

People's Democratic Republic of Algeria
Ministry of Higher Education and Scientific Research
University of Tlemcen



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**Planetarian Discourse and the Pendulum of Identity in
Contemporary Fiction. Al-Sanea's *Girls of Riyadh* and
Mukherjee's *Miss New India***

Thesis Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the award of Doctorat in
Comparative Literature

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Year 2021/ 2022

Dedications

First and foremost, to my parents for being my pillars and teachers.

To my dearest grandmother. The soul that never ceased to love, give, and instruct.

To my family for their unconditional love and support.

To my friends, who have always been there when needed.

Acknowledgments

Achieving this work is a SUCCESS that was only attainable through endless hours of efforts and hard work. This project could not be completed without the support of a number of people assisting my steps.

First of all, I would like to express my genuine gratitude to my supervisor Prof. Ilhem Serir-Mortad for being an abundant source of encouragement, orientation and feedback; her own work has certainly been an inspiration for me towards the desire for intellectual contributions. I also appreciate her guidance and support during my years of experience as a teacher and as a scholar in different research projects. I am also thankful to her appreciated navigation through the daunting administrative details to meet the graduation requirements.

My sincere gratitude to the jury members, namely: Prof. Fewzia Bedjaoui for allotting precious time to evaluate and supply insightful feedback, especially on Indian Literature, that undoubtedly strengthened the quality of the work. To Prof. Mohammed Seghir Halimi for providing valuable criticism and comments that immensely enriched the content of the work. I am also thankful for the years of advice and guidelines as my teacher, which considerably contributed to my person as a researcher. To Prof. Wassila Mouro and Dr. Fatiha Belmerabet for their time, careful consideration and appreciated remarks that surely added considerable value to my work. I also appreciate their kind, valuable advice, and research spirit that inspired me as a young researcher.

I would like to express my gratitude to my friends and colleagues at the University of Tlemcen for their support and helpful insights; indeed, their warm interest, kind remarks and helpful scientific sources oriented my research at its early stage. In addition, I am pleased to learn from their devotion, hard work and teaching atmosphere that steered me further to appreciate the teaching experience at the English department.

A warm recognition goes to my teachers and colleagues at the University of Skikda for their support, encouragement, and mostly for believing in me in the most doubtful moments. More particularly, special thanks to Dr. Bouchra Bouteraa and Dr. Soufiane Mechtouf for planting the early seeds that directed me towards the pursuit of academic growth, and crafted my deep affection for teaching.

Abstract

Disciplines like humanities, social sciences, and Cultural Studies have allotted considerable interest in the concept of globalization as a multi-dimensional phenomenon, which is featured by intense connections and interdependencies among world nations and communities. Cross-cultural communication with the Other has accelerated due to techno-communication, which bridged spaces among distant geographies leading to create novel conceptualizations and realities that are transmitted into literary works. The present thesis uses the concept of Planetarity, substituting the term 'globalization', as defined by Gayatri Spivak in her *Death of a Discipline* (2003), to promote a cultural and literary perspective governing a reading in the periphery literature, namely the Arab/Saudi novel *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) by Rajaa Al-Sanea and the Indian fictional work *Miss New India* (2011) scripted by Bharati Mukherjee. Under the cultural context of globalization promoting a cross-cultural connection with the Occident, cultural identities of 'Periphery' characters become a subject of interrogation. Henceforth, it is argued that cultural imagination of the Self and the Other constitute the primary drive to construct a transcultural identity of the main characters. With that being said, the reading of both texts rests upon an eclecticism of theories and approaches, namely: imagology, cultural cognition, and transculturalism. In accordance with a Planetarian reading, both texts distribute images of the Self and the Other that parallel a state of transition favoring a counter-orientalist vision that opts for cultural familiarity to a world audience; whereas the images of the Occident are visualized as a space of embrace alternating speeches of rejection or idealization hovering the classical discourses of Occidentalism. In addition, responding to the circulating cultural images, the oriental woman, in both texts, tend to construct their cultural identities upon imagination, which directs toward the negotiation of transculturality. The latter vocalizes a cultural site that conveys a non-binary position between the Self and the Other, in addition to occupying a space of non-culture. Hence, the present thesis opts for a cultural reading of the Periphery texts forming a Planetarian perspective, which corresponds with the recent thematic and intellectual orientations that are being sculpted by the recent realities under the circumstances of global flows.

Keywords: Planetarity, Global flows, imagination, image, Oriental woman, *Girls of Riyadh*, *Miss New India*, transculturalism, Identity.

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GENERAL INTRODUCTION

General Introduction

Intellectual interests in the historical context of the contemporary times prompt for navigation into the concept of globalization as the term-banner for the intensive borderless circulation of phenomena. The Anthropologist Arjun Appadurai takes a major interest in the term and employs the suffix 'scapes' to designate the boundless transnational flows taking lieu among world nations and communities. As a matter of fact, being an eyewitness of the current historical circumstances implies an observed alteration of realities that disfavored limited interactions among world nations as an extension to the escalation of nationalist principles. Alternatively, as Steve Redhead notices in his *Theoretical Times* (2018), the spread of liberal principles steered towards the removal of margins that may distance people, media, finances, technologies, and ideas from probable restricted motions.

In accordance with such a reality, the literary scene appears to be manacled to global circulation of libraries -the dissemination of intellectual productions across borders- therefore; the consumption of texts is appreciated by a world audience. Such motion of texts led to the emergence of the field of World Literature, which considers works from different national literatures. David Damrosch defines these products as works in circulation as they receive an audience beyond nations, communities, and languages. In fact, the scholarly reading of these scripts diverges from the standard interpretations, and attempts to generate novel standards that match the emerging literary complexities of World Literature. Numerous scholars and critics have indeed endeavored to furnish readings that correspond with the changing literary realities; more particularly, calling upon multi-disciplinarity as means to produce up-to-date readings that find no equivalence in the classical literary discourses.

Amongst those with an affinity for literary reconsiderations, Gayatri Spivak calls for the evaluation of the canon literary currents, and principally addresses to field of Comparative Literature. The theorist is traditionally recognized as a postcolonial thinker producing substantial insights regarding the post-colonial conditions; more particularly, on the theme of cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and Occident. In her *Death of a Discipline* (2003), she uses the concept Planetarity in her attempt to reevaluate the discipline of Comparative Literature and calls for new readings that diverge from the employed classical literary perceptions. According to her, the standard landscapes of the discipline prerequisite changes that are likely to be harmonious with the global realities, where the relation between

the Orient and Occident should stand upon equal grounds rather than promoting scholarships that are characterized by Eurocentricism and dichotomies.

The reasoning of the concept of Planetarity vows the unsuitability of the word 'globe' and its substitution with 'planet'. In fact, the proposed terminological alteration is based on the connotations of both words; the 'globe' appears to announce: differences, binarism, and dichotomies especially in relation between the East and West. The concept of globalization appears to be a contested term among theorists and intellectuals as it is received as a path for imperialism and further dichotomies between the Orient and the Occident. Paradoxically, the 'planet' implies an orientation towards disregarding binary relations along with imperialist/colonialist perspectives that numerous theorists propose as definers of the relationship between the Orient and Occident in the era of intensive transnational flows. Positing Planetarity within cultural and cross-cultural themes, in the era of globalization, drives into a critical outlook that distances from the pronounced dichotomies and binary relations that may govern such discussions, especially in relation to Orient and Occident. Correspondingly, literary readings of contemporary Periphery texts, considered as cultural artifacts, calls for Comparative Cultural Studies as a discipline that provides methodological infrastructures for Gayatri's concept and stresses upon cultural themes in literary texts. Hence, Planetarity calls for a discourse that transcends the thematic complexities of globalization and calls for the theme of same-ness regarding cross-cultural relations through promoting for literary readings that call for cultural non-binarism and dichotomies.

The contemporary literary circulations in the Periphery witnessed a shift in thematic and formal characteristics of texts. Indeed, the text as a cultural product is sensitive to historical changes as it articulates the concerns of a certain community occupying a certain historical period; accordingly, the contemporary historical context, characterized by global flows, finds thematic and stylistic reflections in literary texts. Among these writings: the Arab Saudi fictional novel *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) scripted by Rajaa Al-Sanea and the Indian Bengali novel *Miss New India* (2011) by Bharati Mukherjee, where both narratives belong to the literary Periphery, in addition to entailing cultural histories of their respective communities. Moreover, an observed sensitivity to the global changes is detected which render the novelists as historians scripting the socio-cultural conditions under global flows.

Indeed, *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) stands as a cultural text for representing the Arab/Saudi female realities in the Arab community amidst recent global changes. AL-Sanea is received as

a young writer who has scripted a single text orbiting around the lives and experiences of Saudi females. Despite of her youth and shortage of written texts, she joined the literary stream for producing a considerably valued text that has been widely received, not only by Arab readers but, by a world audience. In fact, the text has been translated into many world languages and gained a wider attention in the literary and scholarly circles. Hence, despite of youth and non-abundance of literary works, Al-Sanea arrived at integrating the literary world through a depiction of the female subject in the contemporary era. The novel presents four protagonists belonging to upper class Saudi Arabia; they come from different regional backgrounds of the kingdom and demonstrate a behavior that is characterized by modernity and cultural difference vis-à-vis the Saudi/Arab cultural background. Noura Algahtani (2016) views the novel as a representation of the millennial generation of Arab women who tend to discuss and explore taboo issues and challenge social patriarchy. Similarly, Joel Gwynne emphasizes on the literary significance of *Girls of Riyadh* for capturing popular and critical attention throughout the MENA (Middle Eastern and North African) societies due to its transnational cultural relevance to the wider Muslim world. Moreover, the narrative represents Arab girls who are interactive with the cyber world along with constant transnational movements, which makes them exposed to data that transcend their local communities. Hence, the novel depicts a globalized background as an extension to the historical realities of the contemporary era.

The script of Bharati Mukherjee *Miss New India* (2011) projects the Indian experience in the context of the political neoliberal circumstances that paraded the nation towards a globalized reality. The writer is marked by her Indian Diasporic concerns as she authored multiple fictional and non-fictional texts that highlight the Bengali woman's experiences in a cross-cultural setting; primarily, the encounter between the Orient and Occident, and between traditionalism and modernity that appear to shape and reshape her women's identities. However, her latest work *Miss New India* diverges from the Diasporic interests and exclusively sets the narrative in India, where the protagonist Anjali moves from the small town Gauripur to the globalized city of Bangalore in the pursuit of a better life prospect. The critical reception of the story positions the novel as a portrayal of the contemporary Indian woman of twenty-first century globalized setting. In fact, a major part of the narrative is located in Bangalore, which is portrayed as a city that incorporates big multinational businesses, global brands, technological advances, call centers, media corporations, in addition to being a cosmopolitan center. Therefore, such a depicted hyperactive space is in

fact an extension to a globalized reality as a response the neoliberal policies undertaken in the last half of the previous century.

Accordingly, meditating the Periphery characters, it is perceived that the cultural environment in which they dwell in appear to attune with the global flows that are present through different means. Such a setting steers to question the characters' identities construction vis-à-vis the existing cultural flows. Indeed, the hyper-connectivity among nations, on multiple levels, leads to presumed impacts on the cultural identities of the local community. Standing upon the poststructuralist perceptions, contending that cultural identities are subjected to metamorphosis due to time and space alteration, it is perceived that globalization as a phenomenon drives into novel shifts of identities. Numerous thinkers appear to be particularly interested in the relation of power and nurture assuming a power relation between certain entities and individuals exposed to these 'powers'. In fact, Michelle Foucault believes that knowledge encountered in the outer world is perceived as a form of power dictating certain behaviors on people. Consequently, the knowledge that globalization delivers, as a sight of hyper-connectivity and cross-cultural encounter through various means, encompasses an amalgam of data that are received by the socio-cultural agents in the Periphery to craft their identities. Consequently, the present work investigates the relation between global flows and the cultural identities of the main characters belonging to the literary periphery. In other words, the identities of the protagonists in *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India*, as representatives of the cultural periphery of Arabia and India, are questioned in the light of global circulation of cross-cultural knowledge. More particularly, specific questions are put forward in order to examine the structuring of identities:

- How do the cultural identities of Oriental women in both novels react to the contemporary global flows?
- How are the Oriental and Occidental cultures represented in both works?
- How do the main characters construct their identities in the light of global flows?
- What are the characteristics of the constructed identities in the light of these flows?

The forwarded questions intend to examine how both literary texts react to the global circumstances. Moreover, they are set to highlight the literary depiction of contemporary realities to clarify how these writers visualize both Arabia and India in addition to the depiction and reception of the cultural other; more particularly, the Occidental other. Besides, the project endeavors to analyze the Oriental women's cultural identities construction in the

light of global circulations, which appear to supply abundant knowledge from various cultural sources. Moreover, the study attempts to come to terms with a definition of the cultural parameters of the crafted identities resulting from these cultural 'scapes'. Accordingly, it is contended that both authors contest against an Orientalist vision of the East and visualize it as a 'modernized' space mirroring an image of a globalized setting. In addition, the Occidental other is argued to be represented with an embrative sensitivity, which evacuates the classical Occidentalist perceptions. Furthermore, it is argued that cultural imagination of the self and the other promotes the construction of a transcultural identity.

Reading the literary texts *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) and *Miss New India* (2011), aiming at an examination of the thematic responses to globalization, is placed upon a Planetarian vision. The concept shelters a theoretical discourse that primarily considers literary readings that correspond with the produced themes and forms resulting from a globalized reality. In addition, it attempts to evacuate the connotations of binary thinking, dichotomies, colonial and imperialist thinking to be substituted by a perspective that promotes a more tranquil relation among communities. The theme of cross-cultural encounter between the East and West has been perceived from a relation of tension and difference considering the long history of colonialism and imperialism. However, the contemporary circumstances have grounded for softened cross-cultural encounters between the Orient and the Occident, which finds no theoretical relevance in the postcolonial theory as the primary discourse examining the relation between the East and the West. The former stresses upon the influence of the colonial legacies on cross-cultural relations, and therefore, addressing a perspective that corresponds with binarism. Henceforth, a Planetarian discourse advocates a literary perspective that both detaches from postcolonial theories, as the main cross-cultural discourse between the Orient and Occident, and promotes a literary and cultural reading that correspond with the hyper-connectivity of cultures.

Fostering a Planetarian discourse, the present work sets to examine the literary representation of the Orient, namely Arabia and India, in the pursuit to determine how the cultural self is visualized vis-à-vis contextual changes. In addition, the images of the Occidental Other are examined in order to determine the manner in which both *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India* picture the other in their texts. For the purpose of such examination, an analysis based on imagology, as an approach to literary texts, is employed. Literary imagology licenses the collection the various cultural images of the self and the other

in objective terms, which permits to discuss these images within a theoretical field that corresponds with the intentions of the authors and texts. Thereupon, the approach furnishes a foundation for discussing a representation of the cultural Self and Other that is distant from both Orientalist and Occidental perspectives.

Moreover, the project attempts to survey the construction of the protagonists' identities amidst cultural flows, where imagination is argued to be its main infrastructure. Coming to terms with an identity reading, the analysis grounds from the theoretical discourse of Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined Communities' that views the politics identity as a process of imagination, where the theory finds further theoretical responses in adjacent fields like sociology, anthropology and linguistics, which are additionally considered in identity discussions. In fact, the notion of culture and cultural identity is viewed as a multi-layered entity as it encompasses a 'surface' and 'deep' conceptualizations. The latter demonstrates a point of emphasis for the thesis for the aim of assessing the characters' cultural identities on the level of perception and behavior rather than a description of cultural interests. The examination of 'deep' culture calls for cognitive readings as a literary approach; thereupon, the thesis utilizes the cognitive approach to cultural analysis for the purpose of understanding the characters' identity construction amidst cultural flows. The approach delivers a multitude of readings that range from different disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, cultural studies, psychology, neuroscience, and biology to arrive at an understanding of mind processes to construct identities. The Orientations of the approach align with the scope of a Planetarian discourse for delivering an analytical reading that sips from various disciplines and scholarships to arrive at an objective interpretation; hence, it distances from the postcolonial discourse as the primary theoretical background for reading cross-cultural identities between the Orient and the Occident.

Furthermore, the thesis discusses transculturality in the texts of *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India*, where it is argued that imagination constructs a transcultural identity. As a response to global flows, the cultural identity of the main characters is perceived to be inscribed in the parameters of transculturality. The latter concept is addressed by multiple authors and scholars to define a state of embrace and acceptance of the circulating cultures. It aligns with Planetarian perspective due to the concept's discussion of cultural embrace and transcendence of binaries and dichotomy outlooks. The notion of hybridity, as a cultural identity product resulting from embodying the characteristics of two different cultural

sources, is contested against and is substituted by a state of transculturalism. Cultural hybridity announces further binary thinking and aims at defining particular parameters that sourced from two different cultures. In contrast, transculturalism is located in novel cultural standards that are defined outside specific cultures, but inscribed in models of postmodernity and modernity that promote for fluid identities. Hence, as a response to the constant cultural flows, the texts discuss transculturality that define the main characters' cultural identities.

For the purpose of planning the thesis, it is divided into five main chapters. The first chapter functions as a theoretical outlook of the contemporary historical and literary backgrounds. It employs a constructive theoretical analysis to develop the concept of Planetarity from Spivak's intentions to its further connotations from a cultural perspective, which directs towards the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies to meet the cultural aims of the thesis. Moreover, the chapter furnishes a historical and literary background of contemporary Arabia and India. The second chapter provides a conceptual framework for the work through addressing the principal concepts and discussions relevant to the thesis. The chapter highlights the concept of cultural identity from a postmodernist and poststructuralist perspectives, introduces nationalist discourses, ground-bases cultural imagination and cultural cognition, in addition to conceptualizing transculturalism.

What is more, the project devotes three chapters for the practical analysis and discussion of both *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India*. The three chapters divide into two main parts, where each novel is studied apart from the other for the aim of juxtaposing both and for holding different conclusions as both contextual backgrounds are particular. The third chapter is entitled "The Self and the Other: Cultural Images and the Representation of the 'Oriental' Woman", it studies the images of the self and other and how both writers represent the Orient and the Occident in their texts. Besides the representation objectives, the chapter's aim of capturing images provides an infrastructure for the forthcoming chapters to relate cultural images to identity construction. In fact, the visualized spaces and perceptions foreground a context for the protagonists' identity building.

The fourth chapter entitles "Identity and Imagination: Constructing the Oriental Woman's Identity", it provides an examination of the main characters' identities amidst the local and global cultural contexts of both contemporary Arabia and India. The main objective of the chapter is to closely analyze the characters' responses to cultural images received through various sources that range from local to global and from direct to indirect encounters.

Therefore, the main focus is on the assessment and analysis of the contribution of cultural imagination in the construction of the main characters' identities; whereas the fifth chapter argues for a building of a transcultural identity exhibited in both texts. Entitled "Towards a Planetarian Vision: Vowing an Oriental Transculturality", the chapter discusses transculturality as a resultant identity from cultural imagination. In fact, the characters' exposure of cultural flows leads to the building of transcultural identity that locates its parameters in cultural transcendence and fluidity.

The motivation behind the thesis topic stems from an interest in the relation between the Orient and the Occident in the light of intensive interconnectedness among nations and cultures. Globalization as a contemporary phenomenon has altered reality on various levels and has contributed into the emergence of new discussions and perceptions. On the literary field, the concept of World Literature emerged to announce novel discussions about the circulating themes and forms. Thereupon, the nature of themes and literary forms constructed a major interest as various literatures are consulted to answer the above inquiries. More particularly, the literature produced by 'Third World' nations, defined as the Orient, is put under a questioning. Furthermore, cultural identity as a major topic of consideration questions the nature of identities produced or reproduced in a cultural context of intensive cross-cultural relations; more particularly, the relation between the Orient and the Occident in the light of global flows. Such a relation has found a major literary echo in the Postcolonial discourse that considers the cross-cultural relation between the East and the West. Such a discourse promotes for a binary relationship as it stems from a colonial history and extends to imperialist perspectives, which had been a contested statement especially when exposed to critiques of the Postcolonial discourse. Hence, the primary motivation for the study stems from understanding the relationship between the cultural Orient and Occident in the context of globalization along with novel perspectives that produces an appropriate reading for the new realities.

Reading the Arab literature, as part of the 'periphery' literature, the novel of *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) scripted by Rajaa Al-Sanea has taken the interest of scholars and critics for the engaging and audacious themes she displays in her narrative. The text as a cultural artifact, delivers themes that bear the context of globalization articulated by the characters' constant transnational motion, anti-conformist behavior, and an obvious cyber existence. Equally, Bharati Mukherjee's latest fictional text *Miss New India* (2011) has captured attention for

visualizing a globalized India as a cultural background. Mukherjee might not be the only writer capturing the neoliberal changes, but she surely captures the Indian female's cultural journey in a way that considers multiple themes; in fact, *Miss New India* depicts traditional India, post-colonial India, and globalized India rather than merely settling on one cultural background. Hence, both texts have contributed to the depiction of females who belong to the 'Periphery', and who are culturally located amidst global changes. Moreover, the selection of both literatures rests upon a personal interest in the Arab cultural and literary backgrounds in the contemporary era, along with a consideration of other Oriental cultures and literatures. In addition, the Indian rich cultures and literary productions have obtained a personal attention, especially in the contemporary era.

The present thesis aims to be located in the scholarships about literature in the age of globalization through introducing readings that align with the contextual novelties. Gayatri Spivak uses the concept of Planetary to announce a move towards novel readings that attune with the global and disciplinary circumstances, yet she offers no disciplinary or methodological substitutions of the canon discourses. Henceforth, the central aim of the project is to rest upon theoretical and methodological grounds that find consistency with Spivak's concept. Correspondingly, the reading of both texts rests upon the cultural cognitive approach and transculturalism. Cognitivism as a literary approach occurs in multiple scholarships that attempts to read the literary responses of the audience while being exposed to literary texts; in addition, it has been seen as an approach to read the author's mind and Orientations when scripting the text. Thus, the cognitive approach finds relevance in the field of literary studies; however, few literatures are found concerning the use of the cognitive approach to read the literary characters. In fact, reading the cultural mind of characters through the use of the above approach is located within Diasporic scholarly works that studies the characters' cultural mind responses to a different environment.

The present thesis, therefore, promotes for the use of the cognitive approach as literary method to read the characters' cultural identities. The approach permits a closer reading of the characters' minds, behavior and perception through a multidisciplinary field. Indeed, the approach rests upon many disciplines that range from hard sciences to social sciences and humanities to arrive at an 'objective' reading of the characters' understanding; more particularly, a comprehension of their cultural identity construction in the era of intensive cultural circulation. Moreover, the approach is utilized to read the cultural mind of

the characters when encountering the cultural Other, not through direct/ Diasporic encounter but, through imagination which involves direct and indirect encounters with multiple cultural environments.

Furthermore, the significance of the study is the promotion of transcultural reading of literary texts. The concept appears in numerous scholarships that studies cross-cultural relations; in fact, the term is firstly produced by Fernando Ortiz who described the relation between the Orient and the Occident as transcultural, however, within a context of colonialism. Moreover, the concept is additionally developed by Arianna Dagnino to promote for a version of writers and texts that have multiple belongings. She receives that the era of globalization promoted the creation of group of texts that vow no stable cultural belonging as she uses the term 'nomads' to designate these transnational writers. Hence, Dagnino emphasizes on a study of diasporic writers and texts to main-stream the use of transcultural text reading. On the other hand, the present thesis sources the theoretical grounds of 'transculturalism' from both Fernando Ortiz and Ariana Dagnino's conceptualizations, and reads the literary texts of the 'periphery', where it is argued that cultural imagination plays a significant role into the construction of transcultural identities, and the promotion of transcultural texts. In other words, the present reading departs from Ortiz's transcultural relation between the Orient and the Occident, and uses Dagnino's themes and contexts to produce a reading version that meets the transcultural occupations of the 'periphery'. Moreover, it parts from Ortiz's colonial context and Dagnino's emphasis on Diasporic literature; thus, promoting for a transcultural reading that meets the Periphery's cultural context of globalization, and diverges from the transnational Diaspora as a literary context to be replaced by national literatures.

CHAPTER ONE

THE 'PLANET OVERWRITES THE GLOBE': PERIPHERY LITERATURES AND THE CALL FOR NEW DISCOURSES

Chapter One: The ‘Planet Overwrites the Globe’: Periphery Literatures and the Call for New Discourses

1.1. Introduction

The contemporary era appears to be characterized by global circulation of products, finances, individuals, knowledge, and literature, which open discussions about the re-evaluation of the theoretical standards prophesying realities. In fact, the transnational motion of letters has called for the emergence of World Literature as a literary field that encompasses works from different origins. In addition, the imposition of new literary realities calls for innovative readings that aims at corresponding with the emerging themes and forms, where many scholars and theorists have called upon. Accordingly, the present theoretical chapter employs a constructive theoretical analysis that builds upon the concept of Planetarity to develop a literary perspective that parallels the contemporary themes and forms of the merging literatures. The notion of Planetarity is traced in the speeches of Gayatri Spivak, who uses the concept to deliver a novel perspective that distances from the classical and traditional standards of literary readings and calls for the reconsideration of novel literary values. The theoretical analysis of the concept and its association to cultural discourses, as the main occupation of the present work, converges with the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies to ground for methodological and analytical principles to read literary works. In fact, resting upon such a discipline opens to a multitude of fields and scholarships that are employed in the study of literary texts. Indeed, the cultural and cross-cultural themes, being the main occupation of the present thesis, sought the employment of Imagology, Cognitivism, and Transculturalism as analytical and critical instruments to meet the reading objectives, yet, a further conceptual development is introduced in the forthcoming chapter. Moreover, the historical and literary backgrounds of both Arabia and India attest for an observable metamorphosis in the distributed themes and forms reflecting certain standards that meet the global realities.

1.2. Conceptualizing Globalization and the Circulation of Letters

The contemporary epoch highlights an intense interconnectedness among nations and societies on many levels which engenders multifaceted relationships among individuals and

groups. Such avowed complexity is manufactured by the heightened political, economic, social and cultural bonds that took place as a reaction to the rise of technology under the concept of 'globalization'. The term rests upon no stable meanings as scholars and theorists study the phenomenon from multiple theoretical outlooks despite of the assumed clarity of the term for the common sense. Indeed, the meaning of globalization is differently conceptualized depending on the field of occurrence and perceptions. The word has a long-standing history as different societies and groups grounded their consumption upon product exchanges, which permitted to create routes and inter-relationships; thus, the term's historical use appears to be economically oriented, where scholars agree that its chronological prints signified a territorial interconnectedness among world nations for the sake of product exchange (Pieterse Jan Nederveen, 2009; Arjun Appadurai, 1996; Lewellen, Benedict Anderson 2006). Indeed, the historical patterns of the phenomenon are largely economic as anthropologists assume; however, recent debates associate it to multiple fields since the rise of technology prompted a heightened interconnectedness among individuals, groups, and nations. The last decades of the twentieth century have witnessed a boom in the technological advances that rendered the world a small interconnected space on multiple levels; consequently, intellectuals and scholars have been driven to initiate novel readings and conceptualizations to come to terms with the realities that are shaped and reshaped by the fact of globalized world.

On the political facet, the concept has been a reoccurring theme of discussion. Jan Nederveen Pieterse (2009) explains that economic exchanges have unlocked gates for nations to undertake similar policies fostering free market and global investment; hence, it resulted into an economic resemblance in policies and conditions to fashion the expression of 'borderless nations' (15). In fact, the contemporary epoch demonstrates world's interconnectedness through the economic crises of 2007 and 2008 that impacted the national economies of the rest of the world, whereas the elections of leaders are globally waited for since the agendas of the leaders have high impacts on the stream of relations among nations. Moreover, the period is received to be installed upon a widespread neo-liberalism, globalism, and digitalization as a reflection of right-wing political agendas favoring liberal stands (Redhead 12). Under these conditions, intellectuals are conducted to assume a 'hegemonic' fact practiced by the Western 'powerful' nations. The symptoms of globalization equate an intervention in the political conduct of nations in the name of interconnectedness, and therefore, nationalism and national unity is put into question. In his book *Globalization and Empire* (2009), Pieterse associates the phenomenon to imperial agendas due to the call for

political similarities that are based on western principles (45). Equally, Krishner Jonathan's "Globalization and National Security" broadcasts that the concept means "the narcissism of a superpower in a one superpower world" (5), where the globally promoted 'western-centric' views are motivated by 'personal interests' rather than common interests, more particularly, regarding the non-western groups. Therefore, the occidental political positions are far distant from neutral agendas where national profits are perceived to be the primary focus (5).

From a sociological perspective, Malcolm Waters's book entitled *Globalization* receives it as: "A social process in which the constraints of geography on social and cultural arrangements recede and in which people are increasingly aware that they are receding" (qtd. in Pieterse 17). Similarly, Robertson uses the concept to term the world's intensified interconnectedness and the resulting consciousness bringing individuals and groups together (8). In fact, such consciousness of the other is related to cultural performances practiced by the social groups. On the cultural account, scholars and intellectuals associate the recent cultural transaction and consciousness to globalization; they observe a perplexing conceptualization of cultural globalization. Robert Pieterse locates such complexities to the multiplicity of definitions attributed to the notion of culture, along with the numerous literatures on the area (229). Among the literatures produced, it is noted that the Twenty-first century globalization discredits hegemony statements claiming that is practiced by Anglo-American capitalism; hence, fashioning an era of non-Americanization (Pieterse 22). In fact, this phenomenon of the devaluation of the western slash American prominence is due to the what Fareed Zakaria (2008) calls "the rise of the rest" (22), where he sees that the twenty-first century is witnessing a shift in the balance of powers and influence where the west under the supremacy of the USA is losing account, and witnesses a prominent rise of other nations and other powers or what he calls "the rest". Indeed, numerous nations as many Asian countries had risen on economic, cultural, social and political level, where they have displayed greater progressive potentials on several levels leaving no space for an attempt of 'Americanization'.

Moreover, it is observed that technology defines contemporary globalization as the widespread of technological advances has been the primary occupation of individuals and nations, which gave a broader scope for progress that rested upon national potentials. The concept of technology indicates a sophisticated speed in the production and delivery of abstract –ideas, news, ideologies, capitals and information- and concrete items –people, goods, finances, articles- that reduce time and space. Jan Nederveen Pieterse understands this

recent occupation as a space of interaction among the economic, political and social agents (institutions) and their audience(s) -the consumer- rather than being a hypodermic needle (10). Furthermore, Arjun Appadurai uses the concept 'technoscapes' to designate the dynamic movement of technologies around the globe (Appadurai 34). These termed 'scapes', either mechanical or informational, are transferred from one place to another in an intensive manner to make more technological connections among world nations, communities and institutions. More particularly, information is received within the scope of ideologies and media, which are equally considered by Appadurai in his anthropological analysis. Indeed, what he terms 'mediascapes' (35) transfer different information, news, and images of communities from one space to another engendering constant flows of information. Hence, media is received to possess a standing position in the contemporary global reality as it transfers data about individuals and groups from one space to another in an instant manner, which maintains a constant connection among them.

The transfer of knowledge from one location to another is received by Appadurai as a movement of ideas and ideologies rather than mere news and broadcasts. Echoing his termed 'scapes', he additionally uses the neologism 'ideoscapes' (33) to signify the world circulation of ideologies. He explains that "These ideoscapes are composed of elements of the Enlightenment worldview, which consists of a chain of ideas, terms, and images, including freedom, welfare, rights, sovereignty, representation, and the master term democracy" (36). Therefore, the received news is deciphered to carry the ideological scopes of enlightened perceptions, and are disseminated on an international level.

Literature and Global Circulation

In the light of the heightened global circulations, the literary sphere appears to be equally wedged. The production and the consumption of letters have gone beyond the national boundaries, where works cross national and linguistic borders to settle in the shelves of 'foreign' readers. Such circumstances have occupied scholars and intellectuals alike to question the nature of the literature produced. Suman Gupta's *Literature in the Global Age* punctiliously inspects the circulation of libraries and literatures on a global scale to notice a dense movement of literary productions due to the hastened technological advances. The result of such circulation of letters resurrected what is termed 'World Literature' as the contemporary literary reality scripted by the global reality; in addition, it produced calls for novel theoretical readings and perspectives corresponding to the novel circumstances.

Reading the literary works, in the era of globalization, opens a discussion about World Literature. The concept has recently acquired a significant interest from scholars around the globe, and appears to rest upon no clear definition. Among the scholars compelled by the term is David Damrosch. In his book *What is World Literature*, he defines the concept as “a mode of circulation and of reading” that applies to a body of works beyond the literary canons (5); thus, the term refers to the body of literature that circulates on a transnational level (6). Throughout the book chapters, he offers a glimpse on numerous literary productions beyond the ‘canon works’ or ‘masterpieces’ that he arguably enlists as World Literature. Furthermore, the early uses of the term were revealed in the articulations of Goethe, who coined it in the nineteenth century to refer to the literatures of different national origins being consumed and studied beyond their origins. Such a concept was urged to re-emerge in today’s literary speeches due to globalization effects. Franco Moretti articulates: «I think it’s time we returned to that old ambition of *Weltliteratur*: after all, the literature around us is now unmistakably a planetary system” (45). Thus, the global circulation of letters was reoriented towards World Literature to be integrated in contemporary literary readings. David Damrosch understands the terms as:

Not an infinite ungraspable canon of works but rather a mode of circulation and of reading, a mode that is as applicable to individual works as to bodies of material, available for reading established classics and new discoveries alike. (5)

Indeed, texts from world literatures have recently been examined within the field of Comparative Literature as an established discipline viewing works from different literary backgrounds. The discipline has in fact been evolving throughout years to constantly shift interest depending on the literary realities. Moreover, the primordial aim of Comparative Literature is the study of literary works beyond the national borders of their origin; hence, an engagement with the emerging World Literature appears to be a predicable equation. In addition, the literary productions in different languages are considered as a common ingredient in both the established discipline and the newly emerging field. Indeed, World Literature collects works from different national and linguistic backgrounds, which appears to be another definer of the above discipline. Tracing the historical progression of Comparative literature, it has emphatically received multiple mutations since its establishment as a literary discipline. Apparently, the call for an ‘evolution’ of the discipline is announced by multiple scholars and intellectuals; recently, many have called for its mutation to meet the novel

literary changes that resulted from the global circulation of ‘letters’. Franco Moretti inclines to detach the discipline from the English departments (43), since the notion of ‘comparing’ literatures is exclusively delivered by the field of English Literary Studies to open the gates for ‘Eurocentricism’. Such a view is similarly shared by Gayatri Spivak in her *Death of a Discipline*, where she calls for a reshaping of the above subject field to become more inclusive of literatures and readings beyond the ‘western’ realm.

Further reasons for the call of a shift in the discipline are factually related to the large exclusion of ‘periphery’ literatures, where the primal emphasis of the area is the center’s literary articulations. The consideration of the intellectual production of the non-centre had been the concern of Area studies, postcolonial and diasporic studies that provided a reading of the ‘periphery’ expressions, yet a detected Eurocentricism is declared by multiple scholars and theorists. In fact, the readings were founded upon methodologies and approaches that had been granted by the west which leaves a greater space of interpretation of the non-western experience to occidental perspectives; therefore, the non-western views are left excluded to a large extent. Under these circumstances, a call for alteration of such an intellectual reality has been the major concern of many especially with the recent growth and spread of Comparative Literature departments in the ‘periphery’ regions; hence, a call for different methodological considerations to the study of literary texts (De Zepetnek & Mukherjee 4-5).

In her *The World Republic of Letters*, Pascale Casanova reflects upon the contemporary literary circulations to acknowledge the existence of a global literary space beyond the world’s political and economic structures; she points:

The purpose of this book is to restore a point of view that has been obscured for the most part by the "nationalization" of literatures and literary histories, to rediscover a lost transnational dimension of literature that for two hundred years has been reduced to the political and linguistic boundaries of nation. (Casanova xii)

The politicized Orientations of modern nations grounded a fractured literary sphere. In fact, the hierarchical structures of world states into ‘centre’ and ‘periphery’ had led to the nationalization of letters, where literary productions are attributed to a certain nation. Thus, literatures are subjected to hierarchical structuring. On this account, Fernand Braudel notices that the political and economic inequalities between ‘Centre’ and ‘Periphery’ are extended to the intellectual and literary spheres to cause further literary hierarchy (83). Moreover, the

literature of the periphery and Minor Literatures are subjected to invisibility compared to the centre literary production. Considering these points, Pascale Casanova promotes for a literary space that distances from the Eurocentric perspective and stresses upon cultural decentralization, which aligns with what Goethe terms ‘World Literature’.

Similarly, Franco Moretti proposes ‘distant reading’ as a method of literary readings that parallels the abundant literary works circulating from one space to another. In his *Distant Reading*, he rests upon World System analysis and evolutionary theory of culture that attempt to gather and analyze quantitative data to read literary texts, and therefore, promoting an alternative of the traditional close reading method (43). The latter has shown hindrance in terms of excluding considerable literatures throughout history to merely favor the ‘canon works’, which highly overlooked the body of works produced. Additionally, a close reading of literary texts appears to be devalued in an era of voluminous literary works coming from different places. According to him, cultural evolution summons novel methods of reading; he states that “Like the economy, literature has indeed developed” (Moretti 19). Certainly, the technological advances and the augmenting interest in digital humanities along with the abundant circulation of ‘letters’ appear to call upon novel methods rather than the traditional reading of the literary works. Under such an account, the productions of the literary ‘periphery’ receives a broad welcoming, which eventually distances from Eurocentric interpretations characterizing the traditional method. In addition, it moves into the consideration of World Literature in the study of texts that are circulating beyond the national boundaries. Therefore, distant reading promotes a quantitative analysis of literary works to include a reading of wide array of works encompassing the circulating literatures and their reading outside Eurocentric perspectives.

Such unaccustomed orientations in literary readings are in fact an extension to the theoretical reconsiderations in multiple fields that have been recently called upon. As a matter of fact, numerous disciplines and fields are undergoing considerable mutations to meet the novel realities imposed by a global fact, which changed the standards of reality in general and intellectual theories in particular. More specifically, the notion of inter and cross disciplinary studies have been widely promoted to arrive at meticulous readings of the globalized facts. On such an account, in his *Theoretical Times*, Steve Redhead questions theories in the era of intersection among high and low theory, new realism, post popular culture, and contemporary global reality to assess the theories employed for literary reading (19). Hence, the theoretical

literary readings in recent years have called upon novel theoretical articulations to arrive at a comprehension of the facts produced under global conditions.

1.3. From Globe to Planet: Conceptual Alteration

Considering the literary background in the contemporary era, novel readings and interpretations are being shaped and reshaped to echo the recent realities. The literary and intellectual productions of the ‘periphery’ celebrate their emergence as a means to ‘resist’ the pervasive Eurocentric perspectives regarding the reading of works. In fact, such an intellectual endeavor is traced in the speeches of Gayatri Spivak, who takes an interest in voicing the intellectual periphery in the tide of ‘westernized’ versions of literary readings. In her *Death of a Discipline*, she inclines the ‘death’ of Comparative Literature as a discipline for its inability to manage the literary changes, and its obvious Eurocentric Orientations. For her, the discipline necessitates a process of ‘decolonization’. More peculiarly, the theorist develops the term ‘Planetarity’ in the last chapter, where she proposes “the planet to overwrite the globe” (Spivak 72). Accordingly, a ‘constructive’ analytical reading of the concept takes the primary concern of the present thesis, where it fountains from Spivak’s perspective and seeks further development in the field of cultural studies. Thus, it is received that the use of the concept contends to replace the term ‘globe’ in cultural and literary discussions.

The use of the term ‘globe’ is received to be an extension to ‘World System’ that classifies nations according to economic and political performances leading to the supremacy of the West over the rest. Indeed, the term ‘planet’ appears more adequate since the former tends to connote political and economic Orientations driven by such a system’. Indeed, expressions like: globe, globalization, and globalism tend to evoke a rupture among world nations on multiple levels as they align with the classifications of center, periphery, and semi-periphery, which tend to categorize nations depending on their economic progress and political Orientations. In addition, the cultural and intellectual spheres paralleled the system announcing the primacy of the western human productions over the rest. On such an account, Edward Said’s *Orientalism* stresses that the Occident’s scholars constructed stereotypical images of the East which shaped a superior position of the former -for imperial and colonial purposes- escorting into a devaluation of the cultural ‘other’. Certainly, with such an Orientalist perspective, the cultural and the intellectual spheres of the ‘rest’ have been

depreciated, and therefore, resulted into the supremacy of the Western perspectives and practices.

Furthermore, the concept predicates power relations among world nations. Indeed, globalization is largely discussed in relation to concepts of 'power' such as: imperialism, colonialism, neo-colonialism, and hegemony, where many receive it with a frame of power rather than an invitation for paralleled economic and political structures among nations. As a matter of fact, the prevailing notion of World System fountained a perspective that is based on hierarchy where strong national entities attempt to dominate the others for the sake of power maintenance, as Edward Said illustrates in his thesis. Accordingly, several intellectual and common minds hold the position that the phenomenon has the objective of homogenizing world cultures to follow a western pattern, and therefore, ensures dominance over the less fortunate nations. Consequently, the concept infers to a binary relation between the West and the 'rest', where a power position is attributed to the former. On the intellectual sphere, the Western perspective sides with such power-relations to promote a Eurocentric outlook regarding readings, methods and applications; hence, intellectual endeavors primarily favor assessments that are founded upon Western principles and practices. Such an idea lengthily progresses in Spivak's *Death of a Discipline* -detailed in the coming titles- where the notion of alterity inscribes in the Western speeches on the Orient.

Analogously, the literary readings of 'periphery' productions constitute the central occupation of postcolonial and diasporic studies that fountain from western interpretation materials. In fact, these disciplines appear to occupy the major concern of the scholars who possess a keen interest in literary and cultural 'periphery' since they voiced the periphery in a Western pervasive atmosphere. Indeed, postcolonial and diasporic literatures have given a voice to the periphery amidst western scholarly productions. In addition, the primary concern of both is to highlight the encounter between the Orient and the Occident. However, both postcolonial and diasporic readings announce greater limitations due to the westernized versions employed to read and interpret these productions since the source of the literary analysis heavily rests upon Area Studies and perspectives that have been theorized in the west. In fact, both Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak speak of Area Studies -as a source for literary approaches- to qualify it as Eurocentric in nature for stressing upon Western perspectives. In addition, the contemporary literary and theoretical perspectives drive to

reevaluate the reading status quo and to reevaluate the canon theories used as the infrastructure for literary interpretations.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin, in their *The Empire Writes Back* see that the term postcolonial encompasses “all the culture affected by the imperial process from the moment of colonization to the present day” (Ashcroft & al. 2); thus, postcolonialism surrounds the national cultural legacies of imperial powers from an historical perspective. It is also understood as “the term for the new cross-cultural criticism which has emerged in recent years and for the discourse through which this is constituted” (2). The concept is highly considered for literary and cultural criticism, where the Orient and the occident are crossing; thereby, composes a substantial instrument of analysis and criticism that understands the world and the west-east encounter from an angle that gives credit to the post-colonized groups. Moreover, the emergence of postcolonial literary theory has clearly credited the East amidst western scholarships, and also constituted a reaction against the western deficiency at comprehending the emerging complexities of the literary articulations of the post-colonial writings (11). Indeed, the notion of European universality of literary studies claims ineffectiveness when confronted with the emerging post-colonial writings. Furthermore, the writers broadcast four critical models of Eastern literature arguing for a gradual transformation of postcolonialism from the 1980s to present times (14). Accordingly, the scope of the former has shifted attention from mere national consideration to international occupations. In other words, the postcolonial theories primarily advanced interests in the conditions of the ex-colonized subjects and their responses to the departure of the colonizer, yet the concentration has equally shifted towards the study of the relation between the West and the East on a transnational level since more literary writers and works became affiliated to more than one cultural heritage as a cause of a vivid territorial displacement. Hence, it provides an extended theoretical framework for the cross-cultural criticism on both the national and transnational level. In his article, “Is the Islamist Voice Subaltern?” Thurfjell contends that the core of postcoloniality is the ambition of decentralizing ‘the West’, or western modernity. This is particularly distributed through Islamism as it leans towards furnishing alternative perspectives that disengage with the west, and thus, gives a voice to the Islamic periphery.

However, in the light of recent historical progression, the validity of postcolonial theories is questioned and intensely criticized by multiple critics like: Gayatri Spivak, Wail

Hassan, Amin Malak and Anouar Majid. These authors agree that the postcolonial perspective holds Eurocentric features. Indeed, Wail Hassan's essay "Postcolonial Theory and Modern Arabic Literature: Horizons and Application" maintains that postcolonial theory has developed out of European traditions; thereby, maintaining the role of neocolonialism, colonial discourse and Eurocentrism (47). Additionally, he adds that postcolonial readings are insufficient to furnish reliable literature that adequately corresponds with the Eastern realities, more particularly the Arab and Muslim periphery, since it heavily relies on western reading traditions and theories (49). Moreover, the notion of 'writing back', understood as a cornerstone in the postcolonial writing, has received intense criticism questioning its relevance to postcoloniality considering the historical progression in the ex-colonized spaces. Elke Sturm-Trigonakis, in her article "Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature", discusses how different writers overcome 'the writing back' along with a longing for the lost mother country (179). In fact, the recent realities and historical circumstances have called upon different readings that find no relation with the binary positions articulated by such a notion.

Moreover, in her *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak calls for new postcolonial readings since the latter relates to Eurocentrism, and notions of binarism and alterity. In her discursive analysis, she employs the word 'uncanny' to connect colonial, postcolonial and de-colonial discourses for being familiar with notions of otherness and binarism, which align with a process of defamiliarizing the notion of 'humanity' as universally familiar space (Spivak 77). Moreover, she comments that "postcolonialism remained caught in mere nationalism over/against colonialism" (81). In other words, postcolonial theories are observed to maintain antagonism against imperial/colonial powers and favor a nationalist perspective that credits the self over and the other, which leads to a rejection of the other. Gayatri Spivak uses the concept of Planetarity outlining a 'utopian' vision that is distant from the postcolonial binary thinking (ibid). Hence, the notion of Planetarity attempts to alter attention from postcolonial theories for its inability to comprehend the contemporary realities conditioned by globalization and intensive transnational flows. In fact, postcolonialism is limited by its overstress upon binarism and the calamities of colonialism, imperialism, capitalism, globalization, and transnationalism (Behdad 423).

Furthermore, such postcolonial Orientations find an echo in diasporic readings, which transports the national/ local Eastern occupations to a diasporic setting. Therefore, the

postcolonial limitations are additionally transferred to the Diasporic readings, which question its adequacy to provide readings for the literary articulations in the contemporary era characterized by globalization. As a matter of fact, multicultural literary productions voice the concerns of the ‘periphery’ that take the theme of cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and Occident as the primary occupation. Such an encounter sets at the ‘centre’ –namely the European ex-colonizer nations and America- where the Eastern subject is regarded as a minority. Based on their diasporic experiences, writers and theorists such as Salman Rushdi, Homi Bhabha, and Bharati Mukherjee have shifted from the western Eurocentric perspectives to distribute readings that correspond with the realities of the diasporic subjects in a status of cross-cultural encounter, and therefore, giving a voice to the periphery in a western space. More particularly, the concerns of these writings and readings are the questions related to cultural identity: hybridity, displacement, loss, alienation, racism, assimilation ...etc. when meeting the occidental other.

Recently, scholars and literary intellectuals question the validity of such theories to provide adequate readings that meet the novel realities shaped by the intense global circulations. The diasporic literary modes of articulation have been connected to the postcolonial discourse especially when dealing with writers and characters originating from ‘third world’ background. Certainly, Spivak sees that both postcolonialism and multiculturalism –with its postcolonial theory dominance- have “constructed the most recent of variations on the theme of U.S. exceptionalism” (Spivak 82), where the adoption of the former in departments is built upon an ‘enhanced metropolitan nationalism” (ibid). In other words, European and American interests in the adoption and development of these fields in their departments is a reflection of their declared attempts to the spread of democracy and human rights on a global level. Therefore, it is confidently assumed that the discipline, in addition to Area Studies as the major source of theory, receive a Eurocentric perspective.

Diasporic literature appears to be primarily occupied by the theme of cross-cultural encounter between the East and West. The readings produced on such a theme received critical responses that vowed its limitations to read the literary modes and constructed themes in the light of intense transnational motion. Indeed, the ‘old’ diasporic circumstances reflected the tide of immigrants and exiled individuals who escaped the economic defectiveness of their homelands after the colonial departure, and therefore, the memory of the East pendulated their cultural identities on and forth. However, the recent migratory flows are conditioned by a

search for more economic and social prospects while possessing cross-cultural awareness unlike the older generations. Henceforth, the canon themes like: the self versus the other, minority versus majority, us versus them, that are essential to the postcolonial theories, are questioned since they vow a notifiable call for binary thinking. In addition, Diasporic productions are regarded as minority literature, and therefore, bear multicultural themes and perceptions. The latter are received to be heavily absorbed by western-Oriented principles that assumed by the majority literature. In addition, the notion of hybridized cultures and works exhibit the impact of the majority upon the minority (Sturm-Trigonakis 184). Therefore, the dominant critical perspectives appear to hand limited access to comprehend the novel cultural and literary productions in an era of global circulations.

Planetarity

The terminological beginning of the concept ‘Planetary’ appeared in Bandung conference held in 1955. Cetswayo Zindaba Mabhena uses the term as a substitute for the expression ‘Third World’, and calls for the participation of the ‘South’ in ‘planet talks’; hence, such involvement creeds for a philosophical and political commitment to a future of world liberation, democracy, and humanism. Indeed, the use of the term Planetary evacuates Anthony Giddens’s concept ‘Third World’ since it promotes, not only the economic and political superiority of the West but, a western intellectual and cultural superiority compared to an inferior non-West. Based on similar stands, Gayatri Spivak employs the term ‘Planetary’ to diverge from the implications of the concept of ‘globalization’ in her attempt to forward a literary perspective that meet the global realities. Indeed, Globalization, with its connotations, refers to notions of control, hegemony, imperialism, and colonialism whereby the World System structure advances an impression –if not the intention- of control. Spivak sees globalization as “the imposition of the same system of exchange everywhere” (72), whereas the planet refers to “the species of alterity” (72).

Hence, the conceptual implications of Planetarity condemn the concept of globe for its announcements of power relations. Moreover, the era of global flows requires novel ways of reading the text –that bears the thematic concern of Orient versus the occident- where a distance from the traditional postcolonial and diasporic discourses leads to a Planetarian outlook. The former critical theories announce themes of: colonizer vs. colonized, majority vs. minority, imperialism, hegemony and hybridity ...etc. which are perceived to maintain no adequacies to read the emerging World Literature and its thematic expressions; whereas a

Planetarian vision announces relatable statements for the newly emerging literature. Nevertheless, “Planetarity cannot deny Globalization” (Spivak 93) as much as it an attempt for reconciliation and an Orientation towards an inclusion of ‘subaltern’ voices. On the intellectual level, global talk, additionally, negotiates Eurocentrism; the Euro-American studies, theories and methodologies including: Area Studies, social theories and cultural studies have largely stood upon western methods to arrive at conclusions related to the periphery’s cultural and intellectual realities. Thus, Gayatri Spivak announces “the planet to overwrite the globe” (Spivak 72).

The term’s insinuations take multiple conceptualizations, yet the primordial concern of the present thesis is the cultural and literary connotations; more particularly, the cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident vowed in literary works. The cultural identity of the periphery has been critically studied within postcolonial and diasporic terms with their specific considerations which are criticized for their binary thinking and Eurocentric perspective. The present thesis takes the theoretical considerations of Planetarity to arrive at a contemporary reading of the literary texts –bearing the theme of cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the occident- without the traditional considerations of postcoloniality and multiculturalism. As a matter of fact, the notion of Planetarity, as announced by Gayatri Spivak in her *Death of a Discipline*, offers no theoretical or critical grounds for a perspective to read literary productions in the era of global circulation. Indeed, the theorist appears to offer a perspective and manner of thinking rather than a set of theoretical or methodological instruments of reading or analysis. In her conference speech entitled “Harnessing the Humanities” held in February 23rd, 2020, Spivak associates the concept of Planetarity to imagination, where she articulated “I have a dream” quoting Martin Luther King’s speech. That is to say, the theorist points to the limitations of the canon literary theories and opts for a ‘utopian’ vision that aims for a literary reading that promote the non-west. Thus, the concept evokes a perspective that promotes for a departure from the canon cross-cultural perspectives towards a vision that parallels the contemporary realities.

The notion of Planetarity derives from the planet, where “the planet is in the species of alterity” (Spivak 72). Spivak argues that the planet encompasses a multitude of species coexisting in the same space. On a cultural parallel, multiple cultures and societies populate the planet, and it is only natural to cohabitate. In her article “From Precarity to Planetarity: Cecilia Vicuña’s Kon Kon” (2013), Candice Amich understands Planetarity as the desire to

know and understand the planet rather than alter or change it (Amich 147). On ecological and environmental perspectives, the notion of ‘globe’ aims at control and change of other species for domination purposes; discordantly, a Planetarian perspective embraces “the species of alterity” (149). Equally, despite of the similarities on the political, economic, and social levels, Paul Gilroy observes dissimilarities between globalization and Planetarity (Hyoung 568). In fact, the move towards Planetarity indicates a move beyond neoliberalism, capitalism and speeches about globalization’s attempts for hegemony (Amich 147); thereby, the concept offers an ethical framework for thinking collectivity in the era of globalization (148).

Moreover, the evoked planet talk insinuates recognition of the existence of the other and its significance on multiple levels. In fact, the notion of the other has been received as opposed to the self and therefore contributed to the creation of binary positions that stood on the grounds of superiority of the self and the inferiority of the other based on certain grounds. Such addresses are rejected by Planetarity, and thus, discards alterity speeches that can be associated to discourses of coloniality, postcolonialism, imperialism and hegemony that can be located in the literature of the cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident. Indeed, Spivak stands for a cultural and intellectual system of equality without suggesting binary nor power relations: “If we imagine ourselves as planetary subjects rather than global agents, planetary creatures rather than global entities, alterity remains underived from us” (Spivak 73). Hence, she articulates notions of sameness and equality when it comes to cultural encounters. Additionally, in their book, *Planetary Loves: Spivak, Postcoloniality and Theology*, Stephan D. Moore and Mayra Rivera receive that the notion of Planetarity, as announced by Gayatri Spivak, is considered as a mindset that challenges the exploitative dualisms of colonialism and postcolonialism (80). Also, it is regarded as a utopian idea promoting for protection against political attempts for imperial hegemonies along with neo-colonial interests (84). Therefore, the notion of Planetarity is a statement promoting cultural and literary coexistence that rejects the idea of alterity and binary difference between the Oriental and the Occident in particular.

Furthermore, the concept appears to connect to discourses related to humanism, cosmopolitanism, internationalism and similar isms that encapsulate pluralistic connotations disowning regionalist thinking, nationalism and others that disregard the other to promote for a superior self. “To be human is to be intended towards the other” (Spivak 73); indeed, the former notions transcend alterity and binary thought, and highly promote for planet-thought

suggesting the acceptance and embrace of the other. Therefore, the literature produced on the themes of cross-cultural encounter between the Occident and the Orient are ought to be read upon a perspective that disregards binary thinking and moves towards embrace of the other as a reaction to the global realities. Accordingly, the present thesis considers Comparative Cultural Studies as a discipline that promote for methodological approaches for literary analysis. The former aligns with the concept of Planetarity as it distances from the Eurocentric approaches to literary analysis; in addition, it derives from the attentions of the concept and forms a methodological structure to read the cultural themes in texts since Spivak offers no theoretical grounds related to her developed concept. Henceforth, on methodological level, Imagology along with its cognitive Orientations, transcultural literary readings constitute the primary concerns of the paper.

1.4. Comparative Cultural Studies and the Culturality of the Text

Spivak's conceptualization of Planetarity, with reference to cultural discourses, appeals to Comparative Cultural Studies as a discipline that considers cross-cultural relations between the Orient and the Occident. As a matter of fact, Gayatri Spivak announces the death of Comparative Literature since it became a saturated discipline, which leads to a revival of the former leaving a space for cultural studies to revive the field. Indeed, a discursive analysis of the concept of Planetarity converges with Comparative Cultural Studies in the sense that: texts are considered as cultural artifacts, a departure from Eurocentricism, questioning artistic canons, considering peripheral productions, and reckoning the Periphery. Therefore, the present discussion creates a pact between Gayatri's concept and Comparative Cultural Studies since Planetarity, in its cultural terms, provides no disciplinary practices to read literary works in an era of trans-cultural intensity. Actually, in a conference held on February 2020, Gayatri Spivak entitles her speech "Harnessing the Humanities", and uses the expression 'I have a dream' in relation to her concept 'Planetarity', which signify that the term is related to a perspective rather than furnishing a methodological or theoretical structures to read literary texts. Hence, a cultural perspective identifies with the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies provides theoretical infrastructures for the reading of literary texts while maintaining paralleled interests in the literary considerations of the concept.

The discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies is understood as a combination of two different disciplines: Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies, which nominates it as an

interdisciplinary field. A number of scholars in the field of Cultural Studies sought to march towards literary productions in order to expand the cultural materials documenting relatable themes to their scholarly interests. Indeed, the literary text is received as a cultural production as it attests for the cultural circumstances of a particular group, or it depicts the cross-cultural encounter between or among different cultures. Steven Totosy de Zepetnek invites for comparative Orientations of cultural studies, and the use of literary texts as cultural products that attest for the manufacturing of culture under certain circumstances. He defines the disciplines as:

a field of study where selected tenets of the discipline of comparative literature are merged with selected tenets of the field of cultural studies, meaning that the study of culture and culture products ... is performed in a contextual and relational construction and with a plurality of methods and approaches, inter-disciplinarity, and, if and when required, including team work. (De Zepetnek 14-15)

In other words, the text is treated as a cultural product that can be studied within the disciplinary framework of Cultural Studies. In fact, Comparative Literature appears to be attractive for Cultural Studies for aligning with interdisciplinarity to read the literary texts. Thus, Comparative Cultural Studies merges the two disciplines since they hold the characteristics of multi and inter-disciplinarity employed to read and interpret texts, as cultural products. In addition, the merger brings a shift in Comparative Literature as it permits it to interrogate and to distance from the vowed Eurocentricism accompanying the readings and methodologies; therefore, it aligns with the intentions of Planetarity as discussed by Gayatri Spivak in her *Death of a Discipline*.

Moreover, the new discipline is constructed upon multiple theories, fields, and disciplines, which makes it an interdisciplinary space. In their book *Comparative Cultural Studies*, De Zepetnek and Mukherjee stand for the introduction of Cultural Studies in the reading of literary texts unlocking gates for the incorporation of scholarships and theories from social sciences, humanities, and even applied sciences to construct theories, methods, and approaches to read the literary texts, as cultural products (11). Hence, the discipline furnishes an abundant theoretical and methodological heterogeneity, plurality, and flexibility of borders to the study of literary texts (ibid). The writers emphasize that:

It can also be described as inter- multi-, and even counter- or anti-disciplinary, taking its agenda and mode of analysis from shared concerns and methods, (re)combining numerous traditional and new disciplines to affect the critical study of cultural phenomena in various societies, always with an emphasis on the cultural and social context and with an aim of understanding the metamorphosis of the notion of culture itself. (De Zepetnek & Mukherjee 11)

Indeed, the multidisciplinary of the field rests its approaches, methods, and theories of studies and perspectives cultivated in different disciplines to arrive at a ‘democratic’ and ‘holistic’ readings of the literary productions (De Zepetnek & Vasvári 11). Accordingly, it permits to the literary field to announce a literature that dissolves from the Eurocentric perspectives that had been observed in recent debates; hence, coordinating with Spivak’s version of a literary Planetarity.

Complying with the contemporary global circumstances, more particularly the cultural realities, novel approaches and perspectives are ought to be imported to arrive at a Planetarian reading of literary texts. Correspondingly, the notion of canon articulations and classical tempos of literary readings are reevaluated and are replaced by a literary field that encapsulates different works from multiple origins, which appears to be the primary occupation of the field of World Literature along with Spivak’s Planetarian vision. As a matter of fact, “Cultural studies aims to articulate the unsaid, the suppressed, and the concealed by dominant modes of knowing”, which comprises, not only texts but also, theories and methods in different disciplines (De Zepetnek & Vasvári 12). Therefore, the primary occupation of Cultural Studies is to underline the cultural materials, comprising literary texts, in an attempt to come at reliable readings of culture outside the notion of hierarchy that standardly classifies literature as either peripheral or canonical. In fact, the central occupation of the discipline is to understand the social and cultural realities in a particular time and space despite of the materials’ consideration as canonical or peripheral by literary standards.

Indeed, the novel literary realities necessitate approaching texts based on new standards. In her article “Comparative Cultural Studies and Linguistic Hybridities in Literature”, Elke Sturm-Trigonakis maintains that the literary changes in the context of global circulations are “Confronted with a boom of linguistically and culturally hybrid texts to which the monocultural methodological tools and national canon-based aesthetic criteria generally do not offer an adequate approach” (178); thus, calls upon novelty of perspective to produce

reliable readings attuning with the novel realities. Moreover, De Zepetnek and Mukherjee argue that the era of globalization requires innovative ways of reading, which requires inter and multi-disciplinary approaches that are assumed by Comparative Cultural Studies; in fact, “Comparative Cultural Studies is an inclusive discipline of global humanities and, as such, acts against the paradox of and tension between the global versus the local” (De Zepetnek & Mukherjee 17). Certainly, Comparative Cultural Studies reads literary texts within theoretical frameworks of cultural context, cultural studies, and cultural relations (De Zepetnek 1).

IN addition to Cultural Studies, the discipline of Comparative Literature and its constantly shifting standards find a repository in the field of Comparative Cultural Studies. In fact, the occupation of Cultural Studies appears to summarize, first, in its powered will to comprehend the socio-cultural quotidian of particular groups in a particular epoch. Secondly, it rests upon other disciplines: anthropology, sociology, history, narratives, and others for the study of socio-cultural phenomena (De Zepetnek & Mukherjee, 12). In addition, it is occupied by the marginalized, popular cultures, media, and audiences along with the canonical, traditional, and the standard; thereby, it appears to embrace a broad range of theoretical, approaches, and methods to arrive at a reading that customize with the wide array of occupations (11). By the same token, Comparative Literature share similar interdisciplinary occupations as it aim to study literary texts from various national origins for the purpose of comprehension. Yet, the literary field appears to be changing as a result of the global circulation of letters and libraries along with the emerging field of World Literature joining the departments of Comparative Literature. Tototsy De Zeptnek receives that the discipline is in the process of mutation due to recent changes, and he urges for the merger of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies (9). On the same wavelength, Gayatri Spivak assumes the death of Comparative Literature as a discipline that is saturated by Eurocentric perspectives, and calls for further transformations in the field to cope with the recent changes. In her *Death of a Discipline*, she questions the relevancy of Area Studies as the primary theoretical ground for the critical analysis of literary texts since, as Edward Said argues through his concept Orientalism, the former is geared by Eurocentric perspectives (Spivak 6), in addition to an announced politics of power and binary position (7).

