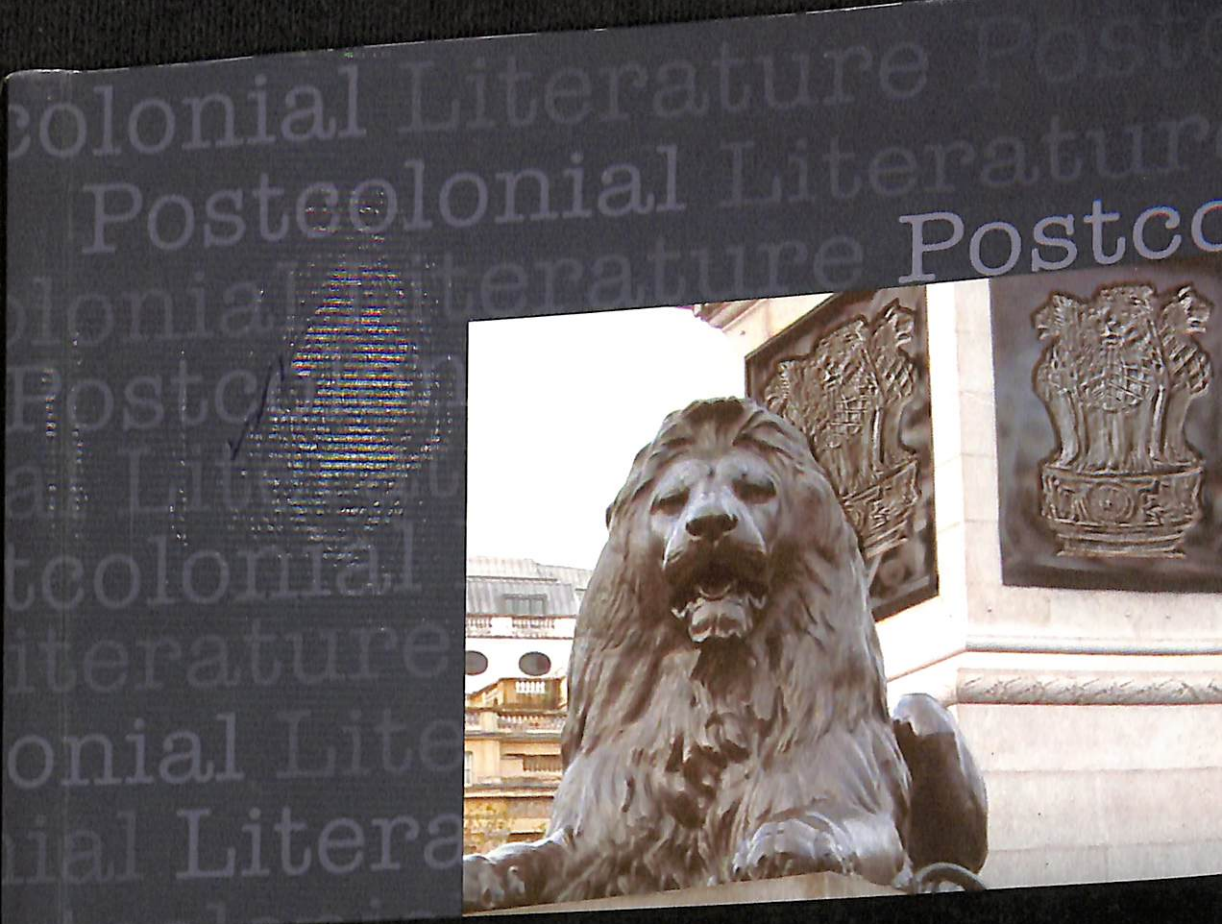


Postcolonial Literature

An Introduction

Pramod K. Nayar

Pearson

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Postcolonial Literature

An Introduction

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This one is for Pranav

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PREFACE

Postcolonial Literature is a schematic introduction, surveying issues, themes, and debates in writings from Africa, Asia, South America, and other formerly colonized spaces. The aim is to present students embarking on studies of 'postcolonial literature' with a panoramic view of the field, signposting sites for subsequent portraiture.

Postcolonial literature is that which negotiates with, contests, and subverts Euro-American ideologies and representations. Technically, most modern literature can be termed 'postcolonial', in the sense that large areas of even Europe and Asia were once parts of the Roman or Ottoman empires. England itself was under the Romans for about four centuries. (Amitav Ghosh rightly wonders, in his statement withdrawing *The Glass Palace* from the 2001 Commonwealth Writers Prize competition, if we could consider renaming 'English Literature', 'literature of the Norman Conquest'—thus highlighting the fact that the history of most countries have included a period under colonialism.) In contemporary critical discourse, 'postcolonial' is used to mean countries from former European empires. However, postcolonial attitudes emerge in writing even before political independence, and hence anti-colonial writings from the colonized phase of a nation also constitute the 'postcolonial'. Clearly, the term refers more to a methodology and approach rather than a temporal frame.

In this book postcolonial writing is perceived as the attempt at the retrieval of local, native, and particular histories freed—as much as it is possible—from Euro-American 'versions' of the same. Finally, I treat postcolonial writing as a literature that critically engages with a history of oppression, colonialism (both external and internal), racism, and injustice, but *with a particular emphasis on issues of race and ethnicity.* It is a literature of emancipation, critique, and transformation.

The 'postcolonial' as a term has to undergo significant semantic expansion to include ethnic studies, minority studies, African American, Caribbean, South American, 'Third World' studies: writings of and by people who have been dominated by white, Euro-American cultures, and which explore the various modalities of power, identity, subjectivity as informed by race, gender, class, ethnicity, and sexual preference. Indigenes, migrants, and non-European races/ethnicities in Euro-American cultures and nations share a structure of subordination with colonized cultures in Asia, Africa, and South America. Cast as the 'other' by and within regulating Euro-American discourses the literatures from these zones of contest (imperial), conflict (internal), and collaboration (neo-colonial) reveal common concerns and themes—and this commonality is the present book's governing motif.

Following from this interpretation of 'postcolonial' this book subsumes multiple, heterogeneous discourses and practices like African American, Native American, Dalit, Australian Aboriginal, South American (including border writing like Gloria Anzaldúa's and John Rechy's), and Indian writing in English under the sign of the 'postcolonial'. The book focuses on thematic overlaps among the writings from Africa, Asia, Australia, African American, the Caribbean and nation-states that gained political independence during the course of the twentieth century. This, however, does not mean that texts from these diverse regions can be made to tell the same story. Postcolonial*ism* as a critical method respects historical differences among former colonies while *also* facilitating comparative studies of what was (is) a global process of colonial/imperial domination. While the focus is on thematic concerns in postcolonial writing, the chapter on Form focuses on the major structural and stylistic features of postcolonial writing. I have quoted extensively from texts to prove rather than to illustrate the arguments. I have consciously exceeded on the side of variety and therefore incorporated material from many genres, even though there might be some regional or generic imbalances in the use of illustrative examples, and not all the texts may be readily available in Indian libraries. The choice of the survey mode was, at least partly, predetermined by the kind of book this hopes to be: a wide-ranging introduction.

Since these literatures are extraordinarily diverse, a book of this type runs into some obvious difficulties. The first one is the difficulty of aligning a diversity of historical contexts, politics, and social conditions along the same historical, conceptual, and theoretical continuum. Countries in Africa, Asia, and Australia experienced colonialism differently, and have had varied 'lives' after political independence. Nigeria's experience of colonial intervention is markedly different from the 'settler' colonialism of Australia.

The second difficulty is of reifying literatures within continents itself. For instance, a reading of literature from the Indian subcontinent has to account for the variations among India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, and Bangladesh, where socio-political structures range across democracy, theocracy, dictatorship, and separatist civil wars. The third difficulty is that genres within any country's writings have a breathtaking diversity. Myths, legends, histories drawn from folklore and oral storytelling traditions are specific to that particular geographical and cultural space. To place Igbo traditions alongside Quiché or Dalit is to do them an obvious disservice. My counter to these no doubt deserving charges is: the aim is not that of in-depth study of each tradition within the postcolonial, but to show how cultures with a common denominator of colonial oppression share remarkably similar concerns and strategies, where 'singular' texts from, say, Africa or Asian America talk with each other in a huge, ongoing, intertextual dialogue that is sometimes antagonistic but always engaging. For particulars, the student will naturally have to turn to specific studies of individual literatures. If it encourages her to do so, having first acquired a basic grounding in the vast area of 'postcolonial literature', this book would have served its purpose.

Unfortunately, this book also perpetuates the old crime, of contentiously using the term 'postcolonial' to describe works written (only) in English, and thereby reinstating the primacy of 'English' and the norms set out by Euro-American postcolonial*ism*. A greater, richer body of work that merits the term is available in other languages, in India and elsewhere. However, with the limited access I have to these other literatures (except for those in translation, which I *have* used), my choice was, in a sense, already made.

One final point. Too often postcolonial literature and criticism has relied on a binary identified by Nobel Laureate Derek Walcott. Walcott argues that the 'servitude to the muse of history has produced a literature of recrimination and despair, a literature of revenge written by the descendants of slaves or a literature of remorse written by the descendants of masters' (1998: 37). Walcott warns us against the various dangers of recrimination, revenge, remorse, and nativism. Much of what Walcott says may be treated as a preface to literary interpretations that glorify poor writing merely because it is rooted in suffering, or reject good writing solely because it comes from a former colonial power. Walcott, in the same essay, complains in a passage worth pondering over:

> The contrition of the master replaces the vengeance of the slave, and here colonial literature is most pietistic, for it can accuse great art of feudalism and excuse poor art as suffering. (39)

The *literary* merits, the aesthetic or emotional appeal of a text have been ignored in favour of political readings, even though the 'founding' text of postcolonial studies (and its inspirational author), Edward Said's *Orientalism*, demonstrated how political readings need not eschew considerations of literary quality. There is, one forgets, a 'literary' in the theory. The more astute of postcolonial critics (and the ones mentioned/used in this book are such ones!) have, however, carefully teased out political readings while keeping a firm eye on the literary, affective, and aesthetic aspects of texts. Walcott asks that we reinstate aesthetic criteria in criticism, an aesthetic rooted in *but not restricted to* their own histories, cultures, and politics. In the politically correct age we live and intellectualize in, certain forms of literary expression and literature do not get criticized adequately, or with a sufficient degree of honesty. The politics of literary interpretation and academic careerism makes for some extremely cautious criticism of, say, African American or Dalit writing. This often results in a deliberate, desperate blindness. For instance, does anybody (Elleke Boehmer is one of the few who does, 2005b: 44) point out that the cult text in postcolonial classes, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o *Decolonising the Mind* (1986), does not mention a single woman author (even) when proposing an *expanded* curriculum? Staying within the bounds of political correctness, even at the cost of honesty, has rendered much postcolonial criticism mere hagiography, and postcolonial critics, praise-singers. The student would be, therefore, well-advised to mark the politics of careers, interpretations, and pedagogy in dealing with postcoloniality in general and postcolonial literary studies in particular so that she is aware of the routine one-sidedness of the discipline.

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ONE

Colonialism, Postcoloniality, Postcolonialism

A study of postcolonial literature must begin with the historical contexts of colonialism, contexts that are unremittingly and frighteningly shot through with violence. While it might seem a bad choice to begin with violence, it is a deliberate strategy that announces the very nature of the colonial encounter. The violence of colonialism—epistemic, cultural, economic, political, and military—is so integral to the history of 'Third World' nations that no literature or critical approach, as far as I know, has been able to ignore it.

Postcolonial literature seeks to address the ways in which non-European (Asian, African, South American, but also settler colony) literatures and cultures have been marginalized as an effect of colonial rule, and to find, if possible, modes of resistance, retrieval , and reversal of their 'own' precolonial pasts. That is, this literature seeks to understand, negotiate, and critique a specific historical 'event'—colonial rule—while looking forward to a more just, socially egalitarian world order. It is a literature of resistance, anger, protest, and hope. It seeks to understand history so as to plan for the future. In order to situate the themes of postcolonial literature, we need to first look at what colonialism itself meant and achieved. This chapter, intended to serve as an introduction, details the historical contexts of colonialism/neocolonialism, the conditions of postcoloniality and postcolonialism, and the basic assumptions and tenets of the critical approach that has come to be known as 'postcolonial theory'.

COLONIALISM, IMPERIALISM, NEOCOLONIALISM

The term 'colony' once meant something very different. The *Oxford English Dictionary* (*OED*) notes that the fourteenth century term, 'colonye', derived

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from the Latin 'colon-us', meaning farmer, cultivator, planter, or settler in a new country, was used to describe the Roman settlements in the fourteenth century. It carried with it the sense of 'farm' and 'landed estate'. Roman 'colonia' referred to the settlement of Roman citizens in a hostile or newly conquered country. These citizens retained their Roman citizenship, received lands in the new place, and served Roman interests by working as a garrison. Later the term 'colonial' began to mean, according to the *OED*, 'belonging to, or relating to a colony, or specifically, the British colonies; in American history, of or belonging to the thirteen British colonies which became the United States, or to the time while they were still colonies'. It is therefore important to note that the first 'colonies' were not structures of governance over native races.[1] Ruling was not the priority with such settler communities. Colonies were simply new settlements by communities seeking a better life. The Puritans who migrated from England/Europe to the 'new world' in the seventeenth century, and who created their own settlements, are examples of this form of 'colonization'. Derek Walcott satirizes the entire notion of the 'new world' in his poem of the same title:

> Adam had an idea.
> He and the snake would share
> The loss of Eden for a profit.
> So both made the New World. And it looked good. *(1986: 300–1)*

In many cases, especially in the ancient and early modern periods (up to roughly the fifteenth century) migrations of this type involved a *mixing* of races (see Hoerder 2002). In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, however, the settlers, rather than assimilating into native races/cultures, retained their 'original' (European) difference. Seeing England or Europe as their 'home', they began to perceive the native as different from the 'settler' or 'colonizer'. In many cases—the USA, South America, for instance—the colonizers sought to destroy the native populations. It is here that the full import and structure of 'colonialism' begins to be visible. Colonization was invariably the violence perpetrated upon the natives by the European settlers. It is this aspect of colonialism that comes in for attention from postcolonial literature and theory.

Colonialism is now defined by the *OED* as 'an alleged policy of exploitation of backward or weak peoples by a large power'. In postcolonial studies it has a clear pejorative meaning, being synonymous with oppression, inequality, racism, and exploitation. Colonialism is not merely the political control of Asian, African or South American (the three continents

1.1 Colonialism

Colonialism is the process of settlement by Europeans in non-European (Asian, African, South American, Australian) spaces. While migrations are as old as the presence of humankind on earth, colonization in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries meant a violent appropriation and exploitation of native races and spaces by European powers. Colonization often destroyed native cultures, or altered them significantly, often producing new (hybrid) forms. Thus colonization cannot, in the twentieth century, be seen as an innocent 'settlement' in a new place. It must, rather, be seen as a powerful mode of exploitation based on the difference in race, culture, forms of knowledge, technological advancement and political systems.

which became 'colonies' of European powers during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries) regions. It is the context in and through which non-European cultures and knowledge were destroyed, modified, or 'disciplined' by colonial rulers. Colonialism cannot be seen merely as a political or economic 'condition': it was a powerful cultural and epistemological conquest of the native populations. The Europeans acquired knowledge over native cultures through translations, commentaries, and academic study before either destroying it or modifying native systems of thinking.[2]

A good example of the cultural dimension of colonialism would be the role of the English in India. Colonial administrators such as Warren Hastings and T.B. Macaulay, academic scholars like William Jones and commentators such as James Mill first studied Indian languages (especially Sanskrit and Persian) by translating texts from these languages into English or undertaking studies of Indian law, religion, or arts (for colonialism, ideology, and translation see Niranjana 1992). In the second stage they announced that these Indian texts and cultures were primitive, irrelevant, and completely out of date. With such knowledge systems, they argued, India could never progress. From this second moment emerged the third. In the third moment they substituted English as the medium of instruction, as the language of knowledge itself. Arguing that English and European culture alone could ensure equality, liberty, development, and 'modernization', colonial administrators installed English (see Joshi 1991).

The colonial encounter hinged upon a racial encounter, where the European and non-European races met. The nineteenth century, the heyday of European empires,[3] was also the period of formulation of race theories. Science, medicine, anthropology, and other disciplines formalized theories of race that justified imperial presence in Asian and African lands. Such theories postulated and 'proved' that the non-European races occupied

the lower end of the scale of human development ('development' being measured through parameters created by and in Europe). The native races were primitive, child-like, effeminate, irrational, irreligious (since 'pagan' religion was deemed to be no religion at all), criminal, and unreliable. Since the native race could not take care of itself, it must be taken care of by the European. This process of racializing enabled and justified European colonial presence in Asia and Africa (for a study of Victorian attitudes towards race and the nineteenth century 'scientific' discourse of racism see Bolt 1971 and Stepan 1982).

Colonialism thus has three central features:

(i) The governance of these non-European places by European administrators and rulers (through economic, political, and military modes),
(ii) The study of non-European cultures by European academics, scholars, and scientists (in anthropology, literature, 'area studies'),
(iii) The slow transformation of native societies (through missionary work, English/European education systems, European modes of bureaucracy).

'Imperialism' is a term that is often used in conjunction with or, less accurately, as a synonym for 'colonialism'. Imperialism is also the rule by a European nation of a non-European one. However, imperialism often refers to the practice of governance through 'remote control', often without actual settlement in the non-European spaces. It means that a metropolitan European or American power controls activities (financial, military, political, cultural) in Asian, African, or South American nations. It is driven by the ideology of expansion of state power. To adapt a favourite phrasing from postcolonial writers, the European/American 'capital' at the centre controls Asian/African/South American nations at the periphery. Imperialism continues the colonial practice of domination but without the actual 'settlement' by the dominating masters/races.[4]

'Imperialism' became a common term only in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Today it means mainly a system of economic domination and exploitation, though political and military domination may also run alongside the economic one. Imperialism, argue Marxist thinkers, is—and always was—driven by the economic needs of the European nation. Marxist commentators such as V.I. Lenin (in his now classic text, *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916) see colonial processes as rooted in the rise of Western capitalism.

This key difference—of random settlement and governance (colonialism) versus deliberate, ideology-driven control (imperialism)—means that imperialism can be analysed as a concept and colonialism as the practice

1.2 Imperialism

Imperialism is the ideology that recommends, furthers, and justifies colonial rule. It is the concept that proposes the conquest of newer regions for the sake of economic exploitation. Imperialism is often the political theory behind colonial conquest. It originates from European centres of political, military, and economic power and spreads outwards to take in the whole earth. It justifies conquest in the name of evangelicalism (uplift of the pagans), economy (for the economic good of the European nation) or politics (the defence of democracy). It situates the non-European region on the periphery and controls it mostly through economic measures (slave labour, capitalism, trade restrictions), but may be accompanied by political and military control. Imperialism is the theory and colonialism is the practice.

of this concept. If colonialism was driven by the need to create another living space (hence 'settlement', as in the case of the United States of America and Australia), imperialism was driven by the need to acquire greater wealth. It is important to note that colonization, even as late as the nineteenth century, was rarely organized. It was random, driven by commercial, evangelical, or emotional needs (freedom to practice religious beliefs, to acquire wealth). Imperialism, on the other hand, was a more deliberate, mercenary expansion of European power into non-European spaces. What needs to be kept in mind is that not all imperial powers worked in the same way. There are considerable differences between French and British imperialisms in the nineteenth century, and in the American imperialism of the twentieth.

Political independence—a process often described as 'decolonization'—for non-European nations made them 'postcolonial' in the temporal sense. This is an important clue as to the nature of imperialism itself. Political control may have moved from the Europeans to the natives. Economically, however, the native population is still controlled by the European power. That is, nominally 'free' nation-states continue to suffer from economic exploitation by European powers that, therefore, remain 'imperial'. This is why we do not ever see the term 'post-imperial'. This form of control has been called 'neocolonialism', used especially to describe the American control over the rest of the world. Neocolonialism is the continuing economic exploitation of Asian and African nation-states by European and American powers. What is significant is that the former colonial masters are still in economic control over so-called 'free' former colonies. The colonies may not be 'colonies' in the strict sense of the term, but their dependence upon and exploitation by former masters continues. In most cases, neocolonialism is achieved not merely through state control by

Euro-American powers, but by a nexus between the politician, the banker, the general, and the Chief Executive Officers (CEOs). While physical force (military or police) may not be an immediate event in neocolonialism, trade sanctions by former colonial masters are invariably accompanied by the threat or imminence of military action against the 'erring' Asian/African nation-state. International aid and development initiatives are very often aligned with economic policy diktats that disable 'Third World' economies (a case in point would be the World Bank/IMF injunction against subsidies). Neocolonialism, therefore, may be the more insidious and dangerous form of colonialism.

1.3 Decolonization

Decolonization seeks freedom from colonial forms of thinking, a freedom to revive and rejuvenate native forms of knowledge. The term is used to describe a methodology wherein European categories and epistemologies are called into question. It involves a process of close examination of historical processes—and this is where it departs from postcolonial theory which is, for the most part, ahistorical—European forms of thought, nationalist thinking and forms of resistance. It engages European thought in a dialogue, and hence decolonization is always a dialogic process. It is a critical methodology that draws on postcolonial theory's interrogative stance but seeks a more nuanced historicized theorization. It is both a state of mind and a critical approach, a political process (separation from the former colonial master) and a social attitude. (For a representative collection of essays on the process see Le Sueur 2003.)

Colonialism and imperialism, therefore, make a clear distinction between the following: rulers and ruled, European and non-European, the white race and non-white races. Colonialism can thus be seen as a method of discovering, creating, and reinforcing *difference*. What is interesting is that while colonialism posited and worked from a principle of difference of the whites from the non-whites, it consistently treated all non-Europeans as similar. That is, while it underlined the difference of the white from the non-white, it ignored differences between the non-whites themselves. All non-whites were simply 'natives' or 'others' or 'them'—a deadening homogenizing category.

Postcoloniality

As noted in the preceding section, European powers ruled over vast regions of the Asian, African, and South American continents until the

1.4 Settler Colonialism

Colonialism had, as mentioned before, two main forms: colonies of occupation and colonies of settlement. The former consisted of spaces occupied by European military and political powers and economically exploited for the benefit of the 'mother' country. Settler colonies, in contrast, were spaces where the white races settled down. Australia, the US, Canada, Brazil and, to some extent, South Africa, are examples of such settler colonialism (other, more problematic examples include Ireland, Kenya, Palestine, Mozambique). An important feature of settler colonialism is the violence that accompanies settling. None of the spaces settled by white Europeans were exactly empty: settling meant an annihilation of the local inhabitants of that area. Colonial policies thus removed indigenous peoples from the space, and declared themselves 'possessors' of that space, and of being 'native' to that country. The legal term 'Terra Nullius' (literally 'nobody's land'), used in the Australian context to deny native land claims, refers to this notion of 'empty space'. This results in the complete suppression of the indigenous peoples. The concept of 'First Nation' being articulated by indigenous people in Canada is a direct response to such settler colonialism: the aboriginals argue that they constitute the original inhabitants of the land and are the 'First Nation'. However, the situation is not so simple in the case of the USA. Settlers in the 'new world' felt that they were being colonized by the English, and that they had no say in the governance and development of their (new) 'home' space. The American 'War of Independence' was fought against colonialism. In Mexico, a parallel is visible in the work of figures such as Vine Deloria, Jr who have critiqued the doctrine of discovery—which postulated the whites 'discovered' America and populated it—as the weapon that has taken away all rights from indigenous people.

mid-twentieth century. To belabour the point: this rule took the form of political governance, economic exploitation, and cultural domination. During the latter half of the nineteenth century, and increasingly in the first half of the twentieth, the colonized states engaged in active political resistance to this rule. Freedom struggles erupted throughout the colonies. By the mid-twentieth century, these struggles had resulted in political independence for many states in Asia and Africa. In temporal terms they were 'postcolonial', suggesting 'after the colonial'.

'Postcoloniality' refers to the historical, material, and actual 'living' conditions of newly-independent Asian, African, and South American states within the global system. It refers to the economic and political conditions in countries such as India after the European ruler handed over political power to the native population. 'Postcoloniality' emphasizes the impact of global geopolitics, globalization, and economic shifts upon material conditions in Asian and African nation-states.[5] Thus 'postcoloniality' accounts for all of the following: the change in reception accorded to

1.5 The Postcolonial

The 'postcolonial' specifies 'a transformed historical situation, and the cultural formations that have arisen in response to changed political circumstances, in the former colonial power' (Young 2001: 57). The 'postcolonial' describes a whole new experience of political freedom, new ideologies (of development, for instance, or economic freedom and self-reliance in many postcolonial societies) and new agendas. The sovereign nation-state now asserts its independence by preparing its own programme for economic and social development, and by generating its own, newer cultural forms (albeit influenced by the colonial experience), where previously it had been decided and administered by the European colonial power. The problem with the term 'postcolonial' is that European colonialism becomes the determining moment of the non-European country. All cultures are placed in history as 'before European colonization' or 'after European colonization'.

Asian and African migrant workers, the new economic policies of import-export of 'Third World' products, and even the formation of the European Union and altered visa rules for 'Third World' people in the light of 9/11.

'Postcoloniality' also captures the strategies of resistance, negotiation, and cultural assertion that countries such as India adopt to deal with increasing neocolonial interference and control exerted by the 'developed First World' nations. 'Postcoloniality', therefore, is the set of practices that seek, to negotiate a history of colonialism, the present state of political independence and the always imminent threat of neocolonialism in the economic, cultural, and social fields. Thus the advent of cultural nationalism, religious fundamentalism, tribalisms, and regionalisms in Asian/African nation-states constitute social strategies in the face of globalization. The reconstruction of native cultures, the revival of folkloric forms in the arts, the newer forms of narrative and the rewriting of histories and 'minoritarian cosmopolitanisms' (see below) constitute the practice of 'postcoloniality' and 'postcolonialism'. Postcoloniality is closely tied up, therefore, with decolonization: trying to secure freedom from the cultural, political, and economic control of the former European masters. Helen Gilbert's definition of 'postcolonial' captures the diverse contours of the term:

> The term indicates a degree of agency, or ... a programme of resistance, against cultural domination; ... signals the existence of a particular historical legacy ... a ... stage in a culture's transition into a modern nation-state; [or] to suggest a form of co-option into Western cultural economies ... 'postcolonial' has become a convenient ... term to describe any kind of resistance, particularly against class, race, and gender oppression. (*Thieme 2003: x*)

Postcoloniality is marked by transformation. Western development models have now begun to be critiqued because of the awareness that such post-Enlightenment notions of 'modernity' cannot easily apply to countries and cultures such as India. Thus entirely new conceptions of modernity are demanded (though not necessarily available yet) at the heart of the process of (postcolonial) transformation. The modern is 'resisted' and used at the same time. Strategies and techniques can be used without absorption into Western modernity (see Ashcroft 2001). Further, even concepts such as citizenship, the state and civil society, human rights and equality before the law draw upon (one may even say are derived from) European thought. Dipesh Chakrabarty's gloomy diagnosis of the situation declares: 'one simply cannot think of political modernity without these and other related concepts that found a climactic form in the course of the European Enlightenment and the nineteenth century' (2001: 4).

1.6 Race

Race, once considered in essential terms, is now seen as socially and ideologically constructed to meet specific needs during slavery. Race was used as a mode of social organization and identity formation in the West (especially the USA in the era of slavery), just as caste has been used in India. Today there is a process-oriented theory of race. It sees race as racial projects, efforts to institutionalize racial meanings and identities in social structures like individual, family, community, and state. Racial space is also more globalized today, with the international movement of labour and immigration creating new racial identities.

The scope of 'postcolonial' and 'postcoloniality' have been expanded to include not just the narrative, representational, and political strategies of formerly colonized Asian/African nations, but also the modes of negotiation adopted by groups such as African Americans and Asian American/Asian British when dealing with the legacies of colonialism, cultural imperialism, and racism. That is, anything that contests oppressive structures informed by colonial ideologies such as racism can be described as 'postcolonial', even though such groups live in 'First World', metropolitan locations.[6] As Homi Bhabha puts it, 'they [postcolonial criticism] formulate their critical revisions around issues of cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination in order to reveal the antagonistic

and ambivalent moments within the "rationalizations" of modernity' (1992: 437). Bhabha's emphasis on cultural difference, social authority, and political discrimination suggests a common platform for all of those who have paid the price for their 'difference' from the Euro-American, white, or dominant (in some cases, of the same race but different castes/class) culture (although by no means is the Euro-American culture to be seen, even for a moment, as unified, seamless, or monolithic). Later, Bhabha makes the connection between these 'groups'—which I have here placed together under the sign of the 'postcolonial', risking ideological, theoretical, and historical blurring—when he states: 'contemporary postcolonial discourses are rooted in specific histories of cultural displacement, whether they are the "middle passage" of slavery and indenture, the "voyage out" of the civilizing mission, the fraught accommodation of the Third World migration to the West, or the traffic of economic and political refugees within and outside the Third World' (1992: 438).

Postcoloniality thus pays attention to cultural and artistic practices that negotiate with colonial histories, globalization, and neocolonial contexts.

Duncan Ivison (2002: 5) proposes a 'postcolonial liberalism' based on three main liberal values and ways of thinking.

(i) Individuals and peoples are fundamentally equal.
(ii) They are free.
(iii) Social and political arrangements should be such as to romote the well-being of individuals and groups in the manner that they conceive of it.

The ultimate aim of Ivison's postcolonial liberalism is to foster a 'form of mutually acceptable coexistence between indigenous and non-indigenous peoples' (30). Ivison asks: 'how could a philosophical and political creed of

1.7 Discourse

'Discourse', a term used frequently in contemporary critical writing, is the context in which knowledge is produced. It defines the limits of what can be said, and what is prohibited. It sanctions and legitimizes knowledge. It is the context, also, of representation, speech, and language. The law, religion, medicine, literature are all 'discourses'. Likewise, all aspects of life have a discursive context: race, identity, class, economy, and politics rely on certain modes of articulation, representation, and reproduction. Discourse, in contemporary thinking, is about power and regulation because it is the very context of language and expression.

individual rights and human dignity not find favour with those suffering from racial or cultural discrimination and economic and political marginalization?' (31). A postcolonial liberal state is committed to rights and dignity. In such a situation there is both challenge and opportunity for indigenous peoples. The challenge includes contesting the legitimacy of the state (like state-sponsored violence against tribals and aboriginals in Asian and South American nations) and normative concepts of justice, equality, and freedom. Normative concepts and ideals of equal citizenship have been used in countries such as Australia to justify forms of coercive assimilation (for instance, in respect to Aboriginals). There is an urgent need to explore alternative forms of mediation that are less alienating for those subject to them.

A subaltern resistance (from minorities or the traditionally oppressed) to the hierarchic, oppressive upper class/caste state is clearly visible now. Subaltern historiography in India, for example (exemplified in the *Subaltern Studies* series[7]), draws attention to the way the supposedly democratic Indian nation has been constructed through a process of exclusion and marginalization of the Dalitbahujan, women, and the working classes. Kancha Ilaiah argues that since the 1990s Hindu politicians and writers have sought to portray the Dalitbahujan as Hindus. The irony, Ilaiah notes, is that when the Dalitbahujan had tried to be accepted as Hindus, they had been kept apart as 'others'. However, this process of co-optation is not entirely honest: for 'socially, culturally, and even physically, they want us to remain their "other", while acting politically as "homogeneous Hindus" who can be their tools against Muslims or Christians' (1996: 166). Ilaiah argues that the exclusivity of the Indian nation-state—which he clearly characterizes as Hindu—meant that throughout (Indian) history Dalitbahujan voices have been silenced, while their hands and bodies have gone on working. The Hindu (coded most often as Brahmin) culture of learning alienated them from the Dalitbahujan culture of work (168). Ilaiah suggests a programme where the Dalit histories must be based on their own epistemology, their own selfhood. Ilaiah writes:

> Unless the oppressed learn to hegemonize their own self, unless the culture and consciousness of the oppressed is put forward visibly in public debate, unless this culture is prepared to clash with the culture and consciousness of the enemy in public, a society of equals will remain an illusion. (*168*)

The nation-state must therefore be interrogated for the ways in which it concentrates power—and therefore culture—in the hands of a few. Women's, queer, Dalitbahujan, and working class movements/counter-narratives

seek to recast the postcolonial nation-state by revealing its elitist biases and exclusionary structures.

FROM COMMONWEALTH TO POSTCOLONIAL

Postcolonial writing can now be defined as the *textual/literary processes through which formerly colonized people assert their difference from, resistance to, and negotiation with, European colonial masters and cultures while attempting to develop similar strategies to tackle contemporary globalizing and neocolonial processes of domination by Euro-American powers.* In one of the first major theorizations about 'postcolonial literature', Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths, and Helen Tiffin defined it thus:

> We use the term 'post-colonial' ... to cover all the cultures affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day. This is because there is a continuity of preoccupations throughout the historical process initiated by European imperial aggression. We also suggest that it is most appropriate as the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted. (*1989*: 2)

Once called 'commonwealth literature' to designate literature and writing from Britain's colonies, the term is used as shorthand to describe writing from Asia, Africa, Australia, South America, and Ireland. The 'recognition' of this literature has been in part informed by a set of politically informed reading practices, referred to as 'postcolonial theory' (see below).

'Commonwealth literature' as a term began to be used during the 1950s to describe writings from Africa, Asia, and South America. The term also included, alongside writers from formerly colonized nations (such as Chinua Achebe from Nigeria and R.K. Narayan from India) and writers from white settler communities (such as Australia). The term signalled a former political context: colonies that had been members of the 'British Commonwealth'. When the countries attained independence from British imperial rule, they continued to recognize the British monarch as a *symbolic* authority, though this authority had no real powers over them. 'Commonwealth' was used as a term to signify the *equality* among nations (as opposed to 'colonial', which indicated a power relation between European and the Asian or African country). Numerous writers, Salman Rushdie points out in his polemical ' "Commonwealth Literature" Does Not Exist', had problems with the term and category, as it forced people from diverse countries, cultures, and colonial experience into a 'ghetto', where the very term signals an 'unreal, monstrous creature' (Rushdie 1991: 63). But the term persisted until 'postcolonial' usurped its place.

After independence from Europe, artists, writers, and intellectuals returned home to their nations in Africa and Asia. The 1950s–1960s in most postcolonial literature were marked by themes of nationalism and the euphoria of decolonization. The preferred mode was realism, as R.K. Narayan's fiction demonstrates. In the midst of settling down to self-rule, new development agendas and unification, writers such as Wole Soyinka and Chinua Achebe were negotiating, in the first round of 'postcolonial' writing, themes such as the following:

- bi-culturalism (European and native)
- nationalism
- local and tribal identities as opposed to a universal humanism
- the conflict between European modernization and native tradition
- the usable past
- generating a discourse about the nature of postcolonial identity

These are among the earliest themes in postcolonial literature in Raja Rao, Narayan, George Lamming, Patrick White, Derek Walcott, and others. Cultural assertion (a return to cultural roots, rituals, icons, and belief systems in Asian writers like Raja Rao, in whose works the native traditions of *Sthalapurana*, local histories, and modes of speech are emphasized) and cultural nationalism (treating cultural commonalities as a source of political solidarity, nation-building, anti-colonial resistance, so where Patrick White saw the culture of settler whites in Australia as a source of a typical Australian national identity) began to become visible as a major theme during this time. During the 1970s, there were endless debates on the impact of colonialism on native cultures, and about the nature of postcolonial development, as witnessed in the social realist works of Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya in India, V.S. Naipaul in the Caribbean, and Chinua Achebe and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o in Africa.

In the 1980s, there was greater critical reflection on the postcolonial condition. Writers such as Salman Rushdie were faced with increasingly multicultural cities and countries. The postcolonial dream had been, in many cases, lost. A degree of cynicism had already crept into literary texts during before this time.

Numerous works explored the postcolonial nation's disillusionment: Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), Ngũgĩ's *Petals of Blood* (1977) and *Devil on the Cross* (1982), Naipaul's *The Mimic Men* (1967) and Ayi Kwei Armah's *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born* (1968). In terms of form, the influence of South American magical realism (mainly the work of Gabriel Garcia Marquez) was profound. Writers began to experiment with narrative modes, often mixing genres and exhibiting a dazzling (occasionally

confusing) 'play' of form, meaning, politics, and ideology. Naipaul's *In a Free State* (1971) and Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1982) illustrate the mixing of genres—autobiography, popular culture, documentary history, fiction—in a kind of postmodern writing. In the last decades of the twentieth century, literature from the once-colonized nations tackled the following:

- secessionist movements
- new minority and ethnic identities
- globalization

Of course, things were helped along by their higher visibility in the global literary arena. Through self-conscious forms, writers like Walcott (*Omeros*) and Ben Okri (*The Famished Road*) thematized the ideas stated below:

- cultural roots
- identity
- migrancy
- multiculturalism
- displacement

Diasporic writers such as David Dabydeen (*A Harlot's Progress*), Hanif Kureshi (*The Buddha of Suburbia*), Bharati Mukherjee (*Jasmine*) and Timothy Mo (*The Monkey King*) discussed the problems of *dual locations* and *dual roots*. The poetry of Agha Shahid Ali, Meena Alexander, and Sujata Bhatt explored hybrid identities, located between the East and West. Ireland—one of the world's first colonies—was not included under 'postcolonial' until well into the 1980s. Today Irish writers such as Colm Tóibín, Patrick MacCabe and Paul Muldoon figure prominently in postcolonial reading lists, even as James Joyce is re-read for his 'Irishness'.[8] The postcolonial canon is growing.

In 1964 the University of Leeds in England held the first conference of Commonwealth literature, and in 1965 the *Journal of Commonwealth Literature* was launched. While 'Commonwealth' did indicate a certain common ground and common cause among the countries and literatures of Asia and Africa—specifically their colonial past and the anti-colonial struggles—the first commentators on the new genre were cautious enough to suggest that there existed a wide diversity among these literatures and cultures too. That is, while India and Africa may share a common history of colonialism and anti-colonial struggles, they were also very *different* culturally. The collection of essays from the first Commonwealth literature conference sounded this cautionary note in its subtitle: *Commonwealth Literature: Unity and Diversity in a Common Culture* (1965). The *Journal of Commonwealth*

Literature emphasized diversity in its inaugural editorial when it wrote: 'the pressures acting upon a Canadian writing in English differ significantly from those operating upon an Indian using a language not his mother tongue' (1.1 [1965]: v).

Initial responses to 'Commonwealth literature' treated it as a version of liberal humanist English literature. While the critics acknowledged the historical specificity of the Asian or African novel, they also underlined the universal human values that the novel (apparently) projected. Writing from 'Third World' countries was seen as embodying the same principles of great (English) literature. This meant that the historical specificity of African and Asian nations and their colonial past was neglected in favour of their so-called universal themes.[9] In effect, this kind of criticism functioned to flatten out all differences between Gikuyu writings from Kenya, white settler fiction from Australia and the Indian English novel. This is a crucial feature, for it is also the point at which 'postcolonial' critics in the 1980s and 1990s break with the 'Commonwealth' critics.

In the now-classic formulation of Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin, postcolonial writing subverted the power of imperial English through

> The abrogation of the received English which speaks from the center, and the act of appropriation which brings it under the influence of a vernacular tongue, the complex of speech habits which characterize the local language. (1989: 39)

This abrogation is best illustrated with a poem, Lorna Goodison's 'Turn Thanks to Miss Mirry':

> She could not read or write a word in English
> but took every vowel and consonant of it
>
> and rung it around, like the articulated neck
> of our Sunday dinner sacrificial fowl.
> In her anger she stabbed at English, walked it out,
> abandoned it in favor of a long kiss teeth… (*1999: 12–13*)

Notice the violent appropriation and reworking of the colonizer's language here. The native seeks to negotiate the violence of an alien language, subordinate it to her own needs in a process of nativization. This also involves identifying modes of self-representation (magic realism, social realism), adequate languages of representation (English or native—as the chapter on Form outlines), the 'proper' themes for discussion and the audiences one is writing for.

1.8 White Studies

Postcolonial studies has encouraged, in the USA, 'white studies'—the cultural history of whiteness. Based on the idea that whiteness constructs itself at the socio-economic costs of the minorities (especially Blacks), white studies foreground the ideological and political roots of white cultures. In the case of the USA, writers such as Theodore Allen (1994), Noel Ignatiev (1995), Valerie Babb (1998), and others document how 'whiteness' was used to group together various European migrants to the US. This 'banding', which sought to overcome differences of class, religion, and language, was constructed against Native Americans and blacks. Thus, although the working class European migrant has more in common with blacks, the whites did not establish solidarity with them; rather, they grouped themselves as whites. Whiteness, and its concomitant development, racism, enabled the poorer whites to see and project themselves as part of the dominant group. It gave them an identity in opposition to the 'other'—the black. Whiteness studies argue that 'white' is an unmarked, invisible category because it is seen as natural and normal. All others are judged and categorized, but not white. Whiteness studies suggest that to deconstruct categories of 'blackness' it is necessary to highlight the construction of whiteness and to dismantle 'white' as a category.

The internationalization of literature, the high visibility of Booker Prize winners from the formerly colonized nations, the celebrity status of postcolonial critics such as Gayatri Spivak are all part of this institutionalization (for a discussion of the transnationalization of such literatures, see Amireh and Majaj 2000). In the latter half of the twentieth century, writers of non-European origin and those with both European and native languages at their disposal (Asian American or Black British, for instance) have produced significant literature in European languages. This cross-cultural and multilingual exchange process has internationalized literatures from all over the globe. With the internationalization of literature, they also have access to a wide variety of non-European models and literature. In such a context, as Vinay Dharwadkar points out (1996: 62), it transforms the literary surroundings of a writer. There are more influences, more readers and more markets now than ever before. In the globalized world, the cultural flows circulate faster and more variously for the writer to pick and choose influences (see Huggan 2001, Parry 2004).

In terms of publicity and circulation, writers from the formerly colonized countries find markets and audiences in the 'First World'. Recognition in the form of awards, 'reading tours', publicity, critical responses and academic presences, and the publishing industry of the USA has increased exponentially in the 1980s and 1990s (though it cannot be said that the mass/popular readership of such 'new' literature has been easy to attain, given the resistance to 'foreign' literature and cultures still visible in Euro-American contexts). This has contributed to the institutionalization of the postcolonial writer in the global literary market place, where European literature once held monopolistic sway. Gayatri Spivak puts it this way: 'As teachers we are now involved in the construction of a new object of investigation—"the Third World",' "the marginal"—for institutional validation and certification ... It is as if, in a certain way, we are becoming complicitous in the perpetration of a "new orientalism" (1993: 56).

The warning is clear: postcolonialism runs the risk of making the postcolonial into a commodity for marketing (and perhaps, even, production) in the 'First World'.

POSTCOLONIALISM, POSTCOLONIAL THEORY

'Postcolonial*ism*' is the theoretical wing of postcoloniality. It refers to a mode of reading, political analysis, and cultural resistance/intervention that deals with the history of colonialism and present neocolonial structures. It is a mix of rigorous epistemological and theoretical analysis of texts and a political praxis of resistance to neocolonial conditions. It is, in short, a critique. It invokes ideas such as social justice, emancipation, and democracy in order to oppose oppressive structures of racism, discrimination, and exploitation. It asserts the formerly colonized subject's 'agency'—defined as the ability to affect her/his present conditions—in the face of continuing oppression. Postcolonialism—as well as its more 'dense' (in more ways than one) companion, postcolonial theory—is a method of reading and discussion. Following from the expanded scope of 'postcolonial' and 'postcoloniality', we can argue that postcolonialism refers to any strategy that resists not colonial*ism* as such but colon*izing* (or oppressive, exploitative) practices. What is resisted is not so much any European power or group but a system of domination by any power. Postcolonialism, in sharp contrast to colonial approaches, pays attention to the differences among the native peoples. Theoretically at least, it cautions against any kind of homogenization of cultures or people. It specifies the local and the particular as against the colonial mode of seeing only large categories of 'Indians' or 'natives'.

Postcolonialism seeks to understand how oppression, resistance, and adaptation occurred during colonial rule. In Leela Gandhi's words, postcolonialism 'can be seen as a theoretical resistance to the mystifying amnesia of the colonial aftermath. It is a disciplinary project devoted to the academic task of revisiting, remembering, and, crucially, interrogating the colonial past. (1998: 4)

Gandhi misses out a crucial term here: 'political'. The postcolonial task of 'revisiting', 'remembering', and 'interrogating' is an exercise in cultural pedagogy that is (or ought to be) irreducibly political. In analysing injustice or oppression in colonial periods, postcolonialism worries about and interrogates (or ought to) the postcolonial—that is, post-independence—injustice and oppression, too.

In the 1980s and 1990s issues of ethnicity, displacement, sexuality, and gender were added as categories for analysis. Thus postcolonial arguments began to focus on how nationalist projects in colonial times and the decolonized nation-state replicated or extended certain fundamental oppressive structures in class, gender, and (in India) caste. The decolonized nation, argue postcolonial thinkers, under the guise of national stability, elides differences and perpetuates oppression of the marginalized—women, lower classes/castes. This, they argue, is essentially the same technique as that of colonialism. Under the rubric of postcolonial studies we thus have an ongoing attempt (*Subaltern Studies*) to retrieve histories that have been silenced or erased by both colonial and nationalist powers.

1.9 Postcolonial Theory

This theory looks at or addresses the following:

- colonialism's strategies of representation of the native;
- the epistemological underpinnings of colonial projects (colonial histories, anthropology, area studies, cartography);
- the feminization, marginalization, and dehumanization of the 'native';
- the rise of nationalist and/or nativist discourse that resisted colonialism, and other forms of resistance;
- the psychological effects of colonialism on both the colonizer and the colonized; and
- the role of apparatuses such as education, English literature, historiography, and art and architecture in the 'execution' of the colonial project.

Postcolonial theory explores how colonial ideology, strategies of representation, and racial prejudices are coded into the literary texts, and how these informed concrete political, military, and social 'operations' in colonialism.

During the 1970s and through the 1980s, the dominant form of postcolonial criticism was colonial discourse analysis. This borrowed from and was influenced by new research areas and theories: gay and lesbian, gender and feminist, African American, poststructuralist, psychoanalytic, and others. Adapting approaches from these new pedagogic and critical 'approaches', colonial discourse analysis looked at the ways in which

systems of knowledge enabled oppression. It began with the assumption that colonialism was not only a system of military, economic, and social oppression, but also a discourse about the domination of another race. That is, there was a discursive (literary, linguistic, representational, ideological) component of material domination. Effectively, colonial discourse analysis attempts an unmasking of the colonial ideology in literary and cultural works produced by European countries. It examined discourse—the system of thought that allowed certain knowledges, ideas, and opinions to be expressed while disallowing and silencing others—as the basis of material oppression. What this meant was that discourse and language were seen as coding actual political and material practices of colonial oppression. It saw literature as the site of such a colonial domination over native cultures. Discourse analysis was thus concerned with the linguistic expression of colonial practices and power relations rather than with actual historical and institutional conditions of capitalism, geographical acquisitions, or market forces. Colonial discourse analysis therefore turned to the colonial *text* rather than the colonial context.

Unfortunately, there is a tendency to ignore specific historical conditions and contexts when theorizing about colonialism in much postcolonial studies. Selective reading of programmatically chosen passages from isolated texts (and not even the entire text comes in for close scrutiny) is then built up into a huge edifice (Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Dipesh Chakrabarty are all guilty of this methodological 'sleight of hand'). Thus empires as diverse as the English, French, and Spanish are conflated in such readings of 'coloniality'. What is even more distressing is the focus on the colonial dimension of European modernity or Enlightenment without an equal attention to the other aspects of the age. Frederick Cooper, one of the few who draws attention to this selective mode of reading in postcolonial studies, puts it best:

> One can pluck a text of a narrative from Spanish America in the sixteenth century, or from the slave colonies of the West Indies in the eighteenth century, or from a moderately prosperous twentieth-century cocoa planter in the Gold Coast, and derive a lesson that conveys a generalizable meaning. (*2005: 405*)

Comparative literature grew as a discipline to include more and more writers from formerly colonized nations. With the increasing visibility and respectability of non-European writings, postcolonial criticism also argued that European aesthetic models or modes of reading need to be abandoned, since such approaches cannot do justice to Asian or African writings derived from and influenced by their own cultures. A whole new

reading paradigm was therefore deemed necessary to analyse 'Third World' writing. Such criticism (as in Boehmer 1995) proposed that writings from other cultural contexts were not mere imitations or adaptations of Western traditions and texts. Such works from Africa or Asia often transgress, modify, re-design Western forms and traditions, recasting them within their own native traditions. The postcolonial today is aware of her institutional/celebrity status—witness Salman Rushdie as a literary figure and Gayatri Spivak as a critic—but also self-consciously seeks to create politically relevant and socially committed literature and criticism.

Postcolonial critics of the 1980s and 1990s prefer to look at the differences between, say, Wilson Harris (Caribbean) and Raja Rao (India), rather than propose that both writers speak of a universal human condition. With the increasing influence of postcolonial studies and postcolonial theory (especially after Edward Said's monumental *Orientalism*, 1978), critics have focused on how colonial writers underscored racial difference and imperial power. This kind of criticism looked at the ways in which literature enabled, empowered, and reinforced the empire. Works such as Elleke Boehmer's (1995), for instance, underscored the fact that all literature was ideologically constrained by its geographical and political contexts.[10] Postcolonial criticism, in Bhabha's (unusually lucid) words, 'bears witness to the unequal and uneven forces of cultural representation involved in the contest for political and social authority within the modern world order' (1992: 437).

It is also true that, more often than not, postcolonial or 'Third World' texts are evaluated and read almost exclusively for their politics, ideologies, and 'value' as sources of 'authentic' information. Little attention is paid to the aesthetic dimensions of such texts—an ironic situation where so-called imaginative literature that thrives on aestheticizing the world is treated only as political tract or opinion. We need to understand that 'the intermeshing of sociopolitics with artistic and intellectual expression' (Bahri 2003: 11) is central to postcolonial writing. Evaluating these texts as merely socio-political documents is to treat them as commentaries (on poverty, caste, oppression, and other accepted 'Third World' and postcolonial conditions), demanding they be 'testimonials' (ibid.: 160) without artistry. Denying them status as literary texts or artistic genres would mean relegating them to the status of anything that is 'written' (say, a telephone directory?). The burden of the postcolonial text to be 'authentic' (what Bahri accurately describes as 'subjugation of story to information', 201), ethnographically accurate and full of information often detracts its other purpose: to tell stories, to be imaginative and artistic. It is this problem that haunts much postcolonial writing today.

In the 1990s, the scope of postcolonial studies moved beyond addressing 'Third World' cultures and colonial histories to include issues relating to the 'Third World' within 'First World' nations: immigrants, refugees, blacks/Hispanics and other ethnic minorities in the US and the UK. This marked a shift in thinking about the *nature* of the postcolonial itself. Including minorities under the rubric of 'postcolonial' indicated a bridge-building between formerly colonized and oppressed people in Asian/African/South American nations and socially subordinated and marginalized races/communities in 'First World' nations. Diasporic peoples who were subject to racism and systemic marginalization even within 'First World' nations saw themselves as colonized. Further, native peoples in Canada, Australia, the USA began to argue that indigenous peoples the world over had been colonized by the white settler races. The debate broadened the purview of postcolonial studies to include indigenous peoples and their experience of colonialism. As we can see, postcolonialism has now become a term to discuss the problems, and narratives, of much of the world's marginalized classes. Jenny Sharpe states this in unambiguous terms: 'When used as a descriptive term for the United States, postcolonial does not name its past as a white settler colony or its emergence as a neocolonial power; rather it designates the presence of racial minorities and "Third World" immigrants.' (1995: 181. Also see Sharpe, 2000).

Robert Young (2001) proposes (the rather awkward) 'tricontinentalism' as a term for postcolonialism, to suggest the commonality between Asia, Africa and South America, arguing that 'colonialism' has not fully disappeared and therefore, '*post*colonialism' does not make much sense.

This criticism also looked at the ways in which native people reading such literary texts assimilated Western ways of looking at non-white races. That is, postcolonial criticism looked at the manner in which non-white races imbibed values, stereotypes, and prejudices of the West through the consumption of imperial texts. Such a critical approach embodies three modes of reading, according to John McLeod:

- a re-reading of English literary texts to examine their methods of representations, assumptions, and prejudices that reinforced imperial power relations
- analysing the construction of colonial subjects in these writings, and the ways in which natives resisted such constructions
- discussing the ways in which colonial subjects 'wrote back', that is, responded to, resisted, and overturned imperial power relations to the empire (2000: 23–29)

Postcolonial theory can be said to have originated in the mid-twentieth century texts of Franz Fanon, Aimé Cesaire and Albert Memmi. Anti-colonial writing, nationalism, resistance, anti-Westernization, and cultural identity in colonized nations have been integral to the writings (and speeches) of Kwame Nkrumah, Gandhi, Julius Nyerere, Kenneth Kaunda, Amilcar Cabral and other leaders from colonized nations from the end of the nineteenth century. Though studies of imperialism have been undertaken much earlier (notably in works such as V.I. Lenin's *Imperialism, the Highest Stage of Capitalism*, 1916), it is with Fanon that studies of the cultural and psychological effects of colonialism really developed. Mannoni's work on the 'psychology of colonialism' (1956) was a central text in this area. This section provides a brief survey of postcolonial theory (postcolonial theory's imbrication with feminist and queer theory are discussed in the chapters on 'Gender' and 'Queer').

Ashcroft et al (1989: 5–6) characterize writing emerging from the once-colonized nations as postcolonial. They identify three major characteristics of this postcolonial writing:

(a) The silencing and marginalization of the postcolonial voice by the imperial centre.
(b) The abrogation of the imperial centre within the text.
(c) The active appropriation of the language and culture of that centre.

Franz Fanon argued that colonialism drives the colonized to madness by rejecting any individuality-claims of the native. This was achieved by the emphasis on psychic difference, where the native's psyche was repeatedly represented, savaged, and 'treated' as inferior. Fanon points out that the European descriptions of the native are invariably couched in zoological terms, emphasizing his 'reptilian' motions, the stink of the native quarter, of foulness and bestiality. The universal category of 'Man' now begins to mean 'white man'. Eventually, the native also admits loudly the supremacy of the white man. Fanon argues that the white man comes to stand in for the father. The child cannot associate himself with others of his community or his family with a nation. In the colonial context, the native community and the nation are both controlled by the white man. The colonizer thus becomes the father, and the colonized the child who has to obey the 'law of the father'.

After years of unreality, the native discovers this reality and transforms it into the pattern of his customs, into the practice of violence and into his plan for freedom. When the native can't fight the colonizers, the violence turns against his own people to work off their hatred. The development of violence among the colonized people will be proportionate to the violence exercised by the colonialists. Fanon argues that tribal feuds help relieve the tensions of the colonized. By using all his force the native tries to persuade himself that colonisation does not exist, that his and his tribe's history goes on as before.

1.10 Franz Fanon

One of the pioneer thinkers on colonialism in works such as *The Wretched of the Earth* and *Black Skin, White Masks*, Fanon argued that colonialism dehumanized the native. This process was so thorough that the black man can see himself only as the black (mirror) image of the white man. The white man is the master, and represents an object that is to be feared and desired. The black therefore tries to be more like the (desirable) white man/master. He puts on 'white masks'.

Colonialism, argues Fanon, projects itself as self-born and the origin of everything. Nationalist consciousness arises as a counter to this. This anti-colonial nationalism achieves solidarity between the disparate classes and groups of the colony. Such a nationalist consciousness and literature embodies a 'negritude', a pan-African consciousness and solidarity.

Fanon suggested a 'national literature', perhaps a *negritude* that would enable the development of a national consciousness. The native strengthens the inhibitions, which contain his aggressiveness by drawing on his own myths. Myth and magic integrate the individual into the history of the district or the tribe. Likewise, the ecstatic dances of the tribe/native are a means of exhausting their emotional sensibility. The circle of the dance is a permissive circle: it protects and permits. The colonizer, however, attributes the native's assertion of a distinct identity and a concern with preserving some elements of his national ethos/existence to religious, magical, and fanatical behaviour.

Nationalist consciousness arises as a counter to colonialism. This anti-colonial nationalism achieves solidarity between the disparate classes and groups of the colony. This may help prevent and overcome the cultural and psychological damage of colonialism. The birth of nationalist parties in colonized countries is contemporaneous with the formation of an intellectual elite engaged in trade. This elite attaches great importance to organization. However, Fanon argues that the nationalist parties exhibit elitism—they rarely direct their propaganda towards the country's masses. In a spontaneous nationalist movement, the individual 'stands aside in favour of the community'. The progress of this nationalist spirit is charted thus by Fanon:

> Tribalism in the colonial phase → regionalism in the national phase → federalism in the decolonized phase. (*1963: 92*)

Fanon, however, was prescient enough to suggest in his essay 'The Pitfalls of National Consciousness' that, once nationhood had been attained, the 'national middle class' would cause more ruin than anything else. Its 'cowardice', 'unpreparedness', and 'laziness' will turn national consciousness into an 'empty shell' (1963: 121–163).

Edward Said argues that knowledge about the Orient (Asia, the East and non-European cultures) was never knowledge for the sake of knowledge: it preceded actual colonial practices. In fact colonial practices (political, economic) necessitated the production of such knowledge. Colonial power based on Orientalist knowledge does not rely on physical force as much as it does on the consent of the native. Also, these texts and discourses present the imperialist programme as natural and necessary. The native agrees to be colonized when he accepts the colonial stereotypes of himself.

Said demonstrates how a range of texts—literary, philological, philosophical, administrative, ethnographic—functioned as the lens through which the Orient was viewed preliminary to being ruled. Stereotypes—the ignorance of the natives, their effeminacy and indolence, their oversexed nature, their essential untrustworthiness, the superiority of the European and his knowledge—helped justify and even necessitate Western presence as the masculine, strong, and rational protector in various guises and roles—of the protector (police, army), educator (teacher), administrator (bureaucracy and political presence), and saviour (missionary).

Said suggests that we need a contrapuntal perspective—in order to think through and interpret together experiences that are discrepant, each with its own agenda, pace of development, internal formation, and coherence—and a system of external relationships that coexist and interact with one another. Said is thus suggesting that we abandon a unified approach that goes by the master narrative, and adopt a technique where marginal and apparently contradictory narratives battle. What Said proposes, in short, is a disputational reading process, where the author's 'given' must be seen in the light of texts/experiences which are effaced.

Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak rejects the idea that there is a recoverable pre-colonial past. The native past has been so thoroughly interpreted and reinterpreted by colonialism that it has become unrecognizable. What one can do is to understand the 'worlding' of the 'Third World', the process through which the local population was 'persuaded' to accept the European version of reality for its own modes of understanding and structuring its social world.

I.II Edward Said and 'Orientalism'

> Edward Said inaugurated the postcolonial field with *Orientalism* (1978). The best definition of 'orientalism' comes from Said himself: 'a way of coming to terms with the Orient that is based on the Orient's special place in European Western Experience ... the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience ... Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident" ... the phenomenon of Orientalism as I study it here deals principally, not with a correspondence between Orientalism and Orient, but with the internal consistency of Orientalism and its ideas about the Orient ... despite or beyond any correspondence, or lack thereof, with a "real" Orient'. (1–3, 5)
>
> Orientalism is this production of ideas, knowledge, and opinions about the Orient—ideas which were preliminary to governance, military conquest and political control over the geographical territory of the Orient. Orientalist knowledge came first, political control later.

It is impossible to recover the 'authentic' voice of the subaltern (a term used to signify the oppressed class). Spivak's well-known (and controversial) argument is that the subaltern cannot speak for himself/herself because the very structure of colonialism prevents this speaking. However, Spivak argues that the intellectual project must try to make visible the position of the marginalized. The subaltern must be 'spoken for' (that is, represented), but not romanticised. There is also the warning that the term/category 'subaltern' is neither universally applicable, nor homogeneous (though this, unfortunately, has happened).

Spivak suggests that the appropriation of the marginalized as part of postcolonial studies and Western academies relegates them to perpetual marginality. The distinction between centre and margin is retained, even strengthened by the 'Third Worldism' of postcolonial studies. What Spivak is suggesting is that the institutionalization of marginality is a dangerous trend. The West's longing for its Other figures in the institutional investments it makes in the form of postcolonialism.

Spivak insists that postcolonial theory must recognize the heterogeneity of postcolonial cultures. Rather than a monolithic homogenizing Saidian version of the Orient and Orientalism, Spivak argues for a complexity of form, full of differences and contradictions. Spivak suggests that the variations among experiences of oppression must be first admitted. Spivak seeks to understand the methods through which 'Third World' cultural texts may be admitted into Western academy without blunting their critical position. To this end Spivak argues for a transnational study of

1.12 Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak

Known for harnessing deconstructive critical thought, feminism, and Marxism for postcolonial purposes, but not necessarily for lucid prose, Gayatri Spivak, Avalon Foundation Professor of Humanities at Columbia University, is also well known as the translator of Jacques Derrida's first major work, *Of Grammatology*, into English (1976), Mahashweta Devi's works from Bangla into English, and a critical watchdog of the state of the humanities in the age of global capital. In one of her more provocative essays, 'Can the Subaltern Speak?', Spivak worries about the agency of the subaltern/oppressed to represent themselves. She argues that since the subaltern cannot speak for herself because the 'double bind' of colonialism and patriarchy silence her, any intellectual project must seek to make visible the position of the marginalized. Interestingly, she also argues that the appropriation of the marginalized into 'disciplines' such as postcolonial studies condemns them to perpetual marginality, always the subject of somebody else's discourse. Western feminism, like postcolonial studies, assumes the role of an authoritative commentator on its 'Other'—the non-white woman. The Asian or African woman is 'ventriloquised', where a voice is ascribed to her by the First World commentator. Spivak also warns against a homogenization of postcolonial cultures.

culture, where single-author studies are substituted with non-Western texts, non-Western languages, popular cultural forms, and critical theory.

Spivak's main contribution has been to use deconstructive thought for postcolonial theorizing. She seeks to reveal the manner in which colonial texts undermine their status and logic. Focusing on minor characters and subplots, Spivak is able to reveal the racial biases that constitute even apparently humanist texts. This process places and reads canonical texts in alien contexts, by demonstrating how these texts reveal a contradictory meaning/subtext when wrenched out of their conventional narratives.

Spivak points out that during imperialism, the British assumed the authority and prerogative to speak for the oppressed native woman (especially in the colonial discourse on Sati). The construction of the oppressed native woman was necessary to justify the presence of the modernizing British man. The native woman apparently 'called out' for liberation. For Spivak, this was the ascription of a true voice to the native woman. In reality, the voice of the woman is 'ventriloquised', or spoken for. The nationalists also resurrected the voice of the native woman for their own ends, but, as Spivak points out, the voice of the woman is effaced in the discourse of both nationalism and colonialism: she is only spoken for.

Homi K. Bhabha, the third most visible postcolonial theorist after Said and Spivak, argues that Edward Said's reading of the colonial encounter is unidirectional: it only treats colonial authority as proceeding from the

colonizer to the colonized. Said's argument also suggests that the identities of colonizer and colonized are fixed and stable. Bhabha asserts that colonial discourse is actually conflictual, ambivalent, and riven with contradictions. The contradictory psychic relations between the colonizer and colonized—moving, for Bhabha, between fear and desire for the Other—prevents any stable, unchanging identities for the colonizer and the colonized. The relationship between the two is one of negotiation and transaction, and not a one-directional will to power as Said implies.

1.13 Homi K. Bhabha

Known often for some difficult prose and a wide range of theoretical–philosophical roots, Bhabha's work on the stereotype, hybridity, and the narration of a nation has set the agenda for postcolonial thinkers across the world. Bhabha, Professor of English at Harvard, underlines the 'growing awareness that, despite the certainty with which historians speak of the "origins" of nation as a sign of the "modernity" of society, the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality' (1995: 1). Bhabha argues that what mediates between Theory and politics is writing, where 'writing' includes cultural exercises such as novels, cinema, and music. Bhabha also argues that the mimicry and production of stereotypes and hybrids in colonial discourse reflected not the strengths but rather the weaknesses of colonialism—colonialism needed stereotypes to reinforce itself. Mimicry was resistance and subversion on the part of the native.

Bhabha argues that identities are possible only in differential relations and displacement. Identity for Bhabha constantly moves between positions, displacing others and being displaced in turn. The colonial regime achieves power through the creation of set stereotypes such as those of the sly treacherous native, the noble savage, or the lustful native. Bhabha argues that the stereotype is an indication not of the stable and supreme power of the colonizer, but rather of the fractured nature of the colonial power. What is already known or established has to be endlessly confirmed through repetitions. For Bhabha, this need for repetition points to a lack of certainty about the stereotypes, which indicates their essentially unstable and constructed nature. The colonizer can construct his identity only through the stereotype of the Other. That is, the identity of the colonial master is dependent upon the relationship with the oppositional native/Other. The stereotypes thus help the formation of the colonizer's identity while simultaneously rendering it unstable and dependent.

The stereotype and the 'fetish/phobia' of colonial relations indicate

- the affirmation and desire of the colonizer for wholeness and similarity with the native; and
- the simultaneous fear and anxiety at/of the lack and the different native.

Simply put, colonial discourse is ambivalent in its attitudes because it both desires (fetishizes) similarity/unity with the native and yet fears (is phobic of) the wholly Other nature of the native. This ambivalent nature is best seen in the contradictory representations of the colonized. The native is simultaneously beyond comprehension (the stereotype of the 'inscrutable native') and yet completely knowable/controllable as the subject of colonial power (in the stereotype of the native as an innocent child, or as a vulnerable woman). The colonial relation is full of such contradictions and conflicts.

In his concept of mimicry Bhabha further analyses the fractured nature of the colonial condition. Colonial power requires that the natives adopt and internalize the forms and habits of the colonial master: the native should mimic the master. The entire colonial mission is to transform the native into 'one like us'—a copy of the colonizer. For Bhabha the mimicry is a defence, fraught with the resistance of the native. The native is in a position to return the gaze of the colonial master, since he is now camouflaged. A reversal has been achieved through the mimicry of the colonizer by the colonized. Mimicry is now active resistance: it achieves something other than the purpose intended by the colonizer. On the one hand the colonial power tries to recast the native as one of themselves, and on the other tries to remember and reiterate the irreducible difference of the Other. Mimicry thus produces a subject who reflects a distorted image of the colonial master. In the attempt to produce the same-as-me, the colonial power induces a distorted self-identity, a reiteration of the difference. What is produced is the hybrid (the same and not-the-same native). For Bhabha then, the resistance of the native is the result of the failure of the colonial power to effectively reproduce and extend itself.

For Bhabha, colonial presence is ambivalent, split between the two positions: its appearance as authority and original and its articulation as repetition and difference. This split is the failure of colonial discourse and the site of potential resistance by the colonized. Hybridity and the third space, the result of the split and negotiation between colonizer and colonized, which is 'neither the one nor the other' is thus the point where anti-colonial resistance is first articulated.

