

Salman Rushdie: The Postcolonial and The Global

Obiya jolly

Dr. Jana Fedtke

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Abstract

Salman Rushdie is a pioneer among postcolonial authors, whose novels enter the debates around postcolonial theories. My thesis is an analysis of Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children* (1980) and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* (1999) for the representation of postcolonial India. I employ the Jameson-Ahmad debate, a famous debate around postcolonial literature and national allegories, in this thesis. This paper analyses postcolonial themes of otherness, Hybridity and gender which are employed in these two texts as a way of postcolonial nation to assert its identity through literature. Along with highlighting otherness of the postcolonial identity, the texts enter into a discourse of Hybridity as the identities in postcolonial fiction are evolving from distinct and essentialized to hybrid identities. A focus on gender is given in the final chapter of this paper while analyzing the themes of othering, essentialization and Hybridity as illustrated through the characterizations of female characters in *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*.

Introduction

Postcolonialism is the discourses around various, social, cultural and political impacts of colonialism over a society as examined through the time period of colonialism and after colonialism. As Arif Dirlik discusses postcolonialism in his article "The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism," he admits that it is an overgeneralization that postcolonialism is all about the discourses that represent the third world in the Western academia (329). According to Dirlik, it is the way of the former colonies to reject the binaries formed during the colonization and thereby demanding their space in the center along with the position of their former colonizers, moving away from the margins (329). Further, Dirlik asserts that postcolonialism is an ambiguous term that cannot be defined easily. However,

according to Dirlik postcolonialism roughly comprises of the condition of the former colonies after decolonization, the condition of the globe after the period of colonialism as well as the epistemological and psychic discourses around these local or global conditions (332). However, the term postcolonial is not an old term. As Dirlik writes, it was only in 1980s that the world named discourses from the third world as postcolonial discourses owing to the long history of colonialism that they share (330). The global attention to the term postcolonial came into being with the rise of third world intellectuals in the western academia. This was possible mainly through textuality of the third world, which is predecessor to the term postcolonial. Hence, a lot of scholarship is available about the debates around the term postcolonial and the literature they produce. One of the major debates around postcolonial literature is the Jameson-Ahmad debate which is discussed in the following pages.

The Jameson-Ahmad Debate

Jameson-Ahmad debate around the national allegory forms the basis of my paper. In his essay titled “Third-World Literature in the Era of Multinational Capitalism”, critical and literary theorist Frederick Jameson asserts that texts produced in the third world are to be read as allegories of the nations where these texts come from. “All third world texts,” according to Jameson, “...are to be read as what I will call national allegories...” (69). Here Jameson categorizes all third world texts as national allegories. Marxism forms the basis of Jameson’s arguments when he proposes that the world can be divided into three parts based on social theories such as capitalism and socialism, both of which are the important modes of production. Therefore, the profit based production of capitalism defines the first world whereas the second world follows socialism emphasizing the equal distribution of resources.

The third world is different from the other two as there is no particular mode of production in the third world such as capitalism or socialism. Jameson categorizes third world as "...a range of other countries which have suffered the experience of colonialism and imperialism" (67). Here Jameson provides an overly simplified definition of the third-world as all the countries those were once colonized. Jameson moves a step forward in suggesting that the third world does not have an "anthropologically independent or autonomous" identity as they are in a constant struggle to resist western cultural imperialism (68). Even though Jameson admits for a moment that such a generalized and overly simplified definition of the third world is problematic, he doesn't really explore the problems of this definition and continues to use it as a tool to clearly divide the world into three parts. According to Jameson, there is a split between the private and the public exist in the first world owing to the ideology of capitalism which separates the individual from the collective. However, the third world is not capitalist and therefore not individualist which keeps the private and the public closely connected. This resistance to individualization existing in the third world makes it necessary that individual narrative from this part remains closely connected to the public realm. Therefore, according to Jameson, there are no stories of private lives come out of the third world literature rather personal stories represent the nation and therefore are national allegories.

Allegory is a term that forms the basis of this paper as it examines the Jameson-Ahmad debate on national allegory. As M.H Abrams provides a definition of allegory in his book *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, "An allegory is a narrative, whether in prose or verse, in which the agents and actions, and sometimes the setting as well, are contrived to make coherent sense on the 'literal,' or primary, level of signification, and at the same time to signify a second, correlated order of signification" (5). Allegory is a literary technique used by the authors to convey a

message outside of the literal meaning of the text along with the literal meaning of the text.

National allegory being one among them is when an individual's story is narrated, which in the next level signifies the nation, its history or politics as a whole. This is what Jameson argues, the postcolonial literature to be- allegories of the postcolonial nation. However, Jameson's argument about third world textuality is much debated and Ahmad Aijaz is the prominent of all who rejected Jameson's argument and thus forming the major debate in postcolonial literature.

Aijaz Ahmad, a literary theorist born in India, rejects and critiques Jameson's argument that all third world texts are allegorical, in his article "Jameson's Rhetoric of Otherness and the 'National Allegory'." According to Ahmad, Jameson's argument constitute an othering of the region by categorizing it as third world and their textuality as the allegories of their formerly colonized nations. Ahmad argues that "there is no such thing as a 'third world literature' ..." (4). For Ahmad, Jameson's view is reductionist as he fails to take important elements into account that contribute to the literature of a region such as "...periodisation, social and linguistic formations, political and ideological struggles within the field of literary production, and so on..." (4). Ahmad rejects Jameson's idea that presence or absence of economic ideologies such as capitalism is not enough to conclude that certain parts of the world produces certain kinds of literature. Rather, Ahmad critiques Jason that he does not take into account various other social, ideological, periodical influences in textuality of a region. Ahmad disproves Jameson's generalized definition that the third the third world is not capitalist but postcolonial by illustrating the capitalist aspects of India, a nation belonging to Jameson's generalized category of third world. Ahmad questions Jameson's usage of the term nation and he suggests that the idea of nation is narrow and extremely limited. Ahmad proposes that if we reject the idea of people and the nations when it comes to allegorization and replace it with the personal and the

collective, allegorization can be traced anywhere, not only the third world. Thus, Aijaz Ahmad debates Jameson's position on third world literature exclusively as national allegories.

Born in 1947 to an affluent Muslim family in Bombay, Salman Rushdie spent much of his adult life in England and America. He is a globally renowned writer who has received intense global attention from critics throughout his publishing career of thirty six years, writes Jessica Brown in her article titled "East/West: Salman Rushdie and Hybridity" (5). Most of his fiction centers on the Indian subcontinent. Magical realism is a common literary technique used in most of his writings. Among eleven novels of Salman Rushdie, *Midnight's Children* is one of the books that received much global attention, next to *Satanic Verses* by Rushdie. *Midnight's Children* received the Booker prize in 1981 and won the Best of the Booker in 2008.

