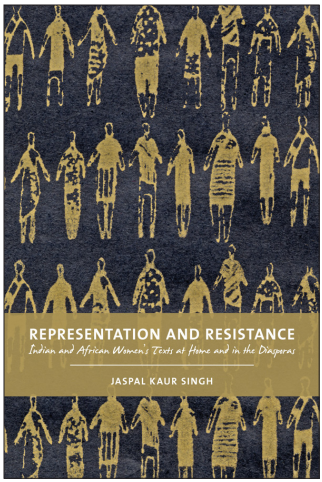

REPRESENTATION AND RESISTANCE: INDIAN AND AFRICAN WOMEN'S TEXTS AT HOME AND IN THE DIASPORAS

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2

Dominant Epistemologies and Alternative Readings: Gender and Globalization

The paradigm of femininity constructed by discourses of colonialism and nationalism still predominates, to varying degrees, in postcolonial South Asia, the Caribbean, and in many parts of Africa. In this chapter, I outline important moments of European colonial history and literature and examine the representation and construction of the colonized. I examine gender indentity construction in national discourse in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and analyze the continuing debates regarding nationalism and gender. How do women in postcolonial spaces resist gender identity construction in the era of globalization?

The result of nationalism was confusing for many women, as it was riddled with ambiguity and conflict. On the one hand, it promised women greater freedom, while on the other hand, their material conditions remained unaltered; we see such ambiguities and conflicts reflected in postcolonial women writers and their representational subjects. With the introduction of European languages and Western education into colonized spaces, an emergent middle class in colonized countries came to speak and write in the colonizers' language. Many women in colonized countries who questioned gender identity construction belonged to this class.

Thus, focusing on colonial and national constructions of female identity will lead to a discussion of why some Western-educated women writers continue to see resistance in purely Western, albeit altered terms, while others learn to negotiate for empowering gender identities in hybrid spaces without employing easy binaries of East/West or Modernity/Tradition. However, the majority of the so-called feminist texts read in the West are of the former variety. This, then, is the starting point of my investigations into why certain literature is still privileged in the West and Westernized social and economic spaces, and how it recasts and reproduces the ideological concerns of the dominant class/caste in postcolonial, neo-colonial, and transnational spaces.

To begin with, let us examine colonial rhetoric. Colonized nations have been repeatedly represented by colonialist discourse as feminine, requiring "paternal governance" (McLuskie and Innes 4). British imperialism in India, for example, defined itself as a civilizing mission, particularly in relation to the condition of women. Constructing the Indian woman as the passive victim of brutal patriarchal oppression helped British colonialism justify its intervention in the cultural and economic sphere of the indigenous peoples. In "Can the Subaltern Speak?" Gayatri Chakraborty Spivak refers to the British abolition of the practice of *suttee* in India as "White men saving brown women from brown men"; as Spivak explains, in the discourse of colonialism, the colonizers constructed their argument on the bodies of the oppressed Indian womanhood, and especially *suttee*, as justification for penetration into India, which indeed had nothing to do with the actual oppressed Indian woman (120–30). Such penetrations were justified as the obligation and moral duties of the enlightened colonizers, who used the rhetoric of civilization, such as Kipling's famous "White Man's Burden," for the continued oppression and exploitation of the colonized cultures, resources, and peoples.

During early interventions into India by the West, textual representations of Indian men as inferior and oppressive of Indian women abound. Let me give just one brief example from a myriad of such writings from that time: James Mill writes as early as 1817 that he considers Indian culture primitive, rude, immoral, and fundamentally lacking in the qualities that "preside over the progress of civilized society" (309). Of particular concern, for my purposes, is the representation of women in his writing. According to Mill, one has to see the status of women to realize how civilized a society is. He claims that in civilized society, women are exalted,

while among "rude" people, women are degraded. He portrays Indian women to be in

> a state of dependence more strict and humiliating than that which is ordained for the weaker sex.… Nothing can exceed the habitual contempt which Hindus entertain for their women.… They are held in extreme degradation, excluded from the sacred books, deprived of education and of a share in the paternal property.… That remarkable barbarity, the wife held unworthy to eat with her husband, is prevalent in Hindustan. (312)

Mill further maintains that the practice of gender segregation came about because of the whole spirit of Hindu society, where women must be constantly guarded at all times for fear of their innate tendency toward infidelity and sexual excesses. At the same time, the poor passive and suffering Indian woman must be saved from the degenerate Hindu man. Such conflicted views and the perceived degeneracy of Hindu society and lowly position of Hindu women justified continued colonial intervention into Indian culture and society, while at the same time feminizing the Indian males as being unfit for self-rule.[1]

Despite colonial assertions of wanting to liberate oppressed Indian womanhood, colonial involvement was never meant to be liberating for the colonized women. In fact, in many parts of the world, colonial intervention lowered women's social standing and position. For example, Joanne Liddle and Rama Joshi argue that British intervention disrupted the maintenance of a matrilineal form of family organization of the Nayars of Malabar in Kerala (28). The British imposed legal restrictions in the nineteenth century by reorganizing the Nayars' family structure to a more manageable, and clearly patriarchal, form. Therefore, they maintain, colonial intervention, while proclaiming to liberate oppressed Indian women, resulted not only in the reinforcement of existing patriarchal practices in some cultures, but also in the introduction of specific forms of gender inequalities transported from Victorian England to many matrilineal societies (29). Here, clearly, British intervention altered and lowered Indian women's social condition.

Additionally, colonial ideology represented and constructed the Indian woman as the darker, inferior "other" of the Victorian gentlewoman

(Burton 295). In the colonial ideology of civilization, writes Antoinette Burton, the Victorian woman held an important symbolic space where she played an important part in the project of empire as a missionary or a teacher. Basing her concern for the "oppressed" Indian womanhood on common ideas of gender and motherhood, the British woman was allowed to penetrate into the forbidden spaces of the *zenana* (domestic spaces), ostensibly on a civilizing mission (Burton 295). Still, White women, throughout their entire attempt to liberate Indian women, "remained unambiguous about their own racial superiority and moral purity, a conviction that allowed them to speak for the Indian woman and silence her in the project of her liberation" (Burton 295). Take, for example, Katherine Mayo, who, in the discourse of colonialism, and through her text, shows the ideological framework that was used to construct the Indian woman. Mayo's book, *Mother India*, published in 1927 when Indian nationalists were intensifying their efforts against the British, was extremely popular and influential. This work is just one example of the colonial project using the representation and construction of the silent, suffering mass of Indian womanhood as a justification for colonial penetration and continued exploitation.

