

**National Consciousness and Critical Cartography in the Works of  
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## Introduction: Postnationalist Discourses and Peripheral Literatures

That the nation has rapidly been rendered outmoded by the sweeping tide of globalizing processes of commodity exchange and migratory flow has been proclaimed by a varying range of political and ideological camps. As a political and cultural category that binds people together and endow them with a strong sense of solidarity and comradeship, the nation has undoubtedly been an essential unit of collectivity through which freedom and well-being of the population are continuously sought and realized.<sup>1</sup> However, for the past three decades, a number of scholars in the social sciences and humanities have argued for the dismissal of the nation both as an analytical framework and a political force, focusing instead on the fluid nature of cultural practices which allegedly deviate from a homogenizing and totalizing tendency of nationalism. Such discourses of postnationalism often share the assumption that cultural practices can never be entirely contained within the territorial and symbolic borders of the nation and that diasporic networks and transnational migratory flows are replacing the rigidity of territorial nationalism. This dissertation challenges such line of argument by demonstrating how postcolonial writers in the late twentieth and early twenty-first century maintain acute sensitivity to the issue of nationalism and their works evince alternative types of national consciousness that allow us to recognize the nation not as a fixed entity but as a contested sphere in which people's senses of identity are developed and cultivated in the face of uneven globalization. My investigation into contemporary postcolonial literature places particular focus on the ways in which each literary work overtly and covertly revives liberatory ideals of decolonizing nationalism emerging in the mid-

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<sup>1</sup> The concept of the nation is notoriously difficult to define, partly because of the nationalists' quintessential assertion that the origin of the nation is as ancient as the advent of human history. While influential scholars of nationalism such as Anthony Smith take a stance to see the persistence of ethnic collectivities from the premodern era to the modern period, I follow the "modernist" definition of the nation as an artificial product created essentially in modernity, a view widely shared by materialist authors such as Eric Hobsbawm, Benedict Anderson, and Ernest Gellner. Gellner's concise description of nationalism as "primarily a political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent" (Gellner 1) allows us to construe the nation as an outcome of, rather than the source of, psychological, cultural, and collective activities through which people seek to unify themselves against detrimental forces, whether they are alien invasion or internal conflicts. As we shall see, modern philosophical organicism may be seen as offering the ideational foundation of such dynamics of nationalism.

twentieth century. In addition, this dissertation pays close attention to writers' keen awareness of and critical engagement with geographical unevenness that originates in imperial domination and persists in capitalist globalization. In order to lay the foundation of my argument, it is first and foremost necessary to review recent debates on postnationalism and expound on its relevance to contemporary postcolonial writing. In what follows, I present a critical review of literature concerning the position of national consciousness in connection with globalization and attempt my own theorization by drawing upon Frantz Fanon's prospect for the cultivation of national consciousness across geographical divides in the context of decolonization.

### Postnationalism and the Concept of Culture

The 1990s saw the proliferation of discourses on the dismissal of the nation as a meaningful unit of inquiry. The term "postnational" was introduced into the cultural debate by cultural anthropologist Arjun Appadurai, who called attention to the qualitative transformation of the nation-state as an object of loyalty and patriotism. Drawing on his own familial connection with an expatriate Indian nationalist, Subhas Chandra Bose, who split with the Nehruvian moderate scheme and sought active support from the Axis powers, Appadurai questions the fixated affiliation between territorial state and patriotism. Appadurai does not oppose nationalism or patriotism per se but casts doubt on the rigidity of the hyphen between nation and state. The dissociation of nationalism from territorial state has, he argues, become increasingly popular, so much so that there has emerged "the extraterritorial nationalism of populations who love America but are not necessarily attached to the United States" (Appadurai 171). Appadurai's argument for the unmooring of nationalism from territorial state recognizes diasporic subjects as crucial players in cultural production and identity formation. Emphasizing such phenomena as diasporic networks, transnational circulations of images through the media, and deterritorialization of identities, he argues that they give rise to the obsolescence of the nation-state as a viable unit of analysis. Appadurai thus proposes us to "think ourselves beyond the nation" (158). Appadurai's proposition

suggests a shift from a deterministic mode of interpretation of culture to a rather flexible way of viewing culture. He prefers the adjective form “cultural” to the noun “culture.” While the noun form connotes that culture is a substantiated object, the adjectival sense allows us to recognize culture as a heuristic device to look into “the process of naturalizing a subset of differences that have been mobilized to articulate group identity” (15). The latter mode is fit to account for the ways in which the culture concept may be decoupled from rigid territorial borders of nation-states and transnational cultural flows render stubbornness of nationalism obsolete. Instead of embodying a spirit or integrity of a particular collectivity, such cultural practices mobilize a range of deterritorialized modes of identity. Far from exceptional or marginal, “diasporic public spheres” emerging out of those practices occupy the increasingly significant position in popular imagination.

The liberatory potential of culture as epitomized by Appadurai is formulated in light of the sea-change in disciplinary methodology by James Clifford, who expounds on a methodological turn occurring in anthropological research. Clifford challenges the strategy of “localization” that accompanies the traditional mode of anthropological study, stating that it necessarily leads to constructions of native cultures as fixtures in concrete spaces. Localization is a key step to “museumization” of a target culture, and dynamic cultural exchange across geographical expansions is relegated to the realm of margin. A new method of anthropology, Clifford claims, must recognize that local and global cultural experiences are mutually constitutive so that it can explore hybrid cultural formations:

Anthropological “culture” is not what it used to be. And once the representational challenge is seen to be the portrayal and understanding of local/global historical encounters, co-productions, dominations, and resistances, one needs to focus on hybrid, cosmopolitan experiences as much as on rooted, native ones. In my current problematic, the goal is not to *replace* the cultural figure with the intercultural figure “traveler.” Rather, the task is to focus on concrete mediations of the two, in specific cases of historical tension and relationship. (Clifford 24; emphasis original)

The heightened focus on fluidity over fixity, or, on routes over roots, turns out to assume

political efficacy. Since hybrid cultural traffic characterized by incessant transformation escapes from the museumizing gaze of the metropolis and homogenizing propensity of nationalism, it represents resistance to any types of totalization that attempt to incorporate a variety of cultural activities into a single category. Here, culture is posited as the mediative realm where different forces collide with one another, and each actor engaged in this process of cultural production is claimed to enjoy relative freedom from constraints of deterministic interpretations.

These sanguine views on culture's vitality to cut across national boundaries and mediate between the local and global spheres are problematic at least in two senses. First, they are inclined to privilege the cultural at the expense of structural relationships and obscure the material basis of cultural interactions. It remains unclear for whom the liberatory potential of cultural practices that disturb nationalist totalization and statist territorialization is reserved. Weihsin Gui questions Appadurai's presentation of America as a productive soil for subjectivities relatively autonomous from state interference by indicating that "despite his emphasis on the transformation of patriotism into a plural and mobile concept, Appadurai's postnationalism is actually located and territorialized in the one remaining country that is also a superpower state" (Gui 4). Appadurai's apparent privileging of America poses the question of who can actually claim to possess access to new types of identity in the unevenly globalized world. One may wonder, then, what material and political conditions make it possible to enjoy cultural life independent of state power and to what extent these conditions are dependent on, or, even complicit with, American imperialism whose exertion of power has increasingly turned out to be "deterritorialized."<sup>2</sup>

The second and more fundamental point is their tendency to overlook the fact that the culture concept was widely employed by anticolonial thinkers to organize *national*

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<sup>2</sup> Although Antonio Negri and Michael Hardt's conception of Empire is not isomorphic to American imperialism, Appadurai's rhetoric of diasporic public spheres echoes Negri and Hardt's formulation of "the Multitude" as a nomadic and heterogenous network that poses potential challenges to Empire. In his early critique of *Empire*, Giovanni Arrighi suggests that their prospect for the dissolution of the North-South divide is too optimistic and premature, saying that "the road to global citizenship and to a guaranteed income for all citizens can be expected to be far longer, bumpier and more treacherous than Hardt and Negri maintain" (Arrighi 37). A similar type of optimism is discernible in Appadurai's argument.

collectivities. In his extensive study of historical and philosophical links among freedom, culture, and organic life, Pheng Cheah traces a genealogy of the idea of culture into German idealism and argues that in modernity, culture plays the vital role in filling the gap between the status quo and the desirable norm in such a way as to actualize freedom: “[the] culture concept of philosophical modernity thus carries the immense ethical burden of reconciling facticity and universal normativity” (Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions* 96). Such aspiration to incarnate normative ideals finds expression in decolonizing nationalism which deemed culture as a principal medium through which the otherwise disparate colonized population unify themselves and create progressive agency to counter colonial oppression. Cheah demonstrates that thinkers of decolonizing nationalism in the mid-twentieth century are genuine heirs of the culture concept of philosophical modernity and that their cases for cultural mobilization qua decolonization are the most apposite illustrations of the concept’s tenacious relevance to the colonial and postcolonial world:

Culture’s political vocation lies in its ability to articulate society into an organic community, to transform the masses into a dynamic self-generating whole that approximates or actualizes the ideal of freedom. However, just as decolonizing nationalism inherited the task of bringing the grand narrative of freedom to fruition, the most cogent examples of culture’s political vocation today also seem to come from postcolonial space. (Cheah, *Spectral Nationality* 235)

Since the colonizer carries with them a whole range of cultural apparatuses that foster inferiority on the part of the colonized, the liberation movement must first and foremost embark upon the demystificatory work to subvert superiority of dominating forces and aspires to overcome cultural alienation induced by colonialism. Proponents of national liberation in the mid-twentieth century are keenly aware of the need of struggle on the level of culture. Such insight into the central importance of cultural decolonization is, Cheah argues, best exemplified by Amílcar Cabral’s writing, in which the Bissau-Guinean revolutionary leader identifies the essence of colonial power in the act of cultural subjugation:

The experience of colonial domination shows that, in an attempt to perpetuate

exploitation, the colonizer not only creates a whole system of repression of the cultural life of the colonized people, but also provokes and develops the cultural alienation of a part of the population, either by supposed assimilation of indigenous persons, or by the creation of a social gulf between the aboriginal elites and the mass of the people. (Cabral 145)

While Cabral places strong emphasis on the long historical process through which culture takes its roots in every corner of people's lives, his is not an argument for retrograde archaism. On the contrary, he postulates an organic connection between historical progress and cultural development, the resultant of which is the enduring progressive move to find fuller expressions of freedom in cultural production. It is in with an aspiration to organize such a self-generating collectivity that Cabral equates liberation movement with cultural activity: "national liberation is necessarily an *act of culture*" (143; emphasis original). Even after formal independence, decolonizing nationalism's liberatory promises can hardly be said to have been fulfilled. Cheah argues that the recent rise of postnational discourses, often celebratory in their tones, miss the aporia that in macro-sociological terms, uneven capitalist development at once creates diasporic public spheres *and* inspires the fundamentalist reassertion of cultural identity.<sup>3</sup> This dilemma persists and even sharpens in globalization because material forces always curtail access to the transcendence of national boundaries proclaimed by postnational discourses. Decolonized countries still suffer severely from unequal distribution of political power and economic wealth, which results in the generation of "an entire spectrum of popular and official postcolonial nationalisms" (Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions* 103). These nationalisms should not be dismissed simply as reactionary or fanatic, as they are at least genuine responses to the predicament engendered by uneven globalization, no matter how pathological they might at times appear to be.

The present dissertation is primarily concerned with the ways in which contemporary postcolonial writers address national consciousness in their works.<sup>4</sup> In the

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<sup>3</sup> On this point, Cheah draws on Samir Amin's *Eurocentrism*.

<sup>4</sup> I employ the term "national consciousness" instead of "nationalism" in hope to designate the creative and



domain of literary studies, there have been sporadic attempts to rethink postcolonial nationalism and national consciousness in conjunction with neocolonialism and globalization. Cheah proceeds his argument in *Spectral Nationality* by elucidating how postcolonial writing intends to narrate the national organic body in the style of *Bildungsroman*. His interpretive targets are nationalist *Bildungsromane* written by Pramoedya Ananta Toer and Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, emerging out of the specific historical contexts of nationalist revolts in Indonesia and Kenya, respectively. Such literary works, whose conceptual precursor is European Romantic literary nationalism, are meant not just to thematize or represent the nation. They aspire to undertake an actual causal role in the nation's genesis and formation. Nonetheless, this type of activist impetus, recognizable widely in postcolonial writing from across disparate regions, suffers from the loss of confidence in the inevitable progress of history as a result of the dominance of the authoritarian neocolonial state and the dispossession by foreign capital. The resulting failure to "organicize the foreign prosthesis of the neocolonial state and, therefore, to make the nation-people fully self-organizing, points to a certain ghostliness within the living national body" (246). Drawing on Jacques Derrida's hauntology, Cheah articulates how this "haunting" of the nation deforms the conventional mode of political organicism, while at the same time conditioning the strange, ghostly survival of postcolonial nationalism as an irresolvable problem in the global force field. Vilashini Coopan's *Worlds Within* follows Cheah's insight into postcolonial nationalism's phantasmatic characteristic, noting how the thwarted, yet undead, organicism turns postcolonial nations into spectralized spheres that reflect myriad types of projection. Coopan defies a linear logic that supposes a smooth transition from nationalism to postnationalism, calling attention to how the nation in its afterlife continues to haunt the present moment of postcoloniality and globalization. In Coopan's view, the nation is not as consistent as nationalists claim to be. In its literary manifestations, the nation invites a series of divergent

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spontaneous character of consciousness that unfolds over time. I refrain from using "nationalism" when discussing literary works lest it implicate a set of institutional and stringent doctrines that operate in an oppressive manner.

forces both from within and without territorial boundaries: “Nations . . . are fantasmatic objects knotted together by ambivalent forces of desire, identification, memory, and forgetting, even as they simultaneously move within, across, and beyond a series of spatial and temporal borders (us/them, territory/flow, present/past, life/death)” (Cooppan xvii). Weihsin Gui’s *National Consciousness and Literary Cosmopolitics* colligates Theodor Adorno’s critique of instrumentalization of reason in modernity with contemporary postcolonial theory and literature so as to discern “critical national consciousness” in a range of works written by such authors as Kazuo Ishiguro, Derek Walcott, and Shirley Geok-lin Lim. The unconventional juxtaposition of Adorno’s apparently European or Eurocentric thought with postcoloniality is intended to demonstrate postcolonial literature’s engagement with “critical nationality” that refuses reification of nationalism or patriotism as a mere tool for newly born states. The critical aspect of literary nationalism in postcolonial writing is consonant with Adorno’s interrogation into European Enlightenment as the former evades instrumentalization of reason embodied in colonial situations and prompts the reconfiguration of the Manichean binary into mutual recognition in a non-dogmatic fashion.

While the current study draws inspiration from these critics, my argument is distinguished from them by its particular attention to the ways in which literary imagination address and intervenes into cartographical conjunctions. I employ the term “cartography” in a rather broad sense, investing it with not only visual images of maps that duplicate or imitate given geographical areas but also imaginative perceptions of particular spaces with which human subjects attempt to associate themselves against the backdrop of political and economic vicissitudes. One’s mental perception of a geographical area is not necessarily equivalent to the official map of the same space; rather, the creative potential of literary cartography resides in its challenge to the orthodoxy entailing cartographical depiction. In his comparative study of the map topos in Canadian and Australian literatures, Graham Huggan observes that maps are, for all their ostensible claim to descriptive precision and objectivity, always embedded in a web of cultural and social communication. As such, maps may better be seen as reflections of communicative activities between mapmakers and mapreaders:

The map is both product and process: it represents both an encoded document of a specific environment and a network of perpetually recoded messages passing between the various mapmakers and mapreaders who participate in the event of cartographic communication. The accuracy of a map obviously depends on its precision of detail and refinement of delivery, yet it also depends on explicit or tacit perceptual conventions that differ widely from culture to culture. Maps, in this sense, are the unstable products of social, historical and political circumstance.

(Huggan, *Territorial Disputes* 4)

The dual nature of maps functioning at once as process and product suggests that they are susceptible to being employed as tools for geopolitical claim. Historically speaking, maps in modernity have played authoritative, rather than objective, roles, going hand-in-hand with material interests of particular groups. Western cartography, which bases itself on the representational convention of mimesis, has implicitly offered justification for the dispossession and subjugation of non-Western lands and peoples. As part of colonial discourse, maps have served a series of rhetorical strategies such as “the reinscription, enclosure, and hierarchization of space” (150). However, the ambivalent character of the map topos as descriptive device and imaginative projection has also inspired challenges from a variety of standpoints in “literary” cartography. Huggan articulates the ways in which feminist, regionalist, ethnic challenges have been carried out by contemporary Canadian and Australian writers. In the face of the unevenly developed world, I assert, spatial referents that postcolonial writers deploy in their works assume certain symbolic and ideological weight. As we shall see in the following chapters, literary works that I discuss in terms of their expressions of national consciousness demonstrate awareness of marginalization in spatial and geographical terms. Emphasizing contemporary writers’ explicit and implicit association with the liberatory promises of decolonizing nationalism, I argue that their keen sensitivity to space should be considered theoretically in light of geographical unevenness, instead of diasporic public spheres (Appadurai) and travelling cultures (Clifford).

## Uneven Development and Nationalism

Uneven development, a socio-economic concept that underlies my argument of critical cartography in literature, has been discussed among recent debates about world literature. Applying Immanuel Wallerstein's world-systems theory and Darwinian theory of evolution to the dynamics of literary production, Franco Moretti seeks to build a methodological model that accounts for the ways in which certain literary forms disseminate to and circulate in disparate regions. His argument is based on the premise that the modern capitalist world system is "simultaneously *one*, and *unequal*: with a core, and a periphery (and semi-periphery) that are bound together in a relationship of growing inequality" (Moretti 46; emphasis original). This asymmetrical structure characterizes what he calls the world-literary system, a literary corollary to the ever-more interconnected world as once envisaged by Johann Wolfgang von Goethe and Karl Marx. Moretti's unique insight consists in his syncretization of socio-historical analysis with formal scrutiny of literary texts. The unidirectional diffusion of the novel as a literary form from the centre to the periphery, he asserts, is so powerful that the uneven relationship itself sneaks into marginal texts as an implicit presence: "the foreign presence 'interferes' with the very *utterance* of the novel. The one-and-unequal literary system is not just an external network here, it doesn't remain *outside* the text: it's embedded well into its form" (59; emphasis original). Formal analysis in this regard is part and parcel of the large-scale, socio-historical investigation to construe the structural whole. Moretti's methodology, deftly named "distant reading," gestures to the possibility to theoretically compare and contrast texts from disparate regions within the modern world-system in such a way as to map them in a single constellation and give an account of world literature in its totality. Inspired by Moretti's work, The Warwick Research Collective (WReC) further elaborates on his hypothetical speculation to test its applicability to the exploration into capitalism's pervasive effects on literary style and content in peripheral realms. In so doing, they oppose certain critics who attempt to remodel comparativist approaches to transcend disciplinary and linguistic divisions in literary studies. Commenting on the calls for renewal of comparativism issued by Wai-Chee Dimock and Rey Chow, they

caution that such attempts to make a shift away from Eurocentrism and approach to a more inclusive mode of universalism are inclined to underestimate both the persistent presence of nation-states and impacts of capitalist modernity. The following passage is especially pertinent to our concerns in the current thesis:

[A] premature dismissal of the material effectivity of the nation paves the way, in some contemporary criticism, for the adoption of an even less plausible analytical framework: a militantly idealist transcendentalism that glories in literature for its civilisational (that is to say, community-building) capabilities, across, athwart and, indeed, in defiance of the boundaries (historical as well as geographical) of any actually existing social order. Often encountered in such contemporary slogans as “planetarity” and “epochal time,” this new form of transcendentalism avows to release literary and cultural studies from concerns about not simply nation-statism, but capitalist modernity also. (WReC 42)

Like Moretti, WReC breaks with such transcendental universalism by foregrounding asymmetrical connections that necessarily arise from capitalist modernization and identifying them as major forces that condition literary production and circulation. Nevertheless, they distinguish themselves from Moretti’s methodology by placing stronger focus on literary innovations that occur in the periphery. While Moretti presupposes the world-literary system to be of centrifugal character, WReC shows particular interests in a “counter-current” and “the *dialectics of core and periphery*” (56, 51; emphasis original), thereby dwelling on what they call “peripheral realism,” a literary mode that allegedly registers the shock on social experiences and the advent of different modes of life brought about by imperial conquest. Challenging the predominant assumption about the rivalry or incommensurability between modernism and realism, they discern in peripheral realism “a propensity to reactivate archaic and residual forms, to use these to challenge, disrupt, compound, supplement and supersede the dominant (often imposed) ‘order’ of peripheral experience” (72). Such formal and thematic experimentations bear witness to how peripheral experiences compel writers to invent peculiar forms differing from didactic realism. While WReC considers uneven

development to be of paramount importance in the study of the world-literary system and challenges a certain trend to dismiss a whole range of problematics concerning nationalism as obsolete, their critical scope is directed towards what they (following Michal Löwy and Michael Niblett) call “irrealist” aesthetics that allegedly register massive social ruptures and confusions caused by industrialization and colonization.<sup>5</sup> For all their ambitious redefinition of world-literature as a necessary product of capitalist world-system with particular focus on the dialectics of core and periphery, questions concerning nationalism and national consciousness remain largely undertheorized.

It would, then, be instructive to refer to an earlier debate about the development of nationalism for theoretical supplement. Uneven development as a condition for nationalism is discussed in Tom Nairn’s 1977 book *The Break-up of Britain*, the much-forgotten classic work that preceded and inspired a series of innovative studies of nationalism in the 1980s.<sup>6</sup> Nairn identifies nationalism as “Marxism’s great historical failure,” noting how conventional Marxist theory has failed to give satisfactory explanation of the explosive spread of nationalism in modernity (Nairn 282). Nairn goes on to argue that the origin of nationalism can be traced back to the moment when marginal areas that fall behind in modernization are propelled to advance in such an extraordinarily rapid way:

To defend themselves, the periphery countries were compelled to try and advance “in their own way,” to “do it for themselves.” Their rulers—or at least the newly-awakened élites who now came to power—had to mobilise their societies for this historical short-cut. This meant the conscious formation of a militant, inter-class

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<sup>5</sup> The term “irrealism” originates in Löwy’s proposition to supplement and expand realism’s potential to present a powerful critique of the social order (Löwy 193). Niblett follows him by describing irrealism as a broad generic category that does not necessarily conform to a conventional mode of realism framed by Georg Lukács but remain faithful to realism’s disposition to critically depict social reality by means of the combination of realistic details with “elements of fantasy, the oneiric, and the surreal” (Niblett 21).

<sup>6</sup> In a broader scheme of theorizing nationalism, it is instructive to remember that Nairn’s central aim was to offer an internal critique of Marxism that failed to account for the tenacity of nationalism in modernity. Following Nairn, Benedict Anderson observes the difficulty to study nationalism by describing it as “an uncomfortable *anomaly* for Marxist theory” which had been “largely elided, rather than confronted” (Anderson, *Imagined Communities* 3; emphasis original). This Marxist origin of the discussion of nationalism become less discernible in later, culturalist arguments developed by such a thinker as Homi Bhabha who, as we shall see, conceives the nation primarily in terms of discursive practices.

community rendered strongly (if mythically) aware of its own separate identity vis-à-vis the outside forces of domination. There was no other way of doing it. (291)

The predicament and dilemma that fell on the periphery never remained trivial exceptions; indeed, the ideological momentum of nationalism espoused in the margin was so powerful that core countries such as France and England later came to adopt its doctrines. Thus, nationalism evolved and pervaded in a dialectical fashion, eventually encompassing not only developing areas but also advanced countries. As a consequence, a sort of fatalistic prospect of global cultural integration once implied in such a term as “world literature” gave way to the predominance of nationalism: “[t]he world market, world industries and world literature predicted with such exultation in *The Communist Manifesto* all conducted, in fact, to the world of nationalism” (293). The point here is that the dialectic of nationalism played out between core and periphery is structural to the whole process of modernization. Although postcolonial studies and literature as such were largely underdeveloped when Nairn wrote these words, I consider his insight to be relevant to the discussion of contemporary postcolonial writing. As long as development in the name of globalization proceeds unevenly, the question of nationalism cannot be simply done away with. In applying Nairn’s characterization of nationalism as a necessary by-product of modernity to literature, I do not intend to propose another variant of vulgar economic determinism. My implication is that, for all the recent trends that disregard national questions, national consciousness is invariably in the process of imaginative reinvigoration in peripheral realms (be it national and international) under the structure of uneven development, and this creative process is still pertinent to the organicism that national culture claims to incarnate.