As a matter of fact, the periphery spaces have adopted the discipline of Comparative Literature in their departments, which has created an outlook that challenges the Eurocentric intellectual and scholarly hegemonies that the discipline has classically been standing upon.

Numerous Arab states have appropriated Comparative Literature in their departments to receive a wider acknowledgement among the Arab intellectual arena. In her article entitled “Comparative Literature in Arabic” (2013), Marie-Therese Abdel-Messih takes a closer look into the development of the discipline in an Arab space, where she observes that the Arab intellectual and scholar tend to appropriate the discipline to sort it out from its classical Eurocentric Orientations. These scholars squad with a more ‘nationalistic’ endeavor and suggest an Arab superiority over the colonizers, first, in an attempt to recognize the self in comparison to the other, and second, to claim self-validity in a space of Eurocentricism (233). In addition, Edward Said’s “Secular Criticism” along with the postcolonial theories represent a nest to dwell upon in order to provide a theoretical space of resistance to the literary and theoretical hegemonies employed by Western institutions (235). Consequently, they challenge the Orientalist perspectives vowed by the Western scholarships.

Factually, various disciplines in social sciences and the humanities appear to have been on the path of transformation of their occupations and methods. As an instance, the field of Anthropology appears to play a significant role in the study of literary texts as a major source of theoretical perspectives, particularly those addressing themes of culture. The field is received to be faithfully related to Comparative Cultural Studies since it is regarded as a fountain for cultural knowledge and theories. In his chapter “Anthropological Studies” (2013), Rik Pinxten associates the field to Comparative Cultural Studies and contends that “With the anthropological approach added, this means an expansion of the field by bringing in another relevant aspect and perspective in and of scholarship” (121). Undeniably, the incorporation of cultural Anthropology to Comparative Cultural Studies permits to have an access to a non-Eurocentric perspective when related to the critical analysis of cultural tenets. Tototsy De Zeptenek points that the historical background of the field is tightly associated to Eurocentricism since scholarships produced in the West has been scientifically validated and had been used as a frame of reference, and thus, “falling pray to a colonial attitude” (112). Recently, these attitudes have been criticized and reevaluated to escape the notion of Orientalism and Eurocentricism in reading cultural products.

Indeed, many scholars have called for the dismissal of ‘old’ readings and the incorporation of novel ones in the field of Anthropology, which have been primarily claimed by Pierre Bourdieu and Michel Foucault. Bourdieu claims that “the study of culture in whatever discipline or field is possible only in and through interactions with the other

subject(s)” (Pinxten 114), which signify that the scholarships about a particular society or cultural group can only be valid when treating the subjects scientifically and objectively rather than mere theories. Such a position demonstrates that the validity of anthropological scholarships cannot be grounded from theories that are generalized to different societies and cultures; otherwise, a fall into Orientalism cannot be avoided. Additionally, Bourdieu calls for a process of dialectics, or an attitude of openness and empathy that permits to generate sound readings and comprehensions of the world and relationships (De Zepetnek & Mukherjee 114). By the same token, Clifford Geertz believes that “divergences and differences are rampant, and the need for solid and tenable approach to comparative anthropology is essential” (116).

1.4.1. Reading the Cultural Self and Other

The occupation with approaches and methods of text reading, Imagology finds an echo in Comparative Literature since its early uses as an approach in the nineteenth century, where its main aim is the study of national images and representations of social and cultural communities. In their book *Imagology: The Cultural Construction and Literary Representation of National Characters, a Critical Survey*, Beller and Leerssen define it as “the critical analysis of national stereotypes in literature and in other forms of cultural representation” (83). The main concern of the study of images; therefore, is a glimpse on how national, ethnic, racial, cultural images are displayed in a literary text. The purpose of the approach is to provide a methodological dimension to the study of literary depiction of cultural or national images of a certain group of people. According to Leerssen (2016), “Imagology is a working method, not in sociology, but in the humanities; the aim is to understand, not a society or social dynamics, but rather a discursive logic and representational set of cultural and poetic conventions” (19); therefore, approaching the work of a historian.

However, the approach has been criticized as a rigid endeavor to comprehend cultural and national representations as it assumes the fixity of cultures, especially in an air of global circulations and cross-cultural encounter. Indeed, Joep Leerssen’s article “Imagology: On using Ethnicity to make sense of the world” articulates that “the nation-state is no longer the self-evident category it used to be”, where identities have been affected by the transnational flows calling for efforts to reconsider Imagology for its national essentialist perspective (28). Equally, Zrinka Blažević points that the crossing between Imagology and postcolonial studies has not been successful due to the tacit universalizing of Eurocentric Orientation (355-356). Alternatively, recent discussions have pointed to the relevance of image studies with its

national stereotype Orientations to the notion of ‘world-thinking’ and to the growing field of World Literature.

Viewed from the imagological perspective, a reconsideration of culture in translocal terms implies that, in the context of the contemporary globalized world, images can be simultaneously situated within both local and global realms. This renders every demarcation line between “foreign” and “own” indistinct and blurred. On that account, it is more than obvious that Imagology is nowadays faced with the, literally, global challenge. (Blažević 356)

In addition, transcultural reading aligns with a Planetarian vision of cultures under the recent global realities. In his article “Transcultural Imagology”, Zinka Blažević calls for a new approach to Imagology that comes to terms with the global and transcultural realities of the contemporary era, to arrive at a discipline that matches the changes and constant developments of Comparative Literature as a discipline. The aim is to analytically deal with the complex cultural images the multifaceted semiotic context of a global network society (356). He emphasizes that: “Transculturality declines the static and monistic understanding of cultural identities, and concentrates instead on mechanisms of cultural exchange as the main catalysts of generating and proliferating cultural differences” (Blažević 358). The transcultural dimension to Imagology participates in the new visions announced for the discipline, where it considers the global transnational realities facing the discipline of Comparative Literature in general. Similar dimension into the study of literary images is ‘cognitive approach’ to read the national images transferred in the literary texts. Other dimensions going in the same stream is the cognitive perception. The latter finds theoretical applications in the field of Comparative Literature in order to read national images and decipher the cultural changes in an air of global motions and changes.

The Orientation of the present dissertation is the study of cultural identities in its deeper levels of analysis, Hence, a consideration of the imagological Orientations of cognitivism. The latter methodologically aligns with Spivak’s announcement of Planetarity, in its cultural terms, to grant more credit to no methodological/ theoretical Eurocentricism as it provides deeper analytical statements for cultural studies and cross-cultural encounter in the age of transnational flows. The concern of the approach is to offer an understanding of the cultural realities and cultural shifts slash identity assessments in an air of cross-cultural encounter.

Moreover, the understanding of cultures calls for a cognitive perspective which looks deeply into the construction and production of culture. Indeed, cognitivism is received to be incorporated into the study of national images, which provides a meticulous look into the study of cultures and national representations. The consideration of the cognitive approach in imagological terms has captured different scholars. The question that linked between the two disciplines is: how to make sense of the world, cultures and images? Therefore, being interested in how individuals receive these transferred images contribute to the perception of concepts around them. To achieve that purpose, theories of social cognition provide insights into related mental processes that occur on the unconscious level (Gawronski 201). Thereby, like the reader-response theory, the reception of the cultural and national images is put into primary consideration.

The interdisciplinary nature of the broad discipline of Comparative Literature granted an access to cognitive science for further comprehension of the images received. The *mélange* between image studies and cognitive science goes further than its interest in social-reception of images. The cross-cultural encounter as a recurrent literary theme is interested in how cognitive processes operate in the presence of cultural images. The contemporary global setting furtherly provides a cross-cultural reality on different levels, where the transnational circulations generate a flow of images from one place to another. The movement of images on both national and transnational levels is the main concern of the present dissertation where deeper cultural comprehensions of identity construction appeal to the cognitive approach to make deeper sense of the cognitive responses to the cultural images of the self and the other. In the next chapter, a detailed projection on the cognitive approach as a literary tool and its connection to cultural studies and cross-cultural encounter is provided.

1.5. The Periphery Literature and the Other: An Overview

The contemporary era in both Arabia, more particularly Saudi Arabia, and India are impacted by the recent global changes that inflicted the historical circumstances of both contexts and the literary sphere to produce certain texts with particular themes and forms.

1.5.1. Contextualizing Arabia: Contemporary History and Literature

The notion of Arabness remains a questionable statement for the common individuals as the word is used to refer to people from the same geographical, ethnic, religious, historical and cultural background. Juan Cole, a professor of Middle Eastern studies and South Asian

studies, sees that the concept refers to linguistic category, “Arab is not a racial category, the Arabs are just a people who speak a language” (21). He makes a distinction between the ‘Arab Nation’ and the ‘Arab culture’; the nation consists of elements that have not fully grown yet among the Arab nations, whereas the Culture means concrete realities that have grown out for centuries (21). Hence, the Arab world sees itself in cultural and religious terms rather than national. The religion basis dates back to the Islamic empire, where an Islamic based culture has typified the behavior of the Arab Muslims from the early embraces of Islam and remained printed to present days. In fact, despite of the long histories and conflicts, religion has stood solid to mark the cultural conditions of the Arab societies. Therefore, the fact of being an Arab equals an Islamic based-culture promoted as national identities in the region.

Saudi Arabia as a national entity is constructed upon the rise of al-Saud dynasty along with the Wahhabi doctrine fuelling the structuring of the nation, which stressed upon fundamentalist readings of the Islamic scriptures in order to highlight the political, economic, and social structures of the nation. Such national orientations have attributed certain rules and roles to both males and females as social agents, where women were granted a subordinate position compared to men especially on the public sphere. In her chapter entitled “Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East”, Maha Azam articulates that the fundamentalist beliefs structured society and social roles according to traditionalist perspectives that grounded from the earlier centuries, and fostered by orthodox interpretations (218). Additionally, the identity of the Muslim female and her ‘integrity’ is ought to be guarded and kept different from the Occidental woman, who is received as impure (219).

The contemporary history of the kingdom witnessed degrees of modernization regarding the economic sector as the discovery of petroleum natural resources contributed to the richness of the nation. Political decisions have opened doors for foreign aids in different economic matters to render the nation as a stage for cosmopolitanism. Indeed, people from various spots around the globe target the Kingdom for economic purposes constituting a major working force in all economic sectors. Hence, Saudi Arabia became a cosmopolitan space gathering people of all backgrounds and nationalities within a single territory. However, it is worth to mention that such ‘cosmopolitan’ Orientations do not appear to create a hybrid society as political decisions and laws favor the maintenance of a Saudi cultural identity, where respecting and adhering to Saudi cultural and social standards remains an essential

position into accepting immigrants. Furthermore, the modernization of the kingdom on an economic sphere extended to social compartments; which feature a dissemination of a group of laws permitting access to facilities, spaces, and certain behaviors. In such a context, women are granted a certain degree of freedom similar to the right to drive vehicles and the right to remove the public dress code.

1.5.1.1. Contemporary writings

The literary production in the Arab world has a long history of acquaintance with Islamic discourse. Many writings were banned and regarded as blasphemous when numerous ones were subjected to the Islamic *fatwa*. In fact, Nawal Saadawi, the widely acknowledged Arab slash Egyptian feminist has been widely criticized for her anti-Muslim thoughts. Muhammad Rashid Qabbani, a Lebanese mufti states that there is a limit of freedom of speech and expression, one limit is that it should not infringe on people's religious beliefs. Moreover, Turki Al-Hamad explores different issues related to Saudi Arabia, Arab and Islam that have led to the initiation of *fatwa* against his works to be banned in Saudi Arabia. His work *Al-Adama* (2003) is initially about a young male who displays considerable social misfit due to his philosophic and political ideas nurtured through readings. The book questions the validity and relevance of many social, cultural and religious discourses along with political criticism which made the book a perceived misfit for a Saudi audience.

In her article "Modern Arabic Literature and Islamist Discourse", Haifa Snir sees that the Arabic literature has always been connected to Islamic discourses. In fact, the nature of the Arabic literature since the 7th century AD was determined by its interaction with Islam. With the rise of Islam, the Arab civilization was given a definition both ideological and cultural. Gustave E. Von Grunebaum said that while Islam for many a century continued liberal in accepting information, techniques, objects, and customs from all quarters, it was careful to eliminate or neutralize any element endangering its religious foundation, and it endeavored consistently to obscure the foreign character of important borrowings and to reject what could not be thus adjusted to its style of thinking and feeling (79). Therefore, the dominance of Islamic discourse in the literary system was also reflected through censorship of books and their being banned for religious considerations and for the harm they might do to public morality (79). The literary work of Al-Sanea and many others have been banned from publication since they were perceived offensive to the Arab Muslim identity, yet, the notion

of banning published works appears to have been an Arab tradition since the early days of literary publishing.

The concept of Feminism in the Middle East is a complex word often associated to foreign/ western interventions in the cultural, social and political spheres of the east (Valassopoulos 13). Various scholars and critics see the traits of western influence of western feminist discourse on women literary articulations. In her *The Marriage of Feminism and Islamism in Egypt: Selective Repudiation as a Dynamic of Cultural Politics*, Abu-Lughod argues Islamist discourse –in parallel with Arab discourse- favors an authentic self when it comes to cultural identity and identity performances; thereby, they perceive that progressive statements in Arab writings are mere western influence (244). The Feminist discourse in Arab writings is rejected on the premise of its relevance to western feminism with its secularist attempts; in the name of identity and Islamism, the feminist discourse is majorly discarded. Such rejection is built on the notion of public freedom that is associated to the female social and cultural conduct, whereas feminist activists calling for: education, marriage based on friendship and the integration of women in work place are generally accepted considering ‘modernization’ of the Arab economic sphere.

In the different representation and description of women in Islam, they were regarded as subjects and subordinated to men on different levels. Women activists were against these the female status and the subordinated position they were positioned in; thereby, involving their actions within the feminist discourse that sees itself relevant to secular feminism. In his book *Women in Islam and Refutation of Some Common Misconceptions*, Abdul-Rahman Al-Shesha presents the perception of the Islamic perception of women in the Muslim world. The writer gives accounts of the rights of women in Islam and how she is perceived from the perspective of a local Muslim woman rather than from a western ‘progressive’ perception. His book is a historical study of the status of women in different societies stressing on the subordination of women by her male counterpart. The writer stresses on how Islam, as a religion, held emancipatory proclamations for women to level their social status towards betterment. The position of women in society swings between equality and ‘naturalness’, where the notion of complicity and nature of both sexes are held primary in the Islamic social discourse. This book among others gives a local perception on the position of women in society whereby entering a terrain of defense of the local cultural perception that is ‘Orientalist’ represented. The aim is to erase misconception and misrepresentations of women

by occident, in addition, it gives a local perspective on how women are perceived and represented.

By the same token, Joseph Zeidan's *Arab Women Novelists: the Formative Years and Beyond* (1995) realizes a defectiveness in approaching the Arab women writers with western feminist theories (Valassopoulos 10), which vow the distinctiveness of Oriental female experience. In addition, he argues that 'individualist' reading of Arab women writings can be approached from a western feminist perspective; yet, it is unfair to approach collective works from a western perspective due to the identity matters and cultural disresemblance (10). Moreover, Multi-Douglas sees that gender consciousness is not novel to Middle Eastern context as it took a considerable posture since early ages (14). Thereby, he associates Arab female works to Arab women consciousness rather than being a project of influence projected by western feminism as a movement.

Postcolonial feminism, vowing the female question with postcolonial theoretical context, points other concerns related to women that are different from the western feminist approach. In her *Contemporary Women Writers*, Valassopoulos evokes: racializing feminism, rethinking whiteness, re-defining the third world subject, sexuality and sex rights, harem and the veil, and post/colonial spatial relations (22), thereby articulating different concerns than the western feminist readings and perspective. The postcolonial perspective related to feminist readings has added other dimensions to the critical analysis of Arab women texts. Wail Hassan, in his *Postcolonial Theory and Modern Arabic Literature* sees that the postcolonial perspective offered extended perceptions that relatively have involved historical and cultural contextualization (25) along with interdisciplinarity. Postcolonialism might have granted the feminist approach a broader theoretical perspective, yet, the contemporary issues of modernity and globalization seem to overwhelm the postcolonial perspective to provide relevant readings to the present cultural Arab women productions. Valassopoulos sees that Arab women discourses are not merely issued with dislocation and hybridization, but also extends to modernity and cultural influences in the age of transnational motion (27).

Readership, production and reception of Arab women writings are dissimilar in comparison to the West. In their collection of essays "Intersections: Gender, Nation and Community in Arab Women's Novels" (2002), Majaj, Sunderman and Saliba see that mixed marks of identity need to be questioned in the process of analysis of women writings (Valassopoulos 29). The postcolonial discourse triggers the question of the relevance of the

context of Saudi Arabia to, as the relation between them considering the fact that the territory witnessed no colonial occupation; thereby, the exclusion of the postcolonial discourse. However, the postcolonial discourse sees itself distant from the understanding of “period”, it is regarded not merely as period that has connotations with the colonial departure, but it is a perspective where postcolonial theory seems to echo many of the Saudi realities especially on the cultural and national levels.

Critical readings of women literary works in the contemporary era tend to move beyond the heavy emphasis of historical and political context that the postcolonial and political feminism focus on. In her *Contemporary Arab Women Writings*, Valassopoulos’s proposes a critique that “opens up contextual possibilities, for example, reading the work of contemporary Arab women writers alongside contemporary popular culture such as cinema, music, news media, television and other popular forms” (25); hence, announcing interdisciplinarity when it comes to literary analysis and criticism. Cultural studies and its literary incorporations manifest in contemporary postcolonial studies, yet, more relevant in contemporary literary studies beyond postcolonial considerations. Furthermore, Abu-Lughod advocates moving away from what she calls ‘lazy criticism’ which is “either too generous towards their subject matter or too self-aggrandizing” (14). In her *Introduction: Feminist Longings and postcolonial Conditions*, she advocates a critical perspective that looks at local and ‘gendered responses to issues of modernization, western influences’. These debates lead to cultural discussions where the cultural encounter between the east and west is taken into major consideration articulating topics like: “cultural domination versus resistance, cultural loyalty versus betrayal or cultural loss versus preservation” (14). She advocates criticism that allows exploring “the actual cultural dynamics of colonial encounter and its aftermaths” (14).

The literary theme of cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident has been significant in Arab literary articulations. Such encounter manifested itself in the literary works of many writers who have represented and questioned the notion of the cultural self and the cultural other. After 9 /11 attacks, the Muslim world has been perceived within negative terms where Islam became a source of terrorism; Saudi Arabia features with direct association to wars of terror for its perceived association with Al Qaeda and the fundamentalist views of religion, thereby sentencing the nation to an intense involvement with the notion of Orientalism. Indeed, Saudi Arabia has demonstrated to be the most misunderstood country

among the Arab slash Muslim countries for the lack of studies and the restrictions that individuals face when negative statements are uttered against the kingdom.

The representation of the Orient in western literature has taken major consideration in literary criticism to slightly overlook how the Orient perceives the occident. However, the notion of 'Occidentalism' is perceived as a quasi-theoretical concept that received no apparent theoretical considerations like Oriental studies (Ning 62). The concept of 'occident' geographically refers to western nations (63), and is significantly related to 'the mind of the west'. In literary terms, the perception and the representation of the occident in Arab literature took an ambivalent shape. In fact, the history of Western representation rests upon either a perception of admiration for their civilization and institutions, or a view of rejection for the colonial and imperial connotations and histories (Al-Enany 15).

The contemporary era comprehends the term 'Occident' mainly with reference to America regarding its situation as world leader (Buruma & Margalit 08). According to Al-Enany (2006), the concept of Occidentalism means 'the images of an idealized other, a quest for the soul of the other and to become the other' (7). It is equated to the feeling of glorification and idealization of the western culture as perceived in the literary voices of Sliman Fayadh's *Voices* (1972). The latter glorifies the western culture and purity, where there is an apparent rejection of the Arab-self due to its corruption and disillusionment (116).

The different of perceptions of the occident among writers and Arab intellectuals have associated the notion of spirituality to the Orient, whereas materialism is seen relevant to the western mind. In is "Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of His Enemies" (2004), Burma and Margalit understand that the mind of the west is capable of great economic success and good calculations, yet unable to grasp spirituality (75). In fact, the notion of western materialism and Eastern spirituality has been a recurrent theme in many of the Arab literary works like Toufik El-Hakim *Birds of the East* (1938). The narrative introduces the theme of cross-cultural encounter between the east and the west, where he vows the immorality and the irresponsibility of the Occident. The east, for him, holds the key to human and moral salvation (Al-Enany 44). Sayyid Qutb's works can be aligned with Toufik's perception. He sees an emotional dryness, no compassion and a primitive admiration for strength and that they are indifferent towards death and loss (169). The notion of materialism versus spirituality is articulated in the sociological works of both Durkheim and Levi-Straus. The latter uses the expression of "hot and cold societies" (Carrier 2).

Moreover, the Syrian writer Colette Khouri is thematically concerned with the cultural encounter and female escapism into the western culture in her novel *A Single Night* (1961) where her young Arab protagonist finds refuge and happiness in the arms of a French man rather than her twice aged Arab husband (Al-Enany 187). This theme translates the cultural disillusionment with the Arab cultural traditions repressing the female. Her Arab setting deprived her education, adolescence, dreams to be replaced by a forced marriage to an old businessman. Paradoxically, Ghada Al-Samman's works seem to embody an anti-western perspective where she adopts the idea of materialization of the west and spirituality of the east. Although disappointed with the Arabic cultural background towards the female status, she embraces her cultural roots and portrays a sexually immoral west. In her novel *Beheading the Cat* (1998), her protagonist takes pride in her cultural roots with a mixture of western values in a western setting. Nadine, the leading character, confesses her unconditional acceptance of her female cultural identity saying: 'I am a woman who is modern, realistic, free, independent, in love, and Lebanese. If I have the right to combine all these qualities with my Lebanese identity, then I am Lebanese' (Quoted in Al-Enany, 192).

1.5.2. India: Contemporary Culture and Literature

The late twentieth century has witnessed political and economic turn in the history of India as it was directed towards neoliberal policies, which opened doors for a globalized production and consumption. As a result, the economic growth of the nation attained considerable numbers, where speeches were directed towards declaring the emergence of a 'new India'. Indeed, in his book *The New India: Citizenship*, Kanishka Chowdhry argues that the economic liberal attempts lead to the construction of a new Indian citizen (4). The notion of cultural and cultural performances in the Indian contemporary/ global context summons for the negotiation of the later within both a national and a transnational context; Arjun Appadurai uses the expression 'public culture' as a 'zone of public debate':

The contestatory character of public culture has much to do with the tensions and contradictions between national sites and transnational cultural processes. These tensions generate arenas where other registers of culture encounter, interrogate, and contest one another in new and unexpected ways ... This zone of contestation and mutual cannibalization—in which national, mass, and folk culture provide both mill and grist for one another—is at the very heart of public modernity in India. (5)

The contemporary Indian realities shaped by the global economic growth and the reevaluation of Indian citizenship under the label of 'new India' question the traits of the latter. The sense of novelty of identity directs towards the formation of certain questions related to the definition of the new Indian identity and its main characteristics on the economic, political, social and mostly cultural spheres.

Moreover, Kanishka Chowdhury argues that the definition of the new India does not involve creative aspects as much as it is an extension of the postcolonial past (40). In fact, the postcolonial realities in India created steers towards multiple discussions related to neocolonial practices, corruption, and the issue of castes. Accordingly, the notion of cultural identity has been relative to notions of 'nation', 'state', and 'national identity'; as a matter of fact, the Indian cultural and social background attests for the multiplicity of cultures and languages that have existed before the colonial period and have aligned under one national rule. The nationalist movement brought the diverse Indian cultures together under one national identity that has been defined from Oriental terms stemming from Oriental perspectives and religions. The nationalist discourse has brought various discussions among the intellectual groups questioning the validity of the latter and its extensions on cultural and social levels. Kanishka Chowdhury comprehends that the notion of 'new India' and her inter/transnationalist approaches equals not transcendence from the postcolonial realities making arguments based on caste. In fact, the economic adoption of liberalism in India has reached the cultural and social lives, where the social status of women, in the contemporary epoch, has contested with the previous nationalist discourse that promoted the female as a mother, a wife, and as the Indian identity bearers. Accordingly, the right-wing Hindu organization presented the feminist movement that works for anti-traditionalist conceptualization of the Indian female identity. They see themselves as "agents of change, as advocates for women's rights" (Chowdhry 14).

To clarify further, the nationalist movement, aiming at independence, defined the Indian female identity to perform certain cultural behavior that makes her different from the western one. The role of the Indian woman was primarily to maintain the roots of the Indian culture and traditions; indeed, women had the duty to maintain a revived India through performing the Indian traditions as a form of resistance against the western colonizer. According to Nuria Lopez, these actions vowed the British occupation of the public sphere, and the superiority of the Indian in maintaining the interior sphere (Wintle 199). After the

departure of the colonizer, the Indian woman no longer depended on the image of the western woman as an idol, but the idol Indian woman echoed the nationalist feeling and the pride in the Indian culture (200). There has been a return to the old Hindu and Buddhist traditions to keep a proper Indian culture and identity that is distant from the western one. The term ‘*memsahibs*’ or the British women in India became no longer models since they were considered western, thereby, adopting attitudes and values that lead to spirituality and feminine virtues (200).

The distinction between the West and the East is summarized in the notion of Oriental spirituality opposed to the Occidental materialism. Indeed, the spirituality of India is exhibited in the ‘*femininity*’ of women, who are regarded as the guardians of the spiritual values of their society (Wintle 201). Indian mythology as a source of cultural references and social idealism dictated the virtues and values of the Indian female; these values rested upon devotion, submissiveness, religion, benevolence, self-sacrifice and others. The so called New Woman echoed the nationalist identity of India which has announced it as key difference between the Indian Oriental identity and the British occidental culture. After the independence of India in 1947, the notion of New Woman was questioned. Such an idea was deeply rooted in the Indian culture and the question was if it should be removed or it should remain valid. Their socio-cultural status remained static till 1970s where consensus indicated an observable inequality between males and females and that the traditional role of women and their type of education left them unaware of their rights (207). Nationalist and independence movements stressed on the maintenance of culture, traditions, customs and religion rather than mere political demands, culture justifies the political stands of a nation. The rediscovery of the past in colonized societies contributes to the creation of a national identity that is free from the negative stereotypes imposed by the colonial process, which represses and manipulates the native character by claiming its inferiority and portraying it as a valueless identity (120).

1.4.2.1. Contemporary Indian Literature and Globalization

The twentieth century Indian literary sphere witnessed the emergence of literature in English that vowed the ‘*nationalist*’ concerns of the subcontinent. The appropriation of the English language and western literary forms marked the internationalization of Indian literature that has been widely concerned with presenting the Indian national identity after the British colonial departure. Chatterjee sees that the Indian novel has moved from almost mythical accounts of gods and kings in the pre-nationalist period to new forms of modern

historiography (Guttman 11). The postcolonial period has produced an abundant amount of literary works that both questioned and defined the Indian cultural identity after the colonial departure. On the notion of identity, different writers like: Salman Rushdi and others were concerned with vowing the identity of the independent nation. The postcolonial theoretical perspective that came with different theorists: Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak, Franz Fanon and Edward Said have highlighted what is understood as the postcolonial theoretical perspective. The latter has been the major lens when reading the Indian cultural identity when exposed to the Occidental other. However, the validity of such theoretical grounds is questioned by multiple scholars. Indeed, Gayatri Spivak calls for ‘new postcoloniality’ in her *Death of a Discipline*, whereas Suman Gupta’s *Contemporary Literature* questions the validity of the former in addressing the cultural issues in the era of globalization.

The recent literary sphere in India has additionally witnessed the emergence of a new literary genre called Call Centre Lit. The literary genre is perceived as a subgenre of World Literature that emerged in India in the last few years. The Call Centre Lit challenges the notion of the literary canons to make it more accessible to the public through massive sells generally presented and published in paperback form with an inexpensive cost and colorful covers. The straightforward narration articulates simplicity and ‘unliterariness’ to be criticized as a genre that sees itself outside the realm of literature and literary sophistication. In fact, the literary critic Tabish Khair regards it as part of low literature when consulting the classical standards of literary works (Southmayd 2). The genre is thematically concerned with contemporary Indian issues and realities in the midst of a globalized India. It represents a new breed of writers who have foreign influences, yet they remain Indian; thus, the creation of a new literary genre that echoes the global literary changes in the global era. Upamaayu Chatterji calls the new generation of writers as ‘reflectivists’ who are in search for a new identity, they stand in a crossroads of individuality, culture; and society (1). Moreover, he calls them a generation of cosmopolitans (1).

Chetan Bhagat, the most read author in contemporary India, addresses issues and themes of contemporary India using a language that appeals to the new generation of the Indian audience. *One night @ the Call Centre* (2005) exhibits how the Indian contemporary generation thinks and how they perceive their lives, culture, society and religion. The representation of the middle class in India has diversity of issues: materialism and ambition, trends, multiculturalism, new female identity, English language, and Indianness (Southmayd

1). In addition, it is observable that such literary Orientations tend to echo the tendencies of the young Indian generation, who are described to oppose the postcolonial legacies of Indian literary standards. Scholars and critics describe such Orientations as ‘youth narratives’ or ‘young India’ (Dawson 200), which translate the issues and concerns of the new generation. Factually, these works tend to articulate a measured interest in the English language with American standards, and themes related to globalization and a globalized India. Moreover, the literary sphere has witnessed the emergence of Chick Lit as a subgenre that discusses the concerns of the Indian female in a globalized and urbanized setting. Indeed, the female readership has been widely interested in ‘coming of age narratives’ that highlight the concerns of young female in urban spaces (Philips 99).

To illustrate, Raj Kamal Jha’s novel *She Will Build Him a City* (2015) orbits around contemporary global India and urban issues. Delhi is represented as a dark, morbid place, dark city of horror and ugly construction sites showing the transformation of the Indian city to an urban unhistorical city. The novel represents the psychological effects of the Indian ‘dark’ city on the main characters and how society is also affected. Kamal Raj articulates the issues of modernization and a globalized India through using a Charles Dickens’ narratives about urban issues. The new body of writing is a marked departure from the ‘literary fiction’ of Rushdie and Roy. Critically labelled as Para-literature, such writing might be described as ‘commercial’, ‘popular’ or ‘genre’ fiction. In the case of India, Gupta describes both literary and commercial fiction production (9). For Gupta, this new ‘commercial fiction’ is ‘consumed primarily within India’, seen to display a kind of ‘Indianness’ that Indians appreciate and is not meant to be taken ‘seriously’ or regarded as ‘literary’ (86).

1.4.2.2. Contemporary Indian Female Literature

When referring to Indian female literature, it calls for a reference to feminism and feminist movement, female identity, women’s social status, male female relations, and gender relations. The notion of feminism is traditionally understood as women’s attempts to voice the concerns of the female in different political, economic, social, and political spheres, and therefore, contribute into consciousness and finally into a better situation. The concerns of the Indian woman have and had been voiced through literary texts produced primarily by women for the sake of questioning their situation in their societies and cultures. Indeed, what started as an existential questioning about the self and the meaning of life and its inherited phenomena has created a group of Indian females who question all the inherited structures

and standards that, in a way or another, have limited their 'existential' endeavors. As a matter of fact, Simon de Beauvoir's *Second Sex* can be seen, not only as a text that questions and explains the reasons for women's issues in society but, as an existentialist text that takes the female issues to a deeper philosophical questioning that promote for the essence of existence rather than mere critique of inherited values. Therefore, the present work looks at the notion of feminism and the female question from an existentialist perspective that considers the essence of the female existence rather than tapping on a critique of the traditionalist values.

Traditionally, the Indian women writers have portrayed women as being oppressed and subjugated by socio-cultural norms that were based on patriarchal structures (86). In addition, these writings highlighted the main issues and limitations attributed to women like the concerns about education, employment, careers, the burden of domestic responsibilities, and castes that were spotted in the Indian society (87). Therefore, the literary arena became a space to pronounce the concerns of the 'subaltern' in an attempt to change such a bleak reality of women. Githa Hariharan's novels protest against male dominance; her *Thousand Faces of Night* (1993), she denounce the subservience of Indian women and promote the emancipation of women (Bedjaoui 101).

However, It can be noticed that the contemporary Indian literature tend to portray women as empowered rather being the victim of society, culture, and patriarchy. Indeed, many writers do distance from the visualization of their female protagonists as the victims of society and traditions, but rather as fighters who tend to craft their own paths and paint their own cultural patterns: they defy their traditionally attributed roles and opt for novel selves that serve their individualities and perceptions, which usually come after a journey of self-quest. As an illustration, in her *Rich Like Us* (1985), Nayantara Sehgal's protagonist Sonali refuses the social norms attributed to the Indian female and decides to remain unmarried because of the restrictions that marriage imposes on women in India (Jackson 28). Indeed, the protagonist refuses the lectures of her mother on the importance of marriage and traditions, "the supposed maternal role in cultural reproduction is effectively bypassed" (28). Indeed, the protagonist decides to distance from the social norms and the India society has casted upon its women and opts for a life that is free from family obligations since she finds no meaningful values in such a socio-cultural role, and she adopts an individualist approach to her life.

Moreover, the contemporary writings on women's concerns are perceived to incorporate themes of globalization and its witnessed effects on multiple levels. Indeed, many

contemporary female writers are concerned with the female identity in the midst of cultural changes and globalization. The theme of modernity versus traditionalism has been a prominent theme in many of their discourses as a response to the neoliberal approaches taken by the government. The Indian traditional life equated harmonious co-existence with the traditional way of life given women a certain role in society. A modern conception of life is paralleled to individualistic assertion, where the freedom of conduct without set rules and roles seemed to invite women in today's 'modernized' India. Indeed, Indian women writers attempt to define or redefine the female identity in contemporary India through a return to myths which are regarded as stories of reference for women. These writers offer no clear path or patterns, but they endeavor to offer a 'prise de conscience' for women (Bedjaoui 48). In fact, the return to myths defined no rejection since, the notion of being modern means disclaiming the traditional regards to mythical female for behavioral reference; however, they incited a reinterpretation of myths. The rereading searches for creative interpretations of them, a fresh knowledge that is more relevant to contemporary realities.

In her *That Long Silence* (1988), Shashi Deshpande's the protagonist Jaya refuses to submit to social rules and dismisses the thoughts of the acknowledged Hindu womanhood characterizing by suffering, endurance, duty and silence. Jaya reflects upon the ideal females through looking at the idealized women in Indian methology like: Sita, Savitri, Maiytreeye, Gandhari as these stories promoted and idealized women's submissiveness (Jackson 41). The cultural society created an image of the ideal Hindu female and defined the manner of conduct, restrictions, rituals ...etc. relative to an ideal woman (43) that is based on the myths and traditional folklore. The protagonist Jaya recalls images of her childhood that encompass women who followed the traditional manner of the conduct that is dictated by the traditional society and condemns it through rebelling against such restrictive codes (Jackson 43). She takes another type of ideal women than the traditional myths. The images of the females that she is constantly exposed to in the media gave her a new image of the female and the female social position that is totally different from the one seen and detested in her environment (42). The females presented by the mass media were females of total control over their femininity and sexuality; they possessed power over the others and over men. This image of the middle-class female is relative to the capitalist growth in the late twentieth century India (43), which affected the lives of people and their perception of life in general.

The country of deceit (2008) by Shashi Deshpande introduces her female protagonist in modern trait where there is a conflict between traditions and modernity in contemporary India. Her protagonist distances from traditionalism, and moves towards a more individualistic life delivering meditative and philosophical responses of her life experiences, where the protagonist Devi attempts to fight against certain orthodox conventions of the society. Shashi's representation of women equals enlightenment. In fact, they appear to be enlightened, culturally rooted, analytical, reflective and they cross all barriers of identity and socio-cultural roles. Similarly, Chetan Bhagat in his *Revolution 2020* (2011) portrays the Indian female as liberal who are free to pursue whatever she desires from material success to premarital physical relationships. His writing marks a rejection of the old age Indian customs which he perceives as a prison to women in a patriarchal society. In addition, Aditi Kotwal's Draupadi's *In High Heels* (2013) is classified as a chick-lit sipping from the western genre; it portrays the contemporary Indian woman in high heels and a sari, which symbolize a westernized version of Indian culture (Philips 103); thus, the novel's main theme is the cultural encounter between traditions and modernity, the East and West (104).

Cross-cultural discussion of Indian identity is additionally considered in Diasporic literary articulations. The contemporary era, with its global changes, has dramatically altered the perception of distance as it became easier and less radical, where the global realities rendered individuals in motion at the centre of hypermodernity (Krøl 39). The dislocated individuals have voiced their experiences and cultural perceptions through their literary works in what is called 'Diasporic literature'. Many literary voices have echoed the Indian diasporic concerns in the second half of the twentieth century till contemporary times. The diasporic literature went through different stages each vowing similar concerns. The first generation of writers has voiced the sense of loss, displacement and assimilation to the host country, as they marked the Orient versus the Occident differences and similarities. The notion of Occidentalism can be traced in their fiction when discussing themes like luggage, homesickness, memories, and displacement. Monica Ali, Kiran Desai and Jumpha Lahiri vow their cultural identity concerns and their experiences when distant from home (Krøl 40). The literary lines carry along direct cross-cultural encounter with leading to cultural identity issues and problems shaping their narratives. Another theme is related to Orientalism where the east or the home is perceived from a Diasporic perspective. The 'homecoming narratives' reflect upon the Eastern/ Western cultural identity. In Monica Ali's *Brickline*, her main character returns to Bangladesh, where her experiences converted her to a displaced individual as the

Home became no longer recognizable. The protagonist appears to spot the similarities and differences between the Orient and the Occident leading her to change (40). Her book bears the theme of a need for roots, a wish to belong; however, the Home is no longer recognizable, which falls into the theoretical analysis of Edward Said's 'Out of place' (43). Moreover, Kiran Desai's *Inheritance of Loss* explores the issues of globalization, multiculturalism, economic inequality and violence in the contemporary multicultural space (Bedjaoui 104).

The second-generation immigrants, however, seem to vow different concerns than the first-generation. They appear more attuned with the western cultural identity which made it a hard task for them to adopt or accept their parents' cultural origins. In both Jhumpha Lahiri's *The Namesake* and Meera Syal's *Anita and Me*, Gogol and Meera reject their Indian origins for the sake of adopting the western one (American and British). Both characters' experiences eventually led to the acceptance and incorporation of Indian identity in a process of hybridization. Being in between cultures or crossing cultures bring a talk about the possibility of double belonging. This duality can be termed, in Homi Bhabha's words, as 'hybridity'. The cultural combination of more than one culture received a wide critical claim in diasporic and postcolonial literary criticism. The fact of being in-between cultures with a great degree of adaptation and mimicry of the host culture along with the adoption of the home cultural behavior without issues of displacement and loss led to the call for a third space as a reconciliation of both cultural spaces.

1.6. Conclusion

The contemporary global realities and their literary articulations on the formal and thematic levels summon for novel perspectives and readings to come to terms with an understanding of the literary texts. Among the theoretical perspectives echoing these realities is the concept of Planetarity, which is located in Gayatri Spivak's call for re-evaluation of Comparative Literature as a discipline. In her *Death of a Discipline* (2003), she calls for the substitution of the term Globe by Planet evoking statements of non-Eurocentricism that is located in the Canon literary studies and theories. Planetarity, as a perspective that reads the cross-cultural relations as a literary subject, calls for Comparative Cultural Studies as a disciplinary ground that utilizes theories and methods from other adjacent disciplines to arrive at a cultural reading of literary texts. Thus, the former, as a discipline, offers a ground to incorporate theories, methodologies, and approaches from multiple disciplines in order to read the literary texts with a degree of novelty that appears not to be traced with the pervading discourses in

the literary arena, more particularly, postcolonial discourse and diaspora studies as the primary literary grounds reading the cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident. Thereupon, the work's theoretical and methodological Orientations find relevance in imagology, cognitivism and transculturalism as the primary approaches distributing a literary reading that attunes with the global realities, which are additionally developed in the next chapter. Furthermore, the present chapter goes through the 'periphery's' literary and historical contexts in the contemporary era, more particularly, in Arab/Saudi and Indian contexts.

CHAPTER TWO

CULTURAL IDENTITY, NATIONALISM, AND IMAGINATION IN THE AGE OF GLOBAL MOTION

Chapter Two

Cultural Identity, Nationalism, and Imagination in the Age of Global Motion

2.1. Introduction

The statements negotiated in the present chapter perform as the conceptual background of the dissertation as it defines and discusses the basic frameworks developed in the coming chapters. The primary consideration of the present work is the examination of identity and its directions amidst the contemporary global changes. Thereupon, grounding from the poststructuralist intentions to defining cultural identity, it is perceived as a metamorphic entity, and thus, located within unstable parameters. Considering the term culture as the individual's environment discusses the concept of nationalism as an entity defining a particular identity for 'local' communities, which are in a process of redefinition due to global circulations of phenomena. The notion of post-nationalism opens a discussion about modernity and its 'creative' parameters that defy the 'traditionalism' of the periphery's prescribed nationalist identity, as a legacy of the post-colonial cultural conditions.

Correspondingly to the contemporary changes on numerous levels, identity politics open up a conversation about the contribution of imagination in the creation of cultural identities. Imagination is comprehended as a process of consuming cultural images of self and the other that are received either through direct or indirect encounter, which are argued to construct a cultural environment. The latter meets with a poststructuralist conceptualization of identity to suggest a construction of a cultural self that is based on cultural imagination of the self and the other. Moreover, the study of imagination as the foundation of identity in the contemporary global reality, the cognitive approach to culture attempts to closely read the contribution of these 'imaginaries' in the construction of cultural identities of the literary characters. Indeed, reading the mind of the characters when exposed to cultural images of the self and the other is argued to match Edward T. Hall's perception stating that it is crucial to look at the way things are rather than merely resting upon existing theories. Consequently, the cognitive approach to literary texts grounds for a meticulous reading of the cultural minds of the characters, in order to examine their actions and reactions towards the received images of the self and the other.

Finally, the chapter ends with a discussion of transculturalism as a reading perspective of literary texts. The recent developments of the term correspond with the global realities along with its premise on cultural fluidity. The concept occurs in multiple theoretical and scholarly literatures evoking a transcendental perception towards the existing cultures in a context of cross-culturality. In fact, Arianna Dagnino recently fashions the term in the context of diaspora as a suitable ground for cross-cultural encounter; however, the present thesis contends that cultural imagination behaves as a platform for the construction of transcultural identities displayed by the literary characters. In fact, the process of imagination is comprehended as a cultural context since it reacts to local and global images to promote for a transcultural identity that is basically grounded in fluid parameters shaped and reshaped by contexts.

2.2. Defining Cultural Identity

The term ‘culture’ has found its place among popular speeches to refer to the performances of a group of people in a certain geographical location. Indeed, the concept is commonly used to refer to the ‘different’ practices and utterances that a group of people execute on daily basis; it is understood as “a collective articulations of human diversity” (Nederveen 47). On the intellectual and scholarly bowl, ‘culture’ carries multiple definitions resting on contextual reflections; Anthropologists comprehend ‘culture’ as a set behaviors and beliefs learned and shared among a group of people, which signify that it is not individual and not instinctive (48). On this account, Stuart Hall defines culture as a description of a particular way of living that expresses certain meanings and values characterizing a common lifestyle of an assemblage of people; it is defined according to its implicit and explicit values shared among a particular community (Hall, *Culture, Community, Nation* 351). Similarly, the German sociologist Reckwitz perceives the concept as a “collective intelligible social practice” (qtd Blažević 360). Moreover, Edward T. Hall defines the concept of culture as:

Culture is man’s medium; there is not one aspect of human life that is not touched and altered by culture ... it is frequently the most obvious and taken-for-granted and therefore the least studied aspect of culture that influence behavior in the deepest and most subtle ways. (Hall 16-17)

Hall stresses that the covert part of culture is taken for granted since performed without notice, yet they construct the cultural basis for the individual behavior. Furthermore, the

concept of culture is commonly confused with civilization, since they bear almost similar components. Yet 'civilization' refers to an advanced status of society judged upon governmental, scientific, architectural, industrial and communication standards; whereas culture reflects an intellectual and humane side of the mentioned achievements (kumar 2). Moreover, culture has no territorial boundaries unlike the concept of nation; it possesses the characteristics of openness, where there are no fixed territorial borders are defined (Nederveen 48).

A historical overview on the concept attests that the first half of the twentieth century witnessed a general intellectual mood favoring a behaviorist theory of culture. Anthropologists and sociologists like Lévi-Straus, Durkheim, and Weber argue that the social and cultural environment is the dominant force in composing the individual's behavior (Shaules, *Deep Culture* 25). However, after the Second World War, scholars were more seduced by cross-cultural encounter and their effect on behavior and thought. In such a context, Stuart Hall becomes a pioneer in terming 'intercultural communication' into the field of cultural studies (27). He understands culture as "an unconscious framework of shared meaning which makes communication possible but makes intercultural conflict inevitable" (ibid 27). Hall elaborates that intercultural communication is difficult due to the individual's unawareness about the hidden patterns of thinking and communication (28). The notion of cross-cultural encounter between the Occident and the Orient has been Stuart Hall's primary occupation. The post-modern East West relations has been considered from the perspective of colonizer versus colonized, and the Centre versus Periphery dichotomies. Similarly, the concept of culture is debated regarding the effects of globalization (Shaules 24); indeed, the intensified diversity, social justice, multicultural societies and cultural minorities question the nature and the impacts of cultural diversity on identities.

The conceptualization of identity finds multiple definitions for occurring in diverse fields. It is self-definition within the parameters of a certain culture. Stuart Hall sees it as collective sharing of a common ancestry and history by a group of people (Hall 223). In addition, Bonny Norton defines it as the way an individual understands the self vis-a-vis the world (5). Traditionally, it is received to be fixed and unitary phenomenon; however, postmodern conceptualizations admit the fluidity, multiplicity, and dynamism of identity amidst social and cultural changes. By the same token, Stuart Hall situates the concept in a field of evolution and fluidity rather than stableness. In addition, his *Modernity and Its Future*

(1992) questions identity politics and perceives that the concept has three distinctive subjects: Enlightenment subject, sociological subject and the postmodern subject (275). The latter is articulated within a background of cultural shifts, where he attributes the notion of identity fluidity to a process of cultural decentering (278). Indeed, the postmodern subject is characterized by instability and non-unity that results into the acceptance of identity shifts to remain in constant changes (ibid).

Stuart Hall understands cultural identity as a shifting phenomenon as it is located in a state of being' and 'becoming'. It is sourced from a historical background, which makes it changeable with the transformation of historical and contextual circumstances. Hence, it is subjected to continuous changes rather than being an eternally fixed entity (225). Likewise, in his *The Location of Culture*, Homi Bhabha says "Cultures are never unitary in themselves, nor simply dualistic in their relation of Self to Other" (35-36), which locates cultural identity in a state of shifts in accordance with the environment. Consequently, cultural identity is received as a non-stable entity, but a changing one that is shaped a reshaped by contextual circumstances; the cultural subjects are constantly changing their identities whenever exposed to particular set of knowledge.

2.3. From Postcolonial Nationalism to Modernity

Discussing cultural identity in relation to the 'periphery' territories, the concept of nation and nationalism occupies a significant space. The concept is defined differently depending on the context of occurrences. Nationalism is received as a feeling of belonging to a particular national group defined by a set of prescribed characteristics. Benedict Anderson sees it as "a cultural artifact of a particular kind" (4), where he relates the nation/nationalism to cultural belonging to a certain group. Homi Bhabha attributes the forming of nations to modernity, where communities became separate entities that stress on the notion of distinctiveness (Bhabha 1). Furthermore, Ernest Renan defines the nation as a historical result of a series of facts affected either by dynasty, provinces or general consciousness (Bhabha 11-12). By the same token, Nina Glick Schiller (2002) maintains that 'nationalism' as a project "consists of social movements and state policies through which people seek to act in terms of the nation which they identify" (571), whereas nationalism as a discourse is comprehended as an attempt to frame aspirations "by identifying with a nation" (ibid). On similar grounds Gellner sees that "Nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it *invents* nations where

they do not exist” (Quoted in Benedict 6). The use of the term ‘invent’ intends for the meaning of ‘fabrication’ and the ‘creation’ of a national identity as Benedict comes to notice (6).

Relating the concept to the post-modern/ Post-colonial context, nationalism is defined within political terms, where the indigenous communities called for independence from the colonial powers through creating their respective nations. Collaborating with the Third World nationalism, postcolonial thinkers’ use the concept Postcolonial Nationalism to define the national/cultural status of the newly emerging nations, as a result of colonial resistance. Henceforth, the ‘Third World’ national leaders appealed to an Oriental pre-existing cultural identity of the indigenous population to legitimize the call for independence from the colonial powers. On this respect, Franz Fanon in his *The Wretched of the Earth* ranks the nationalist leaders to the colonizer for possessing hegemonic agendas towards their communities (124). On the same wave length, Edward Said’s *Culture and Imperialism* pronounces the role of the nationalist ideology in gaining wider support for the prescribed identity, where they entrench their ideologies in the minds of the community members and rally them into accepting the new identity. Fanon asserts that the recovery of the pre-colonial culture motivated the indigenous intellectuals for a decolonization project (229). The ‘created’ nation, based on a unified and stable national culture, has become an integral part of anti-colonial sentiments as a means of colonial resistance (Shermani 5). Moreover, the nationalist leaders have an educative background, which renders them into an elite movement that rallied the mass into a ‘national consciousness’ through slogans of independence, replicating the colonizer’s hegemonic agendas, to finally aim for securing their advantages (6). Therefore, the notion of nation and culture are in constant interplay as nationalism relatively contributes into the creation or revitalization of cultural identities through rallying the mass into adhering to certain cultural norms and values in the name of identity.

Franz Fanon notes that The Arab postcolonial nationalism defined the Arab identity on basis of Islam and Islamism, as they regard Islam as a source of conduct rather than a mere spiritual religion (151). Indeed, In the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the al Sauds, as the new nation’s leaders, promoted a Saudi national identity that is fostered through national institutions like media, educational system and the public dress code (Talha 5). The aim for these institutions is to highlight the distinctiveness of the Saudi identity among other nations on basis of religion and on the premise of guardianship over Islam’s holiest sites: Mecca and

Medina (5). In addition, the national identity has recognized the Wahhabi vision of Islam as the main source of religious interpretations due to its perceived 'most pious' character (5). Wahhabism as the major religious discourse in Saudi Arabia has set strict beliefs about the state rules, society and culture that are sources from the religious scriptures and their interpretations, where both the Al Sauds and Wahhabism legitimize one another (Kanie 287). Hence, due to the excessive reference to religion in all official matters, the Saudi identity became a 'society of fatwas' as the Saudi anthropologist Abdullah Anwar come to notice. In addition, the Wahhabi elites lead over the educational system and curricula, preside the legal system, and establishes religious mosques and centres, which makes religion a crucial part in Saudi Arabia's political, social and cultural lives (Kanie 287). Therefore, based on a postcolonial perspective, it is comfortable to conclude that both religious Wahhabism and the royal family leaders created the national character of the Saudi community for a distinctive identity purpose; in addition, performing hegemonic attempts through their religious-based institutions to rally the community to adopt the prescribed identity.

Similarly, the postcolonial nationalist discourse finds an echo in India, where the nationalist leaders rallied the indigenous communities into adopting an Indian Oriental identity that contradicts the British western cultural norms through appealing to pre-colonial cultural values. As an illustration, the nationalist elites have promoted the Indian 'New Woman', who adopts pre-colonial Oriental values such as spirituality, family care, sacrifice, dress code, and home duties as a means to preserve the cultural traditions of the nation (Wintle 203). These values are an opposition to the British colonizer's western cultural standards, and therefore, marking cultural distinctiveness between the colonized and the colonizer. In the post-colonial period, the promoted identity remained the persistent discourse marking the national identity of the newly independent India, where the primary ideal is to articulate difference from the western-imperial world (Chatterjee 239). Leaders have resorted to family traditions, collectivism and religion to promote an Oriental culture that distances from the Occidental stress on public domains: economy, technology and politics (ibid). Therefore, the nationalist leaders have promoted an Oriental Indian identity that is marked by distinctiveness from the western other and its imperialist attempts. Furthermore, Gregg notes that the state of 'becoming modern' is a rejected statement by nationalist leaders for the notion of 'modernity' equated colonization and westernization (Gregg 25). The colonial fact contributed into a hindering of the economic and political development of the ex-colonized societies; in addition, attempts to dissolve from their core cultural and religious values (ibid).

Therefore, the western other and its perceived agendas are dismissed in favor of a distinctive national identity.

IN the era of accelerated global motion, the concept of nationalism is contested against since the displacement of individuals, finances, technologies, media and ideas became the new world reality. Arjun Appadurai uses the concept 'scapes' to designate the transnational movement from one space to another as the new reality (33). Thereupon, the conceptualization of 'nation' is reevaluated as the traditional circumstances have been altered by a global reality. As a matter of fact, Homi Bhabha receives culture as both transnational and translational (172); in his "Nation and Narration" (1990), he defines the concept of 'nation' within the framework of narratives: "Nations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and only realize their horizons in the mind's eye" (Bhabha 1). To put it differently, the contemporary realities related to globalization require a redefinition of nation, nationalism and allegiance.

Under diasporic circumstances, as a space of cross-cultural encounter especially between the East and the West, Stuart Hall (2019) believes in the multiplicity of identities (207). Indeed, the exposure to various cultures permits a shift in the national and cultural allegiance resulting from the fluid nature of identity; he sees that identity is constantly metamorphosing; and therefore, subjected to changes when exposed to global motion of individuals and groups (221). In that case, the displaced immigrants are seemingly attuned with the dominant culture driving to create multiple cultural connections to end what Hall calls the western defined "modernity" (221); consequently, fashioning their own terms of modernity. Identically, Homi Bhabha (1990) believes in the everchanging nature of identities once meeting a different culture, where new forms of identification are conceivably highlighted (313). Thus, cross-cultural encounter calls for a redefinition of nationalism and allegiance in terms of trans-nationalism and modernity. In her part, Irene Gilsean Nordin (2010) acknowledges Habermas's calls for postnationalist stands to disaffiliate from speeches that are strictly associated to nation-states. For Habermas, multiple allegiances lead to 'cosmopolitan solidarity' that transcends "the tragic consequences of xenophobic cultural nationalism" (Nordin & Llana 3).

Culture and Modernity:

Nationalism is equated to the establishment of cultural parameters that are proper to a certain group of people. In the post-colonial world, cultural identity and traditions have been prescribed as static and fixed entity rather than a changing one; the notion of belonging to an Oriental group, required adherence to its identity parameters inscribed in the lines of traditionalism, whereas modernization is received to erase cultural, social, and biological diversities (Nederveen 43). Cultural traditions in the post-colonial context are equated to nationalism and group allegiance, where modernity is perceived as an opposition to group belonging. The notion of modernity in the post-colonial context is related to processes of changes towards a non-nationalist self and therefore admitting westernization. Indeed, Ghandi contends that the post-colonial India is plagued by an anxiety of imitating a European post-enlightenment discourse (Chatterjee 02); and therefore, remains cautious about stepping into traits of a 'modernity' that is inscribed in the parameters of 'westernization'. Similarly, in MENA societies the theme of struggles between traditions and modernity has been a constant discourse. In fact, almost every aspect of life is debated in terms of traditions and modernity, where cultural articulations of traditions are perceived as acts of allegiance, pride and principles (Gregg 35).

Peterson Nederveen understands the concept of modernization as a process of cultural changes towards effacing cultural and biological differences, where notions of alienation, disenchantment and displacement are substituted by rationalization, standardization and control (43). By the same token, Goethe captures the psychological nature of modernity in the late eighteenth century Germany; he sees that a man possesses creative force permitting him to strive for the purpose of achieving more, and that such creativity is only determined by one's limitations (Gregg 88). Indeed, "modernity nourishes personal dreams", where these aspirations globally spread to wrap the heads of young generations. Furthermore, these modern pursuits transcend materialism, and encompass a desire to exist beyond the confines of the older generations' perceptions (89).

The concept of modernity has occurred and reoccurred in various contexts to apprehend different meanings. In other words, modernity occurs under unstable grounds as it shapes and reshapes according to the situational novelties of a present context; thus, the criteria of modernity grounds upon no stable parameters that consist with all contexts. In fact, the desire for modernity is legitimized by the desire to change for the sake of betterment,

which is not found in the traditional conditions. Modernity, as conceptualized by Roger Garaudy and Tariq Ramadan in their *Islam et Modernité*, is equivalent to change, reason, technology, and science, whereas the opposite term ‘tradition’ is consistent with mysticism and unreasonableness (8). Such a definition corresponds with a western perspective, where the Western history attests for multiple modernities occurring at various stops of history. However, understanding modernity, as announced by Arif Dirlik, is no longer viable through a European perspective; the global reality participates into the creation numerous formulations of the concept (Dagnino 1). Opposed to Huntington’s calls for westernization as a universal civilization, multiple intellectuals call for ‘different modernities’ to breakdown such a ‘western civilizational hegemony’ (Nederveen 46). Similarly, Stuart Hall sees that there are multiple ‘modernities’ instead of a centred modernity; he uses the expression ‘vernacular modernities’, which adopts that even the remote spaces tend to create a respective modernity as a marker of “a new kind of transnational, even postnational, and transcultural consciousness” (Hall 223). Therefore, the recent global realities have created novel discourses of modernity that are inscribed within no set parameter, but shaping a socio-cultural setting that adjusts to present contexts.

2.4. Cultural Identity and Imagination

Stuart Hall stresses upon the fluidity and constant changes of cultural identity in a cross-cultural setting. Indeed, being exposed to simultaneously different cultures leads to cultural alteration. Hall’s conceptualization finds an echo in cross-cultural studies, where diasporic circumstances demonstrate to be a fit environment for identity shifts as a space where multiple cultures and identities meet. In addition, the colonial and post-colonial backgrounds call for a shift in cultural identities due to encounters between the colonized self and the colonial other leading to spaces of cultural merger, which leads, in many circumstances, to the creation of what Homi Bhabha terms as the ‘third space’. However, in the era of globalization and transnational flows where different cultures are likely to directly or indirectly meet, the notion of cultural identity is questioned. Henceforth, and for the purpose of the present thesis, it is contended that imagination, based on cross-cultural encounter as a response to global flows, grounds for cultural changes; more particularly, the local cultures of the periphery nations namely Arabia and India.

The concept of imagination is commonly received as a mental process of receiving and deciphering images. It is also understood as a representation of a particular individual or group through articulating their characteristics and their receptions in the mind. For the purpose of the present thesis, the concept of imagination is understood as visualization of cultural elements and their impacts on the mind of individuals and groups to create a novel reality. Thus, the concept is not received as an individual endeavor or a mere fantasy, but group visualizations promoting the construction of a novel cultural reality. According to Arjun Appadurai the collective practice of imagination grounds for common actions rather than a path to escape (31). He elaborates that fantasy is divorced from projects and actions and is merely related to individualistic and private pursuits; whereas imagination fuel behavior and leads to collective creation of neighborhood and nationhood (ibid). Jacques Derrida calls teleiopoeisis. Defined here as “to affect the distant in a poeisis— an imaginative making—without guarantees” (31), the term refers to acts of the imagination that cross time and space with uncertain outcomes and that are essential to the making of discontinuous collectivities. Spivak proposes that teleiopoeisis will be one of the decisive literary and critical modes of the globalized world, that a “copying (rather than cutting) and pasting” (34) across cultural zones is fashioning the works and readers of the present (Roland, *Death of a Discipline*, 155).

The concept and its relation to culture and nation building appears in the theoretical discourse of Benedict Anderson’s *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. The book attempts to come to terms with the meaning and the origins of nationalism as a feeling of belonging to a particular community. Gellner and Benedict agree on defining the nation as a cultural community which signifies common aspects of behavior where they share the same language, history, future, life styles and system of behavior. He defines the nation as “an imagined political community” (Benedict 6) contending that “It is imagined because the members of the community will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lies the image of their communion” (6). Hence, Nationalism, as a feeling of belonging to this ‘imagined’ community, signifies no direct contact with the fellow communions, yet possessing a feeling of being connected to them. Thereupon, imagination of the distant communion is fostered by transferred images, as Benedict argues. Images, in this sense, signify the transfer of: ideas, pictures, media, news, and languages from one space to another to create a sense of belonging to these similar images to the self. The reception of these

images, without a direct contact, leads to the feeling of connection and attachment to the distant fellow communions. By the same token, Stuart Hall believes that “the nation-state was never simply a political entity” but an imagined community (355). Hence, the theory of imagination is strictly related to the feeling of belonging to a particular cultural community sharing similar characteristics.

Benedict Anderson uses the term to associate individuals to a particular community that shares the same cultural practices; thus, discounting the cross-cultural encounters. In fact, imagination contributes into the understanding of the formation of a national belonging; however, the concept is contested in an era of globalization where the nation-state is questioned. Such a questioning is addressed by Carmen Zamorano Llena (2010) as she addresses the traditional conceptualization of ‘imagined communities’ in the global circumstances: “the sense of home and belonging has been called into question” (Nordin & Llena 143). Therefore, the dependability of ‘imagination’ is interrogated since multiple cultural exposures threaten the singularity of allegiance to a specific community. Indeed, the era of globalization and its nature of cross-cultural interactions have called for an evolution of the concept of imagination to transcend the local community and consider the multiple cultural images that individuals and communities are exposed to. The concept has evolved from Anderson’s conceptualization to serve as a theoretical background for different studies in various fields and disciplines like anthropology and linguistics.

Arjun Appadurai, a contemporary anthropologist, grounds from the theory of imagination to conceptualize his ‘scapes’. He contends that imagination as a field of practice becomes the novel reality (7), yet it extends the national boundaries of a single community to reach beyond the parameters of nations and cultures. The use of the term ‘scapes’ signify the movement of local elements on a global scale; the suffix points to the irregularities and fluidity of movements that result from globalization as a contemporary fact (33). In other words, the era of globalization and the accelerated motion of people, news, technologies and ideologies have called for a different way of thinking about national and cultural belonging, where imagination transcends the boundaries of a local community to a translocal attachment. Hence, globalization has created a new reality characterized by constant movements, novel practices, and ideas that questions the notion of imagination and its relevance to mere national belonging. Appadurai contends that the reception of ‘scapes’ shape perspectives and perceptions; the nature of exposure to these global flows contributes into the construction of

identities. Thus, there are multiple ways of imagining the self and the world (Powell & Steel 76). Indeed, the reception of images either national or global leads into the creation of a self that have unfixed parameters, which result into the construction of what Stuart Hall calls 'multiple modernities'.

