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PARAMA SARKAR

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CONSUMING INDIA: IDENTITY, COMMODITY, CULTURE AND INDIANS IN BRITAIN

By

Parama Sarkar

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ABSTRACT

CONSUMING INDIA: IDENTITY, COMMODITY, CULTURE AND INDIANS IN BRITAIN

By

Parama Sarkar

Moving beyond discourses of nationalism, national belonging and immigrant nostalgia, *Consuming India* explores the representation of exotic commodities and bodies which I believe, is not only crucial in analyzing the formation of the South Asian British diaspora in the nineteenth century but also in understanding contemporary and in-vogue discourses like multiculturalism. I start with the critical commonplace that British culture since the early nineteenth-century has steadily exoticized the East. However, rather than read this exoticization solely in terms of the process of legitimating and maintaining colonial domination, my dissertation examines its function in Britain revealing how the representation of the East as exotic masks the undercurrent of xenophobia palpable in metropolitan attitudes to a steadily escalating foreign presence. As I examine events ranging from the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to the Nationality Act of 1948 and the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* to Robin Cook's "Chicken Tikka Masala" speech of 2001, I explore the triadic relationship between historical events, material objects and racialized bodies in Anglo-Indian encounters in the metropolitan context in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. In other words, I not only examine how these watershed moments necessitate shifting representations of South Asians within the metropolitan context but also demonstrate

how South Asian immigrants in Britain engage in self-orientalization, among other strategies, to gain economic and social stability. Simultaneously, I underscore the commodity culture of nineteenth-century colonial and twentieth- century post-colonial Britain, which necessitated and aided such specific self-presentations. Instead of portraying immigrants simply as victims of circumstances, such a reading imbues these figures with considerably more agency and shows them to be actively involved in the construction of their identity. In doing so, I also explore the dynamic relation between exoticism and xenophobia that dominates the British public imagination from the moment Indian immigrants began to arrive at the heart of the empire.

Thus, my dissertation explores how British commodity culture, in a broad sense of the term, impacts both Anglo-Indian encounters in the metropolitan space in colonial times as well as South Asian British literary and cultural production in the post-colonial age. In other words, by looking at literary texts at specific historical moments, I explore how India has been consumed in Britain over a broad historical spectrum and illustrate how fetishism and phobia of the East fundamentally shape colonial-metropolitan interactions and South Asian British cultural production. While most South Asian diasporic studies focus on the "home/abroad" binary , "Consuming India" thus engages with a different set of foci: exoticism, commodification, culture making, and strategies of identification in South Asian literature and culture in Britain.

Dedicated to

Ma and Baba

For the unconditional love, support and encouragement

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I am lucky to have a wonderful family, and friends who have loved and supported me through the many years of graduate school. But first I want to thank my chair, Dr.Salah Hassan for being a great advisor and mentor all these years. I am very grateful to my other committee members, Dr.Zarena Aslami, Dr. Frederick Aldama, Dr. Sheng-Mei Ma and Dr. Jyotsna Singh for their valuable input in the project. I also want to thank Dr.Steve Arch for his support during my final year as graduate student.

I want to thank my best friend Aryn for looking over the draft many, many times, and the countless coffee sessions, pep talks and much, much more. Thanks, Meghan for your unconditional love and support. Thanks also to Archana, Arunima, Becky, Brian Kanchana, Shikha, Theng-theng for being a constant source of encouragement. Lastly, I would not be where I am without my family. Dada -- you taught me to write and everything I have achieved now is because of you. I know you are always looking over me. Mummum -- thank you for believing in me when others were hesitant. Ma and Baba – thank you for letting me follow my dreams, and Runa, my little sister and best friend – thank you for being with me every step of the way. I owe this to all of you.

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Introduction

To call people exotic freezes us into the position of being always alien [...] by giving the "oriental" inhuman, unexplainable qualities, the racist abrogates human qualities, and, carrying all this to extremes, finds it easier to lynch the Chinaman, bomb Japan [...]

- Maxine Hong Kingston [1]

The key issue is how a culture comes to be aestheticized by people who have no stake in that community and in particular by those who exercise authority over the culture or people rendered exotic. This aestheticization is dependent on a mechanism whereby differences are abstracted from their cultural context and rendered strange or curious.

- Deborah Root [2]

Indian takeaways now outnumber fish and chip shops across the British Isles, and Chinese food and pizza have become standard fare. What has happened to British taste? Who are you if that's what you eat?

- David Howes [3]

On a trip to the National Portrait Gallery in London in summer 2005, I came across a notepad that featured the replica of Thomas Mann Baynes' portrait of Dean Mahomed, the first Indian writer in English. Nestled among other memorabilia and collectibles featuring icons of British history, this notepad was on sale for a pound alongside another notepad with a photograph of Princess Diana.

Figure 1 Sake Dean Mahomed Shampooing Surgeon. Brighton, Coloured lithograph by Thomas Mann Baynes, With special permission from the Wellcome Library, London [4]

In the portrait, Mahomed is dressed in Oriental finery. He is wearing a white silk robe with a maroon waistcoat and turban with a dagger fastened to his waist with a girdle. In his right hand, he is carrying a glove that was presumably used in the shampooing process that he claimed to have pioneered in Britain in the early nineteenth century. His left hand is on his waist as he stares unflinchingly at the painter. The setting of the painting is the seaside resort of Brighton where Mahomed set up his shampooing establishment, but instead of that building in the background, we get a partial view of Brighton's Royal Pavilion, complete with its dome and minarets, that was commissioned by George IV to humor his fascination for Oriental architecture. The title of the portrait reads "Sake Dean Mahomed, Shampooing Surgeon, Brighton."

I was immediately struck by the narrative that was embedded within this souvenir notepad. I had been intrigued by Dean Mahomed's story just a few days earlier when I saw another portrait of him in the Brighton Museum. The curator of the museum spoke about Mahomed in glowing terms as a major figure in Brighton's history and even volunteered to show me the site of Mahomed's baths on the seafront which had not

surprisingly been replaced by the Queen's Hotel. From his travel narrative and book on the shampooing process, I had imagined Mahomed as one of the earliest South Asian immigrants who was desperate to gain economic and social mobility in metropolitan society but was often marginalized and caricatured in the popular press for his entrepreneurial efforts. Ironically, two hundred years later, he had achieved the iconic status that he had so craved in his lifetime with British institutions like the National Portrait Gallery celebrating him in special exhibitions like "Between Worlds: Voyagers to Britain, 1700-1850" and commissioning souvenirs featuring him. But even as his contribution as curry entrepreneur and shampooing surgeon is celebrated today, Mahomed's image in his exotic Indian robes on the notepad cover reminds us that he has been literally objectified into a marketable tidbit of British history.

In the summer of 2006, I came across another interesting instance of cultural commodification. As part of the now routine "celebration of India" events in London, the high-end department store, Harrods launched a set of twelve inch dolls modeled on Bollywood celebrities.

Figure 2 Bollywood Legends Dolls [www.ethnicnow.com, 11sept.2006]

http://www.ethnicnow.com/channels/editors-choice/press-release/1/582/bollywood-comes-to-harrods.html

Created by entrepreneur Shameen Jivraj in collaboration with toy manufacturer and distributor Spin Master Toys UK and promoted as India's answer to Barbie and Ken, these dolls, predictably in ethnic wear, are replicas of popular stars like Shahrukh Khan, Hrithik Roshan, Kajol and Priyanka Chopra. Jivraj claims in an interview that Bollywood is "such a magical and emotive arena...I wanted to create something that would allow the audiences to be able to take some of that magic home to treasure and enjoy in a unique and new way."[5] So the "exotic world of Indian cinema" (the Associated Content ran a story with that title to mark this event) is commodified into bite-sized dolls to be enjoyed in a more private setting. This in-your-face cultural commodification didn't seem to ruffle any feathers; in fact, the Bollywood celebrities were only too happy to recreate a "fairy-tale atmosphere," that is, an Oriental setting, by arriving at Harrods in a horse-drawn carriage and endorsing this commodification by autographing the dolls for their fans. But this racialized politics of marketing cultural and ethnic difference can have serious ramifications as Ann DuCille points out in her analysis of the increasing range of "ethnic" versions of Barbie dolls: "For me these dolls are at once the symbol and a symptom of what multiculturalism has become in the hands of contemporary commodity culture; an easy and immensely profitable way off the hook of Eurocentrism that gives us the face of cultural diversity without the particulars of racial difference"(3-4).

In the face of this blatant reification of ethnicity and persistence of the discourse of exoticism well into the twenty-first century, I was really interested in exploring how India was and still is consumed in Britain. In other words, I was not only interested in understanding Britain's persistent fascination with exotic objects and bodies, but also in

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looking closely at the commodification of ethnicity, race and sexuality that has informed the politics of cultural appropriation of India in Britain in the last two hundred years. The decision to study the representation of India in the metropolitan context across a broad historical spectrum is not entirely arbitrary. Most current studies of South Asians in Britain start with the years just after independence and the partitioning of the Indian subcontinent with the assumption that the post-war labor needs of Britain encouraged migrants from its former colonies to relocate to the imperial metropolis in the hope of economic betterment.[6] However, just as Jigna Desai asserts that "it is the historical condition of colonialism and postcoloniality that has led to the global displacement of South Asian peoples under various forms of migration nor can they be separated from the uneven expansion of global capitalism that also functions to provide mobility and agency to these postcolonial subjects"(13), I argue that we must return to an earlier historical period and a different aspect of the economy to understand the emergence and sustenance of a postcolonial South Asian diasporic culture in Britain.

Also, much of the critical work on South Asians in Britain remains mired within discourses centering around the tension between "home" and "abroad," the actual residence and the ideal home left behind, and the anchorless migrant subjectivity that emerges out of this tension. Current critical work often represents immigrants as perpetually haunted by questions of belonging and as rooted to a specific space while desiring or constructing visions of a lost land.[7] While such representations illustrate the immigrant condition to a certain extent, this portrayal often takes away emphasis from the remarkable resourcefulness demonstrated by South Asian immigrants in order to integrate themselves within their adopted society, in this case, Britain. Constantly portraying them

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Moving beyond discourses of nationalism, national belonging and immigrant nostalgia, "Consuming India" explores the representation of exotic commodities and bodies which I believe, is not only crucial in analyzing the formation of the South Asian British diaspora in the nineteenth century but also in understanding contemporary and in-vogue discourses like multiculturalism. I start with the critical commonplace that British culture since the early nineteenth-century has steadily exoticized the East. However, rather than read this exoticization solely in terms of the process of legitimating and maintaining colonial domination, my dissertation examines its function at home, revealing how the representation of the East as exotic masks the undercurrent of xenophobia palpable in metropolitan attitudes to a steadily escalating foreign presence. As I examine events ranging from the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Indian Mutiny of 1857 to the Nationality Act of 1948 and the arrival of the *SS Empire Windrush* to Robin Cook's "Chicken Tikka Masala" speech of 2001, I explore the triadic relationship between historical events, material objects and racialized bodies in Anglo-Indian encounters in the metropolitan context in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.
In other words, I not only examine how these watershed moments necessitate shifting representations of South Asians within the metropolitan context but also demonstrate how South Asian immigrants in Britain engage in self-orientalization, among other strategies, to gain economic and social stability.[8] Simultaneously, I underscore the commodity culture of nineteenth-century colonial and twentieth-century post-colonial

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Britain, which necessitated and aided such specific self-presentations. Instead of portraying immigrants simply as victims of circumstances, such a reading imbues these figures with considerably more agency and shows them to be actively involved in the construction of their identity. In doing so, I also explore the dynamic relation between exoticism and xenophobia that dominates the British public imagination from the moment Indian immigrants began to arrive at the heart of the empire.

The discourse of "exoticism" has been widely theorized in postcolonial studies. Although the Oxford English Dictionary dates the word "exotic" to the sixteenth century, meaning "not indigenous," and "introduced from abroad," Isabel Santaolalla maintains that the fascination for foreign objects goes way back in time: "It was the lure of the exotic that led to the appropriation of Egyptian decorative motifs in early Greek architecture, or to the embrace of eastern cults like those of Isis and of Mitra in Rome..."(9). Pia Pal-Lapinski mentions that in the mid-eighteenth century, Samuel Johnson in his *Dictionary* (1755) defined the "word 'exotick' in terms of what it was *not*: as 'foreign, not produced in our own country; not domestick'"(1). Pal-Lapinski suggests that the seduction of Richardson's Clarissa "transforms her into an exotic being, a 'foreigner' who has no place in English society, whose only option is an extravagantly staged death"(1). From the middle of the eighteenth century then, a word that was previously associated with something new or unfamiliar assumed negative connotations and began to be associated with ideas of fear and contamination; anything exotic was perceived as a palpable threat to English racial and sexual identity. This discourse gathered steam with the onset of high imperialism in the nineteenth century even as exoticism became synonymous with cultural appropriation. Clara Gallini points out the

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role of the "Great Exhibitions (London, Paris, Philadelphia, Turin...) which concretely, in their great 'national pavilions,' constructed the exotic in order to suggest it as practice for domestic use"(214). Graham Huggan further elaborates on the construction of the discourse of exoticism: "For the exotic is not, as is often supposed, an inherent *quality* to be found 'in' certain people, distinctive objects, or specific places; exoticism describes, rather, a particular mode of aesthetic *perception* – one which renders people, objects and places strange even as it domesticates them, and which effectively manufactures otherness even as it claims to surrender to its immanent mystery"(13). Huggan rightly points out that the word "exotic" doesn't necessarily indicate an inherent difference in people or places, but is a carefully constructed discourse that is skillfully marshaled in the politics of global consumption. Huggan's arguments are bolstered by Stephen Foster who argues that "the exotic functions dialectically as a symbolic system, domesticating the foreign, the culturally different and the extraordinary so that the 'phenomena to which they...apply begin to be structured in a way which makes them comprehensible and possibly predictable, if predictably defiant of total familiarity" (13-4).[9]

Foster's formulation of the exotic is strikingly similar to Louise Kaplan's definition of a "fetishism strategy." "Fetishism strategy" as defined by Kaplan is the "need to transform something unfamiliar and intangible into something familiar and tangible" (1). In an effort to understand why certain people, objects and cultures are coded as "exotic" within Western aesthetics, Deborah Root points out: "Exoticism in its commodified form appears as a sophisticated appreciation of other cultures or as an aestheticized nostalgia for a different place or time, but the content of exotic images links it closely to colonialism and to contemporary systems of economic and cultural

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domination. The process of exotification is another kind of cultural cannibalism...Differences clearly do exist between cultures, and the issue is not that these are noticed but how these come to be aestheticized and by whom" (29-30). Drawing on Huggan, Foster, Root and Kaplan's theorizations of exoticism and fetishism strategy and focusing on Anglo-Indian encounters in colonial and postcolonial Britain in my dissertation, I read the discourse of exoticism both as an euphemism that masks the xenophobia latent in Britain's perception of the "foreign" and as a mode of control that is mobilized for the cultural appropriation of the "other" that endeavors to make the unfamiliar, familiar and safe. Nineteenth century Anglo-Indian interactions in the imperial metropolis sees an ebb and flow of exoticism and xenophobia while in the twentieth century, the discourse of exoticism morphs into the state sponsored discourse of "happy multiculturalism" and xenophobia translates into blatant racism against South Asians.[10]

My dissertation is divided into two parts: the first part focuses on Indian immigrants and travelers and metropolitan responses to them in nineteenth-century imperial Britain; the second part focuses on contemporary South Asian narratives in post-colonial Britain. My first chapter argues that in the absence of a solidly defined discourse of scientific racism, prejudice against South Asians took the form of crude objectification in early nineteenth-century Britain. Britain's love affair with exotic Eastern imports started as far back as 1662 when Catherine of Braganza's bridal dowry introduced varied objects like cane, tea, porcelain, lacquer and textiles to Britain.[11] Before this first material contact with its objects, the European mainland had at best fantastical images of the East, as lands where cotton "grew six yards tall; of a city in China where all people

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dressed in silk, yet still had plenty to spare for foreign merchants; and of fortunes to be had in Java in 'pepper, nutmegs, spikenard, cubebs, cloves and all the other valuable spices and drugs'" (Thomas 9). [12] Even though travelers like Marco Polo, who Gertrude Thomas quotes here, were publicly derided for embellishing their travel narratives, it was the lure of these eastern luxuries that prompted constant expeditions from Europe to the East. In 1498, when Portuguese explorer Vasco da Gama opened up the sea route to the East and landed in Malabar on the western coast of India, Portugal was exposed to the riches of the East. More than a hundred and fifty years later, when Catherine of Braganza of Portugal married the new king of England, Charles Stuart in 1662, all the Eastern imports which had become a mainstay in Portuguese domestic life found their way into England.

These two events, as Thomas's book demonstrates, had a lasting impact on "Renaissance living," and more generally on British commodity culture, and in many ways "it was the demanding desire for such exotic extravagances that in great measure shaped geography and wrote the history of the world" (vi). But when commercial trade opened up the sea routes between Britain and the Orient, the British mainland saw a steady stream of immigration from the East and Britain was faced with the practical problem of framing the increasing number of brown bodies within the British body politic. The only viable way to do so was to insert them as objects within its burgeoning commodity exchange network while celebrating their exotic appeal. In my first chapter, I suggest that while nineteenth-century South Asian immigrants like Dean Mahomed, often traded their ethnicity for commercial gains, they were simultaneously engaged in challenging the discourse of British cultural superiority. Mahomed, by re-inventing the

traditionally rejuvenating process of shampooing as a medical procedure, inverts the dominant binary of the corrupt East/pristine West to portray a diseased British body politic, weakened by imperial economic expansion in need of Eastern healing to be restored to health. I then read two photographs of the Indian Pavilion at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Britain's obsession with exotic commodities reached a climax with this event and as the reading demonstrates, Indian bodies are literally objectified amidst the other exotic objects to celebrate India's status as the shining glory of Britain's imperial crown.

In the second chapter, I focus on Wilkie Collins's *The Moonstone* to explore how the historic events of the 1850s, namely the Great Exhibition of 1851 and the Indian Mutiny of 1857, transformed the exotic Indian into an object of fear and revulsion and led to a resurgence of blatant xenophobia against Indian commodities and bodies. Even though the Great Exhibition of 1851 was designed to frame the exotic within set categories, there was growing anxiety in Britain about the increasing foreign presence. Caroline Reitz mentions a quote from Philip Thurmond Smith which captures this uneasiness: "The Great Exhibition...brought forth a strident crop of dire warnings to the authorities. In a letter to the Home Secretary, George Graham, an 'aeronaut' [balloonist]...warned of 90, 000 foreigners, 150,000 Irishmen and 60,000 Irishwomen, and assorted Chartists who were ready to join forces, and at signal rise up and kill as many English as possible"(101). I begin this chapter by examining Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank's narrative on the Great Exhibition of 1851 and suggest that the imperial objects on display produced a complicated reaction to the presence of foreign bodies on English soil in the Victorian imagination. The organizers of the exhibition

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wanted to encourage the belief that foreign objects and bodies were effectively contained under the mantle of British imperialism. But as the Mayhew text demonstrates, the exhibition made foreign bodies hyper-visible like never before and generated a degree of uncomfortable apprehension of the loss of British identity from foreign influence and fanned increased fears of miscegenation. This apprehension turns into acute xenophobia in the seventy odd novels published in Britain following the Indian mutiny of 1857. Even though the Mutiny is not literally mentioned in *The Moonstone*, the representation of India and its inhabitants clearly mirror the cultural temper of the post-mutiny years. The mild mannered Hindoo with his magical healing powers is transformed into a demonic other who engages in some kind of "hocus pocus" (Collins 55) to create fissures in the Victorian social order. Even though the novel does not show the actual scene of crime, the three Indians are suspected simply because of their race. Any kind of Eastern influence is regarded as disruptive and dangerous to the metropolitan space and the only way British identity can be salvaged is by deliberately thwarting the insidious effects of these objects and bodies and returning the formerly exoticized objects and bodies to the colonies.

The third and fourth chapters focus on postcolonial Britain. The third chapter demonstrates how Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* deflates Britain's fascination of the "mystic east" and draws attention to the delicate line toed by the South Asian diasporic community to negotiate their identity in an inherently suspicious postcolonial metropolitan society. Following Stuart Hall, I suggest that the discourse of exoticism has mutated into the state-sponsored discourse of "happy multiculturalism." I start with a look at the British foreign secretary, Robin Cook's celebration of multicultural Britain in

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his "Chicken Tikka Masala" speech of 2001 and argue that such recent celebrations of Britain's so-called multicultural identity eclipse the politics of cultural commodification and ignore the xenophobia and often blatant racism that still mark the immigrant experience in Britain. Through his relentless satirizing of the British fascination of the mystic East in his novel, Kureishi punctures the discourse of happy multiculturalism which insists on celebrating cultural co-existence while deliberately ignoring the uncomfortable realities of immigrant life. At the same time, he mocks the naïveté of upper class South Asian immigrants who still hold on to the idea of Britain as a land of possibility and not unlike their ancestors in the nineteenth century are only too happy to engage in self-exoticization in the hope of economic viability and increased social acceptance. Finally, I suggest that Kureishi by portraying immigrant life in all its complexity simultaneously argues for a reconfigured, more inclusive idea of Englishness and advocates a new form of multiculturalism that is "not a superficial exchange of festivals and food, but a robust and committed exchange of ideas."[13] In other words, while Kureishi attempts to resist the imposition of a specific ethnic identity fostered by discourses like multiculturalism and records the plurality of immigrant responses to a xenophobic society, he simultaneously underscores that British-Asian immigrants are not passive subjects from whom culture is appropriated or identity constructed. Instead his work, not unlike that of Dean Mahomed, highlights the ways in which South Asian immigrants are also active participants in the process of cultural consumption.

In my final chapter, I discuss how the South Asian text itself has become a commodity in the global literary marketplace and ways in which the Western publishing industry still reinforces Orientalist stereotypes about women. In *The Post-Colonial*

Exotic, Huggan has explored in detail "the material conditions of production and consumption of postcolonial writings, and the influence of publishing houses and academic institutions on the selection, distribution and evaluation of these works" (vii). In this chapter, I engage with Huggan's work by analyzing some book cover designs of texts by South Asian women writers; I point out how the discourse of exoticism is literally gendered and sexualized when it comes to South Asian women's writing. In the first section of this chapter, I argue that such blatant objectification of women's bodies not only continues the trend of exoticism well into the twenty-first century but is a form of neo-orientalism that insists on constructing the South Asian woman as a passive and overtly sexualized being. Interestingly, while some postcolonial women writers like Preethi Nair are complicit in this process, several writers like Ravinder Randhawa, Atima Srivastava, Meera Syal and Arundhati Roy have disrupted this stereotype and tried to capture the angst of the lives of immigrant and postcolonial women. In the second section of the chapter therefore, I focus on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and explore how Roy's narrative challenges the accusations of inauthenticity of representation that Indian critics have brought against her but also how it resists the Western discourse that seeks to commodify South Asian women's writing.

Thus, my dissertation explores how British commodity culture, in a broad sense of the term, impacts both Anglo-Indian encounters in the metropolitan space in colonial times as well as South Asian British literary and cultural production in the post-colonial age. In other words, by looking at literary texts at specific historical moments, I explore how India has been consumed in Britain over a broad historical spectrum and illustrate how fetishism and phobia of the East fundamentally shape colonial-metropolitan

interactions and South Asian British cultural production. While most South Asian diasporic studies focus on the "home/abroad" binary and the related topics of nationalism, hybridity and immigrant nostalgia, "Consuming India" thus engages with a different set of foci: exoticism, commodification, culture making, and strategies of identification in South Asian literature and culture in Britain.

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Chapter One

Trading Ethnicity: the Commodification of Indian-ness in Early Nineteenth-Century Britain

The general fansie of the people runs upon East India goods to that degree that the chints and painted calicoes...become now the dress of our ladies, ...Nor was this all, but it *crept* into our houses, our closets, and bedchambers; curtains, cushions, chairs, and at last, beds themselves, were nothing but calicoes or Indian stuffs; and in short, almost everything that used to be made of wool or silk, ...was supplied by the Indian trade. (emphasis added) [1]

In 1708, Daniel Defoe in *The Review* commented on the insidious influence of Eastern textiles, among other imports, on the English mindset. In the statement quoted here, he talks specifically of the Indian cottons that were becoming so indispensable in the British home that British Parliament eventually had to prohibit the import of India cottons into Britain.[2] I begin with Defoe's quote to draw attention to the uneasiness caused by the proliferation of Eastern objects within the metropolitan economy not only in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries but also well into the twenty-first century.[3] England's love affair with Eastern imports started as far back as 1662 when Catherine of Braganza's bridal dowry introduced varied objects like cane, tea, porcelain, lacquer and textiles to Britain.[4] But if Defoe's statement is any indication, the growing dependence on Eastern commodities, fostered by the activities of the East India Company, created considerable anxiousness about the corrupting influence of Eastern trade among the British intelligentsia. My project, which reads South Asian literary and cultural production within a matrix of British commodity culture, argues that the co-

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existence of this "fascination" with and "phobia" of the East fundamentally shaped nineteenth-century British cultural imaginary. Such a pattern is discernible not only in nineteenth-century Britain's responses to the burgeoning presence of Indian objects and bodies within metropolitan space, as this chapter demonstrates, but also in post-colonial Britain's attitude to South Asian immigrants.

In the early nineteenth century, material objects like precious gemstones and cashmere shawls were highly coveted for their exotic appeal but so were Indian bodies engaged in the service of colonial "nabobs."[5] Sukhdev Sandhu notes that these brown bodies "served as human equivalents of the porcelain, textiles, wallpapers, and lacquered pieces that the English nobility was increasingly buying from the East" (4). This chapter, focusing on literature from pre -1850 Britain and a couple of photographs of the Indian Pavilion from the Great Exhibition of 1851, reads the British fascination with exotic objects as a euphemism that masks the undercurrent of xenophobia already palpable in metropolitan attitudes towards an increasing foreign presence. In the absence of a solidly defined discourse of scientific racism, reaction to the Indian bodies manifested itself through blatant objectification, an attitude that climaxed in the Great Exhibition of 1851.[6] Surprisingly, early immigrants and travelers did very little to resist such objectification; in fact, the first Indian writer in English, Dean Mahomed actively promoted the exotic nature of his "shampooing" techniques in order to gain economic and social stability. But at the same time, immigrant narratives like that of Mahomed are characterized by a peculiar resistance to unquestionably accepting British cultural hegemony. This chapter examines Mahomed's *Shampooing, or Benefits Resulting From the Use of The Indian Medicated Vapour Bath, As Introduced Into This Country, by S.D Mahomed (A Native of*

India), and argues that in order to counter a possible charge of what I call "ethno-pornography," Mahomed's text inverts the dominant binary of the corrupt East/pristine West to portray a diseased British body politic, weakened by imperial economic expansion in need of Eastern healing to be made whole again.[7] While "Indian-ness" is certainly commodified in the text, Mahomed's deft narrative replete with testimonials from satisfied patrons and accounts of the purported advantage of Indian medical techniques over British practices effectively argues for a legitimate immigrant presence in Britain. I then read two photographs of the Indian Pavillion at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Britain's obsession with exotic commodities reached a climax with this event and as the reading demonstrates, Indian bodies are yet again literally objectified amidst the other exotic objects to celebrate India's status as the jewel in Britain's imperial crown.

Commodity Culture in early nineteenth-century Britain

In the early decades of the nineteenth century, Britain was preoccupied with its own growing supremacy as a mercantile nation. Industrial and technological advancement following the Industrial Revolution and unprecedented revenues generated by trade with Asia and Africa produced in early nineteenth-century British mindset a sense of economic and cultural superiority. The construction of a commodity culture organized around the production and circulation of consumer goods reached a climax with the Great Exhibition of 1851. Prince Albert, on the opening day of the exhibition, declared that "the products of all quarters of the globe are placed at our disposal, and we have only to choose which is the best and cheapest for our purposes" (Richards 28). His statement not only proclaims Britain as the leader in the global market, but immediately situates the British consumer within a network of commodity exchange where he can

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pick the most useful object from a vast array of products, even those brought from distant parts of the world. Oriental commodities like tea had been anglicized and domesticated into a British ritual as early as the middle of the eighteenth century, and Britain's fascination with curry was steadily on the increase in the nineteenth century. Living in London at a time when the city was one of the major trading centers in the world with products ranging from tea, coffee, sugar and cotton to spices and tobacco being ferried into it through the Thames and other waterways from Africa and Asia, Indian travelers and immigrants could scarcely have failed to recognize the value of Eastern commodities in British metropolitan life. Once immigrants started making an appearance on Britain's shores in the nineteenth century, it was almost unavoidable that they figure a way into the money economy heralded by the Industrial Revolution.

In his book on commodity culture in Victorian England, Thomas Richards argues that in the Victorian mindset, the word "Empire" was synonymous with Britain's economic expansion and it was generally believed that imperialism would be contingent on the effective "outward-bound movement of surplus capital and commodities": "It did not matter whether one was for or against Empire: it was an article of faith among jingoes and liberals and radicals alike that, in Marx's words, 'it becomes necessary for capital progressively to dispose ever more fully of the whole globe...so as to find productive employment for the surplus value it has realized'"(120). Richards also suggests that while Britain was always on the lookout for new markets in its empire to dispose of the excess or "surplus" commodities from its burgeoning industrial production, it was also scouring for raw materials/commodities to feed the endless demand of countless mills and factories that had sprung up all over Britain. In this context, both "commodities" and

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"surplus commodities" acquired a new sense of value. Even though Richards's argument is specific to Victorian Britain, I think it is particularly helpful to understand the incipient commodity culture of late eighteenth and early nineteenth-century Britain. Both the raw materials/ commodities that were used in industrial production as well as the finished products are what drove Britain's imperial ambitions even in the early decades of the nineteenth century. In other words, the need to circulate commodities necessitated the establishment of a network of exchange between Britain and other countries around the globe and directly resulted in the establishment and prosperity of the East India Company. Within this tightly woven exchange network, there was no place for any commodity/body that did not have a use value.[8]

Here, I want to extend Marx's term "use value" to not only indicate the utility of inanimate commodities but also to refer to the utility of labor of individuals or bodies. Within such an economic matrix, failure to partake in the network of exchanges and to generate money would indicate that these bodies were a burden to society and hence would be promptly relegated to the underclass, so elaborately categorized in Henry Mayhew's compendium on London's street life,[9] or even to the far flung colonies along with the surplus commodities. In an essay, Deidre David rightly points out that in line with several of his contemporaries, "Dickens finds the colonies of white settlement to be convenient repositories for characters difficult to integrate into English society"(87). Hence, in *Hard Times*, Tom Gradgrind who has disgraced himself in the eyes of all around him is shipped off to one of the distant lands and Mr. Micawber, at the end of *David Copperfield* sails with his family to Australia (David 87). Dickens does not indicate the reason for the marginalization of these characters at the end of his narratives

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other than suggesting they were morally suspect and David doesn't elaborate on this economic angle. But it seems fairly apparent that, among other things, failure to generate money through bodily labor and hence to contribute to Britain's material wealth necessitated their withdrawal from metropolitan society. While both Mayhew and Dickens refer to Victorian London, this commodity oriented economy was already in place in the beginning of the nineteenth century. This chapter evaluates the literary and cultural production of South Asians in Britain in the early nineteenth century and argues that the economic regime and fear of being denoted as surplus commodities and relegated to the underclass makes South Asian travelers and immigrants engage in self-orientalization to gain economic and social mobility.

In this cultural climate of rampant consumerism when Eastern objects were quite a rage, South Asians themselves were regarded as little more than exotic objects and elicited curiosity and wonder anywhere they went. In the last decades of the eighteenth century, several South Asians traveled to the heart of the Empire and some of them, like Mirza Itesa Modeen and Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, constantly talk about the attraction of the British public to the exotic brown bodies. According to Mirza Itesa Modeen, a South Asian traveler to Britain in 1765, "even the mere company of an Indian dressed in Oriental clothes could add to the reputation of a man" (Visram 8). Mirza Abu Taleb Khan, an official in the administrative division of the East India Company in India, traveled all over Europe in late eighteenth and early nineteenth century and in 1810, published a translated volume of his travels. *Travels of Mirza Abu Taleb Khan in Asia, Africa, and Europe* records an extremely interesting incident:

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> One day, a great crowd having assembled about me, a shopkeeper advised me to walk into his house, and to sit down till they should disperse. I accepted his kind invitation, and went into the shop, where I amused myself looking at some penknives, scissars, etc. The people however thronged so about his windows, that several of the panes were broken; and the crowd being very great, it was in vain to ask who had done it. (143)

In his book, *Novels behind Glass*, Andrew Miller demonstrates how the invention of plate glass in the mid 1830s revolutionized the whole business of selling in nineteenth-century Britain. The commodities displayed behind the shop window both elicited desire and created a distance between the object and the consumer with the very material presence of the plate glass between them (5). Unaware that he was being perceived as an object himself, Khan goes inside the shop to see the products of Britain's newfound industrial prowess. Once his body is more clearly framed among indispensable commodities but is simultaneously distanced by the material presence of the transparent glass, the crowd can barely control its acquisitive desire, resulting in the splintering of the glass windows. This incident quite literally draws attention to the violence in the "contact zone" that accompanies the fetishization of the brown body.[10] Louise Kaplan's brilliant definition of "fetishism strategy" (1) is particularly useful in understanding this phenomenon. Kaplan declares that "fetishism is a mental strategy or defense that enables a human being to transform something or someone with its own enigmatic energy and immaterial essence into something or someone that is material and tangibly real, a form of being that makes the something or someone controllable"(5). In a commodity-obsessed society, a move to

establish the Eastern bodies as exotic entities transforms the "other" into dehumanized commodities and becomes an effective mode of exerting control over them.

In nineteenth-century Britain, exoticization of the brown bodies was a mode of control. But the fear of being relegated to the margins of British metropolitan society prevented travelers like Abu Taleb Khan and some immigrants like Dean Mahomed from resisting the rampant objectification. Rozina Visram's pioneering work on South Asian immigrants comprehensively demonstrates that ayas and lascars who were employed in the service of the East India Company and left destitute on the streets of London after being discharged from active service were treated with contempt and loathing by the British public. Early travelers and immigrants like Abu Taleb Khan and Mahomed therefore not only indulged in self-orientalization but also tried to figure out ways by which they could trade their skills and their ethnicity to contribute to the market-centric economy of Britain and in the process, gain access to mainstream society. Khan, at one point, reveals his desire to be of more practical use in British society by teaching foreign languages to the British public:

> When I first arrived in London, it had been my determination to have opened a Public Academy to be patronized by Government, for instructing such of the English as were destined to fill important situations in the East, in the Hindoostany, Persian, and Arabic languages[...]By these means I expected to have passed my time in England in a rational and advantageous manner; beneficial both to myself, and to the nation I came to visit.(163)

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Khan's intentions here are strikingly similar to Thomas Macaulay's formulation of the "mimic men" in his infamous "Minute on Indian Education"(1835): "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (Macaulay 1612). Though Macaulay conceptualizes this idea almost thirty years after Khan, attitudes like this might have alerted Macaulay to such a possibility. Khan clearly accepts the administrative dominance of the British in colonial India thus tangentially contributing to the imperial process.