1.14 Mahatma Gandhi

The most revolutionary participant of anti-colonial struggles, Mahatma Gandhi is curiously not often cited or appropriated by postcolonial theorists. Robert Young attributes this absence to postcolonial theory's commitment to Marxism which does not sit well with Gandhi's spiritualism (Young 2001: 339–40). Yet Gandhi's spiritualized critique of the West is in no way less than the Marxist one—though postcolonial theory's Marxism is itself quite suspect. His notions of self-rule (swaraj) and non-violent resistance, his critique of capitalist modernity and the campaigns against caste are crucial modes that radically altered the politics of India's anti-colonial struggle—features ignored in postcolonial theorizing today. Gandhi argued in his *Hind Swaraj* (1910) that it was the Indians' psychological acceptance of English/European culture and civilization that made British colonial rule of India possible. His suggestion of India's village communities as an alternate model to European modernity was, in Gyan Prakash's terms, a 'realignment' (1995: 7). Gandhi located the Indian premodern not as an ancient past or history but alongside the European modern as the non-modern. In a clever move, Gandhi achieves this through a method that contemporary postcolonial theorists have adopted: re-reading Western texts and the colonial archive for sources of resistance to the West. Gandhi's notions of village communities and the premodern drew upon European and American sources, such as Henry Maine, Leo Tolstoy, John Ruskin, and HD Thoreau. It was Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy* (1983) who 'recovered' Gandhi for postcolonial purposes. Nandy showed how Gandhi's anti-colonialism was a battle fought on both external and internal—that is, psychological—terrains. Nandy elaborated a Gandhian psychology of resistance where one borrowed from the very culture that was being resisted. Nandy also pointed to Gandhi's emphasis on hybridity—a theme in Gandhi that has not been picked up—while Bhabha's theorizations of hybridity have become the mantras of postcolonial theory—as an anti-colonial and postcolonial strategy.

Aijaz Ahmad's *In Theory* (1992) was one of the strongest critiques of Edward Said and postcolonial theory. Ahmad, writing from an avowed Marxist position, has called into question several of the assumptions that inform postcolonial theory; especially the latter's complicity with neo-imperialism, appropriation by Western academies, and the notion of the subject.

Ahmad argues that 'Third World' literature arrives as a category when it is appropriated, marketed, reviewed, and accepted as 'counter-canonical' by Western metropolitan academies. The global channels of communication and circulation coerce the book/texts into the category of 'Third World' literature. It is also aided by the fact that there is far greater assertion of the immigrant professional strata from non-Western countries. The entire counter-canon is thus formed in the West. What is needed is, according to Ahmad, an inquiry into how texts are incorporated into the Western

academy/canon. The literary relations between the metropolitan countries and the former colonies are also instrumental here. The literary theorist in the US or Europe has access to at least one other European language, but rarely an Asian or African one. But the intellectual from the imperialized formation will need at least one European language. Therefore the few writers who write in English are praised and valorized 'beyond measure'. The metropolitan country sees the text in English as representing, speaking for the whole colony/'Third World'. Differences within particular national structures are then minimized, and one is forced to speak only in terms of the First or 'Third World'. Class and gender formations and conflicts are thus conveniently ignored.

Rejecting Bhabha's notions of the interventionary nature of poststructuralism, Ahmad argues that Bhabha writes from within the material conditions of postmodernity. Ahmad argues that the luxury of debunking myths of progress and modernity is available only to the intellectuals who have availed its plenitude: the vast majority in the 'Third World' have no access to the actual benefits of modernity (health, education, and so on). Non-Western individuals have also been appropriated by and into the Western programmes, argues Ahmad, that is, non-Western postcolonial thinkers become part of the Western pedagogic, scholarly, publishing, career programme that gives them massive benefits (capitalist modernity's benefits) from where it becomes possible to question the role of modernity in 'Third World' nations.

Attacking the postcolonial theorist, Ahmad suggests that immigration has its own politics. The combination of origins, professional ambitions, and the absence of a socialist agenda cause the immigrant intellectual to seek a politics of 'Third World'ism-as-opposition. Exile is over-romanticized, and for Ahmad, does not quite describe the upper-class Indian who chooses to live in the metropolitan country.

Fredric Jameson's idea (1986) that all 'Third World' texts are 'national allegories' also comes in for criticism in Ahmad. He notes that Jameson's definitions of the First and Second worlds are based on the criteria of modes of production, while the 'Third World' is described as that which has once experienced imperialism. Thus the 'Third World' is defined entirely in terms of externally inserted phenomena. This, for Ahmad, merely repeats the age-old idea that history is created by the 'First World', and happens to the 'Third World'. Also, nationalism is not a simple unitary thing: there are variations in the type of nationalism, which Jameson does not seem to recognize. Moreover, if the 'Third World' has only the experience of the oppression and imperialism, then (asks Ahmad) what else does the 'Third World' have to narrate? Ahmad points out that the implication of Jameson's argument is: any text that is not a national allegory cannot be considered as an authentic 'Third World' text.

Ahmad has a number of charges against *Orientalism*. Ahmad argues that Said is steeped in the High Humanist tradition when he presupposes the following:

- A unified European identity which is at the origin of history
- This history—visible in a set of beliefs, values and attitudes—remains essentially the same right up to the twentieth century
- This history and beliefs are immanent in the great books of the Western canon.

Ahmad objects to Said's assumption that difference and identity in the colonial contexts were the effects of discourse rather than political economy. The Saidian assumption that the entire Western civilization was diseased and paranoid about the Other and itself is too fantastic for Ahmad to accept. Ahmad argues that xenophobic crises of identity have been prevalent in all civilizations, including non-European ones.[11]

Ahmad attacks the so-called representatives of the 'Third World', where the elite academic intelligentsia claims for itself 'the role of the world's revolutionary vanguard'. One must, notes Ahmad, be aware of the fact that the 'combination of the comprador class origin, Western location, [and] exiled self' produces the so-called revolutionary postcolonial position. Ahmad points out that postcolonial intellectuals do their theorizing in the West, a comment that echoes Arif Dirlik's dry proposition that postcolonialism begins with the arrival of the 'Third World' academic in 'First World' academia (1994). It somehow suggests, according to Ahmad and Dirlik that the postcolonial can only be situated in 'First World' academia, write for 'First World' audiences and write in the language (read 'jargon'!) of the 'First World'. It is, quite justifiably, a valid comment.

Ahmad argues that Spivak's notion of postcoloniality as 'the heritage of imperialism' is simply untenable. Spivak, argues Ahmad, relies upon political concepts of nationhood, democracy, and socialism for her definition. For Ahmad the 'historically adequate referent' for the legacy of imperialism is available in the national movement itself. Ahmad claims that Spivak relies upon the European meanings of these concepts and words. Ahmad argues that we need to speak not of colonialism or postcolonialism, but of capitalist modernity.

Those who celebrate globalization—Arjun Appadurai and Homi Bhabha come to mind here—see globalization almost exclusively in cultural terms. However, as Simon Gikandi cautions us, there is an increasing

'disjunct' in such celebratory analyses, 'between the emergence of global images and the global stories of global subjects' and 'the material experiences of everyday life and survival' (2001b: 631–32). This is indeed a well-taken point. While the cultural impact of globalization may or may not be positive, the economic impact on 'Third World' nation-states has almost definitely been disastrous. Global flows of capital, Hollywood cinema and MTV notwithstanding, illegal migration, destitute refugees, and sweat shops are the material signs of uneven globalization. Increasingly, postcolonial studies have turned to diaspora studies and neo-colonialism-globalization, as exemplified in the volume *Postcolonial Theory and the United States* (Singh and Schmidt 2000).

Globalization is surely an extension, a more insidious one in fact, of colonialism and capitalist modernity. Globalization today expands the network of slaving voyages, transoceanic trade links, travel, and conquest that linked various locations on the earth for centuries before the present one. The Silk Route, the early modern discovery voyages, the crusades and the pilgrimages, and the expansion of various empires anticipated the twentieth-century's globalizations. Interestingly, contemporary (post 9/11, post-Iraq) accounts of and accolades for globalization by the 'First World'—coded, most often, as the USA—often draw these links between the present neo-colonial moves and older empires. Here is Niall Fergusson, often seen as an apologist for empire, writing in the *New York Times* on 27 April 2003:

> The British Empire has had a pretty lousy press from a generation of "postcolonial" historians ... affronted by its racism ... the reality is ... the British were significantly more successful at establishing market economies, the rule of law and the transition to representative government than the majority of postcolonial governments ... (*Loomba et al 2005: 11*)

To go back—given the Afghanistan/Iraq contexts—to an earlier example, the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki have received far less scholarly historical and critical attention. Allied bombings of German and Japanese cities, in which, it must be noted, there were massive civilian casualties, have remained beneath the critical vision of Western historians and critics. W.E.B Du Bois had, in fact, pointed out that the atomic bomb had been developed for use against Germany but was instead used (twice) against Japan—a clear case of racism (Torgovnick 2005: 101). In 1995 the Smithsonian museum's exhibition was scheduled to include photographs and quotes from the atomic victims, but was eventually edited to exclude the Japanese. As Marianna Torgovnick points out, the silence on American and European destruction of Asian cities and cultures contrasts sharply with the wealth of documentation, memoirs, and memorials about the

Holocaust (101). I would add a coda here: how many times has the world witnessed the collapse of WTC on its screens? Compare this with the number of times the Bhopals and Hiroshimas (both, it must be pointed out, the consequence of Euro-American technology, corporatism, and policies) has visited the same screens on CNN or BBC. This is not to efface the deaths in the WTC bombings or to equate the technical expertise and communication facilities available in 1945 and 2001. But the difference in depictions of war, death, and destruction between Euro-American and Asian worlds is undeniable. Death and destruction are differently 'valued', depending on 'their' geographies and racial make-up.

Postcolonialism must, primarily, address these issues (Do African Americans, for instance, constitute 'the Empire State'—the licence/number plates of automobiles in New York state are inscribed with this fascinating legend—with its dominating, exploitative structures?). It is also important to note how such celebrations of globalization are made only from within the context of high-paid professorships and material comforts of 'First World' citizenships and locations. Academics and theorists from 'First World' contexts speak on behalf of the oppressed 'Third World'. Instances of this 'behalfism' (as Rushdie calls it, 2002: 60) abound—from Western women's anxieties about women in Islam to the disappearance of tribal languages in India. Nawal El Saadawi, doctor, feminist, activist, and writer from Egypt, expresses her worry about this when she writes:

> Influential circles, especially in the Western imperialist world, depict the problems of Arab women as stemming from the substance and values of Islam, and ... the retarded development of Arab countries...as largely the result of religious and cultural factors ... Development in such circles is visualized as a process of cultural change, of modernization along the lines of Western life, of technological advance which would permit better utilization of resources... (*1980: i–ii*)

El Saadawi is here warning us against the appropriation and adoption of an emancipatory programme that might end up serving neocolonial interests under the guise of 'improving' Arab women.

Postcolonial theory thus provides a set of analytical tools with which to unpack colonial writings and deliberate postcolonial literature. In subsequent chapters several of these concepts will be deployed in order to understand the themes of postcolonial literature.

NOTES

1. Incidentally, the term 'native' (etymologically meaning 'to be born in a particular place', according to the *OED*, but also in post-classical Latin to mean

'a person born in bondage') is almost *de facto* associated with the darker, 'Third World' races. Further, the 'postcolonial' is also almost always associated with the term 'native'.

2. See Edward Said (1978, 1993) for trenchant—and, as it turned out, path-breaking—analyses of the cultural, epistemological, and 'academic' colonization of non-European spaces. For a history of postcolonial critiques such as Said's, see Robert Young (2001).
3. The term 'empire' is commonly used to describe west European nations—Portugal, Spain, France, Netherlands, England, Belgium—who began to expand their territories overseas in Asia, Africa, and South America from the fourteenth century. There were considerable variations in the nature of colonial settlements and colonial powers. For a comparative study see Hart (2003). On the differences between 'Orientalisms', see Lisa Lowe (1991).
4. D.K. Fieldhouse in his study points out that by 1930 nearly 85 per cent of the earth's land area was under some kind of empire or other (1984: 373).
5. Globalization can be described as the increasing linkage of national economies into a worldwide market for goods and services through the circulation of capital. It is concerned with the expansion of trade but also with the migration of workers across national barriers, the linking up of social movements, and the circulation of cultural products. It is driven, especially in the last decades of the twentieth century, by the expansion of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs), creating a networked, global society and a new world order. The new globalized economy is marked by decentralization of work, individualization of labour, the relocation of production sites to 'Third World' nations, and the rise of global financial markets; but also by the crisis of the nation-state, increased social inequality, and cultural battles. On globalization and postcolonial studies, see Simon During (2000), Simon Gikandi (2001b), Timothy Brennan (2004), and the chapter on hybridity in this book.
6. It is ironic, however, that much of postcolonial scholarship's critique—of caste, oppression of women, and the movement for human rights—is a 'legacy' (as Dipesh Chakrabarty terms it, 2001: 4) of European Enlightenment, which was itself driven by colonialism.
7. However, the irony of the Subaltern Studies project itself should not be missed out. The work is almost entirely in English (even though some of it has been made available in Bangla and Hindi). There is extensive use of Euro-American poststructuralist theory, and the jargon/discourse is, crucially, elitist and non-subaltern. Most of the scholars were trained and/or teach in the 'First World'.
8. However, including Ireland in postcolonial studies alongside Africa or India poses several issues that have been debated by several scholars. Ireland, to begin with, was a part of the 'Western' world. The Irish nationalist movement seeking independence from Britain rarely saw themselves alongside other European colonies, and finally, more often than not, Irish administrators and soldiers were a part of England's imperial and colonial structures (Cleary 2002: 104–5). Evidently, it is not an easy situation: as Joe Cleary points out, even European 'developments' in Ireland were mediated through colonial structures (106, also Bahri 2003: 55–87). Helen Gilbert has argued in favour of including settler cultures like Canada and Australia—which contributed to the colonization of indigenous/aboriginal populations—under the category of 'postcolonial'. Gilbert argues that to exclude these texts would be to suggest that colonial relations affected only the dispossessed (2001: 3). Overall, I go with Cleary and Gilbert's arguments in this book.
9. A good example of such a criticism is visible in William Walsh's *Commonwealth Literature* (1973).
10. Later critics expanded their reading by looking at how the empire influenced not just 'classic' or canonical literature, but also the public (popular) imagination in non-canonical texts such as travelogues, medical texts, anthropology, and advertisements. See John M. MacKenzie (1984); Nicholas Thomas (1994); Anne McClintock (1995), among others.
11. Ahmad's argument that Said homogenizes all colonial oppression in his suggestion of stable identities is a point raised by numerous thinkers. See the collection edited by Trivedi and Mukherjee, *Interrogating Post-colonialism* (1996), for instance.

TWO

History

Who has responsibility for what and whom? Who does what?
Who takes responsibility for saying things for whom?
Who does the saying and the writing?

—Jackie Huggins, *Sister Girl* (1998: 116)

Most 'Third World' countries emerged from under the shadow of colonial rule. In many cases this 'emergence' into political independence followed a long period of anti-colonial struggle. Writing in the immediate aftermath of the nationalist struggles, authors of imaginative literature thematized the problems of colonialism. Their writing captured the cultural and social impact of colonial rule in native, non-Western societies. In particular, they were interested in the ways in which native societies responded to Western cultural presence. Postcolonial novels of the 1950s, therefore, were essentially case studies of cultural colonialism, native identity, and anti-colonial resistance. They were about history, with many authors suggesting that native cultures should understand their history and the history of colonialism better. The anti-colonial struggle in Africa, for instance, moved rapidly from the political dimension to the cultural one. Anti-colonial writing of the first phase is thus of the cultural nationalist variety—embodied in movements such as Negritude, African Personality, and African Aesthetic. Freedom from European political domination was, in these struggles, freedom from European cultural imperialism.

Anti-colonial struggles were about liberating themselves, at both individual and communal levels, from colonial attitudes and forms of thinking. Postcolonial obsession with history is thus closely linked to the overarching goal of decolonization.

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'History' as a theme in postcolonial literature addresses several themes:

- Interrogating the effects of colonialism, especially in terms of cultural alienation;
- The anti-colonial struggles of the 'Third World' and the rise of nationalism;
- The creation of 'mimic men' in colonial culture;
- The appropriation of history by the colonial master;
- The attempts to retrieve and re-write their own histories by the formerly colonized cultures; and
- The modes of representation.

These themes may be organized around two main heads:

- Interrogating colonialism
- Retrieving history

INTERROGATING COLONIALISM

Noemia De Sousa in her 'If You Want to Know Me' describes herself thus:

> This is what I am
> empty sockets despairing of possessing of life ...

She identifies her body as one tattooed with wounds seen and unseen from the harsh whipstrokes of slavery. She however remains 'proud and mysterious Africa from head to foot' (Noemia De Sousa, *'If You Want to Know Me', in Narasimhaiah 1990: 137*)

The poem captures the worst aspects of colonial rule: the destruction of identity, bodily pain, and the complete rejection of a culture. The 'proud and mysterious' Africa is broken and 'tattooed' with injuries. De Sousa's poem is a particularly fine example of a postcolonial writing that interrogates the economic, political, and cultural basis of colonialism. It would, however, be wrong to assume that resistance and anti-colonial thought occurs only in post-independence works. Literature of the colonial encounter—Narayan and Anand in India, for example[1]—had explored in considerable depth the ill-effects of colonial rule, racism, and exploitation even before political independence from their colonial masters.[2] That is,

the postcolonial critique of colonialism that we see in literature from independent nations now was pre-figured in writings even during the colonized phase of the nations. Thus, in Narayan's ever-popular *Swami and Friends*, the Scripture teacher, Ebenezar, described by Narayan as a 'fanatic', rejects Hinduism and rants and raves against Hindu idolatory: 'Oh, wretched idiots!' the teacher said ... 'Why do you worship, dirty, wooden idols and stone images? ... What did your Gods do when Mohammed of Gazni smashed them to pieces?' (1999a [1935]: 5). Narayan is here showing how colonial rule and English education rejected native belief systems as a preliminary moment to installing Christianity as the only true faith. African and Asian writers in formerly colonized countries seek to not only reject colonial stereotypes of native cultures, but also to reverse them in the form of re-writing colonial texts (as we shall see in the chapter on Form). In many cases nationalist writings have gone together with liberationist, insurgent, and revolutionary writing, most of it being produced in times of military interventionism by 'First World' nations in 'Third World' regions. Central to the politically conscious postcolonial project is an understanding that their culture/nation's engagement with their own past has always been mediated by colonial interpretations and historiography (for instance: Indian understanding of its past is often informed by British colonial historiographies—in fact British colonial histories of India is what we all read right from school—which represents the Muslims as invaders, iconoclasts, and oppressors without showing how Islamic culture was adapted by and assimilated into Hindu culture).

Central to much postcolonial literature is an interrogation of colonialism. This interrogation locates the most dangerous and persistent problems associated with colonial rule. Significant themes in postcolonial interrogation of colonialism include:

- cultural alienation
- nationalism
- the making of mimic native men

Cultural Alienation

> The white man had come to Siriana, and Joshua and Kabonyi had been converted. They had abandoned the ridges and followed the new faith. (*Ngũgĩ 1965: 8*)

This is Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's description in *The River Between* of both colonialism's cultural consequences and native indifference to the erosion of their ways of life.

Colonialism was admittedly an economic project. However, its impact on Asian or African cultures has been so profound that the effects will probably never wear off. In the cultural realm, colonialism subverted established traditions by interfering with local customs, setting up norms of conduct, rejecting native beliefs as superstitions and, finally, ensuring that the native himself believed all this through the medium of Western education. Derek Walcott notes in 'What the Twilight Says' that his generation always looked at life with 'black skins and blue eyes' (1998 [1970]: 9), gesturing at the loss of individuality and modes of living. Projecting itself as a benevolent and humanitarian enterprise—the 'civilizing', evangelical component was integral to colonialism—iconoclastic European masters rejected native cultural systems. Tribes and individuals were influenced and coerced into turning to the white master's culture and religion. By locating itself at the peak of the human evolutionary structure, the colonizer's culture set itself up as the definitive goal of the colonized. The colonized began, therefore, to abandon his/her culture in favour of the white man's. It is this cultural alienation that became the subject of the novel that is often taken as the originary and paradigm-creating moment of postcolonial literary writing: Chinua Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* (1958).

Achebe's fiction constantly questions the European-generated image of benevolent colonialism. What Achebe does is to reveal how violent, selfish, and destructive colonialism has been. It erased local cultures and systems so completely that the native lost his support system. It projects itself as an attractive alternative to the native's own religion and culture. The native is tempted by Western thinking: 'it was the poetry of the new religion, something he felt in his marrow ... He [Nwoye] felt a relief within as the hymn poured into his parched Soul' (1969 [1958]: 137). It destroys the clan, traditional values and social bonding: 'he has put a knife on the things that held us together and we have fallen apart' (162). Mr Goodcountry in Achebe's *Arrow of God* (1967) wishes to 'save [Igbos] from the error [of their religious ways] which was now threatening to ruin them' (269). The colonial is the iconoclast who refuses to acknowledge that the native totem or mask has any value. In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions*, (1988) Nhamo, who has left the village to study in the mission, stops coming home even during vacations, because the 'poverty began to offend him' (7). Later, he says: 'I shall go and live with Babamukuru at the mission. I shall no longer be Jeremiah's son' (48), suggesting that even familial and filial structures have to be abandoned because of Western education. In a powerful scene in Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman*, he presents this destructive iconoclasm of the colonial. At a party the white colonials play with Yoruba (egungun) masks. The masks, for Yoruba,

stand for their revered ancestors. The whites are ignorant of their cultural significance for the Yorubans. The native Amusa therefore reacts with horror and terror at seeing the Pilkings wear the mask (1984: 164–65). Since the mask is that of dead ancestors, it is holy, and not meant to be worn simply as a costume. The mask symbolizes death and the afterlife; it is an object of veneration. The Englishman and his wife actually play with it, and are unaware that they are committing a serious sin. Then Elesin describes the destructive impact of colonialism on his psyche, culture and religion: '[It] turned me into an infant in the hands of unnamable strangers ... My will was squelched in the spittle of an alien race' (211–12).

Colonialism 'infantilizes' the native, rendering him/her helpless, vulnerable, and dependent on the white master. Jane Pilkings asks Olunde, Elesin's English-educated son: 'But don't you think your father is also entitled to whatever protection is available to him?' (194). Thus the native must be protected from his own culture. When Pilkings prevents Elesin from committing ritual suicide, he has actually interfered with the entire community's cultural agency. He has rejected the community's ability to plan, decide, and execute its wishes and needs. Pilkings does not accept that Elesin's death is meant for the community as a whole: it is the individual's life that he seeks to protect. What the European effects here is an irreversible destruction of an entire way of life. When he interferes with Elesin's programme, Pilkings has actually affected the entire community's life. In Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* (1970) it is suggested that Kofi Ako's impotence (he is described as the 'watery male of all watery males', 2001: 105) might be the symbol of imperialism's destructive effects on the African male. In Jimmy Chi and Kuckles' Aboriginal musical *Bran Nue Dae* (1990) there is a more positive tone: while it accepts the destruction of the local way of life by Christian imperialism and colonial rule, it seeks a cultural renewal based on the strengths of Aboriginal society. In *The River Between*, Ngũgĩ's icon of colonialism's cultural effects, Joshua, justifies his cultural alienation thus: 'His people worshipped Murungu, Mwenenyaga, Ngai ... Isaiah, the white man's seer, had prophesied of Jesus ... He had told of the coming of a messiah. Had Mugo wa Kibiro, the Gikuyu seer, ever foretold of such a saviour?' (29)

The straightforward destruction of native culture apart, colonialism also induced damage of a more permanent kind. It induced the natives to abandon their culture and way of life and imitate the colonials'. This meant that the native ended up as a pale imitation of the white man. Much theorized about, especially in postcolonial theory, this act of mimicry is a central theme in much postcolonial writing.

Nationalism

> The future of West Indian militancy lies in art.
>
> —Derek Walcott, 'What the Twilight Says' (1998 [1970]: 16)

Nationalism provided some of the fieriest protest and resistance writing in almost every nation-state in modern times. The resistance to colonial domination, seeking self-expression and basic freedoms, made the idea of a united, homogenous, and well-defined 'nation' or 'culture' attractive and even feasible. Almost every postcolonial literature today had as its originary moment, nationalist literature. Nationalist literature—with all its biases and ideological problems (embodied in India in clearly anti-British works such as Dinbandhu Mitra's *Nil-Darpan*, 1860; Bankimchandra's *Anandamath*, 1882: and others)—was anti-colonial in sentiment, and sought to define a native identity different from European constructions of the same. The main purpose was to raise a 'national consciousness'. This meant constructing images of a tribe/region's history, glorifying its pasts, reviving myths, and rejuvenating pride in its cultural forms. Indigenous art forms and modes of production were revived—let us recall Gandhi's 'swadeshi' or Tilak's Ganapati festivals—in order to forge a common cultural base for the community itself. The nationalist movement quickly realized that instilling a national consciousness would first require establishing a common enemy (the European) and a common cultural denominator. Thus the nationalist project was always a cultural one. In the postcolonial era, the pride is in racial attributes, ethnic cultural forms, and one's 'origins'. Grace Nichols captures this pride in being black in her poem 'The Fat Black Woman Composes a Black Poem... And a Fat Poem':

> Black as the intrusion
> of a rude wet tongue
>
> Black as the blackness
> of a rolling ship
>
> Black as the sweetness
> of black orchid milk
>
> Black as the spraying
> of a reggae sunsplash. (*1984: 16*)

The first anti-colonial and nationalist writings were cautious in their critiques. They were critical of colonialism's culture, though they were

also influenced by European ideas. Henry Derozio's nineteenth century poem, 'The Harp of India', described a country 'bound' in silence by a 'fatal chain', and prays to the muses that he may become the strain of the country—images cast in Romantic English poetry style but obviously providing a criticism of colonialism's ill effects. The first nationalist writings sought to combine the best of European and native cultures. In Africa works such as Joseph Casely-Hayford's *Ethiopia Unbound* (1911) and H.I.E. Dhlomo's *Girl Who Killed to Save* (1935) embody this kind of ambivalent feelings towards colonialism. With political independence came a stronger nativist and anti-colonial sentiment. Nation-building was the main agenda—embodied in India in the writings of Jawaharlal Nehru and the pan-Indian themes of R.K. Narayan and other social-realist writers—of the 1950–1970s period. A good example of how natives resisted (overtly or covertly) colonialism is provided in Walcott's play *Pantomime* (1980). Here the Caribbean Jackson is speaking about the shifting relationship between master–slave, white–black:

> For three hundred years I served you ... in my white jacket on a white veranda ... in that sun that never set on your empire, I was your shadow ... that was my pantomime.
>
> But after a while the child does get frighten of the shadow he make. He say to himself, that is too much obedience, I better hads stop. But the shadow don't stop ... until it is the shadow that start dominating the child, it is the servant that start dominating the master... (*112–13*)

Several points of anti-colonial resistance are figured here. The servant dutifully waits upon the master: there is a history (three hundred years, as Jackson reminds Harry) of servitude. But then, the master is compared to a child, thus reversing the dependency relationship of colonialism. The child-white man needs the support and protection of the native. The native mimics the 'master'. Initially the game has its amusing aspects. But the native's persistence eventually becomes frightening and the 'master' begins to be psychologically dominated by the 'servant', who is, therefore, no more a servant. Walcott shows how resisting colonialism is also about role-playing. Resistance consists of playing the same game as the master, becoming so good at it that the master eventually loses to the servant.

As the newly independent nation-states 'progressed' to corruption and cultural depravity, nationalism as a theme in Asian/African literature combined with a critique of postcoloniality itself. The literature of the post-1970 period in Africa and Asia was marked by nationalist ideas and ideology but tempered with a sense of despair, what Neil Lazarus has presciently described as the 'rhetoric of disillusion' (1990: ix). In the period of global migrations, civil unrest, and political corruption in many of these nation-states, writers as diverse as Achebe, Mariama Ba, Bessie Head, Salman Rushdie, and Isabel Allende foregrounded the issue of ethnic identity, cultural relativism, gender and class issues, and social emancipation. Women writers such as Meena Alexander and Buchi Emecheta critiqued nationalism and 'national identity' for its gender biases. From a different genre we discover other critiques of nationalism. As a case study, I take here Juan Ramirez's war memoir *A Patriot after All* (1999). Ramirez, of Chicano origins, fought in Vietnam. His book's very title gestures at the dual identities he is trying to keep: as an 'American' patriot and as Chicano. When in the army he is subject to reverse racism for trying to be more assimilationist. Other Chicanos mock him for his 'lack of accent' and for his 'propensity to befriend white guys' (32). On leave, he is asked if he was treated properly, because they had heard that 'Mexes' (people of Mexican origin) had been used for dirty work rather than actual combat (91). During garrison duty, Ramirez writes, blacks and Latinos fought each other (95). Nationalism and patriotic fervour do not take away racial tensions, as Ramirez discovers (102, 111). At the end of his memoir Ramirez writes: 'Some of my problems ... came from ... the environment I grew up in ..., a racist society that systematically channelled me towards becoming a combat soldier. Brown and black people kill and are killed for a society that still calls us spics and niggers when we get home ...' (174). Ramirez discovers that Chicano and other Latino soldiers suffered the highest casualty rates per capita of any group because they were given the most dangerous jobs (175–79). He finally asserts: 'I am undeniably of Mexican descent. I am also without a doubt American ... I am resigned to the fact that I always will be perceived first as a Mexican immigrant. Regardless of how you see me, I am an American ... I am a patriot after all.' (180) Ramirez's experiences in the American army and Vietnam are racialized ones. However, he is also being a 'patriotic' American despite the racism directed against him. Nationalism meets its greatest challenge in such circumstances where people are asked to forget their treatment at the hands of the country and fight for it and die for it. Nationalism asks African Americans, Chicanos and other immigrant races—the victims of American racism—to believe in the American view of the world and ignore their victimhood. Nationalism's tensions are, therefore, not just restricted to former colonies, but extend to victim races and ethnic minorities in 'First World' nations.

Most of these writers saw the colonial legacy of corruption and oppression as handed down to a morally shallow native elite. V.S. Naipaul's

writings, for example, question a postcoloniality that is simply imitative of the West. In *The Middle Passage* (1969), a non-fiction travelogue covering five societies (British, French, Dutch, in the Caribbean, and South America), he is particularly harsh on the Caribbean's 'nationalism'—the book first appeared in 1962, immediately after the attempt to create a West Indies Federation had failed—and modernity. He describes Trinidad thus: 'Ambition ... not matched with skill, and the effect was Trinidadian, with a slightly flawed modernity.' (42) The sense of the nation in these writers also reveals a deep self-consciousness—of the limitations of emancipatory programs, of the dangers of cultural nationalism, the patriarchal structures of democracy, and the disquieting rise of fundamentalism.

In many Asian and African nations modernization and increasing economic liberalization has resulted in the concomitant rise of religious and cultural fundamentalisms. The injunctions on compulsory purdah for women by Islamic fundamentalists in Kashmir and Afghanistan under the Taliban, the BJP–ABVP's objections to Western clothes on Indian women—a topic that comes up with reasonable frequency—are explained as the fundamentalists' need for control. In her reading of fundamentalism's gender issues, Karen McCarthy Brown argues that fundamentalism emerges from a sense of threat. It seeks arenas to control, and invariably turns to the woman—her clothes, sexuality, behaviour, rights—for this purpose (1994: 182). In India the debates over Roop Kanwar's Sati or women's clothes are

2.1 Cultural Fundamentalism

In the time of the freedom struggle Tilak revived the Ganapati festival as a means of unifying the people. Gandhi used homespun khadi as a means of proposing an alternative fabric to industrial cotton. In both these cases the festival and clothing is less important in and of itself. It has a certain symbolic value as a mark of native culture. Cultural revivalism during the freedom struggle was marked by the return to Indian, local, and native cultural forms. In the 1990s, a different version of this same revivalism is cultural fundamentalism. Conservatives, worried by the erosion of 'Indian' values in the face of widespread and popular global (often a code word for 'Western', Euro-American) culture, seek to impose native forms of dress and behaviour. Thus the objection to Western costumes moves beyond a mere resistance to a fashion. It has now become a kind of moral policing where some political groups and activists claim Indian culture in particular ways. This often involves a return to so-called 'essential' values of say, Hinduism or Islam. Cultural fundamentalism results in objections (often violent) to re-readings of history, new forms of art (the cases against MF Husain and, more recently, at Baroda's MS University). All over the world such cultural fundamentalisms resist new interpretations and adjudicate on a particular version of local cultures.

inflected with this ideology of control over the female. Postcoloniality has often meant, in these cases, resisting nativism and reactionary fundamentalisms while also battling cultural homogenization that accompanies globalization.

The Making of Mimic Men

Elesin, the King's horseman prevented from committing suicide by the English administrators in Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman*, accuses the Englishman Pilkings thus: 'You stole from me my first-born, sent him to your own country so you could turn him into something in your own image' (205). Elesin is speaking here of colonialism's project of creating mimic men.

A central feature of colonialism was its ability to generate convincing images of itself. Projecting itself (and the colonizing culture) as superior and benevolent, as Edward Said has shown (1978) colonial self-representation managed to convince the native culture that this image was true and authentic. In short, natives began to agree with such images as superior Western/primitive native, benevolent Westerner, colonialism as development and so on. Often this resulted in a condition where the native sought to model himself—please note the gendered context—after his white benefactor/patron/protector. In Rudyard Kipling's *Kim* (1901), Hurree Chunder Mukherjee is a good example of the native Indian casting himself as a white man. Harry Coomer/Hari Kumar in Paul Scott's *The Raj Quartet* is another example of colonial 'passing' (where the native hopes to pass off as white). This condition is what Homi K. Bhabha (1994) has famously termed 'mimicry' (which, Bhabha argues, was also a means of anti-colonial resistance). A central theme in postcolonial writing is the transformation of the native into something other himself—a Westernized native, or at least one who is in a crisis regarding his own cultural identity. That is, postcolonial writing thematizes the crisis of cultural identity in tribes/individuals when faced with an Other culture that is also the ruling class/clan. Postcolonial writers seek to present the destructive side of colonialism as part of their anti-colonial critique. They seek to demonstrate how colonialism left the native culture, identity, tradition, and even individual selves in tatters, destroyed through indoctrination, 'education' or outright negation.

This crisis of cultural identity results, as Franz Fanon has argued (1963), in a kind of schizophrenic madness. The accumulated insults by the white 'master', the endless negation of his native culture, and the prolonged

indoctrination in Western culture—all result in an unstable condition for individuals, where their native culture was rejected but a new one was not readily available. What is frightening is that as a culture, they have begun to lose their identity. As Makak puts it in Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, native culture is now a 'A forest with no roots!' (1970 [1967]: 248). Native culture has lost its bearings and roots in its encounter with colonialism.

The 'mimicry' of the Other (white) culture becomes a way of negotiating with this unstable state of non-identity. The individual's identity, he discovers, was always an attribute—something given to him by the Westerner. In Derek Walcott's powerful *Dream on Monkey Mountain*, a play that explores identity under colonialism, the native, Corporal Lestrade, asks in anguish: 'My mind, my mind. What's happened to my mind?' Basil replies: 'It was never yours, Lestrade' (297). Basil's response captures the extent of identity-crisis in colonialism. Throughout the play the theme of native mimicry and adoration of Western culture is underscored. Moustique admits that he believes God to be a white man (290). 'Makak' is a native who has even forgotten his real name and answers only to the racially coded name 'Makak' or 'Monkey'. 'Makak' is unable to identify with his family, tribe, culture, or even himself. He is, in Lestrade's words, 'a being without a mind, a will, a name, a tribe of its own' (222). Lestrade himself is a mulatto who tries to pass himself off as white. One means of doing so is to reject all of his native culture. Lestrade hates the blacks and describes them as 'animals, beasts, savages, cannibals, niggers'—all terms taken from the colonial master's vocabulary (216). He sees himself as civilized, in sharp contrast to his tribe that has 'lingered behind' (217) in the process of evolution. He collaborates with his colonial ruler, seeks to be more like them, in a process that Patrick Colm Hogan terms 'mimetic collaborationism' (2000: 54–81). Later, in one of the play's most powerful scenes of anti-colonial critique, Lestrade tries to get Makak to mime simian behaviour. Lestrade persuades Makak to imitate him and sings:

> Everything I say this monkey does do,
> I don't know what to say this monkey won't do.
> I sit down, monkey sit down too,
> I don't know what to say this monkey won't do. (223)

The monkey's mimicry is here Makak's mimicry. He can only mimic, if he has to survive. However, we should also note that Lestrade himself is behaving like a monkey. He represents white authority in that he can order Makak. But Lestrade himself performs meaningless actions that he expects Makak to perform/mimic.

In Attia Hosain's *Sunlight on a Broken Column* (1988 [1961]) she describes a set of her grandfather and members of his generation:

> His brothers and cousins, black-bearded, dressed in embroidered achkans and caps, with jewelled swords held in their hands... [Grandfather] alone, beard-less...dressed in a suit, with shining pointed boots and spats...with a group of strained pompous Englishmen standing behind Englishwomen. (32)

Hosain carefully points to the subservient, imitative nature of her grandfather's pose in the photographs: dressed in European style, elitist in relation to his own countrymen, and relegated to the background among the English people. Later, Hosain savagely contemptuous of the 'mimic men', describes Mrs Wadia thus: 'Her perfumes, and shoes and lace and linen and silver came from the most expensive shops in Paris and London. She...was prouder of Western culture than those who were born into it, and more critical of Eastern culture than those outside it.' (129) Hosain is here dismissing the postcolonial elite as being shallow and simply imitative of Western culture (though lacking in the latter's finer qualities), while also showing how eagerly the native turns away from her/his culture. Hamid is introduced thus: 'He is more a Sahib than the English' (22). Even the living space of the house has been 'Englished': 'The rejuvenated rooms reminded me of English homes ... yet they were as different as copies of a painting from the original' (120–21). Like Makak and Lestrade in Walcott's brilliant play, Wadia and others in Hosain are empty—shadows that seek to become substance, attempting to be more white than white.

However, this is not the strongest sense of postcolonial mimicry that Hosain delivers. Her irony sketches the revival of traditionalism itself as mimicry. Perin Wadia discovers nationalism upon her return to India. Hosain suggests that Perin's turn to 'Indian traditions' is itself mimetic of Western interest in India, and not an original or 'inside' interest of an Indian. Like the British Orientalists (William Jones, Nathaniel Halhed, the Asiatic Society of Bengal) of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Perin's interest in India is more a fashion than anything deep. Like the revival of taste in ethnic arts and costumes—in addition to tribal crafts fairs where one can purchase tribal pottery or fabrics to decorate one's home—in 1990s Indian metropolises, Perin's nationalism and traditionalism is a sham. 'She spoke of ancient culture in European terms', writes Hosain (276).

Mulk Raj Anand's Bakha in *Untouchable*, influenced by his association with the British army, harbours the 'ambition to live like an Englishman' (22). He therefore acquires broken European furniture for his father's

house and dress in 'regulation overcoat, breeches, puttees and ammunition boots of the military uniform' (10). And yet, this pathetic attempt at Europeanization leaves Bakha incomplete, for he knows that 'except for his English clothes there was nothing English in his life' (12). The Methwold Estate in *Midnight's Children* is full of such mimic men and women, where Indians affect British accents and live in houses called Buckingham, Sans Souci, Escorial, and Versailles. The incident where Aadam Sinai buys a 'talking budgie' that refuses to talk is a deliciously savage take on postcolonial mimicry. The bulbul refuses to sing, but repeats its new owner's plea 'in his own self-same voice: *Sing! Little bulbul, sing!*' (200). Naipaul's mimic men in his novel of the same title are not really human any more: they simply drift along.

In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1985), Nyasha describes her father Babamukuru's condition thus: 'Her voice took on a Rhodesian accent. "He's a good boy, a good munt. A bloody good kaffir"' (200).

Nyasha is pointing to the irony here: the issue is not whether Africans think Babamukuru is good, the issue is whether the colonial master recognized him as 'good'. Dangarembga suggests that colonized people continually look to Westerners for approval, and therefore present themselves in ways that would help them get this approval—they become mimics.

Perhaps the most savage critique of such mimic men occurs in V.S. Naipaul's *Guerillas* (1976). Guerilla leader Jimmy Ahmed casts himself in the role of Emily Brontë's Heathcliff (who is the Other of the very English Linton in *Wuthering Heights*). He sees himself and his role thus:

> He's the leader they're waiting for and the day will come when of that I'm convinced when they will parade in the streets and offer him the crown, everybody will say then 'This man was born in the backroom of a Chinese grocery, but as Catherine said to Heathcliff "Your mother was an Indian princess and your father was the Emperor of China", we knew it all along'... (62)

What Jimmy Ahmed hopes to do is to erase his 'Otherness' by being more acceptable to people like the English Jane. Ironically, he ends up fulfilling the most basic colonial image of the native-as-the-brutal-black man when he rapes and kills Jane. In his 'role' as Heathcliff Jimmy destroys his 'Cathy', and thus ends up being the truly Other by imitating a fictional character from the English canon. Naipaul's novel speaks of the irreducible Otherness of the black individual. In Naipaul's *The Middle Passage* (1969) he describes the entire Caribbean culture/society as imitative. Naipaul writes: '[Trinidadian modernity] a constant alertness, a willingness to change, a readiness to accept anything which films, magazines and comic strips appear to indicate as American...[the] extreme susceptibility of people who are unsure of themselves, and having no taste or style of their own, are eager for instruction' (48–50).

However, in many cases mimicry (as theorized by Homi Bhabha) is used as a means of interrogating colonialism and revealing the latter's weaknesses. In order to understand this mode of interrogating colonialism in postcolonial writing, I return to Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*.

In Scene Three there is an extraordinary event. Amusa and two constables, who are representatives of the colonial power, arrive in the marketplace to arrest Elesin. Then ensues a brilliant piece of farce that symbolizes the theme of resistance. The implications are clear: Amusa's masculinity has been destroyed by colonialism. The innuendo-filled dialogues of the women in the scene suggest this. The women refer to him as having had his 'weapons' cut off, an obvious reference to castration (175)

The next set of events marks an extension of the theme. Having mocked the men as 'eaters of the white man's leftovers', the women proceed to present a farce. The farce is mimicry, a witty dramatization of the relation between the white colonial master and the black colonized native. It is a mixture of obedience and defiance. The women imitate Western behaviour patterns as well as that of the colonized native. Soyinka is brilliant in the parodic scene. Here is a section of the dialogue. Two Englishmen are talking to each other in this scene. The Englishmen's formal speech mode are portrayed by Yoruba women:

> -Your invitation card please,
> -Who are you? Have we been introduced?
> -And who did you say you were?
> -Sorry, I didn't quite catch your name.
> -May I take your hat?
> -If you insist. May I take yours? (*1984: 177–78*)

This goes on for some time. The dialogue is loaded with insults to Amusa and his policemen. The imitation of English colloquial speech, with expressions such as 'by golly' and 'old chap' presents mimicry, which is actually a mockery, and laughs at the colonial master. Even if the mockery is not a 'real' anti-colonial resistance, it is a subversive act in the symbolic realm.

At first reading the women seem to be following the white man's style of speech and behaviour. Some attention to the actual words and language reveals the second level. The conversation, rather than about any serious subject, is a collection of clichéd phrases and a dialogue that mocks the African. The African is a 'rather faithful ox', 'liars', the monsoons keep 'African time', and so on. Then there is the rather stilted section on patriotism. The African women mimic the English speaking about the 'old country',

'keeping the flag flying' and so on (178). It is not a sensible conversation. From insulting remarks about the African to the clichéd phrases of patriotism, the women provide a magnificent mimicry of the colonial situation.

The farce finally ends with a particularly significant event. In the middle of the conversation, one of two 'Englishmen' (that is, African women mimicking the English) says:

> 'Where is that boy?'

and then 'bellows':

> 'Sergeant'.
> Amusa (snaps to attention): 'Yessir' (*179*)

Amusa is witnessing a farce being staged. However, he is so thoroughly indoctrinated with the sense of (native) duty to the (European) master that he is unable to distinguish between a staged parody of the master's order and the real one. His mind has been so conditioned that he responds as though he were in the presence of the English. This becomes a tragic parody of his professional duties, since Amusa 'performs' it for the African women. Further, the women's mimicry appears to be the 'real' one for Amusa. Though the women are mocking the English style and speech, the native solider, used to hearing only the words and responding without thinking, cannot make out the mockery. Mimicry here reveals not only the power of the colonial but also the destruction of the native's individuality. It becomes a dual symbol: of the destructive effect of colonial indoctrination, and that of its fractured nature.

RETRIEVING HISTORY

There is a moment in Chicano writer Alicia Gaspar de Alba's first novel, *Sor Juana's Second Dream* (1999), which captures the agony, anxiety, and hopelessness of the postcolonial project of retrieving history. The brilliant young woman, Juana Inés has just finished reading a European history of Aztec America. De Alba records her response:

> I was seized by an allegiant fury that compelled me to give them all a lesson in the history of the conquest of the Aztec empire. I pointed out that it was on the foundations of that illustrious civilization that the Crown of Spain had built a colony... And they were only considered savages and magicians because they placed their faith in augurs and idols rather than in the symbol of the Cross... Spanish greed, I added my final point...wreaked infinitely more damage on the country and its people than any abject insurgency by the castes. (*28*)

Here De Alba's young heroine—based on the true historical figure of Juana Inés, now acknowledged as the first lesbian–feminist writer of North America—is detailing the biases in European historiography. Her aim is to 'correct' this skewed history, to provide a more authentic account of the colonizing of South America, but also to show how Europe was as barbaric and primitive as it portrayed the colonized countries to be. What is significant is that De Alba places the critique in the mouth of not a postcolonial, but in seventeenth century Mexico. With this De Alba actually pushes back the time frame of the postcolonial itself, suggesting that anti-colonial writing and critique was underway well before 'postcolonialism'.

Retrieving histories for a postcolonial culture invariably means dredging through some horrific memories and an intense awareness that 'native' history without colonial contamination is simply not possible. The Subaltern Studies project seeks to discover, beneath the layers of colonial historiography, the local (tribal, women's, working class) resistance to colonialism. It is a history from below, utilizing resources in native (non-colonial) languages, and non-colonial forms of history-recording, such as folk songs, ballads, and stories.

Native American Frank Conibear writes about multiple forms of history, specifically articulating a worry over the white man's appropriation

2.2 Subaltern Studies

Subaltern Studies is an innovative project born out of an increasing disillusionment with the practice of history writing in general and Indian historiography in particular. Associated with the writings of Ranajit Guha (one of the founding members of the Subaltern Studies Collective), Shahid Amin, Dipesh Chakraborty, David Arnold and other historians, it can be defined as the history of the marginalized communities, gender, races, and groups, written with local sources and from their perspectives. This ensures that the elitist bias in writing history is avoided. The project focuses on local sites of resistance within the national freedom struggle in India, writings by Dalits who question the notion of a unified Indian society, the history of gender oppression, the atrocities and struggles of the tribals, and communal violence. They work with local language sources and see it as an alternative to mainstream history writing. The history of a region or nation, for the Subaltern historians, is not the history of industrialists, merchants and great statesmen, as projected in traditional histories. It is primarily the history of the common people, the lower classes, the tribals, and the women, whose lives and stories do not figure in mainstream history except as audiences to the great acts of the dominant classes or groups.

of Indian pasts. Conibear's poem captures many of the concerns of postcoloniality's historiography:

> They collect the artifacts to study the past.
> Out of the bone fragment, chipped stone and delicate
> Cedar weave is written a history long forgotten.
>
> In all this where is the truth?
> What is the history?
> .....
> The truth is perhaps
> In the elders who remember,
> Who are living and looking to the young.
> .....
> The history is alive,
> Not to be found in an old site, but
> Present in the people. (*'Artifacts', in Roman 1994: 184–5*)

History is thus a central theme in almost every genre in postcolonial writing—from Africa to South America. Writers from former colonies often find the need to negotiate, understand, and recover from their traumatic pasts. This negotiation is often an attempt to achieve an identity different from the one imposed on them by the colonizer (of a barbaric civilization, for instance). Colonialism, like racism, is a condition where the dominated races lack power 'to present themselves to themselves and to others, and thereby the power to contest the bombardment of negative, degrading stereotypes put forward by white supremacist ideologies' (Cornel West 1993: 17). West's definition captures the absolute limits of racism and colonial representative strategies, and is a useful mode of reading aboriginal and postcolonial history.

Aboriginal writer and activist Jackie Huggins states the case for recording oral histories of indigenous people: 'Aboriginal people did not write down their knowledge, thoughts, and experiences. These were passed on in the normal course of social life, by word of mouth supplemented by graphic representations with regionally and socially coded and variable meanings.' (1998: 37) William Baldridge, a Cherokee, complains in what could very well be the anguish of all postcolonial societies: 'For Native Americans, perhaps the most pervasive result of colonialism is that we cannot even begin a conversation without referencing our words to definitions imposed or rooted in 1492.' (Weaver 2000: 222) Baldridge is basically talking about history—how settlers and colonialists defined the very terms in which the native had to define himself or herself. There *is* no history before Columbus.[3]

History as a theme in postcolonial writing has various aspects. Postcolonial writers are concerned with the following:

- White histories
- The Other rights/writes histories
- Race, space, memory
- Representation, fiction, identity

The process of decolonization involves, therefore, a critical engagement with the colonial past.

White Histories

In an extraordinary scene in her novel *Nervous Conditions* Zimbabwean writer Tsitsi Dangarembga describes Nyasha's breakdown: 'Nyasha was beside herself with fury. She rampaged, shredding her history book between her teeth ("Their history. Fucking liars. Their bloody lies") ... They've trapped us. They've trapped us...' (201). Nyasha, one notes, is anorexic. Here her eating disorder—a hysterical refusal of food—swiftly translates into a hysterical refusal of history. Nyasha's symbolic spitting out is a rejection of colonial history. Her diatribe against the falsehoods of colonial writing makes her weak—food and food for thought are linked metaphors here—and independent at the same time. The scene is symptomatic of a postcolonial obsession with retrieving a clearer history while rejecting a handed-down, biased colonial one. Wole Soyinka sums up the postcolonial project of past retrieval thus:

> For a people to develop, they must have constant recourse to their own history. To deny them the existence of this therefore has a purpose, for it makes them neutered objects on whose tabula rasa, that clean slate of the mind, the text of the master race—cultural, economic, religious, and so on—can be inscribed (*1990: 114*)

The postcolonial writer must be aware of the versions of colonial histories that circulate. Historiography has itself been a weapon of the colonial. As James Mill's *History of British India* (1817) and numerous other works have demonstrated, they were written from specific racial, class, ethnic, and political standpoints, and appropriated for imperial purposes. On

occasion, such 'white histories' were used to catalogue native 'crimes' as evidence of the latter's barbaric nature.[4]

As many theorists, historians, and philosophers have argued, colonialism was premised upon the absolute 'otherness' of the Other.[5] The European treated and imaged the native as 'Other'. The entire discourse of colonial writing is based on the us/them, I/they binary, where the European stood for the defining self and the native for the defined 'they'. This meant that the power of defining, and eventually of governing the savage Other rested with the European.[6]

Perhaps the best examples of such pseudo-evidentiary history—which could then circulate as justifications for colonial tyranny, much as discourses of non-white despotism and threat have been used recently to justify wars against 'terror'—are available in the white narratives about American Indians. The captivity and battle narratives from the sixteenth century downwards depicted the Indian as vicious and the white immigrant (to the New World) as the innocent victim. Recorded history of the New World immigrant narrativized either European heroism or their suffering at the hands of the 'villainous' Native, and said nothing about the massacre of thousands of Sioux or Micmac people. Here is an example of how such one-dimensional histories circulated:

> The Catholic Church tells us stories about
> Their early missionaries in Canada. They say
> The Iroquois made savage attacks on the clergy.
> They say the Indians captured Antony Daniel and
> Flayed him. They say the Iroquois strung a necklace
> of red-hot tomahawks around Jean de Breboeuf's neck
> then "baptised" him in boiling water. They claim
> the tribal members drank his blood and that
> the chief ate de Breboeuf's heart. (*in Brant 1988: 26*)

In this poem, 'Thanksgiving Dinner During Pelting Season (1957)' by Mary Moran, she captures the colonial version of the Indian-European encounter: the focus is entirely on the Indians' barbarism, the death of the Europeans and the violence that marked the encounter. Audre Lorde, writing about Apartheid, also reflects on the one-sidedness of the white man's historiography:

> I reach for the taste of today
> The New York Times finally mentions your country
> A half-page story
> Of the first white South African killed in the "unrest"
> Not of Black children massacred at Sebokeng
> Six-year-olds imprisoned for threatening the state
> Not of Thabo Sibeko, first grader, in his own blood
> On his grandmother's parlor floor ... (*'Sisters in Arms', 1997: 357*)

It was a single perception of history: universalizing, imperial, and unitary. When Mercator created his 1636 *Atlas*, he set in motion a process of history-writing. The *Atlas* recast the known geographical territories of the world. It suited the European voyagers (basically merchant-adventurers) to plot and map the world's regions as a preliminary to exploitation. But what it also did was to wilfully ignore earlier forms of territorial organization and 'national' formations to do so (see Rabasa 1993 for a study of Mercator). Such a historiography, supported by the new discipline of archaeology (which has always been used to bolster Western values), located Europe at the centre of the world and at the top of the human evolutionary order, with Asians and Africans at the lower end of the scale. This depiction of native cultures as primitive in 'definitive' and 'authoritative' works of history—especially after history became a 'science' in the nineteenth century—enabled the colonial ruler to justify European presence. Dismissing native spiritual views in favour of the material and the religious in favour of the scientific, anthropology, history, and archaeology constructed the great colonial binary: savage native/advanced Westerner. Further, these same biased works were used to teach the 'native', so that it produced natives who had assimilated the white man's values.

The Other Rights/Writes Histories

> I want to write the history of my own family ... there's almost nothing written from a personal point of view about Aboriginal people. All our history is about the white man. No one knows what it was like for us. A lot of our history has been lost, people have been too frightened to say anything. There's a lot of history we can't even get at ... I just want to try to tell a little bit of the other side of the story.
>
> —Sally Morgan (1987: 163–64)

If all native history has always already been written by the colonial, then how does the native—the "Other" of the colonial master—write her own history? Is there any other way of history-writing which could also be history-righting (that is, correcting history)? Sally Morgan's *My Place*, from which

the above-quoted passage is taken, is gesturing at the need to write private and communal histories independent of European ones (though, interestingly, Morgan sees possibilities of Aboriginal–settler coexistence). It calls for a history that may or may not be in written form—which is the only form that European colonial culture accepts—but is, nevertheless, history. Oral histories, legends and stories are as significant as any written texts.

During the 1960s, Aboriginals in Australia demanded the right to self-determination and land rights. Both these demands were based on historical claims, claims which rejected and re-wrote settler histories of 'virgin lands', and discovery narratives. The movement was accompanied by a large-scale production of Aboriginal histories, memoirs, literary texts, and documentaries on the pre-settler history of the country. What this attempted was a different history altogether. It was an attempt to draft their own histories, in their own languages and narrative modes. More than anything else, such Aboriginal writings called into question the issue of ownership and belonging: who belonged in/to the Australian nation—the white settler or the pre-settler Aboriginal? History writing was thus being used to debate the question of precedence, a question intimately linked to land rights, cultural identity, and belonging.[7]

A central mode of retrieving the past in postcolonial literature is through reconstructions of cultural and national histories and identities. Such reconstructions call into question established dominant (imperial) histories of the 'homeland'. There are three modes of indigenous/native reconstructions: contestation of established stereotypes and discourses, retrieval of buried histories and stories that perform this contestation. These modes are mainly literary and make use of rhetorical strategies to reverse colonial stereotypes or to provide subversive interpretations of canonical works (see chapter on Form). The third mode comes from archaeology, where indigenous cultures seek to re-appropriate their knowledges and artefacts. While indigenous/Aboriginal literatures, as I argue in the chapter on Nation, seek to provide their own oral myths and form of storytelling as a counter to colonial, European narratives; indigenous archaeology seeks a retrieval of material items from their past. Indigenous theorists in Australia are now arguing that Aborigines alone must be allowed to inspect their archives. This stand, as Jace Weaver has argued (2000), is based on the very real fact that Aboriginal records and archives have always been under the control of the white man. Since knowledge is never neutral, such a control over the archive suggests a social and political 'management' of the Natives. When the Natives seek their archives, it is essentially an attempt to have access to and power over those resources that can be used to reclaim their history.[8]

European anthropologists and archaeologists collected, stored and interpreted materials from indigenous pasts in museums such as the Smithsonian, and controlled all history-writing about the indigenous people. And now, the indigenous people seek to regain control over skeletal remains, material artefacts, and art objects from their past so that they can narrate their own histories. This is a crucial component of postcolonial culture, and is worth dwelling over for the role it plays in the literary realm.

The first task set for the indigenous historian or archaeologist is to retrieve indigenous knowledge. Indigenous ways of knowing may not always attain the status of 'truth' from Western scientific establishments. However, this 'unscientific' knowledge had helped the tribe/clan to survive for centuries. Its intimate knowledge of local weather conditions, seasons, fauna, and flora was based on a holistic view of life. And such knowledge, coded into local legend or folklore, is a fine source of history. Thus, for example, the totem poles of the Northwest Coast of British Columbia and Alaska are actually mnemonic devices: each crest on a pole represents a historical event in the past of the group that raised the pole. Another example of such a source of indigenous history is toponymy. Every feature of the land has a name and names have specific meanings. The names of places, in many indigenous cultures, tell what the place is/was used for, who used it, or what historical events occurred there.[9]

A good example of a rewriting of history is Derek Walcott's poem, 'The Sea is History'. In this poem Walcott recalls the Middle Passage (the slave voyages across the Atlantic) and recasts the experience of the slave in terms of Biblical parallels. He opens with the famous series of questions:

> Where are your monuments, your battles, martyrs?
> Where is your tribal memory? Sirs,
> In that grey vault. The sea.
> .....
> The sea is History.

The 'grey vault' is a colonial narrative that has captured, silenced and limited the story of the black race. It may very well be irretrievable. Walcott then goes on to link the events of the Middle Passage with those from white Christian history: the capture of slaves parallels/echoes Genesis, the Middle Passage is Exodus, the dead bodies on the sea floor are the Ark of the Covenant. The sea becomes the site of an extremely traumatic slave history. Death, suffering, racism, and separation replace monuments and martyrs in this retelling of the Atlantic's history as Walcott, in a series of powerful images, recasts 'plangent harps' as 'Babylonian bondage' and 'white cowries' as 'manacles' (1986: 364–67).[10]

Postcolonial reclamation of history involves what Wilson Harris termed 'infinite rehearsal', a process of constant re-reading of cultural texts which interrogates the very formation of those texts (Harris 1985: 161). It means becoming aware of the processes through which both colonial and native texts (by which we mean literature, myth, folklore, and everyday life) generate meaning: its politics, modes of communication, ideological biases, exclusions and inclusions, power and rhetoric. This is part of the 'decolonizing' enterprise. Decolonization also involves a keen awareness of what colonialism really meant. It was not only about development, medicine, and railways. Colonialism was also about exploitation, cruelty, and barbaric racism. An entire race's history has been altered, a way of life destroyed. A poem that examines the trauma of colonial history is David Diop's 'Africa':

> Africa, my Africa
> Africa of proud warriors in ancestral savannah...
> Is this you, this back that is bent ...
> This back that breaks under the weight of humiliation
> This back trembling with red scars
> And saying yes to the whip under the midday sun...
> That is Africa your Africa
>
> That grows again patiently obstinately
> And its fruit gradually acquires
> The bitter taste of liberty. (*Narasimhaiah 1990: 153*)

In *Things Fall Apart*, Achebe's cult text, Okonkwo is troubled by the impending destruction of his tribe's way of life. Okonkwo is the patriarch who has taken the Ozo title for his honour, courage, and strength (Achebe does not say he takes the title, though the hints are all in place: Okonkwo is not allowed to climb trees—a restriction placed on Ozo title holders—and he incarnates as an ancestor in the Egwugwu dances). He is furious with Nwoye for going to the Christian church, and brutally beats him (141-43). Okonkwo is afraid that the old ways will soon be lost (the images of emasculation in the novel are to do with cultural death). Reclaiming history and retaining certain collective memories are crucial to the postcolonial condition.

Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* also showcases structures of historical memory: newspapers clippings, songs from films, photographs, and anecdotes. All of these make up the alternate archive of the postcolonial. While there is the colonizer's history—linear, organized, 'secular', but ultimately indigestible, as Dangarembga demonstrates in the passage quoted above—there is also a wealth of other modes of historical memory.

Story-telling, authors like Soyinka, Rushdie, Llosa and Isabel Allende suggest, provides local histories that are rooted in the everyday life of the people. These histories are like human memory—leaky, uncertain, and digressive. They are not organized linearly, nor do they claim the status of objective truth. As Saleem Sinai coordinates, maps, and harnesses stories of other 'midnight's children', we discover that his is one version of a (his)story. When Isabel Allende mixes historical fact with hearsay, gossip, dreams, and surreal visions in *The House of the Spirits* (1985) and *Eva Luna* (1988), we see how story-telling—whether of an individual or of a nation—relies on unreliable narrators, shifting moments of enunciation (the audience, the setting, the agenda of the day) and multiple sources, not all of which can be indexed or verified. Thus Rushdie's Sinai suggests that he has created India's history by thinking it into reality: that his dreaming 'repeatedly' of Kashmir 'spilled over into the minds of the rest of the population of Pakistan' until his dream becomes 'the common property of the nation' (319). The war, says Saleem, happened because [he] dreamed Kashmir into the fantasies of [the] rulers (328).

However, this 'imaginative' construction of the nation is not antithetical to the very real sense of national identification that Saleem (and others) share and experience. When Saleem identifies himself with the nation-state, he is engaged in what millions of other Indians are doing: creating an affiliation and national identity for themselves. It is a part of what Lauren Berlant has termed the 'National Symbolic'. The 'National Symbolic' is the discursive strategy by which 'the accident of birth within a geographic/political boundary transforms individuals into subjects of a collectively-held history' (1991: 20). The 'National Symbolic' generates a sense of collective history and a collective destiny.

Rushdie suggests, like Achebe, that postcolonial identity depends on a negotiation of colonial history. The postcolony needs to deal with its own brutal past, while simultaneously looking forward to the future. To simply dwell on the colonial history of the nation-state, suggest many writers, is to reduce identity to its past. One cannot build a literature only on the suffering of victim, as Derek Walcott has emphasized (1998: 38–39).

On the other hand, one should not forget this history either. In a well-known poem, 'The Schooner *Flight*' (1986: 345–61) Walcott achieves a negotiation with history that is neither conciliatory/forgiving (of the colonial) nor despairing/negative.

> I'm just a red nigger who love the sea
> I had a sound colonial education,
> I have Dutch, nigger, and English in me,
> And either I'm nobody, or I'm a nation. (346)

Note Walcott's gentle irony. He describes himself as a nigger, but one with a colonial education (that raises him to a slightly 'higher' level). He is by race, perhaps, a 'nobody'. And yet it is possible that he is a nation. The poem captures the identity-building process of a postcolony. Walcott in the poem keeps the memory of colonial history alive, but intends to move on. He will not be tied down to his slave/colonial past, which, in any case, was violent to both sides:

> Statistics justify and scholars seize
> The salients of colonial policy
> What is that to the white child hacked in bed?
> To savages, expendable as Jews?
> (*Walcott, 'A Far Cry from Africa', 1986: 17–8*)

Neil Bissoondath in *A Casual Brutality* describes the psychology of the postcolonial: 'Our leaders taught us how to blame, but not how to help ourselves. They gave us the psychology of the victim' (1988: 200). M.G. Vassanji's *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* shows how, once independence had been attained, the violence once directed against the white man quickly turned into an oppression directed at the non-black, non-'native' peoples (in this case, the Indians in Kenya, many of whom had been there for at least two generations, who suddenly found themselves 'outsiders'). One of the things that, ironically, links colonialism with postcolonialism is the utter inhumanity and corruption of both—something writers as diverse (both geographically and politically) as Soyinka, Rushdie, Walcott, and Bhabani Bhattacharya understand.

Race, Space, Memory

Since reclaiming history entails reclamation of memory, postcolonial writers are (perhaps obsessively) concerned with the theme of memory. Writers from across Asia, Africa, and South America search for layers of memory that have remained untouched by colonial historiography. This often entails retrieving non-Western forms of memory, what may be termed vernacular memory. Such memories are almost always collective: racial, ethnic, and communal. Local histories figure prominently in such works of re-memorialization. And, since local histories are intimately linked to the specific topos of a tribe or clan, space enters into postcolonial attempts to recover collective memory. Most postcolonial writing therefore links space with racial memory.

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* (1938) is perhaps the best known example of a text that explores such a localized, community-bound, geographically specific memory. Tabish Khair invests his mother's kitchen with great emotional energy when he recalls it (2000: 99–101). Lorna Goodison cloaks her poetic vocation in topographical terms, describing Jamaica, her country of origin thus: 'my Jamaica / my green-clad muse' (1986: 10). On the opposite side of the world Michelle Cliff is perhaps best known for her search for alternative modes of historical memory—stories, songs, and folk culture. One way in which Cliff seeks to rewrite the history of the colonized is to locate cultural memories that have been silenced by colonialism. For this purpose she situates her fiction in specific topoi and unravels the myths and legends (sources of collective memory) of that place. Thus memory is spatial—memory *of* and *in* a particular place. Further, Cliff shows how memory is multi-layered. Unlike colonial histories that tend to homogenize and erase differences, Cliff's local memories are digressive, accounting for differences and oppositions. Memory is contested, disputed, and often tangential. It is rarely linear and involves circuitous routes through verifiable historical facts, myths, and legends. It draws upon not one but many sources, from grandmother's tales to songs handed down from generation to generation. As such no particular memory is privileged over another and reflects the multiple facets of life itself. It is this multiple nature of history and memory that Cliff uses. I quote an extended passage from *Abeng* (1984) to illustrate Cliff's strategy of subverting established (colonial) meanings. The passage concerned deals with the walk that Clare and her father, Boy, take through the former plantations (now being turned into neocolonial symbols: American vacation homes). Boy is pointing out the greatness of the family house. Cliff writes, in a brilliant example of spatial memory:

> And so father and daughter walked through what was once a great house, ... These buildings out back ... had contained molasses and rum and slaves ... the ceiling was low—usually brushing the forehead, so the inhabitants ... had to walk stooped forward. As they stooped to hoe; stooped to stir ... From the backyard, in which she now stood, noting the existence of the foundation stones and the gullies in the earth, but not knowing the former life they represented, Clare could see in the distance long funnels of smoke and an occasional tongue of flame... (*25–27*)

Several things happen in this passage. The most obvious, is the clear 'rooting' of memory in place. The descriptions of dwellings and landscape are aligned with their narratives, now forgotten. Cliff ensures that we recognize

that any postcolonial reclamation of memory can only be partial by suggesting that Clare can never really know what colonialism meant ('not knowing') to those who suffered. Recovery of racial/collective memory is always limited and refracted through the subjectivity of those doing the reclamation. And yet reclamation reveals, also, the gaps in colonialism's own historiography—when evidence of its trauma survives, there is always the possibility that future generations will retrieve colonialism's history. Such evidence is always open to multiple re-readings, as postcolonial writing demonstrates.