Appadurai, among other scholars, notices that the contemporary era is characterized by an accelerated flow of people from one space to another for various reasons. The phenomenon of immigration and dislocation has accelerated, where people change their national location to different spaces and therefore has shifted the circumstances and cultural impacts of dislocation. He uses the concept 'ethno-scapes' to refer to the flow of individuals from one space to another (33). The ethno-transnational flows, illustrated by Diaspora, transport their cultural belonging in what Benedict Anderson terms as 'Long-distance Nationalism' as the national borders do not delimit membership to a nation, due to the process of imagination (Schiller 571). Nina Glick Schiller receives the concept as a form of nationalism fostered by the process of globalization and transnational motion (Schiller 573-574). She argues that the practice of 'long-distant nationalism' directs the diasporic subjects to remain committed to their cultural origins, which, in return, promotes a separation from potentials of assimilation and of cultural loss (577). Hence, the notion of imagination -or imagination of the cultural self and origins- posits itself as a reliable instrument to develop a feeling of belonging to a distant community and remain culturally attached to it. On the other hand, imagination sports a role in the creation of a novel belonging to a new community rather than remaining merely connected to the nation of origin. The fact of 'scaping' to a different cultural environment equates receiving images of the novel community as they share a language, customs, behavior and territory. Thus, the cultural agents imagine a belonging to a novel culture and novel identity.

Under the diasporic circumstances, Stuart Hall (2019) believes in the multiplicity of identities (207). Indeed, the exposure to various cultures permits a shift in the national and cultural allegiance resulting from the fluid nature of identity; he sees that identity is constantly metamorphosing, and therefore, subjected to changes when exposed to global motion of individuals and groups (221). In that case, the displaced immigrants are seemingly attuned with the dominant culture driving to create multiple cultural connections to end what Hall calls the western defined "modernity" (221); consequently, fashioning their own terms of modernity. Identically, Homi Bhabha believes in the everchanging nature of identities once

meeting a different culture, where new forms of identification would conceivably be highlighted (313). In addition, in his *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha announces the concept of ‘the third space’, where diasporic communities create a hybrid status celebrated through the merging of different cultural elements. Accordingly, the possession of double allegiance signifies a lasting connection to the community of origin, while successfully interacting with the host culture (Bhabha 53). In her part, Irene Gilsenan Nordin acknowledges Habermas’s calls for postnationalist stands to disaffiliate from speeches that are strictly associated to nation-states. For Habermas, multiple allegiances lead to ‘cosmopolitan solidarity’ that transcends “the tragic consequences of xenophobic cultural nationalism” (Nordin & Llana 3). Consequently, it is announced that the concept of imagination takes a step towards postnationalism paralleled with transculturalism and transculturality -discussed within literary parameters in the next title.

Furthermore, Benedict Anderson stresses that media or what he terms ‘print capitalism’ is held accountable for the spread of nationalism as a feeling of belonging (36). He contends that ‘print-capitalism’ furnishes a possibility for community members to consider themselves related to other distant communions through consuming the same received data (Benedict 36). However, the disseminated media on the national level, and its direct relation to the feeling of belonging is contested against since the traditional conceptualization of media has been altered. Mahmud Jowan notices that the notion of ‘imagined communities’ is weakened by the new media in the age of globalization, therefore diminishes the validity of nationalist feelings. He uses the term ‘counter-nationalism’ to announce that new technologies erase the traditional media such as newspaper, television and radio, which leads to generate non-nationalist feelings (3). These images tend to transfer trans-national ideas and ideologies rather than national, thus question the feeling of belonging to one single community. Additionally, Emily Ignacio questions the future of nationalism; in terms of identities, culture, and gender; since the circulating images crosses the frontiers to transnational spaces (9).

Based on such a theoretical ground, Arjun Appadurai takes the theory of ‘imagined communities’ further and claims that transnational motions disseminate media content throughout the globe to render an apprehended content beyond the boundaries of a single community. Thereafter, individuals and groups are reactive to their international media in addition to their national one (7). He uses the concept ‘mediascapes’ to define the globally disseminated media that provide “large and complex repertoires of images, narratives, and

ethnoscapes to viewers throughout the world” (Appadurai 35). Indeed, the recent history has witnessed considerable media corporations deterritorializing their products to be disseminated on a global scale to meet their business ends; hence, the world has become the audience and the consumer of these productions rather than its consumption within the boundaries of particular nations (Morley & Robins 11; Appadurai 35). Moreover, for the purpose of meeting the requirements of a planetary audience, media production has detached its standards from national cultures to align with more ‘universal’ principles leading to the creation of global programming for a global market and therefore announcing the mythology of ‘global media’ (Morley & Robins 11).

In the light of ‘global media’, societies and cultures are questioned; Bailey notices that the new millennial academia has been preoccupied with the interaction of media and society (Bailey 1). Indeed, the Marxist ideology theory, cultural studies, and gender theory indulge in series of debates concerning the impact of the media (2). Richard Kearney uses the expression ‘civilisation of the image’ describing the contemporary global situation. He contends that reality has become an extension to the received images that the distinction between reality and imagination has become blur (Morley & Robins 38). Similarly, Appadurai sees that the marge between reality and fantasy became no longer distinguishable due the accelerated received images (36). On this account, Fredric Jameson contends that the globally circulating images create ‘an existential bewilderment’ resulting from incapacity to locate cultural positions due to the diverse sources and aims of these circulating images (Morley & Robins 38). In a similar vein, Joshua Meyrowitz suggests that there is a relation between media and social behavior; the association between the physical setting and social relations is redefined by media. The latter ensures a larger audience without physical presence and therefore the notion of experience transcends the physical (132). Indeed, media provides a platform for experiences that overstep the physical to the impalpable, and therefore calls for the contribution of imagination in the creation of experiences. What appears to associate people to one another or the distributed images is attributed to imagination rather than direct encounter. In fact, Appadurai admits that the association between reality and imagining becomes blur through exposure to mediascapes (35). Hence, media is argued to create new communities across spaces and bridge distances among groups, and leads to the performance of cultural mixing (Morley & Robins 132), where these newly created communities is received by Appadurai as ‘modernity’.

Furthermore, Benedict Anderson contends that the language contributes to national consciousness (38). Indeed, the primary source for imagination is relative to the shared linguistic utterances among community members; speaking the same code as the fellow communions contributes into the feeling of belonging to particular group. Benedict's book studies the emergence of nationalisms to attribute the phenomenon to the development of vernaculars and their disseminations among groups as standard languages; thus, the creation of modern nations is attributed to language-dissemination (Benedict 42). The community members using the same language may or may not be in a direct contact with one another, which opens a discussion about cross-cultural contacts in the age of globalization, where languages of other communities directly or virtually come into contact. Indeed, the notion of the feeling of belonging to a community through the articulation of its national language questions the use of a second or a foreign code. Such a perplexity has occurred in the studies of the Bonnie Norton, who relates imagination to language learning. The scholar bases her theoretical background on the theory of 'imagined communities', where second/foreign language learners construct images of the distant communities to trigger a desire to become a part of their group (Wu 105). Thus, sharing a language of another community triggers the imagination of individuals to view the self as part of that particular group even without direct contacts.

Based on poststructuralist perspective of identity, Norton receives that identities are shaping and reshaping according to the received images. She views that individuals are subjected to power, which leaves identity construction as ultimately being shaped by the circulating powers (Norton 16). Moreover, language learners are engaged in a continuous process of identity construction whenever using a specific code (Tamimi & Seyyed 15). Therefore, sharing the same language as a different community triggers imagination to feel connected to such a community or 'communities'. In fact, 'imagined communities' refer to the communities that are constructed through imagination, where individuals learning and sharing a code develop a desire to join the language group and culturally aspire to be similar to them (Norton n.p). In his *Communities of Practice: Learning, Meaning, and Identity*, Etienne Wenger see that being engaged with community practices is not the sole way to belong to a community, and suggests imagination as another important source of community (Yasuko & Norton 241). He defines imagination as "a process of expending oneself by transcending our time and space, and creating new images of the world and ourselves" (Wagner 176). Furthermore, Gao comprehends a relation of interdependence between

language learning and cultural learning, where receiving a language signifies a simultaneous reception of culture (Wagner 184).

The notion of language and its relation to culture and nations has been widely debated in the intellectual community. In his *The Intercultural Mind: Connecting Culture, Cognition and Global Living* (2015), Joseph Shaules discusses the relation between language and culture, where he points to the relativist perception of language and its relation to mutual cultural understanding among community members, which strongly fosters Benedict's notion of 'imagined communities'. The relativist theory strongly stresses on the consistency of language and community, where the latter is the primary identifier of a community or nations (Shaules 173). Sharing a language with a group of people signifies sharing their conceptualization, and promotes a further integration in the mutual cultural intelligibility among the community members.

2.5. Cultural Identity: A Cognitive Reading

The heightened connections among cultures in the era of globalization address the question of impacts of cultures on one another; more specifically, it highlights the effects of Occidental culture on the Oriental ones. Reading the cross-cultural encounter in cases of colonialism and diaspora reported abundant theories and explanations of the cultural encounter, yet the contemporary era of intensive connections summons a closer reading in the actions and reactions of the cultural agents. Thereafter, the pursuit of a close reading and analysis of cultural actions and reactions towards the circulating global flows is achieved through undertaking a cognitive approach that aims at understanding the circulating cultures and their impacts on the mind of the socio-cultural agents. Resting on Edward T. Hall's argument about the importance of looking at the way things are put together than based on mere theories (16) serves the primary motive for a cognitive approach. In such a position, the notion of culture is received as multiple layered entities, where the covert part catches the interest of the cognitive theories. In fact, the concept of culture as highlighted in the earlier pages of the present chapter is divided into two: explicit and implicit parts.

The multilayered aspect of culture appears under diverse terms by multiple authors. Besides Arjun Appadurai's 'hard' and 'soft' culture, Edward Hall terms overt and hidden culture. Arjun Appadurai makes a distinction between 'hard' and 'soft' cultural forms. The 'hard' culture is received as "a set of links between value, meaning, and embodied practice

that are difficult to break and hard to transform” (90); whereas the ‘soft’ form of culture signifies “those that permit relatively easy separation of embodied performance from meaning and value, and relatively successful transformation at each level” (ibid). Moreover, Joseph Shaules uses concepts like ‘surface’ culture and ‘deep’ culture. The former is consistent with the apparent norms of culture that define a community’s structures, customs, religion, architecture, and traditions which are explicitly represented as distinctive features of a certain group (31); whereas ‘deep’ culture is primarily consistent with practices and behaviors that are exclusively intelligible to the community (85). For the purpose of relating cognition to culture, the ‘deep’ layer of culture is the primary considered entity, which permits the assessment of cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident.

Deep culture refers to the unconscious meanings, values, norms and hidden assumptions that allow us to interpret our Intercultural Contact in the Global Village experiences as we interact with other people. These shared meanings form a framework which acts as a starting point for our sense of what it means to be human, what constitutes normal behavior, how to make moral or ethical choices and what we perceive as reasonable. (Shaules 11-12)

The term cognition intends for the mental processes of the human mind that are related to the reception and the production of meaning and behavior. Scholars and scientists alike have been interested in cognitive science in an attempt to understand how the human mind operates in different situations, where the fields of neurology, linguistics, psychology and anthropology have construct various theories and studies aiming to relate the human behavior with causes and effects. Indeed, the discipline stresses on how information is stored and processed in order to manufacture perspectives (Druckman & Lacey 7). Early modern theorists like John Locke, Thomas Hobbs and Emmanuel Kant have been interested in the subject of human nature to centre it over biology; thus, the human behavior is structured upon biological drives that are shared among the human species regardless of society and cultural backgrounds (Fukuyma 15). Correspondingly, Pierre Bourdieu terms the ‘habitus’ to signify a set of embodied and socially learned dispositions that are reflective of a certain social environment (Chiao 36). In other words, human beings share similar biological structures, where their minds and behaviors are dictated by their socio-cultural environment as they receive certain knowledge that render their actions meaningful within the group they live within. In addition, Edward T. Hall sees that “studying the models that men create to explain nature tells you

more about the men than about the part of nature being studied” (14). Furthermore, Carl Jung points that:

When we speak of man in general, we do not have his anatomy -the shape of his skull or the color of his skin- in mind, but mean rather his psychic world, his state of consciousness and his mode of life (*Modern Man in Search of a Soul* 125).

Thus, speaking of man equates not, the physical anatomy, but his psychic world, consciousness, and mode of life, which lead to the creation of behavioral patterns that are adopted and disseminated. Therefore, to study cultural shaping and structuring, it is vital to return to the study of the psyche of man and his internal responses and productions to the world around him, which means considering the ‘deep’ facets of the individual’s identity construction.

The interest in cognitive science is displayed in the first half of the twentieth century, where major theories have stressed upon a behaviorist perspective. The latter attributes mental and behavioral functions to the brain as a biological and neurological entity; therefore, receiving the human being in mere biological terms. Such a perspective extends from the Darwinian evolution theory holding that human actions are driven by deterministic traits, which has been evacuated by theories developed in the second half of the twentieth century (Aldama 251). A novel stream of studies interrupts the behaviorist over-stress upon biological and neurological attributes to notice other factors participating into the production the human perception and behavior (ibid).

Cognitive science finds an equivalent perspective in the field of psychology. Both approaches aim to understand the human mind and behavior when exposed to certain circumstances. In addition, Psychology is received as the science of the mind, which studies the mind’s conscious and unconscious phenomena; the discipline sources its theories from other disciplines that range from biology, neurology, sociology to anthropology. Indeed, Psychology provides explanations about the human behavior and inner self which relates to behavior and thought. Conclusions are drawn based on a background study of individuals fabricating their mental and behavioral drives. In fact, the psychological readings of individuals are debated among relativists and Universalists upon the universality versus the cultural specificity of emotions as the primary driver for human action (Chiao 32). Culture and the social environment are reckoned as primary sources for the production of action; thus,

Universalists display certain discomfort regarding the discipline of psychology for not equating the advancements of other sciences regarding the documentation of universal principles employed to explain complex human behavior. Hence, the field of psychology finds multiple limitations to explain the behavior of individuals especially in cross-cultural settings. Furthermore, Anthropology, as a discipline studying the human as historical, social and cultural entities, appears to be injected by cognitive theories in an attempt to comprehend the human behavior throughout histories and geographies. The primary occupation of the field, however, is the study of cultures, their variations, evolution, and their relation to human beings. Indeed, the sub-field of cognitive anthropology comprehends culture as what a member of a society needed to know or believe, in order to behave meaningfully within that society' (Chiao 31).

Cognitive science asserts itself as a multi-disciplinary field through accessing literary studies as an approach. Scholars have been keen to study the human mind and its relation to literary articulations, where they have stressed upon the connection of the text to the reader-response; in addition to a reading in the mind of the writer. Lisa Zunshine promotes an interpretation of the mind of the reader through their responses to literary works. She uses the expression 'cognitive cultural studies' in her attempt to read cultural artifacts like cinema, paintings, and literature aiming to comprehend or 'read the mind' of these productions. She explains, from a neurological perspective, the functions of the human brain regardless of culture and individual differences when exposed to literary texts. However, her claims appear more limiting to the human individual differences that the humanities are putting forward. Her mere scientific perspective allows no entrance to the field of humanities to access her research analysis.

Moreover, the cognitive approach is interested in the evaluation of the writer's mind while producing the literary piece; indeed, literature is a product of the author's mind and an extension to her/his experiences. Theories of psychology are particularly concerned with delivering theoretical and analytical grounds to interpret the writer's psyche, ideologies and perceptions through his text. However, such theories, mainly sourced from Freudian and Lacanian hypotheses, are perceived limited due to the over emphasis upon the psyche of the writer as the sole director of the text structures and themes (Aldama 2). Therefore, the cognitive approach offers multi-disciplinary grounds for reading the writer's mind without an over-emphasis on mere psychological traits, and offers a multi-dimensional understanding of

the author that reads from fields like: neuroscience, biology, anthropology, cultural studies among other fields.

In his book *Towards a Cognitive Theory of Narrative Acts*, Fredrick Louis Aldama embarks on a cognitive reading of cultural products like music, literature, and films, where the contributors of the book posit their interpretations on various disciplines like philosophy, neuroscience, biology and philosophy among others. In his book, he vows an attempt to bridge between science and the humanities for the sake of an objective interpretation of cultural artifacts (Aldama 1). From what is noticed, the cognitive approach, as a literary lens, sources from multiple fields and disciplines in order to arrive at a 'global' reading of literary works. The approach is therefore aiming at a 'scientific' objective reading of texts, authors, and readers rather than a subjective interpretation of a particular perspective. The approach employs sentences from various disciplines and fields which makes it multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary fields of study that uses theories from hard sciences, humanities and social sciences to arrive at an objective reading of the text. Such disciplines vary from neurology, biology, psychology, social sciences, history, and anthropology to cultural studies. Hence, the cognitive approach is regarded as a bridge between humanities and science, where scientific findings and studies infrastructure theories in the humanities. More specifically, it is received as a 'scientifically' reliable approach to analyze and interpret literary texts. Therefore, the approach collects its theoretical grounds from various disciplines and fields to arrive at a multi-disciplinary reading of literary texts as cultural products. Announcing the complementary nature of science and humanities, the approach seeks to answer questions related to human behavior and perspective through collecting theories and studies from various fields permitting access to a holistic perspective related to text reading (Aldama 1).

For the purposes of the present thesis, it is perceived that a Planetarian perspective aligns with the objectives and methods of the cognitive approach in the sense that it allows a literary analysis characterized by objectivity rather than subjective readings that the canon literary approaches offer. Not to depreciate the latter, but the subjective treatments of these theories appeal to further dichotomies and differences, especially when dealing with the cultural relations between the East and the West. The Cognitive approach; therefore, offers an objective analytical perspective to the literary texts to promote for objectivity rather than theories grounded from the Western Area Studies or the 'Easter' postcolonial studies. Henceforth, the present thesis stresses on the relation between the Orient and the Occident in

the era of intensive global flows. The literary theoretical backgrounds appear to promote for no canon literary theories to read the contemporary texts under global circulation; therefore, the cognitive approach demonstrates a reliable approach to provide an 'objective' reading of cultural identities. Henceforth, the cultural cognitive theories serve the primary theoretical background to meet the cross-cultural occupations of the present thesis.

As mentioned earlier, the cognitive approach has been considered in the literary studies, where the reader's response to texts along with a reading of the author's purposes has been the primary concern. However, the present study takes the cognitive approach further, where it utilizes its multi-disciplinary nature in order to read the cultural mind of the literary characters. Despite of the occurrence and re-occurrence of the approach in various fields, there is a noticeable deficiency in the literature employing the cultural cognitive approach as a cultural lens to assess and eventually comprehend the relationship between/ among cultures in circulation. Hence, the primary stress of the present thesis is the assessment of cultural identities of the 'periphery' literary characters through reading their cultural minds in a cross-cultural environment resulting from intensive global circulations.

The fields of cultural neuroscience and cultural psychology have made considerable scholarships in an attempt to comprehend the relationship between culture and the mind, more particularly the effects of culture on processes of thinking, perceiving and constructing identities (Shaules 5). In her book *Cognition and Culture: A Cross-Cultural Approach to Cognitive Psychology*, Jeanette Altarriba sees the importance of her edited book "as a bridge between researchers and interested scholars in different parts of the world who share a common interest in understanding the human mind, thought, and behavior" (ix). Furthermore, the field of cognitive anthropology perceives culture as 'what a member of a society needed to know or believe, in order to behave meaningfully within that society' (Chiao 6). Thus, it puts culture as the primary driver for human behavior. Jessica Benjamin spells a 'theory of intersubjectivity' to contend that identity is dependent upon other subjects that steer self-recognition through responding to feelings, intentions and actions (Aldama 168). Indeed, cultural identities depend on shared meaning among the members of the community to sense a feeling of belonging. These shared meanings occupy the cognitive science that studies the reception and the production of meaning; Jean-Pierre Changeux finds a possibility of 'cultural imprint' where he stressed on the importance of integrating cultural influences into neuroscience research (Chiao 20). In addition, contemporary trends call for the activation of

interdisciplinary theoretical and empirical endeavors that aim at comprehending the influences of socio-cultural contexts on brain development and function (ibid).

Joseph Shaules's *The Intercultural Mind: Connecting Culture, Cognition, and Global Living* considers the cognitive approach in reading the mind in a state of cross-cultural encounter. He draws upon neuroscience, cultural psychology, and cultural studies to arrive at an understanding of how the mind operates in cross-cultural situations in the age of globalization. Moreover, the book draws attention to the influences of cultures on the unconscious mind to receive and produce meaning corresponding with more than one cultural environment. Indeed, the mind receptions of various cultural sources produce a behavior that corresponds with the inputs the brain receives. The 'intersubjectivity' in a state of multi-cultural living produces an individual mind that corresponds with the multitude of cultural exposures, and therefore, producing an ability or a disability to attune with such an environment. The human cognition introduces the term 'plasticity' as a means of cultural learning. Neuroscience studies indicate that the human mind responds to the different types of received experiences through brain plasticity, which allows mental processes that adapt to various forms of experiential turnings and adopts other forms of expression (Chiao 18). Thereupon, plasticity offers an 'adaptive system' that corresponds with the individual's environment and promotes for behavioral changes depending on the type of exposure (ibid). Consequently, this leads to announce that the human mind adapts to cultural changes through receiving certain cultural inputs from a global environment, which leads to alterations in the cultural identity of individuals.

Klarina Priborkin attempts to read the cultural mind of the characters in the novel *The Woman Warrior* by Maxine Hong Kingston. The story orbits around a Chinese mother and an American born daughter, who appear to produce cultural conflicts as they misinterpret each other's intentions and behavior. The writer points to the cultural differences between the Oriental mother and the occidental daughter as they both received different cultural programming; they both possess dissimilar gestures, facial expressions, bodily movements, silences. (162). Such an instance corresponds with what is termed 'theory of mind' where Joseph Shaules announces that the ability to understand the mind and intentions of the other signify an ability to read the mind of the cultural communions without reflections upon probable meanings. In cases of cultural differences, the notion of 'mind reading' becomes ineffective and therefore announces further differences and disruptions between/ among the

cultural agents. Indeed, Klarina notices that the mother is troubled by the fact that she is positioned to explain and reexplain the Chinese cultural behavior to her children for not being able to ‘mind-read’ these performances due to their American cultural environment (164).

2.6. Transculturalism: A Route Towards a New Identity

The intensive cross-cultural encounter heightened by global realities the relation between the Orient and the Occident has in fact occupied scholars from various disciplines. Indeed, scholars and theorists settled on transculturality as a concept pronouncing particular parameters regarding cultural relations. The early appearances of the concept find traces in the work of the anthropologist Fernando Ortiz’s *Cuban Counterpart*, who appears to be concerned with the cultural Orientations of his native community; he observes a cultural mixture emerging after the Spanish colonial endeavors on the American continent. According to him, Cuba’s cultural reality has gone extreme ‘transmutations’ towards a process of transculturation (Ortiz 98). The occurrence of the term has ever since been found in multiple disciplines in attempt to understand cultural encounter and cultural mutations. In fact, Phyllis Peres stresses that colonial encounters craft a path towards a complex process of identity mutation that are inscribed in transculturation (10). He opposes modes of acculturation when discussing the cultural relationship between the colonizer and colonized and assumes a discourse of cultural fluidity as a response to the presence of the other (ibid). Indeed, the poststructuralist perception of cultural identity receives that identities are in constant shifts due to their encounter with different contexts, which constructs the ground for transcultural discussions. In *Transcultural Identities in Contemporary Literature*, the book contributors define transculturality as “the formation of multifaceted, fluid identities resulting from diverse cultural encounters” (Nordin et al 11). Therefore, the structuring of a transcultural discussion rests upon cross-cultural encounters which lead to structuring fluid identities.

In the era of globalization and the intensity of cultural connections, the concept reappears in multiple readings to re-consider cultures and cultural relations and their connection to construction of cultural identities. Among these scholars is the German Wolfgang Welsch who re-fashioned the used of the term ‘transculturation’. According to him, the concept serves to cover a cultural situation where meeting different or opposing cultural groups leads to blurring the boundaries between/among them (Nordin et al 169). Moreover, he reconsiders the use of the term ‘interculturality’ to defined the cross-cultural relations in the age of

globalization for connoting problems and rupture between/among cultures since these cultures are highly influenced by their respective ethnocentrism, which drives into an impoverished communication. Henceforth, the utilization of the term 'transculturality' implies further dialogues and connections between the different cultures (169). Therefore, the concept 'transculturality' is assumed to substitute interculturality; the former stresses upon similarities and integration rather than differences and exclusion (ibid). In fact, the uses of the concept have occurred in multiple discussions in various disciplines addressing the theme of culture and cultural dialogues, yet the contemporary historical Orientations lead to reconsideration of the concept to replace the common cultural discourses like: immigration, interculturality, multiculturalism, and hybridity. These concepts additionally connote notions of cultural essentialism, whereas transculturality is about recognizing change and diversity rather than stressing upon differences and boundaries (11).

Furthermore, Arianna Dagnino places the concept in a literary mainstream to discuss an emergent 'transcultural literature' in the age of global flows; she places it within the emerging field of World Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies. The scholar receives a number of writers like Zadie Smith, Hanif Kureishi, Micheal Odaaje and others as transcultural writers for challenging the parameters of national literatures through a process of 'denationalizing' their literary works (2). In fact, the above-mentioned writers appear to possess a living condition beyond national borders as they dislocate from one cultural environment to another. Moreover, their writings distribute themes that overcome the ethnic, national, cultural, imperial or religious boundaries dictated by national belonging to a particular group (Dagnino, 2012 12). These 'mobile' writers possess a transcultural sensibility that transcended the boundaries of a specific culture contest against Huntington's notion of 'clash of civilizations' and stress on confluence, communication and interactions rather than polarities (Dagnino 2015 1). In fact, transcultural literature and writers transcend the borders of a single culture or community and engage in a global literary perspective as a novel way to imagine identities (ibid 2). By the same token, Richard Rathwell's article "The Architecture of Transculture" uses the concept to designate the group of literary articulations that are beyond the 'national literary space' that range from literatures in English to other languages (2).

2.6.1. Transcending Binary Discourses

Announcing a transcultural discourse signifies promoting for a cultural discussion that transcends binarism and dichotomies accompanying cross-cultural encounters. On that matter, Irene Gilesean Nordin and others announce that the notion of cultural encounter, traditionally viewed from analytical theories of migration, multiculturalism, cosmopolitanism, postcolonialism, and cultural memory, are reevaluated (11). Indeed, the postcolonial discourse as a literary approach has been primarily occupied by the cultural relation between the Orient and the West, where both meet in a position of opposition due to the colonial/imperial history. The discourse has occurred in a historical time after the colonial departure from the Eastern territories, and has since been relevant to theories that put forward speeches related to prefixes such as pre-, anti-, post-, and neo- that emphasized on a binary relationship between/ among cultures. Bart Moore-Gilbert points that the postcolonial discourse remains a serviceable reading practice to comprehend the relation between the past and the present; the colonial fact has contributed into power relations that are applicable to political, economic, and cultural forms (Shands 9). However, the post-colonial state is quite debatable considering the contemporary circumstances that are perceived to evacuate colonial practices and post-colonial themes.

On that matter, Terry Eagleton's *After Theory* (2003) questions the capacity of post-modern post-structuralist and post-modern discourses to generation value discussions that cope with the novel global reality. In fact, the above-mentioned discourses, pointing specifically to postcolonialism, are perceived to reject the called for enlightenment narratives in favor of prominence of difference (Spencer 18). In addition, the postcolonial production in literature is perceived to highlight statements of conflict as the primary form of contact between the West and the rest (1). Furthermore, Frank Schulze-Engler observes that the postcolonial approaches perceive cultural dynamics in terms of dichotomies of colonizer versus colonized or centre versus periphery (xi); thus, notions of difference, alterity, opposition, and marginality persist as primary discussions. In addition, the discourse contributes to effects of othering the Rest, which is perceived as a western tradition. Indeed, the constant attempts to contribute to the prominence of the 'Rest', after being marginalized by the West through imperial means, engendered a discourse that stresses upon, not only differences between the two entities but, a marginalized and defeated periphery that attempts

to struggle and survive the aftermaths of the colonizer; therefore, contributing to a representation of the 'Rest' as the other as a non-deliberate extension to western traditions.

Moreover, Robert Spencer contends that postcolonial literature tends to represent cultural situations that are more or less deviated from orthodox patterns of understanding and representing the post-colonial worlds, where Edward Said calls it 'extreme occasion' that are received sometimes as 'uncalled-for' (42). Indeed, the postcolonial discourse attempts to credit value to the Oriental subject at the expense of the 'evil' pursuits of the West and its imperial endeavors. Thus, it tends to create literature that magnifies issues and differences between both entities, with a 'demonizing' flavor of the imperial other. What is more, the postcolonial cultural theories are received to be less relevant to the real history for appearing theoretically radical and disengaging with the present world situation (Krishna 111). By the same token, Frank Schulze-Engler believes that:

Many postcolonial debates today seem increasingly irrelevant to literary studies ... some of the chief tenets of postcolonial theory developed in the last two decades now seem hard to reconcile with the literary and cultural dynamics of a rapidly globalizing world. (20)

Indeed, the postcolonial theories appear to stress on dichotomies and differences as it constantly grows disengaging with world realities, especially in a context of a globalized world circumstances. In her *Death of a Discipline*, Spivak distances from postcolonial readings and engages into planetary cultural studies, she perceives that the «old postcolonial model- very much 'India' plus the Sartrean 'Fanon'- will not serve now as the master model for transnational to global cultural studies on the way to Planetarity" (Spivak 85). Hence, a critique of postcolonial discourse signifies a consideration of alternative discourses and perceptions that engage the cultural Orient and Occident in a relation of communication and interdependence rather than stressing upon dichotomies and differences, in order to meet the novel cultural and cross-cultural realities. Transcultural speeches are by no means an attempt to eradicate postcolonial discourses, yet, it vows a reconsideration of its binary speeches that articulate: imperialism, hegemony, politics of power, nationalism, identity, powerful and subordinate, colonizer and colonized and others insinuating binary perceptions.

Furthermore, the notion of hybridity is an adjacent concept when cross-cultural relations between the West and East are discussed. It is perceived as the development of a

flexible intercultural identity (Beraldi *et al* 70) that attempts to combine two different cultures together to create a novel one. The term as pronounced by Homi Bhabha means a status of interaction between a nation and the empire, which puts it in a contest of postcolonialism. Indeed, the colonial departure has left its imperial cultural imprints in the colonized community, which has led into a process of cultural mimicry (Nederveen 79). In his *The Location of Culture* Homi Bhabha states:

All forms of culture are continually in a process of hybridity ... it is to me the 'third space' which enables other positions to emerge. The process of cultural hybridity gives rise to something different, new, and unrecognizable, a new area of negotiation of meaning and representation. (Bhabha 211)

Thus, the new culture attempts to reconcile two different cultures through creating a middle ground for both. In fact, such cultural reconciliation is received from postcolonial scholars as a mode of 'writing back' as it attempts to resist the colonial hegemonic powers (Acheraoui 153). Moreover, Amar Acheraoui's *Questioning Hybridity, Postcolonialism and Globalization* (2011) understand that Bhabha's notion of hybridity can be a challenge to Orientalism as the latter stresses upon binary thinking (90). Edward Said's Orientalism is received as an emphasis on binary thinking, where there exists a powerful and a weaker entity. The former dominates the cultural discourses in order to subjugate the other, whereas Bhabha proposes a middle ground for both cultures as they equally converge into creating a novel one, without an over-stress of one at the expense of the other. Furthermore, Aijaz Ahmad receives that Bhabha's hybridity theory is disconnected with postcolonial occupations as it disconnects from the colonial context (Acheraoui 108), and promotes an anti-imperialist agency that aims at cultural solidarity (103).

In recent Diasporic discourse, the notion of hybridity finds a wider scholarly interest as it exhibits cultural adequacy with the cross-cultural realities the subjects are exposed to, due to being in an environment of various cultural backgrounds: the periphery-diasporic minority and the center-majority. The dislocation from one space to another, and their literary echoes, has found the theory of hybridity a suitable discussion to expose the cultural circumstances that conditioned from an encounter between the periphery and center. Indeed, the theory of hybridity and 'Third Space' has dominated the postcolonial and cultural studies over the past two decades (Acheraoui 90). However, in the recent changes due to global flows, the validity of hybridity discourse is questioned. Nederveen notices that Bhabha's

hybrid individual is characterized by identity fragmentation and distortion as it constantly attempts to find a fit into the mainstream culture (79). Accordingly, the hybrid individual remains in constant struggles in society, as he exhibits novel traits that do not correspond with the mainstream culture or society. Therefore, the subject develops a sense of alienation, dislocation, fragmentation and distortion, which is a position of weakness and otherness (Nederveen 79). Consequently, the theory of hybridity articulates further dichotomies and cultural issues regarding the identity of the periphery subject, which summons an alternative cultural discourse that parallels the current cultural discourse amidst global flows.

2.6.2. Diaspora Studies and the Changing Discourses

The cross-cultural relations, primarily between the Orient and the Occident, occur in a diasporic space where the cultural subject dislocates from their 'periphery' environment towards the 'centre' for various reasons. Reading the cross-cultural encounter in a diasporic space has favored 'multicultural' discourse. However, Arianna Dagnino notices that the letter celebrates cultural differences, nostalgia for the lost lands, and broken identities; thus, it opposes togetherness and solidarity that transcend ethnic, national, and cultural frontiers (*Transcultural Literature* 5). Indeed, the multicultural approach derives from 'immigration' policies that promote for acceptance of the cultural other and calls for co-existence and consciousness about the cultural other, who dislocates from different territories for numerous causes. However, the approach is politically-based that rallies groups into accepting the 'other'; thus, fails to announce cultural embrace, togetherness and solidarity that are the original basis for communities before the initiation of the modern conceptualizations of nations. Moreover, critics of multiculturalism as defined by Taylor and Kymlicka contend that a group-differentiated approach to culture is counterproductive, as it is based on a view of cultures as distinct and self-contained, rather than as interrelated (Nordin *et al.* xix).

Another subject closely related to cross-cultural encounter is 'cosmopolitanism'. The concept is closely tied to encounters between and among different cultures in one cultural space. It is comprehended as a devotion to the interests of humanity and the universality of human rights and liberties, and an obvious detachment from affiliations and group allegiances that nation-states impose as a fact (Guttman 1). Bruce Robbins points out that cosmopolitanism has undergone conceptual changes over the last thirty years (*ibid*). Moreover, Robert Spencer understands it as:

Cosmopolitanism is both a disposition – one characterised by self-awareness, by a penetrating sensitivity to the world beyond one’s immediate milieu, and by an enlarged sense of moral and political responsibility to individuals and groups outside one’s local or national community. And, it is very important to add, a set of economic structures and political institutions that correspond to this enlarged sense of community. (4)

Therefore, the concept is closely related to political Orientations rather than emerging from cultural preoccupations (4); in fact, the political institutions issue decisions to promote co-habitation among the different cultures within a single space. Moreover, he receives it as a marketing strategy that conceals neo-liberal capitalist ideals rather than humanist considerations (Spencer 23). In additions, the author comprehends the phenomenon as “a system of trans-national relationships embodied in structures and institutions” (ibid 6).

Furthermore, Wilson, Clifford, Brennan and others (1998) understand that there is a linkage between cosmopolitanism and global capitalism. In fact, some nationalists adhere their scepticism about the intentions of cosmopolitanism and considers it as a promoter of rootlessness for seeking to detach from cultural and national roots. Such a case drives into passive belonging to social communities, and hence, the impossibility of democracy (Shazia 406). Many philosophers receive it as a deracinating subject as it calls for a departure from local cultures as identity definers (Bounar 164). In addition, recent approaches to the concept perceive it as an extension to homogenization of cultures under the banner of common ‘humanity’ among individuals and groups of the different world communities. In fact, the term appears to associate to globalization and its homogenizing dimension to create a single cultural facet for world nations and cultures; thus, uses the notion of cosmopolitanism to achieve their ‘imperial’ target. Consequently, both concepts ‘multiculturalism’ and ‘cosmopolitanism’ are evacuated for their incapacity to provide reading approaches that constellate with a planetarian discourse as they appear to have been modulated for ‘political’ purposes; thus, they additionally contribute to binary thinking or sometimes an exertion of power over other ‘weak’ communities.

2.6.3. Transculturality: An Alternative Reading Discourse

Considering the aforementioned limitations of the canon literary discourses, the transcultural approach to literary texts is perceived to produce reliable readings of texts that correspond with the novel global realities. The concept is qualified as a mode of enquiry and a

perspective rather than highlighting descriptive terms that align with a certain group of writers or texts. In fact, transculturalism stands in the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies since it studies texts in culture-sensitive environment: themes and forms (Tötösy de Zepetnek, *From Comparative 2*). Transculturalism is not a theory per-see, but "a matrix through which a set of critical tools and vocabularies can be refined for the study of texts from a localized world, but institutionalized globally" (Dagnino, 2015 8). Moreover, being located in the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies permits an interdisciplinary bridge between literature and culture, by which it permits to assist the rediscovery of middle grounds between Eastern and Western, Northern and Southern, and centre and periphery rather than the polarizing effects of the already established discourses (Dagnino 8). By the same token, Tötösy de Zepetnek sees that:

It is through this combination of comparative literary studies and transcultural studies that researchers might be better able to distance themselves from the perspective that focuses too strictly on national literatures, which "represents anew an entrapment in the national paradigm" (Tötösy de Zepetnek 6)

Following these steps, Arianna Dagnino refashions the concept as a literary mode to contend for a transcultural literature that emerges as a response to global mobilities of writers and texts. She writes a series of books and articles, where she puts forward arguments for the use of the concept to designate a specific group of writers who could no longer be associated to a single national literary tradition due to their thematic and formal literary articulations. In the context of globalization, an emergent group of writers, who dislocate from one national space to another, script literary themes that collaborate with their nomadic status. Arianna Dagnino notes that such a perspective attempts to overcome the limitations of postcolonial and multicultural theories as cultures posit on non-fixed characteristics (4). She adds that cultures are hybridizing organisms, which eases the task of de-linking literatures to a single nation, and at the same time offer an alternative to the dichotomies presented by postcolonial readings (4). Dagnino additionally argues that:

I posit that transcultural literary works engage with and express the confluential nature of cultures overcoming the different dichotomies between North and South, the West and the Rest, the colonizer and the colonized, the dominator and the dominated, the native and the (im) migrant, the national and the ethnic. Transcultural literature records the re-shaping of national collective imaginaries in an effort to adjust to the

cosmopolitan vision in a new age of transnational and supra-national economic, political, social, and cultural processes. (Dagnino 3)

Dagnino identifies her transcultural literature with Diasporic writers for constructing an exemplary sample for transnational literary producers. The diasporic writer, as an immigrant, exhibits a tendency to present the cultural and ethnic concerns in a space of cross-cultural encounter, which directs towards a reading of these experiences from a transcultural perspective (3). Indeed, the diasporic writers are exposed to multiple cultural experiences, which make their writings a reflection of their cultural sensitivities. Accordingly, their works are read with a transcultural perspective that detaches from postcolonial and multicultural perceptions demonstrating to be the dominant paradigms in the last four decades (Dagnino 6). Transcultural literature is thus “pursuing a literary discourse that is branching away from the tradition of (im)migrant and postcolonial literatures as the mainstream paradigms in the Literatures of Mobility” (6).

However, the present argument states that the transcultural perspective, is not merely related to a group of writers who possess diasporic or immigrant experiences, and who assume a cultural position that transfers from one cultural space to another but, encompasses writers who belong to ‘national literature’ categories. The term globalization as used by Dagnino and others, in relation to cultural encounter, covers the meaning of transnational movement of individuals and groups to various cultural locations; however, the concept includes the transfer of other entities as well. Arjun Appadurai uses the suffix ‘scapes’ to speak about the constant motion of technologies, finances, media, and ideologies as well; thus, globalization considers the transfer of cultural images and awareness indirectly rather than mere direct encounters. In his theory of ‘imagined communities’, Benedict Anderson stresses that imagination leads to the feeling of belonging to a particular community without a direct encounter with these cultural members. Therefore, it is contended that cultural imagination of distant communions, who share particular characteristics or links with, leads to the structuring of transcultural identities without being a diasporic individual. Accordingly, it is assumed that this drives to the creation of a group of writers who share transcultural sensibilities, and who are outside the realm of diasporic cultural experiences.

Transcultural articulations have taken the interest of the German philosopher Wolfgang Iser, who has considered the contemporary global conditions. He believes that there are no cultural differences or dichotomies, but similarities and dependencies that drives

into a transcultural perspective. In fact, the era of globalization contributed into an individual and collective networking of cultures, which leads a single culture to encompass a number of lifestyles and practices that are emergent from another culture (198-199). He adds that identity formation is no longer marked by difference from the other, but by an integration of components of a multitude of cultural sources (199), which are the result of cultural hybridization in an era of economic, social, and cultural inter-dependencies (203). To put it differently, due to cultural encounters that have foundation from early history, and intensified by globalization, a single culture exhibits certain cultural imprints that are associated to another culture. Hence, it vows cultural similarities and inter-dependency rather than differences and dichotomies. Furthermore, transcultural perspective assumes a position of transcendence as the notion of the differences between the self and the other occupy no title. In fact, the ideas related to ethnocentrism or cultural prejudices are evacuated since they stress on differences and dichotomies leading to further conflicts and mis-communications. On that matter, Welsch receives that the concept of ‘transculturality’ aims to overstep notions of global and local or universalistic and particularistic aspects of globalization (Welsch 205). The latter concept is debated, in the intellectual arena, for assuming either a homogenizing or heterogenizing position vis-a-vis world cultures; accordingly, transculturality attempts to move beyond these discussions and promote for ‘translocality’.

Standing a transcultural position signifies an evacuation of debates about the prominence of national or local cultures at the expense of others, which promote a sense of ethnocentrism or identity exceptionalism. Amine Maalouf speaks about such a topic in his *In the Name of Identity: Violence and the Need to Belong*, where he argues that the components of identity are received with exceptionalist standards that regard the self as higher and better than the other. The third world communities have initiated such a sense of exceptionalism as a response to the colonial prejudice that regarded the ‘Rest’ as inferior, and therefore, subjected to colonization. These communities constructed their nations and settled a national identity based on their respective particularities promoting a strong nationalist feeling fed on exceptionalism. In the era of globalization, many receive the phenomenon as an extension to imperial pursuits that the ex-colonizer West attempts to practice for their colonial ends; therefore, degrees of political and cultural resistance against globalization were/ are promoted for. Such resistance leads to antagonist feelings against the other being viewed as the imperial and additionally leading to heterogeneity as responses to the phenomenon. On the other hand, it is received by others as an idealized other for possessing traits of power and advancement.

Such a status drives into discussions of mimicry and idealization of the other for the sake of granting the self certain images of the western other, which eventually leads to homogeneity. Alternatively, a transcultural perspective evacuates both theories of globalization and dictates cultural embrace of both the self and the other.

The concept of 'transculturation' stresses upon cultural perspectives of similarities and integration rather than on differences and exclusions, as Welsch comes to put it (205). According to him, cultures and societies have always been under possibilities of connection and correspondence rather than isolation and conflicts, which make transculturality an old phenomenon (Welsch, *Acquisition and Possession* 10). Indeed, Welsch's idea correspond with the rise of nations and nationalisms in modern history, where communities created their territorial boundaries that are defined by certain traits that are different from the definitions of other near or far communities. Henceforth, the creation of distinctive nations does not negate the fact that communities tend to share similar cultural traits. Likewise, the contemporary historical context re-fabricated cultures and cultural behaviors to share resemblance with one another, where Welsch notices that «a pure culture is hard to imagine in today's society» (205). In fact, cultural boundaries are blurring more and more which leads to the emergence of transcultural individuals, who are willing to embrace cultures and cultural changes.

As put forward earlier, transculturalism is not perceived as a literary theory that correspond to certain theoretical parameters, but it finds its infrastructures in the vocabularies and critical outlooks in the discipline of Comparative Cultural Studies. Thereupon, reading the transcultural identities in a literary text is sourced from adjacent cultural and critical theories. However, the ground-rule for transcultural identities lies in its fluid fact; indeed, such an identity is constructed upon constant changes and fluidity, which attributes it a shapeless facet. Richard Rathwell points that transculturality has no standard structures, but stands outside set patterns of thinking, and trots towards fluidity of genres and character that require a co-creation with the reader (2). In fact, possessing no defined parameters, in terms of forms and themes, permits for a certain degree of reader-response that is more attentive to occurring cultural shifts, especially in the cultural context of globalization. Moreover, the transcultural identity is structured upon the theoretical background of post-modern and post-structuralist perceptions of cultural identities, which opens a gate to discuss novel transcultural identity shifts while being sensitive to the cultural context of the literary texts

under interpretation. Thereupon, it opens a discussion about modernity, postmodernity, transnationalism, neo-cosmopoly, and imagination.

The relation between transculturality and imagination becomes a central consideration due to the circulation of phenomenon provoking both direct and indirect encounters. The notion of imagination equates the reception of what Appadurai calls ‘scapes’, which leads into the construction of a transcultural identity. Indeed, individuals as cultural agents, who are shaped and reshaped by knowledge, received from the outer environment to contribute to their self-perception and identity construction. The transnational imagination exposed to knowledge from different cultural sources -namely the Oriental and Occidental- leads to the construction of a transcultural identity without Diasporic circumstances. In other words, the notion of transculturation, as adopted by Arianna Dagnino and others, appear under diasporic circumstances as individuals move from one cultural space to another; thus, exposed to various cultures leading to the building of a transcultural perception. However, the diasporic circumstances are not received as the only means for cross-cultural encounter with the other, but even the indirect cultural circumstances via imagination drives into the construction of transcultural selves. Thereupon, under such an argument, the transcultural identity shaped by cultural imagination is examined in the coming chapters.

2.7. Conclusion:

To conclude, the conceptual framework of the dissertation negotiates the concept of cultural identity and its location in different discourses: nationalism, modernity, imagination, cognition, and transculturation. The definition of cultural identity rests upon a poststructuralist perspective attributing it a posture of fluidity and change. Discussing cultural identity brings a talk about nationalism as an ideological movement received by postcolonial perspective as an attempt to craft a national identity to respond to a colonial/ imperial existence. However, the recent historical changes drive thinkers and scholars alike to reconsider nationalist homogeneity and pronounce a movement towards ‘modern’ novelties. Furthermore, the global realities characterizing the contemporary era summon a consideration of ‘imagination’ as a process of receiving and processing cultural images to foster a feeling of belonging to a particular community, and therefore, leads to an alteration of the cultural identity. For the purpose of reading the process of imagination and its effects on identity construction, the reading of culture stresses upon a cognitive approach permitting a meticulous analysis of cultural environments and their impacts on the perception and behavior of the literary

characters as cultural agents. The lastly discussed segment is transcultural reading, which promotes a reading in the cultural identities of the literary characters from a perspective of transculturation. The latter chiefly considers a status of moving beyond the cultural dichotomies and binary thinking promoted when discussing a status of cultural encounter, especially the encounter between the Oriental self and the Occidental other.

CHAPTER THREE

THE SELF AND THE OTHER: CULTURAL IMAGES AND THE REPRESENTATION OF THE 'ORIENTAL' WOMAN

Chapter Three: The Self and the Other: Cultural Images and the Representation of the ‘Oriental’ Woman

3.1. Introduction

The literary texts contextualized within globalization as a historical and literary fact, the notion of representation of the Orient and the Occident becomes a considered subject that quests for examination; more particularly, the literary representation of the Orient and the Occident in the contemporary texts belonging to Arabia and India, as the cultural ‘periphery’. For the purposes of representation, the present chapter rests its analysis upon Imagology as a literary approach that selects images of the cultural self and the other for representation purposes. Moreover, it is contended that both texts discuss images that distance from both ‘Orientalisms’ and Occidentalism. Thereupon, corresponding with auto-images, Rajaa Al-Sanea’s *Girls of Riyadh* stands an anti-nationalist contenance against the homogeneity of postcolonial nationalists through a vowed modernity exercised by the main characters; whereas *Miss New India* departs towards a postnationalist space meeting an image of a hyper-modern India. Henceforth, the analysis proposes a reading of the Oriental woman that corresponds with no Orientalist discourse nor the postcolonial conceptualization of nationalism. Furthermore, the images of the Occident depict an abundant presence of the cultural other that is represented as a space of embrace. Thus, the literary reception of the other debates the concept of Occidentalism defined in the parameters of either rejection or idealization of the western other. Scholars have occupied their readings with the representation of both Saudi Arabia and India in both novels, yet there is an apparent disregard for the visualization of the cultural other; henceforth, the study provides an outlook of the other that considers no ‘binary’ traits corresponding with the pronounced Planetarity. Moreover, the present chapter provides analytical materials for the following chapters that explore the construction of identities of the main characters in both novels. The images of an anti-nationalism, postnationalism, modernity, hypermodernity, and an embracive presence of the cultural other infrastructure an understanding of the identity construction of the main characters discussed in the forthcoming chapters.

3.2. An Arab Image Amidst Local and Global Flows

Girls of Riyadh narrates the stories of four young Saudi females: Gamrah, Michelle, Sadeem and Lamees in the form of e-mails sent to a chat group on Yahoo. The narrator, being one the

four girls, disentombs the intimate and most secretive details of the lives of the young women, who belong to Riyadh's upper class. The well-educated *Girls* lead a life of luxury, glamour, fashion and voyages around the world, as they seek love, relationships and successful careers amidst the Saudi socio-political limitations. The novel delivers the stories, misfortunes, feelings, and struggles of the young females in the Saudi society that casts limitations upon them despite of the limitless offerings of their upper-class status.

The novel can be considered as an anthropological statement (Ware 63) witnessing the Arab/Muslim female identity changes in the contemporary global era. The scholarly reviews have been occupied by the national stands of the novel and its position among world literature and the national literature. A concentration has also been casted upon the representation of the Saudi/Muslim culture and society, while the presence of the cultural other has received little attention. Therefore, the present chapter casts light, not on the presentation of the national/local image but, on the representation of the cultural other in *Girls of Riyadh*. The images displayed in the present chapter considers the global/ transnational flows of images from one space to another, as foregrounded in Arjun Appadurai's *Modernity at Large* (1996), that are present in the novel. Casting a light on the cultural other permits an Oriented attention towards the impacts of the cultural other in the construction of the self that is furtherly discussed in the fourth chapter. In addition, a glimpse on the representation of the other evokes the theme of Occidentalism and the representation of the other in the Arab literary texts, where *Girls of Riyadh* is argued to deliver the theme of Occidentalism through her protagonists' engagements with immigratory or touristic 'ethnic-flows'.

3.2.1. *Girls of Riyadh* Voicing the Cultural Periphery

Girls of Riyadh is an example of the dependence between literary creativity and the actual state of society (Michalak-Pikulska 105). The novel delivers a representation of the Arab/Muslim female in the Twenty-first century addressing a world audience in an attempt to shift the Oriental perspective circling the Muslim women's lives in the Arab communities and more specifically the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia. The Kingdom has been stereotypically received as "wealthy, barbaric, sex maniac and terrorists" (Algahtani 30). The writer hedges into the market of 'World Literature' and attempts to give an image of the Saudi woman to shift the Orientalist perspective attributed to her by the western scholars and Western-based Area Studies. Rajaa Al-Sanea articulates the preoccupation of her narrative to state her attempts for a counter-Orientalist perspective, she states

and to many other Saudis, that the Western world still perceives us either romantically, as the land of the Arabian Nights and the land where bearded sheikhs sit in their tents surrounded by their beautiful harem women, or politically, as the land that gave birth to Bin Laden and other terrorists, the land where women are dressed in black from head to toe and where every house has its own oil well in the backyard! (Al-Sanea, Epilogue)

The writer's aim, when addressing a world audience, is the modification of the stereotypical image that they have of the Saudi society and more specifically women: received as subordinated to men, oppressed by the veil, and receive no prospect outside the home sphere.

The writer attempts to deliver the image of the Saudi/Muslim woman within the parameters of modernity rather than a traditional image that the Orientalist discourse sponsors. Yet, such painted image by the writer is more suggestive of a self-Orientalist promotion rather than a stand against it, as argued by Nesreene Abdullah Al-Harby, in her Ph.D dissertation. She describes the work of Al-Sanea as Orientalist, where there is a tendency to self-Orientalize rather than being Orientalized by the other (182). The novel is received to highlight the issues and problems of women in Saudi Arabia and their status as being subjugated by their male counterpart. Such an idea is similarly developed in the Article released by Isam M. Shihada, which stressed on the representation of women's issues in Saudi Arabia. He examines the status of the Saudi woman amidst patriarchy, tribalism, hypocrisy, and violation of human rights (59). Such description certainly evokes Al-Harby's theme of self-Orientalization for representing the Muslim cultural space as oppressive and patriarchal. However, admitting such representation would overlook the writer's stress on representing a modern female character, who diverges from traditionalism. Such pronounced modernity and diversion from traditionalism equips the novel with an acute perception towards reality, where the writer is admitted to possess high consciousness about the limitations of her socio-cultural environment, yet, pronounces the shifts that are occurring at the covert level of the society unlike the overt side -pronouncing a 'pious' manner of conduct as a definer of the Saudi community.

Girls of Riyadh is argued to deliver a modern image of the Saudi woman to join the current of protest literature. Mirwan Kanie understands the novel as a protest novel for critiquing the social structures of the Saudi society: tribal system, social oppression, patriarchy, marriage issues, divorce, school system, and others (290). The aforementioned

limitations in the Saudi society are put in the framework of conservatism, where the writer delivers an image of a non-conservative society dwelling the covert spaces of the community. Dissimilar to previous literary texts on Saudi women elites pictured in Jean Sasson's *Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia* and Carmen Bin Ladin's *Inside the Kingdom: My Life in Saudi Arabia*, who offer a glimpse on the life of the Saudi women in the Saudi strict society, Raja Al-Sanea proposes a voice of ordinary women who struggle with issues and problems that are consistent with women in any country (Ware 9). The issues of love, marriage, careers and breakups are regarded as universal themes for women in any society, not merely related to the Saudi woman. Therefore, the writer claims that her protagonists are no different from other women in the world, as their concerns, likes and dislikes are as ordinary as any female from any culture around the globe. She forwards an image that goes against the current of Orientalism. Hence, it is argued that *Girls of Riyadh* delivers an image of anti-Orientalism related to women.

3.2.2. The National Character and Socio-cultural Images of Arabia

The cartography of cultural images depicted in the novel reflects the national character of Saudi Arabia, where the political decisions frame the socio-cultural traits of the community. In the present context, the concept of nationalism is related to state and political decision rather than being a feeling of belonging. Saudi Arabia is a religious-based country, which signifies that the decisions made are derived from religious sources aiming to render the nation as a pure reflection of Islam, since it holds a guardianship position of the two holiest sites: Mecca and Medina (Talha & 5). Henceforth, the national character of Arabia under the influence of religion-based political structuring is argued to be a space of limitations exerted upon both the female and the male characters. Raja Al-Sanea dispenses an image of Arabia that is both strict and limiting; however, her representation distributes a nationalist stand as a state measure for the creation of a national identity that is based on a religious fundamentalist reading. Hence, the writer distributes indirect anti-nationalist feelings in her text.

Islam M. Shahid emphasizes on the limitations exerted upon the characters in order to limit their behavior and individuality. The negative statements that the analysis holds put the novel as a 'Chick Crit' as Booth puts it. Isam M. Shahid, in his article "Breaking Silence in Rajaa AlSanea's *Girls of Riyadh*" (2013), concludes that women in the novel are "victims of male-dominance, strict traditions, tribal customs and misuse of religion in a very conservative society" (73); therefore, delivering an image of Arabia that oppresses women and direct them

towards doom and misfortunes. He taps topics of marriage, divorce, forbidden love, gender segregation, tribal segregation, and male domination to highlight the degree of limitations the *Girls* are subjected to. The author of the article puts the misfortunes of the protagonists under a feminist perspective, where the writer of *Girls* is assumed to be ignited by feminist stands to highlight the issues of women in Arabia, and to stand against such unfair structures through ‘breaking silence’ and critically write about the silenced.

3.2.2.1. An Oriental Feminine Image

Raja Al-Sanea distributes anti-nationalist feelings through exposing the limitations and the misfortunes of her protagonists in their social environment. Although the novel involves no political references, yet the results of state decisions and policies in Arabia impact the socio-cultural behavior of the characters as social agents. Al-Sanea marks her disagreement with the postcolonial nationalist attempts through exhibiting the main characters’ limitations considering social behavior, marriage, dress code, and education. Al-Sanea equates traditionalism and conformity to national hegemony. A traditional behavior holds conviction in the community standards, where *Girls of Riyadh* presents multiple female characters who adhere to these ‘religious’ community norms. A woman is to hold certain social roles and adhere to certain behavior and social status dictated by nationalist leaders under the banner of religion. It is argued that the traditional behavior exhibited by the characters is a result of hegemonic practices by the Wahhabi regime as the nationalist leaders of the community. *Girls of Riyadh* contributes to a radical critique of religious institutions in Saudi Arabia; therefore, the Wahhabi fundamentalist interpretations of Islam. Anti-nationalist perceptions and anti-political stands are made invisible in the novel which directed Wenche Ommundsen to consider that the girls are passive individuals who make no revolutionary actions against the status quo (Kanie 291-292). Yet, the writer delivers certain images of the Saudi leaders who perform hegemonic attempts through various institutions with a certain degree of revolt against these attempts.

Echoing the socio-cultural hegemonies of the nationalist leaders women are described a certain social role that they adhere to. These roles and rules contributed into the creation of limitations for women’s behavior and identity. The notion of femininity is understood to be the attributes that a woman adheres to be distinguished from men and to be able to fulfill a certain role in society (Yamani 231). The protagonists appear to be consistent with the circulating beliefs as they exhibit a willingness to perform the duties of a traditional wife,

their attempts to please their male counterparts along with families. The image of a traditional Arabian female is visualized through Gamrah, who strictly adheres to the national and social conformities. Her main interests are to guard the collective reputation of her family and husband; since her early youth, supervised by her mother, she develops a degree of interests in social issues and topics rather than seeking a career prospect: “she decided to withdraw [from university] in order to devote herself full-time to planning the wedding” (Al-Sanea 12). To meet her marital aims, she secedes from an educational future and a handsome career to devote herself to her husband. Therefore, decides to leave what can be regarded as her properties -her family, friends, education and career- to follow the properties of a male with her complete consent. She additionally attempts to uphold her marriage despite of its obvious failure through consulting a traditional source, her mother. The main aim for Gamrah; therefore, is the performance of her ‘collectivist’ duties towards others to correspond with the traditions’ dictated femininity.

Social norms and gender segregation permit women and men to meet only under the institution of marriage, where both devote their lives to the wellness of the other. Such institution defines rules and roles to be achieved by both sides to ensure a healthy marital foundation. Despite of Gamrah and Rashid’s differences and unsuccessful relationship, they performed their duties towards each other without complaints. Even the notion of love is received as a duty rather than a personal preference: “Gamrah did not know if she had come to love Rashid because he was worthy of being loved, or if she simply felt it was her duty as his wife to love him” (Al-Sanea 59). Therefore, it is the duty of women to love and cherish her husband. *Girls of Riyadh* criticizes the institution of marriage that is built upon consumed conservative ideals to announce its failure. Al-Harby (2018) announces that the divorce resulting from the arranged marriages, Gamrah and Sadeem fall into, witnesses the down fall of traditional marriages and therefore, the downfall of strict conservatism of the community (161). In her PhD thesis, Al-Harby sees that the arranged marriages are considered as a prison for women who cannot perform free actions, consume their energy into pleasing their husbands, while they appear to be unknowledgeable about how to make them satisfied (161). Yet, the notion of compulsion is non-existent, since they appear to agree with such arranged marriages and they exhibit positiveness towards traditional marriages.

Both Gamrah and Sadeem are represented with a will to be engaged in an arranged marriage and a tendency to please their male counterparts. Unlike other Arab and Saudi

female writers who give an image of an oppressed woman by the socio-cultural standards, Al-Sanea gives her characters the will to be at the disposal of a male without compulsion. Both Sadeem and Gamrah are willing to change themselves and their behavior according to the desires of their males. Gamrah drops her veil, learns to drive, and learns computers in order to satisfy the personal preferences of Rashid, while Sadeem forgets about social standards and decides to be sexually engaged with Waleed before the wedding for the mere reason of pleasing him. Hence, in accordance with the social and cultural norms of the Arabian community, both women's minds are wired to perform their roles in society without compulsion, which suggests a nationalist hegemony of women to perform certain socio-cultural roles.

Moreover, nationalist hegemonic statements are articulated in the dress code; the veil as an obligatory garment for women is reinforced by state rules. Al-Sanea is argued to give the veil a cultural extension rather than a religious one. Henceforth, she associates the compulsory-wearing of the veil as a hegemonic practice by fundamentalist religious leaders. In addition, Franz Fanon believes that “the veil worn by the women appears with such constancy that it generally suffices to characterize Arab society” (43) and therefore, an expression of identity. By the same token, in her chapter *Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East*, Azzam stresses that the Arab veil is associated to the politics of identity:

Most women who wear the *hijab* believe they are fulfilling a religious duty while some, mainly university students, believe it is partly a statement that they are not westernized. Being westernized in this context reflects sexual promiscuity and decadence, *fasad*, which is perceived as being partly symbolized by western fashions that constantly try to reveal a different part of a woman's body. (Yamani 225)

The four girls maintain connection to their Arab/Muslim culture through their veils and “She has to create for herself an attitude of unveiled-woman-outside” (Fanon 52).

Further national hegemonies are articulated through the educational atmosphere as a means to rally individuals to promote the national identity. Talha sees that the Saudi national identity is achieved through “a national system of education (for boys) with a national curriculum and a public dress code” (5), which spread the notion of identity and belonging. On this matter, Benedict Anderson in his *Imagined Communities* understands that the notion of nationalism and belonging is achieved through education (page). Hence, the facet of the

educational system is argued to enhance the national identity of the Saudi nation and rally individuals into accepting the Saudi Muslim identity. *Girls of Riyadh* argues that the educational setting echoes the national hegemonic practices that the leaders' approach to rally people into accepting the Muslim identity of the Saudi nation. Indeed, the educational setting in the novel is an extension to the nationalist ideology through its strict rules dictating the smallest behavior of students.

Al-Sanea represents the secondary educational arena as a strict space where the protagonists have no permission to possess items that do not appeal to educational purposes set by the state. The narrator uses flashback technique to demonstrate the educational setting that is characterized by extreme strict rules regarding non-educational items by the state standards. The flashbacks narrate the girls' exchange of movie tapes on the school grounds:

The girls heard about the administration's intention to search all of the classrooms and everyone's schoolbags that day, looking for prohibited items. The list of contraband items was long and included photo albums, diaries, perfume bottles, romantic novels, music cassettes and videotapes. (AlSanea, 2005: 43)

The mentioned items seem to appeal to the emotional side of individuals and therefore, they are ought to be strictly banned. According to May Yamani, Schools in Arabia emphasize on religious values as part of their curricula (220). Henceforth, a strict fundamentalist religious perception, which aims at evacuating emotional triggers, characterizes the educational setting for the aim of producing individuals who are conforming to the nationalist religious identity prescribed by the nationalist leaders. Similar rules are announced at the University background, where the writer emphasizes on exhibiting the limitations experiences at the 'cosmopolitan' space. Lamees is directed to the police station where she received harsh treatment for meeting with a male colleague at a coffee shop for educational purposes.

