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The Subaltern as Surrogate: Identity and Gender in Contemporary Postcolonial Novels

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THE SUBALTERN AS SURROGATE:
IDENTITY AND GENDER IN CONTEMPORARY POSTCOLONIAL NOVELS

by

JACKSON TURNER

(Under the Direction of Joe Pellegrino)

ABSTRACT

The Postcolonial novel attempts to reveal the crimes and lasting effects of colonization. By looking at *Season of Migration to the North* by Tayeb Salih, *The English Patient* by Michael Ondaatje, and *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* by Mohsin Hamid, I intend to reveal how the inversion of the typical postcolonial gender dynamic changes the conversation about the relationship between the colonizer and the colonized. The male, colonized characters within these works are used as surrogates for something that the colonizer, female has lost or desires. This change in relationship draws attention to the way in which past empires still exert their influence on former colonies. The methods of the colonizer have changed from outright conquest to a covert neo-colonization that draws the colonized to the core of the empire in order to exert power.

INDEX WORDS: Mohsin Hamid, *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Michael Ondaatje, *The English Patient*, Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*, Postcolonial, Colonial, Gender, Surrogate, Neo-colonial, Identity, Colonization, India, Sudan, Pakistan, Africa, Middle East, National Allegory, Georgia Southern University, Literature.

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MASTER OF ARTS

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CHAPTER 1
INTRODUCTION

“Mark these words of mine, my son. Has not the country become independent? Have we not become free men in our own country? Be sure, though, that they will direct our affairs from afar. This is because they have left behind them people who think as they do.”

—Tayeb Salih, *Season of Migration to the North*

Postcolonial and colonial literature has taken many forms during and after the breakup of the empires that once stretched across the globe. This literature appeared as novels, short stories, plays, and poems in the name of calling out the crimes of the empire and the lasting effects of those crimes. In terms of metaphor and allegory, many of these works exhibit a particular trend in their exposure of colonization and imperialism—the gender dynamic of their message.

For example, Joseph Conrad’s *Heart of Darkness* presents the leader of the inner tribe as a vengeful matriarch that represents the Congo that was “raped” by the imperialist Europeans (84). In Léopold Sédar-Senghor’s “Black Woman,” the continent of Africa is equated to that of a black woman resisting the conqueror. Even in Rabindranath Tagore’s “Punishment,” the oppression of the colonized subjects is distilled in Chandara’s deprived agency and execution (212). These works, and many others, strive to pitch the colonizer as the aggressive male figure that symbolically rapes the female, colonized nation. This approach is not an incorrect way to address colonization, as this is the case in most scenarios. However, there is something to be said about postcolonial works that invert this dynamic by setting the colonizer up as a woman and the colonized individual as a man.

This change in character and allegorical alignment, I claim, makes an updated statement about how the colonizer continues to interact with the colonized in a post-colonial world. These

texts and characters participate in a national allegory—a concept that which Fredric Jameson distills in a single sentence: “the story of the private individual destiny is always an allegory of the embattled situation of the public third-world culture and society” (69). Given the existence of this national allegory we can observe that, in the established gender dynamic, the roles played were familiar and overt to the point where the male aggressor or the female victim were easily seen and understood in the context of imperialism and colonization. Once these roles are flipped, the distinctions become more obscure and complex. The methods of oppression are altered to make up for the reduced foothold that these empires have in the nations that they once controlled. Rather than the conquest that characterized imperialism, these new representations of the empire reveal how the colonizer will innocently draw colonized individuals to them in order to destroy them from within the core of the empire. This can be seen in more contemporary works in the form of the female colonizer, as she draws the colonized male in close before destroying him.

The three contemporary novels that I will discuss in this study demonstrate this method of writing by illustrating how the male in each respective work is used by his female counterpart. These men become mere surrogates for something that the woman has lost or desires. This surrogacy and each relationship will serve a key role in revealing how each work parallels the abuses of the empire towards the colonized nation. By looking at Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*, Michael Ondaatje’s *The English Patient*, and Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, one will be able to see the significance of these changed gender dynamics and surrogate relationships. I hold that, as time progresses further away from the time of outright empire, postcolonial literature will continue to change in the way that it depicts how world powers abuse the countries they once colonized. By following these works

chronologically, we can observe how the colonizer, in the form of the female, will become less demanding and gentler. She will seem as if she were a comforting refuge where there once was outright oppression. However, the intentions of the empire will remain the same—to maintain whatever hold it can on the rest of the world.