Mayo uses Orientalist (see Edward Said) language in providing empirical reality based on what she calls scientific data. She assures her Western audience that her book does not concern itself with politics or religion or the arts. Rather, her book concerns itself with the matter of "public health and its contributing factor, [and] the object of systematic and scientific inquiry" (12). She then goes on to document "empirical" proof of every aspect of Indian life, examining the personal habits of all people and looking for an essential Indian character, "not only of today but of long-past history" (16). She has a simple approach in understanding India's cultural, social, political, and economic history: one must understand the sexual practices of the natives. Mayo then concludes that India's problems and its inability to govern itself stem from Indian's sexual practices and their excesses:

> The whole practices of the Hindu's woes, material and spiritual – poverty, sickness, ignorance, political minority, melancholy, ineffectiveness, not forgetting that subconscious conviction of inferiority … rests upon a rock-bottom physical

> base. This base is, simply, his manner of getting into the world and his sex-life thenceforth. (22)

The most important and fascinating aspect of *Mother India*, in view of my project, is the construction of Indian women and the apparent attempt at engaging with Indian women's oppression. The author writes in great detail about oppressive practices, such as the *purdah*, child marriage, frequent pregnancies, primitive care during confinement, widowhood, and *sati*, which, she claims, drain the Indians of physical and mental strength, leaving them incapable of taking care of the important needs of their society. On the one hand, Mayo portrays the Indian woman as a passive victim of patriarchal oppression: she is weak, innocent, and helpless as a child. On the other hand, she portrays the Indian woman as the product of degrading, perverse traditions, cultural and sexual, unexposed to liberal education. As a result, Mayo suggests, the Indian woman fails in the discipline and sublimation of her sexuality. Occupied with matters of sexuality, the Indian woman teaches her child "from earliest grasp of word and act, to dwell upon sex relations" (23). She is the medium through which perverse sexual practices are transmitted, sapping the race of its physical and moral strength. As can be seen, contradictions and ambiguity abound in colonialism's cultural constructions of Indian womanhood. Such representations not only produced unlimited sympathy for the victimized womanhood of India and thereby justified colonialist intervention in the natives' domestic and cultural sphere, but they also provided a discursive space for the colonialists to fulfill their roles as social reformers (Mitra, "Colonialism" 46). The outcomes of such conflicted representations served the colonizers well.

Partha Chatterjee, in "Colonialism, Nationalism, and Colonialized Women: The Contest in India," argues that "by assuming a position of sympathy for the unfree and oppressed womanhood of India, the colonial mind was able to transform this figure of the Indian woman into a sign of the inherently oppressive and unfree nature of the entire cultural tradition of a country" (662). Thus, for the colonizers, the Indian woman's sexuality became extremely threatening, while, paradoxically, her passive suffering demanded reformist intervention. She became at once sexually alluring *and* threatening.

Frantz Fanon, writing in the context of French colonialism in Algeria (which resonates eerily in the twenty-first century in the context of Afghanistan and Iraq), maintains that the ambiguous figure of the colonized, native woman points to a complex psychology of colonialism. While the European finds the veiled Algerian woman sexually alluring, Fanon states that there is also

> the crystallization of an aggressiveness, the strain of a kind of violence before the Algerian woman. Unveiling this woman is revealing her beauty; it is baring her secret, breaking her resistance, making her available for adventure. Hiding the face is also disguising a secret; it is also creating a world of mystery, of the hidden. In a confused way, the European experiences his relation with the Algerian woman in a highly complex level.… [The Algerian woman] who sees without being seen frustrates the colonizer. There is no reciprocity. She does not yield herself, does not give herself, does not offer herself. (Fanon, *Wretched* 54)

This resistance, however, must crumble in the face of colonial intervention for the colonial enterprise to succeed. The colonizers need to "unveil" the native woman so that she will support Western penetration into the native society. Her unveiling, whether voluntary or involuntary, whether by coercion or Western education, will allow the ideology of liberal humanism to triumph. The unveiled woman will be easily co-opted, and as in other African nations, and as the educational debates suggest, women will then impart Western cultural practices to their children. Fanon points out that

> every rejected veil disclosed to the eyes of the colonialists horizons until then forbidden, and revealed to them, piece by piece, the flesh of Algeria laid bare. The occupier's aggressiveness, and hence his hopes, multiplied ten-fold each time a new face was uncovered. Every new Algerian woman unveiled announced to the occupier an Algerian society whose systems of defense were in the process of dislocation, open and

> breached. Every veil that fell, every body that became liberated from the traditional embrace of the haïk, every face that offered itself to the bold and impatient glance of the occupier, was a negative expression of the fact that Algeria was beginning to deny herself and was accepting the rape of the colonizer. Algerian society with every abandoned veil seemed to express its willingness to attend the master's school and to decide to change its habits under the occupier's direction and patronage. (43)

Civilizing the native woman by removing the veil, thereby "saving" her, became the primary aspect of the colonial strategy of destructuring and destabilizing the colonized culture, resulting ultimately in economic and cultural control of the colonized. Fanon contends that due to that relentless project, "reactionary forms of behavior on the part of the colonized" were inevitable (46).

Therefore, nationalism in colonized countries constructed its oppositional rhetoric around the figure of the woman, in one way or the other. To counter the construction of the colonized women as the backward, passive victims of brutal patriarchal traditions by the British colonizers, women were "allowed" to be educated in schools outside the home by the emergent elite. According to Kumari Jayawardena, "Mass education was a concept of the bourgeois world, brought into these countries by the colonizing powers" (6). The bourgeois man, himself the product of Western education or missionary influence, needed a "new woman," and he demanded an "enlightened" woman, a "woman who was 'presentable' in colonial society yet whose role was primarily at home" (12). Many of the social reformers among the "indigenous bourgeoisie were men who saw the social evils of their societies as threats to the stability of bourgeois family life, and who, therefore, campaigned for reforms in order to *strengthen* the basic structure of society rather than reform them" (original emphasis, 9). The discussion about women and education is resonant of Victorian England and the "woman question." Many women in colonial India, no longer veiled or secluded, were allowed to be educated. Jayawardena's argument regarding women's education, and its analogous strengthening of the marriage institution, claims that

> education for women in Asiatic countries thus had a dual function. It brought bourgeois women out of their homes and into various professions, into social work, and into the political sphere claiming the right of suffrage. It transformed them in the image of the "emancipated" women of the Western society. On the other hand, as nationalist reformers took over, education became a conservative influence; it began to hark back to traditional ideals, to emphasize the role of women as wives and mothers. (19)

Thus, and as Fanon contends regarding such reactionary politics, women were constructed to be *both* modern *and* traditional. The social reform movement in India was linked to the issue of "preserving and strengthening basic family structures and creating good wives and mothers" (Jayawardena 87). Female education became an important question at this time since reformists thought that education was necessary to eliminate social evils, but the concept of education, as we have seen, was limited to producing better wives and mothers.

As Elleke Boehmer points out in regard to Africa, the concept "of the gendered configuration of the postcolonial nation, and specifically, of the nation embodied *as* woman *by* male leaders, artists and writers" is prevalent in texts "across time, and across nations, including anticolonial nations, if with inevitable cultural modifications, of women as the *bearers* of national culture" ("Stories of Women" 4). How did this "apparent constant" (Boehmer 4) of woman as nation come about in the first place? In *Motherlands: Black Women's Writing from Africa, the Caribbean and South Asia*, Susheila Nasta contends that women were represented in nationalist texts as

> The "mulatto figure" (often portrayed as an exotic, luscious fruit), or the powerful matriarch in Caribbean literature, "Mother of Gold" the fertile earth mother in African literature; female goddesses entrapped by tradition and religion in "Mother India." (xiv)

Nasta suggests that although these women were "represented as powerful symbolic forces, repositories of culture and creativity, they were essentially silent and silenced by the structures around them" (xiv). The social and public spaces were, at this time, gendered, and many women, even those "refined" through Western education, were mainly confined in the domestic spaces.