Cliff illustrates this fractured nature of historical memory through a simple image. 'Abeng' is the conch shell that was used by colonial masters and plantation owners to summon slaves to the sugar cane fields. However, during the Maroon 'rebellions' (1690s in Jamaica, and the 'Maroon Wars' of 1730–39) the conch was also used among the slaves as a means of communication. Notice how historical memory works: the same object stands for both colonial oppression and the resistance to it, it is both a reminder of their tragic pasts and their heroism. Cliff suggests, with her very title, that it is simply not possible to see the conch shell as a single 'memory'. Another similar device used by Cliff is the name of her heroine in both *Abeng* and its sequel, *No Telephone to Heaven* (1987). Clare is named fondly by her father as a monument to Clare College, Cambridge. As the novel proceeds we discover that this colonial connection is subverted by a (truer?) parallel/source of her name. Clare is named after Clarinda, or Clary, a country girl from her mother's side. The heroine thus becomes a locus of two mutually oppositional contexts. Eventually Clare realizes that she has to return to Jamaica to unravel her roots. She identifies with the nationalist movement, re-learns local histories, and researches her African roots.

The problem is that these imaginative retrievals of the past and constructions of the nation seem to fall woefully short in the face of the countervailing effects of colonialism. And, as mentioned earlier, retrieval is always a partial task. For a good example of how even politically conscious postcolonial re-writing of history can be at best partial, I turn to a celebrated recent novel, Peter Carey's *The True History of the Kelly Gang* (2000). In this novel, Carey seeks to explore a hitherto marginalized aspect of Australian settler history: the Irish. The Irish immigrants, Carey shows, were always under surveillance and suspicion. Eventually, Ned Kelly fulfilled the government's expectations and turned outlaw. Violence stalks the protagonist, who is both a hero and an anti-hero. Carey rewrites Kelly's famous history by citing sources written by Ned Kelly himself. In many of these documents Kelly raves against the society that made him an outlaw.

Early in his narrative Kelly informs us (he is supposedly addressing his daughter, from prison):

> I lost my own father at 12 yr. of age and know what it is to be raised on lies and silences my dear daughter you are presently too young to understand a word I write but this history is for you and will contain no single lie may I burn in Hell if I speak false. (7)

By calling attention to the supposed authenticity of his narrative, Ned Kelly also alerts us to the subjective nature of his version of history. Therefore we are not surprised when, right through the narrative, Kelly rages against the English. What is interesting is that nowhere in this narrative does the single greatest oppression in the Australian continent—that of the Aborigines by colonials—find mention! In a sense this echoes A.D. Hope's early vision of Australia in a poem of that title: 'the last of the lands, the emptiest ... without songs, architecture, history' (1972 [1939]: 13). It is this aspect of postcolonial memory-retrieval, which ignores a pre-settler/pre-European past, that postcolonial writers draw our attention to.

Nostalgia and memory in poets like Sujata Bhatt, Leela Gandhi, and Agha Shahid Ali also constitute an attempt to understand the violence of cultural–national 'severance'. Postcolonial memory here merges individual and racial/communal memory. In the case of diasporic writers, memory becomes a cultural archive of the past. 'India', for instance, survives as memory in these poets. Belonging, cultural roots, displacement, acculturation, and estrangement, and history itself, are forms of violence.

Ali, Bhatt, and occasionally Meena Alexander, seek to retain an Indianness in their poetry, while being carefully assimilatory about their adopted cultures. This tension between the violence of memories and the violence of assimilation is best visible in Agha Shahid Ali's poetry. In 'Postcard from Kashmir' Ali speaks nostalgically of home when he writes:

> the half-inch Himalayas in my hand
> .....
> This is the closest
> I'll ever be to home. (*1987: 1*)

In poems like 'The Dacca Gauzes' (1987: 15–16), 'A Call' (1987: 55), In Memory of Begum Akhtar' (1987: 28–29), 'Survivor' (1987: 51) and 'Nostalgist's Map of America' (1991: 35–36), Ali returns to the same theme of memory and forgetting. Agha Shahid Ali's later volume, *The Country Without a Post Office* (1997), continues his central concerns with Kashmir, exile,

nostalgia, and postcards. Ali's violence of memory is rooted in the suffering of a wounded Kashmir.[11]

In the case of Chicano and indigenous writing from Mexico the case to retrieve histories is as complicated as in other postcolonial cultures. Efforts are underway, through organizations like ELIAC (see box in chapter on Form), to retrieve the ancient Meso-American civilizations. But the idea is also to retrieve it in its diversity, and not emphasize a 'unicity' of ancient culture. This retrieval of a common, if plural, past is to be the counter to the hegemony of the West. In fact, one of the dimensions of these efforts is to forge a transnational indigenous movement that may retrieve modes of living that resists the postnational capitalist world.

Representation, Fiction, Identity

As noted earlier, histories of native cultures were written and authorized by the European power. Having obtained 'authentic' knowledge from archaeological, historiographic and other sources, the Western historian/academic was able to generate endless amounts of histories and studies of Native culture.

Essentially, history is another system of representation. It makes use of narrative and rhetorical strategies to generate certain kinds of knowledge and images. 'Facticity' and 'authenticity' are effects of narratives about events and facts rather than immanent features of the facts themselves. That is, we can have access to a fact or historical event only through narratives about them. Hence the form of representation of those facts and events are crucial because they influence the way an audience receives the images: do we believe in what is being represented on screen or on paper? Colonialism's histories, as many theorists have demonstrated, relied on particular kinds of representation. These representations acquired a degree of power in that they circulated as 'definitive' accounts of a native culture. Such representations have persisted well into the twentieth century and long after colonialism. A good example of colonial discourse's continual hold on the Euro-American public can be gauged from the enormous successes of Hollywood's films on Oriental nations/cultures (*Romancing the Stone*, 1984, *Indiana Jones and the Temple of Doom*, 1984, *The Mummy*, 1999, among others).

A brilliantly ironic example of the power of representations is provided in Maxine Hong Kingston's *Tripmaster Monkey* (1989). The novel deals not just with issues of representations, but shows how representations are closely bound up with identity-formation. At one moment in the tale,

Nanci Lee, a Chinese American, is seeking a theatre profession. A director is annoyed with her portrayal of a Chinese peasant. 'You don't *look* Oriental', the director tells her. 'Can't you act more Oriental? Act Oriental' (24, emphasis in original). Later Wittman tells her that he will write a play just for her Oriental looks: 'where the audience learns to fall in love with you for your ochery skin and round nose and flat profile and slanty eyes, and your bit of an accent' (27). Kingston's critique of representation points at the stereotyping of identity. The director wants her to be nothing more than or other than, Chinese. The emphasis is on a singularity of racial/ethnic traits that will sell. She has no option but to be Chinese. What is significant is that the real, corporeal identity must fit the available fictional one. Lee has to be like the stereotype of a Chinese woman. Here the circulating representation is considered authentic, and reality must approximate to it rather than the other way round. The West's fascination for the authentically exotic never ends, suggests Kingston: 'there's always white guys from Minnesota and Michigan looking for geisha girls' (77).

Postcolonial literature's constant concern with representation has to do with this problem. Identity is reduced to a set of essentialisms—representations of which are inherited from the colonial past. Theories of 'Third World' literature as 'national allegories' (Jameson 1986) repeat this essentializing move—a text that is not quite allegorical in the sense the West approves and understands formulation will never qualify as authentically 'Third World'. Rushdie's fiction thus fragments 'Indian' identity. His works, like Llosa's or Kingston's, shows how identity is heterogeneous, and cannot be reduced to one or two elements. Saleem Sinai and Nanci Lee are alike in the fact that 'Indianness' or 'Chineseness' is a part of their identity, but is not the only factor in it. Thus coloured women critics such as bell hooks (*Ain't I A Woman* 1981; *Yearning* 1990) argue that we need to push the boundaries of identity to locate it at intersections of sexuality, class, gender and race, without reducing it to one or other alone. Hanif Kureishi's writing, especially works like *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), for instance, locates identity at the intersection of multiple categories and locations: ethnic (Asian–Pakistani), gender (male), community (Asian–British), sexuality (bisexual), class (middle-class) and geography (metropolitan London). However, postcolonial writers are equally guilty of essentializing. Derek Walcott complains that, very often, West Indian literature (only) romanticizes the poor. The playwright, recognizing that the poor will constitute his audience, chooses hunger and deprivation as his major theme ('What the Twilight Says', 17–18). Walcott is suggesting that we go beyond this representation of suffering: 'slaves, the children of slaves, colonials, then pathetic, unpunctual nationalists, what have we to celebrate?' he asks (18).

Postcolonial writing, it appears, will always be obsessed with history and history-writing. Postcolonial literature's central and continuing concerns are, therefore with modes of retrieving pre-colonial history, 'correcting' mis-representations of their culture in European texts and, by extension, controlling the representation of their culture's identity.

NOTES

1. In Anand's *Untouchable*, Colonel Hutchinson offers the colonial solution to Bakha's problems: conversion to Christianity; in *Two Leaves and a Bud*, Reggie Hunt, the assistant manager of the plantation, represents the Western cruelty and greed and Croft-Crooke colonial indifference.
2. Hence Patrick Colm Hogan prefers the term 'postcolonization literature' to describe works that have been concerned with colonialism. See Hogan 2000: xix.
3. In the case of India, the British found it difficult to deny a history to India, since its ancient civilizations were well known. Edmund Burke, William Jones, and James Mill argued that India did once have a great civilization. Unfortunately, it had stagnated and, while the rest of the world moved on ahead, India stayed in its antiquity.
4. However, it must be kept in mind that colonial representational strategies were neither comprehensive nor perfect. Homi Bhabha's work has demonstrated how colonialism's language, narratives, and discourses often proved inadequate and even flawed.
5. See, for instance, Tzvetan Todorov's *The Conquest of America* (1999 [1984]).
6. However, this is not to say that colonial discourse about the native was a monolithic entity, or that the ideology of conquest was universally accepted even within Europe. Even though texts such as Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels (1726) do suggest a certain European exploratory drive, its sharp critique of conquest is often ignored. To illustrate I shall quote one passage from the concluding sections of the novel. Gulliver is reluctant to inform the King of his knowledge of new dominions because he knows it will lead to further colonizing moves:*

> That enlargement typically involves a crew of pirates … driven by a storm they know not whither … they go on shore to rob and plunder, they see an harmless people, are entertained with kindness, they give the country a new name, they take formal possession of it for the king, they set up a rotten plank or a stone for a memorial, they murder two or three dozen of the natives, bring away a couple more by force for a sample, return home and get their pardon. Here commences a new dominion acquired with a title by divine right. Ships are sent with the first opportunity, the natives driven out or destroyed … the earth reeking with the blood of the inhabitants: and this execrable crew of butchers employed in so pious an expedition, is a modern colony sent to convert and civilize an idolatrous and barbarous people. (*1726 [2001]: 361*)

Non-European texts that critiqued the imperialist drive, albeit in a cautious manner, include the early Olaudah Equiano's *The Interesting Narrative of the Life of Ouladah Equiano* (1789) that showcased the African-European encounter.

7. In the 1980s, the Australian government set up the Centre for Aboriginal Reconciliation (CAR) to effect a 'reconciliation' between Aboriginals and settler Australians. Its 'vision statement' read: 'A united Australia which respects this land of ours, values the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander heritage, and provides justice and equity for all' (*Draft Declaration of Reconciliation* 1999. http://www.austlii.edu.au/au/orgs/car/docrec/draft/index.htm). However, it rejected Aboriginal demands in the interest of 'national' unity. What is important is that CAR's emphasis was on 'shared histories', defined as 'a sense of all Australians of a shared ownership of their history' (http://www.austlii.edu.au/ au/special/rsjproject/rsjlibrary/car/kip4/2.html) in its discussion paper, 'Sharing Histories' (also at the above website). For an account see Attwood 1996 and 2005.
8. Politically speaking, this demand for Native control over Native archives is part of a larger issue. In most countries, indigenous people are not willing to settle for the 'ethnic minority' label/identity. They seek special rights within the nation-state. This has resulted in some major legal decisions. In the USA it is the declaration of the Native peoples as 'nations within a nation' guaranteed by a treaty and by the US Constitution. In Canada this special status is called 'citizenship-plus'.
9. For a representative volume on indigenous knowledge and archaeology see Smith and Wobst 2005.
10. For novels dealing with the Middle Passage see Caryl Phillips (*Higher Ground* 1989; *Crossing the River* 1993; *Cambridge* 1991), David Dabydeen (*A Harlot's Progress* 1999) and Fred d'Aguiar (*Feeding the Ghosts* 1998).
11. Keki Daruwalla has a brilliant satire on such native re-writings of colonial history. In 'The Ghana Scholar Reflects on his Thesis', the young Oxford doctoral candidate writes a dissertation titled 'The History of Cocoa in Ghana'. His fellow Ghanians attack him for keeping his thesis 'clean' of colonialism:

> "De word 'slavery'
> doesn't figure in your friggin paper!"

The scholar is caught between being true to his country's traumatic colonial past and his own career needs. The poem concludes:

> I shook my head, I wanted
> That doctorate from Oxford real bad.
> Now this: apparitions
> Surfacing from nightscapes—
> Black visages with bloodstains
> Where the eyes should have been. (*Daruwalla 2002: 12–13*)

THREE

Nation

I wanted to know England not as I saw her, but in her finest hour—every place chooses its own and to me it did not seem an accident that England had chosen hers in a war.

—Amitav Ghosh, *The Shadow Lines* (1988: 57)

Postcolonial writers, especially the first generation from the 1950s and 1960s, were conscious of their role in nation-building, since the nation is also a cultural construct, built out of and upon the artistic, folkloric, theoretical, and philosophical discourses about the nation. And the novel, as Timothy Brennan demonstrates, has historically played a central role in this construction because the novel objectified the multiple and unified nature of national life (Brennan 1989: 1–31). The contours of the nation—geographical, economic, political, and cultural—have been a continuing theme in postcolonial writing. The chief question to address a nation and its literatures is: how does a nation speak about represent itself to its own people and to the world?

The nation is, in fact, a project, as postcolonial literatures seek to erase their colonial pasts. Resisting and rejecting the Western constructions of their nations as primitive, savage, and ancient, postcolonial writers seek to retrieve a pre-colonial past that would help them define the nation, and, more importantly, project a destiny, a future. That is, they seek to reconstruct the nation without the frames of reference used by the colonial masters. However, this is hardly a simple task since most postcolonial methodologies, rhetorical forms, epistemologies are always already 'contaminated' and informed by Western ones. The past, present, and future are harnessed in postcolonial texts where trauma (colonial), pride (nationalism) and

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hope (postcolonial) merge. Nelson Mandela's first 'State of the Nation' address captures the postcolonial theme succinctly:

> The time will come when our nation will honour the memory of all the sons, the daughters, the mothers, the fathers, the youth, and the children who, by their thoughts and deeds, gave us the right to assert with pride that we are South Africans, that we are Africans and that we are citizens of the world ... we must, constrained by and yet, regardless of the accumulated effect of our historical burdens, seize the time to define for ourselves what we want to make of our shared destiny. (*Rita Barnard 2001: 151–76*)

However, this sense of postcolonial destiny is often tempered with an awareness that things are not exactly wonderful in the postcolony. Writers even in the first flush of political independence were worried that indigenous societies were moving from colonial corruption to postcolonial decadence. Simultaneously, segments of the population saw themselves being marginalized by the new native rulers. Postcoloniality brought in its wake a new process of exclusion, whereby certain groups/classes dominated other ethnic groups, communities, races, and classes, who, therefore, became disempowered, 'colonized', and marginal (even) in the independent nations. Gyanendra Pandey has tellingly argued that 'minorities are constituted along with the nation'—a nation constructs and colonizes specific communities even as it claims political independence as a postcolony (Pandey 1999: 608). In postcolonial societies, this argument has been borne out through a process that I call *postcolonial subalternization*—a process captured and critiqued in many discursive and non-discursive texts of the 1980s and after from Africa and Asia. Eventually, these voices sought to write their own histories when they realized that dominant cultural narratives refused them representation, or worse, misrepresented them. In a particularly sharp-edged image—that could very well be a prototype of postcolonial anxiety—Ben Okri's boy-prophet in *The Famished Road* (1991) has a dream where the 'interchangeable dreams' of politicians and the 'insanity of thugs' manipulate the people (180). The nightmare that Okri describes captures the unreal lapse into oppression, decadence, and horror of the postcolonial state. The citizens become the subalterns in the state. As the Party of the Poor and the Party of the Rich begin to resemble each other in Okri's novel (194), Azaro realizes that the postcolonial state was simply 'the new incarnation of their recurrent clashes, the recurrence of ancient antagonisms, secret histories, festering dreams' (194).

In India, Dalit writing represents the best example of subaltern self-representation. They also constitute sharply-edged critiques of postcoloniality.

The literature of postcoloniality that configures 'nationhood' generally emphasizes the following themes:

- The modes of constructing, imagining, and representing the nation;
- The role of locality, community, and space in the making of a national identity;
- Issues of cultural identity, especially for Aboriginal writing in post-colonial societies, and the politics of nativism;
- The centrality of religion and spirituality in the construction of a national identity;
- The continuation of colonialism through other forms, especially by postcolonial elites;
- The marginalization of certain communities and identities within postcolonial societies—a process of subalternization—which leads to protest and movements for social change and reform.

These themes in postcolonial literature may be read under three main heads:

- Constructing the nation
- Cultural identity
- Postcolonial subalternization

The use of myth, collective memory, the appeal to a common history—all go into the postcolonial construction of the nation.

CONSTRUCTING THE NATION

> Humanity is not abstract.
>
> —Wole Soyinka (1996: 118)

A central concern with the creation of a nation links together the diverse literatures of Canada, Nigeria, India, and other postcolonial nations. During the nationalist, anti-colonial struggles, the presence of the European Other united the various tribes, clans, and minorities in the 'Third World' country. With political independence came the task of nation-building. Resistance and anti-colonial struggles in African and Asian nations were not simply movements against imperialism. They were also supposed to liberate the native culture from its own oppressive structures. That is, revolutionary struggles were also movements for social transformation of the native space. This was hardly an easy job since, in most cases, the country

was made up of innumerable fragments. For instance, Nigeria had over 250 ethnic groups. Under such conditions, how was a Nigerian nation to be built? This is the question that concerns both Achebe and Soyinka.

In this section I look at certain crucial aspects of constructing the nation in postcolonial writing:

- Locality, community, identity
- Imagi-Nations

Locality, Community, Identity

The nation has a certain territorial imperative. Territorial sovereignty, boundaries, maps, and routes are integral to the very idea of the nation. Most postcolonial works deal with space as it is intimately connected to issues of community, cultural identity, and nationhood. For postcolonial literature to be about the nation, the writer must be located within the space of the home, argues C.L.R James during the heyday of the Caribbean Federation efforts. In his essay, 'The Artist in the Caribbean' (1977), James argues that writers like Lamming or Naipaul are 'objectively circumscribed' (187). They do not qualify as 'great' because they live abroad and write for a 'foreign audience' (188). An almost Wordsworthian sense of place is visible in James' injunction on space and literary creation. In this section I shall discuss how the postcolonial nation uses space and location to map selfhood, individual identity, and community.

Postcolonial writers locate the self firmly within communities and their spaces. Space for many of them is lived space, brought alive through relationships, emotions, histories, and memories. In the case of Indian poets and novelists, the site of the family with its myriad emotional bonds and personal relationships are almost always spatialized. Community lives are connected to the space of the land. Ila's grandmother in Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines* (1988) suggests that Ila has no right to live in England. This is what the old woman says:

> She doesn't belong there. It took those people a long time to build that country; ... years of war and blood-shed. Everyone who lives there has earned his right to be there with blood: with their brother's blood and their father's blood and their son's blood ... War is their religion. That's what it takes to make a country. (77–78)

Surely this is an ironic comment too: a country is made out of bloodshed (that of its 'own' and of its 'others'). Its life demands and depends on the end of life for many of its people. A nation is defined by the deaths of its

own. It lives in its many memorials to its dead youth, men, and women. A nation is born through this process of its community's lives.

Bhabani Bhattacharya's social realist fiction, written in the decades immediately after India's independence, provides a useful starting point to explore the ways in which space, community, identity, and the nation are dealt with in postcolonial writers. Bhattacharya thematizes a major debate of post-Independence India: the choice between rapid modernization (where modernization may be destructive of the rural way of life), or continuation of the traditional rural scheme (which runs the risk of not being able to meet the demands of either the international community or India's own growing population). Bhattacharya, however, does suggest his preference for the quiet pastoral India, while remaining conscious of the exploitative structure of rural society.

In *Shadow from Ladakh* (1966), Satyajit's Gandhigram comes close to being the ideal rural community envisaged by Gandhi: self-sufficient, clean, happy in its small pleasures of hand looms and gardening. Located next to the steel plant of Lohapur, Gandhigram stands as contrast to India's modernization programme. Bhattacharya describes Gandhigram thus:

> The village lay spread to the left and right—mud houses, each with a vegetable patch behind a hedge and a bamboo gate ... There were other values Gandhigram stood for ... the apparently insignificant village was building up a model for the whole of India. The new community of people was creating a social order in which all were truly equal. All land belonged to the cooperative. Food from the fields distributed according to needs. (*25–26*)

However, such an idyll is not the complete picture of rural India. Bhattacharya is fully aware of the extremely tenuous structures that hold the village and feudal houses together. He is aware, for instance, of the very oppressive and exploitative structures that become necessary to retain the rural 'way of life'. In fact, as his descriptions repeatedly suggest, the coherence and peace of the rural idyll is based upon the complete silencing of the labourer, the women, and the youth of the village community. For instance, having suggested that the Big House is wealthy, generous, and the last refuge of the village in times of trouble in *Music for Mohini* (1964), Bhattacharya also notes that it is a house that 'lived always in the shadow of the family tree' (131). Bhattacharya provides an interesting description of the House that diminishes its symbolic significance. He writes:

> The façade with its many arches and columns could not have been washed with lime for half a century or more. It was *mildewed in spots, overgrown with weeds,* and trees growing aslant out of its *gaping cracks* ... The acres around the house were enclosed by a tall compound wall with massive iron gates guarded by two couchant stone lions. (*99–100, emphasis added*)

In *Shadow from Ladakh*, Suruchi realizes that Gandhigram is not necessarily the idyll that she had imagined. The idyll was created out of the mute assent of several young men and women like herself. When her daughter Sumita turns eighteen, she tells Satyajit, in her only dissenting opinion in the novel: 'You've moulded me into something that you have wanted me to be. Now it's the turn of your daughter!' (324). In *He Who Rides a Tiger* (1955), Bhattacharya refrains from even suggesting any such peaceful, fulfilling rural geography. The small town he portrays here (Jharna) is far from being any such pastoral idyll. Like several other towns in India, it retains a strong caste hierarchy. Kalo discovers quickly that education, talent, even brilliance, does not erase the stigma of caste. Like Rohinton Mistry in the 1990s, Bhattacharya maps an India whose civic infrastructure has been ruined, whose government is both inept and indifferent. Bhattacharya's fiction is important for the ways in which it uses space to critique the modernizing and 'development' programmes of post-Independence India.

In Amos Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), the Drinkard gives up his lazy and indifferent lifestyle when he discovers that his community is in danger. He accepts his role as hero—as ordained and named by praise songs (*oriki*)—when a famine threatens the village. There is a detailed description—paralleling Bhattacharya's in *Music for Mohini*—of how the community is brought together to battle the danger (124–25).

The sense of belonging and community is best illustrated in Nissim Ezekiel's 'Background, Casually'. Ezekiel begins by speaking of his childhood when he was constantly harassed for being different:

> I grew in terror of the strong
> But undernourished Hindu lads,

The protagonist then goes off to London to acquire an education and 'find' himself, and after two years discovers that he has 'failed'. The geographical dislocation—away from a traumatic space of 'home'—does nothing to help him. On his return he is faced with the biggest question of all:

> How to feel at home, was the point.

The family, the community, and his own ancestry—a Jew in India—do not help him feel 'at home'. He needs to situate himself in a better relationship with his space. This is acquired through literature:

> The Indian landscape sears my eyes.
> I have become a part of it

To be observed by foreigners.
They say that I am singular,
Their letters overstate the case.

Finally, the speaker's discovery of his identity can only be imaged as a spatial location:

I have made my commitments now.
This is one: to stay where I am,
As others choose to give themselves
In some remote and backward place.
My backward place is where I am. (*1989 [1976]: 179–181*)

Here the speaker's location is both physical-spatial and metaphoric. The discovery of place is also the discovery of selfhood, identity, and belonging. Ezekiel's poem underscores the centrality of location to a postcolonial identity.

Nayantara Sahgal's fiction focuses on public spaces. India's leading political novelist, Sahgal chooses to map India's public spaces as sites of contest. The university campus in *A Situation in New Delhi* (1977) is the central public space in the novel. The university as the site of learning functions as a preparatory site, a sort of pre-site for the students' entry into the public sphere. This public space is a site where a new experiment is being conducted: one which will enhance the quality of student life, reinforce ideals and create a reservoir of ideas. Thus the university is at the spatial heart of a projected renaissance of India itself. Towards the conclusion of the novel the Vice-Chancellor, now convinced that there is no hope of remedying the flaws of the university, resigns. He organizes a rally where several of his own students participate. The Vice-Chancellor, discovering that he is completely ineffectual in his office, seeks other spaces. The students who do not respect him in the space of his office congregate in large numbers at his public rally. In *A Time to be Happy* (1957) the only two subversive acts occur in public space. An urchin throws a handful of dirt at Weatherby, who is infuriated (110). The anger is less at the humiliation than at the fact that it occurs in sight of many natives. Sahdev, who joins the freedom movement, defies the Englishman's authority. Walking quietly along, he is ordered off the pavement, and he refuses to obey. This enrages the policeman so much that he shoots Sahdev dead (188). In *Mistaken Identity* (1989), Bhusan and Razia meet publicly at a time when Hindu–Muslim relations in Vijaygarh are less than cordial.

From a different context, Cherríe Moraga's writing queers the mythic space of Aztlán, the ancestral homeland in the north that the Aztecs left in 1168 when they journeyed southward to found the promised land, Tenochtitlán (Mexico City) in 1325. The search in Moraga and other Chicano/a authors is for a pre-Hispanic homeland. Aztlán for Moraga and others represents a kind of spiritual unity among the Chicano/a, who see in their pre-Hispanic heritage a source of cultural strength in the face of racism and exploitation. The mythic space of the nation here is a spiritual power against contemporary realities, suggests Moraga in her plays. This mythic space, Moraga suggests, symbolizes more than the land:

> For immigrants and natives alike, land is ... the factories where we work, the water our children drink, and the housing project where we live. For women, lesbians, and gay men, land is that physical mass called our bodies. Throughout las Americas, all these 'lands' remain under occupation by an Anglo-centric, patriarchal, imperialist United States. (*1994 [1987]: 73*)

Moraga here 'translates' land into bodies, cultural conditions, and material factors. The mythic site of Aztlán is the iconic space of exploitation and struggle. Gloria Anzaldùa characterizes Aztlán as an in-between space, caught between Mexico and the USA. It becomes a space where, in Anzaldúa's unforgettably powerful image, 'the Third World grates against the first and bleeds' (1994 [1987]: 3). In such writings the space of the nation—mythic, historical, utopian—serves the purpose of a certain cultural nationalism even today. This is a crucial mode of 'constructing the nation'. A clear statement of such an act of national construction is seen in the manifesto document prepared by the National Chicano Youth Liberation Conference (held in Denver, Colorado, 1969). The document, *El Plan de Aztlán*, stated:

> With our heart in our hands and our hands in the soil, we declare the independence of our Mestizo nation. We are a bronze people with a bronze culture. Before all of North America, before all our brothers in the bronze continent, we are a nation, we are a union of free pueblos, we are Aztlán. (*Documents of the Chicano Struggle*, 1971: 4)

Aztlán maps the three stages of colonialism and cultural encounters: the Spanish conquest of Aztecs, the USA's appropriation of Mexican lands (nineteenth and early twentieth century), and the immigration to the American Southwest by Mexicans and Central Americans in the twentieth century. As the 'plan' for Aztlán quoted above suggests, the mythic space is the site of economic self-determination, cultural identity, and political freedoms. It marks out the space of a distinct cultural community and identity. It exemplifies, truly, the 'construction' of nations, kinship, and cultures, while, rather dubiously, reiterating the myth of origins and sources.

In a different context, both the violence of colonialism and postcolonial rule in Kenya are imaged in terms of landscape. The nation, region, or culture's state of affairs becomes symbolized in the land. In Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o's novel *Weep Not, Child* (1964) the difference in colonial and native is presented through the description of their respective approaches to the land:

> They went from place to place, a white man and a black man. Now and then they would stop here and there, examine a luxuriant green tea plant, or pull out a weed. Both men admired this shamba. For Ngotho felt responsible for whatever happened to this land. He owed it to the dead, the living and the unborn of his line, to keep guard over this shamba. Mr Howlands always felt a certain amount of victory whenever he worked through it all. He alone was responsible for taming this unoccupied wildness. (*35*)

The point is that the land was never 'unoccupied wildness'—it had its own history, legend, and life. It had seen community and identity engraved upon it through local rituals and prayers.

Criticism of the postcolonial/neocolonial state is also symbolized *through the state of people in the land* in most postcolonial writings from the 1960s through the *1970s. Interestingly,* the major writers in the postcolonial canon today all made their reputation in this period of critique rather than the period of glorified nationalism (which is the first stage in postcolonial writing: the 1900–1950s phase): Soyinka, Walcott, Armah, Aidoo, Sahgal, Achebe, among others. In Leonard Kibera's *Voices in the Dark* (1970) Irungu and Kimura, two ex-freedom fighters, are now disabled beggars in the murky pathways of the streets of Nairobi (one has no hands, the other lacks legs). Their former role as brave anti-colonial fighters is now replaced, with political independence and neocolonial capitalism, by their status as 'vagrants'. Soyinka targets the dictatorial governments of Africa in *Kongi's Harvest* (first performed in 1965) and *A Play of Giants* (1984). In *From Zia with Love* (1992) and *A Scourge of Hyacinths* (1992) Soyinka looks at the effects of the Buhari/Idiagbon military regime (who decreed, retroactively, that drug trafficking was punishable by death). In *A Scourge of Hyacinths,* the hyacinths become a metaphor for the slow curtailing of civil liberties by the military. In *The Beatification of Area Boy,* which deals with the military intrusion into the lives of street traders in Lagos, Sanda leads the traders in their fight against a corrupt military government. Elsewhere Soyinka has consistently critiqued the postcolonial state, and commented on the flaws of post-independence Nigeria. In his collection of essays, *The Open Sore of a Continent* (1996), he has emphasized the need to re-vision the postcolonial nation where there is no totalitarianism or violence and a space for dialogue, understanding, and peace

(see especially 133–43). Somalian novelist Nuruddin Farah has been a trenchant critic of the dictatorship of Siyad Barre in the trilogy (*Sweet and Sour Milk, Sardines, Close Sesame*) that explores the lives of people in a resistance movement.

Ben Okri prefers to present landscapes that are surreal. In a world where corruption and suffering is the lot of all (postcolonial) characters, the landscape takes on a certain timeless quality (the land alone survives). The river becomes a road that devours its travellers. Myth and everyday life meet in passages such as these in *The Famished Road*:

> I could still hear the voices in passionate gardens ... I saw delicious girls dancing tarantellas in fields ... Then all I was left with was a world drowning in poverty, a mother-of-pearl-moon, and the long darkness before dawn. (*308*)

Life in the postcolony is a famished road, suggests Okri.

In each of these examples, the individual, family, community, and nation is primarily imaged in terms of landscape and spaces. Changing fortunes with political independence, the public sphere of democracies and corrupt politics, social interaction, political economy and personal relationships are all spatialized in postcolonial writing.

Imagi-Nations

The birth of the Indian nation, writes Rushdie, is 'an extra festival on the calendar, a new myth to celebrate ... a country which would never exist except by the efforts of a phenomenal collective will except in a dream we all agreed to dream ... India, the new myth—a collective fiction in which anything was possible, a fable rivalled only by the two other mighty fantasies—money and God' (1982: 111). Benedict Anderson's influential, if controversial, thesis that nations are 'imagined' (rev. ed 1991), located literature—specifically the novel—at the centre of the 'imagining'. Anderson argues that the novel was a technical form for 're-presenting' a kind of imagined community that becomes the nation. Timothy Brennan's gloss on Anderson points to the ways in which the novel's layered structure, linguistic heterogeneity and multiple voices actually mimicked the structure of the nation itself (1989: 8). The arguments for and against Anderson notwithstanding, postcolonial literature's modes of representing and constructing the nation invite closer analysis.[1]

The point is not whether Anderson's thesis is right or wrong but rather that literature, especially in the postcolonial context, constantly refers to the idea of the nation. Literary texts do indeed construct the nation through

3.1 Imagined Communities

Benedict Anderson argues that nations are acts of imagination. This does not mean that there is no territory or people. What he is saying is that we can 'connect' to people in other parts of the territory only in terms of imagining them. This is facilitated through 'technology' such as the novel and other forms of print. We are connected to them as fellow Indians because there is so much writing, film, talk, speeches about them, even though there is no immediate, geographical or cultural connection with them. A community is thus built through imaginative connections: we feel they are all Indians even though we may never meet a tribal from the Garo Hills or have a meal with a Kashmiri Muslim.

'imagining' spaces and territories. Nations of the mind assume as much significance as 'real' ones, and Anderson is quite accurate in this formulation. A novel or poem that provides a particular image of the nation is influential in shaping the public imagination of belonging, territory, and nationhood. C.L.R James underscores this role of the writer and the literary text:

> [The writer] exercises an influence on the national consciousness which is incalculable. He is created by it but he himself illuminates and amplifies it, bringing the past up to date and charting the future. (*1977: 185*)

While most postcolonial writers are keen on discovering the limits and extent of their 'nation', several of them are aware of the constructedness of the very idea of nation. Rushdie refers, in his major essay, 'Imaginary Homelands' to 'Indias of the mind' (1991: 10). And again in 'The Riddle of Midnight: India, August 1987':

> After all, in all the thousands of years of Indian history, there never was such a creature as a united India. Nobody ever managed to rule the whole place, not the Mughals, not the British. And then, that midnight, the thing that had never existed was suddenly "free". But what on earth was it? On what common ground (if any) did it, does it, stand? (*1991: 27*)

What Rushdie does in his cult text, *Midnight's Children*, is to refuse any unitary and monolithic notion of India. Rushdie's polyphonic novel has two 'centres'—Saleem Sinai (who claims he is central to India) and India's national history. In the first case, Sinai's obviously subjective and eccentric views of India cannot be privileged or taken to represent India. In the second case, Rushdie's narrative refuses to privilege things like the national

movement or Gandhi's assassination (getting the date of the latter event wrong. For Rushdie's comments, *Midnight's Children* see his essay 'Errata', 1991: 22–25). Thus there is no coherent centre (or organizing myth) around which the concept of India can be visualized. There is no one history, no central figure, no geographical certainty to rely on when speaking of India. 'India' is multiple, fluid, amorphous, and can only be imagined into existence through fragmented memories and histories. The same 'fact' can be interpreted by reporters and historians to suit their immediate purpose. Thus, news reports of the Indo-Pak war in Rushdie's novel have several interpretations of the same events (326). This open-endedness of historical 'truth' is the central insight of *Midnight's Children*.

Another brilliant example—and surely on par with Rushdie's—is Mario Vargas Llosa's *The War of the End of the World* (1984). Here Antonio Conselheiro ('the counsellor') puts together a commune that seeks social change and a state. He generates myths (and a brand of magic) to win over the criminals and the social outcasts to instill a desire for a new land. Canudos is the society and state these people build, driven by the Counsellor's fiery rhetoric and projected dream-visions of a glorious future (the parallels with nationalist and revolutionary rhetoric are easily discernible in Llosa's scintillating prose). Llosa captures the exact nature of a nation's formation: discursively constructed out of myths, visions, and dreams, the personality-cult, some notions of a social order and an appeal to common traditions and customs.

In Amitav Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, the old grandmother asks if she would be able to see the 'border between India and East Pakistan from the plane', at least 'trenches ... or soldiers, or guns pointing at each other' (151). She wonders how, if there are no trenches, one can possibly distinguish between the nations and peoples. And, if there is no marker of separation or distinction, why was there any need for the violent partitioning of the land (151). The father then clarifies 'abstract' notions of boundaries and nationality: the border is concretized in 'all those disembarkation cards and things' (151–52). Lines, invisible except on paper, divide people:

> Someone else insisted that passengers be told where the 'inexistent' border used to be—inexistent, because Somalis never admitted it ... Non-Somalis, because they were total strangers or knew no better, looked at maps, where they found a curvy line, drawn to cut one Somali people from another. (*Farah 1999: 132*)

A nation is drawn, constructed on paper, and enforced through material 'forces' like Immigration Offices, the military, passports, and visas. A

nation exists within these forms. It exists in the icons people adopt and believe in:

> Most people they met along the way had their bodies tattooed with their identities: that is, name, nationality and address. Some had engraved on their skins the reason why they had become who they were when living and others had printed on their foreheads or backs their national flags or insignia. (*Farah 1999: 43*)

Increasingly postcolonial writers unhappy with the state of their nation are beginning to contest the idea of nationhood itself. There have been many critiques of the exclusionary, oppressive nature of postcolonial nation-states from within (see section on 'Postcolonial Subalternization' below). V.S. Naipaul, for instance, has attained notoriety for his relentless sharp-edged criticism of both the Caribbean and India. A contested nation is now a central theme in postcolonial writing, and is becoming, in the age of globalization and blurring national boundaries, a major political project. Nuruddin Farah, exiled from Somalia, writes:

> I have dwelled in the dubious details of a territory I often refer to as the country of my imagination. I have always considered countries to be no more than working hypotheses, portals opening on assumption of allegiance to an idea... (*1993: 16–20*)

In Farah's now-cult text set in the aftermath of the 1977 war, *Maps* (1986), Askar tries to understand his identity by reading about Somalian history. The very fact that Askar does not understand that his memory is limited and his vision truncated becomes Farah's main critique: one can only imagine a segment of the nation, a small corner of culture, and assimilate only a bit of cultural identity. Askar's vision of Somalia is both partial and idealistic, and is formed out of segments of history handed down to him. Out of such fragments, Farah suggests, we construct entire maps and identities. Askar goes on to visualize Somalia as Edenic gardens, and proceeds to name things. In an extraordinary passage Farah undercuts the very concept of topos (we must keep in mind that 'nation' is intimately connected to a sense of place, geographical boundaries, and topographical features):

> He was standing at the centre of the garden's clearing and was giving the appropriate names to the trees and plants just as Adam had done on the first day of creation ... [His] skin was mapped with routes which led him back to his past, a map showing earth roads, the rivers which rise in the region... (*248*)

To name, as several philosophers have argued, is to colonize and to possess.[2] Askar is told by Uncle Hilaal: 'There is truth in maps. The Ogaden, as Somali, is truth. To the Ethiopian map-maker, the Ogaden, as Somali, is untruth.' (229) Here Askar chooses to construct a particular image of Somalia (even though he has been warned to expect war and death and blood). Farah is, I suggest, arguing that the nation, like the garden, is partly brought into existence through a collective fantasy. By projecting the nation as a fantasy—sometimes even in the light of very different realities (in Farah it is the reality of the war with Ethiopia)—Farah refuses to privilege it. It becomes a contested space willed into existence, but liable to dissolve any moment. It is therefore significant that almost all of Askar's visions of gardens are prefigured by visions of water, suggesting a kind of amorphous, fluid, and unbounded space rather than the organized specificity of the garden/nation.

An astonishing satire on imagining nations, maps, and Europe figures in R.K. Narayan's *Swami and Friends*. Swami is trying to draw a map of Europe. Several issues and questions crop up in the boy's mind:

> It puzzled him how people managed to live in such a crooked country as Europe.... How did the map-makers find out what the shape of a country was? How did they find out that Europe was like a camel's head? (*1999a: 56*)

Singapore's most prominent writer Edwin Thumboo sees the 'National Library, Singapore' as a place where such a construction of national identity can possibly take place. This logos of identity preserves the past for posterity in a rapidly changing world. Thumboo, in his poems in *A Third Map* writes of Singapore—incidentally, a 'postcolonial' nation born out of not anti-colonial struggles but out of a political decision to separate from Malaya—as an 'invented island ... held about the foam' (1993: 98). In 'Island', he describes the transformation of a space of romance and nostalgia, flowers and nature into a construct of diesel and rivets, welders and cranes: the actual forging together, the beating into shape of a nation (1993: 78–79). What Thumboo is concerned about is the forced construction of unity and of a 'nation-state'. His poetry is full of images of invention: of technological devices, civil infrastructure, and ultimately of the nation itself. In 'Catering for the People' Thumboo examines the state's efforts to prevent ethnic strife and chart a common destiny for all.

> We strive to find our history
> Break racial stubbornness
> Educate the masse and Educated—
> Evacuate the disagreeable
> Bring the hill to valley, level the place and build
> And generally cater for the people ...
> Set all neatly down into Economy. (*1993: 53–54*)

Thumboo is here clearly gesturing at the conscious forging of a national identity (through the 1980s and 1990s, it must be remembered, Singapore built up its economy, slowly emerging as the strongest economic power in the region). In a brilliant poem, appropriately titled 'The Way Ahead', Thumboo depicts the Singapore citizenry participating in imagining their community and nation: a professor, a civil servant, a town planner and a common man meet and discuss how they can 'frame a city' (1993: 55–57). Although Thumboo sympathizes with this project of nation-building and identity-creation, he is also aware of the forced homogenization of the process, of the subsumption of differences, individuality and the local into the larger 'frame' of the city. In a poem that suggests his ambivalence about this drive toward a strong, centralized state, Thumboo writes:

> We concede again
> (or some of us at least):
> The state above all else,
> Above extremes of personal liberty (*'The Interview', 1993: 48*)

The postcolonial nation has to negotiate the difficult balance between individual and community, region and nation, diversity and homogeneity. Thumboo's poetry captures the stresses involved in such a process of nation-building. The task, as some postcolonial writers have identified it, is not to reiterate notions of boundaries and territory, but to assume responsibility for material suffering within the nation-state. Wole Soyinka, a major commentator on his country (Nigeria) writes:

> I accept Nigeria as a duty; that is all. I accept Nigeria as a responsibility, without sentiment. I accept that entity, Nigeria, as a space into which I happen to have been born, and therefore a space within which I am bound to collaborate with fellow occupants in the pursuit of justice and ethical life … Expressions such as 'territorial integrity' and the 'sacrosanctity of boundaries,' those relics of a colonial master–slave bequest that abjectly glorify the diktat of colonial powers, are meaningless in such a context. (*1996: 133*)

Soyinka admits to an abstract notion of the nation-state, but transforms it into an ethical imperative. Since suffering, as he emphasizes throughout his *The Open Sore of a Continent* (and especially in the essay 'The National Question: Internal Imperatives ', 109–44) is concrete, very real, and possibly endless, the task is to shift focus from boundaries and territories to the spaces of humanity, as the epigraph to this section reminds us.

CULTURAL IDENTITY

Postcolonial literature is often a dialectic—between imperial systems and native subversion. That is, postcolonial literature is an attempt to undo the discourse of Europe about native cultures, to decolonize oneself. Postcolonial writing can be treated as a literature of transformation—cultural, psychological, social, and political. Social and political transformations are, of course, self-evident: with political independence nation-states achieve a measure of sovereignty. Psychological transformation is about the change in attitude—from slave to master, from dependence to independence. But perhaps the most important transformation of all is in the realm of culture. Decolonization is marked by a re-affirmation of one's cultural values and systems. While the colonial master had rejected and destroyed native culture and superimposed the European one, decolonization seeks a retrieval of the forgotten rhythms of life. Decolonization literature (which functions as another term for 'postcolonial') is characterized by a concern with native cultural identity. The central issues and questions in this theme are:

- How can one reclaim native cultural identity?
- Is it possible to achieve a return to an 'authentic' pre-colonial past?
- Is such a return desirable?
- Can traditional culture be adapted to suit new contexts?
- Can cultural identity mix-and-match native and colonial forms?

One way of re-claiming their cultural pasts is to re-envision European discourses about their (formerly colonized) culture. Postcolonial literature functions as a counter-discourse, providing alternative representations to European ones. The first body of postcolonial writing in the 1950s and 1960s was explicitly decolonizing, working with new concepts of national identity, critiquing the former colonial ruler, seeking to retrieve their pasts and looking forward to the future (projected as glorious, democratic, and emancipatory). Franz Fanon defined 'national culture' as 'the whole body of efforts by a people in the sphere of thought' (1963: 233). It harnesses folklore, myth, intellectual debates, and epistemologies in combating the colonizer's culture.

In Wole Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel* (1963, *Collected Plays 2*), Sidi, a young girl, is wooed by the schoolteacher Lakunte. Lakunte is a Christian and does not accept the village's tradition. Sidi's photographs appear in a Lagos magazine and she begins to act pompous. The chief Baroka wishes to make Sidi his wife. Eventually Sidi opts for tradition in the form of

3.2 Aimé Césaire

Martiniquan writer Aimé Césaire was one of the earliest 'theorists' of the postcolonial condition. Writing in the 1930s and 40s, Césaire proposed a common heritage for the Caribbean and African peoples. He coined the term 'negritude' to describe the politicized cultural identity of these people. Eventually, with Leopold Senghor and others, negritude would become a major political programme, especially in the French colonies of Africa. Césaire argued that colonialism destroyed the identity of the colonized. The colonized were presented, by the Europeans, as people with no history prior to their 'discovery' by the European. That is, the history of the people of Africa or Asia began with the Europeans' arrival on their land—everything before this moment was irrelevant. Césaire argued that the only way to battle this erasure of history was to retrieve black history and civilization. Retrieving black cultural identity and past—negritude—would mean seeing Africa as the binary opposite of Europe—where Europe was the decadent Other of Africa. Negritude did, as we can see, rely on an essentialist view of African identity, where it was assumed that there was a 'core' African culture that could be relied on and used. Césaire was also emphatic in his view that colonialism reduced the colonized to a savage, but, equally, reduced the *colonizer* to a beast. Thus Césaire was one of the first to argue that colonialism transformed not only the native but also the European into something barbaric. The European, for Césaire, learnt to be an army sergeant, acquired race hatred and developed a propensity for violence.

Baroka rather than Christian/modern Lakunte. This becomes symbolic of the triumph of tradition. As Baroka puts it in the play:

> Yesterday's wine alone is strong and blooded, child,
> And though the Christians' holy book denies
> The truth of this, old wine thrives best
> Within a new bottle. The coarseness
> Is mellowed down, and the rugged wine
> Acquires a full and rounded body…

In his *Death and the King's Horseman*, Olunde seeks to erase his English education and 'acculturation' by returning to a 'primitive' Yoruba ritual. He kills himself when his father, Elesin (the king's horseman) who is supposed to commit ritual suicide, does not keep up the tradition. The praise-singer says when the body of Olunde is brought to Elesin:

> There lies the honour of your household and of our race. Because he could not bear to let honour fly out of doors, he stopped it with his life. The son has proved the father, Elesin, and there is nothing left in your mouth to gnash but infant gums. (*218*)

We recognize the central irony of colonialism itself here. The expensive and exhaustive educational and cultural machinery has not erased the sense of community in Olunde. It has not destroyed his Yoruba sensibility. He returns as a medical student from England. But he returns with the explicit purpose of burying his father. Olunde simply assumes that his father has already committed ritual suicide after the king's death. Olunde does not hesitate for a moment about the role destined for either Elesin or himself. He has all along remained a Yoruba. Thus colonial/Western education does not take away his self. On the contrary, Soyinka suggests that it is Western education that has enabled Olunde to see the cracks in Western culture's edifice (as his conversation with Jane Pilkings reveals, 191–99).

Thus, when an Achebe or a Rushdie provides another vision of Nigerian or Indian society, they subtly (or not-so-subtly) interrogate prevalent European notions about these societies. Native Americans live with the legacy of having been colonized, their culture decimated, and subsequent generations 'Americanized' by the white culture that arrived on the continent from the seventeenth century. Increasingly, writings by Native Americans seek an understanding of this transformation, the traumatic past that has rendered them special subjects—in reservations—or completely Americanized Indians with no connection to their cultural pasts. These writings make it clear that there is an urgent need to retrieve their pasts. Lee Francis writes:

> To reclaim their identity, American Indian urban youth need to learn the stories of the People. They need to learn, remember, and tell the ancient origin and migration stories … And they need to tell new stories about growing up and living urban lives. These new stories need to incorporate the wisdom of the People about the land and relatedness to all of creation … Once these stories are learned it is important to tell stories about those People … Link those stories with those of the People from whom urban Native youth are descended. (*2003: 79*)

In Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales' poem 'I Am Joaquín' (1967) he describes Mexican history from the Spanish conquest to the US domination of today. He captures the ethnic and cultural diversity within Mexican and Latino/a peoples. He opens with 'I am Joaquín', stressing the individual, before going on to show how the individual can only articulate his or her identity within the identity of (a) the community, (b) nation, and (c) culture. Thus an individual has multiple locations. Gonzales starts with

> My father
> Have lost the economic battle

And won
The struggle of cultural survival.
And now!
I must choose
Between the paradox of
Victory of the spirit,
Despite physical hunger
Or
To exist in the grasp
of American social neurosis,
sterilization of the soul
and a full stomach.

Here Gonzales is honest enough to question the use of cultural independence when there is no economic means to survive. Culture, he seems to suggest, is necessarily subordinated to economic needs. Gonzales also suggests that he is both oppressor and oppressed, and this rejects the preferred postcolonial mode of casting 'Third World' culture only in terms of victim:

I am the sword and flame of Cortez
The despot.
And I am the Eagle and Serpent of
The Aztec civilization.

However, Gonzales is clear that the fight against colonialism and imperialism is never over, for as long as ethnic minorities, women, and smaller nations are exploited the war rages:

I am Joaquín.
I must fight
And win this struggle
For my sons...

Resisting notions of cultural insularity and cultural imperialism, and looking forward to contemporary ideas about multiple locations and shifting identity, Gonzales concludes that he is Mexicano, Latino, Spanish, Chicano. He declares:

I am the masses of my people and
I refuse to be absorbed (*2003 [1967]: 76–87*)

Pascim Guwahati Mahavidyalaya Guwahati-17 Date..... Dharapur Chariali

Nativism

A revival of native cultural forms and identities was essential to the anti-colonial struggle. It united people from various diverse ethnic, linguistic, and cultural backgrounds in the pursuit of a 'national' goal. Thus 'India' or 'back to Africa' becomes more important than Tamizh or Yoruba identity. Violence, integral to most liberation struggles, became a theme in postcolonial writings (without exception, writings from Africa, Asia, Black America, and South America map geographies of violence). In many cases a justification for native violence was located in structures of racism and colonialism. Thus in Richard Wright's graphically violent *Native Son* (1940) it is suggested that Bigger's extraordinary violence is the direct effect of racial segregation: 'But did Bigger Thomas really *murder*? ... He was *living*, only as he knew how, and as we have forced him to live' (366, emphasis in original).

In the post-Independence era nativism assumes a different aspect. Troubled by the trauma of a homogenizing national culture—more often than not a culture that is elitist, class-centric (in the case of Africa tribe-centric and in India, caste-centric) and of the numerical majority—local cultures begin to have the same fears as the colony did under the Westerner: that their cultural forms and identities would be destroyed and subsumed in the guise of 'national identity'. Nativism becomes the response of such a beleaguered culture or ethnic group. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o in a recent interview underlines the significance of such a response, even though he does not quite agree with the use of the term 'nativism'.Ngũgĩ says:

> The primary thing is to look at power. The language question should really be discussed in terms of power relations, and in terms of production and distribution of knowledge. If you look at the United Nations, you will find that only five or at most six languages dominate it ... Four or five of those languages are European ... (*2004: 161–67*)

In the global system, then, native languages do not find a presence, and a new wave of colonialism—this time in the form of globalized world cultures and governing bodies—sweeps their cultures away. Hence, as Ngũgĩ points out, in such an unequal power relation, local and native languages seek representation in the national/global iconography and a share in decision making—ethnic and caste groups band together. An affirmation of local identities—linguistic, caste, community, tribe—takes place. That is, the identity politics of postcolonial nativism narrows down from 'nation' to 'tribe'. In many cases, such a narrowing results in tribal genocide

3.3 Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o

Novelist, critic, and dramatist, Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o is now an icon of anti-colonial and postcolonial resistance. Writing originally in English and then switching to his native tongue, Gikuyu, Ngũgĩ has been in exile from his country, Kenya for being an outspoken critic of its government. His novels are powerful indictments of the postcolonial condition where dictatorships, corruption and Westernization have ruined traditional tribal cultures in Africa. Ngũgĩ argues that the study of Africa is inevitably treated as a study of its tribes and tribal conflicts. This deflects attention from the real problem: European colonialism that ruined the African cultures. More than economic or military annihilation, it is Europe's cultural war that has devastated African identity. And central to this cultural war is the arrival of English in Africa. In *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) Ngũgĩ argued that English language, literature, and university departments were responsible for the ruin of African language and culture. Language, especially in schools, became the means of subjugation in the colonial context. The child begins to see himself or herself only through European eyes, textbooks, and images. Eventually, the child assumes this biased image is true and accepts that s/he is inferior to the European. What is needed is a 'decolonizing' of the mind, of the biased European intellectual traditions that Africans have assimilated. Ngũgĩ's return to Gikuyu is an attempt to achieve this decolonization, but, as is the case with much postcolonial theorizing, he is able to do so only within the Western (in this case, American) academic system: Ngũgĩ is a professor at the University of California, Irvine.

(Rwanda, Uganda, and other African states), ethnic oppression/cleansing (of, for example, the Mayan Indians in Guatemala) and caste/community tensions (Hindus and Muslims in contemporary India).[3] Salman Rushdie, who ought to know about reactionary responses, has this to say about nativism and xenophobic nationalism:

> Nationalism corrupts writers, too ... In a time of ever more narrowly defined nationalisms, of walled-in tribalisms, writers will be found uttering the war cries of their tribes ... Is the nation a closed system? In this internationalized moment, can any system remain closed? ... Good writing assumes a frontierless nation. Writers who serve frontiers have become border guards. (*'Notes on Writing and the Nation', 2002: 61*)

Rushdie's cautionary note is surely timely. In order to demonstrate the tensions of a reactionary postcolonial nativism we can return to Walcott's *Dream on Monkey Mountain*. Makak mourns the inter-tribal tensions of the post-independence years: 'The tribes! The tribes wrangle among themselves, spitting, writhing, hissing, like snakes in a pit ... devouring their own entrails like a hyena' (305). Tigre represents the face of postcolonial

oppression. Like the former Western master, he seeks to impose uniformity of identity. He tells Makak: 'those who do not bend to our will, or your will, must die' (306). Lestrade declares: 'Justice must be done, even tribal justice' (315), while speaking of 'progress'—a strategy familiar to most postcolonial societies where elites who have usurped the role of their former colonial masters engage in a rhetoric of progress to refuse local/native differences and cultural identity. If numerous natives were killed and maimed by the white man, thousands of tribals and ethnic minorities have been executed in the name of 'national' identity in postcolonial societies. Nativism in the hands of a (Westernized?) elite, suggests Walcott's play, is just as discriminatory, exclusive, and oppressive as the former colonial regime.

Writing Aboriginal

Nativism in postcolonial societies is closely aligned with indigenism and the emerging politics of identity. Indigenous literature/cultures share a history of oppression with postcolonial societies, and hence this literature is perhaps best grouped with 'postcolonial'.[4] Like postcolonial societies in Africa and Asia, Aboriginals in these regions have been conquered, ruled, brutalized and forced into assimilation into 'mainstream' cultures. Like postcolonial societies, they have resisted and fought reductive modes of colonizing representations.

Soon after the first moments of the white discovery of America, Canada, and Australia, the indigenous people lost their lands. Though

3.4 Leopold Senghor

A friend of Aimé Césaire, and eventually elected the President of Senegal in 1960, Leopold Senghor turned negritude into a major political project and programme. He used negritude alongside socialism and preached a Pan-African identity, arguing that Africa has achieved socialism well before the Europeans. Senghor, like other, later African leaders and statesmen, Julius Nyerere and Kwame Nkrumah, argued that African socialism and democracy had been destroyed by European colonialism. Senghor proposed a Pan-African identity where African states would be in a horizontal relationship with each other but would also have an affiliation with Europe. The spirit of the 'Commonwealth', Senghor pointed out, was precisely this: even politically independent African and Asian countries remained loosely associated with Europe.

they were the first residents, colonization by the whites drove them into the interior, or to their deaths. Today, they exist in ghettos, euphemistically called 'reservations'. The total acreage of the USA is 1.9 billion acres. The BIA (Bureau of Indian Affairs) claims that it holds 56 million acres of land 'in trust' for Indian nations and individuals. But, as Glenn Morris is quick to point out, there is no mention about the how the other 1.85 billion acres were lost to the Indians! (Morris 2003: 112). The irony is that even within the postcolonial nation-state, Aboriginal communities, tribals, and 'First People' (or 'Fourth World' about 4 per cent of the global population is Aboriginal) have been marginalized in favour of an urban elite.

Kath Walker (now Oodgeroo Noonuccal) published her poems, *We are Going* in 1964, and marked a key moment in Aboriginal writing. Hailed as the voice of the community, Walker's work immediately inspired a genre of writing that has provided a rich counter-tradition to the settler (white) one. Aboriginal writing from Australia, New Zealand, and Canada, and Dalit writing from India has acquired a significant readership for their identity politics and has provided some of the most trenchant social critiques in contemporary postcolonial cultures. It must, however, be kept in mind that the conditions of Aboriginals in Canada differ widely from India's Dalits and the Aboriginals in Australia. A brief outline of the essential features of Aboriginal writing is as follows:

- Resistance to settler colonialism and its cultures
- Resistance to homogenization
- Draws upon its oral traditions
- Battling injustice and exploitation by/from dominant races/tribes
- Celebration of Aboriginal culture and tradition
- Search for a means of continuity in the tradition
- Adapting traditional forms to suit/interest present generations
- Discovering modes of survival in a globalizing culture

Aboriginal literary traditions borrow from the verbal/oral ones. Poetry is transmitted from generation to generation through community singing, griots, prophets, and balladeers. Such literature also uses local settings (topography), the seasons, local myths, and legends in order to situate the themes in the song. Efforts are now underway in most countries to document and archive these forms of literature. Organizations, academics, and computer specialists team up with translators and historians to compile songs and art forms that are the nearest to a pre-colonial culture one can imagine. For example, the material compiled by the Adibasi Sanskruti Gabesana Parishad, India, includes folklore from six tribes: Gonds, Kondhs, Bhunjia, Paharia, Binjhal, and Banjara. The extraordinary ASEDA (Aboriginal Studies Electronic Data Archive) of the AIATSIA (Australian Institute of Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander Studies) has compiled dictionaries, grammars and teaching materials for over 300 languages (see www.aiatsis.gov.au). The NAISDA (National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association) also works to promote traditional art and create new art forms influenced and inspired by Aboriginal arts (see www.naisda.com).

Aboriginal writing in almost every culture has one common theme: nature. Thus Mudrooroo's first novel, *Wild Cat Falling* (1965), used indigenous themes to talk about land and nature, and linked Aboriginal identity with geography and nature. While it is easy to reiterate the nature/culture divide in looking at Aboriginal/urban writings, it must be emphasized that 'earth consciousness' dominates the thematic of Aboriginal visual representations, songs, and myths. Here anti-colonial movements include a strong strand of environmentalism and ecofeminism. Aboriginal writing sees global imperialism as a mechanism that exploits nature, women, and coloured natives (i.e., non-white) almost equally. They argue that a battle against imperialism should automatically mean a

3.5 Multinational Citizenship

In a globalized world, solidarities exist beyond territorial and nation-state boundaries (see Chapter Six). Critics have argued, especially in connection with substate peoples like the Aboriginals of Canada and Australia, that even in transnational forms of identity, territorial identities remain important. Aboriginals, for example, are loyal to territorial forms of identity. Thinkers like Siobhán Harty and Michael Murphy therefore propose a multinational citizenship, defined as something that 'gives equal recognition to the citizenship regimes of state and substate nations through a democratic argument for self-determination at the substate level and a revised conception of state sovereignty that is divided and shared' (2005: 3). That is, Aboriginals demand as a primary right a greater share in state sovereignty. These are normative grounds based in principles of democracy and non-domination, and state sovereignty must be redistributed to ensure that the Aboriginals have a say in the matter. There must be put into place institutions that enable a role in regional decision-making. Then substate Aboriginals can choose their own political representatives. In short, it is a kind of 'differentiated citizenship' (18) where each nation must be seen as multinational in itself, and where each nation (or substate) possesses equal rights to self-determination. This multinational citizenship entails: democracy and equality, recognition (where each party recognizes the other as a distinct people, equal in status and with the right to determine their own futures), identity, trust, and territory (Hart and Murphy 2005, 79–102). As Will Kymlicka has pointed out, such a situation places a certain *obligation* and a responsibility on citizens. Kymlicka writes: 'citizenship should be a forum where people transcend their differences, and think about the common good of all citizens' (1995: 175).

battle for nature and the earth. Sustainable culture, these writings suggest, comes only from Aboriginal ways of life, which had always learnt how to live with nature. Invariably, as Australian Aboriginal autobiographies and tracts demonstrate, the demand for equitable land distribution and land rights have been at the centre of political and social debates. Plays such as Jimmy Chi and Kuckles' *Bran Nue Dae* (1990) embody this Aboriginal demand for land rights. A recitation in the musical goes thus:

> This fella song all about the Aboriginal people, coloured people, black people longa Australia. Us people want our land back, we want 'em rights, we want 'em fair deal, all same longa white man. *(2001 [1990]: 345)*

Here the recitation links together several oppressed peoples, as we can see. The rights are demanded on behalf of several equally subjugated people. It is precisely this kind of concern that links multiple kinds of postcolonial literatures even when they proceed from different histories of colonialism.

Aboriginal writing also expresses an anxiety about the loss of cultural specificity as more young men and women move into cities and cosmopolitan cultures for economic gain. In the context of global capitalism and urbanization, it seems impossible not to. And yet this relocation is almost always permanent and, more often than not, means a complete break with roots and Aboriginal ways of living.

Aboriginal writing underscores the multiple forms of epistemology. Tribal and Aboriginal forms of knowledge have always been rejected by 'First World' science because these do not follow Western systems of peer review or laboratory work. Alternate forms of knowing (from agriculture to healing) must be accounted for and used in development schemes.

Numerous Aboriginal writers explore the close links between the exploitation of nature and the suppression of women by capitalist structures. Critics have therefore argued that a return to native forms of spirituality in order to emancipate women might be required to ensure social justice (see chapter on Gender for a discussion of native American feminist spirituality). The work of Vandana Shiva (1988, 1994) and the theories of Carolyn Merchant (1980) in particular have been extremely influential in disseminating ideas of other epistemologies that account for local, feminine cultures that sacralize the woman (what is being called 'Native Womanism').

In the case of Dalit writing from India, the aesthetic derives from the work of labour, from the conditions of actual suffering in the physical, economic, and social domains. Sharankumar Limbale therefore argues that Dalit writing must be rooted in the material suffering of the Dalits,

and that '"giving extraordinary pain" must also be recognized as an artistic value' (2004: 108). The aesthetics is rooted in a very corporeal context. Bama's *Karukku* (2000) therefore locates all images of caste-related suffering in terms of the body. When humiliated by the priest in the class, the oppression is inscribed in terms of Bama's 'shamed' body: 'When I entered the classroom, the entire class turned round to look at me, and I wanted to shrink into myself as I went and sat on my bench, still weeping.' (17) She describes the trembling bodies of old, 'abused' Dalits (23), her racing heartbeats when she sees caste violence break out (26), and her 'burning anger' when she sees atrocities against her caste (23). There is no respite, for 'each day brings new wounds ... I have seen the brutal, frenzied and ugly face of society' (105). Indigenous aesthetic is not about abstractions—it is rooted in a particular place (as Mexican or Australian Aboriginal aesthetics demonstrate) or in very specific body–contexts. Though such a reading comes dangerously close to perpetuating the old binary of 'upper caste/class-mind versus lower caste/class-body', the distinction in sources of aesthetic ideas and images must be kept alive to undergird the opposing views of the two sides.

A significant genre in postcolonial Aboriginal writing is life writing. Part individual life story, part collective biography, the life narrative is an ethnographic account of a different life. Often mediated problematically by First World translators-editors-interlocutors (and thereby coding a new kind of politics; see McCall 2002), these narratives seek to present histories of entire communities. Such accounts, especially by Native American, Australian, and Canadian women, began appearing in large numbers from the 1970s (and it is no coincidence that this was coterminous with the rise of feminism, with its concomitant search for alternative canons of texts by women). Beverley Hungry Wolf's *The Ways of My Grandmothers*, Margaret Blackman's *During my Time* and other texts were quickly taken into curricula and feminist studies courses in First World classrooms (itself a mode of colonization and appropriation).

In fact, Aboriginal or Native American culture becomes a tourist commodity for consumption by white races from Europe and America. In a particularly tragic poem, 'Trading Post—Winslow, Arizona' Terri Meyette writes:

> Tourists with knobby knees white socks
> And black leather shoes parade out.
> Cameras around smog-soaked necks
> .....
> They buy history in a blanket,
> Family traditions in a squash-blossom necklace

> The old lady walks home
> With two bags of flour. (*Brant 1988: 42*)

In Arundhati Roy's celebrated *The God of Small Things* (1997), there is an episode embodying such a commodification. The 'Kathakali Man', heir to an illustrious local artistic tradition is on show: 'unviable. Unfeasible. Condemned goods' (219). What happens to him is tragic.

> He cannot slide down the aisles of buses, counting change and selling tickets. He cannot answer bells that summon him. He cannot stoop behind trays of tea and Marie biscuits ... He hawks the only things he owns. The stories his body can tell. He becomes a Regional Flavor. (*219*)

In the Heritage Hotel he provides 'truncated kathakali performances' to tourists (121).[5]

The Aboriginal writer is also concerned with the cultural negotiations that present-day youth have to undertake. Faced with discriminatory laws, social codes, and even medical norms, Aboriginal youth are often criminalized for not conforming to mainstream cultural codes. Louis Nowra's or Jack Davis' plays, for instance, depict the lack of 'fit' between the two ways of life. The children are forced to join 'mainstream', white schools where their own culture is erased through a very different programme of education. In fact the Aboriginal experience has been one of forced acculturation—a dual process of erasure of their native one and an assimilation of the white one. The most famous of Aboriginal texts, the Canadian Jeanette Armstrong's *Slash* (1985) also dealt with the experiences of a young Indian boy. An old medicine man tells Slash:

> It is not the [native] culture that is lost. It is you. The culture that belongs to us is *handed down to us* in the sacred medicine ways. Our strength lies there ... That is not lost. It is around us here *in the mountains and in the wild places*. It is in *the sound of the drums* and in *the sound of the singing of the birds* ... We are the ones who are lost, in alcohol and drugs and in the cities in the rat-race. (*191, emphasis in original*)

The comment captures the plight of a community itself. Adopting new lifestyles of drugs and crime, Aboriginal youth slip further away from their traditions, and many Native writings explore this deterioration of Native/Aboriginal psyches. Maria Campbell's classic *Halfbreed* (1973), the autobiography of a one such Indian, mapped her life of drugs and prostitution. Cherokee Dorothy Hayes's 'A Short Autobiography' (in Brant 1988: 204–06) details her life of alcoholism, unemployment, and unstable personal relationships. Nowra's *Byzantine Flowers* (1989), the play sequence *Capricornia*, *Crow* (1994), and *Radiance* (1993), rework Aboriginal stories.