Midnight's Children is not only special for the special global acclaim it still receives but it is an exceptional text in the discourse of postcolonialism. *Midnight's Children* is a postcolonial novel as it narrates the story of the nation during the end of colonial times continuing to thirty years of independence. Narrated by Saleem Sinai, the novel serves as a national allegory as the nation's history is interwoven with Saleem's family saga. The narrator Saleem is born in the magic moment of India's history, at the "stroke of midnight" August 15, 1947 the day when India gained independence (3). From that moment, Saleem is born with his nation, India, and there starts the life journey of Saleem and India as a postcolonial nation. The identity assertion of the individual and the nation are entwined justifying critics' reference to *Midnight's Children* as a national allegory. As the title suggests, Saleem was born with another thousand children who are born in the same night each of them endowed with magical powers to change their lives and the nation. However, these children and their powers are made into victims of pride and power just like the sociopolitical complications postcolonial India goes through.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet, a modern tale centered around the myth of Orpheus, is still a postcolonial novel as it represents postcolonial India after fifty two years of Independence highlighting its current position in the globe. Discourse around postcolonialism treats it as a continuous process. It is difficult for us to answer the question on whether India stopped being postcolonial or is India still considered a postcolonial nation. The characters in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are born in India and they experience India just like characters in *Midnight's Children* do. However, the characters in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* move around the globe a lot more than that of *Midnight's Children*, which is an effect of India taking part in globalization and its people therefore getting globalized. Rushdie still provides the voice of the postcolonial through *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. This time it is a stronger voice with fewer differences between the "East" and the "West." It explains the current status of India, far from a country which struggled for its independent existence after colonization, taking part in the globalization process. Postcolonial India in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* gains its own voice, through hybridity of cultural elements.

In this paper, I examine if Jameson's theory of postcolonial literature as national allegories can be applied to two novels by Salman Rushdie. The two novels under consideration are *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* by Salman Rushdie. Even though both novels are written by renowned postcolonial author Salman Rushdie and are analyzed to be postcolonial upon the examination of postcolonial elements in them, both *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are not national allegories. *Midnight's Children* is a national allegory as Saleem's life story represents the history of post-independent India. However, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is not a national allegory as the characters do not represent post-independent India at all, rather it is a global novel. Upon analyzing the individual subjectivities

in *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* surrounding the themes of otherness, hybridity and gender, I argue that a postcolonial text is not necessarily a national allegory. In postcolonial literature, a national allegory is inevitable to assert an independent national identity for the postcolonial nations. However, as discourse around postcolonialism changes with time, postcolonial texts evolve to be global and therefore they are not national allegories. From the example of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, a postcolonial text highlights hybridity and globalization without being national allegories themselves.

The other, hybridity and gender are the three elements I examine in this paper. I see othering as an essential characteristic when a postcolonial nation starts to claim its own identity. It has to highlight differences it has from the colonizers in order to show that it has an independent identity. After, reclaiming its separate identity, postcolonial texts develop hybrid identities after rejecting the binaries and differences imposed by colonial rule. The hybrid identities forms links between different cultures and are more stable in the era of globalization. Thus, a hybrid identity is what makes a national identity stronger in the era of global connections. These are the two important characteristics of postcolonial literature with its responsibility to represent the postcolonial to the rest of the world. Third, gender is inseparable from the discourse of postcolonialism due to the similar history of domination and hegemony. Therefore, these texts are analyzed for the representation of gender to examine whether female characters exemplify certain essentialized characteristics.

The Other

According to the Jameson-Ahmad debate that I mentioned in the beginning, postcolonial literature is a way through which postcolonial societies assert their identities to the world. Therefore they are required or not required to be the allegories of nation forms the basis of this

debate. Thus, the postcolonial writer is often expected to be aware of their responsibility to communicate their nation to the global audience. This responsibility comes from the collective aim of postcolonial literature which, in simple words, is the voice of the once colonized nations. Similar is the expectations of the readers who belong to the rest of the globe, usually the former empire, to listen to the voice of the empire through the writing of the postcolonial author. Masood Ashraf Raja examines the above mentioned postcolonial responsibility of Salman Rushdie in the article titled “Salman Rushdie: Reading the Postcolonial Texts in the Era of Empire.” Raja proposes that the politics of the postcolonial critic requires the same level of attention as it is given to the postcolonial author for being the recipients of this important cultural dialogue and bearing the responsibility of interpreting it to the masses. Raja writes that Rushdie, being a writer with a multicultural background, “...assumes the role of the so called cultural informant who represents East to West” (3). According to Raja, Rushdie is the one who explains the postcolonial nation to the rest of the world. The title of a “cultural informant” accurately explains the collective role of postcolonial writers.

As I mentioned in the beginning about the responsibility of the postcolonial author to highlight the distinct voice of the postcolonial nation, postcolonial texts like *Midnight's Children* should provide a unique perspective of the nation it represents. Upon examining the subject position of Rushdie as a postcolonial writer, Raja advocates that Rushdie plays the role of a “cultural informant” and therefore is a credible source of representation of the postcolonial nation. The metropolitan audience has therefore the right to assume anything about the postcolonial nation which might or might not go with the existing Eurocentric stereotypes about the former colonies, India in this context. I think it is inevitable that postcolonial literature highlight's its uniqueness from the rest of the world in constructing the distinct identity of the

postcolonial nation. Here comes the importance of examining the concept of “other” in postcolonial novels.

Upon theoretically reviewing the much used concept of the other, I understand the other as the tendency to separate oneself from something else. It is about constructing and affirming one’s own identity based on the differences. In the book titled *Post-colonial studies: The Key Concepts*, Bill Ashcroft, Gareth Griffiths and Helen Tiffin mention that the colonizer separates the colonized by characterizing it as the other, thereby “normalizing the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view” (155). According to this definition the construction of the other is based on the superior tendency to maintain the power relations that favors the dominant society. Thus, in general, the construction of the other is aimed at awareness of one’s self and identity. However, in specific terms postcolonial literary analysis adopts psychoanalytic theory of the other by Jacques Lacan.

Ashcroft et al. provides a brief description of Lacanian theory of the other which will be employed in this literary analysis. As Ashcroft et al. describes Lacanian theory of the other is based on the distinction between “Other” and “other” (155). The “other” is explained with the example of a child seeing its mirror image for the first time. The other in this case “resembles the self” and the same time making the child aware that he or she is a separate being from the mirror image he or she sees. The image should, therefore, bear certain degree of resemblance to the child himself along with reasonable difference enough for him/her to identify that the mirror image is a reflection. The self is thus the ego which takes an “anticipated mastery” over the other-its reflection-. When employed in postcolonial theory, this psychoanalytic theory of the other refers to the relationship between the colonized and the colonizer. The colonized is identified as the other based on the differences it possess from the colonized and assumes a

mastery over it based on “imperial ego” (155). Thus Lacanian theory of the other is employed in postcolonial theory to theorize the unequal power relations between the colonized and the colonizer.

However, Lacanian theory of the Other is different in the sense that the subject gains identity through the gaze of the Other where the Other is considered as the “great Other” or the absolute pole. The separation of this Other from the subject gives identity to the subject. In postcolonial discourse, the colonized subject gains its dependent identity from the Other which are the imperial gaze and the dominant ideologies using which the colonized makes sense of the world. The colonizing power-the absolute Other in this case-nurtures the subjectivity of the colonized. In essence, both the other and the Other are constructed in the same process where the colonized falls in the former category while the colonizer goes with the latter. This dominant-repressive distinction of the colonial relationship gives separate names to the colonized such the oriental.

Edward Said coined the term “Orientalism” in order to discuss the distinction of the colonized from the colonizer as the O/other. According to Ashcroft et al., Orientalism is the process by which the orient is “constructed in European thinking” (153). The orient is “constructed” which goes in accordance with the tendency to otherize the colonized, the orient. Ashcroft et al. writes, “...it (Orientalism) was a supreme example of the construction of the other, a form of authority” (153). Orientalism, according to Ashcroft et al., is a pure construction based on assumptions and stereotypes and is based on the relationship between the occident and the orient which is about power, domination and complex hegemony (153). Thus the discourse of Orientalism is built around the tendency of viewing the colonizer and the colonized as the O/other from themselves.