So even as the East India Company was engaged in furthering their mercantile interests in India, some imperial subjects were "demonstrating their resourcefulness and adaptability" (Visram 357) in the heart of the imperial metropolis by engaging in what Rozina Visram terms "cultural entrepreneurship," that is, making a livelihood out of "selling Indian culture" to Englishmen with a voracious appetite for anything Oriental. As such, they can be held accountable for what I term "ethno-pornography," along the lines of Sau-ling Cynthia Wong's use of the term; that is, the move to highlight one's ethnicity in order to get a foothold in white society. Aware of this and in an effort to downplay accusations of "selling themselves" under economic pressure, immigrant narratives like those of Mahomed, make an attempt to establish the indispensability of the brown body in healing the British body politic, portrayed as damaged by the onslaught of industrialization and colonial expansion.

Dean Mahomed's self orientalization

Dean Mahomed's life was distinguished by the sheer diversity of his experiences. Mahomed was born in Patna, Bihar in 1759 and started his career as a soldier in the East

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India Company's Bengal army under Godfrey Baker, an Irish cadet. He served the army from 1769 to 1782, but when Captain Baker decided to return to Ireland, a desire "of seeing that part of the world" (*Travels* 124) and a conviction that he would suffer "much uneasiness of mind" (124) in the absence of his patron and best friend, Mahomed took the decision of immigrating to Europe and arrived at Dartmouth in England in September 1784, at the age of 25. His early years as a migrant were spent in Ireland under the patronage of the Baker family who lived in a prosperous part of Cork but his exact position within the household is not known. Records indicate that he was engaged in some kind of managerial position and it is during his stay in Ireland that he got married to Jane Daly and wrote *The Travels of Dean Mahomed* in 1793-94, recounting his experiences as a soldier in the East India Company's army.

Travels is more in line with the genre of traditional travel writing that was seeing an upsurge in the nineteenth century as the imperial officers and various members of their entourage were offering extensive commentaries on their experience in exotic lands, the genre that Edward Said has famously said to have contributed to the rise of orientalism in the West. Widely celebrated as the first book to be written and published in English by an Indian, *Travels* was undoubtedly an attempt by Mahomed to situate himself within the Western literary world. Written as a series of letters to an imaginary friend, William A. Bailie, a colonel in the service of the East India Company, it is an attempt to provide an insider's perspective on the Indian colonial landscape with graphic portraits of native people and places. I do not focus on *Travels* here because it has been extensively commented on by Michael Fisher in his two books on Mahomed.[11] I am more interested in looking at Mahomed's lesser known text, *Shampooing, or Benefits Resulting From the*

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Use of The Indian Medicated Vapour Bath, As Introduced Into This Country, by S.D Mahomed (A Native of India). First published in 1822, this text can be read as a classic example of an early nineteenth-century advertising success story.

Even though advertising as a medium was generally frowned upon in the early nineteenth century and flourished only after the accession of Queen Victoria, Mahomed recognized that being economically viable by catering to the needs of the society was the only way he could prevent his relegation to the margins. He decided that advertising would be the hallmark of his entrepreneurial venture.[12] Mahomed decided to trade his ethnicity and reinvent himself, first as a restaurateur and then as an Eastern sage and medical man, the disseminator of knowledge and wisdom, both services being highly in demand at this historical moment. Unlike Elizabeth Gaskell's novels which focus on the conditions of production and Dickens's novels which often highlight the consumer, Mahomed's text is designed to create and stoke consumer desire. In his re-invention of the traditionally rejuvenating process of shampooing as a medical procedure, his emphasis is not so much the conditions of production, but the utility of the product generated. This was a striking departure from the method of his patron Basil Cochrane, who pioneered the Vapour Bath in Europe in his Portman Square establishment. Indirectly then, Mahomed too partakes in the imperial mission by fostering a craving for Oriental commodities and deliberately creating the lure of the mystic East with constant emphasis on the authenticity of his ingredients and his procedure. In line with modern advertising techniques, he further fans this desire by garnering ecstatic testimonials from his consumers. Fisher in his biography rightly draws attention to Mahomed's self-orientalization. I suggest that while it is indisputable that Mahomed flaunts his ethnicity

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for commercial gains, it is also important to underscore the ways in which he utilized prevailing social and economic conditions with remarkable finesse to achieve his ends while simultaneously revealing fissures in the British social order.

Mahomed's deft manipulation of available socio-economic and literary conventions of the time to construct a self that is simultaneously a "much obliged, and devoted, humble servant" (*Travels* 32) to his British patrons and a proud Indian who believes, after having observed the contrasting lifestyle in Ireland that his countrymen have "still more of the innocence of our ancestors, than some of the boasting philosophers of Europe" (34) makes *Shampooing* a fascinating and complex read. Written at a time when Mahomed had lived in Britain for a while, the text clearly demonstrates that he was abreast of the social and economic conditions of the time and used his knowledge to maximum effect to carve out a unique identity for himself in early nineteenth-century Britain. In this text, Mahomed uses the immigrant body to both subscribe and thwart dominant Western discourses about the East. He makes the immigrant body hyper-visible in the metropolis while constantly emphasizing the difference between the East and the West. Simultaneously, by reinventing himself as a "Shampooing Surgeon" with magical healing powers, he suggests that the East is indispensable in restoring the colonizer's body to health. He employs several conventions about the Orient that were entrenched in the nineteenth-century British mindset, yet ends up asserting Eastern superiority on several different levels.

Rozina Visram tells us that a significant number of South Asian immigrants were engaged in self-employment, "as keepers of lodging-houses and cafes, as purveyors of Indian culture, playing music or hawking Indian cures and wares, reminding us that

earning a living catering for compatriots or 'selling culture' was as important in the nineteenth century as in the twentieth, and did not begin with the post-war generation of migrants" (357). A lot of working class Indians, in the nineteenth century, marketed their own ethnicity as means of survival and worked as itinerant traders selling textiles or other Oriental merchandise door to door. Others were engaged in the restaurant business. Curry was already much in demand in Britain; by 1784, curry and rice had become specialty on the menu at a lot of fashionable eateries in London's Piccadilly (Visram 6). Dean Mahomed had moved to London with his family around 1807 and had found temporary employment with Sir Basil Cochrane in his vapour-bath establishment in Portman Square. But his shrewd business sense convinced him that there was money to be made in the restaurant business and accordingly he set up the Hindoostanee Coffee-House in 1810 at 34 George Street, Portman Square. As Antony Clayton mentions in his book, there were around 550 coffee houses in London by the second decade of the eighteenth century, and in order to distinguish himself, Dean Mahomed chose to highlight his ethnicity to create a consumer base and cater to the palate of the India returned "nabobs" who were still wallowing in the nostalgia of their experiences in the East.

Visram mentions that this business venture was probably the first instance of "economic survival through ethnic 'cultural-entrepreneurship'" (39) among the early South Asian immigrants in Britain. Clayton mentions that an advertisement in *The Times* on 27 March, 1811 emphasized the uniqueness of Mahomed's coffee-house in terms of presenting an authentic "Oriental" experience (121). The note mentions that the coffee-house was available "for the entertainment of Indian gentlemen, where they may enjoy...the real Chilm tobacco, and Indian dishes, in the highest perfection, and allowed

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by the greatest epicures to be unequalled to any curries ever made in England; with choice wine and every accommodation" (Clayton 121). The emphasis here is clearly on the "real," the authentic dining experience that only a native of India could provide. This emphasis on the "native" is probably because there are indications that British women often used their curry-making skills to cater to different East Indian families settled in London. Visram mentions Sarah Shade who was apparently able to make a living for over a year and a half by selling curry to different families in London(6). It is also important to underscore here that the allusion to "Indian gentlemen" was a reference to the British "nabobs" and not people of Indian origin per se. Such fashionable establishments would probably be inaccessible to the lascars and ayas of South Asian origins who crowded the streets of London.

Mahomed, by recreating an Indian setting in his coffee house and serving authentic Indian dishes, aspired to cater to a particular section of nineteenth-century society. His strategy worked to the extent of getting him a substantial mention in the nineteenth-century version of the *Good Food Guide* and *The Epicure's Almanac* but not enough to make it a lasting career for him. The entry itself in *The Epicure's Almanac* gives us a better idea of Mahomed's intent:

> At the corner of George Street, there was until very lately an establishment on a novel plan. Mohammed, a native of Asia, opened a house for the purpose of giving dinners in the Hindustanee style, with other refreshments of the same genus. All the dishes were dressed with *curry-powder, rice, Cayenne, and the best spices* from Arabia. A room was set apart for smoking from *hookahs with Oriental herbs* [...] *Chinese pictures*

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and other Asiatic embellishments representing views in India, Oriental sports, and groups of natives decorated the walls. (123-4; emphasis added)

This graphic portrayal alerts us to the extent to which Mahomed went to create an Oriental atmosphere in order to distinguish his coffee house among the host of coffee houses mushrooming all over London. Mahomed deliberately fuses Chinese, Indian, Arabic identities to construct an Oriental tableau and actually uses objectified "native bodies," probably portraits displaying Indian scenes, to adorn the walls of his coffee-house. But Mahomed could not sustain this Oriental fantasy for too long and for various reasons that are not completely clear, he was forced to declare bankruptcy in the *London Gazette* in 1812 (Visram 40).

The entrepreneurial streak in Mahomed would not let him quit even after he had to file for bankruptcy. Around 1814, he arrived in Brighton to establish himself as a "Shampooing Surgeon." Brighton, made more accessible by the railway connection from London was fast becoming a fashionable sea side resort, primarily because of the virtues of sea-bathing in curing ailments, a medical view popularized by Dr. Richard Russell and by the patronage of King George IV (Visram 40-1). Even before the arrival of Mahomed, Brighton already had a variety of bathing establishments which professed various cures and it is amidst such an environment that Mahomed set up his shampooing establishment and bath. As with his coffee-house, Mahomed knew that the only way he could survive amidst severe competition was by trading his ethnicity. He had to find a way to emphasize that he was "different" and what he offered was both unique and superior to all the existing establishments in Brighton. Visram suggests that the reason that Mahomed's bath was so successful was because he was at the right place at the right

time. Brighton's Royal Pavillion, modeled on an Oriental mode of architecture and commissioned by King George IV was completed by 1821 and Mahomed's baths, "with its associations of oriental luxury, would have blended in with such associations" (Visram 42). Though such a view cannot completely be disregarded, Mahomed's baths were a stupendous success primarily because of the shrewd business acumen of its proprietor. In an age pervaded by print and commodity culture, Mahomed realized that publicity was as indispensable and needed to be used no less masterfully than the commodity itself. He skillfully utilized effective advertising strategies and manipulated the murky world of medical practices of early nineteenth-century Britain not only to make a living but also to make a political statement about the role of immigrants in mainstream British life.

I want to now turn my attention to the text itself and show how, by focusing on the "white" and "brown" body in the imperial metropolis and centering the discourse around existing medical practices, Mahomed both negotiates his own immigrant identity in an alien space while simultaneously establishing the cultural superiority of the East over the West. He draws on two prominent social/cultural conventions of the time to create a specific clientele for his establishment; his self-construction as an Eastern sage and "Shampooing Surgeon" is possible because of the lack of a well organized medical system in Britain at that time. Moreover, his emphasis on commodification, ranging from presenting the immigrant body as an ethnic commodity to attract consumers and packaging the shampooing method as a successful medical procedure to the publicity of the establishment through a narrative which is an extended advertisement in itself is well aligned to the exotic commodity fetish of early nineteenth-century Britain. The

frontispiece of the book itself establishes all the cultural markers that Mahomed employs throughout the text:

> Shampooing; or Benefits Resulting From the Use of The Indian Medicated Vapour Bath, As introduced into this country, by S.D. Mahomed, (A Native of India) containing a brief but comprehensive view of the effects produced by the use of the Warm Bath, in comparison with Steam or Vapour Bathing. Also A detailed account of the various Cases to which this healing remedy may be applied; its general efficacy in peculiar diseases, and its success in innumerable instances, when all other remedies had been ineffectual. To which is subjoined An Alphabetical List of Names (Many of the very first consequence,) subscribed in testimony of the important use & general approval of The Indian Method of Shampooing.

Such an elaborate and comprehensive title maps out Mahomed's strategy in the text; that is, an elaborate comparison between the benefits induced by his "Indian medicated vapour bath" and the more traditional warm bath already popular at this time. Even though this text is clearly meant to be a promotion for his establishment, Mahomed cunningly structures it around testimonials by satisfied patrons in order to avoid allegations that he is blowing his own trumpet. Mahomed thus adopts a publicity stunt akin to the modern day money back guarantee; he is so confident of his abilities that he would rather let his patrons do the talking. At the same time, he takes care to emphasize that he is indeed a pioneer of the Indian method of shampooing distinguished by its

medical benefits by representing himself as the "Shampooing Surgeon" responsible for its introduction to Britain.

In his book on medical practices in Britain, Roy Porter emphasizes that "though in recent times the medical profession has energetically massaged its own public image, identity-management is not unique to the modern era of spin doctors and public-relations consultants – indeed it dates back to the very first medical professionals"(129). Dean Mahomed does this "identity management" extremely effectively in the preface of this fascinating text. He presents himself as an authority on the shampooing practice in India but claims that his experiments have led him to believe that the process "which in India is used as a restorative luxury, would, with certain improvements, operate in this country also, as a most surprising and powerful remedy for many cases of disease"(*Shampooing* viii). Shampooing was a practice that was widely prevalent in India; it involved the massaging of the whole body with aromatic oils and was primarily believed to be helpful in increasing blood circulation and reducing stress. Mahomed invests this traditional practice with medical benefits while claiming that shampooing along with the vapor bath is "in all cases of violent exercise [...] a quick and delightful restorative" (17) compared to the traditional warm bath.

In order to distinguish himself both from the itinerant Oriental peddlers who sold medicinal drugs and from other quacks, Mahomed needed to adopt a title to somewhat legitimize his establishment as something which was indeed offering a medical cure for serious ailments and he did this by calling himself a "Shampooing Surgeon." Even though the organizational structure of the medical profession was in near chaos before the passage of the Medical Act of 1858 and "quacks," "empirics," and "drug peddlers

practiced freely with no legal sanctions against them" (Peterson 5), Mahomed did his best to document his medical credentials by claiming that he "was educated to the profession of, and served in the Company's Service, as a Surgeon" (*Shampooing* vii). There is no concrete evidence of Mahomed ever getting a medical degree in India. But he cleverly decided to stick with the epithet of a surgeon rather than a physician. Having lived in Britain for a considerable time before setting up the vapor bath, he surely knew that a university education is what distinguished physicians from other orders of medical practitioners like surgeons and apothecaries. As Peterson confirms, unlike physicians who had to have a university degree to practice medicine, surgeons were not university educated men in early nineteenth-century Britain: "As was traditional among craftsmen, surgeons learned their skills by apprenticeship. Their training was necessarily practical and not at all classical or theoretical as the physicians' reputedly was [...] In order to make a living, most members of the surgeons' corporation had to prescribe and dispense drugs as well" (Peterson 10). Even though Mahomed engages in this apparent deception, he was well within the medical conventions of the time according to his biographer who also points out that he did face initial ridicule from the traditional medical faculty who called him "a cheat and a Hindoo juggle" (Visram 41). In fact, Mahomed took great pains in his preface to protect himself against such ridicule by presenting himself as a pioneer in this field. But as with all new discoveries, he acknowledges that there would be some amount of skepticism. The desire to present "indisputable evidence"(ix) of the effectiveness of his practices is what ultimately resulted in his compilation of testimonials from satisfied patrons.

Even as he struggles with charges of inauthenticity, Mahomed's text manages to forge new grounds. In a world obsessed with boundaries and a desire to keep the realms of the colonizer/colonized, native/immigrant and Hindu/Moslem markedly distinct, Mahomed not only literally disrupts boundaries between the brown and white bodies by bringing them in close proximity in the enclosed space of the vapour bath, but also blurs religious distinctions between Hindus and Moslems. He states that "to the hindoos, who are the cleanest and the finest people in the East, we are prinicipally indebted for the Medicated Bath, in cases of disease and bodily infirmity" (15). His religious identity as a Moslem doesn't prevent him from claiming allegiance to a distinctly Hindu tradition and he draws his conviction from a popular discourse dating from the Mughal age that identified Hindus simply as inhabitants of the land of Hindustan.

The text itself is divided into several chapters devoted to particular ailments like asthma, contractions, paralysis, rheumatism and sprains and each is prefaced by a brief introduction to the diseases followed by a comparative analysis of why the medicinal vapor bath is more effective than the warm bath as prescribed by the traditional medical faculty in Britain. This is followed by testimonials from grateful patrons who have been cured of these respective ailments by the magical properties of the vapor-baths. Mahomed had already emphasized that he was an innovator of this method and that "the herbs and essential oils with which my Baths are impregnated, are brought expressly from India, and undergo a certain process known only to myself, before they are fit for use"(17). Throughout the text, he reiterates his claims and constantly warns against imitators who might try to usurp his credibility. The testimonials are his way of re-emphasizing that he continues to receive extensive patronage and hence is assured that

"the public have, and no doubt will continue, to decide the claim to superiority, by the choice of their election"(18). He utilizes this language of superiority throughout the text as he seeks to demonstrate how his medical vapor-bath triumphs over the traditional warm bath for every ailment ranging from asthma to rheumatism. In fact, so confident is he of his methods, that he even proudly announces "*I challenge competition from the cures which I have performed*" (37).

Each testimonial is structured in a similar way: it highlights the failure of traditional remedies in curing the ailment, mentions the initial skepticism that surrounds the experimentation of a new form of treatment and finally expresses profound gratefulness which generally accompanies a complete cure. Mahomed's remedies produce glowing reviews from his patrons; in most cases, they express a sincere desire to spread the word about the efficacies of the cure so that more people can benefit from the magical transformative power of the vapor bath. The language in most of the letters is strikingly utilitarian; following their recovery, Mahomed's patrons wish to share their exultation with the general mass so "that it may give hope and confidence to the afflicted" (30) and they do so even more willingly because they "desire the good of others; it being a pity that such a valuable remedy should not be made public" (22).

The letters also make constant comparisons between traditional medical practices and the curative power of Mahomed's methods. A letter from W.M. Slark claims that "before placing himself under your care, [he] tried everything the first medical practitioners would recommend, but got no relief" (44). Another part of the text quotes a letter to the *Brighton Gazette*, dated 27th September, 1821, that explicitly explains why Mahomed's method is infinitely better than conventional medical practices: "It is not

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generally known, that the celebrated comedian, Mathews, whose surgical attendants pronounced him *incurable*, and stated that he would be a cripple for life, in consequence of a dislocation from the hip, occasioned by the accident of his being, some time ago, thrown out of his gig, was completely and effectually cured by Mahomed's process of shampooing"(92).This passage is particularly fascinating because it effectively sums up all of Mahomed's strategies in this text. It establishes that Mahomed's methods produce better outcomes, that an ailment which had been earlier pronounced "incurable" (he even italicizes the word to emphasize it) has been healed and that a "cripple," that is, a dysfunctional white body, has been made whole by the intervention of this Eastern medical man. What is also worth emphasizing here is that the process of shampooing is never described in great detail. Aside from one letter from F. Carter which mentions the use of a particular medicine, "tobacco leaves steeped in a particular liquid" (78), the minimal description of the actual shampooing process manages to preserve the mysterious allure of the exotic East in the public imagination. The focus is constantly redirected to the transformative power of the process which heals the afflicted white body into wholeness with a symbolic dropping of the crutches, an image that is reiterated throughout the text.

The image of the crippled white body plagued by different diseases ranging from rheumatism to gout and sprains is one of the central tropes in the text. The letters repeatedly emphasize that after constant interventions of Mahomed's shampooing and vapor bath, the white body is restored to health and any kind of external support like crutches are completely discarded. So, in a letter from Stephen Robinson, "after three of your Medicated Indian Vapour Baths, Mrs. R. was enabled to lay aside her crutches and

walk a considerable distance" (29) and "after coming out of the Bath the third time, Lady Louisa walked across the room without support" (56). The space of the bath is marked as a healing space where the brown body, through its knowledge of healing practices salvages the diseased white body and nurses it back to health. The implication here is that rapid industrialization and Britain's pre-occupation with its imperial expansion has fundamentally damaged the British body politic. Britain had gained substantial economic prosperity but fissures had started to widen in the social fabric as is evident from the chaotic nature of the medical system. Mahomed's narrative suggests that intervention by immigrants like him is inevitable for the well-being of the British body politic. His claims are bolstered when he is hailed as the "star of the east" by one of his patrons, W.M. Hart, who hopes that he will "be the means of guiding thousands from the bed of affliction, to the comforts of ease, health, and happiness"(31). An excerpt from a letter from a patron published in the *Brighton Gazette* similarly emphasizes that having experienced "the invigorating and healing effects of this Eastern remedy, we shall be among its greatest advocates" (80).

Mahomed's grand claims are given further credence by an ode published in the *Brighton Gazette* on October 8, 1822. This mysterious patron who is initialed as M. W. hails Mahomed as his Muse and "*Indian sage*" (88) and launches into a glorious eulogy about Mahomed's steam baths. Addressed to both Mahomed and a Mr. Bolton, who we are told "first employed steam-engines in coining" (87), it insists that the true achievement or potential of "steam" is not to be found in the harnessing of steam boats or steam engines which are at the heart of Britain's mercantile economy but instead in Mahomed's use of steam as a restorative and salutary agent, for "What use are honours,

plenty, wealth, / without the best of treasures, health?"(87). In the true spirit of the industrial capitalist economy, health here is equated with money, but what is more interesting to note is the deflation of the very symbol of Britain's industrial and imperial ambitions, the steam engine and steam boat to a state of nothingness. As if that isn't enough, the ode ends with a powerful admonishing to Bolton to make way for the Eastern sage: "Bolton! Give place – the *Indian sage*/ Doth all my Muse's powers engage; / *Thou* giv'st the uncertain treasure, wealth, / But *He Heaven's richest blessing, Health*"(88). There is very little chance of ascertaining the identity of the contributor but by including this ode among other things in his text, Mahomed both engages in self-promotion and succeeds in somewhat legitimating the presence of Indian immigrants in the imperial metropolis .

Dean Mahomed thus succeeds in doing what many wouldn't have deemed possible for an immigrant struggling to negotiate his identity in an alien space. He undoubtedly engages in "ethno-pornography" by self-orientalizing for commercial gains. But what is remarkable is that he mobilizes and embellishes existing stereotypes about the "other" (the reification of physical differences, the immigrant/colonized body as an object, the lure of the exotic East) and yet manages to make them work in his favor. The ostentatious décor of his Bath, his flamboyant Oriental outfits, especially during royal visits, the constant emphasis of his ethnic identity were all part of his strategy to make the Oriental body hyper-visible and make his bathing establishment more appealing to consumers in a highly competitive market. Local newspapers in Brighton repeatedly mention Mahomed as one of its local celebrities who is remembered "'gorgeous in Eastern costume, with his pretty wife by his side, and a dagger in his girdle'" (Visram

43). At the same time, by being economically viable, he effectively resists social marginalization and in fact, successfully argues for the indispensability of foreign presence on the British mainland.

"Rule, Britannia:" The Indian Pavillion at the Great Exhibition of 1851

The demand for Eastern objects continued unabated in the eighteenth and nineteenth century as England made significant inroads into its colonies. By the nineteenth century, imports like tea had been appropriated into a uniquely British domestic ritual while textiles, as Suzanne Daly suggests, "led a double life, functioning at once as exotic foreign artifacts and as markers of proper Englishness"(237). But it was the Great Exhibition of 1851 organized at the initiative of Prince Albert at the newly constructed Crystal Palace in London's Hyde Park that marked an official acknowledgement of Britain's fascination with material objects, especially those imported from other countries and particularly Britain's ever expanding colonies. The exhibition was an exaggerated show of mercantile prowess and intended to demonstrate the burgeoning supremacy of Britain in trade among its European counterparts. The display of objects from India, the jewel in Britain's imperial crown was particularly necessary to create this myth as the following photographs of the Indian Pavillion demonstrate. It is also worth emphasizing that Indians in their ethnic costumes are an integral part of the display along with all other material objects imported from the colony lending credence to the discourse of racial fetishism that had dominated the early nineteenth century. As Peter Hoffenberg suggests in his insightful account on the great exhibitions of the nineteenth century, "The use of South Asians as ethnographic exhibits was part of a more general Victorian-era project to construct an ethnographic survey of

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the subcontinent…Human subjects were labeled, displayed, and studied much as were complementary commercial and artistic exhibits"(219).[13] So the Indian bodies are effectively objectified and framed within this tableau of picturesque Oriental life and simultaneously highlight Britain's control over its dominions.

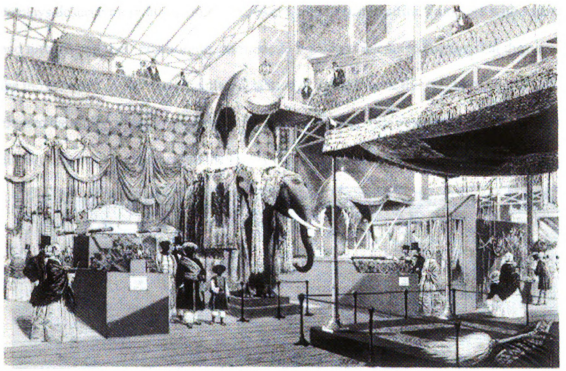

Figure 3 Joseph Nash, "The Indian Court," 1854, Colour Lithograph on paper. Museum no.19536:11. © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London. [14]

In the *Official Description and Illustrated Catalogue* Of the Great Exhibition 1851, all other foreign displays except the Indian Pavilion are categorized under "Foreign States"(1525) with India being put under the title "British Possessions"(1513) clearly indicating India's position on the colonial map. Tim Barringer in his essay offers more evidence: "The Indian court, appropriately for the grandest of British territories, covered 30,000 square feet, and its array of exotic objects was highly significant in popularizing

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Indian design for the British consumer market" (12). The focal point of the display as revealed in this image appears to be the magnificent howdah in gold and silver on the top of a stuffed elephant, the quintessential colonial animal. On either side of this spectacular display is an equally elaborate reconstruction of the palanquin, a popular mode of transportation in India. The three Indian figures squeezed in between the two elaborate displays deserve more attention. All three are clad in ethnic attire, complete with sashes and turbans and their positioning, with one foot forward seems to suggest that they are on the move, when in fact they are clearly stationed in the line of the spectator's gaze and aligned carefully with the objects on display. Along with this ostentatious display was an elaborate exhibit that presented the highly coveted textiles of India.

Figure 4 "The Indian Court and Jewels" by H.C. Pidgeon, illustration, Plate 3, in: Recollections of the Great Exhibition, 1851, (London: Lloyd Brothers & Co., Spet.1, 1851). Call number: 19/20 G 30. Courtesy of Special Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries.[15]

The scene staged on the left is of a luxurious Oriental court complete with plush silk seating arrangements, lush carpets and gilded standing fans. This elaborate reconstruction of the Indian court and the howdah are both fenced off from the other displays clearly indicating the splendor of royal life in India, which as the presentation suggests, can now be framed in British terms because they have been effectively translated into being a British possession. Within the Indian Pavilion, these are clearly tableaus of Oriental life on display; they are sufficiently ornate so as to clearly mark them as different. As Barringer suggests, "The Oriental Courts, through their very separateness, served the orientalist function, described by Said, of asserting an absolute difference between the Orient and the Occident, while collapsing differences within the category of 'Oriental' (Said 1978). Oriental art was grouped together and set apart from the mainstream, its otherness emphasized through isolation and exoticization"(16). This whole Indian Pavilion can be viewed from all sides; so we see spectators crowding around individual displays as well as gazing down from the viewer's galleries. The line of vision of the spectators is indistinguishable; so we are unable to discern whether they are viewing the objects or the bodies on display. Neatly arranged with all the exotic objects, the Indian bodies are also completely objectified in the eyes of the Victorian public. The choice of the objects displayed in the Indian Pavilion and their presentation as seen in these photographs deserves some critical attention. The different modes of transportation highlight the difference between Oriental and English life; such modes of transportation would never be used in civilized nations like England because, as the official catalog suggests, they necessitate the use of human labor. So even though the display features objects that are indicative of motion, the way they are displayed and fenced in and

labeled seems to suggest a civilization in stasis and something that can be framed and displayed effectively by English intervention. Even as the luxuries of the East are fetishized, the spectators looking down into the gallery seems to suggest that this civilization is lower on the hierarchy between nations. Hoffenberg observes: "For the observers and the observed, here were living pictures of the Raj's diversity, but also its hierarchical order. Distinctions were recognized, and the exhibitions provided a process to establish ordering and management, not their erasure"(222). The process of orientalising is clearly underway here with the Great Exhibition interpreting and translating the colonies for the Victorian public both celebrating England's imperial prowess and creating a myth of consummate control over the colonies.

Barringer suggests that in the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1886, "Empire was commodified and reduced to the sum of its material productions" (24). The above photographs from the Exhibition on 1851 clearly indicate that the process Barringer mentions had actually started much earlier. This Great Exhibition of 1851 was clearly the climax of Britain's obsession with commodities. As this chapter demonstrates, even though some of the early nineteenth-century immigrants like Dean Mahomed can be said to be complicit in the discourse of "Orientalism" by their constant self-exoticization, such a move becomes imperative for survival within a commodity centric British society that would otherwise insist on pushing them to the peripheries.

Chapter Two

From fetish to phobia: *The Moonstone* and Victorian re-evaluations of Anglo-Indian relations in the late nineteenth century

> It used to be said of the Hindoos that they were such a mild, amiable, and gentle race...But what is the disclosure? That greater liars do not exist in the world than the Hindoos; that you cannot always trust them out of sight; that they are deceptive; and we have seen by recent events such outbursts of fanaticism, cruelty, bloodshed, and crime, that we wonder how any that knew them thirty years ago could give them such and so splendid a character. [1]

The 1850s was a decade of transformations in the history of the British Empire with significant events radically altering relations between Britain and its colonies. At the beginning of this decade, British imperialism was beginning to gather steam following the exaggerated celebration of Britain's mercantile prowess at the Great Exhibition of 1851. Although the English Ethnological Society was founded earlier in 1843, discourses around racial hierarchy became more pronounced with the 1859 publication of Charles Darwin's *Origin of the Species*.[2] But it was the "recent events" in the above comment, alluded to by Dr. Cumming in his 1859 text, which fundamentally changed Anglo-Indian relations. Prior to the Indian Mutiny or Sepoy Rebellion of 1857, Indians were mostly regarded as "docile, harmless, and industrious" people who make "capital servants"; and potential masters were advised that "the great secret in the management of them is kindness and fair dealing, with a tolerance of their harmless prejudices" [3] Even in the middle of the decade the stereotype of the mild-mannered Indian servile to British

authority was dominant in the Victorian imagination. In other words, the "tractable, mild Hindu"(Bolt 178) belonged to a gentle race who could be objectified at will and who welcomed the benevolent rule of the British Raj as long as their "harmless" religious practices and prejudices were indulged. The events of 1857 thus came as a huge shock and created complete outrage in Victorian Britain, primarily because "it seemed to indicate a gross ingratitude on the part of the Indian people" (Bolt 157). The stories of eyewitness accounts of the rebellion were grossly embellished and feverishly circulated in Britain. Suddenly Indians were no longer fetishized objects but wild, savage brutes capable of unspeakable cruelties and in desperate need of strong governance. Even the normally reticent *Spectator* reflected this xenophobia and spoke of that "strange pit full of jewels, rags, and filth, of gleaming thoughts, and morbid fears, and horrid instincts – the Hindoo mind" (qtd in Bolt 166).[4]

The immediate effect of the revolt and the public outrage that followed was radical administrative reform whereby the rule of the East India Company was terminated and power assumed by the Crown. But the most significant effect of 1857 was the post-Mutiny re-evaluation of the Indian character in the contact zones.[5] Racial and commodity fetishism of the first half of the nineteenth century transmuted into a palpable anxiety about foreign bodies and commodities both in the colonial space and in the imperial metropolis. Victorian literature both recorded and stoked this heightened awareness and apprehension of the "Other." My first chapter suggested that racial and commodity fetishism of the early nineteenth century necessitated the self-exoticization of Asian travelers and immigrants like Abu Taleb Khan and Dean Mahomed. [6] This chapter, focusing on two texts from the second half of the nineteenth century, explores how the

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historic events of the 1850s transformed the fetishized "Other" into an object of fear and revulsion. In doing so, it tries to answer the following questions. If, in the early nineteenth century, Indian objects were hailed as "splendid" and "magnificent" leading Asian immigrants to commodify themselves, why, in the second half, were Asian objects and bodies the source of contempt and fear? How did such different attitudes coexist in the nineteenth century and when did the fetishism of colonial objects escalate into an apprehension of too much reliance on colonial products? In other words, when and how did the discourse surrounding Asian objects and bodies mutate from that of fetishism to that of xenophobia and miscegenation?