Take, for example, Rabindranath Tagore's *The Home and the World*, written in the aftermath of the Swadeshi (literally meaning "homemade" or "indigenous") movement in India, where the author utilizes the dichotomy of the home and the world, or the spiritual and the material, in his criticism of complicity and resistance in (post)colonial text; the author points to the ideological turmoil at the centre of nationalist endeavours to resolve the women question.[2] Ania Loomba writes that "National fantasies, be they colonial, anti-colonial or postcolonial, also play upon the connections between women, land or nations … the nation state and its guiding principles are often imagined *as* a woman" (180). The family becomes the extension of the nation, and as a result, the family becomes "the antithesis of a nation or 'private' realm as opposed to the public space of the nation" (181). The turmoil became more apparent during nationalism when women participated in the nationalist movements that affected and produced changes in the domestic sphere.

Tagore's text shows how gender is inscribed at the centre of nationalist thought and action and how the disciplining of women and their sexuality for nationalistic purposes affected them. Indrani Mitra, in her essay "'I Will Make Bimala One with My Country': Gender and Nationalism in Tagore's *The Home and the* World," discusses the failure of the nationalist project founded on "false essentialism," which resulted in failure to strike the appropriate balance between home and the world, the public and the private, the material and the spiritual (244). Mitra argues that the nationalist project regarding the "new woman" is "founded upon an ideology that constructs 'home' as the symbolic space of nationalist politics and non-violent activism as its only true form" (244). Mitra contextualizes the text by placing it within the *Swadeshi* era in Bengal, 1903–1908.

In *The Home and the World*, we see a reconstruction of the female character, Bimala, by her husband, Nikhil, a rich landlord. Nikhil represents the native elite as the gatekeepers of traditional practices yet, at the same time, placed in the position of modernizers and reformers during colonialism. We see Bimala, who, with her husband's support and encouragement, leaves

the seclusion of the *zenana* to enter the public sphere; she is being reformed by her husband and enlightened under his liberal tutelage and patriarchal authority. In this public space, she meets Sandip, her husband's friend, a fiery nationalist. Bimala's reconstruction must signify the idealized union between male and female, West and East, and to fulfill this purpose she is being educated under a well-bred English governess. Now she can venture into the "world" without jeopardizing the "home." At such a moment, ideally, tradition and modernity would come together harmoniously. However, the outcome of such an experiment proves disastrous for Nikhil because Bimala falls in love with Sandip, and her sexual attraction for another man signals disorder and the destruction of the "home" (Mitra, "'I Will Make Bimala'" 248).

As Mitra argues, the anxiety and conflict brought on by modernity is manifested in the paradoxical restructuring of the domestic sphere during nationalist movements. On the one hand, women had to be educated so that they would become more suitable for their Western-educated husbands, while, on the other, patriarchal control of female sexuality became an added concern due to modernity (Mitra, "'I Will Make Bimala'" 248–49). As in Africa, modern and educated women came to be viewed as sexually liberated and, therefore, possibly lascivious (see, for example, Mariama Bâ's *So Long a Letter*). These women's sexuality was to be controlled and contained for the culture to remain pure and untainted by Western notions of liberation.

The group that came to redefine the Indian woman, based on traditional elements drawn from inherited caste ideologies, modified and refined through contact with Western education, was the newly emergent middle class. Accordingly, women needed to be refashioned; however, their essential feminine qualities should not be changed (Mitra, "'I Will Make Bimala'" 250). In the educational debates of the time, education for the upper-caste and upper-class women emphasized the cultivation of Victorian ideals of femininity and stressed the "cultivation of genteel norms and domestic virtue" (Sumanta Banerjee 128). The dichotomies inherent in nationalist discourses – of the home and world, private and public – transformed to that of the mind and body and finally came to rest on the male and female psyche. Regarding nationalist discourse, Sumanta Banerjee notes the following:

> A woman's nature is generally emotional while a man's is rational. Only that therefore can be termed authentic female education which primarily aims at improving the heart of a woman, and only secondarily at improving her mind.… The main aim of real female education is to train, improve and nourish the gentle and noble qualities of her heart.… Under such a system [of education], attempts should be made through … religious education, moral education, reading of poems which inspire noble feelings, and training in music which rouses pure thoughts, so that women can become tenderhearted, affectionate, compassionate and genuinely devout to be able to be virtuous and religious minded. (162–63)

Once the distinction between male and female was established in essentialist terms to construct social roles, femininity could be adjusted in accordance to the nationalist needs as it evolved into the twentieth century.

Chatterjee explains that while men adjusted themselves in the material or public realm, which was reflected in their dress, food habits, religious observances, and social interaction, women had to compensate by being pure in the domestic and spiritual realm. Although Westernized manners, such as reading a novel or wearing a blouse and petticoat with the sari, were accepted as a sign of decency and privilege, drinking or smoking in the manner of men was unacceptable. Women were given the responsibility of carrying out religious duties and taking care of family life and family ties: "The new patriarchy advocated by nationalism conferred upon women the honour of a new social responsibility; and by associating the task of 'female emancipation' with the historical goal of sovereign nationhood, bound them to new, yet entirely legitimate, subordination" (Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 248). Chatterjee contends that this coercive authority was expressed most generally in "an inverted ideological form of the relation of power between the sexes: the adulation of woman as goddess or as mother" (248). He emphasizes that the image of woman as goddess or mother serves to erase her sexuality, and consequently, makes her less dangerous.

Satyajit Ray's film *Devi: The Goddess* (1960),[3] set in 1860 Bengal, focuses on the national reconstruction of the female as goddess or mother and its consequences on women. The plot of the story revolves around a

young woman, Daya, her modern, Western-educated husband, Uma, and her traditional father-in-law. Uma leaves Daya, and his Brahmin home, to study English at the University of Calcutta. Uma speaks in favour of the Brahmo Samaj movement,[4] which preaches the importance of learning the English language and ways and gives up Indian "cult" religions for Christian-influenced monotheism. He believes one should replace traditional medicine with modern medicine and support for the younger generation against the total power traditionally accorded the Hindu father. Uma's father worships the goddess Kali, the mother goddess, who is both a destroyer and a creator.