Similar is the construction of colonial binaries which is based on Saussurian semiotics that signs obtain meaning based on their difference from other signs. This is similar to Lacan's theory of the other where the subject obtains meaning and assumes superiority based on the difference it sees in the other. The binary oppositions are always dichotomous relations where binary pairs are constructed as opposing poles where the interstitial space remains largely neglected. In imperial logic, binaries convey the message of dominant-oppressive relations. In postcolonial discourse, the colonizer/colonized binary convey the message that the colonizer belongs to the dominant and the colonized belong to the oppressive category. Binary oppositions create and perpetuate important ideologies where the "weaker" parts of the binary system are always in the category of the colonized.

As postcolonial literature is about conveying the independent identity developed by the colonized, texts of postcolonial literature provide instances of highlighting differences it has from the colonizer. *Midnight's Children* being an important text in postcolonial studies provides instances of the other illustrating Lacanian theories of the O/other. In the beginning of the novel, Saleem Sinai narrates the story of his grandfather, Dr. Aadam Aziz, returning to Kashmir after completing his medical education in Germany. There is a description of an instance when Dr. Aadam Aziz describes an instance when he remembers his German friends mocking his prayer and later passing comments about India's politics. As Aadam Aziz recounts his friend Heidelberg's opinion, "...he (Heidelberg) learned that India-like radium- had been 'discovered' by the Europeans;" and "...this belief of theirs that he was somehow an invention of their ancestors..." (6). In Heidelberg's opinion, India was "discovered" by Europeans-the colonizers and the individuals inhabiting India, in this case Aadam Aziz, are given identity by the Europeans. This instance illustrates Lacanian theory of the other where the colonizer assumes

authority over the colonized by seeing them as their alter ego. The notion of him, Dr. Aziz, being invented by the Europeans goes in conjunction with the theory of the Other where the colonizer's gaze gives identity to the colonized, in a sense inventing it. By illustrating the colonial notion of otherness in the beginning itself, *Midnight's Children* as a postcolonial novel calls the readers' attention to the imperial ego which needs to be identified and deconstructed in the postcolonial text.

Similarly, the voice of the colonizer which distinctly characterizes the colonized and the colonizer is evident in the instance of William Methwold's sale of his house to Saleem's family. When Saleem's parents move to Bombay, they decide to buy the house owned by an English man, William Methwold. Methwold was ready to sell his estate with mansions named after palaces of Europe on the condition that the new owners should not remove anything from the houses and the houses should be kept and used as it is. Amina Sinai, Saleem's mother, exclaims to this demand of Methwold to which Methwold expresses his reluctance of leaving India and the impact the British had in India. Methwold says, "Hundreds of years of decent government, then suddenly, up and off. You'll admit we weren't all bad: built your roads. Schools, railway trains, parliamentary system, all worthwhile things" (105-106). Methwold explains the positive contributions they made to India during colonization including politics and infrastructure. This explanation does not seem problematic rather it is true to some extent as colonization has brought a lot of developments to India. However, reading it from a postcolonial literary critique perspective, Methwold's voice stands for the voice of the colonizer in asserting its dominance on the colonizer and seeing it as the other. This can be juxtaposed with Lacanian theory of the Other when employed in the postcolonial discourse that the colonized subject gaining its dependent identity and "...colonized subject being both a 'child' of empire and a primitive and

degraded subject of imperial discourse” (Ashcroft et al., 156). The identity of the new India is thus provided by the colonizer and the new India with better infrastructure is the “child” of the imperial discourse, through Lacanian lens.

Along with Lacanian concept of the O/other, Saleem quoting Methwold provides instances of perpetuating ideologies based on continuing colonial hegemony as well. Methwold continues to express his lack of interest in leaving India by highlighting the positive differences the British brought to India. Methwold continues, “Taj Mahal was falling down until an Englishman bothered to see it” (106). According to Methwold, the Taj Mahal, one of India’s important cultural icons, would have gone unnoticed without the help of British who made it popular. This instance shows the colonizer’s ideology that the colonized is given an identity by the colonized just like the instance in the beginning when Aadam Aziz’s German friend says that India was “discovered” by Europeans. Taj Mahal represents India as a whole, which remained unknown until the British came and gave it an identity and made it known to the world. Another instance is when Saleem describes the days before the British leaves India when things are getting settled down. Saleem writes that when the British was about to leave, the Indians were getting used to the advanced of British such as gas cookers and ceiling fans. Saleem continues, “...and Methwold, supervising their transformation, is mumbling under his breath” (109). Methwold “supervising” the transformation of the Indians represent the continuation of colonial hegemony even after political independence of India. Based on the colonial ideology that the identity of the colonized other was produced by the colonizer, assumes their role in protecting and supervising the colonized for they are “dependent” of the colonizing other.

Similarly, rejecting cultural elements of the colonizer is a tactic used by the colonized in asserting its own identity. In this case the colonized perceives the colonizer as the other, people

who are different from them. For the former colonized to assert its identity, they should highlight the differences they possess compared to the colonizer. An example in *Midnight's Children* illustrates this. When Mary Pereira, the lady who later becomes Saleem's nanny, confesses to the priest about her crumbling relationship with Joseph D'Costa, she explains the arguments she had with Joseph in regard to their political ideologies. Mary recalls Joseph's words, "You and your Christ. You can't get it into your head that that's the white people's religion?" Leave white gods for white men" (116). By saying this, Joseph is rejecting Christianity, which is the "white people's" religion and asking Mary not to stick to Christianity because it's not "their" religion. Through Joseph, the postcolonial author is conveying the idea that the colonized is rejecting the elements of the other culture to ensure independent existence of its own culture. Such a voluntary separation of itself from the dominant culture is the next step in postcolonialism after identifying that the colonized culture is considered dependent of the colonizer culture.

Beginning from the realization from the colonized that they are seen as the other form the colonizer, the renowned postcolonial text *Midnight's Children* indicates instances where the colonized rejects colonial imposed identities. As mentioned in the beginning, Salman Rushdie plays the role of cultural informant and provides a voice to the colonized through Saleem's tale, specifically through the instances where Indian's reject colonizer's cultural elements such as religion. Salman Rushdie, however, takes a different stand in narrating the voice of postcolonial India in the other novel used for postcolonial analysis in this paper, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*. Published in 1999, the fact that this novel is the sixth novel of Rushdie does not make it any less postcolonial. Notwithstanding the fact that *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is very different in terms of the illustration of postcolonial elements compared to *Midnight's Children*, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* still provides instances of postcolonial theory.

Since *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a text discussing postcolonial India after fifty two years of Independence, the postcolonial nation has moved far from being identified as the other. Rather, Salman Rushdie gives a hybrid identity for the postcolonial nation through this novel. The postcolonial author is no more a “cultural informant” to borrow Raja’s term, rather he is the agent who communicates the status of Britain’s former colony in the modern world where the line of cultural differences are blurred forming hybrid identities. The hybridity is a major theme sited in postcolonial texts for it is an important tool in asserting distinct yet globalized identities for postcolonial nations. I choose to focus on analyzing the themes of hybridity between cultures in these two texts following the analysis of the theme of the other because, blurring boundaries comes second to asserting independent identities as discussed in the part of the other in this paper. That is, as a postcolonial nation asserts in distinct identity, it elevates itself from the local strict boundaries to make it visible for the rest of the globe which is done through the hybridization of cultural elements. Therefore, the theme of hybridity is examined in the following chapter where *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is given more importance.