I begin by examining Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank's narrative on the Great Exhibition of 1851 and suggest that the imperial objects on display produced a complicated reaction to the presence of foreign bodies on English soil in the Victorian imagination. The organizers of the exhibition wanted to encourage the belief that foreign objects and bodies were effectively contained under the mantle of British imperialism. But as the Mayhew text demonstrates, the exhibition made foreign bodies hyper-visible like never before and generated a degree of uncomfortable apprehension of the loss of British identity from foreign influence and fanned increased fears of miscegenation. This apprehension turns into acute xenophobia in many novels that follow the mutiny of 1857. Even though the events are set in the late 1840s and the Indian Mutiny is not literally mentioned in Wilkie Collins's 1868 novel, *The Moonstone*, the representation of India and its inhabitants in the novel clearly mirror the cultural temper of the post-mutiny years. The mild mannered Hindoo with his magical healing powers is transformed into a demonic other who engages in some kind of "hocus pocus" (Collins 55) to create fissures

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in the Victorian social order. Any kind of Eastern influence is regarded as disruptive and dangerous to the metropolitan space and the only way British identity can be salvaged is by deliberately thwarting the insidious effects of these objects and bodies.[7]

One school of critical thought believes that many of the nineteenth-century novelists, including Dickens and Collins, were apologists for empire. As Cannon Schmitt elaborates in his discussion of Dickens' famous passage from *Dombey and Son*, "Their fictions reflected imperialist assumptions and aspirations, including most crucially an anglocentric world view and a sense of obvious, perhaps divinely sanctioned British superiority. With that superiority came, in turn, the implication of a right or obligation to seize other lands, subdue other peoples, replace outmoded customs and pernicious superstitions with British laws, mores, and religion – in short, to rule the globe"(5). Others like Joy Connolly maintain that Collins is "probably best seen not as an apologist for the British empire but as a tentative judge of its ills" (xxxi). Like Connolly, Upamanyu Mukherjee argues for a middle ground between Lillian Nayder's reading of *The Moonstone* as an anti-imperialist text and Ashis Roy's reading of it as a pro-imperialist one and produces an extremely nuanced analysis of the motif of criminality in Collins's fiction.[8] This chapter, following in Mukherjee's trajectory suggests that the novel's brilliant narrative structure ensures that it cannot be definitively slotted into one category. Though Wilkie Collins was less vehement in his criticism of the Indian mutineers than Dickens and was more ambivalent in his response to the mass hysteria surrounding the events of 1857, *The Moonstone* is a novel deeply embroiled in the post-mutiny discourse of fear and mistrust that dominated the Victorian public imagination. Even though they are never actually seen committing any of the crimes in the novel, the

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three Indian characters are suspected even before the start of the events, simply on the basis of their race and nationality. So if the novel seeks to reproduce stereotypical representations of the colony, what has led to its description as an anti-imperialist text by critics? The answer lies in the novel's narrative structure. If the culpability of the Indians is a fictional construct generated by the disciplinary machinery of Victorian England, is it possible that the stereotypes of Indians generated out of the post-mutiny hysteria is a narrative construct as well? In other words, this chapter argues that the discourse produced out of a particular set of historical events in the 1850s necessitates a particular representation of the "other." But texts like *The Moonstone* do not simply participate in that discourse, they also, in interesting ways, question the generation of that discourse thus revealing deep-seated insecurities and vulnerabilities in the Victorian social order. In this chapter, I look at Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank's narrative about the Great Exhibition and Wilkie Collins's novel, *The Moonstone* to explore how the events of the 1850s produced a re-evaluation of Anglo-Indian relations.

The fear of the foreign in the narrative of Mayhew and Cruikshank

The myth of control over its colonial subjects that was circulated at the Great Exhibition is replaced by anxiousness about foreign presence in Mayhew and Cruikshank's text. Henry Mayhew and George Cruikshank's book, *1851: or The Adventures of Mr and Mrs Sandboys and Family, who came up to London to "Enjoy Themselves", and to see the Great Exhibition* is among the very few literary representations of the Great Exhibition. Mayhew's narrative and Cruikshank's illustrations not only offer a tongue-in-cheek view of the event, but also shed light, though indirect, on the complicated relation of England with its colonies in the mid-

nineteenth century. Even though it does not explicitly deal with Indian characters, Mayhew's picture of England's industrial prowess, commodity culture, dependence on the colonial economy, perception of the "other" and the latent xenophobia of the metropolis all helps to set up the social and cultural backdrop against which events in *The Moonstone* take place. The official pitch was that the Great Exhibition "provided a benchmark in changing popular attitudes to Britain's colonial possessions, and its organizers emphasized the commercial importance of more than thirty colonies and dependencies whose manufactures and raw materials were displayed"(Barringer 12). But Mayhew's narrative of the highlander family coming to London for the first time to see the Great Exhibition attempts to puncture the hoopla surrounding the Great Exhibition and introduces a reality check in the public imagination about the burgeoning presence of foreigners in the imperial centre. A critique of post-industrial Victorian society where empire is on display is unmistakable and so is an uncomfortable look at the colonial-metropolitan encounter. Interestingly, that is not the only cultural encounter we witness in the text. The encounter of the Sandboys, who lead a blissfully ignorant and idyllic existence in the little hamlet of Buttermere without the conveniences of modern industrial civilization ("no butcher, no baker, no grocer, no draper, no bookseller, no pawnbroker, no street-musicians, no confectioners, and no criminals"[7]), with the big, bustling metropolis of London, especially at a time when it was swarming with foreigners, introduces the country/city binary paradigm within the text. But Mayhew's clearly exaggerated and satirized depictions also attest to the fact that there can be no single way of understanding these encounters. We see the big, bad world of London, its inhabitants and its foreign visitors through the provincial eyes of the Sandboys and at the same time,

the gaze is redirected back at them because they happen to be as foreign in the city as the Frenchmen, Greeks, Turks or Asians who throng the Great Exhibition. Like most other provincial landowners, Mayhew's protagonist, Cursty Sandboys leads a singularly insular existence: "He knew little of the world but through the newspapers that reached him, half-priced, stained with tea, butter, and eggs from a coffee-shop in London- and nothing of society but through that ideal distortion given us in novels, which makes the whole human family appear as a small colony of penniless angels and wealthy demons"(11). Mr. Sandboys thus has very little contact with the wider world except through the exaggerated accounts of the newspapers or the make believe world of novels. To him, a visit to London is unthinkable because the city is the "very caldron of wickedness, of which the grosser scum was continually being taken off, through the medium of the police, to the colonies" (11-2). Mr Sandboys thus wishes to avoid not only the moral contamination of the city, but also the corrective measures that are in place in a city, like the police who are responsible for carting off the baser population to the colonies. Even though Mayhew seems to dismiss both the newspapers and novels as a non-realistic, in-authentic medium, in a striking resemblance to the final scene of Dickens's *Hard Times* and *David Copperfield*, the colonies are presented as a space where only the dregs of London society could find a place.

At the same time, Mayhew is not unaware of the dependence of England's economy on that of the colonies. It is Mrs Sandboys's outright refusal to do without her tea and sugar that forces Mr. Sandboys to agree to the trip to London. She could have done without the services of the milliner, the circulating library and even the draper "but to have taken away her tea and sugar, was more than a lady in the vale of years, and the

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valley of Buttermere, could be expected to endure"(20). Mayhew makes it quite apparent that both tea and sugar, two of England's biggest colonial imports were indispensable in English households, even in little highlander towns like Buttermere. By the end of the eighteenth century, "tea had become the British drink"(Collingham 191). From being a fashionable beverage and hailed for its medicinal properties by the wealthy elite, by the middle of the nineteenth century, tea wasn't a luxury anymore, with even washerwomen and maidservants stipulating the availability of tea in their conditions of hiring (21). As Mayhew wittily reminds the reader "What oil is to the Esquimaux, what the juice of the cocoa-nut is to the monkey, what water is to the fish, what dew is to the flower, and what milk is to the cat – so is tea to [English] woman!"(21). As is evident from the description, this "Chinese infusion" (21) had become a staple of any English household.[9] Thus the lack of essential domestic commodities, or in other words, Eastern imports which had completely redefined British domestic life necessitated the journey of the Sandboys into the unfamiliar and hostile territory of London.

The teeming metropolis confirmed the Sandboys' worst fears. Not only were the sights and sounds of the city unfamiliar and overwhelming, the Sandboys themselves are constantly cast in the position of being outsiders. Interestingly, even though they are somewhat naïve about city life because of their insular existence, time and again, their presence is racially charged. To the horror of Mrs. Sandboys, the soot from the railway engines, running on coal instead of coke after the reform measures, resulted in making them look like a "family of Ethiopian serenaders"(37) by the time they came to London. Mayhew's dig at post-industrial England is unmistakable as he offers a grim picture of Manchester, one of England's most industrial towns in language that is eerily reminiscent

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of Dickens's description of London in *Bleak House*.[10] So is his dig at Mrs Sandboys's latent xenophobia that has her scrubbing her entire body with a handkerchief in order to be spared the indignity of being mistaken as an African native.[11] But the Sandboys' apprehensions of foreigners in London constantly collapse on them as they are time and again mistaken as the "other" and are subject to numerous mishaps during their brief London stay. The following passage appears around the middle of this interesting narrative and in a nutshell, illustrates some of the aspects of the encounter that I will elaborate in the rest of the chapter. Both Sandboys and his wife had accidentally fallen into a cellar full of coal in their temporary boarding house in London and are desperate to scrub off the layer of coal dust and soot which have rendered them completely unrecognizable.

> The less fastidious Cursty, however, as we said before, was hastening up the stairs, two at a time, with a jug of warm water in his hand, intent upon a good wash and effecting that physical impossibility of scrubbing the blackamoor white; for, so intensely sable with adhering coal-dust was the complexion of Mr.Sandboys, that, truth to say, the most experienced ethnologist would, at the first glance, have mistaken that gentleman for one of the Ethiopian tribe. The lady in white had descended the first flight of stairs, and was just preparing to turn the corner of the second, when the black gentleman darted sharply around, and bounced suddenly upon her.
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> The nervous Mrs.Quinine was in no way prepared for the sight of a "man of colour" in such a place or at such a time. Had even her own husband pounced so unexpectedly upon her, the shock would have been

> sufficient to have driven all the breath out of the body of so susceptible a lady; but to find herself, without the least preparation, face to face with "a black" – as Mr. Cursty Sandboys appeared to be – was more than the shattered state of her nerves was able to bear.
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> The lady no sooner set eyes upon the sable monster than she screamed like a railway engine on coming to some dark tunnel, and fainted off dead into the arms of the astonished and terrified Sandboys; and as the lifeless body of the invalid fell heavily against the wretched Cursty, the dusty, grimy, coaly garments of that gentleman left their deep black mark not only on the white cambric robe but imprinted a large black patch upon the cheek of the poor unconscious Mrs. Quinine. (72-3)

This accidental collision between Mr. Sandboys and Mrs. Quinine epitomizes the colonial-metropolitan encounter as staged in a lot of the popular Victorian narratives and reflects upon the imperial attitudes of the late nineteenth century. A careful close reading of the above passage yields several complexities about the relation of the imperial metropolis to its colonial subjects in the Victorian era, which is the primary concern of this chapter. Mrs Quinine has already been described as the naïve, vulnerable white woman suffering from her "poor poor nerves"(70) and the shock of the collision with "black" man, is almost too much for her and she faints and falls into the arms of the terrified Cursty, resulting in black splotches all over her white cambric robe. The constant emphasis on the contrast between the two figures is interesting – Cursty, covered with soot, is repeatedly described as Ethiopian, a description that he clearly finds distasteful and hence rushes to try to scrub off the blackness that resulted in this

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encounter. But even though Cursty's "blackamoor" appearance seems to be unwarranted, Mrs Quinine's reaction to his sudden appearance clearly mimics the latent apprehension of the "other" that was beginning to gain ground in the Victorian mindset. She screams "like a railway engine on coming to a dark tunnel," clearly a reference to England's obsession with the steam engine at this point but also a veiled suggestion with the use of the "dark tunnel" that such encounters with the "other" was dangerously poised on the realm of the unknown and that England was unaware of the terrors that could ensue. Interestingly, when in the above passage Mrs Quinine faints into the arms of Cursty, her spotless white "cambric" robe becomes splattered with shades of black. Cambric was a distinctly English fabric that was being manufactured in the numerous cotton looms in Manchester. So if cambric is a distinctly English object, the indication here is that the pristine English nation is being soiled by the appearance of the black "others." The recurrent use of the word "invalid" seems to suggest the helplessness of the Victorian individuals against the sudden influx of the blacks. So when previously the foreigner like Dean Mahomed could actually make the white body whole, now the presence of the other is destructive, knocking off the invalid into a death faint. And even though Curtsy is not black, his appearance as one, even though it is the result of an accident, is enough to indicate the insidious entry of the others into the mainland. That this influence is insidious is further emphasized when we are told how Jobby, Cursty's son, loses his way in the city as he is "bewitched" by a band of Ethiopian serenaders: "their lamp-black faces, their white-paper wristbands and collars, and their fuzzy horsehair wigs, together with the banjos and kettle-drums, and the rattle of the bones, and the chuckle of the

nigger-laugh, -all were so new and strange to the boy, that he traveled after them in all directions"(91).

The implications here are unmistakable: foreign bodies were suddenly gaining unprecedented visibility in the metropolis and all the stereotypes of foreigners were in danger of being realized. For instance, the character of Major Oldschool, a retired East India Company official, comparable to the character of Mr. Murthwaite in *The Moonstone* voices these concerns: "The Major was what is termed a 'good hater' of foreigners" (83). It is the Major who finally convinces the Sandboys to pay a visit to the Great Exhibition and we have a whole chapter dedicated to the description of the glorious scene, especially the machinery department: "One glance was quite sufficient to account for the greatness of the nation to which it belonged! The foreigners appeared to be in no way prepared for so overpowering an example of England's immeasurable pre-eminence in this respect"(137). Surprisingly, Mayhew seems to lose his sarcastic tone here as he waxes eloquently about the virtues of such an imperial initiative, striking a rather discordant note in the whole narrative. There is one passage in this chapter that needs special mention. Mayhew here is describing the gradual assembly of the court when Queen Victoria officially unveils the Exhibition: "There stood all the ministers of state in their glittering suits, the ambassadors of every country... There was the Chinese mandarin in his red cap, with peacock's feathers dangling behind, and his silken robes with quaint devices painted upon them in front and at the back. There was the turbaned Turk, and the red fez-capped Egyptian...*It was a feast of colour and splendour to sit and gloat over- a congress of all the nations for the most hallowed and blessed of objects*" (135-136 emphasis added). The language here is interesting; not only are all the objects

culled from various corners of the world on display here but we are presented with a veritable catalogue of foreign bodies in their distinctive attire which accompanied the national tableaus as objects of display. In fact, that these foreign bodies are fetishized by the onlooker is clearly emphasized as we are told that this was a display to sit and enjoy and actually to "gloat over." It is an apparent coming together of all nations to celebrate the most "blessed" of objects but even in this description it is unclear whether the bodies of the ambassadors are dissociated from the objects themselves. In fact, the two images of the Indian Pavilion at the Great Exhibition that I described in the first chapter and Mayhew's narrative suggests that the foreign/Indian bodies are clearly absorbed into the display and are a part of the myth of Britain's imperial control over her colonies that has been created in the Victorian imagination. But what had eluded the British administration was that the Victorian public were not only viewing the objects on display but were also increasingly made aware of the bodies on display. The objectified bodies do not assuage the fears of their presence in the metropolitan centre; instead their presence combined with the realization of the interdependence of the two economies starts to breed tension in the metropolis. The miscegenation to which Mayhew cheekily refers in his narrative starts to become more of a pressing concern: "Assuredly the Great Exhibition of all Nations was a wise means of restoring the matrimonial markets of the metropolis to a healthy equilibrium" as with the influx of the "gynolatrus Frenchmen,...hundreds of polygamic Turks what maid, what widow shall not be wooed – shall not be won?"(78-79). These apprehensions, triggered again by the Great Exhibition, reach a culmination in 1857 following the Indian Mutiny and it is amidst this turbulent backdrop that writers like Wilkie Collins and Arthur Conan Doyle frame their narratives. In what follows, I focus

on the way Collins's *The Moonstone*, both embraces and questions the generation of xenophobic ideas in the second half of the nineteenth century.

The Indian Mutiny of 1857 in the Victorian Imagination

> "Of all the great events of this century, as they are reflected in fiction, the Indian Mutiny has taken the firmest hold on the popular imagination"
>
> - Hilda Gregg [12]

Just as England was gloating over its triumphant success of the Great Exhibition of 1851 with the *Morning Chronicle* declaring that the event was "not only the noblest exhibition of the results of human ingenuity, but an important chapter in the history of the human race...As a people, we are not what we were"(Leapman 252) and basking over its colonial possessions, the Indian Mutiny, or the Sepoy Rebellion of 1857 completely fractured this sense of control. Resentment had been brewing for years over the arbitrary policies of the East India Company that led to the toppling of dozens of kings and annexation of their territories but things came to a head when in 1857, the East India Company army introduced the use of greased cartridges in the widely used Enfield rifles. The cartridges were covered with a layer of cow or pig fat and thus quite naturally violated the religious sensibilities of the hundreds of Hindu and Muslim soldiers in the service of the East India Company. Encouraged by the open defiance of Mangal Pande, an ordinary soldier who tried to shoot his supervisor, the other sepoys or soldiers rebelled against their English commanders. They were encouraged by several members of the Indian royalty who had been unlawfully dispossessed of their territories by the English administration. Soon the sepoy rebellion transformed into a full fledged mutiny all across the country and sent shockwaves not only through the East India Company administration

but throughout Victorian England. What is historically regarded as India's first war of independence against the atrocities of the East India Company quickly acquired a different color in the English imagination with exaggerated stories of the "Cawnpore massacres" flying across the seas.[13] Civilian casualties on both sides were innumerable as the East India Company officials brutally suppressed the rebellion but the killings of English women and children in the "Cawnpore massacres" raised the hackles of the Victorian public and seemed to confirm their worst fears about the natives in the colonies. India was no longer the exotic wonderland replete with riches that could be imported regularly for Western consumption; it was suddenly the home of uncivilized, savage brutes who needed to be tamed and ruled with an iron hand. The embellished narratives of traumatized British residents in India were further fanned by the reaction of intellectuals like Charles Dickens. In his edition of *The Moonstone*, Farmer quotes Dickens who lashed out at these events with surprising venom claiming that measures needed to be taken "to exterminate the Race upon whom the stain of the late cruelties rested...to blot it out of mankind and raze it off the face of the earth" (24-5). Veracity of eyewitness narratives or official enquiries into the event was subsumed under public outrage and the British government eventually took over the reins of the governance of India from the hands of the East India Company. In 1858, India was officially designated as a colony of England with Queen Victoria at the helm of affairs.

The events of 1857 fundamentally demystified Victorian perceptions of India. Prior to this, in the first half of the nineteenth century leading up to the Great Exhibition, Indian objects and bodies had been fetishized in England. But following the events of 1857, xenophobia became more pronounced in the mainland and anxieties about

miscegenation became compounded. The white female body was not just in danger in the colonies; it was threatened even in the domestic space in England because of the presence of the unwanted foreigners. The Great Exhibition had aligned Indian objects and bodies in such a way that it was difficult to disentangle them in popular imagination. Since one could not be dissociated from the other, in order to preserve British identity and maintain an untainted domestic space, both had to be disposed of in some way. The Mutiny proved that blind reliance on the colonial products was fatal and so all Eastern objects were suddenly perceived as threats and harmful to British society.

Hilda Gregg's quote, which introduces this section, captures in a nutshell the British response to the Indian Mutiny. Similar reverberations are felt in the other novels dealing with the rebellion and attest to the fact that the revolt was one of the most enthralling subjects to capture the British literary imagination in the late nineteenth century. Critics like Christopher Herbert and Gautam Chakravarty have rightly wondered why the rebellion, with a considerably less casualty list than other significant wars of the nineteenth century like the Crimean War or the Boer war, has been the subject of so many novels. Herbert in particular, is dissatisfied with the way critics have conducted a similar monolithic evaluation that the novelists engaged in their narratives, by suggesting that the Victorian public were "uniformly hysterical in condemnation of the rebels, were driven by an unrelenting spirit of racial superiority and racial hatred, systematically suppressed evidence of wartime atrocities on the British side while exaggerating and sensationalizing excesses on the side of the mutineers, and invariably glorified British heroism and imperial right"(6). He is skeptical of postcolonial scholarship on the Mutiny like S.B. Chaudhuri's, who suggest that "Not merely the British but the Westerners in

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general also showed the same racial proclivity and expressed their intense hatred and disgust for everything that was Asiatic or Indian"(qtd. in Herbert). Herbert similarly critiques approaches like that of Patrick Brantlinger, who claims that "Victorian writing about the Mutiny expresses in concentrated form the racist ideology that Edward Said calls 'Orientalism'" and suggests that this writing exhibits "the racist pattern of blaming the victim expressed in terms of an absolute polarization of good and evil,...civilization and barbarism"(qtd. in Herbert 7). But Herbert's most critical comments are reserved for Chakravarty who suggests that the news of the rebellion in Britain ushered in an almost "immediate manufacture of a language combining patriotic fervour with xenophobia, enthusiastically circulated by a burgeoning press and other popular media, anticipates middle and working-class jingoism and warmongering of later, high imperial decades"(25). Herbert admonishes Chakravarty for glossing over the dissenting voices in the Victorian intelligentsia who condemned the British reaction to the rebellion, citing Edward Leckey's *Fictions Connected with the Indian Outbreak of 1857 Exposed* (1859), George Trevelyan's 1865 study on the Massacres of Cawnpore and R. Montgomery Martin's *Mutiny of the Bengal Army*(1861) where Martin asserts that "British war heroes in the Mutiny are commonly pathological mass murderers; the mutineers for the most part are victims, not villains"(15). Herbert, on the other hand suggests that the monstrous shock that the British public received by the news of the rebellion was not only that they were despised by their supposedly complaisant imperial subjects but that "their national idealism and national self-esteem were self-deluding and morally corrupting"(17). While it is true that there cannot be a monolithic reading of Mutiny literature as "a confident allegory of British virtue and racial entitlement to rule"(17), Herbert here displays the

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same kind of Orientalist rhetoric that insisted on taking away the agency from the colonial subjects and re-evaluating British value systems. He is not so much interested in tracing the dynamics of Anglo-Indian relations post 1857 but on exploring how the events necessitated a reality check for the Victorian public. Britain was deluded in thinking that it had complete control over its native subjects and the events of 1857 elucidated the falsity of such a belief.

Such an impassioned critical discussion of mutiny literature only goes to show the deep impact the events of 1857 had on Anglo-Indian relations. The Mutiny completely shattered Britain's complacent myth of imperial control and mutiny literature was engaged in formulating a different imperial narrative that would provide a justification for why Britain needed to maintain its domination of India. Such a myth had to be predicated on the savage brutality and unspeakable cruelty the Indians had revealed during the mutiny which necessitated that they were in need of strong and able governance by rational people. Also, mutiny literature was specifically mobilized to elicit sympathy from the Victorian public for the heroic British men who were struggling to bring the lights of civilization to ungovernable natives, thus conveniently obfuscating the years of merciless colonial plunder that had triggered the rebellion in the first place.

The events of *The Moonstone* are set in 1848-9 but Collins's novel, published in 1868 participates in this new imperial myth being formulated by mutiny literature and records the anxiety and trepidation surrounding foreign objects and bodies produced out of the post-1857 xenophobic discourses in England. Collins seems to be critical of the British conduct in India at certain points in the narrative, especially in the description of the plunder of the royal armoury at Seringapatam where Colonel Herncastle seizes the

diamond after very possibly murdering the Hindoo priest who was responsible for the safekeeping of the jewel. This leads some critics to read the novel as an anti-imperialist text. Yet, Collins's narrative seems to employ all the stereotypes prevalent in the post-mutiny Victorian imagination in his representation of the Indian characters. In a striking departure from early nineteenth-century popular discourse which rampantly fetishized Indian objects and bodies and displayed them as permanent fixtures in both private and public spaces, Collins's narrative raises concerns about "security and infiltration" (Perera 13) and presents the Indian diamond and the Indian priests who accompany it to England as invasive threats who would create fissures in the Victorian social fabric. I try to explore the covert echoes of the post-mutiny hysteria in the representation of Indian objects and bodies in *The Moonstone* and argue that Collins imagines the colonial space and its people as a metaphorical quicksand that threatens to engulf all that comes into contact with it. As such it participates in the new imperial narrative being formulated by mutiny literature in the 1860s. At the same time, the novel, by spinning a narrative of fear, guilt and culpability around an unseen crime, raises the question of the validity of such a narrative. Finally, the novel also wonders whether this kind of hysterical pre-occupation with the colonial subjects and their presence in the imperial metropolis is but a smokescreen for the social ills that were plaguing Victorian society and underscores that indifference to domestic issues could have serious ramifications on the Victorian moral and social order.

The unseen crime in The Moonstone

"Look!" she said. "Isn't it wonderful? Isn't it terrible? I have seen it dozens of times, and it's always as new to me as if I had never seen it before!"

...the horrid sand began to shiver. The broad brown face of it heaved slowly and then dimpled and quivered all over. "Do you know what it looks like to me?" says Rosanna, catching me by the shoulder again. "It looks as if it had hundreds of suffocating people under it – all struggling to get to the surface, and all sinking lower and lower in the deeps! Throw a stone in, Mr. Betteredge! Throw a stone in, and let's see the sand suck it down!"(40)

Much has been written about this exchange between Gabriel Betteredge and Rosanna Spearman in connection with the patch of deadly quicksand called the "Shivering Sands," a place where Rosanna ultimately finds her resting place. Critics have debated whether the people trapped in the brown sands are the British caught in the counter-effects of colonialism or the colonial subjects trying to fight their way out of domination by the British (Connolly xxxi). This sinister image of the quicksand seems to be the central leitmotif in Collins's narrative and seems to me to indicate the insidious effect the colonial space has on the colonizer. The passage acknowledges the struggles of the colonial subjects against imperial domination but the image of the stone being engulfed by the sands seems to suggest the deadly effect of colonialism on anybody who comes in contact with it, maybe even the British colonizers. Rosanna's urging Betteredge to throw the stone into the heaving sands and see the sand suck it down immediately brings to mind Betteredge's immediate impulse to throw the cursed moonstone into the quicksand

(or back into the colonial quagmire) so as to preserve the domestic harmony of the Verinder household. This metaphor, early on in the narrative paves the way in which India and its influence are imagined in the text. The magnificent Indian Diamond, the Moonstone, the three Indian priests in the pursuit of the Diamond and the opium, under whose influence the crime is induced, form the triumvirate around which Collins's narrative reevaluates the empire-colony relation following the 1857 rebellion.

In her fascinating study of *The Moonstone*, Deidre David identifies the trope of invasion and counter-invasion that frames the narrative of the moonstone.: "In *The Moonstone*, the trope of counter-invasion gathers together in Britain the Indians, the diamond and the opium, all produced through the British appropriation of large parts of the Indian subcontinent and all wrested, as it were, from their own ahistorical 'natural' places." (David 20). David, like Conolly and other critics tend to read the novel as Collins's portrayal of the ill-effects of colonial plunder which ultimately results in the destabilizing of Victorian domestic life. Such a reading would also support Mary Louise Pratt's astute observation that while "the imperial metropolis tends to understand itself as determining the periphery, ...it habitually blinds itself to the ways in which the periphery determines the metropolis"(6); this blindness on the part of the imperial ruler enables the trope of counter-invasion that David identifies. Within the narrative this moment of counter-invasion is captured most succinctly by the colonialist butler, Gabriel Betteredge who laments that "Here was our quiet English house suddenly invaded by a devilish Indian Diamond – bringing after it a conspiracy of living rogues, set loose on us by the vengeance of a dead man...Who ever heard the like of it – in the nineteenth century, mind; in an age of progress, and in a country which rejoices in the blessings of the British

constitution?" (48). Betteredge's comment not only fuses the object with the accompanying bodies by reiterating the "devilish" presence of both, he at once establishes the contrast between the rational British identity "in an age of progress" and the backward Indians who are apparently thought to be strolling conjurors but are actually revealed to be three Indian priests in disguise in pursuit of the moonstone. Even though the imperial-at-heart, *Robinson Crusoe*-toting butler refuses to acknowledge his racist sensibilities, claiming that he would be "the last person in the world to distrust another person because he happens to be a few shades darker"(30) than him, his first instinct, when the three Indian figures first appear, is about protecting the family silver and warning them off the estate.

While the jewel becomes a material embodiment of the threat that imperial plunder could produce, the presence of the three Indians in the metropolitan space effectively punctures Britain's complacent creation of the Oriental tableau in the Great Exhibition, in which colonial subjects are contained within the fold of Britain's imperial authority. Cast in the image of the rebels who were literally believed to have massacred British subjects in a single-minded pursuit of their goal, the Indian priests are revealed to be nothing short of murderers in trying to recover the sacred gem from the clutches of its usurper. That the rebellion is also regarded as India's first war of independence against British colonial domination is carefully deleted out of such a representation. The influence of opium becomes even more insidious as it is under its unconscious influence that the main protagonist, Franklin Blake, commits the crime of stealing the moonstone from Rachel Verinder's boudoir, thus triggering the unfortunate series of events. The creation of the mixed-race Ezra Jennings who proposes the experiment of re-enacting the

scene of crime to exonerate Franklin Blake of his guilt have made critics like Deidre David argue that Jennings's work reveals him "as a colonized figure so trusted by his masters, so purged of the native savagery that flourished at the time of the thuggee gangs, that he can be assigned the labor of cleansing the centre of empire itself of its own corruption"(143). Such an observation is only partly true. In his role as an amanuensis for the demented Dr. Candy that helps him to discover the mysterious effects of the opium on Franklin Blake thus leading to the unraveling of the mystery of the moonstone, Jennings might be mistakenly assumed to have considerable narrative agency. In reality though, Jennings is repeatedly shown to be tortured and persecuted because of his extraordinary appearance and his role is limited almost to that of being the "native informant" who alerts his white masters of the ill effects of opium because he himself has been subject to its deleterious effects. Jennings, it must be noted, cannot shed light on how the moonstone made its way from the unconscious hands of Franklin Blake to the pawnbroker in London. It is the re-entrance of the archetypal detective figure of Sergeant Cuff which fills in the missing pieces and uncovers the crime of Godfrey Ablewhite. Collins's narrative is clearly skeptical of the presence of mixed-race individuals within the Victorian social order and even though Ezra Jennings is treated with a degree of indulgence, his story is not a happy one. In a way, Ezra Jennings is as disabled by his race as Rosanna Spearman and Limping Lucy, both of whom are clearly indicated to occupy the margins of Victorian society.

In his insightful study that traces the emergence of criminality in the English novel vis-à-vis Britain's relation to its colonies, particularly India, Upamanyu Mukherjee rightly identifies the figure of the "criminal" Indian in Collins's novel as a legacy of the

Mutiny fiction that dominated the Victorian imagination in the 1860s (166). It is worth underscoring here that the three Indians are under suspicion right at their first appearance in the narrative simply because of their race and without any possible inkling of crime. Even though they seem to be harmless, dressed in "white linen frocks and trousers" with "small hand-drums slung in front of them" and appeared to be simply "strolling conjurors," Betteredge's first thoughts are about the family silver. He is immediately distrustful of them because their "manners are superior to my own"(31) and warns them off the premises. The criminality of the Indians is entirely a matter of conjecture as is evident in Collins's choice of words. Franklin Blake, for instance puts forward the opinion that it just might be possible that the "dark-looking stranger"(42) who had shadowed him in his journey and the "three jugglers *may* turn out to be pieces of the same puzzle"(42 emphasis added). Herncastle, who had usurped the diamond from its original owners, had disgraced himself with his family very early in his life and since they had ostracized him, more so, on his return from India, everything about him was at best a rumor. So "it was said he had got possession of his Indian jewel by means which, bold as he was, he didn't dare acknowledge" (45), his life had been threatened in India and "it was firmly believed that the Moonstone was at the bottom of it" (45). The old family papers which form the prologue to the narrative are the only documents that lend a bit more credence to the fact that the Indians might be on the track of the Diamond. It isn't Herncastle's crime that is emphasized here, maybe because he has already been established as a blackguard, but the "plot organized among the Indians who originally owned the jewel...a plot with some old Hindoo superstition at the bottom of it"(54) is the central concern. English rational behavior vis-à-vis Hindoo superstition becomes one of

the focal points of the narrative, with Franklin Blake and Mr. Murthwaite taking on the role of the Orientalist. Herncastle had been socially ostracized by his family and friends because of the swirl of rumors of misdeeds around him, especially his dogged refusal to dispose of the cursed moonstone, but once the jewel is passed on as a legacy to Rachel Verinder, its monetary worth of more than twenty thousand pounds ensures that no efforts would be spared to ensure the safety of what was now regarded as one of the possessions of a British aristocratic family. Betteredge had categorically affirmed that the Colonel had "never attempted to sell it – not being in need of money, and not (to give him his due again) making money an object" (45). The magnificent Eastern jewel had remained simply an object in Herncastle's possession. But the gift of it to a young girl of marriageable age immediately makes a monetary evaluation necessary and the diamond is appropriated into the Verinder family fortune, making it imperative that all social institutions be mobilized for its safekeeping. Herncastle's purported crime of wresting the diamond in blatant disregard of Hindoo religious beliefs is sidelined while the imagined "conspiracy" of the Hindoo priests to reclaim the jewel, which was originally theirs, becomes the central concern of the narrative.

In order to demonstrate the criminal potential of the Indians, every post-Mutiny stereotype of Indians is mobilized with aplomb within the narrative. Franklin Blake, having seen the world, pronounces his judgement: "The idea of certain chosen servants of an old Hindoo superstition devoting themselves, through all difficulties and dangers, to watching the opportunity of recovering their sacred gem, appears to me to be perfectly consistent with everything that we know of the patience of Oriental races, and the influence of Oriental religions"(54). Blake, here, clearly takes on the role of the

Orientalist that Edward Said has so succinctly articulated in his seminal work. Blake's portrayal here seems to be more in line with a pre-mutiny stereotype of a mild-mannered and patient Hindoo in contrast to the post-mutiny stereotype of Mr.Murthwaite. The imperialist at heart, Betteredge readily believes in such a stereotype because it affirms everything that he gleaned from the classic imperialist text, *Robinson Crusoe*. So as soon he discovers a small vial of ink in the estate grounds, he is convinced that he had disturbed the activities of the three Indians "lurking about the house, and bent, in their heathenish way, on discovering the whereabouts of the diamond"(63). He is ready to believe Franklin's words that there are people, "in our country, as well as in the East, ...who practice this curious hocus-pocus"(64). He imagines the diamond as an object threatening the stability of the domestic space: when the ultimate British ritual of respectability, the dinner party goes awry, he states: "I am half-inclined to think that the cursed Diamond must have cast a blight on the whole company" (82). When Franklin's good-natured ridicule of the medical profession puts the village doctor, Mr.Candy in an unfathomable rage during the course of dinner, Betteredge is convinced that "The Devil (or the Diamond) possessed that dinner-party"(85). And when the house is thrown into turmoil the next morning after the moonstone is stolen, he reasserts that "The cursed Moonstone had turned all of us upside down"(98). If he had his way it would just be easy "to shy the Diamond into the quicksand, and settle the question in *that* way" (55). In other words, Betteredge first sounds the cautionary note about casting off the spell of the East by disposing it in that colonial quagmire itself.