One night, the father has a dream in which Daya's eyes become the eyes of Kali, and on waking, he starts to worship his daughter-in-law and bows down before her as the incarnation of Kali. Daya's older brother-in-law and the holy men in the village follow suit and start worshipping Daya. A beggar brings his sick child to her, and he miraculously recovers in her presence. When the husband, recalled by the sister-in-law, returns and begs his wife to run away from this madness, she refuses to leave, wondering if, indeed, she really is a goddess. As people gather from far and near to worship the living goddess, her young nephew falls ill, and the family expects her to perform a miracle. When she fails, the family is at once grief-stricken and angry at his death. When Uma returns home, he finds his wife, presumed mad, running out into the flower-filled fields. At the end of the movie, her image dissolves into the image of the smiling stone face of the goddess Kali.

Thus, the film opens with the image of Kali and ends with it. Daya is mother to her nephew, to her father-in-law, and even to her parrot, which calls her "Ma." On her wedding night, her husband tells her, "You are a china doll. You are a goddess." She is at once represented as a creator and destroyer, and is placed directly within the conflicted space set up by the different generations and different cultures – between modernity and tradition.

The film calls attention to the two forces of nationalist thinking on the woman question – the modern notions of sexual equality and reform voiced by the young, Western-educated husband, and the destructive elements of tradition in the deification of woman as mother, which takes nightmarish forms in the father's fantasies.[5] I examine the aftermath of such ambiguous and conflicted reconstructions in postcolonial women's texts. While the above examples are limited in that they represent only a

tiny population of the vast Indian subcontinent, the idea, in very generalized terms, is to show how modernity transformed the domestic spaces and how it impacted certain women's roles within it. While the domestic spaces can transform modernity, as seen by Gandhi's use of non-violence and passive resistance, which he claims he learnt from women, my main concern here is to point out the hegemonic position of the "new" woman in nationalist thinking and reconstruction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Nationalism created a discursive space for the selective modernization of colonized woman as long as she remained pure and traditional (Mitra, '"I Will Make Bimala'" 251).

Tanika Sarkar argues that when the essential values of society came to be located on the "chaste and virtuous" woman, the actual doors of the *zenana* could be unlocked; as long as woman remained essentially feminine – essentially virtuous – she could be refashioned to suit the need of a changing society (2011–55). Thus, the upper- and middle-class patriarchal control of female sexuality changed from what was seen as the coercive system of the *zenana* to the more contractual form of companionate marriage as represented in Tagore's *The Home and the World*, which ultimately still supports patriarchal structures.

Even in Jawaharlal Nehru's *The Discovery of India*, the author realizes the difficult position of the "new woman" in the emergent nation. Discussing his wife Kamala, Nehru writes, "She became a symbol of Indian women, or of woman herself" (33). Nehru supports Kamala's political role and her participation in anti-colonial movements. "She wanted to play her own part in the national struggle and not be merely a hanger on and a shadow of her husband" (30). He discusses Kamala's desire to deconstruct the binaries:

> Like Chitra in Tagore's play, she seemed to say to me: "I am Chitra. No goddess to be worshipped, nor yet the object of common pity to be brushed aside like a moth with indifference. If you deign to keep me by your side in the path of danger and daring, if you allow me to share the great duties of your life, then you will know my true self." (30).

In spite of Nehru's assertion, he is aware that his ideas are not compatible with the emergent nation's idea of gender and equality. He writes,

"Kamala and I were unlike; we did not complement each other" (33). To him Kamala "was not the type of modern girl, with the modern girl's habits and lack of poise; yet she took easily enough to modern ways. But essentially she was an Indian girl and, more importantly, a Kashmiri girl, sensitive and proud, childlike and grown-up, foolish and wise" (29). Thus the distance created from the material sphere where human relationships could be cultivated fails for him, and it prevents him from knowing her "true self" (33). This failure leads him to suggest that "The idea [couple] is terribly difficult to grasp or to hold … marriage is an odd affair, and it had not ceased to be even after years of experience … [and] often ignored in our fierce arguments about politics and economics" (34). He wonders if the East and the West, wisdom and science, have to be sacrificed "one for the other," at the "stage of the world's history when the only alternative to such a union is likely to be the destruction and undoing of both" (34). Can the material be brought into the domestic spaces, and the spiritual taken to the public spaces without chaos? Or are they to be kept separated for various vested interests and reasons?

On the one hand, as we have seen, nationalism reinforced the patriarchal repression of women by ideologically separating the home and the world. On the other hand, nationalist ideology created a discursive space for the discriminating modernization of the domestic sphere and the reformation of women's place in it. Upper-class women were no longer barred from public spaces, as they had to go out to be educated, leaving the *zenana* quarters behind. The new woman's "spiritual qualities," such as "self-sacrifice, benevolence, devotion, religiosity, etc.," did not impede her movement into the public sphere; "on the contrary, [they] facilitated it, making it possible for her to go out into the world under conditions that would not threaten her femininity. (Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 249).

Thus, the result for nationalism turned out to be confusing and ambivalent for the new woman. On the one hand, the notion of liberating her became just empty rhetoric, as reformation did not change the material or social position of the Indian woman; on the other hand, it allowed the middle-class woman an entry into the public sphere, and we will find Indian women writers, who belong to this class, exploring space previously prohibited to them. However, we see post-independent India's cultural representations still reflecting the effects of women's reconstructions with its ambiguity and conflict in postcolonial women writers.

Social histories of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries discuss the social conditions of women in India during the colonial period, as well as during nationalist movements. Sociologists look at these two important circumstances – colonialism and nationalism – as determinants that have affected women's roles and conditions in contemporary India. They write about the reformation of oppressive patriarchal practices instituted by enlightened, Western-educated intellectuals. Women are guaranteed equal rights in the Indian constitution.

Feminists have been questioning those so-called progressive legal changes by looking at the actual condition of the majority of Indian women. There is continued underrepresentation of women in the political and economic sphere which prevents them from participating in the decision-making processes of the country. Thus, in recent decades, feminists and activists have started to reorganize and concentrate on the studies of the status of Indian women's oppression. As indicated, the group that earlier came to redefine the status of Indian women were the upper-caste and upper-class members of the Western-educated elite. The national culture that they defined for themselves drew from their traditional ideologies, which were transformed due to their Western thinking and education.

Therefore, traditional cultural practices modified by modern Western thinking became the location of the national project on the woman question. Chatterjee discusses how the figure of the Indian woman came to be located at the very centre of a national culture defined by the indigenous cultural elites in "The Nationalist Resolution of the Women's Question." According to him, nationalism reconciled the contrary pulls of tradition and modernity through the discursive division of the material and the spiritual. The East was subjugated due to the superiority of the material culture of the West, with its technological and economic institutions, and its modern statecraft. The native people, therefore, had to learn those "superior techniques of organizing material life and incorporating them within their own cultures" (237). They realized they were in need of modernizing reforms.

However, this did not mean that they were inferior in all domains, and to emphasize that, national culture located its self-identity in the spiritual domain, which is located with the domestic spaces of the home (Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 238). It was in this location that the "superior" self-identity of the East was made manifest, which was believed to be far superior to that of the West (238). Chatterjee argues that nationalism

formulated an ideological framework to cultivate the material techniques of modern Western civilization while "retaining and strengthening the distinctive spiritual essence of the national culture" (238). Furthermore, in the discourse of nationalism, the binaries of material/spiritual, outer/inner, public/private, world/home constructed a space from which the colonized resisted colonial domination, and that space was the feminine one of the home.