Hybridity

I reiterate what I mentioned in the beginning of the first chapter that postcolonial literature serves as the voice for the postcolonial nations to assert their independent identity. I would like to begin the discussion of hybridity in *Midnight’s Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* with the introduction of prominent post-colonial theorist Homi K. Bhabha. In his article titled, “Hybridity in Cultural Globalization,” Marwan M. Kraidy summarizes Homi K Bhabha’s definition of hybridity as he writes in his book *The Location of Culture* written in 1994. Kraidy writes that Bhabha celebrates hybridity as “the resilience of the subaltern and as the contamination of imperial ideology, aesthetics, and identity, by natives who are striking back at

imperial domination” (319). Reacting to the colonial othering, postcolonial nations aim at establishing their unique identity and voice against the imperial ideologies. Hybridity is the colonial subject’s way of establishing that unique identity; precisely it is the reaction of the colonial subject to the imperial ideologies by the “contamination” of imperial discourses.

Contextualizing Rushdie as a postcolonial migrant writer makes his writing fluid between boundaries as his experience of different cultures is not static. For the same reason, Rushdie’s representation of postcolonial identity is also far from othering and essentializing but of hybridizing and globalizing. In her article titled “Political (W) holes: Post-colonial Identity, Contingency of Meaning and History in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*”, Rama Lohani-Chase discusses that Salman Rushdie’s postcolonial writing reflects a “deconstructive playfulness” (32) where he deconstructs all dichotomies and boundaries to produce hybrid images. Lohani-Chase begins her essay with, “His books infused with themes of uncertainty, shifting boundaries, syncretism, hybridity, *mélange* and metamorphosis...” (32). All these adjectives for Rushdie’s books are synonymous to mixing, hybridity and blurring of boundaries. His books “infused with the theme of uncertainty” means that Rushdie’s writing moves far from strict boundaries of dichotomies with high degree of certainty and takes the themes of hybrid, syncretic elements.

To expand on Rushdie’s identity as a postcolonial migrant writer, I employ Lohani-Chase’s argument that a migrant writer produces inclusive identities in his/her work since he or she does not belong to any particular culture. Lohani-Chase writes, “This experience of belonging and not belonging to places, collectivities, cultures and modes of being is the fate of postcolonial migrant writer” (34). That is, once emigrated from a place, the migrant writer feels belongingness both to his homeland and with the whole world. Not belonging to particular places

gives them the agency to take a common stand among different cultures which is often inclusive (Lohani-Chase, 34). Here is the relevance of examining *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* for the themes of Hybridity.

The fact that both texts are written in English, the language of the colonizer, offers the foremost example of hybridity in both texts. In the book *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft et al., discuss the significance of language in postcolonial literature. The chapter "Re-placing language" starts with, "The crucial function of language as a medium of power demands that post-colonial writing defines itself by seizing the language of the centre and re-placing it in a discourse fully adapted to the colonial space" (37). The authors highlight the power that language holds and therefore power relations in colonial discourses can be agitated by deconstructing the power relations attached to language. They discuss two major strategies for this deconstruction named abrogation and appropriation. The first one, abrogation is the denial of the metropolitan power held by English being a colonial language and thus rejecting its power over other languages when it comes to communication. The second strategy is appropriation, which is "...the process of capturing and remolding the language to new usages, marks a separation from the site of colonial privilege" (37). Appropriation is the process of adopting language from the colonizers and providing it a different form that is closer to the colonial subject than the colonizer.

However, a definition of appropriation is given by Ashcroft et al. in the text *The Postcolonial Studies: The Key Concepts*. According to Ashcroft et al., appropriation is a tool used by the colonized culture to resist the control imposed over it by the colonizer (15). It is how postcolonial societies adopt cultural elements such as language, textuality and thoughts etc of the dominant culture and appropriate it to their societies to form their specific identities (15).

Appropriation of language and textuality is the most powerful form of appropriation used for resistance against cultural hegemony. The language and textual form of the dominant culture is appropriated “to express widely differing cultural experiences...to reach the widest possible audience” (16). The hybridized language appropriated by the colonial subject is used to convey elements of both cultures and reach maximum audience. Language being the foremost medium of communication, a hybrid language does provide a stronger ability to intervene and question colonial discourses (16). Thus, appropriation of languages does challenge the authenticity of both cultures but provides a stronger support of postcolonial resistance because the resulting language is not an alien but a hybrid form of the familiar and the dominant language (16).

Apart from the hybridity of language *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* employs allegorical narratives of individuals to form a hybrid postcolonial nation. The novel is based on the myth of Eurydice, Greco-European myth to narrate the love story of Vina Apsara and Ormus Cama and thus provides an instance of hybridity of cultures. The Myth of Eurydice is about the love story between Euridyce and Orpheus who tries to get back Euridyce to life after her death. Orpheus gets Euridyce back on the condition that he should lead her out of the hell but never look back at her as they move out of the hell. However, Ormus fails to fulfill this promise and he loses Eurydice forever. The novel is also about the love of Ormus and Vina, who desperately wants Vina back after her death in an earthquake and later ends up joining in death with her. Rai’s occasional mourning over Vina’s death during the earthquake in Mexico can be read along the lines of the death of Eurydice in the Greco-European mythology. As Rai narrates, “...as she slides ever deeper into the abyss, buried beneath an avalanche of versions, as she enters the halls of the underworld to take her seat on her dark throne...” (499). Here, terms like “abyss” and “underworld” connects the death of Vina to the death of Eurydice depicting that Vina

experienced a similar death as in the story of Eurydice as she was taken to the world below by the earthquake, which in myth is the abyss. The theme of the myth of Eurydice is clearly woven with the life story of Ormus and Vina which forms a basis of hybridity for the entire novel.

Characters in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* leads a cosmopolitan exist forming hybrid identities. In the beginning of the novel, narrator Rai discusses the feeling of *outsideness* and *born not belonging* held by Sir Darius Xerxes Cama, Ormus' father. According to the narrator, there are some people in every generation who are not fully attached to the world, "...without strong affiliation to family or location or nation or race..." (72). With this the narrator is establishing the cosmopolitan identities held by the major characters in the novel. Not belonging to a particular place or nation rejects the idea of authentic existence and othering rather highlight hybrid identities. Rai confesses his long urge to leave Bombay and to go to America. Rai writes that he was really proud of his city Bombay for its architecture and history. As he finds architecture in Manhattan similar to that of Bombay he finds it as copying their style, but later appreciates the new hybrid form. According to the narrator, "...the Art Deco of Manhattan...only increased America's allure, made it both familiar and awe-inspiring, our little Bombay writ large" (78). According to Rai, the monument names *Art Dekho* in Bombay was authentic to them and when he finds a similar image, Art Deco, in America he feels disturbed first but later realizes that the image actually possess a different beauty. This can also be read in conjunction with the theory of appropriation of language where the former colonies appropriate the language of the colonizers. In this instance, however, the order is reversed where Hindi language is appropriated to a new word in English and named for a similar monument in America. In this case, there is a reversal of binaries where the colonizer is influenced by the

cultural elements of the colonized and is appropriated. This instance symbolizes hybridity as the character sees a positive difference in things that are a mix of both cultures.