Therefore, the movie tapes along with Lamees' arrest are considered scandalous and shameful behaviors that are ought to be inhibited. These behavioral restrictions are inscribed in a culture of shame, fear, and guilt that are received as emotional hegemonies aiming for social control. Ruth Benedict, in her book *The Chrysanthemum and the Sword* speaks about the psychological dimensions: fear, guilt and shame cultures. The notion of guilt has a psychological understanding, where she sees that the American puritan society tends to spread the emotion of guilt in the mind of individuals to prevent any erroneous actions. Similarly, the

feeling of shame is socially employed to appeal to the emotional side of individuals in order to prevent them from religiously erroneous behaviors. In addition, it stresses on feelings of fear of disapproval, disgrace and humiliation when ethics and morals are violated. In *Shame, Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopatology, and Culture*, Cohen, Vandello and Rantilla state that ‘Muslim’ societies tend to focus on the emotions of individuals to promote a culture of order and stability, where the collective interests have the highest the consideration. The Saudi culture with its restrictive perceptions opens the discussion about the aforementioned cultures.

Consequently, Al-Sanea represents an image of Arabia that corresponds with an anti-nationalist perspective as she vows the socio-cultural restrictions and limitations that the protagonists are exposed to are in fact the result of hegemonic endeavors practiced by the Wahhabi nationalist leaders, who employ a fundamentalist reading of the religious scriptures to create a national identity for the Saudi community. Although the writer is distant from direct political implications, the results of the practiced hegemonies are vowed in the narration.

3.2.2.2. Modern Arabian Girls

Modern behavior means adopting actions and beliefs that are alien to the traditional local ones. Modernity means a constant change in behavior and actions and that they are not consistent with a particular cultural group. In *The Theory of Modernizing the non-Western World*, Wolfgang Zapf finds that two major factors have been hindering the process of westernizing the Arab world: first is the communist heritage some Arab countries inherited from the Soviet Union, and second is the gradual growing of the fundamentalist reaction to Western colonization (Altwaiji 3). Indeed, the notion of modernity is unwelcomed in Arabia for viewing it with occidental traits; consequently, rejecting any traits of ‘modern’ progressive behavior. In fact, the reception of *Girls of Riyadh* by the Saudi audience is characterized by rejection as Mariam Abdullah notices: “caused a ruckus in Saudi Arabia, the novel was banned outright by Saudi courts because it ‘incited vices’ and subverted the foundations of Saudi literary traditions” (Cited in Shahid 60).

Algahtani Noora understands that Raja Al-Sanea belongs to a new generation of Saudi writers who depict their protagonists as educated, intellectual, individualistic and liberated females (Algahtani 29). Indeed, the girls stress on their individuality and attempt to achieve certain objectives both in the public and personal spheres. Similarly, Barbara

Michalak-Pikulska (2013) sees that the protagonists stand up to conservatism and the social regulations that interfere in the personal details of individuals such as views on love, personal relationships and social intercourse (105). She continues to analyze the novel by stating that the writer highlights that the Saudi society is being reshaped towards change that leads to a better existence. She stresses that there is a ‘spark within the nation’ which would bring change to Saudi Arabia where it would be characterized by progressivism (108) instead of being tied by a stagnated vision of traditionalism. Furthermore, Ishaqi Tijani (2019) notices that *Girls of Riyadh* reflects the new generation of postmodern Gulf Woman who stress on their independence rather than submitting to patriarchy and social oppression (4). Indeed, Raja Al-Sanea represents the Saudi female as modern women who appeal to other women in the globe despite of their cultural or national backgrounds. Indeed, *Girls of Riyadh* defy the Orientalist exotic and bizarre perspective that the other has of women in Saudi Arabia. Hence, through representing the Saudi woman with modernized behavior, she contributes into the construction of non-Orientalized perspective of the community.

The narrator of *Girls of Riyadh* injects her narrative emails with exuberant stories of her female friend’s experiences which are regarded as non-conformist and blasphemous from a religious fundamentalist perspective. Indeed, the narrator reports the deeds of her *shillah* and paint an image of non-conformity to socio-cultural behavior attributed to the Arabian female. As an instance, Gamrah’s wedding has been a sight for a non-pious wild celebration as “music blared and the girls danced and smoked and played cards” (Al-Sanea 20). In addition, the girls gathered and smoked *shisha* where they have added their own flavor to it “each girl chose her favorite flavor of the water-pipe tobacco mixed with molasses and fragrant essences” (20). The atmosphere of a similar party among girls is contrasted to a typical ‘feminine’ Saudi. Furthermore, the protagonists are involved in a series of behavior that equated non-conformism like the girls’ hidden relationships with males, attitudes at the public spaces, rendez-vous with males, sexual relationships outside marriage, driving cars without permission, and unclot their veils once in a western land ...etc. Telling these stories to a cyber-audience has led to negative feedback from the conservative readers, who obviously shared their discontent with the painted images.

Men have written to me saying: who authorized you to speak for the girls of Najd?! You are nothing but a malevolent and rancorous woman deliberately attempting to sully the image of women in Saudi society. (AlSanea 32)

For these conservative minds, the narrator is representing stories that do not reflect the real image of the Saudi woman, who is characterized by piety and conservatism. They have intercepted her statements as unlawful and ‘unreligious’.

A Woman with Economic Independence

Furthermore, the novel is historically located in an air of international and intra-national economic exchanges. Numerous businesses and entrepreneurs have risen in Arabia since the last decade of the twentieth century, which celebrates a social atmosphere of businessmen and entrepreneurs. Most of the families of the presented characters are business owners who made a living out of entrepreneurship and business deals, which gave them access to upper-class living conditions. Such a social status gave the protagonists an access to luxury living that encompasses global trends and global brands which offers a degree of freedom. Lamis Alshejri understands that Arab women are divided into common and elite. Unlike the common, the upper-class elites have more access to freedom and liberal behavior which equates the western model of consumption (215). Therefore, being part of the Saudi social elite, the girls’ social status has granted them a degree of freedom and access to luxuries and other inaccessible things for the common individuals. Their upper-class status is not merely correspondent to a higher social rank within the parameters of the Saudi community, but extends it to international status reflecting their international businesses. Such international business pacts reflected the status of the girls as they received international experiences away from the Saudi Arab community. The novel introduces the girls in cosmopolitan cities: Chicago, San Francisco, London, Riyadh and Dubai which represent expensive clothing, ethnic diversity, industries and high-paced lifestyle (Al-Harby 172).

Reflecting these economic Orientations, *Girls of Riyadh* are represented as women who are willing to opt for careers as they started their own businesses declaring their financial independence. They belong to the new generation of modernized individuals who seek their economic and financial wealth through building their own businesses or being part of modern industries. Indeed, echoing their received education, the four protagonists end with creating their own businesses and mark an economic independence rather than being an economic subordinate to a male in the family. Sadeem works at a bank in London and Riyadh which makes her work an international one; whereas Lamees is a medical doctor who wishes to make a print in life. Gamrah is visualized as a tradition-Oriented woman, who evacuates public sphere achievements and stresses on maintaining the image of the pious woman at the

early parts of the novel, yet her condition as a divorcee led her to start her own business and achieve financial independence. Thus, the writer holds a statement that the traditional beliefs in the contemporary global world are invalid to promote happiness and satisfaction for women (Al-Harby 152). Similarly, Michelle's occupation aligns with non-traditionalism as she meets the requirements of the modern-global world. The Tele-communication enterprises receives little attention for the Saudi business world especially for females, yet, Michelle finds a delightful attunement in her job as it gives her an expression of her own self and identity. Therefore, the hyper-modern world and its call for economic rise through businesses integrate the protagonists, where they find more freedom and individuality in.

A Pronounced Individuality

An anti-Orientalist image is additionally visualized through adopting an individualized self rather marching the steps of collectivism characterizing the Saudi Oriental community. Mirwan Kanie calls *Girls of Riyadh* a Bawh novel for revealing the hidden lives of the Saudi women, who occupy the private sphere away from any public facet (290). Revealing what is hidden is in fact a declaration of the individualities of these women and their diverse lives, thoughts, personalities and Orientations. A Saudi woman is viewed as a traditional individual who has no voice, no Orientations besides the community's standards. The novel, in reverse, represents the inner space of the Saudi woman that is distant from traditionalist traits, echoing the new generation of Arab Saudi women who seem to attune with the new accommodated realities. The writer represents her protagonists as highly individualized as they have specific desires, wishes, personalities and manners of dealing with problems. Each one of them has her own conceptualization of happiness, love, marriage, career, and men (290). Therefore, the writer presents diverse characters and personalities to highlight female diversity, contradicting with the image of a traditional Saudi female visualized by the previous discourses.

The novel is received to be similar to the American sitcom series "Sex and the City". New York Times and Los Angeles Times equate the novel to the sitcom in the sense that both artistic productions have four female protagonists, who thrive their way in cosmopolitan cities to highlight their individuality and identity through different means. Moreover, they share the thematic concern of love and relationships as they stress on relationships with the opposite sex to find their individuality and sense of empowerment (Book cover). On this account Altwaiji (2010) aligns *Girls of Riyadh* as a feminist novel for its concerns with the female as an oppressed subject, yet he seems to neglect the notion of empowerment attributed to the

girls as they assert themselves and their identities amongst a conservative society that demands conformity and submission to social rules. Therefore, Altwaiji's observation signifies that Al-Sanea directs her characters' actions towards individuality and the pursuit of self-fulfillment as a person rather than filling a subordinate position granted by social rules.

Dress Code: Alternative Standards

Further visualization of a modernized Saudi female is through depicting the protagonists' dress codes. The novel represents women with a variety of manners of clothing that drive distant from the traditional discourse of the female attire. Modest dress equates being covered from head to toe to distribute vanity and chastity to others and especially to men. *Girls of Riyadh* portrays the new generation of Saudi females who are deaf to these traditionalist discourses to attune with a more progressive version of dress code. The Abaya is the compulsory dress code for the Saudi women in the public sphere; however, the protagonists convert the code -its main aim is the concealment the female body- to fit their fashion pursuits. Their dress is an exhibition of wealth, style and body shapes for the sake of fulfilling a certain social profile, which aims to not at attracting males' attention, but to provoke jealousy of other females who exhibit the same fashionable tendencies.

The rest of them were wearing embroidered *abayas*. But these *abayas* weren't the loose teepees that you see women wearing on the street. These were fitted at the waist and hips and they were attractive! With the *abaya*, the girls wore black silk *lithaams* that covered everything from the bridge of their noses to the bottom of their throats, which of course only emphasized the beauty of their kohl-lined eyes, their tinted contact lenses and their outlandish eye-glasses all the more. (Al Sanea 17)

Hence, beauty concealers like the Abaya and Lithaams are modulated to fit an attractive allure in order to be suited to an image of a modish elegant female. Hence, Al-Sanea visualizes her female characters with modern beauty standards that not reflective of the traditional norms and therefore, presents an image that the Saudi woman mirrors the picture of other females from other space. She evacuates the Orientalist notion of othering the Saudi female through stressing on their attachment to a dress code that is reflective of the contemporary modernities. To put it into further perspective, careful attention to their physical appearance, the four protagonists allot considerable attention to their garments and body shapes:

Gamrah's smile grew broader as she listened to her friends' praise and noted the envy half hidden in their eyes... Lamees was proud to show off her distinctive height and her gym-toned body ... Sadeem was always longing to have her curves liposuctioned so that she could be as slim as Lamees and Michelle" (AlSanea 9).

The lines demonstrate that the girls are careful about their curves and fitness, where their notion of beauty is not an adjective of the traditional Saudi beauty standards. Therefore, the novel introduces new conceptualizations to the Saudi culture than has been previously alien, which attunes with the progressive vision of cultures as supported by Stuart Hall. In addition, Mirwan Kanie sees that *Girls of Riyadh* is a testimony to the cultural changes of the Arab/Saudi communities, where women are an active cultural actor (Kanie 290).

Unlike other Saudi writers, who appear to be vexed by the imposition of the veil in their literary works, Al-Sanea is argued to represent the veil as a cultural element rather than a symbol of religious piety. Her counterpart writer Rajaa Alem appears to be alarmed by the veil in her *the Dove's Necklace* as the main theme of her narrative is the female body and the imposition of the veil. The writer questions the validity of the latter in an aggressive tone towards the compulsion of the former. On the other hand, Al-Sanea distributes the theme of the culturality of the veil without aggressive images or tone as she clothes her main characters with the veil in the public space; whereas the private and non-Saudi spaces attest a removal of the former without confrontations or struggles from an opposing front. She gives her characters the freedom to lose their veils whenever they see fit without being alarmed by a religious guilt. Indeed, Sadeem loses her hijab once arriving to London; Gamrah does the same in the United States; whereas Michelle is reluctant to wear it outside the Saudi streets. They appear to be relaxed when tarnishing the veil outside the parameters of Arabia, where revolutionary actions or statements against it or for it is missing throughout the novel. Thus, stresses on the culturality of the veil that meets the non-fundamentalist modern readings of the religious scriptures, discussed at length in the fifth chapter.

Modernity and the Arab Male: Gender Equality?

The assertion of the female identity is additionally articulated through love and relationships with men. The novel announces its primordial theme, which is love announcing its importance in the life of the four protagonists, and their struggles to achieve their aspiration. The theme of love and relationships brings a wonder about the nature of these relationships with men in

contemporary Arabia. It is argued that the novel represents the Saudi man as equal to women in terms of social empowerment. The novel presents an array of males from different backgrounds and personalities, which additionally highlights the diversity of character. These men hold considerable social positions along with their families, yet they are conscribed to meet the social rules and roles attributed to them by society. The postcolonial nationalist discourse emphasizes on patriarchy based of the ‘politics of difference’ between men and women to create gender binary (Anwar 16); the Wahhabi cultural-religious discourse emphasizes on gender hierarchies to be reinforced by governmental decisions and institutions. Samira Aghacy calls such reinforcement a ‘traditional brand of hegemonic masculinity’ (20), where there is an apparent stress on patriarchy based on the supremacy of the male in relation to the female. Indeed, Al-Sanea highlights, through her male characters, that similar to women, men have a social role where their masculinity is defined through their capacity to provide, supervise, and to hold family honor and reputation.

Moreover, Rashid, Gamrah’s husband, performs his masculine duties without truly caring about his wife which is an extension to the dictates of the Arab society: “...but aren’t men from Najd like that?” (Al-Sanea 87). Rashid is described to be severe, remote, and blows up at her for trivial reasons, yet his actions are perceived by Gamrah and her mother as archetypal of the Saudi males who demonstrate their masculinity through rough behavior and tough personality. Moreover, Gamrah’s mother -symbol of traditionalism- displays gratification about men’s rough behavior “...the heightened enjoyment and sense of pride of a young man whose father offers him a cigarette to smoke in front of him for the first time” (AlSanea 14). The act of smoking is not regarded as healthy and good behavior in society, yet it is appreciated for displaying toughness related to sings of masculinity and responsibility.

In contrast, Nuri, Um Nawayyir’s son, alarms his parents and other society members through his ‘feminine’ behavior, that included “creating a persona of a sweet, soft, pretty boy rather than the tough masculine young man he was supposed to turn into” (Al Sanea 24). His father discovered his and used violent and aggressive ‘kicks’ that left him with fractured rib and broken arm and nose. This aggressiveness from a father on a son demonstrates the social carefulness that society gives to masculinity traits (reference). Nuri’s actions are a disgrace to the Saudi society and thereby it should be halted since he is regarded as a “faggot boy who was such a freak of nature” (25). Hence, the novel highlights that males are equal to women in

terms of social limitations. Both genders are ought to fit into a certain prescribed image, where divergence is ultimately aggressed.

Rajaa Al-Sanea presents the male characters as different from her female counterpart writers. Altawaiji (2010) attributes feminism to the novel which gives the male characters an oppressive role, where they use their traditionally and culturally attributed role to limit and control women, and thus, being the primary hinder for female progress and freedom. Tijani notices that Al-Sanea blames men for their misfortunes in love and romance (4); however, *Girls of Riyadh* views men differently. They are visualized as modern, cultivated and socially-powerful males who produce progressive behavior when it comes to the question of women. Nizar, Lamees's fiancé is presented as a progressive person who knows the modern language of love and its seductive hooks which appeals to his wife's feminine ego:

Nizar would randomly bring home a bunch of red roses for Lamees for no special occasion. He posted little love letters on the fridge door before going off to his on-call shifts at the hospital. When he was about to take his rest break there, he always called her before going to bed. He waits impatiently for her to be finished so that they could spend the rest of their day together, like newlyweds still on their honeymoon. (Al-Sanea 275)

Similarly, Both Faisal and Firas are represented as modern individuals who possess progressive thinking and progressive actions. Faisal appears to perfectly attune with Michelle's progressive thoughts and criticism of the Saudi society and traditions. Her occidental and progressive ideas appear to trigger him as he believes in love and non-conformism. Firas similarly possess liberal and progressive behavior, which made him an eloquent speaker with great amount of knowledge and embrace of the other. He fell in love with Sadeem and remained in a relationship with her despite of her divorcee status, received as unacceptable in society. Firas interacted with the character of Sadeem and loved her without considering her social image and her non-conformist behavior inside and outside the parameters of Saudi Arabia.

However, their modernity of character is intercepted by social norms and an imposed masculinity to deny them the right of choice and individuality. Men in *Girls of Riyadh* are represented as individuals, who are deprived of the former masculine qualities, and thereby, plunge into a character of weakness and indecisiveness due to social pressures and assumed

social honor and reputation. Both Firas and Faisal were in love, however, unable to marry the woman of their choice due to social restrictions. Firas was denied to marry Sadeem due to her social status as a divorced woman, in addition to his attempt to keep his honor and reputation in his Saudi society. Equally, Faisal could not marry Michelle due to his family's disapproval and ended up marrying a woman imposed on him by his family. This demonstrates the strength of social rules and restrictions over individual wishes, be them females or males. Consequently, Raja Al-Sanea represents modernized characters who evacuate the hegemonic nationalist traits to adopt a cultural version that contributes to the construction of a non-Orientalist perspective.

3.2.3. Images of the Occidental Other

Rajaa Al-Sanea transfers images of the Occident in her narratives. In response to global flows of people, news, and ideas from one space to another, the novel attest for the presence of the west in the lives of the protagonists, who they travel from one western city to another for the purpose of tourism, education, and work. Henceforth, *Girls of Riyadh* represents the western cultural other to echo the concept of Occidentalism. The term might suggest a paralleled definition to the concept of Orientalism; however, it echoes Al-Enany's definition, which suggests that Occidentalism means the representation of the other without a feeling of antagonism that assists Orientalism. The representation of the west in contemporary Arab literature is present in the works of Diasporic writers, who echo the concerns of the Arab individual vis-a-vis the cultural other. In addition, the occident appears to be almost non-existent in the Arab literature that do not discuss postcolonial or Diasporic themes, yet due to the global scapes, the Occident appears in the literary discussion of *Girls of Riaydh* as an Arab novel representing the Contemporary Arab/Saudi female. It is argued that Al-Sanea represents the Occident in her novel stressing on cultural acceptance of the other.

3.2.3.1. Matti: A Cultural Guide to American Ideals

Girls of Riyadh introduces Matti's character as a representation of the Western American ideals, beliefs and cultural perceptions. The American ideals and culture favor individuality that is ought to be expressed in diverse manners without restrictions and boundaries. Stressing on individuality, it is traced to the history of the construction of the new American nation and its stress on liberty and individuality that has been observed in the American declaration of independence. In fact, individuality is embedded in the notion of freedom: giving individuals

the space for diversity, expression of inner thoughts, and the freedom of action. In the American declaration of independence, it is stressed upon that every individual has the right for freedom and the pursuit of happiness (*The Constitution of the United States* 45). Such Orientations are sourced from the western enlightenment age philosophies that stressed on giving people their natural rights, which are inscribed in the expression of one's self without limitations. Within this understanding, the character of Matti represents the American ideals to eventually contribute to Michelle's self-perception and identity.

Matti's actions, personality traits and behavior carry abundant markers of Americanness. The novel explains that "Matti had the power to make Michelle's life one long, totally cool adventure" (181). He appears to possess great willingness to break the daily routines through novel adventures and experiences that seem to appeal to a personality side characterized by freedom, pursuit of happiness and life delights. He introduces new experiences to Michelle through going to different new places and enjoying leisure moments, which again aligns with the notion of the pursuit of happiness that Matti embodies in his life. Furthermore, Matti highlights that the respect of the other's beliefs and perceptions is a notion that cannot be crossed when dealing with other people:

He always explained, though, that these disagreements didn't amount too much, just minor differences of opinion. It wasn't worth the effort to change each other's view just to march in lockstep in everything. (Al Sanea 184)

This image demonstrates that he extends the notion of diversity to practical settings, where he emphasizes that respecting others' opinions is an extension to the belief that individuals are different and diversity is ought to be considered. Matti's beliefs accredit the notion of personal opinion as an extension to one's individualism and freedom of belief and conduct. "What Michelle liked about Matti was that he always showed respect for her opinions, however different they were from his views" (184).

Matti is represented as a path to freedom and self-recovery for Michelle. Being in Saudi Arabia for most of her life drove her to assimilate to the Saudi socio-cultural life, while her American self has been contested. Indeed, Matti's presence triggered a return to her American ideals to find her cultural identity leading her to craft a life path that fulfilled her desires as an independent individual seeking 'happiness'. Therefore, Matti, not only embodied

the American cultural ideals but, is a guide to new living and to luxurious modernities that aimed for self-fulfillment and satisfaction.

Being a guide to western living calls for Al Enany's concept of Occidentalism, where he notices that the female/male Arab protagonist falls in love with an occidental individual, which symbolizes an embrace of the cultural other. In addition, he notes that Arab women's writings about the occident, notably about America, display an interest in cultural issues blended with gender questions. The latter seem to highlight the concern of women's social status, liberation, and male-female relations (Al Enany 185). Accordingly, the embrace of the cultural other is traced in the behavior of Michelle when in San Francisco. The time spent with Matti revives her forgotten American identity, and dislocates the sense of loss she felt as a result of being in-between cultures -Saudi and American. The narrator in the novel magnifies the comparison between the two cultures through Matti's behavior and utterances that appear to be different. Indeed, whenever he utters an idea or behaves, he is compared to the Saudi men and women with a lens of inferiority. Michelle appears to suffer from the limitations imposed by the Saudi society, which drives her to embrace the ideals of freedom and independence that the American culture offers unlike the restrictions prescribed by the Saudi community.

The notion of embracing the cultural other is additionally symbolized by the feeling of love that Michelle grows for Matti. In Al-Enany's *Occidentalism* (2001), the Arab protagonist appears to fall in love with a symbol of the western culture, which sees relevance in *Girls of Riyadh*. Michelle vows to have developed feelings of the American Matti for his character and beliefs. Indeed, falling in love with the cultural other symbolizes the embrace and the acceptance of the cultural other. Yet, it is contended that Michelle's admiration of the western culture is not inscribed as new cultural encounter, but a revival of her forgotten self. Her American origins -the side of her mother- are distributed through different situations when in Saudi Arabia, yet being exposed to the Saudi culture for many years created a sense of loss and confusion for her. The latter is dismissed when leaving for San Francisco to craft her cultural self and revive her hybrid identity to become a steadier person in terms of cultural selection.

3.2.3.2. The Occident: A Space of Refuge, Freedom and Individuality

In his *Arab Representation of the Occident*, Rasheed Al-Enany notices that the concept of the ‘Occident’, in the works of Arab women writers, is associated to freedom and emancipation from the socio-cultural limitations imposed by the Arab culture (Al-Enany 185). Hanan Al-Shikh considers that the Arab self is inferior to the west, since the latter attributes a great degree of freedom to women in opposition to the Arab one (194). From the perspective of Franz Fanon, the postcolonial subjects tend to possess an ‘inferiority complex’ towards their respective cultures due to the loss of their local cultural originality after colonization (194). Therefore, many works are regarded as self-Orientalist representation of the Arab culture. Similar to the Arab women writers, Raja Al-Sanea represents the west as a space of refuge and freedom from the limitations imposed by the Arabian society. As previously argued, the writer distances from self-Orientalist perspective through attributing such limitation to nationalist leaders. The writer delivers her representation through a direct encounter with the western other through the characters of Michelle and Sadeem.

Michelle moves to San Francisco in order to pursue her higher studies after her disillusionment with the socio-cultural environment of Arabia that prevented her from marrying Faisal. During her stay in America, the description of her experiences and actions are accompanied with a comparison between the east and the west to highlight the amount of freedom and liberty in contrast to the restrictions received in Saudi Arabia. Upon her arrival to America, she describes a felt freedom and independence:

She breathed in air saturated with moisture and freedom. People in all shapes and colors, from everywhere in the world, were flowing around her in every direction. No one paid any attention to her Arabness, or to the fact that the person standing next to her was African. Everyone was minding his own business. (Al-Sanea 150)

The early steps Michelle makes in America, she notices a great difference between the constant circulating gazes in Arabia’s streets and America’s cosmopolitan streets, which triggered a feeling of freedom and liberty in her; she is not surveyed or noticed by any person unlike in the collectivist Arabia. Ghada Al-Samman’s *The Square Moon* (1998) recounts her experiences in exile, where there is a heightened juxtaposition of two sets of values: the western values against Arab ones. The Arab culture is characterized by an intense collectivism that contrasted with the individuality marking the western values (Al-Enany 191). On similar veins, Al-Sanea stresses on the notion of western individuality, where she appears to find balance in individualist and independent experiences. Indeed, Michelle opts

for independent living standards rather than depending on her family's support like in Arabia: "I'm really dying to try it out, living with some independence" (Al-Sanea 151).

Furthermore, the ideals of freedom, independence and the pursuit of happiness appear to craft Michelle's Orientations when she moves to Dubai to work at her dream job. She expresses her individuality and freedom through crafting a career in Telecommunication. In addition, she appears to adopt the American ideals of hard work and devotion in order to reach her objectives, which are consistent with an individualized version of the self. Michelle is argued to refuge in an individualized version of herself rather than receiving further failures from a society that rejects her for her hybrid impure origins. Her American experience has delivered her an ambitious perception that aligns with the notion of the American dream; the protagonist is represented with a tendency to achieve great: "She dreamed of one day seeing her portrait on the cover of a magazine standing next to Brad Pitt or Johnny Depp" (Al-Sanea 248). In fact, such ambition has led to distance from her girlfriends since they no longer share the same life perceptions and ambition; her friends' collectivist thoughts do not appeal to her celebrated individuality, which highlights the difference between the Occident and the Orient. Her dreams are more ambitious compared to the other girls, who would settle with a happy married life with a lover. The other 'Oriental' girls possessed no will to celebrate western concepts of freedom, independence, self-reliance, self-dependence and individualism.

The representation of the occidental city as a space of refuge is additionally delivered through the Sadeem's temporary relocation to London. Similar to Michelle, she escapes the misfortunes she receives from Arabian limitations; her divorce from Waleed on basis of traditional socio-cultural beliefs provokes a state of psychological depression and social disappointment. In other words, the western city provides a mental escape from the psychological malaise provoked by the Waleed as a symbol of the traditional Arabian culture. Like Michelle, she compares the western space to the Saudi one to articulate the restrictive characteristics of the latter. Indeed, Sadeem remain cautious not to "meet a young Saudi man who would try to chat her up" (71), and remind her of the Saudi culture and perceptions while in her escape-time. The protagonist spends her time in London working in a Bank, while interacting with people from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds:

Sadeem felt free to act as if she were one of them, joking with this one and laughing with that one, and putting no constraints on herself as she normally did when she was with a group of Arabs (Al-Sanea 117).

The protagonist displays emotional ease when in the western space due to the liberties she is associated with. Moreover, the freedom and individuality that she experiences in London permitted her to perform a piano piece in front of a mixed-gender and mixed-race audience, where there are no restrictions or surveillance of others; whereas in Arabia, she was unable to show her acoustic talents in front of an audience.

Furthermore, Sadeem tosses the Saudi social codes to adopt a behavior that attunes well with her individuality; this is illustrated through her dismissal of the ‘restrictive’ Saudi dress code to wear tight jeans and a T-shirt, once arriving to London. In fact, unclothing herself from the Saudi dress code demonstrates her dismissal of Saudi social restriction exemplified in the Abaya and Hijab. In fact, such a deed is understood by Altawaiji as an act of embrace of the western culture and a total dismissal of the Arab self (69); however, it is argued that her action demonstrates an embrace of a modernity that is free from all traditionalist perspectives and national dictations, and to promote freedom and the liberty of action. According to Sadeem, the west is a space where “you can loosen up, you can breathe without worrying who’s watching you” (Al-Sanea 200). The west, therefore, is argued to be a space to exercise freedom and individuality rather than assimilating to its cultural parameters.

Considering the last-mentioned argument, Al-Enany (2015) notes that Arab writers, through their protagonists, attempt to deliver the superiority of the west, where the Orient adopts the western cultural and civic values in an attempt to erase the attributed ‘Orientalized’ image (194). By the same token, Al-tawaiji associates the embrace of the western values as a way to deliver the inferiority of the cultural east compared to the occident (**page**). However, both views are dismissed to argue that the embrace of the other, in *Girls of Riyadh*, is not equivalent to assimilation and embrace of the west/occidental other, but a reception of the west as a space that grants the freedom to act within the parameters of individuality. Indeed, the protagonists appear to equally embrace their Saudi culture along with the western one. What they appear to disfavor, therefore, are the socio-national restrictions defining the national structures, which have political extensions indirectly revealed in the novel. As an illustration, Lamees decides to wear hijab in Canada, Gamrah’s total embrace of Saudi culture, along with Sadeem’s consistency with what the Saudi culture has to offer. Even Michelle, who has a hybrid identity and who seems to perfectly attune with the cultural west, decides to go back to Arabia, where she finds a middle cultural background; she moves to Dubai, which is perceived as a culturally Arab space beyond the national restrictions. Through

the character of Sadeem and Michelle, Al-Sanea joins Colette Khuri's *A Single Night's* theme. The latter pronounces a sense of disillusionment with the Arab cultural traditions and seeks refuge and happiness in the west (Al-Enany 187). Unlike Hanan Al-Shikh, Al-Sanea delivers no feeling of inferiority of the eastern culture compared to the western one. Rashid Al-Enany that such feeling of inferiority is embedded in the incapacity of the Arab culture to dismiss what is culturally and socially no longer viable, thus rejecting modernity in all its terms (194).

3.2.3.3. Occidentalism: Questioning the Rejection of the Other

The concept Occidentalism, according to Ian Burma and Avishai Margalit in their *Occidentalism: The West in the Eyes of its Enemies*, is associated to western antagonism as it represents the imperial other (6). Cultural rejection is based on anti-western and anti-modernization sentiments. In addition, it is equated to colonialism, imperialism, and hegemony as a result of sequence of historical events displaying struggles between the Orient and the Occident (Al-Enany 2). The former rejects the other's ideas, political processes, and material objects as a result of the aforementioned anti-westernization (Jukka Jouhki & Henna-Riikka Pennanen 4). In addition, the Occident appears to be synonymous with modernization; Fernando Coronil (1996) points to the fact that people receive the west as the source of Modernity, which results into the rejection of the latter (ibid 7). Modernity and modernization seem to signify a retreat from the cultural self and its 'exceptionalist' traits; therefore, the rejection of both the west and modernity ensures the persistence of national/cultural identity. On Similar grounds, Burma and Margalit speaks of 'westoxification' carrying the meaning of refutation of the other for possessing qualities of mechanism, emotionlessness, rationalism, secularism, individualism and imperialism contradictory to Oriental traits (Jukka Jouhki & Henna-Riikka Pennanen 4). With this in mind, *Girls of Riyadh* traces such antagonism and western rejection, where it is argued that Saudi stereotypes and prejudices are consistent with a traditionalist perception.

Michelle is presented as a hybrid individual, who is born in America to an American mother and a liberal-mind father. These traits gave her access to modernity and westernization that are seen inferior to the Saudi traditional families. Her relation with Faisal streamed to failure, even if both of them possessed similar vision towards life, because the mother refuses her son's reunion with a westernized woman. Michelle's behavior is received to carry western liberalism, which means unfit to hold the community's values, traditions, spirituality and morality. The west is received to lack these traits; consequently, being culturally inferior.

Faisal's mother decides to reject her son's request "as soon as she heard that the girl's mother was American" (107). Her relationship with Faisal has been successful considering the line of thoughts and perceptions, yet their love for each other and commitment has been disrupted by Faisal's family and mother. Their premise is that the 'American' Michelle would be unfit and culturally unable to hold the family name and honor it according to Saudi standards. She is considered an individual who is corrupted by the occidental other; hence, unfit to be part of Saudi family that has a long line of cultural and ancestral roots. This exhibits to a greater extent the notion of ancestral blood lines and the importance of family background in the Saudi Oriental beliefs as an extension to collectivist thoughts and perceptions. The latter favors family roots, reputation, honor, religion and appearances in marriages, where according to them, are resting upon family roots that are characterized by *Asala* and honor (Gregg 28).

Furthermore, a 'clash of civilizations' is pronounced by Al-Sanea through the character of Michelle, who possesses a hybrid identity: American-Saudi. Michelle's Americanness gave her access to a non-Oriental perception, which does not attune with the Arab socio-cultural beliefs and ideologies (Michalak-Pikuska 108). Her female Saudi friends distribute certain agitation due to the limitations they live in, yet they have no revolutionary actions or statements against their society or culture unlike Michelle, who shows degrees of troubles concerning her life in Arabia. In fact, she vows to have a different mind set than her female friends, which made her feel distant from them:

Michelle could see the gap between her and her friends widening to the point where at times she wondered how it was that she ever fit in their scene at all- their world didn't accord in any way with her own ideas about life or ambitions she had. (Al-Sanea 247)

Michelle's hybrid self and her discontent with the Saudi Oriental culture aligns with a notion of 'Occidentalization' of the mind, as her discontent is not merely related to a social quo but, transcends to cultural discontent to distribute a clash between the west and the east displayed in her psychological status of mind. Michelle feels degrees of loss and uncertainty that she doesn't arrive to understand or transfer to her other friends. Her discontent is widely displayed when they are gathered, but no one of them has the ability to truly understand what she is going through internally.

Michelle never was able to explain, to her closest female friends, what exactly she felt upon returning to Saudi Arabia from the States. Her friends were aware of Michelle's

enormous dislike of traditional and restrictive Saudi society, they knew that she mocked the limitations and bans which the lives of young women were fortified with, yet not one of them would have ever thought that a strong internal struggle was being played out in her. She felt as if she was in the centre of a clash between two contradictory civilizations and this could only be understood by someone with equally broad horizons to herself.” (p. 66). The avowed difference between Michelle and her friends are related to their perceptions and beliefs. For her, there is a wider gap between her and them for adopting the ideals of individuality, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness that are absent in the minds of her friends. Their Oriental Arab identities have greater consideration for marital relationships and love rather than individual pursuits of dreams and flourishing careers. Michelle dismisses a focus on love and relationships to Orient herself towards self-rewarding path through bigger goals, dreams and career rather than displaying affection to a male. Her perceptions accentuate a postfeminist perception that finds more attunement in an American background rather than an Oriental one.

3.3. Images of Miss New India between the Self and the Other

The contemporary literary sphere has echoed the socio-cultural changes that have taken place in India under the light of globalization. Under the transnational circumstances, Bharati Mukherjee depict these changes in her latest novel *Miss New India* (2011), which tells the story of a young female’s journey from small town to the big city of Bangalore. The novel chronologically follows the life of Anjali Boss’s cultural experiences from Gauripur, Behar to Bangalore in search of better living conditions afforded by the big tech-hub metropolis. Mukherjee represents the new face of India to an international readership (Southmayd 93); therefore, designated as part of World Literature. Her novel portrays the characters as belonging to an upwardly and mobile social class that disassociates with the traditional Indian castes (Southmayd 93). Moreover, Mukherjee represents the contemporary Indian woman who declares her individuality and exonerate the challenges originated from the Indian traditional social structures through giving the protagonist autonomy and empowerment (Bijalwan 240). Hence, Mukherjee’s *Miss New India* represents an image of new India that accredits post-nationalism in the light of the presence of the Occidental other as a result of global flows.

3.3.1. An Image of India: a Reflection upon Nationalism

Miss New India reports an image of traditional India through a number of characters occupying the small town Gauripur. Mukherjee continues her cultural representation rituals of depicting the Bengali community in her latest novel, where there is an obvious discontent with such social practices especially on women characters (Timalsina 10). Her previous works exhibit a tendency to plate the concerns of the Bengali woman in a cross-cultural environment, in which the former carries negative connotations as patriarchal traits of the Bengali community is repressive to the protagonists' individuality (Bijalwan 235). Indeed, *Miss New India* exhibits a tendency to represent the nationalist India, where she expresses a discontent with the latter (Timalsina 12). She is against nationalism even in her other works like *Jasmine* where she shows that the Bengali culture is repressive to the protagonist as it grants her limitations which led her to immigrate to America in search for better social life prospect. Similar interests are vowed in *Miss New India* as she represents the Bengali culture as a oppressive one to the protagonist and other females (mother and sister). Mukherjee's negative representation of Indian local cultures vis-a-vis the American cultural other is seen as an exhibition of the writer's Orientalist perspective. She represents the Orient as an exotic and bizarre space (Timalsina 8). Contemporary Indian writers exhibit a tendency to represent the changes occurring in India as they stress on theme of modernity and changes contrary to Mukherjee, who's argued to represent India with exotic aspect to join western scholars (23). However, such representation is evacuated because her representation stresses upon the legacy of colonialism. She is known as a postcolonial writer; such designation plays a role in her vision as she condemns the colonial presence and legacies for the misfortunes of her characters. Hence, it is argued that Mukherjee condemns the postcolonial nationalist ideology for the misfortunes of the Bengali woman.

An independent India from the British colonizer equates the adoption of an Oriental 'distinctive' identity from the colonizer to ensure political separation; on basis of cultural identity traits, the Indian nation is permitted for political separation from the Occidental British. Ashis Nandy in *The Intimate Enemy* explains that nationalist leaders crafted a sense of Indian national identity defined in opposition to the west as a means of colonial resistance (2). Therefore, it is argued that Mukherjee associates the negative image of Gauripur -as the image of a nationalist India- to the legacies of postcolonial nationalism promoted during and after the colonial encounter with the western other.

The writer delivers and image of the nationalist India through Gauripur as the story's primary setting and the protagonist's family as minor characters. First, the writer introduces Gauripur as a small town that resists modernity and emphasizes on the traditional authentic traits of living. This is illustrated through the failure of Pinky Mahal, as a symbol of modernization; "the town's three-story monument to urban progress" (Mukherjee 08). More attempts to modernize the town are through the promotion of the English language through native English teachers like Mr. Champion. However, the attempts to modernize the town appear to have failed: "when Pinky Mahal failed, the spirit of Gauripur was crushed" (9). For Anjali "Bangalore and Mumbai might be on fire, but Gauripur is still in the deep freeze" (Mukherjee 37). Modernity for the nationalist thought is an extension to the colonial other and an attempt to 'impurify' the cultural principles of the Indian community (ies). Consequently, the failure to modernize Gauripur argues for the persistence of the traditional discourse as a marker of the Indian cultural identity.

The nationalist ideology granted men a certain social role equipping him with a superior posture of control, responsibility, and economic-catering exercised upon his family members. Andrew Parker notices that the nationalist ideology has in fact privileged men over women for being active agents in the anti-colonial struggle, and therefore, received the upper political and economic power (6). In addition, the social roles carry a collectivist trait that cares for the community rather than for individual pursuits. The tendency to regard the group instead of the self is inscribed in the nationalist ideology that promotes collective thinking to reach collective aims. In addition, similar social values are contrasted with the colonizer's cultural principles; the western ideals have rested upon individualism and individual pursuits. Hence, for the sake of identity distinction, a call for collectivist pursuits is promoted for, and remained inscribed in the community in the postcolonial era.

Reflecting the collectivist ideals of the Oriental Indian community, Mr. Bose is careful to maintain decent living standards for his family as he guards a safe reputation for himself and his family. Echoing the Orientalist beliefs of family and honor, Mr. Bose's main occupation in *Miss New India* is to search for a suitable husband for his daughter and to secure her dowry. Indeed, being consistent with the collectivist notion of honor and reputation, Mr. Bose succumbs into a search for a suitable husband for his 'rogue' daughter, who demonstrates to possess non-traditional qualities for an Indian female and therefore, it is a huge burden for him to find her a place to fit in considering her qualities: "to marry her off

was her father's Hindu duty ... he was eager to marry her off before she sullied her reputation and disgraced the whole family" (Mukherjee 20). According to Mr. Bose, his actions would permit him to perform his duty as a father and to Orient his daughter towards her cultural duty to marry and raise a family as dictated by the nationalist duty of the Indian 'new woman'. Gregg announces that notions of honor, shame and modesty constitute a great part in the cultures of India, which challenges statements of individualism through adhering to certain cultural and behavioral etiquettes for the sake of a public image and reputation (Gregg 91). Accordingly, Anjali observes that her father's stiff character is dismissive of any probable changes, embodying the image of Gauripur's unwillingness to welcome modernity.

It was impossible to think of her stout father, with his peremptory voice and officious manners, in anything but the role of up-holstered patriarch. He would never wear a wrinkled shirt in public or shirtsleeves to the office, and he had never owned blue jeans. (Mukherjee 9)

Mukherjee uses the term 'patriarch' to define the father character; therefore, the traditional image of India encompasses gender patriarchy, where the father performs authoritative duties towards his family and controls their actions. Such a status comes with an impossibility to accommodate the nationalist-self with alternative 'modern' behavior that can signify defiance to the cultural standards of the Indian community. For Mr. Bose, "it is not a question of happiness, yours or ours. It's about our name, our family reputation" (Mukherjee 11); he gives major significance to reputation and honor rather than the pursuit of individual happiness. Therefore, it is confident to assume collectivism as a nationalist trait of the Indian community evacuates statements of individuality and individualism as cultural traits of the Occident and ultimately the evacuated other/ colonizer.

Furthermore, Mukherjee represents a regionalist vision through the father character, which is a result of cultural exceptionalism promoted by nationalist leaders. The notion of cultural exceptionalism is captured in the nationalist ideology speeches in the colonial and post-colonial era for the purpose of independence. The expression of territorial nationalism stresses on common culture, history and territory, where the community group display hostility against other groups, ethnicities and tribes while they celebrate their own culture (Abd Al-Janabi 2). These ideologies are embodied in Mr. Bose's perceptions and principles; for starter, the condescending of the American Peter Champion for being the western other is demonstrated in his refusal of any relation with his daughter Anjali. For him, he is the western

other who possesses the capacity to corrupt the cultural beliefs of his daughter through infiltrating novel ideas into her mind. He displays a concern for his daughter's behavior and English language proficiency as it signified a probable trans-passing of the Bengali self that should be guarded safely. Similar dislikes of differences are exhibited in the use of the expression "these people" (Mukherjee 22) to speak about other cultural groups in India who do not belong to the Bengali community. This notion of othering is inscribed in the cultural exceptionalism, where the local Bengali community closes its doors from penetrations of any 'other' cultural differences even within the same national boundaries. The protagonist appears to be interested in others who are outside of the Bengali community compass, yet vows her father's unwillingness to "not consider non-Bengali applicants" (23). Moreover, the sense of otherness encompasses other castes where "Bengalis -those exposed to the temptations of big-city Kolkata- were part of the plot against them" (22). These urban Bengalis are received as groups, who have been 'infected' by western-like-modernity and are not faithful to the Bengali cultural authenticity. Therefore, regionalist expressions in the novel are reflective of the persistence of postcolonial legacies that celebrates local cultures and promotes their exceptionalism vis-a-vis the other cultural communities.

Moreover, the nationalist ideology's promotion of local cultural celebration -as a means of colonial resistance- has engendered a defeatist syndrome on the individual level. Indeed, a sense of powerlessness and defeat accompany the major characters in Gauripur as they possess no power to act upon their life circumstances. Belonging to a lower caste has indeed impacted their perception of life and the future, where achieving better is not seen as a life prospect for them. Mr. Bose works a low paying job and refuses to take up a job that might give him a better life prospect as he refuses to leave Gauripur in search for betterment.

In his book *Nationalisms and Sexualities*, Andrew Parker contends that the nationalist narratives favored males over females for the sake of colonial resistance. He articulates that "feminist programmes have been sacrificed to the cause of national liberation and, in the aftermath of independence; women have been consigned to their former 'domestic' roles" (6). The legacies of the colonial resistance have set certain rules and roles for women to embody in order to represent the Indian woman as culturally distinctive from the western model. Therefore, women's voice has been silenced and replaced by patriarchy, collectivism and sacrifice. Indeed, women populating Gauripur are represented without a voice and who share the same collectivist principles:

Most of those Anjalis would be married, hobbled by saris, carrying infants or clutching the hands of toddlers while their husbands haggled for fish or vegetables. To be hailed from the street by a man on a scooter would be scandalous. (Mukherjee 8)

These women embody the nationalist female characteristics attributed and promoted by the nationalist leader inscribed in the notion of 'new woman'. The Orientalist feminine duty to uphold the interior sphere of the social structures and therefore, ought to be endowed with certain behavioral traits like: submissiveness, respect, sacrifice and care (Gupta 245). The image of an ideal woman is "modest and pliable, a flawless embodiment of Bengali virtue ... She could cook, dance, sing, or recite Tagore poetry" (Mukherjee 24).

Furthermore, the mother is represented as a remote character who has no interference in the life of her daughters except when it comes to manual work, hence reflecting Spivak's notion of the subaltern. Indeed, she performs a passive assistance to Anjali in numerous occasions as her mere stands are passive supportive of Mr. Bose's views and decisions. Mukherjee's representation of the mother character gives the impression of possessing views and own perceptions, yet unwilling to share them or act upon them, even at the expense of her daughters' well-being. Therefore, she embodies the notion of sacrifice as she sacrifices her own individuality and voice in order to meet socio-cultural expectations. In addition, Sonali, Anjali's sister, is a further extension to the traditionalist India that attributes major consideration to the female duty. Her status as a divorcee ranks her as a social failure for her inability to maintain a standing marriage through sacrifice: "when Sonali had finally got up her nerve to institute divorce proceedings, their father had turned against her for wreaking on the Bose family the public shame of divorce" (Mukherjee 11). Society treats her with disrespect for selecting her individuality over the notion of sacrifice to maintain her marriage and a standing social reputation. Mukherjee represents the misfortunes of women in a traditional patriarchal society, where the humiliations are casted upon its women (Bijlawan 237), which leads to the main character to discount for her social environment and aspire for a new one, where female dignities are attributed.

Consequently, the negative tone associated to the representation of traditional India as a space of patriarchy, limitations and indignities is in fact a statement against the postcolonial nationalist endeavors that aimed for a national/cultural identity that is separated from the colonizer's cultural themes; hence, aligning with Franz Fanon's neo-colonialist theory. Such a premise positions Mukherjee as a postcolonial writer attempting to highlight the bad effects of

the colonial legacy in India. Hence, the depiction of a negative image of the Bengali culture in the novel is disassociated from speeches of Orientalism or self-Orientalism as the previous scholars have pointed. However, the postcolonial perspective is dis-announced through depicting a new India that characterized by post-nationalism and hyper-modernity discussed in the following pages.

3.3.2. Post-nationalism: A Hyper-modern Space

Miss New India is a testimony of the historical changes that are occurring in contemporary India. The fast changes taking lieu as a result of neoliberal policies undertaken by the government in 1990s has engendered a new social and cultural reality in the country (Kerr 182). Western corporations and the air of entrepreneurship have indeed contributed to a new economic facet in India (Bijalwan 236). Mukherjee might not be the only Indian writer interested in the fast changes swiping the nation; an amalgam of writers attest for these changes through casting their own perceptions on status quo. Chetan Bhagat articulates that ‘young India’ has become an entrepreneurial generation characterized by a positive embrace of globalization (Philips 97). In fact, protagonists of contemporary Indian popular fiction appear to welcome the new modernity with optimism and ambition (Philips 98). Similarly, Mukherjee portrays her main character in her *Miss New India* with the same welcome, optimism and ambition, while projecting a particular interest in the theme of female cultural identity amidst the binary of Indian traditions and modernity (Bijalwan 239). On this account, the writer vows that: “I am interested in the psychological, emotional, personal consequences of globalization” (quoted in Ladva 171).

Unlike Chetan Baghat, who appears to promote for a positive embrace of globalization, Mukherjee demonstrates a degree of reluctance towards a total embrace of these changes. With the same view, Richa Bijlwan understands that the novel maintains a sarcastic view towards India’s contemporary culture, both traditional and modern as it examines the insecurities that characters are placed in when both cultural paths fail to provide cultural clarity (Bijalwan 240). Moreover, Chetan Bhagat’s *One Night @ the Call Centre* announces that the move towards neoliberalism is in fact a betrayal of the early independence nationalist leaders. The move towards a global economy is perceived as a betrayal of the post-colonial India that has marched national steps towards socialism (Basu 181). Indeed, *Miss New India* is a portrayal of a post-nationalist India that dissolves from the postcolonial nationalist traits. Stephanie Southmayd contends that Mukherjee’s novel promotes neo-nationalism as it

introduces the new nationalist entrepreneur as the face of India; in opposition to her claim, it is argued that *Miss New India* portrays a post-nationalist India, where postcolonial themes are dismissed. In addition, hyper-modernity constitutes the novel traits of the depicted new India. Henceforth, Bharati Mukherjee represents a hyper-modern India through the depiction of Bangalore as a non-place city that corresponds to global living standards. Moreover, she reflects the characters of Call Centre lit through giving a transnational trait to the characters populating the Indian metropolis.

3.3.1.1. Bangalore: A City of Hyper-modernity

Ram Prasad Timalina, in his dissertation “Representation of the Indians in Bharati Mukherjee’s *Miss New India*”, argues that Mukherjee portrays India with no accuracy as her depiction was not adjacent to the socio-historical realities that the neoliberal fact has created (Timalina 7). As postcolonial writer, Mukherjee is argued to be impacted by postcolonial themes, which drives to a failure in an accurate portrayal of the new India. Compared to Chetan Bhagat’s literary works that portray an intense hyper-modern India, Mukherjee in fact gives a more realistic image of India; she portrays a hyper-modern city and does not overlook a postcolonial reality exemplified by Gauripur. Moreover, she delivers an image of Bangalore with traits of Hyper-modernity.

Bangalore is a site of hyper-business-activities, which is equated to the American Silicon Valley, where business opportunities and entrepreneurial activities are the overriding atmosphere. Indeed, Gurish Gujral, as a representative character of the city, designates the space as the most advanced city in the world; businesses in various industries boomed, where people became rich through investing in different fields, more particularly the high-tech industry. Bangalore’s hyper-modernity is mostly related to technological advances that rendered it a “virtual city” (Mukherjee 101). Mukherjee stresses on the technological significance of the city amidst world economies “without us, the world would collapse” (102), which highlights the mutual-dependencies of world economies, rather than being dependent on western economic supplies. As an extension to globalization, the city is a host for global brands and multi-national companies and services exemplified by Pizza Hut, Radio Shack, and Starbucks that are consumed by an Indian audience.

As an extension to hyper-modern consumption, Mukherjee depicts Bangalore as a space of materialism. Expressions like: fancy logos, barista, luxury condos, Pizza Hut,

shopping malls, international designer boutique, Starbucks, air-conditioned office, crore ...etc. highlighting the significant care for material comfort of the population. Upon Anjali's arrival to the big city, she notices the fancy appearance of its dwellers as young men are clothed in suits, while women exhibit their attractive appearances in western fashion. In addition, Gurish Gujral broadcasts that wealth-chase is accessible for every individual who wishes to work hard in the different economic sectors, as the Indian 'Silicon Valley' "crores are the new Lakhs ... A Lakh was a hundred thousand, a Crore was a hundred Lakhs" (Mukherjee 100), demonstrating a boost in economy, where millions and billions are made accessible for their seekers through intelligence and hard work. Similar expressions of materialism and the pursuit of wealth invite the recall of the 'American Dream', where the pursuit of happiness and wealth narrate American principles. Such relatedness between the Indian Bangalore and America is deliberately articulated by the writer through Mr. GG's character: "Bangalore is LA" (104). Therefore, Mukherjee equates Bangalore to America based on economic values.

Izabella Kimak, in her article "(Non)Places of Bangalore: Where the East Meets the West in Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India*" (2019), argues that Bangalore is represented as an equivalent city to America due to the spatial interconnectedness between the east and the west (84). What is more, in his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions to Globalization*, Arjun Appadurai understands that the process of modernization in India has taken an American facet rather than prints of Britishness as used-to-be facet modernity (2). Moreover, the American expatriate Peter Champion might validate the statement through performing a push-button for the protagonist to blast off the traditional Gauripur for the pursuit of her 'American Dream', which appears to be tainted with material acquisition rather than the pursuit of Indian-clearly-prescribed standards. Consequently, to a considerable degree, the argument is assumed valid for the plentiful references to American narratives of the pursuit of happiness in its material terms. However, a mere mimicry of America is a promotion of the 'Americanization' dimension of globalization contrasts the intentions of Mukherjee in the novel.

The writer ensures a delivery of an image that is more receptive to modernity and futurism rather than an American copy-paste version. Bharati Mukherjee identifies three spaces related to the city: the 'cantonment' Bangalore acknowledged through a colonial past such as: Bagehot mansion and Kew Garden; the 'ultra-modern high-rises' space distributed

through images of luxurious living and modern architecture; whereas ‘thriving IT-hub’ fill into the image of industrialization and shopping malls (Mukherjee, *Globalization and Change* 183). The spatial traits are, therefore, a testimony for the distinctiveness of Bangalore rather than a neat mimicry. Furthermore, referring to the city as the American Silicon Valley, may insinuate the influences of the former on the contemporary image of India, which align with the perspective that promotes the Americanization process through openness to globalization. However, the Silicon Valley model is closely related to the process of economic liberalism - shared by both American and Indian states- that promotes businesses and entrepreneurship; therefore, the similarities of the two spaces are inevitable. They both promote for opportunities of wealth-making, material progress and development that are exercised by private enterprises rather than government-owned companies. The individual’s business Orientations lead to an emphasis on materialism as a result of a stress on economic advances, where individuals’ pursuits for economic ends are highly relatable to material-gain psyche. Therefore, it is not correspondent with a sense of Americanness as much as it is related to wealth-seeking promoted by neo-liberal policies.

Moreover, Mukherjee presents an image of India that is characterized by modernity and futurism. Richa Bijlwan comprehends that Bangalore is received as a metaphor for contemporary India that is both familiar and alien at the same time (Bijlwan 238). On similar veins, the architectural designs and high-tech traits of Bangalore call for Marc Augé’s notion of ‘non-place’. In his book *Non-places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity* (1995), Marc Augé terms ‘non-place’ to designate the sites that are globally similar. He argues that “supermodernity produces non-places” (78); it is defined as non-anthropological one: “where transit points and temporary abodes are proliferating under luxurious or inhuman conditions ... where the dense network of means of transport which are also inhabited spaces is developing” (78). Therefore, status of ‘supermodernity’ defining the space of Bangalore creates of non-place, where it is accompanied by spatial familiarity:

A paradox of non-place: a foreigner lost in a country he does not know (a ‘passing stranger’) can feel at home there only in the anonymity of motorways, service stations, big stores or hotel chains. For him, an oil company logo is a reassuring landmark; among the supermarket shelves he falls with relief on sanitary, household or food products validated by multination brand names. (Augé 106)

Thus, Bangalore shares similarities with other spaces that are characterized by technological advances and modernized architecture. The sights of airports, hotel chains, leisure parks, large retail outlets and wireless networks that bring together distant spaces put the individual with contact with “another image of himself” (Augé 79). This image is understood as a global image of ‘hypermodernity’ rather than a special replication of America -which is also regarded as a space that is affected by hyper-modernity due to the spread of businesses and entrepreneurship.

3.3.1.2. The Metropolitan Female Character

Debra Philips notes that the contemporary Indian popular fiction appears to embrace modernity with positive attitudes; the characters appear to embody a self-confident optimism and ambition (98). Brinda S. Narayan’s *Bangalore Calling* presents a character that adopts a global identity and upward mobility in order to meet the hyper-modern changes delivered by globalization (Southmayd 54). In addition, Chetan Bhagat’s characterizations in his works deliver the theme of complete embrace of India’s new modernity. Simultaneously, these characters reject their Indian ‘authenticity’ and national pride for the sake of adopting a global identity (Southmayd 56). Similarly, Mukherjee represents the characters in Bangalore as hyper-modern who embrace novelty and changes, while rejecting the ‘old’ Indian self. The novel brings into light an amalgam of characters that animate the narration with their deeds and words echoing a passage to a new India that is different from the nationalist one. Indeed, the Bagehot mansion girls are represented with traits of modernity and openness to cultures and novelty unlike her mother and sister, as Anjali comes to notice. They are represented as economically and socially independence, self-reliant and empowered; an image that Anjali aspires to embody when leaving Gauripur. In addition, Mukherjee clothes women of Bangalore with no Saris, but with fancy modern dresses, jeans and T-shirts as a means to express their adopted modernity, and as a declared departure from the nationalist character.

Moreover, the female characters are presented with a positive spirit and attitudes towards their life standards without expressing the pitfalls of limitations despite of the negative histories they might have experienced; Tookie recounts her misfortunes with her dysfunctional family, yet she currently possesses a strong mental status as a result of an adopted modernity and non-limitations in Bangalore. Similarly, Husseina’s story expressing her discontent with an arranged marriage; however, she appears to be surpassed through adopting modern living standards in the metropolis. Hence, Bangalore offers a space for

people from various national and international backgrounds to enjoy independence and to free themselves from conventions (Ganesan 12); therefore, the city is regarded as a refuge for women from the patriarchal social structures that the nationalist community has offered. These modern women desert the social conventional living standards and opt for an alternative modern life style (Bijalwan 236).

Further articulations of a post-nationalist stand are expressed in a non-regionalist tone of the characters. Despite their cultural, religious, ethnic, and linguistic backgrounds, their level of interaction is held with tolerance, unlike Anjali's father in Gauripur who disliked the above differences for regionalist purposes. Mukherjee represents Bangalore's women as transnational individuals who enjoy financial and social independence in India despite their origins and backgrounds. The writer therefore, delivers an image of global citizens, who are deterritorialized without crossing the national borders. In fact, Mukherjee joins the call center lit through introducing the world of call centres as a transnational mode of living in new India; the call centres have become a spread phenomenon in the world of business and in the field of communication and services that networked distant geographies to each other. The wide-spread of call centers are received as an extension to Bangalore's status of IT hub. The former industry "with its relatively high wages and high-tech work environment, was heralded as a source of liberation for women" (Patel 1). Shashi Tharoor explains that the call center industry is in fact a symbol of the "newly globalized force" of Indian youth who are professionally trained to high performance of communication and services in order to transnationally communicate with individuals from the other side of the world in order to provide services that meet their needs (18). The workers are provided with high salaries permitting them to access a certain lifestyle that is characterized by freedom and ersatz-westernization that defied the old Indian standards (19). Thereafter, the call centres are argued to provide a space of empowerment for women as the work industry supply women with the freedom to earn higher wages and to work at night without limitations (Patel 1). In fact, women at call centres have access to an unlimited life symbolized by having access to night spaces that were previously deemed off-limits for the Indian female; therefore, dismissing the assumption that women assume a space of dependency and vulnerability (12). Indeed, the writer announces that young women from different places in India target the city for work purposes. Parvati tells Anjali that "women who might have remained illiterate and independent were now earning decent paychecks" (Mukherjee 165) through training and working at call centers. Hence, working for the IT industry has attributed a respectable degree

of autonomy and empowerment for women to render the city an attraction for freedom-seekers searching for financial and social independence. The access to such a living - exercising modernity without limitations- has indeed impacted the women populating Mukherjee's narrative to characterize their behavior with tolerance and positivity.

Consequently, the representation of new India as is reflective of the contemporary realities characterized by a post-nationalist stand; Bharati Mukherjee delivers an image of hyper-modernity that is associated to business and entrepreneurship, which marks a departure from the postcolonial nationalist socio-cultural allures. A post-nationalist endeavor is additionally associated to the depiction of characters who cross the borders of their origins and backgrounds to echo a transnational stand.

3.3.3. The Cultural Other: a Questioned Idealization of the Occident

Mukherjee not only represents an image of contemporary India, but delivers a picture of the occidental other. The representation of the Occident in the Indian literary writing is shaped by multiple voices that swing from admirer to criticizer in order to form the concept of Occidentalism (Buruma & Margali 2). The latter is a concept that strolls on multiple conceptualizations depending on perceptions and views; however, the Occident is related to 'mechanistic' traits contrasted to the Oriental 'spirituality' (ibid 5). Furthermore, the concept finds more relevance to Americanization in the contemporary era for the spread of American culture and ideologies on a global scale (8). Mukherjee's representation of the Occident is observed in almost all her works for being the speaker of Indian Diaspora in North America; her works deliver the theme of cultural encounter between the east and west as her major characters are women. Consequently, the writer depicts the occident in her works and highlights its impacts on the Bengali cultural identity. Linda Leith notes that the American culture and values are very apparent in *Miss New India* than Mukherjee's other works (Guttman 5). The fact of living in North America has attributed her with potential biases towards the western culture.

In fact, Mukherjee does contribute to enrich the literature about Occidentalism or the representation of the occident in Indian literature through promoting the American west as the supplier of liberal ideology bringing about socio-cultural changes in America. It has been contended that Mukherjee holds a passive tone towards the American other for practicing hegemony on the Indian nation. However, Mukherjee attests for the contribution of the west

in the move towards a post-national character. *Miss New India* represents the Occident on multiple layers, yet puts primary emphasis on Peter Champion as an American expatriate, in addition to the Bagehot mansion as a symbol of British colonial legacies.

3.2.3.1. A Representation of the American Other

Peter Champion is argued to represent the American cultural presence in India and its cultural influences. The American Occident is delivered as a space of cultural influence and embrace without assimilation or idealization. The American expat Peter Champion is accredited a considerable emphasis throughout the story, which permits to announce the assistance of America in the progression of events. Indeed, *Miss New India*'s epilogue lengthily discusses the American teachers who displace from their home country for the aim of seaming good in the 'third world' spaces. As an image of these global-nomads, Peter Champion debarks in Gauripur, Bihar for the sake of teaching English to Indian small-town youngsters. Shamenaz Bano describes the American teacher as:

With sheer dedication to his job, he managed to thrive on hardship and his special focus was on the young men and women of India whom he guided for success and productivity in their life. He carried his teaching by enthusing them. (Bano 89)

Indeed, Champion transcends his job role as an English teacher and succumbs into the help of the youngsters to sort out their potentials and pursuit a fate that is distant from the traditionalist, seen limited, life prospect that Gauripur community offered for the rising generations. Champion confesses to Anjali that he has seen potentials in multiple people, yet he was unable to steer them to fulfill their potentials outside of their small communities. Bano attributes traits of boyishness, energetism, slimness to the physical appearance of the American teacher (90). The comparison that Anjali makes between Champion and her father is in fact a comparison between the American culture and the traditional Indian one:

He had over fifty, considering that he'd been in Behar for nearly thirty years, but was still so slim and energetic that he seemed boyish. All American man –within the tiny compass of her experience- seemed boyish. Her father, a railway clerk, was younger than Mr. Champion but looked older (Mukherjee 9)

The positivity of the attributed image is argued to be identified with the positive outlook that Mukherjee has about the American culture. In fact, her prior works distribute a negative

perception of the traditional Bengali society, as the writer, as contended by Timalina Ram Prasad, tend to emphasize on the negative aspects of the Bengali culture (23), which is regarded as hinder for her female characters.

