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Symbiotic Feminist Postcolonial Overlapping: Understanding Theoretical Challenges and Exploring Possibilities

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Abstract:

Historically, the policing strategies of institutional forces in modern Western societies shaped and set limits on the representation of what are considered essentially subordinate beings. These erasures and absences hardly found their voice in the canonical texts written under the influence of patriarchy and colonialism that reinforce stereotypical representation and systematic "othering" of the characters in the institutionalized discourses of patriarchy and colonialism. Colonialism and patriarchy have been closely entwined historically. The issues of identity conform to modernist essentialist agenda, and aligned with the politics of colonization and domination, patriarchy becomes the master narrative that is uninterested in the displaced, marginalized, exploited, oppressed and, therefore, the excluded presences. An end to the physical presence of the colonial powers has not meant an end to the discourse of oppression which has affected the consciousness of the oppressed through the ages. Deconstruction of patriarchal and colonial discourses through the lenses of feminism and postcolonialism offers possibilities for the decolonization and subversion of oppressive order.

Key words: Postcolonialism, Feminism, Narratology, Canonicity, Rewritings, Deconstruction

Introduction:

The postcolonial and feminist theories examine how women and the colonized are represented in colonial and postcolonial literature, and challenge the assumptions about women and the colonized both in literature and society. The pockets of resistance offered by these theories challenge the reliability of historical representation which survived the ages and disrupt the prevailing discourses. Working in the interpretive zone, the feminist and postcolonial theories collaborate in order to carry out the struggle for the legitimacy and recognition of the "othered."

Symbiotic Feminist Postcolonial Overlapping:

As a counter force to the oppressive discursive enterprises of colonialism and patriarchy are postcolonialism and feminism. Postcolonialism and feminism challenge the "writing practices" and rewrite the canonical writings. Richardson explains the departure from monolithic and standard writing practices legitimized in colonialism and patriarchy in this way:

> Language [. . .] is a constitutive force, creating a particular view of reality and of the Self [. . .]. No textual staging is ever innocent. Styles of writing are neither fixed nor neutral but reflect the historically shifting domination of particular schools or paradigms. Having some sense of the history of our writing practices helps us to demystify standard practices and loosen their hold on our psyches. (518)

The complicit involvement of male theoretical hegemony in postmodern writings warrants an investigation. According to Richardson, the shifting grounds explicitly posit the interests of "particular schools or paradigms" that have laid out the formulaic guidelines for writing practices. However, these need to be investigated for better knowing of these standard practices that will thus provide us with a new direction to

writings. The feminist-postcolonial rewritings, as a process to demystify, come under scrutiny as they deal with the gaps, erasures, silences, secrets and mysteries. As discourses, cultures and histories are intertwined, rewriting intelligently and innovatively is an effort to investigate further and farther. The canon serving the cause of institutional forces of patriarchy and colonialism has talked of fixity, universality and neutrality while the rewritings of erasure, absences and silences contend this assumption.

Imperialism means the set of ideas which stands for the motives pertaining to the physical domination of a powerful country over the weaker states which have been annexed by force. It can also be political and economic coercion of the marginalized cultures. The domain of imperialism extends to political, social, economic, cultural and territorial spheres. It establishes relationship between the imperial power and dependencies and is noted for creating inequality, injustice, oppression and exploitation. There have been many imperial powers which can be called Empires. Historically, they range from the Persian, the Roman, the Ottoman, the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the French, the Russian, the Chinese, the British, to the American Empire. In my study, I take cultural imperialism into consideration which, as the Western concept, has colonized the other/othered cultures. The Western canonical texts imperialized knowledge and stereotyped the othered cultures by establishing prototypes in history. However, my focus is on the textual colonization of the marginalized characters rooted in the subordinate cultures by the colonial and patriarchal writing.

I take colonization as the by-product of imperialism in line with Said's realization. It is the implementation and application of the ideology of imperialism in the form of installing and capturing distant territories by the Empire (or its agents) which acts as center of power. Colonization also entails the aftermaths of this physical intervention and interruption of

imperial culture in the other/othered cultures. Said delineates the distinction between "colonialism" and "imperialism" in *Culture and Imperialism*: ""imperialism" means the practice, the theory, and the attitudes of a dominating metropolitan center ruling a distant territory; "colonialism," which is almost always a consequence of imperialism, is the implanting of settlements on distant territory" (9). Here we can notice that colonialism is the physical aspect of imperialism. It is the application of imperialist philosophy and imperialist secessionist designs.

I equate the process of colonization as a product of imperialism as well as patriarchal system. The imperial powers overpowered the weaker nations. Likewise, patriarchy extended its control over women. The experiences of colonized were of different types owing to ethnicity, sex, race, gender and location. Similarly, the experiences of women also vary from one patriarchal system to another. What has connected colonialism with patriarchy is the fact that these systems have consistently imposed structural and hierarchical oppression over the weaker selves. I am concerned with the "epistemic violence" which silenced the colonized and women in the Western canonical writings and, consequently, erased their voices and suppressed their experiences in the oppressive systems. With respect to the Western canonical narratives, the political agendas of feminism and postcolonialism overlap; both challenge the canon, endeavor to inscribe the experiences of the marginal subject (female and/or postcolonial) and involve the concepts of othering, voice, representation, identity formation, speech and silence.