A cosmopolitan place is shown in the novel as the novel is not set in India revolving around elements that are strictly Indian but the characters end up in different places and possess strong affiliations to places outside their homeland. There is a sense of being above all the local boundaries and strict connections, but remaining visible and belonging to the rest of the globe. The narrator conveys that a non-belonging was felt by the characters and a tendency to feel more connected with America and Europe. According to the narrator, "... Sir Darius's disenchantment with his home town became Ormus's too" (100). Also, "America! It pulled him; it would have him; as it pulls so many of us..." (100). Here the narrator says that Sir Darius and Ormus felt unattached from their hometown and just like the narrator himself they all were attracted to America. Similarly, when the narrator says, "Many youngsters leave home to find themselves; I had to cross oceans just to exit *Wombay*, the parental body" (100). Here the narrator is conveying that he had to leave his hometown to find his identity which was different from how his parents formed their identities in India. When the first generation of postcolonial India formed their identities based on India including authentic Indianness in terms of the places they belong to, the second generation belong to a different places and it's a must that they travel out of India to form their identities. Thus, the postcolonial author is creating a space that is not closely attached to one authentic culture; rather the characters feel an unattachment towards their homeland and an attachment to a foreign land. The postcolonial text, *The Ground Beneath her Feet* is not trying to highlight and project identities that make it unique from the rest of the world, rather the postcolonial identity finds strength in creating identities that draws from both the foreign and the

original cultures. The postcolonial identity formation is not only attached to the nation or place, as *The Ground Beneath her Feet* illustrates.

The postcolonial text showcases hybrid identities through the depiction of characters' affiliation towards America and the uniting effect music blurs boundaries and differences of people and places. If the text was aiming at claiming their identity independent of the identities imposed by the colonial, the postcolonial texts could create new and hybrid identities with their former colonizers, the British. The postcolonial author is moving farther away from the colonizer-colonized binaries and reaches a global level because the postcolonial nation is not just a former colony, it has reached global level. America continues to be the attraction for its luxuries, technological advancements and a place for opportunities. When it comes to the global level, the postcolonial texts uproots itself from the fixed national base and incorporate elements of hybridity that connects the whole world together, music being one among them. Music does not require languages and it reaches beyond boundaries, else music itself is a language which is comprehensible to all people of all nations. Ormus and Vina being singers travel around the world and receives global attention. The theme of music played in the background of the postcolonial novel is a deliberate choice of the postcolonial author to ensure hybridity, global connections, blurred boundaries and a common language.

The novel not only illustrates that the characters experienced a sense unattachement from their home country but also their interests and topic of studies moves from authentic nationalisms but a hybrid one. The narrator represents Sir Darius as an "anglophile" and a person who is possess a cosmopolitan identity. Rai discusses a topic on which Sir Darius conducted his studies and his paper was to be published in "*Proceedings of the Society of Euro-Asianic Studies.*" It is based on the concept of "outsiderness", about the "...lepper, pariah, outcast or exile..." (150).

Sir Darius's arguments drew from untouchability in India to the judgement of Paris, the Greek myth. Here I see that the characters in the book are engaged with studying subjects which is a mix of elements from different cultures. Moreover, the concept of outsidership that comes up very often in the novel is what requires particular attention as it is related to the status of Rushdie as the postcolonial migrant writer.

The hybridity in *The Ground Beneath her Feet* is about blurred boundaries, syncretism, people belonging to different places and the theme of outsidership. The characters in the novel, almost all of them, lead an outsider existence belonging and not belonging to different places. Salman Rushdie as a postcolonial writer leads a similar existence as the characters in these novel and it affects his writing as discussed in Rama Lohani-Chase's article titled "Political (W)holes: Post-colonial Identity, Contingency of Meaning and History in Salman Rushdie's *Midnight's Children*". As Lohani Chase writes, "Underlying Rushdie's deconstructive playfulness is a radical political spirit that sees meaningful humanity beyond the rigid definitions of national, cultural and political identity" (33). This is what we see in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* that Rushdie does a deconstruction of rigid boundaries and characterizes individuals who does form their identities in fluid boundaries, belonging and not belonging to different places. Lohani – Chase writes that migrants feel disconnected from something called a real home, rather they carry the idea of homeness wherever they go across the globe. Therefore, for a migrant writer a place is something in constant flux. Lohani- Chase continues, "This experience of belonging and not belonging to places, collectivities, cultures and modes of being is the fate of the postcolonial migrant writer" (34). That is, belonging to different places and communities endows the postcolonial writer with the privilege to represent their postcolonial identities closer to the antiessentialist common identity. This is seen in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* as the characters

belong not to one place but possess different identities and thereby serves as the allegories of postcolonial nation with hybrid identities.

Even though Lohani-Chase's arguments can be read in conjunction with the theme of hybridity in *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, her arguments are based on Salman Rushdie's deconstructive playfulness in *Midnight's Children*. Lohani-Chase points out that Rushdie deconstructs the notions that divide people and nation in terms of othering and binaries (38). His efforts include highlighting the hybrid identity of India which is inclusive of all differences (38). According to Lohani-Chase, "For Rushdie, the process of decolonization can work only through deconstruction of the self/other duality and oppressor/oppressed dialectic and through dismantling the rigid cultural, political and ideological borders and boundaries" (39). Rushdie takes the responsibility of continuing colonization in postcolonial nations in terms of rigid cultural differences and binaries and attempts to break them through his fiction, especially *Midnight's Children*.

Salman Rushdie employs hybridity in *Midnight's Children* in the form of appropriation of the language as mentioned above. As mentioned above, in an attempt to highlight an inclusive and hybrid identity of postcolonial India Salman Rushdie addresses diversity of postcolonial India. Thus, we rarely see instances of hybridity of the colonizer and of the colonized, rather hybridity in *Midnight's Children* is about hybrid identities within the postcolonial nation, within its national boundaries. However, the hybridity of the imperial elements is seen in the instances of appropriation of language as Rushdie appropriated English language to coin new terms that fits with Indian culture. Rushdie symbolizes his work in *Midnight's Children* to the process of pickling and "chutnification", the new term he appropriated. As Saleem writes,

“My special blends: I’ve been saving them up. Symbolic value of the pickling process: all the six hundred million eggs which gave birth to the population of India could fit inside a single, standard-sized pickle-jar; six hundred million spermatozoa could be lifted on a single spoon. Every pickle-jar (...) contains, therefore, the most exalted of possibilities: the feasibility of the chutnification of history; the grand hope of the pickling of time!” (529)

Rushdie symbolizes his writing to pickling- the process of making pickle which is a traditional preserved food in South Asia- as it is a mixture of varying ingredients. Just like different vegetables are mixed together for one jar of pickle, the varied cultural elements and individual histories are hybridized in the novel to preserve for a long time. It is not only the hybridization and inclusiveness of different cultural elements, but the appropriation of English language with the local food that requires more attention. More importantly, Rushdie’s invention of the term “chutnification” is the best example of appropriation as Rushdie mixes English with a local food, chutney, to produce a contextually meaningful term which stands for the mixing and preserving of history. The definition of appropriation by Ashcroft et al., which is “...the process of capturing and remolding the language to new usages...” (37). Appropriation is the using colonial language in different contexts by modifying it. The coinage of the term “chutnification” also is about “remolding” the colonial language with a familiar element to convey a message that is closer to the postcolonial culture. Chutny is a South Asian dish which is a mixture of different ingredients. When Salman Rushdie appropriates English language with the name of this local food, a message of hybridity is conveyed to the readers. The message that different elements are joined in *Midnight’s Children* to provide a tale that is pleasing and familiar to the readers. Thus, the language is appropriated in *Midnight’s Children* thus forming a hybrid concept of both the colonial and the familiar cultural elements.