> The world is the external, the domain of the material; the home represents our inner spiritual self, our true identity. The world is a treacherous terrain of the pursuit of material interests, where practical considerations reign supreme. It is also typically the domain of the male. The home in its essence must remain unaffected by the profane activities of the material world – and woman is its representation (Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 239)

Woman, although altered by the contact with Western ideas, can remain virtually pure in the domestic spaces due to her spiritual qualities. Thus nationalist discourse constructed another ideological framework to define social roles by gender.

According to Chatterjee's argument, then, the material/spiritual, world/home dichotomy corresponds to masculine/feminine virtues. Adjustments have to be made in these spaces, and men will bear the major responsibilities in the "external world of material activity, and men would bear the brunt of this task" (Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 243). As the family, too, was part of the social fabric, it could not be protected entirely from the outer world, though some changes and adjustments in the organization of the home would have to be made. Chatterjee notes, however, that

> the crucial requirement was to retain the inner spirituality of indigenous social life. The home was the principal site for expressing the spiritual qualities of the national culture, and women must take the main responsibility of protecting and nurturing this quality. No matter what the changes in the external conditions of life for women, they must not, in other words, become *essentially* westernized. It followed, as a simple

> criterion for judging the desirability of reform, that the essential distinction between the social roles of men and women in terms of material and spiritual virtues must at all times be maintained. There would have to be a marked *difference* in the degree and manner of westernization of women, as distinct from men, in the modern world of nation. (original emphasis, Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 243)

While men's essential qualities could be altered with the needs of the time, women's essential qualities, such as her spiritualism, must not change in spite of her contamination with Western ideals. Thus, nationalism came to locate itself on the physical body of the Indian woman. As can also be seen from Tanika Sarkar's study of the nationalist writings of the nineteenth century, woman's body was the sign for the last inviolate space, the figure for national independence:

> The woman's body was the ultimate site of virtue, of stability, the last refuge of freedom.… Through a steady process of regression, this independent self-hood had been folded back from the public domain to the interior space of the household, and then further pushed back into the hidden depth of an inviolate, chaste, pure female body. (2014)

As in Africa, where the "binary opposition of Mother Africa as the past or nation restored versus prostitute as the nation present degraded forcibly" (Petty 22) suggests, nationalism's anxiety and its resolution played out on the woman's body – as pure or defiled. Chatterjee claims that the "material/spiritual dichotomy, to which the terms 'world' and 'home' correspond, had acquired … a very special significance in the nationalist mind" (239). He elaborates:

> The world was where the European power had challenged the non European peoples and, by virtue of its superior material culture, had subjugated them. But it had failed to colonize the inner, essential identity of the East which lay in its distinctive, superior, spiritual culture. That is where the East

> was undominated, sovereign, master of its own fate. (Chatterjee, "Nationalist" 239)

And it was on the chaste and pure unconquered woman's body that nationalism posited its identity. Thus, equating national independence with the purity of Indian women resulted in an obsessive concern with "the sign of the final surrender, the fatal invasion of that sacred space" (Sarkar 2014). This anxiety is manifested in the nationalist debate about the woman question, especially in the debates around the question of women's education and became of central importance with the emergence of Gandhi in Indian nationalism, which coincided with the integration of women in large numbers into the liberation movement in the twentieth century.

The reason for Gandhi's serious involvement at this time is located in the historical experience of the moment: the beginning of mass political action against imperialism, involving both men and women in large numbers. Gandhi's writings at this time reveal an increasing concern with those social institutions and practices such as *purdah* that restricted women's participation in the national awakening (Sujata Patel 379). Patel argues that in the early stages of the movement (1917–1922), Gandhi clearly subscribed to the ideology of separate spheres, although he also invested the private space of the home with a new political life in the project of *satyagraha* (civil disobedience, non-cooperation), whose success was closely related to the issues of domestic economy. Gandhi used the spinning wheel as the symbol of *satyagraha*, which is connected to women's traditional role. Thus Gandhi could, at this time, conceptualize for women a meaningful role in the nationalist politics, without disturbing the sanctity of the domestic sphere and women's roles in it. Soon the idealized domestic sphere and the ideal domestic woman emerged as the prominent symbol of national regeneration. Gandhi believed in the essentialism of the two sexes and explained the social manifestations of the biological complementarity of the separate sphere which supposedly reflected an "egalitarian" partnership:

> Men and women are of equal rank, but they are not identical. They are a peerless pair, being supplementary to each other.… Man is supreme in the outward activities of a married pair and, therefore, it is in the fitness of things that he should have

> a greater knowledge thereof. On the other hand, home life is entirely in the sphere of woman, and therefore, in domestic affairs, in the upbringing and education of children, women ought to have more knowledge. (Gandhi 207–8)

Soon the idealized domestic sphere and the ideal domestic woman emerged as the prominent symbol of national regeneration.

Patel explains the relevance of Gandhian nationalism for the domestic sphere and the figure of the moral woman in it. For example, the success of *swadeshi* (development of indigenous economy), a necessary prerequisite for *swaraj* (self-rule), critically hinged on the revival, on a symbolic plane, of the home as the site of economic production. The most suggestive symbols of *satyagraha* – the spinning wheel and, later, salt – were obviously connected to a home-based economy and thus, to the sphere of female activity. Patel claims that even though it is assumed that Gandhi "mobilized a large mass of Indian women," his construct of women too is "drawn from a space inhabited by an urbanized, middle-class, upper-caste Hindu male's perception of what a woman should be" (378). The unique achievement of Gandhian ideology, Patel states, "lies in its ability to reinstate woman as a creative and conscious agent in political activism," without displacing her from her "natural sphere" (379). Gandhi " [not only saw] women as the repository of all that is morally and spiritually good within the 'home,' he gave woman-in-the-home a specific space in his political ideology, thereby legitimizing this space" (Patel 379). As can be seen, the ideological base for nationalism under Gandhi was "discursively inscribed through the writings of bourgeois culture" (Patel 379). Because Gandhi politicized and legitimized the domestic space, women could join the nationalist struggles with their "superior moral and spiritual" strength. Again, as in Africa (see Chapter 1), women who fought in anticolonial movements had to wage another war against the males of the nation for economic equality. Many middle-class and educated women writers who examine their unaltered material positions write about such matters; the conflict inherent in such conditions is reflected in cultural representations produced by them. Caught as they are between various discursive and ideological constructs, the modern postcolonial women negotiate their identity in conflicting and indefinite territories. We can see such ambiguities reflected in cultural productions, representations, and receptions of

texts by women writers, such as Bharati Mukherjee, Aparna Sen, Farida Karodia, Mariama Bâ, and Myriam Warner-Vierya, for example, who are Western-educated and Westernized women. We see the protagonists of these authors resisting cultural constructions of identity, such as wife, mother, and so forth; sometimes such resistance takes extreme and violent forms, and we see the protagonist going "mad."

