I have watched her pick up an infant's foot—Irfan's, perhaps, or Tillat's—with an expression of curiously sealed wonder, as though her hand had never felt so full as when she held her infant's feet. They were Asiatic, happiest when allowed to be barefoot or to walk throughout the world with a leather thong between the toes—a moving thought, to mamma. (Meatless Days 160-61)

Suleri constructs her mother's subjectivity, which inhabits a space of abstraction, as capable of perceiving "race" as an undiminishing "location of difference."

Mair Jones's Britishness is a refuge, which cocoons and shelters her from the heterogeneous components of her geographical location. Mair's domesticity keeps "her aesthetic segregated from native tradition" (Suleri, Rhetoric 78). She "professionalizes the activities of wife-and mother-in-exile, housekeeper, and hostess" (Gandhi 92). The role of the domesticated and selfless figure of the "white" housewife has been analyzed as instrumental in effecting a transformation of the mission of colonization from self-interest to "self-sacrifice and racial

superiority." This premise would legitimize the hypothesis that Mair Jones may have fulfilled the desire of the colonized male to repossess his territorial and sexual rights, by an amorous possession of the "white" woman who represents the dignity of the empire (Fanon, Wretched 63). But Mair, as portrayed by the narrator, invalidates that notion by donning an identity of her own volition:

> She seemed to live increasingly outside the limits of her body, until I felt I had no means of holding her, lost instead in the reticence of touch. I could not tell she was still teaching me, I sensed throughout a day the perpetual gravity with which my mother taught, but I was baffled by her lesson: if I am to break out of the structure of affection, I asked her silently, then what is the idiom in which I should live? She would not tell me, but even today—as I struggle with the quaintness of the task I've set myself, the obsolescence of these quirky little tales—I can feel her spirit shake its head to tell me, "Daughter, unplot yourself; let be." (Meatless Days 156)

Mair Jones' advice to her daughter to destroy the impregnability of barriers by unplotting herself, defetishizes the category "woman."

The narrator of Meatless Days attempts to widen her scope by looking beyond "obvious questions of good and evil" (Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep" 759). The marginalized status of "women" leads to their objectification, producing a distorted idiom. The narrator challenges the

quintessential ideas created by this idiom by playing with the notion of the negativity of woman:

> What I found were hunks of meat wrapped in cellophane, and each of them felt like Mamma, in some odd way. It was my task to carry those flanks across the street and to fit them into the coffin at the other side of the road, like pieces in a jigsaw puzzle. . . . It was a piece of her foot I found, a small bone like a knuckle, which I quickly hid inside my mouth, under my tongue. (Meatless Days 44)

The narrator's realization that she is unable to piece together her mother's and Ifat's bodily fragments signifies the erasure of determinate and univocal meaning.

Nationalism and National Identity

The narrator's politically and culturally constructed representation of her existence is manifested in her rendition of the genesis of Pakistan. In the era during which Suleri's father changed his identity from Ziauddin Ahmed to Z. A. Suleri, a group of three Indian Muslims in England coined the notion of a separate homeland for Muslims: Pakistan. The title of the pamphlet that propounded Islamic independence was "Now or Never: Are We to Live or Perish Forever?" This question strikes the

narrator as a "particularly Pakistani question" (Meatless Days 110). I would contend that Suleri admits the historical and religious necessity, which enables the forging of a nationalist identity. The use of this "theoretical fiction" enables the deployment of an essentialism to fabricate the idea of a sovereign subject, which is "among the conditions of the production of doing, knowing, being" (Spivak, Outside 10). The indigenous elite of the Indian subcontinent engendered a nationalistic discourse which repositioned the postcolonial subject so that nation and nationalism became key concepts.

The civil war in 1971 saw a further division of Pakistan and the creation of another geographical space: Bangladesh. Suleri recalls the era of that civil war as one of "trying times" (Meatless Days 8). After the gruesome partition of India in 1947, the establishment of Bangladesh as a nation-state caused another indeterminacy in the determinant concept of "nation." The aftermath of 1971 was a period of political instability in Pakistan. The country witnessed a series of coup d'e'tats, which were orchestrated by the army in order to install military dictatorships. The ardent nationalism of that era elicited the cohesive structure of an entrenched and centralized

nation-state. As Warley puts it, "What does it mean, finally, to be born into a country that slides both geographically and linguistically?" (113). Suleri seems to resolve the ambivalence created by this political kaleidoscope by characterizing the sovereign subject as decentered.