In his analysis, Mukherjee suggests that "the questioning of law and morality in sensation fiction was conducted mainly by targeting two crucial elements of British

authority – the categories of the 'domestic,' and that of 'masculinity'"(167). It is indisputable that these are the two realms of Victorian society which seem to be under the maximum threat from the infiltration of colonial objects and bodies. In Victorian London, jewels were traditionally valued as adornments of the female body and feminine attraction to jewels can be hardly overemphasized with most gems casting a spell on the feminine mind. In this narrative, the diamond appeared to be even more brilliant when it is fashioned in the form of a brooch and fixed to the bosom of Rachel's white dress which is where the Indian men see it and realize that it is in her possession. Rachel, quite predictably is entranced with the moonstone, but as the narrative makes clear, this particular jewel, because of its Eastern associations and dubious legend associated with it becomes the symbol of Eastern threats on the western domestic sphere. Betteredge, the moral guardian of this space in his role as a butler, is clearly uncomfortable when he realizes the three Indians can see the dazzling jewel in the bosom of Rachel's dress. To add to his apprehension, Mr.Murthwaite gravely entreats her to be careful with the handling of the Diamond: "If you ever go to India, Miss Verinder, don't take your uncle's birthday gift with you. A Hindoo Diamond is sometimes part of the Hindoo religion. I know of a certain city, and a certain temple in that city, where, dressed as you are now, your life would not be worth five minutes' purchase" (81). The language that is used to describe this moment is reminiscent of what Mukherjee talks about as the infiltration of the domestic sphere. Rachel's body as well as the whole Verinder family is under threat from foreign forces and the whole Yorkshire society is destabilized by the possession of the Diamond. As Rachel becomes the victim of the gaze of the three Indian men, the

implication of sexual threat here is unmistakable; the British female body is threatened by the contaminating influence of the colonial other as epitomized in the form of the jewel.

It is also implied that Rachel, with her peculiar temperament is more susceptible to potential risk. She was too independent and free-spirited: "She judged for herself, as few women of twice her age judge in general; never asked your advice; never told you beforehand what she was going to do; never came with secrets and confidences to anybody...She looked you straight in the face, and shook her little saucy head, and said plainly, 'I won't tell you!'...Self-willed – devilish self-willed sometimes – I grant; but the finest creature, nevertheless, that ever walked the ways in this lower world" (68-9). Betteredge's words not only equate the position of women to a lower social order; it seems to indicate that women with temperaments such as hers who were resistant to patriarchal authority needed to be sequestered from the influences of the corrupt East to a greater degree. It is also implied that Franklin Blake is his capacity as the hero of the novel should have been Rachel's protector. But his effeminate nature consequent of a foreign education makes him unsuitable for the role which has to be fulfilled by Betteredge and then by the solicitor Mr. Bruff. With his rigid ideas of British masculinity, Betteredge is also disappointed in Franklin Blake: "The man put me out...His complexion had got pale: his face, at the lower part, was covered, to my great surprise and disappointment, with a curly brown beard and mustachios...To make matters worse, he had promised to be tall, and had not kept his promise" (42). In other words, Franklin Blake with his foreign education and appearance and manners of a European dandy seemed to fall short of the ideal English notions of masculinity in the eyes of Betteredge. Betteredge immediately infers that his manners are due to the influence of his foreign

education: "At the age when we are all of us most apt to take our colouring, in the form of a reflection from the colouring of other people, he had been sent abroad, and had been passed on from one nation to another, before there was time for any one colouring more than another to settle itself on him firmly. ...He had his French side, and his German side, and his Italian side- the original English foundation showing through, every now and then, as much as to say, 'Here I am, sorely transmogrified, as you see, but there's something of me left at the bottom of him still'"(58). His unreliability as the safeguard of the Verinder household makes it imperative for Betteredge to step up to the role as is evident from his role as the principal narrator of the events.

Following the disappearance of the Moonstone, Mr. Murthwaite, "the celebrated Indian traveler, ...who, at risk of his life, had penetrated in disguise where no European had ever set foot before"(81) reprises Franklin Blake's role and becomes the authoritative voice on the Indian character. The most explicit echoes of the Mutiny are felt with the full force of Mr. Murthwaite's words: "In the country those men came from, they care just as much about killing a man, as you care about emptying the ashes out of your pipe. If a thousand lives stood between them and getting back of their Diamond – and if they thought they could destroy those lives without discovery – they would take them all. The sacrifice of caste is a serious thing in India, if you like. The sacrifice of life is nothing at all"(89). In response to Betteredge's opinion about the Indians as "a set of murdering thieves"(89), Mr. Murthwaite benevolently states that they are indeed "wonderful people" and in a paternalistic tone, as someone who truly understands the Indian character and their religious and social prejudices urges that the Moonstone be split up into half a dozen diamonds so that "There is an end of its secret identity as The Moonstone – and there is

an end of the conspiracy"(89). So according to him, the solution lies not in restoring the Diamond to its rightful owners but in appropriating it in such a way that it loses its very identity and value. If we take the jewel to be the metaphor of Hindoo identity, Mr. Murthwaite fulfills the role of the imperialist in urging its destruction. In this then, he is not far from the secret desire of Gabriel Betteredge even though he claims to have seen more of the world than Betteredge probably ever can. In their opinion, Indians as a race are little more than animals, evident from the use of all the bestial imagery of the three Indian men. They are constantly described as feral and untamed possessing a "tigerish quickness"(86) and "bowing and salaaming ...in their most polite and *snaky* way"(86 emphasis added) by Betteredge. Murthwaite too warns Franklin Blake of the physical threat posed by these men: "Those men will wait their opportunity with the patience of cats, and will use it with the ferocity of tigers. How you have escaped them I can't imagine"(88). When the Diamond disappears the morning after the Indians' performance at the dinner party, the suspicion of them as the culprits is almost predetermined in the minds of both Franklin Blake and Betteredge. Even though the Indians were back in Frizinghall during the time of the actual crime and "plainer evidence than this, in favour of the Indians, there could not well be" (99), they are arraigned without a reason. In a shocking instance of blatant xenophobia, we see the misuse of legal authority simply because the men in question are foreigners, and colonial subjects at that.

> The magistrate said there was not even a case of suspicion against them so far. But, as it was just possible, when the police came to investigate the matter, that discoveries affecting the jugglers might be made, he would contrive, by committing them as rogues and vagabonds, to keep them at

> our disposal, under lock and key, for a week. They had ignorantly done something...in the town, which barely brought them within the operation of the law. Every human institution (Justice included) will stretch a little, if you only pull it the right way. The worthy magistrate was a old friend of my lady's – and the Indians were 'committed' for a week as soon as the courts opened that morning. (99)

The passage not only reveals the deep mistrust of "others," of "rogues and vagabonds" or any one in general who was on the peripheries of society and lacked any kind of social validation but also the shocking ease with which the higher classes could claim to interfere with the legal and justice system. So even though there is nothing that could explicitly link the three Indians to the disappearance of the diamond, they are guilty by virtue of their race and nationality in the Victorian imagination. This initial indictment brings the Indians under the radar of surveillance that stretches throughout the narrative. Even though they are set free a week later because of a lack of evidence against them, Sergeant Cuff, the celebrated Scotland Yard detective declares that both he and Mr. Murthwaite is convinced that they had come to Yorkshire to steal the jewel but the events of that night had made their plans awry and they were sure to be on track of the diamond (166). No regret is expressed at their unjust arraignment; in fact, the police, legal and judicial machinery are mobilized so that the moonstone can be discovered before the Indians can get it in their grasp.

A little further in the narrative, Betteredge receives an excerpt in the mail from a London newspaper which suggests that Mr. Septimus Luker, a dealer in Oriental gems and jewels might be a target of an attempted robbery by "some of those strolling Indians

who *infest* the streets. The persons complained of were three in number" (207 emphasis added). As in previous instances, the Indians are disparaged as thieves and warned off the property without sufficient proof of their guilt. In fact, when asked by the magistrate "Mr. Luker admitted that he had no evidence to produce of any attempt at robbery being in contemplation. He could speak positively to the annoyance and interruption caused by the Indians, but not to anything else" (208). The Indians re-emerge in Miss Clack's narrative where they are reported to manhandle both Godfrey Ablewhite and Septimus Luker on the same day, though we are not told whether they are the same three people from Betteredge's narrative. Both Ablewhite and Luker are summoned by a letter to a particular apartment in London. The only thing that marks out the apartment décor is the smell of musk and camphor and an "ancient Oriental manuscript, richly illuminated with Indian figures and devices"(218) that invitingly lies open on the table. Just as Ablewhite becomes immersed in this Eastern curiosity with his back towards the door, he is seized from behind by two men who he could recognize as being of a different race by the arm around his neck which was "tawny-brown colour" (217) and their indistinguishable language. He is searched thoroughly and then left bound and gagged in the room till the landlord discovers him and sets him free. The same thing happened to Mr. Luker and nothing was taken from the room except the illuminated Oriental manuscript which had captivated the attention of both individuals. It is clearly indicated that the attackers had used the "beautiful work of Indian art"(221) to absorb the attention of the onlooker and then caught him unawares. Couched in her pretentious Christian beliefs, Miss Clack's words draw attention to the hidden anxiety that is replicated in this episode: "When the Christian hero of a hundred charitable victories plunges into a pitfall that has been dug

for him by a mistake, oh, what a warning it is to the rest of us to be increasingly on guard! How soon may our own evil passions prove to be Oriental noblemen who pounce on us unawares!"(220). Though Miss Clack is talking of human vices that can only be mitigated by the intervention of Christianity, her language conflating vices with the Oriental noblemen seems to hint at the potential threat from the attraction to Oriental objects that can spring unawares on the Victorian people.

A little later on in the text, Mr Bruff, the solicitor's encounter with a certain rather "remarkable- looking man...so dark in his complexion that we all set him down in the office for an Indian, or something of that sort"(298) is mediated through an object. The Indian, having been granted an interview, placed a beautiful bejeweled casket in front of Mr. Bruff as assurance for a money borrowing request. Mr. Bruff rejects his request on the pretence of him being a stranger at which the gentleman "rose – this admirable *assassin* rose to go, the moment I had answered him"(300 emphasis added). Even though this encounter presents a simple loan request on the surface and there is no evidence of any kind of physical threat from his manners or behavior, it does not stop Mr. Bruff from a prejudiced assessment of his visitor, simply from his terse manner of speaking: "Briefly answered, and thoroughly to the purpose! If the Moonstone had been in my possession, this Oriental gentleman would have murdered me, I am very well aware, without a moment's hesitation"(300). Although Mr.Bruff is tricked into answering the gentleman's question about the maturity period of a loan in this country, he reveals himself to be immune to the attraction of Oriental objects by his refusal to accept the casket and is thus hailed as the epitome of rational British sensibility, so extremely required at this time. From this point, Mr. Bruff becomes not only Rachel's legal guardian but her moral

guardian as well and has a central role in ensuring the security of the estate entrusted to him.

In a remarkable chapter in his narrative, Mr. Bruff comes into contact with Mr. Murthwaite who in his role as the Orientalist traveler attempts to solidify the role of the Indians in the conspiracy of the moonstone. Even though there is absolutely no conclusive evidence of the guilt of the Indians in the events leading up to this moment, Mr. Murthwaite is able to spin a narrative that firmly locates the Indians as the criminals in this plot. To the alarm of Mr. Bruff, he reveals that the three Indians are successors of the priests who had accompanied Herncastle to England and are part of an organization which is "a trumpery affair" no doubt: "I should reckon it up as including the command of money; the services, when needed of that shady sort of Englishman, who lives on the byeways of foreign life in London; and, lastly the secret sympathy of such few men of their own country, and (formerly, at least) of their own religion, as happen to be employed in ministering to some of the multitudinous wants of this great city"(305). Mr. Murthwaite clearly refers to some of the Asian seamen or servants who have been abandoned by their colonial masters and who inhabit the peripheries of London and survive by engaging in all kinds of shady businesses, prominent among which is the illegal trade of opium, which is soon revealed to be a key element in the solving of the moonstone riddle. But not only are the Indians engaged in dubious activities, they are also revealed to be naïve and stupid in their practices and their reliance on clairvoyance. This also establishes them on a lower racial hierarchy compared to rational British minds who "have nothing whatever to do with clairvoyance, or with mesmerism, or else with anything that is hard of belief to a practical man"(307). At the same time, the Indians are

deduced to be cunning as "no Indian...ever runs an unnecessary risk"(307) as is evident from their patience in waiting for the right moment till the jewel gets transferred to the custody of Rachel Verinder because it would be easier to "wait till the Diamond was at the disposal of a young girl who would innocently delight in wearing the magnificent jewel at every possible opoortunity"(307) than try to seize it from the control of Franklin Blake who had already outwitted them twice. Mr. Murthwaite with his supposed "superior knowledge of the Indian character" (308) doesn't stop there. He sounds an ominous warning that the Indians would make one final attempt at the recovery of the Diamond when it is released from the bank and states that at that moment "I think I shall be safer...among the fiercest fanatics of Central Asia than I should be if I crossed the door of the bank with the Moonstone in my pocket...It's my firm belief that they [the Indians] won't be defeated a third time" (312).

In the preceding analysis, I have tried to draw attention to how the whole narrative has been constructed to indict the Indians for a crime that hasn't yet been committed simply on the basis of stereotypes that existed in public imagination. This continues even in the final pages of the novel as Godfrey Ablewhite is murdered and an empty jewelry box is found at his bedside. Sergeant Cuff suggests that it is probable that one of the three Indians was shadowing Ablewhite throughout the night. A piece of gold thread found in the murdered man's room is deduced to be of Indian manufacture and the report that the three Indians were seen sailing in a steamer bound for Rotterdam that same day seems to confirm their role in the Ablewhite murder. But other than these incidental occurrences, yet again, there is no conclusive material or legal proof that the murder was orchestrated by the Indians, a fact that even Sergeant Cuff seems to admit, insisting that

"there is here, moral, if not legal evidence, that the murder was committed by the Indians"(474).

The prologue narrated by Herncastle's cousin had suggested that Herncastle was morally guilty even though there was not literal proof of him murdering the Indian prison guards. By making the Indians morally guilty of murder at the end of the narrative, does the story come full circle? Does it literalize Deidre David's trope of invasion and counter-invasion suggesting that colonial plunder produces an equal reaction in the heart of the metropolis? Collins doesn't offer a definite answer. As I have tried to underscore in my analysis, Collins's narrative undoubtedly captures the cultural temper of the 1860s in its covert echoes of the events of the 1850s, particularly 1857. It records all the anxieties about Indian objects and bodies that were plaguing the Victorian imagination and articulates the latent xenophobia generated by this anxiety. India is imagined as the quicksand which is threatening to engulf anyone who comes in contact with it and the Victorian public is reminded of the ill-effects of their addiction to Eastern objects. But it is worth noting that the multi-narrative structure and the way the narrative is constructed question the generation of such a discourse. Just as the characters weave a narrative about the role of the Indians in the moonstone plot within the novel, is it possible that the novel form itself is producing and exaggerating the hysteria and paranoia about the "other" generated primarily by the events of 1857.[14]

This brings us to the function of the curious epilogue in the book where it is revealed that the three Indians, suspected of the Ablewhite murder and kept under observation, manage to escape the surveillance of the British captain when the ship is becalmed off the coast of India. In his book, Mukherjee suggests that "it was morally and

physically justifiable for Indians to resort to violence in order to regain their stolen property. By refusing to ensnare the Indians in the disciplinary network set up by the entire range of British characters suffering from 'detective fever,' the novel allocates a heroic structure to them"(184). Such a statement produces a discordant chord in Mukherjee's otherwise astute analysis and is almost reminiscent of a Victorian commentator, Geraldine Jewsbury's words published in *The Athenaeum* in 1866: "Few will read of the final destiny of *The Moonstone* without feeling the tears rise in their eyes as they catch the last glimpse of the three men, who have sacrificed their cast[e] in the service of their God ... as they embrace each other and separate to begin their lonely and never-ending pilgrimage of expiation. The deepest emotion is reserved for the last"(qtd in Nayder 139). This is more in line with Nayder's view of *The Moonstone* as an anti-imperialist text that Mukherjee's analysis had initially explicitly resisted. Nayder claims that "Collins humanizes figures commonly represented as bestial by his contemporaries and identifies as their rightful property a valuable diamond looted by British forces in Seringapatam fifty years before the main action of his story is set. Depicting the 1799 Siege of Seringapatam in his Prologue, Collins prefaces *The Moonstone* with an instance of British violence against Indians and suggests that their later acts of violence against Britons are makers of retribution triggered by an original, imperial crime"(139). Mukherjee, by citing the "heroic stature" accorded to the Indians almost seems to arrive at the same conclusion that he critics Nayder for – reading *The Moonstone* as an anti-imperialist text.

It is important to underscore here that I am not trying to read Collins's narrative as pro-empire. Instead, I suggest that such a reading of *The Moonstone* which sees the

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events as a direct result of the imperial crime committed by Herncastle is fairly reductive and the epilogue categorically resists such a monolithic reading. In the final scene, Mr. Murthwaite in the classic move of the oriental traveler, disguises himself as a native and since he knows "the language as well as I know my own, and that I am lean and brown enough to make it no easy matter to detect my European origin (492) penetrates the Hindoo heartland and arrives at the holy city of Somnauth. Here he is witness to the ceremony in the honor of the moon god and apparently recognizes among the thousands gathered, the three Indians he had seen on Lady Verinder's estate in Yorkshire. He is told that "They were Brahmins....who had forfeited their caste, in the service of the god. The god had commanded that their purification should be the purification by pilgrimage"(493) and hence were going to set forth one final time to different shrines in India to commit penances for their wrongdoings. Since we did not witness any particular spirit of camaraderie among the Indians in England, it is hard to experience the pathos of the scene as elucidated by Jewsbury. Her words seem to be more of a romantic evaluation of the devotion of the Hindoos to their religion. Instead, the epilogue in the form of Mr.Murthwaite's words seems to encourage a disturbing picture of discontent among the Hindoos and Muslims. The Prologue had suggested that the Mohammedan conqueror, Mahmoud of Ghazni had ravaged the holy city of Somnauth. The moon-god with the Yellow Diamond on its forehead had been smuggled into Benares and had been watched day and night by three priests and their successors as ordained by the deity till one of officers of Aurungzebe's army seized it and "the Moonstone passed (carrying its curse with it) from one lawless Mohammedan hand to another...till it fell into the hands of Tippoo. Sultan of Seringapatam, who caused it to be placed as an ornament in the handle

of a dagger"(13). It is this dagger that is seized by Herncastle after the raid of Seringapatam. So in the final scene, when the moonstone is shown as restored to the forehead of the deity, the narrative seems to come full circle asserting the primacy of religious beliefs of the Hindoos. What is more disturbing is the animosity that is deliberately evoked between the Hindoos and Muslims in the prologue and epilogue. The Muslims are portrayed as usurpers of Hindoo traditions and customs but with the restoration of the moonstone, the supremacy of Hindoo religion in India is affirmed. Yet at the same time, the Hindoos are depicted to be a violent race as well with Muthwaite claiming that "How it [the moonstone] has found its way back to its wild native land – by what accident, or by what crime, the Indians regained possession of their sacred gem, may be in your knowledge, but is not in mine. You have lost sight of it in England, and (if I know anything of this people) you have lost sight of it for ever (494). The animosity hinted at here is an uncomfortable reference to Britain's policy of divide and rule in the high imperial years which ultimately led to the partition of India in 1947 triggered by religious discontent among the Hindoos and Muslims. While it may be too presumptuous to suggest that Wilkie Collins was advocating a different, more sophisticated form of imperial control, one cannot help agreeing with Ashis Roy's analysis that Collins's text was perhaps pleading for an end of the old colonial order as embodied in *Robinson Crusoe* and arguing for a new kind of imperial strategy with the ascension of Queen Victoria to the throne.[15] Herncastle represented the old colonial order with his senseless plunder and his stubborn refusal to break up the flawed diamond in multiple parts, whereas the sophisticated Orientalist, Murthwaite is all in favor of such a procedure that

would destroy a distinctive Hindoo identity and perhaps increase animosity between the two largest religious groups in the country.

Finally, no analysis of *The Moonstone* can be complete without talking about the fascinating character of Ezra Jennings. Ezra Jennings is a figure who has elicited reams of critical response. We are told early in the narrative that he is Mr. Candy's assistant but is also a victim of the same kind of prejudice that we see throughout the book. The man with the "gipsy-complexion,"(388) and piebald hair has to be tolerated by the village folk because of the lack of anyone better and Betteredge sums up the reason for the universal dislike of him: "His appearance is against him, to begin with. And then there's a story that Mr.Candy took him with a doubtful character" (344). In the prejudiced and close-minded Yorkshire society, both his appearance and character are enough to vilify him. This was a society where mixed-race inhabitants were not entirely accepted and Jennings, we are told "was born, and partly brought up, in one of our colonies. My father was an Englishman; but my mother ..." (391) clearly indicating that he had "some foreign race in his English blood"(391). So not only is his lineage dubious, by his own admission, Jennings reiterates that "the cloud of a horrible accusation has rested on me for years...I am a man whose life is a wreck, and whose character is gone"(399). Critics like Mukherjee have suggested that "just as the mere race and nationality of Indians are enough for them to be labeled as criminals, Jennings has to suffer a similar slander that forces him to act like a runaway convict, seeking out the obscurest of places to try and make a living"(180). Interestingly we are not told the actual event that has damaged Jennings's reputation; instead, he is shown to be stoically accepting of his life of obscurity in a remote corner of England in his capacity as a medical assistant. Moreover,

this mixed-race individual is far from being the epitome of English masculinity. By his own admission, he was so overwhelmed that he had been successful in saving Mr.Candy's life with non-traditional medical practices, "I own I broke down! I laid the poor fellow's wasted hand on the bed, and burst out crying. An hysterical relief, Mr.Blake – nothing more! Physiology says, and says truly, that some men are born with female constitutions- and I am one of them!"(393).

Ezra Jennings is thus clearly a misfit in Victorian society and is doomed to remain on the margins. Yet his crucial intervention in the process of uncovering the truth seems to deflate some of the stereotypes of the "other" in the narrative. Why is such a character shown to be the agent in the solving of the mystery of the moonstone by his re-staged experiment involving the use of opium? As Mukherjee suggests, the ambiguous role of Jennings is one of the many slippages that prevent a monolithic reading of *The Moonstone* as a pro-imperialist text (181). I see Jennings in the role of the native informant whose own struggles with opium prompts him to explain its insidious effects to the unsuspecting colonial masters. The deep mistrust that the society reveals of the three Indians also plagues Jennings, but his role in exonerating Franklin Blake and paving the way for the happy reunion of Rachel and Franklin seems to be an affirmation of the hetero-normative social order. Both the guardians of the Victorian social order, Betteredge and Bruff are deeply distrustful of his motives initially but by shedding valuable light on the use of the opium, he resurrects himself in their opinion. If society could figure a way of looking beyond its prejudices and be a little more tolerant of "difference," the intervention of foreigners might be restorative, the narrative seems to

suggest. But Jennings's painful death after a life of persecution seems to offer a rather pessimistic ending where there is still no place for people like him.

Collins almost mocks the Victorian pursuit of a perfect society where anybody who is non-normative doesn't have a place. In this, Jennings's plight is remarkably similar to that of Rosanna Spearman. Rosanna Spearman cannot forget her criminal past (she had been to prison for theft and then been sent to a reformatory) and even though Lady Verinder had employed her intending to keep her on the path of honesty, Rosanna still finds herself marginalized. In a very telling statement she tells Betteredge "The stain is taken off...But the place shows, Mr.Betteredge – the place shows!" (38) eerily foreshadowing the plight of Ezra Jennings. Even though Betteredge engages in his best paternalistic behavior with her, he is immeasurably cruel when he realizes that Rosanna Spearman is in love with Franklin Blake: "But a housemaid out of a reformatory, with a plain face and a deformed shoulder, falling in love, at first sight, with a gentleman who comes on a visit to her mistress's house, match me that, in the way of an absurdity, out of any story-book in Christendom, if you can! I laughed till the tears rolled down my cheek"(61). The cruelty that Betteredge reveals here even shocks his daughter Penelope but is also clearly indicative of Collins's awareness of the social ills in Victorian society. Also, it is worth mentioning here that Collins's narrative about the unseen crime of the Indians tends to sideline the fact that Godfrey Ablewhite is the real criminal in the story. He pretends to be a benevolent philanthropist but is revealed to be the person who steals the moonstone from Franklin Blake in his state of opium induced stupor and pawns it to Septimus Luker for three thousand pounds that he needs to settle payments from a young patron's trust that he had embezzled to the sum of twenty thousand pounds. His sexual

hypocrisy is evident as he makes false promises to Rachel while maintaining a lavish villa in the suburbs and living there with a lady. Yet, both he and Herncastle occupy fairly limited narrative space within the novel with the lion's share of the narrative attempting to trace the misdeeds of the criminal Indians. But it is quite probable that this is a deliberate gesture by Collins to draw attention to social ills that were plaguing metropolitan society and a reminder that unnecessary attention and energy spent in demonizing the "other" could actually be detrimental to Victorian society itself.

As this analysis reveals, *The Moonstone* is deeply involved in the imperial question. The diamond is magnificent with "its size [making] it a phenomenon in the diamond-market" and "its colour [placing] it in a category by itself"(52) but it resists a definitive evaluation because "there was a defect, in the shape of a flaw, in the very heart of the stone"(52). The imperfection of the diamond seems to sound a cautionary note in the narrative with Collins suggesting that the magical riches of the colonies could cast a spell on everyone like that of the diamond but it was necessary to be aware of the accompanying problems that could come with it. The debilitating effects of opium are clearly indicated as well and the addiction to it is revealed to be deadly because it almost ruined Franklin Blake's shot at love and happiness. So while Collins is deeply skeptical of the Oriental spell and sees the colonies, especially India, as an insidious influence that could further contaminate Victorian society as symbolized in the lure of the diamond and the opium, he simultaneously reveals an anxiety that if the entire disciplinary system was mobilized to police the colonies or colonial inhabitants in the metropolis, it could distract the public from the social ills plaguing the metropolis like the indictment of real criminals

like Ablewhite or rehabilitation of marginalized figures like Spearman, Limping Lucy or Ezra Jennings who are persecuted because they are non-normative in some way.

Despite this complex range of interpretations, *The Moonstone*, like Mayhew's narrative is a product of the dominant public discourse in late nineteenth-century England that reflects the shift in perceptions of the East. Thus, as this chapter demonstrates, the decade of the 1850s ushered in a new dimension in Anglo-Indian relations. Racial fetishism made way for a more pronounced xenophobic discourse where the magical East was denigrated into the malevolent East which would corrupt and destabilize the Victorian society if the public was not made aware of its insidious influence. This particular moment of crisis in Victorian London provided rich material to the literary intelligentsia and narratives like *The Moonstone* provide valuable insight into Victorian social life vis-à-vis its relation to the colonies in the late nineteenth century.

Chapter Three

England is [not] the place for me: the failure of the immigrant dream in Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*

England lay before us, not a place, or a people but as a promise and an expectation.

- George Lamming [1]

I suppose I had entertained some naively romantic ideas about London's East End, with its cosmopolitan population and fascinating history...But this was different. There was nothing romantic about the noisy littered street bordered by an untidy irregular picket fence of slipshod shopfronts and gaping bomb sites. I crossed Commercial Road at the traffic lights into New Road. This was even worse. The few remaining buildings, raped and outraged, were still partly occupied, the missing glass panes replaced by clapboard or brightly coloured squares of tinplate advertising Brylcream, Nugget Shoe Polish and Palm Toffee. There was rubble everywhere and dirt and flies. And there were smells.

- E.R. Braithwaite [2]

Postcolonial Britain, anxious and jittery with the large scale immigration of Asians, Africans and West Indians in the 1960s and 1970s, became increasingly obsessed with definitions of national identity. This anxiousness quickly led to a resurgence of hotly contested debates about the meaning of Englishness, especially in Powellian and Thatcherite England that continue even today. In 2001, in a much celebrated speech, British foreign secretary Robin Cook tried to embrace Britain's racial and cultural diversity by declaring Chicken Tikka Masala as "the" British national dish: "Chicken Tikka Masala is now a true British national dish, not only because it is the most popular,

but because it is a perfect illustration of the way Britain absorbs and adapts external influences. Chicken Tikka is an Indian dish. The Masala sauce was added to satisfy the desire of British people to have their meat served in gravy."[3] On the surface, Robin Cook's proclamation seems to signal a much needed acknowledgment of post-colonial Britain's multiracial identity. But the indication that gravy had to be added to the traditional Indian preparation of the chicken tikka to make it more appealing to the British palate and to make it deserving of the honor of being regarded as a "national dish" raises interesting issues. Contrary to Robin Cook's claim that this process illustrates Britain's seamless adaptation of "other" cultural influences, this metaphor is a good indication of tokenism and the politics of cultural appropriation in Britain that has continued well into the twenty-first century.

My first two chapters discussed Britain's shifting responses to the proliferation of Indian objects and bodies in the metropolitan center in the nineteenth century and argue that colonial-metropolitan encounters are almost always marked by a mixture of exoticism and xenophobia. This chapter, focusing on a narrative of postcolonial Britain, examines how this trend has continued in Britain's interactions with its immigrants, albeit through a more sophisticated, state sponsored discourse of multiculturalism as articulated in speeches like the one quoted above. More specifically, I focus on Hanif Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* to argue that recent celebrations of Britain's so-called multicultural identity eclipse the politics of cultural commodification and ignore the xenophobia and often blatant racism that mark the immigrant experience in Britain. Through his relentless satirizing of the British fascination of the mystic East in this novel, Kureishi punctures the discourse of happy multiculturalism which insists on celebrating cultural co-existence

while deliberately ignoring the uncomfortable realities of immigrant life. At the same time, he mocks the naïveté of upper class South Asian immigrants who still hold on to the idea of Britain as a land of possibility and not unlike their ancestors in the nineteenth century are only too happy to engage in self-exoticization in the hope of economic viability and increased social acceptance. Finally, I suggest that Kureishi by portraying immigrant life in all its complexity simultaneously argues for a reconfigured, more inclusive idea of Englishness and advocates a new form of multiculturalism that is "not a superficial exchange of festivals and food, but a robust and committed exchange of ideas."[4]In other words, while Kureishi attempts to resist the imposition of a specific ethnic identity fostered by discourses like multiculturalism and records the plurality of immigrant responses to a xenophobic society, he simultaneously underscores that British-Asian immigrants are not passive subjects from whom culture is appropriated. Instead his work highlights the ways in which South Asian immigrants are also active participants in the process of cultural consumption, or as Sunaina Maira puts it "not only on the receiving, or rather giving, end of cultural appropriation"(Maira 331).

England and the colonial imagination

In the footsteps of Edward Said's influential book *Orientalism*, postcolonial critics have continuously engaged with the different ways in which Western discourse invented and mobilized numerous ways of imagining the "Other" and how that became inextricably linked with English self-representation. But as Simon Gikandi suggests in *Maps of Englishness*, not many theorists dwell on how the "Other" gazes at Europe: "Colonial culture is as much about the figuration of the metropolis in the imagination of the colonized themselves as it is about the representation of the colonized in the dominant

discourses of the imperial center" (Gikandi 20). Priya Joshi's book, *In Another Country: Colonialism, Culture and the English Novel in India* and Ashley Dawson's *Mongrel Nation: Diasporic Culture and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* attempt to fill this void in different ways and are crucial in establishing how colonial/post-colonial migrants/immigrants are actively involved in their representation in the West. In her book, Joshi works through a rich colonial archive to trace the reading patterns of Indians during the nineteenth century. She demonstrates that contrary to the common British perception garnered from the Orientalist narratives of Forster, Kipling or Orwell, Indians did not just "travel in trains, deliver and receive mail, play cricket and polo, bargain, dissemble, squat, spy, eat, shout, sleep, talk, hunt, and then talk some more" (35), but were in fact voracious readers who consumed just about anything that was made available to them through the imperial machinery. Joshi reveals how less popular British novelists like G.W.M. Reynolds and Marie Corelli had devoted readerships in India perhaps because "Indian readers would have discovered a symbolic affinity between their struggles against the colonial machinery and those of Reynolds' oppressed masses in London against the ruling classes"(82). Moreover, in an attempt to explain the Indian preference for the melodramatic plots and the rejection of the realist modes of representation in popular novelists like Dickens, Joshi points to Michael Denning's use of "allegorical" reading or, in other words, seeing the plots of novels not as unique stories but as types that could record the reader's own sensibilities and imaginative possibilities: "It was a form of reading through which readers could script themselves and their concerns into the narrative, in which readerly mastery and control in consuming the text inverted readerly impotence and powerlessness in the colonial world"(136).

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What I want to emphasize here is that though the Indian readership was exposed to a generous helping of Wordsworth's adoration of the Lake district and Keats' raptures about English flora and fauna, narratives like those of Reynolds made them equally aware of the ills that plagued English society. What then made the colonial readership envision Britain as an idyllic place, free from dirt, crime and corruption and foster the desire of immigration that we repeatedly encounter in colonial and postcolonial novels? For instance, like Haroon in Kureishi's novel *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Bharat, a character in Yasmine Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies*, is not exaggerating when he says: "Long before I saw Britain for the second time (as a postgraduate student), I knew London [...] I knew, long before I ever ate one, what muffins tasted like"(qtd. in Lokuge 12). Joshi's insight offers one way of reading this conundrum by suggesting that the hallowed vision of Britain was largely a constructed one in the colonial imagination as is apparent from the mode of consumption by Indian readers. It is well documented by Macaulay's infamous declaration in the "Minute on Indian Education" (1835) that creating a class of "mimic men" was one of the official objectives of the imperial educational policy (249). But it was also the colonial desire to "familiarize themselves with the language, style, and manners of the ruling race" (Varma 6) that aided the imperial mission of producing a class of anglophiles and was also responsible for this fetishization of England. In fact, to Amitav Ghosh's young narrator in *The Shadow Lines*, London is very much an imaginative space shaped by the stories that his friend Ila and his Uncle Tridib have told him. It is glorious in all its halo, it signifies all that he yearns to achieve, it helps him go through his mundane life in Calcutta before he realizes, in an oddly similar moment to that in Kureishi's narrative, that expectations never match up to

reality: "It was easy enough on the A to Z street atlas of London that my father had brought me. I knew page 43, square 2, by heart: Lymington Road ought to have been right across the road from where we were. But now that we had reached the place I knew best, I was suddenly uncertain" (63). Little did the colonial establishment realize that their administrative and educational policies in the colonies would backfire and would result in a steady immigration from the colonies in the hope of a better life propelled by imperial myth making.