How do we interpret representations of madness by female writers inhabiting these conflicted spaces? How do we read and analyze them? In *The Wretched of the Earth*, Fanon provides useful analyses for an interpretation of madness in postcolonial texts and the effects of colonization on both the colonizer and the colonized. The use of language and ideology in the tactics of colonization and decolonization in Algeria is particularly useful in its application to other postcolonial countries. Fanon states in the very beginning of the book that "decolonization is a violent phenomenon" (35). He calls colonization "violence in its natural state, and it will yield only when confronted with greater violence" (61). This violence occurs, explains Fanon, because of cultural alienation, which is brought about not only by economics but also by psychological, as well as cultural, conditions. Women in postcolonial societies became alienated due to colonialism and nationalism. On the one hand, they were encouraged to become "new women" through nationalistic discourse, and, on the other, they were urged to become more traditional and self-sacrificing. How do women, in a postcolonial world, address such ambiguities? Can they address them without falling prey to the pitfalls of language?

At first, like the earlier women writers Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar write about, women in postcolonial societies too "either are inclined to immobilize themselves with suffocating tight-laces in the glass coffins of patriarchy, or they are tempted to destroy themselves by doing fiery and suicidal tarantellas out of the looking glass;" then, later, they "explode" out of the "glass coffin of the male-authored text" and the "old silent dance of death" which then becomes "a dance of triumph, a dance into speech, a dance of authority" (44). Or do they? And if they do, how do we, as postcolonial/transnational feminist critics, read them? For to read these texts without the antecedent historical and cultural references is to fall into the very traps set by modernity and globalization and see them simply as writing about oppressive home cultures, or as creating mad female subjects resisting brutal indigenous patriarchies.

Fanon states that decolonization "brings a natural rhythm into existence, introduced by new men [and women], and with it a new language and a new humanity" (36). Maybe postcolonial women writers are using this "new language" to address women's continued oppression and to look for resistance strategies. However, what happens when women write in postcolonial spaces, which Mary Louise Pratt defines as "social spaces where cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in contexts of highly asymmetrical relations of power, such as colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out in many parts of the world" (530)? She states that "autoethnography, transculturation, critiques, collaboration, bilingualism, mediation, parody, denunciation, imaginary, dialogue, vernacular expression" occur in the contact zone. However, when postcolonial female writers write in this zone, "miscomprehension, incomprehension … absolute heterogeneity of meanings" are some of the perils we will have to confront (530). Many of the postcolonial female texts are misread, miscomprehended or even misinterpreted, sometimes unknowingly, sometimes blatantly. Thus, women's writing in a postcolonial world has to be read in a new way. What happens when women write or read in a "new way"?

Fanon's notion of "occult instability," where postcolonial people dwell when they are trying to give shape to a national culture, is useful here. Fanon states that we "must join the people in that fluctuating movement which they are just giving shape to … which will be the signal for everything to be called into question … it is to the zone of occult instability where the people dwell that we must come" (*The Wretched* 227). Women, too, try to redefine their identities and reconstruct their social conditions within such spaces. We too, as readers, must call everything into question, and we too must come to this "occult zone of instability" for a new understanding to occur. This space is also Foucault's "limit of madness," the space where the "line between reason and unreason" is not "accessible" to readers; a new language – "a very original and crude language, much more primordial than that of science" – becomes available to the interpreters of madness, such as myself, a conflicted subject, and may yet represent "those stammering, imperfect words without fixed syntax" in which an "exchange between madness and unreason sometimes occurs" (Foucault, qtd. in Miller 106).

In order to read postcolonial women's texts, then, particularly women writing madness and nervous conditions, let us return for a moment to

The Madwoman in the Attic. There, Gilbert and Gubar state that women a few generations ago who were "presumptuous" enough to attempt "the pen" had to deal with "enormous anxiety," as they were seen only as beings to be acted upon by men "both as literary and sensual objects" (8). Many women writing madness, too, are "searching … into the mirror of the male-inscribed literary text," and readers who try to uncover the feminist poetics in these texts do see "an enraged prisoner" beyond the "mask" (15). Their efforts to write the "I" for self determination through the pen are denied them. They either become the "angel-woman" or the "monster-woman," and the outcome of their earlier attempt at writing is "ambivalent" (34). To be constructed by patriarchal discourse, which is contrary in itself, in many ways, is to be "trained to ill health," be it mental, psychic, or physical (55), as the subject constructed by patriarchal discourse has to navigate territories that are oftentimes conflictual. Thus, "surrounded as she is by images of disease, traditions of disease, and invitation to disease, and dis-ease, it is no wonder that the woman writer has held many mirrors of discomforts to her own nature" (57). While Gilbert and Gubar discuss Western patriarchal constructions of gender identity, these ideas, when transposed on to the colonized cultures, wreak havoc on the postcolonial female psyche.

And while Gilbert and Gubar base their analyses of feminist texts on Western literary traditions, the codes of postcolonial feminist writing, too, are subsumed by Western patriarchal conventions, constructed as they are by colonialism. To paraphrase Gilbert and Gubar and ask along with them, when postcolonial female writers write for self-definition, do they imitate the discourse and conventions of colonialism or nationalism, or do they "talk back" to them in their "own vocabulary, [their] own timbre, insisting on [their] own viewpoints" (46)?

What literary choices do postcolonial women make, then? What of postcolonial feminist poetics in English literature? Many postcolonial female writers, writing madness, too, are trapped within a masculinist discursive paradigm. As Trinh T. Minh-ha posits,

> All deviations from the dominant stream of thought, that is to say, the belief in a permanent essence of wo/man and in an invariant but fragile identity, whose "loss" is considered to be a "specifically human danger," can easily fit into the categories

> of the "mentally ill" or the "mentally underdeveloped." It is probably difficult to a "normal," probing mind to recognize that to seek is to lose, for seeking presupposes a separation between seeker and the sought, the continuing me and the changes it undergoes. What if the popularized story of the identity crisis proves to be only a story and nothing else? Can identity, indeed, be viewed other than as a by-product of a "manhandling" of life, one that, in fact, refers no more to a consistent "pattern of sameness" than to an inconsequential process of otherness? How am I to lose, maintain, or gain an (fe/male) identity when it is impossible to me to take up a position outside this identity from which I presumably reach in and feel it? (*Women* 90)

If, as Minh-ha suggests, trying to claim a unique identity outside of the "master's logic" can land one in a "hospital, a 'rehabilitation' center, a concentration camp, or a res-er-va-tion," (95), how can women reclaim a unique female identity inside the dominant discursive system? Must they dismantle the system, as Minh-ha suggests? Yet, again, as Minh-ha claims, "gender, in its own way, baffles definition" (116), and if "each society has its own politics of truth … [then] being truthful is being in the in-between of all regimes of truth … outside specific time, outside specific space (121), then what language do postcolonial female writers use? Which discursive system do they inhabit?