In order to further elaborate on the generation of national consciousness in the periphery, I will now turn to Frantz Fanon’s discussion on the location of culture in anti-colonial struggle and his view on the revolutionary potential of rural peasants. Fanon’s activist writings produced in the midst of his engagement with the Algerian War of Independence are at once descriptions of dehumanizing brutality of colonial dominance and prescriptions for the forthcoming social change. The relevance of Fanon’s theory to our

current argument consists in his sharp observation of geographical divides within the colonized population and his insistence on the need to overcome such divides in a bid to cultivate national consciousness. Although less attention has been paid to his cognizance of geographical divides, Fanon actually gives much heed to the ways in which urban-centred party politics are inevitably troubled by a geographical and social hiatus. I locate his consideration of national culture in close alliance with the question of mobilization of the rural peasantry into anti-colonial politics. Fanon aspires to organicize the national body politic by describing and prescribing the ways in which the rural peasants join the anti-colonial struggle in a spontaneous way. Fanon's writing guides us to perceive the ideal of decolonizing nationalism with critical attention to geographical divides, proffering a theoretical modification to culturalist strategies that commentators such as Appadurai and Clifford later advanced. As we shall see, it also serves as a rectification to Homi Bhabha's redefinition of the nation as a discursive practice.

#### Frantz Fanon's Revolutionary Cartography

“For a colonized people, the most essential value, because it is the most meaningful, is first and foremost the land: the land, which must provide bread and, naturally, dignity” (Fanon, *Wretched* 9). This passage from Fanon's *The Wretched of the Earth* makes it clear that the organic unity between the indigenous populations and local land is of central importance in the process of decolonization. He extends this argument by observing that the latent obstacle in the anti-colonial struggle is a fissure between elitist progressive nationalists dwelling in the urban centre and the rural peasantry who comprises the majority of the colonized population and by and large lives closely to the native land. In “Grandeur and Weakness of Spontaneity,” Fanon points to the missed encounter between city dwellers and rural masses, describing how these disparate social strata remain indifferent to each other. This is indeed a major factor that prevents the diverse population from crystalizing into a national collectivity: “the political parties’ disregard for the rural masses during the colonial period can only be prejudicial to national unity and to setting rapidly the nation in motion”



(72). The exclusion of the rural peasantry from the political confrontation stems both from the party's myopic tactics that deem the urban proletariat as the major reserve of political mobilization and from the peasant's indifference to national politics. As a consequence, the indigenous peasants are doubly excluded from the political process. First, they lack access to civilizational tools that the colonial regime introduced to the colony. Their lack of interest in utilizing benefits of modernity prevents them from turning into active elements that drive the progressive anti-colonial struggle. The second point is ignorance on the part of the national bourgeoisie. The national bourgeoisie based in the city remains largely oblivious to life of the mass peasantry. They adhere to the role of mediator to augment the colonial system in hope of inheriting colonialism's legacy without transforming the basic economic structure which European settlers installed. In Fanon's words, "[the] national bourgeoisie discovers its historical mission as intermediary. . . [I]ts vocation is not to transform the nation but prosaically serve as a conveyor belt for capitalism, forced to camouflage itself behind the mask of neocolonialism. The national bourgeoisie, with no misgivings and with great pride, revels in the role of agent in its dealings with the Western bourgeoisie" (100-101). Even if the political process grows out of specific party politics centred in the city, it is vitally important to mobilize the rural population to actualize the wider association across the colonized territory. In a somewhat paradoxical way, Fanon conceives the peasantry's marginality in the colonized society to be a great source of possibility. Their externality suggests that they are not yet contaminated by colonial oppression, and, therefore, open to indoctrination and radicalization. As Marie Perinbam remarks, "Fanon chose the peasants because . . . they were 'outsiders'. . . . Low social status, and lack of education, technological skills, and capital, had denied the dubious advantages of 'colonial oppression'. They were 'outside the class system,' which, in Fanon's non-Marxian class assessment, made it easier for them to destroy colonialism" (Perinbam 435).

Fanon's concerns for the need to overcome geographical divides must be considered in conjunction with his reflection on the function of national culture in decolonization. In the chapter "On National Culture" in *The Wretched of The Earth*, Fanon

attempts to discern the proper position of culture in the anti-colonial struggle. At the outset of the essay, he insists on the need not just “to write a revolutionary hymn to be a part of the African revolution” but also “to join with the people to make this revolution” (145). What is implied here is the central significance of mobilization of popular masses for such a utopian vision as continental emancipation. In parallel with the progress of armed and political struggles, cultural production undergoes radical transformation both in form and content. Culture here is defined not as a legacy from the precolonial past but an expression of the continuous fight that increasingly involves the popular masses. As Fanon says:

National culture is no folklore where an abstract populism is convinced it has uncovered the popular truth. It is not some congealed mass of noble gestures, in other words less and less connected with the reality of the people. National culture is the collective thought process of a people to describe, justify, and extol the actions whereby they have joined forces and remained strong. National culture in the underdeveloped countries, therefore, must lie at the very heart of the liberation struggle these countries are waging. (168)

An essentialist stance on culture is explicitly negated in this passage. Unlike propagators of negritude who seek to discover the mythic past common to black people dispersed across the Atlantic, Fanon identifies the site of cultural production in the ongoing reality of the present. Hence, culture for Fanon is something that always negates standardization and fixation: “Culture never has the translucency of custom. Culture eminently eludes any form of simplification” (160). It follows that the kernel of national culture must be sought not in some mythic, primordial past but in the abiding progress that develops in tandem with the political and militant struggle. The decisive shift of focus from the distant past to the ongoing present is nowhere more evident than in his account of change in the mode of oral storytelling: “Instead of ‘a long time ago,’ they substitute the more ambiguous expression ‘What I am going to tell you happened somewhere else, but it could happen here today or perhaps tomorrow’” (193). Thus, culture appears dynamically entwined with the anti-colonial struggle which in turn activates cultural production. As in Cabral’s case, Fanon’s programme for the

forthcoming decolonization and post-independence social reform is characterized by this dynamic organicism. It is due to this ideal of organicism that Fanon turns to the rural peasants.<sup>7</sup>

Homi Bhabha, one of leading theorists of postcolonialism, draws on Fanon's argument in his theorization of new ways to form the national collectivity. Although references to Fanon appear sporadically throughout his *The Location of Culture*, it is in the chapter "DissemiNation" that Bhabha directly refers to Fanon's argument of national culture: "Fanon's critique of the fixed and stable forms of the nationalist narrative makes it imperative to question theories of the horizontal, homogeneous empty time of the nation's narrative" (Bhabha, *Location* 219). By drawing upon Fanon, Bhabha aims to point to a theoretical possibility of collectivity whose basic condition derives neither from uniformity nor homogeneity but from differences among its constituents. Bhabha suggests that the very notion of a unitary people that nationalism persistently attempts to evoke is nothing other than a rhetorical articulation. Bhabha's reformulation of the nation into a realm of discursive practices rather than a homogenous fixity stems from his recognition of a certain temporal slippage latent in the narrative of the nation: "In the production of the nation as narration there is a split between the continuist, accumulative temporality of the pedagogical, and the repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative. It is through this process of splitting that the conceptual ambivalence of modern society becomes the site of *writing the nation*" (*Location* 209; emphasis original). The dual movements that constitute the narrative never allows us to grasp the nation in any unitary way. Instead, they prompt us to conceive of the nation as a disputed realm wherein opposing discursive forces contest one another. As David Huddart succinctly recapitulates: "On the one hand, pedagogy tells us that the nation and the people are what they are: on the other, performativity keeps reminding us that the nation and the people are always generating a non-identical excess over and above what we thought they are" (Huddart 109). To look into the non-identity and contestation between the pedagogical

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<sup>7</sup> See Patrick Taylor 47-94 for an erudite summary of Fanon's prospect for the role of mass peasants in liberatory politics.

and the performative is thus a productive way to investigate into incompleteness and inconsistency intrinsic to the narrative of the nation. What is more, Bhabha suggests that, in the recursive process of articulation in which the non-identical excess is constantly produced, differences might be turned from markers of boundaries to potential elements of unity. He concludes the essay by touching on this point: “it is by living on the borderline of history and language, on the limits of race and gender, that we are in a position to translate the differences between them into a kind of solidarity” (*Location* 244). Bhabha attempts to open up the possibility of collective unity that does not conform to a totalizing or homogenizing tendency of nationalism. This seems to accord with Fanon’s insight into instability of national culture.

Nevertheless, a certain revisionism is detectable in Bhabha’s interpretive tactics. What seems to be absent from Bhabha’s evaluation of Fanon’s diagnosis of heterogeneity and instability of national culture is a problem of mobilization of rural masses into national struggles. Indeed, Bhabha, whose conceptualization of popular terms such as mimicry, ambivalence, and hybridity foregrounds the significance of liminal space where identities are always in the process of transfiguration, tends to prioritize the urban sphere over the rural. Such prioritization of the city turns especially salient when he tries to suggest new ways of social formations:

It is to the city that the migrants, the minorities, the diasporic come to change the history of the nation. If I have suggested that the people emerge in the finitude of the nation, making the liminality of cultural identity, producing the double-edged discourse of social territories and temporalities, then in the West, and increasingly elsewhere, it is the city which provides the space in which emergent identifications and new social movements of the people are played out. (243)

By privileging the city as a major site of “new social movements,” Bhabha fails to identify the location of the rural masses in his reformulation of the nation. Bhabha’s revisionist reading obscures Fanon’s intense attention to the mass peasantry as the reserve of

revolutionary vigor.<sup>8</sup> How, then, can rural masses, often illiterate and uneducated, be mobilized into the national struggle? The mass participation of the people as a whole is unquestionably essential for national liberation, but how do they awake to national consciousness?

Contra Bhabha, Fanon indeed shows profound awareness of a gulf between the urban elites and rural masses. Fanon plots the dramatic process of mass participation in a different essay “This is the Voice of Algeria” compiled in *A Dying Colonialism*, explicating the role of the radio in the fight for liberation in Algeria. Under the colonial dominance by the French, Fanon writes, the radio set remains an instrument exclusively for the colonizer. Voices from the radio receiver are the reminder of continual colonial dominance and the link to the “civilized” world for the French settlers, especially farmers who do not have direct access to dominating power on a daily basis. On the side of the indigenous Algerian people, the radio is nothing other than an alien object threatening tradition that they wish to preserve. Therefore, its potentiality to disseminate news of battles and motivate masses into action remains severely restricted: “Radiophonic technique, the press, and in a general way the systems, messages, sign transmitters, exist in colonial society in accordance with a well-defined statute. Algerian society, the dominated society, never participates in this world of signs” (*Dying Colonialism* 73). Put simply, the radio set in the Algerian colonial society assumes a particular function as a fetish that maintains social boundaries between the colonizer and the native intact. In such condition, the Manichean binary between them is not yet intensified to the extreme and remains below the phase of total conflict and dialectical synthesis. But the situation undergoes drastic change along with the progress of liberation practices. As people try to reach and identify with the fighting movement against colonialism,

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<sup>8</sup> Bhabha’s revisionism has been pointed out by materialist critics such as Benita Parry and Neil Lazarus. Parry suspects that Bhabha’s interpretive strategy “annex[es] Fanon to Bhabha’s own theory” that tends to obscure the severe conflict in a colonial setting, whereas Fanon was more than manifestly concerned with the Manichean antagonism (Parry 16). Lazarus indicates that Bhabha’s theory is primarily about “colonized elitism” which is subject to dominant colonial discourse. He argues that Bhabha’s strategy strongly informed by psychoanalysis “inverts the historical trajectory of Fanon’s thought in order to propose a vision of Fanon as preeminently a theorist of ‘the colonial condition,’ of the interpellative effectivity of colonial discourse,” concluding that “Bhabha’s Fanon would have been unrecognizable to Fanon himself” (Lazarus 88-89).

the symbolic meaning of the radio in society is gradually redefined. With the creation of the *Voice of Fighting Algeria*, the radio set loses its hostile character altogether. The voice from the radio is now an invitation into communication with the revolutionary movement that is under way in some other parts of the country. Notably, Fanon observes the ways in which the French authority attempts to obstruct transmission by jamming. In a certain dialectical manner, the jammed voice paradoxically produces an unexpected side effect by evoking a peculiar mode of interpretation among listeners:

This voice, often absent, physically inaudible, which each one felt welling up within himself, founded on an inner perception of the Fatherland, became materialized in an irrefutable way. Every Algerian, for his part, broadcast and transmitted the new language. The nature of this voice recalled in more than one way that of the Revolution: present “in the air” in isolated pieces, but not objectively.

The radio receiver guaranteed this true lie. (*Dying Colonialism* 87)

The oxymoronic phrase “true lie” has profound implications. The vague, fragmented voice, present only in the listeners’ minds, is a lie simply because its interpretations by the listeners might be different in content from what original voices are meant to convey. Its trueness, however, implies that it inspires the listeners’ subjective attempts to be one with the revolution and that the voice they believe to have heard exists in the same horizon of the colonialist language which is supposed to carry the truth of civilization. As is observed in *The Empire Writes Back*, “[l]anguage becomes the medium through which a hierarchical structure of power is perpetuated, and the medium through which conceptions of ‘truth’, ‘order’, and ‘reality’ become established” (Ashcroft et al., *Empire* 7). The radio voice stimulates counteractions against such truth established by the language of the civilizing nation.<sup>9</sup> The two different truths now encounter on the same discursive horizon. For Fanon, the mass participation in this signifying system where the peasants find their own “truth” is as

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<sup>9</sup> Fanon goes so far as to suggest that the liberation struggle is a key moment whereby the social meaning of the French language undergoes complete transformation within the colonized society: “with the struggle for liberation we see the initiation of a major process of exorcizing the French language. The ‘native’ can almost be said to assume responsibility for the language of the occupier” (*Dying Colonialism* 90).

indispensable as violence and armed fight against the oppressor, as it potentially involves the abolition of the colonialist truth.

Still more significant for our current exploration on national consciousness in terms of geographical unevenness is how Fanon foregrounds the spontaneous engagement of the rural masses with the revolutionary politics and how this process tacitly disturbs a hierarchical structure that the very term “mobilization” might insinuate. The radio voice’s “trueness” derives from the peasants’ spontaneous, almost instinctual conviction that they are now full subjects of the revolutionary struggle, and in this instant a certain “top-down” structure presumed by urban elites is rendered invalid, if momentarily. From this perspective, we may take Fanon as implicitly complicating Bhabha’s dualism of the pedagogical and the performative. The highly abstract aspect of Bhabha’s insight into the dual facets of the nation would appear more concrete when considered in juxtaposition with the critique of historicism put forth by Dipesh Chakrabarty, one of the historians engaged in subaltern studies. Chakrabarty concretizes Bhabha’s dualism by transplanting it to the location of peasants in the modern Indian historiography. He argues that, despite the peasants’ affinity with non-secular beliefs in gods, spirits, and other spectral divine beings, the universal adult franchise and other social movements recognize the uneducated peasants as full constituents of political modernity:

The history and nature of political modernity in an excolonial country such as India thus generates a tension between the two aspects of the subaltern or peasant as citizen. One is the peasant who has to be educated into the citizen and who therefore belongs to the time of historicism; the other is the peasant who, despite his or her lack of formal education, is already a citizen. This tension is akin to the tension between the two aspects of nationalism that Homi Bhabha has usefully identified as the pedagogic and the performative. Nationalist historiography in the pedagogic mode portrays the peasant’s world, with its emphasis on kinship, gods, and the so-called supernatural, as anachronistic. But the “nation” and the political are also *performed* in the carnivalesque aspects of democracy: in rebellions, protests

marches, sporting events, and in the universal adult franchise. (Chakrabarty 10; emphasis original)

The peasantry conceived in the pedagogical mode are passive people to be educated into mature citizens. They are seen to be too premature to be recognized as full participants of modernity and civil society. This “not yet” temporal horizon is continuous with European historicism’s stagist theory which confines the non-Western world in “an imaginary waiting room of history” in which the excolonial population are expected to perpetually prepare for political life on a higher stage. However, it is also accompanied by the massive interruption of the temporal frame of “already.” Democratic practices in rural spheres necessarily accompany a variety of social movements among peasants, and while many of them are routinely labeled as merely “archaic” and “prepolitical,” these practices indeed constitute a considerable proportion of political modernity. In a number of performative ways, the peasants prove themselves to be full-fledged subjects of civil society. The carnivalesque aspect of the peasant movements is thus part and parcel of the historical formation and trajectory of the nation. In this way, Chakrabarty expands the theoretical horizon of politics to encompass the spheres of life which are conventionally deemed as non-political. Fanon’s characterization of the “true lie” arising from the rural society attests to a typical way of such performative generation of national consciousness in the margin of the geographical expanse.

The principal aim of this dissertation is to explore how the “true lie” unfolds in contemporary postcolonial writing. Although Fanon is primarily concerned with urban/rural configurations within a single country, I extend his insight into the peripheral generation of national consciousness to a global milieu, analyzing how national consciousness performatively arises in writers’ efforts to make sense of and grapple with their marginal experiences in uneven globalization. While the portrayal of national consciousness as one performed on a global arena might seem to endorse Appadurai’s postulation about transnationalization of nationalism, I differentiate my argument from culturalism by remaining attentive to the ways in which material forces both curtail access to the liberatory potential of culture and give rise to the marginalization of particular areas. It is with a keen



recognition of and in response to such marginalization that writers commit themselves to critical cartography and aspire to evoke, re-conceive, and reconstitute national consciousness. By inserting geographical unevenness as a material condition for national consciousness, I also attempt to rewrite Bhabha's discursive formulation of nation as narration and his presentation of the city as a creative soil for new social formations. Performativity inherent in the narrative of the nation must be reconsidered in conjunction with the city-country divide that has expanded to an international scale.<sup>10</sup> Decolonizing nationalism's liberatory ideals that call for organicist alliances across the diverse population will provide us with conceptual frames and interpretive schemes to unravel how each work commits themselves to (re)imagining national collectivities.

#### Chapter Summaries

The following chapters discuss the works of three writers: Salman Rushdie, Kiran Desai, and Michelle Cliff. I read their fictional works in terms of how they address the conceptual concerns outlined above. While all of them overtly and covertly denaturalize the notion of nation by demonstrating its constructed nature, they nonetheless attempt to re-conceive the nation against the backdrop of uneven globalization. On the one hand, these works are inclined to uncover the fictional nature of nation by implying its baselessness and inconsistency: dubiousness of the narrator's authority occasioned by the self-reflexive mode of narration in Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* calls into question the very notion of legitimacy on which the logic of the nation seems to depend; Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* takes an ironical stance on the rise of Gurkha nationalism and mocks the predominant assumption about Gurkha as a brave, fearless race; for the protagonist of Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, national consciousness is not a natural given but something to be consciously cultivated in

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<sup>10</sup> As early as 1973, Raymond Williams expands his discussion of the town-country duality to an international reach, exploring how "[t]he traditional relationship between city and country was . . . thoroughly rebuilt on an international scale. Distant lands became the rural areas of industrial Britain, with heavy consequent effects on its surviving rural areas" (Williams 280). Lucienne Loh re-conceives William's insight into the extension of the urban-rural relation to a global expanse by discussing "a host of postcolonial writers from nations that once served the role of 'the country' to imperial Britain while considering processes of neocolonial globalization as a perpetuation of these networks" (Loh 4).

the course of the trans-Atlantic migratory process. On the other hand, they are concerned with the socio-historical circumstances under which various modes of national consciousness are inspired; Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* depicts how immigrants travelling across national boundaries are still haunted by the idea of nation; Desai's awareness of marginality of the Gurkha population led her novel to conclude with an aporia that the exposure of the colonial origin of Gurkha masculinity and combativeness does not render their doctrine obsolete; Cliff's protagonist, initially immersed in the hierarchical race structure in Jamaican society, develops a sense of identification with the imaginary grandmaternal figure in the face of racist demonstrations in London, which subsequently inspires her to associate herself with the underprivileged masses in her native country. In each instance, the uneven effect of contemporary globalization is in tense relationship with the development of national consciousness.

Chapter 1 "Narrative Strategies to Represent the Nation in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*" takes up Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*, whose portrayal of the Indian national collectivity has attracted critical attention by a number of commentators. Saleem, the narrator-protagonist of the novel, aspires towards the idealist unification of the miscellaneous children scattered across the country, whose sole denominator is nothing but a temporal coincidence of their births. In their conversations through Saleem's special ability of telepathy, however, he is overwhelmed by the vastness and heterogeneity of their ideological orientations. A sharp opposition that appears between Saleem and Shiva develops into the ideological antagonism between idealism and materialism. Instead of making a compromise, the story complicates their relationship by presenting the affiliative connection between the two positions and inverts the ideological dualism. The novel's postmodernist narrative structure characterized by self-reflexivity suggests that the oscillatory process between them endures beyond the temporal frame of the story, thereby evoking a sense of eternity of the Indian nation.

In Chapter 2 "Magic Realism and Hybridity in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*," I turn to Rushdie's most polemical work, *The Satanic Verses*, in order to look into

how national imagination undergoes transformation in the contemporary migratory movement. In so doing, I examine the two literary characteristics that have been accepted as appropriate in political tactics of postcolonial literature: magic realism and hybridity. The two methods, or styles, have been praised as particularly effective in postcolonial writing as they overtly and covertly undermine the assumptions of Western, rational mode of narrative and recuperate the pre-colonial culture and worldviews. My reading, however, suggests that these purportedly subversive tactics must be considered in light of how they contribute to the generation of a sense of communal attachment.

Chapter 3 “Landscapes and Perceptions of Nature in Kiran Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*” focuses on the peripheral realm in a rather literal sense, analyzing Desai’s *The Inheritance of Loss*, whose main plot unfolds in Kalimpong, a mountainous district in the Indian state of West Bengal. Developed as a “hill station” in the era of colonialism, the area is presently in turmoil amid the Gurkha insurrectionary movement that seeks to attain political autonomy. I will read the novel with particular attention to the ways in which the local scenery is perceived variously by characters in different social strata. The geography presented by the novel denaturalizes the predominant, colonialist notion of the Himalayas as an innocent place of retreat and recovery. In this process, Gurkha nationalism is revealed to be predicated on the colonialist notion of masculinity. Nevertheless, the novel ends with a suggestion that Gurkha nationalism remains an unresolvable dilemma.

Drawing on Edward Said’s insight into what he calls the “cartographical impulse” discernible widely in anti-colonial imaginations, Chapter 4 “‘Ruin Landscape’ in Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*” reads Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven* with particular attention to the ways in which the protagonist, Clare Savage, acquires a critical perspective on plantation colonialism and the tourism industry through the development of geographical imagination. Inspired by her dead mother’s message, she aspires to approach the underprivileged masses in Jamaica. She attempts to conceive the native land as distinct from the tourism’s version by means of synthesizing the antagonism between human projections onto the natural environment and nature’s unique vitality that endures beyond the

protagonist's finite life.