The image that Mukherjee paints is a reflection of the American cultural values and principles; the notion of freedom, individuality and progressivism are the main traits of Mr. Champion. The fact of appearing young and energetic is the extension to the adopted principles and behaviors that express one's individuality. Following the character of Champion, it is said that he pursues his individual perceptions such as his non-social conformity, sexual Orientations, and his humanistic endeavors that characterize his socio-cultural background. As a start, Champion appears not to carry the conventional male type who is willing to drive in the path of a simple conventional lifestyle composed of a small family and a potential social role. Despite of his old age -more than fifty years old- the notion of performing a conventional social duty is unlocated within his speeches or as a foreseen prospect. He chooses to devote his life to intellectual productions and of humanitarian deeds; he moved from America to India many years ago for humanitarian purposes. In addition, he strengthens his sense of individuality through vowing his sexual Orientations. The vowed same-sex relationship with Ali is a strange and taboo preoccupation in the Bengali community, yet he performs his individuality without being interrupted by the society he lives in.

Furthermore, Champion expresses his individuality through 'humanitarian' endeavors. His life is in fact a devotion to the study of the Indian Orient: nation, community, and history exhibited through his introduced books about Bangalore and the Bagehot mansion, which made him a well-known and accredited person in Bangalore society (his person appears to be well-cherished whenever his name is brought into conversations). This symbolizes the accredited value that America appears to have in the Bengali/Indian new society; indeed, such symbolism reflects the status, either economic or intellectual, that America has in India. Peter Champion chooses to dedicate his life to the study and the spread of 'good' rather than fulfilling a traditional role, which is an American principle by excellence. In addition, the spread of progressive thoughts meeting the ambitious characters of the Gauripurian villagers is regarded as his primary task that aims to fulfill his individual endeavors. Shamenez Bano sees that Champion is a man who possesses a progressive mind (90), which served as an engine to fuel Anjali's departure for Bangalore. As Anjali's teacher,

he captures her ambition and potentials which drives him to adopt and to finance her departure to Bangalore. Anjali's ambition and potentials are therefore assisted by Champion who demonstrates a great tendency to help her flee the unpleasing circumstances in Gauripur; a progressive mind abandons any traits of the social conformity that small town life-prospects might offer.

Bharati Mukherjee represents the American Champion as culturally influential for the protagonist. Stephanie Southmayd sees that he is, in fact, Anjali's mentor and father figure (99), who performs as a source of inspiration for her to shift her social environment and pursuit a better life prospect that would meet her ambitious and talented character. In addition, he plants the idea of Bangalore city into her mind after wanting to flight for Mumbai as a city of her dreams. Similarly, he vows that he has been keen to support young females from Gauripur to pursuit a better living outside the confines of the limiting Gauripur:

It's never about money. You'd be surprised how many women in Gauripur were girls I once taught. Girls with good grades and good minds, with good curiosity about life outside of this town. Ambitious girls, not just daydreamers. And we walked then just as you and I are walking now, and that was before India took off, before there were real opportunities in this country and you didn't have to fill your head with nonsense dreams of England or America... (Mukherjee 50)

He vows to exercise influences of other Bengali female who exhibited potentials to debark on occidental spaces for the opportunities to fulfill their potentials outside the confines of a seen limited environment. Champion's motives stand on humanitarian grounds as he wishes for no material gain for his own person, but for the satisfaction of bringing 'civilization' to the Bengali youngsters. Such humanitarian traits dismiss arguments for Americanization process. Mukherjee sees that Champion's endeavors do stem from an occidental perspective -which contributes to the issue of center versus periphery hypothesis- however, the proposed influences of the American culture are limited. He offers alternative values for the Indian community based on: material comfort, individual freedom and the dignity of living (Burma & Margait 72). Although he receives null gains from helping the protagonist as his deeds are classified as humanitarian endeavors does not exclude him from unconsciously adopting an Orientalist perspective, where the occidental values are superior to the Indian Oriental ones. The authoritarian tone that Anjali senses in Champion's speech can best be interpreted within an Orientalist perspective:

But he was lecturing her. He was talking to her as he did to students in the classroom. He was telling her in the plainest terms that both the bride-to-be Anjali of the studio portrait and the gusty-rebel-Angie who had ridden on the back seat of his scooter were frauds. He had become a dangerous mentor, sowing longings and at the same time planting self-doubt. (Mukherjee 50-51)

Champion's tone assumes a better position of knowledge and values compared to the traditional Oriental one, which gave the protagonist a sensed danger as he continuously brain-washes her to adopt his views. In addition, Champion approves for and recommends Bangalore for Anjali as an Alternative for America and London as a space for escape for the Bengali youngsters under his cultural supervision. The similarities that Bangalore has with America led to his approval of the former to be a sanctuary for his proteges. For him, "the base-that's India today- is changing and the old ways are dead ways" (Mukherjee 50). The 'new ways' are hence are accredited by him to be an alternative for the occidental background.

Bharati Mukherjee aligns Peter Champion as a humanist who delivers a message of human solidarity through his selfless endeavors, yet he accompanies his actions with an Orientalist perspective that forwards the theme of the superiority of the Occident over the Indian Orient. It is also acknowledged that the novel characters hold an admiration and embodiment of the American ideals as 'new ways' of living, however, the writer contends that the American values face considerable limitations in India. To forward the statement, the protagonist notices a difference between the Peter Champion in Gauripur and the one in Bangalore, at the Bagehot mansion's dinner party:

The Gauripur Peter rode an ancient scooter, wore a kurta and blue jeans, and shunned the company of women. The Bangalore Peter was shorter than she remembered, wore a dark suit, white shirt, and red tie, and acted chummy with the two beautiful women, one in a tailored silk pantsuit and the other in an embroidered silk sari. (Mukherjee 157)

The difference that Anjali notices in Champion is in fact related to a change in her perspective and his connotation as a symbol of the American cultural values. Back in Gauripur, she perceived his as a simple person yet very held influential positions on her psyche; such influences were symbolized by physical height and posture. Oppositely, in Bangalore, despite

of his high accredited stature in Bangalore's high society, she receives him as less tall than recalled, which symbolizes the diminished influences that Champion exerts upon her. Such reduced impacts equally symbolize the evacuation of pure Americanism for the sake of a 'new Indian authenticity' that is discussed in lengthy terms in the fifth chapter. In addition, it is a demonstration of the halt of American conceptualization of modernity to march towards the production of novel values that proper to India rather than American mimicry. Mukherjee's perception is dissimilar to her literary counterparts, who appear to cherish American ideals on multiple occasions.

In addition, despite of the accredited position that Peter Champion has among the people in the mansion, the praise and the high status and the fame and its symbolism to the American global position among world nations and cultures, it is noticed that the party held a European flavor along with an Indian one symbolized through the wearing of the Sari in the thrown party. Hence, even amidst the occidental cultural environment, Indian authenticity illuminates its presence.

3.2.3.2. A Departure from Colonial Legacies

The representation of the Occident is additionally present through the character of Minnie and her Bagehot mansion. Mukherjee refers to the space to evoke the decay of the legacy of the colonial past and its replacement with modern-standards values. *Miss New India* portrays an image of the colonial legacy through orchestrating the architecture and the living standards of the space. Anjali observes the mansion closely to qualify its patterns and interior design to the Raj-era style with its architecture, furniture, paintings, walls, utensils ...etc. In addition, the residence owner Minnie Bagehot orchestrated the Britishers to a great extent; her accent, tone and behavior painted an image of a colonial British. She lives upon the "virtues like Shame, Honor, Duty, and Loyalty" (Mukherjee 120), which are regarded, by the Bagehot residents, as decayed values considering their constant references to her status as 'crazy'. Minnie exhibits living standards that are common in the Raj-era and therefore relives the past and attempts to guard the esteemed status of the mansion and its value in the society of Bangalore.

The post-colonial India has guarded the colonial legacies of the British and considers them as important sights of history. Mukherjee uses the motif of the mansion to emphasize on the importance the colonial legacy in the making of the protagonist's cultural identity: "A historically important residence" (Mukherjee 116). Previous to inhabiting the colonial space,

she appears to have no encounter with the historical past of India. The colonial legacy is not merely delivered through the landscape of the house, but through the accompanied stories, paintings and perceptions. Minnie's tone when recounting the Raj-era stories are full of pride and contentment illustrating a cherished past compared to the present era; the colonial era held cultural activities that are seen superior to the popular activities of India. The Orientalist perspective, therefore, is associated to her deeds and perspectives. She supports such an outlook through expressing her disenchantment with the current status of the Bagehot mansion as it has lost its previous respectable and 'majestic' reputation that it used to have. For her, the fact that common Indians held no high consideration for the place: "the Bagehot name doesn't strike terror anymore" (Mukherjee 200). In addition, the Orientalist perspective she possesses is better expressed through her use of the word 'vermins' referring to the Indians who no longer regard the superior status of the mansion and its colonial Orientations. She looks at them, the girls at the mansion and even Anjali with condensing looks expressing a vision of superiority and Orientalism. Consequently, it is permissible to announce that the representation of the Bagehot house and its owner send an Orientalist signal that characterize the colonial legacies in India.

Miss New India contends that colonial influences have come to decay as the colonial legacies on the nations have switched off in the contemporary era. Such message argues the departure from the postcolonial legacies to enter a new era with different cultural characteristics. The postcolonial era has witnessed a degree of faithfulness and intercultural relations with the British ex-colonizer, where the division of castes attributes a considerable status to the colonial cultural values, from a social perspective, in comparison to the Indian ones. Arjun Appadurai's anthropological endeavor in *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions to Globalization* points in his introduction that the Indian background has gradually shifted from British postcolonial influences to march towards an American content (2). Mukherjee's narrative falls consistent with Appadurai's perspective as she portrays the decay and the departure of the British colonial existence to be replaced by a modernity that is more appropriated to hyper-modernity. Similarly, Deborah Philips sees that the Bagehot house has become a residence for young females who work at the call center, which signals a transition from the colonial to the global (101). Indeed, despite of the Minnie's care about the mansion's reputation and colonial standards, the residents appear to disvalue her attempts for being considered old and outdated, and are ought to be replaced by more modern standards. In addition, the move towards the global is captured through the cherish of the American Peter

Champion as opposed to Minnie Bagehot, as he is a representative of the American modern standards.

Transcending the postcolonial legacies and influences are captured through the fall of the house of Bagehot and the death of Minnie in the last part of the novel. The evacuation and the destruction of the mansion is a symbol of the departure of the colonial influences; the fact that the house is sold in an auction to be a mere museum is Mukherjee's manner of vowing that the colonial legacies is a mere history that practices no influences upon the contemporary realities in Bangalore. Indeed, the museum motif equates a state accrediting value to the British colonial history, yet dismisses probable impacts on the socio-cultural life of the community. Furthermore, *Miss New India* articulates that the materialist spirit of the novel entrepreneurial India regards the mansion and its history as a sight of profit as the Bagehot house became a "profitable boutique for Rajoo of All-Karnataka Auction House" (Mukherjee 247). Moreover, the death of Minnie, "a victim of a ruthless city which no longer has any deference" (Philips 102) is a further indicator of the departure of the British colonial legacies as she is the embodiment of the British colonial other. Mukherjee deliberately states that "the house and its owner and everything it stood for had been dumped" (247) referring to the historical significance of the mansion and Minnie Bagehot.

3.2.3.3. English and the Linguistic Other

English language in India is regarded as an official language for serving as a linguistic unity among the numerous local cultures. Since the Independence of the state, the Indian community has favored English as the means of communication which provides a common ground without favoring one local language over the other (Southmayd, *India on the Line*, 4). In the linguistic arena, the global position of English is debated between its colonial and imperial connotation to a status of situational adequacy (Kumaravadivelu 6). Scholars and linguists have been divided on the historical position of English, where those advocating the imperial approach perceive that the spread of English as a lingua-franca is attributed to a colonial and imperial endeavor attempted by the colonial powers. However, others receive it as a lingua-franca without imperial intentions.

Reflecting such linguistic Orientations, the contemporary literary themes have been preoccupied by use of the language and its status in society. Basu sees that Bhagat uses a form of English that is not bound to regional affiliations (12); whereas, Stephanie Southmayd

receives such use as a means to appeal to a wider reading audience and therefore “remove the possibility of alienating any group with a particular aversion to another regional or cultural one” (32). However, the use of Indian-English has been altered by a naturalized accent, where the American pronunciation takes major significance. Indeed, in his *One Night @ the Call Center*, Chetan Bhagat promotes for global English, which he terms American English. The latter is different from the Indian Standard English growing out of English colonialism. The mastery of American English permits its users to penetrate the novel elite social class defined by upward mobility (Southmayd 6). And therefore, a ‘globalized’ self-expression that moved apart from the postcolonial linguistic legacies. Stephanie Southmayd relates the linguistic preferences to the call centre institutes that attempt to privilege American English over Indian-English, which is contended as an attempt for cultural homogenization resulting from globalization (5). In fact, Brinda S. Narayan’s *Bangalore Calling* argues that the call centres attempt to eradicate signs of workers’ Indian identity through forcing a neutralized accent in the field work, which extended to their behavior and identity outside the work space (Southmayd 5).

Surfing the same linguistic preference, Mukherjee depicts a good degree of appreciation of the English language compared to the local language(s). In fact, Anjali favors to read newspaper columns distributed in English rather than the local languages: "Angie picked up a tattered English-language Bangalore newspaper and started reading ... but since they were speaking in Kannada or Tamil, she chose to ignore them" (Mukherjee 82). Hence, the protagonist echoes the tendency to value a foreign language over the local ones for the economic and social connotations they appeal to. *Miss New India* represents a shift in the use of English language from Indian-English -as a legacy of British colonialism- to neutralized American English to highlight a departure from the postcolonial influences towards a global one -equating marches towards hyper-modernity.

The English language is accredited a high social status for being a ticket for economic well-being and further work opportunities, even in the parameters of the traditional Gauripur. Indeed, her sister insists that Anjali’s mastery of English would provide her with better work opportunities, while her father distributes a concern with her English manipulation as it is a threat for her suitability to close a good marriage deal for being better than the potential suitors. In addition, Anjali appears to dispossess work skills that lead to provide her with a job in the work market, yet her English language skills and excellence

seem to be enough for her to have access to a high paying employment. Further attributed importance to the English language is the protagonist's constant observation of the linguistic articulations of the people she encounters; whenever a new character is introduced, she catches their utterances to be analyzed thoroughly. For her, the adequate use of English is a social indication, where she feels more postured with the characters who accentuate their English utterances without the influence of mother tongue: "Usha Desai spoke English with a slight Indian accent. That made her less threatening" (Mukherjee 157).

A noticeable disregard for the British English contends a departure from the postcolonial influences that were prevalent after the colonial departure. The high regards attributed to the English language in the post-colonial era equates a high-valued socio-cultural belonging to an educated caste compared to Indian languages users who received no formal education. Mukherjee regards such dismissal as an anti-colonial endeavor for dis-valuing the language of the colonizer. *Miss New India* represents the British linguistic legacy in Minnie Bagehot's utterances that accentuate accurate Britishness. The mansion residents condescend Minnie and her speeches to designate her as a 'crazy' old woman, which refers to their disregard for the British presence in contemporary India; despite of historical status of the mansion and the social position of Minnie, her words are not highly valued. In addition, Anjali disqualifies Minnie's utterances from assuming a higher position as she vows her dislikes of the tenant's linguistic utterances: "Anjali's first impulse was to throttle Mad Minnie and stuff her Raj-era vocabulary back down her gullet" (Mukherjee 198), which demonstrate an intricate dislike of the householder and her speech, which in return, reflects a disregard for the British English in comparison to the American one.

The promotion of the English language with an American accent is undeniably present in Mukherjee's novel; the American pronunciation constitutes ninety percent of English language speakers populating the novel. From the early encounters with individuals in Bangalore, Anjali is alarmed by their English accents as she weights their pronunciation and utterances from American accent standards. Moreover, the Americanism in the utterances exceeds the standard uses to articulate the language's colloquial and idiomatic expressions. Indeed, the American colloquial language is observed to in the characters' swear words, exclamations and tags, which mark a deeper connection with the American culture rather than mere superficial relatedness. Mukherjee parallels such linguistic use to the call-centre lit that stresses on capturing English that is analogous to the Americans. Such linguistic emphasis

leads to construct an argument for American cultural influences and a further departure from the postcolonial influences.

The fabrication of acute English with an American accent is distributed by the call centers, where most of the characters with 'perfect' English are trained in the call centre training programs (Southmayd 31). In addition, with the prospect of working at a call center, Peter Champion trains Anjali to pronounce perfect English meeting the standards and the requirements of the institute. Mukherjee provides the reader with meticulous outlooks on how the English language crafts its way to Americanism. They have received courses on: softening consonants, crisping vowels, syllable stress, poem reciting ...etc. to train their pronunciation capacities to sound less Indian-English. Indeed, the trainers aim at crafting a speaker that naturally forgets about the influences of his own language and submerge into English perfectionism for the sake of meeting the service-needs of American consumers. Consequently, based on the latter idea, it is perceived that the use of English language departs from speeches of colonialism, imperialism, hegemony and homogeneity.

3.4. Conclusion

Girls of Riyadh delivers an image of Arabia that transcends the nationalist stands. Scholars receive that the novel provides a self-Orientalist perspective since it stresses on the socio-cultural limitations limiting the lives of the main characters (Al-Harby 176), yet the writer attributes such limitation to nationalism as a concept pronounced within the postcolonial discourse. The latter attribute the female issues to a nationalist ideology rather than cultural infrastructural; therefore, distancing from the Orientalization of the Saudi/ Arab culture. In addition, the writer marches towards an anti-nationalist image of Arabia that corresponds with a picture of a 'universal' modernity, where the female characters correspond with a female image that does not inscribe within the parameters of a Saudi cultural frame. Similarly, *Miss new India* attribute social limitations to a postcolonial nationalist ideology promoted for the sake of anti-colonial identity. The protagonist distributes agitation with the socio-cultural norms and departs towards a postnationalist stand. The latter is additionally pronounced through a depiction to a hyper-modern space characterizing Bangalore as a globalized city. Both writers exhibit a tendency to evoke postcoloniality for furnishing a theoretical background that condemns 'nationalism', as a legacy for the colonial other, for the misfortunes of the main characters. Therefore, giving credit to both Oriental cultures, and

arguing that the female characters' issues are not the effect of the Oriental cultures per-see, but are sourced from nationalism as a political extension and as a reaction to the colonial presence of the other. In addition, the female characters depict the emergence of a new generation of cultural agents who perform certain behaviors that are inscribed in the category of 'universalism', where Marc Augé uses the concept of 'non-place' to demonstrated that their actions are related to females around the globe rather than merely Saudi or Bengali/Indian.

Furthermore, the representation of the Occident in both novels exhibits a tendency to embrace the other. The concept of Occidentalism is defined as the representation of the Occident in Oriental literary fiction. According to scholars the Occident is depicted within the parameters of either rejection or assimilation, as the literary history puts the Oriental subject in a position of either admiration for the cultural and 'civilizational' standards of the other, nor a status of rejection due to its oppressive and colonial effects. Similarly, the diasporic literature vow similar intentions as the Occident is received either through a lens of rejection and alienation or an outlook of acceptance and assimilation to western culture. On the opposite, *Girls of Riyadh* delivers and image of the Occident as a space of refuge and freedom from the Saudi social limitations, yet the character appear to remain faithful to their cultural origins. Similarly, *Miss New India* depicts the Occident through characters who represent their respective cultures. The American Peter Champion portrays cross-cultural encounter between the Oriental India and the Occidental America, and who is perceived as a source of a move towards a hyper-modern space. The cultural other is not represented as the opposite to the self, but rather the same. Mukherjee's previous works exhibit a tendency to clash between cultures, yet her latest work is argued to highlight no struggles with the cultural other but a tendency to embrace it as the new image of India.

The discussed Occidentalism march the steps of Edward Said's suggestion of the unworthiness of creating a counter-discourse 'Occidentalism' that has similar agendas as 'Orientalism' for bringing no benefits (Jouhki & Pennanen 3). Henceforth, both writers portray the Occidental other as an entity of embrace rather than of rejection or assimilation. Such embrace denounces the perception of the rejection of the other on basis of antagonism and historical colonialism, and stresses on a planetary vision receiving the other as an embrave cultural body. In addition, the representation of the Occident as the bearer of refuge, freedom and individuality equates not idealization at the expense of the Oriental one,

but steps into a perspective of embrace as a cultural entity that is present in the novel realities of both communities in the light of globalization.

CHAPTER FOUR

**IDENTITY AND IMAGINATION: CONSTRUCTING THE
NEW ORIENTAL WOMAN'S IDENTITY**

Chapter Four: Identity and Imagination: Constructing the Oriental Woman's Identity

4.1. Introduction

Resting on the notion of post-structuralism and postmodernist theories of identity construction, the present chapter aims to come to terms with the identity construction of the protagonists' cultural identities amidst global flows. The previous chapter distributes an Arabian and Indian image as cross-cultural spaces that consider the Occidental other as extension to globalization, which leads to question the cultural identities of the main characters amidst global flows. The notion of cultural imagination is contended to contribute into the building of the protagonist's identities. Resting on the theoretical discourse of Benedict Anderson's *Imagined Communities*, it is argued that global flows play a major role in the identity making of the main characters. Henceforth, a cognitive approach takes a closer look into the characters' cultural environments in order to comprehend the images and circumstances conditioning their identities. Cultural cognition as an approach to literary reading considers the socio-cultural factors, present in both literary texts, as associated to the building of an Oriental cultural mind. It sheds light on the environments of the characters as cultural agents and associates its images to self-perception and self-construction. Moreover, it takes a closer look into the globally-circulating images of the cultural other and assesses their contribution to the characters' cultural minds.

The present chapter attempts to read the cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident through a cultural cognitive lens, which distances from postcolonial and Diaspora theories as the primary fields reading the cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident in the literary field. The analysis might serve as a platform for scholars to engage in similar readings for the aim of understanding the literary characters' identity construction in the age of globalization and transnational flows. In addition, the chapter provides materials for the next chapter as the imagination constructs a transcultural identity. In other words, the cultural imagination that directly and indirectly crosses borders resolves into the creation of transcultural identities that are argued to appear in the literary texts of Al-Sanea and Mukherjee.

4.2. Reading the Arab Woman's Cultural Mind Between the Self and the Other

Understanding the identity construction of the main characters in *Girls of Riyadh* requires a closer look into the cultural environment that they are exposed to. Living in within the contemporary global flows means that the surrounding environment encompass more than one culture or cultural flows, be them direct or indirect. Al-Sanea puts her main characters in a setting a trans-cultural milieu, which leads for an attempted reading in the cultural identity construction among these circulating cultures: national/ local and global.

4.2.1. Ethno-theories: Cultural Graphing of the Self

The feeling of belonging to a particular community signifies adopting the socio-cultural traits of the group that are transmitted through constant interactions with the fellow communions. The shared values, principles and manner of conduct among them constitute shared ethno-theories. Joseph Shaules uses the concept to mean the unconscious mental models that create cultural patterns and their passage from one generation to another (104). The passage of ethnotheories permits to interact meaningfully within the cultural society to construct social cognition (Shaules 136). Therefore, the social environment contributes into the passage of cultural patterns into the characters' minds in order to craft their meaningful belonging to the Arab community. The previous chapter illustrates the image of Arabia both as a traditional space and a modern one as the face of the new cultural Arabia. Henceforth, a cognitive analysis of the main characters' reception and responses to the ethnotheories furnishes an understanding of their behavior and cultural shifts. The present analysis sheds light of parental ethnotheories and education as spaces of cultural crafting.

The passage of ethno-theories is reflective of the transmission of knowledge from one generation to another, where parental upbringing constitutes a primary source of cultural conventions. The novel represents four main characters, who respond differently to their circumstances due to their different parental backgrounds; parental upbringing constitutes an important distributor of both personality traits and cultural identities (Gregg 45). Echoing the representation of Gamrah as a traditional character who maintains a bonded relationship with her other, it is assumed that the passage of cultural theories from the older generation to the new one is successful. Gary Gregg notices that parents in MENA societies "nurture the formation of lifelong bonds of loyalty and interdependence" (47); which leads to a continuous

string between parents and their offspring. Thereupon, the relation between Gamrah and her mother promotes the success of the national hegemonies that dictate the ‘feminine’ role of women in Saudi society, where positive attitudes towards the national culture are illustrated in their behavior and thoughts. In other words, the traditional feminine image of the pious Arabian woman find an expression in Gamrah’s mind due the successful passage of her mother’s instructions and advice as an extension to collectivist values.

Gamrah’s behavior depends on her mother’s Orientations and advice concerning the details of her life: “her mother’s delighted approval had filled Gamrah with confidence and pride” (Al Sanea 13). Shihada notes that mothers, in the Saudi society, have the responsibility to pass the female traditional role to their daughters, who instruct them about the right actions in their appropriate moments (61). Joseph Shaules uses the concept ‘interdependent self’ to designate the identities that tend to rely on others to act meaningfully, which reflects the collectivist communities (108). Thus, Gamrah’s individualist behavior are fragile endeavors; the Saudi collectivist values provide the ‘right’ behavior in every situation, which means being unable to think and behave according to her own perspectives. Henceforth, reflecting Ruth Benedict’s notion of fear, guilt and shame cultures, Gamrah takes no individual actions without the consent of others highlighting the emotional effect of nationalist hegemonies in the protagonist’s mind. Therefore, Gamrah’s dependence on her mother’s Orientations is reflective of the social behavior that rests on a perceived more reliable source of action rather than promoting her individual perceptions and independent problem solving.

Moreover, according the Vygotsky, the cultural environment provides the necessary tools for individuals to approach their problems and questions to later be developed into higher mental processes where one directs his own individualized actions (Abdellatif Mami 58). Yet, Gamrah’s mind appears to disassociate from individualized thinking process and heavily lies on the ethno-theories delivered by her mother, as her cultural supervisor. Such cognitive ‘incapacity’ is argued to be generated from the nationalist hegemonies of the Saudi national culture that stresses on the primacy of socio-cultural rules over individuality; therefore, the notion of freedom of thought and action, displayed in the use of higher cognitive skills, are dismissed in favor of social mimicry of the early generation.

Contrary to Gamrah, Sadeem receives no motherly Orientations, which explicate a defective passage of ethnotheories. Sadeem appears to have traditional Orientations similar to her friend Gamrah, yet her lack of motherly constant cultural Orientation led to act within the

confines of her own individuality, perceptions and social mimicry rather than following structured patterns of behavior. In other words, due to death of her mother at a young age, Sadeem receives no maternal guidance and therefore, a lack in well-defined and Oriented cultural instructions to perform meaningful actions that correspond with the Saudi deep cultural perceptions. On the surface level, Sadeem's actions relate to social standards and cultural morals, where she behaves meaningfully within the Saudi society; she is a good student, a hijabi girl who obeys the rules and wants to be the perfect feminine Saudi wife to her husband Waleed; she meticulously follows social protocols when it comes to social behavior. However, she is individually distant from comprehending the handed rules and roles as she lacked detailed Orientations. Henceforth, it is argued that Sadeem's behavior is intuitively oriented rather than culturally studied; the collective social values, that are crucial to the Saudi society, seem to diverge as Sadeem calls for her individuality and intuition to be the guide of her conduct with Waleed. Her sexual approach to him equated a misdemeanor in the collectivist mind of Waleed, who perceives her individuality as a lack of constraint, which means a non-fit for the social role of a pious wife. Consequently, the lack of parental orientation -as the means for the passage of ethno-theories- leave a room for an amount of intuitive behavior that is directed by individual orientations rather than cultural patterns structuring social and personal performances.

The passage of ethno-theories leading to affect mind-perceptions is additionally distributed through Michelle who appears to be affected by her 'hybrid' environment. She is born to an American mother -carrying American ideals- and a liberal Saudi father, who appears to disengage with the traditional image of the Arab culture. Michelle's mind is argued to absorb the trans-cultural ethno-theories that are existent in American and Saudi Arabia. Joseph Shaules (2015) sees that "Cultural differences in parenting and culture effect the cognitive and emotional development of children" (Shaules 106). The father fosters his daughter's sense of freedom and individuality in multiple occasions; he supports her decision to independently live and study in San Francisco and work in Dubai at a TV station. The father character's direct statements in the narrative are absent, yet his impacts on his daughter are apparent in her behavior and speeches about him. As an illustration, Michelle announces her wish to advance a career among world stars and celebrities, and asserts that her father would be 'eventually' supportive of her decisions: "never mind that her father had not let her attend even one of them-she would convince him with time" (Al-Sanea 248). The passage delivers two main cultural stands that are imprinted in Michelle's cultural mind: independence

and collectivism. The two notions appear to be clashing since collectivist thinking contradicts with independence, which is based on individualism; however, the hybrid cultural identity of the father (lived both in Saudi Arabia and America), transmitted through his responses to his daughter's decisions, explicates the passage of both cultural stands. From the collectivism perspective, the father plays a major role in the decisions made by his daughter unlike Michelle's mother, who is almost non-existent in Al-Sanea's narration; he maintains a decisive role in his daughter's life as he oversees her actions and orients her towards a better living. On the other hand, the individualized perceptions are apparent in the notion of support of Michelle's decisions, choices and individuality. Moreover, Michelle collects ethno-theories from the Saudi environment exhibited in her tendency for a marital relationship rather than pursuing a career, at the early parts of the narration. The Saudi Oriental perspective of women's social role as a wife and a care giver is illustrated in her behavior and her desire to marry Faisal, even if disapproving socio-cultural rules and roles.

The social upbringing of Lamees is more related to her regional origins. Her family members are descendants of the area of Hijaz. The latter is represented as a cosmopolitan space that embraces cultural diversity and change unlike the Najd region (Yamani 12). Thereupon, Lamees's parents are more tolerant towards diversity and changes unlike the Najdi Gamrah and Sadeem. Based on the analysis of Mai Yamani, the Najdi individual is less responsive to individuality and diversity as their cultural mind is oriented towards rigidity and toughness (12). Reflecting such a statement, Hijazi people, in the novel, tend to be more cosmopolitan and open-minded, which is reflected in Lamees's cultural mind. She is more oriented towards the cultural other on inter-national level; her mind is more oriented towards the diverse other as she befriends the religiously-different Fatima 'the Shite', who she finds interesting. In addition, her parents transmitted a degree of freedom of action to their daughter communicated through their responses to her wild actions at school. Her rebellious character to the repressive/restrictive norms at school is met with leniency, which signifies that they are more supportive of diversity unlike Gamrah's mother. Thereupon, they reflect the non-restrictive cultural mind of the Hijazi, which permits a cultural escape from the national hegemonies practiced by political leaders. Consequently, it opens a space for individuality and diversity that is noted in the cultural behavior of Lamees.

Furthermore, *Girls of Riyadh* represents the educational space as an extension to nationalist orientations defining social and cultural behavior of the Saudi community, and

therefore, reflecting hegemonic strategies employed to promote a homogenized community, as argued in the third chapter. Indeed, the educational sphere is represented as a strict space that is devoted to the promotion of the community's cultural conventions that utilize what Ruth Benedict calls as fear, shame and guilt cultures. In *Shame, Interpersonal Behavior, Psychopathology, and Culture*, Cohen Vandello and Rantilla state that Muslim societies tend to focus on the emotions of individuals to promote a culture of order and stability, where the collective interests have the highest consideration. Similarly, Gary S. Gregg's *The Middle East: A Cultural Psychology* argues that «honor and shame indeed are crucially important features of MENA cultures, and that they shape the personality development of perhaps most individuals (28). Henceforth, the educational restrictions appeal to the emotions of the girls in order to adhere to religious actions. The emotion of fear is traced in the protagonists' reactions when they heard about the sudden inspection that the school administration commanded. The use of fear impacts the girls' as their minds remind them of their culturally erroneous actions, and therefore, any misdemeanor would be dismissed from their part. Al Munajjed contends that "the function of the educational system in Saudi Arabia is to establish a religious, moral and traditional entity in the Saudi society" (Al Munajjed 65). Moreover, the lists of the school restricted items tend to appeal to human emotions that are disregarded by the religious community for possessing no added values. Therefore, their minds imprinted a single cultural framework in the name of the Saudi national religious identity.

Failure of Ethno-theories

Considering the social environment, as the primary source of cultural identity, leads to adopt a deterministic perspective; it states a direct relation between the environment and identity construction. Henceforth, announces that the Girls are the cultural replica of the Saudi environment and ethno-theories. However, Al-Sanea delivers a representation of characters as modern who display anti-nationalist behavior, which leads to assume that Stuart Hall's notion of post-structuralist identity, assume a role in the construction of the protagonists' cultural identities. Thus, the protagonists display a degree of rejection of their ethno-theories and favor an emotional attachment to same-generation peers.

The demonstration of the failure of ethno-theories in the modern era is the criticism that the writer holds towards society. The protagonists exhibit a tendency to revolt against the social and cultural standards of the community, and adopt 'modern' cultural behaviors explained in the previous chapter. The received ethno-theories of the Saudi community

display a greater discontent from the girls as they step outside the social norms. They adopt non-religious performances like drinking, unclenching hijab, secretly meeting with men and approaching sexual behaviors. In addition, they perform actions that are not consistent with the social manners and conformities like smoking and driving cars. In addition, the protagonists occupy the public sphere as they are workers and grad students (Algahtani 63). The girls are aware of the social and political ignorance they live in, and they want to change their position (Michalak-Pikulska 107) through their individual choices like relationship with men.

The friendship among the four girls is in fact an emotional bond among them as they confine their cultural disappointments to each other. Al-Harby notices that there is a strong friendship among the four female protagonists, which becomes essential to each of the girls and surpasses the importance of the family (167). Indeed, at multiple occasions in the story, the girls share new experiences that are not consistent with the social and cultural norms of Arabia: they drink wine, play cards, smoke and drive without restrictions. Their behavior is considered as a misdemeanor for their parents as it is inconsistent with the Saudi ethno-theories that communicate an oversight of one's behavior. Such solidarity among the Girls reflects the ineffective passage of cultural traditions for being inconstant with the described 'modern' behavior of the new generation. In fact, they are emotionally saturated with the received disappointments from their cultural environment. Michelle, Sadeem and Gamrah are emotionally dissatisfied with patterns of male behavior towards them due to Saudi cultural conventions that promotes certain rules and roles which are inconsistent with their novel identities.

Moreover, the emotional assistance of the girls to each other is demonstrated in the narrator, who recounts her friends' experiences: feelings, actions, reactions and secrets, which display the narrator's knowledge about the smallest details of her friends' lives and emotional disappointments. As an illustration, Sadeem's sexual approaches to Waleed and her detailed feelings after her divorce are described meticulously by the narrator suggesting the confidence that the friends have to each other. In addition, despite of Gamrah's traditional perception, she finds refuge in her friends as she distributes her feelings and experiences with Rashid. Consequently, it is calculated that the strength of the friendship among the four girls is an extension to the failure of Saudi ethno-theories, which deliver no alternative for their misfortunes. The unreliability of former has delivered the fate of divorce for both Gamrah and

Sadeem and the cultural rejection of Michelle to marry Faisal for being a hyphenated Saudi. Moreover, Gamrah's mother's delivered ethno-theories fail to provide adequate management for her daughter's marital relationship; whereas Sadeem's failure to read the cultural mind of Waleed leads her to divorce (Al-Harby 152). Therefore, it is confident to say that the traditional perceptions are invalid to contribute to a decent living -in modern terms- for the four girls.

4.2.2. Imagination and the Other: Identity and Cultural Flows

In his *Imagined Communities*, Benedict Anderson speaks about the feeling of belonging to a particular community is associated to imagination, where multiple projections of theory of imagination are celebrated in different fields. In the present analysis, Arjun Appadurai's notion of 'scapes' are used in order to form the theoretical basis for reading the cultural mind of the protagonists vis-à-vis their encounter with the western other in a space of cultural/global flows. As highlighted in the second chapter, imagination constructs the basis for cultural identity construction. Barbra Michalak-Pikulska (2013) observes that *Girls of Riyadh* underline the question of the relation between the Arab world and the western world in terms of clash of civilization. The west is present the phenomenon of the flow of technological innovations and social thought that has impacts on the mental, psychological and the behavioral life of the main characters. Therefore, she associates the protagonists' modern cultural behavior to the impact of the cultural other transferred through global means (107). Hence, Barbara notices the impact of global flows on the psyche of the characters, yet she offers no explicit analysis of how their cultural minds work when faced with these global flows of the cultural other. Within the same understanding, Agar (2002) comprehends that "cultures that affect one at any given moment are multiple, local to global, partial and variable in their impact" (Quoted in Shaules, 'Deep Culture' 33). By the same token, Hofstede (1997) understands that behavior is predetermined by mental programs (ibid).

4.2.2.1. Ethno-scapes: Immigration and Tourism

The global flows permitted individuals to displace from one geographical location to another without boundaries. This accelerated human motion engendered cultural changes in both the local and the global spheres. Arjun Appadurai uses the term "ethno-scapes" to define the flow of people from one place to another. The 'ethno-flows' come in the form of human tourism, immigration, refugees, exiles, guest workers and others (33). The accelerated transnational

realities promote for a redefinition of the meaning of nationalism and belonging, where the traditional characterizations of nation and nationhood are dismissed, and are replaced by dissimilar conceptualizations corresponding with the transnational circumstances. Within this understanding, Homi Bhabha receives culture as both transnational and translational (172). In his “Nation and Narration”, he defines the concept of ‘nation’ within the framework of narratives: “Nations, like narratives, lose their origin in the myths of time and only realize their horizons in the mind’s eye” (Bhabha 1). To put it differently, the contemporary realities, relating human motion to globalization require a redefinition of nation, nationalism and allegiance.

In her article “Re-imagining the Imagined Community: Homeland Tourism and the Role of Place”, Jillian Powers points to the notion of tourism and its relation cultural identity construction. Although her work is concerned with homeland tourism for diasporic communities, it can be similarly applied to foreign tourists since it relates to the fact that globalization offers novel ways of living nationally and existing/imagining globally (Powers 2). She stresses that tourists remain faithful to their cultural heritage, yet incorporate novel actions to craft new identities (3). Such a perspective finds an echo with the objectives and readings of the present work. *Girls of Riyadh* captures the ethno-scapes of the contemporary world through her four protagonists, who experience direct encounters with the cultural other/ west leading to capture their various responses to their cultural relocation. Indeed, Sadeem, Michelle, Gamrah and Lamees move from one culturally cosmopolitan space to another to craft their own perspectives and announce their diverse reactions to the Occident. Noura Algahtani notices that the Girls tend to visit and immigrate to cosmopolitan luxurious world cities like: London, Paris, Dubai, Los Angeles, San Francisco, Chicago, and others (29). It is argued that the girls interact differently with the cultural other depending on their cultural minds once meeting the other.

4.2.2.2. Memory and Cultural Encounter

Memory and the intuitive mind play a major role in Gamrah’s ‘scape’ to America with her husband Rashid. Once, she is married, she dislocates to America to be with her husband who appears to work and study in the western America. The novel represents the relationship to her husband as an unsuccessful one due to the differences between her cultural mind and his seemingly ‘Occidentalized’ mind. Joseph Shaules talks about memory and the intuitive mind as key cognitive components that permit successful interactions with the cultural community

(55). Yet, he questions the validity of the former to establish effective interactions once in an intercultural situation (64). The study of memory has taken a larger space in the inter/multi-cultural studies, where remembrance of the home remains intact through cultural memory. Homi Bhabha considers memory as an essential component in the immigrant experience, where both the cultural east and west meet in a multicultural environment. Within such understanding, memory refers to the collected images of the home land transferred when dislocating to a culturally different environment. The stress on the notion of memory when exposed to a multicultural environment has received a considerable attention from the postcolonial discourse primarily conceptualized by Homi Bhabha, as a leading theorist of postcolonialism. Yet, such perspective finds limitations in the intercultural contemporary realities, where the nature of the intercultural experience finds a different facet. Françoise Krøl in her *Critical Identities in Contemporary Anglophone Diasporic Literature* sees that diasporic experience is geared towards the past, memories of the lost country and the sense of nostalgia (75). Krøl talks about the theme of ‘luggage’ as Gamrah immigrates to USA with a good deal of luggage: memories, past, experiences (41). Her memories do not permit an integration of assimilation to the new occidental culture.

Corresponding with the above-mentioned transnational realities, the notion of memory can be defined as the images of the home culture. These images include behavior, thoughts, actions and other meanings shared and comprehended by the community members (Appadurai 33). It is argued the girls of Riyadh carry along with them the memory of their home culture to the occidental space to fuel diverse cultural interactions. The cultural memories of Arabia are argued to be installed in the minds of the main characters to direct their responses to the western other. According to Joseph Shaules, the images of the individuals’ past stored in the mind construct their deep culture, which in return fuels intuitive actions (11).

Gamrah’s immigration to America equates a cultural exposure to the other that culminated into divorce, as a symbol of disruption with the cultural other. In his article entitled “Breaking Silence in Raja Al-Sanea’s girls of Riyadh”, Isam M. Shihada announces that Al-Sanea highlights the issue of divorce and its impacts on the Saudi woman (63). However, it is worthy to note that the issue of divorce in *Girls of Riyadh* is considered as a cultural issue rather than a ‘feminist’ concern. She attunes not with the life in America which puts her in a situation of conflict with her husband Rashid, who appears to have assimilated to

the American cultural principles. Rashid is represented as an ‘Occidentalized’ individual, who perfectly assimilates to the American culture and disfavors Oriental behavior lead by Gamrah. Al-Harby puts such rejection as self-Orientalism (157), where the self the perceived as inferior to the other. His adopted Orientalism is distributed when seeing Gamrah’s veil as a source of embarrassment when in public (Shahida 62); therefore, his mind is wired to perceive that the Oriental behavior is less significant than the occidental and thus a source of mortification. Moreover, his mind seems to be unappreciative of Gamrah’s pious actions: he dislikes her remaining indoors, her ‘feminine’ submissiveness, and her dependence on him for outdoor activities. He kept “grumbling about her [Gamrah] laziness and how she never left the apartment had grown louder” (Al-Sanea 56). His constant complains demonstrate their different cultural minds. His occidental behavior favored women with an occidental perspective, who accounts for her own self without relying on her husband in different matters. He incited her to learn to drive not to be reliability in a country that cherishes responsibility, freedom and individuality. In his mind, reflecting the American Western perspective, a woman is ought to be independent, free, responsible and self-reliant, which explains his attraction to Kari -a hyphenated American Japanese woman whom Rashid has an affair with.

The protagonist is represented as a traditional individual, who attunes with the Saudi cultural performances; therefore, her mind is wired to performing actions that are merely associated to the Arab deep culture. Joseph Shaules associates the latter to the intuitive mind; that acts meaningfully without long cognitive processing -instant reactions to the cultural environment. Immanuel Kant associates the concept to individual behavior that is sourced from feelings and emotions; whereas Joseph Shaules associates the concept to unconsciousness (52). Pointing out to the latter, Shaules distances from the Freudian perspective and assumes that the contribution of cultural memories to the making of the intuitive cultural mind that operates based on implicit knowledge experienced in the cultural environment (55). Gamrah’s unconscious mind is wired on the Saudi cultural performances that distributed “Concrete behaviors are grounded in cultural values and habits that take a long time to understand” (Shaules 31). Memories of gender segregation, the veil, female submissiveness, and the occupation of the home sphere constitute the basis of Gamrah’s behavior even in a culturally different environment. Being a traditional character signifies a successful passage of the Saudi ethno-theories constituting the basis of her behavior, explaining an unsuccessful assimilation to the American culture. The cultural behavior of

Gamrah, ideologies and comportment do not seem to match Rashid's perspective and his adopted cultural mind. She attempts to read his mind, yet his actions are not consistent with the Saudi ethno-theories, which puts her in a state of confusion and shock. For her cultural repertoire, the Saudi male favors the 'feminine' version of Arabia according to the instructions of her mother, who does not seem to secede from interventions through her advices. The latter are symbols of the persistence of Saudi ethno-theories furtherly imprinted in the mind of the protagonist. To sum up, in Gamrah's mind, the 'feminine' duty of women is to secure her family's home sphere, where the husband responds back to her duties with love and respect; however, her Oriental mind fails to trigger responses in her husband's westernized mind and therefore fails to attune with the western culture.

4.2.2.3. Ethno-dislocation and the Adaptive Mind

Contrary to Gamrah, both Michelle and Sadeem display a tendency to cope with the cultural changes once in an occidental environment. The previous chapter visualizes the Occident as a space of refuge from the socio-cultural limitations imposed in the Saudi society, which plays as a leading factor in both protagonists' adoption of the occidental culture in both England and America. Both Sadeem and Michelle are responsive to the western culture once they travel to England, Paris and the United States of America. Thereupon, it is contended that the constant displacement from the Arab cultural environment to a western one directed their Arab mind to culturally change, hence adopting new behavior that appear alien to an Arab self. Joseph Shaules relates the adoptive mind to "the emergence of new patterns of behavior to meet the cultural changes" (Shaules 42). On the same line of understanding, the theory of culture learning approach, which sees that social interactions abroad can be construed as mutually organized skilled performances similar to other motor skills; therefore, cultural expressions are executed meaningfully (Slor 76).

In fact, the adoption of western behavior has found roots in the postcolonial world, where the western behavior is exercised by Arabs; therefore, the incorporation of the occidental behavior is not particularly a novel phenomenon on the Arab cultural arena. Leila Aboulela's *Minaret* attests for the westernized behavior of the protagonist who exhibits western Orientations due to the legacies of the western colonial presence. Ngugi Wa Thiongo's *Decolonizing the Mind* speaks of cultural behavior in the post-colonial world, where the ex-colonized mind memorizes the cultural behavior of the Occident for being familiarized with it to a larger extent, which has driven the cultural adoption of the western

culture (Krøl 32). On the other hand, the migratory flows of immigrants from the Arab space to the western one have highlighted an adoption of the western culture. Similarly, *Girls of Riyadh* accounts for the behavioral changes of the protagonists once meeting the cultural other through their constant travels. The ethno-flows of both girls from Arabia to the west on multiple occasions has impacted their views and perceptions about cultural behavior and belonging. On this account, Bachelard's *The Poetic of Space* (1994) puts into light the relation between the space and identity and the interplay between the representations of a country on the individual psyche (Krøl 33). That is, the constant visits to the occidental space and its image in the mind provoke psychological responses leading to alteration of the cultural behavior. By the same token, Joseph Shaules (2015), among the cultural cognitive scholars, uses the term plasticity to evoke the mind's capacity to adopt and adapt to cultural changes.

As an illustration, once arriving to London, Sadeem rushes to change her dress from the Saudi Abaya to Jeans and T-shirt, which exhibits her embrace of the western culture through adopting their dress code instead of the Saudi Abaya and scarf. Moreover, she adopts a non-Saudi behavior when freely interacting with the opposite gender in different public spaces. Indeed, Sadeem's work and fun circle appear to encompass males more than females as her closest friend is the Pakistani Tahir; multiple celebrations and night-outs appear to animate her presence in London. Furthermore, the notion of adopting the cultural standards of the western culture is exhibited in the Sadeem's acoustic talents displayed through performing a piano piece in front of a mixed-race and mixed-gender audience. In addition, at the bar, Sadeem exhibits her acoustic talents when she performs a piano piece in front of mixed-race and mixed-gender audience. Her behavior shows her cultural embrace of the Oriental other without restraint. In cognitive terms, the notion of 'plasticity' appears to deliver a cognitive explanatory statement for Sadeem's adoption of the western culture.

From a deterministic perspective, one's cultural environment provides a set of performances ensuring the meaningful interaction among the social community, whereas an encounter with a different culture appears to lead to 'cultural shock'. However, in accordance with Stuart Hall's 'poststructuralist' understanding of identity, the notion of cultural-mind plasticity find attunement to come to terms with the behavioral changes in a foreign cultural environment (Hall 284). Under this perspective, Sadeem's 'plastic mind' (Shaules 92) permits her to adopt and adapt to the western cultural environment, which holds different -if not contradictory- traits. The constant travels to London that Sadeem had throughout years with

her parents gave her access to a mutual understanding with the cultural westerners and therefore, act meaningfully once there. Therefore, Sadeem's 'adoptive mind' (Shaules 83) as a result of the mentioned neuro-plasticity furnished an ability to adapt to the novel cultural inputs exposed to in the western space, and therefore, she has been able to develop new habits and performances. Besides, it is worthy to mention that the cultural downfalls received from her culture, exemplified in her divorce from Waleed for traditional cultural reasons, injected her mind with refusal of the cultural elements attached to the Arabian social environment. Contrary to the mother environment, London offers escapist cultural activities the relief the pressures of the limitations imposed in her society. Hence, traveling to an Occidental environment has impacted the cultural behavior of Sadeem making her cultural mind more responsive to the cultural other through adopting western behavior that are alien, if not opposite, to the Arabian cultural performances.

Michelle on the other hand, has been receptive of the American culture since her infancy. She is born in America to an American mother, which highlights a stronger influence of the occidental culture in her behavior. *Girls of Riyadh* attests for the occidental behavior of Michelle performing as a cultural guide for her friends in Arabia illustrated in Gamrah's wedding party, "the music blared and the girls danced and smoked and played cards" (Al-Snea 20). Joseph Shaules sees that the American deep culture attest for the freedom of choice encountered everyday even in simple matters (77). Indeed, her Occidentalized performances encompass an assertion of the American ideals of individualism, freedom and the pursuit of happiness. Her actions along with her constant criticism of the Saudi society attest for the incarnation of the western ideal of freedom and therefore alarming a disposal of the limitations inscribed in the Saudi society; she believes that she has the right to perform actions that appeals to her individuality rather than conforming to social standards. As an illustration, Michelle demonstrates a good knowledge of wine etiquette and brand types, and incites her friends to consume wine while forbidden in Arabia. Alcoholic beverages are illegal in Saudi Arabia, yet the girls appear to exhibit delight for wine consumption under the influence of Michelle. Hence, she is represented as a symbol of the western culture due to her hybrid culture.

Michelle's departure to the United States for studies has in fact contributed to change in her identity as she became more Oriented towards the occidental culture rather than the Oriental one. Her presence in America has stabilized her identity from loss to recognition.

The early part of the story, the narrative attests for the cultural loss that Michelle feels in Arabia for her cultural-hybrid nature; she feels dis-Oriented and different compared to her friends. Yet, her visit to America has contributed to self-recognition and an adoption of the American-self characterized by individuality, freedom, and the pursuit of happiness. The protagonist's dismissal of cultural loss is perceived to be the result of cultural comparison between the cultural east and west. Indeed, Michelle's presence in both cultural spaces indicates for her constant comparison and criticism as she is the voice of cultural difference or 'clash of civilizations' in the novel.

Cultural comparison rushed her mind since her first landing in San Francisco airport as she notices a greater difference between the environment in American and Arabia. Her mind had been adapted to social atmosphere of Arabia characterized by interferences as an extension to collectivist principles. Contrary to the latter, America offers an air of individuality where the mind is more oriented towards the occupations of the self as an extension of individualism. The freedom that Michelle senses upon her arrival is in fact her felt disposal of social interferences as no person minds her actions. In Arabian malls, as a public space, the novel introduces an atmosphere of tenseness due to constant surveillance on the behavior of other people. Here, despite of Michelle's hybrid nature and her awareness of the cultural differences, her presence in America alarmed her mind to notice differences. Although Michelle's early life was spent exposed to the occidental culture, her departure to Arabia appears to craft her mind to be more Oriental than her wishes. According to Joseph Shaules's notion of deep culture (x), Michelle's long and deep connection to the Saudi culture for several years has made her blind to cultural differences while in Arabia, yet comparison recovered once arriving to USA.

Furthermore, Françoise Krøl uses the concept of 'luggage theme' to distinct between the immigrants who travel 'light' and those who travel with 'luggage', which signify a stress on the importance of past experiences and memories of the home (Krøl 41). Michelle appears to travel 'light' to America for possessing no strong ties with the Saudi culture; besides, her memories of Arabia are tainted with disappointment and disapproval. Therefore, Michelle vows cultural allegiance to the occident for representing a space of freedom and the expression of individuality. Michelle's presence in America indicates a total immersion in the occidental culture under the guidance of Matti. In the third chapter, Matti is represented as a symbol of the American culture as he assists her steps through every experience she goes

through. Her experiences however, included further cultural comparison between the east and the west as she favors the occidental one for attributing more freedom and individuality to her. As an instance, the notion of opinion appears to differ between the two cultures. Public opinion coalesced around a single view- the view backed by the most powerful people” (Al-Sanea 185). The exchange of opinion equated power where opinion “did not necessarily represent what people really thought” (184) but equated a status of power, where the most heard opinions were of those in power. This noted image represents the notion of collectivism where opinions are shared among people and are adopted collectively, where leaders’ utter opinions and others follow without diversion of the common laws and perspectives. Consequently, Michelle’s presence in America and her integration in the deep American life made her identity change and adopt different perspectives that the ones she used to have when she lived in Saudi Arabia. To illustrate Michelle’s cultural identity shift after her re-encounter with the occidental culture is her statement about the felt difference between her and her friends’ minds.

However, despite of the adoptive mind that both Sadeem and Michelle develop during their presence in the occident, their Oriental cultural minds appear to remain unchanged. Sadeem’s engagement with the occident and her non-Saudi behavior does not interrupt her Saudi behavioral patterns. It is argued that the challenges that she encounters in Saudi Arabia are in fact socially imposed limitations dictated by political leaders, which means her mind disposes of social impositions rather than cultural principles defining the Saudi identity. Indeed, her constant presence with the Pakistani Muslim Tahir exhibits her Oriental Orientations: “She was especially comfortable with Tahir, a Muslim Pakistani colleague” (Al-Sanea 116). A sense of comfort is attributed to the fact of being Muslim, which signify the ability to read her religious/cultural mind and therefore, ensures that many limitations would not be crossed. Moreover, Sadeem’s choice of an Arab piano piece to play at the bar in front of an occidental audience displays her cultural faithfulness to the Arab culture. Her piano skills are intuitively crafted in an Arab cultural environment with an appreciative reception of the Arab music, which demonstrates and argue for her unconscious faithfulness to the Arab culture. Her piano skills share an Arab memory reflective of the Arab community.

Consequently, Sadeem’s touristic presence in London for a short period led to a further assertion of her cultural identity, where her conscious practices exhibit her relation and attachment to her culture and cultural practices. However, her conscious perceptions

positioned her in a space of criticism and denial of the socio-cultural restrictions that shape the Saudi surface culture.

4.2.2.4. Mediascapes and the Shaping of an Imagined-self

According to Appadurai, “Mediascapes refer both to the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce and disseminate information (newspapers, magazines, television stations, and film-production studios)” (35). These data are, in fact, received images of distant communities and individuals that perform certain impacts on the receiver’s mind. The diffusion of these images is argued to be pregnant with cultural messages that are disseminated throughout the globe to meet certain ends of media corporations (35). The novel technologies and media brought new realities to women’s lives, especially in patriarchal communities. The internet has permitted the Arab woman to have a global voice and provided opportunities of networking and therefore a platform for identity articulation (Guta & Karolak 117). On the same wavelength, Morley and Robin notice that the transmitted para-social images drive psychological impacts on the receptive audience without direct contact, but through taking the example of trauma resulting from TV transmitted tragedies (131). In addition, the German psychoanalyst Claus-Dieter Rath believes that today’s world lives within a ‘television geography’ where cyber/ technological and electronic transmission cross national borders, where the planetary images transmitted reaches inside homes without direct interactions (131).

Girls of Riyadh as socio-cultural artifact delivers an image of the contemporary Arab female whose life is assisted by the abundant presence of media and therefore the exposure to the planetary disseminated images. Indeed, internet, social media, TV, and media world appear to have a significant presence in the life of the girls, which leads to assume the connection between these images and the girls’ trans-cultural minds. In other words, it is argued that the mediascapes tend to impact the main characters’ cultural identities. The scholarly literature available on the subject of media in the novel, Al-Harby (2018) emphasizes on the contribution of the cyber-space, where she argues that the online world, in Arab women’s lives, is received as a medium for revolutionary actions (154). Also, Oliver Roy understands that the cyber space offers a space of self-expression and active membership to a certain community, as articulated in *Girls of Riyadh*. Indeed, the internet demonstrates to be an important part in the lives of these women to interact with the distant communities (Santesson & McClung 121).

Media and new media play a major role in the lives of the protagonists as they are constantly exposed to various images of the distant local and global communities. Benedict Anderson believes that media or what he terms ‘print-capitalism’ contribute to the feeling of belonging to a particular group of people (Benedict 43). These print-capitalisms are additionally argued to take a transnational facet to reach planetary audience; and therefore, assuming a role of mediator of culture, which in return impacts socio-cultural perceptions of the media-receivers. In fact, Hollywood and film industries have been constantly present in the lives of Lamees, Gamrah, Michelle and Sadeem since their youth. The school ground was a setting for exchange of movie tapes among girls to secretly watch them at home.

They were the latest American movies ... there were *Braveheart*, *The Nutty Professor* and a few others that the girls’ brothers got from Dubai or Bahrain or from American compounds in Riyadh where they sell noncensored movies. (Al-Sanea 47)

These tapes are an illustration of Appadurai’s notion of mediascapes, where the movies [mediascapes] provide a large and complex form of images (34) that blur the boundaries among distant communities. The source of the tapes appears to parallel Appadurai’s notion of deterritorialization as these media-productions transfer from one space to another without boundaries to be consumed by a global audience. Henceforth, the formers contains, not only entertaining images, but cultural and ideological pictures of the occidental producers, who write the scripts, direct and produce movies according to occidental standards. In addition, they disseminate cultural content to different spaces through the different corporations located in cosmopolitan cities. Indeed, the content of these tapes carries British cultural content (*Braveheart*) that transfer a portion of the British history to a world audience and therefore disseminating historical images about the culturally distant Britain. Appadurai emphasizes that “media creates communities without a sense of place” (29), as he comprehends media as the distribution of electronic capabilities to produce information (34). Such acquaintance with these para-social images contributes to the accumulation of knowledge about the distant unknown community. Hence, the cultural other -as the source of the disseminated images- is no longer the unknown other.

Furthermore, the novel introduces Gamrah as a loyal viewer of the American sitcom series ‘Sex and the City’ while in America. Gamrah is previously argued to be highly

impacted by the Saudi ethno-theories, possesses a Saudi cultural memory, and refuses to adapt to the American culture, which disclaims her association with an Occidentalized self. However, it is argued that Gamrah's perceptions exhibit a degree of alteration due to her media experiences. Indeed, "Gamrah followed that show avidly even though she could only understand a little of what the characters were saying to each other" (87). Here, the use of the term 'avidly' announces her eagerness and particular interests in watching the show even if linguistic barriers existed. 'Sex and the City' is abundant with post-feminist standards as the four females recount and live their lives according to their own standards and beliefs. Therefore, the series delivers the message of female empowerment disseminated throughout the globe through transnational media corporations. Television as media is argued not only to mediate images of different identities and life styles, but plays a role in lifestyles also (Appadurai 36). By the same token, Christopher Coker suggests that "the impact of television lies not at the level of opinion and concepts, but at the level of sense rations and patters of perception" (Morley & Robins 133). Indeed, Gamrah's constant attending of the series has impacted her perception and behavior to adopt self-empowering attitudes; she succumbs into the learning of new skills, habits and mindset: "Gamrah spent months learning how to use it [computer] ... tried to rely on herself as much as possible" (Al-Sanea 88). The behavior of Gamrah appears to carry more self-reliance and empowerment as a result of her constant exposure to self-empowering images. Moreover, when back to KSA, she starts her own entrepreneurial business to economically depend on herself rather than on her family.

Moreover, the influence of mediascapes is more apparent with Michelle's character as her life career is in the media information sector. Being exposed to the flow of international media, it is confident to contend that Michelle's identity conception is influenced by the media sphere to stimulate her possible self. Michelle studies information technology at the American University of Dubai and works at media station "on weekly TV youth program" (Al-Sanea 230). Her job granted her international access to information, news and world VIPs. The narrative states:

Every day they surfed Arab and foreign internet sites searching for breaking arts news ... They were very enthusiastic and thorough, and the producer gave them responsibility for handling the entire arts section on their own (Al-Sanea 230)

In fact, her job permitted her to engage in a worldwide network involving people and celebrities from different cultural and national origins. Her success and constant presence with

this type of atmosphere allows her to perform different actions and be engaged in a culturally wider circle. Hence, the international connections via Mediascapes “opened up new horizons for Michelle” (230).

The media setting is argued to trigger Michelle’s imagined-self; “Possible selves emerge from images within proximal social environments and experiences” (Marshall et al. 141). Indeed, Michelle’s notion of possible-self is crafted through her interaction with media-disseminated images. Her mind pictures her future as a successful person who marches the path of celebrities and media, which is seen as an embodiment of the ‘American dream’. In fact, she dreams about seeing her portrait in magazines with American celebrities like Brad Pitt and Johnny Depp, “she fantasizes about magazines and radio-channels” (248). Sipping both from the notion of ‘the American dream’ and the media-scapes, Michelle alters her self-perception to compose it according to her media-environment wishing success and freedom as an extension to individuality and self-expression. For her, anything is possible; her ‘American Dream’ is possible since freedom, hard work, and success appear to be her new allies, as a definition of her character. Indeed, the American perception of ‘the dream’ is an embodiment of the self that can pursue the nuances of the set goal, which leads to follow the path of freedom, choice, self-expression, self-actualization, control, and optimism (Dunkel & Kerpelman xii). This permits to articulate that Michelle’s adoption of her imagined-self is triggered by an American perception to enhance her sense modernity and futurism. In addition, such a dream is accustomed to the received global mediascapes to render her fantasy into a future reality, where Arjun Appadurai sees that imagination is not fantasy (7). Therefore, Michelle steps into a world where imagination is achievable once she sets her mind to achieve them and therefore, constructing a new self and new identity that parts from the traditional one, or the traditional socio-cultural roles.

Furthermore, Curtis Dunkel, Daniel Kelts and Brian Coon see that possible selves are strongly associated with change in the self (Dunkel & Kerpelman xiii). The vision of a future self for Michelle is not associated to a traditional perception of culture, but a futuristic vision associated to traditions neither on Saudi terms nor on American ones. On such an account, Appadurai announces that “media afford powerful source for counter modes of identity that you can project against parental wishes and desires” (43). Michelle’s desired self –under the influence of her job at the media station- sees no parallel with her Saudi cultural background, and also her family’s perception towards her non-Saudi-conformist endeavors. Her dream

articulates difficulties of perception by her father, who would allow no such decision, however, her set mind towards her goals would “convince him with time” (248).