Besides language, there is a hybridity of religion evident in *Midnight’s Children*. The novel attempts for religious syncretism including the colonial religion, Christianity, as well. For

instance, an attempt by a Christian priest to be tolerant about other religions is shown in the novel. When Mary Pereira goes to the Bishop for confession, she tells him that she was asked the color of Jesus. The Bishop replies, “Tell them blue; it will be a sort of bridge between the faiths; gently does it, you follow; and besides blue is a neutral sort of color, avoids the usual color problems, gets you away from black and white: yes, on the whole I’m sure it’s the one to choose” (114). The Bishop asks Mary to answer “blue” as it is the skin color of Lord Krishna, a Hindu God and that it will raise no conflicts as the neutral color blue can actually form a connection between two faiths. Similarly, as Saleem begins to discuss Mary Pereira’s relationship with Joseph D’Costa, he says, “...like every Mary she had her Joseph” (115). This directly goes to the Christian faith in the Holy Family where Mary and Joseph are the parents of Jesus. Both instances, I argue, are the deliberate attempts of Rushdie to blur religious differences, particularly the differences in colonial religions and Indigenous religions. The Bishop advocated Mary to move away from black and white and to choose the color blue, neither taking the sides of black or white. Here black and white stands for the idea of defining and categorizing cultural elements into dichotomies and the choice of blue is the choice to not to belong to either of these categories.

Midnight’s Children is narrated by Saleem who is the son of an English man, William Methwold and an Indian woman named Vanitha and gets exchanged at birth with the son of an affluent Muslim family. There begins the hybrid identity of the protagonist himself and an embodiment of different religious identities. According to an article titled, “Hybridity and Postcoloniality: Formal, Social, and Historical Innovations in Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children*,” Sarah Habib Bounse offers a general discussion of hybridity in *Midnight’s Children*. According to Bounse, “Through the novels presentation of a multitude of differing characters

and allowing these characters to articulate their own histories and stories, a new colonial and post-colonial history emerges through these varying characters' voices, which remained silenced in an imperial and colonial India" (5). According to Bounse, *Midnight's Children* is the collection of the voices of postcolonial India which remained silenced during colonialism. The hybridity in *Midnight's Children* is the collection of this multitude of diverse voices which are mixed in the perfect fashion to keep forever.

The first two chapters discussed the process of asserting identities by postcolonial nations through their texts first by highlighting its differences from the rest of the world and later by allowing itself to enter the globe through blurred boundaries and mixed cultures. Both *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* have the themes of Hybridity and otherness employed in their various characterizations and contributed to designing the distinct identity for the postcolonial nations. Since these texts are examined to be national allegories, a focus has been given to analyze the themes of Hybridity and otherness through the characterizations of individuals in the novel. Considering the fact that there is hardly any scholarship available on feminist readings of Salman Rushdie, I narrow down the analysis of these themes to the female characters of these two novels. Therefore, what follows is the analysis of the representation of female gender in these novels. This analysis is an examination of whether these female characters embody a distinctly otherized and essentialized identity falling into the expectations of the postcolonial culture or whether they embody the elements of Hybridity through their characterizations and actions.

Gender

To begin, postcolonialism and feminism follow similar trajectories as both of them are discourses aiming at the resistance against domination. Moreover, national identities are

constructed around the lines of mostly female genders. Thus the female gender of a particular nation bears the responsibility of narrating the nation through her subjectivity. For the above reasons, gender becomes an important element to be considered while examining postcolonial representations of nations. Since the national identity is inextricably connected to the women of that region, postcolonial texts representing nations has female characters who arguably stand for the nation itself. The representation of women in *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are analyzed in this section not only because the texts are postcolonial, rather there is hardly any literature available on the feminist analysis of Salman Rushdie's texts. Notwithstanding the fact that *Midnight's Children* gains global acclaim as a postcolonial novel, the part of gender in this novel is largely overlooked. Yet, I think it is important to analyze these texts through the lens of gender partly because it is not done much before and mostly because postcolonialism and gender are tied together for the reasons that I have foregrounded.

Feminism is relevant in postcolonial context due to the hierarchically lower representation of postcolonial women compared to their western counterparts. Leela Gandhi discusses the link between postcolonialism and feminism in the chapter titled, "postcolonialism and feminism" of the book *Postcolonial Theory: A Critical Introduction*. Leela Gandhi suggests that the figure of the "third-world women" itself refers to the "double colonization" of women in continuing imperialism as they are "the forgotten casualty of both imperial ideology, and native and foreign patriarchies" (83). The "third-world women" are colonized both by the patriarchy as well as the continuing imperialism, often in terms of Western feminism. Leela Gandhi points out Trinh T. Minh-ha's point on the continuing feminist imperialism as the western and the eastern woman are binaries where the Eastern woman is the oppressed category. Gandhi writes that this set up hierarchy and othering of colonial woman "sets up an implicit culturalist hierarchy

wherein almost inevitably the ‘native woman’ suffers in contrast with her western sibling” (85). That is, the women in the formerly colonized societies bear a lower status compared to her western sisters. This hierarchical difference along with patriarchy in postcolonial setting makes the representation of third world women in postcolonial texts important in forming her identities.

Further expanding the link of female gender and sexuality with colonial discourse, female bodies serve the metaphors and allegories of the colonized land. The identity of women of the postcolonial nation becomes the identity of the nation itself. As Ania Loomba writes in her book *Colonialism/Postcolonialism*, “Thus from the beginning of the colonial period till its end (and beyond), female bodies symbolize the conquered land” (129). According to Loomba, the female body is considered as the metaphor of the colonial land and the colonial land is thus feminized. Thus, nation is gendered and therefore the qualities and values associated women are attached to define the nation itself. Shirin M. Rai discusses the gender, nationalism and globalization in her book *The Gender Politics of Development: Essays in Hope and Despair*. Rai discusses that a nation forms its identity through written history which is mostly through a male perspective where the role of women is largely neglected. If at all, women’s role in nation building is mentioned that is also through the patriarchal expectations of women. As Rai writes, “This gendered nationalist self, . . . , remains tied to the notions of purity and authenticity, which in turn are critically attached to the shadowy figure of the woman in the home” (15). What Rai means is that when nation is considered female, the patriarchal expectations of purity and authenticity is a common factor in both nation and the women of the nation. Therefore, in colonial discourses the female gender is the metaphor of the nation and therefore the female gender is significant in the identity formation of the nation.

Postcolonial texts represent the postcolonial nation. Since the identity of the nation and the female gender is linked together, the representation of female gender in postcolonial texts is significant in analyzing the identity assertion of the nation by the postcolonial author. *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are analyzed for the representation of female characters and whether they fit with the patriarchal and imperial expectations that governs both the nation and its women. The novels are analyzed to examine whether the female characters are represented as authentic and pure, traditional or modern. I argue that considering the different time periods in which the novels were written, *Midnight's Children* represents female characters that are closer to the images of ideal Indian woman while that of *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is a global citizen who is far from traditional similar is the representation of the nation in both novels.