Chapter 1: Narrative Strategies to Represent the Nation in  
Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*

This first chapter addresses a crucial concern of the location of literature in relation to national consciousness: how can such a fictional format as novel contribute to the production of a sense of national collectivity? The supposedly individualist nature of novel may seem to place a high priority on the particular over the general. However, it is also true that the literary form has been invested with the role to bridge the gap between individual particularities and abstract generalities. In his classic formulation of the principle of realism, Georg Lukács puts great value on realism's disposition to portray a typical character whose solitary situation is presented as an emblem of contradictions of society as a whole. In Lukács's account, typicality offers readers a perspective with which to view paradoxes in the socio-historical process in concrete terms: "The literature of realism, based on the Aristotelean concept of man as *zoon politikon*, is entitled to develop a new typology for each new phase in the evolution of a society. It displays the contradictions within society and within the individual in the context of a dialectical unity" (Lukács 30-31). The issue of national consciousness in the context of postcoloniality poses challenges to such a notion of typicality, as a typicality from one perspective does not necessarily amount to the representation of the diverse postcolonial nation as a whole. In addition to social contradictions, writers are also overwhelmed by the vastness and heterogeneity of the population of the postcolonial country. The question that I posed above may thus be reformulated as follows: what are narrative methods that make it possible to subsume the vast national population in one story? In order to express the nation while recognizing its multiplicity, a writer must develop a peculiar narrative strategy. The strategy can by no means be straightforward, as it confronts several difficult tasks on the theoretical level. First, in order for the nation to be imagined "as a deep, horizontal comradeship" (Anderson 7), it must develop a mechanism of liberating the marginalized populations while at the same time encompassing them. Especially in the ex-colonial country where one cannot always

presuppose a common ground that assures equality among the vast population, the project of nation-forming must accompany the process of active demarginalization. Second, because the nation is always in the tense relation with state power that intervenes into life of its citizens, it must construct a public sphere that defies authoritarian intrusion. More often than not, state is a primary power holder that seeks to regulate and command group identities. Thus, it appears imperative for a writer to present a public sphere that is democratic, self-generational, and independent of external impingement. Finally, because the validity of the nation hinges on its ability to express a sense of the temporal persistence of collective life, the nation must guarantee life that transcends finitude of individual human persons, that is, life beyond death. This is the crucial problem for organicism which supposedly endows the national collectivity with vitality that endures beyond limits of each particular individual life.

Coming out to the English literary world in 1981, Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* has established itself as a major literary voice of India, a milestone that triggered the literary renaissance of Indian fiction in English. As an early reviewer states in an admiring tone, "[t]he literary map of India is about to be redrawn. . . . *Midnight's Children* sounds like a continent finding its voice" (Blaise). Initially hailed as a representative voice of the nation, the novel has inspired different views on its representational technique in terms of the issue of nation.<sup>11</sup> Michael Reder, for instance, evaluates the novel for its ability to present an individualized history so as to relativize the rigid, official history of the Indian nation. In so doing, "Rushdie replaces an absolute notion of identity . . . with a humanistically centered, multiply defined individual identity" (Reder 226), which amounts to an alternative, personalized version of nationhood. Meanwhile, in his broader general formulation, Timothy Brennan regards Rushdie as a representative figure of "Third World cosmopolitans," whose works address nations of their origin and yet expresses the alienation from them at the same

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<sup>11</sup> Rushdie himself has been a vigorous proponent of the idea of India as the multiple, heterogeneous nation that is capable of infinite differences. In an essay to celebrate the fiftieth anniversary of India's independence, he states that, despite continuous political corruptions, the idea of India "may be the most innovative national philosophy to have emerged in the post-colonial period" ("A Land of Plenty" 23). Based on this principle, he elsewhere defies communal divides and chauvinistic nationalisms: "'My' India has always been based on ideas of multiplicity, pluralism, hybridity: ideas to which the ideologies of the communalists are diametrically opposed" (*Imaginary Homelands* 32).

time: “the writer proclaims his identity with a country whose artificiality and exclusiveness have driven him into a kind of exile—a simultaneous recognition of nationhood and alienation from it” (Brennan 63). Thus, for Brennan, “the central irony of his novels is that independence has damaged Indian spirits by proving that ‘India’ can act as abominably as the British did” (63). However, both types of reading do not pay sufficient attention to the novel’s engagement with issues of class, gender, and state oppression, all of which are closely related to above theoretical tasks to express the nation. My reading alternatively tracks how the novel attempts to revive a sense of collective nationhood by dealing with elements that are liable to produce boundaries among the vast population.

#### Midnight Children’s Conference as an Alternative Public Sphere

At the outset of his narration, Saleem, the protagonist of *Midnight’s Children*, declares his insoluble connection with India: “I had been mysteriously handcuffed to history, my destinies indissolubly chained to those of my country” (*Midnight’s Children* 11). As if to confirm this, he imagines himself being at the center in the history in his childhood. Recollecting incidents that happened immediately after his birth, he says, “everything happened, happened because of me” (132). He even implies the universal centrality of his location: “I was already beginning to take my place at the center of the universe” (126). But his actual position is by no means abstract but particular and socially located. He is born into a wealthy Muslim family in Bombay whose business enterprise assures their prestigious status among the Indian postcolonial society. Moreover, the family symbolically inherits legacies of the British Raj by dwelling in Methwold’s Estate, which they are asked to inhabit without changing its interiors. As Methwold’s comment to Saleem’s father suggests, this is intended as an analogy of the transference of the colonial power to the newly independent state: “My notion. . . is to stage my own transfer of assets. Leave behind everything you see? Select suitable persons—such as yourself, Mr. Sinai!—hand everything over absolutely intact: in tiptop working order” (96-97). Saleem’s immediate bourgeois position is not challenged even when he actively uses his telepathic ability to intervene into nationally shared

affairs. Using this supernatural ability that allows him to enter minds of any persons in India, he develops the artistic mind and comes to feel himself as a creator of the nation: “I had entered into the illusions of the artist, and thought of the multitudinous realities of the land as the raw unshaped of my gift” (172). Exerting this power, he detects illicit affairs between Lila Sabarmati and Homi Catrack, a film magnate who resides in Methwold’s Estate. Saleem anonymously informs Commander Sabarmati about their relationship, which leads him to shoot both of them. Although the murder case goes through several trials and stirs a “public opinion” on a nation-wide scale (256), the outcome comes down to a conventional moral lesson on private matters: “a scandal . . . a scare, a lesson to all unfaithful wives and mothers” (255). Here Saleem is at best an anonymous journalist who exposes a scandal that is suitable for mass consumption.

The crucial moment that connects Saleem with the national collectivity in an interactive way is when he forms a forum called the Midnight Children’s Conference (M.C.C.) through telepathy: “Telepathy, then; the inner monologues of all the so-called teeming millions, of masses and classes alike, jostled for space within my head” (166). After Saleem discovered countless children across the country who were born within one hour after the independence and somehow came to possess various supernatural abilities, he forms a group of his own to compensate for the expulsion from the local children’s group: “having been expelled from one gang, I decided to form my own, a gang which was spread over the length and breadth of the country, and whose headquarters were behind my eyebrows” (203). Some critics identify the significance of the M.C.C. in its symbolical force. For example, James Harrison writes that, because of the sheer abundance and variety of their special abilities, “members of the M.C.C. can be thought of as in any way embodying a hope for new nation’s future” (Harrison 58). Referring to Fredric Jameson’s infamous formula of Third World literature as “national allegory,” O.P. Dwivedi praises the M.C.C. for its ability to revive a sense of the Indian past history while at the same time expressing the multiplicity of its vast populations (Dwivedi 507-508). But the structure of the M.C.C. is a dynamic one that goes beyond the metaphorical function to signify the nation’s future or past. I would rather



argue that the M.C.C. is comparable to what Jürgen Habermas calls the public sphere, an open civil forum that appeared in the eighteenth-century European society. Habermas defines the public sphere concisely as follows: “By ‘public sphere’ we mean first of all a domain of our social life which such a thing as public opinion can be formed. Access to the public sphere is open in principle to all citizens. Citizens act as a public when they deal with matters of general interests without being subject to coercion” (Habermas, “Public Sphere” 105). Characteristics of the public sphere can thus be summarized roughly as follows: first, positioned below state authority and above the private sphere of market economy, it seeks to produce a common good that is beyond private interests; second, it is egalitarian in nature and each member holds equal right to participate in the forum through critical-rational debate; third, it is formed against the interventional power of public authority (mostly state power) to safeguard its autonomy. As such, it necessarily assumes an idealist characteristic. As Habermas himself later admits, it is “tempting to idealize the bourgeois public sphere in a manner going way beyond any methodologically legitimate idealization of the sort involved in ideal-typical conceptualization” (“Further Reflections” 442). Likewise, despite its supernatural appearance, the M.C.C. is presented as a secular, democratic forum in which members can freely converse with one another. As Saleem explains, his mental facility, which is compared to radio, acted “as a sort of national network, so that by opening my transformed mind to all the children I could turn into a kind of forum in which they could talk to one another, through me” (221).<sup>12</sup> In this mechanism Saleem’s role is delimited to a neutral chairman who offers a common ground on which children can interact directly with each other. Moreover, at an early stage of the formation of the M.C.C., seeking to establish a common purpose, Saleem insists on the need to figure out the meaning of their forum: “The thing is, we must be here for a *purpose*, don’t you think? I mean, there has to be a *reason*, you must agree?” (215) Saleem attempts to invest the M.C.C. with the potentiality as a public sphere that works towards a common ideal.

Furthermore, while Habermasian public sphere is mediated through interactions

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<sup>12</sup> The resemblance of Saleem’s telepathy with Fanon’s radio discussed in Introduction is unmistakable. For a comparative discussion on the role of radio in nation-forming in Rushdie and Fanon, see Baucom 17-18.

through letters in a bourgeois society, the auditory discussion in the M.C.C. is open to any members whose opinions are abstracted into “universally intelligible thought-forms” (166). In this radical inclusiveness that is absent from Habermasian epistolary model, the conference also approximates what Nancy Frazer calls “subaltern counterpublics,” alternative public spheres where “members of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counterdiscourses, so as to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs” (Frazer 14). Paralleling with the Indian Parliament in number (581), thus allegorically opposing the official strong public, the M.C.C. potentially functions as a counterpublic that might enable alternative social formations and identifications. This is illustrated evidently when children react to Saleem’s observation that their various skills are hierarchically determined based on the temporal distance of the birth from the moment of the independence. As he announces a hierarchical nature of the children’s magical abilities (in a way reminiscent of a census that the state conducts), they unify themselves against his conviction and express their collective claim: “‘Whatdoyoumeanhowcanyousaythat,’ they chorused. . . ‘Who says it’s better to do one thing or another?’” (222) Children are, in the form of collective voices, united to express the common demand for equal recognition. Thus, children’s democratic association defies authoritarian judgment and opens up the interactive and inclusive dialogue. The heterogeneity of opinions among the children is exhaustively illuminated when they react to Saleem’s appeal for a common purpose. In addition to polyphonic ideological claims ranging from collectivism, individualism, filial duty, infant revolution, to capitalism, Saleem observes that “there were declarations of women’s rights and pleas for the improvement for the lot of untouchables; landless children dreamed of land and tribals from the hills, of Jeeps” (223).

Yet, the M.C.C. confronts a fundamental contradiction deriving from its structure. That Saleem constructs an alternative public sphere that is radically inclusive does not immediately mean that he is a pure medium through which the subaltern acquires and broadcasts their own voices. While Habermasian public sphere is first and foremost conceived as “a forum in which the private people, come together to form a public, readied themselves

to compel public authority to legitimate itself before public opinion” (*Structural Transformation* 25-26), Saleem the chairman himself is liable to turn into a kind of public authority whose arbitrary judgments determine ideological directions of the group and excludes oppositional opinions. This is already implied rhetorically at the early stage of the formation of the M.C.C. When one member recommends that Saleem become a “chief” of the conference, he replies: “No, never mind chief, just think of me as a . . . a big brother, maybe. Yes; we’re a family, of a kind” (222). Saleem’s humble response and call for fraternal alliances ironically evoke Orwellian absolute state control. Besides, inherent class and caste differences of each member are liable to produce relentless antagonism among them, which sharply appears in the debate between Saleem and Shiva. When he confronts the “gradual disintegration of Midnight Children’s Conference” (247) as a result of internal conflicts, Saleem insists on resisting dualistic oppositions. Interestingly, oppositions are conceived mainly in terms of social class:

“Do not let this happen! Do not permit the endless duality of masses-and-classes, capital-and-labor, them-and-us to come between us! We,” I cried passionately, “must be a third principle, we must be the force which drives between the horns of the dilemma; for only by being other, by being new, can we fulfill the promise of our birth!” (248)

In reply to this, Shiva offers a deterministic, materialist critique: “No, little rich boy; there is no third principle; there is only money-and poverty, and have-and lack, and right-and-left; there is only me-against-the-world! The world is not ideas, rich boy, the world is not place for dreamers or their dreams; the world, little Snotnose, is things” (249). In addition to his materialist refutation of idealistic thought and dualistic perceptions of the world, Shiva’s repetitive call to Saleem as “rich boy” functions to relativize Saleem’s claim and contextualize his notion of a third principle as a specifically bourgeois ideal. Abhorring Shiva’s crude attitude, Saleem ends up excluding him when he returns from Pakistan to reorganize the M.C.C. Ironically, the act of exclusion is possible only because he possesses the superior power over the supposedly democratic forum of the children. Saleem’s status as

a self-proclaimed egalitarian chairman thus slides into a kind of oppressive authority which he repudiated earlier. The children then accuse Saleem fiercely for his “secrecy,” “egotism,” and “high-handedness.” As a result, the democratic forum turns into an unruly battlefield over which Saleem has no control: “my mind, no longer a parliament chamber, became the battleground on which they annihilated me” (289).

#### Affiliation, Communalism, and State Power

The despairing consequence of the M.C.C. can be deemed as a failure to realize idealism peculiar to Habermasian public sphere. It points to the fact that ideational discussions through universally intelligible thought-forms do not easily amount to the harmonious collective unity on a nation-wide scale. But the antagonism between Saleem and Shiva, abstracted as that between bourgeois idealism and underclass materialism, undergoes further complications through the plot. In fact, this ideological dualism is almost inverted in their adulthood. Before observing this process, however, it is necessary to examine Saleem’s another rhetorical device to figure the nation: family. As Anne McClintock, among others, has indicated, family has been the central figurative entity through which national historiography can be shaped with coherency and linearity: “The family offered an indispensable metaphoric figure by which national difference could be shaped into a single historical genesis narrative” (McClintock 357).<sup>13</sup> Saleem’s narrative initially seems to endorse such a conventional model, as he sets out to write his autobiography by tracing the familial origin well back into the past. This is due to Saleem’s belief that human lives have the nature to incorporate with each other. As he explains to Padma, “[t]hings—even people—have a way of leaking into each other” (39). This quasi-philosophical insight leads him to the conviction that, in order to know him, one has to know countless others who are associated

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<sup>13</sup> Partha Chatterjee also observes that, in the history of Indian nationalism, gender differences conceived in familial terms are strategically employed in order to preserve the inner spiritual essence of the indigenous population. As he puts it, the defense of the autonomy included “an essentialization of the ‘inner’ self of the man-in-the-world and an essentialization of womanhood in the protective and nurturing figure of the mother” (Chatterjee 69). For explorations of gender dimensions of nationalism, see Kandiyoti, Sluga, and Yuval-Davis.

with his life: “I have been a swallower of lives; and to know me, just the one of me, you’ll have to swallow the lot as well” (11). Although the term “leaking” may at first appear to connote physiological and sexual phenomenon, it is not restricted within the familial or sexual relationships. As he discloses at the middle of the narrative, he does not have the biological origin in the Sinai family, whose genealogical trajectory Saleem has been tracing in such a meticulous manner. Although his sole audience, Padma, angers at this revelation that can ruin the legitimacy of the whole narrative, this fact is far less important for Saleem. As he remarks, “when we eventually discovered the crime of Mary Pereira, we all found that it *made no difference!*” (117; emphasis original) As M. Keith Booker notes, “[c]learly, to Rushdie (as to Joyce’s Stephen Dedalus) paternity is a legal fiction. Rushdie even expands this principle to make maternity a legal fiction” (Booker 983). Saleem’s attitude implies his firm defiance to biological determinism and preference for rather negotiable relationships based on imagination.

Saleem’s stance can be theoretically explained by comparison to Edward Said’s formula of filiation and affiliation. Said posited the terms in order to indicate a transition in patterns of formations of bonds in the modernist era. While the nineteenth century literature is largely characterized by the notion of natural and self-evident modes of relationship based on blood kinship, modernist literature breaks with such an absolute certainty of belonging. As Said explains:

Thus if a filial relationship was held together by natural bonds and natural forms of authority—including obedience, fear, love, respect, and instinctual conflict—the new affiliative relationship changes these bonds into what seem to be transpersonal forms—such as guild consciousness, consensus, collegiality, professional respect, class, and the hegemony of a dominant culture. The filiative scheme belongs to the realms of nature and of “life,” whereas affiliation belongs to exclusively to culture and society. (Said, *World* 20)

Saleem’s renunciation of filiative kinships and assertion of affiliative relationships open up this possibility of “transpersonal” bonds. His authorial power turns out to include even the

ability to create the past parentage: “my inheritance includes this gift, the gift of inventing new parents for myself whenever necessary. The power of giving birth to fathers and mothers” (108). He is able to relate to many figures in his narrative regardless of their actual connections. Even Tai, the ancient boatman in Kashmir whom Saleem had never seen, leaks into and influence him. As Matt Kimmich notes, “It is also this notion of a plurality of parents, whether biological, potential, surrogate or symbolic, that in the end undermines the authority of a singular, monolithic parent figures most. It marks a development from filiation to affiliation” (Kimmich 41).<sup>14</sup>

This problematization of filiation and embracing of affiliation complicate the rivalry between Saleem and Shiva. As Saleem informs at the middle of his narrative, his ayah, Mary Pereira, who wanted to prove her love to her communist lover, Joseph, switched Saleem and Shiva right after the moment of their births. The baby switch incident seems not so much to separate as to connect them in an unusual way. As Saleem admits, Shiva is not only his enemy but also his “alter ego,” whose fate is inevitably entangled with his own. Their antagonism assumes different aspects when they reencounter in adulthood. In the post-M.C.C. narrative, Saleem dwells in the ghetto community of magicians in New Delhi. As he discovers shortly, the magicians are indeed cynical realists who share the conviction that magic as such does not exist. They are communist activists whose problems reflect issues of Indian communism. Despite Saleem’s initial preference for Businessism and Hindu polytheism, he is gradually affected by the community’s political doctrine: “A renegade Businessist, I began zealously to turn red and then redder . . . so that now my mission of saving-the-country could be seen in a new light; more revolutionary methodologies suggested themselves” (384). Saleem’s communicative stance is now based on communalism, which decisively differs from the naïve idealism formerly proclaimed at the M.C.C.: “Full of thoughts of direct-communication-with-the-masses, I settled into the magicians’ colony” (384). The crucial revelation for Saleem is the moment when Picture Singh, the snake charmer and the community leader, confronts an

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<sup>14</sup> According to Kimmich’s count, if one includes symbolical and surrogate parents, Saleem’s narrative incorporate “approximately seven maternal characters and thirteen father figures” (56).

egalitarian activist from the Indian Congress. Reacting to the activist's call for conventional egalitarianism, Picture Singh performs the amazing snake charming to show that "some persons are better, others are less" (385). This scene gives Saleem a certain lesson: "Watching this scene, Saleem Sinai learned that Picture Singh and the magicians were people whose hold on reality was absolute; they gripped it so powerfully that they could bend it every which way in the service of their arts, but they never forgot what it was" (385). Contrary to the telepathic power that once enabled Saleem to feel himself as an omniscient artist, an instant creator of the nation, Picture Singh's demonstration teaches him an alternative, realistic way of perceiving the world by which the intervention into reality by means of art becomes also possible. The scene is reminiscent of the discussion between Saleem and Shiva, although idealism-materialism opposition is now reversed, with Saleem inclining towards materialism akin to Shiva's.

Meanwhile, as Shiva grows up, his underclass resentment against the rich turns into a strong desire to approach the authoritative power. Under the Emergency proclaimed by the Widow, the fictionalized version of Indira Gandhi, Shiva comes to have a direct connection of this despotic state authority. As Saleem observes, Shiva revives "a hatred for these high-ups and their power, which is why I am sure—why I know—that when the Emergency offered Shiva-of-the-knees the chance of grabbing some power for himself, he did not wait to be asked a second time" (396). Once a vulgar slum boy, Shiva now returns as Major Shiva, who boasts the militant nickname of "war hero." After an army led by Shiva destroys the magicians' ghetto, Saleem is taken to the Widow's Hostel and experiences the operation of "spectromony" that deprives him and *Midnight's Children* of their reproductive ability. This procedure seems to be conducted on the logic of filiation by which state power manages and regulates reproductive means of the people in forcible ways. Meanwhile, Saleem afterwards finds himself rejoicing when he finds out that, despite the Widow's will to exterminate the possibility of offspring of *Midnight's Children*, countless prostitutes secretly bear Shiva's babies: "at this very moment, in the boudoirs and hovels of the nation, a new generation of children, begotten by midnight's darkest child, was being raised towards the future. Every

Widow manages to forget something important” (425). Even Saleem revives the filiative logic in this sequence. How does this filiation-affiliation entanglement contribute to the production of a sense of national collectivity? To approach this problem, it is necessary to consider the central stylistic feature of *Midnight's Children*, that is, the self-reflexive character of Saleem's narration.

#### Self-reflexivity and Infinite Reproduction of Affiliation

“I was born in the city of Bombay . . . once upon a time” (11), so the narration of *Midnight's Children* begins. But Saleem immediately redirects this commonplace fairy tale mode of telling and situates his birth time at the specific moment embedded in history: “No, that won't do, there's no getting away from the date . . . at the precise instant of India's arrival at Independence, I tumbled forth into the world” (11). This narratorial performance of the temporal switch is significant not only because it marks the novel's break with a fairy-tale tone and the historical specificity of Saleem's life but also because it indicates the self-reflexive character of his narrative. Throughout his autobiographical story, Saleem repeats similar narrative acts of self-reflection and adds metacommentaries on his own narrative. It is with this self-reflexive gesture that Saleem connects his personal memoir with such a collective experience as the nation's independence. Such narrative effort disturbs the hierarchical distinction between history and fiction, and establishes that there can be no objective, absolute perspective from which the history of the nation can be perceived. This is why Linda Hutcheon takes *Midnight's Children* as a suitable example of practices of postmodern parody that “put into question the authority of any act of writing by locating the discourses of both history and fiction within an ever-expanding intertextual network that mocks any notion of either single origin or simple causality” (Hutcheon 12). The novel's intertextual parody of official history implies that it is only in textual practices that we can know the past history. This is evidently shown in Saleem's statement about the centrality of memory in his storytelling. When he discovers an error in historical date in his own narrative, he refuses to correct it and justifies himself by insisting on the priority of his personal memory



over historical facts. As he explains to his interlocutor, Padma:

“I told you the truth,” I say yet again, “Memory’s truth, because memory has its own special kind. It selects, eliminates, alters, exaggerates, minimizes, glorifies, and vilifies also; but in the end it creates its own reality, its heterogeneous but usually coherent version of events; and no sane human being ever trusts someone else’s version more than his own.” (207)

The consequences of the prioritization of each subjective reality over the objective one can vary. It is certainly possible to give a positive evaluation to the novel’s questioning of the historical truth as one that opens up the individualized historical views and identities. Michael Reder’s essay, referred to earlier, is a case in point. On the contrary, Aijaz Ahmad, a trenchant materialist critic of postcolonialism, thinks that “the digressive self-reflexivity” of Rushdie’s narrative only amounts to “the obscuring of his ideological moorings in the High Culture of the modern metropolitan bourgeoisie as well as the suppression of a whole range of questions” (Ahmad 126-127).