The impact of media on Michelle has been fundamental as she eventually felt liberated from limitations and restrictions that were imposed on her by her Saudi traditional society. Her mind became more associated to the liberated space of media and international people, who had no boundaries and no restrictions. Transnational media opened imaginative spheres that are not restricted by geography, territory or cultures. Her environmental network and ethno-theories are presently borderless and limitless, which grants her a sense of freedom and liberation. The unlimited and liberated life that Michelle is presently engaged in finds not fit within the restricted society of the Saudi Arabia. She feels disengaged from her former life that encompassed her friends, family, along with her perception of finding love and being the wife of someone she loves.

Michelle could see the gap between her and her friends widening to the point where at times she wondered how it was that she ever fit in their scene at all – their world didn’t accord in any way with her own ideas about life and the ambitions she had (247).

Michelle’s identity seems to disregard her previous life concerns and the concerns of her friends in life to set her mind more on success, achievement and dream pursuit.

4.2.2.5. Finance-scapes: Towards a Liberal Mind

The contemporary reality attests for the flow of businesses and finances from one space to another for economic purposes. Arjun Appadurai uses the concept ‘finance-scape’ to refer to the flow of economies from one space to another making the world economies interconnected and interconnected (34). Saudi Arabia is no different as entrepreneurship constitutes the primary sector for economic revenues, which is reflected in *Girls of Riyadh*. The novel introduces the main characters as belonging to the upper class, where their parents occupy a higher social and economic position permitting them to have access to luxuries. Gregg contends that industrialized institutions permit social integration into modernity (46), where the traditional economic institutions are substituted by novel tendencies that impact the cultural psyche of the protagonists, thereupon, it is argued that the main characters are integrated in the entrepreneurial world which directs their perceptions towards individuality and self-reliance.

As a response to the economic realities, the girls are integrated in the entrepreneurial world as they start, work or are part of a private business. Michelle works in TV station and is more concerned with media and Entertainment Company; whereas Sadeem and Gamrah started her private businesses; thus, integrating the soft economic forces providing services. Michelle's work is more related to the global era as it encompasses technologies and mass-motion, thus received as a non-traditional business industry. Sadeem has become an international worker as she moves to London to work at a Bank, whereas, Gamrah's business as a wedding planner is regarded as a modern business as it provides services that marks a society that is built upon a social image; planning a wedding signify that the clients -society- cares more about their social images in front of their guests and therefore they intend to hire a planner.

The entrepreneurial economic milieu that the girls work in is received as highly individualized and hypermodern. The business world has some requirements that they should submit to be characterized by individuality, self-reliance, and resilience. In his "*Social Economy of the Metropolis*" (2008), Allen Scott sees that cultural industries have direct relation with the various forms of "individuality, self-affirmation and social display" (84). Thereby, the type of work they have enhances their sense of individuality and identity. Indeed, the private sector for business created a novel environment for the protagonists' minds in order to adopt behavior and produce activities that stimulate their cognitive skills that are more Oriented towards individuality rather than collective pursuits, which gives attention to the voice of the group and community rather than the individual one. The notion of decision and profit making, responsibility at one's work, financial management, and encountering new people in the business develop new skills for the protagonists' mind which allow them to be more independent in their lives. In addition, their works are a reflection of their own selves: Orientations, occupation and tendencies; thus, an expression of their individualities. These jobs are contrasted to the governmental institutions, exemplified by the high school teacher misses Hanah, who possesses no freedom and no individuality as she follows the rules based on fear. The teacher promises Lamees not to tell on her for catching her with the forbidden items, yet her fear of expulsion drives her to neglect her promise and tells the school board about Lamees's 'misdemeanor'. Therefore, the private sector of economy led by the girls contributes to the nurture of their individualities to enhance their modernized selves.

Moreover, the private sector has altered human relations from blood ties to networking relations that are based on common profit rather than familial bonds. Anthony Giddons notes that relationships are based on “shared interests, feelings of affection, and other emotional ties”, in addition to formality, agreement and calculations of self-interest (Gregg 47); which can be demonstrated in Michelle’s relationship with Jomana and her vowed difference between her and her three friends on basis of sharing no similarities. Being in the business industry has indeed changed Michelle’s conceptualization of friendship and relationships. Her friends since childhood are based on Saudi community standards and parental Orientations towards a more individualist Orientations that are based on similar interests and Orientations. Consequently, building relationships with other are more based on mutual-interests rather than on family bonds. The collectivist society is built upon family relationships, yet the natures of these bonds have changed to become individual-based, which in return impacts the social relations and the identity of the community. Gregg notes that the business sector selects employees on basis of competence rather than kinship and personal feelings to ensure productivity (47). Therefore, the notion of kinship as the basis of social relations has become more individualized and based on work competencies.

4.2.2.6. Language of the Other and Identity

Language is perceived to function upon two approaches: a communicative or instrumental and a symbolic approach (Suleiman 32). The instrumental use of the language means the use of the language as mere communicative tool, whereas the symbolic approach equates integration with the language to a good extent. By the same token, the Universalist versus the relativist perception of language gives similar definitions of two different Orientations to language and language learning. The Universalist perception equates “a pragmatic and functional view of language ability ...It is seen as less central to thinking and perceiving ... a tool for communicating ideas” (Shaules 174). Thus, language is understood to be a tool for communicating ideas for functional uses only. On the other hand, the relativist theory calls for Whorf and Sapir hypothesis which sees that “language captures something of the human experience” (ibid 177). Hence, “The role of language as a marker of group boundary is therefore associated more with its symbolic than its communicative function” (Suleiman 32). Accordingly, Joseph Shaules understands language as means the integration of certain images that are proper to one language without the other (s); thereby, the captured images are

exclusively related to a particular language. Thereafter, the exposure to another language permits for an access to shared experiences (177).

Ishaq Tijani notices that the protagonists use a globalized language, where English phrases (in the Arabic version) demonstrate that the audience are millennials “who are mostly bilingual and westernized” (3). The millennial generation is therefore opened to global other, where the English language finds way into their speeches. The use of English language by the main characters is argued to reflect their identity construction and perceptions, for language permits an access to the linguistic community along with its cultural experiences. According to Benedict Anderson, the state of being bilingual means an access to ‘modern’ western culture in the broad sense (Benedict 116). English language is an important component of Michelle’s identity; she remains connected to the American community by means of her constant English use. Born in America, and displacing to Saudi Arabia at the age of six has enormously impacted her identity and perceptions; however, her constant connection to English language and her ease with its use demonstrates her continuous connection to the American community.

The use of the English language for Michelle is liberating as she equates freedom and individuality with English, and limitations and constrains with the Arab language. That is, the use of the English language permitted an access to an American experience related to its cultural values and principles in daily matters. To illustrate, her interactions with Faisal favors the use of English to speak about her ‘modern’ thoughts and experiences: “she spoke English, because she felt less constraint that way” (Al Sanea 101). Here, the use of English made her feel at ease with her speech as the Arab language does not seem to share experiences of freedom and independence. Therefore, the use of the English language is far distant from the Universalist use as Michelle relates the Arabic language to constraints and limitations. The Arab language is perceived as an extension to the cultural and the social properties of Saudi Arabia, which are rejected by Michelle due to its restrictive nature. English is more liberating and more expressive of her feelings and social discontent. ‘Language captures something of the human experience of the American community’, indeed, Michelle’s recounting of the adoption experience that her family went through is additionally expressed in English. The concept of ‘adoption’ in the Saudi community is a limitation and culturally non-existent, thus Michelle tells the story and her emotional experience through English rather than Arabic.

Consequently, the Arabic language lacks the cultural experience of adoption unlike the American cultural experience.

Similarly, Sadeem possesses a perfect English language demonstrating a integrative reception of the Occidental culture. Sadeem's English is understood to be perfect as she could be easily conceived as a native as Firas has pointed (Al Sanea 118). Sadeem's use of perfect accent demonstrates her proficiency in English that exceeded the communicative perception of language. Gaining linguistic excellence signifies being exposed to the second language for a significant period of time with a considerable degree of motivation to reach an ideal linguistic self. On the matter, Bony Norton speaks about the ideal-self, where the second language learner aims to reach a linguistic ideal self and therefore impacting perception and identity (Wu 103); indeed, Sadeem's linguistic proficiency is seen to impact her behavior both in London and Arabia. In the Occidental space, Sadeem embodies the language's culture as she behaves in an occidental manner; Firas observes that her language and actions mirror an Occidental person rather than an Arab; in addition he praises her linguistic perfection. Consequently, Sadeem embodies an Occidental self due to a proficiency in the English language, which has opened gates for other cultural experiences to alter her cultural perceptions and behavior. Sadeem appears to discharge the Arabic language when in London, due to the limitations that the language carries as «language carries cultural experience» (Shaules 174); and adopts a western behavior that comprehends freedom of action, independence, gender and racial mixing as Occidental western values. These values are not shared by the Arab community as it stresses on collectivism and in its limiting forms.

Opposed to the relativist perception of language, Gamrah embodies communicative stands. She views language as a mere tool for transmission and adheres to no motivation to learn a second language despite of immigrating to America with her husband. She remains faithful to her own cultural heritage and refuses to integrate or assimilate to the new culture environment for not possessing the linguistic tools to achieve it; thus, she remains culturally alienated. She maintain constant contact with her friends and relatives in Arabia; hence, being in constant contact with the distant community to remain faithful to their language and culture. Gamrah's inability to speak good English made her an outsider in an English American environment. Language gives access to shared experience (Shaules 188), a status she could not experience. Indeed, Gamrah's knowledge of English does not transcend the daily uses as she merely names items and needed expressions for communicative purposes

needed at the absence of her husband. At the same time, having access to English -with a limited degree- grants her access to more independence and self-reliance as she takes care of house responsibilities without relying on her husband as practiced in the Saudi cultural environment. In addition, Gamrah possesses no shared meaning with the American community and is unable to read their cultural mind; according to Benedict Anderson, having access to a European language -English in present terms- equates an access to a state of modernity (116). This means that the notion of having access to modernities is closely related to speaking more than one language; which explicates the traditional Orientations of the protagonist unlike her friends who appear to adopt modern behavior. Moreover, her husband is also culturally distant from her as he reads the western cultural mind and attunes with it due to his access to the English language

Consequently, language plays a role into the construction of the protagonist's cultural identities. Language plays a role in the imagination of the Occident as it carries images of 'deep' cultural experiences of the western community (s). The character, Michelle, Saddem and Rasheed appear to adopt modernities and western behaviors in their actions either in Arabia or in a western space due to their access to English language, as linguistic proficiency corresponds with adopting cultural traits of the other. On the other hand, the limited access to English as a second language for Gamrah deprives her from sharing cultural experiences with the west to adopt a communicative or Universalist perception of language; thus deprived of western cultural experiences.

4.3. Graphing the Miss New India's Mind Amidst Cultural Flows

The Portrayal of India as a global nation, a post-nationalist community and a space of cross-cultural encounter questions the identity construction of the female protagonist. It is contended that the shaping of the protagonist's cultural identity rests upon the reception of images of the self and the other that transfer plural cultural standards.

4.3.1. The Failure of Ethno-theories

The concept is defined as socio-cultural performances delivered to communions in order to act meaningfully within a set of socio-cultural environment (Shaules 113), and therefore, augment the feeling of belonging to the set community of practice. The former enhances the sense of community and nationalism, where sharing the same cultural practices with culturally same other leads to shared feelings and thus the feeling of belonging (Benedict 6). However,

the failure of these cultural theories leads to the feeling of not belonging to the community rather than belonging. Indeed, the embrace of a novel cultural identity announces the failure to keep the old culture surviving. The protagonist of *Miss New India* announces the failure of the Indian ethnotheories as her cultural mind refuses to adopt the 'old' cultural standards. To put it in other words, Indian Ethno-theories are communicated through Anjali's life Gauripur, parents, sister and the general specificities of the space. The previous chapter delivers the image of Gauripur, family, relatives and others as surrounded by a traditional space, where India nationalist identity prevails; this Indian Identity is argued to be dismissed by Anjali to adopt a different identity that the nationalist one finds no association; and therefore, leading to the failure of the passage of ethno-theories. Mukherjee communicates a failure in the passage of cultural theories from the traditional India to the new generation. Anjali's mind rejects the culture of old India for multiple reasons: the first is disillusionment with the cultures for failing to provide security and embrace. The second is that her mind is wired towards novelty and change.

Cultural Disillusionment

Mukherjee accompany her main character with a sense of disillusionment with her original culture as it failed to provide her with emotional and social support to conduct a meaningful life in Gauripur. The negative experiences lead to negative emotions; feelings of sadness, anger, and fear are critical in the formation of sensations of rightness and wrongness (Shaules 96). Indeed, she senses an emotional disappointment with her father, mother and sister who fail to support and understand her. Her father, as the image of the nationalist legacies in India, attempts to achieve his collective duty of providing for his family and marrying off Anjali. The first part of the novel attests for his relentless endeavor to find a suitable husband for his daughter. Moreover, the protagonist is attuned by her mother's constant silences and subordination to the will of the father; whereas, her sister works different jobs in order to provide for daughter after divorce. Sonali is considered as a failure for her family according to the nationalist social standards. The image that Anjali receives of her family and society in Gauripur is negative for being associated to failure and rigidity. Despite of the negative image that the protagonist receives of the socio-cultural realities in Gauripur, she displays no revolutionary actions towards her reality. Mukherjee gives her character a remote personality as her actions are submissive to the will of her environment: she does not reject the idea of seeking a handsome marriage, and solicits the assistance of other people and websites in order

to achieve her father's will. Hence, Anjali displays no rejection of her culture, but rejects the emotional vibes she receives from her cultural environment that held no supportive stands for her.

Moreover, further emotional disappointments are received with the traumatic feelings due to the rape incident; the image of India has altered from "something green and lush and beautiful to something barren and hideous" (74). Indeed, the degree of acceptance of the Indian culture that Anjali possesses before Mitra is evacuated as the culture provides her with a molester as a husband instead of a delightful image of the future. Stephanie Southmayd notices that the family is ready to marry her off despite of the incident (104), which triggers the protagonist's further disillusionment with her family and society. Their main objective is to find her a socially fit husband who corresponds with socio-cultural conventions without a care for the moral stands. To illustrate, Anjali's mother utters no word with her daughter to enquire about her emotional status towards the fact of finding a husband for her, but chooses to remain silent giving her daughter no infrastructure to voice her sentimental occupations. Such a situation echoes the psychological pressures that the traditional Indian females encounter in her own society; constant silences, submissiveness defining the female duty defeats the individuality that the mother possesses.

Reasoning of Cultural Conventions

The protagonist, not only rejects the old cultural conventions based on emotional reactions, but she employs her mental faculties to question, evaluate and criticize her cultural surrounding. Mukherjee gives her character an acute sharpness to the occurrences around her, where every detail is received with evaluation and criticism. The mental act of reasoning makes her question certain cultural values inherited from her society. Anjali dismisses collectivist ideals and disfavours her father disaccounts for individuality. She questions the notion of duty over happiness that her Baba constantly refers to in relation to her individual desires; her mind is not entirely convinced by her father's claims. The protagonist questions the notion of the validity of collectivist values in the Indian society and their relation to happiness. Joseph Shaules sees that collectivist thinking rests upon a shared responsibility among community members, where social ties are prioritized (107). Thereupon, living upon collectivist conventions means a stress on social values and principles rather on the individual happiness as her baba claims.

Anjali criticizes these values as they are received as unfulfilling by social or individual standards. David Lewis argues that cultural conventions are arbitrary (Slors 64); experiencing them with consciousness lead to question the validity of these principles to attribute it a trait of arbitrariness. He adds that following conventions is rational, but the collective choice of convention is arbitrary (65). Indeed, the protagonist understands the reasons of her marriage and the reason for silence; however, she rejects these conventions as they conduct to no happiness. In other words, the collectivist conventions in their current form, practiced by 'old' India, are meaningless as they diverge from the principles of collectivism to enter a phase of rigidity and mere mimicry of old generations. The meaninglessness of these values is demonstrated in the unhappiness of the main characters in Gauripur. Consequently, 'old' India's collectivist principles in their current form are dismissed by the protagonist for failing to provide a reasonable judgement to the existence of these cultural conventions.

Character Judgement

Foreshadowing is a literary technique that is used to give the reader a hint about future events befalling characters. Mukherjee delivers hints about the future of Anjali; her actions and thoughts gives the impression that old India will not be her future home. Her character traits as a modernized female trigger the surrounding characters to premonish her future. Her father is alarmed by her actions and appearances and rushes to marry her off "before she sullies the name of the family" (Mukherjee 215); he is concerned about her defiant character and deliberately vows his concerns to her. Equally, Subah Mitra articulates that he is aware of the 'modernities' of Anjali through her reputation in Gauripur. Moreover, her behavior with Peter Champion, her constant visits to his house, and her riding in motorcycle with him, along with her T-shirt and jeans dress code created a character with 'modern' traits in relation to Gauripur's social conventions. Thus, Anjali is being judged by her cultural environment as a 'modernized' character, where the latter is equated to western promiscuity. Through the image and the reputation that other people in Gauripur have constructed of her equipped her with further attachment to that image. Furthermore, Peter Champion furnishes further motivations for her to construct and embody the 'modernized' female she aspires to be. She adopts the principles of individuality as she seeks to please her own desires and evacuates the collectivist standards of her community.

4.3.2. Graphing the Cultural Imagination Once Meeting the Other

4.3.2.1. Ethno-scapes: a Path to a Liberal Mind

Arjun Appadurai stresses on the subject of flow or 'scapes' of people from one place to another. The named 'ethno-scapes' signifies the movement of people from one place to another for long or short period (Appadurai 6). The individuals on motion transfer with them their ethnic, cultural heritage and practices. Jean Baudillard argues that the individual, in the society of the image, is a switching centre for all the networks of influence (Morley & Robins 38). The previous chapter represents Peter Champion as an American expat dislocating from America to India, and who exercise a degree of influence upon the protagonist. He carries along his American ideals that are transferred to Anjali through teaching and instructing her on different life matters.

Bruce Robbins notices that the literary works featuring an upward mobility contain a 'Fairy Godmother' figure or a donor who instructs a character to be part of the mobile society (Southmayd 39). In addition, Kimak claims that American influences come in the shape of a character who serves as a source of inspiration for the main character (84). Indeed, Peter Champion is regarded as a figure instructing and paving the path for Anjali to pursuit a life of hypermodernity and mobility. Not only has he influenced her departure, but her perception of the life that she might have outside the parameters of her culture. Peter Champion, as a western model, delivers a culture of progress, development and enlightenment, democracy, liberalism, individualism, capitalism and freedom, which are concepts that are alien from Oriental cultures, who adopt a more 'organic' values contrasted to western 'mechanism' (Burma & Margalit 6). Hence, Anjali's mind received influences from the American Peter Champion to construct a self that is based on individuality, independence and materialism.

The most important American principle that Peter Champion installs in Anjali's mind is the notion of individuality as her main aim in life is to fulfill her desires and wishes. Individualist thinking prioritize independence and self-reliance (Shaules 107). He transmits the culture of individuality and independence, which are alien to the Indian collective culture. He financially supports her departure to Bangalore to embrace a novel life that is pregnant with freedom and individualities: "Anjali was determined not to yield her right to happiness"

(Mukherjee 11) as she steps aside her father's notion of duty before happiness. Reflecting the Oriental culture that stresses on collectivism, Anjali seem to walk western steps where the search for happiness and self-fulfillment is held primary to her over the notion of duty. Under the influences of Peter's promises of a better living and a better life, her desires to obtain luxuries and to wander free from people's restrictive gazes, she defies her Oriental culture and her father's perspective.

Being Anjali's teacher has given him the upper hand by introducing the American culture and ideals to his student, with a provided special care for her due to her linguistic brilliance. The influence of Mr. Champion is seen in the actions of Anjali as she appears to behave in a non-Indian manner as a celebration of her freedom from the social and cultural constraints. Freedom of choice is encountered daily in the lives of American people, which is the basis of their cultural values (Shaules 78). It is exemplified in the freedom to choose a life partner, which contradicts the notion of arranged marriages of the collectivist India. On the appearance, Anjali accepts the collectivist principle of arranged marriage, but in her mind, she wants to choose her life partner without social compulsion. Shamenez Bano notes that Champion constantly lectures Anjali on the patriarchal nature of the Bengali society, which would prevent her from accessing better circumstances (Bano 91). Champion instructs Anjali to leave Gauripur in search for a better life:

I told you at graduation you had to leave this place before you got trapped in a rotten marriage. I'm telling you again, let that happen and you're good as dead... I have dreams for you. You get married to some boy from here, and the dream dies. You'll never see the world... You'll have kids and a husband who's jealous of your intelligence and your English and won't let you out of the house, and that would break my heart (17-18).

His American-culture-perspective here condemns the tradition of marriage to death as he sees that Anjali would be sentenced to a life without freedom or individuality, which equates death. Indeed, the American expat's continuous lecturing about life in Gauripur infiltrates the notion of freedom in Anjali's mind in an attempt to persuade her to leave for Bangalore.

The impact of the American teacher is witnessed in her dress code, language, name and nonconformist behavior. Anjali wears T-shirts and jeans in Gauripur without considering the dress code of the community. She is aware of the community's dress code, yet she

chooses to wear American. In addition, she appears to use English language more often, especially when she meets her teacher. Her choice of American English is displayed throughout the narrative, which demonstrates the degree of influence accompanying the presence of Champion. Moreover, the protagonist plays her Americanized self through departing on the scooter with a male teacher without considering the traditional gazes that other. Despite of what her father and others think, she gives herself the freedom to act upon her desires.

At the presence of Peter Champion, Anjali relates her future to her fantasies and dreams: a westernized luxurious living. Through his instructions on urban global living and on linguistic excellence, Anjali imagines a prosperous living better than her father's and other is Gauripur. Peter Champion's description of Anjali's probable life in Gauripur is an image a better future from a material perspective. He appears to stress on economic gains in order to provide her with better economic standards and independence. Indeed, the American mind is considered the heart of materialist thinking, where it promotes economic freedom. These pursuits are inscribed in the American Dream, where individuals have the possibility to achieve their dreams through economic opportunities and hard work. Anjali is identified at high school as one of the dynamic youth of the New India; as her American school teacher tells her: "You have the spark – don't crash and burn. India is starting to wake up. India is a giant still in its bed, but beginning to stir. It's too late for me, but India is catching fire" (Mukerjee 11). Mr Champion here is trying to convince her Anjali to leave Gauripur and work as a call-center agent in a culturally 'better' environment and thereby constantly steering her mind attention towards leaving for Bangalore. Therefore, he installs a version of the American Dream in her mind, which can be achieved through linguistic proficiency and through working at a call center in Bangalore. According to Jim Cullen (2003), the American dream and its common beliefs are associated to freedom along with economic and social advancement (8), and it assumes a path that is directed towards an imagined life stemming from the belief of controlling one's destiny (10). Indeed, the American dream finds a great relevance in the novel, where Anjali follows the dream of freedom and advancement in a call for destiny change.

4.3.2.2. Para-social Contacts: Spaces of Encounter and Places of Recognition

Benedict Anderson stresses that the feeling of belonging to a particular community grounds from an imaginative status of distant fellow communions, who are not directly encountered,

yet sense a connection to them. He additionally argues that education constructs a major initiator of imagination as knowledge about the fellow communions fosters the feeling of belonging. By the same token, Stuart Hall understands that the cultural identity “belongs to the future as much as to the past” for it transcends time, space, history and culture (225). On the same wavelength, the concept of ‘para-social contacts’ insinuates individual exchanges beyond direct contacts among them, which are received via technologies shortening territorial distances or historical knowledge minusculing temporal distance. In fact, *Miss New India*’s protagonist receives para-social images of the other to shape her cultural self. Anjali collects images of the American mind through English classes as a space of encounter; besides, a contact with the colonial past permits self-recognition rather than a departure from the old self.

English Class: An American Para-space

The reception of cultural knowledge and values of the distant community has fostered the protagonist’s feeling of belonging. The protagonist makes cultural references to the American literary classic poem the 'Raven' in her daily speech, which communicates her knowledge of the American classics: "A tapping, gentle rapping, like in the poem. A playful tap, like in the movies" (Mukherjee 41). She articulates her knowledge between her and herself exhibiting her influence by the American culture neglecting her Indian ones in her speech. In Gauripur Champion devotedly teaches his students the properties of the American culture, where Anjali absorbed her English lesson in a well-manner. Anjali has a devoted educational identity, where she demonstrates an acute intelligence noticed by her teacher. Her educational identity, tracing a good motivational degree for English courses, contributed to her adoption of great amount of American cultural references. Anjali uses these cultural references more often in her daily speeches, which demonstrates her emotional sidedness with Americanness.

"A ray-venn?" she asked. "A large black bird with a black white beak? Like a kite, or a Crow?" She was back at Peter's apartment, the pencil in Peter's hand punctuating each word. Again, again, no, again. Without being asked, she began to read the sheet. The "weal and weary," the "quote the raven," the "never-more" all presented themselves fully formed, natural, without a pause. (Mukherjee 187)

At the call-center, she receives deep cultural images of American society and civilization. Besides language fluency, trainees are required to be acquainted with American politics,

sports, and popular culture to engage them properly in the American cultural psyche. Restating Joseph Shaules's perspective on culture, it is divided into surface culture and deep culture. The surface one is related to the social, political, economic and literary data about this particular society, which ultimately defines it vis-a-vis another culture. On the other hand, deep culture signifies the cognitive elements of the culture that are only noticed when the other is encountered. Based on this perspective, Anjali's mind receives the deep cultural elements of the American culture in the call-center, leading to both positive and negative responses from her.

In the training manual two sessions were listed under "Getting to Know the American Client" and subdivided into "Topography" and "Culture". According to the manual, knowing a language without knowing the culture was the same as knowing the words of a song but not the music. (Mukherjee 233)

Trainees are required to know about the American deep culture in order to successfully communicate with the American clients when they call. Language is not enough to establish a successful communication which required a good deep level of knowledge about the American culture. Being submerged in a culture required wiring the mind to think in a certain way that is different from another culture. Therefore, Anjali's submersion in the American deep culture required a novel way to think.

Being acquainted and interacted with such deep cultural knowledge triggers Anjali's imagination to feel more connected to these received images and thereby feel a sense of belonging to the other's community. During the sessions, she received various names and properties of American food chains, local Banks, insurance companies, national companies, popular TV sitcoms: *Friends*; *Seinfeld*; *Sex and the City*, TV episodes ...etc. which opens imaginative horizons on the cultural other. Indeed, Anjali feels connected to the English speaking community as her mind understands that they share the same knowledge and values not merely a language. At her arrival to Bangalore, she displays an ease through her interaction with call centre workers for having the same cultural standards: language, dress code, jokes, gender-mixed gatherings ...etc. However, negotiating feeling of belonging for Anjali is dismissed for failing to comprehend and successfully interact with the distant Americans, for holding different cultural properties than those she knew of or that Peter possessed. Further discussion of the reasons of Anjali's failure to communicate with the imagined-other is addressed in the third part of the present chapter.

Historical Self-Knowledge and Cultural Authenticity

The concept of ‘para-social’ means the non-social interactions and the indirect contacts of an individual or a group with another group or an individual. In the present context the term refers to the accumulated knowledge, let it be: cultural, historical or geographical, about a certain community or group of individuals. Within the context of identity and the feeling of belonging to a particular community, it is argued that the notion of belonging is triggered by the flow of para-social data from one place to another. Resting on Benedict Anderson’s premise, individuals receive information about their distant fellow communions to trigger a feeling of belonging. In addition, Benedict’s notion of imagination transcends time and space; where imagination reaches temporal and spatial boundaries to trigger an emotional tie to images that are not directly present (Benedict 6). Temporal imagination involves historical achievements of a certain community along with their shared fate or future. Benedict understands the feeling of belonging as community members’ conscious sharing of a similar past while heading towards a similar or a common future (ibid). By the same token, Stuart Hall emprunts Edward Said’s expression ‘imaginative geography and history’ to announce that the mind intensifies its sense of the self through spotting “the difference between what is close to it and what is far away”, which requires imagination leading to a feeling of belonging (232). Moreover, he contends that relationships to the past alters cultural identity and leads it towards recognition (236). Indeed, an interaction with the past signifies a conscious involvement with historical knowledge that encompasses achievements, past experiences and stories about the community. This conscious contact with the past is argued to foster the feeling of belonging to the community through triggering the sense of pride and national consciousness. Furthermore, it is argued that the protagonist of *Miss New India* fosters her feeling of belonging to the Indian community through an interaction with the Indian historical data stored in the Bagehot mansion, as a Raj-era space.

The Bagehot mansion is represented as a space that echoes the colonial legacies in India; the house possesses a standing reputation among elites in Bangalore despite of its colonial connotations. For the protagonist, it represented an enigmatic space for representing something she possessed no knowledge or experience of; her curiosity has driven her to encode the mysteries surrounding the place. To Anjali’s historical surprise, she witnesses a living history embodied through paintings and items portraying the colonial struggle, where her fellow Indians have struggled to achieve freedom:

These were wide, black-and-white landscapes, seemingly military scenes, framed in pewter...Sari-clad bodies lay strewn along a riverbank. The faces were young, no older than she was. Bodies of Sikhs-you would identify them by their turbans- lay stacked like firewood, and walking among the bodies were uniformed British soldiers, grinning broadly. (Mukherjee 137)

Anjali's glimpse on the struggles of the previous generation assists her feeling of belonging to the Indian community after dismissing it when departing from Gauripur. The images received from the paintings contributes into the creation of a vivid image of history that her mind never received before; "in school, she'd never really warmed to the history-book chapters" (138). She acknowledges her motivation for historical knowledge was none for possessing an oriented mind towards the future rather than an understanding of her Indian identity. She possesses no memory of the past, and therefore no cultural consciousness about the meaning of being Indian. Yet, the acquaintance with these images triggered a sensed link to the independence martyrs who are connected to her father and the older generation. In addition, she emotionally experiences a dislike for the cultural other as it embodies 'horrific' images of killings, hangings, and blood-sheds that her fellow communions endured in the past. Anjali experiences "rage, then venom" (137) towards these images leading her to construct a positive image of pride and appreciation of the old India. Anjali "looked on the British period as a long comic opera, felt a sudden connection to all the Indian dead and the indignities they suffered" (Mukherjee 138-139).

The feeling of connection to her fellow communions augmented cultural awareness to become more comprehending of her parents' minds: they and the Indian nation is "still recovering from the scars of colonialism and the dazzling new Bangalore as a city of total amnesia" (139). She correlates the behavior of her parents to the legacies of colonialism, which made her more understanding of their behavior and mostly their struggles. She confesses:

I am Indian, she thought... I have roots anywhere but in India. My ancestors were hated and persecuted by everyone but themselves. I understand Sonali-di, even Baba. Finally, she had a taste of her authenticity. (Mukherjee 138)

Thus, she posits herself and her identity on Indianess, a status she previously rejected due to a lack of understanding. Such meeting with the historical past delivered further consciousness

about her generational status. She comes to conclude that being from a different generation than her baba equates different Orientations and different struggles, yet an acknowledgement of their past battles is key to craft the new generation's struggles. Hence, Anjali's encounter with vivid memory-images of the Indian past crafted her historical consciousness driving her to feel connected to her fellow Indian communions and therefore a feeling of belonging to India.

4.3.2.3. Media and the Construction of a Liberal Imagined-self

The concept of Media-scape occurs in the speeches of Arjun Appadurai's book *Modernity at Large*, where he speaks about transnational media and its relation to culture (33). Benedict Anderson is a pioneer in giving credit to what he calls 'print-capitalism' into the spread of nationalism as a feeling of belonging to a certain community. The new communication and technologies have influenced the study of human geography. New media succeeded at 'emptying' time and space allowing more social relations from different locations and carry out communications from a long distance (Karim 6). The feeling of belonging to the imagined community find traces in *Miss New India*, where it is argued that media transfer images intercepted by Anjali's mind to foster her self-perception. In addition, these media-disseminated images stimulate Anjali's imagined-self.

Anjali's life appears to be surrounded by media images as she displays appreciation of the latter received via TV, magazines, and posters. These received images impact her perception and her constructed imagined-self. The concept of 'possible selves' is defined as the "individuals' ideas of what they might become, what they would like to become, and what they are afraid of becoming" (Dunkel & Kerpelman xi). Stemming from the idea of 'afraid of becoming' Anjali is desperate to avoid the traditional image of the Indian female embodied by her mother, sister, and other women in Gauripur. The sense of being "intelligent and ambitious and to crave for her own share of happiness" (Mukherjee 23) drives her to see limitations in her life in Gauripur; she is denied the opportunity to go for what she desires. The latter are being fostered by the images she receives in Bollywood movies, where Anjali appears to be consumed by these images:

All the same, some siesta hours while her mother snored in bed next to her, she allowed herself to daydream that maybe a Bollywood hunk, a Shah Rukh Khan or Akshay Kumar, would find her irresistible during the marriage interview and would

deposit her in Mumbai, Canada or America. In daydreams, even Dubai seemed bearable. (Mukherjee 25)

Here, while Anjali's mother is performing her female duties, Anjali articulates her fantasies, which seem to be triggered by Bollywood movies and songs. Anjali wishes to dispose of the life prospect that her small-town environment might propose for her and aspires to have an alternative life that could meet her fantasies triggered by media-disseminated images.

Miss New India makes multiple references to Bollywood as an Indian media corporation. The latter appears to convey many images that play a significant role in her imagined-self. In Bangalore, she appears to realistically meet the 'Bollywoodic' image of a café and therefore, meeting her possible-self.

In Bollywood films, the coolest stars casually meet in a Barista. Angie felt cool as she trundled her suitcase to the counter indoors. She would splurge on a tall iced coffee with a scoop of ice cream. In fan magazines, actresses were photographed while seductively licking strawberry-pink or saffron-yellow ice cream off a long-handled spoon. (Mukherjee 87)

Bollywood as a film industry convey images of India that are regarded as hybrid genre; a traditional image mixed with western components (Karim 30), for the aim of meeting a world audience. "India is fading, images of India, songs, dialogues and stars contributed to the new image of India" (Karim 29), which suggests that the disseminated Bollywood images are in fact a non-pure picture of traditional India, and contributes into the creation of a new image of the nation. Therefore, the images that Anjali receive through media are perceived to be tainted with globalized/ modernized colors. The images conveyed trigger Anjali's mind to imagine her future self within the described images; hence, the received images of a possible-self engines the desire to depart from the perceived bleak reality in the traditional Gauripur - ethno-theories- and aspires to embody a modernized self -alternative cultural community. Anjali's imagined self has energized her actions to buffer the current self that is characterized by seen indignities. Additionally, the protagonist's unconscious mind "generates judgements, inclinations, and feelings, and thus subtly guides behavior in certain direction" (Shaules 11); her mind is negatively responsive towards the culture in Gauripur, while directed towards the positive alternative-images delivered by the media. These images help to construct "possible

lives, fantasies that could become prolegomena to the desire for acquisition and movement” (Appadurai 36). Hence, the latter guide her behavior towards her imagined-self.

The images of positive living are additionally transferred through magazines and pictures: “In fan magazines actresses were photographed while seductively licking strawberry-pink or saffron-yellow ice cream off a long-handled spoon” (Mukherjee 87). These ‘print-capitalisms’ convey photographs of ideal beauty and living standards that trigger a desire to indulge the self in. Thereby, Anjali’s imagined-self include luxurious toiletries, dresses, self-care, and expensive Barista-made coffee that carry positive vibes rather than her uninteresting lifestyles carried by her mother and sister. Her mind equates her imagined-self to material gains and attained luxuries, as she feels a need to belong to this new social class in Bangalore, and the fact of being in Bangalore without this imagined-self equated a sense of loss. Indeed, Anjali displays great confidence when she receives Husseina’s luxurious belongings; on the opposite, she feels loss and despair when losing the opportunity to work at the call-centre, the destruction of the Bagehot mansion, loss of her new belongings. Hence, Anjali’s mind feels comfortable and familiar with the attained imagined-self and finds relevance in it, yet feels lost when the image is longer viable to her. She spends many weeks in shock due to her inability to compose an image of herself outside the image she has collected from the media back in Gauripur. Therefore, media images play a major role in the construction of Anjali’s imagined-self.

Reflecting the notion of ‘hypodermic needle’, it is received that Anjali exhibits a feverish consumption of media as a source of imagination. The hypodermic needle model of reception means the non-ability of “individuals and groups to do anything other than passively received media messages” (Bailey 4). Accordingly, the protagonist appears to passively consume these images when in Gauripur, as her mind constantly draws pictures that are inspired by Bollywood-disseminated imageries. Hence, her unconscious mind collects these images without a capacity to distinguish between reality and fantasy and therefore led to the composition of a world that is beyond her access and that she pictures her imaged-self within these imaginings. On this account, Arjun Appadurai points that Mediascapes provide a complex from of images transferred through TV and magazines, which leads to a blur line between reality and fantasy, where distant images lead to “construct imagined worlds that are chimerical, aesthetic, even fantastic objects” (Appadurai 35). However, the protagonist’s presence in Bangalore has affected her perception to become more interactive with her

unconscious descriptions and thereby evacuate the persistence of the concept of 'hypodermic needle' to include an obvious interaction with media content, which signals marches towards cultural maturity.

Moreover, Anjali's imagined self is not directed by her own self as much as it is directed by social conditions. According to Dunkel & Kerpelman, aspects of self, identity and possible selves is socially driven and conditioned as the social environment help to affirm, validate and realize them (xii). Indeed, the imagined self of Anjali is affirmed and validated by Mr. Champion and her experiences in Bangalore. Therefore, Anjali's imagined self is not an individualized version or practice, but a shared one in the Indian contemporary community. In fact, *Dynamo's* newspaper column validates such a statement through revealing that Anjali, with dreams, pursuits and perceptions, is the image of a new generation of Indian girls; hence, collaborates with Appadurai's notion of imagination as a social fact rather than a fantasy (Appadurai 7). In addition, in her chapter "Gender and Possible Selves", Michele Knox believes that possible selves are not discrepant from the real self since it exhibits self-efficacy, control, competence and effectance (62). Anjali's imagined-self rests upon her reality rather than mere fantasies and distant dreams. Her competence in English language and her communicative skills in addition to her beauty are considered as pre-requisites for her imagined-self. Reinforced by the claims and encouragements of her English teacher, she aspires to reach a certain image through the means of her current status.

By the same token, Levitt (1992) has associated the female appearance to the female self-esteem (Knox 65); the media images of 'ideal' female impacts the imagining of the possible-self to encompass certain standards of beauty and appearance. Indeed, Anjali gain more self-confidence when she inherits Husseina's cloths and luxurious living standards. It is noticeable that her self-esteem augments when confronting to Minnie's harsh words after being constantly silent to her continuous verbal assaults. The protagonist's previous social and financial position gave her no self-esteem to defend herself against Minnie's words; however, the confidence attributed through attaining her possible-self related to appearance gave her power to articulate her thoughts even if harsh to the owner without being afraid of being expelled from the residence.

4.3.2.4. Communities of Belonging: Speech Neutralization and the Ideal-self

The association between imagination and language, in Benedict's understanding, are interrelated as the use of the same 'vernacular' associate individuals in a certain national/cultural group. Bonny Norton believes that an imagined self is associated to the mastery of a foreign/second language, as the self is perceived ideal when having access to the others' language (reference). Accordingly, a language learner is a cultural learner as the linguistic content opens a door for experiencing the 'deep' cultural meanings behind the utterances (Shaules 173). *Miss New India* attributes importance to the use of English language with a neutralized accent, which evacuates the 'imperialist' and colonial legacies of the English language in the Indian territory. Indeed, the use of American English has impacted the identity construction of the protagonist to join the novel upward mobile class and to adopt a globalized-self echoing the socio-historical realities of the community. Stephanie Southmayd notices that Mukherjee is concerned with identity and culture that reflects the debated about the use of English in India and its relation to the nationalist discourses (6). Reflecting the presentation of English in *Miss New India*, discussed in the previous chapter, it is argued that Anjali's identity and self-perception is connected to her use of the English language. She sees herself as the American other through embracing the language and she feels a sense of belonging.

4.3.2.4.1. American Pronunciation and the Ideal Self

From the early lines of the novel, Anjali is represented as a good speaker of English with a perfect American accent. Being the bright student of a native American expat permits a native exposure to English resulting into linguistic excellence. Peter Champion himself appears devoted to teach Anjali a perfect English as he constantly readjusts her pronunciation to sound more neutralized rather than impacted by her Bengali vocalization. Moreover, at the call center training program, Anjali and other trainees receive intensive language tutoring to refine their neutralized English. Such refinement includes a dismissal of the pronunciation impacts of the Indian accents and therefore, to produce linguistic utterances that are proper to English. She receives courses on softening consonants, crisping vowels, syllable stress and poem reciting to train their tongues to properly pronounce the language and train an evacuation of the pronunciation properties of the Indian languages, where both differ in their pronunciation characteristics. A pronounced vowel in Indian doesn't seem to find its equivalent in English and vice versa, thus creating a degree of hardships for Indians to perfect an American accent.

As an illustration: “‘please’ came out as ‘pliss’; *garbage* and *manage* as ‘garbayje’ and ‘manayje’. All twelve had problems with the buried *v*: ‘de-well-op’, ‘day-li-wer’” (Mukherjee 231). Thus, the call center trainees demonstrate a shift in their Indian-English to American English in order to meet a linguistic global audience. A non-neutralized pronunciation is intercepted by Parvati as ‘problems’ resulting from the influences of mother tongue, which she attempts to change: “she dictated which syllable to stress. She instructed the students to press the upper teeth down the lower lip so that crisp *v* didn’t dissolve into a whooshy *w*.” (232). Her aim is to produce workers who be globally validated in order to meet the economic status of the call center as the image of a globalized India. Thus, meeting the requirements of a global audience conditioned the Indian accent to be replaced by a neutralized one. It can be assumed, thereafter, that the ability to cope with the realities imposed by the global fact, a shift into a neutralized pronunciation rather than an Indian-English is validated, which impacts the identity of the language users.

Learning a neutralized pronunciation means an attempt to excel in the target language and to submerge into its detail; therefore, the language is not merely perceived as a means of communication. Language is an access to cultural experiences, according to the relativist theory (Shaules 174). Thus, the linguistic experience is a cultural experience beyond direct cultural encounters, which aligns with Benedict Anderson’s notion of ‘imagined communities’. Indeed, Anjali finds more relevance and attunement with her imagined-self through the use of neutralized English. Kanno and Norton argue that since actions are driven by aspirations, “our identities then must be understood not only in terms of our investment in the “real” world but also in terms of our investment in possible worlds” (284) (Quoted in Wu 103). Thus, Anjali’s identity is related to her view of her linguistic-possible-self, where she relates her identity to her ideal-linguistic-self. The notion of the ideal self, from a linguistic perspective, means the personal representation of the individual’s visualization of the future irrespective of what others’ expectations (Taylor et al. 5). Moreover, the protagonist sees a relation between English proficiency and her ideal self: her use of English is equated to her embodiment of an imagined self. The protagonist constantly assesses people’s speeches and classifies them according to their English pronunciation: she finds an attraction in Husseina’s “perfect American accent” (113), and is alarmed by Usha Desai’s Indian accent, who she receives as less threatening: “Usha Desai spoke English with a slight Indian accent. That made her less threatening” (157). Therefore, the ideal-self that Anjali imagines is strictly related to their neutralized pronunciation as they mirror a higher social status.

Anjali's focus throughout the narrative is upon the linguistic articulations of the various characters she encounters, where she classifies them according to their pronunciation. She appears to be fond with the call center workers and aspires to be like them. They represent an image of success, financial independence and social freedom that could be gained through linguistic excellence. Their English proficiency and the mastery of a neutralized speech is the ideal-self for her, in addition to their American dress code and behavior. Furthermore, she constantly compares herself to others and aims to utter the best neutralized language she could. Hence, language proficiency equates integration into a community that has opposite characteristics of Indianness.

4.3.2.4.2. Idioms and American Colloquialism: a Transfer of the Deep Culture

The fact of being linked to a particular community signifies sharing the same linguistic code that transcends the standard use of language. Indeed, community members share vernacular articulations that are merely understood by this cultural group. Thereupon, using the vernacular of a particular language ensure an integration to its community; consequently, their cultural particularities. Indeed, Joseph Shaules sees that language permits to access cultural entry into a different culture, and therefore, to a different world (173). American colloquialism and idiomatic expressions have abundant presence throughout the novel. At the presence of American teacher, Anjali uses English beyond its standard uses: "'Okey-dokey, Mr. Champion.' She laughed, easing herself in place beside the jute sack on the passenger seat" (Mukherjee 12). The use of the expression "okey-dokey" with her American teacher and the fact of riding in the scooter with him demonstrate her indulgence in the American foreign cultural behavior distancing herself from Indian cultural considerations. Anjali's mind becomes American wired as she embodies an American identity and perception at the presence of her teacher. She recognizes the shared experience with the American community as she associates herself with them rather than an association to her mother culture. Language provides an entry into another cultural community that leads into a shift in identity (Shaules 188). In addition, the protagonist's arrival to Bangalore is marked by spotting English speakers and associates herself with them:

A gagle of voices floated down to her, tinkly voices of hyperconfident breakfasters, chatting in American English. Finally, a language with familiar cadences! She climbed the stairs to the plaza and found herself in a crowded coffee shop".
(Mukherjee 87)

Anjali feels connected to this group for sharing a language. In addition to their American accent, their utterances encompass colloquial expressions like: 'not cool, dude', 'a little loosey-goosey', 'deep shit', 'out on your ass', 'lover boy', 'old bitch' ...etc. Along with cultural references to American Hollywood actors like Brad Pitt and Angelina Joli.

Furthermore, at the call center's training manual, the notion of linguistic relativity is referred to stating the strong relation between language and culture: "knowing a language without knowing the culture was the same as knowing the words of song but not the music" (233). Such an expression evacuates the Universalist approach to language learning that perceives it as a mere means of communication (Shaules 173), and cherishes the relativist approach that comprehends culture as part of language learning. Therefore, the learned language is additionally related to the deep cultural experiences of the distant community.

You'll find that English-language skills are only a part of what we expect, and not even the largest part. Language enhancement is largely mechanical- it's your absorptive capacity, your character, your ability to learn and use new ways of thinking and, of course, new facts, that we're interested in. That's why we interviewed and tested yo in the first place. (Mukherjee 233)

Moreover, at the call center, trainees are required, not only to perfect American pronunciation but, to possess knowledge about the American popular culture, which became the call center popular culture. Symbolic references for Indian situations or persons are seen similar to American popular-culture symbols. Language has a big impact on the perception of the world as it permits for a novel way to see things (Shaules 174). Indeed, being in constant contact with the American English and the American community through the novel technologies has impacted their cultural perceptions to attune with the American popular culture without direct engagement with the community. Both Indians and Americans at the other half of the hemisphere share the same cultural values and understandings without being in a direct contact. Here, Anderson's notion of 'imagined communities' is relevant since being connected to the fellow communions is a mere practice of imagination that is transferred through various means: in this case, novel technologies that connects the globe.

The English language carried along with its sentences and utterances the Anglo-Saxon deep culture transferred into the mind of Anjali when learning the English language. Benedict Anderson coins the term 'Imagined Communities' where he argues that the feeling of

belonging to a particular community owes thanks to vernacular language (Anderson, 2006), where the language can be considered responsible for transferring the feeling of belonging to a particular community. Based on the relativist theory, "Language captures something of human experience" (Shaules 177); however, Anjali appears to miss this experience and cannot understand for being culturally different. That's why she couldn't work at the call center. The images that are generated the language, has no relation with her cultural experiences. Despite of her desire to master the language, she fails to incorporate the deep American culture and to understand it.

She learns idioms and vernacular uses: "how did "throwing a curveball" indicate "unexpected degree of difficulty"? (234). she cannot seem to capture the relation between the expression and its meaning since it has made no sense to her. This demonstrates Anjali's incapacity to read the mind of the American deep culture; and therefore, fails to be part of American distant community. Indeed, Anjali's mind fails to read the American deep culture due to a lack of an enough submersion into the distant community and calls for the construction of a novel identity patterns that involve no American deep culture in. Parvati announces to her that she is caught for something else rather than being a call center, which means unable to be part of the American cultural community.

4.3.2.5. Home but not Quite: Possibilities of Being and Becoming

The 'globalized' circumstances defining the city of Bangalore have changed the face of India and Indianess from the nationalist trait to post-nationalism. The hyper-modern reality created by the entrepreneurial world altered the cultural approaches to become more diverse and cosmopolitan, where *Miss New India* stresses upon the creation of a novel 'upward mobility class' as Stephanie Southmayd terms it. As a response to the global circumstances, the protagonist shifts her cultural environment from small-town Gauripur to the metropolitan Bangalore, that is, from a traditionalist space to a hyper-modern reality. The novel environment represents a clash between the old, the protagonist attempts to escape; and the modern, she wishes to embrace. Amidst this conflict, Anjali reacts passively to these changes as she experiences a cultural loss that is equated to the diasporic experience; in addition, her cultural journey from Gauripur to Bangalore is a march towards the formulation of a global-self characterized by interculturality.

The theme of 'memory' is traced throughout the narrative as the protagonist comes back and forth in time to go back to old India. Ram Prasad Timasina notices that the protagonist is haunted by the memory of rape, which prevents her from establishing a settled identity (41). Not merely haunted by memories of rape, but of her 'old' India that she constantly compares to new India. Her memories are received as her mind's recall of her ethnotheories for not being able to confidently adapt to the novel socio-cultural environment. Her memory constitutes her ability to read the mind of 'old' India to perfectly attune with their cultural behavior. Indeed, she comprehends her father's perceptions, despite of her opposition, and she is able to read their cultural minds. Joseph Shaules uses the concept of 'mind reading' to reflect upon the individual's capacity to instantly understand and attune with his community as they share the same 'deep culture'. Indeed, she is able to connect well with her parents and understands their intentions and perceptions.

The protagonist is able to read the mind of her father and perfectly understand the cultural components of his mind. Although she opposes the notion of traditional marriage, she comprehends her father's social and cultural duty to marry off his daughter; to a certain degree she accepts the marriage prospect if the selected man would fit her criteria. This leaves the protagonist in a state of confusion between the traditional marriage, reflecting old India; and an independent romantic choice, adhering to an image of modernity (Philips 104; Guttman 5). In addition, Guttman sees such clash between the traditional and modern as "the dichotomy between modernity and traditions so familiar to postcolonial studies" (5), however, she emphasizes that "this sort of splitting is also a common response to trauma" (ibid). In fact, Anjali is perceived to be traumatized by her ethnotheories for accommodating her with various cultural failures, as stated in the above lines. In addition, the protagonist succumbs into the pursuit of a fainted dream that settles upon no stiff grounds as she appears to dispossess prior knowledge that equips her mind to act meaningfully in a culturally unstable environment. Thus, the fact of dislocating from Gauripur is equated to the loss of the cultural grounds that her mind and behavior settles upon.

Bangalore offers novel culture(s), where the protagonist appears not to comprehend or read the cultural mind of the new space. Bangalore offers her the freedom to change herself and adopt it to fit a desired image. Anjali invents and re-invents herself as she feels the freedom of possessing no cultural grounds. Compared to the protagonist in Mukherjee's *Jasmine*, who changes her identity and cultural behavior multiple times in order to adapt to

the novel cultural environments she infiltrates in (Bouaita 439), Anjali alters her identity multiple times to fit the environment she is in. Primarily, she adopts an American self to adapt to the behavior of the American Champion; she submits to her father's wishes as she displays no rejection to the tradition of marriage; she changes herself receiving Husseina luxuries; whereas she shifts persona when living with Parvati. Hiba Bouaita associates Jasmine's identity shifts to her mind's ability to adapt to novel cultural environments (439); similarly, Anjali uses the mind's ability to culturally adapt to novel situations in order to fit to the requirements of the metropolitan Bangalore. In other words, such cultural shifts are read in the cognitive lines of adaptability; which signify the mind's ability to adapt to cultural changes (Shaules 31). Encountering a novel situation, without resistance barriers, signify an activation of the adoptive mind that attempts to read and adjust to novelties (74). In her «Reading the Intercultural Mind: Towards a Cognitive Approach to Literary Analysis», Hiba Bouaita sees that Mukherjee's protagonist in *Jasmine* employs her adaptive mind in order to change her name and perspectives accordingly (439). Similarly, Anjali attempts to adapt to Bangalore's modernities, to Americanization through adopting a new name and novel behaviors.

Moreover, Anjali's cultural loss is contested for. Anjali appears not to be vexed by the novel cultural environment; she is aware of the cultural differences as she chooses to join the English speakers at the coffee shop upon her first arrival. Yet, she possesses no cultural tools to read the metropolitan mind. Her ethno-theories, despite of being rejected, play a role in her mind construction. In other words, the sense of loss that the protagonist experiences equates a cultural void as she is unknowledgeable about her cultural stands to rest her identity upon. Amine Maalouf states that individuals have a need to belong to a cultural group or community to share meaning with. Hence, the need to belong to a defined community is not validated due to her dismissal of her ethno-theories and her inability to read the mind of the novel culture in Bangalore. Consequently, her status opened multiple possibilities of being and becoming. Stephanie Southmayd observes that Anjali is caught between and among different identities: Anjali, from the small town Gauripur; Angie, the bold entrepreneur; and Janey Busey, the American persona she crafts at the call center (98). Indeed, the protagonist shifts from one name to another and from one identity to another meeting the changes she encounters in the non-place Bangalore; the city offers her new possibilities of self-invention:

No one in Bangalore seemed to be stuck with a discernible identity . . . She could be anything she wanted . . . Who do you want to be? Bangalore doesn't care. Bangalore will accommodate any story line. She could eliminate her parents and her sister. (Mukherjee 95)

Hence, the novelty of the space has delivered her a new sense of being that is inscribed in a non-place belonging. Bangalore means a space that disfavors the 'old' nationalist Indian identity and submerges into non-defined cultural parameters. She moves from traditional India, when in Gauripur; to an American imagined-self, fused by her dreams to a better living; to a non-fixed identity, articulated after her failure to join the call centre community.

Moreover, Anjali's cultural journey develops an intercultural mind as a reaction to the hyper-modern realities Bangalore offers. An intercultural mind is to «become more international, develop a more global mindset, become interculturally more sensitive ... thanks to leaving home and seeing the world ... At the same time, it's hard to pinpoint precisely what is changing» (Shaules 193). In fact, the protagonist displays easiness and comfort in dealing with her cultural realities as she accepts the changes in her life without a form of resistance nor complete adoption of the novel circumstances. She arrives at making her own decisions without the loss she experiences at her early encounters with a different environment: she willingly consents to a sexual relationship with Mr. GG, yet refuses to accompany him in his intercultural journey. In addition, she displays no intentions of embodying the American-self she aspires to be when in Gauripur as she accepts her belonging to India, the old and the new.

Consequently, the exposure to both ethno-theories and global flows lead the character to develop an intercultural mind responds to the flows. It is argued that the exposure to the cultural flows leads to cultural loss as the home becomes un-identified. In addition, the protagonist's cultural mind responds. Arjun Appadurai says that there are mutual dependencies of cultures and nations in the global reality rather than a tension between colonized and colonizer. Therefore, there are no American hegemonies.

4.3. Conclusion

To conclude, the present chapter analyzes the construction of the main characters' cultural identities in the light of global flows. It is contended that cultural imagination shapes the identities of the protagonists, where circulating images of the self and the other provide a

platform for the main characters' minds to craft a transcultural self. A cultural cognitive reading of the minds of the characters announces a study of the local and the trans-local environments permitting an assessment of their cultural selves.

The protagonists of *Girls of Riyadh* appear to attune with the Arab/Saudi ethno-theories as they are consistent with their parental upbringing, social and educational environments crafting their cultural minds. Yet, a noticed failure of ethno-theories puts the characters in a state of refusal of their communal standards through committing to a long-standing relationship that forwards a generational cut with the traditional society. Hence, the protagonists' cultural minds are consistent with their Saudi cultural standards as they act meaningfully in the community; however, they display a move into novel cultural values that are proper to the new generation rather than complete submission to old cultural standards. Contrary to Arabia, *Miss New India* displays a departure from the traditional-mind India towards cultural novelties. Anjali's mind stresses on cultural denial of ethno-theories and a move towards a new India declaring a complete cut with traditions. Therefore, an apparent attachment to the local cultural environment is displayed in *Girls of Riyadh* as opposed to Mukherjee's novel.

Based on the notion of imagination, the flow of cultural images of the other received by the protagonists assisted their identity shaping. The literary characters in both novels, despite of their different origins, received images of the Occident through direct or indirect means. The concept of ethnoscaapes initiated by Arjun appadurai comprehends that *Girls of Riyadh* dislocate from Arabia towards the Occident for reasons of tourism, studies or work, where they received images of the other shaping their cultural conceptualization. *Miss New India* introduces the American Peter Champion as the embodiment of ethnoscaapes, where he dislocates from the Occidental space towards India carrying the cultural luggage of America and are transferred into the mind of the protagonist to alter her self-perception. Moreover, based on a reading of imagined communities, the cultural identities of the protagonists of Arabia distribute an individualized imagined-self through an exposure to media as a space of cross-cultural encounter. Mediascaapes additionally play a major role in Anjali's self-conceptualization as she views herself within an image that transcends her local environment in Gauripur.

Moreover, a space of finances and entrepreneurship characterize the lives of girls of Riyadh to adhere to further individualities, self-reliance and autonomy that the modern world

of businesses offers to the economic agents as the girls join the world of individual businesses. Furthermore, Anjali explores the Indian past through historical connection to the colonial legacies contributing into her self-recognition as an Indian descent. The present study additionally takes the theme of language and associates it to cultural perception as the use of the language of the other creates a sense of belonging to the cultural community of the language. *Girls of Riyadh* views the Occidental language as a means for cross-cultural consciousness that promotes a transcultural consciousness, whereas Anjali receives the English language, in its neutralized form, as a means to belong to a different social class and a different community than the Indian traditional one.

CHAPTER FIVE
TOWARDS A PLANETARIAN VISION: VOWING AN
ORIENTAL TRANSCULTURALITY

Chapter Five: Towards a Planetarian Vision: Vowing an Oriental Transculturality

5.1. Introduction

Resting upon the argument stating that cultural imagination stimulates to the construction of a transcultural identity, the present chapter identifies the characters' identities with transculturalism defined within discourses of cross-cultural encounter, primarily between the Orient and the Occident. Transcultural literary parameters designate a certain group of writers and texts bearing transnational experiences in a context of intensive global circulations. Accordingly, *Girls of Riyadh* distributes a transcultural position through adopting an Islamic feminist perspective that transcends nationalist/ local arguments of a religious identity. In addition, the writer departs from westernization arguments through adopting cultural parameters permitting to locate the text in an in-between space that utilizes remodeled themes and styles from a western origin; hence it evokes collaboration between the self and the other instead of mimicry or antagonism. Al-Sanea locates the identity of her protagonists to a space of non-culture as they vow a fluid identity that sips from different cultures, not to create a novel one but, to meet a transcultural self that promotes for no fixed cultural identity. On the other hand, Mukherjee's *Miss New India* is located in a non-binary space that departs from both Indian community standards and western mimicry to describe the self within the parameters of modernity as a reaction to the global reality of a cosmopolitan space. Indeed, Anjali displays a transcultural identity characterized by cultural fluidity, modernity and cosmopolitanism. Moreover, the text articulates the concern of the female character through a transcultural postfeminist perspective vowing a departure from the feminist concerns that might be located within western or Indian feminism.

The notion of transculturalism vowed in both texts permits to align with Spivak's Planetarity for evoking a correspondence with novel literary and cultural parameters signaling a departure from Eurocentricism; equally, it dismisses postcoloniality's overemphasis on nationalism. In fact, the notion of transculturalism drives from the conceptualization of Ariana Dagnino, yet the present study promotes for an Oriental transculturality that rests upon no diasporic circumstances but upon imagination; therefore, the composed identity distances.

5.2. Trans-Texts and Biographies: Oriental Transcultural Writing

Transcultural writing is defined as literary productions beyond the cultural parameters signify holding trans-cultural propositions transferred into the literary text. Ariana Dagnino contextualizes such a literature within the field of World Literature and Comparative Cultural Studies (2). Commonly, the position of being a writer equals possessing an intellect that is alarmed by realities and life circumstances (4); the transcultural writer, in fact, captures global shape-shifting cultural modes in the contemporary era (4). Therefore, pronouncing literary parameters that find no fit in the mainstream discourse. The contemporary realities of transnational flows and literary circulations, it is received that both writers produced transcultural texts that fall in a Planetarian discourse. Hence, due to cultural imagination, the thematic productions of both texts align with a transcultural vision transferred from transcultural authors. Both writers are primarily concerned with the preoccupations of their communities, yet their literary and biographical backgrounds announce a transcultural consciousness that transcends the boundaries of their national/ local communities.

Rajaa Al-Sanea is understood as a transcultural writer for contributing into the creation of a discourse that finds no fit into the mainstream literary discourses. Arianna Dagnino defines transcultural writers as those who have transnational displacement from one space to another, and who possess a mindset and Orientations towards the world at large like Amin Maalouf, Alberto Manguel and Pico Iyer (Dagnino, *Transcultural Writers* 2). Similarly, Rajaa Al-Sanea finds a refuge in a multi-cultural environment as she studies dentistry in the United States, while her early upbringing had been in Saudi Arabia. As a millennial writer, her text ensures a depiction of the social, cultural and cross-cultural themes of her generation. The writer is an intellectual nomad who crosses cultural experiences and transcends the boundaries of her own nation and culture to structure the literary themes of her narrative. Although Dagnino's description of transcultural writers does not entirely fit the lifestyle of Al-Sanea, but it is argued that her writing draws upon transcultural themes and occupations to promote for a new category of transcultural writings and writers.

Moreover, the writer denies her belonging to a particular categorization: Arab Woman, Muslim woman, or Middle Eastern which would permit no stereotyping of her text or her belonging. She comments on the reception of her novel by the British media as further vowing of Orientalism as her text exposes the Saudi female life that has been absent from the

literary and media (Ware 4). In addition, narrator recounts events that are considered as a space of conflict as she positions herself in a mobile posture; she is neither within nor outside the community (Santesso & McClung 121). Moreover, Al-Sanea “position herself inside and outside the *ummah* without directly invoking it”, where she suggests a literary field of conflict that is mobile rather than unified and clear (121). *Girls of Riyadh* break literary conventions and writing standards of the Arab literature through using the cyberspace as a platform for narration (Ware 13). Indeed, the cyberspace has permitted to transcend the parameters of the community to position the self in a fluid community of actions and reactions, therefore constituting a fluid platform of belonging (ibid). Hence, The writer’s critical statement against social standards and her bold position towards the current community culture puts her outside of the notion of cultural belonging to this community, at the same time, she appears to belong to no specific cultural background; therefore, it permits to classify her as a transcultural writer. Furthermore, Ware notes that Al-Sanea does not confine to the virtues of literary styles, plotting, and characterization and on (60); in addition, the text distributes a challenge for linguists as the writer breaks with the Arabic writing standards as she incorporates Saudi slang and English expressions (13). Therefore, Al-Sanea’s literary text finds itself beyond standards categorization or belonging, which permits to classify it in the ‘fluid’ field of transcultural writing.