In *Writing Madness: Borderlines of the Body in African Literature*, Flora Veit-Wild states that "writing madness … [relates] to the paradigm of writing the body … 'as the borderlines of the body'" (3). She argues:

> Borderlines of the body mark the boundaries between the mental and physical world, reality and unreality (imagination), self and other, the individual and the community; they also imply being on the verge/on the edge, with a hint at the possibilities/danger of trespassing the lines, of the transgression or violation of certain boundaries, limits, dividing lines, or regulations. (3).

Three phenomena occur when postcolonial feminists strive toward creating an individual subjectivity through writing madness. First, they go through the earlier phase of using the masculinist poetics for self-representation (see the earlier discussion on Cazenave); then, they go through the oppositional phase, when they "other" themselves; finally, after passing through these various phases, they come to the in-between space, what Homi Bhabha calls the "Third Space" for rearticulation. This space is the space of conflict, or contrary and maddening reception and understanding, and only in the hybrid social spaces are their poetics read as empowering, albeit sometimes through misreadings – as their poetics are sometimes viewed through universal feminist perspectives and other times through a critical postcolonial feminist lens.

I will locate my chosen texts in this postcolonial "Third Space" from which postcolonial feminists, themselves the bearers of hybrid identity (as they are formed by the oppositional rhetoric and discourse of colonialism and nationalism) translate and negotiate meanings and identities, particularly within the global context of resurgent debates about nationalism during the past few decades. However, we must keep in mind the position of women writers who are able to write in English and publish primarily in the West.

Are these writers Indian, African, Caribbean, or are they simply Western? Tim Brennan, in his essay "Cosmopolitans and Celebrities," claims that what often produces the illusion of the obsolescence of nationalism is the "cosmopolitan embrace" which catapulted into fame writers such as Bharati Mukherjee, Salman Rushdie, Derek Walcott, and Carlos Fuentes:

> Propelled and defined by the media and market, cosmopolitanism today involves not so much an elite at home, as it does spokespersons for a kind of perennial immigration, valorized by a rhetoric of wandering, and rife with allusions to the all-seeing eye of the nomadic sensibility.… Operating within a world literature whose traditional national boundaries are (for them) meaningless, writers like Fuentes and Rushdie at the same time possess "calling cards" in the international book markets because of their authentic native attachment to a specific Third World locale. (2)

Brennan's remarks highlight the debates of the postcolonial diaspora in which literary figures from "Third World" countries are accused of commodifying their national identities for international consumption. I will look at the cultural productions coming out of the postcolonial spaces where identities are negotiated and reconceptualized. Who are these hybrid writers who can still use their cultural capital and yet refuse to be identified with the nation of origin? Bharati Mukherjee, for example, refuses to be termed an Indian writer and prefers to be categorized as an American writer. She appears wrapped in an American flag *sari* as she makes the proclamation of being American.[6] Can such spaces be used for individual empowerment without the complication of nationalism?

For Bhabha, the space of the "displaced," the "hybrid," is an empowered space which can produce counter-narratives of nations that challenge and displace fixed geopolitical boundaries. In "DissemiNation," Bhabha writes, "The boundaries that secure the cohesive limits of the western nation may imperceptibly turn into a contentious internal liminality that provides a place from which to speak both of, and as, the minority, the exilic, the marginal and the emergent" (300). This hybrid space is also the place to strategize resistance and generate an emergent sensibility that produces counter-discursive and reading practices.

In subsequent chapters, I focus on the politics of gender in these discourses of resistance in order to discuss postcolonial women writers negotiating their national and gender identities. I argue that this identity is rooted in gendered identity constructions. We have to keep in mind that in the process of the formulation of a national identity by the colonized, Western concepts of progressive individualism were assimilated selectively. Women's subjectivities and the indigenous patriarchal interpretations of "Indianness" or "Africanness" conflicted, and this conflict is reflected in women's writings that are shaped in resistance to such processes. However, women writers who address resistance to cultural constructions of identities or show "resistant representations" are misread as writing simply about oppressive patriarchal practices. According to Amina Mama,

> The collective African [and South Asian] experience – being conquered by the colonizing powers; being culturally and materially subjected to a nineteenth-century European racial hierarchy and its gender politics; being indoctrinated

> into all-male European racial administrative systems, and the insidious paternalism of the new religious and educational systems; and facing the continued flow of material and human resources from Africa [and South Asia] – has persistently affected all aspects of social, cultural, political, and economic life in postcolonial African [and South Asian] states. ("Sheroes and Villains" 47)

Thus, it is necessary to examine gender violence, imperial roots, as well as neocolonial power structures that continue to construct ambivalent and conflicted subjects. Today, in the post–9/11 world, and in an era of widespread globalization with "signs of galloping U.S. imperialism" (Loomba et al., *Postcolonial Studies and Beyond* 1), ideas of national belonging become complex. Thus, the United States and the rest of the West are seen as liberating for women and minorities, while the Global South continues to be posited as oppressive and limiting.

Nation as tradition or "Nation *is* tradition" (Menon 207) is again rampant. The idea of America in the discourse of neo-liberalism functions as a place where "possible struggles for rights through consumerist practices and imaginaries … came to be used both inside and outside the territorial boundaries of the United States" (Grewal, *Feminisms* 2). Additionally, "American was important to so many across the world because its power enabled the American nation-state to disseminate the promise of democratic citizenship and belongings through consumer practices as well as disciplinarily technologies" (2).

When "Nation *is* tradition" is again rampant, there are many challenges facing women of the world. "The challenge for feminist practice," suggests Menon, "as a radical critique of capitalism and dominant cultures is to disaggregate the strands of these assertions (nation is tradition) and to carve out a different space of resistance" (207). This space, too, is conflicted as, on the one hand, "globalization in the *economic* sphere 'has offered an expanded and varied life for the rich and made the poor poorer,' [and] in the *cultural* realm, it has 'opened up a new channel of hope for the historically suppressed masses'" (Kancha Ilaiah, qtd. in Menon 218–19). While Illiah points to the lower castes here, women too fall into the category of the oppressed, and the cultural spaces that Ilaiah points to are the "world's egalitarian knowledge systems … characterized [by] the access to

English" (Menon 218–19). Here too the ambiguities, conflicts, and ironies are widespread, as globalization will not alter the material conditions of the oppressed but will provide access to English and the *egalitarian* knowledge systems through which some can represent their oppressions for neo-liberal consumption, a conviction that allowed them to speak for the Indian woman and silence her in the project of her liberation.