In most Aboriginal writing, like in African or African American, authors take recourse to their native (non-white) myths and legends (for example, Henry Louis Gates Jr's 'signifying monkey' or *esu elegbara*). Thomas King, of Cherokee origin, and the best-known native Canadian novelist, frequently uses the figure of the 'trickster' or 'coyote' in his fiction (*Green Grass, Running Water*, 1993). Playwright-novelist Thomson Highway (*The Rez Sisters*) also uses the trickster figure. In addition much of Aboriginal writing adopts narrative strategies that are from the oral tradition rather than written ones. In fact Aboriginal writing can be described as the written expression of an oral culture. It borrows the rhythms of everyday speech and native storytelling conventions. These are basically 'aural' texts, seeking to render into written form sounds in the air during conversations.

Aboriginal writers often have to act as representatives of their community. This results in writing that often reads like propaganda—but propaganda that is necessary and demanded in an age where Aboriginal culture is either destroyed or commodified. Mudrooroo's critical writing (embodied in collections such as *Writing from the Fringe*, 1990) argued for specifically Aboriginal forms of textuality, political commitment, and resistance. Kevin Gilbert's preface to *Inside Black Australia* (1987, an anthology of poetry that includes significant voices like Rex Marshall, Mary Duroux, and Julie Watson Nungarrayi) is another politically charged plea for the recognition of an Aboriginal literary tradition. In fact, early Aboriginal writing, at least in Australia, was polemical (petitions, tracts thematizing resistance, negotiations with settler administration) rather than literary (Kleinert and Neale 2000: 319). Such critical efforts are clearly postcolonial in intent, methodology, and politics, and constitute an integral component of postcolonial writing today.

Indigenous writings such as the ones mentioned above must be located in the context of a world-wide awareness of the injustices done to the First Nation peoples in the Americas, Australia, and Canada. The writings and cultural work of indigenous artists are now a part of the world-wide indigenous rights movements (which also has a legal and political dimension, as activists fight for land rights and language inclusion). In recognition of the significance of the movement, the ILO Convention on Indigenous and Tribal Peoples (Convention No. 169) of 1989 declared that 'in many parts of the world [indigenous] peoples are unable to enjoy their fundamental human rights to the same degree as the rest of the population of the States in which they live'. It went on to state:

> [We recognize] the aspirations of [indigenous] peoples to exercise control over their own institutions, ways of life and economic development, and to maintain

and develop their identities, languages and religions, within the framework of the States in which they live. (*http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/62.htm*)

In terms of postcoloniality, this move towards self-affirmation and self-determination by indigenous peoples is as significant as the anti-colonial movements of the twentieth century.

Religion and Spirituality

In his scintillating essay, 'What the Twilight Says' Derek Walcott, describing the production of Wole Soyinka's *The Road* tells us how the Africans had 'lost both gods' and were left with only 'blasphemy' (1998 [1970]: 9). Walcott, I believe, captures the utter rootlessness and loss of traditions of the postcolonial. Abandoned by both native and Christian gods, the postcolonial has no more prayers, and all articulations are basically just blasphemies. This loss of the bulwark of identity and certitude—religion—and its attempted recovery is a central issue in much postcolonial writing. Rejecting Western conceptions of religion, postcolonial writings from Africa, Asia, and South America resurrect their gods—voodoo, witchcraft, alternate healing, spirituality, and animism.

While the newly-independent nation state in the 'Third World' sought to model itself after secular Western ideas of the nation, the native culture's roots in religion and spirituality were not easy to abandon. Further, most colonies had shared a difficult history with Christianity (arriving with the colonial master). The issue of conversion, the dialectic between native faith and a colonial (Christian) education and the search for a secular form for the nation-state are part of African, Asian, and South American histories in the twentieth century. One way of dealing with this theme is to posit a spiritual native culture/tradition against the materialist 'West'.

Numerous postcolonial novels deal with this often-traumatic theme of religion and faith, the relations between Christian missionaries and native peoples.[6] Australian Aboriginal writer Mudrooroo's *Dr Wooreddy's Prescription for Enduring the Ending of the World* (1983) was one of the first to explore the relation of the Aboriginal and the missionary. Mudrooroo critiques the colonial attempts to erase all traces of Aboriginal identity through the imposition of Christian names and notions of a Christian morality (which rejected native customs as mere superstition)—'a programme of work and learning together with cleanliness and Christian morality', as Mudrooroo puts it (1983: 149). In *Things Fall Apart*, Mr Brown decides that education might be the best method of destroying local religion:

> Mr Brown learnt a good deal about the religion of the clan and he came to the conclusion that a frontal attack would not succeed. And so he built a school and a little hospital in Umuofia ... From the very beginning religion and education went hand in hand. (166)

Further, the missionary made the Aboriginal economically dependent upon the colonial machinery—through the distribution of clothes, medicines, tobacco, and food. Thus, an insidious programme of undermining local identity was underway when the colonial missionary took away their economic, political, social, and religious structures.

In the post-independence period, writers were concerned with issues of secularism versus former religious traditions, modernity, and religion, and the revival of older religious systems. Thus tribal beliefs, local folkloric rituals and native totems figure prominently in Wole Soyinka's plays. R.K. Narayan's fiction dwells upon Hindu forms of thought. Rushdie (*The Moor's Last Sigh*, 1995), Shashi Tharur (*Riot*, 2001), and Rohinton Mistry (*A Fine Balance*, 1996) explore the communal tensions of contemporary India with the revival of Islamic and Hindu fundamentalism. Further, with fundamentalism, communities of different religious affiliations become marginalized. Mistry's fiction shows, for instance, how Parsis are marginalized in contemporary India. Maurice Gee, the New Zealand writer, sees contemporary New Zealand society as inheriting a form of Puritanism which causes a schizophrenic split. The culture is divided between a secular modernity and religious stability. Such writers are also aware of the dangers posed by religious fundamentalism and a blind faith in systems of thought that may be at odds with current ideas of social emancipation.

In other cases writers call into question the relevance of religion, especially colonial Christianity for the world's diverse races. In Alice Walker's classic, *The Color Purple* (1982) Celia wonders whether a white God listens to black people, since the white mayor does not listen to the blacks, and eventually admits that she does not find God in church. What is interesting is that postcolonial writers like Achebe argue that human beings create gods. In *Arrow of God* (1964) there is a powerfully dramatic scene where deities are installed by common consent: '[The leaders of villages] had hired a strong team of medicine-men to install a common deity for them. This deity which the fathers of the six villages made was called Ulu ...' (17) Religion, gods, and rituals in the postcolonial writer lead to what Ken Goodwin has termed 'an objectification of a social need' (153). It embodies a culture's constructed support system more than anything else. In some cases this means that manipulative people can misuse the power of faith to further their own ends—a theme seen in many postcolonial writers. We have already noted how Elesin exploits an ancient belief to get a young

bride in Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman*. In Rohinton Mistry's *A Fine Balance*, the young Dina has to constantly elude the clutches of a priest who loves touching young girls.

In other cases, writers see religion and faith as linked to social and economic conditions. In India the writings of Bhabani Bhattacharya and Kamala Markandaya locate religion and rituals in social conditions. Famines, natural disasters, and social tensions cause people to return to or reiterate their faith. In *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) Markandaya's Rukmani and Nathan see their living conditions as the result of fate alone:

> And whatever the extraneous influence the tannery may have exercised, the calamities of the land belong to it alone, born of wind and rain and weather, immensities not to be tempted by man or his creations. (*136*)

But Damodar in Markandaya's *A Handful of Rice* (1966) symbolizes a different approach. He prefers rebellion, self-examination, and self-improvement to Hindu fatalism and wishes. Ravi is caught between the twin approaches of Hindu acceptance and (Western?) self-improvement. In Rohinton Mistry's fiction, beleaguered Parsis in modern India hold on to religious rituals with a tenacity that is remarkable. Yezad's 'conversion' to belief in *Family Matters* suggests that religion can be the bulwark against soul-destroying change. In *Such a Long Journey*, Gustad finally understands the true depth of the chants he had merely uttered throughout his life:

> The prayers filled the dark room slowly ... And before he was aware of it, Gustad was under its gentle spell. He forgot the time, forgot Alamai, forgot Nusli. He listened to the music, the song in a language which he did not understand, but which was wondrously soothing. All his life he had uttered by rote the words of this dead language ... But tonight, in the *dustoorji's* soft and gentle music, the words were alive; tonight he came closer than he ever had to understanding the ancient meanings. (*247–48*)

A particularly powerful example of the hold religion has on even diasporic, Westernized 'Third Worlders' is seen in Bharati Mukherjee's *The Tiger's Daughter* (1971). Tara (who once ran away from a tantric, 81), now studying at Vassar College, turns to her old beliefs when lonely.

> [She] prayed to Kali for strength so she would not break down before these polite Americans. And Kali, who was a mother nursing her infant, serene, black and exquisite, and Kali, who was a mother devouring her infant, furious, black and exquisite, who sat under silk saris in a suitcase in Vassar, smiled out at her mischievously. (*1987 [1971]: 11*)

Here one sees the awkward juxtaposition of Western settings with Indian deities, a secular social interaction with a Third World informing ethos. Religion, suggests Mukherjee, does not really abandon a person, despite massive Western acculturation and dislocation.

POSTCOLONIAL SUBALTERNIZATION

Jamaica Kincaid asks the former colonial master in *A Small Place* (1988):

> Have you ever wondered to yourself why it is that all people like me seem to have learned from you is how to imprison and murder each other, how to govern badly, and how to take the wealth of our country and place it in Swiss bank accounts. (*34*)

Admittedly, this is a critique of colonialism. However, what is important is that it is also a comment on the newly independent society that has acquired all the evils from its former rulers. What Kincaid does is to suggest a line of continuity between the colonial and the postcolonial, where both are linked by crime, immorality, and corruption. Kincaid's comment is a critique of the nation-state itself. She gestures at a process whereby the new elites exploit the nation's poor, and 'nationalism' has become a keyword in preserving the power and privileges of this class of native masters.

Kincaid is one of the many postcolonial writers who have documented the 'crimes' of nationalism and of the newly independent nation-state. In Armah's powerful story of postcolonial Ghana, *The Beautyful Ones are Not Yet Born* (1968) the 'Teacher' says:

> I saw men tear down the veils behind which the truth had been hidden. But then the same men, when they had the power in their hands at last, began to find the veils useful ... Only some people have been growing, becoming different, that is all. After a youth spent fighting the white man, why not the president should discover as he grows older that his real desire has been to be like the white governor himself ... And the men around him, why not? What stops them sending their loved children to kindergartens in Europe? ... That is all anyone here ever struggles for: to be nearer the white man... (*108–109*)

In one devastating paragraph Armah destroys not only the anti-colonial struggle but also the postcolonial era. Neil Bissoondath in *A Casual Brutality* states unequivocally: 'as they [the colonizers] exploited us, so we [the postcolonials] exploited each other. As they raped our land, so we raped our land. As they took, so we took. We had absorbed the attitudes of the

colonizer, and we mimicked the worst in him. We learnt none of his virtues' (200–201).

Aijaz Ahmad in a ground-breaking essay draws attention to the 'nationalism of mourning' where postcolonial authors draw parallels and similarities between the colonial master's and the postcolonial nation-state's ability to oppress. Ahmad writes:

> What we witnessed was not just the British policy of divide and rule, which surely was there, but our own willingness to break up our civilizational unity, to kill our neighbours … A critique of others (anti-colonial nationalism) receded even further into the background, entirely overtaken now by an even harsher critique of ourselves. The major fictions of the 1950s and 1960s—the shorter fictions of Manto, Bedi, Intezar Hussein; the novels of Qurrat ul Ain, Khadija Mastoor, Abdullah Hussein—came out of that refusal to forgive what we ourselves had done and were still doing, in one way or another, to our own polity. (*1987: 22*)

If the native was the subaltern during colonial rule, postcolonialism created its own subalterns. Women, 'lower' castes, and classes, ethnic minorities rapidly became the 'Others' within the postcolonial nation-state. The new elite was as oppressive and exclusive as the colonial master. Democratic approaches failed, and economic and social emancipation slipped across the horizons as millions of 'postcolonials' saw themselves colonized by the new powers. Rohinton Mistry's fiction, set in post-Independence India, for instance, demonstrates how the rise of Hindutva marginalized the Muslims and made it clear to the Parsis that they were an ethnic minority in Hindu India. Further, caste discrimination and working-class exploitation continues unabated. In *A Fine Balance*, the horrific fates of Ishvar and Om are symptomatic of a postcolonial subalternization—a process whereby certain categories are rendered destitute, disenfranchised, and economically powerless by the socio-political structures of the new nation-state. It is a process of disempowerment. Mistry writes:

> During his [Dukhi's] childhood years he mastered a full catalogue of the real and imaginary crimes a low-caste person could commit, and the corresponding punishments were engraved upon his memory. By the time he entered his teens, he had acquired all the knowledge he would need to perceive that invisible line of caste he could never cross… (*97*)

Om and Ishvar represent lower-caste, rural subalterns, driven into the city by the upper-caste-initiated killings of their families. In the city they are

exploited, and eventually reduced to beggary and sterility (literally, as a result of the Emergency's forced sterilization campaigns). Nusswan represents the postcolonial nation's elite. Nusswan says:

> People sleeping on pavements gives industry a bad name … at least two hundred million people are surplus to requirements, they should be eliminated. (*366*)

The casualness with which the homeless can be reduced to statistics represents Mistry's critique. Keki Daruwalla has a humorous take on the gullible postcolonial who craves spiritual guidance, thus opening her/himself to exploitation by dubious 'gurus'.

> And the missing *nautanki* dancer
> Who was found in the Swami's bed,
> The Swami often photographed lying on a plank of nails;
> And his acolytes who were furious
> Not because they discovered this liaison
> But because they'd never known he had a proper bed! (*1995: 6*)

Postcolonial subalternization also involves the discursive constructions of the anti-national Muslim (in India), the 'insurgent' communist, the anti-social Muslim youth and other such 'categories' of periodic witch-hunts. As Gyanendra Pandey has persuasively argued—an argument that has been borne out by right-wing constructions of the Muslim in India after 1992, Godhra and others (and, post-9/11 in the USA and Europe)—such groups are called upon to routinely prove their nationalism, patriotism, and commitment to the idea(l) of India (Pandey 1999).

One of the most significant collections of voices that captures this postcolonial subalternization is *People Unlike Us* (2001). The volume documents peoples marginalized and victimized by the postcolonial nation-state. The volume is worth spending some time on for what it reveals about India.

The militancy-ridden state of Kashmir presents an example of how postcolonial states isolate sections of their 'own' people. Entire villages have been wiped out, children orphaned, and women widowed. Numerous villages are attacked by both pro-Pakistan militants and the Indian army: the former suspects them to be pro-India or army informers, and the latter accuses them of being militants. Writing about one such village, Pazipora, the site of a massacre by the Indian army in 1990, Muzamil Jaleel writes: 'geographically, it is a part of India, but emotionally it is poles apart' (2001: 23). Another voice from the region—belonging to Jalaluddin,

who has lost 23 family members to the war in Kashmir—declares: 'No one here is Indian at heart, nor will anybody save you for being Indian' (17).

The northeastern states remain marginal to 'mainstream' India. Underdevelopment, militancy, cross-border refugee and smuggling problems, tribals who never figure in public debates—the North East is the silence at the heart of India. Siddhartha Deb, writing about this region notes:

> The modern, secular nation-state adopted as a political model for India demands a certain flattening out of differences and the imposition of a structure that does not consider small or anomalous groups of people or nomadic movements ... If nations have to be imagined into being, the people of the north-east may represent the most remarkable failure of that imagination in regard to India. (2001: 88)

The marginalization of the North East is ironically a collapse of the post-colonial project of creating a unified India.

In another case, Randhir Khare explores how Bhils, Khatkaris, and other tribals lose their ways of life because forest lands disappear at a rapid rate in contemporary India. Their marginalization has been extreme, even with so-called 'development' programmes, so much so that they are forced to live as scavengers. Khare argues that the tribals, who have lived with nature, should be an integral part of all reforestation and forest protection programmes (2001: 159–211).

In each of the cases documented by the volume *People Unlike Us*, mainstream postcolonial society marginalizes, oppresses, and in some cases decimates certain sections, cultures, and ways of life. The 'unity in diversity' myth or the illusion of the world's greatest democracy often conceals sharp iniquities, oppressions, and injustice. The politics of access to democratic rights, education, and health care ensures that the benefits of democracy or development accrue to metropolitan, able-bodied people of particular castes and classes. Under the aegis of globalization such iniquities have become worse: as subsidies are removed, new forms of technology alter ways of life; electricity, health, and even the water we drink, get privatized and 'owned' by corporate bodies often situated beyond the nation-state's borders. Postcoloniality, unfortunately, is a continuous process of subalternization for many.

Postcolonial subalternization involves two main components:

- The continuing effects of colonialism
- Postcolonial protest

Continuing Colonialism?

In Chinua Achebe's *No Longer at Ease* (1960) Obi Okonkwo returns to his Igbo society after a period of study in England. What he discovers is that the Igbos have suffered a cultural collapse due to colonialism. Nation-building becomes a difficult task in the face of ethnic strife, widespread corruption, and the general decadence of native society. He quickly finds that his idea of a pan-Nigerian state was unlikely to happen because Umuofias continually saw themselves as 'sojourners' in a strange land. Achebe writes in what is surely a theme common to all postcolonial cultures:

> The Umuofians ... who leave their home town to find work in towns all over Nigeria regard themselves as sojourners ... When they have saved up enough money they ask their relations at home to find them a wife, or they build a 'zinc' house on their family land. No matter where they are in Nigeria, they start a local branch of the Umuofia Progressive Union. (4)

There are other instances where Achebe's appraisal of Igbo society and culture sees it as exploitative and flawed. For example, Igbo culture is one of hypermasculine competition. The fact that Okonkwo and the rest of the village see his father—who was artistically inclined—as effeminate and as a failure (in fact Okonkwo's perpetual fear throughout the novel is that he may end up like his father) suggests that things are not exactly wonderful in native cultures. In Soyinka's *The Lion and the Jewel*, he is sharply critical of what Baroka's traditionalism stands for: the exploitation of women. However, neither Soyinka nor Achebe questions the claim that native culture, with all its flaws, is still better than the colonial one. Achebe's sharp irony suggests that 'progressive' is a questionable term in this context. Social fragmentation, and a refusal to see beyond their family, means that a concept of 'Nigeria' does not exist for the Umuofians. Nuruddin Farah, Somalia's best-known novelist, echoes the theme when he says: 'I write because a theme has chosen me: the theme of Africa's upheaval and societal disorganization' (2002: 13). Jean Arasanayagam's poetry and short fiction captures the ethnic strife in Sri Lanka, where childhoods, innocence, economy, and cultural artefacts all fall prey to the conflict's violence. (The significance of the ethnic conflict for contemporary Sri Lankan literature can be gauged from the fact that the first section of Rajiva Wijesinha's *An Anthology of Contemporary Sri Lankan Poetry in English*, 1988, is 'Moved out of Trance: Ethnicity and Violence'.)

George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953) maps the anti-colonial struggle in a tiny village in Barbados. Mr Slime becomes a local leader

who organizes the rebellion against the English Mr Creighton. Lamming shows how all the hopes of the anti-colonial struggle are betrayed and destroyed when Mr Slime's organization becomes the new elite—with all the corruption of the colonial one. Lamming's breathtaking imagery shows how black and white shade or merge into each other as colonialism is transformed into neocolonialism. In a stunning image Lamming encapsulates the postcolonial despair:

> The figures [a black man and a white, quarrelling] were still, and they looked across at each other hard and steady as if they were involved in a common chaos which neither could understand but greatly desired to redeem ... And as they looked the clouds curving over and about their heads made an arc of words that read: ARE YOU NOT A BROTHER? The shapes sharpened in outline, the white one getting heavier and darker. (*111; emphasis in original*)

The racial attributes of the men are erased when they become mere 'figures'. There is a common chaos about them. This common chaos—evidently the anti-colonial struggle and the immediate aftermath of political independence—effects a change: the white and black seem to become each other. The surreal nature of the image is a larger critique of what happens in postcoloniality.

In the poem by Chicano/a writer-activist Rodolfo 'Corky' Gonzales ('I Am Joaquín' 1967) quoted above, he admits to his complicity in such a postcolonial subalternization where the new elites have retained class and ethnic hierarchies even after independence. M.G. Vassanji's novel *The In-between World of Vikram Lall* (2004) deals with the corruption, violence, and new forms of racism that characterize post-independent Kenya (the racism now is against the Indians who have lived in Kenya all their lives). Upamanyu Chatterjee's satires often show the Indian administrative and political elite as a cross between the clown and the con-man. Wole Soyinka's *A Play of Giants* is about human suffering in the postcolonial state. His *Death and the King's Horseman*, while providing a picture of the slow erosion of native culture under colonialism, is also alert to the social conditions of traditional Yoruba communities.

Elesin obviously uses his official position to acquire any woman he wants. He is rarely refused, as he admits, because he is the King's horseman. There is the sense of power being misused, and suggests a theme of social injustice. Elesin demands a young bride just when he is about to commit ritual suicide. Iyaloja defends Elesin's unreasonable demand because Elesin is their link to the ancestors. The entire scheme is justified on the basis of community belief. This is social injustice in the name of faith. Soyinka critiques an exploitative system where people with sanctioned power often misuse it.

Interestingly, many postcolonial societies choose to see the problems with their culture as either a legacy of colonialism or as something imported from the outside (in India, all social evils are attributed to Westernization, almost as though patriarchy, casteism, and bonded labour were Western inventions for the express purpose of ruining India). In Achebe's *A Man of the People* (1966), federal minister M.A. Nanga is welcomed by the people despite the clear knowledge that he is corrupt. As Chidi Okonkwo has perceptively pointed out, Nanga's flaws are explained away as a part of political culture of the 'beyond' and having nothing to do with the 'home' (Okonkwo 1999: 162). The tribe's tolerance of the 'beyond's' corruption ignores local flaws and problems, especially the fact that local conditions have deteriorated and become corrupt. Such a corruption of local/indigenous culture is a central theme in many African and Caribbean writers. In Soyinka's novel, *The Interpreters* (1972) Sekoni returns (like Obi Okonkwo in *No Longer at Ease*) to Nigeria hoping to use his new knowledge to improve his people and land. He discovers then that such an improvement is undesired by the local elites and by the common man. The masses, Soyinka suggests, have become indifferent to the freedoms they have won with such sacrifice. The despotic elites have become greedy, and the poor poorer. In a devastating image Soyinka shows how the masses have become as barbaric as their former masters. A petty thief is lynched by the mob. This same mob, writes Soyinka, '[will] reform tomorrow and cheer the larger thief returning from his twentieth Economic Mission and pluck his train from the mud, dog-wise, in their teeth.' (114) Sekoni eventually has a nervous breakdown in a situation where his utter helplessness (he is sent on a punitive transfer) at empowering his 'home' is compounded by the sheer ignorance and mindless brutality of his compatriots. Soyinka suggests that Sekoni's breakdown is symptomatic of what would happen to any morally upright person in postcolonial society.

Postcolonial Protest

> Leaves murmur like dying Muslims.
> —Jayanta Mahapatra (2005: 67)

In Omprakash Valmiki's *Joothan: A Dalit's Life* (2003) he recounts how everywhere he went people encountering his name assumed he was a Brahmin (Valmiki, the author of the Hindu epic, *The Ramayana*). He has a poignant discussion about the implications of his name with his daughter.

What strikes the reader about the narrative here is the unchanged arc of the Indian public imaginary, where caste is still, more than half a century after political independence, the dominant context of social interaction (Valmiki 2003: 124–32). Postcolonies the world over continue to battle their pre-colonial prejudices and oppressions, which appear to be the one zone where colonialism's impact is barely visible. This irony of a pre-colonial past is the subject of debate in most literary and polemical texts in the postcolony.

Nationalism, which had helped the anti-colonial struggle, now becomes something entirely different in the postcolony. Dissent is suppressed as elite groups take charge and become more oppressive than the colonial master. In fact, as early as 1963, in his *The Wretched of the Earth*, Franz Fanon had warned against the rise of the bourgeois class as the ruling elite in newly-independent societies. Differences are glossed over in a desperate attempt to project a unified 'nation'. Projects labelled 'national development'—driven by Euro-American money (aid) and benefiting the corporate houses of postcolonial societies—are pushed through at the cost of tribals, local populations, and women. Contemporary debates over Narmada, for instance, are essentially about what the 'nation' actually means. What happens in such a nationalism is postcolonial subalternization—a process of homogenization that excludes all who do not fit in. Thus Aboriginals must be brought into the mainstream 'national culture', or else placed in ghettoes (euphemistically termed 'reservations'). As the section on indigenism/nativism above demonstrates, many writers of Aboriginal backgrounds find postcolonial nationalism extremely problematic for the way in which it ignores ethnic and local specificity. Nationalism solidifies into a monolithic mass (in India it takes the form of a dictum repeated *ad infinitum*: 'unity in diversity') that refuses difference or variation. In Amitav Ghosh's *The Hungry Tide* (2004), poorer people seeking lands to live and work in the Sunderbans are killed in a massacre by the State (ironically, a regime run by the Marxism-communism inspired party). In post-independence India, any settlers (including refugees from Bangladesh) living on the island of Morichjhapi (declared a tiger preserve by the Indian government), are deemed 'squatters'. Nirmal in the novel sees the Hamilton experiment (of setting up a community in the islands) and the settlement at Morichjhapi as 'history from below', to adapt a phrase from Subaltern Studies. Nirmal calls it 'an experiment, imagined not by those with learning and power, but by those without' (171). Ghosh here is suggesting that nations and communities are not necessarily 'imagined' by elites alone: powerless, illiterate, and poor people also dream of them. When Nirmal voices the aspirations of these powerless subalterns—'where do we belong?' (254)—he is articulating a protest against the non-belonging of the subalterns in 'free' India. Nirmal's answer can be read as a voice of postcolonial subalternization itself: 'Where else could you belong, except in the place you refused to leave' (254). Belonging and non-belonging, powerful and powerless, subaltern and elite: the equations of colonialism continue to hold relevance in contemporary, postcolonial India as subalterns are harassed, rendered powerless, and even killed in the name of the nation.

In the Indian context, Dalit writing in native languages, and now increasingly available in English, generates a powerful critique of postcolonial subalternization.[7] Dalit writings are also important as postcolonial protest literature. During the nationalist struggle, reformers and national leaders had argued for social transformation and revolution, especially in the case of widow re-marriage and child marriage. A central issue, foregrounded by Dr Ambedkar, was that of untouchability. Dr. Ambedkar argued that there could be no real 'independence' for India if millions of 'untouchables' remained victims of the caste system in Hinduism. Dr Ambedkar's criticism of Gandhi and the Indian National Congress rested primarily on his argument that neither of these was willing to work for/toward the social transformation of the untouchables (for a sample of Ambedkar's responses to Gandhi's charges against him see his *Annihilation of Caste*, 1990 (1936), especially Appendix II, 113–29). In order to understand the strongest critique of contemporary (i.e., postcolonial) India—that of the Dalits—it is important to re-tread the paths of pre-Independence India.

During the colonial period, British administration appropriated the existing caste structure for its own purposes. The collusion of Brahminism and state power ensured the retention of Hindu social and caste hierarchies (Omvedt 1994, Dirks 2001, Bandopadhyay 2004). However, the 1917 Calcutta session of the Indian National Congress, under the Presidency of Annie Besant, passed a resolution that it was both necessary and just to remove the oppressions of caste on the Depressed Classes. As Dr Ambedkar points out, this was an unusual step because earlier leaders (and he quotes Dadabhai Naoroji, Badruddin Tyabji, W.C. Bonnerjea, and others) ignored this aspect of social reform for the so-called lower castes (Ambedkar 1946: 1–18). Hindu society may even have reformed itself (by elite groups) in such a way that it legitimized Brahmin domination and cultural hegemony (Bandopadhyay 2004).

Ambedkar's critique of the national movement underscores the fact that the Congress was not a true representative of the untouchables. Ambedkar demonstrated how the electoral system created by the British government would never allow a Scheduled Caste candidate to be elected

to Parliament (1946: 146–65. For Ambedkar's account of the rise of untouch-
ability see his works, *The Untouchables*, 1948, and *Who Were the Shudras?*
1970 [1946]). Ambedkar's declaration sums up the problems of representa-
tion both before and after Independence:

> The reason which has led the Untouchables to non-co-operate with the Congress has been popularly expressed by them when they say that they do not wish to be placed under Hindu Raj in which the governing class would be the Bania, the Brahmin, with lower class Hindus as their policemen, all of whom have been the hereditary enemies of the Untouchables. (*Ambedkar 1946: 168*)

He declared: 'political reform cannot with impunity take precedence over social reform' (1990 [1936]: 38), and that political revolutions must be preceded by social and religious revolutions (ibid: 41). In the post-Independence context, with continuing atrocities on Dalits (as documented in multiple sources) even into the new millennium, Ambedkar's question to the Congress remains valid: 'Will there be any other safeguard, beside adult suffrage, for preventing the tyranny of a Hindu Communal Majority?' (1946: 169). The incorporation of Dalits into the political mainstream during the penultimate phase of India's colonial history maintained Hindu society's hierarchic structure and upper caste domination (Bandopadhyay 2004).

Dalit writing must be treated as a part of postcolonial writing because, like 'traditional' anti-colonial works, it seeks

- social transformation(s);
- freedom from dominating social structures;
- justice for the oppressed;
- a counter-point or counter-perspective to established histories; and
- to protest against the subsuming of local, victim narratives into a larger framework, thereby erasing their specificity.

In terms of theoretical frameworks, Dalit writing represents a subaltern viewpoint that has been ignored thus far. While it is important to enlist the support of this set of writings for a more egalitarian postcolonial society, caution must be exercised that a tribe or community's historical, economic, and social specificity is not erased in the bargain.[8] These are local stories, rooted in the seasons, agricultural practices, and folklore of a particular place; hence subsuming them into mainstream postcolonial 'canons' runs the risk of sacrificing their particulars in favour of a structural solidarity with the other postcolonial oppressed. This aporetic path is what postcolonial studies will have to tread: to retain their particulars while also ensuring their integration into a larger movement for justice and equality.

In order to understand the nature of this critique it is necessary to explore the nature of Dalit writing. Using forms as diverse as fiction and autobiography, Dalit writers like Omprakash Valmiki, Bama, Laxman Gaikwad, and Laxman Mane reveal how caste prejudices, economic exploitation, and social injustices continue to oppress millions of so-called 'independent' Indians. Police brutality, political manipulation, and administrative indifference have ensured that independent India continues to treat the 'lower' castes as 'marginals'. Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchalya* (1998) describes the persistent harassment of his caste by policemen. The reason is that they have been classified as 'thieves', a legacy of the British empire, which had first passed the Criminal Tribes Act in 1871.[9]

Popular Dalit writing like pamphlets and street plays, Badri Narayan and A.R. Misra argue, presents a counterpoint to traditional histories of the country. Narayan and Misra propose that this 'literature of the greater majority' (Bahujan Sahitya) 'meet[s] the psychological demands of the present-day power struggle and attempt to liberate the common Dalits from being compelled to believe what the dominant castes have produced through the written word'. It serves the purpose of 'infus[ing] strategic and tactical thoughts required for social transformation' (2004: 31–32).

Indian Dalit autobiography must be read less as an individual's 'life-writing' than as a *testimonio*, an atrocity narrative by witnesses (for a definition see John Beverley 1992). Like *testimonio*, Dalit writings are narratives of trauma, pain, resistance, protest, and social change. Dalit texts document the sufferings of and atrocities committed upon a large section of the population. The writing proceeds from a lived experience of poverty, violence, rejection, and suffering. Here autobiography or life writing is less about the Dalit individual than about the community/caste. That is, it is a collective biography of a people that have been structurally subordinated for centuries. Bama writes: 'I share the same difficulties and struggles that all Dalit poor experience. I share to some extent the poverty of the Dalits who toil far more painfully through fierce heat and beating rain …' (2000: 67–68)

Life-writing documents atrocities and voices protest. It seeks to raise consciousness and bring about social change. It is a literature of protest and a literature of hope. Bama calls for change thus: 'We who are asleep must open our eyes and look about us. We must not accept the injustice of our enslavement by telling ourselves it is our fate, as if we have no true feelings: we must dare to stand up for change…'(2000: 25) *Karukku* as testimonial life-writing enables Bama to share her tale of pain so that personal testimony becomes the accurate historical witnessing of a social

structure of traumatic oppression (Nayar 2006, 2008). In subaltern writing, descriptions of localized, individual suffering are located within larger historical contexts of collective pain. Dalit *testimonio* places the individual's story within the public domain, in a discourse that makes the story shareable with others. Readers are embarrassed by revelations, for example, of child abuse in the family or the description of state-sponsored torture/violence since one expects the home to be safe and the state to be a protector. Bama's text must be read alongside other texts that serve as *testimonios*. While reading such texts as Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchalya* or Laxman Mane's *Upara*, and media reports of atrocities against Dalits, we also need to understand the obligations of witnessing these atrocities. Dalit writing functions within a dynamic where silences are increasingly pierced by voices such as Bama's. Dalit writing reveals the oppressive structure, corruption, and continuing indifference of the postcolonial state.

Other Dalit texts also showcase the history of caste oppression—from mythic histories to colonial and post-Independence India. Thus the play *Shambook Vadh* (Periyar Lalayee Singh and Ram Avtar Pal, 2004) highlights the killing of a Shudra ascetic and leader, Shambook, by the icon of Hinduism, Rama, because he 'oppos[ed] the varna system and … conspire[ed] for a social revolt' (2004: 185). The play illustrates Ambedkar's argument throughout his writings that social reform remained the privilege of the 'upper' caste Hindus: it had to be done on their own terms rather than as a Dalit-driven reform. The passage is worth quoting:

> Ram: It is certainly on account of your ascetic fervour that my kingdom is enveloped with sin … The Social Upliftment Committee is opposing the Aryan varna system and its rituals …
>
> Shambook: King! You have misunderstood. I have simply attempted for upliftment of a backward society. They have every right to regain their lost status. If you call it treason, it is all right.
>
> Ram: Yes, I take it so be an act of treason. It is not your but my duty to uplift those who are backward. (*2004: 185*)

Chicano/a writing, exemplified in Moraga, Anzaldua, and others, also maps a similar history of oppression and dispossession. This genre seeks to present to the world the cruelty of cultural encounters. Protest is central to this genre of South American writing. Post-Babri Masjid, post-Kashmir (where Pandits and Muslims are *both* massacred and victimized), post-Godhra, communal, caste and other violence call the efficacy and legitimacy of the nation itself into question. It is therefore with heavy irony that

Meena Alexander, having described communal violence in 1990s India, writes:

> Please don't
> Keep writing letters to Gandhiji
> He has gone through so much already. (*2004: 83*)

Poets like Jayanta Mahapatra, scarred by the increasing violence of post-colonial India, now produce poetry that thematizes victim-hood, suffering, social collapse, and decay. In a section titled 'Another Ruined Country' (*61–70*) in his new volume, Mahapatra maps the various forms of senseless violence against women, young men, and particular communities. He is forced—unhappily, I believe—to conclude that India is now:

> A land haunted
> by the cries of women made hostages by history. (*2005: 64*)

Writings from the north-eastern states capture the sense of dispossession in the post-Independence era. A region riven by strife, marred by military presence, and deaths, literature from the 'Seven Sisters' states is a particularly relevant case of postcolonial anguish and protest. Poetry from the region links nature with culture in an uncomfortable relationship—topography and guns come together. Desmond Kharmawphlang, one of the finest poets writing from the North-east concludes 'The Conquest' thus:

> You stricken Land, how they love
> Your teeming soil, your bruised children.
> One of them told me, "You know,
> Yours is a truly metropolitan city". (*in Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 134*)

Chandra Kanta Murasing writes, in a similar vein:

> The hen in the forest now
> Roams and clucks from noon to dusk,
> The haunting madhavi fragrance escapes the rustle of spring,
> It is acrid with the smell of gunpowder.
> ('*Forest – 1987*', *in Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 254*)

Saratchand Thiyam's 'Gun' opens with

> Till today, I haven't heard any hypnotic voice rising
> when a gun is thrummed calmly and gently by fingers.
> (*in Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 106*)

Kynpham Sing Nongkynrih's 'Ren' shifts between a Khasi folk story and the harsh contemporary reality in a lovely mix of registers:

> Ren, the beloved of a river nymph
> .....
> Times have changed
> Few care to listen
> Many only wish to be left
> To their separate dreams.
> And mine always end
> With alien policemen
> Their eyes longing
> To eat us up. (*in Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 158–59*)

Almond D Syiem's 'On Top of a Hill' maps a different topos:

> Dead, and only khaki men stalk its streets.
> The law's noose has strangled
> The city's throat. (*in Nongkynrih and Ngangom 2003: 174–75*)

Here the predominance of violence, death, and military presence calls into question the images of 'India' as a nation. Poetry from the North East protests against the homogenization of a country where regions are marginalized and oppressed as the Other within the nation-state (see a discussion by Siddhartha Deb above). In Rita and Jackie Huggins' *Auntie Rita* (1994), an Aboriginal autobiography, the mother Rita emphasizes that it is a collective biography too: 'My story is not rare among Aboriginal women ... Much has been done to me and my people that we find hard to talk about.' (2) The work maps oppression on a communal scale, where the individual sufferer is a metonym for an entire race/ethnic group.

Postcolonial protest, as seen in the above examples, showcases a nation-state's uneven relationship with its people and regions, the continuing forms of exploitation, forced homogenization, and social injustice. However, there is also the risk of converting the 'subaltern' into a catch-all category. In an incisive comment on the 'expansion' of the Subaltern Studies project, Brinda Bose writes:

> Certainly ... subalterns are everywhere, and there is nothing sudden or surprising about it anymore. In fact, the Collective, as it presumably plans its next volume that will take them into double figures, will need to guard against the stealing effect that is the very doom of academic endeavour. The Subalternists appear to be caught in a peculiar bind: that of indispensability coupled with a kind of debilitating predictability. (*1997: 5–7*)

Bose's warning is timely. The unquestioned 'application' of subalternity as a concept-metaphor, a praxis, and as a category runs the risk of blunting its political edge. The academic careerism that today relies on 'prospecting' subalternity—I use the colonial image deliberately—evacuates much of material conditions of the critical exploitation of the structurally oppressed. The new 'behalfism', which Salman Rushdie (2002) warns us about (for the full passage see note 8), is as much a contributor to the exploitation as anything else. A reification of the category is called for today, for there are multiple layers of oppression, and many modes of silences.

NOTES

1. Partha Chatterjee, for instance, rejects Anderson's thesis as yet another example of Eurocentrism. He writes:

> If nationalisms in the rest of the world have to choose their imagined community from certain "modular" forms already available to them by Europe and the Americas, what do they have left to imagine? History, it would seem, has decreed that we in the postcolonial world shall only be perpetual consumers of modernity. Europe and the Americas, the only true subjects of history, have thought out on our behalf not only the script of colonial enlightenment and exploitation, but also that of our anti-colonial resistance and postcolonial misery. Even our imaginations must remain forever colonized. (1999 [1986], *Nation and its Fragments*: 5)

Chatterjee argues that anti-colonial nationalism had its domain of sovereignty even before it confronted imperialism. In the case of India, for instance, the material world was modelled, under the impact of colonialism, after the West. In the 'inner' domain—the spiritual—a certain cultural identity was maintained, ferociously defending it against Western intrusion. A related argument is available in Ranajit Guha's critique of Eric Hobsbawm. Hobsbawm in his *Primitive Rebels* (1978 [1959]) categorizes peasants as 'pre-political people' (2–3). This, in effect, reinstates the linear movement of European historiography: political consciousness, Hobsbawm implies, came first to the Europeans and then to the 'primitives'. What Hobsbawm does not accept is that there might be different forms of the political itself. Thus, Guha argues that peasant movements from about 1790s in India were 'political' even as they took recourse to myths, practices involving gods and spirits (Guha 1983, chapters One and Two). That is, Hobsbawm's notion of the political as secular movements (and he is not strictly accurate about this either, if one returns to European history, where political movements invariably took recourse to discourses of the 'divine' or the miraculous) rejects the peasant's 'spiritual', 'magical' or theological movements as 'primitive' and 'pre-political'. Guha emphasizes that European constructions of such elements as 'traditional'

were 'traditional only in so far as [their] roots could be traced back to pre-colonial times, but [they were] by no means archaic in the sense of being outmoded' (1988: 4).

2. See, for instance, Michel de Certeau's *The Writing of History* (1988).
3. For a study of the genocidal effects of postcolonial nativism see Mamdani (2001).
4. This of course runs the risk of homogenization, since there is considerable variation among Aboriginals in Australia, Canada, the Native Indians of America, and the Adivasis of India. However, in sharp contrast with the urbanized, cosmopolitan Euro-American and 'First World' cultures, Aboriginals share a common history.
5. I have elsewhere explored the rhetoric of authenticity that informs postcolonial tourism. See my *Reading Culture* (2006), especially 202–207.
6. For studies of missionary work and its impact in colonies, and for the close link between evangelicalism and empire see, among others, Anna Johnston's *Missionary Writing and Empire* (2003) and Andrew Porter's *Religion versus Empire?* (2004).
7. The term 'Dalit' comes from the Sanskrit 'dala', meaning 'to oppress'. It also means 'of the soil' in Marathi. It suggests, 'that which has been ground down'. Today the term includes socially suppressed caste groups in India. The term's semantic scope has been extended to include tribals, landless farm-labourers, so-called 'criminal tribes' and the exploited. For a study of the Indian caste system see Louis Dumont (1980), Gail Omvedt (1998) and Sagarika Ghose (2003). Statistics reveal that 49 per cent Dalits today are agricultural labourers, while only 25 per cent are cultivators. Since 1961, despite a host of land reforms, a great many Dalits lost even the little land they had and had no choice but to join the ranks of landless agricultural labourers. Today, over 86 per cent of SC [Scheduled Caste] households are landless or near landless and 63 per cent are wage-labour households. See 'Black Paper on the Status of Dalit Human Rights' (http://www.Dalits.org). For documents on atrocities on Dalits see www.Dalits.org and Human Rights Watch's *Broken People: Caste Violence against India's "Untouchables"* (NY: Human Rights Watch, 1999). The Human Rights Watch reports that there have been cases of discrimination against Dalits in disbursal of assistance for tsunami victims. (see http://hrw.org/english/docs/2005/01/14/india10019.htm)
8. Salman Rushdie warns of people who set themselves up as the voice of the oppressed and the subaltern. Speaking for the subaltern is often a good career move in academics and intellectual work. Rushdie writes:

> Beware the writer who sets himself up or herself up as the voice of a nation. This includes nations of race, gender, sexual orientation, elective affinity. This is the New Behalfism. Beware behalfies!
>
> The New Behalfism demands uplift, accentuates the positive, offers stirring moral instruction ... Seeing literature as inescapably political, it substitutes political values for literary ones. It is the murderer of thought. Beware!
>
> —*Salman Rushdie, 'Notes on Writing and the Nation' (2002: 60)*

9. In 1952 the Government of India officially 'denotified' the stigmatized communities. From 1961 the Government of India, through the state machineries, has been publishing state-wise lists of 'Denotified and Nomadic Tribes'. Laxman Gaikwad's *Uchalya* is the autobiographical narrative of a member of one such 'criminal tribe'. But atrocities against such 'denotified tribes' has continued. See Mahasweta Devi's 2002 essay on the topic at http://www.indiatogether.org/bhasha/budhan/birth1871.html.

FOUR

Gender

> Chicanos are an occupied nation within a nation and women and women's sexuality are occupied within the Chicano nation. If women's bodies and those of men and women who transgress their gender roles have been historically regarded as territories to be conquered, they are also territories to be liberated. Feminism has taught us this. The nationalism I seek is one that decolonizes the brown and female body as it decolonizes the brown and female earth.
>
> —Cherrié Moraga (1993: 150)

The modes through which European imperialism 'colonized' women have been documented in numerous postcolonial critical texts (Burton 1994, Jayawardena 1995, Mani 1998). As early as 1986, essays describing the 'double colonization' of women by patriarchy and colonialism were appearing on the scene (Peterson and Rutherford 1986).[1]

More recent studies (Aldrich 2003) have explored the relationship of colonialism with other kinds of sexuality (homosexuality, lesbianism, etc.). Studies of the woman's condition in postcolonies have been undertaken in law, literature, and the social sciences. In terms of literature, gender and sexuality have become prominent themes in the last decades of the twentieth century. Gender and the role of women in the postcolonial nation-state has been the focus in the writings of Anita Desai, Ama Ata Aidoo, Suniti Namjoshi, Buchi Emecheta, and Nawal El Saadawi. The linkage between gender and their racial/ethnic identities has been the subject of numerous autobiographical writings by Native Canadian and African American women such as Gloria Anzaldúa and Maria Campbell. This chapter deals with postcolonial women's texts that foreground the gender question from various perspectives, while focusing on the possibilities of a postcolonial feminism.[2]

Research in the social sciences has focused on the status of women in postcolonial societies, taking particular care to see how class, caste, and other factors such as economy, political empowerment, and literacy have contributed to the condition of women in India, the Caribbean, Africa, and the Arab world. In many cases such studies have also analysed the impact of 'First World' feminisms on 'Third World' writers, while exploring the possibilities of 'Third World' feminism (Jayawardena 1986, Sunder Rajan 1993).

The retrieval of women's literary and other texts from the margins and exclusions of the canon (Tharu and Lalita 1993; De Mel and Samarakkody 2002) has resulted in the increasing awareness of women's role in the construction of social, communal, national identities; their oppression at the hands of not just colonialism, but also patriarchy in native cultures; and their strategies at escaping/negotiating the power relations between genders. Literary traditions in most postcolonial nations have focused on writings by males (as I have pointed out in my Preface, even the revisionist Ngugi does not include a single woman author when speaking of expanding the canon. For a critique of Ngugi's representation of women, see Boehmer 2005b, especially 42–53). The canon, as several feminist critics have demonstrated, is a male bastion. As a result, women's texts and narratives are either not included, or included as 'domestic fiction', thereby relegating them to a less-privileged space, and ensuring that these narratives' political opinions are never taken seriously. However, as Elleke Boehmer points out, gender has been 'intrinsic to national imagining' (2005b: 5). This is where the significance of women's narratives, their comments on issues ranging from patriarchy to community and spiritualism, comes in.

It is fruitful to read postcolonial women's texts through the prism of identity. In a powerful critique, which is also a manifesto, novelist Mariama Bâ says:

> The woman writer in Africa has a special task. She has to present the position of women in Africa in all its aspects. There is still so much injustice … In the family, in the institutions, in society, in the street, in political organisations, discriminations reign supreme … We no longer accept the nostalgic praise to the African Mother, who, in his anxiety, man confuses with Mother Africa. Within African literature, room must be made for women (*Schipper 1984: 46–7*)

Bâ's statement sets out the main themes of postcolonial women's writing itself: political equality and social emancipation; literature as a source of courage, strength and an agent of social change; re-working old identities

and identity markers; and the erosion of stereotypes and myths. The above passage summarizes, in effect, an entire genre of writing, even though Bâ is concerned only with African women's literature. But it is important to also understand that postcolonial gender studies cannot focus on iconic 'heroines' alone. A national imaginary in postcolonial states must be seen as constructed out of an exchange of stories by diverse women and men (Boehmer 2005b: 17).

4.1 Postcolonial Feminisms

Women's writings from the former colonies often embody feminist concerns. These involve: a critique of colonialism, the problems of the postcolonial nation-state (especially the status of women in them), the crisis of 'development', the increasing fundamentalisms, the continuing patriarchal control over women, and others. Writers like Assia Djebar and Anita Desai—from two different contexts—work feminist issues into their themes when they question the role of the family in controlling women, the possibilities of an egalitarian society, and the use of religious doctrine in oppressing women. Others like Bessie Head and African American poets look at how the woman's body becomes the site of patriarchal (and colonial) oppression. Most women writers from former colonies see the woman as being continually colonized—by the European races and by their own. Feminist critiques of strategies of representation (of the ultra-feminine, sexualized woman's body, for instance) in such writers called for a rethinking of the idea of the nation, femininity–masculinity, the role of religion, the issue of motherhood and women's bonding. There is also an increasing dissatisfaction with Western feminist models. Numerous critics (Mohanty 1996 [1986], Suleri 1996 [1992]) have called for a more careful examination of feminism, arguing that Western feminist discourses do not pay adequate attention to the local, micro conditions of 'Third World' women. These critiques of Euro-American feminisms have been necessary, timely, and absolutely crucial in understanding Asian/African women's literature and politics.

While women's fiction in the postcolonial context foregrounds issues of female identity and its constructions, one should not immediately assume that such writing ignores social and political problems in favour of psychological explorations of the 'woman's condition'. In fact almost every woman writer from the Asian, African, and other previously colonized countries presents trenchant critiques of political economy, the larger social context, and institutions such as the law, especially as these affect women's lives. In more 'public' genres such as postcolonial street theatre women's organizations (especially in India) have sought to raise social awareness about women's issues.[3] Plays (in India) like Theatre Union's *Om Swaha* (first staged in 1980, and dealing with the theme of dowry in Hindu

marriages) and *Dafa 180* (dealing with rape and the legislation for the rights of women in custody) were successful attempts to move beyond elite literature into mass media. Other works like *Social Trap* (by Garib Dongari Sanghatana), *The Girl is Born* (by Stree Mukti Sangathana) and others dealt with abused/abandoned women and oppressive situations. Others like Dina Mehta's award-winning *Brides are Not for Burning* (1993) have received greater critical and pedagogic attention. The reach of street theatre, especially in rural and semi-urban audiences, cannot be overstated.[4]

In women's writing, many of these themes are presented in greater detail—given the larger canvas of the novel and the literary–aesthetic potential of social realism. Nayantara Sahgal, India's leading political novelist, highlights the conditions of women workers in *Rich Like Us* (1986). She describes the exploitation and oppression that women workers in kilns have to put up with:

> Hundreds of brick kilns along [the Ganges] ... open and swallow up women ... Women labourers disappeared into kilns where they worked and the pigholes where they lived, sometimes never to return, used ... by the kiln masters and their men when they finished carrying brickloads for the day. (*1988 [1986]: 68*)

In *A Situation in New Delhi*, Sahgal speaks of urban poverty and the life of women in the slums that mushroom outside Delhi:

> They were people who hadn't known they were people ... [that] they need not work as many hours as they did, that they were entitled to more pay, that if a marauding caste neighbour set fire to one of their huts or raped one of their women, they need not suffer it. The law provided redress... But they couldn't read and those in authority had not taken the trouble to see that the laws were observed ... The law of the land lay like disintegrated rubble in the quarry. (*1988 [1977]: 98*)

In one of the few novels that tackles the era of Naxalism in India, Meena Alexander's *Nampally Road* (1991) Mira joins the Naxalite movement to protest against the class–caste oppressive structures of Indian society.[5]

Critical approaches to postcoloniality, especially from feminists, have focused on matters of political economy in the age of global capital. For instance, the issue of gender in postcoloniality cannot ignore the material conditions of

- 'Third World' sweat-shops
- exploitation of women's labour

- global sex tourism
- effects of environmental hazards and accidents
- medicine and public health
- urban planning
- militarization
- education

This select list indicates areas in which women of 'Third World' nations have experienced severe and several problems. These material contexts of literary production, pedagogic practices, and critical methodologies inform feminist postcolonial studies in the 1990s.

Women's literature from South Asia, Africa, South America, and African Americans in the USA see themselves as situated at the intersection of three repressive discourses and structures: racism, imperialism, and sexism. Imperialism treated them as colonial subjects. Racism 'othered' them as 'not-white'. Sexism, at the hands of an oppressive patriarchy even in native societies, reduced them to machines of reproduction and labour. Writers from the African and Asian nations, while coming from different cultural and political histories, see themselves united as women. While reading such a diversity of texts necessarily entails loss of historical specificity, it organizes 'women's writing' from postcolonial nations around common themes and concerns.

Gender themes in postcolonial writing include issues such as:

- Identity—sexual, ethnic, national, socio-political, cultural;
- The intersection of three main discourses: racism, imperialism, and sexism;
- Marriage, sexuality, desire, and the body;
- Writing about and by subalterns within postcolonial writing;
- The link between fundamentalism and patriarchy;
- The role of 'mothers', and the intimate linkage between motherhood and motherland;
- The role of language (mother-tongue) in the formation of cultural and national identity; and
- Women and spirituality in postcolonial societies.

These themes can be studied under the following heads:

- Gendered nations
- Marriage and the family
- 'Motherism'
- Patriarchy, fundamentalism, war
- Body, desire, sexuality
- Subaltern women and life writing
- Spirituality

GENDERED NATIONS

> As a woman I have no country, as a woman I want no country.
>
> —Virginia Woolf (1938: 109)

In Cherríe Moraga's *The Hungry Woman* (2001), a futuristic play about the Chicano/a 'nation' of Aztlán, Moraga's characters Savannah and Mama Sal exchange this dialogue:

> Mama-Sal: We were contento for awhile —
>
> Savannah: Sort of. Until the revolutionaries told the women, put down your guns and pick up your babies … And into the kitchen! (24)

Thus, once political independence has been gained, women, who had fought the same nationalist battle with and alongside the men, are sent into the kitchens. Their feminine duties must be resumed in the new nation-state. In effect, nothing has really changed, as Moraga seems to suggest.

The nation and gender are interlinked social phenomena. Women are 'involved' in, or rather delegated the responsibility for, the 'biological' and cultural reproduction of the nation (Yuval-Davis 2002 [1997]). Women and nations may be usefully studied under various sub-heads:

- Nationalism, national movements, and women
- Gendered traditions and modernities
- Cultural identity, community, and gender
- Diasporas and women

Nationalism, National Movements, and Women

The idea of the nation and the history of nationalism are closely aligned with the history of manliness and manhood. In national struggles women are reduced to supporting roles—basically as keeping the home ready for the warrior-nationalist to return to—while men did the 'active' work. She becomes the repository of cultural wisdom and morality—and it is her duty to ensure the reproduction of the nation. Moreover, almost every nationalist struggle presented itself as battling to save its women. George

Mosse, in fact, argues that nationalism evolved parallel to modern masculinity (Nagel 2003: 159–60). Terms such as 'honour', 'patriotism', and 'duty' are masculinized. It is also to be noted that nationalist struggles have almost never overthrown patriarchy in Asian or African countries, thus suggesting that nationalism is a gendered phenomenon. Even when feminist and nationalist objectives overlap, the gains for women are relatively few. Women are 'sacrificed' in the 'larger' interest of the nation (for a ground-breaking collection, see Lois West [ed.] *Feminist Nationalism*, 1997). In an innovative reading, Elleke Boehmer suggests that male roles in the national 'family drama' may be seen as metonymic (where the male is part of the national community or contiguous with it) while the figure of the woman functions as a metaphor (in the representative maternal form), a role authorized by her sons. She stands for the national territory and values (2005b: 29). Kumari Jayawardene argues that 'Third World' women share three features with the anti-colonial struggles: the desire for internal social reforms, the destruction of religious orthodoxies and pre-capitalist structures that prevent reform, and the assertion of a national identity (1986: 3).

During the anti-colonial struggle in India, writers such as Bankimchandra Chatterjee (*Anandamath*, 1882) and Rabindranath Tagore (*The Home and the World*, 1919) portrayed the woman as an icon of Indian tradition. The image of 'Mother India'—something which survives to this day—is perhaps the most visible form of gendering the nation. This iconography has always imaged women in terms of symbols of primal origin: birth, hearth, home, roots, and others. In fact such an iconography of the unchanging, 'essential' Indian woman is integral to nationalist discourses (see Nandy 1976). Winnie Mandela was called 'Mother of the Nation'. The writings of Muslim nationalists in the subcontinent during the anti-colonial struggle (and later in Pakistan) make the link between national/cultural identity and womanhood very clear. For instance, the writings of Dipty Nazeer Ahmad (a nineteenth century reformer) and the poetry of Akbar Allahabadi showcase a particular kind of woman. Allahabadi writes in a couplet:

> When yesterday I saw some women without purdah
> Oh, Akbar I sank into the ground for loss of national honour (*Saigol 1999: 117*)

Even Sir Syed Ahmad Khan, who launched the movement for Muslim educational reforms, was against women's education in the modern arts and sciences. Gandhi's attitude towards women and sexuality has been debated by many critics (Burton 1994, Ramusack 1999). In 1988, Jesse

Jackson pleaded for African unity saying that Africans everywhere 'identify with Africa as ... mother continent' (Boehmer 1992: 4). Kwame Nkrumah declared that the 'women of Africa have already shown themselves to be of paramount importance in the revolutionary struggle' (Young 2001: 363). In nineteenth century India, Pandita Ramabai critiqued the British government for not paying enough attention to the plight of Indian women (see Ramabai 2000). Thus nationalism is a gendered ideology where the notion of 'motherland' does not automatically mean either 'source' or 'home' for women. Nayantara Sahgal's *Mistaken Identity* (1998) makes a satirical comment on Gandhi's vision of India, an India where specific aspects of human life like sex will be completely removed:

> The India of Bhaiji's dreams is a country of vegetarian capitalists and rural handicrafts. A few machines such as sewing machines that won't corrupt the economy or the moral fibre will be welcome. They'll make way for leisure but not too much of it. Some wool and cotton will be spun in cottages. Citizens will abstain from sex and turn the other cheek. Independence will be the dawn of an era washed clean of drink and lust. (*69*)

Bharati Mukherjee's *Darkness* describes Gandhi as 'the enemy of women' because he 'had hurt our women. The man who could sleep between virgins and feel no throb of virility had despoiled the women of our country' (1985: 4). In R.K. Narayan's *Waiting for the Mahatma*, when Sriram and Bharati inform Gandhi of their intention to marry, Gandhi turns to look at the girl. Noticing her blush, he declares: ' "Ah, that is the sign of a dutiful bride ... She'd be a very unbecoming bride, who spoke her mind aloud!" ' (1999b [1955]: 252). Gandhi here reinforces the stereotype of the bashful, silent Hindu wife, who does not speak her own mind. Imtiaz Dharker believes that women do not 'fit' into any nation except as subordinate creatures. Those who do not abide by 'national' norms about 'appropriate' behaviour are rejected within the nation in which they live. In one of her most savage poems critiquing the unjust gendering of the nation Dharker writes:

> Maybe there is a country
> Where all of us live

Dharker describes the women in the nation as 'freaks' because they are ones

> who aren't able to give
> Our loyalty to fat old fools
> the crooks and thugs

> And these 'old fools' 'put their feet on our necks/and break their own rules' ('*She Must be from Another Country*', *2001: 38–9*)

The echo of Woolf's lines, used as the epigraph to this section, is very clear in Dharker. In El Saadawi's *The Innocence of the Devil*, the woman is the repository of family honour. But, as El Saadawi points, being the possessor (as husband, father, brother) of an honourable woman is to the credit of the man: 'For honour meant the honour of the male, even if the proof of it was in the body of the female.' (1994: 44)

A recent novel that explicitly details the problematic relationship of family, nation, and women is Manju Kapur's *Difficult Daughters* (1998). Set in the years of the Indian national struggle and in the 'hotspots' of nationalism (Amritsar and Lahore), the story of Virmati situates the woman's question firmly within the 'national' contexts. Virmati's attempt to educate herself—in 'defiance' of the ordained role of daughter/wife/mother—is itself caught in a national project of education when her husband, Harish, seeks to 'educate' her. The male, even here, is the architect of both the nation's modernity and the woman's 'upliftment'. She wishes to assert herself at the national level: 'I fret about my petty, domestic matters, at a time when the nation is on trial. I too must take a stand.' (239) Ironically, her education is itself on trial, caught as she is between her roles as wife and student. In Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah*, the new rulers, it is proposed, might be women, symbolized in Beatrice, Elewa, and Amaechina. This, Achebe hints, might be the hope of the new Nigeria. This new gendering of the nation may be interpreted as Achebe's critique of a nationalism and postcolonialism that has constantly ignored the feminine. El Saadawi's Nefissa is obsessed with her country, troubled by a deep love for her Egypt, and the love is so intense that it takes on a corporeal manifestation:

> She shivered as though with fever. The word *country* expressed for her a deep love. She had learnt to write the four letters *Misr* [Egypt in Arabic] even before she could write her name … Her heart sagged with the weight of the love she had for the word had for it … Her heart burned passionately with the love she had for the word *country* … (*1994: 45, emphasis in original*)

Here El Saadawi suggests that the national/patriotic love is not a masculine attribute. The woman also is capable of making the country—and not necessarily her home, as the novel attests—her obsession.

Gendered Traditions and Modernities

A pithy summary of the linkage between gender, postcolonialism and modernity is provided by Mary John and Janaki Nair: 'The middle class, upper caste woman has been the ground on which questions of modernity are framed. She embodies the boundaries of licit and illicit forms of sexuality, she is the guardian of the nation's morality' (1998: 8). Further, by bestowing her with spirituality—the notion of 'Shakti' in the Hindu tradition, for instance—the woman's sexuality is effectively erased in favour of a 'pure' ideal.

In postcolonial times, in the contest between tradition and modernity, the woman is held to be the repository of all that is 'good' in the culture's traditions, even as colonial/postcolonial modernity and tradition seek power over the familial and domestic space (see Partha Chatterjee 1986). When everything else in that postcolonial culture is in a state of flux and transformation, its woman needs to be projected as stable and safe. As writer C.S. Lakshmi puts it: 'The "notion" of an unbroken tradition is constant and attempts are made to write this notion of tradition on the body of the woman to dictate its movement, needs, aspirations, and spheres of existence even while the body is moving along time, space, and history' (1999: 55). Debates about dress codes in contemporary India, for instance, often use notions of 'a suitable dress for Indian woman' or ideas of 'appropriateness'. Indeed, even politically powerful women in postcolonial societies are conceptualized within the binary of 'good mother/bad mother', thereby neutralizing their political edge by circumscribing them within a stereotypical role (see Sunder Rajan 1993). Such debates are rooted in this discourse of fixed womanhood, of woman as the symbol of a well-preserved and stable national/cultural identity.

In Anita Desai's *Clear Light of Day* (1980), history and individual lives are constantly linked, where the fortunes and misfortunes of the Das family are played out against the traumatic events of the Partition.[6] At one point in the novel, Desai makes the connection between gender roles and the iconography of nationalism explicit. Bakul, who wishes to marry Tara, comes to meet her sister Bimala to ask for her permission. This is what Bimala says: 'I don't think you need to ask anyone—except Tara. Modern times. Modern India. Independent India.' (81)

Modern India is thus emblematized in a woman, just as, during the nationalist movement, the Indian woman was the icon of 'Indianness'. Now, Bimala herself becomes a marker of 'modern' India: she teaches in a college and has even refused marriage! She appears to possess markers of (westernized?) independence, and yet is conditioned by her Indian upbringing. It is the 'modern' Bimala who becomes the moral and physical guardian of the Das home-space. Desai captures the stresses of a post-Independence Indian woman's dual identities in Bimala: a Westernized education and an Indian ingrained tradition. She is trapped in the

ideological 'sentiments' instilled in her through her education and the Hindu system of values she grew up in. Dr Biswas points to this tension when he tells Bimala: 'Now I understand why you do not wish to marry. You have dedicated your lives to others—to your sick brother and your aged aunt … You have sacrificed your own life for them' (97). Westernized, independent Bimala thus becomes the icon of Hindu womanhood's self-sacrifice. Her recourse to the past (specifically the period of the Partition) and her mother suggests the overarching theme of nation-as-mother and nation-as-family. In fact the best sections of the novel are Desai's subtle portraits of the tradition–modernity tensions in India, where (Hindu) tradition is symbolized in Mira-*masi* (the poor relative, widow) and colonial modernity in Bimala's mother, Mrs Das (though Desai reduces the iconography of 'westernization' to a frivolous pastime: Mrs Das playing bridge at the local club). Bimala is furious with her brother, Raja, who had been bed-ridden with tuberculosis during the traumatic events of the Partition. Eventually he goes away and marries a Muslim girl, thereby antagonizing Bimala further. National and family histories merge here. The only way Bimala can discover the comfort of 'home' is to achieve an understanding of the past. She concludes: 'She loved him [Baba], loved Raja and Tara and all of them who had lived in this house with her … Although it was shadowy and dark, Bim could see as well as by the clear light of day that she felt only love and yearning for them all' (165). It is a reconciliatory move toward the sad history of her home and nation. This theme of a self-sacrificing Indian woman is seen also in Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1977) and *Feasting, Fasting* (2000) and Bharati Mukherjee's *Wife* (1975).[7]

In Tsitsi Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* (1988), the first novel in English by a black Zimbabwean woman and perhaps the finest exploration of the stresses of modernity and tradition for women, the two girls Nyasha and Tambu seek a female identity within the schismatic contexts of their tribal (Shona) traditions and British colonial power. Set in colonial Rhodesia of the 1960s and 1970s, Tambu rebels against conservative patriarchal systems. She is denied education because 'the needs and sensibilities of the women in my family were not considered a priority, or even legitimate' (12). Her mother, who supports her ambitions, speaks of the 'poverty of blackness on one side and the weight of womanhood on the other' (16), thus suggesting the African woman's double bind. Eventually, however, it is Tambu's ingrained native values that enable her to survive and succeed in the mission (colonial) school. Thus, when her aunt and uncle visit them from England, Tambu takes special pride in the fact that she can cook for them. 'I stopped feeling excluded', she thinks (39–40). Thus her lineage gives her an identity. Tambu achieves the safety of home within her own culture. Her identity is secured through the process of cultural acceptance in a context when the colonized 'nation' is itself in flux. 'Home' is, in effect, lineage, tradition, the past, and postcolonial memory for Dangarembga's Tambu as it is for Anita Desai's Bimala Das.

Achebe's *Things Fall Apart* problematized gender in a different way. His hero Okonkwo is obsessed with masculinity. Throughout the tale, his one aim is to avoid being an *agbala*—an epithet used for his father—which is another name for a woman. Achebe writes:

> Even as a little boy he had resented his father's failure and weakness … that was how Okonkwo first came to know that agbala was not only another name for a woman, it could also mean a man who had taken no title. (17)

Here masculinity is the cause of the crisis, as Okonkwo grows increasingly brutal and uncaring. Achebe seems to suggest that this loss of the feminine is precisely the cause of Okonkwo's downfall.