In my study, imperialism and patriarchy have been discussed together. I read many parallel issues in them. I focus on how in both the theories, imperial and patriarchal discourses cause "othering" of their subjects. Both the colonized people and women struggle for resisting the dominance and hegemony of both the colonizers and men. However, at the same time, I

acknowledge the essential differences in their spheres of resistance, issues and problems. We need to explore as to how and why women's stereotypical roles were unilaterally and one-dimensionally determined beforehand by the patriarchs. A woman is not allowed to create her identity on her own. She is not allowed to grow naturally but is cultured on the Petri dish[1] of patriarchal environment.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin notice that both feminist and post-colonial discourses work on the inversion of the dominating structures like substituting a female tradition or traditions in place of a male-dominated canon. We can add, here, the substitution of a colonial tradition with the postcolonial. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin reiterates Jones' understanding that both the feminist and postcolonial critics have reread the classical texts with the view that "a canon is produced by the intersection of a number of readings and reading assumptions legitimized in the privileging hierarchy of a patriarchal or 'metropolitan' concept of 'literature'" (*The Empire Writes Back* 176). So the rewritings work towards "the possibility of reconstructuring [what is left out in] the canon" instead of "exchange of texts" (*The Empire Writes Back* 176). They change the reading and re/writing practices for all texts and, consequently, contribute towards the subversion of the canon in the light of postcolonial and feminist discursive practices. For Parry, Fanon and other critics address the issue of limits imposed by the "silencing" effect of colonialism and holds that a sufficient space can be created so that "the colonized can be written back into history" ("Problems in Current Theories" 23). I wonder if "sufficient space" has been created by the rewritings in order to counter the "silencing" effect of colonialism and patriarchy.

[1] I am using this term metaphorically. In a laboratory, a Petri dish is used to culture cells under controlled sterilized environment. Here, the women have been cultured socially and politically under the controlled patriarchal conditions.

I, here, study and explain the terms "postcolonial" and "postcolonialism" with reference to colonialism. Pennycook explains colonialism as "a location of discourses, cultures and histories that merits constant further investigation" (8). Slemon in "The Scramble for Post-Colonialism," claims that the term 'Post-colonialism' "de-scribes a remarkably heterogeneous set of subject positions [through the field of representation], professional fields [like Western formation of the field of "political science," English literary studies, Western syllabus of humanities as product of colonization developed during the period of colonialism and introduced in the colonies], and critical enterprises," critiques "totalizing forms of Western historicism" and challenges the "colonialism's multiple strategies for regulating Europe's others" (16–17). When I equate Pennycook's understanding of colonialism with Stephen Slemon's viewing of "post-colonialism," I understand that colonialism is not a linear experience; it is heterogeneous and multidimensional. Colonialism is an ongoing phenomenon as Pennycook suggests that experience of colonialism is still under-investigated and unexhausted. From the above discussion it can be established that, like colonialism, postcolonialism is an ongoing and multipronged critical discursive enterprise which acts as a deregulatory force to the process of colonialism. One of the major functions undertook by this term is that of de-scribing "Europe's others" which are the former colonies of the Europe.

In my study, I use term "postcolonialism" instead of "post-colonialism" on the plea that hyphen (-) after post gives the impression to me as if we are talking of a life-after-colonialism. In my study, "postcolonialism" studies the culture once it has been affected by the colonial rule and had its bearings even once the physical rule was over. Different critics and theorists have mostly defined postcolonial with regard to the colonial rule. Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin define the disputed term(s) "postcolonial/post-colonial" in their "Preface,"

to *The Post-Colonial Studies Reader* and associate it with "an amorphous set of discursive practices, akin to the postmodern," an "historically located set of cultural strategies" (xv) employed by the writers from independent (former) colonies, and the totality of diverse practices which have become characteristic of the post-colonial world from the moment of colonization to the present day. For Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin as well as for Thieme, the use of "post-colonial" remains restricted to "writing by those peoples formerly colonized by Britain" (*The Empire Writes Back* l) and "the Anglophone literatures of countries other than Britain and the United States" (Thieme 1). In these definitions, the center has been defined as Britain and the United States. Postcolonial literature as Anglophonic only is a limited definition when we read Chinua Achebe's call for "new English" (*The Post-colonial Studies Reader* 286). Ngugi wa Thiong'o also questions English language as the language of empire by saying that "[t]he bullet was the means of the physical subjugation. Language was the means of the spiritual subjugation" (9). He suggests that the African Literature should be written in African languages as language is a carrier of culture and only African languages can carry African experience in the truest sense.

I find the definition of postcolonialism, "an amorphous set of discursive practices, akin to the postmodern," contradictory. Over the years, this discipline has shown relevance and morphed into a definite recognizable theory with its protocols and writings. In order to establish my point, I enumerate the projects undertaken by the postcolonial theory. Parry pinpoints, relevant to my study, that it seeks to establish "alternative protocols in disciplinary studies," develops what Edward Said calls "oppositional consciousness," posits "nothing less than new objects of knowledge [. . .] new theoretical models that upset or at the very least radically alter the prevailing paradigmatic norms", and "the end of dominating,

coercive systems of knowledge" ("Problems in Current Theories" 13).

My work is directly related to the writing practices of the Empire and investigates rewritings which claim to de-scribe the colonized characters and absences. It falls into the category of postcolonial literature thereof. In this context, one important feature of post-colonial literature as observed by Sharrad in "Speaking the Unspeakable: London, Cambridge and the Caribbean" is that:

> [I]t offers a more cogent description of Empire by *de-scribing* it—by allowing the *unspeakable a space in which to speak*, *uncovering gaps* in discourse and revealing hidden dialogue and intercourse. The colonial text, on the other hand, obscures and *silences* Empire by covering it over with inscription, by offering *the* impression of total description, papering over gaps, containing dialogue and denying intercourse. (216, stressed added)

This quote reiterates writing of rewriting as a project of de-scribing Empire and its texts by writing the unwritten, speaking the unspeakable, and revealing the gaps. This quotation takes colonial writings as monolithic and standard writings which gave the false impression of "total description." In the colonial-postcolonial relationship, postcolonialism makes allowance for de-scribing the unspeakable, the erasures, the absences, and the silences. The rewritings also fall in the definition of "alternative protocols" and "new theoretical models" against the writings recognizable with the "prevailing paradigmatic norms," and "dominating, coercive systems of knowledge."