The "construction" of the sovereign subject corroborates the inability to trace the etymology of an intrinsically "natural" entity. This is endorsed by Spivak, who speaks of postcolonial claims to nationhood, democracy, and economic justice as "catachreses." I will discuss the employment of this device in Suleri's narrative in the last section of my paper. "Catachreses" is defined as

> a more local, tactical maneuver, which involves wrenching particular images, ideas or rhetorical strategies out of their place within a particular narrative and using them to open up new arenas of meaning, often in direct contrast to their conventionally understood meanings and functions. (Spivak, In Other Worlds 234)

The strategic use of the device, which Spivak defines as "catachreses," in the narrative, in order to draw a homology between the narrator's family and the nation, facilitates the assigning of unfamiliar values to "canonical" thought processes.

The narrative of Meatless Days has a plot that bears a wider national reference. This empowers the narrator to take charge of her social and political destiny. The title, for instance, refers to a specific government decree which forbade the selling of meat on Tuesdays and Wednesdays in order to conserve the resources of meat in the newly established nation-state: Pakistan (Warley 114). But the narrator endeavors to rewrite history and create symbols of nationhood by inverting the representational meaning of "Meatless" to mean hectic Mondays for the Suleri household, as that was when they replenished their supplies. This not only creates a dialectic between "codes of recognition" inherent within institutionalized conventions and the polyphony of voices that ironizes officialese, but corroborates "lived experience" with historical and theoretical contexts (Suleri, "Woman Skin Deep" 761).

Suleri further toys with the solemnity of institutions and exhibits a heightened awareness of history by writing about the death of her sister as an incident just as grave as the watershed execution of the first democratically elected president of Pakistan: Zulfikar Ali Bhutto. The echo of a national tragedy in a personal loss addresses the cultural specificity of the text. The impact of these two

deaths prevents the narrator from bemoaning Dadi's loss. This device prevents the narrator from essentializing the ontological dimension of bereavement, and she is able to perceive the death of her sister in a wider historicity.

The narrator's immigration to America severs her from Pakistan and places her in a world in which she "blessed the peace that put her out of the endless circulation of news" (Meatless Days 123). But the realization that she "had become historical" (Meatless Days 127) dawns on her in the America, where a sense of unreality had seemed a viable alternative to history. Suleri's acknowledgement of the prerogative that multiplicity and diversity had given her enables her to claim a space within the field of representation for marginalized identities.

The narrator's application of the device of catachresis in Meatless Days empowers her to choose an idiom in which she unplots herself. This subject defines herself as a construct that resists homogeneity in order to erase arbitrary and artificial distinctions to produce, as I suggested in the beginning, a politically conscious subject position.

General Conclusion

The structures created by colonialism rendered the epistemological systems and linguistic mediums of subaltern groups inadequate and underprivileged. This linguistic and cultural dislocation generated by the colonizer impaired the colonial subject. The postcolonial world seeks to bridge the schism created by the gulf between the experience of place and the cultural perspective and language available to describe it.

In order to achieve this, Salman Rushdie and Sara Suleri endeavor to reinterpret the repressive frameworks that essentialize the identities of former colonial subjects by negotiating the dominant discourse from within in order to construct their subjectivity. The strategy of appropriating the former colonizer's language enables the postcolonial writer to resist collaborating with former colonial discourses of power. This intersection of cultural identities engenders a "mongrelization" or reinscription of boundaries.

Rushdie deploys the discourse of cultural "hybridity" to create positions for reconstruction. The appropriation of the language of the dominant power is not merely a

proclamation of an ambivalent subject status but demands a revisioning of culture and society, so that the "trans-historicity" of colonialism does not neutralize the subjectivity of indigenous peoples (Gandhi 169). This process of decolonization has entailed a reformation of European constructs that involves a dialectical interplay between various codes of recognition. In certain instances this interaction relegates indigenous or national formations to the background in order to emphasize Western epistemological formations.

Suleri combats the unequal discourse of "hybridity" by propounding the phenomenon of "ambidexterity" that enables the postcolonial subject to function efficiently in two or more cultural positions without getting immersed in a single one. Suleri undermines the Western construction of the "third world woman" that relegates indigenous women to the nooks and crannies of society as victims of patriarchy by portraying indigenous women as having distinct subjectivities.

Postcolonial narratives, to borrow the words of Ashcroft et al, scrutinize the methodology by "which Europe imposed and maintained its codes in its colonial domination of so much of the rest of the world" (Empire 196). Rushdie

and Suleri, for instance, foreground national and regional cultural and historical perspectives in their texts in order to question the universalization of an "originary" culture and history. These texts portray social and political positions as well-fabricated constructs that are historicized as well as contextualized.

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