England and the postcolonial migrant

"When finally Britain convinced itself it had to decolonize, it had to get rid of them, we all came back home. As they hauled down the flag, we got on the banana boat and sailed right into London...they had always said that this was really home, the streets were paved with gold and, bloody hell, we just came to check out whether that was so or not"

- Stuart Hall [5]

Ashley Dawson's book on the diasporic culture of postcolonial Britain records the very important moment that Stuart Hall so graphically enunciates in its opening pages. Standing on the deck of the *SS Empire Windrush*, Calypso singer Lord Kitchener had performed a paean to the immigrant dream of England as a land of possibility. Lord Kitchener's song "London is the place for me" captures the optimism and hope that was felt by the initial group of West Indian immigrants but that soon turned into disillusionment and despair as they got a taste of latent British xenophobia. In his plays, novels, short stories and essays, Hanif Kureishi's South Asian British protagonists suffer similar predicaments as Kureishi attempts consistently to deconstruct myths of British cultural superiority by portraying Britain as a waste land under both the Conservative and

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the Labour parties. In this chapter, I focus on Kureishi's provocative novel *The Buddha of Suburbia* to demonstrate the ways in which it draws attention to the grim reality of immigrant existence. He reveals how widespread exoticism and xenophobia frustrate attempts by immigrants to gain wider acceptance in postcolonial British society thus effectively puncturing Britain's self-constructed myth of itself as a happy multicultural land. Simultaneously, he mercilessly satirizes the immigrant's naïveté that refuses to relinquish the dream of Britain as a land of endless possibilities and which often leads some of them with pronounced class aspirations to engage in self-orientalization to gain social mobility.

As long as there was material distance between the British and the "Other" during the colonial period, it was possible to control them using various discursive practices, but "the influx of immigrants from the former colonies ensures that blackness is not simply a semantic or performative category but a real presence and cultural threat to the pastoral image of England as an island" (Gikandi 70). The ideal of English identity being thus destabilized, there was the need for both a new set of discourses and new state regulations that would contain the growing presence of the formerly colonized people within the actual physical confines of England. Following the Notting Hill riots of 1958, black and Asian immigrants in Britain were beginning to encounter a "growing politics of racial intolerance expressed at an official, institutional level" (Procter 95). In a striking contrast to the Nationality Act of 1948 which encouraged immigration from Britain's colonies and former colonies, the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 started distinguishing between British passport holders born in the UK and those born in the colonies or former colonies, thus effectively reducing Britain's immigrant population to

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that of second class citizens. The fact that immigrant communities were increasingly perceived as a threat to the adopted land, in this case, England, is clearly articulated by Simon Gikandi's comment on Enoch Powell: "Enoch Powell has provided English nationalism with what we may call its working hypothesis: empire gave England power and prestige but left its national character untouched; even at the height of its empire, England remained an island untouched by the landscapes and subjects it dominated; now with postimperial migration, the blacks have come to contaminate the realm"(Gikandi 86). Gikandi, here refers to Powell's infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech of 1968 where Powell claimed that because of the large scale immigration, "this country will not be worth living in for our children."[6] Following this, more policing strategies were adopted over the 1970s and 1980s and led to the Immigration Act of 1971 which stopped all primary black immigration to Britain.[7]

Simultaneously, new discourses were introduced in Britain that were based on a monolithic, racialised conception of national identity where inevitably being English was on the top of the totem pole. One among these was the discourse of cultural nationalism or cultural assimilationism. Bart Moore-Gilbert points out that during the 1960s "whereas the far Right seeks the expulsion of 'aliens,' 'cultural assimilationism' advances the ostensibly more moderate position that immigrants can, indeed, belong to British society – provided that they surrender the cultural identities which they have brought with them and adopt the norms, values and social practices of the host society"(131). So assimilation into British society would require a complete disavowal of their racial and cultural identity. But as Avtar Brah points out from a frequently cited 1966 speech by the then Home Secretary Roy Jenkins, in order to project the British state

as more inclusive, the discourse of assimilationism was soon replaced by that of integration. Jenkins argues against the notion of "assimilation" but was in favor of "integration": "He said that the latter should be viewed, not as a 'flattening process of assimilation but as equal opportunity, accompanied by cultural diversity, in an atmosphere of mutual trust'"(qtd. in Brah 25). Such a policy, with its emphasis on cultural diversity is inherently problematic not only because it obscures the economic and political realities of the immigrant population, but also because it veers towards the currently in vogue concept of "multiculturalism." In both America and England, discourses of "multiculturalism" were mobilized as an antidote to fears of cultural miscegenation from immigrant communities within the nation state. By forcing immigrant communities into specific ethnic enclaves, the discourse of multiculturalism in its existing form insists on celebrating difference thus effectively still othering these communities. Though "multiculturalism" emerged primarily as an American discourse preaching a benign acceptance of other cultures and a peaceful co-existence in a multi-racial, but tolerant American society, British policy makers adopted and tailored it to their own needs

For Stuart Hall, this reformulation of English national identity with the import of multiculturalism was institutionalized in the 1970s, especially when Margaret Thatcher came into power in 1979:

> To add to England's travails, the old empire has been replaced by the 'Empire Within', generated by flows of black immigration to the British mainland that started in the 1940s and have become increasingly unwelcome to a number of white Britons. As a result, the recently

> reformulated Englishness – variously referred to as 'the new racism' or 'Thatcherism' – equates national community with the white race. This nationalist discourse eschews the openly racist language of biological superiority and uses instead the more coded language of cultural difference to promote an English nation that is culturally homogenous and exclusively white (qtd. in Chrisman107).

The same point is emphasized by Ziauddin Sardar who suggests: "In Britain, multiculturalism comes chronologically after 'assimilation' and 'integration'... Multiculturalism focused on 'celebrating difference...Over the past decades, both Conservative and Labour governments have been insisting that minorities demonstrate and interminably celebrate their difference. Difference is a hot commodity in our art galleries and museums where it is regularly constructed, fabricated and paraded as a sign of enlightened plurality"(138). It is amidst this background of racial/cultural conflict that Kureishi emerges as one of the most celebrated South Asian writers.

The fetish of possibility in <u>*The Buddha of Suburbia*</u>

In his first novel, *The Buddha of Suburbia*, Kureishi captures the chaos of post-colonial suburban London, "the caustic combinations of conservative prudery and newfound sexual permissiveness; of inbred racism and self-congratulatory multicultural openness"(Huggan 96). *The Buddha of Suburbia*, published in 1990 and set in 1960s Britain is fashioned as a picaresque narrative and chronicles the adventures or mis-adventures of Karim Amir, a second generation immigrant. But it is as much the story of Karim's dad Haroon, a first generation Indian immigrant who had come to England to be educated like Gandhi and Jinnah and fulfill the class aspirations of his aristocratic

Bombay family. Susie Thomas has argued that "In all Kureishi's work there is an emphasis on how race can affect class and vice versa" (Thomas 74) and nowhere is this more apparent than in *The Buddha of Suburbia*. In his essay, *The Rainbow Sign*, Kureishi talks about how race and class are intertwined in colonial-metropolitan encounters in England: "Racism goes hand-in-hand with class inequality. Among other things, racism is a kind of snobbery, a desire to see oneself as superior culturally and economically, and a desire to actively experience and enjoy that superiority by hostility or violence. And when that superiority of class and culture is unsure or not acknowledged by the Other...but is in doubt, as with the British working class and Pakistanis in England, then it had to be demonstrated physically"(26). Kureishi goes on to deconstruct the notion entertained by some sections of Pakistani society who believed that the racism in Britain was a result of the unsophistication of their own people, especially the working class who migrated to Britain in large numbers to meet Britain's post-war labor requirements. Clearly a product of Macaulay's imperial policy, some of these Pakistani gentry prided themselves on their adaptability to British culture and customs and decried their fellow citizens for not following these: "If the British could only see them, the rich, the educated, the sophisticated, they wouldn't be so hostile. They'd know what civilized people the Pakistanis really were. And then they'd like them"(*The Rainbow Sign* 26).

The assumption here is that if the British were made cognizant of how South Asians, both Pakistanis and Indians really lived and were not confused between people like Haroon "and the swarms of Indian peasants who came to Britain in the 1950s and 1960s, and of whom it was said they were not familiar with cutlery and certainly not with toilets" (*The Buddha* 24), they would revise their perceptions of the region. This

inaccurate belief and the desire to please their host society and be model citizens is what generated the discourse of the "model minority," currently in vogue in America. [8] But as Kureishi emphasizes, this was simply a myth entertained by the South Asian intelligentsia because British racists were not discriminating in the least and "kicked whoever was nearest": "To the English all Pakistanis were the same; racists didn't ask whether you had a chauffer, TV and private education before they set fire to your house" (27). As Kureishi's novel demonstrates, the form of racism against immigrants might be different depending on their socio-economic status, with Haroon and Karim subject to the exoticizing discourse while Haroon's less-privileged friend, Anwar and his daughter Jamila are the targets of a more blatant xenophobia, but 1960s postimperial Britain was still an extremely hostile environment hardly conducive to the fulfillment of the immigrant dream of a land of unimagined possibilities. Haroon was clearly part of the privileged class in India and was sent to England with the hope that he would return to India "a qualified and polished English gentleman lawyer and an accomplished ballroom dancer"(24). But when Haroon and his friend Anwar arrived in England with their heads stuffed with images of daffodils and lake country from their colonial education, they were in for a rude awakening: "London, the Old Kent Road, was a freezing shock to both of them. It was wet and foggy; people called you 'Sunny Jim'; there was never enough to eat, and Dad [Haroon] never took to dripping on toast"(24) because he had "thought it would be roast beef and Yorkshire pudding all the way"(24). Kureishi emphasizes that the image that Haroon had of England was a myth as we are told that "He'd never seen the English in poverty, as roadsweepers, dustmen, shopkeepers and barmen. He'd never seen an Englishman stuffing bread into his mouth with his fingers, and no one had told

him the English didn't wash regularly because the water was so cold – if they had water at all" (24). Moreover, when Haroon "tried to discuss Byron in local pubs no one warned him that not every Englishman could read or that they didn't necessarily want tutoring by an Indian on the poetry of a pervert and a madman"(25). Haroon, lured by the heady attractions of a wicked London, of "bow-ties" and "bottle-green waistcoats and tartan socks"(25) and "several pints of rough stout and brown ale"(26) became Harry, abandoned his education, married a pretty British girl called Margaret and made a home in suburbia while he worked as a clerk in the Civil Service for three pounds a week after his family cut off his allowance when they learned of his earthly sins. Suddenly, his life, once full of "beaches and cricket"(26) was "all trains and shitting sons, and the bursting of frozen pipes in January, and the lighting of coal fires at seven in the morning: the organization of love into suburban family life in a two-up-two down semi-detached in South London"(26).

Anwar and his wife Jeeta, on the other hand, transformed a toy shop in South London into a relatively successful grocery business, but their everyday existence was threatened by the spectre of racial violence. The area they lived in was economically impoverished and full of neo-fascist groups who at night, "roamed the streets, beating Asians and shoving shit and burning rags through their letter-boxes. Frequently the mean, white, hating faces had public meetings and the Union Jacks were paraded through the streets, protected by the police"(56). Thus for both men, the actual physical settlement brought the uncomfortable realization that as immigrants they would always be on the peripheries of society because "the whites will never promote us. Not an Indian while there is a white man left on the earth. You don't have to deal with them – they still think

they have an Empire when they don't have two pennies to rub together" (27).

Haroon's intense disillusionment with the possibilities England offered its immigrants prompted him to seek solace in Oriental philosophy and when years later, Haroon is solicited to speak on one or two aspects of it by Eva Kay, Haroon is thrilled by the opportunity to showcase his culture and maybe gain a stronger foothold in British society. At his first appearance as Buddha, when Eva proclaims grandly that her "good and deep friend Haroon here, he will show us the Way. The Path"(13), Haroon is thrilled at the sudden attention quite entirely missing that what Eva means is not the path to spiritual redemption but a way out of the drab suburban society into the heart of cosmopolitan London. Even though he is at the receiving end of racial stereotyping from some members of the audience who wonder whether he had arrived there on the "camel parked outside" (12) or on a "magic carpet," (12), Haroon, not unlike Dean Mahomed, is eager to oblige his audience and perform the role of Buddha, the spiritual guru who could teach the spiritually impoverished British people "an entirely new way of being alive"(36). But this masquerade requires a certain degree of self-orientalization and a perplexed Karim tells us that Haroon begins "hissing his s's and exaggerating his Indian accent. He'd spent years trying to be more of an Englishman, to be less risibly conspicuous, and now he was putting it back in spadeloads. Why?"(21). Even though Karim is bewildered by the sudden change in his dad during his "appearances," Haroon's makeover is completely in line with his constant yearning to have the same social privileges in his adopted British society that he had in his native land. In fact, Haroon was so intent on fulfilling the role of a "model minority" that he carried around a little blue English dictionary in order to learn one English word a day because "You never know

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when you might need a heavyweight word to impress an Englishman"(28). Haroon thus engages in what Mary Louise Pratt defines as "auto-ethnography" as he pretends to be an expert on Indian mysticism and offers spiritual guidance to eager Britishers with a fetish for the Orient.[9] His self-exoticization, Haroon hopes, would finally give him the visibility and social status that he has craved all his life.

The obsession with the exotic in postcolonial London becomes even more apparent when we are given a glimpse of the house of the Indophile couple, Carl and Marianne, who had recently returned from a trekking trip to India: "This [their trip] was immediately obvious from the sandalwood Buddhas, brass ashtrays and striped plaster elephants which decorated every available space"(30). Haroon, dressed in a red and gold waistcoat and Indian pyjamas was "certainly exotic"(31) and "looked like a magician"(31) and fitted right in with the oriental décor. Much like in the early nineteenth century, when exoticization of the brown body becomes a mode of control, Haroon, with his years of neglect by mainstream British society and yearnings of acceptance is reluctant to resist such objectification. Karim tells us: "Perhaps Daddio really was a magician, having transformed himself by the bootlaces (as he put it) from being an Indian in the Civil Service who was always cleaning his teeth with Monkey Brand black toothpowder manufactured by Nogi & Co. of Bombay, into the wise adviser he now appeared to be. Sexy Sadie!" (31). Kureishi's satire of both Haroon's masquerade and the British fetishism of Indian spirituality are unmistakable here. Stuck in the drudgery of his Civil Service job, Haroon is clearly exhilarated at the importance he commands in this role as a spiritual guru. Haroon is hardly steeped in the tenets of Buddhism but he performs this role with gusto because by mobilizing a cultural

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stereotype of South Asians possessing spiritual and redemptive powers, he can exert some hierarchical control over the English who have so long ruled over them and, as Haroon claims, who seem to pretend that they still have an Empire. But as both he and Karim are aware and as the reader is constantly reminded, this performance in self-orientalization is a masquerade to cater to the Oriental fetish of the British public.

Karim had earlier wondered whether Haroon was a charlatan or whether there was some spiritual truth hidden in his speeches. The reference to "Sexy Sadie," the song John Lennon wrote after his unpleasant experience with Maharishi Mahesh Yogi further points to this element of deception. Following up on their infatuation of Mahesh Yogi and his theory of transcendental meditation, the Beatles undertook a three-month meditation course in Rishikesh, India under the Maharishi's tutelage. (Shea & Rodriguez 65). Unfortunately, the experience took an ugly turn when Lennon and Harrison heard some rumors about the Maharishi's supposed indiscretions toward some of the women disciples, including Mia Farrow: "While George had doubts (and years later apologized to the Maharishi), John very publicly denounced the guru. At first channeling his bile into a musical diatribe called 'Maharishi,' he eventually softened somewhat, changing the song's name to the less inflammatory 'Sexy Sadie.'"(Shea & Rodriguez 66). Just as Mahesh Yogi disappointed his high-profile disciples by his supposed indiscretions, the mention of Lennon's song in connection to Haroon's guru gig seems to suggest that if Haroon's transfixed audience cared to look beyond his façade, they were as likely to discover a charlatan. Graham Huggan claims that Haroon's charlatanism doesn't expose his own racial insecurities as much as it highlights "the self-serving enthusiasms of his captive audience, for whom Eastern philosophizing is little more than the latest

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temporary panacea to their own middle- class suburban boredom"(Huggan 96). This commodification of Eastern spirituality had become a fashion in the 1960s and is mercilessly caricatured in Gita Mehta's *Karma Cola*. Mehta talks about the western fetishism with Indian spirituality and one of her comments is particularly applicable to Haroon's stint: "The visitors do not have the profound Indian consolation of knowing that everything and every perception is a con, a self-induced con, a view enshrined in the Hindu concept of Maya. As a result, too many visitors take the masquerade as in controvertible fact"(Mehta 35). It is precisely for this reason that Haroon is comfortable in his role-playing because he realizes that his performance doesn't in any way alter his personality.

What Haroon soon realizes however is that his willing self-orientalizing to gain acceptance ultimately paralyzes him. Eva had exploited his exotic appeal actually to further her own interests and cultivate her contacts with theatre directors like Thomas Shadwell who helps her journey from middle-class suburbia to the aristocratic inner circles of London. Eva's ambitions are apparent right from the beginning when she dismisses the suburban audience at Haroon's gigs as "pretty stupid" and declares that it is her aim to introduce him to a more sophisticated audience and that she was "determined to get all of us to London"(30). Haroon essentially becomes the magnet through whom she can lure the eclectic, artsy London crowd to suburban Chislehurst and then use them as props to further her own ambitions. Yet when Haroon begins to really glow in the possibility of providing meaningful spiritual guidance to his doting followers in London, she asks him to stop the act that helped her satisfy her ambitions in the first place: "For Christ's sake, can't you cut down on the bloody mysticism – we're not in Beckenham

now. These are bright, intelligent people, they're used to argument, not assertion, to facts, not vapours!"(151) clearly indicating where her priorities lie and the place Haroon has in that.

Eva is also quick to pick up on Karim's intense boredom with his suburban existence and indulges his teenage desires to stand out by encouraging his self-orientalization: "Karim Amir, you are so exotic, so original! It's such a contribution! It's so you!" (9). Aware of Karim's acting ambitions, she introduces Karim to Thomas Shadwell, perfectly aware of the increasing demand for actors to play racial stereotypes in London's theatre circuit. Karim is aware of Eva's pretentiousness throughout the novel, but like Haroon, he is so desperate for some kind of excitement in his suburban lifestyle, he makes little effort to resist Eva's advances and willingly performs the role of Mowgli and other racial stereotypes that he is assigned. In the final pages, even though Haroon leaves his job, continues to "help others contemplate the deeper wisdom of themselves"(266) and announces his marriage to Eva, it is clear that Haroon has lost his spirit. He had become one of the chessmen on Eva's chess board. In the final scene at Karim's dinner party, we see how Haroon is now forced into a performance of his ethnicity as Eva coaxes him into his Nehru jacket so that "the waiters would think he was an ambassador or a prince, or something. She was so proud of him." (282). In contrast to Eva's new found confidence and grace, Haroon, who had ironically "preferred England in every way"(213) now seems completely lost and out of place. Even Karim is aware of this change as he tells us: "Now he couldn't move without flinching. I'd become the powerful one; I couldn't fight him – and I wanted to fight him – without destroying him in one blow. It was a saddening disappointment"(261).

Karim: "Englishman born and bred, almost"

The city blew the windows of my brain wide open. But being in a place so bright, fast and brilliant made you vertiginous with possibility: it didn't necessarily help you grasp those possibilities. I still had no idea what I was going to do. I felt directionless and lost in the crowd. I couldn't yet see how the city worked, but I began to find out. (*The Buddha* 126)

As a second generation immigrant, Karim is initially more secure of his claim to Englishness. In the famous opening lines, he proudly proclaims "My name is Karim Amir, and I am an Englishman born and bred, almost. I am often considered to be a funny kind of Englishman, a new breed as it were, having emerged from two old histories. But I don't care – Englishman I am (though not proud of it), from the South London suburbs and going somewhere" (3). The word "almost" from the opening sentence becomes key in Karim's self-fashioning throughout the novel as he constantly oscillates between distancing himself from and embracing his racial and sexual identity. Initially, as this sentence demonstrates, Karim's South Asian lineage makes him uncomfortable and he staunchly insists in staking a claim to Englishness as his national identity. He is sure his lighter skin would aid his self-representation but as he realizes soon enough, xenophobia is rampant in British schools towards immigrant kids or kids with biracial identity. He was "sick too of being affectionately called Shitface and Curryface, and of coming home covered in spit and snot and chalk and woodshavings. One kid tried to brand my arm with a red-hot lump of metal. Someone else pissed over my shoes, and all my Dad thought about was me becoming a doctor. What world was he living in? Every day I considered myself lucky to get home from school without serious injury" (63). As someone born in

England, Karim is justified in feeling a sense of belonging to England but like Haroon, Karim constantly realizes that even though he was supposed "to be English, but to the English we were always wogs and nigs and Pakis and the rest of it"(53) and being biracial did not grant him any special privilege.

The constant racial discrimination doesn't stop Karim from holding on to the possibility of London as a more inclusive space for black people like him than the narrow-minded suburbs. When a move to London is in the works, Karim reveals that he "fantasized about London and what I'd do there when the city belonged to me...there were thousands of black people everywhere, so I wouldn't feel exposed"(121). But his experience with Thomas Shadwell's theater group soon jolts him into reality. Karim is asked to perform the role of the boy-hero, Mowgli in Kipling's Orientalist classic, *The Jungle Book.* It is the aspiring actor's first job and hence it is crucially important for him to please the liberal director even though he can now see through his purported veneer of racial tolerance. Shadwell is completely puzzled when he realizes that Karim doesn't speak any of the Indian languages and had never been to the country: "Everyone looks at you, I'm sure, and thinks: an Indian boy, how exotic, how interesting, what stories of aunties and elephants we'll hear now from him. And you're from Orpington"(141). Shadwell's statement doesn't only reveal the blatant racial stereotyping of the 1960s but also punctures the myth about the openness of liberal London that Karim had constructed prior to his move. In fact, as a biracial immigrant, he is branded a "half-caste in England...belonging nowhere, wanted nowhere"(141) clearly echoing the comments of National Labour Party leader John Steel following the Notting Hill riots of 1958: "We will be a nation of half-castes. The result is that the nation will possess neither the rhythm

of the coloured man, nor the scientific genius of the European. The only thing we will ever produce is riots, just as do the mixed races of the world" (Dawson 28). The "exotic" Indian boy is completely objectified as Shadwell declares that Karim is perfect for the role: "You are Mowgli. You're dark-skinned, you're small and wiry, and you'll be sweet and wholesome in the costume. Not too pornographic, I hope. Certain critics will go for you"(143). Karim's identity as a second-generation immigrant is completely nullified as he is pigeonholed into the specific ethnic identity that exists in Britain.

Unlike Haroon who is initially thrilled to get uninterrupted attention from the British in his role as Buddha, Karim resists this imposition, particularly when he is forced to emulate an Indian accent for the sake of being authentic by declaring that "It's a political matter to me"(147). He doesn't see why as a British subject, albeit the son of an Indian immigrant, he should be coerced into a specific ethnic identity. But when Shadwell insists that "You [Karim] have been cast for authenticity and not for experience" (147) and for a new actor like him, ideologies have to be shoved aside for the sake of artistic concession and the good of the production, he dons the requisite sing-song accent, the brown body make-up and loin-cloth for the role. Even though he is still uncomfortable about the significance of his actions, Karim, like Haroon, eventually warms up to this forced self-exoticization because it brings him the attention that he has always craved, especially in his dream city, London's theatre circuit: "Despite the yellow scarf strangling my balls, the brown make-up, and even the accent, I relished being the pivot of the production"(150). As John Clement Ball suggests, "Father and son both become faux-Indians, successfully marketing back to the English warmed-over versions of their own popular appropriations of Indian culture" (Ball 233).

The reason that Karim can appropriate an authentic Indian identity and mannerisms for the role is because like Haroon, Karim has convinced himself that he is simply enacting a role and his performance has no connection whatsoever with his inner self and hence poses no threat to the identity that he has convinced himself of. When Jamila admonishes him for acting in a "neo-fascist" (157) play and "pandering to prejudices...and clichés about Indians"(157), Karim admits that he is ashamed of himself but doesn't think he is in a position to resist the objectification and stereotyping as a newbie in search of economic stability. Even in the face of blatant racial discrimination, Karim is ready to perform roles that stereotype minorities because he is convinced that being biracial and a British subject somehow distinguished him from the fresh-off-the-boat immigrants. He is hesitant to identify himself as a black member of Matthew Pyke's theatre group even though "two of us were *officially* 'black' (though truly I was more beige than anything)" (emphasis added 167). Kureishi, through Karim's dilemma of self-identification, draws attention to the use of the word black to refer to Caribbean, African and South Asian experience in Britain. Kobena Mercer has spoken about the use of "black" as a political signifier, more than a biological or racial category in the late 1960s and 1970s.

> When various people – of Asian, African, and Caribbean descent – interpellated themselves and each other as/ black/ they invoked a collective identity predicated on political and not biological similarities. In other words, the naturalized connotations of the term /black/ were disarticulated out of the dominant codes of racial discourse, and

rearticulated as signs of alliance and solidarity among dispersed groups of people sharing common historical experience of British racism. [10]

But as Kureishi's novel points out, the category "black" had developed considerable fissures as we see Karim hesitant to identify himself with Tracey, the other black member of Pyke's group.[11] When director Matthew Pyke asks him to choose a character to play, preferably based on someone from his own background, "Someone black"(170), Karim is puzzled: "I didn't know anyone black, though I'd been at school with a Nigerian. But I wouldn't know where to find him. 'Who do you mean? I asked." (170). When Pyke tells him "Uncles and aunts. They'll give the play a little more variety. I bet they're fascinating," Karim finally realizes the full import of his words -- that the alternative theatre guru was just as racially prejudiced as anyone else. Yet he still resists being one of "them," that is, one of the black people; in a self-delusional move, Karim decides to model his character first on his father's friend Anwar and then on Anwar's son-in-law, Changez, the only black people he convinced himself he knew. But Karim soon has to abandon his plan as the other black actor in the group, Tracey points out that by doing so, he is confirming the stereotype that the British have of black people. When Karim insists that he was only relating the truth, Tracey rightly points out the flaw in his thought process: "Truth. Who defines it? What truth? It's white truth you're defending here. It's white truth we're discussing" (181). Karim then invents a character called Tariq who is loosely modeled on his friend Jamila's husband, Changez, a recent immigrant from India. Even though Changez explicitly forbids him to mimic him, Karim goes ahead with his impersonation, primarily because he realizes that inventing a character is a creative process and by playing to the hilt someone who he is not, he seemed to feel more secure

in his own identity. He remembers Pyke's words that "To make your not-self real you have to steal from your authentic self"(219) and by effectively portraying what he is not but could possibly have been– an immigrant fresh from a small Indian town, he gains a new perspective on his identity. Also, by ridiculing the stereotype of the Indian immigrant and by making jokes which "concerned the sexual ambition and humiliation of an Indian in England"(220), Karim to some extent nullifies the stereotype.

During this creative process of introspection, Karim realizes that it is important to acknowledge finally his Indian lineage. This realization strikes him first amidst a gathering of Indian mourners at Anwar's funeral: "I did feel, looking at these strange creatures now – the Indians – that in some way these were my people, and that I'd spent my life denying or avoiding that fact. I felt ashamed and incomplete at the same time, as if half of me were missing, and as if I'd been colluding with my enemies, those whites who wanted Indians to be like them"(212). He is even more embarrassed when he hears of the neo-fascist attack on Changez in South London when the attackers had called him Paki, not realizing that he was Indian, and had "planted their feet all over him and started to carve the initials of the National Front into his stomach with a razor blade"(224). Karim had always been aware of the xenophobia against immigrants, but when Changez is attacked, the racism hits home and in a rare moment of solidarity with his people, Karim even pledges to go to a protest march with Jamila. But the attack on Changez is not simply a wake up call for Karim. Changez prided himself on his higher class and sophistication and like the Pakistani gentry whom Kureishi mocks in his essay, is only too eager to believe that racism in England was because the immigrants presented themselves as uncouth and uncivilized: "This bad racialism is because they are so dirty,

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so rough-looking, so bad-mannered. And they are wearing such strange clothes for the Englishman, turbans and all. To be accepted they must take up the English ways and forget their filthy villages! They must decide to be either here or there. Look how much here I am! And why doesn't that bugger over there look the Englishman in the eye! No wonder the Englishman will hit him!"(210). But as the attack on him demonstrates, racism in postimperial Britain doesn't distinguish between class positions or subjecthood; all immigrants are racialized irrespective of their citizenship, and Changez and Karim are as vulnerable to it as Anwar and Jamila, living in the less economically viable sections of London. And even though he resists the monolithic black racial category for Asian, African and West Indian immigrants, he is constantly reminded that racial solidarity with other minorities is the only way to combat British racism.

Also, through the following incident involving Sweet Gene, Kureishi points out how dominant discourses are always forcing immigrants into accepted stereotypes and how for some immigrants like Karim, this self-exoticization becomes a necessary survival mechanism. Sweet Gene, Eleanor's black lover, killed himself because "every day, by a look, a remark, an attitude, the English told him they hated him; they never let him forget they thought him a nigger, a slave, a lower being" (227). Karim learns that Gene was a talented actor, well versed in poetry and African music but ironically enough, Pyke remembers him as one of the best mime artists he had ever met. Just as Pyke had forced Karim into performing a specific ethnic identity, Pyke's characterization of the talented actor as simply a mime artist almost symbolically gags him. Gene's sense of self-worth was tied up with his acting ambitions and when he is repeatedly forced to enact stereotypes of black men like criminals and taxi-drivers on stage instead of being in

"Chekhov or Ibsen or Shakespeare" (201), he internalizes his frustrations leading to his suicide. The novel seems to indicate that Karim's willingness to be flexible about his racial identity on stage is what prevents him from a similar fate. As Bradley Buchanan suggests, "No amount of self-confidence or determination can resist society's indifference, and thus it is better to inhabit racial or class-based stereotypes for the sake of being accepted (as Karim does) than to challenge the culture's assumptions about race or class (as Gene does)" (50). In the final pages of the novel, as Karim gears up to play another stereotypical role of a rebellious son of an Indian shopkeeper, he is more practical in his perceptions of English society and his place in it on the eve of the election which would bring Margaret Thatcher into power. He accepts the role simply because of the money and the happiness it brings him to be able to have the financial stability to take his family out for a nice dinner at least.

In an interesting move right before the end, Kureishi offers the idea that America has displaced England as the land of possibilities. Karim clearly believes this as he heads to New York with Pyke's theater group. He is giddy with excitement as he exclaims "America was waiting" (242) and is quick to dismiss the opinion of Terry, one of the most radical members of the theatre group, that America is "a fascist, imperialist, racist shithole"(240). Ironically and despite his willingness to self-exoticize in England, the racial fetishization that Karim immediately encounters in New York makes him uncomfortable. Dr. Bob, the proprietor of the theater where they had their opening night performance appears to be a patron of the "ethnic arts" (243). Not only is his office décor, "full of Peruvian baskets, carved paddles, African drums and paintings" (243) but he organizes a dance performance by some half-naked Haitians for the visiting artists. This

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performance had Dr. Bob in raptures, yelling "Yeah and Right on"(244) and makes Karim extremely uneasy as it "made him feel like a colonial watching the natives perform"(244). Having been forced to witness this display, Karim finally realizes why his role-playing made Jamila uncomfortable and he suddenly yearns to distance himself from this rampant racial fetishism and be back in London, "away from all these people"(245). He hopes that Eva's son Charlie, the object of his teenage desires who had made himself famous in America's musical scene would be able to rescue him from this world of fetishism. But on hearing Charlie's cockney accent, something he remembers he'd been mocked for in school, Karim realizes that Charlie was equally guilty of it because "he was selling Englishness, and getting a lot of money for it"(247). In spite of disillusionment, and days trying falsely to convince himself that he and Charlie "were two English boys in America, the land where the music came from, with Mick Jagger, John Lennon and Johnny Rotten living around the corner. This was the dream come true" (249), he could not get rid of his depression and self-loathing. Finally, while being forced to witness yet another meaningless sexual tryst between Charlie and his lover, Karim has an epiphanic moment and he suddenly realizes that he is free from the intangible hold that Charlie had always had on him. Charlie reveals himself to be inauthentic and spiritually desolate trying to find succor in the material aspects of life. [12] Neither Charlie nor his adopted land of America held any more possibilities for Karim as he realizes that "I'd moved beyond him, discovering myself through what I rejected"(255).

Once Karim is able to acknowledge the emptiness in him that would force him to cling to certain illusions about people and places, he is finally able to accept himself and understand his place in society. Charlie's words "England's decrepit. No one believes

in anything...England's a nice place if you're rich, but otherwise it's a fucking swamp of prejudice, class confusion, the whole thing" (256) rings in his ears but as America seems to provide no viable alternative, Karim decides to move back to familiar surroundings. In the final lines of the novel, Karim declares that he felt "happy and miserable at the same time. I thought of what a mess everything had been, but that it wouldn't always be that way" (284). By acknowledging that his vision of England as a land of possibilities was a myth, Karim can suddenly see the actual opportunities that England can offer its immigrant population. Karim chooses to embrace "this emerald isle, this England" simply because he refuses to consider himself as "some kind of shitted-on oppressed people" and instead decides to "just make the best of ourselves"(268). As Huggan elaborates: "What Karim 'is' is what he makes of himself or, rather, of the roles that are foisted upon him"(Huggan 98). Karim's journey from the suburbs to central London is oddly reminiscent of the wonder faced by colonial immigrants when they actually arrive in the imperial metropolis, like Changez's insistence of wanting to see a cricket match and visiting bookshops, the result of being subject to a colonial education. Karim is thus constantly engaged in the negotiation of his space within London and its suburbs and this demand of an actual space, both material and symbolic within Englishness is what defines Kureishi's novel. In fact, as Sukhdev Sandhu claims in *London Calling*, it is writers like Kureishi who have resurrected a reverence for London through characters like Karim who don't agonize over their belonging but embrace all the paradoxes of London in an attempt to show how "London exists and thrives through the repeated jamming together of disparate groups"(Sandhu 255).