On the other hand, Bharati Mukherjee is classified as a transnational author for her life background and her diasporic texts. Ariana Dagnino comes to classify the transcultural writer within the frame of «cultural dislocation, transnational experience, bilingual proficiency, and multiple cultural encounters» (*Transcultural Writers* 1). Indeed, Mukherjee falls into this category due to her Bengali/Indian origins and her Western dislocation: she studies in Britain, moves to Canada, and then to the United States; she assumed a teaching position at an American University and married to a Canadian writer. Her wide dislocation from one space to another grants her the title of transcultural writer by Dagnino’s terms. Moreover, Mukherjee herself denies any identification as a writer as she believes that the biological grounds of identity do not define her as a writer (Kumar 25). In addition, Mukherjee denies the notion of a hyphenated identity, where critics perceived it as a rejection of her Indian origins. Nevertheless, she elaborates:

I think my position have been misunderstood largely in India. I insist on being considered an American writer because I want America to realise that in the late 20th

century there can be no American Centre and periphery ... I am fighting the American establishment to be regarded as central. I want to destroy the whole notion that Asians, or people of a different colour are 'sojourners' whereas those who arrived in America from Germany or Sweden are 'settlers'. It's also a way of resisting exoticisation" (quoted in Kumar 25)

Mukherjee rejects a categorical belonging as she regards herself an Indian, American, British and Canadian. Her humanistic tendency appears in the rejection of the notion of periphery and centre to call for a belonging without borders. Hence, she disassociates herself from belonging to a particular 'national' or transnational group infiltrate her within transcultural writers.

Furthermore, both novels are received as literary works in circulation through translation and the use of a global language. Being part of World Literature on Pascale Casanova's terms equates reaching to a world audience, where both works are read, reviewed and criticized beyond the boundaries of nations. Indeed, both *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India* are read and reviewed outside the parameters of Arabia and India. Noura Algahtani notes that Al-Sanea promotes her text with international recognition through translation to English; hence this literature of the periphery is drawn into the centre (30). In addition, she notes that the writer finds the literary work at an odd space as it crosses the homeland borders (31). Such a non-place posture permits the writer to integrate into a section of transcultural authors. Furthermore, Mukherjee finds a wider reading audience through pronouncing her work with a global language vowing Indian community concerns. Michal Guttman notes that *Miss New India*, as a cultural product, is linguistically and thematically accessible to a non-Indian reader (5). Moreover, the writers not only distributed an image of Arabia and India, but an image of other localities and individuals who belong to multiple cultures and communities; therefore, their texts are pregnant with cross-cultural and multi-cultural themes as a response to global flows.

5.3. Women of Arabia: An Oriental Transculturality

The event of transculturation is argued to find a space in the literary work of *Girls of Riyadh*. Such perception results from imagination of both the Orient and the Occident that the main characters are exposed to. The theme of transculturation appears in various ways in the text,

which leads to highlight an Oriental transculturality rather than following the standard discourses on the subject in the age of globalization.

5.3.1. Transcending the National Self Through Islamic Feminism

Rajaa Al-Sanea stands against the nationalist ideology that attempts for homogenization of the Arab female, discussed in the previous chapter. The writer delivers an anti-nationalist image of Arabia supported by modernized approaches of the main characters as a means of resistance. In addition, the author evokes a failure of ethno-theories to eliminate the continuance of traditions in the Saudi socio-cultural space. In addition to these arguments, standing as primary indicators of cultural change, it is argued that the writer promotes a version of Islamic feminism that falls consistent with a transcultural position.

Mariam Cooke's book *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* gives an account of Islamic feminist writers: Nawal Saadawi, Fatima Mernissi, Assia Djebar works are associated to Islamic feminism as their novels negotiate the status of women in Islam. Their works are argued to delve deeper into the questioning of women and identity in relation to the Islamic discourse, where they argue for gender equality and vow against patriarchy. Therefore, pronouncing the title of 'Islamic Feminist writer' is equated to a 'direct' contact with the Islamic discourse to vow a clear statement in favor of females in Islam. However, the present analysis positions Rajaa Al-Sanea as an Islamic feminist writer without direct bearing of the 'direct statements' exposed by Cooke's selected writers. Indeed, scholars associate Rajaa Al-Sanea's work to Islamic feminism. Tijani O. Ishaq argues that *Girls of Riyadh* is more Islamically-grounded through appealing to references and allusions to Islamic scriptures (5), where the writer attempts to demonstrate that the socio-cultural practices in Saudi Arabia are more related to social patriarchy rather than Islamic scriptures (5). He additionally places *Girls of Riyadh* as an Islamic feminist work par excellence (7). By the same argument, Mirwan Kanie considers the novel as an Islamic feminist work for its focus on the writer's individual interpretation of religious scriptures (Quran and Hadith). He stresses on the individualist declarations and the relation between the individual and religious texts, and thus, evacuates the traditionalist interpretation of religious texts that are considered as the common discourse by the socio-cultural realities in Saudi Arabia (294). It is argued that Al-Sanea distributes a version of Islamic Feminism that transcends dichotomies; the writer stresses on the notion of the culturality of the dress code and a non-male-patriarchy as a means to distribute a transcultural position.

5.3.1.1. A Transcultural Veil

The divinity of the veil is traced in the religious readings of Qur'an. Therefore, as a Quranic obligation, it is the Muslim woman duty to wear the hijab as a means to adhere piety and submit to the divine will. Indeed, Azzam in her chapter *Gender and the Politics of Religion in the Middle East* believes that Muslim women wear hijab due to an understood religious duty, whereas others believes in the 'culturality' of the hijab and perceives it as a way of being culturally distant from the western woman, which is equated to decadence and promiscuity (Yamani 225). The notion of 'fasad' is associated to western women and their revealing fashion which should be avoided in order to have a sane society and to submit to the will of God (225). As an extension to a religious-fundamentalist state, the girls of Riyadh are coded to wear hijab in public settings. Despite of the promoted ideologies about hijab and its divine significance, *Girls of Riyadh* is argued to have a non-divine vision of hijab as it joins the argument stating its mere cultural relevance. Therefore, hijab is not a divine obligation as much as it is a cultural symbol of a Muslim identity. Such view is articulated by most Islamic feminists. According to Muhammed Abdu and Qasim Amin, hijab is a mere symbol of the Muslim identity rather than an enunciation of religiousness and therefore, an innovation for Islamic practices in the contemporary era (Bouatta 93). Thus, Rajaa Al-Sanea aligns with the novel interpretations of scriptures and vows the 'culturality' of the veil as a means to deliver a transcultural identity for her main characters.

Despite of their adherence to religious beliefs, their understanding of the wearing of hijab is rather culturally related rather than a religious duty. Wenche Ommundsen notices that the protagonists display no revolutionary actions towards their lives (Kanie 292), which demonstrate that there is no impression of revolutionary actions or cultural struggles, but a smooth peaceful passage towards individualist actions. On the other hand, Mirwan Kanie opposes Wenche Ommundsen's statement against the revolutionary actions of the four girls through adopting quasi-revolutionary actions against the fundamentalist religious discourse (292). Therefore, the actions of the girls demonstrate their critical perceptions towards the situation of women in Saudi Arabia as they adopt a behavior that is more attuned with the modern realities rather than western or fundamentalist. Moreover, unlike other feminist Arab writers, Al-Sanea represents her Arab women as possessing no issues with hijab, for not being synonymous with oppression. Mubark Altawaiji observes that Henda Mansour and Ahdef Soueif, as feminist activists, regard the veil as a means of oppression for and domination of the Arab/Muslim woman (5-6). Indeed, Michelle, Sadeem and Gamrah are ready to lose their

hijab once they are outside of the parameters of Saudi Arabia. In the airplane to London, Sadeem, among other Saudi women and men, change their clothes to be more western to adapt and assimilate to the western cultural environment they are addressing.

Furthermore, Gamrah's immigration to the United States and her husband's westernized perceptions; she decides to unveil when in the public sphere. Her decision is additionally reflective of the 'culturality' of the hijab rather than being a religious duty. Despite of the obvious traditionalist character of Gamrah, she is ready to dismiss her veil when in a western environment in order to fit into the cultural life in her new culture and to meet the cultural expectations of her 'westernized' husband. In addition, Michelle completely tarnishes the hijab whenever she is outside the parameters of Saudi Arabia. The wearing of the hijab could be argued that is it a means to assimilate to the western culture or receiving it as a hinder to cope with cultural others in a western environment, yet Michelle's decision of not wearing the hijab is a an Arab-Muslim nation, Dubai, exhibits her status on the hijab as a cultural product rather than a religious one. Their actions might convey a secular feminist perception, where it is perceived as a means of subordination for women. Mubarak Altawaiji sees that Al-sanea's work is a secular feminist endeavor. Yet, her text is abundant with religious references; she constantly uses religious references to the Prophet Mohammed's statements or Quranic verses: "May God consider my writings as good deeds, as I only have good intentions" (Al-Sanea 68). Moreover, Mirwan Kanie notices that the writer's religious references take a different and an individual understanding of religion rather than portraying the traditionalist understanding of the religious statements (294). His argument places the writer among the Islamic feminist writers for suggesting an individualized vision of Islam that marches well with the contemporary (modern) realities, and condemns the traditional discourse due to its contribution to hypocrisy and miseries.

Al-Harby sees the girls' reactions on the dress code as an alignment with 'self-Orientalisation' of the Muslim woman (181) for showing that they reject the veil and adopt a western dress code. Yet, the novel founds no grounds for veil opposition as much as she delivers a transcendental religion that regards the individual's self rather than the individual's dress code. Here, the writer understands that the dress code is purely cultural and equals not religious commitment. Al-Sanea accords with Abu-Lughod's perception of cultural satisfaction; Lamees's decision to wear the hijab when she is in Canada reinforces the notion of individual freedom of choice and belief that the writer emphasizes on. Although, the

speeches about the cultural connotations of the veil are sided with an Islamic feminist perception, the decision of wearing the veil is similarly a religious freedom. Indeed, the veil appeals to cultural and social allegiance of the *Girls* to their Saudi/Muslim community, whereas outside the parameters of Arabia, the veil is considered unnecessary. Mirwan kanie sees that the writer represents the Saudi society as a hypocritical one, “full of contradictions, deceptions and lies, making the lives of women miserable” (Kanie 291). Indeed, the fact of wearing the veil merely within the parameters of the community means a tendency to view it as a cultural symbol rather than a religious one.

Consequently, Rajaa Al-Sanea promotes that the veil stands in the parameters of culture contradicting the fundamentalist readings of religion that promotes the divinity of the veil. Thus, the writer aligns with modern religious perspectives distributed by Islamic feminist activists. Al-Sanea creates a transcultural identity for her protagonists as they transcend the nationalist versions of religion and its fundamentalist readings approached by nationalist leaders. Therefore, reinforces the nation of modernity and cultural changes.

5.3.1.2. Transcending Masculine Patriarchy

Islamic feminists and feminists in general stress on the equality of men and women, yet most Arab feminist writers portray women as the victims of male domination or as empowered women who defy male domination; whereas the male patriarch exert power and dominance over the female protagonist defeating her individuality and voice. Raja Al-Sanea, on the other hand gives an equal image of males in the Saudi society as she gives a close interpretation of their behavior towards women. The males populating the narrative are closely approached in the narrative to give an account of their life circumstances; thus, the writer attempts to voice the Arab male concerns in Arabia. In fact, understanding the Arab male is tied to a poststructuralist perspective that gives a distant relation to essentialism and universalism (Bosch-Vilarrubias 44). In her book on masculinity in the Arab and Arab American world, Marta Bosch-Vilarrubias sees that masculinity is a term related to culture, thereby, differently interpreted by different cultures:

What we understand as masculinity, hence, derives from the cultural and, most importantly, discursive processes that have historically established relations of power between genders. Manhood is thus no longer seen as a universal category but another construction, with innumerable intrinsic variations. (Bosch-Vilarrubias 44)

By the same token, Douglas Schrock and Michael Schwalbe, in their article “Men, Masculinity and Manhood Acts”, consider the notion of ‘multiple masculinities’ to understand them as related to hegemonic attempts (47). Therefore, the notion of masculinity that the males receive in the novel is inscribed in the dominant discourses distributed by the postcolonial nationalist discourse. Masculinity and masculine studies from an Islamic feminist perception take the notion of gender equality as a primary occupation. According to Judith Kegan Gardiner, “feminists need to engage masculinity studies since feminism produces only patriarchal explanations of society if it does not understand how men are shaped by masculinity” (Quoted in Bosch-Vilarrubias 3).

In the previous chapters, *Girls of Riyadh* represents the male characters as equal to women due to a nationalist ideology that aims at attributing a socio-cultural position for women whose lives are highlighted by socio-cultural limitations to put them equal to women on social and cultural terms. Indeed, the most prominent males in the novel: Firas, Faisal, Rashid, and Nizar are introduced as modern characters that have progressive thoughts about women and their relation to women. Their actions are received to be revolutionary, which defy, to an extent, the promoted masculine discourse of power and dominance. These men appear to attune perfectly with the ‘modern’ actions of the protagonists as they favor love and individuality over the notions of traditionalism and collectivism. Faisal is engaged with his individual mind and self. He is perfectly attuned with Michelle’s liberal thoughts as they share the same perceptions and principles. Yet, their decision to marry is interrupted by collectivist voices as his mother denies him to be engaged to a westernized woman. For the mother, Michelle possesses no needed femininity tools to uphold the family name and reputation and it is the duty of the male to select a wife that is fit to hold the family name, reputation and honor. Therefore, Faisal’s proposal to be tied to Michelle is rejected despite of his strong desire to and his personal choice based on his personal preferences and mind attunments. The dreadful psychological condition of Faisal as a result grants him no access to his wishes despite of his position as ‘patriarch’, which promotes the triumph of social limitations and the remoteness of the male character. Thus, similar to Michelle and other women, he is victimized by the prevailing traditionalist thoughts and fundamentalist perspectives. Faisal’s marriage with a woman of his mother’s choice leaves him a choiceless individual who possesses of no voice.

On the same wave length, Firas is represented as an influential male who holds a stiff and a strict character. His modern thoughts, wide knowledge, and powerful position denied him however from being with a divorced woman: Sadeem. The relationship between him and Sadeem is compatible on many levels, yet the fact of being a divorced woman in the Saudi society is problematic for Firas since, for his family and the traditional Saudi society, Sadeem is not fit to hold the family name and honor for being involved with another male before. Despite of Firas's obvious admiration of Sadeem, he is unwilling to make social amends to marry her, and has followed his family's suggestion to marry another woman seen fit to hold the family name. In addition, Rashid, Gamrah's husband, departs for USA to study and work, and he has received cultural alteration in his perception and behavior when in a different occidental setting. His rejection of his wife Gamrah and her obvious Oriental actions announces his disapproval of the Oriental beliefs. Yet, the notion of reputation and honor, according to Oriental beliefs appear to hold a significant role in his life despite of occidental individualism. His marriage to Gamrah exhibits his willingness to submit to his family and society rules and roles. Thereby, acting upon Rashid's individuality and personal desires is irrelevant in the Saudi cultural mind. Rashid additionally performs his husbandry duties according to the Saudi perception without involving occidental manners with his wife. He attempts not to change her to welcome the western mind, yet he judged her Oriental actions. Rashid, like the other males in the novel, had nothing to say or do on their own without the permission of their families and society, where the Oriental masculinity is a requirement.

Consequently, *Girls of Riyadh* accounts for the failure of individuality facing the traditional Saudi culture and the triumph of postcolonial nationalist attempts to maintain a masculine identity of the Arab male that is more relevant to honor, reputation and supervision rather than individual pursuits. The patriarchy that is based on the notion of male dominance and control is evacuated and is replaced by a discourse of equality. Hence, *Girls of Riyadh* transcends binary thinking related to male-female relation and dismisses patriarchal speeches to highlight gender equality, while she condemns the postcolonial nationalist discourse for delivering gender binary thinking.

5.3.1. The West is a Space of Embrace

The global flows and the images received from the western cultural other is received by scholars as pattern of homogeneity, which classifies globalization as a device for cultural homogeneity. They comprehend globalization and global flows as means to homogenize the

Arab world and drive it to dismiss its religious identity. Women in particular are ‘sensitized’ against being influenced by the western other. In the previous chapter, it is viewed that the main characters are influenced by the images received of the cultural other, which drives to announce the occidental impacts on the cultural identity of the protagonists. In addition, the Occidental cities are represented as a space of refuge for the protagonists to flee the cultural limitations imposed. In addition, Aligning with Al-Harby’s argument, Gamrah, Michelle and Sadeem fail to find satisfaction in the western cities, which highlights that the solution for Saudi women’s issues should not be imported from the west but fabricated at home (Al-Harby 172). The present chapter argues that Al-Sanea steps distant from western mimicry as a means for modernized behavior through delivering a version of Islamic feminism.

5.3.1.1. Cross-cultural Consciousness: A Contested Mimicry

Mubarak Altawaiji sees that there is a ‘clash of civilizations’ between the Arab East and the West, where the writer favors the western culture instead of the Saudi one. Yet, it is argued that *Girls of Riyadh* evacuates western sidedness and attempts to find solutions to cultural issues on Arab terms instead of western mimicry. The occidental space is received to a space of comparison leading to cultural consciousness rather than a subject of identification and mimicry. The previous chapter attests for cultural behavior of Sadeem, Michelle and Gamrah in the west to conclude that their behavior are more attuned with an Arab long-distant nationalism, where they keep faithful to their cultural origins despite of their openness to the other’s cultural experiences. Gamrah’s adoption of long-distance belonging to the Saudi community prevented her from assimilating to the American culture despite of her trials. To march in accordance with her husband’s wishes, she adjusts her behavior to better suit the American culture, yet she is unable to be admitted to the western American culture due to the heavy images received from her mother country. Yet, in America, she adheres to western life styles through being introduced to self-dependence and individuality: she learns to achieve things without the help of her husband, she learns computer science and she is able to live the American way without losing her Saudi one. On the other hand, in Saudi Arabia, she performs ‘modern’ actions with her friends suggesting a transcendence of the traditional Saudi behavior. When Gamrah goes back to her mother country, she utilized what the American culture has taught her, which made her engage in independent pursuits to start her own career. Welsch considers these behavior as part of a transculturation; a ‘modern culture encompass a number of lifestyles and cultural practices that interpenetrate or emerge from one another’

(198). He adds that the construction of individual and collective identities is marked by the combination of diverse cultural origins (199). Thus, the integration of different cultures produce divergent behavior inscribed within the transcultural parameters where there is no full commitment to one culture.

Furthermore, the feminist perspective is aligned with the perception of saving the Arab woman from their own unfair culture: dominated by discourses of power, patriarchy and male dominance leaving the Arab woman vulnerable amidst the socio-cultural realities. Such 'saving' ends are merely met through secular feminist stands, where the Islamic religious discourse is departed from. According to Nawal Saadawi, the Egyptian feminist activist, "the idea that you can have feminism within a religion is incoherent" (quoted in Altawaiji 2) such an idea sips from the impossibility of creating a sound religious discourse that appeals to all fractures of society, and therefore, the notion of religion is ought to be dismissed when seeking to give women their rights in the Arab culture. In addition, the heavy emphasis on the religious discourse in the Arab culture sentences the call for women's rights to a call for a revolt against Arab cultural heritage and Islam for its unfair statements on women.

Multiple scholars receive *Girls of Riyadh* as a feminist novel, where the notion of empowering women, defying patriarchy, and a search for an individual identity define the main characters' actions. Mubarak Altawaiji perceives that Rajaa Al-Sanea accounts for the westernized behavior of her main characters, where he associates their non-conformist actions to the west, which is perceived as a better alternative than the Arab-Islamic one (4). He additionally argues that Al-Sanea attempts to depart from Islamism and indulges her main characters into a western environment, which is "free and fair" (4); therefore, a departure from the Arab culture and its Islamic basis to embrace a western life. In fact, the girls of Riyadh are represented as women who perform western actions and attempt to empower themselves through education, careers and un-marital relationships. These behaviors are revolutionary by the Arab standards, and are perceived common and natural in the western world. The acts of drinking wine, smoking, dressing tight clothes, and meeting up with the opposite sex are western actions, where the four girls see themselves in perfect attunement and ease performing them. In addition, Michelle's constant aggressive criticism towards the Saudi culture and society puts her in a feminist position, as she dismisses all actions that weaken women:

The way she [Michelle] talked about freedom and women's rights, the bonds of religion, conventions imposed by society and her philosophy on relations between the sexes. She was continually advising Gamrah to become tougher and meaner in asserting herself and not to give an inch when it came to defending her own rights. (Al-Sanea 195)

Thus, Michelle stands against the subjugation of woman and calls for women's rights, where she believes that a woman is ought to stand up for herself and asserts her own self and individuality in order to achieve what she desires.

Mubarak Altawaiji notices that the novel gives a detailed life of westernized Arab women, which is more preferred and suitable rather than the Saudi Islamic one (4). By the same token, Kyla Hakim understands that the American influence on Arab society is perceived by the way the Arabs respond to it, where the local cultural resistance slowly weakens (Altawaiji 5). However, the call for women's rights from a 'feminine' perspective equals not a call for secular feminism. The writer promotes for a 'feminist' stand as an endeavor to highlight women's rights in the Arab community, yet departs from secularist perspectives that Altawaiji places her in. As highlighted previously, the novel *Girls of Riyadh* is received as an Islamic feminist text, which evacuates the secular trends accompanying the word 'Feminism'. The secularist proposal is aligned with the Orientalist perspective, where it is understood that the western aims of delivering the Arab women is inscribed in the Orientalist agendas. Mohanty Chandra (1988) observes that western/ secular feminism responds to the misfortunes of the Muslim female through calling for improvements through secular means, which positions the Muslim woman as a further subject of change as it is the duty of the western female to 'rescue' these women and lead them towards maturity and development (Darvishpour 2003). The Orientalist perspective towards the Arab women is remedied through an embrace of the western perception, and therefore, a call for western homogenization. If such claim is admitted, then the novel's main characters' identities are reflective of western rather than the Saudi culture, which is a dismissed position in the previous chapter: the protagonists distribute a degree of attunement with their ethnotheories; in addition, they display an amount of dismissal of western values in favor of novel cultural stands. Therefore, it is contended that *Girls of Riyadh* delivers non-western-homogenic attitude as it evacuates secularist readings to adopt an Islamic feminist discourse.

Moreover, despite of difference in approaches, both secular and Islamic feminist movements attempt to meet the end of securing the rights of women from patriarchy and oppression, which signify no opposition between both as much as they share compatibility (Altawaiji 2). Such resemblance is argued to pronounce the secular western stands that the scholar Mubarak Altawaiji received in his article. Indeed, the westernization of the characters' behaviors; her notes are in fact a demonstration of individuality rather than a promotion of secularism.

5.3.2.2. Chick Lit: A Branching From Literary and Thematic Standards

Al-Harby (2018) seats *Girls of Riyadh* among Chick Lit works which credit for the behavior of the four girls. Such literary affiliations tap universal themes of love, relationships, appearances and the search for male hero (154), which have no cultural affiliations for being universal, similar to the genre. This type of literature, in the contemporary era, orbits around females who are globalized and who seek economic and social independence, while they submerge in sexual relationships. These females go through various experiences leading to their growth at the end of the narrative (Al-Harby 154). Furthermore, the author announces the diversion of the novel from the western Chick Lit as she asserts that circumstances of the four protagonists are irrelevant to the western environment that is characterized by individualization, freedom of action, independence, and the pursuit of happiness (156), which is different from the Saudi circumstances. The four girls are more aware of the limitations of their own environment as they struggle to achieve their aspirations. The scholar additionally contends that *Girls of Riyadh* appropriates the genre to meet Arab ends and thus diverging from the western conventions of Chick Lit (154); hence, moving distant from western affiliations considering the non-conformist behavior of the girls.

Being classified as a Chick Lit novel, leads to admit that the girls are involved with actions that are regarded as universal for sharing the themes of self-development, love seeking, career achievements, as noticed in their behavior throughout the narrative. Gamrah, Sadeem, Lamees, and Michelle recount their experiences with love and relationships, seek to have pleasure moments, along with their stress on education and careers which lead to their self-development and satisfaction. Therefore, the modern behavior of the four protagonists are not received as western, but emerge from individual pursuits comprehended as universal responses shared by females of the planet. Furthermore, the cyberspace is argued to be a space

of transcendence. In her *Women Claim Islam: Creating Islamic Feminism Through Literature* (2005), Miriam Cooke understands that:

The revolution in information technology is enabling a new kind of networking that links local, national, and transnational players and is instrumental in forming global conception of identity and community. (Cooke viii)

Indeed, Al-Harby notices that the writer moves from the local to global spaces announcing a transnational identity. The concept of transnational is argued to be replaced by transcultural, where the cyberspace promotes a transcultural identity rather than a transnational. The latter conceives the concept of 'nation' along with its 'bordered' conceptualization, whereas transculturalism intends for the 'culture' promoting fluidity and change. The author's analysis falls consistent with the interplay of the local and the global that affects the protagonists' self-perception and identities:

“We all live in this world” (1). Then she moves back to the local: “among us Saudis” (1) and “the heroes of my story are people among you, from you and within you, from the desert we all come and to the dessert we all shall return” (2). As a result, the narrator's blog entries indicate two-way traffic between transnational and global aspirations, and local constraints. (Al-Harby 176)

The writer of *Girls of Riyadh* promotes the fluidity between the local Saudi culture and the global. The latter is conceived as a term that means universalism and humanism more than its hegemonic/ homogenizing connotation. Hence, the cyberspace has permitted to transcend geographical boundaries, the move beyond localized identities and overcomes the restriction of the local culture (Al-Harby 175). The new media has permitted the *Girls* to transcend the constraints and the limitations that are imposed on them by their socio-cultural environment, and therefore, resisting hegemonies practiced by the nationalist state. Indeed, Lamees and Gamrah use the internet and social media to transgress the limitations and to encounter males on line; thus, moving beyond the confines of their home sphere, which delivered them a mere domestic role. For both characters, the internet has given them a space to go beyond the domestic hegemonies as they could have a glimpse on the sphere that is not recognizable for them and therefore transcending the Saudi/ Arab cultural norms and imposed limitations. Moreover, the cyber-space is considered as a space that transcends the limitations imposed on women considering the public sphere. The narrator is argued to defy the 'traditionalist' image

of Saudi women through appropriating the cyberspace as a platform to announce the female 'modern' behavior and identities, and to announce the cultural identity shifts that the Saudi space is witnessing.

5.3.2. Modernity and Cosmopoly: A Space of Non-Culture

Mubarak Altawaiji suggests that the writer gives a detailed account of the life of westernized Arab women, where the western code of life is preferable than the Arab Islamic one (4). However, the protagonists are argued to possess a modern identity that inscribes on the parameters of fluidity rather than stable cultural standards. The discussion calls for the term 'non-culture' which parallels concept of non-place announced by Marc Augé, who associates modern spacial characteristics to a non-particular place or culture but to a universal one with no culturally defined characteristics. Henceforth, the notion of non-culture signifies modern cultural characteristics that are attributed to non-defined cultural space.

5.3.2.1. Critiquing Hybridity: Towards a Non-space

Al-Sanea advances a theme that goes beyond hybridity celebration. Homi Bhabha understands hybridity as the third space and the incorporation of two different cultures to create a new one (Acheraoui 91). *Girls of Riyadh's* protagonist Michelle is represented as a westernized individual, who is born and raised in America to an American mother to later immigrate to Saudi Arabia. Michelle's cultural journey starts with a state of in-between-ness that she experiences upon her arrival to Arabia from the US. Her sense of dislocation is promoted through her constant criticism of the Saudi society:

Michelle had never been able to explain to any of her friends, not even to her close girlfriends, the sense of loss she had felt when she had moved back to Saudi Arabia from America. Even though her girlfriends understood how intensely she loathed Saudi society and its severe traditions, and even though they knew how much she mocked the restrictions that the society placed upon young women, the battle of two civilization that raged within her was so contradictory and so complex that only someone with an acute intelligence and an enlightened, open-minded thinking could truly comprehend it. (AlSanea 100)

Michelle's cultural journey can be conceived as hybridity, as her identity is composed of two different cultures. However, it is contended that Michelle's cultural journey is more attuned

with transculturality rather than hybridity; therefore, arguing that character of Michelle celebrates transculturality. It is contended that American nationalism appeals not to Michelle as her behavior finds no attunement with the so-called American exceptionalism and its notion of national pride. Stanly A. Renshon understands that allegiance to the American nation requires psychological attachment and emotional bonding to guarantee a belonging to the American national identity (Nordin et al. 7), which is perceived non-existent in Michelle's thoughts, feelings and behavior. Michelle is argued to feel a sense of belonging not to the conservative America -that calls for pride and heavy nationalist belonging- but to the modern connotations of America and its universal ideals of freedom and individuality that stand strong in the flow of modernities across the globe. And therefore, distances from speeches of hybridity that Homi Bhabha delivers in his *The Location of Culture* for transcending the nationalist stands that the postcolonial/ multicultural hybridity promotes. In fact, once Michelle arrived to San Francisco:

She breathed in air saturated with moister and freedom. People in all shapes and colors, from everywhere in the world, were flowing around her in every direction. No one paid any attention to her Arabness, or to the fact that the person standing next to her was African. Everyone was minding his own business. (Al-Sanea 150)

The writer stresses on the notion of freedom and diversity that her character experiences once in America, where there is no sense of belonging or longing for the American culture. She longs for freedom from the 'political' and social limitations imposed upon them rather than celebrating an American identity over the Saudi one. Consequently, Michelle's celebration of America over Saudi Arabia stands for social and political stands that grant freedom of action and thought rather than favoring a pure American nationalist identity.

Moreover, the feeling of ease and attunement with the American life style is consistent with a pronounced modernity rather than being purely nationalist American ideals, which Michelle embraces and calls for throughout the narrative. Her presence in America grants her the title of a 'transmigrant' in Nina Glick Schiller et al's terms:

In the current transnational, globalized context, migrants do not necessarily sever their ties to their home country, but rather maintain them along with a sense of allegiance to their place and community of origins, while incorporating new allegiances to the receiving society and culture into their sense of identity. (Nordin et al. xiii)

She remains consistent with the Saudi culture when in America, yet, incorporating western pattern of behavior. The writer gives her character the status of a transmigrant or a wanderer between and among cultures, where she lives in America, moves to Saudi Arabia and goes back to American to finally settle in Dubai and have a life of transnational motions. Therefore, she adopts no cultural ties to a single community or to two communities, but she incorporates and embraces different cultures into her identity.

Girls of Riyadh offers an acute comparison between the American West and the Saudi East through Michelle's eyes, where she criticizes the Saudi limitations compared to the freedoms felt and lived in the US. Such constant comparison permitted Motawaiji Mubarak to advance the above argument: westernization is the answer for the girls. In addition, it gave a stand for Al-Harby (2018) to argue for self-Orientalization that Al-Sanea advances through her narrative lines (182). However, it is argued that the comparison between the West and the East serve as critical statements against the nationalist state and the promoted social hegemonies in Arabia rather than a criticism of culture. The writer points to social issues that are resultant from nationalist agendas that are more related to limitations rather than a critique of the Saudi culture in a whole. The comparison contributes to the character's political consciousness advancing the writer's political criticism that is hidden between the lines rather than a clear statement against the leaders. Therefore, *Girls of Riyadh's* offered comparison is utilized as a platform for cultural consciousness as a result of meeting the cultural other.

In addition, such comparison evokes the notion of binary opposition between the East the West that is pronounced in Huntington's 'clash of civilizations' where admitting the irreconcilability between the south and north. This view is disclaimed by the novel as it advances connection between both Western and Eastern cultures. The girls' actions and reactions seem to be more consistent with modernity either in their home land or in the western space, such modernity is a shared status among both cultural entities. The modernity, as pronounced by Arjun Appadurai, is termed in the human experience rather than mimicry of the west, therefore putting modernity outside western terms. It puts the eastern/Saudi culture, in particular, in a state of transition from traditionalism to modernity. Therefore, binary perception is evacuated in the name of 'modernity' shared between the western and eastern cultures, without attributing supremacy to the Western one.

Moreover, reflecting on the concept of the West in *Girls of Riyadh*, it is more understood as a space of cosmopolitanism and modernity rather than a rooted cultural space.

America represents freedom and individuality which are also the symbols of 'hypermodernity'; therefore, American doesn't merely represent the west as much as it represents the nest of 'hypermodernity' that can be shared among other national spaces across the globe. Thereafter, Michelle's motion from one space to another permits her to access the modernities that are transferred into her identity. The choice of Dubai as her living ground is argued by Al-Harby to be an alternative space for finding no comfort in America as a western space (172). Indeed, the cultural setting of Dubai makes it a cosmopolitan modern space par-excellence as it reconciles various cultures, yet remains an Arab space. Thus, it symbolizes that the protagonist maintains her Arabness, yet accommodates it with a modern version that corresponds with transculturality.

The third chapter refers to the Occident as a space of refuge for the characters to escape the limitations imposed upon them by their cultural environment. Such representation delivers that the west is a better cultural space than the east; however, the west is regarded as a cosmopolitan space rather than a pure cultural and national one. *Girls of Riyadh* introduces major cosmopolitan cities like: London, San Francisco, and Chicago which are characterized by modernity. The western spaces have modern characteristics as they welcome people from different spots of the globe. The life characteristics in those cities is more cosmopolitan, modern, and Avant-gardist rather than purely western. Marc Augé calls these cities the non-place since they belong everywhere (78). This notion of the non-place attributed to these cosmopolitan cities evacuates the western influences as they symbolize the non-place and not a western space -and therefore western culture. Both Dubai and Riyadh as Arab cities do have the characteristics of modern non-place spaces as they are the space for cultural meetings. The girls are argued to head to these cities because they represent the modern, global, and cosmopolitan sanctuary where they are more at ease practicing their individuality than in the Saudi space with its 'national' limitations over the individual and the female in particular. Therefore, the non-place is received as a cosmopolitan space that holds modernist and Avant-gardist cultural features rather than western one. Lamis Alshejni understands that Arab women are divided into common and elite. Unlike the common, the upper-class elites have more access to freedom and liberal behavior which equates the western model of consumption (215). Therefore, being part of the Saudi social elite, the girls' social status has granted them a degree of freedom and access to luxuries and other inaccessible things for the common individuals.

5.3.2.2. Modernity and Love

Mirwan Kanie argues that the girls' actions are more derived from their intuitive inner self rather than a duplication of a certain common cultural discourse -either the national Saudi or the western cultural conduct (294). Indeed, the protagonists adhere to their individualities as they seek to fulfill their personal visions rather than the cultural collective interests. Throughout the narrative, the girls seek a path for love as an expression of their identities and personal desires, as they indulge in non-marital relationships with men. In fact, since their young age, the girls have celebrated Valentine's Day despite of its irrelevancy in the Saudi Muslim cultural discourse. Such a celebration is regarded as a blasphemous practice since it is considered unreligious, where being a 'traditional' Muslim equated negating foreign cultural practices. Hitherto, the four girls celebrate the non-Muslim day, not for praising the Christian religion or an attempt for western mimicry but as a route towards embracing the global culture as a mode of being. The symbolism of the Valentine's Day transcends the western cultural connotation as it becomes a universal practice celebrated by the 'global youth' who rejoice love and its significance. Therefore, the openness on the global cultural circulations, the protagonists transcend the boundaries of their local culture, along with transcending the western cultural other through embracing transcultural stands instead of being shaped by one or falling into the mimicry of another.

It is argued that love for women is an aspiration for modernity. For Goethe, it is the human's creative ability to pursuit dreams (Gregg 88). From a romantic vision of life, individuals are ought to grow towards self-expression, pursuit of one's personal dream, which are the characteristics of modernity (88). Within this understanding, the girls' aspirations for love are regarded as a means to express creativity and the pursuit of one's individuality. Similarly, love and its discourse are understood by Michiko Suzuk as a process of becoming modern females. It is argued that the four protagonists are impacted by the notion of love to create their modern identities (67). Moreover, Ishaq Tijani notices that the protagonists use a globalized language, where English phrases (in the Arabic version) demonstrate that the audience are millennials "who are mostly bilingual and westernized" (3). The millennial generation is therefore opened to global other, where the English language finds their way into their speeches. What Tijani comes to notice is an interesting view despite of the use of the term westernized, which it is argued that it is ought to be replaced by 'global'. The notion of westernization loses its credibility considering that the millennial generation belongs to a

hypermodern global reality rather than a westernized one. This leads to say that English loses its cultural ties to its socio-cultural origins and becomes a global language that demonstrates modernity rather than westernization. Consequently, celebrate their individuality through love, which is considered as an exhibition of modernity as a universal human quest rather than mimicry of western other.

5.3.2.3. Intra-national Cosmopoly

The writer invokes the notion of cosmopolitanism and cosmopoly in the lines of her narrative. *Girls of Riyadh* opts for diversity and difference rather than being inscribed in the parameters of one national identity. The unification process of the kingdom has favored the “Nadjisation” of the Saudi community, where the Najdi culture is imposed on the rest of the country (Al-Humaidi 124). In her book, Mai Yamani goes through a lengthy description of the Saudi cultural diversity among the four cultural regions of the kingdom concerning the dress code, language, rule of conduct, religious practices and gender relations (2). Therefore, pronouncing the existing diversities in the kingdom when disregarding the nationalist agendas of the Wahhabi leaders who have entrenched their perception and culture in the minds of the Saudi community despite of their backgrounds and differences. Being conscious about the existing diversities, Rajaa Al-Sanea delivers the theme of Intra-national cosmopoly to highlight deep cultural diversity in the kingdom.

Girls of Riyadh portrays a difference in cultures and perceptions among the characters. Their differences echo the variation in the cultural and the historical background of the kingdom: accents, manner of conduct, heritage and openness. Lamees has Hizaji origins and she is represented as a character who possesses more freedom and rebellion than the other girls, or at least the Najdi Gamrah. Coming from the Hijaz, Lamees has greater tolerance for diversity and otherness, which reflects the cosmopolitan history of the territory since ancient times. Mai Yamani describes in length the cultural history of the kingdom as she puts the Hizaji culture under a wider lens in her *“The Cradle of Islam: the Hijaz and the Quest for an Arabian Identity”* (2004): “Hizaji women are more ‘used to going outdoors’ and expressing themselves publically, a phenomenon more reserved for men in other regions of the kingdom, especially Najd” (264). Indeed, the Hijazi Lamees displays cultural embrace of diversity through her friendship with Fatimah; while the other Nadji shillah disregarded Fatimah and were mainly referring to her as “Fatimah the Shiite” (142). The latter represents diversity and change among them, something that they are and were not acquainted with, she is “the first

shite they had ever met, a stranger in their midst, an intruder in their close-knit Sunni circle” (143). Hence, the rejection of Fatimah by the Najdi girls is an extension to national homogeneity that rejects religious differences in favor of Sunni, yet Lamees displays a tendency to overlook intra-cultural differences and establish a rapport with a Shiite. Therefore, due to Lamees’s Hizaji cosmopolitan background, she disregards the notion of intra-cultural diversities and stress on the character of Fatimah, which she finds attracting. “Lamees’ relationship with Fatimah was altogether different. It was founded on mutual attraction” (Al Sanea 144), rather than family or religious backgrounds.

Moreover, Noura Algahtani notices that Lamees is received as the ‘story winner’ in comparison to her friends; she receives lesser constraints and few complications than her shillah (29). She is the wise resourceful person who is always consulted in different matters of life; as an illustration, she teaches Gamrah to use the internet and has given her instructions and advice in order to upgrade her life after her divorce (Shihad 71). Moreover, the narrative ends with a relatively pleasant life for Lamees as she marries Nizar, works as a doctor, and immigrates to Canada. Throughout the story, she encounters no difficulties similar to her friends due to her awareness of the social conventions; she manipulates her circumstances into her best advantage (Algahtani 29). In fact, the cosmopolitan perspective that Lamees has has granted her a successful living as she perfectly attunes with the global images she receives unlike her friends, who display discomfort resulting from a clash between socio-cultural traditions and the global flows. Consequently, *Girls of Riyadh* distributes a transcultural perception through transcending binary thinking, where the protagonists vow a self-location outside the Saudi cultural standards. Equally, the novel departs from western mimicry towards a cultural self that inscribes in a space of non-culture.

5.4. Towards a Transcultural Indian Identity

Mukherjee represents India as a post-national nation that is opted for hyper-modernity as consequences of global flows as a new reality in contemporary India. In addition, the social circumstances that adopts global flows as the socio-cultural entronement has impacted the identity construction of the main character to march towards cultural ambivalence, which suggest situating the self with no clear cultural ties. The sense of Ambivalence is adopted for in this chapter as it sees that the main character pronounces transcultural identity that transcends the parameters of settled identities. It is argued that the ambivalence that the

protagonist feels is due to a departure from nationalist self towards a post-nationalist stand that finds no clear parameters as the imagined self as the American other has furnished no concrete cultural grounds to structure her identity upon.

5.4.1. Reading Beyond Binarism

The third chapter contends a departure from nationalism to postnationalist stands, which evacuates the postcolonial legacies to be replaced by a new image of India that corresponds with the novel realities. In other words, the representation of India as a hyper-modern space transcends the legacies of a nationalist facet. The fact of representing India as postnationalist space signifies the removal of post-colonial legacies in India. The writer is called a postcolonial writer, but in her *Miss New India*, she dissolves from the postcolonial legacies.

5.4.1.1. Questioning the Diasporic/ Postcolonial Experience

Scholars and critics receive Bharati Mukherjee as a postcolonial author, who transmits the themes of cross-cultural encounter between the West and the East; henceforth, she addresses cultural themes that are embedded in the postcolonial theoretical perspective. Stephanie Southmayd notices the protagonist's cultural ambivalence in her latest work *Miss New India*, where she exhibits a "split between two homes and visions and therefore, between two conflicting identities" (94). The concept of 'ambivalence' describes a continual fluctuation between wanting one thing and wanting its opposite, a simultaneous attraction toward and repulsion from a situation (Young 161). Homi Bhabha speaks about ambivalence in colonial context, where he sees that colonial relationships are ambivalent (Ashcroft et al. 11); thus, seeing the cultural self as opposite to the other. An ambivalent character is apparent in the name shift; her Indian given name 'Anjali' is substituted by Angie, an American version, whenever she wishes to embody an American version of herself. In fact, being in Bangalore and at the presence of Peter Champion, she unconsciously switches to the name Angie for the sake of embodying the characteristics of the name. The name is a means for her to reinvent herself and break with the old self and the old origins (Philips 100). Anjali is similar to Aditi Kotwal's Draupadi in *High Heels*, where the protagonist Deeya renames herself Dee in an attempt to adopt a westernized version of herself (103). Similarly, the protagonist of Mukherjee's *Jasmine* changes her name multiple times in order to culturally fit into the novel environment she lives in. Anjali attempts to reach her imagined-self through mimicry of others who appear to possess American standards.

Moreover, Mukherjee uses the theme of mimicry of the cultural other in her text. Indeed, Anjali mimics the American other when she attempts to Americanize her accent, behave in a western manner at the presence of her American teacher dresses a western style and attempts to behave within the cultural standards of the American other. Bhabha contends that “mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence” (126). Receiving Anjali within ambivalent terms promotes for a state of mimicry that is characterized by continual slippage, excess, difference, indeterminacy, a sign of a double articulation, strategy of reform, appropriation of a visualized powerful other (Bhabha 126). The articulation of Bhabha’s notion of mimicry is received relevant to Anjali’s cultural conduct as she continuously switches from one cultural behavior to another. Bhabha puts the notion of mimicry in coordination with colonial powers, which promotes that the American presence in India is received as an imperial presence disguised in globalization. Conversely, Mukherjee attributes her character’s mimicry to postnationalism and hypermodernity that are characterized by uncertainty and fluidity rather than a position of admiration of the ‘colonial other’. Indeed, the flow of cultural images in a globalized reality drives for the act of mimicry. Besides, Anjali does not merely replicate the American behavior, but succumbs into a series of mimics in the name of modernity: she mimics the Muslim Husseina; the call centre workers; Dynamo’s traits of ‘Miss New India’; in addition, she wishes to embody the hybrid character of Bollywood actresses; hence, evacuating a mere mimicry of the western ‘imperial’ other. Consequently, Mukherjee drives distant from Bhabha’s notion of ‘ambivalence’ to argue for cultural fluidity as a marker of the protagonist’s cultural loss.

Miss New India flashes back into the memories of colonial and ‘old’ India as a means of cultural comprehension. Anjali’s imagination of the past equals no glorification leading to embodiment of these cultural memories but for the sake of embrace. Bharati Mukherjee and Salman Rushdi speak about imagination of the homeland leading to further connection to the culture of origin. Hence, imagination and ‘long-distant’ nationalism play a major role in the cultural identity of characters as images of the past lead to persistence of cultural ties. However, the notion of imagination of the past hails for no persistence of cultural links with the ‘old’ community but an embrace of its meaning, impacts, and experiences that her fellow communions, including her parents, share. The comprehension of her past images leads to an embrace of the cultural past rather than a dismissal for the sake of changes and novelties offered by the novel realities dictated by a hyper-modern reality. Moreover, a departure from the nationalist India is symbolized by the death of the protagonist’s father under the influence

of his daughter's flight. Anjali represents the new generation of young entrepreneurs who are ready to craft a novel way of life and neglect the old (Southmayd 226), while her father represents the old generation of Indian nationalists. The fact that Anjali is estimated to cause the death of her father is a symbol of the departure of old India for the sake of a new one; the desire for the Indian Dream based on materialism and freedom causes the disappearance of a community that was crafted on nationalism and pride with Oriental values. In addition, Mukherjee drives her protagonist back to Gauripur, the nest of old India, to witness the complete change of the space to embrace modernity. The facet of the town has transformed from traditionalism to modernity permitting to argue for a non-return back status to a nationalist India.

Furthermore, *Miss New India* portrays a novel social class defined by Stephanie Southmayd as 'upwards mobility class', which denounces the previously existing castes in India. The image of postcolonial India has been related to the notion of social classes and castes as a social legacy of colonialism. Dawson Varuguese argues that the postmillennial Indian literary fiction have moved 'beyond the postcolonial', where the exploration of the globalized world replaces a celebration of the past and its injustices and international inequality to evoke a 'sunny future' for India (229). Mukherjee, as a reflection of the postmillennial literature, transgresses castes and represent a cosmopolitan social class that has no consideration for social and cultural backgrounds. Indeed, the characters in the novel have different social and cultural backgrounds, yet they form a novel social class that is characterized by entrepreneurial pursuits and therefore an economic class. Thus, the notion of belonging to this novel class requires economic/entrepreneurial endeavors rather than religious, social, regional or tribal definitions; "a 'new' India in which caste oppression and relative poverty can be overcome by dint of hard work acumen" (Southmayd 64). Indeed, new India with its entrepreneurial facet has created a new caste where job seekers would become job creators in the land of opportunities (64). The anti-hero that Southmayd refers to is vis-à-vis the notion of nationalism. The contemporary writers like Chetan Baghat, Anish Trivedi and Neelesh Misra deliver a narrative and a tendency to move beyond the nationalist image of India and to embrace a new generation that tosses aside all that is old and traditional to embrace a novel identity that corresponds with liberalism and novelty. On the other hand, Bharati Mukherjee's *Miss New India* delivers more occupations with nationalism and an Indian identity, "*Miss New India* is in fact realist works that do seem to contain a strain of call-centre-lit-style nationalism" (Southmayd 66). The pronounced national anti-hero, Anjali,

represents a character who is both skeptical about nationalism and globalization for their openness to leaders' corruptive agendas and western imperial pursuits (66-67). Therefore, Mukherjee's novel transcends the old equations of Indian Castes through delivering her protagonist's belonging to an upward mobility that dissolves from both nationalist legacies and globalization.

5.4.1.2. Transcending the Cultural Other

The other is represented in America and British colonialism through Minnie Bagehot and Peter Champion. Their presence in *Miss New India* is influential, yet both fail to craft permanent presence in the protagonist's cultural trajectory. The theme of 'decolonizing India' is delivered through the presentation of the Bagehot mansion and Minnie Bagehot. In fact, the colonial connotations of both motifs has been brought to an end through the fall of the house and the death of Minnie, which symbolizes the end of colonial influences in India to open grounds for the novel influences of globalization and global flows. Thus, both incidents deliver a further departure of the British colonial Orientalist values. Furthermore, Peter Champion is represented with traits of American values and humanism that are embraced by new India, which are symbolized through the influential powers Peter has on Anjali. In the fourth chapter, he exercises deep cultural influences on the protagonist to cast cultural changes in her in terms of individuality, freedom and material pursuits. These equate the American influences on the nation. Indeed, Peter Champion exercises multiple influences on the main character as he fuels her flight from Gauripur to Bangalore. In addition, Kimak Izabella contends that Mukherjee gives answers on questions on the new India through Peter Champion, who explains the social and cultural realities according to his western 'Re-Orientalist' perspective (89). However, his views are contested at the end of the novel as he confesses to wrong by Anjali. He implants western ideals of materialism and the pursuit of happiness in her mind without thinking of the consequences (Timalsina 40). Indeed, Peter Champion holds a western perspective and is only able to comprehend things accordingly, while an Oriental mind is composed differently, which makes the American cultural values invalid. Therefore, Champion's failed Orientation on Anjali symbolizes the failure of American ideals to craft a cultural path in the Oriental India. Consequently, the symbolism of the Bagehot mansion, Minnie and Champion announce the failure of western hegemony.

5.4.1.3. The Call Centre: Failure of American Homogeneity

The emergence of Call Center Lit as fiction sight has indeed impacted the work of Mukherjee. The call center demonstrates a major theme in *Miss New India*, where the protagonist aims to upgrade her living conditions through having access to a call centre employment. The milieu is regarded as a symbol of economic transition from local to global staffed by an ambitious and educated generation of young India (Philips 98; Tharoor 18). Scholars receive the call center as a space to access a global market without deterritorialize from India, which makes a contested theme. Indeed, both scholars and writers draw attention to the call centers and their contested significance and impacts. Scholars like Jonathan Murphy claims that the call centres in India is in fact a means of homogenization brought by globalization, which creates a new middle class with shared values as other classes in the developed world (430). Similarly, Stephanie Southmayd notes that the call centre, as a transnational workplace, possesses an overly optimistic perception, yet suspicious about the cultural intentions vis-à-vis the Indian globalized youth (80). She understands that this sight is an extension to imperialism customized in a globalized identity, producing alienated, isolated and morally destructive individuals (ibid). In addition, Harshi Trivedi comprehends that the call centre, as a globalization effect, is underlined under the neo-imperialist agendas that attempts to remove the nation-state for the sake of adopting western values. He notes that the new imperialism has an American facet rather than European centered (Southmayd 10). Chetan Bhagat receives the transnational milieu as a space of deception since it leans towards American values of materialism and consumerism; hence, betrayal of nation-state and Pan-Indian values (Southmayd 33). *One Night @ a Call Centre* distribute the theme of servitude of the imperial powers leading to enable individuals to flourish (Southmayd 74).

Moreover, the call centre is received as a space of cultural hybridity. In her article “India on the Line”, Stephanie Southmayd notes the hybridized status of the call centre lit for becoming a sight for American accents and westernized names (7). Similarly, Tina Basi notes that call centre work give rise to ‘ethnic fusion’ as it imposes cosmopolitanism in the work institutions. As an extension, the workers’ identities appear to be affected by these institutional impositions (Basi 164). The change in style and language that Basi observes go beyond mere code-switching but extends to profound transitions to assume a hybrid identity (Guttman 11). Indeed, the call centre workers undergo profound transition to formulated a hybrid self that combines Indianess and Westernization (Southmayd, *India on the Line* 7). In fact, Literary writings like Shruti Saxena’s *Stilettoes in the Boardroom* (2009) and Brinda S.

Narayan's *Bangalore Calling* (2011) promote call centres as a space that erase the boundaries of caste, religion, gender and regionalism (Guttman 1). Therefore, the call centre literature distributes concerns about the cultural identity of the staff as they submerge into a transnational and transcultural sights. Similar concerns are delivered by *Miss New India*; Mukherjee receives the call centre space as a sight of cultural servitude as it attempts to erase the Indian Identity for the sake of a globalized individual ready to cope with economic shifts through changing the self accordingly. The writer rejects the call centre space through her protagonist, whose character fails to amend to an Americanized version of global identity. Hence, *Miss New India* distributes the theme of the call centre's failure to craft Anjali's cultural identity.

Working at the call centre has been the primary objective and a path for Anjali to reach her imagined-self. Anne Michal Guttman argues that Anjali never works at the call centre but the idea of IT-enable work place structures her identity (2). Paradoxically, Anjali crafts her identity upon no call centre, but upon an imagined-self as she role-plays as a call centre worker, but possessing no emotional interests in being a call centre worker. Indeed, Anjali displays no apparent appreciation for becoming a call centre employee, but receives it as a path for life betterment since she only possesses English language skills. The notion of imagined-self, hence, is associated to a better life prospect and an escape from the traditionalist living in Gauripur rather than an imagined aim to embody an Americanized version of the self. Therefore, the Americanization process associated to the call centre is perceived as a means to material gain and a path to become an entrepreneur in the hyper-modern India.

The theme of failure to Americanize the new India is symbolized through Anjali's failure to be employed at the call centre. Indeed, Stephanie Southmayd understands it as an exhibition of the new generation's fight for a nationalist India against the American homogenizing forces (107). She arrives not at proper communication with the American community: she does not laugh at their jokes, fully comprehend their colloquial statements, relate speeches to a comprehensive meaning, and she is not able to digest her novel alias. Certainly, the exposure to the authentic American cultural experience disarms Anjali from any adopted Americanism and distributes that her mimicry of Americanism is in fact a mere attempt to reach an imagined-self rather than attaining an American version of the self: it

signifies a quest for freedom and individuality. Anjali herself sees call centre work as “dead end” even before she lands a position (Guttman 5).

She is told that she has "a great deal of difficulty erasing herself from the call" (241) which enhances her Indian Identity and her non-belonging to the American culture. The agents are required to fully submit to their new 'night' identities and to fully integrate in the American culture, to arrive at fooling the American callers. Parvati vows to Anjali that "Being a call agent requires modesty. It requires submission. We teach you to serve. That's not in your makeup, Anjali" (242). The mentioned traits in the call-centre agents are submission to the American culture and a full integration in the language and its culture, which are non-existent in Anjali. The notion of 'Serving' is associated to the notion of the master and the subordinate, where India's soft skills are put into the service of an American audience. The fact of night shifts for the sake of meeting the needs for the distant Americans is associated to 'servitude' where the American masters' quest for assistance is met across the hemisphere. In addition, the concept of 'Submission' requires a degree of self-negligence to meet the needs of the other's needs. The call centre employees appear to disavow their Indian identities to embody an American one for the sake of serving the distant other:

Look me in the eye, Anjali. Consumer support is a very demanding and very specialized profession. One of the things it demands is the ability to submerge your personality. No one is interested in you, or your feelings. You are here to serve our client, and the client is the corporation, not the caller. (241)

A constant questioning of the call center metaphor and meaning is delivered through the questioning of Anjali and the other trainees to put it in a critical situation. The call centre culture, according to Mukherjee, is 'humiliating' as it erases the Indian identity, language and culture in order to meet the needs of corporations serving Americans. In fact, many trainees at the call centre institute decide to secede from the program for perceived 'humiliating' aspects of the training sessions, as they vow that their identities is being erased for the sake of a foreign one. Similarly, in his *One Night @ a Call Centre*, Chetan Bhagat distribute a negative connotation of the call centre as it is seen as a means of servitude that enables individuals to flourish (Southmayd 74). Conversely, Mukherjee's *Miss New India* declares that her main character promotes for a new globalized India that disavows association to cultural Americanization; therefore transcending the theme of cultural homogenization practiced by the American other.

5.4.1.4. Finding the Self in the Other: Beyond Dichotomies

Mukherjee's magnified stress on Peter Champion is in fact a symbolism of American presence and influences on India as he role-plays the 'fairy god mother' to Anjali. It is marked that the former character embodies the American hegemonic structures imported via the transnational motion of people. His presence infrastructures the flight of the protagonist towards a modernized living; however, without a continuous presence in her life, which argues for cultural similarity, which replaces themes of hegemony. In fact, Anjali is impacted by the American presence to formulate her identity as she learns individualism, independence and the pursuit of happiness, yet arriving at Bangalore attested for her failure to adopt Americanism. Unlike Brinda Narayan's *Bangalore Calling*, which received that globalization/neoliberalism as a form of cultural homogenization (Southmayd 9), Mukherjee sees it in terms of modernity that plays on a planetary string. The representation of America has appeared in other works of Bharati Mukherjee like: *The Iddleman and Other Stories*, where one of the characters Ro represents America with negative connotations enhancing the theme of political and imperial superiority.

In texts such as this, the established asymmetrical centre-periphery-relation is devalued in the sense that the Western hemisphere appears as decadent and alienated and its pseudosuperiority is unmasked by the behaviour of the fictive figures. (De Zepetnek & Mukherjee 181)

However, *Miss New India* delivers an awareness of the American hegemonies and proposes an alternative cultural posture that sips from the western space, but departs towards modern perspectives that negotiate similarities between the two cultural entities instead of binary differences. Thus, the American ideals and values are embraced and are the ones fueling Anjali's cultural journey towards embracing a transcultural self.

Both India and America are similar in terms of national structures and economic Orientations. Indeed, similarly to America, India is composed of multi-cultural and multi-ethnic background populating a significant surface of land. In addition, adopting economic liberalism is initiated to meet the plurality of structures in both nations leading to the composition of a capitalist economic background that engendered further social and cultural changes. America has been the ground for capitalism since the early establishments of the

nation. Such economic liberalism has favored the rise of entrepreneurs, factories, companies, corporations, which permitted the emergence of a social class of new wealthy people who own large companies and are in charge of hundreds of workers. In the 1980s the nation called for a neo-liberal policy where George Bush emphasized that the Americans are ought to adapt to novel circumstances rendering every citizen an agent of his destiny (Gill & Scharff 5). Moreover, a neo-liberal fact relies on individual entrepreneurship, freedom, skills, private rights, free markets and free trade: “neoliberalism is a mobile, calculated technology for governing subjects who are constituted as self-managing, autonomous and enterprising” (Gill & Scharff 5). Therefore, a neoliberal fact has created an economic culture that stresses on individuality and freedom, which distances from Occidental cultural values and succumbs into a culture of economic production.

Furthermore, the Indian subcontinent engaged in the economic structure of liberalism which impacted the socio-cultural facet of the nation. Peck and Tickell notice that neoliberalism creates individuals who are characterized by rationality, calculation and self-motivation, and who are increasingly urged to make sense of their individual biographies: freedom, autonomy and choice, despite of probable constrains (Gill & Scharff 6). The representation of Bangalore as a multicultural, cosmopolitan and mobile space along with its material growth exhibits its routs towards a more modern space that signified a cut with traditions. Hence, the notion of modernity defines both the American and Indian socio-cultural backgrounds to stain both with degrees of similarity. The liberal approaches and the economic realities of India is perceived to be similar to the contemporary Indian one, which has led to similar impacts on socio-cultural sphere provoking the mentioned image of Bangalore. *Miss New India*, therefore, aligns with such reasoning, where the perceived American ideals present in the novel, are in fact the extension of a status of socio-economic modernities rather than a mere mimicry of Americaness.

5.4.2. From Imagination to Modernity: A Space of Non-Culture

The practice of imagination permitted an access to diverse cultures and spaces either through direct or indirect conditions. Indeed imagination permits the protagonist of *Miss New India* to view herself as part of more than one space. With the presence of global flows, India is represented as a space of hyper-modernity populated by culturally-diverse characters who are argued to promote an identity with transcultural parameters. Marc Augé hypothesizes that “supermodernity produces non-places (78), which constellate with universal characteristics of

the place and therefore the culture. Paralleling the above concept, the notion of non-culture is attributed to the cultural identity of new India as a space of hypermodernity. Henceforth, *Miss New India* identifies her characters in parameters of modernity and cosmopolitanism.

5.4.2.1. Modernity and the Post-millennial India

In his *Modernity and its Future*, Stuart Hall believes that identity shifts with the change of the cultural space; hence, the ‘postmodern subject’ is located nowhere due to the process of decentring (278). The former is problematized by stability, unification, constantly shifting identities, contradictory contexts, constant fragmentation, and temporality; therefore, remains incomplete (ibid). He adds that the post-modern individual is “framed against the background of metropolis” where the “inner core has been displaced and whose center has been eliminated” (279). By the same token, Marshall Burman understands that modernity creates ‘permanent revolution’ suggesting the impossibility of feeling home (96). In addition, the survival in a modern world requires a fluid identity and willingness to change (95), overcome nostalgic feelings, and submerge into the appreciation of mobility, renewal and futurism (96). Thus, a state of modernity equates a non-identity-position as it constantly shifts due to the surrounding cultural realities, which leaves *Miss New India*’s protagonist in a state of instability in terms of cultural location. The hyper-modern reality describing the metropolitan Bangalore contends to produce a postmodern character characterized by entrepreneurship Orientations and cultural fluidity.

Indeed, the hyper-modern image of Bangalore has created a novel image of fictional characters echoing the economic and cultural tendencies of the post-millennial India. These characters tend to value their economic posture among world economies, as these entrepreneurs furnish technological advances to world consumers. Such a character, equals to post-millennial literary fiction, is delivered through the voice of character Gurish Gujral, who is a young entrepreneur holding postnationalist stands on the new India. In fact, he asserts that India’s global path emerged from the technological dependency on the skills that the nation offers; hence, he disregards a dependency on the west in the new era (Philips 101).

Every business in the world is outsourcing. Without us, the world would collapse ... we would collapse without international collaborators ... Then they’d collapse without us. (Mukherjee 101)

Stephanie Southmayd notes that a nationalist entrepreneur, who stands for a newly-shaped India, is embodied by Mr. GG. The nationalist tendency is approached through his cherishing for a distinctive India from the western character (Southmayd 77). Similarly, Shehzad Nadeem understands that a globalized India aims for racing and replacing western economic supremacy (71). Moreover, the image of the entrepreneur is contested as it is perceived as an extension to American economic influences, which is an opposed statement by Mr. GG. In the novel, Mr. Auro applauds for a continuous involvement of American supports to upgrade the Indian economy:

"epoch of cosmic slump" India must "decouple" its economy from that of Western nations. "We Indians hitched our bullock cart to the U.S. wagon, and now we're up to our knees in horseshit and bullock dung." Citing statistics about investment flight, capital lost, and plummeting rates of corporate expansion. (302)

Auro perceives that the Indian economy is flourishing through American aids on various levels to the point of 'not-becoming' when Americans lose their 'helpful' strings. This view is contrasted by Mr. G.G announcing the distinctive mature nature of the Indian nation without the help of western nations: "this is our chance to leapfrog and win the creativity race. We Indians are genius inventors, not just cut-rate mistris!" (303). Therefore, placing the Indian nation in a status of distinctiveness, where it is able to surpass the influences of the other to stand on its own.