I argue that, in *Midnight’s Children*, the self-reflexive narrative technique assumes significance on the level of temporality, contributing to the production of a sense of eternity of national collectivity. While Saleem’s self-conscious mode of telling does call into question the absolute authorship and ridicule the notion of objective historical fact, it does not result in the mere disavowal of the sense of collective history and the wholesale celebration of individuated identities. For Saleem, a bourgeois idealist who came to learn commitments to the grass-roots mass movements, the nation must still be conceived as a collective entity. In order to address this issue, it is necessary to investigate the position of Saleem as the narrator rather closely.

As Saleem reminds the reader from time to time, he intends to write his autobiography in expectation of the approaching death of his body: “I have no hope of saving my own life, nor can I count on having even a thousand and a night” (11). Because of the multitudinous crowds he has swallowed and the two “drainages” that deprived him of telepathy and fertility, his body is now literally falling apart. “In short, I am literally

disintegrating, slowly for the moment, although there are signs of acceleration” (38). He sets out and continues the process of recounting his life while knowing that he is on the verge of death. It is from an interstitial space between life and death that Saleem tells his life story. The life-death urgency is linked to Saleem’s procreative inability, which sharply appears in his relationship with Padma, his critical interlocutor. In addition to their stances as a storyteller and a listener, factors of gender and sexuality constitute a certain proportion of their complex relationship. In fact, conventional gender roles and divisions are challenged in their spasmodic negotiations. While personalities of Saleem’s grandparents are typical to the modern patriarchal order which is symptomatic of nationalism (Aadam as a secular progressivist and Naseem as a superstitious traditionalist), such clear-cut division is never applicable to Saleem and Padma. Despite Saleem’s pretense of rationality and scientificity, miraculous elements in his narrative never cease to evoke suspicious reactions from Padma, which consequently blurs the distinction as to which person is actually superstitious and unscientific. In addition, there is a particular instance in which the orthodox sexual order between the two sexes is implicitly reversed. Following his philosophy of “leaking” discussed earlier, Saleem at one point admits Padma’s influence on his narrative in the following words: “And certainly Padma is leaking into me. As history pours out of my fissured body, my lotus is quietly dripping in, with her down-to-earthery, and her paradoxical superstition, her contradictory love of the fabulous” (39). In this image, it is the female that impregnates the male with particular tastes for storytelling. Meanwhile, Saleem’s state of impotence prevents “leaking” from occurring the other way around: “That's right . . . I am unmanned. Despite Padma's many and varied gifts and ministrations, I can't leak into her” (39). Furthermore, Padma’s comment that contrasts Saleem’s writing with his sexual potency signals the phallic nature inherent in his power of storytelling: “. . . she whispers in my ear, ‘So now that the writery is done, let’s see if we can make your other pencil work!’; despite everything she tries, I cannot hit her spittoon” (39). A rather conventional rhetorical association of pencil with penis here suggests that writing life story is a compensatory means for biological reproduction: Saleem’s generative ability that is deprived by sterilization at Widow’s Hostel

is replaced with the power of writing with which he attempts to create “meaning.” At one point, Saleem states that he writes his story for his son who is not yet able to read: “My son will understand. As much as for any living being, I’m telling my story for him, so that afterwards, when I’ve lost my struggle against cracks, he will know. Morality, judgment, character . . . it all starts with memory . . . and I am keeping carbons” (207). He narrates and writes the story in expectation of its future reading by Aadam, who is named after Saleem’s grandfather and whose biological father is Shiva. Saleem’s writing with a craving for “meaning” is conducted with a wish that his story would be inherited affiliatively. As if to fulfill Saleem’s wish, the first word that Aadam pronounces turns out to be the word of magic: “Abracadabra” (442). The enunciation of the classic magical word is indicative of another life story that would be constructed by Aadam, a story that is beyond the reach of the novel.

In the very last paragraph in which Saleem finally falls apart, he presents a vague but hopeful vision of the coming of future generations. Referring to the multitudinous lives he has swallowed, he says deliriously:

Yes, they will trample me underfoot, the numbers marching one two three, four hundred million five hundred six, reducing me to specks of voiceless dust, just as, all in good time, they will trample my son who is not my son, and his son who will not be his, and his who will not be his, until the thousand and first generation, until a thousand and one midnights have bestowed their terrible gifts and a thousand and one children have died, because it is the privilege and the curse of midnight’s children to be both masters and victims of their times, to forsake privacy and be sucked into the annihilating whirlpool of the multitudes, and to be unable to live or die in peace. (446)

Jaina C. Sanga interprets this ending in a quite pessimistic way: “This points towards a definite closure, an ending of history itself. For Saleem, the burden of being so many intertwined persons, of managing and jostling all the multiple lives and their influences has proved to be overwhelming” (Sanga 28). Although it is true that the protagonist being reduced

to “specks of voiceless dust” is quite despairing, Sanga fails to see how the ending passage leaves the possibility of generations yet to come. This final paragraph should be read in comparison with the beginning passage of the novel. The “yes” that opens the above paragraph corresponds with the “no” that appeared at the outset. While the latter signifies Saleem’s acknowledgement of the inescapability from the connection with the national history (“No, that won’t do, there’s no getting away from the date.”) and informs the story’s self-reflexivity, the former refers to Saleem’s conviction of the coming of future generations. Again, the narrative substitutes the power of writing for that of procreation, compensating for Saleem’s inability to leave biological offspring. Finally, the very last passage “to be unable to live or die in peace” doubly resists narrative closure. Combined with the phrase “once upon a time” in the first sentence of the novel, “to live in peace” evokes a pattern of happy ending peculiar to fairy tale (“... *and they lived happily ever after*”). Conversely, “to die in peace” may confine *Midnight’s Children* to the invariable memory of the national dead. The death of Shiva as “war hero” may well constitute such a closed, simplistically nationalistic narrative.<sup>15</sup> But he is still alive somewhere and his story does not come to an end in the novel. In addition, the fact that countless prostitutes bear Shiva’s children indicates that the dialectic between filiation and affiliation will still continue. By denying both types of closure, the ending passage emphasizes that the story is never finished and will be narrated in renewed fashions in the future. This is the novel’s method to signify the cross-generational collective identification, an eternity of the nation made possible by the self-reflexive mode of narration.

This chapter analyzed several narrative tactics employed in *Midnight’s Children* to express the Indian nation as an organic and self-generational entity. The narrator Saleem first aspires to form an egalitarian alternative public sphere that is free from authoritarian intrusion of state power, which nevertheless ends with a failure mainly due to his bourgeois positionality. Second, his prioritization of affiliation over filiation opens up the possibility of transpersonal bonds, which adds up to the production of a sense of national collectivity.

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<sup>15</sup> Benedict Anderson describes how soldiers’ heroic (but anonymous) deaths are incorporated into the imagination of late official nationalism. See his “Replica, Aura, and Late Nationalist Imaginings.”

Through the dialectical development of affiliation between Saleem and Shiva, the plot subverts the duality between the two positions, thereby deconstructing some antagonisms accompanying their relationships. Finally, Saleem's self-reflexive way of narration demonstrates that affiliative bonds configured in his narrative will be infinitely reproduced outside the temporal reach of the novel. Insofar as these narrative techniques are effectively deployed, *Midnight's Children* can be considered to succeed in representing the Indian nation.

The next chapter turns to Rushdie's most controversial work, *The Satanic Verses*, to look into how national imagination undergoes alteration when transplanted to the global arena. While *Midnight's Children* predominantly tackles issues arising within the single country, *The Satanic Verses* manifestly addresses how national consciousness unfolds in the migratory movement and the flow of media images across national borders. My argument puts particular focus on the two literary characteristics, hybridity and magic realism, to consider them in juxtaposition with the issue of national collectivities. While the two are often assumed to be predominant styles in postcolonial writing, my reading suggests that they should be examined in terms of ways of conceiving collective agency.

## Chapter 2: Magic Realism and Hybridity in Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses*

A multilayered story that interweaves trajectories of two Indian immigrants in Britain with the history of the origin of Islam, Salman Rushdie's *The Satanic Verses* narrates the lives of immigrants and shows what it means to be an unrooted cosmopolitan. The novel describes the process and aftermath of immigration from India to London by focusing on two male protagonists who fall from an exploded airplane to land on the English soil. After *Shame* and *Midnight's Children* whose settings and referential frames never extend beyond the Indian subcontinent, Rushdie seems to have turned from the representation of single nations to transnational movements under which various populations from disparate cultures and societies interact and conjoin. Unlike the established nations that are able to keep themselves in existence through reference to the official history and various institutional apparatuses, collectivities articulated in *The Satanic Verses* appear to be much more unstable, fluid, and open to transformation. Gibreel Farishta's peculiar dictum that sets the opening scene of the novel, "To be born again, first you have to die," seems to indicate the novel's central concern with the process of transmutation of selves in the migratory movement. In the following pages, we see the destabilization of the basis of belonging in a rather obvious manner:

Mingling with the remnants of the plane, equally fragmented, equally absurd, there floated the debris of the soul, broken memories, slough-off selves, severed mother-tongues, violated privacies, untranslatable jokes, extinguished futures, lost loves, the forgotten meaning of hollow, booming words, *land, belonging, home*. (*Satanic Verses* 5; emphasis original)

Self-evidence of familiar words of roots and identity is thrown into air and thus rendered obsolete. But the novel by no means simply celebrates or promotes unrootedness and deracination that result from mobility enabled by globalization; rather, it in large parts delineates the expense of being in the state of exile on the psychological as well as social level, exposing sufferings and miseries that inevitably accompany migrancy. In spite of its

basic focus on individual experiences of the two protagonists, the novel points to a possibility of a mode of collective unity as a result of migration. In the following, I will examine the theoretical constellations within which *The Satanic Verses* can be located in order to set the ground for the analysis of the novel.

A part of the difficulty of measuring political effectiveness of Rushdie's works derives from his major literary method: magic realism. An oxymoron in itself, the term has acquired critical currency among postcolonial studies. According to *Post-colonial Studies: The Key Concepts*, mythic and legendary materials in magic realist fiction are "seen to interrogate the assumptions of Western, rational, linear narrative and enclose it within an indigenous metatext, a body of textual forms that recuperate the pre-colonial culture" (Ashcroft et al., *Post-Colonial Studies* 119). Magic realism has often been assumed to function as an effective literary style with which to critically engage with the political realities in the postcolonial world. Homi Bhabha also endorses the usefulness of magic realism for postcolonial writing: "'Magical realism' after the Latin American Boom, becomes the literary language of the emergent post-colonial world" (Bhabha, "Introduction" 7). Elleke Boehmer goes so far as to suggest that the genre has become inextricably connected with postcolonial writing in English in general: "Indeed, the proliferation of postcolonial migrant writing in English has become so closely linked to the continuing success of magic realist approaches that the two developments appear almost inextricable" (Boehmer 228). The creative and political scope of magic realism extends beyond intervention into imperialist ideology through the deployment of "indigenous" perceptions of the world in the works of fiction; it also speaks for immigrant populations because such people experience a profound degree of displacement and disjuncture as a result of imperialism and globalization: "Drawing on the special effects of magic realism, postcolonial writers in English are able to express their view of a world fissured, distorted, and made incredible by cultural crash and displacement," and in such literary works, "magic effects, therefore, are used at once to convey and indict the follies of both empire and its aftermath" (Boehmer 229).

Such celebratory and optimistic evaluations of the employment of magical realism

in postcolonial literature are, however, opposed by materialist critics who doubt the political efficacy of the method. Aijaz Ahmad directly casts doubts on Bhabha's statement by stating that "such pronouncements are now routine features of the metropolitan theory's inflationary rhetoric" (Ahmad 69). For Ahmad, circulation and classification of literary works from developing countries in the metropolis are complicit with the process of establishment of postcolonial studies and reification of "Third World literature" as an object of intellectual expertise that, to the dismay of Ahmad, increasingly dismisses the ordinary realities of oppressed people:

Inclusion of some writers from the "Third World" in our existing curricula would surely be a gain, but a relatively less significant one, especially if it is done in an eclectic sort of way and without negotiating the consequences of the fact that "literature" from other zones of the "Third World"—African, say, or Arab or Caribbean—comes to us not directly or automatically but through grids of accumulation, interpretation and relocation which are governed from the metropolitan countries. (44)

Ahmad's criticism holds true to a certain degree as magical realism in postcolonial literature has come to possess its own unique value in the literary marketplace centered on the metropolis in the West. Some critics attempt to discern the particular marketability of postcolonial literature by calling attention to the material conditions within which literary works are produced, commodified, and circulated. Sarah Brouillette more closely examines the position of postcolonial literature in the publishing industry and specifies some expectations for postcolonial writers to succeed in the marketplace. Even though postcolonial writers from different regions of the world now occupy the noticeable position in the literary scene in English, there is a set of expectations that condition their status:

To review, several things characterize the postcolonial literature that achieves the greatest success in the current market: it is English-language fiction; it is relatively "sophisticated" or "complex" and often anti-realist; it is politically liberal and suspicious of nationalism; It uses a language of exile, hybridity, and "mongrel"



subjectivity. (Brouillette 61)

In this odd situation, postcolonial literature appears to be complicit with the interests of a particular cosmopolitan class who can at once enjoy detachment from the local material reality of their origin and proffer descriptions of postcolonial societies to the Western readership. Their fictions claim to speak for dominated lives in the colonial and postcolonial world, but it is precisely due to the distance from those people that writers can present their pictures in rather caricatured ways. Commenting on a range of “cosmopolitan” writers, Timothy Brennan writes that the fact of “being from there” is a major characteristic of such cosmopolitan fictions. The antagonism between the local and the cosmopolitan is thus rhetorically mediated and resolved. The detachment is so decisive that “people” in their works do not possess substantial power to affect and change the course of the historical reality. Postcolonial people who suffer from various types of domination in both the present and the past are always present in their works, but they are not empowered as subjects who activate the historical progress:

Cosmopolitanism displays impatience, at times even hostility, to the legacy of decolonization and is filled with parodic or dismissive references to the exalted “people” of the liberation movements. The “people” in cosmopolitan novels are not, as in Fanon, an occult preference of almost religious power; they are not the agents of historical change but the comic register of our common inadequacies, gullibilities, creativities, and desires. (Brennan 39)

The strong insistence on the need to form revolutionary movements through national consciousness that was central to liberation theorists such as Franz Fanon and Amilcar Cabral is thus absent from those cosmopolitan fictions. Such literary works shift focus from collective alliances to individual privileges that are available only to those who manage to gain mobility in the globalized world.

However, the marketability of magical realist fictions and their complicity with commodification of literary theory in the metropolis require a more careful consideration, especially when one discusses the particular text of *The Satanic Verses*. The novel seems on

the surface to fit into the model outlined above. It is a work of fiction written in English that narrates stories of two figures whose origins in India haunts their destinies. The novel abounds in magical factors such as the miraculous landing from the exploded airplane, transmutation into a human-goat, and tropicalization of the cold city of London. A state of exile is a fundamental condition for both of the two protagonists. Nonetheless, the novel does not simply celebrate transnational movements of individuals at the expense of collective unity. Indeed, it is precisely the mobility made available by globalization that the novel puts under scrutiny. The attractiveness of “other” identities in the capitalist West is what Rushdie attempts to interrogate in *The Satanic Verses*. In this process, individual mobility as opposed to collectivity of “people” is put into question. Magic realist characteristics in *The Satanic Verses* ought to be studied in terms of its potentiality to produce collective identifications that deviate from any conventional, fixed forms of identity.

The problematics concerning magic realism are closely related to another significant theoretical concept in postcolonial studies: hybridity. As a cultural term that originates from racial theory, hybridity has become a strategic concept that supplies postcolonial criticism with a powerful framework to interrogate and criticize colonialist orders imposed by the West. In *Colonial Desire*, Robert Young traces the genealogy of the concept in European thought. Despite its biological and botanical origins, hybridity has changed into a cultural concept that is not rigidly determined by racial implications.

“Hybrid” is the nineteenth century’s word. But it has become our own again. In the nineteenth century it was used to refer to a physiological phenomenon; in the twentieth century it has been reactivated to describe a cultural one. While cultural factors determined its physiological status, the use of hybridity today prompts questions about the ways in which contemporary thinking has broken absolutely with the racialized formulations of the past. (Young 5)

The focus therefore shifts from the physiological dimension to the linguistic one, enabling Mikhail Bakhtin to formulate the concept as a theoretical viewpoint from which inherent doubleness in a single speech can be visualized. For Bakhtin, every utterance is a contested

realm within which two languages co-exist without losing mutual differences and conflicts.

What is a hybridization? It is a mixture of two social languages within the limits of a single utterance, an encounter, within the arena of an utterance, between two different linguistic consciousnesses, separated from one another by an epoch, by social differentiation or by some other factor. (Bakhtin 358)

Bakhtin's descriptive account about fundamental hybridity in a single speech opens up a possibility of the intentional use of linguistic hybridity in a socio-political milieu. Modern colonialist forces exerted power over the colonies by means of various symbolic apparatuses. In the process of implementations of norms in different cultural contexts, however, such authoritative symbols must undergo substantial change in signification and meaning. The hierarchical opposition that sustains the colonial space is thus inevitably destabilized. According to Homi Bhabha, colonial representation holds in itself a split so profound that it paradoxically empowers the very knowledge that it seeks to disavow: "Hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal, so that other 'denied' knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority—its rules of recognition" (Bhabha, *Location* 162). Bhabha attempts to capture the contingent moments of disruption of authoritative symbols in various colonial contexts. Indeed, any cultural production in essence arises from ambivalent spaces that negate totalization of identities. Culture is constructed upon the instability inherent in the process of signification. This is the point out of which political projects of postcoloniality emerge.

The language of critique is effective not because it keeps forever separate the terms of the master and the slave, the mercantilist and the Marxist, but to the extent to which it overcomes the given grounds of opposition and opens up a space of translation: a place of hybridity, figuratively speaking, where the construction of a political object that is new, neither the one nor the other, properly alienates our political expectations, and changes, as it must the very forms of our recognition of the moment of politics. (*Location* 37)

The concept of hybridity suggests that presumption of any conventional identity as a basis of political interrogation misses the indeterminacy that inheres in cultural production. It is in this ambivalent and contradictory space that postcoloniality grounds its project.

This, then, returns us to the issue of magic realism. It is not a coincidence that magic realism, a very popular mode of writing in postcolonial literature, happens to be a self-contradictory term. The co-existence of magic and realism seems to be closely aligned with linguistic hybridity. In this very term, different ideas conflict with each other, offering the possibility to elucidate a dialectic that inheres in a single language. Magic realism opens up a “third space” in which the rigid hierarchical distinction between native codes of recognition and colonialist ones is unmasked and made invalid. As Stephen Slemon puts it:

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

Slemon’s observation of magic realism in a postcolonial context resonates with Bakhtin’s notion of linguistic hybridity. Magic realism is a typically hybrid style in which two opposing modes of discourse conflict with each other. It is often seen as a condition produced by brutal cultural intermingling under colonialism. The political efficacy of magic realism resides in its ability to reflect a socio-political battle into a discursive one. A proclamation of such an endeavor can be found in Rushdie’s commentary on the issue of adoption of the English language in literary creation. In an essay commenting on the validity of English in writing about India, he makes his case by emphasizing British Indian writers’ destiny to remake the quality of English so as to accomplish their political aim:

Many have referred to the argument about the appropriateness of this language to Indian themes. And I hope all of us share the view that we can’t simply use the language in the way the British did; that it needs remaking for our own purposes. Those of us who do use English do so in spite of our ambiguity toward it, or perhaps

because of that, perhaps because we can find in that linguistic struggle a reflection of other struggles taking place in the real world, struggles between the cultures within ourselves and the influences at work upon our societies. To conquer English may be to complete the process of making ourselves free. (Rushdie, *Imaginary Homelands* 17)

The production of narratives of India in English challenges British orthodoxy not only in content but also in the linguistic realm. The ambivalence in the process of remaking English is what may empower Indian writers. Notably, Rushdie here speaks not only of his works but tries to represent “us,” the Indian writers in England, whose creative struggles directly reflect social struggles that occur in the real world. The linguistic challenge that Rushdie promotes here is collective in essence.

But there still remains doubt about the efficacy of Rushdie’s methods of hybridity and magic realism. As is suggested earlier, the intermixture of the real and the fantasy, destabilization of the hierarchical division between different codes of recognition, and the remaking of English are prone to commodification when they are located in the Western literary marketplace, resulting in the offer to Western readers of an escape from reality with which very practitioners of those methods grapple. The illusory, unnatural, and hallucinatory characteristics of his novels are at the risk of covering the material issues, that is, the “realist” part of magical realism. There can be no clear *a priori* expectations about the outcomes of those methods. Nyla Ali Khan calls attention to a general tendency of Rushdie’s hybridity to be subsumed into one dominant culture: “At times, Rushdie’s celebratory discourse of hybridity comes dangerously close to a liberalism that claims to be a neutral ground on which peoples of different cultures can coexist, but which is in fact a reflection of one hegemonic culture” (Khan 67). In the same vein, Brenda Cooper, after an exhaustive mapping of the discourse of magic realism and hybridity in postcolonial literature, comes to acknowledge that the only certain characteristic of magic realism is the unpredictability of its outcomes. Thus, magic realism is destined to be a fundamentally ambivalent style.

It seems to me that if this debate on magical realism has revealed anything clearly, it is the instability of the outcomes of those fictions. . . . Magical realism attempts to capture reality by way of depiction of life’s many dimensions, seen and unseen, visible and invisible, rational and mysterious. In the process, such writers walk a

political tightrope between capturing this reality and providing precisely the exotic escape from reality desired by some of their Western readership. (Cooper 2)

This profound ambivalence always haunts the works of magic realism.

In my view, the most significant point in assessing magical realist fictions is the ability to link individual experiences of hybridization with collective ones. In other words, translative newness that has its theoretical roots in linguistic hybridization must be transformed into and empowered as a communal claim. Otherwise, it becomes a futile gesture that lacks a mass base and privileges a certain cosmopolitan class. Therefore, the key thematic opposition to be analyzed closely in this thesis is neither that between hybridity and purity nor that between the East and the West, but the one between personal detachment and communal attachment. Experiences of migration of the two protagonists evolve around this opposition in various ways. The tension between detachment and attachment recurs throughout the text, and the novel does not offer a simplistic judgment of the two. The strategy of hybridity is an ambivalent one that is at once politically empowering and epistemically blinding. In this regard, it is instructive to refer to Pheng Cheah's fundamental criticism on Bhabha's hybridity:

Indeed, we discover that in essence, hybrid cultural agency consists of physical freedom being tied to the earth. Such freedom is the phenomenal analogue and material condition of possibility for endless hybrid self-creation and autonomy from the given. . . . In Bhabha's world, postcoloniality *is* the hybridity of metropolitan migrancy. Everything happens as if there are no postcolonials left in decolonized space. (Cheah, *Inhuman Conditions* 92; emphasis original)

For Cheah, the current optimistic discussions over postnationalism and cosmopolitanism tend to disregard the majority of postcolonial people who do not have agency through transnational migrancy. While nationalism is largely unphilosophical and underintellectualized, Cheah indicates, cosmopolitanism lacks mass support. Under neocolonial globalization, the nation-state remains the primary locus for the majority of postcolonial people to gain agency and empowerment. Cosmopolitanism cannot be claimed to present the overall picture of present

globalization because it neglects the majority of people of the world who do not have mobility. This is a crucial point in thinking about the potentiality and limit of magic realist fictions that employ hybridity in their interventional tactics.