Sexual fetishism in the metropolis

Arriving in Britain filled with illusions about gaining access to metropolitan capital and culture, migrants quickly found that discourses of colonial difference had not disappeared, as the rhetoric of British "fair play" suggested they would. This process of disillusionment was nowhere more apparent than in the charged arena of sexual relations. (Dawson 47)

The easy masquerade enacting racial stereotypes doesn't serve Karim well when it comes to actual physical relations between immigrants and whites and he quickly learns that the xenophobia he experiences everyday is translated into ugly racism and open hatred when it comes to matters of sexuality. The erotic is inextricably linked with the exotic in Kureishi's novel. In his essay, "Blacks and Crime in Post War Britain," Paul Gilroy states that: "Concern about criminal behavior of black settlers in the late 1940s and 1950s assumed a different form [to that of the 1970s], clustering around a distinct range of anxieties and images in which issues of sexuality and miscegenation were often uppermost"(71). Following the Notting Hill riots, the anxiety surrounding miscegenation became one of the bulwarks of racial conflict in post-colonial Britain. As Ashley Dawson points out, "anger over sexual relations between black men and white women was a crucial catalyst of the riots. Agitators such as John Steel played on fears that sex between Englishwomen and black male immigrants from the Caribbean would create a mongrel population in Britain. Notwithstanding their formal rights as British subjects, in other words, black migrants were viewed by the neofascists, by many members of the political establishment, and by much of the populace in general as a threat to racial purity and consequently, to national identity"(29). Not unlike the nineteenth century, rules

regulating sexuality, especially female sexuality and marriage are central to the imaginings of national identity in the 1960s and now that the black men had made their way into the metropole, the virtuous white women had to be protected at all costs. Karim's first lesson in this is when he goes to visit Helen, the girl he is beginning to like as he weans himself away from his infatuation with Eva's son Charlie. Just as Karim calls out to Helen, Helen's dad appears in the yard and irately warns Karim to get off the premises because his daughter wouldn't go out with "boys. Or with wogs"(40). Helen's father then launches into a vitriolic attack on immigrants and warns Karim that "However many niggers there are, we don't like it. We're with Enoch. If you put one of your black 'ands near my daughter I'll smash it with a 'ammer! With a 'ammer!"(40) before setting the dog on him. The racist father's words refer to Enoch Powell's infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech of 1968 in which Powell talked of immigration as a dangerous and evil trend; the speech was key in introducing a string of racist and anti-immigration acts in the next decade. Economic hardships and anxieties of miscegenation were two of the key issues that were mobilized to bring about these measures.

In *Black Skins, White Masks*, Frantz Fanon talks about sexual relations between black men and white women in the colonies and claims that "By loving me she proves that I am worthy of white love. I am loved like a white man...When my restless hands caress those white breasts, they grasp white civilization and dignity and make them mine"(63). Drawing on Fanon' comments, Ashley Dawson points out that this urge to self-realization through sexual relations with white women was particularly strong among Anglophone Caribbean male migrants (30). *The Buddha of Suburbia* demonstrates that this urge was just as strong among the other black immigrants in metropolitan London

and depicts racial fetishism not simply in the public sphere but also in the sexual arena. Dawson's reading of *The Lonely Londoners* is astute and applicable to this novel as well: "For virtually all the characters [in Selvon's novel], the seduction of European women offers an implicit reclamation of their masculinity, belittled in so many other ways in Britain"(39). Since metropolitan London offered opportunities for sexual experimentation with white women than in the colonial space, male immigrants took full advantage of this. Haroon engaged in several dalliances before he married Margaret and then later on succumbed to the charms of Eva, primarily out of this urge to define one's self-worth based on sexual relations with white women. Haroon is momentarily exhilarated by Eva's complete devotion to him as he feels that he has gained some sort of a symbolic victory over colonial racial subordination that had gone on for generations. But as the earlier analysis demonstrates, Haroon's happiness is shortlived as he realizes that he was merely a pawn in Eva's grand scheme of things.

Karim too is similarly disillusioned. He is initially intoxicated by his emotional and sexual encounters with Eleanor, a fellow actor at Pyke's theater group. But as Karim soon realizes, Eleanor would never completely belong to him not simply because of her somewhat privileged class status and her easy accessibility to some of the most glamorous social circles but because she is consumed by "white liberal guilt" (Buchanan 50) because of Sweet Gene's suicide in the face of blatant racism within London's theatre community. Moreover when he learns that Pyke had instructed Eleanor to "go for" (192) him even though he was sexually involved with her, Karim realizes that Eleanor was using him to absolve some of her guilt from Sweet Gene's suicide. When he is forced into a sexual orgy with Eleanor, Pyke and his wife Marlene because she fancied him,

Karim realizes that emotions had no place in this tableau of racial fetishism that had been constructed and that " the reduction of black men to sexual fetishes placed them in the passive position of the sex object"(Dawson 39). From his encounters with Helen and Eleanor, Karim realizes that black men were either agents of contamination or sexual fetish objects.[13] In a telling statement, Karim acknowledges the futility of his actions: "We pursued English roses as we pursued England; by possessing these prizes, this kindness and beauty, we stared defiantly into the eye of the Empire and all its self-regard – into the eye of Hairy Back, into the eye of the Great Fucking Dane. We became part of England and yet proudly stood outside it. But to be truly free we had to free ourselves of all bitterness and resentment, too. How was this possible when bitterness and resentment was generated afresh every day?"(227). Like Eleanor's former black lover, Karim is finally disillusioned in his dream of England, this time as a land of sexual possibilities.

England is not the place for me

As Bradley Buchanan makes clear, in this novel, as in Kureishi's other works "there is no possibility of establishing any meaningful class-based or racial solidarity that can protect one from the commodification, exploitation and inauthenticity of contemporary British life"(42). But it is not only Haroon and Karim with their class aspirations who are forced to acknowledge the failure of the immigrant dream. Haroon's old friend Anwar and his daughter Jamila, because of their social and geographical proximity to the working class sections of London, are even more persecuted. Haroon and Karim are exposed to the exoticizing discourse, Anwar's family, living in the less-economically solvent parts of London are targets of blatant racism and xenophobia. The mythical London of Eva and Karim, replete with money and glamour, is repeatedly

contrasted with that of Anwar and Jamila where, living under the prospect of vitriolic and brutal attacks by neo-fascist groups, immigrants are lucky just to be alive.

At the same time that Haroon exults in performing his Indianness, his best friend Anwar, plagued by years of racism in England suddenly embraces his Indian roots. Haroon and Anwar had come to London in the pursuit of similar goals of education, economic freedom and fulfillment of desire and had never looked back on India. Karim reveals that Anwar had always proclaimed India variously as a "rotten place...filthy and hot"(Kureishi 64) and had seemed contented with their immigrant life: "For years they were both happy to live like Englishmen...now, as they aged and seemed settled here, Anwar and Dad appeared to be returning internally to India, or at least to be resisting the English here"(64). In a symbolic act of defiance against the English society, Anwar suddenly goes on a hunger strike to make his daughter assent to marriage with the person of his choice. Anwar's behavior can be somewhat rationalized by the fact that whereas Haroon had been somewhat assimilated in England by his marriage to Margaret, Anwar had always inhabited the margins of English society, periodically trying to combat skinhead attacks on his grocery store. Thus, by this enforcement of his orthodox family traditions on Jamila, he "combats (successfully if only symbolically) his daughter's assimilation within English society" (Ball 234) and offers some kind of counter-resistance to Englishness. Jamila, the feisty second generation immigrant is however able to resist this as she systematically "'deconstructs' all that her family has built up – their corner grocery store, their hopes for a dynasty" (Jussawala 25) and even her arranged marriage to Changez by performing the role of the dutiful wife to Changez in the public sphere but not having sexual relations with him in actuality. It can therefore

be concluded that "Kureishi's multigenerational narrative therefore contrasts both inter-continental and the intra-urban migratory experiences"(Ball 234).

The implication of the novel is clear: Britain had failed to fulfill the dreams of its immigrants and even with the implementation of the so-called anti-racist multicultural policy, the structures of colonial discrimination and representations persist. Stuart Hall has written that in the 1970s, "exoticism" had simply been reformulated into the discourse of "multi-culturalism:" "Nobody would talk about racism but they were perfectly prepared to have 'International Evenings,' when we would all come and cook our native dishes, sing our own native songs and appear in our own native costume"(56). I argue that Kureishi, in *The Buddha of Suburbia* effectively punctures this discourse of happy multiculturalism by refusing to write what he calls "cheering fictions." He refuses to see the "writer as public relations officer, as hired liar. If there is to be a serious attempt to understand Britain today, with its mix of races and colours, its hysteria and despair, then writing about it has to be complex. It can't apologise or idealize. It can't sentimentalize and it can't represent only one group as having a monopoly on virtue."[14]

Chapter Four

Breaking out of the labels: the western publishing industry and the commodification of South Asian women's writing

"That Indian subcontinent is really hot. Oh, oops, do you say 'South Asia' now?"

"Nah, our customers don't really like stuff in translation. But have you read that Jhumpa - ?"

- Noy Thrupkaew

In an article facetiously called "The God of Big Trends," clearly mirroring the title of Arundhati Roy's much celebrated novel, *The God of Small Things*, Noy Thrupkaew recalls an incident from 1998 when she was working on a newly launched imprint featuring "the writing of women of all colours" for a publishing company in the United States. In her conversations with booksellers from all over the country about authors they should publish, the above quote was the standard response. In the late 1990s, "literary brown ladies were the new thing" (299) in the West with Roy winning the Booker Prize in 1997 and Jhumpa Lahiri garnering the Pulitzer Prize for *Interpreter of Maladies*, her debut collection of short stories, in 2000. Indian women writers in the early twentieth century, like Attia Hossain, Santha Rama Rau, and Kamala Markandaya, always hovered on the peripheries of the literary marketplace and even writers like Anita Desai, Bharati Mukherjee and Meena Alexander who were quite prolific in the later decades had limited appeal to Western readership. But Indian writing in English has become a hot commodity in the Western consumer market since the 1990s with Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*, Kiran Desai's *Hullabaloo in the Guava Orchard* and *The Inheritance of Loss*, Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *Arranged Marriage*

and *Mistress of Spices*, Indira Ganesan's *Inheritance*, and Lahiri's short story collection and novel, *The Namesake*, among others, flooding bookshelves in Barnes and Nobles and Waterstones, winning various awards and climbing up the ladder in several national bestseller's lists on both sides of the Atlantic.

While this might seem like a welcome change given the Western publishing industry's former apathy to postcolonial writers, in a rather disturbing trend, instead of an emphasis on Roy's brilliant narrative act or Lahiri's succinct eye for detail, an inordinate amount of attention was suddenly devoted to the author's "exotic" beauty. [1] So Roy was quickly named one of *People Magazine's* "50 Most Beautiful People in the World" and Lahiri was celebrated as a "Woman We Love" in *Esquire* magazine and paparazzi stalked her 2001 Calcutta wedding to journalist Alberto Vourvoulias Bush, as retailers and booksellers across Europe and America scrambled to find a place for the "hot" ethnic writer on their shelves. [2] Indian culture had become big business in the West in the 1990s with Madonna sporting henna tattoos in her 1997 "Frozen" video and Heidi Klum and Seal renewing their vows in a Bollywood themed ceremony in Mexico and it was only a matter of time before the publishing industry claimed their stake in it. [3] When writers like Roy and Lahiri entered the literary scene, the publishing and bookselling business went into a frenzy, as is evident from the glitzy magazine spreads and numerous interviews of these writers which flooded the web. [4] Marwan Hassan suggests that in the twenty-first century "Capital is concentrated, not in the creative process, but in the marketing, advertising, promoting and distributing sectors, where book production emulates the models of Coca-Cola, Pepsi, and McDonald's, striving for market share and saturation" (12). This trend of mass marketing of ethnicity deliberately created and fostered by the

Western publishing industry is the subject of this chapter as I explore the works of South Asian women writers who both engage and actively disrupt this discourse.

Roy Miki argues that unequal power dynamics continue to exist between writers, publishers and consumers "since publishers, reviewers, and critics (mostly white) control the conditions of receptivity and interpretation" (121). The scenario becomes even more complicated for writers from formerly colonized countries trying to find a niche in the global literary marketplace. Noted Indian critic Makarand Paranjape talks about the enormous influence the Western publishing industry has on postcolonial writing: "Western media and publishing conglomerates exercise tremendous power over the production and dissemination of images about the Third World. These images not only determine how we are viewed by them, but also how we come to view ourselves. It is not that we are totally helpless or lack the agency to construct our own identities. But the fact is that the strength of these images is so overpowering that few of us can really resist the onslaught" (235). Indian writers writing in English, especially diasporic writers, become the object of Paranjape's ire as he alleges that "the positions of such diasporics is akin to that of African middlemen who sold slaves to the white traders. A Naipaul or Ved Mehta comes to India, invades our privacy, interviews us, makes us objects of analysis, captures our reality, then makes a marketable product out of it. When we don't like what he says about us or wish to speak up for ourselves, no one over there is prepared to listen"(239). According to these critics, women writers are especially guilty of gross misrepresentations by their portrayal of promiscuous men and sexually repressed women as well as tongue in cheek presentations of specific Indian traditions like arranged marriage. Paranjape goes on to argue that such representations "may contribute to a

continuing 'colonization' of the Indian psyche by pandering to Western market tastes which see India in a negative light"(238). Though Paranjape's accusations are not entirely invalid and writers like Nirad C. Chaudhuri, Kamala Markandaya, Santha Rama Rau and even V.S.Naipaul are all guilty of performing the role of cultural translators, both consciously and unconsciously, it is more important to explore the socio-economic terrain of the postcolonial literary marketplace that often determines the nature of postcolonial narratives. Paranjape rightly indicts the western publishing houses that completely disregard vernacular literature or native literature in translation, which are less popular in the west and are instead actively involved in creating and preserving an orientalized image of South Asia. But at the same time, critics like Paranjape themselves are often guilty of essentializing Indian writing in English by ignoring the multiplicity of voices that have emerged in the last couple of decades.

It is true that when a "writer of color" makes it big in the West, he or she is automatically cast into the role of a representative of the culture he or she comes from. Even though writers like Roy have repeatedly distanced themselves from the role of cultural translators and have insisted on their subjectivity, few are willing to listen. When Roy won the Booker Prize for her debut novel in the 50th year of Indian independence, she was repeatedly asked what it meant to be an Indian novelist at that moment, clearly indicating that the Booker Prize, Britain's highest honor for any writing in English had somehow given Indian writing in English yet another stamp of legitimacy after Salman Rushdie's 1980 win for *Midnight's Children.* At home in India, on the other hand, Roy drew significant criticism for her portrayal of strife-torn, caste-ridden Kerala. I draw attention to this twin critical trajectory to illustrate the tenuous position of Indo-English

fiction writers like Arundhati Roy who constantly have to "negotiate a double-bind, balancing an awareness of their work as a cultural commodity against the counter-hegemonic imperatives of their politics" (Tickell 75). In his introduction to a volume of Indian English writing, Amitava Kumar is cautiously optimistic that the new generation of writers like Roy and Lahiri, among others, will "rescue us from the stereotypical fare, which I have described elsewhere as 'the mistress of spices, the heat and dust, sweating men and women in lisping saris, brought together in arranged marriages, yes, the honking traffic, and the whole hullabaloo in the guava orchard'"(xviii). Yet, the western publishing industry ensures that such stereotypes are continually propagated and become the markers of ethnic writing and nowhere is this more apparent in the book covers of texts by women writers. [5]

While researching this chapter, I came across at least twenty book covers of texts by postcolonial women writers like Kamila Shamsie, Kavita Daswani, Anjali Banerjee, Preethi Nair, among others, where women's bodies are objectified amidst other ethnic paraphernalia. The brightly colored smorgasbord of food, jewelry, exotic textiles along with dismembered women's bodies on the book covers is literally designed to whet the palate of Western readers with a voracious appetite for anything exotic and thus effectively forces the "other," in this case, the postcolonial woman writer, into a specific ethnic stereotype where she can only dabble in some kind of "food-based exoticism, a tired roundup of the angst of arranged marriages, bitchy squabbles over whose chutneys and pickles are better than whose and slobbery details about saris"(Thrupkaew 304). In *The Post-Colonial Exotic*, Huggan has explored in detail "the material conditions of production and consumption of postcolonial writings, and the influence of publishing

houses and academic institutions on the selection, distribution and evaluation of these works" (vii). In this chapter, I engage with Huggan's work, and by looking at some book cover designs of texts by South Asian women writers, I point out how the discourse of exoticism is literally gendered and sexualized when it comes to South Asian women's writing. In the first section of this chapter, I argue that such blatant objectification of women's bodies not only continues the trend of exoticism well into the twenty-first century but is a form of neo-orientalism that insists on constructing the South Asian woman as a passive and overtly sexualized being. Interestingly, while some postcolonial women writers like Preethi Nair are complicit in this process, several writers like Ravinder Randhawa, Atima Srivastava, Meera Syal and Arundhati Roy have disrupted this stereotype and tried to capture the angst of the lives of immigrant and postcolonial women. In the second section of the chapter therefore, I focus on Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* and explore how Roy's narrative challenges the accusations of inauthenticity of representation that Indian critics have brought against her, but also how it resists the Western discourse that seeks to commodify South Asian women's writing.[6]

The Indian Writer as Indo-Chic

In his book about the marketing of post-colonial literature entitled *The Post-Colonial Exotic*, Huggan suggests that the reason that Indian writing in English has become so popular in Western literary circles is because it has metonymically replaced India itself as the "object of conspicuous consumption"(81). Huggan identifies 1997, the fiftieth anniversary of Indian independence, as a hallmark year and draws attention to the full-page Oriental display that featured marketing blurbs by the British-based tour operators in the British weekend newspaper, the *Observer*, dated October 5, urging

readers to partake in the "'profusion of romantic palaces, impressive forts and extraordinary temples' counting among the many 'wonders of India's fabled shores'"(58). Huggan suggests: "Here again then, skillfully marshalled, is the Orient as exhibition; and here a further example of the twisted logic of the tourist industry, more than capable of turning the occasion of a half-century of independence into a fanfare for colonial nostalgia and the invented memories of imperial rule" (58). Instead of an insightful look at the triumphs and hardships faced by a new nation, the anniversary celebrations in metropolitan London dabbled in imperial nostalgia and constructed India yet again as an Oriental tableau, oddly reminiscent of the Great Exhibition of 1851. The National Film Theatre held a month long celebration of Indian cinema and the London Symphony Orchestra organized a special independence concert featuring the Indian sitar maestro, Ravi Shankar. The publishing industry was not to be left behind and this year saw a profusion of anthologies and special issues devoted to Indian writing in English and specially orchestrated to coincide with the celebrations of the golden jubilee year of Indian independence. Huggan identifies four specific literary events, the special issue of *The New Yorker* in the United States and *Granta* in Britain, the publishing of *The Vintage Book of Indian Writing*, edited by Salman Rushdie and Elizabeth West and a commemorative academic conference in Barcelona, titled "India: Fifty Years After" in September 1997 to illustrate how Indian literature in English had literally become a "consumer item"(59) and how Indian writers had suddenly become "minor metropolitan celebrities, late twentieth-century household names, exponents of the latest literary craze – the new 'Indo-chic'"[7]

Huggan points out that in the special issue of *The New Yorker*, essays, stories and poems by some of the more identifiable names in the Indian literary circuit like Salman Rushdie, Ved Mehta, Kiran Desai and Vikram Chandra, are arbitrarily brought together with very little effort to provide any rationale or to contextualize their work. Some of the classic Western exoticist staples like "Eastern cuisine" are also liberally sprinkled through the volume and "all in all, the impression conveyed in the pages of the commemorative New Yorker is of a largely depoliticized 'ethnic sampling' for inquisitive American readers'" (60). Much in the same fashion, the spring 1997 commemorative issue of *Granta* provides an eclectic sampling of Indian writing in English, with a distinct eye towards recreating some of the imperial nostalgia even after fifty years of Indian independence. Huggan points out that like the *New Yorker*, "*Granta* presents an image of India as object of metropolitan fascination: an India which, while it cannot be fully comprehended, can certainly be consumed. There is little sense in the magazine of an independent India, one that has freed itself from Britain to pursue an always uncertain future; instead, what comes out clearly is Britain's continuing *dependence* on India, less as a material possession than as an imaginative resource" (63). As Huggan indicates, it is ironic that the commemoration of India's independence following two hundred years of British rule still becomes an object of metropolitan control, albeit in the guise of benevolent paternalism. In his discussion of the different avenues through which exoticism is marshaled by the Western media and publishing houses, Huggan, except in his brief discussion on Roy, doesn't pay much attention to how this discourse is inevitably gendered. In the next section, I am primarily interested in uncovering how book cover designs of novels by postcolonial women writers are

fashioned in a particular way to package the narrative, and by extension, the author as an object of consumption.

South Asian Women's writing and the Western publishing industry

In her book on South Asian writers in twentieth-century Britain, Ruvani Ranasinha points out that South Asian writers writing in the early decades of the twentieth century, were "seen as exotic and oriental outsiders, were also often expected to embody 'foreignness', and provide 'alien' perspectives on Britain, usually in prescribed terms"(11). In an atmosphere that was inhospitable to South Asian writing except when it rehashed stereotypes about the East that was already dominant in the Western imagination, writers like Kamala Markandaya in Britain and Santha Rama Rau in America embraced the role of cultural interpreters in their bid to assimilate within mainstream society. As such, they adopted certain prescribed modes of exoticism in their texts. Kamala Markandaya came to Britain with her English husband Bertrand Taylor in 1948 and as Ranasinha reveals in a detailed analysis of her novels, her British and North American publishers were significantly involved in underscoring the commercial appeal of her novels.[8] Ranasinha suggests that the difficulty of publishing fiction about India in the West is the reason why Markandaya deliberately adopts exoticist motifs and is willing to construct an image of India on Orientalist terms for Western consumption (151). On the other side of the Atlantic, South Asian writer Santha Rama Rau underscored her role as cultural translator and as the titles of her two most popular books (*Home to India* [1945] and *This is India* [1954]) suggest, she "entered the American scene as India expert"(Burton 4) and was championed as a writer with "a Western mind...[and] an Indian heart"(4). [9]

This trend has continued well into the last decades of the twentieth century with the Western publishing industry determining the commercial process through which the work of an "ethnic writer" can be readied for metropolitan consumption. In her essay Rita Wong rightly points out that even before we can pay attention to the writer's work, there is a large framework or machinery that determines what is "hot," that is, what gets published and what gets promoted: "Quality of writing is only one factor in this scenario; access to capital, profit margins, and preconceptions of what is 'marketable' also plays and important part in the process shaping the books to which we have as readers have access"(40). In the genre of any kind of ethnic literature, this commercial process of publication and marketing assumes a whole new dimension. In a sarcastic answer to the question, what makes a certain ethnic genre hot, Thrupkaew notes "The mystical stuff and the food seem to reflect the way that some white people come to different cultures – through seeking religious or spiritual enlightenment, or by exhibiting their open-minded, adventuresome selves through eating our food. Our cultures are 'better' somehow – closer to the earth, purer, more attuned to sensory pleasure – but in nice, non-threatening ways, wrapped up neatly in fortune-cookie wisdom"(301). But her statement is corroborated by British born writer Bidisha Bandopadhyay in an interview with the *Guardian*. Bandopadhyay says of her first novel *Seahorses*, set in London's media world: "I stayed away from race because of the publishing industry's tunnel vision. English publishing is in love with India: writers are being outrageously successful confirming what English people think they already know about India - inter-caste relationships, jungle sensuality. They pander to colonial perceptions." She adds that critics scorned her first heroine Pale who was of an unspecified race: "Loads of critics said I hadn't played

the race card. I felt their terrible sense of offence that I hadn't tackled the traumas of being a young Asian girl – arranged marriage, irate father. They don't understand there are different kinds of Asian people. They can't handle Asians in the same position as them – only if they're phoning up for a takeaway." [10]

As the following analysis shows, the Western publishing industry is only too happy to engage with existent stereotypes of India and Indians because that is what is marketable. In at least twenty book covers that I looked at, the South Asian woman is portrayed as an object of erotic and sexual desire. In her book, *Cannibal Culture*, Deborah Root points out that eroticism is one of the most persistent tropes of exoticism: "The notion that sex is somehow more interesting in a colonial setting, particularly if accompanied by accoutrements the Westerner finds unusual, such as colorful clothing or oddly shaped furniture, is extremely persistent. Exotic accoutrements of sex have always titillated the colonist, which fits in with Malek Alloula's study of erotic postcards in French colonial Algeria in which he observes that French colonists wanted to see Moorish women behind bars"(39-40). I argue that completely objectifying the South Asian woman on the book cover for metropolitan aesthetic consumption distracts the readership from the stories which are often about female agency and empowerment and ensures that the book be read along the prescribed versions of exoticism that is designed to keep non-western female sexuality in control, framed as a historical frieze. Such a move that reinforces racist and sexist stereoptypes of the Oriental woman also contributes to the packaging of the text as a commodity and as such, we see a calculated resurgence of Orientalism in the publishing industry as it sets up its ethnic markers and acceptable

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codes of cultural difference. Sadly, in their quest for Western readership, some South Asian female writers are complicit in this process of consumption.

This process of neo-orientalism in the publishing industry is not an isolated phenomenon, limited to the works of South Asian women writers. In her essay on Chinese Canadian writer Evelyn Lau's work, Rita Wong notices some of the same disturbing trends: "Commodification – be it of cultural production or women's bodies – seems to be ubiquitous in the consumerist society in which we live" (39). Wong points out that several of Lau's books like *Fresh Girls and Other Stories*, the Random House Vintage Canada publication of *Other Women* and the Doubleday publication of *Choose Me* all feature either "the cut-off body of a woman lying down"(41) or "the scantily clad torso of a woman, cut off so that we cannot see her face"(41). This violent dismemberment of the woman's body is a persistent trope in a number of book cover designs by South Asian women writers. A lot of the covers feature women with their heads cut off and their chest accentuated, while others simply have body parts that are bent, eyes that are always downcast conveying insecurity and submissiveness, the stereotypical model of Oriental passivity. Still others feature shots of the woman's face hidden behind a veil emphasizing the inaccessibility and enhancing the mysteriousness of the Oriental woman. In almost all cases, the women are dressed in Oriental finery, in glittering saris and adorned with heavy jewelry and nestled within a lush, Oriental ambience. In the introduction to their edited collection, Button and Reed refer to Sandra Gilbert and Susan Gubar noting that the foreign woman becomes synonymous with the colonized foreign lands in British literature both in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries: "The full extent of this foreign woman's powers is not only unknown, it is also to be

feared...the foreign woman herself becomes a foreign country. Like the uncharted territory with which she is often associated, she is a world to be explored, colonized, inhabited perhaps, and probably subdued"(xiv). In a startling continuation of this discourse well into the twenty-first century, these book covers demonstrate that the foreign woman can only be imagined in the role of the sex object, literally gagged and stripped of a voice as their heads are severed from their bodies.

For instance, Bapsi Sidhwa's *The Pakistani Bride* captures a demure woman behind a veil with one exposed kohl-laden eye, capturing the shyness, insecurity and hesitancy of a new bride while Shobhan Bantwal's *The Dowry Bride* portrays the headless upper body of a woman dressed in bridal finery with heavy jewelry and henna clad hands, completely reinforcing all the stereotypes of Oriental women and passive, submissive beings.

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Figure 5 Book cover of *The Pakistani Bride*, Image reproduced with the permission of Milkweed Editions

As if the images are not enough, the taglines and blurbs are strategically deployed to instruct the Western reader about the content of the book. So Kavita Daswani's novel, *For Matrimonial Purposes* has a photo of a henna-adorned women's feet while the *Seattle Weekly* proclaims it as "Funny, fresh. It's *Sex and the City* with saris and samosas…the ultimate beach read," *Library Journal* declares "A charming debut…*Bridget Jones's Diary* with a distinct Indian flavor," and *The Boston Phoenix* raves "*My Big Fat Greek Wedding*…with a curry twist." The other exoticist trope of food

is liberally sprinkled as the cover design evokes a veritable tableau of Oriental fantasy good simply for a beach read.

The cover design of Monica Pradhan's *The Hindi-Bindi Club* is even more provoking. The cover features the headless body of a woman in a vertical pose with her arm on her waist in a way that accentuates her curves. Dressed in a shimmering blue sari but with the traditional pallu on one side of her body so that her chest and stomach is completely exposed to the consumer/reader's gaze, she is clearly positioned as an object of erotic desire. Even within the cover, the female body is dismembered yet again with the label, patterned with rangoli designs which proclaim that *The Hindi-Bindi Club* is "A Novel *with* Recipes." The tagline in the same space reads "Between mothers and daughters, and old ways and new, lies a very special world..." What is striking here is the arbitrariness of the different components of the cover design and its complete disjunction with the actual content of the book. The book, a story about a summer of rediscovery and reconciliation of three second generation Indian women and their mothers, in the tradition of Amy Tan's *The Joy Luck Club*, hardly warrants this particular cover image. Both the subtitle and the tagline play on classic Orientalist tropes of gastronomic clichés and inter-generational conflict stemming from old and outdated traditions. In another classic Orientalist strategy, the italicized "with" in the subtitle and the three dots in the tagline seem to hint at a hidden mysterious world, full of salacious secrets that can only be uncovered if the reader turns the pages of the book. But what I particularly want to emphasize is that the bright blue and yellow colors, the rich texture of her sari and ornate jewelry and her desirable pose does little to offset the disturbing images of sexual violence evoked by the headless torso and exposed body. The South Asian female body

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thus almost always becomes the object of metropolitan gaze and is reduced to an object of sexual desire.

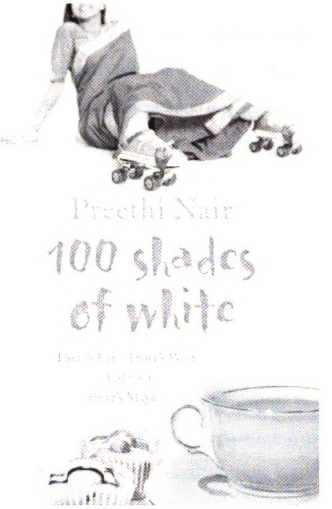

Figure 6 Book Cover Image of One Hundred Shades of White, with permission from Harper Collins Publishers Limited © 2004, Preethi Nair.

South Asian British writer Preethi Nair's book covers continue the creation of this Orientalist fantasy. In her essay on Lau, Wong succinctly captures the dilemma of the postcolonial woman writer:

> While the individual writer cannot be held responsible for power structures that are larger than any single individual, how Lau negotiates

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> them becomes a matter to consider. If one is trying to make a living from writing, abstention from marketing strategies is not an option. Playing along under the banner of being apolitical automatically defaults the said writer into reinforcing the conventional political and economic order that masks its reliance on exploitation as "normal." (42)

As I have discussed before, in an age inhospitable to the publishing of women's writing, the self-exoticization by Kamala Markandaya and others can be understood. But in an age where Indianness is touted as the "hot" new ethnicity in the publishing world, Preethi Nair's novels have to be treated with some amount of skepticism. Her first novel, *Gypsy Masala* was rejected by a number of publishers till she set up her own publishing company to publish it, which probably explains why the cover design of her novel, *One Hundred Shades of White*, published by Harper Collins engages all the Orientalist tropes that I have discussed before. In *The Colonial Harem*, Malek Alloula describes how photographers would recruit models to construct a particular image for the colonial postcard in Algeria. I quote at length from Alloula to emphasize that the same kind of process goes into the staging of the exotic tableau that we see on the cover of novels like *One Hundred Shades of White*. Alloula says:

> In her role as substitute, the model presents three distinct and yet closely related advantages: she is accessible, credible, and profitable. This is the three-legged foundation upon which will come to stand the whole of the enterprise pursued so relentlessly by the colonial postcard.
>
> As the locus for the setting of the illusion, the studio, for its part, must complete the initial illusion created by the model. By virtue of this

> function, it becomes the scene of the imaginary, indispensable to the fulfillment of desire. It becomes the embodiment of the propitious site.
>
> The whole array of props, carefully disposed by the photographer around and upon the model (trompe l'oeil, furnishings, backdrops, jewelry, assorted objects), is meant to suggest the existence of a natural frame whose feigned "realism" is expected to provide a supplementary, yet by no means superfluous, touch of authenticity."(18)

The postcolonial publishing industry operates somewhat along the same lines. The cover photograph of *One Hundred Shades of White*, by British photographer, Robin Matthews is of a young girl sitting on the ground, laidback and fancy free, clumsily draped in a bright fuchsia sari with roller skates strapped onto her feet, clearly signifying the predictable mish-mash of the East and the West. Not surprisingly, part of her head is cut off, probably indicating that the protagonist lacks metaphorical vision as becomes evident through the storyline. Since food-exoticism is a dominant motif within the text, the cover design features a liberal sprinkling of brightly colored cookies and condiments as well as the classic British obsession, tea in a bright green cup and saucer. The tagline reads: "There's East. There's West. And then there's Maya...," thus seducing the reader into believing that the book promises to satisfy their exotic food fetish and craving for spiritual enlightenment. The three dots after Maya not only titillate the reader about the mysterious female protagonist, but "maya," the Hindi word meaning illusion, is mobilized to conjure a vision of the magical space, somewhere between the east and the west that had become hip in 1970s England.

The content of *One Hundred Shades of White* is fairly stereotypical as well. It is both a migrant narrative as it moves between India and England and a coming-of-age story of the central protagonist, Maya Kathi. The story is told alternatively from the point of view of Maya and her mother Nalini and documents their travails to stick together as a family in 1970s London after their father Raul abandons them and migrates to lead a secret double life. Nalini had married the wealthy Raul against the explicit disapproval of his family but is still shown to lead a perfect life of happy domesticity, reveling in her role as homemaker and mother in the opening pages of the novel. Nalini inherits her mother Ammamma's magical cooking skills and it is this skill that she draws upon to survive in England. It is the mobilization of this trope, this invocation to the "exotic" in the style of Chitra Banerjee Divakaruni's *The Mistress of Spices* that transforms this otherwise engrossing novel into a book that rehashes another cultural stereotype – the exotic appeal of South Asian cuisine.

Initially, Nalini works in a factory in East End to support her children, thus drawing attention to the economic hardships faced by immigrants in London. Nalini, as a first generation immigrant constantly has to negotiate her space in an alien land and the way she succeeds in asserting her identity is through food, the traditional communal motif in diasporic literature. Her restaurant becomes a space where her private and public roles are blurred; like Tilo in *The Mistress of Spices*, the spices she uses assumes life of their own and she symbolically becomes the healer and caregiver to the entire community, quite in line with the spiritual image of South Asia. Nair is not content with this role of Nalini; she has to be established as a role model within a heterosexual family so as not to threaten prevalent notions of South Asian femininity. Predictably, the chance

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order to make pickles to substantiate her income leads her to meet Ravi Thakker, a South Asian refugee expelled by Idi Amin's ethnic cleansing of Uganda. As Nalini grabs a second chance at domestic bliss, she makes the huge mistake of not telling her children the truth about their father, instead claiming that he had died in an accident. This mistake becomes fatal when Raul re-enters her life and in an almost Machiavellian way, goes about destroying all her relationships. Nair quite consciously chooses not to go along the political lines which would have provided a more interesting insight into the lives of the South Asian immigrants. We barely get any detail of the hardships Nalini faces in the East End factory; neither is there an exploration through Ravi Thakker's character of the traumatic exilic condition faced by multitudes of South Asians who were expelled from Uganda and were denied entry by England. There is a studied avoidance of any suggestion of inter-racial relations in the novel, as the only potential relationship, between Nalini and Tom, is not allowed to develop; the only space in which they can interact is the magico-real space of the kitchen and the restaurant. The other main character, Maggie, an Irish refugee who hawks her body and desperately tries to hide her past from her son Tom by pretending to be his sister does not shed light on the socio-economic conditions of the 1970s that would warrant such acts. Although a beautiful relationship develops between Maggie and Maya, there is the disconcerting suggestion that immigrant populations cannot help but mingle with the other marginalized sections of English society, in this case, penniless Irish refugees. Nair's novel thus unflinchingly confirms all the cultural stereotypes dominant in the Western imagination. It is hardly surprising that the *Daily Express* endorses it with a blurb on the book jacket which

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succinctly states that the novel "has all the ingredients in just the right quantities to spirit away all negative emotions," and the BBC bought the rights for a television adaptation. But as the following section will try to demonstrate, not all postcolonial women writers were willing to fully engage with the publishing industry's dictates. An analysis of Arundhati Roy's novel reveals the her rather complicated response to this conundrum.