"Postcolonialism", as a term has been frequently *misunderstood*. Gilbert and Tompkins in "Introduction: Reacting (to) Empire" break away from the usage of "Postcolonialism", as a "temporal concept[2]" (2) which is

[2] Gilbert & Tompkins mean the time when the physical involvement and the interruption of the colonizers ended.

concerned with time of colonization and interpret it as "an engagement with and contestation of colonialism's discourses, power structures, and social hierarchies" (2). They quote Lawson's understanding of postcolonialism as a "politically motivated historical-analytical movement [which] engages with, resists, and seeks to dismantle the effects of colonialism in the material, historical, cultural-political, pedagogical, discursive, and textual domains" (156). They conclude that, as a critical discourse, therefore, postcolonialism is both "a textual effect and a reading strategy" (Gilbert & Tompkins 2). They understand that postcolonialism's agenda is to dismantle the hegemonic boundaries, binary oppositions and work on the "continued destabilization of the cultural and political authority of imperialism" (Gilbert & Tompkins 3). The political, discursive, textual, historical and analytical aspects of the term postcolonialism come under study in addition to the reading of absences in the Western canonical texts.

The distinction between colonialism and postcolonialism is because of the essential differences in their approach towards writing practices. These differences entail the deviation from European colonial discourse. What is normative, standard and canonical in European discourse is erasure of the colonized, silencing of the othered, universalizing the colonized prototypes and leaving out the colonized as unrepresentables. Contrary to the above defined agenda of postcolonialism, if it fails to recognize the "differences" it will recreate the hierarchies, misreadings, silencings, and ahistoricisms that are part of the imperial enterprise. Tiffin, Chris, and Alan Lawson argue that "[i]mperial textuality appropriates, distorts, erases, but it also contains" (6). In case of my study, historically contextualized rewritings are the location to see how far postcolonialism has read the absences. If the rewritings have been contained by the imperial or patriarchal writings, its apparent agenda to reright the distorted becomes questionable. I argue that rewriting imperial/classical texts rests on Bhabha's concept of

ambivalence[3] as the rewritings have been done in relation to the writings. For meaning making, they still retain the pre-structures of writings and negotiate powers between the binaries of "presence" and "absence."

Furthermore, Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back* use the term 'postcolonial' "to cover all the culture affected by the imperial processes from the moment of colonization to the present day" (2). I also use the term postcolonial in the same context. I undertake that the colonial rule is not over yet and, therefore, the rewritten affected cultures need to be studied afresh.

Reinscribing Voice:

One of the major concerns of the rewritings which directly relates to my study of absences is the concept of "voice." In the master discourse, the voices of the "othered" are either absent or have not been listened to. The standardized Western writings have consciously stifled the voices of the women and the marginalized. I view this politics of voice by comparing the polemical views of Spivak and Bhabha. To incorporate the feminist perspective along with the postcolonial, Spivak's essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" takes an essentialist stance regarding the politics of voice. Spivak in the essay considers that women in many societies have been metaphorically colonized and othered:

> It is, rather, that, both as object of colonialist historiography and as subject of insurgency, the ideological construction of gender keeps the male dominant. If, in the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and cannot speak,

[3] Bhabha redefines the power relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. He is of the view that neither the colonized is "always impotent" nor the colonizer is "always powerful"(Bhabha 2002: 6). He reads the element of "ambivalence" in this set of binary opposition. See Homi K. Bhabha quoted in Helen Gilbert & Joanne Tompkins, "Introduction: Reacting (To) Empire" published in *Post-colonial Drama: Theory, practice, politics.* London and New York: Routledge, 2002.

> the subaltern as female is even more deeply in shadow. ("Can the Subaltern Speak?" 287)

It implicates that the silencing of subaltern women extends to the whole of the colonial world, and to the silencing and muting of all the (male or female) natives. While studying postcolonial and feminist rewritings, it is a point-to-be-noted, if the female-erasure, non-elite, muted-subaltern women from the perspective of gender are still in the shadow and under-privileged. It is unlike Bhabha who claims that "native voice can be recovered." Benita Parry in "Problems in Current Theories of Colonial Discourse" reads Bhabha's standing on the politics of voice. Bhabha "sets out to liberate the colonial from its debased inscription as Europe's monolithic and shackled Other, and into an autonomous native 'difference'. [. . .] the subaltern has spoken, and his readings of the colonialist text recover a native voice" (24). Bhabha here talks of native's autonomy and difference. In this way, the native evades and transgresses in the colonial discourse and refuses the demands of colonial narrative. From these arguments, we can question if the rewritings have recovered the silenced voices by reading the canonical texts or the subalterns have still been controlled in the rewritings and could not speak out or were still not allowed to speak out.

Politics of Othering:

The rewritings study the othering (politics of unrepresentable) of the female and colonized in the Western canonical texts. In my understanding, the absences, silences and erasures in the classic texts owe to the othering of the less privileged and unrepresentable characters at the margins in representation and the narrative. The word "other" alienates human beings from "us [fellow-feeling]" and from the rest of human beings. It categorizes the human beings into superiors, the powerful and the inferiors, the subalterns. It creates a sense of estrangement

and bifurcation among the factions within a society or among the cultures. The gerund "othering" conveys the sense of an ongoing process. In the exploitative capitalist colonial and patriarchal societies, the human beings have been demarked on these lines. In order to explain the concept of Other/other or othering, I draw on the understandings from Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin. They (1998) explain the terms 'Other/other' from the analysis of the formation of subjectivity by Lacan. In post-colonial theory, the "other" refers to the colonized subject, marginalized by imperialist discourse. The Other is the hegemonic "being" who fabricates the other—with the small 'o'—through language, gaze, attitude and desire. The term 'othering' was coined by Gayatri Spivak. According to her, it is a dialectical process ranging from the colonizing 'Other' to its colonized 'other'. Her understating of othering is closer to Lacanian concept of othering where 'other' designates the other who resembles the self and 'Other' is the great 'Other' in whose gaze, other gets the identity.