Rushdie's short story "Courter" serves as a specimen to explore the political range and limit of his migrant narratives. Although the story largely differs from *The Satanic Verses* in that it is written in a realist style and does not have supernatural elements, Rushdie's methodological concerns about linguistic hybridity in the context of migrancy are visible. The unnamed narrator, whose figure seems to reflect Rushdie's own experiences of migration and familial life, narrates in retrospect episodes of his family and surroundings in London. The story mainly focuses on romance between a male porter and a female servant, respectively called "Mixed-Up" and "Certainly-Mary." Despite divisions among characters set by social status, gender, and age, linguistic error and slippage disturb such divides. For instance, the narrator's patriarchal father, who seems to attempt to assimilate into Westernness by reading *Encyclopedia Britannia* and *Reader's Digests*, has a shameful experience of being slapped by a store clerk for asking if she has "nipples" instead of "teats." This comical incident turns out to be a rare occasion for the narrator to feel a sense of empowerment over his father: "I remember this story with delight, because it was the only time I ever saw my father so discomfited" (Rushdie, "Courter" 184). On the other hand, "Mixed-Up," who is called by various names by others, determines to accept the name "courter" that Certainly-Mary gives to him:

So: thanks to her unexpected, somehow stomach-churning magic, he was no longer porter, but courter. "Courter," he repeated to the mirror when she had gone. His breath made a little dwindling picture of the world on the glass. "Courter courter caught." Okay. People called him many things, he did not mind. But this name, this courter, this he would try to be. (177)

These instances suggest that migration is a moment wherein destabilization of identity and active identification rather than reinforcement of fixed identity become possible. Contingent errors and misunderstandings can be turned into opportunities for such new identifications to

occur. Even though the father's linguistic error and the renaming of porter into courter have no political consequences, these examples show Rushdie's strong concerns with linguistic factors in lives of migrants and creative potentialities of such phenomena.

The story ends, however, not with further explorations of the possibility of linguistic slippage but with the narrator's personal declaration of his positionality. Even after gaining a British passport that sets him "free," the narrator feels that he has ropes around his necks, which order him to choose between East and West. He responds to the demand in an apparently powerful manner:

I, too, have ropes around my neck. I have them to this day, pulling me this way and that, East and West, the nooses tightening, commanding, choose, choose. I buck, I snort, I whinny, I rear, I kick. Ropes, I do not choose between you. Lassoos, lariats, I choose neither of you, and both. Do you hear? I refuse to choose. (211)

One cannot simply celebrate this declaration of refusal to choose as a demonstration of radical subjectivity that defies normative modes of belonging and cultural orthodoxies. A kind of radicalism that refuses conventional identities appears along with the obsessive repetition of "I," which consolidates the narrator's personal subjectivity. What this passage implicitly confirms is the narrator's privileged position from which lives of the unprivileged can be depicted with a certain distance. His is a third position that explicitly negates both assimilationist and nationalistic claims, a position that may be readily described as "hybrid." However, the political range of this radical subjectivity is restricted since the choice itself remains a personal one. For the majority of migrants, such a choice is not available or often made regardless of their will. It is from a certain privileged position that one can assume that there is a choice at all. Despite the story's depictions of interactions of lives of migrants from different regions and histories, hybridization is not open to collective identification. The possibility of such identification is, I argue, left to *The Satanic Verses*.

To sum up, I read *The Satanic Verses* as magic realist fiction that critically reassesses the genre's political and creative efficacy. The novel ought to be read not as a mere example of hybrid cosmopolitanism but as a critical observation of it. The novel is not a simple



celebration of the hybrid subjectivity typical of postcolonial migrants, but an inquiry that examines various contestations within the practice of hybridization and its outcomes. Different styles of hybridity which contradict each other are presented throughout the text. Those strategies of hybridization, mixing-up, mongredization must be measured and valued in terms of their impacts on and interactions with collective lives of dispossessed migrants and postcolonial people. All in all, my reading of the novel attempts to offer a critical response to Ahmad's criticism with regard to representation of oppressed people:

What this excludes—"the missing bits" to which he must "reconcile" himself—is the dailiness of lives lived under oppression, and the human bonding—of resistance, of decency, of innumerable heroisms of both ordinary and extraordinary kinds—which makes it possible for large numbers of people to look each other in the eye, without guilt, with affection and solidarity and humor, and makes life, even under oppression, endurable and frequently joyous. Of that other kind of life his fictions, right up to *The Satanic Verses*, seem to be largely ignorant. (Ahmad 139)

#### Rewriting Englishness

Alongside independences of colonized nations across the globe and the decline of British imperialism, literary production by formerly colonized people has established itself and increased its presence in the British cultural landscape. However, the demise of the empire and the rising voice of postcolonial and immigrant writing do not lead straightforwardly to the revision of the nation's historiography and imagination. Despite emergent representations of black identities in literary, scholarly, and artistic spheres, fixed notions of Britishness and newer identities emerging out of the country's complex history of imperialism often remain intact and incompatible with each other. As James Procter notes at the outset of his argument on "dwelling places" of the black populations in postwar Britain:

Despite the increasingly sophisticated debates over the category "black" (as an ontological sign of both difference and *différance*) in recent accounts of black British culture, "Britain," the material site at which these identities are played out,

has tended to remain a stable bland monolith, a singularly undifferentiated setting.

(Procter 1)

Paul Gilroy more closely explicates the imaginative pathology that contemporary British nation suffers. In spite of the global reach of the British imperial power in the past few centuries, the most popular historical incident cited as the nation's unifying memory, the source of imaginary greatness, is the war against the Nazis. The war and victory against this unquestionably evil enemy are often foregrounded at the expense of foreclosure of other complex and shameful histories such as imperialist expansion and colonialist exploitation which were always accompanied and justified by racism. The complex histories of colonial and postcolonial conflicts are thus strangely evacuated from the imagined community of Britain. Gilroy writes:

Once the history of the Empire became a source of discomfort, shame, and perplexity, its complexities and ambiguities were readily set aside. Rather than work through those feelings, that unsettling history was diminished, denied, and then, if possible, actively forgotten. The resulting silence feeds an additional catastrophe: the error of imagining that postcolonial people are only unwanted alien intruders without any substantive historical, political, or cultural connections to the collective life of their fellow subjects. (Gilroy 90)

Despite the fact that Britain has become the multiracial and multiethnic nation in the demographic sense, the national imagery fails to reflect this change and accept the historical complexity. What results from this active forgetting is a peculiar survival of the unflawed concept of Englishness that is not tainted by disgraceful histories of imperialism. Gilroy then calls this syndrome "postimperial melancholia." Likewise, Stuart Hall, in the context of shifting meaning of the term "race" in the 1980s, insists on the need to renew the notion of "ethnicity" and turn it into a more diverse concept that may work against the hegemonic and stable notion of an English nation:

We are beginning to think about how to represent a non-coercive and a more diverse conception of ethnicity, to set against the embattled, hegemonic conception of

“Englishness” which, under Thatcherism, stabilizes so much of the dominant political and cultural discourses, and which, because it is hegemonic, does not represent itself as an ethnicity at all. (Hall 447)

It is with this condition that Rushdie attempts to consciously intervene in *The Satanic Verses*. At one point, Rushdie has his character Otto Cone say the following: ““The trouble with the Engenglish is that their hiss hiss history happened overseas, so they dodo don’t know what it means”” (353). The initial step of this endeavor is to reveal the pathological and exclusivist nature of this sort of feeling. In the novel, such compulsive patriotism is caricatured in several figures. For instance, Hal Valance, a TV director who employs Saladin in *The Alien Show*, is a patriot who obsessively expresses his love for the country: “He owned a Union Jack waistcoat and insisted on flying the flag over his agency and also above the door of his Highgate home” (274). He is also a businessman who clings to a resolutely capitalist attitude: “He smoked absurd, caricature cigars, refusing all Cuban brands, however, on account of his uncompromisingly capitalistic stance” (274). In a talk with Saladin where Valance announces his dismissal from the TV show, he reveals his concern about racial implications that the hiring of Saladin may have in the show:

“Audience surveys show,” he breathed, “that ethnics don’t watch ethnic shows. They don’t want ‘em, Chamcha. They want fucking *Dynasty*, like everyone else. . . with you in the show it’s just too damn racial. The Alien Show is too big an idea to be held back by the racial dimension.” (273-74)

What is captured here is how the hegemonization of a particular cultural industry occludes racial matters, establishing whiteness as a universal human figure. “Ethnics” are not even allowed to occupy parts of their universe, and they have to be rendered absent from hegemonic culture. This racial exclusion is justified by the combination of the rational reasoning of marketing and compulsive patriotism. Valance is an allegorical figure of Englishness who obsessively expresses his love for the country. Insisting on racial purification and the marketability of Englishness, Valance exhibits his compassion for his country:

Valance was “de-politicizing” the show, by firing Chamcha and putting a huge blond Teuton with pectorals and a quaff inside the prosthetic make-up and computer-generated imagery. . . “I,” Hal Valance announced, “love this fucking country. That’s why I’m going to sell it to the whole goddamn world, Japan, America, fucking Argentina. I’m going to sell the arse off it. That’s what I’ve been selling all my fucking life: the fucking nation. The *flag*.” (276)

What underpins Valance’s patriotism is the logic of market which also demands deprivation of racial implications in the show in order to preserve the untainted national imagery of Britain. But it is also suggested that Valance does not remain a symbolical figure of Englishness. Valance covers, under this self-confident patriotic self, another, original self that cannot claim its voice. When Saladin is invited to his room, he glimpses a fragment of Valance’s older self:

Valance led him into a room in which there stood two clavichords of great delicacy and lightness. “I make ‘em,” his host confessed. “To relax. Baby wants me to make her a fucking guitar.” Hal Valance’s talent as a cabinet-maker was undeniable, and somehow at odds with the rest of the man. “My father was in the trade,” he admitted under Chancha’s probing, and Saladin understood that he had been granted a privileged glimpse into the only piece that remained of Valance’s original self, the Harold that derived from history and blood and not from his own frenetic brain. (278)

In contrast to Valance’s “Deep Throat voice” that loudly speaks his patriarchal passion, these hand-made instruments remain silent. Valance constructs his patriotic mindset by covering his real self. It is through the negation of his genuine self that he retains a status as an enthusiastic businessman and a patriot. In this sense, Valance is, just like various immigrants in the novel, a stranger who is psychologically alienated in his own country. This episode of Hal Valance implies that the pathological self-denial consists not only in assimilationist psyche of immigrants but also in ardent nationalists.

Another character who figuratively indicates the pathology of British patriotism is

an English woman called Rosa Diamond, an old lady who takes in Gibreel Farishta and Saladin Chamcha to her house. After the miraculous landing on the coast with Saladin, Gibreel escapes from the arrest by the police by pretending to be the husband of Rosa Diamond. Gibreel then secures his position by mimicking the role of her husband, Sir Henry Diamond. Rosa Diamond appears to be profoundly associated with the national memory of England. Whenever the moon is full, she revisits the ghost of the William the Conqueror. Through her figure, the memory of the Norman Conquest of England appears to be a recurrent incident that reinforces, symbolically, the origin of the nation: “Nine hundred years! Nine centuries past, the Norman fleet had sailed right through this Englishwoman’s home. On clear nights when the moon was full, she waited for its shining, revenant ghost” (134). It is the obsessive recurrence of this vision of the conqueror that allows Diamond to “feel solid and unchanging” (134). For Diamond, the recurring vision is “*unfinished business*” that needs to be redeemed tirelessly. Rosa Diamond’s ceremonial revision of the origin of national history points to the pathological quality of the construction of the national narrative. Homi Bhabha, in theorizing the dichotomy of the performative and the pedagogical in the nation’s narrative, comments on this episode. For Bhabha, Diamond is an allegorical figure of the pedagogical aspect of Englishness:

Gifted with phantom sight, Rosa Diamond, for whom repetition had become a comfort in her antiquity, represents the English *Heim* or homeland. . . . Constructed from the well-worn pedagogies and pedigrees of national unity—her vision of the Battle of Hastings is the anchor of her being—and, at the same time, patched and fractured in the incommensurable perplexity of the nation’s living, Rosa Diamond’s green and pleasant garden is the spot where Gibreel Farishta lands when he falls out from the belly of the Boeing over sodden, southern England. (*Location* 239-40)

Gibreel, on the other hand, is the performative actor who disturbs this pedagogical code by mimicking Sir Henry Diamond. Bhabha writes that Gibreel is

the mote in the eye of history, its blind spot that will not let the nationalist gaze settle centrally. . . . He is the history that happened elsewhere, overseas; his

postcolonial, migrant presence does not evoke a harmonious patchwork of cultures, but articulates the narrative of cultural difference which can never let the national history look at itself narcissistically in the eye. (241)

But a careful reading would reveal the complex interrelationship and interdependence between them that might even blur the dichotomy of the performative and the pedagogical in Bhabha's account. Diamond's gaze is not, as Bhabha assumes, so totalizing and didactic. Her repetitious conjuring of the ghost of the conqueror suggests that the narrative of the nation's origin is located in the invasion from overseas, thereby pointing to the traumatic nature of the narrative. Furthermore, in the eyes of Diamond, Gibreel is not allowed to mimic the national pedagogy at his will. Bhabha writes: "His mimicry of colonial masculinity and mimesis allows the absences of national history to speak in the ambivalent, rag-tag narrative. . . . As the belated postcolonial he marginalizes and singularizes the totality of national culture" (241). However, Gibreel is essentially jailed in Diamond's estate against his will. Under her observation, he even feels himself deprived of the rights to act as himself. Gibreel is allowed only to play different roles that Diamond imposes on him. At first he is conceived as the ghost of William the Conqueror, whom Diamond reminiscently invokes: "She closed, once more, her reminiscent eyes. When she opened them, she saw. Down by the water's edge, no denying it, something beginning to move. What she said aloud in her excitement: 'I don't believe it!'—"It isn't true!"—"He's never *here!*" (130) At the incident of Saladin's arrest, he deceives the police by pretending to be Sir Henry Diamond. But afterwards, she attributes him the role of her old Argentinian lover Martín de la Cruz. As she tells his old stories, Gibreel "felt her stories winding round him like a web, holding him in that lost world" (150). At one point, he contemplates: "In that dreamlike moment when he had been trapped by the eyes of the old Englishwoman it had seemed to him that his will was no longer his own to command, that somebody else's needs were in charge" (148). In short, Gibreel is at best a powerless medium through which the pathology of the pedagogical national imagery is played out. Rosa's national imagination is blinding herself and prevents her from looking into reality straightaway. For instance, when Gibreel asks her about the magical appearance of horns on

Saladin's head, she excludes the possibility of intervention of newness into ancient Englishness: "there was nothing new under the sun, she had seen things, the apparitions of men with horned helmets, in an ancient land like England there was no room for new stories, every blade of turf had already been walked over a hundred thousand times" (144). Gibreel does not seem to be so empowered as a performative agent in relation to Rosa Diamond. It is only after Gibreel left Diamond's estate and entered London that he embarks upon an active invasion of the national pedagogy. The site of the metropolis is particularly significant because it is there that postcolonial histories engage in a dialogue with Englishness.

The space of the metropolis serves as a particular realm in which transnationalism might be played out. A vibrant location where different cultures commingle and clash with each other, the city has a potentiality as a place where rigid national boundaries might be crossed over and conventional national images can be rewritten. At the same time, however, social divides within a society often result in segregations of populations according to factors such as class and ethnicity. In such a condition, indifference and isolation turn out to be basic elements in the urban life. This negative aspect is at once a consequence and a cause of social mobility that the urban society provides. Therefore, the city is an ambivalent locus that at once produces rigid division of the population and their possible interaction. In the nineteenth century, the ruling class of the metropolis projected the colonialist imagery upon the urban working-class crowd and strengthened their fear of them. As Anne McClintock points out:

Colonial discourse was systematically deployed to map urban space into a geography of power and containment. The analogy between slum and colony was tirelessly evoked, as was the presiding figure of imperial discovery. *The Eclectic Review* hailed premier explorer Henry Mayhew as having "travelled through the unknown regions of our metropolis and returned with full reports concerning the strange tribes of men that he may be said to have discovered." (McClintock 120)

The geographical and adventurous imagination that underpinned the imperialist invasions was projected to the urban crowd so that working-class communities were aligned imaginatively with the degenerate natives living oversea. This resulted in the strengthening

of social divides within the metropolis. McClintock's argument suggests the interdependence of images between the colonialist ruling overseas and the class division at home. Rushdie appropriates the city as a tactical place wherein postcolonial migrants seek to reverse the colonialist order.

The title of the fifth chapter "A City Visible But Unseen," an oxymoron that is likely to evoke Rushdie's magic realist stance, is employed to describe social divisions that the city brings about. Indeed, this strange term is not intended to indicate that the city of London is an imaginary or fantastic place; rather, he aims to portray the invisible boundaries that pervade the city. In an interview on *The Satanic Verses*, he succinctly explains the reason for employing this term as follows:

It is not an invisible city in the sense that Calvino's cities were invisible cities, fantasy cities; that this is a real city whose streets I know; you know, it would be possible to guide anybody down those streets and show them the locations out of which, and the kind of life experience out of which, the experiences in the book come. But that city is certainly in English literature, and even in English society, ignored, not looked at—in fact is unseen. So there you have the experience of a lot of people, millions of people now in Britain, invisible to the rest, and I wanted to try and make it visible. So that of course is also a political ambition. (Ball, "Interview" 105)

Rushdie's diagnosis of the contradictory invisibility of the metropolis evokes Gilroy's idea "postimperial melancholia" discussed earlier. In the same interview, he also states that race is an important cause of this cognitive incongruity: "In the British section I've tried to deal with, or write from, the experience of not being white in Britain, and obviously that's political in its nature" (105). Hence, his enterprise is to present the overall picture of the city where colonial and postcolonial histories, instead of pathological recollections of the white British history, might intervene into the racially biased picture of the metropolis.

Gibreel Farishta seems to be endowed with such an enterprise. On arriving the city of London, he implies the desire to conquer the city: "*London shareef, here I come*. He had



the city in his pocket: Geographers' London. The whole dog-eared metropolis, A to Z" (160; emphasis original). As is epitomized in the term "A to Z," he aims at a total conquest rather than a partial and gradual undermining of the metropolis: "The atlas in his pocket was his master-plan" (337). His desire for total conquest appears to be at odds with the postmodernist view of the city. In *The Condition of Postmodernity*, David Harvey observes the postmodernist rejection of seeing the city as a totalizing space. Unlike modernist schemes of cities which aspired for order and totality of the city, postmodernism tends to refuse totality and look at the plastic nature of the city. Epitomizing Jonathan Raban's concept of "soft city," Harvey writes: "A labyrinth, an encyclopedia, an emporium, a theatre, the city is somewhere where fact and imagination simply have to fuse" (Harvey 5). The heterogeneity and incomprehensibility of the city are what prevent Gibreel from redeeming it. Despite Gibreel's aspiration to conquer the city which is compared to that of a cartographer, the city refuses to submit to such totalizing knowledge: "In this pandemonium of mirages he often heard laughter: the city was mocking his impotence, awaiting his surrender, his recognition that what existed here was beyond his powers to comprehend, let alone to change" (338). The strategic viewpoint that Gibreel then takes is a bird's-eye view from which London can be observed comprehensively. By hovering over the city and "tropicalizing" it, Gibreel projects typically non-English imageries onto the English metropolis. Gibreel's geographical redemption of London is a reversal of imperialist imagination projected upon the native lands across the globe. He literally inverts stereotypical notions about the native lands and transplants them into the metropolis. The apparent hierarchy between the colony and the metropolis is now destabilized. Nevertheless, this literally top-down alteration of the city still relies on stereotypical notions about the postcolonial world. What appears in London as a result of Gibreel's tropicalization is a series of caricatured images of the South such as "institution of national siesta," "spider-monkeys in the oaks," "anti-mosquito coils and sprays," "cholera," and so on. In short, Gibreel's vision remains within the realm of theatrical illusion, and his endeavour does not lead to collective transformation on the street level. The rigid Englishness is obviously destabilized, but as long as this instant, magical transformation

depends on stereotypical images of the non-Western world, Gibreel's conquest of the city does not challenge the imperialist imagination in any fundamental way. The possibility of such radical change is left to his alter ego, Saladin Chamcha.

### Hybridity as Postcolonial Strategy

In an essay written in defense of *The Satanic Verses*, Rushdie emphasizes his strong concern with the method of hybridity in the novel:

*The Satanic Verses* celebrates hybridity, impurity, intermingling, the transformation that comes of new and unexpected combinations of human beings, cultures, ideas, politics, movies, songs. It rejoices in mongredization and fears the absolutism of the Pure. *Mélange*, hotchpotch, a bit of this and a bit of that is *how newness enters the world*. (*Imaginary Homelands* 394: emphasis original)

How does the text exactly engage with hybridity? It is obvious that the novel strongly challenges racist oppression and containment under Thatcherism in the British society in the 1980s as well as Islamic fundamentalist doctrines. As Robert Spencer notes: "The target of this profoundly political novel is not just the sacred text whose authority it endeavours to subvert but also the repressive and racist institutions of British state" (Spencer 152). But how does the discourse of hybridity address these issues critically?

As is suggested in the previous chapter, the concept of hybridity in cultural theory is partly modeled on Bakhtin's view on the doubleness that resides within a single speech. The strategy of double meaning, the dialogic nature of literary language, is practiced in *The Satanic Verses* as well. This is most evident in Gibreel's dreaming sequence where the narrator introduces another protagonist, "the prophet," to the reader:

His name: a dream-name, changed by the vision. Pronounced correctly, it means he-for-whom-thanks-should-be-given, but he won't answer to that here; nor, though he's well aware of what they call him, to his nickname in Jahilia down below—*he-who-goes-up-and-down-old-Coney*. Here he is neither Mahomet nor MoeHammered; has adopted, instead, the demon-tag the farangis hung around his

neck. To turn insults into strengths, whigs, Tories, Blacks all chose to wear with pride the names they were given in scorn; likewise, our mountain-climbing, prophet-motivated solitary is to be the medieval baby-frightener, the Devil's synonym: Mahound. (95)

As Joel Kuortti notes, this name Mahound, "used by Dante and other writers to denote their perception of the diabolic nature of the Islamic prophet, carries with it a history of Christian enmity against Islam" (Kuortti 133). Nevertheless, rather than reconfirming the demonization of the prophet's name, the narrator calls attention to the oppositional interpretation that the prophet himself employs in order to "turn insults into strengths." This spontaneous renaming of Mohammed into Mahound is an empowering process of identification through which the internal meaning of an insulting speech undergoes radical alteration. It is, after all, this strategy of linguistic hybridity, that is, the intentional transformation of meaning within language, that *The Satanic Verses* performs towards the orthodox history of the foundation of Islam, which resulted in outright objections from the Islamic world. Later on in the narrative, when Mahound has his Persian scribe Salman write down the angel's revelations, Salman intentionally rewrites Mahound's words. This act of rewriting of Islamic rules slips through Mahound's attention:

Little things first. If Mahound recited a verse in which God was described as *all-hearing, all-knowing*, I would write, *all-knowing, all-wise*. Here's the point: Mahound did not notice the alterations. So there I was, actually writing the Book, or rewriting, anyway, polluting the word of God with my own profane language. (379-380)

Deliberate misrepresentations reside at the origin of the writing of the sacred text, which consequently makes it difficult to distinguish the divine words from profane, interventionist counterparts. Salman's act of rewriting reflects Rushdie's view on the profound ambivalence in literary language. As Spencer points out, what Rushdie captures here is the process of "creative interpretation" by which textuality of the sacred text would appear:

Fundamentalism demands undeviating allegiance to doctrines, traditions and

beliefs. It interprets scripture literally not allegorically. The novelist, by contrast, views “sacred” texts as texts: that is, as documents requiring and even, by virtue of being texts in the first place, beseeching creative interpretation. (Spencer 143-144)

The promotion of creative interpretation is also a declaration of triumph of the unavoidable ambivalence inherent in writing over the strict dogma of religious orthodoxy. As is evident from alliances of the renaming into Mahound with those of whigs, tories, and blacks, this method of the subversion of the authority extends to modern and contemporary politics, and in this novel, migrancy is a central condition in which Rushdie pursues such possibility of literary language. In doing so, Rushdie carefully highlights the complex intersection between language and power.