In *Midnight's Children*, a nation is born at the moment of Saleem's birth and thus starts their journey together making it convincing to most of the scholars that Saleem's story is a national allegory. If the history of independent India is represented through the life story of Saleem, then the women in Saleem's life would be representing Indian womanhood. Throughout the narration of the story, Saleem is with a woman named Padma who acts as a listener and a constant critique of Saleem. Along the same line, Saleem's mother Amina and his nanny Mary Pereira are important characters throughout the story who takes the roles of mothers who guard the new nation for which Saleem stands as an allegory. Therefore, I argue that female characters in *Midnight's Children* fit with the postcolonial stereotyping of women as mothers and goddesses who embodies the qualities of purity and authenticity and guards Saleem, the new nation just fulfilling the postcolonial expectations of women.

First of all, Saleem's mother Amina Sinai, earlier known as Mumtaz, is characterized as a woman who fits into the image of a stereotypically ideal woman; a virtuous wife and a mother. Mumtaz fulfills the Madonna end of Madonna-whore dichotomy by being the ideal woman, beginning from being an ideal daughter. There are a few instances in the text that illustrate this. For example "Mumtaz was never brilliant; nor as beautiful as Emerald; but she was good and dutiful, and alone" (57). The narrator emphasizes the fact that Mumtaz was not beautiful as her other two sisters as if physical beauty is the most important quality a woman should have. Since the initial inferior status given to her in the family based on her dark complexion, Mumtaz had to put extra effort to be in favor of her family's expectation. Thus she ended up being the perfect dutiful daughter her parents could ever have placing her again and again the Madonna side of the dichotomy. The most gentle righteous woman.

Similarly, in her second marriage also Amina's behavior makes her a best fit for an ideal wife. A very good example of this is in the novel, "... I'll choose you a new name. Amina. Amina Sinai: you'd like that?" "Whatever you say, husband" (68). In this conversation between Mumtaz and Nadir Khan, he decides to change her name to Amina in order to be a new person, forgetting her past marriage. Amina replies meaning that she is happy with anything her husband does for her, even if that includes changing her own name. In this conversation, the readers get an image of a subservient wife from Amina. However, in societies where an ideal wife should be confirming to her husband's decisions, Amina is a perfect wife. She fits well with the Madonna image of the dichotomy.

Assiduous is the adjective that the narrator uses often to describe Amina. She liked to take detailed care on things she does. According to the narrator, Amina was very assiduous in doing household works, such as arranging flowers, selecting carpets etc. During her marriage

with Ahmad Sinai, Amina finds it hard to love her husband as she is still in love with her first husband Nadir Khan. However she is assiduous even when it comes to putting work on loving her husband. The narrator writes, “Each day she selected one fragment of Ahmad Sinai, and concentrated her entire being upon it until it became wholly familiar; until she felt fondness rising up within her and becoming affection and, finally, love” (73). It shows that even though Amina finds herself in love with Nadir Khan, she works hard to love Ahmad Sinai. She tries to love him in fragments, trying to concentrate in different attributes of him. Thus, Amina represents an ideal wife who tries to love the man she is married to even if she likes someone else. To illustrate this, “...in my mother’s opinion, a husband deserved unquestioning loyalty, and unreserved, full-hearted love” (72). This shows how important it was for Amina to love her husband even though she did not feel enough love at first. Thus, Amina is represented as a wife who is subservient to her husband and the one who thinks it is important to love her husband more than any other man.

Interestingly, Padma and Parvati who were Saleem’s love interests at some point of his life also has striking similarities in their characterizations as both of them are named after Hindu Goddesses. First of all, Padma is introduced from the beginning of the novel as Saleem’s caretaker and companion. When Saleem introduces Padma in the chapter “Mercurochrome” he mentions that “...she had been named after the lotus goddess...” (21). Even though Saleem mocks her by calling her plump Padma and dung Goddess, let’s not ignore the idea that her name itself means the lotus goddess. It can be argued that it’s the role entrusted to goddesses, the women, to safe guard the new India just like the woman named after a Goddess takes care of Saleem. Along the same line, Padma does the role of a listener and critique to Saleem’s story telling where she is taking the position of the readers to understand Saleem’s narration. It is with

her presence and counter questions that the readers get to track the complex intricate story telling of Saleem. Along the same line, Saleem keeps track of the events he narrated with the help of Padma. As mentioned in the chapter “Accident in the Washing-chest”, Padma leaves the house when Saleem compares his narration to Hindu text Ramayana (170). Later Saleem finds her absence disturbing which is illustrated through his words, “...in her absence, my certainties are falling apart” (189). That is, Padma is the listener and critic for Saleem who helps the narrative to flow smoothly and helps him to keep track of his story telling and she is the one who believes his complicated story full of magical elements. Together, Saleem and Padma are the story tellers, one being the narrator and the other as an active listener and thus together completing the whole narration. Along with the goddess named Padma safeguarding Saleem, together they appear to be a similar image of *Ardhanareeswara* imagery in Hindu belief system. *Ardhanareeswara* is the images of man and woman forming one complete entity, exemplified through lord Shiva and his Consort Parvati. Here, by being counterparts in the whole narration and later being married into one towards the end of the story, Padma and Saleem symbolize the wholeness brought through the union of man and woman.

Along with the title of the goddesses given to Saleem’s love interests, Padma and Parvati, Parvati is a woman with the midnight’s gift of witchcraft as she is known as Parvati-the-witch. The power of witchcraft stands closest to the supernatural power of goddesses, a category where Indian women are expected to fall to. It is interesting that Parvati is not categorized as an ordinary woman but she is strong for her witchcraft skills. This ties back to the Madonna-Whore dichotomy where, women are categorized into two major categories of the pure Madonna or a sexually promiscuous whore. Similarly, characterization of Parvati limits her to the category of extraordinary women with powers of magic where ordinary Indian women do not fall to. The

powers associated with Parvati are just because she is a midnight's child, not because she is another Indian woman.

Similar to the Goddess image entitled to postcolonial women, she is the entitled to the responsibility to preserve the tradition and authenticity of the nation. The characterization of Naseem Aziz is an illustration of this as her character sticks to preserve the authentic Indian tradition. For example, Saleem conveys that Naseem Aziz was a woman who wanted to preserve the traditional expectation of women. He narrates an instance when expresses aversion to her husband's sexual interests. As Naseem tells her husband, "I know you Europe-returned men. You find terrible women and then you try to make us girls be like them!" (31). In this instance Naseem not only tries to make a distinction between two types of women: the Indian women and the European women, but also she takes into account the sexual expectations of a native woman to be different from a European women. Similarly, Naseem shows a similar resistance when her husband asks her to come out of purdah by telling him "You want me to walk naked in front of strange men." This instance also shows that Naseem takes up the responsibility of postcolonial women as tradition keepers, preserving the authenticity and purity for themselves and thus the nation. Thus, the characterization of Naseem Aziz fulfills the postcolonial expectations of women to be the ones who preserve the authenticity and purity of the nation's culture and that of themselves.

However, the link of female sexuality to postcolonialism is also seen in *Midnight's Children* through Saleem's biological parents: William Methwold and Vanitha. Saleem devotes one whole chapter to the English man William Methwold whom and a local woman Vanitha becomes Saleem's parents. William Methwold is introduced to us by mentioning his physical feature, especially the central parting of his hair, which makes him irresistible to women.