Cultural Identity, Community, and Gender

The home, the community, and tradition become sites of identity. In several African and Caribbean texts—from Wole Soyinka's famous *The Road* (in *Collected Plays I*, 1973) and *A Dance of the Forests* (1963) to Paule Marshall's *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983), one mode of inserting oneself into the lineage, of locating oneself firmly into the ancestry and family ties, is voodoo and spirits. Spirits become the medium through which the ancestry is 'accessed'. In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) Avey Johnson discovers that:

> Something in those small rites, an ethos they held in common, had reached back beyond her life and beyond Jay's to join them to the vast unknown lineage that had made their being possible. And this link, these connections, heard in the music and in the praisesongs of a Sunday … had both protected them and put them in possession of a kind of power … (137)

The novel that best captures this theme of home and ancestry and in postcolonial women's writing is Keri Hulme's classic, *The Bone People* (1983). This Maori tale begins with the inversion of a gender stereotype: self-contained Kerewin Holmes lives alone, cut off from her family and lineage. She can fight, swear, and drink like a man. In her own words: 'I have never been attracted to men. Or women. Or anything else … While I have an apparently female body, I don't have any sexual urge or appetite' (266). She declares: 'By blood, flesh, and inheritance, I am but an eighth

Maori … Now it feels like the best part of me has got lost in the way I live' (62). This 'loss' is the absence of identity and identification. Her isolation and her refusal to assimilate traditional 'feminine' values (marriage, family, motherhood) means that she lacks a gendered or even a communal identity. When Joe—her friend—finds a ship-wrecked boy, Simon, everything changes. As the novel proceeds she is drawn into the Simon–Joe relationship. Eventually, she falls ill and goes away to die on her own (Joe is in prison for beating Simon). And this is when the novel's critical articulation of a postcolonial theme occurs. Alone and in severe pain (the doctors think she has cancer), Kerewin has a surreal experience. She has a vision in which she has a visitor of 'indeterminate sex [and] race'. This visitor gives Kerewin a funny-tasting drink. When she wakes up her pain is gone. When she falls asleep later, she has another dream, and this one is markedly different:

> The light bursts into bright blue daylight … Strangely clad people, with golden eyes, brown skin … touch and caress with excited yet gentle hands … She diminishes to bones and the bones sink into the earth which … is clothed in beauty.

Kerewin realizes the significance of the dream: she is being asked to return to her ancestors. She begins to see the need for a community—at least for a family, in the form of Simon and Joe—what she calls 'commensalism' (383). In a brilliant metaphor, Kerewin writes to Joe suggesting this mode of identity: 'But if I exist this coming Christ Mass, rejoin me at the Tower, eh? … O the groaning table of cheer … speaking of table, does commensalism appeal to you as an upright vertebrate? Common quarters wherein we circulate like corpuscles in one blood stream…' (383) The image of food-laden tables ('mensa' is Latin for 'table'), community dining, and biological processes suggests identification. Finally, even her estranged family returns, and the novel concludes with both a family (Kerewin, Simon, Joe) and a community (her extended Maori family). It suggests a new kind of intimacy—commensalism—in the postcolonial contest. What is important is that commensalism refuses the traditional binaries of Maori culture—the division between 'insider' and 'outsider' (Simon is of Celtic origin, and Joe was once in a Seminary). Commensalism is the postcolonial community with a more inclusive approach. It rejects the rigid hierarchies of caste, tribe, and ethnic origin to plead for a new cosmopolitan approach that adapts from tradition as well as non-traditional (or modern) sources. The fact that commensalism in Keri Hulme's novel is initiated by a woman is, I believe, a crucial point. It suggests a new feminized

iconography of postcolonial identity. It is she who establishes community. Rather than the romanticized heroine of tradition, she is 'modern' in leading the way for community-building, while also retaining the spirituality of tradition. Gender identity and community identity in the postcolonial contest are both derived from the woman's actions here. Even though it reinstates the woman's role of being a guardian of traditional identity, *The Bone People* proposes that a whole new form of society via Kerewin's—a woman's efforts is an important achievement for the theme of identity.

It is important to note that most women postcolonial writers see cultural identity as evolving rather than fixed, plural rather than singular, adapted rather than inherited. Cultural identities, as Stuart Hall informs us is his important essay, 'have histories … But, like everything which is historical, they undergo constant transformation … are subject to the continuous "play" of history, culture, and power' (1994: 394). Women writers generally focus on the transformative aspect of tradition and cultural identity. They suggest, as we have seen in the case of Desai, Hulme, and others, a mixing and merging of roots and cultures rather than a simplified, unitary version of identity. Tired of this constant emphasis on roots, home-space, and racial identity, Caribbean performance poet Jean Breeze declares:

> Is lang time I waan
> Free Iself
> From de black white question. (*'Red Rebel Song'*, *1992: 2*)

The Guyanese poet-novelist Grace Nichols famously captures these shifting cultural identities in her 'Epilogue':

> I have crossed an ocean
> I have lost my tongue
> From the root of the old one
> A new one has sprung. (*1984: 64*)

The botanical metaphor suggests not a new culture, but a culture that derives from, stems from an older 'root'—a plant that grows into a new context from older traditions. Such, suggests Nichols, is identity.

Diasporas and Women

The linkage between gender and nation becomes more problematic in the case of a diasporic woman writer since, as Ania Loomba points out, if the

nation is an imagined community, that imagining is 'profoundly gendered' (1998: 215). In the fiction of Caribbean authors such as Michelle Cliff or Jamaica Kincaid, this 'rootedness' in a racial/ethnic and national identity often becomes a quest. Frequently, the quest becomes a negotiation with the past—with their individual, familial, and cultural histories, their tradition, and heritage. How women writers engage with their heritage is a significant theme in postcolonial literature. That is, the gender–identity question is dovetailed into the heritage–identity question. In Paule Marshall's *Brown Girl, Brownstones (1959)*, Selina is caught between her inherited Afro-Caribbean experience and her life in New York and America. Selina is troubled by the twin poles of experience, each of which appears to bestow a different identity upon her. In *Praisesong for the Widow* (1983) Marshall's protagonist, Avey Johnson (an African American), rediscovers her Caribbean heritage after she jettisons some of her American traits and habits. Johnson is initially unwilling to let go off her middle-class American values and mode of life (she refuses to go to Africa on a vacation). She goes to the Caribbean, and when she hears the patois, it revives memories of her childhood. She returns to memories of her marriage—of her husband, the poetry of Langston Hughes and Paul Laurence Dunbar he recited—and she begins to mourn her cultural loss. She then decides to sell her New York house, and rebuild her Great Aunt Cuney's house in Tatem, Grenada. She accepts her African name, Avatara, and concludes: '[her] body might be in Tatem but her mind … was long gone with the Ibos' (255). She has discovered her cultural identity. However, this might seem somewhat simplistic—the return to a place does not necessarily enable a return to cultural roots or identity, as other writers have demonstrated (see, as an example, Louise Bennett's poem quoted below).

The dual tensions of the comfort of (familiar) heritage and the quest to create an independent one in a new land (the USA) is captured by Audre Lorde 'Call' where she describes figures of Black resistance—Rosa Parks, Fannie Lou Hamer, Assata Shakur, Yaa Asantewa, Winnie Mandela, and her own mother—as 'singing in [her] throat'. This heritage is now a 'burden' (as Lorde describes it in the poem) in the woman's search for a new identity. Her Afro-Caribbean identity (represented in the poem by Aido Hwedo, the Rainbow Serpent) merges with African American civil rights movements in a mix that is troubling at best (Lorde 1997: 417–18).

In cases where their national identities are subject to stresses, women's narratives often thematize the stress in terms of one crucial theme: the search for home. 'Home', as we have already noted, becomes the space where modernity and tradition seek power over women's lives. Since 'nation' as a concept does not envisage women as equals though it claims to represent them, women's narratives seek a place of familiarity, a location of safety and freedom. In Caribbean dub poet (see Chapter 7, Box 7.1 on oral poetry), Louise Bennett's 'Back to Africa' (1966), the speaker addresses the poem's character, Miss Mattie thus: 'between yuh an de Africans / is great resemblance'. But, the speaker goes on to add, Miss Mattie can also detect English, French, and Jewish roots in her own family. Therefore it might make sense to see herself as Jamaican rather than African (which is home), so that there is a place to come back to:

> Back to Africa, Miss Mattie?
> Yuh no Know what yuh dah she?
> Yuh haffi come from somewhere fus
> Before yuh go back deh! (*1966: 214*)

We see here the problematic of cultural identity as linked to the notion of a point of origin or home. Bennett shows, especially in the last two lines quoted above, how locating a point of origin is never easy. The retrieval of a cultural identity or roots is an extremely complicated process.

MARRIAGE AND THE FAMILY

Marriage, suggest numerous writers, does not guarantee the safety of home or a clear identity for the women. Many women writers in India, for instance, emphasize that marriage might indeed be detrimental to the woman's identity (except in so far as it bestows the identity of the self-sacrificing, unselfish, constantly slaving woman-of-the-house). Marriage makes unreasonable demands on the woman, and offers little in turn. In the Hindu context, notions of chastity, service to the husband, and motherhood work toward an erasure of the woman's needs, desires, and even identity. She subsumes her identity under that of the family's. Adrienne Rich in her brilliant analysis of motherhood writes: 'to have borne and reared a child is to have done that thing which patriarchy joins with physiology to render into the definition of femaleness' (1986 [1976]: 37. But Rich also has another interpretation of this, as I shall cite later). Rigid codes of 'appropriate' behaviour circumscribe her. Governed by the regulating framework of self-sacrifice, the woman puts up with several miseries and abuses within marriage. The ways in which a woman is controlled by the institution of marriage becomes a central theme in many writers.

In Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani is proud of the fact that she has never addressed her husband by his name (10). In Bharati

Mukherjee's *Wife* (1975) Dimples realizes that her 'life had been devoted to pleasing others, not herself' (1975: 211). In Anita Desai's *Fire on the Mountain* (1982 [1977]) Nanda Kaul is disillusioned with the idea of care-giving as 'a vocation that one day went dull and drought-struck as though its life-spring had dried up' (30). Shashi Deshpande's Urmi in *The Binding Vine* is unequivocal about the care-giver role: 'Sometimes I think … they brainwash us into this motherhood thing. They make it seem so mystical and emotional when the truth is that it's all just a myth' (2001 [1993]: 76). The image of being 'brainwashed' into the motherhood role in Deshpande's passage is an echo of Adrienne Rich's comment that the 'woman has always known herself both as daughter and as potential mother' (1986 [1976]: 118). In Shashi Deshpande's fiction, marriage destroys the woman completely. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors* (1980) the wife who is socially and financially more successful is subject to constant abuse by her husband. Marriage signals the end of independence—if they were ever independent in their father's house—for women. Hence Deshpande in *The Binding Vine*:

> Tell me, is getting married so important to a woman? … One always hopes one's children will get more out of life than one has … Security. You're safe from other men… It usually gives them that guarantee of safety. It takes much greater courage to dispense with a man's protection. (*2001 [1993]: 87–88*)

Marriage and its rituals are often described as restrictive and oppressive, and never just or fair towards women. Symbols of marital status become symbols of violence and oppression in many postcolonial women writers.

The woman's education, ambitions, and desires are far less important than her role as mother, daughter-in-law, and wife. Writers like Markandaya reveal how, traditionally, women have been deliberately kept illiterate so that they can spend their entire lives in service of the family. In *Nectar in a Sieve* Rukmani's mother asks: 'What use … that a girl should be learned! Much good will it do her when she has lusty sons and a husband to look after. Look at me, am I any worse that I cannot spell my name, so long as I know it?' (16). Rukmani herself is taught to read and write by her father so that 'it would be a solace … in affliction' (16). Later her husband is proud of Rukmani's ability to read and write. However, she admits that it was not the kind of situation he would have preferred if left to make decisions: 'I am sure it could not have been easy for him to see his wife more learned than he himself was, for Nathan could not even write his own name' (17). Nawal El Saadawi, being escorted to prison (in *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, 1986) objects to being treated only as a woman. She shouts at the police officer, both sides being clearly aware of her status as a doctor, activist, and author: 'Do you think because I'm a woman I'm less worthy of respect than men? I'm a woman more worthy of respect than any man here, including your precious Head Director.' (1986: 17)

More complicated issues are addressed in Ghanian writer Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* (1970). Here a disobedient daughter, Anowa, refuses all the suitors brought by her mother and marries a stranger, who, it turns out, is the devil. The independence of the young woman—a code for 'new' Ghana, perhaps?—is complicated by the need to adhere to the received wisdom of elders in the play. She finally commits suicide, a problematic ending because Aidoo seems to shy away from confronting the issues around women's 'rebellion' in patriarchal postcolonial societies.

'MOTHERISM'

African and Caribbean writing often celebrates Black womanhood in a move towards a specifically African feminism. The 'Nanny' in these literatures is a mother-figure, a person who nurtures and protects, possessing secret knowledge and special powers (healing, for instance). In recent times the three themes of mother, motherland, and mother tongue have led to a new movement in many African nations, such as Sudan, Nigeria, and Zimbabwe: *motherism*.

Paralleling this 'Nanny' theme, there is a fascination with and a discontent about the patriarchal (and colonial) image of Mother Africa in African women's writing. The image, critics such as Florence Stratton argue (1994), subordinates the woman by reducing her to mere physicality. She is body/matter while the male is intellect. She is his to explore and control. Motherism is an attempt to re-work two kinds of representation of women: the image of Mother Africa and images of African femaleness. Motherism seeks to foreground the idea of women essentially as mothers.

Catherine Obianuju Acholonu (1995) argues that the mother is at the spiritual heart of the African family. It is rooted in the earth, and suggests an almost elemental connection between woman and earth. Goddesses and earth mothers induce fertility (and meaning) in humans. Ifi Amadiume, developing this motherist model of African feminism argues that we need to shift to the 'motherhood paradigm' to allow for 'a shift of focus from man at the centre and in control, to the primacy of the role of the mother/sister in the economic, social, political, and religious institutions' (1997: 152). Oyèrónké Oyewùmí claims that motherhood binds women together in a collective experience of childbirth and nurture. Eventually this means a nurture of the community itself, and hence the significance of mothering (2000: 1093–98).

It is possible to locate this theme and ideology of 'motherism' in writers such as Flora Nwapa, Bessie Head, and others. In their novels the longing for a child by the protagonists becomes a paradigm of feminine desire itself. The desire is written out, and writing becomes a fulfilment of desire itself. Writing desire, writing creation: this is a 'motherism' because the novelists see creativity as the mothering of their own selves, stories, and identities. Motherhood is thus central to the concept of identity and creativity. In an interview, Nwapa made the link between creativity and mothering as she recalled her own childhood:

> I happened to have known this particular woman. Efuru [the eponymous heroine of Nwapa's novel] is so many women in one. I loved listening to stories. My mother would make clothes and ... many women came while she sewed. I think it must have been from there that I got the idea of how these women behave. (*Innes 1992: 204*)

Notice how many elements of postcolonial women's writing come together in Nwapa's statement: motherhood, language, communication, lineage, community and, of course, gender. In Nwapa's *One is Enough*, Amaka seeks just such a community that would give her an identity. She rejects marriage, and rejects the idea that she would be just a wife, 'in prison, unable to advance in body and soul' (127). Childlessness and the absence of motherhood in Bessie Head's *A Question of Power* (1974) results in its heroine Elizabeth's neurosis. It is Elizabeth's relationship with her son, 'Shorty', that saves her at critical moments when she is about to go over the edge. Her mother-role enables her to regain a measure of sanity. Since she is an exile—thus lacking both motherland and mother tongue, like Bessie Head herself for much of her life—she sees her care of him as a means of sharing. Her sense of belonging is complete only when Shorty is cared for.

The woman writer's response to the trope of Mother Africa has been to address three complex and interrelated issues:

- Motherland
- Motherhood
- Mother tongue

Motherhood

In many African societies, the term 'mother' is used to describe grandmother, the oldest wife of the family and the community of women in general. Since motherhood is central to women's lives in many African states, it also becomes an important theme in its literatures. At the same time, these writers are also angry at the denigration of childlessness in African cultures. They reject the measurement of social worth and standing entirely in terms of motherhood. For example, in Flora Nwapa's *Efuru* (1966) and *Idu* (1970) childless women re-align their relationship with society and recast their gendered role. Motherhood is the site of several other debates: about suffering, social identity, power, and pain. In Buchi Emecheta's cult text, *The Joys of Motherhood* (1980), she criticizes the African idea that a woman's ability to bear children is an index of her virtue. Nnu Ego, the childless protagonist, wonders why women cannot have an identity without being 'related' by some mode to men. In her second marriage,

4.2 African Feminisms

Women played an important role in the liberation struggles of African countries like Algeria and the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa. With political independence, their battle has been for a more egalitarian society. Their struggle has often been—like the struggle of women in most 'Third World' countries in the twentieth century—for a say in the decisions made about development policies, better health and education, and a voice in the country's parliament. Women's organizations have fought for many decades for sustainable development and a more careful use of nature. African feminisms arose as a result of their meager presence in the discourses of Western feminism. Several versions of African feminism circulate now.

Negofeminism: a term coined by Obioma Nnaemeka, who defines it as 'the feminism of negotiation, accommodation and compromise; no ego feminism' (1998: 371).

Motherism: Catherine Obianuju Acholonu writes: 'Afrocentric feminist theory, therefore, must be anchored on the matrix of motherhood which is central to African metaphysics and has been the basis of the survival and unity of the black race through the ages. Whatever Africa's role may be in the global perspective, it could never be divorced from her quintessential position as the Mother Continent of humanity, nor is it coincidental that motherhood has remained the central focus of African art, African literature (especially women's writing), African culture, African psychology, oral traditions, and empirical philosophy. Africa's alternative to Western feminism is MOTHERISM, and Motherism denotes motherhood ... The Motherist is the man or woman committed to the survival of Mother Earth as a hologrammatic entity...' (Godono http://www.thecore.nus.edu.sg/post/africa/godona1.html Accessed on:13 April 2006)

Stiwanism: An acronym for Social Transformation Including Women in Africa, was coined by Molara Ogundipe-Leslie to 'counter the opposition she encounters whilst using the term feminism ... I have since advocated the word "Stiwanism" instead of feminism, to bypass these concerns and to bypass the combative discourse that ensues whenever one raises the issue of feminism in Africa' (1994: 207–241).

Ego returns to her brutal husband Naife to bear him children. Ego assumes that her sons will care for her when she is old. Emecheta writes of Ego:

> Nnu Ego realized that part of the pride of motherhood was to look a little unfashionable and be able to drawl with joy: 'I can't afford another outfit, because I am nursing him, so you see I can't go anywhere to sell anything'. One usually received the answer, 'Never mind, he will grow soon and clothe you and farm for you, so that your old age will be sweet'. (*80*)

It also becomes a context to debate women's relationships. For example, the mother–daughter relationship becomes symbolic of the traditional–individual one, where it suggests continuity, safety, and a sense of home. But it can also be a smothering, a limit imposed on the daughter's identity. The poet Adrienne Rich writes: 'the power-relations between mother and child are often simply a reflection of power-relations in patriarchal society' (1986 [1976]: 38). The Caribbean poet Lorna Goodison is perhaps the best poet of postcolonial motherhood, continuity, and community. Here is Goodison in 'I am Becoming My Mother':

> Yellow/brown woman
> Fingers smelling always of onions
> My mother raises rare blooms
> And waters them with tea

Then the mother merges into the speaker of the poem:

> My mother is now me
> . . . . . .
> I am becoming my mother
> Brown/yellow woman
> Fingers smelling always of onions. (*1986: 38*)

It is important to note the reversal of colour codes: from yellow/brown in the first (mother's) generation to brown/yellow (in the daughter's). Lorde describes herself as 'A dark temple where your [her mother's] true spirit rises' (Lorde, 'Black Mother Woman', 1997: 68).

Goodison and Lorde are speaking here of adaptation and rejuvenation, where the mother–daughter bond is creative and transformative. The succeeding generations continue traditions (the smell is 'always of onions', as Goodison puts it), draw strength from them, but with a difference. Goodison suggests continuity and adaptation, where the daughter repeats with a difference her own mother's mothering. Meena Alexander writes: 'I was born out of my mother, and out of her mother before her, and her mother, and her mother, and hers' (1993: 21), thereby locating a history of women alone. In El Saadawi's *The Innocence of the Devil*, continuity is expressed in terms of a continuation of horror: 'Her [Nefissa's] scream pierced through the night, shrill and prolonged. It was the scream of her mother and of her grandmother before her. The same scream. A single, long scream that went on interminably in her ears…' (1994, 97–98). Likewise, the powerful novels of Ama Ata Aidoo show other kinds of female associations that expand the very notion of motherhood beyond the mother–daughter relationship. For example, in her famous novel, *Our Sister Killjoy* (1988) the stronger relationship is that between mothers and daughters-in-law. Sissie's relationship with Marija is another 'sisterhood' in the novel. In Audre Lorde's 'From the House of Yemanjá', she stresses the need of the mother:

> Mother I need
> Mother I need
> Mother I need your blackness now
> As the august earth needs rain (*1997: 235*)

Gladys Cardiff (a Native American writer) shows how even the simple act of combing the daughter's (or grandmother's) hair establishes continuity:

> Preparing hair.
> Something women do for each other
> Plaiting the generations. (*'Combing', in Roman 1994: 173*)

In Lorna Goodison's 'Songs for my Son', she conflates the care-giving midwife with motherhood and Africa itself (1986: 18). And in 'Guinea Woman', Goodison pushes the continuity and community–lineage right back to her great grandmother:

> my blue-eyed grandmother
> The first Mulatta
> Taken into backra's household

The white people/masters try to remove her recial traits:

> They washed away her scent of
> Cinnamon and escallions

Deracination does not work, and traits are handed down through the generations:

> But, great grandmother
> I see your features blood dark
> Appearing
> In the children of each new
> Breeding (*1986: 39–40*)

In the Indian context, women novelists also address the stresses of motherhood in quite another field. The emphasis on male heirs to the family in India produces a level of stress that is unimaginable. Female infanticide is a direct result of this preference for sons. Even though the British administration banned it as early as 1795, the problem persists even in present times. In Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve*, Rukmani is in tears after her delivery because she has had a baby girl: 'what woman wants a girl for her first-born?' (19). In Sahgal's *Mistaken Identity*, a lawyer describes how female infanticide has become a 'custom-ritual' because of the Hindu preference for sons (62). In Chitra Divakaruni's *Sister of My Heart* (1999), Shobha is asked to abort her child because her in-laws do not wish a daughter. In Suniti Namjoshi's *The Mothers of Maya Diip*, motherhood is integral to identity. Saraswati asks Jyanvi: 'if neither of you has attained motherhood, then how did you receive adult status?' (1989a: 7). In Namjoshi's Mayan society, there are Grade A mothers, who may bear daughters, Grade B mothers who are biological mothers, and Grade C mothers who have to do all the work (ibid: 17). When Jyanvi expresses an opinion that children are less than wonderful, she is imprisoned. The Blue Donkey tells her: 'You've sinned against motherhood—against the core of their identities, their religion, and their family structure' (ibid: 27). The society in Namjoshi's work is a society given to mothering. However, even here, as Namjoshi takes pains to point out, there exists an oppressive hierarchy. In Margaret Atwood's harrowing *The Handmaid's Tale* (1998) fertile women are isolated for the explicit purpose of bearing children.

The role and situation of mothering is of course different in different cultures, and other dimensions such as class and race are of equal importance (for a discussion of queer and coloured motherhood see Chapter Five). Adrienne Rich, as noted earlier, sees motherhood as something that links 'patriarchy ... with physiology' (1986 [1976]: 37). Yet she also believes that it is a means of 'experiencing one's own body and emotions in a powerful way' (37). In a sense many postcolonial women writers seek to retrieve their selves—and not selves inscribed within patriarchy—through motherhood.

Motherland

Motherhood as a theme widens out into a debate about motherland. They see tradition as having 'mothered' them. The mother stands for roots and origins. Motherland is of course the point of identification, the source of identity. Cherríe Moraga writes: 'Nation. Nationality. I am to be the mother of a Mexican baby. I am the worst and best of those macho Chicano nationalists' (1997: 39). Moraga underscores the masculinized nationalism that informs most countries today. Mothering, she suggests, is also a racialized state. However, the notion of motherland can also be constricting and severely limiting. What the woman writer does is, therefore, to suggest a link between motherland, motherhood, and mother tongue. The relation is most complexly thematized in the writings of Bessie Head. Head, who lived in Botswana for several years, was denied a passport in South Africa, an index of her lack of 'motherland'. In works like *Maru* (1972), *When Rain Clouds Gather* (1969) and others, Head reflects on motherhood as a site of conflicting emotions—anger, sorrow, care, guilt, and responsibility. It is important to note that Head sees motherhood as a way of escape from a situation where she lacks both a mother country and a mother tongue. In writers such as Jean Rhys, the alienation from the mother is an alienation from the motherland itself. Jamaica Kincaid's *Annie John* (1983), a novel ostensibly about the adolescent eponymous heroine, is in fact about Annie's mother. Annie's autobiographical essay about a mother–daughter picnic and her nightmare about losing her mother revitalizes their relationship. The entire novel works around this mother–daughter relationship (incidentally, the mother's name is 'Annie John' too, a kind of doubling that we have noted in the Goodison poem quoted above). When the novel ends, Kincaid conflates home and mother to suggest not simply woman's bonding but that a sense of home, of identity, revolves around the figure of the 'mother'. It is Annie John, the mother speaking: 'It doesn't matter what you do or where you go, I'll always be your mother and this will always be your home' (147).

Mother Tongue

Mother tongue is the mode that enables them to speak of their lives. Elleke Boehmer has convincingly argued that novelists like Flora Nwapa induce a women's presence into the text through the 'conceit' of women representing themselves in voice. That is, the 'vocality' is a source of breaking out of the confinement of their lives. Women's talk, says Boehmer, is a

mode of 'self-making' when they share their woes, re-create their lives (1992: 14–15). This is, I believe, a productive way of looking at the women's novel in Africa. It suggests a bonding, a community-building among women through the mother-tongue. The gossip, rumour-mongering, petty quarrels, all done through and in the mother tongue, excludes the men from their ambit. Here a larger 'motherhood' is being formed, a community within a community (perhaps even a 'state-within-a-state'). Mother tongue and language enable motherhood. It is therefore crucial to note that the main narrative—Firdaus's—in Nawal El Saadawi's classic text, *Woman at Point Zero* (1983) opens with a statement about language and speaking: 'Let me speak, do not interrupt me' (11).

But a new kind of mothering is required: the mothering (that is, production) of writing. Motherhood, therefore, can also be re-interpreted as a situation of power and identity: of giving birth to narratives and stories. However, to make a fetish out of the mother tongue—as happens frequently in postcolonial societies—is to restrict oneself. Thus, even in a culturally homogenous context where most people speak the same language, they need to speak in other registers and tongues to communicate with people in other communities.

Novelists who thematize the issue of mother tongue in the Caribbean context also call into question the monolithic nature of language. Language is of course central to all debates about the postcolonial writer, for one of the prime concerns of the writer is to make herself understood by all people in the society. They need to evolve a language that is the language of the local community and is understood by the 'outside' (foreign) world. This is the chief tension in the mother tongue debate of postcolonial writers.

For instance, the preponderance of Jamaican Creole or Dread Talk (a code developed by the Rastafarians) in the everyday speech of Jamaica suggests that the community has evolved a form of language that builds identity. Most Jamaicans switch between these two codes, which is understood by almost everybody, though they use Standard Jamaica English (the official language of Jamaica) when required. Lorna Goodison's poetry uses both Jamaican Creole and Standard Jamaican English. She uses Creole to lend her otherwise 'standard' language a local flavour. An example of how mother tongue 'evolves' is visible in Lorna Goodison's poem 'Ocho Rios':

> Bless you with a benediction of green rain, no feel no way
> Its not that the land of the sea and the sun has failed,
> Is so rain stay.
> You see man need rain for food to grow
> So if is your tan, or my yam fi grow? Is just so.
>
> P.S. thanks for coming anyway. (*1980: 53*)

Mother tongue is thus not just one monolithic language. In many cases it is essentially about communication and community-building. A good example of how language operates to enable women to build bonds is seen in Assia Djebar's short fiction. In 'Three Cloistered Girls' (1993) the three sisters subvert their condition—of being severely restricted to the home—through writing. They find pen-pals to whom they write long letters. These letters—to strange men—become the uniting bond among them. In 'My Father Writes to My Mother' (1993), the daughter is struck by the changes in her mother: her mother has now taken to addressing her father by name. Later we realize the reason behind the change. The husband had actually written to his wife—in French, it is suggested, in the story—an unthinkable deed. The postcard is signed with his name, and addresses her directly. People are shocked, but the daughter realizes that the writing and the address by name 'was tantamount to declaring openly their love for each other' (165). In both these tales the 'escape' for the woman comes in the form of writing. If in the first the sisters conspire to escape from their conditions by writing—and hoping that one of their pen-pals will eventually fall in love with them and marry them—in the second the wife acquires a more equal footing with her husband by learning French so that she can read his affectionate letter. Writing and language thus become central to their identity. Imtiaz Dharker embodies this urgent need to write:

> Everyone has the right
> to infiltrate a piece of paper.
> A page doesn't fight back.
> And, who knows, these lines
> may scratch their way
> into your head—
> through all the clatter of community,
> family, clattering spoons,
> children being fed— (*'Minority', in Eunice de Souza 1997 [1994]: 58–59*)

PATRIARCHY, FUNDAMENTALISM, WAR

In Nawal El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero*, the much abused Firdaus tells her uncle's wife that she cannot go back to her husband because he beats

her. The uncle's wife assures her that all husbands beat their wives, even she has been beaten in her time. Firdaus refuses to believe this of her uncle: 'well versed in the teachings of religion … he … could not possibly be in the habit of beating his wife'. Firdaus reports the wife's response to this statement: 'She replied that it was precisely men well versed in their religion who beat their wives. The precepts of religion permitted such punishment. A virtuous woman was not supposed to complain about her husband. Her duty was perfect obedience' (44). El Saadawi draws a line through religion and gender in her critique of Arab society here. Tehmina Durrani's autobiography, *My Feudal Lord* (1991), and novel, *Blasphemy* (1996), both explore the lives of women in rigidly patriarchal families where religious doctrines are used to circumscribe, exploit, and oppress them. Durrani's work links religion with patriarchy and class as she describes the violence—mental, physical, linguistic—perpetrated on her by her husband Mustafa Khar (an associate of Zulfikar Ali Bhutto). She underscores the fact that the country's social ethos, and male interpretations of Islamic thought, supported his behaviour, and in an ironic twist, castigated her for 'provoking' him.[8] Controversial Bangladeshi writer Taslima Nasreen attracted threats because of her exploration of Muslim oppression of the Hindu minority in her country in *Lajja* (1993).[9]

Numerous postcolonial texts by women explore the tension between a gendered modernity and patriarchal structures in so-called 'theocratic' societies. El Saadawi's fiction and other prose works, for instance, explicitly link religious doctrines (or rather male interpretation of religious doctrines) with women's oppression in Egyptian postcolonial society. Historically, in places like Egypt, women's liberation had assumed secondary importance, while national liberation occupied centre-stage. With political independence and the project of nation-building, women's rights and freedoms were once again sidelined. Patriarchy retained its structures, while postcolonial liberalism continued to maintain control over the nation's women through cultural and social policing of dress, language use, and marriage/divorce laws. Often—and this applies to Hindu, Christian, and Muslim societies—religious doctrines and theology were deployed to justify unequal gender relations and unfair social structures. Women's writings in postcolonial, theocratic cultures have often portrayed the link between patriarchy, religion, and oppression in great detail. A survey of fiction from the Arab world helps us understand the critique provided by women's literary texts—a critique that rejects both Western conceptualizations and constructions of Muslim women and their native notions of 'Muslim' femininity.

Imtiaz Dharker explored with startling power the effect of the veil on the Asian Muslim woman in 'Purdah I' and 'Purdah II' (1989: 3–10). Nawal

El Saadawi, doctor, activist, and writer from Egypt, works the metaphor or image of the veil (or related images) into almost every narrative. In her short story 'The Veil' (1987), El Saadawi overturns the traditional roles of the observer–seen relationship between men and women. The story is narrated from the woman's point of view and opens with a stunning statement: 'I raise my surprised eyes to his face' (31). As the tale moves on the woman's eyes gaze upon the man's naked body—a reversal of the scopic regime where the man stares at the woman's body. This enormously powerful and subversive gaze is a complete reversal of the standard practice in the gendered social norms. El Saadawi rejects the notion of the veil as protection. Instead, it is an illusion to be overcome:

> Many veils fell from my mind as I grew up. Each time a veil fell, I would cry at night in sadness for the beautiful illusion which was lost. But in the morning I'd see my tired eyes shining; washed by tears … I would leave the mirror, trample the fallen veil underfoot and stamp on it with new-found strength. (*1987: 34*)

Then, in order, perhaps, to mitigate the extent of her rebellion against the veil, El Saadawi's protagonist 'recovers' from her fit of madness:

> When I open my eyes the following day… veil has lifted from my eyes … I am about to walk away from the mirror… to trample on the fallen veil … But this time … I bend down, pick up the veil … and replace it once again on my face. (*35*)

In *Memoirs from the Women's Prison*, she describes a fellow-inmate, Fawqiyya, who 'was as uncovered as we were, but she placed a veil over her mind' (1986: 37). The veil becomes a metaphor for closed minds, parochialism, and orthodoxy. Interestingly, El Saadawi also portrays the veil as a protective device for men. In an illuminating passage in *The Hidden Face of Eve*, she reverses the signification of the veil:

> Segregation and the veil were not meant to ensure the protection of women, but essentially that of men. And the Arab woman was not imprisoned in the home to safeguard her body, her honour, and her morals, but rather to keep intact the honour and morals of men … The tyranny exerted by men over women indicates that they had taken the measure of the female's innate strength, and needed heavy fortifications to protect themselves against it. (*99–100*)

In her *The Innocence of the Devil* (1994), a novel with overtones of lesbianism, patriarchy is aligned with organized religion. It is a critique of Islamic jurisprudence where women are oppressed through classificatory/

4.3 Islamic Feminism

The concept of 'Islamic feminism' begins to appear in the 1990s, especially in (expectedly) Western writing about women in Islamic nations and cultures. While women-centric re-readings of Islamic texts date back to the nineteenth-century Iran (in the work of Bibi Khanum Astarabadi, Nazira Zain al-Din, among others), the term 'Islamic feminism' refers more commonly to the attempt at legal reform of the Islamic republic. They seek a better deal for Muslim women within the ambit of Islam. Generally speaking, they are opposed to Western feminism. Thinkers such as S.M. Hashemi and Homa Hoodfar argue that there is scope for a more gender-sensitive interpretation of Islamic laws. Supporters of Islamic feminism separate law from the exercise of religious and political power, arguing that marriage and divorce laws often reveal the interpretive characteristic of personal status laws, which have been crafted by men (Mojab 2001).

disciplinary regimes that indict her as insane (the story is set in a mental asylum), immoral and irreligious. In her fiction and other works, El Saadawi suggests that the woman is 'erased' in the social, spiritual, juridical, and emotional realms. She is made to feel ashamed of herself and her body. In *The Innocence of the Devil* the schoolteacher Sheikh Bassiouni declares menstruation to be 'an unholiness from the Devil' (119). One of the bleakest novels ever—Anita Desai's novels seem to be cheerful in comparison—*The Innocence of the Devil* is a tale about the complete erasure of woman: no woman escapes exploitation in the novel. Indeed the woman's body becomes the locus of exploitation. Nefissa, the main protagonist of the novel, discerns exploitative and threatening eyes upon her body when she walks:

> She carried a body which was unreal, and she tried to hide it from people's eyes. But the eyes were capable of penetrating through glass … for her flesh was thin and as transparent as glass. It permitted light to pass through it, but not air … she was suffocating and was just trying to get some air for herself. (113)

El Saadawi's women become icons of female resistance—she links veiling with oppression in *all* monotheistic religions—where their fight against patriarchy may drive them into madness or death (as in *Woman at Point Zero* and *The Innocence of the Devil*), but their will to fight is not diminished. Other writers explore the modes of operation of fundamentalism and jihad.

This is not to suggest that all Muslim women writing about her condition in Islamic/theocratic societies articulate resistance. There is a degree

of ambivalence about the veil, Islam's treatment of women, religions, and the Arab world. An interesting collection of short stories by Saudi Arabian women, *Voices of Change* (1998), presents a range of attitudes to these issues. In Najat Khayyat's 'Had I been Male' (19–22) she ponders on the commodification of the Arab woman. In Badriyyah al-Bashir's 'School Diaries' (23–27) the school girl is frightened to death of her brother, as her friends are of the men in their families. In Sharifah ash-Shamlan's 'Zainab' (39–41), a woman is condemned as a sinner, and is perhaps murdered by members of her family.

Diasporic Lebanese novelist, Hanan Al-Shaykh, famous for her *Beirut Blues* (1995), maps a hitherto uncharted territory in her lesser-known novel, *Women of Sand and Myrrh* (1988) when she portrays the life of two rich women in what is clearly an Arab country (though the actual geographical location remains unnamed). Suha, a Lebanese wife enters into a lesbian relationship with Nur to escape the monotony of her rich but vacuous life. Nur herself lives in splendid luxury. Arab women in the novel abandon the *abeya* and subvert male values in their own ways—drugs, singing, and, in this particular case, a forbidden relationship. However, Suha soon discovers that lesbianism is no alternative. She leaves both relationships in a political act of self-determination.

In India Imtiaz Dharker's controversial volume, *Purdah* (1989), demonstrated how the veil becomes symptomatic of a social condition and the resultant resistance. A powerful writer from the Maghrebian belt (Algeria, Morocco, Tunisia) is French-educated Assia Djebar (she once wrote for Franz Fanon's revolutionary newspaper, *El-Moudjahid*, and is now an exile in the USA, after spending some time in France). Djebar's fiction has foregrounded the Arab woman's fight for self-determination. Her collection of short stories, *Women of Algiers in their Apartment* (English translation 1992) deals with the issue of the veil. Language itself is beneath a veil. In the 'Overture' to the collection Djebar writes: 'Words of the veiled body, language that in turn has taken the veil for so long.' (1)

It becomes a metaphor for the prison. Sarah tells Anne:

> You see them [Algerian women] going around outside without the ancestral veil, and yet, out of fear of the new and unexpected situations, they become entangled in other veils, invisible but very noticeable ones … Me too: for years after Barberousse [the prison where she had been incarcerated] I was still carrying my own prison inside me. (47–48)

Djebar explores the potential for woman–woman bonding through communication. She suggests a community bath—the *hammam*—as a space where the women can be free, in each other's company. The relationship between the French woman Anne and the Algerian Sarah is built through

their interaction in the *hammam*. In a later novel *A Sister to Scheherazade* (1987), Djebar tells the story of two women—both married to the same man—and their relationship. While one woman is 'modern', the other is trapped in her veil (Djebar devotes an entire chapter to the veil). The relationship between Isma and Hajila slowly shifts as they begin to see the other as a sister rather than as an antagonist. In the more recent *Reading Lolita in Tehran* (2003), about a 'conspiracy' of reading by women in a severely oppressive society, Asar Nafisi shows how reading literature builds communities of women. Elleke Boehmer's readings of Zimbabwean women's poetry locates this same sense of community-building in the tropes of yearning and desire, though overt lesbian relationships are rarely expressed (2005a: 113–28). Community-building and women's bonding become central modes of combating patriarchy.

A Hindu equivalent of such fiction that explores conservative theology-driven patriarchy is Rama Mehta's well-known, *Inside the Haveli* (1977). Geeta in the novel is a silenced woman, living her life within the confines of the aristocratic but traditional *haveli*, a place, Mehta suggests, outside of time and space because nothing seems to have changed with modernity. Even though she had been brought up to think for herself, the house she marries into imposes an entirely different set of rules—including the purdah. Very early in the novel we see an illustrative incident: 'Geeta had lifted her face and pulled back her sari to see. "No, no, you cannot do that," Pari [the servant] had snapped, pulling back the sari over her face. "In Udaipur we keep purdah. Strange eyes must not see your beautiful face"' (17). Later Geeta also discovers that even among women of the *haveli* (and its visitors) there can be no bonding or friendship: they are divided along rigid class lines. Finally she accepts her situation, 'inside the *haveli*'. In an interesting counterpoint, Kamala Markandaya's *Nectar in a Sieve* (1954) the heroine Rukmani sympathizes with purdah- and burqa-clad Muslim women in India. Her comments imply that the restrictions on Hindu women are far less than the conditions in which a Muslim woman lives:

> The women ... they stayed mostly indoors, or if they went out at all they were veiled in *bourkas* ... I felt desperately sorry for them, deprived of the ordinary pleasures of knowing warm sun and cool breeze upon their flesh, of walking out light and free, or of mixing with me and working beside them. (51–52)

More recently, Sara Abubacker's fiction has mapped similar spaces of conservative Muslim households and the life of women inside them.

With recent changes in global geopolitics—especially after 9/11—the postcolonial woman writer from 'Third World' nations has to negotiate a

new set of tensions: between global capitalism and fundamentalist terrorism. As noted before, religious doctrines (and now fundamentalisms based on them) see the woman as the boundary-figure. With global debates about Taliban treatment of women and the purdah system, the 'Third World' woman has been swiftly moved onto centre-stage. US First lady Laura Bush declared:

> Because of our recent military gains in much of Afghanistan, women are no longer imprisoned in their homes ... They can listen to music and teach their daughters without fear of punishment—the fight against terrorism is also a fight for the rights and dignity of women. (*Schulte 2003: 160*)

Because of the significance of this sudden centring of 'Third World' Muslim women, it becomes necessary to step out of literary texts and look at the articulations of anxiety from feminists regarding the gendering of terrorism and anti-terrorism, since it is almost certain that a lot of fiction will, inevitably, focus on the theme.[10]

Women in such discourses of fundamentalism (especially those by the Euro-American world about Muslim nation-states) become figures placed at the intersection of state and religious definition. The 'veil' becomes a symbol of Islam's oppressive structure. Akbar Ahmed and Hastings Donnan write: 'Muslim women are frequently perceived as the most vulnerable to radical change and outside influence' (1994: 14). Rosalind Petchesky's astute analysis of the 'war on terror' locates overlaps between Islamic fundamentalism and the global capitalist nations' 'crusade' against the same: wealth, imperial nationalism, pseudo-religion, militarism, masculinism, and racism (2003: 52–68). Humera Khan notes how similar the Taliban's and West's constructions of women are—the former uses 'lashes', the latter uses 'multimillion-pound advertising flashes of the fashion industry' (Joseph and Sharma 2003: 153. On the tensions between cultural nationalism and globalization, especially situated on the woman's body and dress see Menon 2005). Cherie Blair's war against the burqa, suggests Khan, smacks of an anti-Islamic and anti-woman stance. *Business Week* in fact described the fall of the Taliban regime with a cover that showed an unveiled Afghan woman beneath the word 'Liberation'—thus aligning a nation-state with the woman (in Schulte 2003: 158. For a study of the image of the veiled Muslim woman in Western discourses see Grace 2004). The fact that women and children constitute 75 per cent of all war refugees (Forman 2003: 155) suggests a massive rethink on the gendered nature of war is in order in the present context (for detailed studies see Enloe 1983; Cooke and Woollacott 1993).[11]

Dharker maps the topography of war onto gendered domestic battles, suggesting that there are close parallels between the man's desire for the conquest and control of lands and his conquest of women's bodies.

> All you see is bodies
> Crumpled carelessly, and thrown
> Away.
> The arms and legs are never arranged
> Heroically.

She then compares the battle field with the scene of lovemaking:

> It's the same with lovers
> After the battle-lines are drawn:
> Combatants thrown
> into something they have not
> had time to understand.

The body, she writes, becomes a 'territory' which 'shift[s] across uneasy sheets'. And between the bodies, suggests Dharker, occurs 'barbed wire', the delineating line between borders and battle lines ('Battle-Line', 1988: 46–9).

BODY, DESIRE, SEXUALITY

In postcolonial women's writing the silence around the theme of sexuality is usually focused around three sub-themes: the woman's body, the woman's personal relationships, and her sexual identity (Accad 1991: 240). Bodily functions and the body's diseases, sexual pleasure, and sexual attractions are taboo subjects, especially for women.

Among Indian writers, Kamala Das was one of the first to move towards a feminist mode, daring—in a conservative and patriarchal society—to discuss sexuality. Her autobiographical work, *My Story* (1988), showcased the conditions under which a girl grows up, experiences her sexuality, the risks involved in daring to express the same, and the norms of sexual behaviour that marriage presupposes. In a particularly savage passage, she questions the sexual aspect of marriage when she asks whether marriage involved turning into 'a clown in bed, a circus-performer' (1996 [1988]: 70). Kamala Das had described herself in her famous poem, 'An Introduction', as 'every woman who seeks love' (1973: 26–27). In a proto-feminist poem about women's feelings and sexuality, Das describes Radha and Krishna's love-making. Krishna asks Radha whether his kisses disturb her. Radha responds:

> No, not at all, but thought, what is
> It to the corpse if the maggots nip? (*'The Maggots', in de Souza 1997: 13*)

The deadening of the woman's sensitivity and response has been Das's theme in her fiction and poetry. In a culture when the man takes on the task of representing the feminine form, Das's poetry breaks new ground in representing the woman. She is also one of the few poets to write erotic poetry and describe bodily functions. She describes the conditions in which women live after marriage in images that are honest and brutal. A good example would be her poem, 'The Stone Age':

> Fond husband, ancient settler in the mind
> Old fat spider, weaving webs of bewilderment,
> Be kind. You turn me into shabby room,
> And stroke my pitted face absent-mindedly while
> You read. With loud talk you bruise my pre-morning sleep,
> You stick a finger into my dreaming eye. (*de Souza 1997: 16–17*)

Desire is not something that the woman is expected to articulate. Women writers, especially in the 1980s and 1990s, have begun to fight this literary censorship and silence on women's desires. The poetry of Suniti Namjoshi, Imtiaz Dharker and others map women's desires, often seen and presented as independent of their marital relationships. Imtiaz Dharker writes:

> Desire can be a delicate thing,
> .....
> Who needs as much as the naked
> breast ? lust is aroused by a wrist
> revealed,
> the hollow at the neck,
> the ankle-bone
> half-concealed. (*'Object', 2001: 108*)

Shashi Deshpande has critiqued a society and culture that denies the woman to describe herself, and has, instead, taught her to be ashamed of her body. In *The Dark Holds No Terrors*, Sarita, the doctor-heroine, articulates Deshpande's criticism:

> Backache, headache, leucorrhea, menorrhagea, dysmenorrhea, loss of appetite, burning feet, an itch "there" ... all the indignities of a woman's life, borne silently

> and as long as possible, because "how do you tell anyone about these things?". Everything kept secret, their very womanhood a source of deep shame to them. Stupid, silly martyrs, she thought, idiotic heroines… (*1990 [1980]: 107*)

These thoughts are ironic, because Sarita, a successful professional woman, cannot speak of her own trauma—repeated rape by her husband—to anyone. In *Small Remedies* (2001) and *Moving On* (2004), Deshpande has discussed extra-marital affairs, women leaving 'their' homes and professional women who pursue their interests. In El Saadawi's *Woman at Point Zero* Firdaus, who is treated badly by numerous men (both within and outside marriage), decides that she should take control over her sexuality and her body. She begins to prostitute herself, and at one point informs a prospective customer: 'There are plenty of men and I want to choose with whom to go' (68).

An important mechanism of regulating women's sexuality is through discourses of morality. In fact, in most postcolonial nations sexuality is coded as morality: to be moral is to be monogamous, reticent about one's sexuality/sexual preferences or even being asexual. Thus to articulate sexual desire or preference, or being promiscuous, is immediately classified as 'immoral'. Further, in the age of AIDS, promiscuity and homosexuality readily get coded as potentially dangerous in a discourse that conflates the moral with the medical (see Waldby 1996, among others). For example, the Sexual Offences Bill in Trinidad and Tobago (1986) explicitly linked sexuality and morality (Jacqui Alexander 1991).

SUBALTERN WOMEN AND LIFE-WRITING

Women's life writing (or autobiography) from postcolonial nations often attain strategic importance for feminist theorists. Memoirs and diaries—personal accounts that capture the woman's experience in her own voice—have a sense of immediacy and authenticity that fiction, even realist fiction, does not possess.

The woman in postcolonial society is doubly colonized, as noted before. However, in the hierarchy of structural oppression, there are women who are placed further down the scale. Tribal, 'lower-caste', differently-abled, lesbian, lower class women all come in at the lower end of the hierarchy of women. Writings by such women often present a challenge even to feminists because they resist homogenizing into the larger category of 'Third World women'. In many cases, writings by these postcolonial women are available only in translation. It is worth spending some time looking at the nature of such writing.

Writings by women at the lowest end of the spectrum usually take the form of a *testimonio* (for studies of the form see Beverley 1992, Yudice 1991). In India Dalit writing by women function like *testimonio* because they are narratives of trauma, pain, resistance, protest, and social change. Dalit texts such as Bama's *Karukku* (English translation 2000) document the sufferings of and atrocities committed upon a large section of the population. The writing proceeds from a lived experience of poverty, violence, rejection, and suffering. It reveals the structure of the traumatic experience (caste in India) while also gesturing at the ways in which the victims have fought, overcome, and survived the event. Dalit life-writing is about the re-construction of the self after the traumatic event. Every text in the genre functions as a collective document, as the narrative moves from individual to community through a re-telling of trauma.[12] Aboriginal writing from Australia, Canada, and South America are also kinds of postcolonial *testimonio*.

Perhaps the most important example of the genre is Rigoberta Menchú's *I, Rigoberta Menchú* (1984), a text which has attained cult status as *testimonio*. Menchú, a Quiche Mayan woman from Guatemala, documented the traumatic events of her community. Her opening paragraph states:

> My name is Rigoberta Menchú. I am twenty-three years. This is my testimony … I'd like to stress that it's not only my life, it's also the testimony of my people … The important thing is that what has happened to me has happened to many other people too… My personal experience is the reality of a whole people. (*1984: 1*)

Everything in her narrative, she underlines, is both individual and communal. A child born is treated as 'the fruit of communal love' (8). Her father 'gave up his time because he loved the community' (104). It becomes the document of a struggle of the entire community and race. Likewise, Bama described her *Karukku* this way:

> The story told in *Karukku* was not my story alone. It was the depiction of a collective trauma—of my community—whose length cannot be measured in time. I just tried to freeze it forever in one book so that there will be something physical to remind people of the atrocities committed on a section of the society for ages. (2001. http://www.ambedkar.org/entertainment/RecognitionFor.htm)

Autobiographical writings by Cherríe Moraga (Chicano/a) and Maxine Hong Kingston (Chinese American) all seek to represent the self and the community in their texts. Writing the self is synonymous with writing the

community. Many of them find their identities situated within structures that reject their femininity, race, and sexual preferences. In an innovative reading, Sidonie Smith (1993) suggests that women are represented as possessing an 'embodied subjectivity', rooted in their bodies. Woman's destiny is determined and limited to her body, which she can escape only through selfless service that, paradoxically, denies her sexuality and body. That is, while her social role is determined by her being biologically female, her biological needs or features are what get marginalized in a society where the man's biology becomes important.

Moraga's memoir/autobiography, *Loving in the War Years* (1983) captures this sense of 'embodied subjectivity' by calling attention to those features that have been the cause of her marginalization: her brown skin and her lesbianism. In India, Bama describes her caste-based trauma in corporeal terms:

> Not only did I pick up the scattered palmyra karukku in the days when I was sent out to gather firewood, scratching and tearing my skin as I played with them ... The driving forces that shaped this book are many: events that occurred during many stages of my life, cutting me like karukku and making me bleed... (xiii)

Subaltern life-writing places the individual's story in the public domain. The distinction between private and public breaks down, pain moves outward from the narrator to the narrator's community and things that cannot be written about are narrativized. Further, subaltern *testimonio* is a narrative of witnessing. The narrator is the witness recounting the trauma. The genre enlists the reader as a witness to this trauma.

SPIRITUALITY

Numerous critics have demonstrated how, by casting the woman as the repository of spirituality, patriarchy circumscribes her. However, this is a rather one-sided version of spirituality, especially in the postcolonial context. Women writers from across cultures are now retrieving spirituality for feminist purposes (for a representative collection see Spretnak 1982, Groover 2004). They locate within the spiritual—which they clearly distinguish from the religious—possibilities of a more emancipated society. What is important is that this kind of feminism often emphasizes a retrieval of pre-colonial, local, and native forms of the sacral. It should also be seen as a counter to the hegemonizing discourse of Western 'secular' feminism. Spiritual feminism among postcolonial women writers—Native American, Latino/a, African, and Asian—is thus rooted in local cultures and traditions, while assimilating notions of women's emancipation from global feminist movements. It becomes a truly postcolonial condition because it seeks inspirations and sources within local traditions while also seeking a transformation of the tradition.

A good example would be the writings of black, lesbian feminist critic and writer, Audre Lorde. Lorde's famous essay 'Uses of the Erotic: The Erotic as Power' (1984) recasts the erotic as spiritual power. The essay, symptomatic of the spiritual turn in feminism, is worth quoting in some detail. She described the erotic as 'that power which rises from our deepest and nonrational knowledge ... an internal requirement toward excellence ... [It] is not a question only of what we do; it is a question of how acutely and fully we can feel in the doing' (53–54). Distinguishing this sense of the erotic from what she terms Western 'pornographic' emphasis on 'sensation without feeling', Lorde argues that the erotic is a deep emotional response to life's experiences. She writes in a particularly powerful passage: 'And that deep and irreplaceable knowledge of my capacity for joy comes to demand from all of my life that it be lived within the knowledge that such satisfaction is possible, and does not have to be called marriage, nor god, nor an afterlife' (57). It is a sharing of 'the passions of love in its deepest meanings', and thus makes the erotic a political issue. Sharing of passions and love makes it a spiritualized politics of feelings among women. Lorde writes:

> When we begin to live from within outward, in touch with the power of the erotic within ourselves, and allowing that power to inform and illuminate our actions upon the world around us, then we begin to be responsible to ourselves in the deepest sense ... Our acts against oppression become integral with self, motivated and empowered from within. (58)

A similar spirituality informs Alice Walker, one of the most formidable of the African American writers. Walker's notion of womanism describes a spiritual feminism:

> [A womanist] loves the Spirit. Loves love and food and roundness. Loves struggle ... Loves herself. Regardless (*1983: xii*)

Lorde's poetry encompasses all these dimensions of a spiritual feminism. In 'Today is Not the Day' she captures the sense of struggle when she writes:

> I can't just sit here
> Staring death in her face
> Blinking and asking her for a new name

By which to greet her
I am not afraid to say
Unembellished
I am dying
But I do not want to do it
Looking the other way. (*1997: 471*)

In 'Seasoning' she writes:

I want to chew up time
Until every moment expands
In an emotional mathematic
That includes the smell and texture
Of every similar instant since I was born. (*1997: 259*)

She sees her writing as a spiritual calling in 'Call':

I have offered up the safety of separations
Sung the spirals of power
.....
I am a Black woman stripped down
And praying
My whole life has been an altar
Worth its ending... (*418*)

Vrinda Dalmiya in a prescient essay notes the retrieval of the image of Kali for feminist purposes, where spiritual liberation through devotion entails an ethical stance that holds great potential for justice and feminism (2000). The 'Amman' goddesses from Hinduism, and even Draupadi, adapted by regions in South Africa, can become role models for women, argues Alleyn Diesel (2002). In Suniti Namjoshi's *The Mothers of Maya Diip*, the Matriarch visits a temple which only has the goddess:

> The goddess was everywhere, depicted among her friends, her lovers, her warriors, her servants, her enemies and her babies. And she was there in all her aspects: grim, giddy, austere, tender and maternal, languid and luxurious, asleep and waking, austere and amorous, warlike and proud ... This was stone made flesh. She [Jyanvi] was overwhelmed. (*1989a: 56*)

In Ashagad, in contrast, the figure of the goddess is surrounded by young men (ibid: 75). Jaimes Guerrero calls for a 'native womanism', to retrieve the 'sacred kinship among ... bioregionally based indigenous people and their respective cultures' (2003: 68). In Julia Alvarez's *In the Time of the Butterflies* (1994) Christian iconography meets local spirituality where female characters link Virgin Mary with the people of the Dominican Republic and mothering. This kind of spirituality, argues Kristina Groover (1999), questions Western individualism, presenting spirituality as a community-theme. The ethnic community is the site of the sacred, and social transformation can be achieved through the spiritual based on native traditions. Such a spirituality, as Guerrero (2003) and Groover (1999) argue, links the woman's experience with both the community and the natural setting/surrounding. Thus the land, spirits (taken to be manifestations of ancestors), mothers are all brought together within the spiritual. Such a spiritual might well be the answer to both a destructive colonial modernity (inherited by most postcolonial nations) and a postcolonial globalized culture. The writings of Flora Nwapa, Ama Ata Aidoo, and Mariama Bâ in Africa, Keri Hulme in New Zealand, and South American writers such as Julia Alvarez embody this movement towards a spiritual feminism based on their own traditions.

Postcolonial women's writing arguably presents, as demonstrated in this chapter, the most politically-edged writing in the second half of the twentieth century. Calling for radical social transformation of patriarchal structures, adapting 'tradition' in more egalitarian and just fashions, and retrieving women's traditions; the many genres of women's writing lends postcolonial writing its most social–material dimension. Here the literature works for particular purposes, such as changes in social practices, rather than mere aesthetic pleasure. Postcolonial women's writing can no longer be relegated to the margins as 'domestic' writing. If, in comparison to 'masculine' literature it is claimed that women's writing lacks true 'heroes' who sacrifice wealth, status, or property for larger social causes, the postcolonial woman writer points out that this is because women have never had control over wealth, status, or property to heroically sacrifice them.

NOTES

1. In *A Dying Colonialism* (1965) Fanon argues that the colonial administration's political doctrine (to destroy the structure of Algerian society) was to conquer the women who were veiled and indoors-bound till then. It solemnly undertakes to defend this woman, pictured as humiliated, sequestered, cloistered. In conquering the Algerian woman aggression is employed—by baring her secret and breaking her resistance—to bring her within the colonizer's reach, to make her a possible object of possession. With the Algerian woman there

is no progressive conquest: only the maximum of violence, rape, and near-murder. The Algerian woman's veil transforms her into a suspect for the Westerner. Her refusal to be seen by the colonial is interpreted as an act of resistance and invokes desire in the colonizer. He therefore seeks to unveil her, a metaphoric stripping and possession. Fanon argues that it is in this dynamic that the European's self-consciousness and identity are constituted (35–63).

2. The woman's sexuality, body, spirituality, motherhood, and family are concerns that postcolonial women writers (both avowedly feminist and otherwise) share with mainstream feminist writers from the 'First World'. Because of this there is always a possibility of solidarity among women writers proceeding from their common concerns of women's oppression. What postcolonial writers do is to 'race' these concerns.
3. Jagori, Stree Mukti Sanghatha (an NGO from Maharashtra), Garib Dongari Sanghathan (Pune), Saheli (New Delhi) are some of the few organizations who promote street theatre on women's issues in India.
4. There is another aspect to street theatre: immediate attention from the public. A notorious and tragic instance of the responses to street theatre would be from 1989 India. Safdar Hashmi was brutally attacked and killed during a Delhi performance of *Halla Bol* (Attack), a play about government oppression of the workers, by suspected Congress party agents.
5. Susie Tharu's criticism of Indian writing in English applies to women's writing as well:

> Repulsed by the squalor and depravity they see around, a present reality that in no way matches the perfection of the recreated past, and disturbed, because for all their nationalistic fervour they are left clutching the bloated particulars of a decadent culture and remain as exiled as ever from the lives of the people, writer-intellectuals withdraw. They become cynical, engrossed in their interior landscapes … Their work is proper, the themes small, and their hands clean. (*1999 [1989]: 264*)

6. For a perceptive reading of the linkage between family and nation in postcolonial fiction see Schultheis (2004).
7. For a more complete discussion about gender, nation, and the space of the home see Ileana Rodríguez (1994) and Sizemore (2002).
8. A useful website on women in Pakistan with short studies of various authors, is www.jazbah.org (accessed 25 June 2006)
9. Her homepage explores several dimensions of women's lives in Islamic countries and cultures. See http://taslimanasrin.com/ (accessed 25 June 2006)
10. For other studies of gender in Islamic societies and cultures see Accad 1991; Tohidi (1991), John Stratton Hawley (1994), among others.
11. Other novels from the Arab region also discuss Islamic fundamentalism and its terrorist form. In Yasmina Khadra's [pseudonym of Mohammed Moulessehoul, an Algerian exile in France] new novel, *Wolf Dreams* (2003), he describes the indoctrination of a young man, Nafa Walid, into fundamentalist terrorism. He discovers that he is truly alive only when working for and with the *mujahideen*:

> For the first time in his life, he was discovering himself, becoming aware of his status, his importance, his usefulness as a person, as a *being*.
> At last he was alive.
> He mattered.
>
> He was proud, convinced that he was taking part in a grandiose, just and vital scheme. (*144, emphasis added*)

At one point in the novel his wife promises him: 'I'll make you a *zaim* [leader], a charismatic *jihad* leader. And, on the day of victory, I'll be by your side to conquer other areas' (240). Khadra shows how women too buy into fundamentalist arguments and join terrorist groups—Hind in the novel is more ruthless than her so-called terrorist leader-husband.

12. For a reading of trauma, *testimonio* and life-writing in Bama's *Karukku* see my 'Bama's *Karukku*: Dalit Autobiography as *Testimonio*' (2006).

FIVE

Queer

The 1990s saw the emergence of the Asian homosexual. This was a highly politicized development, especially because homosexuality remains taboo, with little public acceptance in most South Asian nations. Myths about homosexuality being a Western 'problem' run alongside actual historical dynamics of placing gay Australian men alongside Indian gays by ignoring the crucial differences (political, social, economic) between them. That is, despite the shared sexuality, the power differential between a 'First World' gay and a 'Third World' homosexual is a crucial factor in the ways in which a coalition of gays can take place. Further, international AIDS politics have brought together gays from all over the world.

5.1 Queer

Sexuality is increasingly seen as socially constructed. Contemporary studies question the heterosexist biases of sexuality studies, and challenge norms of what is seen as acceptable, legitimate, and 'normal' sexuality. Theorists like Judith Butler, Gayle Rubin, Jeffrey Weeks, and others, drawing on the work of Michel Foucault, argue that homosexuality has always been relegated to the margins using religious, medical, psychological, and legal methods. The assumption of heterosexuality—that everybody is heterosexual—as 'standard' is now termed 'heteronormativity' (that is, a socio-cultural assumption that heterosexuality is the 'norm' and normal). Social institutions like marriage, kinship, family, political economy, and religion are built around this assumption. Theorists now speak of sexualities rather than sexuality. 'Queering' is the process of turning on its head the assumption of heterosexuality-as-norm. 'Queer' now refers to not only gay/lesbian issues but also includes other practices, identities and communities—all of which have been marginalized in history—such as bisexuality, sado-masochism, the transgendered, and the transsexual.

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The emphasis in this chapter is on non-Euro-American, postcolonial gay and lesbian writing. Postcolonial queer writing presents a politics with two contradictory trends. Asian gay men stress a universal gay identity, and seek a common platform with western gays. This is accompanied by an impulse to project an Asian gay identity (Altman 2001: 2). Gay associations such as Bombay Dost (gay group India), OCCUR (gay group, Japan), Ten Percent (gay group, Hong Kong), Pink Triangle (gay group, Malaysia), Anjaree (lesbian group, Thailand), Sangini (lesbian support group, India) and others seek to build bridges with Western gay and lesbian groups. Drag, transvestism, and camp are also increasingly 'visible' in the more affluent cities of Asia. In most countries such organizations lead the way in spreading information about AIDS, AIDS/HIV health care and fighting repressive laws (Naz Foundation India Trust, in December 2001, challenged Section 377 of the Indian Penal Code that criminalizes homosexuality[1]). The recent 'Sexualities, Genders and Rights in South Asia' (July 2005, Bangkok)—the first international conference in Asian queer studies—brought together academics and activists from many South Asian nations on a shared platform of sexual preferences, marking an initiative of a pan-regional sexual politics. The New York-based advocacy group International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission (IGLHRC) investigates and reports atrocities against gays and lesbians worldwide. And the fact that Chen Kaige's *Farewell My Concubine* was co-winner in the 1993 Cannes film festival suggests an internationalization of queer culture from Asian and other areas.

Gays and lesbians share a common rejection by heterosexist society. Further, notions of family that circumscribe gay life in Asian nations are similar to those in European countries not very long ago (I am aware that such a statement suggests a 'development' ideology, where Europe has moved ahead and beyond its ancient prejudices while Asian nations have languished). The literature of homosexuality in postcolonial South Asia does, however, show how expectations of 'family life' bind gay and lesbian identities. Andrew Koh's novel, *Glass Cathedral* (1992), is a good example of this context. Vikram Seth's *The Golden Gate* (1986) locates the homosexual relationship as a kind of parallel to the 'steady' heterosexual one.

With globalization, there is a move towards international gay community-building. With more gays 'coming out', gay lifestyles in Asian nations have found close parallels with the West's gay culture. Dennis Altman argues that contemporary sexual identity grows out of modernity (with its constructions of the body, sexuality, consumption, and identity) while moving on to a postmodern stance of interrogating any stable identity (12–13). Most queer theorists point out that race and sexuality intersect. Thus

portrayals of gay African or Asian cultures, critics like Ian Barnard argue (2001), reinstate white stereotypes of African animal/primitive sexuality and demonize non-white queers. Such a reading of global gay politics is central to an understanding of the racialized world of postcolonial gay and lesbian writing.

Reading gay–lesbian writing in the postcolonial context is based on the assumption that sexuality is important to a text and its critical exegesis. Such an exegesis is necessarily political, dealing with social identities of authors, texts, and sexual preferences. Since gay–lesbian writing is integral to gay activism and both are located in cultural discourses of the nation, a text's stance and ideology (homophobia, 'gayness,' or racialized homosexuality) feeds into and off the larger context. That is, gay–lesbian writing is perhaps more firmly rooted in the cultural scene of a nation or race than perhaps any other genre (one can here see parallels with feminist writing from the 1960s onwards). Thus Suparna Bhaskaran writes: 'Queer sexuality embodies stories of development and under-development, modernity and tradition, economic (re)production and nonmaterial degeneration' (2004: 148). It is linked, Bhaskaran emphasizes, to AIDS activism and fear, caste, the law, and imperialism (for a detailed study of empire and sexuality see Hyam 1990). In effect, then, queer studies has to be a queer cultural studies, even when it is studying literary texts, because queer writing is clearly situated within political contexts of political economy, identity politics, the sociology of the family, race studies, and globalization.[2]

Contemporary thinking perceives identity as fluid, never fixed, always multiple constructed out of negotiations with discourses. Queer writing and queer theory in the 1990s embodies such concepts of identity. Transgendering, transvestitism, drag and camp, and other sexual identities present the multiple natures of identity that cannot be reduced to one category. They are, in short, hybrid.[3] Homosexuals have long been seen as the 'Other' of 'normal' heterosexual identities. This reduces all homosexuals to just one identity—being gay. And yet, within homosexuality, there are multiple strands and dimensions, as this section demonstrates.

It is important to note that different cultures respond differently to same-sex relationships and desires. Asian cultures in Korea and Japan, for instance, have a long history of tolerance towards gay and lesbian relationships (documented extensively in Murray 1992), though the attitude has undergone changes with the influence of Western rejection of homosexuality. Postcolonial queer writing presents the following themes:

- The link between race, ethnicity, and sexual identities
- The structures of kinship and families
- Diasporic queer identities in the age of globalization
- The location and status of queers in mainstream national iconography and discourses

These can be discussed under the following heads:

- Race, ethnicity, sexuality
- Family, relationships, and the queer
- Queer diasporas and globalizations
- Queering national, ethnic, and cultural identity
- Queering the border

RACE, ETHNICITY, SEXUALITY

> I have always experienced my lesbianism as radically different from most white gays and lesbians.
>
> — Cherríe Moraga (1997: 18)

The theme of ethnicity and queer sexuality in postcolonial literatures may be summarized as follows:

- The experience of sexuality and sexual preferences are different for different ethnic groups;
- Even within marginalized groups (such as Blacks or Asians in the USA), heterosexuality is retained as a norm, and queer seen as deviations (that is, queers are 'outside' even within marginalized groups;
- Moving out of a particular national/cultural/ethnic group or territory is often coterminous with sexual freedom and the opportunity to practice alternate sexualities;
- In many cases bonds and groups based on sexual preferences overcome racial or ethnic barriers (such as gay–lesbian rights that might overcome the race divide).