An Introduction to Surrogacy: *Season of Migration of the North*

The first work that I will discuss has two clearly defined characters that enact the struggle between the colonizer and the colonized. Tayeb Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* presents a national allegory where the typical male versus female dynamic is flipped to illustrate its message about postcolonial and neocolonial situations. By making Mustafa Sa'eed the representative of the colonized and Jean Morris that of the colonizer, the novel shows how formerly colonized nations continue to suffer from the repercussions of said colonization. Europe still longs to dominate and control African nations like Mustafa's Sudan. Therefore, European countries bring colonized subjects into the core as surrogates for the colony that was left behind. Jean Morris acts this process out, and she seduces, controls, and destroys Mustafa in every way but physical.

While the narrator and Mustafa Sa'eed both spend time in the European core, we will focus on Mustafa and his relationship with the European women he encounters. Like the other characters to come, Mustafa begins his journey by being selected to be brought into the European core. In this way, the best and the brightest colonized individuals are trained to promote the colonizer's interests. When the narrator first hears Mustafa talk about his life, Mustafa comments on a defining moment in his childhood when his intelligence was noticed by the colonizer. His English headmaster said that "this country hasn't got the scope for that brain of yours...Go to

Egypt or Lebanon or England. We have nothing further to give you” (21). After this, the headmaster secures him a free spot at a secondary school in Cairo, a privilege that few other Sudanese children were likely given. Throughout his schooling after this point, he is given a colonial education where his exposure to the rest of the world is limited. Muhammed Khalafalla ‘Abdalla states that, “when Mustafa is sent on a scholarship to Cairo,” he is “protected from the ‘adverse’ influences of other factors” (47). Not only is he selected and harvested from his country, but he is further influenced by only being able to view his surroundings through a European lens.

As he ages, Mustafa begins to form a rationale for his life in Europe in order to convince himself that he has some sort of agency there. While he pursues his career as an academic, he also becomes a womanizer who uses his foreign status to excite and exploit European women. He will entertain them only to leave them abruptly or become openly unfaithful to them. This causes these women to fall into depressive spirals, and some of them end up committing suicide because of Mustafa’s rejections. By acting out this form of conquest, he claims that he will “liberate Africa with [his] penis” (100). In Mustafa’s mind, he commits these acts as a way to exact revenge on the Europeans for his people in Sudan. Saree S. Makdisi states that “Mustafa carries out this self-appointed mission by inflicting pain and suffering on British women. Just as imperialism had violated its victims, Mustafa violates his, and his unwitting lovers become sacrifices in his violent campaign” (81). Mustafa’s delusion and his success become the reasons for his meeting Jean Morris and his subsequent downfall.

The woman who most embodies the colonizer in Salih’s novel is Jean Morris. She is a violent and vindictive woman who manages to entice Mustafa and break him psychologically, eventually pushing him to murder. Her characterization in Salih’s novel is the most overtly

imperial of the three women discussed in this paper. While she exists in the core of the empire, she destroys indiscriminately out of the desire to break Mustafa and prove his inferiority—much like the imperialists who invaded Africa.

Later in the novel, Mustafa's recollections depict Jean as a domineering world power. She is called a "lioness," "brazen," and a "volcano of violence," as he talks about their interactions. (128-133). Jean is imperialistic in her actions before and during their relationship as well. She is territorial and aggressive towards any woman who approaches Mustafa (129). She entices him but never lets him have control of their relationship by giving him just enough attention to stay interested while not allowing him to have complete power. She even strives to destroy the things that might link him to Africa, just as imperialism would destroy cultures in the name of conquest: "Taking up the vase she smashed it to the ground ... Taking up the old rare manuscript she tore it to bits, filling her mouth with pieces of the paper which she chewed and spat out ... Taking up the prayer rug, she threw it on the fire and stood watching gloatingly as it was consumed, the flames reflected on her face" (130). Even at this point, Mustafa claims that she is the prey and he the hunter, when the opposite is true, and he has wandered unwittingly into her den. Wail S. Hassan comments on her status as an extension of the empire: "In her stubborn and humiliating resistance to his advances, she merges fully than the other woman with the city as a psychic function and a trope of empire" (102). Hassan connects her character with that of the city, implying that Jean sets herself up as something to be conquered, while planning Mustafa's destruction all along. She controls his destiny from the moment she sees him manipulating other European women. In a way, she emulates the empire's desire to control the colonized as she punishes him for his trespasses against her white nation. Jean Morris sees Mustafa much like the

rest of Europe would, as a stand-in or surrogate for the African continent—as something inferior and expendable.