Jacques Lacan in the lecture "The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I as Revealed in Psychoanalytic Experience," delivered at the 16th International Congress of Psychoanalysis, Zurich, July 17, 1949 explains the mirror stage:

> We have only to understand the mirror stage as *an identification*, in the full sense that analysis gives to the term: namely, the transformation that takes place in the subject when he assumes an image – whose predestination to this phase-effect is sufficiently indicated by the use, in analytic theory, of the ancient term *imago*. ("The Mirror Stage as Formative of the Function of the I" 1-2)

Lacan here interprets the mirror stage as formative in the construction of the "I" and structure of subjectivity. These lines explain the "Imaginary order" where the subject identifies itself by its own image. The mirror stage describes the process of objectification of one's perceived visual appearance. Is rewriting

writing of "mirror stage" then as the subjectivities are constructing and reclaiming their (transformational) image (or subjectivity) in the narrative of rewritings whom they can identify themselves with?

Writers such as J.M. Coetzee, Wilson Harris, V.S. Naipaul, George Lamming, Patrick White, Chinua Achebe, Margaret Atwood, and Jean Rhys, enlisted by Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin in *The Empire Writes Back,* have all rewritten and given creative and imaginative subversive responses to Western canonical texts "with a view to restructuring European 'realities' in post-colonial terms, not simply by reversing the hierarchal order, but by interrogating the philosophical assumptions on which that order was based" (33). These writers have challenged the structured reality essentialized by the European writings. They have given a new reality to the periphery by writing back to the center and its stereotypical representation of the ruled in their rewritings.

Re-narratives Revise Absences:

As telling, retelling, writings and rewritings are in the narrative form so the study of narrative would be a marked difference in studying the absences in the writings and rewritings. Narratives as a focal point of study are again important because they have direct relation with the culture. Therefore, the study of absences is a cultural issue at the same time. I take a start with the attempt to know what the narratives are and how their elements have created differences in writing-rewriting. I term poststructuralist narratives as differential narratives on this base. In my understanding, I take canonical writings as structuralist narratives of patriarchy and colonial powers. The poststructuralist rewritings are questioning their reliability. Cohn and Shires in the Chapter, "The Structures of Narrative: Story," explain that a narrative "orders events temporally" (58). Temporality establishes

relation between a story and its telling. It has to do with the arrangement of the events in time. The rewritings, I hold, question the temporality which erased certain less privileged characters and are re-presented in the feminist, postcolonial, poststructuralist and postmodern culture. The components of narration are explained as temporality, agency and focalization **(**the perspective of narration). In the colonial/patriarchal structuralist and the postcolonial/feminist poststructuralist narration, I take into consideration the narrating agent (who narrates), the focalizer (who sees), and the focalized (the subject of the narration) to study the values which have been (re)attached to the colonial-colonized and male-female relationship in the rewritings.

To further study the structure of narrative, I read Cohan and Shires's understanding in the book *Telling Stories: A Theoretical Analysis of Narrative Fiction.* They define narratives and their dependence on structures: "Narratives require close study because stories structure the meanings by which a culture lives" (1). This definition establishes *a link* among narrative, structure, meaning-making and culture. As the definition goes, a narrative is a means to construct social reality so poststructuralist study of the colonial and patriarchal canonized narrative(s) re-defines the conventions which are "cultural agreements about the relation of a sign and its meanings" (3). I expand upon this idea and take on that in the re-telling/rewritings, the narrating "I" deconstructs the seemingly conventionalized "cultural agreements," in the colonial and patriarchal narrative(s) which marked and "crossed out" the erasures, absences and silences in the canonized conventional writings.

In the rewritings, the narrating "I" asserts its presence and finds a space for its expression. In this manner, it furthers the process of meaning-making and creates possibilities for multidimensional realities and critically reconsiders the traditional practices of reading a textual reality. Thus, the

study of absences provides the readers and the critics with analytic perspectives to voice their concerns. It has opened up the 'closed texts' to new re/interpretations, re/readings and re/writings:

> 'Our' Homer is not identical with the Homer of the Middle Ages, nor 'our' Shakespeare with that of his contemporaries [. . .] All literary works, in other words, are *'rewritten'*, *if only unconsciously*, by the societies which read them [. . .] and this is one reason why what counts as literature is a notably *unstable* affair (Eagleton 11, my italics).

Reading affected by unstable social signs, values and codes has been a way of *rewriting unconsciously*. The present day rewriting(s) are a conscious rereading and rewriting, triggered by the "concerns" of the new theories in the contemporary literary theory. Therefore, meaning-making and literary production is an ongoing process. We can equate this process of re-reading and rewriting the "worldly text[4]" affected by social sign system/ codes with Roland Barthes' claim:

> [. . .] textual analysis impinges upon the idea of *a final signified*. The work does not stop, does not close. It is henceforth less a question of explaining or even describing, than of entering into the play of the signifiers; of enumerating them, perhaps [if the text allows], but not hierarchising them. Textual analysis is *pluralist.* (qtd. in Cohan and Shires 25)

Henceforth, the rewritings further the cause of plurality and fluidity of signified. They are not merely destabilizing hierarchizing; they have engaged the colonial and patriarchal presences in the writings, given space to the formerly absences in the writings and apparently negotiated their rightful identity

[4] Said associates a text with the world. He acknowledges that a text has "a material presence, a cultural and social history, a political and even an economic being as well as a range of implicit connections to other texts" (21). He connects the text with the worldly affairs and finds the text and the world around as intertwined. See Bill Ashcroft and D. P. S. Ahluwalia, "Worldliness: the text" *Edward Said.* Routledge, London; New York : 2001.

against their stereotypical presentation. Roland Barthes's standpoint opens a text (canonized writings in case of my study) to the numerous readings, re-readings and, thus, rewritings. The binary oppositions (of presence/ absence) have had allowed "colonialism and patriarchy to signify order" (Cohan and Shires 39) while their opposite side of the binaries, the colonized and women—the absence(s) — have attempted to challenge this 'order.' Certain significant questions arise here. How far the absence could challenge and 're-right' their omissions in the writing? Are there still gaps, omissions, contradictions, ellipses, erasures, silences and absences left out in the rewritings themselves? And if they are there, why and how they can be 're-righted' need further deliberation and study.