For many Asians, the move to the USA, a working life there and a personal life outside the heterosexual family, was a liberating move. In an interview, Hanif Kureishi spoke about 'using your sexuality as a way of moving away from your family. Indian and Pakistani families can be claustrophobic. They never want you to leave.' (2001: 6)

Migration has thus shaped gay and lesbian communities; men and women, 'free' from the limits of the heterosexual family, could seek other men and women of similar sexual preferences. Amitava Kumar speaks of Kureishi's writing as creating a 'whole new world of migration and sexual

freedom' (2001: 117). There is therefore a close link between migration, capitalism (as individuals make their living through wage labour outside of the family unit), and queer personal identity. But with migration, one also needs to account for racial and ethnic components of queer identity.

Race and sexual identities intersect. Being a white lesbian or gay is remarkably different, many writers argue, from being an Asian queer in an American metropolis. Moreover, Euro-American studies and theories of sexuality and gender have, until late into the 1990s, excluded racial and ethnic minorities and their homosexual cultures from their debates, even though Asian American gay–lesbian literature has been around since the 1940s (For example, Margaret Chinen's play, *All, All Alone*, 1947; and, during the 1970s and 1980s, Willyce Kim's work). People from formerly colonized nations find that their racial identity (of being brown and formerly colonized) often becomes a (colour) barrier in their search for queer solidarity. Working class queers belonging to racial and ethnic minorities fall outside acceptable norms even for gay and lesbian movements. That is, even in the process of becoming visible, there is an exclusionary trend that does not quite accept the 'wrong' queer. Poets and writers who map their first queer experiences or encounters recall being discriminated within queer communities for being brown or black. In fact, Dana Takagi goes so far as to argue that the experiences of Asian America and gay America are separate places (1996: 21–35). The dual colonization/discrimination—for being brown/black and for being homosexual—is a harrowing theme in postcolonial queer writing. Postcolonial queer writing has to battle established stereotypes that imbricate ethnicity with sexuality. Thus, dominant or colonizing races invariably portray their sexualities and sexual ideologies as 'normal' and that of the dominated/colonized as 'perverted' or 'deviant'. Thus blacks and Asians have been portrayed in Euro-American writing as oversexed or undersexed. White sexual images valorize their sexual self-imaginings and devalue black sexuality, play on the sexual fears of whites (the rape of the white woman by the black man) and reflect white racialized sexual desires. Sexual behaviour is used as a marker of culture, civilization, and class. The forbidden sexual desires of one race (the white) is projected onto the other (the black or Asian). Joane Nagel sums it up: 'heterosexual masculine and feminine performances and performatives constitute gender/sexual regimes that lie at the core of ethnic cultures' (2003: 56). Sexuality is as much a realm of discriminatory practices as race, and the close alignment of the two when it comes to non-white queers makes it even more of a double-bind. The image of the oversexed Asian male in colonial writing, as numerous critics like Anne McClintock (1995), Jenny Sharpe (1993) and others have shown, is a good example of how race and sexuality intersect, to the detriment of the colonized.[4] And the rape of women during war is the most extreme example of the ethnosexual violence.[5]

Perhaps the most significant of the early thinkers on the race-sexuality question (with specific reference to queer identity) was Audre Lorde, though the fiction of James Baldwin did speak of a non-machismo maleness and homosexuality (perhaps the first African American writer to do so).[6] She was described by Cherríe Moraga as: 'the first ancestor of my own colored lesbian tradition' (1997: 42), as she plotted a lineage for coloured lesbians. Black, feminist, lesbian, she announced her sexual preferences almost entirely in terms of her racial affiliation, and her writings, both literary and discursive, provide some of the best insights into the postcolonial queer condition of constant oppression and resistance in a multiple marginalized identity. In an early interview with Adrienne Rich she described herself as 'a Black lesbian feminist with cancer' (1984 [1979]: 108). In a later essay she described herself in greater detail thus:

> As a forty-nine-year-old Black lesbian feminist socialist mother of two, including one boy, and a member of an interracial couple, I usually find myself a part of some group defined as other, deviant, inferior, or just plain wrong … (*1984 [1980]: 114*)

Elsewhere, Lorde speaks of resisting this kind of reductive identity politics:

> Perhaps for some of you here today, I am the face of one of your fears. Because I am a woman, because I am Black, because I am lesbian, because I am myself—a Black woman warrior poet doing my work—come to ask you, are you doing yours? (*1984 [1977]: 41–42*)

Her autobiographical novel, *Zami* (1982, interestingly subtitled 'a new spelling of my name') shows how identities are slippery, unstable, and plural. She does not wish to be labelled merely as 'black' or as 'woman'. There is no one home or one identity, as Lorde argues in 'School Note':

> For the embattled
> There is no place
> That cannot be
> Home
> Nor is. (*1997: 217*)

Lorde appropriates the figure of the Black Unicorn (in a poem of the same title) from Black Arts poet Dudley Randall and the African Chi-Wara

to describe identity markers that seek to circumscribe her context of patriarchal, racialized oppression. Her 'Black Unicorn' poems (especially the poem cycle, 'Journeystones I–XI', 1997: 313–15) evoke a number of individual women with whom she has varying kinds of relationships—all going towards suggesting a lesbian community. Lorde argues that the black woman must separate herself from white women and the men of both races. Lorde writes:

> I have been woman
> for a long time
> beware my smile
> I am treacherous with old magic
> And the noon's new fury
> With all your wide futures
> Promised
> I am woman
> And not white. (*'A Woman Speaks', 1997: 234*)

Race and gender make the black woman the outsider, and her queer identity multiplies her 'outsiderness' infinitely. Lorde suggests that man–woman communication must be subordinated to woman–woman bonding, since female bonding is self-protecting and enables black women's self-identification. Lorde's poetry and essays inaugurate themes that assume increasing importance in postcolonial (native, Black, diasporic) gay–lesbian writing. Her reflections on identity appear to have concretized in many subsequent writers, especially in figures like Hanif Kureishi, Shyam Selvadurai, Leela Gandhi, all of whom worry about the race–sexual identity axis.

However, it is not quite enough to argue for sexuality as a central aspect of racialized culture. Even within racial boundaries, sexuality and sexual preferences can cause clear distinctions. For instance, within African Americans, even the voices of protest against racism assume that all blacks are heterosexual. Eldridge Cleaver, former Black Panther Minister of Information, dismissed black homosexuality as a perversion, a dilution of 'blackness', a suicidal death-wish and an effect of aligning with the whites. Cleaver rejected James Baldwin's homosexuality as 'un-Black' (Nagel 2003: 122). Cleaver wrote:

> What has been happening for the past four hundred years is that the white man, through his access to black women, has been pumping his blood and genes into blacks, has been diluting the blood and genes of the blacks—i.e., has been ... accelerating the Negroes' racial death wish ... it seems that many Negro homosexuals [are also] acquiescing in this racial death-wish. (*Nagel 2003: 122*)

Here Cleaver is equating black homosexuality with miscegenation, and sees both as signs of weakness. In Cleaver's statements the fear of homosexuality is quite clear, and gestures at the marginalization of homosexuality within an oppressed race.

Evelynn Hammonds notes that black lesbians do not experience homophobia in the same way that white lesbians do. The experience of a homophobia by black women is always inflected with racism. We therefore need to understand the 'way in which black lesbians are "outsiders" within the black community ... to examine the construction of the "closet" by black lesbians' (Hammonds 1994: 136–37). Paula Gunn Allen writes: 'The lesbian is to the American Indian what the Indian is to the American—invisible ... [There exists] the impression of uniform heterosexuality among Indian women except for a very few who deviate from that norm. It is an impression that is false' (1991 [1986]: 245).

Contemporary empirical studies such as those by Andreas Schneider (2002) suggest a link between the stigmatization of sexual–erotic identities, especially in categories of the sex-trade worker, the bisexual, the playboy, the adulterer, and social violence. The Indian lesbian poet Anu, like Lorde, acknowledges the racialized imaginary of sexual identity, and protests at the Western/white norms established even for non-white queers. She opens her existentialist poem, 'Who Am I' thus:

> WHO AM I?
> I am Uncivilized, Barbaric, Heathen,
> Primitive, Oriental
> I am Passive, Submissive, Self-Sacrificing,
> Obedient, Sati-Savitri
> I am Dyke, Deviant, Queer, Assimilated
> Bitch-from-Hell
> .....
> WHO AM I? (*1994: 19–21, emphasis in original*)

The poet Dan Bacalzo is told by his lover: 'I like my Asians to look like Asians'. Bacalzo wonders:

> What is it they expect from me?
> What fantasy do I fulfill?
> Feminine?
> Boyish?
> Oriental? (*2000: 33*)

5.2 Cherrie Moraga

Essayist, poet, and playwright, Moraga's work has defined Chicano/a queer writing for many years now. Her path-breaking (co-edited) collection *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color* (2002) initiated debates about race, feminism, and sexuality. Her plays have an extraordinary depth of insight into the condition of 'mestiza', border figures who are in-between cultures and spaces. In *The Hungry Woman*, she envisions a Chicano/a nation (Aztlán) that is 'free' but whose one-time revolutionaries have degenerated and resulted in madness and destruction. In *The Heart of the Earth*, Moraga reworks a Popul Vuh story, but suggests that the enemy today is white and patriarchal (the Lord of Death in the play is 'Patriarchal Pus'). Her memoir, *Waiting in the Wings*, is a moving account of lesbian motherhood. Moraga's work is a critical engagement with issues of identity, sexuality, and culture, all refracted through the prism of race, nationhood, and community. She is currently the Artist-in-Residence at the Departments of Drama and Spanish and Portuguese at Stanford University.

Non-white queers need to negotiate racial and sexual identities, especially if they are located in the West (see section on queer diasporas for a discussion of the theme of dual cultural locations). As Anu points out in her poem, she is lesbian, but also an Indian who cannot be asked to relocate or identify with White lesbians. This re-assertion of a cultural and national identity is seen in many Asian and non-Euro-American queer writers. In her beautiful prose-poem narrative 'White Rice', Julian Pegues (Pei Lu Fung), of Chinese and American roots, maps her dual inheritance, which is frequently the cause of a problematic sexual identity. Race dominates as a marker of identity for Pegues. She concludes, like Anu in the poem quoted above, with an assertion of her racial and sexual identity:

> After more than twenty years she is still called a foreigner [in the USA]…
> She gave me a Chinese name first, though I wasn't able to remember it … and just recently have come to claim it as my own…
>
> Pei Lu Fung
> Like a peacock it means
> Proud
> Asian
> Woman
> Lesbian
> Proud
> Like a Peacock
> Lu Fung (*1994: 35–36*)

Other writers thematize how 'First World' races and societies exploit the non-white gay. Noel Alumit describes how, as an illegal immigrant in the USA, white men exploited him for sexual favours (2000). In Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994) Arjie's father acknowledges that foreign tourists come to Sri Lanka seeking young boys: 'It's not just our luscious beaches that keeps the tourist industry going. We've other natural resources as well' (166–67).

Justin Chin, of Chinese–Malay culture, is contemptuous of the white man's attraction for the Asian man (1999: 93–94). Minal Hajratwala speaks about another form of discrimination in her 'Summer, Manhattan, 1991' where non-white races might be acceptable provided they are not gay.

> On a doorstep a black man shouts at two white men.
> Sitting close together: 'I don't want no homos in my
> neighbourhood, go on over to the West Side.'
> A white man shouts back: 'You calling me a homo, you
> Fucking nigger.' (*1994: 189*)

Here sexual identity becomes the crucial marker of affiliation and assimilation in a white community. The above passage is laced with irony where the race–sexual identity axis is reversed, as it is the black man who opens the exchange and refuses queer identity to whites. He does not want homosexuals—even if white—in his neighbourhood, and tells them to leave. At this moment, he does not want the sexual identity to be evident (in the form of a gay couple). The white man's insult alters the context slightly—he does not want to be identified as a queer, and hence focuses on the black accused/abuser's skin colour.

As Trinity Ordona points out, the leadership of gay/lesbian organizations in the USA is invariably in the hands of whites. Ordona writes: 'the gay and lesbian community mirrors, with little exception, the racial marginalization that permeates American society' (1994: 384). Increasing solidarity between Asian and Pacific Islanders in the US (they constitute, statistically, the largest growing population in the country), women's rights movements, and the gay liberation movement are paving the way for radical social change in terms of the race–sexual identity axis (388–89).

To move to another racial identity/group, let us take a look at Shyam Selvadurai's *Funny Boy* (1994). Here the ethnicity issue is the Sinhala–Tamil one, the subject of much civil strife in the island nation for over twenty years now. Arjie's relationship with the Sinhala boy, Shehad, is rooted in the dynamics of the Tamil–Sinhala problem. An interesting offshoot of this relationship is that Arjie feels himself alienated from his family. 'What had happened between Shehad and me over the last few days had changed

my relationship with her [Arjie's mother] forever. I was no longer a part of my family in the same way. I now inhabited a world they didn't understand and into which they couldn't follow me' (278).

Homosexual relationships thus automatically signal the end of a 'traditional' family. Arjie's alienation from his family suggests that, within the structure of a (heterosexual) family 'deviance' like gay relationships cannot be accepted. In effect, therefore, Arjie moves out of his family into a new kind of community based on sexual preferences.

FAMILY, RELATIONSHIPS, AND THE QUEER

In Kamala Das's *My Story*, she suggests that her husband had had a homosexual relationship with his close friend, though she does not build on the theme (1996 [1988]: 104). In 'Composition' her protagonist voices doubts about herself:

> I asked my husband,
> Am I hetero
> Am I lesbian
> Or am I just plain frigid? (*1967: 46*)

However, Das has denied that she is lesbian (1993).

The family is often the locus of great tension in postcolonial queer writing:

- Families are seen as circumscribing individual sexual identities
- Families, in most ethnic communities (including racially white ones), assume that its members are heterosexual
- The accepted notion of a 'family' is that of a heterosexual couple with children—and thus not acknowledging that queer families or queer parenting can exist
- Further, families are also built around the institution of heterosexual 'marriage', and thereby disallow the queer couple from (a) being married and (b) being seen as a family
- No other kind of relationship is permissible in a society built on heteronormativity.

Postcolonial queer literature often calls into question the kinds of identities demanded, recognized, and imposed by families. Their concern over the assumption of heterosexuality and heterosexual relationships as the norm within families and society is often thematized as the quest for alternative forms of (perhaps stigmatized) relationships.

In Suniti Namjoshi's *Because of India* (1989b) she asks: 'As a creature, a lesbian creature, how do I deal with all other creatures who have their own identity' (84). In Hoshang Merchant's neo-romantic poetry, relationships are invariably transient and unstable. Though Merchant chooses to project a kind of nomadism and 'global' gay family idea, nostalgia for the stable home lingers in volumes such as *Hotel Golkonda* (1992). In Raj Rao's *The Boyfriend*, the negotiation of homosexuality has to be made between a heterosexual relationship, a mother, and a respectable professionalism. Mahesh Dattani's plays (*Do the Needful*, *On a Muggy Night in Bombay*) often showcase the restrictive nature of the 'respectable' heterosexual family in middle class societies of urban India. *On a Muggy Night in Bombay*, first staged in 1998, was the first play in Indian theatre to openly address the issue of gay sexuality and the problematic idea of the 'family', which, in the Indian context, is always assumed to be heterosexual. The play is about gays who finally opt for the façade of a heterosexual family, while leaving the possibility of gay relationships open. Dattani's play critiques gays who accept the stereotypes of family and sexual preferences. Thus Prakash, who is gay, has decided to go 'straight'. Ironically, he is about to marry Kiran, the sister of his former lover, Kamlesh (who is still in love with Prakash). Kamlesh is now caught between revealing the truth about Prakash to his sister, and his own affection for Prakash. Bunny, in the play, essays the role of a happily married family man in a television sitcom, and in real life. The tension between heterosexual hopes (Kiran's) and homosexual preferences (Prakash) forms the crux of the play's social comment. The play was also the first in India to situate gay liberation and the feminist movement on the same plane. Thus Sharad in the play uses sloganeering tag-lines like 'penis power' and 'macho-man syndrome' from the feminist movement to rave against society's sexual hypocrisy. Dattani's radio play, *Do the Needful*, (first broadcast on BBC in 1996), also revolves around the heterosexual versus homosexual theme, situating the sexual preference angle around the traditional 'family'. The Alpesh–Lata and Salim–Trilok 'pairs' form the setting. The gay Alpesh is forced into marriage with Lata, who is in love with another man. Ironically, Lata decides to marry Alpesh when she discovers him with a man. She is now relieved that, if she marries him, she will not have to sleep with him. Thus the marriage 'contract' is a sexual contract where each will go her/his own way, but maintain the façade of a happy heterosexual family. As Chaudhuri points out (2005: 61), what is interesting about this play is that both the woman—who, in traditional Indian families, is rarely allowed to 'choose' her husband—and the gay man share a common space. Both fight for their preferences in the choice of partners. Admittedly, they opt for covert sexual

contracts that fit in with the established stereotype rather than assert their sexual preferences, but the very fact that they subvert the notion of a family with their mutual arrangement and agreement constitutes, I think, an important social critique of 'compulsory heterosexuality'.

In short fiction in other languages, the family–sexuality theme that restricts the lesbian relationship is central to the plot (see Rosemary Magnoly George 2002 for a reading). Ruth Vanita in an important essay notes that women's movements in India have been mainly concerned with reforming marriage and its laws/social codes: there is little effort to rethink 'gender and sexuality to liberate both women and men into developing different kinds of family or collective living' (1997: 16). Redefining the family and kinship systems is, therefore, central to a queer narrative.

Judith Butler notes that sexuality is invariably thought of in terms of marriage, and marriage as the key to legitimacy. Various sexual practices and relationships outside the purview of the sanctifying law become illegal and untenable. These not only enforce the distinction between legitimate and illegitimate queer lives, but also produce distinctions among forms of illegitimacy. Butler writes:

> The stable pair who would marry if only they could are cast as currently illegitimate, but eligible for a future legitimacy, whereas sexual agents who function outside the purview of the marriage bond and its recognized, if illegitimate, alternative form now constitute sexual possibilities that will never be eligible for a translation into legitimacy. (*Butler 2002: 18*)

Marriage becomes the sanctioned relationship even for gay and lesbian people: 'the proposition that marriage should become the only way to sanction or legitimate sexuality is unacceptably conservative' (21). Marriage, therefore, cannot be the norm that sanctions legitimacy and enables social benefits or political roles. This link between cultural norms, institutions, legality, desires, and sexuality is at the heart of the debates over 'gayness'. Queer families present a challenge to the nuclear family unit. The variations within queer families—gays bringing up children, lesbians not wanting children, non-monogamy—counter the established the ideal (and notions) of a heterosexual family, as the fiction of Suniti Namjoshi shows.[7]

In India, the patrilineal family unit and a wider kinship grouping is deemed ideal in Hindu families. The ideal is the joint family—with three or four patrilineally related generations, all living under one roof. Patrilineal joint families include men related through the male line, along with their wives and children. In effect, all kinship, family relationships, and households are defined and seen only as heterosexual and revolving around the male line (exceptions being the Nairs of Kerala and the Khasis of Northeast India). Any other form of the family is unacceptable. Mainstream feminist analysis in India does not acknowledge lesbianism. The lesbian is a derivative figure, and a negative presence within the system of gendered heterosexuality. The Otherness of the lesbian is never admitted here. Thus the lesbian is not recognized in either the dominant-masculinist discourse or the nondominant-feminist one. Thus, within the subaltern category of 'woman', there is a further marginalization: the lesbian occupies the lowest rung in the hierarchy of victims. A recent volume, *Family and Gender: Changing Values in Germany and India* (2003) has sections on sexuality, female identity, gender relations, and such: but, ironically, not one mention of gay or lesbian relations. 'Changing values' evidently does not include changing the valorization of heterosexuality. Thus Katharina Poggendorf-Kakar's essay in this volume (179–95) on the concept of gender and family in Hindutva ideology analyses the condemnation of sexually 'liberal' behaviour clothing for women by Hindutva ideologues, but has nothing to say on any other form of sexuality.

In Suniti Namjoshi's *The Mothers of Maya Diip* (1989a), Namjoshi presents what can be termed a lesbian feminist separatist fantasy. It is also a sharp critique of women's relationships and suggests that exploitation is a feature of women's communities too. Jyanvi and the Blue Donkey are invited to visit Maya Diip by its Ranisaheb. Jyanvi's lover Saraswati is the daughter of the Matriarch. Jyanvi discovers how exploitative the situation is, even in a woman-controlled society: 'the more powerful mothers hire other women to care for their children … the more powerful the mother, the more privileged the child' (1989a: 39). She discovers that mothers keep some 'pretty boys' as 'necessities', and that 'except for the semen the lives of pretty boys are perfectly pointless' (ibid: 53). Asha seeks 'equal rights for boys' (ibid: 80). Valerie makes two such boys, Mohan and Madhu, aware of heterosexual patriarchy in her country (incidentally, India), where there existed the reverse situation of male masters and female servants. She is arrested for spreading dangerous ideas, of 'rape, slavery and war' (94–97).[8] In another fable, *Building Babel* (1996), there exists a society run entirely by women, where men are 'immigrants' to be trained as a workforce. A debate ensues about the wisdom of allowing men into their society. There follows a speech (by Solitude) which is a critique and a comment on the 'culture' of men:

> Men … have diseased identities … They are troglodytes still. They fight sabre toothed tigers when there are no sabre toothed tigers to fight. They worship power and find the victory of battle heroic. They batter one another, they batter piglets, parakeets and peonies, they batter women … This they perceive as the

> exercise of power; … Power is an aphrodisiac. Power is a pheromone … The smell of power makes their nostrils twitch. Why allow such creatures in? (114)

Namjoshi suggests that gay/lesbian family and social structures seem to be as oppressive as heterosexual ones. In Manju Kapur's *A Married Woman* (2003) Astha seeks to escape the claustrophobic world of heterosexual marriage through a lesbian affair with Pipee. The fact that Pipee is the widow of a Muslim anti-communal activist makes the relationship more complicated. At one level it is a covert, personal relationship between two women. At another, Astha's involvement with anti-fundamentalist activities (she writes a drama script about Babri Masjid for a workshop) renders the relationship subversive of the patriarchy–fundamentalism–heterosexuality norms in contemporary India.

The family represents the ethical, 'normal' form of bonding. Needless to say, a family is always heterosexual. The heterosexual family, as Miranda Joseph argues (2002), is a productive unit in capitalism. As such, it becomes the site of economic value. Further, the family is also the focus of marketing strategies: consumer products target the family (recall, here, the TV ads for cars, insurance, holidays—all of which focus on the family as a consuming unit) in a capitalist economy. More recently, firms such as Ikea and Volkswagen have sought to sell their products to gay couples (Joseph 2002: 89). This appeal to the gay couple as a consuming family is *not* an expansion of the sexual/gender boundary. On the contrary it must be seen as a re-affirmation of the centrality of the family to the capitalist, consumer economy. The appeal is still to the family—heterosexual or homosexual.[9]

Superbly complicating heterosexuality, race, and family is Cherríe Moraga's memoir, *Waiting in the Wings* (1997). Subtitled 'portrait of a queer motherhood', Moraga demonstrates how a coloured lesbian couple can actually constitute a 'family', contrary to established norms (and beliefs) about families being always heterosexual. This brilliantly poetic and deeply moving memoir situates coloured lesbianism within larger contexts of race, sexual preferences, family, and AIDS. Moraga begins thus: 'I have been the lesbian lover of a mother. I know what it is to live in that uncertain role as the nonbiological parent' (15). Here Moraga underlines her sexual orientation (lesbian) and her social/domestic role (parent). From here on she discusses her motherhood (achieved through artificial insemination) and mothering (achieved in conjunction with her lover, Ella). Moraga constantly alerts us to the constructed nature of a heterosexual 'norm'. As a teenager, she writes, 'I did not keep my sexuality secret from the closest members of my family, I knew it could never be fully expressed there. So the search for a *we* that could embrace all the parts of

myself took me far beyond the confines of heterosexual family ties' (17, emphasis in original). The yearning to create and construct a family, Moraga writes, 'informed' her relationships and her work (18–19). Moraga is here staking a claim to have a family despite the socially sanctioned norm of families being rigidly heterosexual. Moraga writes:

> There was a time for me when my sense of family, and by extension *community*, was strictly women, then strictly lesbian, then strictly women of color, then strictly Chicana/o, then strictly Latina lesbian. But these categories of identity could never fully encompass the people in whom I placed my trust. (*19, emphasis in original*)

The need to build a family, Moraga discovers, took her on a quest that was also a quest for her defining marks, her identity, and her politics. The family is thus central to her self. In *Loving in the War Years* (1983) Moraga describes her lesbian life within her community as a state of war:

> Loving in the war years
> Calls for this kind of risking
> Without a home to call your own
> I've got to take you as you come (*30*)

What emerges in Moraga's unputdownable memoirs is the clear idea that the 'family' is not about motherhood alone. Nor is it about heterosexual relationships. It is about a yearning for love. And love, she demonstrates throughout her text, is not about sexual preference or colour.

QUEER DIASPORAS AND GLOBALIZATIONS

As noted at the beginning of this chapter, images of queer sexualities and lifestyles now circulate globally. Hollywood films such as *Philadelphia* and the 'Indian' *Fire* sell commercially worldwide. While the reductive commodification of queer identity is globalization's questionable outcome, what cannot be denied is that a platform for a globalized coalition politics based on sexuality can be built up through this same mechanism. The key questions to be addressed in reading diasporic and transnational queer writing and cultures are as follows:

- How do political and personal identities emerge from the intersections of history, race, and sexuality?
- How do sexual difference, interracial sexuality, and the AIDS crisis shape cultural forms?

- What is the relationship between the gay/lesbian liberation movement, the Asian American movement in Western cities, and Asian American studies in the academia?

Homosexuality can be a weapon for what Chela Sandoval terms 'dissident globalization' (2002: 21). Drawing upon Gloria Anzaldúa's work on 'borderlands', Sandoval suggests that a 'social-erotics' is called for today. A hermeneutics of 'love' allows 'lesbians of color to ally across their own racial geographies and to envision a coalition politics that extended beyond their own identity politics and cultural differences' (27). Lesbians and gays need to 'wage love across the postmodern world' (27). This insight into a new coalition methodology is a useful way of describing postcolonial queer writing. Texts launch and seek relationships across races and spaces.

Gay and lesbian writers from 'Third World' nations who have migrated to 'First World' metropolitan centres have a tough task of identity-formation. Even citizenship—in the USA—is not something a queer Asian, unlike the queer white American, can take for granted, argues Gayatri Gopinath (1996: 120–21. Also Espin 1996). In an autobiographical essay, Urvashi Vaid recounts her experiences of growing up into a lesbian Asian woman in the USA:

> I lived in two worlds—American outside the home and Indian with family and friends. … In college, my life struggles revolved around my growing awareness of sexism, racism and my own sexual orientation. Because I had no Indian community outside of family … the place where I defined my identity was inside grassroots political organizations. After I came out as a lesbian, my worlds became even further splintered—I had a queer life, a mainstream American life and an identity within my Indian family and community. (*1997: 8*)

The notion of community—central to the diasporic cultural imaginary, as the chapter on diaspora argues—automatically assumes that all its members are heterosexual. In fact, gay and lesbian individuals often offer challenges to the immigrant community. Thus, within an already marginalized diasporic community, homosexuals are further marginalized. Note the number of structures that construct and constrict gay–lesbian identity for such people. Gays of colour face oppression from whites. Diasporic queers face multiple oppressions by virtue of their displacement, Western education, race, and,sexual orientation. Their identity, as Martin Manalansan IV argues (1993) is about being gay, being diasporic, being Westernized and being of another race—that is, they are 'subject to' both local and global/transnational identities. They explore oppression systems both

in native cultures/worlds and their adopted ones. Gloria Anzaldúa writes in her *Borderlands*:

> As a *mestiza* I have no country, my homeland cast me out; yet all countries are mine because I am every woman's sister or potential lover. (As a lesbian I have no race, my own people disclaim me; but I am all races because there is the queer of me in all races.) I am cultureless because, as a feminist, I challenge the collective cultural/religious male-derived beliefs of Indo-Hispanics and Anglos; yet I am cultured because I am participating in the creation of yet another culture, a new story to explain the world and our participation in it, a new value system with images and symbols that connect us to each other and to the planet. (*102–103*)

Here Anzaldúa is celebrating a non-identity as identity. When her community rejects her for her sexuality, and mainstream American culture rejects her for her skin colour, she finds herself between identities. She is a border-crosser where every moment of her life is spent in negotiating borders of various identities, none of which fit her very well.

Often, negotiation of dual identities means conforming to racial stereotypes. In her hilarious piece, 'For All the Indian Girls I've Ever Loved', Natasha Singh recommends several measures for 'assimilation'.

> When a white boy is coming over, play your Indian bhajans real softly. Make sure you put out your library books on Hinduism and reincarnation all over your desk…
>
> If it's an Indian boy, put your books away and keep the lights on…
>
> Over dinner, nod your head when white boy begins to tell you how Indians are the most spiritual people on the planet…
>
> When you're with black boy make sure you connect on issues of race and violence against men…
>
> If Latino boy is coming over, put on your red lipstick and matching dress… (*2000: 345–47*)

However, migration may very well offer the opportunity to cross the heterosexual border for Asians, for whom 'coming out' in their native cultures and homelands would have been impossible (witness the fact that many Indian writers such as Suniti Namjoshi, Leela Gandhi, Gayatri Gopinath, and the poets/writers quoted in this chapter, are diasporic). In such cases, 'coming out' can refer to both their sexual and national boundary-crossing.

A central problem in queer globalization is the narrative of teleology and development. The 'First World' sees 'Third World' nations as only recently 'coming out'. It sees the controversy over Deepa Mehta's *Fire* as

an index of the nation's cultural, and therefore, racial, backwardness (see Gopinath 2002, Jigna Desai 2002). In such a narrative, Western nations are more 'progressive' and 'modern' while postcolonial nations, which are only now beginning to 'reveal' their gay and lesbian populace, are 'traditional'. In effect, such a discourse reinstates the binary of colonialism, where the West was modern and the (colonized) East stands for primitivism and traditionalism. Thus a reviewer writes about *Fire*:

> Perhaps bold and novel in India, its feminist messages seem dated by American standards, and *Fire* would be easier to take more seriously if throbbing drums didn't underline its images of passion, if a devastated husband didn't slump beneath a soda machine reading "Crush," and if a sampler inscribed "Home Sweet Home" didn't lay such emphasis on the contrast between the stitched sentiment and the miseries and tensions that motivate the characters under this particular roof. (*Van Gelder 1996*)

Sexuality becomes one more realm in which the West represents itself as a modern culture in opposition to the East's primitive one. It is precisely this kind of discriminatory discourse that must be fought. It becomes the burden of the postcolonial queer to represent itself to the Euro-American queer community. There is an urgent need to locate sexuality within debates about transnationality, a project Inderpal Grewal and Caren Kaplan have admirably launched (2001). Grewal and Kaplan argue that the efforts of contemporary (Western) sexuality studies seek to overcome gender binaries. Such studies ignore the histories of diverse political economies and forms of governmentality. Thus, we need to look at the forms of gender and sexual differences in medieval China and Islam in order to understand the subject positions today. Cultural differences of sexuality today (between Western and Oriental homosexuality, for instance), Grewal and Kaplan point out, are rooted in a legacy of their specific cultures. This means that studies of contemporary sexuality must account for differences in medical theories, family and kinship structures, and scientific discourses in different cultures. Immigration laws and refugee politics, like transnational labour, affects sexual identity politics in a globalized culture. Thus, family-based categories for immigration into the United States are profoundly anti-queer because they assume models of the family based on Western and hierarchic cultural norms. That is, immigration laws do not see families as anything other than heterosexual, and gay–lesbian family immigration policies do not yet exist. Here geopolitics, sexuality, racial and ethnic identities, all come together in political and social discourses.

Hoshang Merchant's introduction to *Yaarana* emphasizes precisely this theoretical point: that for Indian gays to perceive Western homosexuality through the prism of MTV, or to globalize/homogenize gay identity, is to ignore crucial differences between cultures. Merchant writes:

> In India, the MTV culture has done the country's homoerotic culture a disservice. It has projected plastic women like Sophiya Haq and Alisha Chinai onto the adolescent male imagination … Secondly, it has projected the West's gay sub-culture in its worst light by highlighting its lunatic fringe as if it were the mainstream… It has also caused a backlash. While encouraging homosexuals to come out of the closet and increasing tolerance and acceptance it has also caused an increase in the display of physical or verbal abuse against homosexuals and put closet homosexuals on the defensive… (*1999: xiii–xiv*)

Studies of homosexuality in the West are linked to the activism after Stonewall. That is, there is a link between local and community-based activism and the academic discipline. It is therefore necessary to locate Indian or African gay–lesbian identities within their particular contexts. Even in the case of diasporic sexual identity, the subject-contexts of their particular cultures must be kept in mind. Identity politics in queer studies therefore cannot seek exact correspondences between the poetry of, say Raj Rao and Hoshang Merchant, to the work of Audre Lorde or Hanif Kureishi. While the global gay–lesbian alliance moves towards a better coalition politics, it should not erase cultural specificity in favour of a uniform gay–lesbian identity.

Global tourism has also significantly altered the status of homosexuality. 'Ethnosexual adventuring'—a term coined by Joan Nagel (2003)—in contemporary times has translated into sex tourism, where men and women from 'First World' nations travel to 'Third World' nations for alternate sexual experiences. Queer identities have become a consumer product in the age of global tourism (see Puar 2002, Rushbrook 2002) as new racial-sexualized geographies emerge. It is also interesting to see how queer identity politics contests nationalist and ethnic identities. From the 1990s, queer rights advocates have sought equal rights and membership in ethnic communities round the world. Feminist and gay groups in Ireland are now turning to the European Union, appealing outside the Irish national boundary for rights within Ireland. Gay and lesbian groups have appealed to the European Convention on Human Rights seeking decriminalization of homosexuality.

QUEERING NATIONAL, ETHNIC, AND CULTURAL IDENTITY

The term 'queer' seeks to destabilize categories of identity—sexual, gender, community, and even national. As we have seen above, queer identities

call into question institutions that are based upon assumptions of heterosexuality. Queer politics seeks inclusion rather than exclusion. Postcolonial queer writing works dealing with the theme of 'identity' often include debates about:

- The 'stability' of relationships
- The assumption of heterosexual relationships as the norm and queer ones as 'deviant'
- The construction of nations as 'families' which legitimizes the heterosexual family alone
- The use of heterosexual myths and traditions by nationalist discourses that reject alternate myths dealing with queer culture
- The construction of particular cultural identities within the 'nation' that does not account for queer culture, or even the queer elements within a culture;
- The anxiety about seeing queers as part of the nation, and as a nation in themselves.

National identity is often sexualized. In Andrew Koh's *Glass Cathedral*, the priest Norbert admits to his homosexuality, but emphasizes to Colin that any relationship is impossible. Gays are not recognized, as the novel consistently shows, by either the Church or the Singapore society. Norbert says:

> We are around but we must not be visible. We are criminals as far as the law is concerned. What future is there for us? If one of us goes, the other doesn't have the same legal, financial rights to the partner as your heterosexual couples... (*103–104*)

India, for instance, retains section 377 of the Penal Code that criminalizes sodomy (lesbianism is not listed here). The protests against *Fire*—with arguments such as 'lesbianism is not Indian' (see Thadani 1994 and 1996)—are indicative of the heterosexist nature of nationhood. The contemporary legal system in India is, as is well known, a legacy of the British. Recent historians and cultural theorists have drawn attention to the fact that the laws passed during the Raj were rooted in the age's notions of sexuality, marriage, and reproductive biology. The Age of Consent Act (1891) and the Child Marriage Restraint Act (1929) must be read in terms of India's colonial history, and the history of the politics of nationalisms and sexualities. If nationalist—and racial/ethnic—discourse, as suggested by Sinha (1995) and discussed in the section on race and sexuality above, is heterosexist, then how does the Black or Native American gay/lesbian work within the same discourse? In other words, how does the non-white lesbian or gay writer create an identity that is truly Other without being marginal, different without being 'strange'? How does the homosexual write back to the heterosexist empire? In Andrew Koh's *Glass Cathedral*, Rani makes an important point about ethnicity's intersection with homosexuality:

> There is a difference between part of an ethnic minority and being part of a sexual minority ... gays and lesbians are more repressed than other minority groups precisely because you don't have a cultural history you can be proud of ... Come to think of it, all your histories are ... er... there isn't one we know of, is there? (*107*)

The history of a nation or an ethnic group rarely includes homosexuals within the ambit. Homosexuals, Rani seems to be saying, do not constitute a culture within Singapore.

During the 1990s, a social movement called 'Queer Nation' swept across Canada. This movement explored a nationalism grounded in queer experience, and the use of the term 'nation' gestured at the exclusionary principle of nationhood. As noted in the chapter on gender, the intersection of nationalism and the feminist movement has always been fraught with tensions about identities (as woman, as member of a community, the aspirations of a nation). Nationalisms are invariably homophobic. For instance, during the heyday of Canadian nationalism in the 1970s and early 1980s, Canadian nationhood explicitly denied gays and lesbians the right to freedom from discrimination. It was only in 1996 that a Bill (C-33) amended the Canadian Human Rights Act to include sexual orientation. Postcolonial writing interrogates even this vastly inclusive 'queering', seeking to draw in racial and ethnic minorities and the differently-abled under the category of 'queer nation'. The question therefore is: does the black lesbian constitute a part of the American queer nation? What is the identity of the Latino gay in white America? How does the gay or lesbian belonging to an ethnic minority develop a community and belonging in a predominant white, heterosexual (even feminist) ethos?

A probable answer is to be found in the writings of Audre Lorde (of Caribbean descent), Paula Gunn Allen (Native American) and Gloria Anzaldúa (Chicano/a). A central mechanism in these writers is the reinscription of myths (from the Graeco-Roman, and therefore Western–Christian tradition). They revise myths in order to destabilize and interrogate traditional notions of white heterosexual womanhood. Their very perceptive strategies are borrowed from Native American, African, and Chicana mythic traditions. Thus figures and female deities such as

Spider Woman (Hopi), Thought Woman (Keres Pueblos), Coatlicue (pre-Aztec) and Changing Woman (Navajo) people their writings. Henry Louis Gates, Jr. has argued that the retrieval of figures from African mythology (such as the trickster Esu elegbara) marks a revisionary mechanism (see Gates, *The Signifying Monkey*, 1988). Paula Gunn Allen argues that the retrieval of 'red roots' and native (non-European/Christian) gynocentric themes is crucial to making feminism more egalitarian (1986: 214). Anzaldúa in her classic work *Borderlands* (1987) looks at pre-Columbian Coatlicue and its transformation from a matrifocal to a phallocentric figure with the arrival of the Spanish. Coatlicue combined the man–woman within herself, and as such, represents an entirely different view of sexuality and gender identity. She was divided into half, and banished to the underworld—a process to which Anzaldúa attributes the dualism of Western thinking. For Anzaldúa this figure becomes the source of creative energy itself. Lorde uses Yoruba and Dahomean mythical figures of *orisha* (or spiritual forces), in her poetry (in the volume *The Black Unicorn*, now available in *The Collected Poems*). Thus the revival of African and Chicano/a mythology in their writings is a political act where the colonization by white feminist thought can be expanded into a more inclusive framework. The use of androgynous, transgendered figures from native mythology enables writers such as Allen and Anzaldúa to resist the normative heterosexist taint of Western feminism. It enables them to project bisexuality, transgender practices, and cross dressing as a natural state of affairs rather than as a perversion. This means that traditional Western feminism's marginalization of lesbianism or transgenders can be overcome through recourse to figures who are clearly beyond the norm.

Decolonization and a postcolonial analytic practice, suggest these writers, means freeing African, native writing from the oppressive myths generated about their cultures—that a belief in spirits is equivalent to superstition, or that women with secret knowledges are witches—and revisioning the myths. Postcolonial writers, both men and women, use myths from their own traditions for this purpose.[10] Part of this project would include a retrieval of historical homosexual figures and 'hidden' histories of queer life from native traditions. Representations of women-bonding, transsexual or cross-dressing men or women, and characters/stories with lesbian overtones abound in Hindu mythology and legend. We have Brihannala, Amba/Shikhandin, and Mohini. Agni, the god of fire is reputed to have been born of two mothers. Shiva is famously *Ardhanarishwara*, half man-half woman. *Ramayana*'s King Ila tale shows Shiva and Parvati as females playing together (and King Sudyuma turns into a female when he enters this grove). The mythical king Yuvanasva is described as having given birth to a child who came out of his body by bursting open the right side of his stomach (Kakar 1997 [1994]: 24). The *Kamasutra* refers to alternate sexualities, and to lesbianism. And of course, temple architecture and sculpture (especially Khajuraho, dating back to the tenth and eleventh century A.D.) represents 'yogini-mela', a version of yogic lesbian relation). Sudhir Kakar writes: 'In Hindu mythology, sexuality is a rampant flood of polymorphous pleasure and connection, disdaining the distinctions between the heterosexual, genital imperatives of conventional sex and sweeping away incestual taboos' (1989 [1981]: 23).

However, using sexuality as the lone marker of cultural identity is a problem in itself, since class is an integral component of postcolonial lives and identity. Community and religious affiliation account for large chunks of an individual's identity. In response to a question about faith and sexuality ('is it possible for your characters to be a good Muslim and be gay?') Hanif Kureishi responds:

> Maybe there is some way you could reconcile the two. But to be honest, I am not sure why you'd want to. Why couldn't you abandon Islam altogether and just be a gay person? Or take what you wanted from Islam? You don't have to swallow the whole orthodoxy to make use of it. It's like a supermarket, you take this and you take that. Just like a movie—you have a straight character, a gay character, a businessman, a laundrette owner. You put all those bits together. (*2001: 6*)

Kureishi is here talking about many 'bits' that make up identity. He refuses to use just 'gayness' as a decisive marker, and suggests that class, sexuality, age, and race are all integral components. Kureishi allies sexuality with ethnic identity and class in *My Beautiful Laundrette, The Buddha of Suburbia,* and others works.

In order to understand how postcolonial writing's representation of sexuality is aligned with class politics, I turn to Raj Rao's *The Boyfriend* (2003). Yudi, the protagonist of the novel, seeks men in railway station public conveniences: 'the gents' toilet at Churchgate provided a twenty-four-hour supply of men' (2). Yudi seeks poor boys, labourers, or disabled men for his sexual pleasures, only rarely his equals or betters. Rao writes: 'He would give anything to sleep with [physically disabled] men', writes Rao, overwhelming them with his 'Good Samaritan kindness' before getting 'the poor soul into bed' (30). Seeking poorer men for his sexual pleasure may appear as though Yudi has working-class sympathy. My reading suggests that it is actually an exploitative mechanism. The upper class, educated Yudi uses working-class men, and does not quite bond with them except sexually. At one point Rao describes Yudi's feelings: 'all the

working men he slept with … had great bodies but lousy minds' (214). When Milind, his working class lover needs money (after marriage), Yudi pays him—in return for sex (229–31). The chapter, ironically titled, 'A Friend in Need' suggests that a gay continuum cannot be read outside the class/caste (Milind is 'lower' caste) interface.

Queering identities thus complicates notions of community, class, and nation. Contemporary queer politics and writing push the borders of 'acceptable' communities and social codes. Sexuality, writers such as Kureishi or John Rechy demonstrate, is as much a criterion of identity as community, religious affiliation, or even nationality. In fact, the nation must be made more inclusive so that discrimination on the grounds of sexuality (and not only on grounds of class, gender, or race) also ends.

QUEERING THE BORDER

Perhaps the writer who embodies almost every single theme in postcolonial studies and queer theory is Gloria Anzaldúa. Her 1987 book, *Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza* redefined identity and sexual politics as no single text ever has. Written in an elliptic, often irritatingly irregular style interspersed with poetry, *Borderlands* celebrated the border-crosser, the liminal figure who queered boundaries of race, sexuality, gender, nation, and language. There are two key assumptions here:

- Queers occupy and blur borders
- Queers pay attention to the ways in which borders exclude and include only heterosexuals

The border, Anzaldúa demonstrates, is a site of struggle where one seeks to assert identity. Anzaldúa writes:

> Because I, a mestiza
> Continually walk out of one culture
> And into another,
> Because I am in all cultures at the same time (*1987: 99*)

Her lesbianism, writes Anzaldúa, renders her the complete outsider, made up of a mixture of identities (1987: 106, 193–94).

This mixture of identities that spans, transgresses, and blurs borders is about intersections—racial, sexual, gender, nationalities, and languages. She does not fit any taxonomic category, slipping through the interstices between identities and therefore possessing a potent political weapon of

not being reduced to just one identity. This celebration of the multiple, the fragmented, and the fluid, becomes a politics of the possible.

El Paso border writers John Rechy (*City of Night*, 1963) and Alicia Gaspar de Alba (*Sor Juana's Second Dream* 1999; *The Mystery of Survival and Other Stories* 1993) queer the borders of El Paso and Juarez cities as their protagonists struggle with heterosexual constructions of the borderlands. These are attempts to write a new history of the border between the USA and Mexico, where the focus is on alternate sexualities. Rechy also complicates this 'border' by showing how one city/culture/country merges into the other, especially in the realm of sexuality. Thus, when the nameless hero of *City of Night* returns to El Paso, a man accosts him in the local movie theatre. The hero goes out with the man, by 'reverting to the poses learnt in New York'. Soon after, he regrets his actions (even though he works as a male prostitute in New York City when he is in the USA). He determines, therefore, that he 'would never again allow that other life of New York to touch me here' (83). However, he finds that it is simply not possible. Sexual identities follow him from Times Square to El Paso, New York to Los Angeles. The border figure of the queer blurs boundaries. De Alba's *Sor Juana's Second Dream*, an extraordinary first novel set in seventeenth century Mexico, details the life of Sor Juana (Juana Inés), scholar-poet (and widely acknowledged today as America's first lesbian poet), traces lesbianism in the North American continent right back to the Puritan periods. In her newest novel, *Desert Blood* (2005), de Alba documents social injustice and legal prejudices in the towns on the US–Mexican border. De Alba portrays a border town that has become the dumping ground for sex perverts. Sex-offenders are given 'one-way tickets to El Paso'. When the protagonist, Ivon Villa, hears of this she asks:

> One-way tickets? When did El Paso become the dumping ground for perverts?

The Judge responds:

> Isn't the border the dumping ground for all forms of pollution? (*310*)

The border is a landscape of wastes—radioactive, cultural, sexual, political, and economic. De Alba's works are actually social histories of queer writing in the borderlands, and provide insights into the racialized nature of sexual identities, oppression, and social systems in these regions.

Queer fiction of borderlands must be read alongside politically informed readings of historical documents and alternate histories of the region (see Pérez 2003). This includes lesbian oral histories of the El Paso community,

gay and lesbian activists of El Paso, and Mexican American women's agency in the *colonias* of El Paso. Such a project is now being undertaken as part of the University of Texas at El Paso's (UTEP) Ph.D. Programme in Borderlands History.

NOTES

1. It must be remembered that the American Psychiatric Association *declassified* homosexuality as a mental illness only in 1974.
2. In a review of Hoshang Merchant's *Yaarana*, Vikram points to the complete lack of reference to Gay Rights, the Gay Movement and political issues. Vikram is right, of course. To speak of gay writing without its political issues and social implications is to empty it of the subversive and transformative content. See Vikram, 'A Reason to be Glad: India's First Anthology of Gay Writing' (2000: 16). For a mode of queer cultural studies see Nayar (2007).
3. On the hybrid nature of 'third sex' (intersex, popularly known as 'hijras' in India), gender, and queer identity see Patel (1997). 'Transgender' as a term is increasingly used to refer to pre- and postoperative transsexuals. This includes transvestites, drag queens, cross dressers, gays and lesbians, bisexuals, and straights who exhibit behaviour that may be seen as 'transgressing' socially assigned gender roles (see Raymond 1979 for a famous study).
4. The raging controversy about Thomas Jefferson and his black mistress Sally Hemmings is an example of the intersection of race and sexuality. Slave-owners' exploitation of black women slaves was always denied in American society. Sally Hemmings' descendents and historians have argued that Jefferson was indeed the father of her children. In the 1990s, scientists used DNA technology and proved that the DNA from Jefferson's descendents and those from Hemmings' were compatible, thereby proving the liaison between Jefferson and Hemmings. Despite this evidence, Jefferson's family has refused Hemmings' descendents' claim to becoming official members of the family kinship organization. The case illustrates the paranoia around race-sexuality. See Gordon-Reed (1997).
5. For two extremely disturbing accounts of ethnosexual violence and war, see Stiglmayer (1994) and Beverly Allen (1996).
6. More recently, there have been attempts to revaluate earlier African American poets for their gay themes. Critics have discovered a gay consciousness beneath the race themes in the work of Claude McKay, Langston Hughes, Countee Cullen, and others. See Woods (1993).
7. For a collection of important essays on queer families, see Bernstein and Reimann (2001).
8. A tangential point here. In what is surely a nod at US 'interventionism', soldiers arrive with guns in Ashagad. The leader, a programmed android, having discovered that the Ashans do not wish to trade declares: 'You [Asha, the Empress of Ashagad] are deposed for obstructing the causes of democracy and justice. We're appointing a new government that'll be more cooperative and loyal to us' (103).
9. This is not to claim that everything is perfect in gay families. Instances of domestic violence in same-sex families have been reported, and, for all practical purposes, replicate the situation in heterosexual families. See for instance, Munia (1998).
10. For a detailed reading of the revisionary myth in Allen, Anzaldúa, and Lorde, see Keating (1993). For a study of homosexuality among American Indians—a marginalized category even within gay/lesbian studies—see Mary Ann Jacobs and Lester Brown (1997).

Gauhati Mahavidyalaya Guwahati-17 Date:

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Hybridity, Diaspora, Cosmopolitanism

That's all I am, a woman cracked by multiple migrations.

—Meena Alexander, *Fault Lines* (1993: 3)

Colonialism was essentially an encounter between cultures, languages, people, and systems of thought, all located within a structure where the power rested with the white race. Colonial rule in Asian/African/South American regions transplanted European forms of thinking, European languages and culture, and everything from food to sport into a native 'context'. As part of the 'civilizing mission' Europeans introduced Western thinking and languages such as English and Spanish, creating 'European-ized' natives. The result is what Homi K. Bhabha and other postcolonial thinkers famously theorized as the 'hybrid' colonized native.[1] The colonial 'plan' for such a hybrid native is clearly described in T.B. Macaulay's (in)famous 'Minute' of 1835 where he described the creation of Europeanized natives as the creation of 'a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinion, in morals, and in intellect' (in Sharp 1965: 107–17). V.S. Naipaul, in a devastating description of contemporary Caribbean society, captures this hybridized, half-native/half-Westernized, unsatisfactory identity of diasporic, once-colonized communities:

> A peasant-minded, money-minded community, spiritually cut off from its roots, its religion reduced to rites without philosophy set in a materialistic colonial society: a combination of historical accidents and national temperament has turned the Trinidad Indian into a complete colonial, even more Philistine than the white. (*The Middle Passage*: 89)

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Naipaul is describing a Caribbean identity in which 'roots' have been erased and new ideas and ideologies planted. What we have is a protean, unidentifiable identity—the direct result of the colonial encounter.

In the latter half of the twentieth century, the writings of transplanted authors such as Bharati Mukherjee, Buchi Emecheta, David Dabydeen, Caryl Philips, and Hanif Kureishi have captured the diasporic, hybridized state of migrant communities. Black British cultural studies, exemplified by the work of Paul Gilroy and others, links race with class in order to analyse identity. In this Black and Minority cultural studies approaches differed from 'traditional' cultural studies (exemplified by the writings of Dick Hebdige, and even Raymond Williams) that rarely used the category of race to speak of mass cultural forms and processes (Stuart Hall, of course, is the link between the two). Black and Minority studies looks at the processes—social, communicative, political, and cultural—through which immigrants and non-white races create and represent themselves within the 'First World'. Further, it treats black cultural forms in terms of the uneven economic and social development of the communities, and aligning itself with 'oppression studies' (which includes Latino/a studies, women's studies, queer studies, Native American studies).[2]

Diaspora is simply the displacement of a community/culture into another geographical and cultural region. Such movements were common during colonialism.[3] Such diasporic movements developed their own distinctive cultures which preserved, extended, and developed their 'original' cultures. Diaspora culture is the effect of migration, immigration, and exile. Diaspora is a particularly fascinating phenomenon because it has existed since the arrival of humans on earth. As communities settle down, they acquire and build certain traditions and customs. Later, when members of this community move away, they take with them the baggage of these customs and belief-systems. However, it is important to distinguish between kinds of migration and diaspora—refugees, asylum-seekers, illegal immigrants, voluntary migrants, and job-seekers constitute different forms of diasporic existence. Europeans moved all over the world, leading to colonial settlements (Canada, Australia, the Americas). They also transported Africans to colonies for slave labour, leading to yet another diaspora. Curiously, 'diasporic' writing today has come to signify the recent phenomenon of 'Third World' writers in Western metropolises, though diasporic writers by Africans and Asians go back to the eighteenth century (Sake Dean Mahomet, the first Indian author in English, lived in

England).[4] This chapter looks at the poetics and politics of exilic writing of the twentieth century diaspora.

Roger Bromley proposes that every narrative in diasporic writing is 'both an individual story and, explicitly, a cultural narrative' (2000: 21). While Bromley's formulation comes dangerously close to Jameson's controversial claim/prescription that all 'Third World' literature functions as national allegory (Jameson 1986), there is some merit in treating diasporic writing as both autobiographical—individual and communal–cultural. Writers mapping the diasporic experience in their fiction or poetry are invariably diasporic in their 'real' lives. The controversy surrounding the nature of Maxine Hong Kingston's *The Woman Warrior* (1975)—as ethnic autobiography, fiction, documentary—is an example of the undecidable nature of diasporic writing where much of the experiences of unsettlement, adaptation, language, and longing narrated in the fiction could very well be drawn from the author's own experiences of dislocation. It is interesting to note that almost every writer of the diasporic experience has, in her or his interviews, stated their own, personal sense of dislocation (see Rohinton Mistry's interview, quoted below). Hence a case can be made out to treat much of this writing as autobiographical.

However, to say that such writing is merely autobiographical is to severely limit it. The author maps an experience that is shared by many others, and which they would have expressed if they had had a voice. It is crucial, I propose, to see the diasporic author as a metonym—one who stands in for a whole community. I suggest that postcolonial diasporic literature deals less with a problematic hero/ine than with a 'problematic collective situation' (to adapt John Beverley's argument and phrasing from another context, 1992). There is a constant elision in diasporic narratives between the individual and the communal, the personal and the collective, even when we are being told the story of one individual or family.

Diasporic writing captures the two invariables of their experience: exile and homeland. All diasporic literature is an attempt to negotiate between these two polarities. The writings of exiled/immigrant writers undertakes two moves, one temporal, and one spatial. It is, as Meena Alexander puts it, 'writing in search of a homeland' (1993: 4).

The temporal move is a looking back at the past (analepsis) and looking forward at the future (prolepsis). Analepsis involves a negotiation with a retreating history, past, traditions, and customs. It produces nostalgia, memory, and reclamation as literary themes. Prolepsis involves a different treatment of time, where the writer looks forward at the future, seeking new vistas, new chances. This produces themes of the ethics of work, survival, and cultural assimilation. The proleptic narrative is

agenda-driven, as the characters seek to survive hostility, adapt to new circumstances, and gaze upon the future. The best expression of this dual movement comes in Rushdie's *Shame*:

> What is the best thing about migrant peoples…? I think it is their hopefulness … And what's the worst thing? It's the emptiness of one's baggage. We've come unstuck from more than land. We've floated upwards from history, from memory, from Time. (91)

Diasporic writers such as Sam Selvon or V.S. Naipaul are invariably seeking a form and a language in which they can capture the trauma of colonial history with its forced migrations and slaving voyages, as well as the condition of a 'postcolonial' migrancy.

6.1 Diaspora

The word 'diaspora' derives from the Greek, meaning 'to disperse'. Diaspora can be the voluntary or forced movement of peoples from their homelands into new regions. Having arrived in a new geographical and cultural context, they negotiate two cultures: their own and the new one. This diasporic culture is necessarily mixed and an amalgamation of the two cultures.

Robin Cohen defines diaspora as communities living together in one country who 'acknowledge that "the old country"—a notion often buried deep in language, religion, custom or folklore—always has some claim on their loyalty and emotions … a member's adherence to a diasporic community is demonstrated by an acceptance of an inescapable link with their past migration history and a sense of co-ethnicity with others of a similar background' (2001: ix). Diasporic communities are created out of the merging of narratives about journeys from the 'old' country to the new (Brah 1997: 183). People from the first generation of migrants tend to recall the 'old' country more than children born to migrant people.

The spatial move involves a de-territorialization and a re-territorialization connected by journeys/travel. De-territorialization is the loss of territory. It is both geographical and cultural. Diasporic writing across the world, to make a sweeping generalization, is concerned with spaces, landscapes, and journeys. Since diaspora involves a change of place through a journey, this is a self-evident literary theme. What is also significant is that the loss of territory is almost always accompanied by the gain of new ones. Dislocation *from* is followed by a re-location *to*. Diasporic literature's dealings with space thus move between 'home' and 'foreign country', between the familiar and the strange, the old and the new. Contrasts and comparisons between the two spaces are frequent in the writings of immigrant postcolonial

authors. It is surely not a coincidence that a large number of diasporic writing has spatial location implied in its very title: *An Area of Darkness* and *A House for Mr Biswas* (Naipaul), *Tales From Ferozesha Bagh* (Mistry), *The Famished Road* (Ben Okri), *The Nowhere Man* (Markandaya), *Bombay Duck* and *Poona Company* (Farrukh Dhondy), *Brick Lane* (Monica Ali), *Nampally Road* and *The House of a Thousand Doors* (Alexander), *In An Antique Land*, *The Shadow Lines*, and *The Calcutta Chromosome* (Ghosh).

A quick list of features of diasporic culture/literature would include the following themes:

- The shift, contrast, and relation between centre (from where their ancestors/parents originated) and the periphery (into which they dispersed)
- The memory—individual or communal—of home, including details of childhood landscapes, historical events, people
- The sense of alienation in a new society/culture/land
- A need to retain features from the 'homeland'—this includes a determined effort to retain rituals, language, forms of behaviour
- A reclamation of history of the homeland and childhood spaces
- A conscious attempt to assert ethnic identity in terms of the homeland, while simultaneously seeking acceptance/assimilation in the new cultures

These themes can be organized under three main heads:

(i) Nostalgia, memory, 'imaginary homelands'
(ii) Hybridities and new identities
(iii) Globalization and cosmopolitanism

The borders of nations, communities, even families (dispersed across the globe) have become blurred in the late twentieth century. With increasing flows of people and money, culture and lifestyles, the very nature of the border is suspect (except, perhaps, for officers manning immigration booths at airports across the world), but especially in cities in 'First World' nations. An understanding of the enormity of displacement, of the right to cross borders and the need to police borders is necessary to read the best diasporic writing today. Harrowing tales of harassment at 'ports of entry', of humiliating interrogations in refugee centres, quarantining measures, and Visa interviews constitute the largest chunk of contexts for diasporas. (Salman Rushdie, that perceptive observer of events, notes this first 'scene', as it were, of diaspora: the immigration barriers at London's Heathrow Airport, where the people who had the greatest trouble getting past the control point were black or 'Arab-looking'. 'Step Across this Line', 2002: 368).

Diasporic writing, especially in the age of globalization, is a consciousness-raising genre, where political issues of cultural citizenship, cosmopolitan justice, and global inequality run alongside themes of nostalgia, imaginative reconstructions of the homeland, and identities. The theme of identity in diasporic writing is not merely an exercise in exploring multiplicities of location and subjecthoods. It is a larger political issue of global justice, cultural rights, self-determination, and cosmopolitanism. This chapter links the themes in diasporic writing to such larger issues.

NOSTALGIA, MEMORY, 'IMAGINARY HOMELANDS'

Exile and displacement narratives frequently combine a sense of disquiet with their nostalgia and longing. Atwood recreates the world of Susanna Moodie, who migrated from Scotland to Canada in the 1830s, as a world in which the migrant is homeless and foreign. Such a migrant does not see the 'new world' as a land of opportunity. In 'Disembarking in Quebec', a poem that is extraordinary in its images of exile and the 'new world', Margaret Atwood writes:

> Is it my clothes, my way of walking,
> The things I carry in my hand
> .....
> this space cannot hear

In the 'vistas of desolation' others find freedom. For her, it is always exile:

> The moving water will not show me
> My reflection.
> The rocks ignore.
> I am word
> In a foreign language. (*1997 [1970]*)

Here Moodie finds herself 'foreign', while others see the new world as a site of freedom. The sense of homelessness is accentuated by the recognition that one has not found a new home in the adopted country.

Much of diasporic writing explores the theme of an original home. This original home as now lost—due to their exile—is constantly worked into the imagination and myth of the displaced individual/community.

Nostalgia is therefore a key theme in diasporic writing. Nostalgia, memory, and the theme of a lost home often take two main forms in diasporic literature:

(i) 'Home' and the poetics of 'return',
(ii) Dislocation, re-location, memo-realization

'Home' and the Poetics of 'Return'

A character in Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music* (1997) is described thus: 'She [Sandhya] kept returning to her childhood home, a house with a red-tiled roof and a sandy courtyard where the mulberry bloomed' (41). Sandhya's 'imaginative' return to her childhood home captures one of the central themes in diasporic literature. Memories of the 'original' country haunt the spaces of exilic writing. Postcolonial diasporic literature can be read, as noted before, as presenting an analepsis—looking backward at the past—and prolepsis, facing forward to/at the future. Looking backward at the past involves the extensive use of memories of the 'old' country, the point/place of origin and 'home'. Facing the future involves a degree of uncertainty at the prospective of a new location and life. However, in many cases, the memory of the 'old' country is false in the sense that the exile tends to superimpose a memory that may not necessarily be co-terminus with the 'real' one. That is, the exile idealizes the 'old' home country from snapshots, songs, and rather vague memories.

'Home' or the 'old' country is thus more imaginary and imagined than real. It is an idea of the home country, a mythic place. Avtar Brah writes: '"Home" is a mythic place of desire in the diasporic imagination. In this sense it is a place of no-return, even if it is possible to visit the geographical territory that is seen as the place of "origin"'(1997: 192. Also Gurr 1981: 23–24). This suggests that 'home', or 'point of origin' is less a reality than an idealization of how it really is. Such a 'home' is reconstructed out of memories from childhood, newspaper accounts, and fragments, what Salman Rushdie described as reflections made 'in broken mirrors, some of whose fragments have been irretrievably lost' (1991: 11). Exploding the myth of home, Rushdie speaks of 'imaginary homelands, Indias of the mind' (ibid. 10). Hanif Kureishi, the British-born writer of Pakistani origins, captures the role of imagination in constructing the myth of 'home' beautifully in his essay, 'The Rainbow Sign' when he describes how he 'imagined' his 'native' Pakistan:

> Did my uncles ride on camels? ... Did my cousins, so like me in other ways, squat down in the sand like little Mowglis, half-naked and eating with their fingers? ... Stories to help me see my place in the world and give me a sense of the past which could go into making a life in the present and the future. (*1986: 9, 35*)

'Home' is here a product of speculation and imagination. It can be retrieved, reached, or returned to only in memory.

Dislocation, Re-location, Memo-realization

Looking at the past ('origins') and at the future involves a process that Bharati Mukherjee in *Jasmine* described as 'adventure, risk, transformation' ('A Four Hundred-Year-Old Woman', 1991: 240). Looking backward at 'home', such writers also look forward at what new belongings can be constructed—the process of 'transformation' of identity, which accompanies a change of place. You might lose a home but never gain one. Or you might set up a new home in a space which will continue to treat you as a foreigner. In Atwood's 'First Neighbours', the early migrant, Susanna Moodie, says:

> The people I live among, unforgivingly
> Previous to me, grudging the way I breathe their
> Property, the air,

She is mocked and told: 'Go back where you came from'. But Moodie knows that is impossible; the displacement is too complete:

> I tightened my lips; knew that England
> Was now unreachable. (*1997: np*)

Spatially speaking, dislocation invariably means a move away from home. But in diasporic literature, it also means a move towards something, another destination, perhaps another home. This produces a narrative that is often caught between a de-territorialization (the loss of place) and a re-territorialization (finding a new place). Transplantation in a new place in postcolonial diasporic writing is accompanied by the certainty that the old place has not yet released its hold—that some roots still cling to the transplanted. In *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Karim Amir says:

> But I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now—the Indians—that in some way these were my people, and that I'd spent my life denying or avoiding the fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I'd been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted Indians to be like them ... So if I wanted the additional personality bonus of an English past, I would have to create it. (*1990: 212–14*)

Kureishi is here speaking of the acquisition of new identities, while continuing to be (painfully) aware of older ones. Change and the acquisition of new cultures is often a violent act. In Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur* (1964),

Pundit Ganesh Ramsumair begins by condemning colonialism, becomes a reactionary Hindu, and, when the novel ends, is a convert to Christianity and royalism when he is awarded the MBE and invited to dinner at the Governor's Residence. Lorna Goodison describes how even her 'ill-tempered domestic helper', a 'repository of 400 years of resentment/for being uprooted and transplanted' also undermined the white man's language, and retained her old identity:

> To Miss Mirry who subverted the English language
> Calling Barbara, Baba; my father, Tata
> (*'Turn Thanks to Miss Mirry'*, *1999: 12–13*)

Bharati Mukherjee described her stories as reflecting the 'hurly-burly of the unsettled magma between two worlds' ('A Four Hundred-Year-Old Woman'). The violent imagery in both these examples is the imagery of de- and re-territorialization. Suddenly cultural absolutes—such as language, or the mother tongue—are no more absolutes. One way of negotiating this de- and re-territorialization is through the active reclamation of their histories, traditions, and customs (such as festivals and culinary practices). M.G. Vassanji argues, for instance: 'This reclamation of the past is the first serious act of writing. Having reclaimed it, having given himself a history, he liberates himself to write about the present' (1985: 63). Occasionally, the history that is retrieved reveals aspects of their life, ancestry, and culture that had been blotted out of mainstream histories. A brilliant instance of this 'reclamation' occurs in George Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* (1953). The boy-narrator, who learns of Queen Victoria in school, is given an alternate view of things when an old woman tells him of their past of slavery and bondage. The 'new' history clashes with what he has learnt in school books. Lamming's powerful prose states the dilemma of the exile with multiple histories to negotiate thus:

> [H]e was very anxious for the old woman. Who put it into her head that she was a slave, she or her mother or her father before her? … The little boy had heard the word for the first time … Thank God, he wasn't ever a slave … slavery was too far back for anyone to worry about teaching it as history ... Probably it never happened at all. The old woman, poor fool! … She must have had a dream. A bad dream! (57–58)

Lamming's novel is a powerful tale about a colonial education that provides a certain sanitized history of and for the exiles. Slavery, racism, and suffering (of the non-white races at the hands of the Europeans) lie outside

European mainstream historical narratives. And it is this history that exilic literature in classic postcolonial fashion seeks to uncover and reclaim. Lamming's novel provides such a contrapuntal reading of colonialism's race-ridden historiography and pedagogic practices: 'they accepted instinctively that the others, meaning the white, were superior, yet there was always the fear of realizing that it might be true' (27).