Arundhati Roy, the Booker Prize and the process of cultural commodification

In 1981, Salman Rushdie won the Booker Prize for *Midnight's Children.* Rushdie's success was followed by Arundhati Roy in 1997, Kiran Desai in 2006 for *The Inheritance of Loss* and Aravind Adiga in 2008 for *The White Tiger.* Huggan quotes Hugh Eakin to point out that the Booker Prize, "despite its 'multicultural consciousness', has arguably done less to further the development of 'non-Western' and/or postcolonial literatures than it has to 'encourage the commerce of an 'exotic' commodity catered to the Western literary market"(106).[11] Huggan, by focusing on four prizewinning novels, all dealing with colonial revisionist history in one form or another – J.G. Farrell's *The Siege of Krishnapur* (1973), Ruth Prawer Jhabvala's *Heat and Dust* (1975), Paul Scott's *Staying On* (1977) and Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient* – demonstrates how the award reflects a "continuing desire for metropolitan control born in part of 'imperialist nostalgia'"(xiii).

In his introduction to *The Booker Prize and the Legacy of Empire*, Luke Strongman claims that "inaugurated in 1969 as a yearly celebration of the 'best novel written in English' authored by a *writer from the Commonwealth*, the Booker McConnell Prize or 'Booker Prize' has become, ...perhaps the most significant annual award in

English letters"(vii emphasis added). The term "Commonwealth" has become a contested term in itself and such a statement, along with the one in the October, 1989 issue of *The Economist* magazine declaring that "The [Booker] Prize has become a British institution, rather like Derby Day" (101), clearly indicates that the award had some kind of covert political agenda. In his essay, "'Commonwealth Literature' does not exist," Rushdie raises the very important question of authenticity which fosters the creation of categories like "Commonwealth literature:"

> 'Authenticity' is the respectable child of old-fashioned exoticism. It demands that sources, forms, style, language and symbol all derive from a supposedly homogenous and unbroken tradition. Or else. What is revealing is that the term, so much in use inside the little world of 'Commonwealth literature', and always as a term of praise, would seem ridiculous outside this world. Imagine a novel being eulogized for being 'authentically English', or 'authentically German'. It would seem absurd. Yet such absurdities persist in the ghetto."(67).

Rushdie rightly points out that judging a literary work for its authenticity involves the assumption that it is representative of a distinctive, often homogenous tradition and is a futile enterprise. At the same time, his statement in the introduction seems to claim a certain degree of authenticity for the Indian-English writer which is angrily refuted by homegrown critics like Paranjape who claims: "Who owns the fictional India? Who rules it? Who represents it? To whom does it belong? I am arguing that at the end of the empire, likewise, signals a transfer in fiction power. The fictional territory that is India must be repossessed by those who live here and belong here"(41-42). Paranjape is

referring to diasporic writers like Rushdie but his comment could also be taken in a broader context to mean the Western media and publishing industry which is still engaged in the creation of an orientalized India. And when Rushdie goes on to assert in his introduction to *The Vintage Book Of Indian Writing, 1947-1997*, that Indian writing in English produced in the last fifty years is not only "a stronger and more important body of work than most of what has been produced in the 16 'official languages' of India, but represents 'the most valuable contribution India has made to the world of books"(x), it is not surprising that he is indignantly accused of being a sell-out to the Western media and the publishing industry, which had already granted him a great degree of legitimacy with the Booker Prize in 1980. This statement is also surprising coming from a writer like Rushdie who is wary of being labeled as a Commonwealth writer because the definition itself reeks of ghettoization.[12]

Amidst these heated debates about the politics of the Booker Prize and questions of authenticity, Arundhati Roy's Booker Prize win in the fiftieth anniversary year of Indian independence was greeted with significant media attention and an equal share of acclaim and criticism. It catapulted Roy into instant fame and recognition and ensured her status as the newest cosmopolitan celebrity. But at the same time, it also implicated her in the politics of the Booker Prize which itself participated in a "process of canonization which...tends to reproduce the value-systems of 'culturally and otherwise dominant members of a community'"(Huggan 119). This is not meant to undermine Roy's undoubted literary abilities, but as Huggan reiterates, it merely reinstates the fact that the prize is "bound to an Anglocentric discourse of benevolent paternalism" (111). Amidst the other celebrations of postcolonial writing in the metropolitan literary scene, this event

is another legitimation of the English language writing produced from the formerly colonized nation.

In his book, Huggan applies Padmini Mongia's term "Indo-chic," used to refer to Arundhati Roy's unprecedented media attention, to a pan-Indian phenomenon that was sweeping the Western literary circles in the late 1990s. He rightly points out that " 'Indo-chic,' and Roy's contribution to it, are not simply to be seen as naïve Western constructs; they are the products of the globalization of Western-capitalist consumer culture, in which 'India' functions not just as a polyvalent cultural sign but as a highly mobile capital good"(67). Huggan mentions that for some, "the marketing of the novel was an object lesson in commodity fetishism, with a carefully managed excitement at the latest literary 'discovery', and some salacious details about the private life of the writer – described by one reviewer, in another example of the touchstone effect, as an 'unsuitable girl'"(76).[13] According to Huggan, Roy herself was complicit in this process of "the media-friendly manufacturing of exotic ('Oriental') romance" (77) and as such is guilty of a "strategic exoticism"(77).[14] And even while the Western world doted on the newest ethnic writer, Indian critics fulminated over what they regarded as Roy's mis-representations of postcolonial India which would only encourage negative stereotypes of the country in the Western imagination.

The motif of performance in <u>*The God of Small Things*</u>

In this section, I argue that this awareness of the recent reception history of Indo-English fiction in the global literary marketplace is what makes Roy enact a superb stylistic performance in her novel. Roy uses the motif of performance to construct a critique of a society caught between a colonial legacy and the constant onslaught of trans-

national rhetoric. But her overt critique of globalization, which she believes to be a kind of neo-colonialism, effectively sidelines the representation of a strife-torn, class-ridden Kerala, something that could have otherwise drawn charges of misrepresentation and cultural fetishism. Further, she disrupts possible allegations of inauthenticity because of writing in English by dovetailing the English language to a specific cultural context and by casting her narrative in the traditional Indian oral epic mode, thus signaling a metaphoric return to indigenous traditions.

In an interview, Roy bristles against attempts by self-appointed cultural commissars to control representations of India or "Indianness": "If you write about Brahmins or kathakali dancers, you're writing for the West. If you mention *The Sound of Music*, you have betrayed Indian culture. India is a country that lives in several centuries, and some of the centuries have not been at all pleased with my book. But I say replace ethnic purity and 'authenticity' with honesty" (qtd. in Mullaney 70). While making a case for literary subjectivity and "honesty," Roy tellingly encapsulates some important theoretical issues which haunt Indo-English writing, specifically the postcolonial author's act of cultural translation. Huggan elaborates on how writers like Roy are aware that they might be looked upon as cultural translators: "In ironically rehearsing a continuing history of imperialist perceptions of an 'othered' India [...] they know that their work might still be used as a means of reconfirming an exoticising imperial gaze. They are aware of all this, and they draw their readers into that awareness in their writing"(81). Huggan goes on to assert that the reason that Indian writing in English has become so popular in Western literary circles is because it has metonymically replaced India itself as the "object of conspicuous consumption" (81) and that Roy, like Rushdie, is guilty of

perpetuating this mode of consumption while critiquing it at the same time. In Roy's *The God of Small Things*, the critical strain seems more apparent, and the chapter entitled "Kochu Thomban" about the travails of the Kathakali man essentially captures her awareness and apprehensions about her position as a postcolonial writer.[15] This chapter splendidly encapsulates the myriad contours of the performance motif, which functions both as an invisible narrative thread throughout the text and successfully counteracts charges of her pandering to western stereotypes in her portrayal of India. Using this chapter as a focal point, this section explores how Roy's use of the motif of performance reveals fissures in the Indian political and social structure. At the same time, by delineating the ill effects of globalization through the figure of the Kathakali man, Roy cleverly extricates herself from possible criticism of writing under the western gaze that is routinely hurled on the postcolonial writer. Finally, this chapter incorporates a "metafictional moment" where Roy self-consciously comments on her writing, thus tangentially reflecting her awareness of the delicate position that the postcolonial writer is often forced to negotiate.[16]

The Theme of Performance

The performance motif unites the various thematic concerns of the text. *The God of Small Things* makes it apparent that to conform to the demands of a morally rigid, class-conscious society, individuals are constantly coerced into role-playing on various levels. Roy makes it clear that individuals are always either engaged in willing or forced performances and such performances are constantly revealed to be potentially disruptive, if not downright destructive. She concedes that performance is necessary for survival, yet the alternative space that it creates is not self-fulfilling because it is created not out of

the individual's own desires, but by pressure from external forces.[17] Yet those who resist performances are doomed as well. Any opposition to conform to socially accepted codes of conduct is construed as aberrant behavior and the punishment for erring individuals is particularly severe. The kathakali performance at the temple witnessed silently by Rahel and Estha provides an entry point through which we can trace the other performances in the text.

Physical Performance

The "Kochu Thomban" chapter graphically portrays the magnificent physical performance of the kathakali troupe at the local temple in Ayemenem. The men perform episodes from India's great epic *Mahabharata* and this performance is witnessed silently by the novel's twin protagonists, Rahel and Estha. Demands by western tourists have resulted in a tragic mutilation of this native tradition, which is evident in the troupe's truncated performances, a far cry from the elaborate and glorious enactment of ancient myths and legends. The troupe's ritualistic performance at the temple is to exorcise their guilt for commodifying their bodies and to ask pardon from the gods for corrupting their stories merely to earn money through tourism. The theme of performance here is significant on several levels; the reader is reminded of the twins' aversion to any kind of forced performance by their behavior at the Cochin airport when they go to receive their half-English cousin Sophie Mol. The language of performance is introduced at the very beginning of that chapter when we are told:"At Cochin Airport, Rahel's new knickers were polka-dotted and still crisp. The rehearsals had been rehearsed. It was the Day of the Play. The culmination of the *What Will Sophie Mol Think*? week"(136). Estha refuses to greet their cousin properly and Rahel wraps herself in a curtain, much to the chagrin of

their mother Ammu, who "had wanted a smooth performance. A prize for her children in the Indo-British Behavior Competition"(145). This childish resistance to social performance results in their marginalization within the Ipe family. The twins had already been occupying a liminal position because of Ammu's social transgression, first by her inter-community marriage and then by her subsequent divorce. The arrival of Sophie Mol heightens their marginalized condition and in the "Welcome Home Sophie Mol" chapter, which interestingly is replete with performance rhetoric, Rahel and Estha are metaphorically equated with the socially ostracized Untouchable, Velutha. In this chapter, Sophie Mol is being introduced to the matriarch of the family, Mammachi, on the front verandah of the Ipe household, and the artificiality of the entire situation and the performative behavior of the other characters like Chacko is constantly emphasized: "The elevation gave it the dignity of a stage and everything that happened there took on the aura and significance of performance" (165). As the twins silently witness the fawning over Sophie Mol, Rahel quickly realizes that not only is she "in a Play"(172) but also that "she had only a small part"(172) in it, and she willingly slips out of it to go to play with Velutha, who is anyway denied access to the Ipe family's domestic space. In the surrounding grounds, Rahel asks Velutha "*We're* not here, are we? We're not even Playing"(182) and Velutha replies in the affirmative before engaging Rahel in a comical "Rumpelstiltskin-like dance" (182). Roy's capitalizing of the word "playing" highlights the importance of the performance motif, and the juxtaposition between the Ipe family's forced performance to impress Sophie Mol and Velutha's willing performance to entertain Rahel sets up an interesting contrast which is developed throughout the narrative.

Performance as Entrapment

The physical performance of the Kathakali man is predicated on economic necessity; he has to perform to survive. In order to save himself from starvation, he has to sell his only possession, "the stories that his body can tell" (230) to a western audience with "imported attention spans" (231). The "truncated swimming pool performances" (229) are a humiliation of his magnificent skills. Yet he has to perform because he knows he has no other profession and in the absence of a discerning and appreciative audience, he becomes hopelessly entangled within his performance. Performing for pleasure is eclipsed by a routine forced performance for money. The Kathakali man's predicament eerily parallels the lives of Rahel and Estha, both of whom are unwillingly trapped within their performances. But unlike the Kathakali man, who, however unwillingly, survives his performance, the performance which the twins are trapped into by Baby Kochamma almost annihilates them. A seven- year-old Estha is tricked into falsely indicting Velutha as a kidnapper as a means of saving their beloved mother Ammu, but in the process, Estha ends up losing all his loved ones. A forced performance silences him forever. Even after the twins are reunited after twenty-three years when Estha returns to Ayemenem and Rahel comes back from America, Estha cannot escape the cocoon of silence that he has built around himself. Roy graphically describes their poignantly tragic condition as they are unable to even reach out to each other and unite in their common grief and overwhelming sense of loss:

> A pair of actors trapped in a recondite play with no hint of plot or narrative. Stumbling through their parts, nursing someone else's sorrow. Grieving someone else's grief.

> Unable somehow, to change plays. Or purchase, for a fee, some cheap brand of exorcism from a counsellor with a fancy degree, who would sit them down and say, in one of many ways: 'You're not the Sinners. You're the Sinned Against. You were only children. You had no control. You are the *victims*, not the perpetrators.' (191)

Like the Kathakali man, who is trapped within his performance, both because of his inability to be in any other profession and because of financial reasons, Rahel and Estha become hopelessly entangled in a play not of their own making. But unlike the Kathakali man, who can exorcise his rage through a manic performance in front of the gods, or rather the "god of the big things" at the Ayemenem temple, Rahel and Estha have no scope of expiating their guilt because their actions have eliminated their "god of small things" (330), their beloved Velutha who left behind a "hole in the Universe through which darkness poured like liquid tar. Through which their mother followed without even turning to wave goodbye [...] left them behind, spinning in the dark, with no moorings, in a place with no foundation" (191-2). Within the self-enclosed, claustrophobic space of the Ipe family, with malicious and narcissistic Baby Kochamma as the only surviving member, Rahel and Estha have no scope of redemption except the solace they find in one another. Performance is thus forced both upon the Kathakali man and Rahel and Estha and is revealed to be potentially destructive as it stultifies individual desires.

Performance and Madness

Ironically, after a span of twenty-three years, it is the actual kathakali performance at the Ayemenem temple that brings the twins together. The distinction

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between forced and willing performance is emphasized in this section as the twins witness the Kathakali man's manic performance. The Kathakali dancers willingly perform in front of the gods at the Ayemenem temple to exorcise their guilt of performing forcibly for the western tourist, to apologize "for corrupting their stories. For encashing their identities. Misappropriating their lives" (229). The Kathakali man's frenzied performance is both an attempt to expiate his anger and guilt at his forced stigmatization as a cultural enticement and to reclaim his freedom from oppressive social and economic structures. Rahel and Estha's realization that the episode of *Duryodhana Vadham* in the final stages of the performance was no routine act, but that "there was madness there that morning," (235) immediately recalls another horrific performance that the twins had been forced to witness, "the brutal extravagance of this matched by the savage economy of that" (235). Roy describes the police's torture of Velutha in graphic terms as "History in live performance" (309). The policemen are "history's henchmen" (308) and their carefully orchestrated performance is marked by economy and efficiency and motivated by "feelings of contempt born of inchoate, unacknowledged fear—civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness" (308). But even though this performance is not marked by external manifestations of madness like hysteria or frenzy, the implication is that such controlled madness demonstrated by the police is even more destructive. The Kathakali man's madness is a manifestation of his inner rage at society's unjust treatments. A measured performance like Velutha's torture by the vanguards of societal order is particularly horrifying because it is a display of the complete dehumanization of an individual and his reduction to the state of an automaton orchestrated by authority within the confines of the state. As Roy pointedly

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says, this "was a clinical demonstration in controlled conditions [...] of human nature's pursuit of ascendancy. Structure. Order. Complete monopoly. It was human history masquerading as God's Purpose, revealing herself to an under-age audience"(309). Madness thus becomes a performance that is both liberating and constricting in the text. But what is important is that it is again the performance metaphor which unites the past and the present and consequently Rahel and Estha. Their witnessing of the madness in the kathakali performance rekindles in their memory another, more gruesome performance and this is what binds them anew with a common sense of guilt and nostalgia.

Role-playing as Forced Performance – Pappachi, Chacko, Comrade Pillai

Roy also presents performance as role-playing, inventing and inhabiting a self to keep up a desired profile in society but which is in complete contrast to one's actual self. For instance, in the text, the Kathakali man's magnificent performance is undercut by his private persona as a wife beater. We are told that all the men, even the one who enacted the role of Kunti, "the soft one with breasts" (236) went home to beat their wives. Being forced to perform or hawk their body for economic reasons seems to be a compromise of their masculinity, and the bizarre gesture of beating their wives, a show of their patriarchal power, would somehow restore that lost manhood. This manifestation of male power is clearly mirrored in the character of Pappachi, the patriarch of the Ipe family. Chacko refers to the Ipe family as a family of Anglophiles; Pappachi is a literal embodiment of Anglophilia in his role as "Imperial Entomologist" (50). Pappachi is a member of the generation of colonial elite to whom Homi Bhabha refers to as "mimic men."[18] Pappachi, in his job as imperial Entomologist, is always anxious to please his

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colonial masters, and he is in line with the class of Indian men Macaulay infamously enshrined in his "Minute on Indian Education" (1835): "We must at present do our best to form a class who may be interpreters between us and the millions whom we govern; a class of persons, Indian in blood and colour, but English in taste, in opinions, in morals, and in intellect" (249). As Mullaney suggests: "His job of collecting, preserving, and indexing India's fauna for the colonial archive, puts him at the heart of the colonial enterprise"(33). Ammu reaffirms this view when she reveals that Pappachi was extremely courteous with visitors and "stopped just short of *fawning* on them if they happened to be white" (180; emphasis added). When Ammu comes back after having divorced her husband, who was urging her to comply with his English boss's requests for sexual favors, Pappachi refuses to believe her because it is incomprehensible to him that English men could ask for such things: "Pappachi would not believe her story – not because he thought well of her husband, but simply because he didn't believe that an Englishman, *any* Englishman, would covet another man's wife" (42). As Mullaney points out, Pappachi inhabits his mimic man persona religiously and has internalized the beliefs of the English colonizer so much that it is impossible for him to question their authority or criticize their behavior, even if his own daughter is at the receiving end of their oppression (37). In tune with his Anglophilia, Pappachi wears a three-piece suit every day of his life and is very careful to maintain an outward appearance of respectability: "He worked hard on his public profile as a sophisticated, generous, moral man. But alone with his wife and children he turned into a monstrous, suspicious bully, with a streak of vicious cunning" (180). His violent moods were believed to be the direct fallout of a lost opportunity of "taxonomic attention and [...] fame" (49) from having a moth he

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discovered named after him. The naming would have conferred some prestige on him in the eyes of the colonial rulers, and his frustration at this loss of power translates into an act of domestic violence. Not unlike the Kathakali men who beat their wives as a recompense for their loss of masculinity during their performance, Pappachi compensates for the loss of power by tormenting his family. Pappachi thus epitomizes the social and sexual hypocrisy that plagues Indian society. This hypocrisy is nowhere more apparent than in the juxtaposition of his benevolent creation of a school for Untouchables and treatment of them as underdogs in personal interactions.

Mammachi and Chacko, too, are not free of either social or sexual hypocrisy. Roy presents hypocrisy as a web-like, insidious phenomenon fostered by a caste-ridden patriarchal society that infiltrates every character. Mammachi has different codes of sexual conduct for her son and daughter; while Ammu is ostracized first for being a divorced, single mother and then for the even greater crime of falling in love with the Untouchable Velutha, Chacko is exempted from all kinds of maternal indictment, even after his sexually promiscuous behavior.[19] In fact, it is Mammachi who has a separate entrance built into his room so that he can have the female factory workers come in to his room without informing others and it is she who offers monetary recompense to all of these women who are the victims of Chacko's insatiable lust.

Chacko himself is constantly enacting different performances. With the twins, he tries to be the surrogate father figure, always correcting their behavior and using what Roy refers to as his "Reading Aloud" (54) voice to impress them with his Oxford literariness. When his English ex-wife Margaret and daughter Sophie Mol come to Ayemenem, he is the pompous factory owner displaying his trophy wife and daughter to

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all his employees. At the same time, it is Chacko who forces Ammu to banish Estha to Calcutta after the death of Sophie Mol without any regard for her maternal feelings. His interracial marriage is acceptable, but Ammu's intercaste love affair is what brings shame upon the family and destroys all familial bonds. This is indirectly brought about by Chacko's shortsightedness and inability to see through the vindictive machinations of Baby Kochamma.

Comrade Pillai and the Marxists in Kerala are also perpetrators of this social hypocrisy. As Ng Shing Yi suggests, "The novel exposes the corruption and inhumanity of socialist party politics (or more specifically politicking) and capitalism, both of which are domains of power and subtle colonial imperialism" (1). Roy presents a stringent critique of Marxist politics in Ayemenem and her portrayal of Marxism is marked by a complete disjunction between ideology and practice in its exponents. Roy tells us: "The Marxists worked from *within* the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to. They offered a Cocktail revolution. A heady mix of Eastern Marxism and Orthodox Hinduism, spiked with a shot of democracy" (67). Like Pappachi, Comrade Pillai is obsessed with keeping up the appearance of a benevolent Communist leader, but his every action is tinged with a gaping chasm between his proclaimed and actual beliefs. He extensively discusses measures for safeguarding the factory workers' interests with Chacko, but when Velutha comes to him to escape unjust persecution, Comrade Pillai outright refuses to help him. Like Pappachi and Chacko, he epitomizes social hypocrisy in this text, but his portrayal is particularly disturbing because he explicitly pretends to operate from a Communist ideology at the same time that he perpetrates social evils by betraying those he is committed to serve. Thus, the narrative

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"sets itself up as a testimony to the fragility of the small, marginalized things (such as the kathakali dancer and his art) which become consumed by the forces of history and power" (Yi 3).

Unable to Perform – Mammachi, Baby Kochamma

Roy clearly delineates the destructive power of social institutions and society's rigid prescription of hetero-normativity that force individuals to either enact a performance in acceptable behavior or indulge in transgression, both of which are self-destructive acts. Mammachi and Baby Kochamma suffer from unnatural desires; Mammachi's relationship with Chacko is clearly laced with oedipal overtones and Baby Kochamma's unrequited love for the Catholic priest Father Mulligan drives her entire life. But it is their in-between position, their inability to either perform or transgress that shapes their personalities. We are told that since the day Chacko saved her from Pappachi's beatings, Mammachi had "packed her wifely luggage and committed it to Chacko's care. From then onwards he became the repository of all her womanly feelings. Her Man. Her only Love"(168). The capitalizing of the words "man" and "love" clearly indicate her feelings for Chacko and points to the undercurrent of incestuous relationships which permeates the text. Her words also underscore a disturbing voyeuristic relation with her son. When Chacko returns to Ayemenem after a failed marriage, Mammachi can barely control her delight: "She fed him, sewed for him, she saw to it that there were fresh flowers in his room everyday"(248). Her adoration doesn't stop there. She is the one who arranges for Chacko's fulfillment of sexual desires by arranging the factory workers' visits. It is hardly surprising that Mammachi nurses a dislike for Margaret Kochamma because she happens to be Chacko's wife and is even wary about whether she

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will resume her sexual relationship with Chacko when she comes to Ayemenem. The naming of Margaret as Chacko's wife somehow threatens her position and she continues the bizarre gesture of putting money in Margaret's dress as some kind of recompense for Margaret's sexual favors to Chacko, something which she is unable to fulfill. When Sophie Mol dies tragically, Mammachi does grieve for her granddaughter, but it is Chacko's grief which destroys her.

Baby Kochamma is a malicious, vindictive loner whose unfulfilled desire makes her disrupt all loving relations in the family. She harbors an unnatural hatred for Ammu and Velutha precisely because she recognizes that they can successfully resist societal pressure and indulge in sexual gratification even under the imminent threat of annihilation. Baby Kochamma can neither perform nor transgress in her objective of uniting with Father Mulligan. She converts to Catholicism in the hope that her performance in religiosity would ingratiate her with Father Mulligan, but when she realizes that the "Senior Sisters monopolized the priests and bishops with biblical doubts more sophisticated than hers would ever be, and that it might be years before she got anywhere near Father Mulligan" (25), she cannot sustain her performance. Her inability to keep up her performance like Pappachi or transgress like Ammu entraps her into a cocoon of vindictiveness and makes her lash out violently at people who refuse to partake in any kind of performance as it reminds her of her own failings. Like Mammachi, her unrequited lust makes her voyeuristic as she anxiously follows all of Ammu's movements and even Rahel's when she comes back after twenty three years. Ironically, contrary to her comment about Velutha turning out to be the Nemesis of the Ipe family, she is the one who actually brings about the annihilation of the entire clan. Ambreen Hai's

comment on Baby Kochamma in her essay is very revealing. She suggests that the affluent or racially superior white woman is suspicious of men of lower classes or racial other "precisely because as a woman, less powerful than men of her class or race, she is more threatened by their politics of resistance [...] Baby Kochamma is threatened by the Communist class politics—coded as sexual virility—of the Untouchable Velutha" (155).[20]

Resisting Conformity or Forced Performance – Ammu, Velutha, Rahel, Estha

Ironically, any individual who resists a forced social performance does not remain unscathed in this society. Ammu, Velutha, Rahel and Estha are all crippled by their unwillingness to conform to society's demands upon their individual selves. By refusing to perform, all of them indulge in some form of transgression: "Perhaps, Ammu, Estha and she [Rahel] were the worst transgressors [...] They all broke the rules. They all crossed into forbidden territory. They all tampered with the laws that lay down who should be loved and how [...] It was a time when uncles became fathers, mothers lovers and cousins died and had funerals" (31). In all these characters, transgression stems from a direct refusal to perform a different role and paradoxically the space of transgression becomes a liberating space for them. The History House, the colonial residence of the English nobleman, Kari Saipu, whose homoerotic desires led to his suicide, is literally marked as the transgressive space. It is here that Rahel and Estha disrupt class boundaries by playing with the Untouchable Velutha and where Ammu and Velutha consummate their forbidden love.

Performance Commodified – Roy's Text as a Cultural Commodity

Like the History House, which becomes literally marked as the site of transgression, the Ayemenem temple becomes marked as a liberating space for the kathakali troupe after their forced Cochin performance that had been necessitated by economic reasons. The commodification of the Kathakali man introduces a whole new dimension to this multilayered narrative. We are told that the "Kathakali Man is the most beautiful of men. Because his body *is* his soul. His only instrument. From the age of three it has been planed and polished, pared down, harnessed wholly to the task of story-telling" (230). The Kathakali man had been trained from his childhood to uphold the glorious mythic storytelling tradition of India. Even though he uses his body to earn a living, the implications are that as a performer of myths and epics narrating the story of gods, he has been traditionally imbued with a divine aura, "he has magic in him" (230). But now economic unviability threatens the Kathakali man's very existence and he has literally become commodified and fetishized as a tourist attraction completely vulnerable to the western gaze: "In the *Heart of Darkness* they mock him with their lolling nakedness and their imported attention spans. He checks his rage and dances for them. He collects his fee." (231; emphasis added). The reference to Conrad's *Heart of Darkness* is unmistakable here—the implication is that postcolonial India is still reeling under the aftereffects of three hundred years of colonial rule, with cultural commodification an ongoing process through the years.[21] Roy's characters are aware of this cultural encashment as they argue over the use of the image of the Kathakali man alongside the "Paradise Pickles and Preserves" (46) sign on top of the Plymouth owned by the Ipe family. Though the very material task of making pickles is completely at odds with the aesthetic appeal of the kathakali tradition, Chacko insists on it because "it gave the

products a Regional Flavour and would stand them in good stead when they entered the Overseas Market" (47). By showing the Kathakali man as symbolizing the regional flavor of Kerala and revealing his survival to be contingent upon his acting as a local cultural enticement to western tourists, Roy both laments the downfall of tradition and comments on the ill effects of incipient globalization. At the same time, as Tickell suggests, "Roy uses the Kathakali to throw into relief the fact of her own intrinsically marketable position within 'competing regimes of value'[...] this sub-narrative indicates Roy's awareness of the involuntary, assimilative demand which global capital makes in its encounter with local postcolonial cultures" (83). Roy is well aware that her text might be viewed as a marketable cultural commodity in the western media as a picture of the real India and consequently draw charges of inauthenticity from Indian critics.[22] It is this awareness which makes her use the commodification of the Kathakali tradition to construct her critique against globalization and hence repudiate potential accusations of deliberately inviting the western gaze.

Roy's critique of the commodification of native Indian traditions in her book points to the larger critique of neocolonialism, a phenomenon that threatens a native and peaceful way of life. In the last decade of the twentieth century and almost fifty years after independence from colonial rule, India is seen as still engrossed in negotiating its identity, oscillating between nostalgia for a lost indigenous history and the onslaught of globalization. As Mullaney suggests,"The transatlantic networks and movements of goods, money, and labor that once were at the heart of the British colonial enterprise continue despite the ostensible dismantling of Empire with Independence" (49). Actively involved in the protest

against the establishment of a dam across the Narmada river by the multinational corporation Enron at the cost of the displacement of millions of people, Roy is deeply suspicious of this neo-colonialism which has taken the face of corporate globalization. In an essay entitled "The Ladies have Feelings, So..." in *The Algebra of Infinite Justice*, Roy gives a graphic picture of this new threat:

> 'Trade not Aid' is the rallying cry of the headmen of the new Global Village, headquartered in the shining offices of the WTO [...] This time around the colonizer doesn't even need a token white presence in the colonies. The CEOs and their men don't need to go to the trouble of tramping through the tropics risking malaria, diarrhoea, sunstroke and an early death [...] They can have their colonies *and* an easy conscience. 'Creating a good investment climate' is the new euphemism for third world repression. (203)

Her mistrust of global organizations like the World Bank and International Monetary Fund and fear of techno-dominance is reflected through the disastrous effects they have, even on the quiet little town of Ayemenem. The Meenachal river, formerly the lifeblood of the people of the region now "smelled of shit, and pesticides bought with World Bank Loans" (13). Baby Kochamma's passion for gardening has been usurped by the appearance of satellite television and "in Ayemenem, where once the loudest sound had been a musical bus horn, now whole wars, famines, picturesque massacres and Bill Clinton could be summoned up like servants" (27). Baby Kochamma now exists in the make-believe world created by the western media. Roy's anxiety about individuals being engulfed by external

forces like technology and losing touch with their inner selves permeates her book. She is deeply suspicious of the encroaching globalization on the Indian mindset and by emphasizing its disastrous effects on indigenous traditions, she successfully diverts attention from her trenchant social critique of postcolonial India.

Roy's Stylistic Performance

In her article in *India Today*, Binoo K. John makes a move towards contextualizing Roy's narrative by illustrating how her Syrian Christian background and insular "English language" upbringing shaped her story-telling method. The Syrian Christians, in order to distinguish themselves from the rest of the country, decided to adopt the language of the colonizer:

> Geographically insulated from the larger context of the national movement, the community tried to master the [English] language and send its children to proper English colleges. [...] It needed a writer of Roy's impish humor and feel of the language to see the irony—and pathos—here. It is out of this tragic grandeur that Roy wove her novel. *Twisting the language to suit her own story telling. She managed to make the whole world a stage for Ayemenem and its people.* (26; emphasis added) [23]

Roy's self-conscious use of the English language with generous interspersions of Malayalam does seem to suggest that she was working towards what Bishnupriya Ghosh terms "a complex linguistic localism" (66), an integral feature of a cosmopolitical novel. Ghosh persuasively demonstrates how standard literary English "affords only subjective alienation" (49) for the protagonists of

cosmopolitical novels and only "a localized English [...] properly offers the postcolonial subject recompense" (49). She goes on to show that the deliberately created locales like Roy's Ayemenem are, in fact, "linguistically layered worlds in which an idiomatic Malayalam English becomes an everyday *performance* rather than a stable language" (49; emphasis added). Drawing on Ghosh's comment that "the story's specificity of location stipulates the use of a certain kind of English" (109), this section argues that Roy's play with language and her structuring of the book in the Indian oral epic narrative tradition with a complete disregard for temporality is a very deliberately constructed performance. Roy's retelling of the story in the traditional oral epic mode and her refashioning of the English language into a localized dialect is an extended performance which subverts the traditional British novel and upsets the linguistic hegemony popularly believed to be thrust upon the colonial subject by the British rulers. Ghosh recognizes this dual tension in Roy's work and effectively sums it up: "These worlds seem to offer a microcosmic India to global audiences [...] yet entry into those representational worlds and their linguistically confused subjects demands constant linguistic motility, and resists replication for purposes of commodity fetishism" (82). Roy's text thus "both render[s] India communicable (the local fetishized as national) and undercut[s] full communicative access" (82).

Roy starts her narrative with an epigraph from John Berger: "*Never again will a single story be told as though it's the only one*," and italicizes it to immediately apprise us of the multifaceted nature of the narrative. She indirectly comments extensively on her style in "Kochu Thomban," tellingly situated midway in the book comprising of

twenty-one chapters. Elaborating on the local Kathakali storytelling tradition, which involves the enactment of popular myths and epics, she demonstrates how familiarity with a story does not lessen its aesthetic appeal. Rahel and Estha enter the Ayemenem temple in the middle of the performance. Roy tells us:

> It didn't matter that the story had begun, because kathakali discovered long ago that the secret of the Great Stories is that they *have* no secrets. The Great Stories are the ones you have heard and want to hear again. [...] In the Great Stories you know who lives, who dies, who finds love, who doesn't. And yet you want to know again.
>
> *That* is their mystery and their magic. (229)

Roy's capitalizing of the words "great stories" and her subsequent portrayal of the Kathakali men's performance of episodes from the *Mahabharata* compels us to see these lines as emblematic of the power of myths in Indian culture, and their function as a unifying force because of their national familiarity. So even though the highly stylized kathakali dance form is native to Kerala, the performance would not be incomprehensible to people from other parts of India.[24] Also, as the above lines demonstrate, the power of the performance is not inherent in the story but in the way it is enacted with passion and madness. It is the form which is important and which subsumes the content. Roy fashions her story in this same mythologizing narrative mold with a complete disregard for temporality. Like myths, her story depends for its survival on the twin strands of history and memory and in true oral epic mode, it begins *in medias res*, with the first chapter

progressing in a non-linear manner, switching back and forth between the story of Ammu and that of her great-aunt Baby Kochamma. As Mullaney affirms on page 56 of her book, the chapter outlines the entire storyline as we learn that the book is about transgression and desire, about broken "love laws" (33) at the crux of which are the inextricably intertwined lives of the two "dizygotic" twins, Rahel and Estha, and about "who dies, who finds love, who doesn't" (229). Also, like the passionate performance which keeps Rahel engrossed in the re-telling of *Mahabharata*, Roy's stylistic performance with her adaptation of the oral epic tradition keeps the readers glued to the pages.