Rewritings and Narratology:

To address the issues raised above, the focus on the narratives is imperative as the narratives, lives and texts are inseparably interconnected. Dominant narratives (master narratives of the dominant Other) crossed out certain underlings in the culture as absences while the marginalized section re-attempted to re-present itself in the re-writings. Narratives are so pervasive (and persuasive) in human life as Bruner and Weisser's claim that: ""lives" are texts: texts that are subject to revision, exegesis, reinterpretation, and so on" (133). Rapport and Overing define narratives as:

> '[N]arratives are a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and ultimately of ourselves [. . .]. This is a never-finished project, and our conscious lives are taken up with self-narrating, with continuously rewriting, erasing and developing the definitions of our own stories. (120)

In the rewritings, self-narrating conscious lives rewrite definitions and interpretations of their own stories and erased experiences. These self-narrating bodies are imprinted by

history. We study if, during the narration, the narrating selves revise their own under/standing of the self or it is a linear development of the unified self. Postcolonial theorist Edward Said reminds us that "[t]he power to narrate, or to block other narratives from forming and emerging, is very important to culture and imperialism, and constitutes one of the main connections between them" (Said xiii). As researchers, we are searching for the way and mode of inquiry to end this blockage. Malpas in his introduction to *Postmodern Debates* offers a solution to imperialist modernist narrative(s):

> [. . .] the disruption of the rules of narrative allows new possibilities to emerge that were hidden by traditional ways of explaining the world, and new voices to be heard that were silenced in the grand narratives of modernity. (10)

It means that in the transformative culture of postcolonialism, feminism and postmodernism, other forms of narrative(s) emerged in the rewritings. In case of my study, rewriting perspectivizes past for future. "To recover the past and to claim the future" (Lauretis 310) includes the rereading, revisioning and rewriting of the canon, and the imagining of new social spaces and forms of community. My study analyzes, while studying absence, the colonial and patriarchal metanarratives (registered in the writings) and how the rewritings made them 'incredulous' by re-presenting the absences canonized by the masternarratives. Cherryholmes notes that "[m]etanarratives guide a discipline by specifying rules and conditions for producing knowledge, such as the positivist knowledge" (9). In *The Postmodern Condition,* Jean-Francois Lyotard critiques what he calls "*grand recits*" (variously translated as grand narratives, master narratives, metanarratives or metadiscourse). Lyotard notes, "Simplifying to the extreme, I define *postmodern* as incredulity toward metanarratives" (xxiv). As Cherryholmes explains:

> Modern, analytic, and structural thought seek rationality, linearity, progress, and control by discovering, developing, and inventing metanarratives, meradiscourse, and metacritiques that define rationality, linearity, progress, and control. Post-modern, postanalytic, and poststructural thought are skeptical and incredulous about the possibility of such metanarratives. (10-11)

Kristeva in "Rewriting the Subject" presents Bahktin's concept of the "contingent way" of speech by the writers/speakers where he explains 'the dialogic nature of language' which involves both "hearer and speaker, reader and writer." Arguing over this theorization, I include the writer and rewriter as well. Kristeva further develops Bahktin's notion of the dialogic nature of language in her book *Polylogue* and suggests that "language is multiple rather than only double" (Robbins 120). I contest the same that the rewritings as an empowering enterprise come up with multiple realities. Kristeva talks of the "speaking subject" (Robbins 122) who disrupts the explanations of cause and effect, and undoes the very structures of totalizing explanation. The emphasis in case of such narrative has shifted from text to the speaking subject (his/her narrative) as maker of meanings.

Let us study the speaking subject with reference to feminist writings. First of all, I focus here on the woman in patriarchal culture. I develop understanding on the challenges posed by the feminist practices. Later on, I associate it with the colonial culture. In "Subjects of Sex/Gender/Desire," Butler quotes Julia Kristeva's position on the existence of women in patriarchal society: "Strictly speaking, "women" cannot be said to exist" (3). This reflects that in male-dominated societies, patriarchal culture and parochial writings, women don't find their legitimate representation and their beings experience structural erasure(s). As discussed by Butler in "Subversive Bodily Acts," Kristeva's theory of the semiotic dimension of language engages with Lacanian premises regarding Symbolic order where the child associates itself with the father and

disassociates itself from the mother who lacks "phallus," the symbol of power. "The Signification of the Phallus" is a lecture that Jacques Lacan delivered in German on 9th of May, 1958, at the Max- Planck Institute, Munich. Here he explains the role of phallus associated with male, as the signifier of meanings in the patriarchal cultural system. He interprets that phallus as "the privileged signifier," is "the signifier intended to designate as a whole the effects of the signified, in that the signifier conditions them by its presence as a signifier" ("The Signification of the Phallus" 218). According to Lacan, the paternal law structures all linguistic signification, termed "the Symbolic," and so becomes a universal organizing principle of culture itself. This law creates the possibility of meaningful language and, hence, meaningful experience through the repression of primary libidinal drives including the radical dependency of the child on the maternal body. Hence, "the Symbolic becomes possible by repudiating the primary relationship to the maternal body. The "subject" who emerges as a consequence of this repression becomes a bearer or proponent of this repressive law" (Butler 101). This repressive law structures the world and suppresses the possibility of multiple meanings (or narratives) in favor of the univocal and discrete cultural meanings in their place. Kristeva's theory subverts the paternal law within language and asks for the recovery of maternal law that was outlawed by the phallus.