According to Saleem, “It was one of those hairlines along which history and sexuality moved” (195). Here Saleem refers to the relationship Methwold had with Vanitha who later gave birth to her Child Saleem who happens to be exchanged with Shiva and lives in a different household. Through this relationship is that Saleem, allegory of the new India, born. Similarly when Saleem describes that his birth was heavy as it enfolded many fragments from history and a lot of people’s personal lives. One of the components that he mentions is “...an Englishman’s lust for an Indian allegory and the seduction of an accordionist’s wife” (121). Here English man’s lust denotes two things: the colonization of India by the British along with the relationship of English man, Methwold, with Vanitha, an Indian woman. Here the personal story of the relationships is the allegory of the nation itself; it is the English man’s lust that gives birth to Saleem and the postcolonial India. Thus, the history of India is linked with the sexuality of Indian women.

In essence, *Midnight’s Children* employ female characterizations who fit well with the postcolonial discourses around third-world women: the pure mothers, goddesses and the keepers of authenticity and tradition. The history of India is allegorically drawn around the sexuality of an Indian woman. Specifically the new India is the product of an English man’s lust for an Indian woman. Being the first of postcolonial texts, female characters in *Midnight’s Children* stand close to the postcolonial expectations of woman. The presence of these women in Saleem’s life makes his story an allegory of postcolonial India. Such an essentialized representation of Indian woman would have been a responsibility for postcolonial author to assert a separate identity for the postcolonial nation. However, when a postcolonial text is produced in the times of globalization, gender is not written around essentialized frames of postcolonialism. *The Ground Beneath Her Feet*, narrated Rai centers around a woman, Vina Apsara. Vina’s characterization as

a global citizen reaches far from the essentialized construction of postcolonial Indian woman and she does not stand as a national allegory therefore.

First of all, Vina's character is not only of a strong woman, but the novel praises her and places her above real-life woman. The novel starts in Mexico on the day when an earthquake ends her life. Rai, in love with Vina, explains her with great respect and love. In the beginning itself, Rai presents Vina as a global icon who is closer to any Goddess. Rai exclaims, "...a woman (Vina) came to be seen as an emblem, an ideal, by more than half the population of the world?" (20). Rai begins the story of Vina by mentioning that he was looked up to by more than half of the population of the globe. Rai assures that she would have been made a saint if she was born Christian and people would have worshipped her. The "Apsara" in her name also refers to the beautiful nymphs in Hindu belief system. According to Rai, "Vina, the Indian Iyre. Apsara, from Apsaras, a swanlike water nymph" (55). Similarly, the title "Vina" which is the name of a musical instrument suits her as she is a globally acclaimed singer. When Rai says, "She redeemed us by her sins" (20) he is alluding to the crucifixion of Jesus in Christianity where Jesus is considered a redeemer through his death. For Rai, Vina is worth kept as an icon for many just like goddesses are kept. In all these instances, Vina is considered above all real-life woman, closer to a goddess who deserves acclaim. The image of goddess in this context is not that of a woman who is a perfect embodiment of all virtues. The factor that elevates Vina to this level is her stardom and the global acclaim that she receives. Vina is not a postcolonial subject who serves an allegorical narrative for postcolonial womanhood. Instead, she is a strong subject who chooses her being without any specific ties to the expectations of preserving the authenticity.

The Ground Beneath Her Feet also gives a divine nature to its central character, Vina, which however is different from the goddess image of postcolonial women. As Rai writes about Vina after her death in the chapter “Vina Divina”, “This posthumous goddess, this underground post-Vina, queen of the Under-world, supplanting dread Persephone on her throne...” (479). Rai addresses Vina a “posthumous goddess” and equates her with the goddess of the underworld. Similarly, when Rai described his meeting with Vina in Mexico he attributes divinity to Vina. He writes, “Dionysiac Vina has risen up in wrath, goddess of pleasure and destruction” (460). Here Rai equated Vina with the Greek Goddess Dionysus. According to Rai, Vina possesses the powers of pleasure and destruction. In both the above mentioned cases, Vina’s character is elevated to the power of the divine. However, this goddess image is different from that of the image of goddess attributed to women. Traditionally, women as goddess carry a hidden notion of the traditional expectations of the females to remain “pure” and perfect type of women. However Vina’s case is different as the divinity associated with Vina is about the power she possess and it is the awe that the narrator Rai has towards Vina. Therefore, through the characterization of Vina *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* offers the powerful image of postcolonial woman who is not an essentialized bearer of postcolonial identity but is powerful to the degree of the divine.

Apart from the power associated with Vina through Goddess image, Vina’s character is that of a sexually liberated female and she plays a dominant role over the men in her life. The narrator puts it, “Vina belonged to no man, not even to him, through she loved him till the day she died” (121). This instance shows that Vina is characterized as a woman who is independent and powerful without being the possession of any man. Even when Vina promises Ormus that she loves him, she demands sexual freedom from him. She does not want her body to be possession of anyone, rather she chooses men in her life to fulfill her physical needs. As the

narrator writes, “She had picked him like a flower..., she had ordered him like a take-home meal and now she alarmed him by the ferocity of her appetites, because she began to feast upon him the moment the door of the limo closed...” (4). The novel begins with the reference of Vina’s death following a sexual encounter for which she chose a man to “feast upon.” This instance shows the sexual freedom Vina’s character possesses and the power she has over men in her life. According to Rai, “It occurred to me that in the field of love and desire Vina was just behaving like a man... We, Ormus and I, we were her women; her loyal wife standing by her philandering husband...” (432). For Rai, Vina seems like a man who philanders and her male lovers being the subservient wives who submit themselves to their philandering husbands. The gender switch seen in this instance also owes to the representation of Vina as strong, powerful, sexually autonomous woman. Being a woman, she exercises her power through her body and her music. Thus, in the postcolonial text *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* women are characterized as globally acclaimed sexually autonomous individuals which is very different from the traditional construction of women in the postcolonial discourses.

Conclusion

This paper analyzes Salman Rushdie’s *Midnight’s Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* to examine Jameson’s theory on third world literature as national allegories. Jameson argues that texts in postcolonial literature, which was earlier known as third world literature, are to be read as national allegories through which the postcolonial nation asserts its identity. Jameson categorizes any text produced from the postcolonial societies into the category of postcolonial literature and thus national allegories. However, I take the side of Aijaz Ahmad who rejects Jameson’s theory and proposes that third world literature are not necessarily national allegories and considering them as national allegories is overgeneralizing. Both *Midnight’s*

Children and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* are postcolonial texts as discussed in the paper examining postcolonial elements such as the other, hybridity and gender. *Midnight's Children* offers more instances of highlighting otherized identities through the characterizations of different characters, namely Saleem who is an allegory of the nation itself. Even though both *Midnight's Children* also employs themes of Hybridity, *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* offers more instances of hybrid identities through its characters, especially through the female protagonist Vina Apsara. For the very reason, both the texts cannot be easily categorized as national allegories. *Midnight's children* narrates the story of the nation through the saga of a boy born at the night of India's independence, while *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* narrates the story of a group of individuals who do not remain attached to one locality and thus it's a global tale. Therefore, upon analyzing individual subjectivities at the backdrop of postcolonial themes of othering, hybridity and gender I conclude that *Midnight's Children* is a national allegory whereas *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* is not because the individual characters are not narrating the tale of a postcolonial nation in this novel. I posit that allegorical narratives were inevitable in the earlier times of postcolonialism. Once the postcolonial nation asserts its own identity, national allegories are not necessary in postcolonial literature. Therefore, Jameson's argument is not applicable in the case of *Midnight's Children* and *The Ground Beneath Her Feet* and thus not to postcolonial literature in general.

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