Just as Jean exhibits the traits of her imperial ancestors, Mustafa's character embodies the identity of the colonized nation. While Mustafa is an anomaly in terms of his upbringing, he soon uses a conglomeration of African stereotypes to advance his agendas. These are fabricated and not genuine, but in terms of his relationship with Europeans, this makes him the quintessential foreign figure. To the women that he entices he is a "thirsty desert, a wilderness of desires," and they gaze at him "as though seeing [him] as a symbol rather than reality" (37). By merely embodying the fantasy of the "exciting exotic" he becomes an emblem of that world, even if this is nothing but a fabrication. His bedroom becomes, as Mike Velez states, "a showcase *cum* museum of African culture... The irony lies in that while the simulacrum is created for the benefit of his English audiences, it is no less a constructed reality for its owner" (197). Mustafa seems to use this cultural appropriation in an attempt to hold on to a heritage that he can no longer identify with. In this way, he represents the post-colonized status of the many African nations whose culture was reduced in the name of European progress.

Jean and Mustafa are brought together not by accident, but through a process that further illustrates how the colonized individual is used as a surrogate until he is no longer a profitable asset. Like the other women that Mustafa encounters, Jean does not have any true feelings for him. While the other women are not seen as destructive towards Mustafa, they use him as a placeholder for the exotic world they are obsessed with. Jean, on the other hand, uses him in a similar way but desires control rather than the thrill of the exotic. Hassan states: "What draws Jean to Mustafa is the same thing that draws Mustafa to English women—namely, a struggle imperial power and hegemony" (102). Once the novel reaches Jean's story, we see that she starts

their relationship in the same way that she ends it, by demanding control and humiliating Mustafa: "I used to find her at every party I went to, as though she made a point of being where I was in order to humiliate me...against my will, I fell in love with her and I was no longer able to control the course of events" (128-29). Jean uses her knowledge of Mustafa to give him what the other women could not. Instead of submitting to him, she keeps the power in her hands in order to keep him from leaving, as she knows that he is driven to gain that power for himself. As an outsider, Mustafa has overstepped the boundaries set by European society by striving to dominate white women. The relationship between himself and Jean illustrates the consequences of this quest for power and control.

Once Mustafa realizes that he is completely enthralled by Jean, he also understands that their relationship can only end in disaster. He admits: "She was my destiny and in her lay my destruction ... I was the pirate sailor and Jean Morris was the shore of destruction. And yet I did no care" (132). Mustafa becomes convinced that there is no other option but to try and conquer this woman or die trying. In the end, she is able to break him psychologically as a punishment for his desire to control her. In the moments before he murders Jean, Mustafa finally feels that he is "in control of the situation," as if "she had been robbed of her own volition and was moving in accordance to [his] will (135). What he doesn't realize is that she has pushed him to commit an irredeemable act that will confirm, to the rest of European society and to Mustafa, that the Other is savage and of a lesser caste. Thomas Cartelli says that even though "Jean is the one who is literally destroyed, her status in the novel as the avenging angel of the West makes her demise negligible to the fate visited on Mustafa" (157). Jean is in complete control of Mustafa's fate before, during, and after her own death. In this way she emulates the colonizer the most, as even after European nations pulled out of their colonies, they still maintained control from afar. In this

final act of humiliation, Mustafa has fulfilled his purpose as a surrogate for the African continent.

After his time in prison for the murder of Jean and the deaths of his other lovers, Mustafa returns to his roots in Sudan. Once he is punished for his trespasses in the European core, Mustafa realizes that he had been living a lie as this Orientalized figurehead, and he desires to regain the culture than he had lost. This Orientalism is established by Edward Said, but Mary Klages is able to boil down his theories into a more concise definition: “When ‘the West’ writes ‘the East,’ the writings create the ‘oriental’ as fundamentally ‘other.’ The negative binary opposite of ‘civilization’ ...is associated with the ‘oriental’ in this construction” (61). Mustafa, along with the other colonized characters in this study, will be subject to this Orientalizing gaze.

Eventually, Mustafa is rejected by the colonizer for the crime acting as if he held equal status. In the end, he is never the same after his experience with Jean Morris and Europe as a whole. This is best illustrated by the hidden room in his home that is filled with European books and a painting of Jean—a secret life that haunts him until his disappearance (112-128). Mustafa, like his own country, cannot shake the lasting effects of colonization, just as he could not shake the malevolent Jean Morris. Destruction at the hands of colonization is as inevitable as their doomed relationship.