While Paul Zeleza states that "Globalization, as a process and project of neo-liberalism reinforces and recasts the … internal and external, institutional and intellectual, paradigmatic and pedagogical, political and practical" challenges faced by African universities and intellectual communities, as well as the "gender implications" in these changes, he still feels that the "engendering" of globalization can be "Africanized" (80). Instead of seeing African intellectuals in the Western world as a brain drain, he suggests that many African scholars view it as "brain gain" (80) if we use the exchange in a fruitful and collaborative manner, and do not fall prey to the "seductions of the Northern academies to become native ventriloquists, complicit 'others' who validate narratives that seek to marginalize Africa" (80). And more importantly, "Critical to the engendering of globalization is the articulation of clear feminist critiques and constructions of globalization" (81). How does literature on "gender and globalization," with its "androcentric assumptions," expose "neo-liberal agendas [which] mobilize gender, region, sexuality, class, and race to reinscribe differences and hierarchies" (82)? Race and gender differences and class hierarchies are represented in unproblematic ways in dominant literary spaces. How do women write against "gendered, racialized, and regionalized processes of global capitalist expansion" (82)? Zeleza suggests that for a successful feminist criticism, scholars who examine "the impact of globalization on African politics, economies, and societies, including the higher education sector and intellectual production," must "strip the theories of globalization of their Eurocentric and androcentric biases, to show that while indeed powerful, the processes associated with globalization are subject to contestation, the contestation of alternative visions and values, ideas and imaginations of a global order that is truly equitable and humane for both women and men in the worlds we now call the global North and global South" (83). If not contestation, then, we need to infuse postcolonial views into the language of globalization, as this book hopes to do.

However, if we examine Vinay Lal's contention about systems of knowledge, we might have to ask Zeleza the question, how? How do we

go about this contestation that he discusses? According to Lal in *Empire of Knowledge*,

> Nothing is as much global as the knowledge systems that perform the interpretive, political, cultural, and managerial work which characterizes modernity in the era of globalization, and consequently it becomes imperative to provide a cartography of the global framework of knowledge, politics, and culture, as well as of those paths which open up alternative frameworks to a more pluralistic future. (4)

In other words, instead of using old frameworks of inquiry, we must be open to new and alternative ways of writing and reading, which, sadly, are always contested in the "liberal" West and its Ivory Towers.

One might ask how one is to reach these alternative frameworks. Lal provides a solution. He states that "The true function of the intellectual is to be resistant to the dominant epistemologies and political practices, and to investigate precisely that element of knowledge which gives it the quality of being taken for granted. To do otherwise is to abdicate the responsibilities of the intellectual" (4). As a postcolonial transnational feminist critique, this book investigates the reception of my chosen texts to question the "quality of being taken for granted" within the dominant epistemological frameworks to provide alternative readings.

However, there is a danger to providing such alternatives. When I examine these texts that provide neo-liberal ideas of globalization and critique them for their limitations, I might be viewed as being backward and a traditionalist. As Lal suggests, to question the "logic of development was to place oneself among primitives and traditionalists, and to be viewed as an obdurate native who refused to be reformed" (9). What becomes of critics who, like me, continue to resist and to rewrite the agendas of modernity and globalization? There is a fear.

They are punished. They become "victims of development … lying in unmarked graves" (9). States Lal, "The victim of development has no name, and was asked to march to the tune of development, laying aside his or her lands, honor, traditions, and culture in the name of the nation. The victim of development is not even a victim; he or she is a statistic" (9). It is the "insanity of development" and the unnamed statistic that I will

try to give a name to in this book, although I must perforce use the same language of development and enlightenment, progress and democracy, freedom and liberalization, criticism and resistance that is bequeathed to me as a postcolonial scholar.

However, without the alternative readings, postcolonial writers are in danger of simply being raw material for the enrichment of the Western academy and the West, leading to further disenfranchisement of many in the Global South and indeed, in the Global North. As Wallerstein explains, each segment and section of society is impacted by the "world system theory," particularly the Global South due to its being involved in "the world-economy system as a peripheral, raw material producing area" (*The Capitalist World Economy* 7). He explains further,

> It is only with the emergence of the modern world-economy in sixteenth-century Europe that we saw the full development and economic predominance of market trade. This was the system called capitalism. Capitalism and a world-economy (that is, a single division of labor but multiple polities and cultures) are obverse sides of the same coin. One does not cause the other. We are merely defining the same indivisible phenomenon by different characteristics. (*The Capitalist World Economy* 6)

Therefore, each society is impacted by the capitalist world economy – in the economic as well as cultural spheres. All postcolonial societies have been raw material producing sites for a long time as part of the capitalist system. Thus, in my analysis, I suggest that postcolonial writers are indeed still being used as raw material in the cultural sphere. For as Wallerstein posits, "Power lies in the control of the economic institutions," and more importantly for my purposes, "Power lies in the control of cultural institutions" (*Unthinking Social Science* 36). Yet women writers who write to resist may or may not be aware of their co-optation and exploitation; nevertheless, they continue to write resistance literature in the hope of alleviating gender oppression. However, what happens when they write about gender oppression using the idiom of modernity in national and international spaces is the thrust of my analysis.

Additionally, I locate my texts in the conflicted space where the "nervous" subjects – alienated, dislocated, mad – formed by the oppositional discourses of colonialism and nationalism, of West and East, of home and the world, of masculine and feminine, of globalization and neocolonialism, resist cultural inscriptions for nebulous reinscriptions and empowerment. They attempt to rewrite history for an egalitarian future. "You can't escape history because it is everywhere," states Adrienne Rich, adding that "History is made of people like us, carriers of behavior and assumptions of a given time and place" (*Blood, Bread and Poetry* 144–51). The question is, can feminists rewrite history through resistance? As Wallerstein claims regarding resisting the forces of capitalism, "The antisystemic movements are themselves institutional products of the capitalist world-economy, formed in the crucible of its *contradictions*, permeated by its metaphysical presuppositions, constrained by the working of its other institutions" (emphasis added, *Unthinking* 37). Nationalism, according to Wallerstein, in "historical terms, is a very new concept," a "late product" of the modern world-system (*Unthinking* 134), and may not last through the twenty-first century. "This should make us hesitate at least in asserting the long-lasting quality of Indianness (or Africanness) as a social reality" (134).

As African, Caribbean, and South Asian women writers grapple with notions of Africanness and Indianness, of belonging to the nation, "the historical ground on which we stand is about as stable as that covering a fault line in the earth," states Wallerstein (134). If our "sociological (including cultural) analysis is to end up with a historical interpretation of the concrete" (134), what if in the global world-economy of today, we come to a "new order" (147) of things?

Now seems to be the beginning of the new order of things as powers shift. Yet we see more violence, incivility, and oppression – gender, race, class, caste, sexuality, religion – in the Global North as well as Global South today. How can postcolonial feminists write about cultural and psychological madness and conflicts brought upon by such conditions? Can women writers writing oppression for gender empowerment "assert the connection between the individual and community and in which community reflects cultural identity" (Fayad 106)? For identity to be empowering, the postcolonial notion of ambivalence must be used. "Ambivalence is able to avoid the problematics of either/or by rejecting boundaries set up between the dichotomies of modern/traditional and everything they entail" (Fayad 106). History as a category and foundation

for the national narrative must be questioned. For an empowering postcolonial feminist historiography will build a "postcolonial female subject that embraces rather than excludes the *complexities* and *contradictions* of inescapable hybrid identities" (emphasis added, Fayad 106). In other words, trying to escape from one discursive system into another, where another set of oppressions exists, might not be empowering after all, but embracing ambiguities can actually lead to expansion – of the psyche and then of the social spaces leading to new understanding of subjectivities and representations.