As a response to the entrepreneurial reality, the socio-cultural relations have shifted from blood ties relation-based to networking founded connections. Nadeem Shehzad notices a social change from collectivist principles as traits of the Indian society to an individualized version where the emphasis on autonomy, individualism and pleasure-seeking became central (51). Indeed, *Miss New India* delivers an image of departure from Anjali's arranged marriage towards an independent living that contained the support of no family members but on her own and her newly met network. Hence, the collectivist traits resting on blood ties are being replaced by no-blood-ties network, which reflects the economic Orientations of human relations. Anjali's pursuits are met through the support of other people like: Champion, Mr. GG, Husseina and Parvati, who furnished the path for her to adopt her imagined-self without apparent efforts. Such entrepreneurial-based relations are a reflection of hyper-modernity that grants importance to individual growth and development rather than family structures and values.

Moreover, the contemporary entrepreneur contributes into the creation of themes related to national advancement rather than attesting for corruption and institutional illnesses distributed by the themes of the postcolonial Indian entrepreneur. Indeed, the notion of economic profits is altered from the notion of greed, power and ruthlessness that were associated to postcolonial entrepreneurs, where Gurcharan Das comprehends that 'old' India associate business and entrepreneurship to colonization for it symbolizes the western's territorial and material greed at the expense of the Indian natives (Southmayd 72). In addition, the entrepreneurial institutions are perceived as corrupted and corrupting for the individual as Aravind Adiga announces in his *The White Tiger*. Conversely, Mukherjee reports the Indian entrepreneur as the new voice of India, who is directed towards national improvements rather than mere personal profit. Such Orientations have pivoted for an infrastructure for social positivity expressed by the characters populating *Miss New India*. Surely, the protagonist notices the smoothness and the helpfulness of the 'Bangaloreans' for they warmly orient, assist, dress, lodge and help her in different situations without a quest for a return; Peter Champion finances her journey to Bangalore and secures her a training program at the call centre, Husseina and Tookie dress her properly for the party, whereas Parvati offers her a shelter and a family without expecting for returns. Hence, the notion of negative moral compasses associated to the entrepreneur is evacuated and is replaced by a new facet that presents a quasi-utopian version of the 'new India'.

5.4.2.2. Cultural Fluidity: Rootlessness and Dislocation

The Indian female character in a number of literary texts is noticed to be in a constant search for identity since the traditional statements appear to hold no satisfactions to herself. Indeed, Mukherjee's works appear to use the theme of displacement and dislocation, where the protagonists appear to mentally and geographically abandon the traditional space and move towards a westernized area in search for identity (Bedjaoui 47). Following Marshal Burman's definition of postmodern individual, it is confidently contended that the protagonist departs from the past towards an embrace of an unrecognizable self, where she dispossesses of nostalgic emotions towards the old self. She sets upon no cultural clear grounds in the metropolis, yet permits no return or association to the past. In addition, Anjali displays an embrace of novel experiences and cultural locations as she switches environments from nationalist/traditionalist India, to the British colonial legacy mansion, the cosmopolitan streets of Bangalore, the American-influenced Call Center, the hybridized life of Parvati, and back to the culturally-shifting Gauripur. Indeed, the protagonist's cultural journey is labeled

'postmodern' as it stabilizes under no circumstances, but adapts to the constant novelties she is exposed to. Furthermore, Marshall Berman describes modernity as "any attempt by modern men and women to become subjects as well as objects of modernization, to get a grip on the modern world and make themselves at home in it" (5). In fact, Mukherjee distributes a character that adapts to cultural novelties encountered displaying a degree of belonging to the new spaces: in Gauripur, she demonstrates perfect attunement with her environment; in the Bagehot mansion, she befriends Minnie despite of disagreeing with her values; she attunes with the call centre girls and workers; in addition, she feels home at Parvati's house despite of being a stranger to the family and their cultural practices. Therefore, Anjali is considered a post/modern character par excellence.

Bharati Mukherjee creates a character that seats upon no cultural grounds as she disassociates herself from national and global concerns and rests her considerations upon herself merely. Her scope of interests underline null concerns for happenings in economy, politics, society and culture to Orient her interests to the occurrences relevant to her frame of life: "'coupling' and 'decoupling' made sense to her only in the context of her personal life; she didn't feel connected to global issues" (303), which exhibit her cultural dislocation. She cannot associate herself with a particular group or community driving to share similar interests; she feels disconnected from the notion of national or international belonging to a certain group. Hence, her main concern is the novel creations of the self rather than concerns with an already established community. On the same wavelength, Ariana Dagnino associates detachment from "social, economic, psychological and identity ties or bonds that people can hardly do without" (175) to a transcultural identity. Therefore, the notion of cultural fluidity constellates with transcultural identities displayed in Mukherjee's main character.

What is more, the association with cultural fluidity is not merely displayed in the characters' self, but it is reflected in India as a whole. The construction of the 'new nation' appears to hold no stable traits leaving characters juggling with their thoughts and perceptions about the novel realities of the nation. The anthropologist Peter Champion distributes his reflections stating the non-firm parameters of new India:

And for me it is the most worrisome aspect of modern India -the disappearance of trust. I look at modern Bangalore, and at Delhi and Bombai, and I wonder, what are we creating? Not our private sector, but in the public? Can we keep that old patience - dignity, as our hostess calls it- and passion? Have we lost our sense of civic morality

forever? The newfound prosperity in this city is breathtaking, and I don't mean to disparage it. Prosperity is a good thing. But I'm not so sure of the wealth that comes from outsourcing. I wish prosperity was rooted to something. I wish it but something beyond glass monuments. It seems flimsy as a kite balloon. (Mukherjee 162)

The modernities defining the Indian identity constructed a precarious background for the new nation to define its parameters upon. The freedom to pursuit, gain and construct produced a cultural space without a proper definition, leaving individuals speculating about the facet of the cultural future.

The loss of the old Indian character and identity tossed some essential cultural values along with it as morality and values became questioned statements in an air of materialism and material pursuits. The metaphor of 'kite Balloon' designates the hollowness of a social space without its cultural rootless. Peter refers to 'materialism' as 'prosperity' which defined the major Indian cities. Prosperity has caused the elimination of core values of the Indian cultural identity and marched towards unknown spaces.

5.4.2.3. A Cosmopolitan Modernity

Bangalore being in a space of hypermodernity, cross-cultural encounter, and cultural fluidity summons the concept of cosmopolitanism as the effect of diversity. The concept of has been modeled and remodeled depending on the context of its occurrence; however, the main concentration of the term here goes back to the enlightenment definitions stating “devotion to humanity and detachment from local bonds” (Spencer 2). Thus, the intentions of the term transcend the notion of belonging from the local/national sentiments into trans-national belonging, where the self is perceived within the parameters of no fixed culture or community. Mukherjee’s text positions the main character in a metropolis that is inhabited by cosmopolitan population, where they dislocate from various cultural and ethnic backgrounds in search for economic prosperity. In fact, Ram Prasad Timalisina notices the Indian cultural diversity through a spotted miscommunication between the Bengali descent Anjali and the Hindu policeman once arriving at the metropolis (29). Similarly, Michel Guttman observes that the call centre work space favors no biological, regional, nor gender trait, but personal and linguistic qualifications, which promotes for local cosmopolitanism (1); whereas, Mr. GG is received as part of a ‘transnational class’ (Philips 101), who transcends the national and cultural boundaries of the community. Moreover, the substitution of social relations from

blood ties relationships to networking characterizes the social conduct in Bangalore. Robert Spencer points that social solidarity result, not merely from inherited identities and interests but, from shared participation in the public sphere (3-4). For Habermas, this ‘cosmopolitan solidarity’ collaborates with a pronounced postnationalism that transcend cultural nationalisms (Nordin & Lina 3).

Furthermore, Mukherjee’s protagonist develops a sentiment for different individuals who appear to have multiple and diverse backgrounds without favoring a group over another. The narrative positions Anjali amidst a cosmopolitan experience in Bangalore as she acquaints the American Peter Champion, the hyphenated Rabi Chatterjee, the call centre workers at the coffee shop, the Bagehot girls, the British decent Minnie, the transnational Gurish Gujral, and her adoptive parents Parvati and Auro. These encountered minor characters originate from different cultural and ethnic backgrounds, yet they possess a solid connection permitting Anjali to infiltrate such a cosmopolitan class. The protagonist’s waited prospect as a call centre, the fact of frequenting a network of high-mobility communions, and her imagination as being part of their social class, alters her sense of cultural self as she arrives not at positioning herself within a single cultural parameter. Basi understands that call-centers workers’ communicative practices with a global audience give the floor for discussing “globalized identities” (Basi 34). Within similar lines, Anne Michel Guttman comprehends that these identities shift are pronounced within the terms of cosmopolitan identity and therefore refuses to merely integrate the concept of globalization (Guttman 11). With a similar perspective, it is argued that Mukherjee promotes for a transcultural identity that rests upon cosmopolitan structures. The notion of cosmopolity dissolves from its political and economic implications to correspond with a hypermodern reality.

The narrative of *Miss New India* attests for a non-political Orientation of cosmopolitanism, but a cultural; thus, drives distant from political attempts of homogenization under the concept of globalization and its effects on communities. Ariana Dagnino locates the parameters of transculturalism outside political connotations and avoids the term cosmopolitanism for holding a political ideology that promotes neo-imperialist approaches surrounding ‘globalization’ (3). Indeed, Mukherjee steps distant from imperialist and colonial implications through vowing cultural similarity as discussed in the above section. Moreover, Mukherjee aligns with transculturalism through mismatching her text with “a utopian over-idealization of the cosmopolitan virtues of Northern states” (Dagnino 3), which announces

Eurocentric propositions of the term. In opposition, the writer delivers non-binary connotations of cosmopolis through associating it to a trans-local modernity. In the previous chapter, Mukherjee portrays Bangalore as a non-place signifying that the structural design of the city equals no spatial affiliations and therefore belonging to all individuals from all backgrounds. Marc Augé notes that the non-place is the face of hypermodernity, where individuals reside on a non-affiliated belonging. Hence, hypermodernity constellate with a cosmopolitan vision attributed to the population of the metropolis.

Anna Michal Guttman contends that “contemporary Indian texts construct a local cosmopolitanism that simultaneously challenges Eurocentric discourses of cosmopolitanism and established theories of postcolonialism” (14). Global motion has indeed contributed into the construction of a ‘global culture’, yet conceived with planetary vision, where authenticities of the local self are called for. The stated ‘local cosmopolitanism’ is received as a response to a hypermodern reality that the Indian metropolitan spaces are characterized by. However, an adequate term appears more fitting is ‘cosmodernity’; a neologism that correlates cosmopolitanism to modernity. The concept of ‘local’ used by Guttman refers to neo-nationalist stands as the local state pronounces its novel parameters within the same community considering India’s multicultural and multi-ethnic status; thus, the term excludes Eastern/Western relations that have a main stress in *Miss New India*. In addition, admitting such conceptual use equates further alignment with a postcolonial perspective that gives credit to binary relationship with a magnified perspective on struggles and issues between both ‘cultural’ entities. On the other hand, the neologism of ‘cosmodernity’ aligns with a transcultural reading that transcends the binary relationship between the East and West as it promotes a culturally consistent relation. The notion of modernity in the present context, as pointed earlier, is equated to cultural fluidity and India’s cultural status of ‘permanent revolution’ as Marshal Burman terms it. The notion of cosmopolis intends to announce the metropolitan characters’ intention to accept and promote for an embrace of the cultural fluidity projected by modernity. Therefore, Mukherjee attributes a ‘cosmodern’ character to her protagonist, which conduits to a transcultural identity.

In his *Cosmopolitan Criticism and Postcolonial Literature*, Robert Spencer sees that the cosmopolitan relationships are characterized by cultural interaction, which is seen in the postcolonial cosmopolitan text as a relation of tension and discord (139). On the opposite, the dynamic relationship between the East and West that Mukherjee delivers is distant from

cultural tensions, where characters, despite of their trans-local and trans-national backgrounds, have a harmonious connection. Markedly, despite of Champion's American background, he attunes perfectly with the rest of the characters, whereas Mr. GG represents a link among the culturally different characters putting him in possession of cosmopolitan intentions. Anjali vows no tension between/among cultures as she moves from one identity to another marking a fluidity of character; thus, blurring the boundaries among the existing cultures. Anna Michal Guttman marks that Anjali possesses a double existence as she switches from one cultural behavior to another as a badge of 'local cosmopolitanism', a sort of hybridity that posed an issue in the local environment of Gauripur (2). Indeed, the protagonist acquires a cosmopolitan self resulting from the received global flows, which refuses to correspond with Gauripur's pronounced regionalism/ localism. Both media and Peter Champion have modeled the conceptualization of her self to receive her identity without the Gauripurian regionalism, but with a cosmopolitan posture that embraces multiple cultures. Moreover, Anna Michal Guttman contends that cosmopolitanism has transcended the physical mobility of individuals to sense transnational affiliations, and that the South Asians feel a sense of translocal belonging without a necessity to depart from the national borders (2). Indeed, as contended in the previous chapter, imagination contribute into the conceptualization of the self that transcends the national/local belonging to a transcultural belonging through locating the cultural self with fluid parameters and therefore aligning with a 'cosmopolitan-modern' perspective. Consequently, Bharati Mukherjee's text evokes a transcultural identity through adopting cosmopolitan parameters that align with a hypermodern reality.

5.4.3. An India Woman with Postfeminist Standards

The primary occupation of *Miss New India* is the female identity amidst socio-cultural changes in India under a neoliberal reality. Indeed, the hypermodern space intersects with the notion of postfeminism as a contemporary concept that relates to the female circumstances. In their *Postfeminism: Cultural Texts and Theories*, Stephanie Genz & Benfamin A. Brabon capture the link between neoliberalism and postfeminism regarding their infrastructures built upon individualism, autonomy, freedom of choice, self-regulation and self-invent (7). In addition, their simultaneous historical location and the neoliberal stands mostly favoring individualism posits postfeminism as an extension to such a context. Scholars situate Bharati Mukherjee's works within the framework of feminism for appealing to female empowerment against the social circumstances. Indeed, AbhiJhek Awasthi notices Mukherjee's intensive thematic care with the female issues through depicting characters who are submissive,

disempowered, inferior, and trapped in an inescapable social role, which reflect the writer's feminist beliefs (np). Moreover, Nagendra Kumar comprehends that Mukherjee's female characters struggle for their own individuality against traditions as they engage themselves in finding solutions to their circumstances, which are inscribed in feminist struggles to empower the female character (149). Furthermore, *Miss New India* stands a feminist position through the portrayal of the call centre; according to J. P. Pradhan and V. Abraham, the centers higher female due to their devotion, patience, attentiveness and loyalty and therefore stereotyping the female for customer service (Patel 32); hence, an inferior position in terms of employment. Indeed, Mukherjee's work is concerned about the female question, yet drives distant from feminist perspective and adopts a postfeminist stand instead.

The concept of postfeminism considers the feminist perspective, yet indulges into multiple preoccupations related to plurality and fluidity rather than a care about agency and politics. In fact, the concept is highly depoliticized (Genz & Barbon 167) and is related to cultures in plural terms. Postfeminism, used without a hyphen, is argued to be located beyond cultural grounds, therefore a conceptual entity on its own rather than being associated to a certain cultural or national background (Genz & Brabon 3). Moreover, the term suggests crossing feminist perceptions for fulfilling the ends of the latter, where the feminist ideals find no relevance (3). Such cultural deracination collaborates with transcultural fluidity. It is argued the Bharati Mukherjee delivers a transcultural postfeminism in her *Miss New India*, where her perspective about the Indian female status corresponds with transculturality.

She vows links between transculturalism and postfeminism: pluralism: Reject one singular vision of culture/ definition of women's role in community. Anjali has different roles in society: worker, protegee, daughter, lover, American, Indian, transnational and empowered. She is not mono-cultural. She has a modern identity that shifts and reshifts. It is similar to the postfeminist stands where women embody a modern character that shapes according to context. According to Stephanie Genz & Benjamin A. Brabon, Postfeminist expressions emerge in the intersection of media images, consumer culture, neoliberalism and feminism (5). Accordingly, *Miss New India* is based on the mentioned contextual parameters; the previous chapter attests for the contribution of media into the making of the protagonist's self-perception, where Anjali receives the hybridized Bollywood images to formulate her imagined-self. The protagonist's imagined-self is built upon a materialist vision where consumerism and material belongings assumes to be her primary aim. In addition, the novel is

set in a hypermodern space as the result of a neoliberal reality, whereas the novel makes reference to feminism. The latter concept finds relevance in the early parts of the narrative as the writer describes the bleak circumstances of the Indian female under a nationalist culture; Anjali's mother and her sister Sonali are represented as voiceless women who struggle in order to fill a certain feminine role. Moreover, postfeminism is correspondent with the replacement of collectivism with individual assertion of personal choices (Genz & Brabon 8), which are clearly apparent in Anjali's approaches to her her life; she favors her own individual self, perceptions, and personal choices rather than meeting collectivist ideals.

The novel highlights an empowered female who dismisses the female issues in traditionalist India without apparent struggles. Unlike the feminist texts, where the protagonist struggles amidst the socio-cultural circumstances to establish her individuality, Anjali exhibits no struggles or defiance; on the opposite, she is aware of her individuality and marches a cultural path that meets her personal desires without struggling or fighting the traditional society. Indeed, a postfeminist individual transcends struggles and self-establishment-fights to stress on freedom of choice, self-inventing, self-management and self-discipline (Gill & Scharff 7). In his thesis *Tradition and Modernity in Bharati Mukherjee's Novels*, Rajalakshmi sees that Miss New India's protagonist receives that marriage as a lifetime imprisonment that limits women's freedom and individuality (81); thus aligning with a feminist perspective that articulate women's freedom outside the realm of patriarchal marriage. Conversely, Anjali desires a marriage prospect that would meet her individual requirements; she wishes to acquaint a suitable husband that resembles Bollywood males, hence provides her with a prospect resembling her imagined-self. In addition, she wishes to be married to Mr. GG since he embodies the male characteristics she greets. Therefore, Anjali doesn't meet Rajalakshmi's feminist contention.

Anjali defines herself within no cultural parameters as she moves beyond the traditionalist definitions of femininity and the female social roles; equally, she refutes a cultural belonging to the American-like image. Thus, the female character binds herself to no single cultural frame but to a modern fluid one that rests upon no defined contexts. Mukherjee's novel is similar to Chick lit in the sense that the protagonist is a young female, city-based, romantic troubles and a desire to find the one (Genz & Brabon 84). Suzanne Ferris and Mallory Young defined the literary features of chick lit as "single women in their twenties and thirties navigating their generation's challenges of balancing demanding careers with

personal relationships” (quoted in Genz & Brabon 84). In addition, the novel is a reflection of a realistic portrayal of a young millennial female who seeks an idealized life through jobs, romance and asserting her feminine values (86). *Miss New India* collides with many characteristics of Chick Lit; however, provides a different version of the contemporary Indian female outside the parameters of the western genre. The latter presents an individualized self-disciplined female who confidently strives to realize her wishes in the big city; nevertheless, Anjali is not defined as a powerful female who uses her strength and confidence to achieve her desired path and to overcome the encountered limitations, she is represented as a powerless individual who possesses no confident marches towards her wishful path, but merely desires. Anjali is positioned in a tide of cultures and circumstances where she is in no control of. Therefore, Mukherjee’s protagonist vows a postfeminist stand that is culturally oriented which recalls the transcultural female parameters.

Anjali portrays the Indian female as part of the work force, which defies the traditional norms of the female social role. Employment at the communication technology sector offers women the capacity to uphold a job without the limitations of time, space and culture (Patel 36). Anjali is empowered through being exposed to a fluid employment that grants an access to limitless traits that binds her to a spacial or cultural environment through the mere language skills. In addition, the call centre work place requires no significant skills or experience dissimilar to other fields, which permits Anjali to additionally transcend higher working skills to have access to a significant payment. Therefore, Anjali transcends the limitations of the space through accessing to a job environment that transcends previous boundaries and ensures a decent living without possessing higher employment skills.

Furthermore, Mukherjee portrays a postfeminist male character who values fluidity of character rather than an embodiment of traditional masculinity. Scholars points that Mukherjee grants major credit to the female characters in opposition to her male counterpart (Awasthi 112), which leave it a feminist novel par excellence. However, despite of a stress on the female character, Mukherjee gives a significant importance to the male characters as being Anjali’s main assistance throughout the story. In addition, Mukherjee’s feminism notices no conflicts with males as the protagonist asserts herself against cross-cultural encounter rather than struggling patriarchy (Aswathi 61). The scholar’s perspective is adopted, yet within the framework of transcultural postfeminism as the protagonist transcends cultural boundaries rather than struggles to assert the self in a patriarchal structure. Indeed, the male characters in

Miss New India support the protagonist throughout her journey: Mr. Champion fosters and finances her departure from Gauripur to Bangalore; Mr. GG assists her throughout the story whenever she needs, whereas Rabi Chatterjee reinforces her decisions and views. Moreover, Mukherjee populates her narrative with characters who replace the traditional meaning of masculinity to embody postfeminist male criteria. Stephanie Genz & Benfamin A. Brabon note that the 'old' industrial man, exemplified by Anjali's father, is replaced by ongoing technological postfeminist man, exemplified by Mr. GG (135). The latter is aware of hegemonic masculinities and attempts to invent and re-invent himself amidst socio-cultural uncertainties (143). In fact, Mr. GG is a dynamic individual who desires a life of liberty from engagements and commitment to traditional roles and old masculinities displayed in his offer to Anjali. He demonstrates a degree of likes for Anjali yet refuses to engage in marriage and offers her company without a designation. A defined relationship is equated to commitment and gender roles and thus, it is rejected for the sake of freedom. Hence, Mr. GG portrays the transcultural postfeminist man, who rejects the old notions of masculinity in favor of a self beyond the masculine parameters of a certain culture.

Miss New India evacuates the notion of gender roles and regards them equal. Unlike the patriarchal society of old India, the characters appear to fulfill no particular gender roles; Parvati and Auro, despite of their marital relationship, appear to assume no specific gender roles as they fulfill their individualist potentials without interjection from the other for 'role' purposes like her mother and father. At the same wave, Mr. GG appears to be supportive of Anjali's freedom and choices, where he assists her through presence, network and encouraging statements. In his article, he considers her a blessing, which signify being supportive of her empowered self (generation of Indian women). In addition, he seems to attribute a good amount of freedom and choice to her when asking her to accompany him; despite of his desire for Anjali to assist him, he gives her a choice. Thus, the new male character assumes no gender roles or gender issues as both 'human-fellows' cherish individuality and personal freedom of choice over patriarchy and manipulation of the other gender.

5.5. Conclusion

It is permissible to adopt that cultural imagination produces transculturality avowed in Al-Sanea and Mukherjee's texts. Transculturality appears as a response to cross-cultural

encounter producing a multifaceted and fluid identity (Nordin et al. 11). Both texts avow transcultural Orientations due to their cross/multi-cultural consciousness. *Girls of Riyadh's* protagonists articulate a behavior that consistent with an Islamic feminist perspective that promotes a disrupture from the fundamentalist religious readings -as the basis of socio-cultural values in Arabia- and the promotion of a modern vision that views the veil as a cultural practice rather than a purely religious one. I addition, the male characters' socio-cultural status is equal to women as both genders are socially compelled to adhere to a homogeneous culture. Hence, Al-Sanea marks a departure from traditionalism and moves towards a more fluid culture that adheres to no set of 'fundamentalist' parameters but to novel standards that consider neither nationalist identifications nor patriarchy. Moreover, the text distances from western mimicry of secular feminist ideals, framework of Chick Lit, and Postfeminism. The writer considers the above literary parameters in her text as the protagonists reveal female issues within a limiting society, absorbs thematic and formal structures of both Chick lit and postfeminism; however, moves beyond neat mimicry of the western frameworks. Thus, *Girls of Riyadh* transcends the cultural and literary other to settle the text within no defined parameters as scholars notice the unstable literary location of the novel.

Moreover, *Girls of Riyadh's* transcultural parameters are displayed through the adoption of non-cultural space that rests upon fluidity as a prerequisite of modernity. The latter is avowed in a critiqued hybridity, where protagonists' identities disengage from the notion of Bhabha's 'third space' and are replaced by a fluid status rather than collaborating cultures together to create a novel one. The characters' identities are reflective of a non-space rather than a third space as their behavior is inscribed in a 'trans-position' affirming a transcultural identity. In addition, the expression of a modern self through the theme of love as a primal concern in the narrative, along with a pronounced intra-cosmopoly, is inscribed in a transcendental perspective, where the characters go beyond regional and communal thinking towards an embrace of differences and diversities, which are regarded as the basis for a transcultural self.

Miss New India distribute disengagement with binary thinking through adopting a state of transcendence from the nationalist themes announced in the third chapter; in addition to a critique of ambivalence and social castes that are perceived as legacies of a post-colonial reality. A pronounced transcultural self tends to disengage with a postcolonial discourse that

attributes a primary concern to binary thinking promoting cultural difference or opposition between the Orient and the Occident. Moreover, she disclaims mimicry of the American other through the failure of the protagonist to integrate the call centre space and its Americanization effects and equates the cultural other to the self instead of being a space of opposition. Furthermore, cultural imagination creates a modern identity, where Marshall Burman defines it as characterized by fluidity and uncertainty. Indeed, aligning with the parameters of transculturality, the protagonist rests her cultural identifications within no clear frameworks as she shapes and reshapes herself according to her environments. In addition the writer articulates transcultural cosmopolitanism as a marker of cultural fluidity and modernity of character. The chapter closes with a closer look into the Postfeminist standards as a means to express the protagonist's further cultural dislocation for being a space of cultural and literary transcendence. It treats the female character as socio-cultural agents rather than 'feminine' that equates a feminist perspective. Yet, a planetary focus strand distant from binary thinking of male and female, besides women are by no means considered oppressed by patriarchy.

The above discussed themes align with understandings of transcendence, going beyond cultures, neglecting binary thinking, canceling otherness, and cultural fluidity. These themes find relevance in transculturalism as the thematic and formal characteristics in *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India* transcend binary thinking of the Orient and Occident and define the identities of the characters within no stable parameters as initiated by Bhabha's third space.

GENERAL CONCLUSION

General Conclusion

The impulse to a Planetarian philosophy stems from the inclination to read texts beyond the standard parameters inscribed in the canon discourses; more particularly, the encounter between the East and West on an intellectual and cultural levels. Under the historical and literary circumstances of a globalization, the reading of texts summons new perspectives and conceptualizations that distance from the classical philosophies that might not theoretically be well-equipped to adequately read the shaped realities. Thereupon, the present project is an endeavor to highlight a perspective to read the literary texts of the Periphery that engages with the recent spread of global flows. The concept of Planetarity appears in Gayatri Spivak's text *Death of a Discipline* (2003) in a pursuit to call for novel intellectual orientations and new readings of the Periphery text, within the discipline of Comparative Literature, that attune with the contemporary changes. In fact, the primary occupation is a reading in the Periphery –Arab and Indian- texts and their intellectual and thematic responses to global flows. These flows are narrowed to the cultural presence of the Occidental Other leading to the cross-cultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident.

In fact, Spivak's concept intends to alter the term 'Globe' with 'Planet' for the held conceptual connotations. The Globe implies economic, political, and imperialist discussions; it insists on the persistence of dichotomies and conflicts among individual and collective entities. Alternatively, the Planet opts for co-existence and recognition of the 'species of alterity' rather than engaging in a discussion of binarism especially between the Orient and Occident. Therefore, Planetarity as a literary discourse tends to disengage with the polarities pronounced by the dominant discourses –associated to the relation between the East and West- and associate to the connotations of the Planet. The constellation of Planetarity with cultural readings suggests Comparative Cultural Studies as disciplinary ground for reading the contemporary cross-cultural encounter that fetches tenets of literature and cultural studies to provide an interdisciplinary reading of texts as cultural artifacts. Thereupon, the literary readings of Periphery texts in the present study stresses on culture and cultural relations to evaluate the identities of main characters in an air of local and global circulations.

Considering the contemporary literary context of the Periphery, namely Arabia and India, literary narratives perform as historical accounts for depicting the socio-cultural circumstances that thematically engage with the global circulation of phenomena. The Arab

literary texts have been preoccupied with identity themes amidst social and cultural changes that the territory is contextualized in. For the last four decades, the socio-cultural preoccupations of literature have considered the post-colonial circumstances since the building of most Arab nations have taken place in the second half of the twentieth century. Therefore, most of literary articulations have been occupied with issues and circumstances after the colonial era. Saudi Arabia attests for no colonial presence per se; however, imperial presence had been a cornerstone into the building of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, and the literary articulations subjecting cultural identity has indeed been a preoccupation with the national-constructed-self. However, some writers have been occupied by the socio-cultural changes that are occurring as reaction to globalization and the direct and indirect encounters with the Western other. *Girls of Riyadh* by Rajaa Al-Sanea is received as a representative of the literature preoccupied by the condition of women's identities in an atmosphere of intensive circulation of the called 'scapes'. Similarly, the contemporary Indian literary articulations consider the global circumstances of the nation under neoliberal policies undertaken in the last decade of the twentieth century, where *Miss New India* by Bharati Mukherjee attests for the socio-cultural changes and their impacts on the Indian woman.

Therefore, in response to the new realities and the global circumstances, new philosophical views on history have been called for to reconsider the Periphery literary discourses in the past three decades. Indeed, the literary preoccupation with cultural identities, in relation to the Occidental other, primarily from postcolonial theory as the prominent discourse on cultural relations. The present thesis, henceforth, aims at locating the reading of cultural encounters within a planetarian discourse. Therefore, it takes a look into the cultural representation of the self and the other in the contemporary context.

The reading of both literary texts for the cultural visualization of the self and the other produces version that attune with the global circumstances. Rajaa Al-Sanea depicts the self as an anti-nationalist entity that favors a move towards modern traits rather than remaining with a traditional picture. She condemns the nationalist ideology for the misfortunes of her female characters since, and stemming from Postcolonial nationalist perspective, the fundamentalist nationalist leader attempt to craft an identity for the nation. The writer vows her anti-nationalist through a depiction of modernized women characters who are familiar to a world female audience, declaring universality. In fact, the depiction corresponds with a counter-orientalist perspective, as the writer portrays women without the exotic outlook that many

Arab texts deliver. In fact, *Girls of Riyadh* vows a counter-Orientalist perspective associated to the contemporary Saudi female to view her as a similar being to other females around the globe rather than being devoted to an Islamic ‘stereotypical’ image. Similarly, Bharati Mukherjee delivers an image of the Indian female that parallels the recent realities of India. *Miss New India* evokes postcolonial nationalist perspectives in the portrayal of the Indian traditional characters, and adopts postnationalist stands as rejection of the nationalist standards. Indeed, the writer portrays a hyper-modern India, exemplified by the city of Bangalore, that defy the Orientalist perceptions through delivering an equally hyper-modern and metropolitan character that correspond with a universal image of women. Consequently, the contemporary cultural and literary contexts distribute an image of the Periphery female that corresponds with the contemporary circumstances.

Furthermore, both literary works represent the Occident with traits of embrace. The concept of Occidentalism, as the literary representation of the Occident in non-Western works, reflects a tradition of visualizing the other either as the imperial/ colonial other, or an idealized entity. However, both texts receive the Occidental Other as the ‘fellow human’ who is culturally embraced; where such acceptance is not equivalent to idealization. *Girls of Riyadh* receives the west as a space of refuge and freedom from the social limitations imposed by a nationalist ideology, in addition to being a space of cultural comparison. Moreover, it can be noted that *Miss New India* demonstrates a close relationship with the Occidental Other through incorporating cultural elements of the West in the protagonist’s life. Consequently, such embracive cultural representation align with a Planetarian Discourse that discusses no power relations between the Orient and the Occident, as both entities suggest a meeting in a space of conversation rather than conflict or idealization.

The thesis examines the identity construction of the main characters under the circumstances of global flows. The cultural context as displayed in the previous chapter acknowledges multiple cultural images that range from a local/national self to the presence of the cultural other encountered either directly or indirectly. Thereupon, it is contended that imagination plays a crucial role into the construction of the characters’ cultural identities, where the study of the impacts of images requires a meticulous analysis. Indeed, the use of the cognitive approach offers a look into the characters’ perceptions, receptions, responses, and behavior in the light of global flows.

Accordingly, it is concluded that both *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India*’s

protagonists distribute a failure of the ethno-theories demonstrating that the national cultural environment appears to have a dormant impact on the female protagonist. Juxtaposing both Periphery works, it is noted that *Girls of Riyadh* exhibits more Orientations towards a nationalist self since the historical context is in favor of nationalist principles that opens no gates for the cultural Others to perform changes on the identity of the nation. Therefore, despite of the failure of ethno-theories, the main characters are heavily impacted by their parents' culture characterized by collectivist principles. Dissimilarly, Mukherjee's protagonist exhibits an early detachment from the Bengali ethno-theories for not meeting socio-cultural dissatisfaction, which permits a smooth transition to a modern self.

Furthermore, the protagonists' exposure to the global flows altered their perceptions and behaviors. In *Girls of Riyadh* the main characters react to their national dislocation from Arabia to Western cities through an adopted individuality. In fact, each of the girls acts according to her desires and tendencies without a feeling of shame or fear from the highly collectivist Saudi society. Thus, their relocation to world cities has granted them an alien perspective to the Saudi collectivities to exhibit more individualist tendencies. Similarly, Mukherjee's protagonist fabricates an individualist perception through the instructions of her American teacher, which fueled her departure from the traditional Gauripur to the hypermodern Bangalore. What is more, the cultural Other is non-directly encountered, through the disseminated media, where the exposure to media images steers towards the construction and the pursuit of an imagined-self that find no parameters in the traditional sphere. Such parameters appear to share the standards of the 'American Dream' due to the aimed materialist pursuits. Thus, media-images has weaponed the perception of the female characters with a desired-self that required actions beyond the already established social rules, which eventually incite them to change.

Moreover, a reading of the protagonists' imagination discusses the relation between the English language and identity. From a Relativist perspective, language relates to thought and perception. Indeed, the character in *Miss New India* sees her ideal-self in the use of an ideal neutralized speech. Her linguistic excellence permitted her mind to access the American deep culture and ideals that are additionally adopted in her behavior and perceptions. In fact, using the language gave her access to American behavior and ideals like freedom, pursuit of happiness, individuality, in addition to dress code and preferences –as an extension of Surface Culture. Similarly, such relativism is applicable to the *Girls of Riyadh*, where Micheal and

Sadeem's linguistic excellence equated their 'modern' behavior, whereas Gamarah's defective English granted her a position of traditionalism accompanying her behavior. Consequently, the flow of images encountered both directly and indirectly contributed into the construction of the main characters' identities towards a novel cultural space.

The textual reading, in the last chapter, draws from the argument stating that imagination constructs a transcultural identity. Resting upon the transcultural perspective, the literary texts of both writers are received to create an Oriental transculturation that posits upon no Diasporic circumstances, but on cultural imagination. In fact, both writers' biographies and perceptions find a transcultural echo, where their experiences are inclusive of more than one culture. Moreover, Al-Sanea's *Girls of Riyadh* distributes an identity of her characters through evoking an Islamic feminist behavior that stands upon fluid terms. Islam as a religion is received as the source of cultural behavior in Arabia, where the fundamentalist readings crafted the traditional conceptualizations of the Saudi national culture. Promoting an Islamic feminist reading is in fact a statement against the traditional forms of religion and a march towards modern interpretations of scriptures, and therefore, opting for a modernized culture. Moreover, such a reading evacuates any suggested western hegemony upon the Islamic Orient. A call for modernity and women's emancipation in the Arab/Muslim world has been viewed from a secular feminist perception, which is evacuated through adopting an Islamic feminist statements calling for women's rights without borrowing the western speeches. Hence, announcing Islamic feminism as a marker of a transcultural identity that neither inscribes in the nationalist forms of the local culture, nor mimics western speeches, and therefore, contributes into a non-binary vision.

Equally, *Miss New India* detaches from binary articulations through promoting for a failure of western hegemonies attempted by call centers, as a transnational ground that links the Indian subject to the American territory. Additionally, Mukherjee demonstrates a cultural cooperation between the Oriental India and the Western America in the sense that both converse to stimulate changes in the behavior of the other, which is announced through Anjali's cultural learning from the American Champion and his learning from his Oriental experiences in India. Therefore, such mutual cultural learning inscribes in transcultural parameters as it distances from cultural dichotomies and produces a Planetarian vision of cultural relations.

Furthermore, both writers vow a transcultural perspective through pronouncing

modernities as novel identity spaces, where each cultural entity defines its own parameters and standards. *Girls of Riyadh* plunges into a discourse of modernity through the adoption of non-cultural space that rests upon fluidity as a prerequisite for modernity. The latter is avowed in a critiqued hybridity, where protagonists' identities disengage from the notion of Bhabha's Third Space, and are replaced by a fluid status rather than collaborating cultures together to create a novel one. The characters' identities are reflective of a Non-space as their behavior is inscribed in a 'trans-position' affirming a transcultural identity. In addition, the expression of a modern self through the theme of love, as a primal concern in the narrative along with a pronounced intra-cosmopoly, is inscribed in a transcendental perspective, where the characters go beyond regional and communal thinking towards an embrace of differences and diversities, which are regarded as the basis for a transcultural self.

In *Miss New India*, the writer created a new social class that is mobile and has different characteristics than the old self and is different from the cultural west too. The protagonist belongs to a transcultural class characterized by the fluidity and modernity of character. The writer portrays a metropolitan Indian new self that transcends the parameters of cultures, nationalisms and identity definitions to step into a Planetarian understanding that shares characteristics with similar transcultural groups emerging from metropolitan communities sharing the same Non-place traits. Finally, Mukherjee negotiates the Postfeminist standards as a means to express the protagonist's further cultural dislocation for being a space of cultural and literary transcendence. It treats the female character as socio-cultural agents rather than 'feminine' that equates a feminist perspective. Yet, a planetary focus strand distant from binary thinking of male and female, besides women are by no means considered oppressed by patriarchy.

The above discussed themes align with understandings of transcendence, going beyond cultures, neglecting binary thinking, canceling otherness, and cultural fluidity. These themes find relevance in transculturalism as the thematic and formal characteristics in *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India* transcend binary thinking of the Orient and Occident and define the identities of the characters within no stable parameters as initiated by Bhabha's Third Space.

The present project corresponds with Planetarity perspective; it reads the images of the cultural self in the pursuit to move beyond cultural glorification through pronouncing an anti-nationalist and post-nationalist perceptions. At the same time, a Counter-orientalist

perspective is assumed through a depiction of cultural agents that tune with cultural modernity and Hyper-modernity which reflect version of a character that appeals to women around the globe rather than orientalist visions that view women from an exotic perspective, and do not attempt to visualize and glamorize the image of the cultural Orient. Moreover the thesis considers the presentation of the Occident, as the global Other, as a space of embrace. Indeed, the Other is viewed as existing entity that is characterized by freedom and individuality see where the characters are inspired by the Periphery cultural agents do acknowledge the Occident and its positive cultural parameters; however they vow no idealization of the West as they embrace certain cultural and social aspects, but refused to entirely assimilate to the Western standards that may producer as a result of idealization of the Occident. In addition, the rejection of the occident is evacuated since the notion of the intense nationalism is evacuated, and the main characters are relatively impacted by the Other. Thus, such conclusions do align with a Planetarian outlook as it contributes to the reshaping of the visualization of the self and the Occidental other in the light of global flows.

Moreover, corresponding with Planetarity, the project uses the cognitive approach as an analytical approach to read the identity construction of the main characters. Such an approach aims at distancing from the cannon discourses, reading cultural identity construction, exemplified by the post-colonial discourse. Therefore, the analysis takes into consideration the complexity of the cultural setting in the era of globalization that may not find accurate correspondence in the mainstream perspectives. Moreover, the approach takes into consideration the notion of multi-disciplinarity to produce novel readings. In fact, cultural cognition sips from various disciplines in the humanities and social sciences, which signify the incorporation of scholarships, studies, and perceptions produced in the periphery rather than resting upon perceptions that might have Eurocentric sources, as Spivak announces in her *Death of a Discipline* (2003). Therefore, a planetarian perspective calls upon the use of the Cognitive approach, as an extension to the pronounced multi-disciplinarity, to read the cultural identity construction in the era of global flows.

Calling upon Planetarity, as a perception that reads the theme of cultural identity in era of transnational flows, equates a reading in the themes of transculturality. The latter, encountered in various literary interpretations especially between the Orient and Occident. In addition, the term is employed in the literary sphere to describe certain writers, who transcend their national boundaries and consider the literary texts that are produced in Diasporic settings, as a response to globalization, which signify the motion of people from one place to

another. The significance of this project is its contribution to a transcultural reading of texts under the cultural circumstances of globalization, where it highlights that imagination steers towards a transcultural identity and therefore a transcultural text. Consequently, the present study contributes into the promotion of transcultural readings that result from imagination.

The present work adds literature both *Girls of Riyadh* and *Miss New India*. The representation of the self and the Occidental Other provides scholars a literature that allows them to understand cultural representations in the era of globalization that may or may not correspond to previous scholarships. The study also highlights the theme of Occidentalism, or the representation of the Occident, in both works as a topic that do not appear to attract many Scholars and studies conducted on both literary works. Moreover, the analysis of the main characters' identities produces novel readings, where imagination appears to play a major role into the construction of the characters identities; therefore, providing a detailed analysis of the characters' cultural identity construction for further scholarly readings. Furthermore, it invites readers to consider both Rajaa Al-Sanea and Bharati Mukherjee as transcultural writers.

The project, in fact, sets a number of grounds for further studies and readings by other scholars in the field. First, the notion of Planetarity, as pronounced by Spivak, can be theoretically constructed through a different perspective rather than cultural readings, developed in the present project, illustrated by Eco-criticism as a field that is fertile for theoretical engagements of Planetarity. In addition, following the same theoretical grounds developed in the thesis, other literary works can be read upon such a perspective especially in consideration to the texts produced by the Periphery. Second, the work calls for the use of the Cognitive approach as a literary method to read the characters minds and identity construction especially in the context of globalization. The present reality appears to be a complex one, where the already established or set perspectives to read such complexities, in the literary field, appear not to be furnished or at least well-established. Moreover, the notion of multidisciplinary of the approach permits the use and production of analytical literature that might create novel conclusions and results that contribute into the literally understanding of the contemporary literature that is still in the process of shaping and reshaping.

Moreover, the employment of the literary approach distances from the Eurocentric perspective. Indeed, the multidisciplinary of the approach permits to incorporate scholarships and studies that are produced in the Periphery rather than falling into a probable engagement with Eurocentric perspectives that could be announced by certain perspective and

readings. Consequently, it is call for scholars to consider studies and scholarships developed in the Periphery through Periphery standards rather than resting upon readings that are developed in the 'Center'.

The thesis also summons for a transcultural reading of the Periphery texts. Transculturality is traditionally associated to theoretical discourses in the contexts of colonialism, postcolonialism, and globalization –the term is associated to the intense motion of people from one space to another. However, further studies, in the literary field, can be achieved where the notion of transculturality can occur in the context of globalized Periphery, which might involve the notion of imagination. Moreover, the work is a call to consider Periphery works from a transcultural prospective, especially in the age of global flows. Furthermore, it invites readers for further development of transculturality that attune with the Periphery literature in the global age.

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GLOSSARY

Glossary

Anti-nationalism

It inclines the feeling of opposing the standards and identity parameter inscribed by the nationalist ideology, especially those rising in the colonial and post-colonial periods.

Arab culture

It is the behavior and manner of thought that prevail in the Arab world. Despite of the national and socio-cultural varieties within the space, the communities appear to share certain socio-cultural standards that primarily sip from the religion of Islam.

Centre

The term is associated to world system that views nations according to their economic success and political orientations. The system places Europe and North America as the centre whereas other nations as semi-periphery or periphery.

Chick Lit

It is a literary genre describing people popular fiction targeted at younger women. Its themes are particularly concerned with contemporary womanhood, romantic relationships, female friendships, and workplace struggles. The protagonists are usually women in their twenties or thirties living in the metropolitan space.

Comparative Literature

It is an academic discipline that studies literature and cultural expressions across linguistic, national, and disciplinary boundaries.

Deep Culture

The concept defines the unseen cultural elements including: values, beliefs, principles, perception, and ideologies that relate to how and why certain groups view reality. Deep culture is attributed to the unconscious mind that trigger people to act the way they do.

Ethno-scapes

It is the motion of people from one place to another for various purposes: tourism, visits, education, work, and immigration. Such ethno-scapes define the era of globalization where people tend to move from their home countries to other places for various reasons.

Ethno-theories

It indicates the teachings and cultural standards that are proper to a certain community, and are transmitted from one person to another through a direct encounter with them.

Hegemony

A term used mostly by Marxist critics to delineate the web of dominant ideologies within a society. It was coined by the Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci; this refers to the pervasive system of assumptions, meanings and values that shapes the way things look, what they mean, and therefore, what reality is for the majority of people within a given culture.

Hyper-modernity

A term defines the rapid and intense modernity. In this context, it is associated to cultural terms, where the notion of being 'modern' is more intense as a reaction to a certain socio-cultural setting, exemplified by globalization. It is often associated to the spread of technological advances and the hyper-business activities either locally or globally.

Imagination

It indicates the mental processes of receiving and constructing images of cultural elements and standards which contributes into the building of one's identity. The process of cultural imagining is based on the theoretical perspective of Benedict Anderson's 'Imagined Communities', where the images range from direct encounter with cultural elements to a non-direct one.

Imagine-self

It is the perception of the self in the future that aligns with no traditional parameters. Such imagined-self can be seen as the result of media-disseminated images or the imagination of a desired future beyond the standards acknowledge by Society.

Interdisciplinarity

It holds the meaning of merging of different disciplines, a combination of two or more disciplines for the purpose of drawing Knowledge from different fields to create new readings, and to think across the limitations of a single discipline.

Islamic feminism

It is a movement by Muslim women who claimed to redefine the notion of womanhood in the mainstream religious thinking. They attempt to revise religious interpretations to evaluate the position of women in a Muslim society and mainstream culture.

Global flows

It signifies the movement of phenomena from one space to another on a global level.

Literary Canon

The group of texts deemed to be major texts of literary tradition.

Media-scape

It means the movement of media from one location to another, where it receives an audience beyond the borders of nations.

Modernity

A self-definition of a generation with its own set innovative cultural parameters. It sets apart from the traditional mainstream frameworks to establish non-defined ones. Modernity is a cultural space that shapes and reshapes according to the existing knowledge and refuses to possess established definitions; therefore, the term indicates socio-cultural transitions and pendulation rather than a fixed space.

Multidisciplinary

It is the combination of multiple disciplines to understand a particular subject. It opens doors to the perception of phenomena from more than one single perspective.

Non-culture

A concept developed in the present study; it means the association of individuals to non-particular cultural parameters as they embody a universal modernity. The term connotes Mark Augé's notion of 'Non-place', which puts certain places as Universal spaces shared by people around the globe - for example: shopping malls, hotels, airports and others- rather than being associated to specific cultural space.

Non-space

A concept developed in this thesis; it inspires from the neologism of 'Non-Place' coined by the French anthropologist Marco Augé, who uses the term to refer to the Anthropological spaces of transience, where human beings remain without a standard national definition. The non-space means that individuals appear to a desire a belonging non-places rather than being associated to their homes or national traditions as a definer of a strong sense of the national self.

Occident

It implies the western world, initially Western Europe and North America.

Occidentalism

The concept announces the representation of the Occident/ West in the literary text of the Periphery. The term is traditionally associated to an image of either rejection or idealization.

Orient

In this context, it means the nations/ communities that belong to the ex-colonized world. These nations as Edward Said put it are subjected to an Orientalized perspective where they are seen the exotic other.

Orientalism

It means a system of representations framed by political forces that brought the Orient into Western learning, Western consciousness and Western Empire . The Orient is a reflected image of what is inferior and alien, i.e. other to the West. Edward Said claims that the Orient cannot be studied in a non-Orientalist manner but the would-be concerned would focus on the

culturally consistent regions and that the Oriental is to be given a voice and not be given a second hand representation.

Other

The other is anyone who is separate from one's self. The existence of Others is crucial in defining what is normal and in locating one's own place in the world. The colonized subject is characterized as other through discourses as primitivism as a means of establishing the binary separation of the colonizer and colonized and asserting the naturalness and primacy of the colonizing culture and world view.

Para-social contacts

It signifies the non-direct interactions among communions. Social contacts are traditionally established through a direct encounter with individuals and groups; however, the notion of 'para' means meetings that are established beyond direct contact, which largely includes media, social media, phones, and historical knowledge that are associated to cultural imagination.

Para-space

The concept is developed in the present thesis; and it is incited by the notion of 'Para- social contacts', where spaces of contacts and meetings are established beyond the acknowledged social and cultural frameworks, which is closely related to the philosophy of cultural transcendence.

Pendulum

It means the motion and the swing of identities back and forth without having clear standards to rest upon. Indeed, identity pendulates as result of an exposure to the intensive cross-cultural encounters in the era of globalization. Such a pendulum puts identity under different non-prescribed parameters that are exclusively reactive to the cultural circumstances of each individual or text.

Periphery

The concept refers to the nations that belong to the third world, the ex-colonized world. The term is taken from the idea of World System that classifies nations according to their economic progress and political orientations. In the present work, the term is used to mean a

space of the Third World nations from an intellectual and cultural perspective, where the periphery claims governance over its literary and intellectual realms rather than remaining in a marginalized fact.

Planetarity

The concept is employed by Gayatri Spivak in her *Death of a Discipline* (2003). It is employed based on a theoretical constructive analysis to have multiple connotations that contrast the notion of 'globalization' primarily on the intellectual and cultural perspectives.

Postfeminism

The concept refers to an ideological principle that transcends the feminist principles especially those characterized by contradictions and intense measures calling for the emancipation of women. Women's rights and freedoms are certainly announced, yet without taking extreme measures; a woman simply holds the standards core feminist principles and moves forward without apparent struggles.

Postnationalism

It is the process by which national identities lose grounds as a response to international relations especially in the era of globalization, where different Nations and cultures became more interrelated.

Representation

It has a semiotic meaning in that something is standing for something else. Representations are constructed images that need to be interrogated for their ideological content. There is always an element of interpretation involved in representation. There are negative images that can have devastating effects on the real lives of marginalized people.

Scapes

They mean motion. The term is used by Arjun Appadurai in his *Modernity at Large: Cultural Dimensions to Globalization* (1996), where he sees that different phenomena are subjected to boundless and border-less motions from one space to another.

Surface culture

The term refers to the cultural practices and discourses associated to a certain group of people. It broadly includes their customs, languages, traditions, and system that makes a community distinguished from others.

Weltliteratur

The term is originally in German, meaning World Literature. The concept originated in the works of Johann Wolfgang Goethe in the Nineteenth century to mean the literary productions that are consumed beyond the national borders. Recently, the field has regained major interests from scholars, as intellectual and literary orientations, in the era of intensive global circulations.

APPENDICES

Appendix I: Rajaa Al-Sanea's Biography and Synopsis of *Girls of Riyadh*



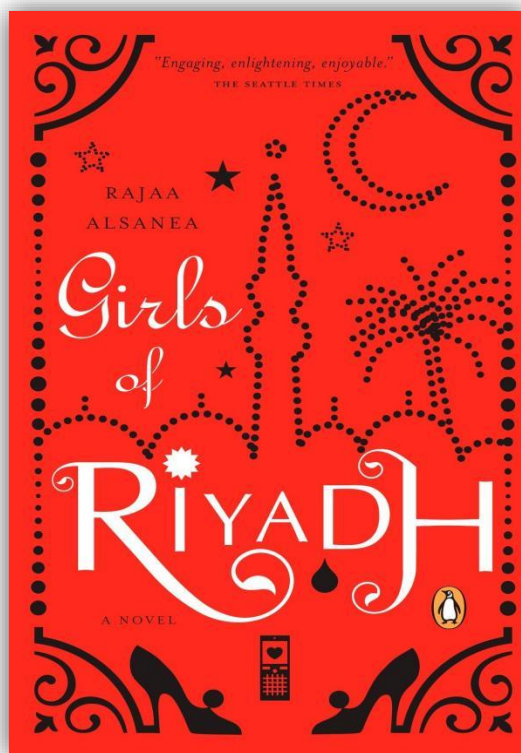
Rajaa Al-Sanea (1981-) is a Saudi young writer who lives between the Arab Kingdom and America. She was born to a family of doctors and equally has pursued a career in dentistry, where she obtained her degree from the University of Illinois, and she works as an assistant professor at the same University. Al-Sanea's literary interests appeared at an early age, where she embarked on a journey to write about the Saudi woman amidst a changing society. She has been acknowledged as a writer due to the world success of her novel *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) written in Arabic and had been translated in different world languages to make her a world acclaimed author.

Despite the popularity of her debut novel, Al-Sanea has not turned to writing as a full-time career. Since returning to Saudi Arabia, she has served as a consultant endodontist and researcher in the stem cell therapy program at King Faisal Specialist Hospital and Research Center in Riyadh. In an interview with 'The National News', the author said, "Dentistry is my job and writing will always be my passion".

Her work of fiction *Girls of Riyadh* (2005) orbits around the lives of four young women, Gamrah, Lamees, Sadeem and Michelle narrated in the form of a series of emails on a Yahoo subscription list from an unknown third person narrator. While the urbane clique shares fashion tips, the occasional sip of champagne, and a dream of true love, each of the girls has her own individual story: Gamrah has moved to the United States with her new husband in a union their families have arranged. Lonely and confined to a Chicago apartment, she wonders if she made the right choice. Her best friend, the romantic Sadeem, is fixed up with Waleed, a handsome civil servant from a prominent lineage, and they are soon caught up in a romantic whirlwind that might be a bit too intoxicating for their own good. Michelle, the half-American member of the group, is at the mall when she meets her own seemingly perfect paramour—the one man who can truly understand her Western values—but who, unfortunately, comes from a less tolerant family. Rebellious, headstrong medical student

Lamees finds herself attracted to the brother of a Shiite classmate, even though the relationship may jeopardize her friendships and her freedom.

What Gamrah, Sadeem, Michelle, and Lamees soon learn is that falling in love might be easy, but finding lasting romance in Riyadh is a much more difficult proposition. In the story, nothing seems to turn out exactly as they planned, but as the girls of Riyadh struggle to maintain their moral integrity in a modern world, they learn to find happiness on their own terms. The writer's honest portrayal of controversial subject matter made *Alsanea* a literary sensation and a public enemy, sparking fierce debate in the media and online discussion groups. Addictively readable yet deeply political, *Girls of Riyadh* has been called the first modern Arab novel and its comic but poignant accounts of contemporary Saudi life make it an instant classic.



Appendix II: Bharati Mukherjee's Biography and Synopsis of *Miss New India*

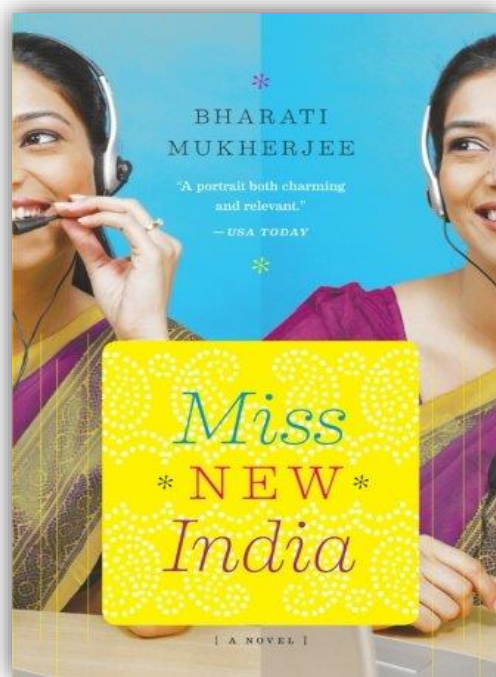


Bharati Mukherjee (1940-2017) is an Indian American-Canadian writer and English professor who authored a number of fictional and non-fictional works. Born in Calcutta, she spent her early life and education in India with her Hindu Bengali parents. Later, she migrates to the United States of America for a Ph.D degree in Comparative Literature. She moved to Canada and then to the States where she worked at multiple university positions as a Lecturer. Mukherjee married the Canadian Clark Blaise and mother two sons.

Bharati Mukherjee is a versatile writer whose oeuvre includes eight novels, four collections of short stories, some powerful essays, and two nonfiction books which she co-authored with her husband. The writer authored multiple texts about the subject of cultural clash between the Oriental Indian woman and the Occident, where she puts a large number of her fictional characters in a state of cross-cultural encounter. Indeed, her themes orbit around immigration, assimilation, and the challenges of straddling lands and cultures. She wrote *Tiger's Daughter* (1971) as her debut novel, where she describes the malaise of cultural dislocation as her characters appear to have a double cultural identification, similarly to her fictional texts *Wife* (1975) and *Jasmine* (1989).

With the publication of *Darkness* (1985), her third book of fiction, she convincingly declared her desire to be seen as a North American writer. In the hard-hitting introduction to this collection of stories Mukherjee explains this shift as "a movement away from the aloofness of expatriation, to the exuberance of immigration". Moreover, in other stories, she explores North America through the voice of immigrants, other than Indian, which includes Italian, Latin American, Sri Lankan and also Indian, which she tends to give a voice to the 'other' in North America. In *The Holder of the World* (1993) Mukherjee turns her attention to

one of the founding novels of the postcolonial American canon—Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The Scarlet Letter*. Reversing the usual binary opposition between occidental and oriental texts, Mukherjee presents Hawthorne's novel as one which has been written out of knowledge of India. Dissimilar to the Diasporic thematic occupations of her works, her latest novel *Miss New India* (2011) is set in India between the traditional old India and the globalized and modernized city of Bangalore.



Miss New India is Bharati Mukherjee's latest novel published in 2011. It revolves around a female protagonist, Anjali Bose, from a small town Gauripur, Bihar, born to a traditional Hindu middle-class family. She is an energetic and ambitious character who possesses good English language skills sharpened by her American expatriate teacher Peter Champion. The potentials that Anjali has, drives her to move to Bangalore for a better use her talents; the city is visualized as a hyper-active place, where the protagonist engages in a series of experiences crafting her self-perception. Indeed, Anjali Bose relocates to Bangalore, India's fastest-growing major metropolis, and encounters a number of audacious and ambitious crowds of young people, who have learned how to sound American by watching shows like *Seinfeld* in order to get jobs as call-center service agents, where they are quickly able to out-earn their parents. It is in this high-tech city where Anjali - suddenly free from the traditional confines of class, caste, gender, and more - is able to confront her past and reinvent herself. Bangalore is a space that resulted into reinventing the protagonist's identity.

الملخص

هذا يهدف العمل إلى قراءة الأعمال الأدبية العربية والهندية المعاصرة في عصر الـ إ. عولمة ن النصوص الأدبية "بنات الرياض" لرجاء الصانع و"ملكة جمال الهند الجديدة لبهراتي" تشهد على موحيرجي ال عنه من خلال معبرالثقافي ال واقع مواضع الروايتين. في ظل الحركات العابرة للحدود التي تعزز اللقاء بين الثقافة الشرقية والغربية، فإن الهوية الثقافية للشخصيات الرئيسية تكون موضع تساؤل، حيث ان حيثيات الهوية تدرس من خلال نظرية 'الكوكبية' المفهوم . تم بناء هذا من طرف غاياتري سبيفاك التي تهدف إلى تغيير معايير القراءة الأدبية "الكالسيكية" وتحت على بناء وجهات نظر جديدة عصر العولمة تتألف مع . أيضا العمل ويرى هذا أن صور الذات والأخر تعزز الخيال الثقافي للشخصيات الأدبية، حيث يؤدي المستقبل المعرفي للصور، الثقافة المباشرة وغير المباشرة للذات والأخر إلى بناء هوية ، تعددية. تساهم وبالتالي، المناقشات في قراءة تروج الاستخدام 'قراءة في 'الدراك كنهج أدبي وثقافي لفهم بناء الهوية في عصر العولمة. عالوة على ذلك، فإنه يضيف إلى القراءات عبر الثقافات من خلال الإعلان أن الخيال الثقافي. التعددية الهويةبناء يؤدي إلى الكلمات المفتاحية: كيبالكو ، الخيال، المرأة الشرقية، التعددية الثقافية، الهوية .

Summary:

The present work intends to read the contemporary Arab and Indian literary works in an era of global circulations. The literary scripts of Rajaa Al-Sanea's *Girls of Riyadh* and Mukherjee's *Miss New India* appear to attest for a globalized reality articulated through the formal and thematic expressions of the texts. Under the fact of transnational motions fostering a crosscultural encounter between the Orient and the Occident, the cultural identity of the main characters is questioned, leading to examine their self-construction from a Planetarian perspective. The concept is theoretically constructed from Gayatri Spivak's notion of Planetarity, which primarily aims at altering the 'classical' literary reading standards, and opts for constructing novel perspectives that converge with the global realities. The present work discusses that the images of the self and the other foster the cultural imagination of the literary characters, where the cognitive reception of direct and indirect images of the self and the other lead to the construction of a transcultural identity. Accordingly, the discussions contribute into a reading that promotes for the use of cognitivism as a literary and cultural approach to understand identity construction in the era of globalization. Moreover, it adds to the transcultural readings through announcing that the construction of a transcultural identity in the global era is assisted by cultural imagination.

Keywords: Planetarity, imagination, oriental woman, transculturalism, Identity.

Resumé:

Ce travail vise à lire les œuvres arabes et indiennes contemporaines à l'ère de la mondialisation. Les textes littéraires de *Girls of Riyadh* de Rajaa Al-Sanea et de *Miss New India* de Mukherjee semblent témoigner d'une réalité mondialisée articulée à travers les expressions formelles et thématiques des textes. Sous le fait de motions transnationales favorisant une rencontre interculturelle entre l'Orient et l'Occident, l'identité culturelle des personnages principaux est remise en question, ce qui conduit à examiner la construction de leurs identités dans une perspective Planétaire. Le concept est théoriquement construit à partir de la notion de 'Planétarisation' de Gayatri Spivak, qui vise principalement à modifier les normes de lecture littéraire "classiques" et opte pour une construction de nouvelles perspectives qui convergent avec les réalités mondiales. La discussion témoigne que les images de soi et de l'autre stimulent l'imagination culturelle des personnages littéraires, où la réception cognitive des images, directes et indirectes de soi et de l'autre, conduit à la construction d'une identité transculturelle. Par conséquent, les discussions contribuent à une lecture qui promeut l'utilisation du cognitivisme comme approche littéraire et culturelle pour comprendre la construction de l'identité à l'ère de la mondialisation. En outre, il ajoute aux lectures transculturelles en annonçant que la construction de l'identité à l'ère de la mondialisation est assistée par l'imagination.

Mots-clés: Planétarité, imagination, femme orientale, transculturalisme, identité