By reversing the gender dynamic of the postcolonial novel, Tayeb Salih’s *Season of Migration to the North*, helps to lay the groundwork for other postcolonial texts to follow. In this work, the female colonizer is openly seductive, manipulative, destructive, and power hungry. She embodies the evil villain persona that is associated with imperialism and colonial Europe. The gender dynamic will remain the same in the subsequent works discussed, but the image of the colonizer will soften while it still exacts the same amount of damage to its victims. In all

cases, the male is used as a surrogate for something colonizer desires, and only remains in favor so long as that desire is being fulfilled.

CHAPTER 2
THE ENGLISH PATIENT

“A book, a map of knots, a fuze board, a room of four people in an abandoned villa lit only by candlelight and now and then light from a storm, now and then the possible light from an explosion”

— *The English Patient*, Michael Ondaatje

Michael Ondaatje’s novel *The English Patient* follows the complicated interactions and pasts of four characters that live amongst one another in a bombed-out Italian monastery just before the close of World War II. The novel progresses through real-time interaction between the four principal characters with lengthy flashbacks and remembrances to further define them. Hana, a Canadian war nurse, develops a strange connection with a severely burned and unidentifiable man. David Caravaggio, a Canadian-Italian thief used as a tool by allied forces, seeks out Hana and develops an obsession for discovering the identity of the patient she tends to. Kirpal Singh, known as “Kip”, is a Sikh bomb technician for the Allied forces who comes to the Italian town to clear out ordinance and ends up staying and developing a relationship with Hana. The English patient, assumed to be a man named Almásy, has been burned over the entirety of his body—so much so that he is unrecognizable and in constant pain.

Ondaatje’s novel is widely read as a postcolonial work because of the nature of Almásy’s time in Africa and Kip’s experience as an Indian sapper in the allied military. While the namesake of the novel, the English patient, is the main focus of the work, I plan to focus on the significance of Kip and his connection with Hana. Their separate stories and their complex relationship reveal how Hana, the personification of the European colonizer, uses Kip, a representation of the foreigner, as a surrogate for what she has lost in the process of the war. She

has a strange affection for the English patient and seems to substitute him for her now dead father. Kip, on the other hand, seems to be a manifestation of the foreign places and people about which she reads in her books and hears in the English patient's stories. In the end, one will see that Hana wishes to mimic, either subconsciously or consciously, the tragic love affair of the English patient and Katharine. In this way she uses Kip as a surrogate for her own simulated, romantic tale. In order to define Kip's character and role in this surrogate relationship, we must first look into how he is brought into the fold of the colonizers and is made to believe that he can be an accepted member of their society.

Kip's journey into Europe is not told as it happens but in the form of his memories and his retelling of his life to Hana and the others. Through these accounts, Kip reveals how he was convinced to join the British military and how that choice gave him a new sense of identity. However, this opportunity was one that came out of time of war, when bodies were needed to deal with the undetonated bombs littering the European theater of war: "By August the Blitz had begun, and in one month there were suddenly 2,500 unexploded bombs to be dealt with...By September the number of live bombs reached 3,700. One hundred new bomb squads were set up, but there was still no understanding of how the bombs worked. Life expectancy in these units was ten weeks" (184-85). While Kip volunteered for one of these positions, the sudden influx of Indian soldiers was necessary for the British Indian Army to maintain its full strength. In Kip's case, he was one of the best and the brightest, educated by the best of the English and, in turn, served his teachers without question. The narrator also tells us about the mechanically-inclined nature of Kip's people. Kip was from an area where "mathematics and mechanics were natural traits," and people were "more likely to carry a spanner or screwdriver than a pencil" (188). This skill set of Kip's people, combined with the dire need for disposable men who could possibly

stand a chance of disarming bombs, reveals how the novel views the English military. They are picking the best-equipped men from a country that, in their eyes, is lesser than their own country. If this work is to be read as a national allegory, Kip would represent the whole of the Indian people who fought and died for a cause that was not theirs. This is the first of the substitutions that are seen in this work: Indian soldiers become the surrogates for English men, whose lives held more value, and thus could not be risked.

Kip's first significant point of contact, once he volunteered to be on a specialist bomb squad, is Lord Suffolk, an eccentric man in charge of the bomb unit. Suffolk would become Kip's mentor and an example for Kip of what a good Englishman looked like. Amidst his being accepted "into a family," Kip was being educated in the art of bomb defusal—an art he would come to love and identify with (189). It is no surprise that Kip, a man who had been utterly alone for a year after leaving his home, would do anything for the man who finally acknowledged him. Kip would also throw himself into the thing that brought the two together, the study of explosives and the job of disarming them. This interaction mimics that of the process of colonization that had defined the British for so long: Offer those that that you wish to colonize something they do not have in order to take advantage of them. Douglass Barbour comments on this manipulation when stating that Kip "falls under the spell of an eccentric paragon of the best British values" (211). This spell that Barbour refers to is exactly what Suffolk is. He is all of the good in the English and none of the bad. Kip becomes transfixed on the image of this man who teaches him how to be partially accepted by the white world. He shows Kip how to be a tool and how to be useful.