The kathakali storytelling tradition is therefore constricted and commodified in actuality, but is perpetuated in a different manner through Roy's text.[25] While the actual performance is sadly truncated to cater to the limited time of the western tourist and the kathakali tradition is literally reduced to a single image in the "Paradise Pickles and Preserves" (46) sign or in the sign at the Cochin airport that says "Kerala Tourism Development Corporation Welcomes You with a kathakali dancer doing a namaste" (139), the native storytelling mode is adapted in the English language and concretized in print and is dispersed among a "multilingual polity, thereby surpassing the concrete limits of oral transmission" (Ghosh 81).

Roy herself is strikingly silent about this obvious fashioning of the book, though she does admit in one of her interviews that her narrative form is as revealing as the content:

> I think that one of the most important things about the structure is that in some way the structure of the book ambushes the story. You know, it tells a different story from the story the book is telling. In the first chapter I more or less tell you the story, but the novel ends in the middle of the story, and it ends with Ammu and Velutha making love and it ends on the word "tomorrow." And though you know that what tomorrow brings is terrible, the fact that the book ends there is to say that even though it's terrible it's wonderful that it happened at all.[26]

The reader is therefore actively involved in reconstituting the meaning of the text. Though the reader is aware that the outcome of the transgressive act of lovemaking is brutal for both Ammu and Velutha, the emphasis on "naaley" or "tomorrow" insinuates a suggestion that the act itself was liberating and redemptive. The conscious adoption of this stylized mode of narration and writing of a modern novel in an epic mode is clearly a way of vernacularizing the English language.

The God of Small Things is a superb example of linguistic performance as well. Since English is the main language spoken by the Syrian Christians, Roy isn't forging new grounds by writing in English. But by showing the twins actively playing with the language and intuitively absorbing and internalizing it like a native tongue, she is in fact, upsetting linguistic hegemonies created by colonial rule and blurring oppositional boundaries between English and the vernaculars. Roy's filtering of her language through the children's consciousness gives her a larger playfield as children's use of language is more intimately related with their childish

experiences. Roy recognizes that children are more attuned to the feel of words and that they use language to concretize their experience rather than making explicit connections between the signifier and the signified, or words and their meanings. So words are constantly fused together ("sharksmile," "longago," "CocoaColaFantaicecreamrosemilk") or split up depending on pronunciation ("later" becomes "lay-ter"), significant words are capitalized ("Orangedrink, Lemondrink man"), words are constantly repeated ("viable, die-able age," "Infinnate Joy," "thimble-drinker," "coffin-cartwheeler") or neologisms are formed ("vomity," "eggzackly").[27] The English language here functions as a mirror of children's consciousness and "central to their project is the materiality of words, and the sounds that words make" (Ghosh 115). The impetus is also on the pronunciation of words and Comrade Pillai's daughter, Latha's rendering of Scott's "Lochinvar" in a Malayalam intonation or Lenin's recitation of "I cometoberry Caesar, not to praise him" (275) clearly indicates that Roy is dovetailing the English language to a specific local usage and hence disrupting the supposed literariness of the language. As Ghosh suggests: "The memorization of poems not understood for their meaning is another symptom of the deadness of colonial literary English in this cultural landscape"(116). Moreover, Rahel and Estha's propensity to constantly read texts backwards signify their consummate control over the language and "the willingness to explore all its contours" (Ghosh 115). By thus showing the twins to be actively engaged in constructing the English language in a culture specific context, Roy undermines the much hyped argument that because English, the colonizer's language, was imposed upon Indians, that

writing in English necessarily implies a pandering to western stereotypes of a fetishized India. As noted Indian writer Vikram Chandra emphatically asserts: "If Hindi is my mother-tongue, then English has been my father-tongue" (9). Ghosh sums it up effectively when she suggests that the opposition between "Indian" English and its "colonial other" has been dissolved: "Now readers are asked to perform different acts of translation [...] to migrate between cultural and linguistic worlds whose boundaries are not rigorously defined as East-West or postcolonial-colonial, and which habitually collide and create subjective discordance" (119). English is completely internalized in independent India and Roy's linguistic performance in this text primarily re-emphasizes the hybridity of the language.

After the spectacular reception of *The God of Small Things* by the western media, Roy was repeatedly plagued by questions about how the book was received in India, especially because the picture it presents of India is not particularly flattering. Roy admits to the social critique in the book in several interviews but always resists attempts to view India as a monolithic entity or be drawn into debates on the question of authenticity. In her essay, "The End of Imagination," Roy dismisses any authorized definition of "Indianness":

> There's no such thing as an Authentic India or a Real Indian. There is no Divine Committee that has the right to sanction one single, authorized version of what India is or should be. There is no religion or language or caste or region or person or story or book that can claim to be its sole representative. There are, and can only be, visions of India, various ways of seeing it—honest, dishonest,

> wonderful, absurd, modern, traditional, male, female. They can be argued over, criticized, praised, scorned, but not banned or broken. Not hunted down. (37)

Here Roy is clearly making a case for the freedom of artistic expression and refuting critics who accuse Indo-English writers of partaking in a global mutilation in their representation of India. But it is her stylistic performance of using the oral epic tradition of storytelling and of dovetailing the English language to her own purposes, combined with the critique of globalization that eclipse the negative portrayal of a strife-torn, hetero-normative and class-conscious society. And just as Roy concludes *The God of Small Things* with a single word, "Tomorrow" (340) thereby suggesting a possibility of hope and renewal, she reveals her optimism about the future of India in an essay:

> "Corporatizing India is like trying to impose an iron grid on a heaving ocean, forcing it to behave. My guess is that India will not behave. It cannot. It's too old and too clever to be made to jump through the hoops all over again[...] and [...] I hope—too democratic to be lobotomized into believing in one single idea, which is eventually, what corporate globalization really is: Life is Profit" (*Algebra* 214).

By reiterating that she is not critical of postcolonial India per se but of the negative effects of globalization and consumerism on the country, Roy effectively counters possible accusations of being a "sell out" to the demands of the western market and effectively resists the discourse of cultural commodfication.[28]

Conclusion

In the summer of 2007, London hosted yet another Indian cultural festival. Titled "India Now," this three month long event was meant to showcase India's art and culture in the sixtieth year of Indian independence. The festival, estimated to attract a million people would exhibit Indian cinema, theatre, music, fashion, food and business through over 1500 events spread across London. Inaugurating the festival, mayor of London, Ken Livingstone described it as an opportunity to "experience the richness of Indian culture" while Indian celebrities like Shilpa Shetty waxed lyrical about how events like this would remind Londoners of the "amazing gifts" India had to offer the West.[1] Quite evidently Britain was yet to get over its colonial nostalgia even as the Indian subcontinent struggled with its colonial hangover. The only exception is that in the twenty-first century, lavish cultural festivals have replaced the colonial exhibitions and exotic museum displays of the nineteenth and twentieth century.

Events like "India Now" and the ones mentioned in the introduction prompted the writing of *Consuming India*. It is an attempt to understand how the West has, and continues to construct and consume cultural difference vis-à-vis specific sites, in this case, the Indian subcontinent and Britain. In other words, amidst the constant reification of ethnicity and the emergence of neo-orientalism, how can we evaluate Indian diasporic writing in relation to commodity culture and fetishization of cultural difference in Britain? Although the project is critical of specific Western institutions that seek to commodify cultural difference, it also draws attention to how Indians themselves are complicit, or not, in the process of cultural commodification. In my four chapters, I look

at specific ways in which India and/or Indians are fetishized in the West at particular historical moments and explore how Indians respond to such discourses.

As I studied the texts of Dean Mahomed, Wilkie Collins, Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy, I realized that the terms in my title – culture, identity, commodity became increasing nuanced in the project. The conclusion will attempt to unpack some of these terms and explain their centrality to the analysis. For instance, culture in any society is a dynamic entity, in a constant state of flux, and using the word culture in a specific way would be self-defeating for the project, as the Western construct of Indian culture within a pre-determined frame is precisely what the project is trying to critique. This is where the use of the trope of exoticism becomes very handy in the project. As Deborah Root suggests, exoticism "works through a process of dismemberment and fragmentation in which objects stand for images that stand for a culture or a sensibility as a whole"(42). For example, as Sunaina Maira has lucidly demonstrated in her article, *Henna and Hip Hop: The Politics of Cultural Production and the Work of Cultural Studies*, following Liv Tyler's henna-adorned hands on the 1997 cover issue of *Vanity Fair* and Madonna's henna-painted hands and Indian dance moves in the *Frozen* video, "henna, and other markers of Indo-chic, have become signifiers for a turn-of-the-millenium Orientalism"(342). The issue here then is how things are abstracted from their historical, social and cultural matrix and are used to signify something else that is in alignment with the popular perception of the Orient in the West. As I extend Root and Maira's argument into the nineteenth century and try to examine metropolitan-diasporic interactions in Britain through the trope of exoticism, I argue that labeling something as exotic both marks it as different and also functions as a specific lens for framing and controlling the

Other. In the twentieth century, exoticism becomes coded into the more sophisticated discourse of multiculturalism and through "cultural" festivals like "India Now," cultural difference becomes neatly packaged into events designed for metropolitan consumption. In today's globalized world, this becomes an effective way of ensuring that cultures and nationalities come into direct and actual contact and yet remain markedly distinct.

Any discussion of anxieties surrounding cultural difference is incomplete without addressing issues of identity. During the age of high imperialism, the impulse to exoticize and codify cultural difference stemmed primarily from the Western fear of losing its identity from the influx of Orientals and Oriental culture. For instance, as early as 1845, Parisian critic Theophile Gautier is highly ironic about the Algerian influence on France:

> It is strange, we believe we have conquered Algeria, but Algeria has conquered us. Our women already wear scarves interwoven with threads of gold, streaked with a thousand colours, which have served the harem slaves...hashish is taking the place of champagne; our Spahi officers look so Arab one would think they have captured themselves in a *smala*; they have adopted all the Oriental habits, so superior is primitive life to our so-called civilization. If this goes on, France will soon be Mahometan and we shall see the white domes of mosques rounding themselves on our horizons...we should indeed like to live to see the day. [2]

Gautier, of course is being deliberately ironic in his rhetoric, but the anxiousness about national identity is evident in every line. The British intelligentsia was no less anxious about the debilitating effect the influx of Indians and Indian goods would have on British national identity and writers like Daniel Defoe, who I have referred to in my second

chapter, actively voiced their concerns. The discourse of exoticism then becomes an effective way of controlling the other. This anxiousness about English identity continues well into the twentieth century and as my chapter of Hanif Kureishi demonstrates, leads diasporic writers like Kureishi, Syal and others as well as critics, especially of the Birmingham school of cultural studies to argue for a more inclusive definition of Britishness.

This leads me to the final term, commodity, in the title of my dissertation. Initially, I had envisioned the project to be clustered around a specific set of Oriental objects that had acquired some kind of cultural cache in Britain. I did not intend the things to be material objects per se, even something that is somewhat intangible but imbued with the Oriental aura in the western mind could be part of the discussion. So my first chapter is loosely based on "alternative healing," that is, the uniquely Indian method of shampooing popularized by Dean Mahomed; the second chapter on Indian diamonds which were wildly coveted by the British aristocracy in the nineteenth century; the third chapter on the "mystic East" or the fetisization of Indian spirituality in 1960s Britain and the final chapter on literary texts by Indian writers which have become a rage in the West in the final decades of the twentieth century. As I wrapped up the project however, commodification – be it of cultural production, Indian-ness or of women's bodies seemed to be ubiquitous in the project and emerged as the connecting tissue between the disparate chapters. It also prompted me to consider the central role of the production of Indian-ness in a diasporic context. So while the first and third chapters illustrate how Indians in Britain performed a specific version of Indian-ness for metropolitan consumption, the second and fourth chapters provides some historical context that necessitated such

performances. This analysis also offers a useful way to disrupt the acceptance/resistance binary in relation to the response of the Indian diasporic community to discourses of exoticism. As my analysis of Dean Mahomed, Hanif Kureishi and Arundhati Roy's work demonstrates, there can be no easy explanation for this, as self-orientalization and resistance to western institutional dominance is interwoven in their texts. It is perhaps more productive to analyze how Indian-ness operates as a fluid category and is constantly revised, re-imagined and performed by diasporic Indian communities in Britain. Most critical studies on the Indian diaspora focus on the way in which Indians abroad construct imaginary versions of their homeland in order to assimilate into the adopted culture. By looking at this commodification and performance of Indian-ness in Britain, my project suggests that the fantasy of the adopted land often control the production of Indian-ness as diasporic Indians attempt to assimilate into British society.

Endnotes

Introduction

[1] This quote is taken from Chandrani Lokuge's essay "'We must laugh at one another, or die' Yasmine Gooneratne's *A Change of Skies* and South Asian migrant identities" in *Shifting Continents/Colliding Cultures*, p. 30.

[2] See Deborah Root's *Cannibal Culture: Art, Appropriation and the Commodification of Difference*, p. 30.

[3] See David Howes edited *Cross-Cultural Consumption: Global markets, local realities*, p.1.

[4] This image is reproduced with permission from the Wellcome Trust, London. It is the same portrait that was on the souvenir notepad I bought on my trip. For more on this, see http: http://images.wellcome.ac.uk/

[5] For Jivraj's complete interview about the creation and launch of these dolls, see http://www.redhotcurry.com/entertainment/bollywood/2006/bollywood_dolls-launch.htm. For the Associated Content story on the launch, see http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/66262/welcome_to_the_exotic_world_of_india n.html

[6] Because my study dates back to the early nineteenth century to the pre-partitioned era of South Asia, it is important to underscore right at the beginning that in my project, I use the term "Indian" and "South Asian" interchangeably to indicate people of Indian sub-continental origin who migrated to the imperial metropolis from the last decades of the eighteenth century well into the current age.

[7] For more on this critical approach, see Rushdie's *Imaginary Homelands*, Geoffrey Kain edited *Ideas of Home: Literatures of Asian Migration* or Philippa Kafka's *On the Outside Looking In(Dian).*

[8] My use of the word "orientalism" in this dissertation grows out of Said's pioneering study in *Orientalism* of how the West constructed and represented the Orient in order to subjugate and control it.

[9] For more on this, see Stephen Foster's essay "Exoticism as a symbolic system," in *Dialectical Anthropology* 7 (1982/3): 21-30.

[10] In her introduction to a collected edition, Dunja M. Mohr has an elaborate footnote on the etymology of the word xenophobia and its various connotations: "Xenophobia is translated as 'fear of strangers'"(x). She quotes from Michael Banton's essay, "The Cultural determinants of Xenophobia," from Anthropology Today where he explains the distinction between xenophobia and racism: 'Racism can then be the name for that dimension by which persons assigned to another group are kept as a distance because they are considered racially inferior. Xenophobia can designate the way that others are kept at a distance because they are considered different"(8). Drawing on Banton, Mohr concludes that "racism implies hostility and extreme hatred, presupposing the superiority of the Self over the Other, whereas xenophobia is chiefly associated with fear of the Other – often fear of the Other within the Self" (x). It is in this sense that I use the word "xenophobia" in my dissertation.

[11] By Eastern imports here, I mean objects that were imported into England from any country in the Near East like Turkey, Far East like China, Japan, Java, Sumatra or from the Indian Subcontinent. I use the term imports to designate any item ranging from spices to textiles that were brought into the European mainland through the trade routes with the East. Also, for a through account of how Catherine of Braganza's dowry changed the pattern of Renaissance living, see Gertrude Thomas's book.

[12] Thomas mentions this on pg. 9. For a more detailed account, see Komroff, Manuel ed.*The Travels of Marco Polo*. New York: Garden City Publishing, 1930, 272.

[13] For the entire text of this article on the discourse of multiculturalism by Kureishi, see http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/aug/04/religion.uk

Chapter One

[1] Daniel Defoe: The Review of 1708. Qtd. in Thomas, *Richer Than Spices*, 48.

[2] See Gertrude Thomas, 49.

[3] I use the term "Eastern" interchangeably with the "Orient" in this chapter to suggest any of the countries in the Far East, the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East that comprised the Orient in nineteenth-century British imagination.

[4] By Eastern imports here, I mean objects that were imported into England from any country in the Near East like Turkey, Far East like China, Japan, Java, Sumatra or from the Indian Subcontinent. I use the term imports to designate any item ranging from spices to textiles that were brought into the European mainland through the trade routes with the East. Also, for a thorough account of how Catherine of Braganza's dowry changed the pattern of Renaissance living, see Gertrude Thomas's book.

[5] Several East India Company officials came back to Britain having amassed a fortune in India and having assumed the epithet of a "nabob" set up lavish establishments in London. Indian servants were an integral part of such establishments.

[6] I am using Anne McClintock's term here. In *Imperial Leather*, she makes a distinction between scientific racism and commodity racism: "I am doubly interested in the Pears' Soap ad because it registers an epochal shift that I see having taken place in the culture of imperialism in the last decades of the nineteenth century. This was the shift from *scientific racism* – embodied in anthropological, scientific and medical journals, travel writing and ethnographies – to what I call *commodity racism*. Commodity racism – in the specifically Victorian forms of advertising and photograph, the imperial Expositions and the museum movement – converted the narrative of imperial Progress into mass-produced *consumer spectacles*"(33).

[7] I am using this term in the sense that Sau-ling Cynthia Wong defines Frank Chin's use of "food pornography." Wong defines the term as a form of self-orientalization used by Asian American writers that "translates to reifying perceived cultural differences and exaggerating one's otherness in order to gain a foothold in a white-dominated social system [...] superficially, food pornography appears to be a promotion, rather than a vitiation or devaluation of one's ethnic identity"(55). Though Wong specifically uses this term in the context of the alimentary culture in Asian American literature, I think it has striking parallels to Dean Mahomed's self-orientalization in the early nineteenth century.

[8] In *Capital*, Marx defines use value: "The utility of a thing makes it a use-value. But this utility is not a thing of air. Being limited by the physical properties of the commodity, it has no existence apart from the commodity"(2).

[9] In an advertisement published in 1861 and which is part of the text, *London Labour and the London Poor,* Mayhew categorically emphasizes that the people included in his survey are "Non-Workers, or in other words, the Dangerous Classes of the Metropolis," clearly associating non-workers with criminality.

[10] In her seminal text *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt uses the term "contact zones" to "refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict"(6).

[11] Fisher conducts a comprehensive study on Mahomed's life in his two books, *The Travels of Dean Mahomed* and *The First Indian Author in English.*

[12] In 1848, *Punch* urged "Let us be a nation of shopkeepers as much as we please but there is no necessity that we should become a nation of advertisers." See Eric Clark's book, *The Want Makers - The World of Advertising: How They Make you Buy*, 1.

[13] Hoffenberg talks about this primarily in relation to the Colonial and Indian Exhibition of 1866 but I think is equally relevant to the Indian displays at the Great Exhibition.

[14] This image is reproduced with permission from the Victoria & Albert Museum, London. © V&A Images/Victoria and Albert Museum, London.

[15] This image is courtesy of Courtesy of Special Collections, Spencer Research Library, University of Kansas Libraries.

Chapter Two

[1] Christine Bolt quotes this from Dr.Cumming's 1859 text, *The Great Tribulation.* See page 182-3.

[2] For a detailed discussion on the sustained development of racial hierarchy in the nineteenth century, see Christine Bolt's *Victorian Attitudes to Race* and Douglas Lorimer's *Colour, Class and the Victorians.*

[3] This is a quote from an 1855 document by H. B Evans. See Bolt pages 178-9.

[4] Bolt quotes the 14 July 1866, p. 771 issue of the *Spectator* on page 166.

[5] In her seminal text *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation*, Mary Louise Pratt uses the term "contact zone" to "refer to the space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict"(6).

[6] As in the first chapter, I use the term "Asian" and "Indian" interchangeably to indicate any individual who traces their racial origins to the undivided Indian sub-continent.

[7] I use the term "Eastern" interchangeably with the "Orient" in this chapter to suggest any of the countries in the Far East, the Indian subcontinent and the Middle East that comprised the Orient in Victorian imagination.

[8] For a detailed discussion of this, see Upamanyu Mukherjee's *Crime and Empire*, pgs. 166-187.

[9] So had soap as is emphasized by Mrs. Sandboys aversion to living in dirt. Soap becomes an essential domestic commodity in Victorian England that would soon see a discourse centred around soap and dirt emerge out of England's relation with the colonies. For a detailed discussion on this aspect, see Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*. As the first chapter demonstrated, bathing wasn't a regular practice in any English household in the early nineteenth century, but the introduction of practices like the vapor bath and shampooing and the growing importance of spices with cleaning properties like pepper redefined cleaning rituals in Victorian England.

[10] The entire passage from Mayhew is worth quoting here: "Manchester at any time is, perhaps, one of the peculiar sights that this country affords.

To see the city of factories in all its bustle and all its life, with its forest of tall chimneys, like huge masts of brick, with long black flags of smoke streaming from their tops, is to look upon one of those scenes of giant industry that England alone can show... Here the buildings are monstrous square masses of brick, pierced with a hundred windows, while white wreaths of steam puff fitfully through their walls. Many a narrow thoroughfare is dark and sunless with the tall warehouses that rise up like bricken cliffs on either side... The streets, streaming with children going to or coming from their toil, are black with the moving columns of busy little things, like the paths to an ants' nest"(53).

[11] Though Mayhew constantly talks of Mr. Sandboys's fear of being perceived as an Ethiopian, and doesn't specifically mention Asian characters in these specific contexts, I use this to show the metropolitan fear of "foreigners." Also, as Peter Fryer's insightful analysis reveals, "black" was an umbrella term used in the nineteenth century to indicate anybody non-white. Asians were constantly referred to as "blacks" in newspapers and magazines. See Peter Fryer's *Staying Power* for more details on this usage.

[12] Hilda Gregg, in "The Indian Mutiny in Fiction," a review article that appeared in Blackwood's *Edinburgh Magazine* in 1897. This is quoted in pg.1 of Chakravarty's book, *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination.*

[13] For detailed discussion on the Cawnpore Massacres, see Chakravarty, Gautam. *The Indian Mutiny and the British Imagination.* Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005.

[14] Mukherjee seems to be making a move in the same direction when he suggests that "A central concern of Collins's novel is precisely to show up these colonialist assumptions to be utterly unreliable and thus subvert the crucial myth of the rule of law used to justify colonialism" (182).

[15] See page 657 of Ashis Roy's "The Fabulous Imperialist Semiotic of Wilkie Collins's The Moonstone" in the *New Literary History*, Vol. 24 (1993).

Chapter Three

[1] For George Lamming's essay "Journey to an Expectation," see *Writing Black Britain 1948-1998*, p. 57.

[2] For an excerpt from E.R. Braithwaite's novel, *To Sir, with Love*, see *Writing Black Britain 1948-1998*, p. 48.

[3] For full text of Robin Cook's "Chicken Tikka Masala" speech, see http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2001/apr/19/race.britishidentity

[4] For the entire text of this article on race and multiculturalism by Kureishi, see http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2005/aug/04/religion.uk

[5] See pg. 24 of Stuart Hall's essay in Hall, Stuart. "The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity" in Anthony D.King ed. *Culture, Globalization, and the World System: Contemporary Conditions for the Representation of Identity*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1997, pp.19-39.

[6] For the entire text of Enoch Powell's infamous speech, see http://www.telegraph.co.uk/comment/3643823/Enoch-Powells-Rivers-of-Blood-speech.html

[7] For more on the active policing strategies implemented, see Hall,S., Critcher,C., Jefferson, T., Clarke, J. and Roberts, B. *Policing the Crisis – Mugging, the State, and Law and Order*. London: Macmillan, 1978.

[8] Asian-Americans were traditionally regarded by white America as "model minority," a variation of the old imperialist policy of divide and rule by which they could be distinguished from the African-American community, generally charged with irresponsible and disruptive behavior. Anannya Bhattacharjee suggests: "On the one hand, the term 'model' signifies a standard of excellence, set by the dominant power, which is predominantly white and wealthy, and is presumably an invitation to the minority to join the majority once it realizes its model-ness. On the other hand, the term 'minority' signifies a relegation to the ranks of the not-majority"(Emerging Voices 241). She elaborates that in its desire to be the ideal community, the South Asian bourgeois leadership doesn't realize that it subscribes to the official discourse on race. For more on this, also see Monica Fludernik ed. *Diaspora and Multiculturalism.*

[9] *In Imperial Eyes*, Pratt coins the term "auto-ethnography": "I use these terms to refer to instances in which colonized subjects undertake to represent themselves in ways that engage with the colonizer's own terms. If ethnographic texts are a means by which Europeans represent to themselves their (usually subjugated) others, autoethnographic texts are those the others construct in response to or in dialogue with those metropolitan representations. ...Autoethnographic texts are not, then, what are usually thought of as "authentic" or autochthonous forms of self-representation...Rather autoethnography involves partial collaboration with and appropriation of the idioms of the conqueror" (7).

[10] See Kobena Mercer, *Welcome to the Jungle*. London: Routledge, 1994, p.291.

[11] As Procter points out, Stuart Hall's essay "New Ethnicities" "draws attention to the fact that the category 'black' actually houses a stressful, internally discrepant community that it can only claim to partially articulate"(5-6). But it is also important to

acknowledge that even though the meaning of "black" as a category has been reconfigured, it is important to underscore the importance of the term as a key organizing category used to create solidarity among immigrant groups in a racially polarized Britain.

[12] In a strikingly similar moment, in Ghosh's *The Shadow Lines*, the narrator, indoctrinated by Tridib believes that life is meaningless without imagination, yet when the imaginary realm is punctured by the narrator's experience of London, he realizes how ephemeral his ideas could be and he takes recourse to the materiality of physical experience by looking for succor in a physical relationship with the Englishwoman, May.

[13]As Dawson suggests, "Colonial and racist discourses, in other words, rendered black men as both hypermasculine and feminine at one and the same time" (40).

[14] See Hanif Kureishi, 'Dirty Washing,' *Time Out*, 14-20 November 1985.

Chapter Four

[1] Lahiri in an interview with Washington Post is described as "a slender, soft-spoken woman with a caramel complexion, large limpid eyes and a flair for fashion." For the full interview, see http://www.washingtonpost.com/ac2/wp-dyn/A59256-2003Oct7?language=printer. Similarly, a salon.com interview with Arundhati Roy after her winning the Booker Prize draws significant attention to her unusual good looks: "She's Arundhati Roy, and she's remarkably tiny -- hovering around 5-foot-2 -- despite the black platform shoes she's wearing and new literary lioness persona. An explosion of curly black hair frames her face, which showcases nearly childlike, saucer eyes and cheekbones that erupt the moment she talks or smiles." For the full interview, see http://www.salon.com/sept97/00roy.html

[2] This was not the first time that Westerns readers, especially in America had made a beeline for writers of a "hot" ethnicity. As Thrupkaew mentions, the early 1990s saw a proliferation of Latina narratives, Laura Esquivel's *Like Water for Chocolate*, Sandra Cisneros's *The House on Mango Street* and Julia Alvarez's *How the Garcia Girls Lost Their Accents* among others (300).

[3] For more on the commodification of "Indianness," see Parag Khanna's article on the Indian diaspora at http://www.newamerica.net/publications/articles/2008/indian_diaspora_8069

[4]After Roy's Booker Prize win, her novel was published in more than twenty nations, was listed at No. 1 on the Sunday Times of London's bestseller list and had earned her more than one million dollars. See http://www.salon.com/sept97/00roy.html

[5] Mustapha Marrouchi when talking about the global consumption of exotic products points out that "An exotic cast of features, myths, stereotypes and exercises in sensory seduction (scents of perfumes, spices, honeyed mint tea, jellaba, Casbah, Medina, babouche, sirocco, souk, story-tellers, snake-charmers, conjurors, water-sellers, even dentists with their own stalls, pliers ("teeth pulled on the spot"), seemingly deconstructed by writers, surface with a vengeance in the marketing designs of their literary productions"(17).

[6]In an interesting note, Thrupkaew mentions that a couple of years after her crowning as one of the most beautiful people in the world, Arundhati Roy cut off her long hair, telling *The New York Times* that she did not wish to be known simply as "some pretty woman who wrote a book." Roy has gone on to write several essays where she is unflinchingly critical of both the Indian politicians and bourgeoisie and the Western corporations, which predictably has garnered little attention in the West.

[7] Huggan borrows the term "Indo-chic" from Padmini Mongia's paper on Arundhati Roy. See "The Making and Marketing of Arundhati Roy," unpublished paper presented at the 'India: Fifty Years After' conference, September 1997, University of Barcelona, Spain.

[8] For a detailed analysis of how Markandaya constructs an Oriental India for Western consumption, see Ranasinha's book.

[9] Burton takes this quote from the review of *Remember the House*, *New York Herald Tribune*, typescript collection of quotes, box 3, HGARC.

[10] See http://www.guardian.co.uk/culture/1999/jun/29/artsfeatures.arundhatiroy

[11] See Eakin, Hugh. "Literary Prizes in the Age of Multiculturalism," unpublished research paper, Harvard University, 1.

[12] In his essay "'Commonwealth Literature' does not exist," Rushdie is extremely critical of the usage of the term: "The nearest I could get to a definition sounded distinctly patronizing: 'Commonwealth literature,' it appears, is that body of writing created, I think, in the English language, by persons who are not themselves

white Britons, or Irish, or citizens of the United States of America...Not only was it a ghetto, but it was actually an exclusive ghetto. And the effect of creating such a ghetto was, is, to change the meaning of the far broader term 'English literature' – which I'd always taken to mean simply the literature of the English language – into something far narrower, something topographical, nationalistic, possibly even racially segregationist"(63).

[13] See Maya Jaggi, *Guardian Weekend*, 24 May 1997.

[14] Huggan defines "strategic exoticism" as "the means by which postcolonial writers/thinkers, working from within exoticist codes of representation, either manage to subvert those codes ('inhabiting them to criticize them', Spivak 1990 a), or succeed in redeploying them for the purposes of uncovering differential relations of power."(32).

[15] This argument finds validation in Alex Tickell's observation: "Roy's reference to Kathakali can be read as an engagement with the wider implications of cultural commodification, both as a reflection of western desires, but also, metafictionally, as a set of choices about postcolonial identity" (82).

[16] Mullaney comments on this aspect of Roy's writing in her book where she suggests that the chapter on the Kathakali man "offers a commentary on her own fiction making, on the architecture of her own story" (57). Taking Mullaney as a starting point, my paper explores the motif of performance both within the kathakali narrative and the larger context of the book.

[17] Roy's construction of identity as performance has striking parallels to Judith Butler's pioneering work on gender and performance. Butler, in *Gender Trouble*, underscores the constructed nature of gender and suggests that an individual's gendered identity is not something intrinsic, but something that has been constituted through a complex interplay of external forces: "Gender ought not to be construed as a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts follow; rather, gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time, instituted in an exterior space through a stylized repetition of acts" (179). For more on this theorizing of gender as performance, see Butler's text.

[18] Priya Joshi explains in her book: "In Homi Bhabha's influential description of it, mimicry is a form of Western desire imposed upon its Others as a way of both inventing them and articulating mastery over them" (24).

[19] When Mammachi discovers Ammu's relationship with Velutha, she is furious. Roy clearly states that Mammachi's tolerance of "'Men's Needs' as far as her son was concerned, became the fuel for her unmanageable fury at her daughter. She had defiled generations of breeding"(258).

[20] Hai suggests that Baby Kochamma's complex reaction to Velutha "is an example of what Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have called 'displaced abjection,' when the relatively powerless pick on those even more powerless than themselves" (155).

[21] In fact, the "Heart of Darkness" image is reiterated numerous times throughout the text, most often as an epithet for Ayemenem. When the police torture Velutha and Rahel and Estha are forced to witness "History in live performance" (309) in the "Heart of Darkness," Roy clearly indicates that even though a hotel chain had recently bought the "Heart of Darkness," over three hundred years of colonial rule has left a disturbing legacy, for instance, "Man's subliminal urge to destroy what he could neither subdue or deify" (308). Ayemenem seems to be hopelessly caught between this legacy that the colonial rulers left and the onslaught of corporate globalization and consumerism.

[22] Roy is keenly aware that writing as a profession has become more economically viable and writers have almost become commodities themselves: "Never before have we been more commercially viable. We live and prosper in the heart of the marketplace" (*Algebra* 193).

[23] See John, Binoo K. "The New Deity of Prose". *India Today* 27th Oct. 1997. 23-6

[24] Tickell gestures towards this in his article: "Roy is quick to emphasize the comparative coherence of these local Kathakali narratives which, unlike the postcolonial novel, envelop their indigenous audiences in a sense of sheltered cultural familiarity" (83).

[25] Ghosh supplements this argument when she suggests that print culture offers new possibilities for the age old oral epic tradition: "The text printed in English, which signifies cosmopolitan address in this postcolonial milieu, quite effectively translates the classical vernacular" (81).

[26] Roy says this on Jon Simmons' website. Mullaney also quotes this passage on page 56 of her book. For further discussion of Roy's comments on her writing, see Jon Simmons website on Roy at http://website.lineone.net/~jon.simmons/roy/tgost4.htm.

[27] Tickell is aware of Roy's play with language: "Throughout *The God of Small Things*, Roy splits and reverses phrases, creates portmanteau words, splices adjectival compounds and indulges in various forms of lexical and orthographic play" (80). Mullaney also points this out in her discussion on Roy's use of language (63-7).

[28] An earlier version and a portion of this chapter appears in the *South Asian Review*: "Performing Narrative: The Motif of Performance in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things.*" South Asian Review 28.2 (December 2007): 217-236.

Conclusion

[1] For more on this, see the report "'Taj Mahal' afloat on the Thames," July 18, 2007. http://www.thehindu.com/2007/07/18/stories/2007071862121200.htm

[2] Deborah Root quotes Gautier at length from Joanna Richardson's book, *Theophile Gautier: His Life and Times*. See p.19.

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