Exiles tend to hold on to their traditions in an almost desperate effort to retain/reclaim their 'original' culture. This is a process of acquiring, in the age of widespread migration, 'cultural citizenship'. Cultural citizenship can be defined as the 'maintenance and development of cultural lineage through education, custom, language, and religion, and the positive acknowledgement of difference in and by the mainstream' (Toby Miller 2001: 2). The term encompasses the meaning of legal belonging (as a citizen), but also other forms of belonging, such as community. Caught up in a 'national' culture in whose cultural life the migrant community may have little or no role to play (this is especially the case with first generation immigrant communities—since their participation in the adopted nation's life may be minimal), the community clings to its own customs and cultural codes. The migrant seeks a cultural citizenship within her/his own community while also seeking legal citizenship within the nation.

In the case of diasporic writing, as noted before, there occurs a certain anxiety of 'original' culture and 'home'. This results in a concerted effort at reclamation. Solidarities forged through such reclamation produce a cultural citizenship with nomenclatures such as 'Asian Americans' or 'Black British'. The widespread demand for Hindi films or *Amar Chitra Katha* comic books among NRIs suggests a concerted and conscious attempt to keep India within the collective and individual intellectual and emotional imaginaries. It becomes a survival device, an attempt to gain cultural citizenship within the same community, when faced with uncertainty, especially among first generation exiles (the second generation, born 'outside', has less adaptation problems). This sometimes results in a desire to return to the 'home' country by the older generation, as in the Indo-Fijian writer, Ismith Khan's novel, *The Jumbie Bird*, where the older Trinidadian, Kale Khan, seeks to return to India, while his grandson accepts Trinidad as home. In Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, the difference between the two diasporic generations is captured in a poignant image: '[With] fifteen … [years] lived in the South London suburbs … [my father] stumbled around the place like an Indian off the boat'. In contrast Karim 'knew all the streets and every bus route' (7).

Earlier patterns of Asian diasporic experiences enabled the creation of more bounded communities. There is a great deal of 'home' in the

narratives of such first-generation immigrants (for instance, in the stories of Maxine Hong Kingston's *China Men*, 1980). The literature provides themes of travel, exhaustion, alienation, and collapsing dreams. There is a very strong us/them, home/foreign, here/there binarism at work as the immigrant is caught up almost exclusively in the pathos of departure and arrival. The second generation of writing—exemplified, to continue with Chinese American literature, by characters in Frank Chin's fiction—shows more porous national borders, and an internalization of the new sites. Cultural citizenship in diasporic communities is an attempt to deal with dislocation through an imaginative re-location within their collective memories, nostalgia, and customs. It is an act not just of committing to memory, but a way of making 'real' their connections to home. It is therefore a memorealization, where collective festivities or histories enable a 'return' to a space that they have not quite forgotten. Thus a community moves through a cultural nationalist stage into a political one. In Lamming's *In the Castle of My Skin* Mr Slime is described as a 'Moses come to save his people' (78). In Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur*, the Hindu nationalism of Ganesh receives wide popularity and public support.

One risk in re-articulating the past through reclamation and deliberate memorialization is clearly a reactionary nativism (embodied magisterially in the form of Pundit Ganesh in Naipaul's *The Mystic Masseur*). All cultures are contaminated, miscegenated with and by the cultures they come in contact with. Nativism (for a detailed discussion see the chapter on Nation)—unless highly self-reflexive—runs the risk of perpetuating binaries such as older culture/newer culture, original/derivative, and primary citizens/new arrivals. Nativism's quest for originary moments and cultures relegates all cultures other than the one being currently glorified to secondary status. Such discourses invoke images of a culture's lost glories, the myth of the golden age, and (eventually) racial superiority. It is surely no coincidence that fundamentalist movements the world over are at least partly funded by their diasporic communities. Such communities see the reactionary/nativist groups and ideology as a way of re-asserting the myth of the homeland. Since they cannot (or do not want to) actually return to the material spaces of this 'homeland', it can only be invoked as symbols and iconography (as Rushdie beautifully put it, 'Indias of the mind'). This might even involve internalizing the 'homeland'. 'Hanuman House' in Naipaul's *A House for Mr Biswas* is such a space where India is integrated into the Caribbean setting. As suggested earlier, diasporic postcolonial writing is about de- and re-territorialization. In a strange movement between de- and re-territorialization, India inscribes itself into the 'new' location. What I propose here is that homelands can get inscribed into a

new location in a curious paradox of re-territorialization, where the material culture and spatial location is 'foreign' while the metaphoric space is 'home': India in the Caribbean. Phrases like 'China Town' or 'little India' used to describe cities and regions in Euro-American cities are examples of this paradox where a foreign land is inscribed over by the homeland. In a sense, diasporic cultures and iconography revivify the landscape of Western metropolises.

The community fictions of Monica Ali or Anita Rau Badami (set in diasporic communities in Western cities) can be read as doubly palimpsestic fictions. In order to understand the nature of this fiction, we need to first explore the new identities that emerge in such diasporas.

HYBRIDITIES AND NEW IDENTITIES

The timbre
in our voice
betrays us
however far
we've been

whatever tongue
we speak
the old ghost
asserts itself
in dusky echoes (*Grace Nichols, 'We New World Blacks', 1984: 30*)

Grace Nichols' poem captures the schizophrenic state of the diasporic/immigrant individual as she seeks to combine two cultures and languages without abandoning either. There is very often a misfit between a migrant's imaginary homeland and the actual living conditions in the 'First World' metropolis. How do migrants negotiate this disjuncture between the memory of an old identity and the concreteness of a new one? A central theme in diasporic postcolonial literature is the negotiation of new identities. Identity in diasporic writing can take various forms:

1. a split-consciousness of being Indian and American (or Indian and British),
2. multiple identities and solidarities or,
3. a re-assertion of 'native' cultural identity (as in cultural fundamentalisms).

The hybrid identities of diasporic or displaced individuals/communities can be discussed under three heads:

1. Double consciousness
2. Multiple identities and solidarities
3. Cultural fundamentalisms and ethnic assertion

Double Consciousness

Meena Alexander in her *The Shock of Arrival* (1996) writes:

> Coming to America, I have felt on my own heart what W.E.B Dubois invoked: 'two souls, two thoughts … in one dark body.' But now, at the tail end of the century, perhaps there are many souls, many voices in one dark body (1–2).

Writers such as Ben Okri, Amitav Ghosh, Derek Walcott, Salman Rushdie, and Caryl Philips explore the migrant experience as the experience of multiple subject-positions. Elleke Boehmer describes them thus: 'ex-colonial by birth, "Third World" in cultural interest, cosmopolitan in almost every other way', these writers work 'within the precincts of the Western metropolis while at the same time retaining thematic and/or political connections with a national background' (1995: 233).

However, a tangential point with regard to such cosmopolitan circulation of migrant, 'Third World' texts is in order here. It is important to ask whether El Saadawi's Arab women-centred fiction becomes popular—and is treated as representative of 'Arab women'—in the West because it delivers images that the West seeks. Does the Arab woman's novel, or the Indian novel of poverty, become 'representative' of their cultures and countries because it fits the stereotype generated in the West? Cosmopolitanism relies as much on previously established stereotypes as local and regional literatures. Fiction does not 'symbolize' the fate of Arab women, and digresses from the metanarrative of the West about Arabia or Ghana rarely gain as much currency as the ones that do. Surely it must be kept in mind that the fiction of El Saadawi, for instance, fits right into the American and European rhetoric of the enslaved, tortured Arab woman?

Cosmopolitan identities are, in such diasporic writings, celebrations of the spaces of migrancy. Rather than a simplistic nostalgia for the 'old' world and dislike of the new, the fiction of the 1990s celebrate their routes—the journey is perhaps the most common metaphor, motif, and image

in postcolonial diasporic writing—rather than roots (to invoke Paul Gilroy's distinction from *The Black Atlantic*). However, between roots and routes lies an agonizing distance and insurmountable dilemmas. Derek Walcott, in one of his most famous poems, 'A Far Cry from Africa' captures the liminality and the tortured ambivalence of the hybrid state when he asks:

> Divided to the vein
> How choose
> Between this Africa and the English tongue I love? (*1986 [1962]: 17–18*)

Walcott here is speaking of a double consciousness of being African and English, caught between his 'roots' and the English language that he has grown to love (Walcott writes in English). Hanif Kureishi mentions how he had considered staying on in Pakistan, and then discovered that he missed England. He writes:

> So there was always going to be the necessary return to England. I came home … to my country … It is strange to go away to the land of your ancestors. To find out how much you have in common with people there, yet at the same time to realize how British you are. (*1986: 35*)

The Philipino writer Antonio Reyes Enriquez claims that he 'sees' the language rather than hears it when it is infused with words from Chavacano (a Spanish-formed dialect spoken in the Phillipine province of Zamboanga:

> We inject the tone and nuances of the Chavacano voice and his tradition into English, the borrowed tongue. The result, of course, is English with less use of English idiomatic expressions and written with the feeling, thought, and sentiment of Zamboanga characters and protagonists. (*Roxas-Tope 1998: 85*)

I believe Walcott and Enriquez's formulation of the functioning of language—authors from three different cultural contexts united by the legacy of colonialism and English—reveals the essential linguistic stresses and consciousness that marks the postcolonial, a stress that marks the double consciousness of the intellectual. The double consciousness makes for an interesting condition, what Abdul JanMohamed called the 'specular border intellectual': standing at the border of two cultures, looking critically at both, neither assimilating nor combining either of them (JanMohamed

6.2 Hybridity

Hybridity, a concept popularized by celebrity postcolonial critic Homi Bhabha, is the creation of new cultural forms and identities as a result of the colonial encounter. Hybridity is, according to botany (from where the term originates), a grafting of different species. In terms of races, the term used is 'miscegenation'. Hybridity in postcolonial societies can be in the form of a retrieval/revival of a pre-colonial past—such as folk or tribal cultural forms and conventions—or to adapt contemporary artistic and social productions to present-day conditions of globalization, multiculturalism, and transnationalism. A retrieval or revival can be seen as resistance to the colonial inheritance—such as the rejection of Western forms of narration (the novel) in favour of folk ballads—by the postcolonial. Most societies favour a more assimilatory move, where older forms are retained but recast to account for present day concerns and markets. The clash of cultures produces something new and brilliant, as the fiction of Salman Rushdie (India), Wilson Harris (Caribbean), and the plays of Wole Soyinka (Nigeria) demonstrate. Hybridity also enables the postcolonial writer to negotiate the dangers of cultural binarism (us/them) and the fundamentalist urge to seek 'pure' cultural forms. Instead, we see a celebration of multiplicities where identities are adapted from many sources and not just from a pre-colonial past.

1992). Suniti Namjoshi captures this sense of being alert to the disadvantages of both West and East when she writes:

> In the West I burn;
> Here,
> When my wings give out
> I cannot breathe. (*1989b: 118*)

Walcott, as plays such as *Pantomime* and *Remembrance* (1980) demonstrate, is just as aware of the legacy of colonialism as he is of the flaws of postcolonial Caribbean society. A good example of such a specular border intellectual, one armed with a double consciousness, is Amitav Ghosh, who has been critical of Western and Indian policies with remarkable integrity. Ghosh's writings on the 2004 tsunami, 9/11, and colonialism (whose myth of 'rationality' he so brilliantly debunked in *The Calcutta Chromosome*) have revealed a consciousness that has negotiated the pitfalls of both cultural revanchism and postcolonial mimicry of Western culture. A.K. Ramanujan once reflected upon the characteristic of a 'great house':

> Sometimes I think that nothing
> that ever comes into this house
> goes out. (*2004 [1971]: 96–99*)

He might very well be speaking of postcolonial nations and cultures that have imbibed multiple traditions and made them their own.

Multiple Identities and Solidarities

However, such clearly discernible poles of experience and thinking may not always be available to the migrant. Assaulted by multiple historical, cultural, and political forces, the migrant usually appropriates several identities. Diasporic literature explores identities forged in the crucible of multiple cultures, cities, and races rather than just 'home' and 'alien land'. Indeed, identity is not simply a matter of race. Identities are constructed through multiple specificities: race, ethnicity, gender, class, sexual preference, language, myth, history. Rushdie's fiction is a celebration of the multiple, the plural, and the fluid. Rushdie and Bhabha celebrate displacement as the means to abandon older, perhaps oppressive and limited forms of identity, in favour of a shifting and complex one.

Homi Bhabha sees disjuncture and displacement as a productive condition. We need to rethink the very idea of identity, Bhabha suggests in the essays in *The Location of Culture* (1994). Bhabha sees borders as thresholds, in-between spaces where identities can be recast. These are zones of transition, hybrid spaces. Bhabha writes:

> The need to think beyond narratives of originary and initial subjectivities and to focus on those moments or processes that are produced in the articulation of cultural differences. These 'in-between' spaces provide the terrain for elaborating strategies of selfhood—singular or communal—that initiate new signs of identity, and innovative sites of collaboration, and contestation, in the act of defining the idea of society itself. (*1994: 1–2*)

Using a range of terms that suggest borders, thresholds, and indeterminate spaces, Bhabha rejects notions of a fixed, rooted, or binary (us/them, I/you) identity. He also rejects ideas of 'original' identity and 'originary' moments/home. Instead, Bhabha proposes that we see identity as a process of negotiation, and of articulation. This process of negotiating a new identity in new contexts—social, economic, political, and literary—is central to postcolonial migrant literature. Stuart Hall (1996 [1989]) therefore speaks of 'new ethnicities' where critical reflection on the stereotyping of non-whites and the rights of access to such representations (since stereotyping is representation) results in an assertion of multiple identities. Hall suggests that one can no longer rely on race as a marker to describe 'Blacks' or 'Asians'. Since neither 'Blacks' nor 'Asians' are homogeneous

groups, to use a racial marker to designate all the multiple identities within them is unfair. There is no 'essential' blackness. Instead, we need to look at the 'real heterogeneity of interests and identities' (1996: 444). Hall proposes that we see race as crossed and re-crossed with other categories of class, gender, and the ethnicity. We need to see identities less as 'fixed' rather than as constructions where differences are kept alive. For the Blacks in Britain, Paul Gilroy speaks of the transnational rather than a fixed, essential quality of black experience and history (1993). Communities need to be built on solidarity through difference, where people in one diasporic community draw upon the resources of another, a kind of 'multicultural citizenship' (Kymlicka 1995). Solidarities can be forged against continuing oppressions of race without sacrificing historical specificities. Since the homeland (like 'origins') is a generative myth reconstituted by reclamation and memory, identity is forged through this process of memorealization. Derek Walcott captured this sense of celebratory re-imagination and re-assembling of fragments in his Nobel lecture, 'The Antilles: Fragments of Epic Memory'. Watching a dramatization of the *Ramayana* in a Trinidadian village, he experiences a sense of loss, perceiving the dramatization to be 'evocations of a lost India'. But then he asks:

> Why "evocations"? Why not "celebrations of a real presence? Why should India be "lost" when none of these villagers ever really knew it, and why not "continuing"? ... The love that reassembles the fragments is stronger than the love which took its symmetry for granted when it was whole. (*1998: 68–69*)

Diaspora literature often projects the consciousness of the communal or racial collective such as 'Asian Americans', 'Non-Resident Indians', and 'Blacks'. Diaspora writing is an expression of this shared identity of being dislocated, and is a principal theme in the fiction from Caribbean, Asian American, and other countries. What this means is that national, ethnic, or communal identities are constituted in the absence of a territory. Non-Resident Indians, for instance, are Indians residing outside the politico-geographical territory of India. They retain their Indian identity—especially now with dual citizenship—despite the loss of a homeland. This is perhaps the most curious and paradoxical theme in postcolonial diasporic writing. Indians outside the territory of India claim solidarity with other similar Indians despite their differences (for Indians of the diasporas across the world do come from different linguistic, cultural, regional, caste, and class backgrounds). Rohinton Mistry is seen as a Canadian, Indian, and Parsi writer by many of those 'formations' (Canada, India, Parsi).

The Caribbean novelist George Lamming captures this postcolonial solidarity and difference in a famous essay, 'The Occasion for Speaking' (*1960*):

> What the West Indian shares with the African is a common political predicament: a predicament which we call colonial; but the word colonial has a deeper meaning for the West Indian than it has for the African. The African, in spite of his modernity, has never been wholly severed from the cradle of a continuous culture and tradition ... [For the West Indian] it is the absolute dependence on the values in that language of his colonizer, which have given him a special relation to the word, colonialism... (*1984 [1960]: 34*)

Stuart Hall declares that for Afro-Caribbeans, '[Africa] is the great aporia ... which lies at the center of [their] cultural identity and gives it a meaning which, until recently, it lacked' (1994: 394).

What we have in such a complex relation of solidarity and difference is a process of 'cultural diaspora-ization' (Hall 1996: 447). A city such as London therefore becomes less a national city than cities of the world, as Naipaul observed in *The Enigma of Arrival* (1987), with many races, cultures and ethnicities mixing and merging.

From the above discussions of in-betweenness and 'new ethnicities', what emerges is a new way of dealing with the theme of identity. Some diasporic writers demonstrate an awareness of their in-between states. Writers such as C.L.R James (*Beyond a Boundary*) or David Dabydeen (especially in novels such as *Our Lady of Demerara*) propose that African American, British, and Caribbean diasporas influence and form each other in special ways. Each cultural identity is therefore multiple and transnational. Hybridity is a mixing of discrete ways of living. The productive mixing and cross-fertilization of cultural forms, ways of life, language, is seen in such writers as liberatory because it frees them, as noted above, from essential identities.

Such a hybridization, suggest many authors, is never complete, or easy. It is a process that continues through life. In Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o's *The River Between*, Waiyaki is caught between his role as a bearer of Gikuyu tradition and Western, Christian modernity. Waiyaki, the narrative suggests, is the long-prophesied messiah of the race (12). However, he is also a messianic *Christian* (as Gikandi points out, 2000: 59). He is therefore troubled by his hybridity: 'Waiyaki wondered if he himself fitted anywhere ... He did not quite know where he was going what he was really going to tell his people' (141–42). Here the prophet/messiah is unable to negotiate his Gikuyu role with his colonial inheritance. Karim Amir in Hanif Kureishi's

The Buddha of Suburbia is described as 'an Englishman, born and bred, almost' (3) in the opening pages of the tale. The 'almost' gestures at the unfinalizability of the processes of transculturation and identity-building. In fact, in the novel, the 'almost' of the above description is the key theme (it is also crucial that Karim Amir is bisexual, and thereby occupies more than one identity category in sexual preferences). In an interview, Rohinton Mistry captures the difficulty of 'becoming' anything other than Indian in multicultural Canada. He states:

> Going to Canada, faced with the reality of earning a living and realizing that although I had, up to that point in my life, read books and listened to music that came from the West, there was a lot more involved in *living* in the West … but actually living in the West made that same music seem much less relevant. It suddenly brought home to me very clearly the fact that I was imitating something that was not mine, that made no sense in terms of my own life, my own reality. (*www.asiasource.org*, 2007)

It is surely symbolic that Draupadi in Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music* discovers Sandhya 'afloat in the city' (3), a metaphor that suggests both a geographical–historical weightlessness but also a freedom of movement and multiple locations.

In most cases, this multiplicity results in an identity that is extremely fluid, and can even induce a sense of anxiety. A brilliant description of the split identities of tradition and colonial modernity is visible in the figure of Waiyaki in Ngũgĩ's *The River Between*. Waiyaki, the Gikuyu prophet, is unable to abandon his Christian training, even as he seeks to lead his people. In a powerful passage, Ngũgĩ captures this tension of indecision: 'Even Waiyaki was affected by that great hush that fell over the land … And he stood at the raised piece of ground and looked at the people … Salvation shall come from the hills … He shall show them the way; he shall lead them' (146). The language of messianism is both 'local' and Christian. The Gikuyu prophet cannot think outside his Christian training, and the salvific discourse is cast in Christian modes to a native African audience (see Gikandi 2000: 69). Hybridity, then, is not always a pleasant experience. Dual identities might be advantageous, but, as Ngũgĩ's novel suggests, it can also be disablingly schizophrenic.

Cultural Fundamentalisms and Ethnic Assertion

However, this construction of new identities is never very easy, nor is the transition from old to new ones smooth. Edward Said characterized exile as 'one of the saddest fates' (1994: 7) because, they (exiled intellectuals) are in a 'state of never being fully adjusted' (53). Atwood's Susanna Moodie describes leaving 'civilized distinctions' for a 'large darkness' ('Further Arrivals', *The Journals of Susanna Moodie* 1997: np).

Part of the problem of constructing new identities—and something that Homi Bhabha ignores when valorizing hybridity—stems from the marginalization of the exile within the adopted/dominant culture of the West, a condition best treated in the fiction of Sam Selvon (*The Lonely Londoners* 1956; *Moses Ascending* 1975; *Moses Migrating* 1983). When the adopted culture fails to see beyond the ethnic identity of the diasporic/exilic individual then this individual has no choice but to retrieve her/his indigenous identity. The tension is between a legal *national* citizenship and a desire for *cultural* citizenship within the community. Instead of multiple identities, such a context forces one to re-assert 'roots' and ethnicity. Bhabha ignores the fact that identity is not merely an individual assertion—it is socially sanctioned and validated. If an Asian in Britain is seen only as 'Asian' rather than 'Asian British', how does the individual create a multiple, hyphenated space/identity? The individual does not 'adjust' to new identities or celebrate fluidity because s/he is circumscribed, fixed, and reduced by the dominant society into her/his 'native' or 'original' one. And, post 9/11, identities have been fixed, indisputably, irreducibly: Muslim, terrorist, anti-national, 'American', and so on. There is no real Bhabha-esque 'ambivalence' in contemporary perceptions of differently coloured skins or ethnic features. There is no doubt about the us/them divide, about 'who belongs', about friend and foe, at least in terms of state rhetoric or military strategies.

This socio-cultural non-acceptance, Hanif Kureishi suggests, is the cause behind cultural nationalism and ethnic fundamentalisms: 'The fierce truculent pride of the Black Panthers is here now, as is the separatism, the violence, the bitterness and pathetic elevation of an imaginary homeland. This is spawned by racism' (1986: 27–28). In Meena Alexander's *Manhattan Music* (1997), Sakhi voices the dilemma of never quite adjusting:

> Travelling places was hard, staying was harder. You had to open your suitcase, lay out the little bits and pieces into ready-made niches. Smooth out the sari, exchange it for a skirt … Then you tucked the suitcase under the bed and forgot about it, started accumulating the bric-a-brac that made you part of the streets around. (207)

Alexander's Draupadi asks: 'Why couldn't they have named me *Dorothy*? That name would have hung better on me' (*Manhattan Music* 88). Alexander's

Dorothy/Draupadi is here expressing an anxiety—of merging unobtrusively into her new landscape. Her name isolates her as 'different', while what she seeks is assimilation. In Rohinton Mistry, characters such as Kersi (in *Swimming Lessons and Other Stories from Firozsha Baag*) exemplify the immigrant's problem of alienation from both his adopted land and his 'original' one. In Mistry's 'Swimming Lessons', the narrator's father makes out a case for particular kinds of immigrant writing:

> [If] he continues to write about such things he will become popular because I am sure they are interested in reading about life through the eyes of an immigrant ... the only danger is if he changes and becomes so much like them that he will write like one of them and lose the important difference. (*1989: 248*)

In Naipaul's celebrated *A House for Mr Biswas*, we have an example of how different people cope with such a new environment. Mr Biswas seeks to adapt to Creole society in Port of Spain. On the other hand we have the Tulsis who become insular and seek to preserve their 'culture'. As a result they convert their house, 'Hanuman House' into a fortress, known ironically as the 'White Fortress'. Caryl Philips' *The Final Passage* deals with a woman's struggles to acquire a decent life—with her husband and baby—having migrated to England from the Caribbean. Eventually, disappointed by her efforts she decides to return to the Caribbean. The hybrid identity may not be very comfortable to wear either, as England-returned Nyasha in Dangarembga's *Nervous Conditions* finds out. She tells Tambu:

> We shouldn't have gone [to England] ... Now they're [her parents] are stuck with hybrids for children. And they don't like it. They don't like it at all... And I don't know what to do about it, Tambu, I really don't. I can't help having been there and grown into the me that has been there. (*78*)

The recent furore in France over the Muslim woman's right to wear a headdress is an example of the tension between a cultural citizenship which builds solidarity based on a common system of faith or cultural norms, and a national identity for the immigrant: are you French or are you Muslim? Cultural citizenship here appears to be at odds with national identity and leads to the rise of cultural fundamentalism—often driven, as noted before, by non-acceptance by the adopted culture.

Neil Bissoondath, a Canadian writer of Indian and Caribbean origin, rejects such an insular and revivalist homogenization of ethnicity, arguing that this results in a ghettoization of identities. He argues that immigration means change and renewal. Bissoondath suggests that such a 'freezing' would result in turning 'ethnic communities into museums of exoticism' (*2002 [1994]: 102*).[5] Bissoondath therefore insists on being called a Canadian writer, and pleads for active integration into the adopted culture and society.

What is clear is that the issue of ethnic identity of a migrant group will always be in tension with the national one. If land rights, wages, and health are issues that are decided as a result of their participation in 'national' citizenship; value, community, and relationships are negotiated at the level of cultural citizenship. Clearly, then, the task is to negotiate between *degrees* of inclusion, marginalization and exclusion—between the assimilatory Bissoondath and the floating Rushdie. Several important questions arise:

- Which groups are included in the national scene? (Let us remember that immigrant labour had no right to vote.)
- How do marginalized groups imagine themselves within the national scene (Indian American, American)?
- What are the degrees of affinity with their 'original' and their adopted culture?

If retaining 'original' identities is a difficult task, so is maintaining several, hyphenated ones. The situation is brilliantly captured in a carnivalesque scene—which also emphasizes the role of stereotyping—in Sam Selvon's *The Housing Lark* (1965), where Syl (Sylvester) of East Indian/West Indian origin is being teased by his group:

> 'Syl, why don't you go back to India boy? That is your mother-country'.
>
> Brit'n is my country'.
>
> Yes. Syl, how comes you don't wear dhoti and turban?'
>
> I wonder if I ever get in trouble if the Indian High Commissioner would help me, or if he would send me to the Trinidad office?'
>
> Man, you don't know if you Indian, Negro, white, yellow or blue'. (*126*)

Selvon gestures at the extremely uncertain states of migrant identity here.

New identities of the type celebrated by Rushdie or Okri—a 'set of fluid identities to be celebrated', as Bharati Mukherjee puts it in her 1985 novel *Darkness* (3)—run the risk of a certain historical rootlessness, where the author's connections with 'Third World' nation are tenuous at best, or metaphoric at worst. Homelessness, once treated as a curse, suddenly becomes privileged. The absence of fixed locality ('de-territorialization') is a cause for celebration, and the exilic condition gets romanticized. But this

de-territorialization also runs the risk of losing history, and there is a tendency to flatten out differences, especially historical and material ones, in such a process.[6]

I suggested that the inscription of the homeland over a foreign material base in diasporic community novels like those of Kureishi or Frank Chin or Monica Ali can be read as doubly palimpsestic. Kureishi's London or Frank Chin's San Francisco consists of a 'white' London that is a re-territorialization of the homeland (Pakistan and China, respectively). The Asian ghetto inscribed into/over metropolitan London creates a palimpsestic effect at two levels. One, in which the Asian cultural scene works as a *metaphor*, and where material reality is established through details of shops, language, and people, and a kind of 'home' space where vignettes of the original homeland are reproduced. It is not therefore the production of an Asia but the re-production in a new context, a catachrestic wrenching out and placing into a new context. The 'original' London is inscribed over with an 'original' Asia in this, the first level of palimpsestic fiction. At the second level, this re-produced Asia has incorporated images, practices, and structures from the 'foreign' space. The foreign space functions as the new tool of inscription which has re-drawn the lines of Asian identity. What is glimpsed through in this hybrid is therefore an 'Englished' or 'Americanized' Asia. A hybrid is thus a palimpsest that reveals both 'alien' and 'home' alternately, in such a way that there is no distinction between the 'original' and the 'new'. It retains a sense of the 'pure' while negotiating the same with the 'impure' in a kind of productive dissonance. Reading the spaces and geographies of Asian ghettoes in Western metropolises in such diasporic fiction it becomes difficult to decide on the borders between Asia and the USA. Icons of Ganesha or a flag circulate in a messy mixture with Euro-American brands and spatial practices. At one instant you see India, at another you see the USA. A doubly palimpsestic fiction such as diasporic fiction captures the undecidability of origins and identities, while celebrating hybridity and cosmopolitanism. Cosmopolitanism, of course, in diasporic writing, is a direct expression of globalization.

GLOBALIZATION AND COSMOPOLITANISM

Most of the diasporic writers writing in the latter half of the twentieth century need to negotiate with increasing globalization and transnational movements of people and communities.

Globalization involves the movement of capital across borders, dissolution of nation-state borders (in economic, of not geographic terms),

increasing communications and network linkages, and new forms of production and consumption (such as outsourcing and niche marketing). The debate in current globalization theory is divided along two lines: does globalization mean a new openness to the foreign, or is it a more insidious mode of American imperialism? The globe is now increasingly one social space where common consumer goods pervade diverse communities. Even as hybridized communities come into being, they constitute a common, homogenized space in terms of consumerism. However, what must be kept in mind is that globalization repeats the phenomenon of national markets. It is on a larger scale with a smaller number of beneficiaries, but is the same exploitative set of processes. Globalization and the 'postnational' world order that emerges in the late twentieth century is a move towards cosmopolitanism. As noted earlier, metropolises across the world have become postcolonial, cosmopolitan, and hybridized with globalization. A whole new mode of reading 'dislocation' and 'immigrant' spaces is now called for. It is also essential to look at the actual material conditions of immigrant populations, which face crises of racism, unemployment, poverty, alcoholism, disease, and homelessness.

In this section, I explore two features of a cosmopolitan, hybridized, and globalized world:

- Transnational solidarity and ethics
- Cosmopolitan cities, migrant spaces, and globalization

Transnational Solidarity and Ethics

Leela Gandhi's call for a 'postnational ethic', especially in the light of large-scale genocide, ethnic cleansing, and fundamentalisms, is both useful and timely (1998: 137). Following Ashis Nandy, Gandhi proposes that the postnational ethic should mean a continuity between erstwhile antagonists (colonizer/colonized) in order to tackle institutionalized suffering. Gandhi calls for a recognition of the fact that oppressors are the victims of their own forms of oppression. Former political antagonists can be cross-identified with each other without taking away the actual sufferings of the 'original' victim (the colonized native). Since victims have been collaborators within the oppressive system, and oppressors have been subversive within the same, the time to forge new identities is here.

Postnational constellations have often involved transnational linkages between voluntary organizations working for the environment, peace, women, or children. This transnational/global linkage where national boundaries are erased (or ignored) in favour of a collective movement

against suffering may perhaps be the new ethics of hybridity that Leela Gandhi proposes. Solidarities built on a common history of suffering or battles against oppression, and fought at various levels and in multiple locations constitute a postcolonial, hybridized, and transnational ethic. A good example would be the Dalit diaspora which has now held international conferences to discuss and work towards the emancipation of Dalits in India. The Vancouver Declaration (2003) states:

> We, the Dalits, from all over the globe having assembled at the International Dalit Conference, to deliberate the issues concerning the 250 million Dalits (Scheduled Castes and Scheduled Tribes) of India and their future in the 21st century…
>
> [We] call upon the Dalits of the world to unite in their activism in the true spirit of interfaith and multiculturalism, and resolve to work tirelessly for the upliftment of the community …
>
> [We] affirm that every human being has the inherent right to life and dignity and that Black is Beautiful and Dalit is Dignified… (*www.dalitconference.com*)

Here a global diaspora has a local interest. It is also interesting to see a solidarity being built between two oppressed peoples—the Blacks and the Dalits (see Rajshekar 1987; Aston 2001). This solidarity is a good example of cosmopolitan postcolonialism and reflects a new ethics across identities and borders.

Dalits who migrated to Britain and other places during the 1950s have also been influenced by Ambedkarite ideology (Hardtmann 2003: 150–182). Ambedkarites in Britain constitute a 'transnational Dalit movement that transgresses state borders' and are part of the same 'counterpublic' as Dalit activists in India and Ambedkarite Buddhists in Britain (ibid.: 151). The debates about including caste as a kind of racism within UN discourses and actions against racism (especially at Durban 2001) have sought to re-articulate Dalit oppression as akin to racial discrimination. This ensures that anti-oppression movements would include anti-caste components within itself. However, practical issues—such as the language and discourses of the UN or global movements (Pinto 2004: 129–130)—become obstacles to such a transnational solidarity.

What is to be noted here is that ethnic identities are now asserted on multiple, global locations that, unlike the nation-state, do not necessarily have a territory. The solidarity forged between ethnic identities in Asia and America (by Asians of American origin) reshapes the very contours of 'Asia' and 'America', and the relation between the two. The sites for the production of Asian ethnicities cannot be contained within national

boundaries, and therefore, must be seen as part of a transnational ethnic identity. Ethnicity, as Susan Koshy in her study of Asian American literature argues, 'can no longer be solely defined through the negotiation between origin and destination' (1996: 338).

Such solidarities are increasingly facilitated by global telecommunications technologies. Rapid exchange of news and opinions and the establishment of contacts and cybernetworks herald, some argue, the rise of a global civil society. Non-governmental organizations, trans-governmental organizations and activists link across the globe through these technologies. In a postcolonial world, such a network can be the source of a democratic, interventionary, and resistant civil society. The Report of The Commission on Global Governance stated: 'Global civil society is best expressed in the global non-governmental movement. As a group, non-governmental organizations (NGOs) are diverse and multifaceted. Their perspectives and operations may be local, national, regional or global. Some are issue-oriented or task oriented; others are driven by ideology' (Schuler and Day 2004: 1).

Local communities building solidarities with other like-minded communities often become postcolonial in that they resist imperialism from within the metropolis. Thus, fora such as Mumbai Resistance (which held parallel sessions opposite the World Social Forum, Mumbai, January 2004) and the Seattle protest marches are 'indictments … of consumer imperialism … from inside the fortifications of overdevelopment as well as outside them' (Gilroy 2002: 591).

Arjun Appadurai argues in favour of a 'globalization from below' or 'grassroots globalization' of local, national, and regional groups and non-governmental organizations. These activists, currently alienated from the vocabulary of the globalization debate itself, have not yet been able to develop a counter-globalization. We need to pay attention to the vocabulary of grassroots globalization, to their modes of inquiry, and formulate new protocols of inquiry that have thus far rejected any mode other than Western as unacceptable. The world may consist, as Appadurai points out, of regions, but regions also construct and imagine their own worlds. Area studies must deliberate upon this relationship between regions (Appadurai 2000: 17–18). Schuler and Day, like Appadurai, call for public funding of new and innovative research that improves the understanding of the diversity of cultures, values, and belief systems throughout global civil society (2004: 374). Knowledge dissemination might very well be the route to a new solidarity of the marginalized in global civil society.

6.3 Tricontinentalism

Robert Young proposes tricontinentalism as a substitute term for 'Third World' (2001). Young notes that since postcolonial discourses have emerged from the three continents of South America (Young continues to use the term 'Latin America), Asia and Africa, tricontinentalism might be a more suitable term. Tricontinentalism represents what Young calls a 'counter-modernity' (2001: 427), rooted in anti-colonial struggles and political movements. It also signals its alignment with the famous 1967 Havana Tricontinental, the global alliance of people from the three continents against imperialism, and its journal, the *Tricontinental*. It is in this alliance that Young sees the founding moment of postcolonial theory. Young sees postcolonial theory as derived from and engaging with very real economic and political situations. Further, tricontinentalism is diasporic and transnational, while also being local and particular. It emerges from a very specific local context of anti-colonial struggle but is also inspired by a transnational theory or political context.

Cosmopolitan Cities, Migrant Spaces, and Globalization

> In Bombay all Indias met and merged. In Bombay, too, all-India met what-was-not-India, what came across the black water to flow into our veins … all rivers flowed into its human sea. It was an ocean of stories;
>
> Bombay was not inoculated against the rest of the country, and what happened elsewhere, the language business for example, spread into its streets. But on the way to Bombay the rivers of blood were usually diluted, other rivers poured into them, so that by the time they reached the city's streets the disfigurations were relatively slight… (*Rushdie 1996: 350*)

Rushdie's description in *The Moor's Last Sigh* captures the extremely cosmopolitan nature of Bombay/Mumbai. In two paragraphs he draws attention to colonialism, postcolonial Indianness, post-Independence cultural and linguistic fundamentalisms, and the multiple narratives of a city of migrants. What Rushdie is doing, with his usual verve, is constructing a city that is at once local and global, particular and universal, 'pure' and 'impure': it is the topos of a globalized, heavily diasporic culture.

Global cities are characterized mainly by their control of transnational finance. In a sense, then, places like London, controlling vast territories in Asia, were global cities during the age of colonialism. The Other (Asian) was 'out there'. Today, in the age of globalization and migration, the Other is *within* London's spaces. This radically transforms and disrupts notions of space itself, as cityscapes become 'indigenized'. While acknowledging that global movements of non-European races, in the form of labour, migrants,

6.4 Multiculturalism

Multiculturalism signifies the co-existence of multiple cultures, though not always on equal footing and not always in peaceable relations with each other. Multiculturalism after the second wave of immigration into Europe and the USA after the 1960s, has been linked to debates about the rights of ethnic minorities. These included debates about the right to residence, equality of opportunity, affirmative action, representation, and other issues.

refugees, is governed by power relations dictated by the West, it becomes important to see cities such as London or New York in terms of racialized spaces that seek to negotiate ethnic diversity within themselves.[7]

In an age where everyone is a migrant in some form or the other—moving away from the place of birth due to market forces, political conflicts, disaster, etc.—the notion of 'home' itself needs to be radically redefined. Home is no more the stable physical centre of one's life. Home is now usually a routine set of practices, in a repetition of habitual interactions, in a regularly used name. This means that there is heightened emphasis on the stereotype, where the formulaic and the repetitive possess tremendous value as a fixed and stable centre in the migrant's life. Participating in common and conventional discourse represents a way for the individual to secure a personal preserve, to establish a context for action.

Thus the Non-Resident Indian's partaking of entertainment provided/organized by other such Indians is a mode of demarcating a home-space (and this is connected to the theme of reclamation mentioned earlier). The Indian enters into the stereotype, locates herself in it, and creates her own itinerary within it. What this means is that celebrations, social 'moments' in Chinatown or 'little India' constitute less a set of geographical features than a set of practices in which the migrant constructs a home—it creates, as noted before, a cultural citizenship in a fluid set up.[8] The stereotype enables her to find the context (read 'home'). What I am proposing here is that the 'fall' into a pattern of behaviour ('stereotype') in diasporic communities entails a dual movement: cognition of the context in which she is presently located, and re-cognition that this is a new context that doubles as home. This is the reason that participation in ethnic or community festivals and games becomes integral to the diasporic imagination. The stereotype provides a ready-made context in which one 'finds' a 'home away from home'.

Asian British writing today is characterized less by a search/longing for roots than by a 'series of discrete navigations across the frontiers of race and class in Britain' (Nasta 2002: 181). They portray what Susheila

Nasta calls 'local migrations' which seek to explore new routes for maintaining their dual heritage (181). Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987) is, for Nasta, the first Asian British novel, focusing on the younger generation of 'British Asians'. Others include David Dabydeen's *The Intended* (1991) and others, Meera Syal's *Anita and Me* (1996), Farhana Sheikh's *The Red Box* (1991), Hanif Kureishi's *Love in a Blue Time* (short stories, 1997), and more recently, Monica Ali's *Brick Lane* (2003). Nasta's perceptive reading proposes that this fiction is not about 'in-between spaces' or never-ending becoming. Rather, these texts 'strategically invent a series of alternative locations, as a means to assert both their presence, and their difference from Anglo-British lives' (186). In such cases, home is where one starts from, and where they start from is Britain itself (191).

However, what must also be kept in mind is that communities may participate in more than one cultural system—Indians of various linguistic backgrounds celebrating each others' festivals in Western cities and regions is not uncommon. This lends another dimension to the cosmopolitan city. In such circumstances the cultural citizenship of a community meets diasporic identities within a Western metropolis. Indians in Afro reggae or Africans dancing to incorporated bhangra disco tunes—common in punk marching bands—exemplify what can be described as the triangulated identity of a cosmopolitan city in the globalized world. The three 'points' of such a triangulation include: the 'homeland', the nation-state of residence, and the transnational community. This suggests that cultural citizenship needs to account for not only the relationship between the diaspora and the site of residence (the Western metropolis) but also diaspora and the 'homeland'. What we have then is a local–national linkage situated in a transnational frame.[9]

Cosmopolitanism, it is argued, expresses the need to 'ground our mutuality in conditions of mutability … to live in terrains of historic and cultural transition' (Pollock et al 2000: 579). That is, in a world/topos almost excessively migrant in nature, we need to find mutuality while dealing with constant change. As proposed above, insertion into the stereotype enables a degree of 'feeling at home'. Modern nationalisms and cultural fundamentalisms can be treated as assertions of such stereotypes. However, despite an immediate gain of 'discovering' roots or 'reclaiming' history for the diasporic community, the tendency to locate cultures in specific places becomes a 'retrograde ideology' (ibid.). What is required is a cosmopolitanism inspired by postcolonial claims for equality and justice. This postcolonial cosmopolitanism must not be grounded in European discourses of modernity, rationality, and nation. Cosmopolitanism takes

the individual as the ultimate unit, and a unit 'entitled to equal consideration regardless of nationality and citizenship' (Tan 2004: 1).

People without national belonging—refugees, for instance, who constitute a major segment of the global diaspora today—represent a cosmopolitical community in and of themselves. It is not enough, Pollock and others point out, to see them merely as 'victims' or as a 'problem' of multiculturalism.[10] They are 'minoritarian cosmopolitans' that present a critique of a modernity that is based on nation and place (582). They vernacularize a great (Western) tradition and call into question grand narratives of 'rationality', 'modernity' through their recourse to the local, the particular, and the small. This is where the counter-discourse of migrancy, cultural citizenship, and 'locality' creates a 'third space' in diasporic culture, resisting homogenizing globalization. Originally, diversity was treated as a mix of single cultures (and described with the metaphor of a mosaic, where the different chips could be identified within the setting). Now, in cosmopolitan, transcultural conditions, there are no single cultures; every culture is hybridized and multiple. Therefore, the diversity produced by such already reified and multiple and their borders are blurred. Minoritarian cosmopolitanism work with such entangled cultures, each bringing multiple forms of epistemology to the Western city.

Cities like London become postcolonial cities. It becomes less a city that loses its imperial 'edge', its narrative of 'Englishness', as immigrant populations 'decolonize' London's spaces itself. As a result, no city retains its pure English or imperial character. It is now, increasingly, a zone where colonial and postcolonial collide, in a peculiar kind of immigrant colonization (even though the power relations between the immigrant classes and groups and the 'native' English may not be equalized). Such a process, of course, lends a dualism, a schizophrenia, to both 'native' English and the immigrant in what is a fluid act of mutual transformation.

Under such circumstances, Western cities with a large influx of immigrants in the globalized world can become 'cities of refuge'. This spatial 'ordering' of people seeking refuge becomes the problem of contemporary cosmopolitanism itself (and here I am speaking of not skilled workers constituting a different kind of diaspora—I am speaking of 'illegal' residents, victims of human trafficking, exiles, and refugees who have fled a nation-state but not gained one). Cosmopolitanism, as (politically) experienced by any 'First World' nation today, needs to negotiate between two very difficult positions: an unconditional hospitality which offers refuge to all, irrespective of origins and ethnicity; and placing a limitation of rights of residence. Like minoritarian cosmopolitanism's cultural challenge to the issue of assimilation, the law of hospitality and the notion of the 'city of refuge' offers a politico-economic challenge.

Jacques Derrida in his brief note on cosmopolitanism proposes that we need to reorient the politics of the state. He suggests that we need to ask cities of refuge to 'transform and reform the modalities of membership by which the city belongs to the state' (2001: 4). The right to political asylum is less respected in Europe and France today, he notes. Derrida also makes a crucial point here, one which moves beyond the abstract theorizing on cosmopolitanism, when he asks: 'how can a purely political refugee claim to have been truly welcomed into a new settlement without that entailing some form of economic gain?' (12). Cities of refuge—cosmopolitan cities—must constantly redefine laws of asylum and hospitality, argues Derrida. This dilemma between offering helpless, vulnerable immigrants equal opportunities and rights while reserving the right to deny them the same is a feature of Western cities today. Under the demographic explosion of multiple ethnicities and nationalities, how is difference to be acknowledged, respected, and treated on par with one's 'own' culture? How is the city to take responsibility for the world's poor migrating across one's borders?[11] Can liberal nationalism exist in the face of global inequality? These are the questions facing a cosmopolitan world culture. Liberal nationalists who privilege a nation's cause over anything else must also be, in these circumstances of global inequality and suffering, international egalitarians (Tan 2004: 109). We need to develop a concept of cosmopolitan justice. Thus, while a developed country is well within its rights to restrict immigration in the name of preserving a homogeneous national culture, a lot depends on the criteria used for selecting or restricting immigration. Immigration policies based on racial or ethnic selection with the objective of preserving the racial identity of a nation would not be liberal. However, selection criteria based on competency in the national language or occupational qualifications are not inconsistent with liberal justice (ibid: 124–25). Tan suggests that we limit patriotic commitments against the demands of cosmopolitan justice. We need to accept the coherence of global justice. The choice, Tan points out, is between the inequitable global conditions where individuals in rich developed nations alone have the means to exercise self-determination, often at the expense of other nations, and a cosmopolitan order where members of all nations are able to participate in a global society (ibid: 198–99).

Writers of the 1990s—Sunetra Gupta, Romesh Gunesekera, etc.—see diasporic identities as not being centred in race alone, but arranged along multiple positions (class, gender) in a cosmopolitan city. They do not seek a return, and memory is no access to any imaginary home. They seek narration itself as a return to selfhood. Hence, as Susheila Nasta has argued, they are not 'panoramic' 'Indian' or 'Caribbean' novels, but stories about the private memories and 'inward contemplation of the problematics involved in writing the diasporic stories of individual human lives' (Nasta 2002: 213–24).

Whether a postcolonial Rushdie can demand protection from Western cultures against fundamentalists with whom he shares (if nothing else) a religious identity is largely a question of global justice demanded by a citizen of the world. The negotiation between cultural identity and citizenship and national (or, in the age of NGOs, supranational) demands is often contestatory and conflictual. Diasporic writing captures this negotiation.

A parallel phenomenon is the globalization of postcolonial cities. Bangalore and Gurgaon, Hyderabad and New Delhi, are homes to multinational companies and business houses. Across South East Asia, cities such as Ho Chin Minh City are being homogenized by the forces of globalization, so much so that they begin to look like any Western metropolis, and constitute what John Clement Ball terms 'transnational metropolises' (2004). If the empire rebuilt cities in 'Third World' nations so that they lost much of their indigenous authenticity, globalization levels these even further as every city has the same kind of malls, hoardings for consumer products, and skylines. Decolonization, in the case of urban design in the age of globalization, has resulted in this phenomenon of 'global cities' even in 'Third World' nations. Many narratives from 'Third World' nations have captured this phenomenon (see Sanjay Chakravorty 2000, Shirley Geok-lin Lim 2003, Anthony D. King 2003, and my discussion of Rushdie's Bombay/Mumbai above). As Atwood puts it in 'Further Arrivals':

> Whether the wilderness is
> real or not
> depends on who lives there. (*1997: np*)

A colonial power inscribes that power over its city-spaces. And now postcoloniality is inscribing itself over the same space.

NOTES

1. See Homi K. Bhabha, *The Location of Culture* (1994), Robert Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Culture and Race* (1995). Decades before Bhabha popularized the term/concept, Franz Fanon spoke of the schizophrenic native, caught between his black skin and white mask, a brilliant imagery of hybridity. See his *Black Skins, White Masks* (1967).
2. For a genealogy of Black Cultural Studies, see Diawara (1993).
3. For a study of global diasporas see Cohen (1997).

4. For histories of Indians in England before 1947 see Rozina Visram's *Ayahs, Lascars and Princes* (1986), *Asians in Britain* (2002) and C.L. Innes' comprehensive *A History of Black and Asian Writing in Britain, 1700–2000* (2002). For the diasporic—Black and Asian—history of Britain see Fryer (1984).
5. The Canadian Multiculturalism Act declares:

   > It is hereby declared to be the policy of the Government of Canada to (a) recognize and promote the understanding that multiculturalism reflects the cultural and racial diversity of Canadian society and acknowledges the freedom of all members of Canadian society to preserve, enhance and share their cultural heritage. (*http://www.pch.gc.ca/progs/multi/policy/act_e.cfm*)

6. Only those migrant writers who celebrate de-territorialized new identities but without necessarily violating the sensibilities of 'First World' readers tend to be praised, and not those who retain a more national focus (Boehmer 1995: 239). Those writers who continue to harp on colonial oppression, Boehmer points out, constitute less popular and less comfortable reading than a Rushdie who celebrates London and/or Bombay by ignoring colonial histories. This is the reason why Boehmer defines postcolonial migrant literature as a 'literature written by elites, and defined and canonized by elites' (239–40). Deepika Bahri complicates this reading by proposing that the native is often treated as a subject possessing authentic knowledge and the postcolonial critic as native informant to 'a demanding and needy metropolitan audience' (2003: 19). It is also important to note that there has been a backlash against postcolonial, hybrid literatures, and multicultural texts. Samuel Huntington's *The Clash of Civilizations* (1998) is a good example of the perceived threat from the new ethnicities. Huntington and organizations such as The American Council of Trustees and Alumni (ACTA)—the inaugural project of the 'Defense of Civilization Fund' (the group founded by Lynne Cheney, wife of Vice President Dick Cheney)—propose that there is an urgent need to maintain and defend the purity of Western civilization. ACTA produced a document titled 'Defending Civilization: How Our Universities are Failing America and What Can Be Done About It' which called for a return to 'adopt one strong core curricula that include rigorous, broad-based courses on the great works of Western civilization as well as courses on American history … America's founding documents'. Interestingly, this proposed curriculum was described by ACTA as 'America's first line of defense' (www.goacta.org, 7–8).
7. For a study of 'postcolonial' imperial cities see Jane Jacobs (1996). It is not that there is an exclusive one-way mode of globalizing Western culture. Local and indigenous cultures assimilate and modify Western culture for their own purposes in an interesting method of transculturation. Thus the fear that globalization is only Westernization is false, for, youth culture—especially—shows exactly how 'Western' culture gets indigenized. That is, a Third World nation or culture asserts its sovereignty by adapting Western materials and icons.
8. Statistics reveal that Asian Americans are the fastest growing minority group in the USA. Asian Americans constituted less that 1 per cent of the US population in 1965 and increased to 2.8 per cent in 1990, and are projected to reach 10.1 per cent by 2050. According to the US 2000 Census, Asian Americans make up 4.3 per cent of the total US population, with an increase of 63 per cent from the 1990 Census (http://www.asian-nation.org/population.shtml).
9. For an analysis of such a triangulated cultural citizenship see Siu (2001).
10. Multiculturalism, the key word in cultural and social debates from the mid-1980s, is not without its share of conceptual problems. Multiculturalism's cultural relativism assumes that locating every culture on the same plane is adequate. It also assumes that there is a core to every culture, which must be treated on par with the core of another culture, and thus essentializes culture itself. However, cultures are not equal: the experience of puberty, aging, and sickness are different in different cultures. To compartmentalize and equate cultures in the name of equality is to render them translatable. It also runs the risk of creating cultural ghettos. More nuanced readings propounding a critical multiculturalism are attempts to remedy these obvious flaws. Critical multiculturalism refuses to see cultural essentials or cores. It sees the nation-state as a mixture of cultural forms, some of which have been dominant. It situates cultural differences in terms of power relations between ethnic groups and communities. Most importantly, critical multiculturalism is self-reflexive: by locating culture within its modes of (re)production, internal hierarchies, and inequalities, it asks for an awareness of one's complicity in the process of cultural othering.
11. In response to theories of cosmopolitan justice towards the world's poor, Richard Miller writes: 'The burden of restricted entry on the world's poor is considerably reduced by their limited capacities and inclinations to take advantage of open entry to well-off countries, and compensation for this burden is, in any case, a shared responsibility of well-off countries that restrict entry' (2004: 43). Miller is here calling for a concerted cosmopolitan effort at global justice.

SEVEN

Form

Postcolonial literature, as we have already seen, embodies an interrogative stance. It questions the assumptions, methods, and the very moral basis, if any, of colonialism. Further, it examines the nature of the post-colonial state where many of the corrupt practices and problems of the former European master have persisted in some form or the other. It is not sufficient to say—as happens in much postcolonial criticism and pedagogy—that the text is 'political' or 'counter-' or 'anti-'. How does a novel or a poem work out this politics? How is a colonial stereotype reversed or countered? Postcolonialism's concern with political economy or activism calls for certain kinds of narratives, that is, different uses, employment and adaptations of language. Texts use aesthetics and narratives to make their protest or critique. There is no politics without rhetoric, no protest without language, no 'anti-' without a narrative. Just as racism and colonialism used language and rhetoric to discriminate, postcolonialisms deploy language, narrative, and particular forms for their critique. Postcolonial literature has thus appropriated, modified, and generated many forms of narratives, rhetorical strategies, and linguistic forms in which its critique of empire and imperialism may be made.

The form postcolonial writing takes often has much to do with the purpose of the work, which in most cases ranges from nationalism and self-identification to anti-imperialist critique and postcolonial protest. Thus protest writing often has a political agenda of social change and expresses anger and disappointment at the new nation-state. Resistance literature in both the colony and the postcolonial nation includes *testimonio* writings, prison narratives, revolutionary tracts and 'insurgency' writing.[1] In other cases the literature takes more complex forms. A more experimental mode is visible in postcolonial writings after the 1970s. Salman Rushdie, Buchi Emecheta, Ben Okri, Bessie Head, J.M. Coetzee, and others began to play

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with the form of the novel. Magic realism, a strategy favoured by South American writers like Marquez and Allende and cosmopolitans like Rushdie, combines a variety of genres: the historical document, popular writing, the romance, the political novel, and the picaresque tale.[2] In cases where the aim is to develop a nativist political position, local folklore and myth is used extensively. Thus ghost stories and songs figure in writers from Africa and in diasporic writers such as Okri. Politically informed fiction is the most straightforward form of postcolonial critique. The works of Nayantara Sahgal and Amitav Ghosh in India, for instance, explore diverse issues of colonial and post-independence India: from communal violence to political corruption. Naipaul's controversial interpretations of India—paralleling Nirad C. Chaudhuri's—in both his fiction and non-fiction are couched in straight-forward narratives in the mode of the social realist novel. The social realist form is also favoured by people like André Brink, Patrick White, and Rohinton Mistry. Accumulation of details, clear observation, and a tightly structured narrative in these authors provides a panoramic view of the postcolony.

Postcolonial writers take recourse to their native narrative forms and traditions in order to counter, oppose, or re-write canonical Euro-American literature. The attempt is often to provide an alternate view of their culture. While such an attempt is frequently articulated in genres borrowed from the former colonizer culture, the genre is adapted and injected with native traditions.[3] Postcolonial writers are, therefore, clearly concerned with questions of form, style, genre, and language.

In this chapter I shall explore the main structural features in postcolonial writing. The last section of this chapter looks at what is perhaps the most debated theme in postcolonial writing: the role of English. The issue of form can be discussed under the following heads:

- Orality and literature
- Folk, myth, history
- Magic realism
- Decanonization
- Postcolonial English

ORALITY AND LITERATURE

> Proverbs are the palm-oil with which words are eaten.
>
> —Chinua Achebe, *Things Fall Apart* (1969 [1958]: 10)

In most cultures of Asia, Africa, and South America, there exists a rich and varied oral tradition. Stories are told, legends enacted, and historical events performed in community settings. 'Literature', from the Latin 'litterae' (meaning 'letters'), suggests a primacy of writing. 'Oral literatures' thus seems a contradiction in terms. However, such a term best captures the varied narrative modes of postcolonial literature, whose forms, sources, issues of authority, and audience draw upon oral traditions even as they produce 'books' in the European literary mode. Orality is thus the central indigenous mode in most postcolonial *writing*. In these cases it is not a binary of orality *or* literacy but of orality *in* literacy. Thus Aboriginal writer Mudrooroo asks:

> What are the chances for a 'literature' in Maori? This question is inseparable from that of the survival of Maori as used speech in everyday life ... What we need is to set about discovering how the rich heritage of the Maori past, both oral and written, might provide a continuing basis for a 'literature' in Maori. (*1991: 140*)

It seems natural that the first generation of postcolonial writers in English, like Amos Tutuola and Raja Rao, adapted their aesthetics from this indigenous mode of story-telling. Postcolonial writing from these eras is therefore replete with proverbs, riddles, songs, and chants, 'colloquialisms', local legends, and apocrypha from their clan/community/tribe/ethnic group.

Walter Ong, in his classic work on the subject (1982), has demonstrated how oral discourse is aggregative, repetitive, and copious because the audience is dependent upon the aural component for meaning. Meaning here is irreducibly performative and context-bound. Orality informs postcolonial narrative forms at times when

- the novelist is staking out a territory and mode of writing for herself, perhaps during colonial rule itself (Tutuola, Raja Rao)
- a conscious attempt is being made, in the postcolonial context, to move away from European styles and influences (Ngũgĩ)

This process of 'decomplication', as Chidi Okonkwo terms it (1999: 38–39), retrieves—extremely self-consciously and with a specific political agenda—older forms of narrative from the native tradition. What must be kept in mind is that 'orality' is not a universal, general situation: it is linked to physical, cultural, and material contexts that are different for different cultures. Orality must be treated as a component of a specific social space, with its own particularities of gender, class, sexuality, and politics. Meaning in

oral traditions is based on the specific context of enunciation, and a word/sound has no permanent meaning beyond that immediate 'expression' (which marks the point of departure from writing, that seeks to 'freeze' the moment of enunciation). Proverbs are used to retrieve older meanings for contemporary needs. Thus Achebe's work is full of proverbs and aphorisms from Igbo culture. In fact, Achebe in *Things Fall Apart* shows how proverbs are misused for other purposes in his picture of Unoka. The scene where Okoye seeks to get back his money from Unoka is particularly illustrative. Okoye has spent some time talking to Unoka before he asks the latter for the return of his loan. Unoka responds thus:

> Each group there represents a debt to someone, and each stroke is one hundred cowries ... I owe that man a thousand cowries. But he has not come to wake me up in the morning for it. I shall pay you, but not today. Our elders say that the sun will shine on those who stand before it shines on those who kneel under it. I shall pay my big debts first. (*1969 [1958]: 11*)

Here Unoka has appropriated traditional wisdom and sayings in order to gloss over his obvious inability to pay off the debt.

In Ngũgĩ's later fiction, especially, *Petals of Blood* (1977), *Devil on the Cross* (1982), and *Matigari* (1989) we see the return of a traditional African artist-as-prophet. Early in *The River Between*, Ngũgĩ presents the seer, Mugo wa Kibiro, 'that great Gikuyu seer of old [...] seeing visions of the future and speaking of them to the many people who came to see and *hear* him' (2). The emphasis here is on listening, and a community of listeners. History is available through the prophet's speeches. What Ngũgĩ underscores is the oral tradition of Gikuyu historiography itself. *Matigari* in fact declares its sources as rooted in the oral tradition in both the 'Note on the English Edition' and 'To the Reader/Listener (vii–ix). In Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987) there is a strong voice of community in the background. In Ngũgĩ's *A Grain of Wheat* (1967) we have direct addresses to the reader (40, 149, 202, 211 and elsewhere).

Oral story-telling traditions are also used in the form of 'vatic narratives' (Okonkwo 1999: 39–40). The omniscient third-person narrator, a kind of 'sutradhar' who appears on stage to comment on the events so far, weaves the story together. Numerous postcolonial writers like Chinua Achebe, Amos Tutuola, and Leslie Marmon Silko combine a traditional oral story-telling format with writing. Central to oral story-telling traditions in Africa is the poet-as-prophet. The story-teller not only narrates the history of the community, but also critiques it through social commentary. The story-teller prophet cautions, advises, and guides his community.

Oral traditions do not have a single, unified 'author'. The modern notion of the author comes from Europe (linking with its emphasis on the autonomous individual and individual subject-hood), especially, with print literacy in the early modern period. In oral story-telling forms, the 'author' is less a person than the context of enunciation and performance. Performance is a collective, i.e., communal, event. It is improvised, adapted, and 'formatted' to suit that particular moment and setting of the story's enunciation. It is also important to note that there are various kinds of genres within the oral tradition itself. It is also important to note that these genres are not strictly delineated (hence, technically speaking, the term 'genre' is rather loosely applied here). Thus, for instance, Yoruba oral forms such as the *ẹsẹ Ifa* (Ifa divination verses), *alọ* (folk tales), and *oríkì* (praise songs) are extremely flexible, where each genre borrows and adapts from the others.

A fascinating example of the mix of orality and literacy is Sally Morgan's *My Place* (1987). Her first-person narrative mixes and merges with three spoken narratives of her mother, grandmother, and great-uncle. After recording his story, her great-uncle says: 'I'm part of history, that's how I look on it. Some people read history, don't they?' (ibid: 213). Morgan's is a good example of the postcolonial hybrid form, where written narrative is based upon—at least partially—oral (if recorded and therefore mediated) histories and stories. Crucially, the work also calls into question the issue of author-ity. Like *I, Rigoberta Menchú: An Indian Woman in Guatemala*, which uses an oral narrative cast into a literary/written document, and therefore unravels any notion of the singular author, Sally Morgan's narrative problematizes authorial hierarchy. Since her autobiography hinges upon (i) her family's oral narrative, (ii) her community's oral and recorded history, and (iii) narrated apocrypha and legends, it becomes difficult to prioritize author-ity. As noted before, oral traditions have multiple rather than single authors. Meaning is held and transmitted collectively. Here Morgan's 'autobiography'—which, as a form, presupposes a singular individual—is actually a collective biography eliding into her story. Meaning about the community's life and her story is 'held' within the multiple stories. This poly-voiced text is a lateral narrative: distributed among many 'characters'. Oral culture here is also a bringing-to-surface of stories that are never available. For example, Sally's mother Gladys says:

> It hasn't been an easy task, baring my soul. I'd rather have kept hidden things which have now seen the light of day. But, like everything else in my life, I knew I had to do it. I find I'm embarrassed sometimes by what I have told, but I know I cannot retract what has been written, it's no longer mine. (*306*)

Here the need for an alternative history drives the oral narrative of the community ('it is no longer mine'). It brings to surface another story.

Another example of the 'use' of an oral narrative in the construction of a family/community life is the famous aboriginal life narrative, Rita and Jackie Huggins' *Auntie Rita* (1994). Once again, oral and 'literacy' cultures are combined in the same narrative. And, like Sally Morgan's narrative, *Auntie Rita* is also the tale of multiple generations. It is the result of 'talking' between Rita and her daughter Jackie: 'This book … is born out of so many years of our talking … In our talking are reflected both the things we have in common and the differences that arise between two Aboriginal women a generation apart' (ibid: 3). It is also important, as I have suggested in the section 'postcolonial subalternization' (Chapter 3), that an individual's story is seen as a collective history too. Since such oral accounts are the only sources of history, it becomes important to record them, to 'translate' them into permanent documents. 'Recording and publishing the memories of elderly Aboriginals is an especially urgent task, otherwise important aspects of Australian history will be lost forever …' (ibid. 5–6). This tension of 'appropriating' oral narratives into a written 'text', while preserving the sense of orality, marks many Aboriginal narratives. A conscious effort has to be made to 'preserve' the oral tradition even in the printed book. Jackie Huggins writes: 'Aboriginal ways of speaking need to be maintained and protected, for they are authentic, precious and irreplaceable' (ibid. 3).

In the case of the African American, oral traditions served a different purpose. Shipped to the 'new world' as slaves, they were denied the right to education and literacy. The slave holders did not want the slaves to acquire any knowledge—such as that of the founding principles of USA—that might induce a sense of questioning awareness and rebellion. They were hence prohibited by law from learning to read and write. However, Africans in the USA retained their African heritage through other means. This 'means' was story-telling. They could not write down their stories, but could definitely pass it on by word of mouth from generation to generation. These stories created and maintained an African American vernacular culture outside the control of the whites. Much of African mythology and culture was preserved through this means of oral storytelling.

Animal fables were common forms in African American story-telling. The stories of the trickster rabbit and the trickster tortoise were very popular. In these stories the trickster rabbit won through due to superior intelligence and a survivor's cunning. The trickster animal in Africa triumphs over the so-called 'lords' of the jungle—the lion, elephant, or the tiger.

Thus in 'Br'er Rabbit and the Briar Patch', the animals decide to punish the rabbit for stealing butter. Offered a choice between being dumped in the fire and thrown into the thorny briar, the rabbit says:

> "Th'ow me in de fiah, please, Br'er Fox; dem ole briers jest tear my eyes our, if th'ow me in de brierpatch."

So the animals throw him into the briar patch:

> And Br'er Rabbit, he shook he'se'f and jump 'way up on de hill and laugh and say "Thank you, Br'er Fox. I was bred and born in a brierpatch". (*Reed 1989: 30–31*)

The animals chosen for the trickster figure include the rabbit, the tortoise, and the spider. These animal tales are rooted in the folk mythology of the Africans. Critics have argued that the trickster figure symbolized the underdog: the slave himself, and whenever the rabbit proved himself smarter, the slave rejoiced, seeing himself triumph over his master one day (Baker 1989: 99–102; Van Sertima 1989: 103–5).

In Jimmy Chi and Kuckle's *Bran Nue Dae* (1990), the first Aboriginal musical in Australian theatre, the songs (20 in all) draw from the Aboriginal song cycle (as well as from Western ones). The work of Wordsworth McAndrew, the Guyanese poet and activist for the preservation of Guyanese folk culture, is an excellent example of the use of folk tales and legends in oral narrative poetry. McAndrew's most famous poem, 'Ol' Higue', about the mythological vampire—which he also performs—with its onomatopoeic lines and sound patterns, is an example of the use of not just local legend but also local speech patterns and language. The poem begins:

> Ol' woman wid de wrinkled skin,
> Leh de ol' higue wuk begin.
> Put on you fiery disguise,
> Ol' woman wid de weary eyes.
>
> Shed you swizzly skin.

As the narrative proceeds, the speaker warns the 'Ol' Higue' about proper behaviour:

> In your dutty-powder gown
> Next day schoolchildren flock you round.
> "Ol'higue, ol'higue!" dey hollerin out.