Both of the two protagonists of *The Satanic Verses* are actors. This particular occupation functions as a complex metaphor for constructions of their selves and their changes caused by immigrant experiences. But in both cases, the job of actor initially indicates their privileged positions in the postmodern, globalized world in which the ability to assume a variety of roles flexibly appears to be superior to physical labour. The gift of playing, for instance, provides Saladin with the ability to mimic sounds of any commodity and voices of any nationality:

Because he did have that gift, truly he did, he was the Man of a Thousand Voices and a Voice. If you wanted to know how your ketchup bottle should talk in its television commercial, if you were unsure as to the ideal voice of your packet of garlic-flavoured crisps, he was very your man. He made carpets speak in warehouse advertisements, he did celebrity impersonations, baked beans, frozen peas. On the radio he could convince an audience that he was Russian, Chinese, Sicilian, the Presidents of the United States. (60)

This hyperbolic description informs that Saladin’s disembodied voices are in accordance with the logic of the postmodern capitalist market wherein the ability to fake various identities in the incorporeal realm of sounds proves successful. Linguistic invasion through incorporeal voices seem to allow Saladin to easily enter into England: “With his female equivalent, Mimi

Mamouliau, he ruled the airwaves of Britain” (61). Furthermore, as Mimi suggests, their abilities seem to lead them to a kind of cosmopolitanism that transcends constraints of particular nations: “‘We should get married sometime, when you’re free,’ Mimi once suggested to him. ‘You and me, we could be the United Nations’” (61). However, this view forces them to remain physically invisible. As is the case with Hal Valance, his success in attracting the audience results in the neglect and elimination of his original self. “‘Maybe I’m a ghost already,’” says Saladin at one point (62). His success, which is a result from the commodification of his numerous voices, is a flip side of the self-alienation that he holds within him. On an airplane to London, he intentionally changes his voice so as to adjust to life as an Englishman: “‘Saladin Chamcha, on Flight 420, closed his eyes; and felt, with deep relief, the tell-tale shiftings and settlings in his throat which indicated that his voice had begun of its own accord to revert to its reliable, English self” (74). Saladin’s verbal flexibility only endorses his assimilationist attitude that hinges on internalization of the imperialist hierarchy. It is after he experiences the magic transmutation into a goat that he starts to understand the power of language, which is described in the novel with a typically magic realist technique. Through the transformation into the goat-like monster, Saladin grotesquely recovers his corporeality. It is also a moment when collectivism starts to challenge his individualism.

After landing on the English land, Saladin is captured by the immigration police who vehemently beat him in a van. The policemen obviously signify the state racism under which any immigrants are deemed indistinguishable aliens. As one of them says to Saladin: “‘You’re all the same. Can’t expect animals to observe civilized standards. Eh?’” (164). Their racism gives rise to the confusion about the distinction between the supernatural phenomenon of metamorphosis and reality:

What puzzled Chamcha was that a circumstance which struck him as utterly bewildering and unprecedented—that is, his metamorphosis into this supernatural imp—was being treated by the others as if it were the most banal and familiar matter that could imagine. (163)

Differing from a conventional view about magic realism which tends to regard magic

elements as growing out of indigenous traditions and worldviews, the magic here indicates an epistemic gulf between the racist gaze of the policemen and that of an immigrant who is dehumanized by such gaze. Later on, when he is jailed in an unfamiliar institution where other immigrants who also have turned to various creatures reside, Saladin learns that what is occurring is an exertion of linguistic power. As the other inmate who has turned into a manicomore informs Saladin: “‘But how do they do it?’ Chamcha wanted to know. ‘They describe us,’ the other whispered solemnly. ‘That’s all. They have the power of description, and we succumb to the pictures they construct’” (174). The power of description is so absolute that it causes the materialization of linguistic description. Ursula Kluwick locates this as a peculiar method of magic realism:

Literalization is a device which blurs the boundary between “truth” and metaphor, and which constitutes one of the most fruitful and frequently used sources of the supernatural in magic realism. Literalization occurs when a metaphor is taken literally, and when what is normally only a figure of speech is actually integrated into the reality of the fictional text. . . . Literalization, then, is about the power of language. It textually performs how reality is created through language, but at the same time frequently calls into question this power by highlighting the bizarre nature of a reality constituted by literalized metaphors. (Kluwick 81-82)

This incident marks a point wherein Saladin comes to confront the physiological influence that the racist linguistic power conveys. The possessor of countless incorporeal voices, who succeeded commercially in the postmodern capitalist market and yet felt himself as “a ghost”, now faces materialization of linguistic power, which calls into question his previous status as an individualist cosmopolitan. Regardless of his own will, he is forced to be categorized into the mass of immigrants by racism. The mass escape from the Detention Centre predicts Saladin’s later association with immigrant communities in London.

After the escape, Saladin finds himself in the Shaandaar Café, a local community space where subcontinental immigrants gather. Among immigrants, Saladin’s physiological mutation becomes a topic of discussion. Initially, he maintains the previous attitude of refusal

of identity as a part of the immigrant society:

“Where else would you go to heal you’re your disfigurements and recover your normal health? Where else but here, with us, among your own people, your own kind?” Only when Saladin Chamcha was alone in the attic room at the very end of his strength did he answer Sufyan’s rhetorical question. “I’m not your kind,” he said distinctly into the night. “You’re not my people. I’ve spent half my life trying to get away from you.” (261-262)

But his physical reality does not allow him to stay the same. It is the corporealization of linguistic description that fundamentally challenges his individualist psyche, gradually changing it into the one open for collective identification. Saladin reluctantly acknowledges that he has become an icon of interracial and multiethnic solidarity who shares the social oppression in Thatcherist Britain: “I am the incarnation of evil, he thought. He had to face it. However it had happened, it could not be denied. I am *no longer myself*, or not only. I am the embodiment of wrong, of what-we-hate, sin” (265; emphasis original). This is the first moment when he begins to identify himself with communal lives of immigrants. At the same time, Saladin comes to confront a discrepancy between him and the postmodern capitalist world that he used to inhabit. When his former colleague Mimi Mamoulian calls him, she tries to convince him of their commonality by emphasizing her intellect and highbrow cultural taste as follows:

So comprehend, please, that I am an intelligent female. I have read *Finnegans Wake* and am conversant with postmodernist critiques of the West, e.g. that we have here a society capable only of pastiche: a “flattened” world. When I become the voice of a bottle of bubble bath, I am entering Flatland knowingly, understanding what I’m doing and why. Viz., I am earning cash. (270)

Mimi calls attention to the marketability of their disembodied voices, which ironically highlights Saladin current figure of a human-goat. Saladin cannot claim to belong to this elitist “Flatland” because he lacks mobility and cannot enjoy detachment from the disempowered mass.

Notably, the symbolization of Saladin as an icon of resistance first appears as dreams among local community members. Dream images of Saladin diffuse across racial divisions, offering the possibility of social identifications that deviate from any prevalent modes to solidarity. Again, Rushdie's magic realist consciousness is manifest here. The following passage reads almost like Rushdie's own definition of magic realism:

What was happening, although nobody would admit it or even, at first, understood, was that everyone, black blown white, had started thinking of the dream-figure as *real*, as a being who had crossed the frontier, evading the normal controls, and was now roaming loose about the city. Illegal migrant, outlaw king, foul criminal or race-hero, Saladin Chamcha was getting to be true. (297; emphasis original)

The fact that he hides from the public, which would have been an unsuited condition for an actor, paradoxically brings about the emergence of Saladin in people's most private realm: dream. Destabilization of the border between reality and dream also causes blurring of the boundary between the private and the public. Saladin's involuntary association with the urban crowd makes a stark contrast with Gibreel's overt desire to conquer the city by totalizing it from a bird's-eye view. Rushdie seems to suggest that the entrance of newness into the world is more associated with contingent, unintentional, and unpredictable phenomena than with deliberate efforts. While such change is not based on a particular ideology, this strategy seems to have the deeper political potential than Gibreel's. John Clement Ball sees Saladin as a potential figure who can promote collective and grassroots consciousness:

Saladin's preferable experience of community entanglements is inaugurated by his bodily transformation, which is much more real in its way than Gibreel's. . . . And this change prompts the kinds of grassroots community identifications that, in a London increasingly occupied by people of colour, can lead to real, material transformations of urban social space. (Ball, *Imagining London* 208)

Afterwards, Saladin directly engages with the activist movement that demands the release of a black activist Uhuru Simba. Despite Saladin's initial expectation of the smaller meeting, the meeting house is filled with the large-scale, multiracial urban crowd that consists of



people from different generations and classes:

What he found was a large hall, the Brickhall Friends Meeting House, packed wall-to-wall with every conceivable sort of person—old, wide women and uniformed schoolchildren, Rastas and restaurant workers, the staff of the small Chinese supermarket in Plassey Street, soberly dressed gents as well as wild boys, whites as well as blacks. (427)

This multitude almost seems to represent the whole population of the metropolis. But he does not absorb completely into the movement. Indeed, he retains a sense of distance to the passion of the mass movement: “All these things Saladin experienced and thought as if from a considerable distance” (430). What makes him cynical about the meeting is a problem of authenticity. To Saladin, all speeches at the meeting seem to be the jumble of things simply borrowed from other histories of protest. The use of a term employed in the civil rights movement in the United States does not seem to be adaptable to the current condition in Britain “where there was no history of slavery” (429). The meeting seems to be organized as if “all causes were the same, all histories interchangeable” (429). He is keen to recognize that the terms invoked at the meeting are floating signifiers. This is especially apparent when Saladin assesses the interpretation of the very name of Uhuru Simba. A woman in front of Saladin wears a badge that sloganizes Simba. His name is translated into a symbol of authentic Africanness:

She was wearing a lenticular badge, the sort that changed its message as you moved. At some angles it read, *Uhuru for the Simba*; at others, *Freedom for the Lion*. “It’s on account of the meaning of his chosen name,” she explained redundantly. “In African.” What language? Saladin wanted to know. She shrugged, and turned away to listen to the speakers. It was African: born, by the sound of her, in Lewisham or Deptford or New Cross, that was all she needed to know. . . (427)

Saladin’s critical observation reveals the fallacy of the political slogan that the woman poses to the public. It is through the association of the exotic name of Uhuru Simba with an obscure and mythic image of Africa that the slogan seeks to provide their political actions with

authority. The slogan constructs the image of Africa as a primordial sign that implies racial essence. The non-empirical mystification of the atavistic “Africa” resembles the movement of Négritude that attempted to invent and privilege the essential quality of blackness. Saladin’s critical observation of the meeting and hesitant attitude probably derive from his prior experience as an actor in a postmodern marketplace where cultural representations are deprived of historical specificities and reduced to market values. Because he is familiar with the process of stripping representations of substance, he is able to critically observe the fallacy of the current movement. Even though he does commit himself to the movement, his view is now inclined to respect locality and specificity. Considering his prior status as a false cosmopolitan, this is certainly a progress. After the meeting, he senses that irreversible change is taking place in him: “What Saladin Chamcha understood that day was that he had been living in a state of phoney peace, that the change in him was irreversible” (433).

The last chapter of the novel narrates Saladin’s homecoming to Bombay to see his dying father Changez Chamchawala and reconcile with him. Unlike the preceding narratives, the episode of attending Changez’s deathbed seems to be uncharacteristically sentimental. He also reconciles with his former selves and recovers the connection with past from which he previously tried to escape: “Although he kept it quiet, however, Saladin felt hourly closer to many old, rejected selves, many alternative Saladins—or rather Salahuddins—which had split off from himself as he made his various life choices” (538). A significant change also occurs in his attitude in relation to his association with the masses. Previously, Saladin maintained a cynical view about mass political movement. As Jumpy Joshi recollects, Saladin once went to see the pacifist movement against the Vietnam War out of pure curiosity instead of active will of participation:

Harold Wilson was coming down to town, and because of the Labour Government’s support of US involvement in Vietnam, a mass protest has been planned. Chamcha went along, “out of curiosity,” he said. “I want to see how allegedly intelligent people turn themselves into a mob.” (183)

Now, coming back to Bombay, Saladin confronts another political mass movement. The

Indian nation is plagued by communalist divides that split of the country according to fundamentalist principles: “Communalism, sectarian tension, was omnipresent: as if gods were going to war. In the eternal struggle between the world’s beauty and its cruelty, cruelty was gaining ground by the day” (533). Guided by his Bombay lover Zeeny Vakil, Saladin participates in a communist demonstration that insists upon “national integration.” Notably, the resurgence of fundamentalist politics, which is an intensified form of identity politics, is articulated as a reaction to postmodernism. As a female character Swatilekha states: “Society was orchestrated by what she called grand narratives: history, economics, ethics. In India, the development of a corrupt and closed state apparatus had ‘excludes the masses of the people from the ethical project’”(551). And this phenomenon demands the exclusion of literary language and adherence to literalness: “‘These days,’ she insisted, ‘our positions must be stated with crystal clarity. All metaphors are capable of misinterpretation’” (551). Saladin’s commitment to the mass demonstration seems to indicate his rejection of the polarity between the postmodern world (where all identities appear to be fluid and interchangeable) and fundamentalist politics that leaves little room for metaphoricity and transformation. Watching the demonstration of the human chain, Saladin “could not deny the power of the image” (556). Although the demonstration is hardly recognized by the mainstream media, the non-didactic presence of the mass suggests the possibility of collective identifications that are open to transformation. Saladin’s active engagement with this movement and his association with Bombay as the “actually existing place” is indicative of a new consciousness that does not neglect the national masses.

This chapter explored the creative and political possibilities of magic realism and hybridity in Salman Rushdie’s *The Satanic Verses*. Gibreel’s engagement with Englishness and his magical tropicalization of London challenge the stubborn national imagery that dismisses postcolonial histories and emergent immigrant voices. By means of supernatural transformation, Gibreel transfuses non-Western sceneries into the gloomy metropolis, destabilizing rigid Englishness that pathologically survives in the postimperial era. However, this instant change does not lead to collective actions. Gibreel’s performance is similar to

acting performance, and his intervention into the city remains within the realm of theatrical illusion. His prestigious position of bird's-eye view is accessible only to himself. Saladin is a more promising figure who produces collective identification through hybridization. By literally corporealizing racist discriminations of the British state, he grotesquely unmasks contemporary racism. His turn from incorporeal voice performances to the corporeal entity contingently produces interracial collective identification, bringing into the city a new communality. The final scene suggests Saladin's appropriation of and association with the Indian national masses that remain underrepresented.

While Rushdie expands the geographical frame by depicting the transnational movement of migrants, his representation of experiences of people in the margin is not so much direct and physical as imaginative and metaphorical. The next chapter addresses peripheral experiences in a rather literal sense, focusing on the mountainous region developed as a "hill station" in the Himalayan foothill area. I will read Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss* with particular attention to the ways in which the local scenery is perceived variously by characters in different social strata. The geography presented by the novel denaturalizes the predominant, colonialist notion of the Himalayas as an innocent place for retreat and recovery. In this process, Gurkha nationalism that seeks to attain regional autonomy is revealed to be predicated on the colonialist notion of masculinity. Nevertheless, the novel ends with a suggestion that Gurkha nationalism remains an irrevocable dilemma.

### Chapter 3: Landscapes and Perceptions of Nature in Kiran Desai's *The Inheritance of Loss*

Seven years after the publication of her first novel *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* in 1998, Kiran Desai made a striking return with her second book *The Inheritance of Loss*, for which she won the Man Booker Prize in 2006. Set in the mountainous region of Kalimpong in the Indian state of West Bengal, the novel depicts encounters of characters from different social strata against the background of the political turmoil during the 1986-88 escalation of the Gorkhaland movement. The land of Kalimpong, the main locale in which the story unfolds, has historically been developed as a “hill station,” a place of retreat and recovery, during the British colonial occupation. In the period in which the main story proceeds, Gurkha nationalism is at its peak in its bid to achieve political autonomy, bringing disorder and confusion to the region. Despite its peripheral setting in the Himalayan foothill area, the plot acquires a sense of historical depth and spatial expanse by encompassing past miserable memories of the former judge Jemubhai, who moved to Britain in his youth, and the current hardships of Biju, who migrated from Kalimpong to the United States and continues to work illegally in New York City. Along with the main plot in Kalimpong in the 1980s, these side stories give the impression that the novel is particularly relevant as a vivid reflection of the contemporary globalized world. John Sutherland, the chairman of the prior year's judges of the Man Booker prize, admires *The Inheritance* by stating the following: “Desai's novel registers the multicultural reverberations of the new millennium with the sensitive instrumentality of fiction, as [Ruth Praver] Jhabvala and [Salman] Rushdie did previous eras. . . . It is a globalised novel for a globalised world” (Ezard).

As globalized as it may be, the novel's putatively global or transnational frame does not immediately amount to a cosmopolitan perspective which endorses universal humanity. On the contrary, major thematic concerns of *The Inheritance* seem to consist in various divisions emerging in the supposedly globalized world. Factors ranging from nationality, ethnicity, political doctrine, class, gender, language, to the legacy of colonialism are deployed in such a way as to accentuate difficulties to bridge gulfs among characters in different social

circumstances. Few relationships among characters are free from constraints of social and political boundaries against which individuals seem to be almost powerless. For instance, Gurkha nationalism rising around the town of Kalimpong casts a shadow on the relationship between the protagonist, Sai, and Gyan, her lover, eventually causing a discord between them. Also, the cook working in Cho Oyu (Jemubhai's mansion) does not know his son Biju's precise whereabouts and at which restaurant in New York City he works. The intimacy between Sai, who grew up in a convent and understands only English, and the cook, a Hindi-speaker, is composed of "shallow things conducted in a broken language" and "[t]he brokenness made it easier never to go deep, never to enter into anything that requires an intricate vocabulary" (*Inheritance* 19). While the past history of colonialism and the current migratory movements under globalization constitute the background of these divides, perceptions of natural objects in the novel at times imply commonality beyond such divides. In other words, when characters and the anonymous narrator form dialogic relationships with natural objects, one catches a glimpse of a vision that deviates from rigid social divisions. A prime example of the obsolescence of borders may be found in the opening scene where young Gurkha guerrilla soldiers intrude into Cho Oyu to seize food and weapons:

They wanted their own country, or at least their own state, in which to manage their own affairs. Here, where India blurred into Bhutan and Sikkim, and the army did pull-ups and push-ups, maintaining their tanks with khaki paint in case the Chinese grew hungry for more territory than Tibet, it had always been a messy map. A great amount of warring, betraying, bartering had occurred; between Nepal, England, Tibet, India, Sikkim, Bhutan; Darjeeling stolen from here, Kalimpong plucked from there—despite, ah, despite the mist charging down like a dragon, dissolving, undoing, making ridiculous the drawing of borders. (9)

The narratorial voice is rather cold and ironical here. The current Gurkha insurrection is seen as yet another instance of the political and military practices of border-drawing in the region. The physical appearance of Gurkha nationalist teenage soldiers is presented as "universal guerilla fashion" (4) and, despite their ostensible insistence on the uniqueness as a "martial

race,” “all the boys are familiar with movie scenes where hero and heroine, befeathered in cosy winterwear, drank tea served in silver tea sets by polished servants” (5). Even the Gurkha movement aspiring to achieve regional autonomy is predominated with the Western cinematic images that circulate worldwide. The opening scene points to a paradoxical condition in which Western media images dispersed globally mold behaviors of separatist nationalists. Nevertheless, in the passage cited above, the anonymous narrator intervenes by counterposing “the mist,” a seemingly powerless natural presence, to the perennial cycle of territorialization, thereby suggesting the arbitrariness of border-drawing. This requires a critical consideration.

Political operations such as colonialism and nationalism always accompany practices of mapping of a given territory. As Walter Mignolo succinctly remarks, “map, rather than the Internet, was the first step of the imaginary of the modern/colonial world that we today call globalization” (Mignolo 726). The cartographical practice abstracts the land and render it subject to administration by the states and calculation by capital. Mary Louise Pratt observes in *Imperial Eyes* that the mapping of the globe advanced in such a rapid way amidst the rise of Western scientific expedition to determine the exact shape of the earth in the eighteenth century, creating among the European bourgeoisie “planetary consciousness” which formed a basis of modern Eurocentrism (Pratt 15). On the other hand, decolonization is an attempt of reterritorialization by means of proffering the land in a different ideological image. In her extensive study of how the territory of Indian had been “produced” by the colonial administration and anticolonial movement, historian Manu Goswami argues that discourses of Indian nationalism presented India as a particular geopolitical community that takes the path of the universal developmental history while at the same time obscuring internal social inequalities and conflicts (Goswami 242-276). As we shall see, Gyan sees the current Gurkha nationalist demonstration in parallel with the past struggle for independence of India. To take these ideological backgrounds about mapping and territorialization into consideration, the peculiarity of the mist that undoes the drawing of borders would become clearer. The mist, compared to such a mythic, suprahuman creature as a dragon, is not just something external to the human world. It is also presented as a medium through which

divisions among characters might be relativized. This chapter examines the ways in which representations and perceptions of natural objects in *The Inheritance* enact imaginations that address, if not overcome, divisions caused by colonialism and globalization. In so doing, it also explores how Gurkha nationalism is still trapped within the logic of British colonialism and argues that, for all the novel's ironical attitude towards and deconstruction of Gurkha as a "martial race," the durability of peripheral nationalism points to an aporia in which the emancipatory potential of mobility promised by globalization does not immediately mean the dissolution of nationalism per se.

The ecocritical approach to *The Inheritance* has already been offered by Jill Didur. Drawing upon art historian Jill Casid's argument about landscaping in the colonial setting, Didur interprets the novel's performance of "counterlandscaping."<sup>16</sup> Landscape as an object of contemplation separate from particular interests is a historical construct premised on material conditions that enable separation and observation. The construction of the Himalayan landscape, upheld by the Western notion of landscape, was inextricably linked to capital accumulation and power consolidation in the context of colonialism.<sup>17</sup> Didur asserts that, while the landscape of Darjeeling district, a hill station developed under colonial rule, also carry the burden of the history of dominance in *The Inheritance*, Desai intervenes by destabilizing such conventional conceptions of landscape: "Desai's narrative offers an alternative mode for imagining the Himalayan landscape that takes up essentializing colonial tropes and subverts their naturalized status" (Didur 59). By indicating the incompleteness of the colonial notion of landscape emerging in the nineteenth and twentieth century and the

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<sup>16</sup> Casid argues that practices of "landscaping" and colonialism were intimately related, demonstrating how the connection fabricated between the Western notion of picturesque and the perspective to observe the colonial landscape contributed to the objectification of the colonial land. The dissemination of a variety of representations produced in this process through print technology made it possible to reproduce such images and circulate them among the British public. (Casid 9).