The postcolonial/feminist rewriters who challenge this repressive law in their writings in history have been labeled as "monster" because they have challenged the structured narratives and systems of meanings. According to Moi, patriarchy calls a woman "the monster" who "refuses to be selfless, acts on her own initiative, who *has* a story to tell—in short, a woman who rejects the submissive role patriarchy has reserved for her" (58). My feminist rewriters are "monster" not Coventry Patmore's "Angel in the House" subverting patriarchal literary standards. The ability to tell a story gives

the woman autonomy to formulate alternatives. In this context, one important question emerges if women and the colonized can "father" a text and if they can escape the "anxiety of the influence." I associate fathering a text with canonical writings which were written either in the patriarchal or the colonial rule. The colonial master in colonial culture is what "father" stands in patriarchy. In this way, (re)writing is like sharing the prerogative of the "father," and returning the lost place of glory to the mother and therefore perhaps while recognizing the trouble in gender discourse, cognize matriarchy back into the system.

Gender Ripples 'Trouble':

The question: Can a woman "father" a text, highlights the issue of gender trouble as even writing has been the domain for men in the classic writings. Even if she tried writing, her narrative was normative prescribed by the patriarchal society. Deutscher in "Introduction: Feminist Philosophy and Constitutive Instability" regards gender as unstable matter and argues that "the meanings of 'female' and 'woman' are troubled and unfixed. [. . .] [a]s a cultural effect, as a textual effect and as an effect in a phallocentric history of philosophy" (1). We make gender troublesome when we question the social assumption on which it is based. In 1990, Butler claimed that "[c]ontemporary feminist debates over the meanings of gender lead time and time again to a certain sense of trouble"(vii). The effort to stabilize gender by patriarchy in the past has been made in the signification system of "phallus." It has been patriarchy which has attached value to gender. The feminist rewritings have questioned the stereotypical roles specific to female gender with respect to culture and writing practices. As the rewritings questioned the stability and fixity of the representation of the female or the colonized in writing, likewise, the project to re-present led to the feminist position that gender in a negotiable

matter in a culture. When we study Butler's *Gender Trouble,* in the preface she exposes the internal instability in the gender binaries, male/female, and asks "What [is the] best way to trouble the gender categories that support gender hierarchy" (Butler viii)? In the stereotypical writings, male gender has always been at the privileged position. The female gender has been denied voice as she was not given part in the narrative of the classic texts. The rewritings are supposed to take this instability of gender in focus. The rewritings also expose this gender instability and destabilize the determinism of the law of father which tried to fix female gender in typical roles. Here arises the question if the *(re)presented images* of women and the colonized—the absences—addressed in the (re)writings analyze the incoherence and instability of gendered and/or stereotypical hierarchy or they still run the risk of reinforcing the consistency of the tradition.

The effort to fix or stabilize comes also from the Western tradition of humanism. Fuery and Mansfield find out what was wrong with the Western concept of humanism. They study the positions of humanism. Humanism sees "the identification and fulfillment of a universal human nature as the purpose of cultural work" (5). "Universal human nature" undermines the differences among the human beings. It also matters who defines this word "universal." This tradition mutates the essential differences among the human beings. It takes away the right to differ from the colonized and women. It takes it granted that all human beings face similar challenges so need similar solutions. According to my understanding, it prioritizes the colonialist and patriarchal values and others women and the colonized. In the case of colonial culture, Bergner studies, "Who Is That Masked Woman? Gender and Frantz Fanon," how Fanon links the construction of colonized (the subject formation) with the colonialist ideology and challenges humanism's myth of the unified self (Bergner 1). In Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, women are considered as subjects

almost exclusively in terms of their sexual relationships with men; masculine is the norm. In "The Woman of Color and the White Man," Fanon quotes from Mayotte Capécia, *Je suis Martiniquaise* in order to establish his point:

> I should have liked to be married, but to a white man. But a woman of color is never altogether respectable in a white man's eyes. Even when he loves her. I knew that. (Fanon 29)

These words by Mayotte Capécia show that even love cannot win a black woman the love and respect in her master's gaze. Bergner notes that in the subject formation in case of Freudian and Lacanian psychoanalysis, the subject is the one who sees; Fanon speaks of the one who is seen. So the absences are the object of vision in the writings; they are seen through the patriarchal or colonial eyes and signifying practices. In the rewritings against this "epistemic violence" rendered in the writings to the objects of narration, reductionism and essentialism, the reality is constructed through the then-object-now-subject's eyes/vision.

Fanon writes of "the Negro who wants to go to bed with a white woman" that "there is clearly a wish to be white. A lust for revenge, in any case" (Fanon 6). Bergner reads that "[t]he black man's ostensibly heterosexual interracial desire becomes an act of both identification with and resistance to the white man" (Bergner 9). Du Bois, Burghardt and Edwards in "Of Our Spiritual Strivings" talk of the concept of double-consciousness with reference to the Negro especially. In this American world which yields him no true self-consciousness, he views himself through the revelation of the other world:

> This double consciousness [two-ness], this sense of always looking at one's self through the eyes of others, of measuring one's soul by the tape of a world that looks on in amused contempt and pity. (Du Bois 8)

The rewritten characters also come across this dilemma of double consciousness. Firstly, they got their identity in the gaze

of their colonial and/or patriarchal masters. Secondly, they visualize themselves in their own gaze. I assume that the narratives of rewritings show how strong was the impact of first gaze and the former consciousness as the characters could not help referring back to their stereotypical representation times and again in their narration. This experiencing double consciousness can be relevant in the sense if the absences experience double consciousness in the rewritings or they can get free of repressed consciousness, and retain their own consciousness in their retellings.