> Tek it easy, hold you mout'.
>
> Doan leh dem find you out.
>
> Rumours of the vampire's existence spread, however.
> But tikkay! Rumour spreadin wild.
> An' people know you name. (*Brown et al 1989: 30–32*)

The poem ends with the witch being beaten to death.

A performance-piece, 'Riddym Ravings' (The Mad Woman's Poem) by Jean 'Binta' Breeze situates first world development alongside Caribbean countryside. She is a vagrant, and soon classified as a mad woman in a city that has no place for her, because 'silence tun rags roun mi bady'. When she seeks a cleansing bath at a sidewalk's standpipe it merely demonstrates her madness to the world. She therefore wants to retreat to the country. She cannot even return to the country because she is evicted from the bus:

> An sometime me a try board de bus
> An de conductor bwoy a halla out seh
> "dutty gal, kum affa de bus"

She does not hear this because of 'de riddym eena mi head'. The bus leaves. The woman believes she has a radio in her head. This constantly plays a reggae tune that suggests the return to the country. The doctor and the landlord—symbols of oppression—try to operate on her and take the radio out. What happens then is a good example of social oppression of women in the large city. We discover that the woman has probably been raped, and she is now pregnant. The story is delivered matter-of-factly. After the surgery to take out the radio, the mad woman says:

> Mi tek de radio
> An mi push i up eena mi belly
> Fi keep de baby company
> .....
> Me waan my baby know dis yah riddym yah
> Fram before she bawn
> Hear de D.J. a play ...

And the radio sings, asking even the unborn child to go back to the country (1992: 19–20). These song-poems are invariably performances, and function as community events (Breeze is well known for her performances)

and seek to retrieve the older functions of imaginative works: to bond the community through shared performances of legends and familiar stories.

The Calypso tradition in Caribbean poetry mixes everyday speech with heavy metaphorical language. It has strong religious roots, but has tried to move towards a more secular mode ('Introduction', Brown, Morris and Rohlehr 1989: 21). It is not quite accurate to say that oral poetry is entirely rooted in local legends and deals only with local stories and events. Many of these songs also function as critiques of larger (global) systems. For instance, the poem-song 'The Gold in Africa' describes how Mussolini wanted Abyssinian gold. The poem describes the colonial First World's unscrupulous pursuit of African wealth:

> The man want to kill King Haile Selassie
> To enslave his territory

Later, as though this was not enough, the conqueror 'want' Haile Selassie wife'. The speaker directs the conqueror to other sources of wealth:

> If he want gold as a dictator
> Try in Demerara
> Venezuela or Canada
> Austro-Hungar(y) or else in America.
> (*Tiger [Neville Marcano], in Brown, Morris and Rohlehr 1989: 125–26*)

Here the oral song-poem is not about local legends, but speaks of larger social and political issues such as colonialism and modern imperialism. It speaks of the past, as Azaro, the *abiku* child in Okri's *The Famished Road* does frequently.

FOLK, MYTH, HISTORY

As noted earlier, most countries in South America, Asia and Africa have a strong tradition of indigenous story-telling forms and folklore.[4] These present the writer with a ready source of material and narrative strategies. Most postcolonial writers turn to local and indigenous myths and folk tales, even as they write in a form that is Western (the novel). In most cases, however, the Western form is subverted and adapted through a process of indigenization, through the incorporation of local strategies, themes, and images. The result is often a form that is recognizably a novel, but modified to suit the postcolonial's requirements of a 'nativized' genre. Thus

7.1 Oral Poetry

Poetry, especially from Caribbean and Africa, has always had a scribal (written) and an oral tradition. Orality, in fact, has been central in the development of Black poetry. During the 1960s and 70s, a new genre of poetry emerged in the Caribbean: dub poetry. Poets such as Mutabaruka (some of his poetry is available online in audio format at www.mutabaruka.com), Oku Onuora, Michael (Mikey) Smith, Linton Kwesi Johnson (in the UK), and Louise Bennett were practitioners of this form. Johnson became famous for his anti-racist poems such as 'Inglan is a Bitch' and 'Five Nights of Bleeding'. Bennett may be the forerunner of women's oral poetry. Dub poetry, accessible in tone, theme, rhyme, and rhythm speaks of everyday things. It is essentially performance poetry, and borrows from contemporary socio-cultural movements such as Rastafarianism. It invokes stories of popular cultural figures—from writers to comic-book heroes—while speaking of people's fears and hopes. It uses local forms of expression, idiomatic speech patterns, and lays emphasis on the speaking voice and the immediate context of enunciation. It is often prophetic in tone. Oral poetry takes many forms—portraits, monologues, satire, folk tales, calypso, and political manifesto. Calypso was an old form of poetry, rediscovered by poets as a response to the iambic pentameter rhythm of English language poetry. It has a carnivalesque atmosphere because of its conscious parody and mimicry. Two other forms include the Kaiso and the Kumina.

myths have a certain political role—interrogating and undermining the monologic control of Western forms.

Wole Soyinka, in fact, exerts considerable efforts in demonstrating how Yoruba rituals, gods, and dramaturgical modes have parallels with and are different from European (specifically Nietzschean) ones in *Myth, Literature and the African World* (1976).

Writers from Africa and other postcolonies use the seasons, agricultural life, local topographies to locate the myth and legend of a culture. This makes the myth highly specific. Soyinka's 'Idanre' poems (1967) speaks of the harvest and seasons. His 'Season' also achieves the same effect of topographical precision:

> Rust is ripeness, rust
> And the wilted corn-plume;

The crop is imaged entirely in colour and sound:

> Thread corn-stalks in winged
> Streaks of light.
> .....

Rasps in the field, where corn leaves
Pierce like bamboo slivers. (*1967: 45*)

Raja Rao's *Kanthapura* describes the daily life in the market-place, village square, and houses in a small village in south India. Decades later, Kavery Nambisan's *The Scent of Pepper* recreates Coorg in Karnataka (India). Thick local descriptions in such regional novels are integral to the 'situating' of a myth in most postcolonial texts, especially in the fiction. Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club* uses Chinese cosmology. Toni Morrison's *Song of Solomon* is informed by the Flying Africans legend, while her *Beloved* explores the role of the supernatural in African traditions. Lorna Goodison's poem, 'This is My Father's Country' locates the human firmly in its topos, as looks, behaviour, attitude are all cast in terms of the land, its stories, fauna and flora:

This is my father's country
And of late I have been thinking
How the burnished copper of his skin
Could mean that he was Amerindian
.....
His temper blazed sudden like bamboo fire (*1999: 29*)

In Achebe's *Anthills of the Savannah* (1987), the myth of Idemili is of the Almighty sending his daughter to moderate masculine power. Chicano Cherríe Moraga reworks the Popul Vuh (Mayan creation myth) into contemporary times in *Heart of the Earth* (2001). Here the enemy is white and patriarchal. Amos Tutuola, the first African writer to gain major public recognition among non-African readership with his *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* (1952), adapts Yoruba folk traditions for his story-telling purposes. It is also important to note that *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* has elements common to numerous West African traditions. Thus the story of a girl who rejects many suitors and finally ends up with a ghost, or another such horrifying creature—in *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, it manifests as the story of the 'complete gentleman', who sheds his clothes and parts of his body—exists in other tales (see Lindfors 1980: 235–37). The hero—unusually, an indolent, and indifferent character—is asked to rescue a girl from this grotesque 'gentleman'. The hero is on the verge of refusing when he realizes that as the bearer of characters of the hero—embodied in the *oríkì*—he cannot refuse. Here Tutuola casts his hero in the *traditional* folk tale of Yoruba heroism. In Ama Ata Aidoo's play *Anowa* (1970), she retells the story from Ghanian folklore of the disobedient daughter who is punished for rejecting her elders' advice. Aidoo's play uses traditional

story-telling forms such as proverbs, colloquialisms, aphoristic construction and names (like 'the-mouth-that-eats-salt-and-pepper').

Most African authors depict human and spirit worlds as co-existing next to each other. In Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937) folkloric elements are clearly linked to female consciousness. Ben Okri's *The Famished Road* re-works the concept of the *abiku*, a southern Nigerian belief in the endless reincarnation of a child. The *abiku* (known among Igbos as *ogbanje*) is about reincarnation and predestination, and has to be appeased. Achebe (Igbo) and Soyinka (Yoruba) all use the concept, suggesting a shared folkloric tradition even among different tribes. Soyinka describes the *abiku* thus:

I am Abiku, calling for the first
And the repeated time. ('*Abiku*', *Idanre 28*)

Azaro in *The Famished Road* (1991), like Ezinma in Achebe's *Things Fall Apart*, is such a spirit-child. The entire novel unravels as his consciousness. What is interesting is that Okri endows the spirit-child with an almost adult task—of delivering worldly truths and aphorisms. Azaro's declarative statements complicate his image as a child: 'The world is full of riddles that only the dead can answer' (75). Or: 'There are many riddles of the dead that only the living can answer' (427), and: 'There are many riddles amongst us that neither the living nor the dead can answer' (488). The idea, I believe, is to cast the child as an oracle through whom the ancestors speak. Okri's *abiku* is the voice of ancestors, and functions as a griot-cum-prophet from folklore. This argument of a child-as-folkloric device is invited by the opening descriptions of Azaro himself: 'When I was very young Irvo had a clear memory of my life stretching to other lives … Sometimes I seemed to be living several lives at once' (7).

Okri's child-spirit is only one instance of the use of a folkloric device in African writing. In Tutuola's *The Palm-Wine Drinkard*, the Drinkard crosses the river (he is in the form of a pebble) to escape from the mountain spirits. The bush, mountains, forests are spaces of spirits. Soyinka's forests and swamps are peopled by the spirits of the dead. Soyinka uses several themes from Yoruba myth and folklore in his plays. His heavy symbolism—theorized, problematically, by Soyinka himself in the essays, especially 'Drama and the African World-view' in his *Myth, Literature and the African World*, (1976: 37–60)—often draws upon traditional iconography and belief-systems. Soyinka becomes a good example of the heavy reliance on local cultural beliefs and symbols in postcolonial writing.

In Soyinka's play *Death and the King's Horseman*, the community is afraid that their ancestral spirits are angry with them due to Elesin's abdication of his duty. Another central Yoruba myth that Soyinka appropriates in *Death and the King's Horseman* is that of the transition. The Yoruba believe that gods and humans once lived together on earth. Then, as a result of some sin by man, gods withdrew to the upper regions of space. The god Ogun tried to bridge the gulf (for an elaboration of Ogun's role see Soyinka, *Myth, Literature and the African World*, 26, 29, 145–46, 157. He terms this the 'abyss of transition' in his note to *Death and the King's Horseman*, 1984: 145). Will is central to Ogun's attempt to bridge this gulf: the gulf is full of dark forces and only a strong individual will can help him bridge it. It is this theme that informs *Death and the King's Horseman*. Elesin cannot make the crossing across the gulf of transition into the land of the ancestors because he lacks a will. He is caught between the comfort of life and the desire to reach the land of his ancestors. When Pilkings arrests him, Elesin gives in to the temptation of having his life prolonged so that he can enjoy the company of his new bride. This is the point at which he loses his will.

The Road is about the tragic search for hidden—maybe even forbidden—knowledge, the essence of death. It deals with the Yoruba metaphysic of *agemo*. The *agemo* is the phase between the moment of death and the actual dissolution of the flesh. It is neither death nor life, but somewhere in between. The Professor wants to mark this moment of transition between the two moments. He therefore interrupts Murano's dying. This interruption of death—as in *Death and the King's Horseman*—is an act of sacrilege. The Professor therefore pays for it with his own life. In the collection *Idanre*, the first section is titled 'Of the Road' and the third 'Of Birth and Death'. This suggests that human experience is a cycle involving life's constant passage from one stage of organic development to the other. The landscape in *Idanre* is itself a repository of the primal and the elemental. Idanre is the very embodiment of the Yoruba myth of origin. Ogun in 'Idanre' (from the collection of the same title, 1967: 61–88) stands for the energy of the individual mind and of the senses. The poem's central section is an evocation of this. This evocation becomes a symbol of the ritual recall of the gods in Yoruba festivals. The purpose is to revitalize the world of artistic creativity. The poet enters into communion with the land and with its moving spirit.

At the heart of Soyinka's *Death and the King's Horseman* is the symbol of the Passage. It is a crucial metaphor. The Passage refers to what Soyinka in his prefatory note terms 'the abyss of transition'. In his essay 'The Fourth Stage' (1976: 140–60) Soyinka refers to the importance of the Passage and the Fourth Stage. The Fourth Stage comes after (i) the dead, (ii) the living and, (iii) the unborn. It emphasizes the continuity of these three stages of existence. The Fourth Stage is the link between these three. In the play the Fourth Stage is represented by the Passage.

The very first noun in the opening scene's stage-note is 'Passage' (147). The words 'pass' and 'passage' occur twice in this note, and thereby suggests that it is a crucial metaphor in the play. As the play proceeds we are given numerous references to the 'Passage': paths, links, and routes of travel (149–52, 153, 157, 158). The Passage is a symbol of both space and time. It links time-spans and generations (dead, living, unborn). The Passage is central to the way in which Soyinka depicts space in the play. The market is a community space. In the play it assumes a 'pure' space, unpolluted by the white man. Spaces become living spaces with the activities that take place there. That is, in the play the market becomes *lived space* through such practices. It is vibrant, colourful, and full of Yoruba vitality. Soyinka carefully suggests that the English space is shabby and lifeless, in contrast with the Yoruba market. What colonialism achieves is the reversal of roles for the market and the prison. The market is no more the space of the community's greatest ritual (Elesin's death). The prison becomes the space of this ritual, and thus erases the significance of the Passage. The market is where the Passage (Elesin) and passing (Elesin's death) must be performed for the well-being of the community.

The 'passage' is, of course, a version of the 'road'. The road image is common to both Soyinka and Ben Okri. In south-western Nigeria, special prayers are offered to the road, pleading with it not to swallow the travellers. The road figures prominently in Soyinka's *Idanre* poems (1967). Ben Okri's most famous novel, *The Famished Road* takes its title from Soyinka's image of road:

> The right foot for joy, the left, dread
> And the mother prayed, Child
> May you never walk
> When the road waits, famished. (*'Death in the Dawn'*, Idanre *11*)

The road has a 'hidden belly' which suffers from 'blind hunger' (Idanre). In Okri the road is reduced to a mere belly by the gods (3). Later the father narrates the story of the 'King of the Road' who was always hungry to the boy-spirit (258–61).

Another significant folkloric element in many African novels is temporal fragmentation. The novels are invariably aggregates of episodes, with little temporal specificity. In fact, time past, present, and future are rarely distinguishable from each other in the surreal worlds of *The Palm-Wine Drinkard* and *The Famished Road*. Often, the episodes themselves seem to be

unconnected, working at multiple levels (seriously misunderstood as 'digressions'). Like folk tales where the singer/balladeer moves away from the main story-line to dwell on, say, the moral codes of the gods or an event in history, Tutuola and Okri choose to locate all their worlds on the same plane, without bothering to mark shifts between them.

The fable form, especially the animal fable, owes its existence to the folk mythology of the Africans. Trickster figures adapted from African and Caribbean folk traditions include Annancy the spider and the Black American Br'er Rabbit. In 'Anansi's Riding Horse', the spider claims that the great tiger is his riding horse. Both the tiger and the spider woo Linda, who is appalled that her beloved tiger can be a mere horse to the weakly spider. The tiger, on hearing of the lie that Anansi is circulating, rushes to the spider's house. There the spider pretends he is dying, and the tiger, determined that he confesses to his lie before dying, offers to take him (Anansi) to Linda. Anansi climbs on to the tiger's back and arrives at Linda's house, where, abandoning all pretense of dying, he shouts: 'See gal, didn't I tell ya, he was my riding horse?' The tiger, ashamed at being fooled thus, runs away (Barnes 1989: 42–44). The superior intelligence of the physically weaker spider wins the day in this Jamaican folk tale.

These fables are usually used to suggest a moral or a truth. The animals, argues Ivan Van Sertima (1989: 106–108), are involved in a shadow drama of the human world. Crucially, these adaptations of folk stories are subversive in content, as already noted. A more god-like trickster figure—the *esu elegbara*, theorized by Henry Louis Gates, Jr. (*The Signifying Monkey*)—is common to African folk tales. This trickster is often formless, with enlarged genitals (male) to suggest organic power, and beyond the codes of civilization. Such a figure stands for untrammeled primal energy, and appears in Wilson Harris's *Companions of the Day and Night* (1975).

Another example of the working out of a myth is seen in Keri Hulme's *The Bone People*. The informing myth here is the sacred canoe. Maoris believe that they all originated from the same source, and voyaged to different islands, including New Zealand (settled during the third voyage). Maori tribes are organized around which canoe a person's ancestors are believed to have sailed. Joe in the novel becomes the protector of one of the sacred canoes. In effect, he is supposed to be guarding a Maori god. The sage Tiaki tells Joe: 'The canoe … it has power, because of where it came from, and who built it, but it is just a canoe. One of the great voyaging ships of our people' (364).

Postcolonial cultures' reliance on myth and local legend is an effort at de-contamination, a process of freeing their cultures from colonialism's pervasive influence. The return to roots—while running the very real

7.2 ELIAC

A major cultural movement that is set to become a political force is Writers in Indigenous Languages, Civil Association (ELIAC), established in Mexico in 1993. It brings together numerous writers from indigenous languages and undertakes recitals, local/regional/national conferences, writers' workshops and awards, and the publication of works by native writers. This attempt to revitalize the indigenous languages has an immediate political context—the debates about multiculturalism, multilingualism, and land rights in the US. They also insist on a plurilingual, multicultural Mexico, and have been much inspired by the work of indigenous scholar/lawyer/activist, Vine Deloria, Jr. (for a survey of ELIAC see Hernández-Ávila 2003). It hopes to be a forum for discussing and fighting for the rights of self-determination by the indigenous peoples.

danger of fundamentalism, reactionary nativism, and chauvinism—is an attempt to gain a measure of self-affirmation that is not tainted by colonialism.

MAGIC REALISM

> Consider the speed and hallucination. The fragmented realities. The things partially glimpsed. The events witnessed but not understood. The welter of meanings and signs and auguries. Consider the loss of belief. The empty universe where the mind spins in uncertainty and repressed terror. The vacant sky where the heart sees nothing but the desert. Consider lives crammed with confusion … Out of all these juxtapositions doesn't the spirit throw out its dream of clarity, its own clear countryside of the soul, its own clear lake mirroring the sky? (*Okri 2002: 120*)

Ben Okri is here referring to a magic realist *state of mind*—disintegrating perceptions, hallucinatory experiences, uncertain realities. It is a vision that seems to capture within it the entire oeuvre of magic realism because it refers to the central issue in magic realist narratives: the limits of perception, classification, definition, and description.

Brenda Cooper defines magic realism as striving to 'capture the paradox of the unity of opposites', contesting polarities such as history and magic, the pre-colonial past and the post-industrial present, life and death (1998: 1). Characters and events in magic realist texts exist, in Cooper's formulation, between the 'extremes of time and space' (1). It is a space where colonial capitalism and pre-colonial forms co-exist (15). More importantly they embody points of transition in postcolonial society where

the two forms battle for power in contemporary geopolitics. Stephen Slemon suggests:

> In the language of narration in a magic realist text, a battle between oppositional systems takes place, each working toward the creation of a different kind of fictional world from the other. Since the ground rules of these two worlds are incompatible, neither one can fully come into being, and each remains suspended, locked in a continuous dialectic with the 'other,' a situation which creates disjunction within each of the separate discursive systems, rending them with gaps, absences, and silences.

It marks, for Slemon, a 'sustained opposition' between 'two opposing discursive systems [that] forestalls the possibility of interpretive closure through any act of naturalizing representation (Slemon 1995: 409–10). The form itself is, therefore, an attempt to restore non-European forms of narration and epistemology. It is about breaking the borders of reality, blurring them, and redrawing them. It liberates the postcolonial narrative from not only European poetics but also European ways of knowing (which gave rise to their realist poetics[5]). Of course, this mode also runs the risk of perpetuating the (colonial) divide: progressive, modern West and pre-modern, 'magical' East.

Magic realism also works with what might be termed, if the play be excused (after all, magical realism is about 'play'), 'seemiotics', focusing on the 'seeming', appearance, illusion, delirium, blurring the line between reality and illusion. The wondrous and the supernatural mix with the concrete and the real, and the arrangement of these worlds is magic realism's 'seemiotics'. Language appears to break down, or grow into new forms as it strives to describe these new merged conditions of the worlds. Magic realism in postcolonial novels and poetry is characterized by the mixing of senses, the inability to distinguish between reality and illusion, dreams and waking. Colonial structures and histories slide smoothly into pre-colonial folk tales, the colonial era into pre-colonial tradition in the works of Ben Okri, Salman Rushdie, Gabriel Garcia Marquez, and others.[6]

The postcolonial writer, borrowing from traditional forms of story-telling, is worried less by the verisimilitude of the events portrayed than by the fact that s/he has to tell a story. Salman Rushdie describing his 'profession' captures this aspect of the postcolonial writer:

> What made me become a writer was the simple desire to tell stories … governed by the principle that stories didn't have to be true … Horses were expected to fly and so did carpets … I found that I was writing within a literature that for a long time had shaped an opposite view … a novel had to be mimetic, to imitate the world, the rules of naturalism and realism. (*2000: 75*)

7.3 Magic Realism

First used in the visual arts, the term has been used to describe the work of many postcolonial writers like Marquez, Rushdie, Okri, Wilson Harris, and others. What the narrative in works such as *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, *Love in the Time of Cholera* (Marquez), *The Famished Road* (Okri), and *Midnight's Children* (Rushdie) does is to conflate the realistic with the dream sequence. Thus the reader is hard put to distinguish between the fantasy element and the described 'reality'. Often the same paragraph combines the two forms (Okri is particularly fond of this technique). Ghosts and humans move along the same 'plane' in such novels, and spirit worlds and human ones seem to inhabit each other. Another predominant feature of the magic realist novel is the mixing up of time sequences. Marquez, for instance, moves between past and present seamlessly. Extended flashback sequences merge with the immediate present. And prophecies impinge on both, thereby complicating the time frames. Magic realist novels also use a great deal of indigenous beliefs, superstitions, rumours, and myths alongside 'real' events, so that the line between 'historical' fact and fictions breaks down. In terms of postcolonial politics, it retrieves local, native, non-European, and pre-colonial cultural practices and modes.

One way of defining magic realism is to say that events in a magic realist novel do not obey known and established laws of science but may be seen and perceived only as inexplicable and fantastic, obeying (perhaps) another set of laws.

Here Rushdie is referring to the mixture of reality and fantasy that his fiction embodies. And, as his statement above indicates, this choice of form is an anti-Western move. Rushdie does not want to imitate any Western form, and turns to his 'own' traditions, from *Arabian Nights* and others: 'In India the thing that I've taken most from […] is oral tradition' (2000: 76). There cannot be 'normality', or a 'norm', in the magic realist novel. Thus the grotesques of Rushdie and the metamorphosed, monstrous bodies that seem to assimilate various animal, vegetable, and human features in Okri's *The Famished Road* (16, 271, 352, 399, 459–60, 464, and elsewhere) are meant to resist any ideas of a standard human body.

In the case of a writer like Ben Okri, magic realism becomes a method for resurrecting African traditions, folk stories, shamanic beliefs, and alternate views of the world.[7] In what follows, I shall demonstrate how Okri's magic realism is rooted in African mythology, thereby making his chosen narrative strategy a postcolonial one.

The Famished Road, as I have noted earlier in this chapter, is about the many lives of the *abiku*. Okri's basic theme is about life and perception at multiple levels, all co-existing simultaneously so that it becomes impossible to distinguish between the moment and space when the *abiku* moves

between them. The spatial sites of the novel—the forest, Madam Koto's bar (where witches, politicians, and evil spirits appear with regularity), and the road with its engines, road builders, and burnt trees (104, which symbolizes colonialism but not unproblematically, as Brenda Cooper points out, 69–78) all co-exist too. The *abiku* is both of the spirit and the 'real' world, half-spirit and half-human. In fact the whole problem is—how 'real' is the 'real' world. The boundary of the two worlds is very porous and the temptation of crossing over into the spirit world—the 'world of pure dreams' (This world is also the world of Okri's later work, *Songs of Enchantment*)—is always open, as Azaro's spirit companions inform him. Azaro is often troubled by his state: 'it is terrible to forever remain in-between' (5). Okri's *abiku* often retrieves the (colonial) past for a better understanding of it, despite the fact it is retrieved as a dream (or, more accurately, a nightmare). The condition of the native under colonialism, as Sartre memorably described it in his Preface to Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth*, was a 'nervous condition' (17). Later, of course, the battle for the country is itself waged on multiple levels—that of the spirit world and the 'real' one, with a degree of unreliability as to which outcome would be more beneficial. In a series of dream-narratives that double as prophecy, Okri's Azaro sees the past, present, and future of the nation (492). Following his immersion in his father's 'redreaming' of the world, Azaro has others where he sees 'conflicting forces fighting for the future' of his country and corrupt politicians selling illusions ('dreams and contracts made up') while mortgaging the freedom, welfare and dreams of the people: 'dreams … locked out of the freedom of the air' (495–96). The passage uses several surreal images to convey the postcolonial's critique.

Okri's magic realism is far more powerful if we take account of the mythologies generated by politics itself. The battle is for the idea of the nation, for the right to imagine, to mythologize a particular kind of nation in the postcolonial era. The 'spirit' is also, perhaps, the spirit of the nation. If the nation has to be imagined (see chapter on Nation) then the battle is not for geographical territory at all, but the powers of imagination itself. And this emphasis on the imagination, on the aesthetics of art, is what the best critics and writers in the postcolonial era have achieved in their work. Here is Derek Walcott on the need to go beyond the blame-game ('it was all because of colonialism'): 'We make too much of that long groan which underlines the past' ('The Antilles' 1998: 68). And elsewhere, on postcolonial 'blamers': 'they cannot separate the rage of Caliban from the beauty of his speech … the language of the torturer mastered by the victim' ('The Muse of History' 1998: 39).

DECANONIZATION

> My Crusoe, then, is Adam, Christopher Columbus, God, a missionary, a beachcomber, and his interpreter Daniel Defoe.
>
> —Derek Walcott, 'The Figure of Crusoe' (1993: 35–36)

A central concern within postcolonial studies has been the (mis) representation of native/non-European cultures within European literary texts. Colonialism defined, refined, and entrenched itself to an insidious—and sometimes not so insidious—discursive mode. Literature and the arts constituted a mode through which colonial binaries of savage/civilized, master/slave could be circulated. Mathew Arnold, F.R. Leavis, and other apologists for 'high' culture and literature, cast 'English' as the universal standard (it must be noted that Arnold's idea of what is the 'best that has been thought and said' in Western ideas did not include American writing!). There was, in other words, complicity between narrative and empire, literature and colonialism, representations and politics. It reflected and refracted colonial ideologies. 'English Literature', as Gauri Viswanathan's ground-breaking study (1989) has shown, was introduced first in India rather than in Britain, and constituted an important mode of socio-political control. More importantly, post-Edward Said work has shown how the non-European Other was integral to the construction of the white race, and that literary writings of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries reveal this process of othering and construction. In a different context, African American writers like Ralph Ellison and Toni Morrison have demonstrated how the presence of the African enabled the construction of 'whiteness'. Decanonization is a two-step process:

(i) the process of re-reading this literature for its colonial/imperial themes
(ii) re-writing the texts from an anti-colonial (even native) point of view

Postcolonial studies are alert to the racial, colonial, and imperial dimensions of canonical English/European writing—from Shakespeare to the postmoderns. Postcolonial modes of reading bring to the surface the hidden colonial subtexts within so-called adventure narratives (like Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe*), 'great' canonical texts like Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (whose Caliban is, of course, the prototype of the exploited colonized for postcolonialism), and explore the complicity of the literary imagination with the colonial enterprise.[8] But the task of the postcolonial novelist or poet extends far beyond reading a canonical text for its colonial ideology.

The canon here is not merely a set of texts—it is a set of standards, evaluative procedures, and values. The canon is a process of inclusion and exclusion. Toni Morrison, expectedly, puts it best:

> Canon building is Empire building. Canon defense is national defense. Canon debate, whatever the terrain, nature and range (of criticism, of history, of the history of knowledge, of the definition of language, the universality of aesthetic principles, the sociology of art, the humanistic imagination), is the clash of cultures. And all of the interests are vested. (*1989: 8*)

Frequently, for figures like Walcott, Coetzee, Jean Rhys, and Wilson Harris, decanonization involves a re-writing of the predecessor novel from an anti-colonial perspective. Thus Shakespeare's Caliban and Defoe's Crusoe are transformed into metaphors for colonialism and its effects in postcolonial writing.

Salman Rushdie was one of the first to recognize a trend in 'Third World' literatures where stereotypes, genres, themes in canonical English and European literatures were being re-cast, adapted, and satirized: what he described as 'the empire writing back with a vengeance' in an essay of the same title (Rushdie 1982). The appropriation of Rushdie's terms by Bill Ashcroft et al in their major work (1989) set the debate on decanonization rolling. Today, no discussion of postcolonialism is complete without a section on 'counter-discourse' and 'writing back'. Postcolonial writing, it is argued, is an 'oppositional' literature, which confronts European constructions (images) of the native. I prefer to use the term 'engagement' to describe the problematic relationship between postcolonial literatures and their 'predecessor' (canonical) texts. Like John Thieme, I do not believe that the relationship is only oppositional, between the source and derivative/secondary re-telling (Thieme 2001: 2). I hasten to add that neither the canon nor the postcolonial engagement was monolithic or unstriated. The engagement can be oppositional—as in clearly polemical essays such as Achebe's reading of Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* (1977)—inspirational, derivative, or adaptive. Figures like Rushdie, Walcott, and Jean Rhys rewrite colonial motifs with native tropes, or re-cast colonial themes in such a way as to undermine the pervasive power of the stereotype, as we shall see. Decanonization in postcolonial writing consists of not only undoing the political, racist, and sexist ideologies of Euro-American writing, but also displacing the role that colonial literature has played in the colonized's curriculum, identity-formation, and psychology. Decanonization is intimately linked to decolonization because it attempts to free native minds of the barnacle-like hold of white colonial myths. In short, it engages with canonical writings to reveal how their 'greatness' encodes a politics of

institutionalism, racism, colonialism, and literary interpretation. Further, canonization, even in English and European literature, has always been predicated upon an exclusionary regime. Working class writings, women's texts, and queer literature were not included in the canon, even if these had larger popular audiences within the same nation-state. The 'great tradition' of literature in countries like England was almost exclusively male and elite. The canon was formed in a context of racism, classism, and sexism. Such a canon automatically, and logically, excluded writings by men and women of colour, gays/lesbians, immigrants, and working classes. Postcolonial rewritings of the canon interrogate this exclusionary principle, this 'lack' at the heart of the canon, where blacks and queers do not find space even though they constituted a definite and recognizable component of the audience, population, and authors. If postcolonial literature originates in the need to establish a common cultural heritage during colonialism and immediately after independence, it also owes its political edge to re-forming the Euro-American canon's stereotypes for the consumption of a contemporary world.

Daniel Defoe's *Robinson Crusoe* (1719) is a paradigmatic text for postcolonial criticism. Its themes of discovery, individualism, and colonial domination of natives and others are rooted in imperial Europe's concerns during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries (Said 1994b: 75). It emerges at a particular moment in England's mercantile culture when slaving voyages, settlement, and conquest drove the capitalist onward. Derek Walcott has commented extensively on Crusoe, and re-drawn the classic tale for postcolonialism.[9] In two important poems, 'Crusoe's Journal' (1986: 92–94), and 'Crusoe's Island' (ibid. 68–72) Walcott presents a different perspective on this classic adventure–survivor narrative. In 'Crusoe's Journal', Walcott emphasizes Crusoe's abilities as a builder and worker (1986: 92). In 'Crusoe's Island', he builds an 'Eden' (1986: 69). The Caribbean itself might be haunted by the colonial legacy of Defoe's Crusoe in 'Crusoe's Island':

> Now Friday's progeny,
> The brood of Crusoe's slave,
> Black little girls in pink
> Organdy, crinolines,
> Walk in their air of glory
> Beside a breaking wave; (*1986: 72*)

In 'The Figure of Crusoe' (1993) Walcott suggests that Defoe's character is an amalgamation of various roles (a theme he has already articulated in 'Crusoe's Journal'), all of which affect the Caribbean (and, by extension,

the non-European space). In a brilliant re-write of the Crusoe story, Walcott recasts the roles of civilized–colonizer and savage–native. *Pantomime* (1980) is a play about a retired English music-hall performer, Harry, now seeking to run a tourist hotel in Tobago. His assistant is a Trinidadian, Jackson. Harry, in an attempt to create new entertainment for his clients, decides to stage *Robinson Crusoe*. Harry suggests that they do a 'satire ... on the master-servant ... relationship. Labour-management, white–black, and so on...' (ibid. 109). But, as it turns out, it is the native Jackson who assumes control of the performance, playing both Crusoe and Friday, constantly reiterating that he will be doing a Creole 'acting out' of the story. Walcott's play emphasizes the role-playing at the heart of the colonial enterprise and suggests that, in the postcolonial context, those roles might be rewritten by the formerly colonized.

One of the most significant European texts for postcolonial studies has been Joseph Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*. Its representation of Africa, Africans and local cultures has come in for so much sustained, if uneven, critical scrutiny, that only postcolonial interpretations of the text seem possible now.[10] The novel's exploration of the European's psyche at the expense of the native, the tropes of discovery, the violence and exploitation are all cast within the colonial context. Wilson Harris in his *Palace of the Peacock* (1960) rewrites Conrad's tale. In Harris's tale a cross-section of Guyanese journey into the country. The travellers are repeating the journey of their predecessors—who were colonials. As the tale proceeds the journeys seem to lose their distinctiveness and merge into each other. More significantly, just as Conrad's text 'doubles' the journey as an interior voyage, Harris's novel also showcases a voyage into the psyche. Donne—interestingly named after the well-known English poet—is Kurtz's equivalent in Harris, even as his expedition into interior Guyana recalls Kurtz's into Africa. Harris refuses to provide a pure postcolonial rewrite as his characters on the second expedition all die in their 'native' country. In effect his postcolonial 'natives' also face the same fate as the former colonials. Harris's near-surrealist (he has often been identified with the magic realists) narrative does not allow one the luxury of identifying a specifically postcolonial decanonization at work. The postcolonial utopia—a kind of pre-colonial past symbolized by the palace of the peacock—is never reached. This, it appears, is a crucial comment on the postcolonial nation-state itself, and its aspirations. One cannot, Harris suggests, go back to a pure, golden pre-colonial past. Like Conrad's destructive Africa, interior Guyana overwhelms both the colonial and the postcolonial.

Charlotte Brontë's *Jane Eyre* (1847) becomes the focus of Jean Rhys's important decanonization process in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (1966). Rhys's focus

here is on the first Mrs Rochester, the apparently mad white Creole Bertha. Bertha is the prototype of the 'mad woman in the attic'. She invokes, in Brontë's novel, all the stereotypes of the tropical colony. Rochester's marriage to Bertha and his life in Jamaica are described almost entirely in racist and colonial tropes. But most horrifying is Brontë's depiction of Bertha, compared to a vampire, a demon, and a beast.

This non-European is the blight on English landscape and the English gentleman's life. He can marry Jane—the 'antipode' to Bertha—only after his first marriage has been dissolved. Rhys rejects this image of Bertha as either a primitive or a demon. Her Antoinette is portrayed as the 'victim' of her identity—Afro-Caribbean and English. She is denied the right to speak or represent herself, and is the personification of the marginalized, non-European woman. Interestingly, Antoinette sees England and Thornfield Hall as hell, even as she recalls her childhood home in the Caribbean as Edenic, thus reversing the tropes from *Jane Eyre*. Rhys's Rochester, who, it must be emphasized, is never named, is a mass of conflicting desires and attitudes, unlike the hard-headed, even brutal, Brontë one.

In all these rewritings, the postcolonial writer has displaced, questioned, and often rejected the European's approach to native spaces and people. The re-telling underscores the discriminatory and exploitative relationship that existed between the European and the native. Further, by subtle shifts of power relations in their rewritings, postcolonial authors demonstrate the need and hope for a more just world. Decanonization seeks to reveal the biases—racial, colonial, class, patriarchal—of 'great' European texts. It locates the 'great tradition' firmly within the context of slavery, colonialism, and exploitative geopolitics. Finally, it reverses the master–slave relationships in a symbolic move towards a more equalized relation between Europe and the 'Third World'.

The idea is not to merely encourage cultural relativism ('we are all different, but we are all the same'). A reform-oriented multicultural decanonization involves a more detailed knowledge of minority history and culture that translates directly into modes of reducing their alienation in literature classrooms and the academic system. That is, the canon must not only reflect cultural diversity but ensure that the larger system enables minority students to have better opportunities. This links decanonization with the economy.

Decanonization, ideally, must go hand-in-hand with a systematic critique of knowledge systems and the privileging of Eurocentrism, elitism, or Brahminism in curricula. Thus Kancha Ilaiah writes:

> What difference did it make to us whether we had an English textbook that talked about Milton's *Paradise Lost* or *Paradise Regained* ... or Wordsworth's poetry

> about English nature, or a Telugu textbook that talks about Kalidasa's *Meghasandesham* … We do not share the contents of either; we do not find our lives reflected in their narratives. (*1996: 177*)

No Dalit gods figured in stories in the 'Hindu' 'English' literary texts. Ilaiah is suggesting that Sanskrit and English are both homogenizing cultures that silenced other cultural forms and languages. In effect, Ilaiah is drawing a line from colonialism to postcolonialism, showing how they share similar prejudices and politics.

Knowledge is socially produced, and socially disseminated, and therefore there is a politics of knowledge: who produces, controls, disseminates it, and about whom? Since studying literature is about studying issues about women, minorities, others—all political issues too—it cannot be studied apolitically, or without an awareness of the process of canonization, inclusion, and representation. Simple inclusion of more and more texts is not the solution to the problems of curricula, and it is impossible to make any course truly representative and comprehensively multicultural anyway. It must, in Gerald Graff's phrase, 'teach the conflicts' (1992: 12). Curricula that seek to provide a picture of India or identify 'Indianness', for instance, must embody an anxiety about what is being excluded from the picture: Dalits, women, queers, minorities. It must emphasize the fact that these categories are constructed and represented in essentialist terms for particular purposes. Contextual criticism that emphasizes historical conditions, and a radically theorized methodology will highlight the 'conflicts'.[11] Reading canonical and marginalized texts—or traditional and 'counter-traditional' texts—together would highlight the conflicts and the processes of exclusion that mark knowledge-systems and canons. Race and ethnicity, tribalism and primitivism, are constructs, not 'natural' states of being. Curricula, like critical multiculturalism, must generate debates about:

- the historical relations of these groups with each other;
- the power relations among cultures; and
- their shifting locations within 'India'.

It must, ideally, emphasize the fact that 'India' (or 'the West') is an ideological construction built upon selective inclusion and exclusion of certain categories of people. In the case of the West, for instance, we might ask as to whether Africans in the US—who, it must be underlined, have been in America for almost as many centuries as the whites—are 'westerners' or whether they need to be treated as African-Americans. A critical pedagogy must highlight

- the constructedness of knowledge;
- the 'situatedness' (i.e. deriving from particular historical contexts) of knowledge;
- culture as a contested rather than a stable terrain, where communities fight over meanings;
- the political nature of all interpretive acts;
- the power relations between cultures and cultural forms;
- the undeniable presence of the 'other' within all cultures, to show how an 'other' is required to construct the self; and
- the centre/periphery, higher/lower, man/woman, west/east binaries that operate within cultural forms.

POSTCOLONIAL ENGLISH

> Language has always been the consort of empire, and forever shall remain its mate. Together they came into being, together they grow and flower.
>
> —Elio Antonio de Nebrija, Bishop of Avila, Introduction to *Gramatica Castellana*, 1492 (Glenn T. Morris 2003: 103)

Language and empires have always gone together. Colonization, requiring legal, social, and political control, is also an archivization project, to document, disseminate, and formulate rules, information, and policies. Often, colonialism's drive to generate its own vocabulary and command and evacuate non-European languages of signification in official transactions mean that the natives were forced to speak the language of the colonizer. England itself has seen the domination of Latin since the Romans, and Latin continued to be the language of prestige, power, and scholarship. Thus English suffered colonization by Latin during the early phase. It must also be kept in mind that there were languages and literatures in England well before English: Old English, Norse, Welsh, Latin, Irish-Gaelic among others. English suppressed Celtic, Welsh, Cornish (of which there are about 300 speakers today), and Gaelic on its route to domination of the islands.

Spanish, French, Dutch, English, and Portuguese acquired the status of 'international' languages because their dissemination across their local geographical borders (into Asia, Africa, and South America) was facilitated through the machinery of empire. As Walter Mignolo's magisterial study, *The Darker Side of the Renaissance: Literacy, Territoriality, and Colonization* (2003) has demonstrated, language grammars, codices, and cartography are all rhetorical forms engineered by colonialism to attain control over the non-European. Incidentally, when the British empire expanded and Spanish and Portuguese empires shrank, English replaced Spanish and

Portuguese as the most dominant imperial language. There is thus a hierarchy within linguistic imperialism itself, and it is a moot point as to what would have been the course of Indian history if Dupleix rather than Clive had been the victor in eighteenth century battles for India.

Others like Benedict Anderson (1983) have suggested that language—especially with the advent of print and the large-scale dissemination of literature/writing in Europe—enabled the formation of national identity and nationalism.

There is considerable confusion about the use of the term 'English Literature' even today. 'English Literature', as studied in curricula worldwide, includes figures such as Walter Scott (Scottish), Oliver Goldsmith (Irish), and James Joyce (Irish). It also includes Europeans like Joseph Conrad, and authors who wrote a considerable body of work in other languages (Samuel Beckett, who wrote in French). That is, 'English Literature' has subsumed under itself distinct literatures like Welsh and Scottish. 'England' itself is only one component of 'Britain' (by no means are the two synonymous), alongside 'units' like Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, and there is no geographical correspondence between 'English' Literature and the ethnic/cultural regions. 'Non-English' writers using English have, of course, bent and moulded the language to their purpose. The best example would be that of James Joyce, perhaps the single most efficient experimenter in the language ever. At the conclusion of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*, Stephen Daedalus voices what could be the inaugural moment of decolonizing English:

> The language in which we are speaking is his before it is mine. How different are the words home, Christ, ale, master, on his lips and on mine! I cannot speak or write these words without unrest of spirit. His language, so familiar and so foreign, will always be for me an acquired speech. I have not made or accepted its words. My voice holds them at bay. My soul frets in the shadow of his language. (*1960 [1916]: 189*)

The works of Irvine Welsh, Roddy Doyle, and others in the second half of the twentieth century seek to capture Scottish dialect within the English language, often taking recourse to street talk, slang, and working class styles (plus, of course, the abundant swearing, averaging the f-word every alternate line).

Postcolonial literary and cultural studies explore the role of language in the process of colonialism. The subjects of postcolonialism's study of language in colonialism include:

- the domination of native languages by European ones;
- the hybridization of both languages; and
- the politics of language, literature, and translation.

Rita Joe, a Micmac Indian, writes about the loss of her language:

> I lost my talk
> The talk you took away.
> When I was a little girl
> At Shubenacadie school
> .....

But then she needs to recover a voice and a language:

> So gently I offer my hand and ask,
> Let me find my talk
> So I can teach you about me. ('*I Lost My Talk*', *in Roman 1994: 76*)

Gandhi declared in *Hind Swaraj* (a text that continues to have relevance for postcolonial processes of decolonization, as Makarand Paranjape has argued, 1993): 'To give millions a knowledge of English is to enslave them. The foundation that Macaulay laid of education has enslaved us' (1910: 103). He then went on to add: 'It is we, the English-knowing men, that have enslaved India. The curse of the nation will rest not upon the English but upon us' (104). This tension of using English transferred itself quite readily into the literary sphere. Raja Rao, one of the first generation of Indian novelists in English, in a much-quoted formulation expressed the linguistic and narrative anxiety of the postcolonial writer:

> One has to convey in a language that is not one's own the spirit that is one's own. One has to convey the various shades and omissions of a certain thought-movement that looks maltreated in an alien language. I use the word 'alien', yet English is not really an alien language to us … Our method of expression therefore has to be a dialect which will some day prove to be as distinctive and colourful as the Irish or the American. (*1963: vii*)

Rao's statement captures the many contours of the language debate in postcolonialism, which may be summarized as follows:

- What language must the postcolonial writer write in? What cultural and social factors are involved in the choice of a language of articulation?

- Does the use of the former colonizer's language imply a continuing colonization?
- Is a distinctive, indigenized 'version' of the colonizer's language possible?
- Can resistance, cultural affirmation/autonomy, and identity be articulated in a foreign language?
- Would the 'return' to one's mother tongue mark a reactionary atavism?
- How does one locate oneself within global geo- and cultural politics without recourse to a global language?
- And, finally, can one use a 'foreign' language and still retain cultural identities?

The debate about English derives from the context of globalization. For countries that have barely begun to recover from the cultural assaults of colonialism, globalization presents the newest challenge. English is clearly the *language of globalization*, represented mainly by business and economy, where it becomes the language of management, trade debates and negotiation, and even dispute-resolution. That is, language here has a close correlation with actual socioeconomic processes. English as the language that drives globalization is also the best contender for the status of a 'global language', where it homogenizes various parts of the world under its umbrella. This kind of 'linguistic imperialism' (Phillipson 1992) demonstrates the close link of political economy, geopolitics, and culture. Here English is promoted through various mechanisms: language skills for workers from non-English speaking nations, migration, the British Council (UK) and the Fulbright Programme (USA), the language of trade debates, treaties, technology (Microsoft's role deserves mention here), political dialogue, and the discourse of human rights and refugee aid. Countries that become the focus of either humanitarian or military attention from USA (or European powers) also become the focus of language and cultural programmes (see Phillipson 1992 and Nancy Snow 1998). English is now, also, the language of NATO. It is also, incidentally, the language of academic discourse, the language in which these debates about language take place!

Responses to the language dilemma have been diverse. Postcolonial writers across the world have had an uneasy relationship with the language of the colonial master. Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o began writing in English before switching to his native Gikuyu. The argument made by people like Ngũgĩ is that one cannot simply *use* a language—to use a language is to adopt and accept (and therefore legitimize) its cultural and political values too, in this case, the colonizer's. Meena Alexander echoes Ngũgĩ's sentiments about the violence of the colonial language:

> There is a violence in the very language, American English, that we have to face, even as we work to make it ours, decolonize it so that it will express the truth of bodies beaten and banned. After all, for such as we are the territories are not free. (*1993: 199*)

7.4 Nation Language

Edward Kamau Brathwaite proposed the idea of a nation language, the language of the slaves and poor labourers. It is heavily influenced by African languages and folk cultures, but is constituted through their interaction with different languages and cultures in the 'New World'. Thus a Yoruba-inflected English spoken by Caribbean peoples would be a nation language. It is non-standard, creolized English that draws upon native African speech patterns, rhythms, and even grammatical structures. The poetry of Louise Bennett, with its Jamaican English, is a good example, according to Brathwaite, of a 'nation language' (see Brathwaite 1984, 1993).

However, it must also be noted that Ngũgĩ abandoned English *after* establishing his reputation as a writer in that language. The move is reminiscent of India's nativist and vernacularization debates: where the foremost proponents of 'defend-the-local-language-against-English' movement and nativism come from Professors of *English* (Balchandra Nemade and Chandrasekhar Patil to name just two). Sukarno in Indonesia banned the teaching of Dutch in its schools presumably as a means of severing all colonial ties. Tsitsi Dangarembga's Nhamo in *Nervous Conditions* forgets how to speak his mother tongue when he returns from the mission school. However, his father is happy at the son's acquisition of English (52–53). For Nyasha too 'when … [she] spoke seriously her thoughts came in English' (77). Tambu herself sees her transfer to the mission as 'reincarnation' (92). And towards the end of the novel, having witnessed Nyasha's breakdown, the mother declares that 'Englishness' is the main cause/culprit (202). Meena Alexander writes of her dilemmas with English: 'English had alienated me from what I was born to; it was also the language of intimacy and bore the charged power of writing' (1993: 116). In Catherine Lim's (otherwise thin) Singapore novel *A Leap of Love* (2003), the heroine turns down one suitor for a simple reason: 'he cannot pronounce the "r" sound and … begins every sentence with "I

understands" '(5). She turns down another because 'enjoys Shakespeare's Lomeo and Julia very much' (171). Her mother is, of course, shocked that 'her daughter allowed something as trivial as English grammar to negate the value of a high-paying job, a good family-background, a totally dependable moral character' (5). The point here is that in Asian nations, especially with globalization, the ability to speak and write good English is prized above the ability to work well with any other language.

Others, like Achebe, have opted to write in English. The goal, as many writers (including Achebe) have stressed, is to indigenize English. Shashi Deshpande, in a well argued essay, appropriately titled 'Where Do We Belong: Regional, National, or International,' states quite categorically: 'I have never had any doubts that my writing was as much part of the Indian literature as my father's was ... writing in English is as much a part of the literatures of this country as the writing in any other language' (2003: 32). Achebe recently defended his choice of English—though he does write in his native language too—thus:

> My reasons for choosing English [in *Things Fall Apart*] were pragmatic: to communicate, to tell a story. You do not tell a story to your ethnic group alone. There is a larger Africa beyond this world. (*2005: Public Lecture*)

For people with their own distinctive languages, the mother tongue becomes a ready option should they wish to abandon English as the form for expression.

However, this situation is more complicated for the Caribbean writer. David Dabydeen writes his poetry in Guyanese Creole (but not, interestingly enough, his fiction or criticism). Naipaul uses standard English, but recasts into local variants. Grace Nichols, Lorna Goodison, and Jean 'Binta' Breeze 'perform' poetry in an English that draws upon their local/cultural traditions and variants. In most cases it is oral poetry, as noted above in the section on orality, because oral traditions are often perceived as being pre-colonial and uncontaminated by English or colonial languages. Salman Rushdie, that tireless experimenter and 'exploder' of language, mixes standard English with Hindi songs, Bombay/Mumbai street slang to produce some extraordinarily breathtaking effects. The poetry of Goodison and the others mentioned above owes much of its verbal energy, expressive rhythm, and colour to the incorporation of native speech patterns, musicality, and sounds into English. The sustained use of local images and metaphors, slang and colloquialisms, is a mode of experimentation that alters the former colonizer's language. Thus names like 'waterfall Venkamma' or 'corner-house Murthy' in Raja Rao's *Kanthapura*, the numerous

proverbs in Achebe's fiction, and songs in Caribbean writing provide a local colour to English. The local language engages and negotiates with the 'foreign' one before settling into a hybridized form. Bilingualism and biculturalism—two central features of the postcolonial metropolis today—are heavily dependent upon this negotiation between languages: 'What I was trying to do was to put two languages in a room. They engaged in a conversation. It was not translation but conversation' (Achebe 2005). Languages in the postcolonial context grow around one another, each drawing resources from the other. Thus, Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands/La Frontera* (1987) is a conversation between three languages: Spanish, English, and her native Nahuatl, and situates the condition of the border among these three cultures.

What this means is that there is evidently no 'standard' English being used by postcolonial writers. English has been multiplied, fragmented, hybridized, bowdlerized, and indigenized by authors and cultures across the former colonies. We now have, as a result, many Englishes, as evidenced by studies in journals such as *World Englishes* and *English World-Wide*. This is sharply distinct from the colonial role of English (which was imposed from the top). Here English is practically reconstituted to create local variants. It marks a process of 'worldliness' where global processes are negotiated at very local levels (Pennycook 2003: 14–16). Indigenization of the language here marks a process of postcolonial resistance (through adaptation and rejection of standard language). This is 'english', as Ashcroft et al termed it, in order to contrast it with (standard) English (1989: 8). But perhaps the most famous expression of this indigenization, localization, and nativization of English remains Kamala Das':

> I speak three languages, write in
> Two, dream in one ...
> .....
> The language I speak
> Becomes mine, its distortions, its queerness
> All mine, mine alone ...
> It is as human as I am human, don't
> You see? (*'An Introduction', 1973: 26–7*)

Jeet Thayil declares: 'English fills my right hand, silence my left' (2003: 39). English has thus been indigenized through colonialism and now with globalization.

Most importantly, such local dialects and vernacularized forms become stable and the hallmarks of that culture—like the language of reggae or

7.5 Pidgin English

Pidgin English—a mixture of local languages with English—becomes a standard in itself, the 'new' language of the postcolonial. The Caribbean pidgin languages therefore mix French, English, Spanish with Yoruba, Igbo, and other African elements. Pidgin English has translated canonical English works—and the Bible—into a language used by the majority of African peoples. Creole is a slightly different version of pidgin: While pidgin is marked by a smaller vocabulary, Creole is a distinct variety of English spoken as their mother tongue by 'native' speakers. Much of the Caribbean populace uses Creole. Pidgin, used for sufficiently long periods of time, becomes Creole.

calypso in the Caribbean and Indian metropolitan English. It becomes the postcolonial agenda to defend this 'version' of English as their own, as a marker of their cultural identity. A particularly fine illustration of the importance of local English is John Agard's poem, 'Listen Mr Oxford Don':

> Me not no Oxford don
> Me a simple immigrant

The violence ('mugging'), the speaker suggests is only on the English language

> But mugging de Queen's English
> Is the story of my life

The poem builds to a climax where English becomes equally culpable:

> I slashing suffix in self-defence
> I bashing future wit present tense
> And if necessary
>
> I making de Queen's English accessory
> to my offence
>
> (*in Brown et al 1989: 109–110*)

Agard's poem is about the violent reconstitution of language that takes place in non-English speaking cultures and immigrant populations. English's decolonization through these indigenizations de-links, at least partially, the language from its former colonial centre and politics.

Translation, as Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi remind us, is an act of 'intercultural transfer' (1999: 2). It involves more than just movement

across or between languages: it is rooted in particular cultural and political contexts, power relations (between languages and cultures, text and translator) and social structures. (It is interesting to note that the term 'barbarian' was originally used to describe people who did not speak Greek.) Thus language inscribes us into a power relation with other people, contingent upon the relationship between those languages.

Translation served a crucial purpose in the colonial context. In the course of administrative, epistemological, and social control over the colonized, the Western powers sought to gain access to the 'reality' of the colony. This meant rendering the colonized culture intelligible. Such a project involved translation. Thus the great translations of the Orientalists in India—spearheaded by William Jones and the Asiatic Society, and including the various 'grammars' of Indian languages produced during this period—from the late eighteenth century delivered to the English administrator and cultural connoisseur an India that could be interpreted in Western terms, to be eventually domesticated and controlled. Further, people like Jones, who argued that since the natives were incapable of interpreting their own laws, the European would have to do this for them, justified the need for translation. It enabled the European, who had gained access to the culture of the colonized by studying their texts, to speak authoritatively on the colonized's behalf. Translation and archaeological and ethnographic studies went together here because they all functioned as modes of controlling the discourse about the colonized's culture by positing a European authority over them. In Tejaswini Niranjana's phrasing, the colonial project was to 'translate in order to contain … and to contain and control in order to translate' (1992: 34. For a detailed study of the collaborative work between Indians and Englishmen in the area of translation during the Orientalist phase, see David Kopf's *British Orientalism and the Bengal Renaissance*, 1969). Clearly, then, translation was inscribed in practices of colonial power and domination. It constructed particular subjects to be controlled and interpreted within European frameworks. This does not mean, however, that translation effectively rendered the colonized a passive subject. As Simon Gikandi (2001a) has demonstrated in the case of Jomo Kenyatta, cultural translation facilitated the translation of colonial culture into an idiom of postcolonial self-making. In fact, Gikandi's reading is, I believe, a key move in translation studies in a postcolonial context, for he shows how 'powerless' colonized subjects, who had apparently 'internalized' and submitted to the structures of colonial dominance, 'translated' and 'transported' (as he puts it) these into nationalist struggle.

In the postcolonial context, translation has different effects. It renders 'Third World' texts into 'subjects' for 'First World' consumption. Translations

into English remain, unfortunately, the primary means of acquiring visibility for regional writers. The power relations governing language, publishing, awards, and visibility are, in effect, still colonial, even though English, to use the example of India, is read and used by a very small percentage of the population. So, does postcolonialism/postcoloniality require translations into English? Is there the possibility of a different kind of postcoloniality that does not require access or articulation in the hegemonic European languages of the former colonial powers? Bassnett and Trivedi phrase these questions when they ask: 'can one be thought to be a postcolonial even before or without being translated into English' (1999: 11). The postcolonial 'subject' continues to be subject to the power relations of disciplines, languages, and acts of interpretation, over most of which s/he has no say. Thus translations of tribal, Dalit, and local texts into English become 'authentic' representations of that culture for consumption by 'First World' readers and academics with a postcolonial bent. The role of translation in (re)presenting the Aboriginal or the Dalit must also take into account the politics of careers—the cultural capital to be gleaned by 'promoting' such literatures—and the power relations that exist here. Not least is the issue of economic gain: how much of the quantifiable profits (such as royalties, and one cannot even speak here of cultural capital such as high-profile conferences) actually goes to the Dalit or Aboriginal whose life/memoir is being made available to consumers? Does the Dalit text become another commodity like an ethnic artefact?

Translations within, say, Indian languages, or 'endotropic' translations, as Diptiranjan Pattanaik argues, helped the expansion of local literatures and facilitated democratization (2000: 71–86). Others like Michaela Wolf propose a 'cultural translation' where translation is an intervention that creates new texts. It emphasizes cultural mixing and negotiation, 'in-between texts' rather than colonial essentializing (Wolf 2000: 127–145). Within plurilingual countries like India, English often serves as a link language across regional-language literatures (evidenced by projects like the Sahitya Akademi's journal *Indian Literature*, which seeks to provide translations, into English, of different language literatures in every issue. See Mannur 2000). Increasingly, postcolonial writers like Rushdie, the Quebecois Jacques Brault and others claim they seek a freedom from essentializing language identities. The postcolonial condition is that of being between spaces, languages, identities, in perpetual translation and transition between and across languages (see Simon 1999).

This is not to say that the relations between the 'vernaculars' are of more equalized nature than that between local languages and that of the colonial power. Unequal power relations inform—and have always informed—the vernaculars, even prior to colonization—a situation not always accounted for by champions of postcolonial translation. Thus the relationship of classical-literary Tamizh from the Sangam age versus other local variations, the literary forms in local languages (ballads, folk songs) and their relationship with the language of the court/administration in feudal India, the relationship (in India), of Hindi with the other languages—are all power relations.

But literary translation is not the sole area of postcolonial debates. Thus science, medicine and technology, intellectual property rights, human rights, environmentalism, modernity—all these discourses of knowledge production, policy-making, and sharing require translation. In the global humanitarian or environmental movements, for instance, intelligibility of local conditions and 'universal principles', knowledge discourses that arise from specific traditions and practices need to be shared and understood. Critics like Probal Dasgupta, who see such a cognitive intelligibility and accountability as central to both, the project of modernity and contemporary (postcolonial) civilization, argue that translation is crucial to understanding the discourses that claim to present knowledge. Dasgupta, therefore, proposes that a civilization that seeks to implement the scientific programme will 'pursue the possibilities of cognition into every language' (2000: 293), which involves encouraging locally rooted and accountable scientific activities in all communities in their own languages. This attractive idea sees translation as linked to discourses of knowledge, the projects of modernity, and 'reciprocity' (a term central to Dasgupta's argument) of perception and understanding of local knowledge.

Postcolonial English is thus the alternative 'English' tradition that emerges with globalization and indigenization. It is important to note that globalization is never a unified or unidirectional process. Global events and cultural artefacts are indigenized at local levels as native cultures negotiate new relations with 'foreign' elements arriving in their midst.

NOTES

1. For a study of revolutionary writing and dissent see Harlow (1996). Harlow has also worked on women's prison narratives (1992) and 'resistance literature' (1987). On *testimonio* see Beverley (1992).
2. The most comprehensive study of the genre remains Lois Parkinson Zamora and Wendy Faris (eds), *Magical Realism* (1995).
3. See Meenakshi Mukherjee's path-breaking *The Twice Born Fiction* (1971) for the dual 'origins' of the Indian novel in English. In her later work, Mukherjee

has demonstrated how Indian writers writing in English often exhibit an 'anxiety of Indianness' about identity and belonging (2000).

4. Numerous plays in India, especially in the regional languages, have utilized folk elements extensively, and with great effect. A short list includes Girish Karnad's *Hayavadana* (1971) and other plays, Chandrashekar Kambar's *Jokumaraswami* (1972) and Habib Tanvir's *Charandas Chor* (1974). However, the use of folk elements in plays has often been disputed too. Theatre personalities and thinkers like Ebrahim Alkazi, for instance, argue that a transformation of older forms into something new may not be very popular among the masses (in Aparna Dharwadker 2005: 324). Others like Katheryn Hansen have argued that traditional forms like the 'nautanki' might make Indian theatre more authentic because it is closer to pre-modern Indian culture (1992: 37–40). Indigenous theatre forms in India—such as *akhyana, bayalata, burrakatha, theyyam, yakshagana, nautanki, ramlila, raslila*—have found periodic popularity when revived and incorporated into contemporary plays by Kambar, Karnad, Mahesh Elkunchwar, and others.
5. See for instance, the arguments of Peter Hulme (1986) and Timothy Brennan (1989), who explicitly link realism with colonialism and imperialism.
6. However, this is not to argue that all postcolonial writing or even writing from South America is magic-realist. There are counter-arguments about the effectiveness of magic realism as a postcolonial mode too. For example, Kwame Anthony Appiah (1992) proposes that realism is a necessary anterior moment in producing a truly decolonized literature (occurring before what he terms the 'post-realist' stage).
7. For a study of Okri's shamanist magic realism see Oliva (1999).
8. Caliban has, as noted, become the set-piece of postcolonial criticism. In fact, *The Tempest* has journeyed far and wide, adapting to multiple social, political, and ideological demands. For an extraordinary survey of the travels of Shakespeare's play see Hulme and Sherman (2000)
9. Other re-tellings of the Crusoe story include Elizabeth Bishop's 'Crusoe in England' (1976: 9–18), A.D. Hope's 'Man Friday' (1972 [1958]: 122–27), Sam Selvon's *Moses Ascending* (1975), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986). Of these, Coetzee's novel is perhaps the most complex, as its postmodern narrative calls into question the 'authenticity' of every one of its own characters. It is ostensibly about Susan Barton, who lived with 'Cruso'—note the altered spelling—and Friday during the last year of their stay on the island. Cruso dies, and Barton is trying to attain the services of a novelist, Daniel Foe (incidentally, 'Foe' was Defoe's original surname) to write *her* story. For some innovative readings see Spivak (1991) and Macaskill and Colleran (1992).
10. A famous example of a postcolonial rejection of the novel as racist is Achebe's 'An Image of Africa: Racism in Conrad's *Heart of Darkness*' (1988).
11. Here of course, rises the issue of 'Theory' and its elitism. Postcolonial literature has been invariably linked to postcolonial theory, and, more recently, with the burgeoning role of technology that makes a vast amount of resources available in more egalitarian fashion (thus reducing the teacher's authority over resources—though I do know of University teachers who have, for inexplicable reasons (the threat to their authority, and reading, might be one, I guess)—banned the use of Internet sources by M. Phil and Ph. D scholars). Theory's elitism, helped in no small measure by the tungsten-lined prose of Spivak and Bhabha, has been the bane of literary studies that seek to foreground democracy, open access, and equality. However, Theory has undeniably provided us the means to generate sophisticated readings. Ways will have to be found to deploy theoretical concepts without making it elitist, or it would defeat the political praxis of 'postcolonialism'. Stuart Hall's work is a good illustration of how 'High Theory' can also be translated into readable, 'applicable' writing and interpretations.
12. Terry Eagleton in fact proposes that Joyce's language in *Finnegans Wake* (1939) 'turns the medium of English against the nation which nurtured it, thus reversing the colonial power relation at the level of the discourse' (1995: 269).

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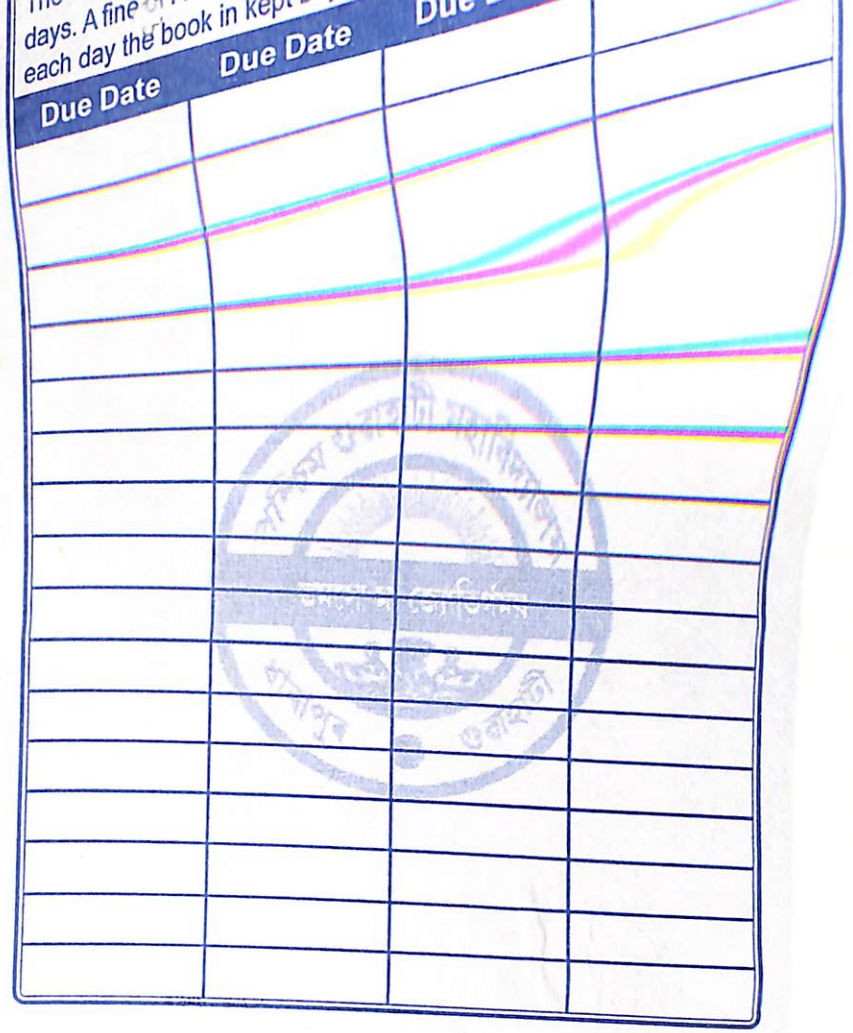
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Postcolonial Literature

An Introduction

Pramod K. Nayar

A remarkably clear and accessible survey of the complex historical, cultural, and theoretical contexts and issues relevant to the reading of postcolonial literary texts.

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Postcolonial writing originating from Africa, Asia, and South America in the mid-twentieth century has constantly examined, negotiated with, and reacted to the overarching experience of colonial subjugation. Often resistive in flavor, postcolonial literature has redefined the concepts of identity and history along self-constructed, novel paradigms and indigenous forms of representation.

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