<sup>17</sup> In *The Magic Mountains: Hill Stations and the British Raj*, Dane Kennedy investigates into the close relation between the development of the Himalayan region into a hill station and the colonial rule of India. For the British, the Himalayan foothills functioned both as a temporary sanctuary and as a strategic military site that played an important role in colonial rule: "Here they established closed communities of their own kind in a setting of their own design. As self-styled guardians of the raj, however, they also sought to supervise their subjects from these commanding heights. Here they established political headquarters and military cantonments, centers of power from whence they issued and executed orders with an Olympian air of omnipotence" (Kennedy 1).



possibility to subvert it, Didur insightfully performs a theoretical analysis of the rich descriptions of landscape that were largely unremarked upon by previous studies of the novel.<sup>18</sup> However, Didur's reading does not connect the novel's subversive practice of counterlandscaping with transnational migratory movements that invest the novel with "global" characteristics. For instance, Biju's grim experiences as an illegal immigrant worker in New York City are left almost untouched in her analysis. By focusing on perceptions of natural objects, I seek to argue that the novel not only denaturalize the idea of landscape but also aim at visualization of divisions produced under globalization. In the concluding chapter of the book mentioned above, Pratt suggests that neoliberalization that swept the world in the name of globalization from the 1980s onwards brought about the degradation of lives of migrants on a massive scale and led to the reconfiguration of citizenship and belonging. She notes how market math "does not count the incalculable costs that migrant labor imposes on individuals, families, communities, the interruption of generational and conjugal relationships, the cost to children of absent mentors, caretakers, and teachers," and contends that these sacrifices left unnoticed by statistics are left open to critical scrutiny by new geographers who "will be required to map the planet reconfigured yet again by the vast mobilizing powers of technology, curiosity, necessity, and empire" (Pratt 242-43). Experiences of transplanted migrants such as Biju bear witness to how a viewpoint of an unseen migrant may turn into a strategic site through which the logic of capitalism may be rendered visible.

### The Chronotope of the Periphery

It is first of all necessary to observe spatiotemporal configurations within which each character is situated. In *Cho Oyu*, a main locale in which the story unfolds, Jemubhai, who once studied abroad to Britain and returned to India to become a judge, is spending his

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<sup>18</sup> *Critical Responses to Kiran Desai*, a book-length collection of essays that examine Desai's two novels, does not contain any thesis that thematically addresses the connection between colonial landscaping and *The Inheritance*.

retired life. He is served by the cook who longs for his son's return from New York City. As Jemubhai reminisces about his departure from Bombay for Cambridge in his boyhood, he finds himself still caught deeply in his adolescent memory of travel: "He realized, to his surprise, that he was thinking of his own journeys, of his own arrivals and departures, from places far in his past. . . . Many years had passed, and yet the day returned to him vividly, cruelly" (35). Sai, Jemubhai's granddaughter, is immersed in the Western way of life, as evidenced in her ignorance of the Indian way of making tea. Jemubhai makes a link with Sai and himself who suffers from self-alienation and loathing for India: "She was a westernized Indian brought up by English nuns, an estranged Indian living in India. The journey he had started so long ago had continued in his descendants" (210). While it remains unclear what the title "The Inheritance of Loss" exactly indicates, it may refer to how the sense of self-alienation and self-loathing that Jemubhai developed under the colonial meritocratic system passes down to his granddaughter. More than anything else, it is the past memory that keeps haunting Jemubhai and occupies his mind. This makes a stark contrast to the feeling of the cook, who is obsessed with a sense of progress delivered through his son currently working in New York City: "Time might have died in the house that sat on the mountain ledge, its lines grown indistinct with moss, its roof loaded with ferns, but with each letter, the cook trundled toward the future" (17). Here, the stationary atmosphere of nature covering the mansion speaks for the sentiment of Jemubhai, whose mind is locked up in his past life as a tragic colonial elite. Meanwhile, the cook, tirelessly longing for advanced technology, feels rather hopeful for the future life he will share with his son. Physically close to each other, they are nonetheless divided not only by class but also by opposing modes of temporal perception stemming from colonialism and globalization.

However, the narrator's shifting viewpoint, moving across national boundaries, illuminates the logical continuity that upholds dominance in different historical stages. As the narrator discloses, it was a Scotsman who once came up with the idea of building this mansion. An ardent reader of travel accounts such as *The Indian Alps and How we Crossed Them* (written by an anonymous female mountaineer in 1876), he tried to challenge the mountain

summit his own way from an adventurist spirit. The antiquated house is thus an embodiment of romance associated with the Himalayas. Importantly, the narrator's viewpoint does not miss out the fact that such romance was founded on sacrifices made by local labourers:

As always, the price for such romance had been high and paid for by others. Porters had carried boulders from the riverbed—legs growing bandy, ribs curving into caves, back into U's, faces being bent slowly to look always at the ground—up to this site chosen for a view that could raise the human heart to spiritual heights. (12)

Whereas reverence for the Himalayan mountain range that could raise human minds to “spiritual heights” formed a basis of desire to erect the mansion, the actual construction work was carried out by native people. The labour was so demanding that their bodies eventually became crooked, preventing them from sharing the appreciation for the high mountains. It is thus shown that the Western romance projected on the lofty mountains was based on the exploitation of labour.

A case of labour being obscured by aesthetic appreciation is repeated in New York City in the 1980s, albeit in a more sophisticated, insidious way. Biju, who comes to New York City to find work, is amazed by a sheer variety of people that he has never seen before. In the course of moving from one restaurant to another, he comes to perceive the overwhelming racial and ethnic diversity to understand that “[t]here was a whole world in the basement kitchens of New York” (22). At the same time, the heterogenous crowds of workers of the city are clearly stratified, and an immigrant worker like Biju is rendered invisible while forced to provide work essential for the sustenance of society. In a somewhat farcical tone, the narrator gives an account of Biju's participation in the job market in New York City:

*Biju at the Baby Bistro.* Above, the restaurant was French, but below in the kitchen it was Mexican and Indian. And, when a Paki was hired, it was Mexican, Indian, Pakistani. Biju at Le Colonial for the authentic colonial experience. On top, rich colonial, and down below, poor native. Columbian, Tunisian, Ecuadorian, Gambian. On to the Stars and Stripes Diner. All American flag on top, all Guatemalan flag below. Plus one Indian flag when Biju arrived. (21)

In the contemporary era when colonialism premised on geographical divisions is by and large over, “the authentic colonial experience” is deterritorialized and turned into a commodity available in the metropolis. And yet, the commodity is unsustainable without invisible immigrants categorized as outsiders. The extensive list of nationalities and ethnicities of workers enumerated by the narrator seems to have a peculiar effect. In *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism*, Rey Chow reflects on “the ethnicization of labour” in contemporary capitalism. Chow argues that the modern conception of ethnicity is a profoundly paradoxical one that possesses both universalist and particularist aspects. While everyone is assumed to have an ethnicity, in practical terms it is always given only to non-whites. The modern idea of “the ethnic subject” is nothing other than a boundary marker generated within the privileged society, and such subjects are required to take a part in indispensable work while conceived as outsiders:

To be classified as ethnic by white society . . . is to be granted a radical—indeed, politically avant-garde—kind of *recognition*, which compounds a straightforward discrimination and intolerance—based on clear-cut, hierarchical boundaries—with an inclusionist, liberalist cultural logic. While it often subscribes to exactly the same boundaries as its reactionary counterparts, this liberalist cultural logic meanwhile democratizes these boundaries rhetorically with honorable terms such as “multiculturalism” and “diversity” and practically by way of the proliferation of enclaves and ghettos (within institutions such as government bureaucracies, corporations, universities, and so forth). (Chow 29; emphasis original)

In this way, the notion of ethnicity authorizes the contradictory coexistence of “theoretical equality” and “practical inequality,” providing a measure to maintain essential workers necessary to sustain society. Biju’s experiences at restaurants attest to the ways in which Americanist principles of inclusive universalism contradictorily exclude ethnicized subjects. By providing the list of copious ethnicities, the narrator in its ironical tone renders visible the deceptive character of the idea of ethnicity. Furthermore, the “up and down” structure is presented as a parallel with the past episode of how spiritual romance for the Himalayan

summit repressed local labourers. The novel's extensive temporal frame that captures the structural resemblance between these distinct occasions bear witness to the logical consistency of oppression under colonialism and globalization.

### Collapsing Landscapes

Characters' spatial cognizance is also put under radical transformation. Noni and Lola, the two sisters who live in Mon Ami, a mansion located close to Cho Oyu, lead an affluent lifestyle not dissimilar to the elite of the colonial period up to the present and does not hesitate to show distaste for indigenous culture. Lola's commentary on V. S. Naipaul clearly shows that the sisters inherited a colonial way of thinking. Laura mocks him for sticking to the past and writing everything out of his colonial memories, claiming that Naipaul suffers from "colonial neurosis" (46). She emphasizes that fish and chips have been replaced by chicken tikka masala in today's multicultural Britain and insists that Britain is now a "completely cosmopolitan society" (46). The multiculturalist rhetoric of ethnic culture assuming commercial value, as seen in the episode of Biju, affects the sisters as well. However, this only shows that they imaginatively identify with consumer culture of developed countries, and the sisters did not struggle to overcome the influence of colonialism. Rather, it is they who blindly inherit the legacy of the colonial period. This is inevitably made clear when their land is invaded by Gurkha guerrillas. One morning, when the sisters wake up, they see "a hut had come up like a mushroom" (240) on a newly cut gash in Mon Ami's vegetable garden. When they protest that the land is theirs, the soldiers plainly reply, "It is a free land . . . unoccupied land" (240). In this way, the sisters are reminded of their powerlessness. It is at this moment of nationalist invasion of their land that the specific sense of place that the sisters have protected for so long is disclosed. At the core of this sense lies the picturesque aesthetic:

The real place had evaded them. The two of them had been fools feeling they were doing something exciting just by occupying this *picturesque* cottage, by seducing themselves with those old travel books in the library, searching for a certain angled

light with which to romance themselves, to locate what had been conjured only as a tale to tell before the Royal Geographic Society, when the author returned to give a talk accompanied by sherry and a scrolled certificate of honor spritzed with gold for an exploration of the far Himalayan kingdoms—but far from what? Exotic to whom? It was the center for the sisters, but they had never treated it as such. (247; emphasis added)

The sisters' confusion about their location in their imaginative geography must be considered in conjunction with the historical background. According to Sandeep Banerjee's study that examines the role that the Himalayan foothills played in colonial India, ever since the beginning of the nineteenth century, the foothill areas have been recorded by enormous volumes of British travelogues, memoirs, research records, paintings, and in the later stage photographs, all of which were circulated in Britain. In addition to these representational dimensions, the areas were materially intervened and developed as summer resorts for the British to escape from the sweltering heat of the Indian plains. By the early twentieth century, the mountains surrounding the summer resort had become a "natural border" between colonial India and its neighboring districts such as Afghanistan and Tibet. Banerjee points out that while "sublime" was important in perceiving the world's highest towering mountains, people actually intervened into mountains by climbing, writing travel journals and inhabiting them. In such circumstances, the picturesque mode has been mobilized as an aesthetic style to "tame" the overwhelming sublimity (Banerjee 101-104).<sup>19</sup> Given these backgrounds, it is clear that the sisters' feelings in the above quote stem from the history of colonialism. Such anecdotes as the elegant presentation of experiences at a faraway Himalayan kingdom at the Royal Geographic Society, as Banerjee points out, are typical of travelogues produced in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. The sisters who internalized these imperialistic fantasies end up learning the absurdity of such fantasies when they get involved in the Gurkha military activity.

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<sup>19</sup> See Buzard for the ways in which the development of the notion of picturesque was associated with British travelogues written from the end of the eighteenth century onwards.

It is not only these fantasies but also the very attempts to manage the natural environment that collapse under the influence of Gurkha nationalism. As their movement intensifies, the land of Kalimpong undergoes brutal changes. The following quote also illustrates the violent intervention of Gurkha nationalism into nature. Soldiers expel Father Bootie, an immigrant missionary from Switzerland, and burn government buildings and other properties, destroying paradisiacal images of mountain landscapes with perpetual peace:

The GNLF [Gorkha National Liberation Front] boys had burned down the government rest house by the river, beyond the bridge where Father Booty had photographed the polka-dotted butterfly. In fact, forest inspection bungalows all over the district were burning, upon whose verandas generations of ICS [Indian Civil Service] men had stood and admired the serenity, the hovering, angelic peace of dawn and dusk in the mountains. (280)

It is notable that destructions of the idyllic landscape are conceived primarily in visual terms. The novel seems to put emphasis on how visual perceptions of the Himalayan environment have been prioritized in the colonial imagination which regarded the local territory as an innocent, depoliticized place. As Banerjee's study suggests, the aesthetic perception of the local space was closely connected to the colonialist practices of intervention into mountain regions. The present Gurkha movement puts such sense of place in radical transformation, destroying the colonialist images projected on the natural world. Nevertheless, as we have already seen, the gestures of these nationalists themselves are but a copy of heroic images produced in cinema and other reproducible representations. When Gyan becomes fascinated by the street demonstration of Gurkha nationalism, the raucous crowds are pictured as "Bruce Lee fans in their American T-shirts made-in-China-coming-in-via-Kathmandu" and "behaving as if they were being featured in a documentary of war" (157). To the eyes of Gyan who gets involved in the demonstration rather hesitantly, the Gurkha movement turns out to be nothing but a repetition of India's independence movement: "Gyan remembered the stirring stories of when citizens had risen up in their millions and demanded that the British leave. . . . If a nation had such a climax in its history, its heart, would it not hunger for it again?"

(158) Put simply, the Gurkha movement is a variation of conventional nationalism that calls for the repossession of territory, and their alleged uniqueness as a “martial race” is inconceivable without reference to the history of Indian nationalism and Western film images.<sup>20</sup> It is Biju, a young immigrant living in extreme poverty in New York City, who provides an alternative perspective to this.

#### From Landscape to Soundscape

Dreaming of a rich American lifestyle, Biju ends up finding himself spending a very miserable life in New York City. He internalizes the logic of invisibility as seen in the spatial segmentation at restaurants and even renders himself invisible in the metropolis. Unable to benefit from the advanced lifestyle imagined by his father, he does not even know the name of the American president, and he has little knowledge of the river embankments he walks on every day and a whole range of tourist attractions in the city. Worrying about the news of the Gurkha insurrection, Biju at one point makes a phone call to his father in Kalimpong. While the phone line is so crossed that they cannot even talk properly, Biju’s imagination conjures up the natural environment of his homeland in such an intensely vivid way:

The atmosphere of Kalimpong reached Biju all the way in New York; it swelled densely on the line and he could feel the pulse of the forest, smell the humid air, the green-black lushness; he could imagine all its different textures, the plumage of banana, the stark spear of the cactus, the delicate gestures of ferns; he could hear the croak *trrrr whonk, wee wee butt ock butt ock* of frogs in the spinach, the rising note welding imperceptibly with the evening. . . . (230; emphasis original)

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<sup>20</sup> Identifying the ideological origin of Gurkha as a “martial race” in discursive practices of the Indian Army and Victorian popular culture, Heather Streets highlights the race’s colonial origin and its implicit association with two other races, Scottish Highlanders and Punjabi Sikhs, which were likewise represented as possessing the fiercest, most manly dispositions in the British Empire. While massive transformations and difficulties brought about by modernization, poverty, and changes in land-use were largely ignored, Gurkhas were invested with particular racial qualities: “Once recruited, ‘Gurkha’ men frequently found themselves forced to adapt to British ideas about their behaviours and traditions, and in the process found themselves compelled to adopt alien rituals, customs, foods and dances as their own. As a ‘race’, then, Gurkhas can truly be said to have been both produced and maintained in the Indian Army and nowhere else” (Streets 9).



The natural world inspires Biju's imagination through tactile and auditory senses in such an intense way that he smells the air and hears sounds of the forest. This is somewhat different from predominant modes of perceiving nature in the novel. As Noni and Lola were "searching for a certain angled light with which to romance themselves" and Father Bootie "photographed the polka-dotted butterfly," characters in Kalimpong perceive nature mainly through visual senses. Likewise, it was from the particular point of view at the veranda that the Indian Civil Service officers, who had lived in the bungalow from generation to generation, had enjoyed the atmosphere of angelic peace. In contrast to their perceptions, the imaginary natural environment approaches Biju in a more vivid, stimulating way. The air of Kalimpong inflated on the phone line directly evokes senses of touch, smell, and hearing as well as vision. Whereas the concept of landscape implies a certain distance between the observer and the observed object, Biju's perception suggests immersion and integration into nature. As is implied in the frogs' onomatopoeic cries, what Biju senses is not so much landscape as "soundscape." As soundscape theorist R. Murray Schafer notes, in modernity human perception has marginalized auditory perception and shifted its main focus to vision (Schafer 10). And yet, in this instance, the modern technology of the telephone paradoxically brings to Biju a sense of communion with nature. At the climax of the novel in which Biju finally returns to his homeland and sees the scenery of his hometown for the first time in several years, the natural environment seems to exhibit the peculiar vitality that deviates from human management:

Biju hadn't seen such vastness in a long time—the sheer, overwhelming enormity of mountainside and scree coming down the flank of it. In places, the entire mountain had simply fallen out of itself, spread like a glacier with boulders, uprooted trees. Across the destruction, the precarious ant trail of the road was washed away. He felt exhilarated by the immensity of wilderness, by the lunatic creepers, the shooting hooting abundance of green, the great caterwauling vulgarity of frogs that was like the sound of the earth and the air itself. (315)

Despite the initial exhilaration, the scenery of Biju's homeland confronts him in a fierce way.

For Biju, the view is neither tranquil nor aesthetically pleasing. Moreover, he does not have the privilege of keeping a comfortable distance from which to observe the mountains. Riding a car on the rough road that leads to his hometown, Biju feels that “[d]eath was so close—he had forgotten this in his eternal existence in America—this constant proximity of one’s nearest destination” (311). The rise of the Gurkha movement impedes proper management of the local land and the natural world regains its own rhythm to relativize the human world. The change in the environment also affects how Sai’s conception of the surrounding world. Although she used to be an ardent reader of *National Geographic*, a journal of scientific descriptions of nature, she gains a new mode to appreciate nature at the climax of the story:

All night it would rain. It would continue, off and on, on and off, with a savagery matched only by the ferocity with which the earth responded to the onslaught. Uncivilized voluptuous green would be unleashed; the town would slide down the hill. Slowly, painstakingly, like ants, men would make their paths and civilization and their wars once again, only to have it wash away again. . . . (323)

What Sai feels here is a distinct temporality of nature that dwarfs human activities to map and conquer the world. Human beings are compared to “ants” and forces of political doctrines—whether imperialistic or nationalistic—are relativized. As with the narrator’s depiction of the mist cited earlier, Sai’s viewpoint, which captures the longer endurance of the natural cycle, points to the possibility of an alternative perspective that views human society from the outside. What is important, Sai’s perception is anticipated by Biju’s experience and, despite their differences in social status and life experience, they obtain the similar type of perspective through their perception of nature. The novel inclines towards the possibility that Sai and Biju achieve a common type of appreciation of nature despite their distinct social standpoints.

The novel ends with the suggestion that Sai would leave Kalimpong to start her life anew. Her departure is, of course, presaged by Biju whose journey turned out to be miserable. It remains unclear what Sai’s future journey would bring about.<sup>21</sup> The fact that Biju lost all

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<sup>21</sup> David Spielman discerns an opposition between Biju and Sai, stating that “[t]he implicit comparisons that Desai arranges demonstrate that those who insist upon solid knowledge suffer repeated misery and misfortune,

the money he earned abroad to Gurkha soldiers just prior to his return seems to be an ironical reminder that the liberatory potential of mobility promised by globalization is unevenly distributed and does not apply to every immigrant. For all its deconstruction of the colonialist origin of Gurkha as a martial race and depiction of pervasive effects of Western media images upon their behaviours, in the final analysis the novel seems to emphasize that this regional nationalism remains an unresolvable dilemma within both the domestic and global realms. The geography of the so-called “globalized world” mapped out by the novel captures this aporia while suggesting that experiences of characters resonate with each other across the spatial and temporal expanse by way of the depictions of dialogic relationships between human and nature.

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while those unbothered by contradictions do not. . . . Desai contributes to debates about postcolonial/immigrant agency and identity in *The Inheritance of Loss* by advocating neither the preservation of cultural distinctiveness nor assimilation, but rather ambivalence and flexibility” (Spielman 87-88). However, Desai’s narrative retains a rather ironical tone about cultural flexibility, as seen in the deployment of Western media images in the Gurkha movement.

#### Chapter 4: “Ruin Landscape” in Michelle Cliff’s *No Telephone to Heaven*

In *Culture and Imperialism*, Edward Said characterizes the scheme of colonialist enterprises as follows: “To think about distant places, to colonize them, to populate or depopulate them: all of this occurs on, about, or because of land. The actual geographical possession of land is what empire in the final analysis is all about” (Said, *Culture and Imperialism* 78). Said considers “geographical sense” to be the basis upon which various types of projections, whether military, economic, historical, or, more generally, cultural, can be constructed.<sup>22</sup> He then goes on to argue that such projections constitute what Marxist geographer Neil Smith calls “second nature,” a peculiar mode of nature permeated with exchange-value (N. Smith 66-69). Accordingly, when he adumbrates projects of anticolonial imagination, Said discerns the urge to

seek out, to map, to invent, or to discover a *third* nature, not pristine and pre-historical (‘Romantic Ireland’s dead and gone,’ says Yeats) but deriving from the deprivations of the present. The impulse is cartographic, and among its most striking examples are Yeats’s early poems collected in ‘The Rose,’ Neruda’s various poems charting the Chilean landscape, Césaire on the Antilles, Faiz on Pakistan, and Darwish on Palestine. (226; emphasis original)

Since a retreat into the primordial geography immune to deprivations of colonialism is not feasible for the colonized, a quest for a “third nature” turns out to be progressive rather than regressive. As John Bellamy Foster remarks, the creation of a third nature “would both restore (in part) what had existed before and would transform the human relation to nature into something new” (Foster 53). The potential scope of this endeavor is thus far-reaching; not only does it draw a critical map of the lingering effects of colonialism and devastating impacts of neocolonialism, but it also reappropriates social, cultural, and environmental space of the

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<sup>22</sup> For further discussions on the relevance of Said as a geocritic, see Tally. See also Deloughrey and Handley for the ways in which Said’s attention to the geographical dimension of colonialism may be linked to the problematics of ecocriticism.

(former) colony to advance a reorientation of human relations with nature. Said's formulation of third nature, although insufficiently developed in his own work, has broad implications for the emerging dialog between postcolonial criticism and ecocriticism.<sup>23</sup>

The rather abstract formulation outlined above finds concrete relevance in the context of the Caribbean, where the tourism industry deprives the region of spatial uniqueness and turns it into a place for recreation and leisure. It is into the milieu of such insidious neocolonialism, arguably an extension of outright colonialism, that Michelle Cliff's *No Telephone to Heaven*, the object of this chapter, aspires to intervene. *No Telephone* is a developmental story of Clare Savage, a creole woman from Jamaica who struggles to find a place of her own over the course of her trans-Atlantic immigration. In particular, for our purposes, the novel has thematic concerns for spatial configurations. In what follows, I first track the ways in which Clare's immigration across the Atlantic challenges her to revise her sense of location in the postcolonial world. Second, I investigate the methods through which contemporary Jamaican land is commodified and exploited by the tourism industry. Finally, I discuss Clare's attempts to reconstitute a relationship with her native land. The final challenge is burdened by a deep contradiction as any human projections toward nature run the risk of anthropomorphizing the nonhuman world. However, the novel's desire for an alternate relationship with nature is such that, although the protagonist attempts to evoke historical interactions with the natural world, it ultimately seeks to defy anthropomorphism inherent in linguistic representation.<sup>24</sup> The novel's ending resolves the dilemma of the linguistic unrepresentability of the natural world by transforming it into a momentary synthesis between human projection and nature's vitality, positing it as an expression of the novel's aspiration for a renewed relationship with nature.