From Objectivity to Subject(ivity):

The idea of subjectivity is attached to the construction of "I" which defines the self of a human being. The rewritings are narratives. The effort to rewrite the absences has been carried out by giving voice to these erased subjectivities in the colonial and patriarchal narratives. Therefore, the study of absences takes the formation of subjectivity in focus. In writings, the absences had been the "object," the "you." The female and colonized characters were presented from patriarchal or colonial gaze. Their voices were suppressed in these repressive systems. In the rewritings, subjectivity(ies) are in the process of (re)formation and (re)construction attempting to resolve the contradictory subject-positions given by the writings and those being constructed in the rewritings with their own voice, presence and re-presentation. In "The Interrogative Text", Belsey talks about the split subject grounding her argument on the Freudian and Lacanian theory regarding the construction of subject. She says that entry into language "inevitably creates a division between the subject of the enunciation and the subject of the énoncé, the 'I' who speaks and the 'I' who is represented in the utterance" (70). In the rewritings, we find the subject of the enunciation taking the discursive practices of the writings to task by (re)constructing the subject of its utterance (énoncé).

The idea of split subject originally belongs to Freud. Mansfield discusses this idea in the chapter, "Freud and the Split Subject":

> What Freud presents, therefore, is a subjectivity not of simple presences and absences, but of potentially violent energies and conflicts, where negative feelings do not merely lapse from the conscious mind, but where they are kept in place by a force against which they constantly struggle. (30)

These feelings struggle for self-expression (like in dreams) against *repression*. Freudian version of the subject is the split subject. The subject experiences a split between the socially and culturally determined processes of the conscious mind, and the repressed impulses of the unconscious by the conscious. Lacan's view of subjectivity has taken over Freudian concept of the split-subject as he substitutes "gender" with "language" in masculine symbolic order, as the source of power. Lacan's symbolic order is a masculine domain governed by the phallus symbol. The symbolic order can be called a phallocentric order in this regard. Belsey constructs on Emile Benveniste's understanding of the self and argues that "consciousness of self is possible only on the basis of differentiation: 'I' cannot be signified or conceived without the conception of 'non-I', 'you', and dialogue, the fundamental condition of language, implies a reversible polarity between 'I' and 'you'" (49). In the rewritings, the "you" of writings (re)claims its "I/eye" and engages with the "I/eye" of the writing. Lacan's symbolic order expects of an individual to submit to the masculine signifying systems of patriarchal culture. By entering into phallocentric language, one becomes a full member of the family and of society; one can speak of itself and can distinguish 'I' from 'you' and, thus, becomes intelligible to itself and others.

In the rewritings, the individual consciousness of the erased subjectivity challenges the phallocentric symbolic order which omits the female self. The rewritings have made this

normative concept of "phallocentric symbolic order" problematic by disowning their (effaced) recognition imposed by the Other in the canonical writings, and challenge the ideological underpinnings of the colonial and patriarchal conventional writings. In this case, the repressed and unconscious desire of an absence becomes a conscious desire for expression of one's self. Writings carry the repressed experiences taken up consciously in the narratives of rewritings.

In "The Subject and the Text", Belsey discusses how classic realism[5] interpellates the reader in the events, "in the narrative by the presentation of events from a specific and unified point of view." While studying the rewritings, I would be very careful not to be beguiled by the interpellation of us as reader in the first person narrative; I would be critically reflexive. That is the why the analysis depends on the negotiation between the narratives of the writings and rewritings. The poststructuralist approach to postcolonial and feminist theories questions the classic realism of the canonical text and its closure, and opens it up to re-interpretation and rewriting. The rewritings as interrogative texts question the assumptions of classic realism, decenter the master narratives and expose incoherences, omissions, absences, transgressions and silences, what writings could not say.

The Colonial Subject and Marginality

Incoherences, omissions, absences, transgressions and silences are related to the issue of marginality. Rewriting-writings is an attempt to recognize 'peripheral forms.' Shklovsky notes that "[n]ew forms in art are created by the canonization of peripheral forms" (qtd. in Levine 79). Here the rewritings are new forms of art created by the attempt to canonize the peripheral voices—the absences in the writings. It is necessary

[5] Belsey defines classic realism as a form which is characterized by "illusionism", narrative leading to "closure", and "a hierarchy of voices" (p.76).

to realize that the voices of erased subjectivities emerge in the rewritings from a long tradition of the structural 'silence' of women and the colonized within the sphere of patriarchal and colonial knowledge production. Rarely addressed in history—this 'silence' has the colonized and female 'silence'. MacLure argues in the article "Deconstruction as a Method of Research" that "the stability in case of the binary opposition is (temporarily) achieved is always at the cost of suppression of some 'other'. [. . .] we can continually try to glimpse the trace of what has been silenced or 'othered'" (286). The binary opposition which would be mostly discussed is between the colonizer/the colonized and man/woman. Stability in writings owe to the silencing of the colonized and women. The narrating self in writing and the voice of the erasures have destabilized the binary opposition. In my analysis, I will use deconstruction as a method to locate the binaries, their in/stability and what has been left out as un/said.

If we consider the absences in writing as product of colonization for the colonized and metaphorically for the women, the narrating-self, previously marginalized "you," appears to experience the process of decolonization in the retelling of the rewriting. Decolonization has been defined and understood by Watson and Smith as "the actual political processes set in motion in various geographical locations before and during this century" (xiii). 'Decolonization', Fanon argues, "which sets out to change the order of the world, is, obviously, a programme of complete disorder" (*The Wretched of the Earth* 36). My work on the rewritings also involves different geographical locations. The processes of colonization and decolonization in the writings and rewritings and "I"/"I"s (narrative[s]) is the focal point for this epistemological and ontological change. This brings us to a different world based on what Nancy Hartsock calls a "standpoint epistemology":

an account of the world as seen from the margins, an account which can expose the falseness of the view from the top and can transform the margins as well as the center [. . .] an account of the world which treats our perspectives not as subjugated or disruptive knowledges, but as primary and constitutive of a different world. (171)

The rewriting enterprise is more about negotiating the margin with the center than decentering the center, I argue.

Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith again question the: "[u]niversalizing agenda of Western theorizing that erases the subject's heterogeneity as well as its agency. [. . .]" (xiv). In order to find out and acknowledge the heterogeneity in the "I"s and within "I"; we would have to be critically and discursively alert to the tendency in the writings universalizing the experiences in different geographical locations and in different cultures, and positionings of the subject(s) under colonialism and patriarchy. Julia Watson and Sidonie Smith argue that there is "not one universal "patriarchy""; not one universal colonization. Decolonization and rewriting is always a multidimensional process rather than a homogeneous achievement. My work is grounded in the locales and temporalities of different colonial, postcolonial, and neocolonial experiences which challenge what Watson and Smith call the "discursive regime [another regime installed by the colonial forces] that works to contain "colorfulness" inside a Western theoretical territory" (xv) of the West identified with Empire.

Deconstruction—an Effective Strategy to Decolonize:

One of the ways to decolonize a narrative is deconstruction. In my understanding, deconstruction makes the margins and absences visible in the structure of the narrative. It works at the binary oppositions which have structured the classical work and give a 'specific' version of reality. As structure always rests on the presumption of a center and hierarchy of meanings so

the rewritings put canonized writing into question. Culler refers to "The Conflict of Faculties" where Derrida defines Deconstruction as:

> a way of taking a position, in its work of analysis, concerning the political and institutional structures that make possible and govern our practices, our competencies, our performances. (156)

According to this definition, deconstruction works as an analytic perspective for the rewritings. The position that the analyst takes on institutionalized structures that master over our knowledge production and writing, can help to destabilize the structures and events in these metaphysical constructs. I shall be able to do so by using deconstruction as an approach and insight to read into the rewritings. It is expected that the rewritings offer resistance to established thoughts and 'defamiliarize' the canonized writing and representation. The rewritings as deconstructive readings "show scant respect for the wholeness or integrity of individual works" (Culler 220). It is a way of challenging the status quo maintained by the canonized writings and fixity of identities, subjectivities, erasures, absences and subsequently listening to the marginalized voices and giving recognition to the effaced characters in the narration.

MacLure in the article "Deconstruction as a Method of Research" co-authored with Burman has enumerated certain binary oppositions in the article which have underpinned Western thought—truth/error; reality/representation; cause/effect; thought/language; essence/appearance; man/woman; presence/absence; nature/culture; mind/body; reason/emotion; universal/particular; world/text, original/copy and so on. We can add presence/absence, male/female, masculinist/feminist, English/non-English, voice/silences, man/woman, centre/margin as relevant oppositions corresponding to my area of study. We can notice hierarchical opposition in the binary. One is standard and the other is

defined in relation to other. In the rewritings, this hierarchical opposition is inverted and absences, erasures, silences presumably find presence and voice. The erasures/absences in the writings would have to negotiate the position of presence and dominance in the binary opposition in the rewritings. MacLure quotes Derrida's position that the application of binary law of presence by deconstruction forces and allows the binary oppositions to reveal their blind spots.

Inversions of the Hierarchy and Ideological Subversions:

Inversions of hierarchical oppositions through deconstruction open possibilities of change and threaten the authority of meaning, value, and authority promoted by the institutions in canonized texts. Cixous claims that "the aim of logocentrism [. . .] has always been to found phallogocentrism, to assure a rationale for a masculine order" (qtd. in Culler 165). In such writing, "man" proceeded without mention of woman because "male pronouns exclude her without calling attention to her exclusion" (Culler 166). The rewritings take departure from this exclusion and the personae claim their own pronouns and retain them in the narrative. Woman as erasures in male-texts can be explained by Julia Kristeva in an interview entitled "La Femme, ce n'est jamais ca" ["Woman is never that" or "can never be defined"]: "….By "woman" I understand what cannot be represented, what is not said, what remains above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies" (Culler 175). Writings miss what the rewritings read (erasures) and the rewritings' identity is established because of its difference from the writings. Still I find every rewriting partial as it encompasses a particular historically erased subjectivity.

These rewritings are part of the effort to counter myths of the male with new myths of the female based on the ideological subversion between man and woman, hierarchical reversals (male-centered narratives vs. female-centered

narratives, absences vs. narrative presence) emerged from critical readings of the major texts by the rewriters. The poststructuralist rewritings while writing from the margins challenge western canonical monocentrism and lead to decentering and pluralism.

Insights:

My concluding thought central to my argument in this section is that these post-canonical texts (under the influence of postmodern theory) are the interventions in the stereotypical representations established by the Western canonicity and have created spaces in the seemingly organic whole of the Western classic writings for the re-presentations of the absences/silences/erasures in the texts. The inversion in the hierarchical structure of the binaries gives room to the re-construction of erased subjectivities in the narrative. Hence, the rewritings talk back to the writings and the deconstructive narrative voices in the rewritings partially address the absences/silences/erasures in the writings. Benita Parry locates a similar problem in the work of Frantz Fanon: "What happens is that heterogeneity is repressed in the monolithic figures and stereotypes of colonialist representations. [. . . But] the founding concepts of the problematic must be refused" ("Problems in Current Theories" 14). Rewriting change the configurations of writing-parameters refusing monolithic and stereotypical presentation(s). I would take the words of absences, silences and erasures as synonymous because absences in a writing are result of erasures of subjectivities which had resulted into their silences in history and therefore, analyze the rewritings which appear to create and re/fill the gaps in the "organic whole(s)" of Western classics. At the end, it is very significant to note that rewriting is an interdisciplinary and intradisciplinary project, most significantly, involving "writing practices" ranging from rewriting colonial/patriarchal

canonical writings to re-righting (his)tories and marginalized (indigenous) cultures.

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