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<sup>23</sup> For a detailed account regarding the intersection between the two divergent critical traditions, see Graham Huggan's *Interdisciplinary Measures* 64-90. In her Edward Said London Lecture delivered in 2016, Naomi Klein attempts to link Said's wide-ranging critique of "othering" with the current crisis under global climate change.

<sup>24</sup> For an extensive argument on anthropomorphism and literature's implicit tendency to subvert anthropomorphic description, see Noda.

## Ruin Landscape and Matrilineal Ancestry

In previous studies on Michelle Cliff's semi-autobiographical novels, matrilineality has often been held as a central factor. Jennifer J. Smith finds the "recuperation of a matrilineal ancestry" to be a defining characteristic of Cliff's writing (Smith 141). Another line of criticism notes the significance of the protagonist's reclamation of Jamaican native land. Yi-Peng Lai's ecocritical reading suggests that "Cliff demonstrates the land's ecological power, rather than colonial, neocolonial or post-neocolonial powers, with which a neighborhood reconstructs itself as the primitivity of Third World national consciousness" (Lai 51). These two divergent aspects are crystallized in the term "ruinate," a keyword that appears sporadically throughout *No Telephone*. Cliff's authorial comment encapsulates the essence of this peculiar term:

*Ruinate*, the adjective, and *ruination*, the noun, are Jamaican inventions. Each word signifies the reclamation of land, of cultivation, civilization, by the uncontrolled, uncontrollable forest. When a landscape becomes ruinate, carefully designed aisles of cane are envined, strangled, the order of empire is replaced by the chaotic forest. The word *ruination* (especially) signifies this immediately; it contains both the word *ruin*, and *nation*. A landscape in ruination means one in which the imposed nation is overcome by the naturalness of ruin. ("Caliban's Daughter" 40; emphasis original)

Cliff invests ruination with uncontrollable ecological power that exceeds political imposition. The motif of ruinate landscape is seemingly associated with matrilineal ancestry. Referring to the repeated appearance of the grandmother figure in her novels, Cliff elsewhere remarks that "Hers [the grandmother's] is a power directly related to landscape" ("Clare Savage" 266). Ruinate landscape for Cliff is also an unstable and shifting signifier permeated with historicity. In *Abeng*, the prequel to *No Telephone*, young Clare imagines the unspoken history of slavery to be buried in rich forests: "The bones of dead slaves made the land at Runaway Bay rich and green" (*Abeng* 41). Clare's nascent imagination figuratively "unearths" the history of slavery that is actively dismissed by formal education. Moreover, historical knowledge gained

from reading Anne Frank's *The Diary of a Young Girl* prompts her to parallel the suffering of Jewish people with her neighboring geography: "And while she limited the Holocaust to Europe in her mind, her mind cast its environment in places that she knew of sight" (*Abeng* 76).<sup>25</sup> Historical issues of a distant era and place are here supplemented by the protagonist's mediative imagination. Cliff puts spatial imagination in a dialectical relationship with historical recognition.

The dialectic finds a particular embodiment in the protagonist's development, as meticulously depicted in *No Telephone*. Clare's imagination for space and history is vitalized through her experience of trans-Atlantic migration. As a teenager, she accompanies her parents to the U.S. in pursuit of a better life as a "passed" white. After some years at school in Brooklyn and the death of her beloved mother, Clare moves to England for further education. This seemingly personal choice is nevertheless informed by geopolitical and racial dynamics originating in colonial modernity; she was "choosing London with the logic of a creole. This was the mother-country. The country by whose grace her people existed in the first place. Her place could be here" (109). Her racial status as a creole guides her to the capital of her "mother-country" as a potential site of belonging. However, the ascension of the educational hierarchy also accompanies the transformation in her spatial comprehension. While suffering from sleeplessness in her new dwelling, she finds herself drawing "the world map in her brain, drenching those sections in red which contained the Empire, now Commonwealth" (110). The objectification of the Commonwealth in cartographical imagery seems to prepare her to appropriate a sense of place propagated by Western knowledge. Later, in graduate school, "[s]he was praised for the way she analyzed Aristotle's definition of *place* in the *Physics*. Each thing exists in place. Each thing is described by place. Would this knowledge have pleased her mother?" (117). Clare's renewed interest in the abstract notion of place immediately redirects her to the concrete memory of her lost mother with whom she

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<sup>25</sup> Aimé Césaire expounds on the underlying linkage between Nazism and colonization, suggesting that both are expressions of barbarity inherent in Western civilization. (6-46). For further discussions on the treatment of Holocaust history in Cliff's works, see Casteel.

is beginning to identify. England as a symbolical “mother-country,” mentioned only a few pages earlier, is now superseded by her actual mother, which prepares her to approach her darker matrilineal ancestry.

As seen in the nexus between spatial cognition and maternal memory, the matrilineal ancestry inextricably tied to slave history stimulates Clare to reconceptualize Jamaican land. This stimulation first occurs in the process of Clare’s reflection on what she learns in London. While she reads Charlotte Brontë’s *Jane Eyre*, Clare tries to associate her current solitude with that of Jane, only to recognize that Bertha is easier to identify with: “No, she could not be Jane. Small and pale. English. No, she paused. No, my girl, try Bertha. Wild-maned Bertha. . . Yes, Bertha was closer the mark. Captive. Ragout. Mixture. Confused. Jamaican. Caliban. Carib. Cannibal. Cimarron. All Bertha. All Clare” (116).<sup>26</sup> Her identification with Bertha as an icon of her Caribbean ancestry seems to stem from a longing for her dead mother. Soon after this, Clare imagines that “[h]er mother was standing next to the bed, looking down at her daughter. Making as if to speak. Then drawing her hand across her mouth as if to wipe away her words” (116). The unspoken language of her ghostly mother drives Clare to seek a relocation of her place in the world. The search for an appropriate place to locate herself proves to be imminent: “She thought of her, her youth, her color, her strangeness, her unbearable loneliness. Where was she now?” (137). Although Clare reads Enoch Powell’s infamous “Rivers of Blood” speech at an earlier age with no apparent emotional disturbance (“She read the pronouncements of Enoch Powell, classics scholar” [114]), later in the narrative, she is deeply upset by The National Front’s racist demonstrations in the streets of London. When her college friend tells her not to “take it personally,” Clare hesitantly replies: “Some of my ancestors were Caribs . . . cannibals” (139). Her emergent identification with Caribbean ancestry seems to be prefigured by her mother’s last message, another strong medium between Clare and her matrilineal lineage. Shortly before her death,

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<sup>26</sup> Cliff admits that this is an allusion to Jean Rhys’ rewriting of Bertha as a critic of imperialism in *Wide Sargasso Sea* (“Clare Savage” 264-65). For a comparative reading of *Jane Eyre* and *Wide Sargasso Sea*, see Spivak.



she writes to Clare: “I hope someday you make something of yourself, and someday help your people.’ A reminder, daughter—never forget who your people are. Your responsibilities lie beyond me, beyond yourself. There is a space between who you are and who you will become. Fill it” (103). The word “space” here has both literal and metaphorical implications. On one level, it refers to the real geographical space of the Atlantic that Clare crossed in her youth; on another level, it figuratively points to the temporal and cognitive gap between Clare’s present self and her future life, presumably engaged with the underprivileged masses of Jamaica, whose history is deeply shadowed by colonial slavery. The responsibility “beyond” Clare and her mother is something that transcends their finite individual lives. The imperative left by her dead mother thus reorients Clare’s development and prompts her to move beyond her personal interests and connect herself with Jamaican land and people in a predicament.

#### The Predicament under the Tourism Industry

Clare’s growing imagination for space motivates her to move herself toward a closer relationship with the land of her birth. Nevertheless, Clare’s return to Jamaica, actualized under the guidance of her friend Harry/Harriet, is by no means a happy reunification with an uncontaminated homeland. Contemporary Jamaican society, characterized by poverty and material scarcity, suffers a chronic inability to take hold of its economy and development. As the local postmistress Miss Cherry tells Clare: “There was new government. One party. And shortages—severe. Petrol at ten dollars a gallon—like salt, on the rise. And the dollar falling fast. People said the IMF [International Monetary Fund] might repossess the country. It was a time of more hideaways for the rich—the expansion of the sandbox” (187). Jamaica’s passive incorporation into the global economy accompany a set of peculiar spatial attributions, as implied in such words as “hideaways” and “sandbox.” These terms indicate how the space of Jamaica is rendered devoid of any vestiges of indigenous history and turned into an artificial playground for tourists. The ultimate but logical consequence of the homogenizing procedure is the fabrication of interchangeability between the local land and other irrelevant locations. When a British film director searching

for a suitable location for filming roams around, for example, he can make an easy comparison between the landscape of the South of France and that of Jamaica: “I found a location looks just like the fucking South of France, except for all the black bums on the beach” (203). The exchangeability between the two locales indicates that, for Western tourists, the value of Jamaican land lies solely in its delightful appearance. Similarly, a fictive advertisement from the *New York Times* that Clare finds in her grandmother’s house testifies to the same quality imposed on the country: “[Jamaica] has mountains that rise to more than 7,000 feet, waterfalls, caves, wide open areas that resemble the African plain and even arid sections that will pass for desert” (200). Deprived of any trace of unique historicity and spatial distinctiveness, the Jamaican landscape is turned into a kind of “natural resource” for tourism and the entertainment industry, a variant of “second nature” as exploitative as plantation economy. Harry/Harriet’s concise remark epitomizes this quality of contemporary Jamaican land: “Our homeland is turned to stage set too much” (121).

The homogenization and commodification of the local space give rise to historical stasis. In his general critique of “historicism” that posits Europe as the singular source of modernity, Dipesh Chakrabarty observes that the colonial world is locked in a contradictory position which he calls “an imaginary waiting room of history,” a peculiar temporal structure in which inhabitants of the (former) colony persistently spend “a period of preparation and waiting before they could be recognized as full participants in political modernity” (8-9). Chakrabarty’s point is suggestive as it indicates that former colonies (such as Jamaica) suffer the unending deterrence of an entry into sovereignty and autonomy that modernity ostensibly promises. Even more daunting in the Jamaican context is how the tourism industry, with its hunger for exoticism, forces the country to constantly replicate particular images emanating from plantation colonialism. Harry/Harriet observes this with lucidity: “But we are of the past here. . . . We expect people to live on cornmeal and dried fish, which was the diet of the slaves. We name hotels Plantation Inn and Sans Souk. . . . A peculiar past. For we have taken our master’s past as our own” (127). Her observation suggests that even the cruelty of plantation

economy is exploited and commodified by the tourism industry.<sup>27</sup> It is with a keen recognition of such backwardness that Harry/Harriet invites Clare to join their fight to reclaim genuine historicity: “Come back to us, once your studies are finished. Could help bring us into the present” (127). The historical backwardness is captured by the more urgent tone of an anonymous guerrilla leader who interviews Clare: “If you have been here for the past two years, then you realize all progress is backward, and the gaps become wider. People are left for dead—more than ever” (195).

In stark contrast to tourism’s rendering of Jamaican land as static, ahistorical, and exchangeable, Clare’s conception of her homeland is marked by its absolute singularity: “I returned to this island to mend. . . to bury. . . my mother. . . I returned to this island because there was nowhere else. . . I could live no longer in borrowed countries, on borrowed time” (192-3). How, then, does the novel envisage the Jamaican land that deviates from the tourism industry’s reductionist representation? Building on Henri Lefebvre’s paradigm of abstract space produced by the capital and subversive potentials of concrete space of everyday life against abstraction, Janie Beriault insightfully argues that the novel’s disclosure of “local social practices” and “the lived dimensions of Jamaica” undermines the erasure of local history and brings about “the readers’ understanding of Jamaican space beyond the constructions offered by the tourism industry” (Beriault 669). Although descriptive accounts of everyday lives upholding the sanitized paradise of Jamaica from the underside may well be disturbing to the eyes of Western tourists, this view should still be supplemented by a close analysis of landscape that is richly presented throughout the novel. What is pertinent to our reading of *No Telephone*, particularly in light of our exploration of “third nature,” is the ways in which the novel treats ruiinate landscape as a dynamic locus that urges the redefinition of human relationships with nature. Instead of Lefebvre’s insight into the potentiality of everyday life, I would draw on Anthony Vital’s ecocritical interpretive scheme that

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<sup>27</sup> Scholarship on Caribbean tourism has emphasized a certain continuity between plantation colonialism and contemporary tourism. Ian Gregory Strachan observes that “as an institution of colonization, the plantation established a political and economic dependency on the metropolitan centers that tourism merely extends” (Strachan 9). See Sheller for a similar argument.

acknowledges the “historicity of ecology” and “the complex interplay of social history with the natural world” (90). This approach, Vital suggests, recognizes that “language cannot deliver the material world (‘nature’) free of linguistic, cultural, or social mediation,” and critical attention is thus paid to “histories of change, social and environmental, for indication of the situations through which language has evolved” (90). Vital’s history-oriented ecocritical scheme is valuable when reading the landscape in *No Telephone* as it allows for a focus not only on dynamic interactions between nature and humans but also on the constructed character of linguistic representations of the natural world. Although the manner in which the landscape is historicized is an act of resistance against capital’s commodification, the novel’s final aspiration is directed toward conceiving the ruinate landscape as an uncontrollable locus.

#### Beyond Anthropomorphism

Clare embarks on the reconstitution of a singular relationship with the land by gleaning fragmented pieces of history. As in projections of the Holocaust onto the Jamaican landscape in *Abeng*, historical sense assists Clare in creatively reimagining the present landscape. Although slavery is one of the most significant aspects that characterizes Caribbean history, it remains obscure owing to the ambiguities presented through formal education. However, the memory of her mother helps Clare compensate for the epistemological lack of slave history: “Unquiet ground, that—children feared the anger of the spirits, who did not rest, who had not been sung to their new home. Her mother had told her of the slaves. Her people” (174). Supported by maternal memory, Clare’s imagination allows her to perceive the ghostly presence of unquiet spirits and locate herself within the untold tragic history of slavery.

Nonetheless, Clare’s atavistic impulse is problematic because of its approximation to a conventional nationalist discourse that posits women as the authentic body of ancestral tradition. The transposition of symbolic maternity from the imperial center to her own ancestry not so much challenges as supplements the linearity of modern historical time which

has its theoretical roots in Western nationalism.<sup>28</sup> However, a closer investigation would reveal that the novel's evocation of local historicity through ruinate landscapes proves to be far more expansive than Clare initially anticipates. As we have seen, Cliff posits the ruinate landscape not only as a mere backdrop but also as an active intruder into human life. The intrusion turns out to be a dynamic and enduring process that spans both the colonial and precolonial periods. For instance, when Clare revisits the land of her grandmother's estate, the land's forestation evokes ecological power lasting from the precolonial age: "The house could not be seen at all. The house so hidden so it seemed to exist no longer. Once the center of their life in this place. . . Nothing but the chaos of the green—reaching across space, time too it seemed. When only Arawaks and iguanas and birds and crocodiles and snakes dwelt there" (172). Reaching into the precolonial past and encroaching on the present, "the chaos of the green" expresses its own rhythm and vitality. The ecological sphere's spatial and temporal expanse feels unsettling to Clare as her grandmother's memory inscribed on the land is never immune to the invasive power of reforestation: "The forest had obliterated the family graves, so that the grandmother and her husband, and their son who died before them, were wrapped by wild vines which tangled the mango trees shading their plots, linking them further to the wild trees, anchoring their duppies to the ground" (8). Although Cliff is, as Izabella Penier rightly asserts, at times inclined to take a path toward "the anachronistic tradition of essentialism" (Penier 165) by idealizing mythic maternal figures, this inclination toward atavism is counterpoised by the recognition of the land's uncontrollable vegetation, which human projections can never contain. The otherness of the nonhuman environment is all the more evident in a rare scene in which natural creatures appear to signify something. As anonymous guerillas head to Clare's grandmother's estate, they hear "the harsh metallic voices of cling-cling blackbirds, questioning, it seemed, who those people were and asking

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<sup>28</sup> Anne McClintock observes that the view of women as atavistic figures is shared by British nationalism and colonialism: "Britain's emerging national narrative gendered time by figuring women (like the colonized and the working class) as inherently atavistic—the conservative repository of the national archaic. Women were not seen as inhabiting history proper but existing, like colonized peoples, in a permanently anterior time within the modern nation" (McClintock 359).

what was their purpose here” (4); similarly, other animals “wondered who these people were and what was their purpose in this place. The animals knew this only as a wild, unhumaned place” (9). Although the indigenous animals are ventriloquized by the narrator’s mediation (particularly through the insertion of the clause “it seemed”), their very voices question the guerrillas’ legitimacy in the land.

Clare’s attempt to reestablish a singular relation with Jamaican land is troubled by a dilemma: while the protagonist seeks to attain a reunification with the land by reconstituting ancestral memory, the land is in a position to relativize any human projections on nature. If, as Lawrence Buell remarks, an environmental text is distinguished by the quality that “the nonhuman environment is present not merely as a framing device but as a presence that begins to suggest that human history is implicated in natural history” (Buell 7), the same feature is observable in Cliff’s text. Clare’s identification with her native land accompanies this fundamental tension between human history and natural history. Nevertheless, this dilemma is, I argue, precisely what enhances the novel’s compulsion to advance a reorientation of human relationships with nature. The tension culminates at the end of the novel when Clare and her fellow guerilla fighters die in their desperate attack on a film crew that attempts a further commodification of Jamaican local scenery. After a brief exchange of gunfire, Clare seems to lose consciousness and any meaningful sense of language:

She remembered language.

Then                    it was gone.

cutacoo, cutacoo, cutacoo

coo, cu, cu, coo

coo, cu, cu, coo

piju, piju, piju

cuk, cuk, cuk, cuk,

tuc-tuc-tuc-tuc-tuc

[. . .]

Day broke. (208)

After Clare's language is "gone," the narrative is dominated by the indecipherable onomatopoeies of birdsongs and animal cries. It is as if the narrator, who thus far followed Clare's perspective with such closeness, surrenders narrative authority to the nonhuman, natural world altogether. Nature now speaks not through anthropomorphic ventriloquism but through its own voices. Nevertheless, the last sentence reintroduces a certain meaningful language, implying a rhythm of natural cycle that endures despite the protagonist's apparent death. This impersonal voice seems to be at the threshold between the human and nonhuman. The synthesis between the two different spheres is certainly momentary, but it can be deemed as the novel's aspiration to reestablish an alternate relationship with the natural environment in a manner that defies anthropomorphism.

Thus, the novel's presentation of ruinate landscape is twofold. First, it excavates the colonial history hidden beneath landscape, which has been rendered all the more obscure by the tourism industry's commodification of the land. The excavation is made possible through the dialectic between spatial imagination and historical cognition, which unfolds along with the protagonist's development. The text may thus be regarded as implementing what Rob Nixon terms "postcolonial pastoral," a type of double-consciousness that bears witness both to the idealization of the landscape and the history of colonial devastations that lie beneath it (Nixon 245). The novel subsequently sets out to establish a renewed relationship with the nonhuman environment by evoking the unique vitality of the natural world, which extends well beyond human history. This accompanies the exposure of vulnerability of human projections onto the nonhuman world. Instead of providing a clear depiction of the character of such a relationship, the novel delineates an aspiration to move beyond anthropomorphism, expressing it in the form of a momentary synthesis between the human and the nonhuman. Although the alterity of the natural world is, as Buell theorizes in the American context, a prevalent theme in environmental texts, the novel departs from the sort of parochialism

discernible in American environmentalism that tends to privilege unspoiled wilderness.<sup>29</sup> Insofar as the urge to transcend anthropomorphic projection is prompted by the critical observation of colonial slavery and ongoing neocolonialist dispossession, *No Telephone* can be aligned with a range of anticolonial writers who share the impulse to reimagine their native lands and invent a “third nature.”

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<sup>29</sup> For a comprehensive critique of parochialism observable in American environmentalism (often rephrased as “deep ecology”) and its inappropriateness to the Third World, see Guha.



## Conclusion

The recent revival of the concept of world literature has posed profound challenges to the nation as a viable unit of analysis in literary studies. There has arisen a broad trend to study literature without recourse to any specific regional or national frameworks. These theories often put a high priority on the history of literary exchange between different regions and languages, proposing “world literature” as an alternative conceptual term to innovate literary studies. In *What is World Literature?* (2003), David Damrosch provides a practical definition of world literature. Damrosch postulates that world literature is not a collection of particular canonical works of literature but “a mode of reading” and “an elliptical refraction of national literatures” (Damrosch 281). He goes on to remark that “works become world literature by being received *into* the space of a foreign culture” (283; emphasis original). The more detached from their native national traditions and circulated widely through translation, the sharper refractions become, rendering works more strongly characterized as world literature. Franco Moretti’s *Distant Reading* (2013), which I have already mentioned in Introduction, develops a methodology to give an account of literary production statistically and quantitatively. According to Moretti, in order to describe the production and development of literature on a world scale, one does not necessarily have to focus on specific languages and cling to “close reading,” but attempt a “distant reading” that grasps the dynamics of influences and diffusions of literary works both diachronically and synchronically. In *The World Republic of Letters* (1999), Pascale Casanova emphasizes the autonomy of literary space and describes the historical creation of world literary space centered around Paris, using such peculiar vocabularies as “literary capital” and “literary revolts.” Whatever their methodological orientations, it seems that theorists are trying to recuperate universalism under the banner of “world literature” yet again.

What these theories, which often present themselves as antithetical to traditional literary studies, have in common is a strong emphasis on the distribution process of literary works. Casanova’s argument, for example, emphasizes the relative autonomy of the world

republic of letters from political, geographic, or historical rigidities, and portrays world literature through descriptions of global literary production and exchange. Likewise, Damrosch takes world literature to “encompass all literary works that circulate beyond their culture of origin, either in translation or in their original language” (4), focusing on the process in which literary works depart from the original cultural and social settings. However, if too much attention is paid to the process of exchange, translation, and circulation, one may overlook issues surrounding the nation, which is often closely related to the subject matter of literary works in (post)colonial settings. Simply put, if contemporary literature is discussed through recent theories of world literature, the question of the nation would inevitably be downplayed. From my point of view, this is not a natural result of the theorists’ accurate grasp of the characteristics of the globalized world but a blind spot deriving from their methodology which focuses on the circulatory process.<sup>30</sup> As Tom Nairn indicates in his materialist account of the rise and spread of nationalism, the nation is often generated as a critical response to economic dominance such as the rule of imperialism and uneven development. Frantz Fanon’s revolutionary tactics locates national consciousness at the kernel of the decolonizing movement, which, in a wider historical scheme, leads humanity to a higher level of mutuality. What is missing from current theories of world literature is the dimension of the transformative potential of literature to express progressive aspiration, an element that often crystallizes into national consciousness. As WReC’s materialist argument predicated on Immanuel Wallerstein’s world-systems theory suggest, peculiar critical aesthetics emerge within situations of peripheral modernity. While they are primarily concerned with “irrealist” aesthetics that fuse realistic details with surreal and fantastic elements, what I have attempted to illuminate in this dissertation is how contemporary writers respond to peripheral experiences by developing new ways of conceiving and representing the nation. The nations that appear in these works are by no means of retrospective character, but indicative of

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<sup>30</sup> For a comprehensive critique of the “descriptive” character of contemporary theories of world literature, see Pheng Cheah’s *What is a World?: On Postcolonial Literature as World Literature* 23-45. See also Aamir Mufti’s *Forget English!: Orientalisms and World Literatures* 56-98 for the ways in which some major theorists of world literature neglect the fact that Orientalist knowledge founded the ground for debating cultural particularities.

progressive vigor to break out of the status quo, which is what makes the writers inheritors of ideals of decolonizing nationalism in the mid-twentieth century.

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