Once Kip is selected and educated, he gains a sort of agency through his mimicry. While he is still not given the same respect that a white soldier would receive, he is respected when he

stands between others and a possible explosion. After the death of Lord Suffolk, Kip is given the task of figuring out how to disarm the type of bomb that killed his mentor: “He knew he was for now a king, a puppet master, could order anything, a bucket of sand, a fruit pie for his needs, and those men who would not cross an uncrowded bar to speak with him when they were off duty would do what he desired...But he knew he did not like it” (196). Kip felt accepted into “Suffolk’s surrogate family,” which “afforded him a ready compensation for the loneliness he,” felt as an outsider (Spinks 199). Once this safe haven was destroyed, he realized that he was given a false sense of acceptance. His job as a highly skilled bomb technician gave him some agency, but the fact that this was his only way of gaining respect further reveals his status as a mere tool of the colonizer. Christopher McVey references a poem by Ondaatje, “The Cinnamon Peeler”, and connects the idea to Almásy: “To be a cinnamon peeler is to have one’s body tied to a specific space and place, including the economic and colonial dimensions of one’s work,” and the body of the cinnamon peeler “marks the speaker in terms of his or her works as a colonial worker” (142). While this concept works well in connection to the English patient, it also applies to that of Kip, who is seen as a bomb technician only and never as an individual.

This idea of seeing the colonized as assets rather than people has always been present, but Kip’s individual experience brings this political issue into the personal realm. Kip reminds the reader of this reality through many of his recollections. At one point he speaks about how “there is always yellow chalk scribbled on the side of bombs...Just as there was yellow chalk scribbled onto our bodies when we lined up in the Lahore courtyard” (199). As an enlisted soldier he was marked like the explosives he was destined to disarm. This is just one of many parallels that are made between Kip and machinery or weapons. What is most tragic about Kip’s existence as a tool is that he, as Shannon Smyrl suggests, is “consuming without suspicion the products of

Western Culture...with a faith in its ability to provide recognition and sense of belonging” (33).

Kip, despite his easy to spot caution in everyday interactions, is content to live in the illusion that he is accepted in the eyes of the colonizer and his lover, Hana.

The political becomes very personal in Ondaatje’s novel as Hana emerges as the damaged colonizer and Kip becomes the surrogate to make her feel whole again. In order to see this surrogacy, one must look into the nature of the damage in Hana’s life to understand what she is now missing. Hana’s issues stem from three major events that occur before the present action of the novel: the death of her father, the death of a soldier she loved, and the abortion of her child. It is in her recollections of her father’s death where Hana reveals a key image that defines her father and, in turn, herself. The narrator talks about how nurses broke mentally because of their experiences with death in the following excerpt:

They broke the way a man dismantling a mine broke the second his geography exploded.

The way Hana broke in Santa Chiara Hospital when an official walked down the space between a hundred beds and gave her a letter that told her of the death of her father.

A white Lion.

It was sometime after this that she had come across the English patient—someone who looked like a burned animal (41).

This passage shows the instability of Hana as well as the connection between the English patient and her father. These two images of a lion and a burned animal are too close to be a coincidence. This association is even acknowledged by Hana as she jokingly references her “Father Complex” on more than one occasion (84). Lee Spinks states that the English patient becomes a sort of replacement in himself as his lack of features removes any discernable identity: “The black hole of the patient’s face becomes a blank canvas upon which any new image may be projected”

(177). His presence gives Hana the opportunity to substitute him for her father, which is the main reason she refuses to leave him behind when the hospital moves on to another town.

The next traumatic death in her life is that of the father of her unborn child. Hana and Caravaggio speak about their varying traumas from the war, and Hana talks about her unborn child and the nameless soldier that fathered it: "I lost the child. I mean, I had to lose it. The father was already dead. There was a war" (82). She only talks about this experience briefly in the first third of the novel and never mentions the experience again. Experiencing this kind of loss around the same time as the death of her father makes her an, understandably, unstable individual. She states: "I courted one man and he died and the child died. I mean, the child didn't just die, I was the one who destroyed it. After that I stepped so far back no one could get near me" (85). Like the Allied countries who had lost so many soldiers in the process of the war, Hana becomes desperate to replace those who she lost. "Even among those she worked closely with she hardly talked during the war. She needed an uncle, a member of the family. She needed the father of the child, while she waited in this hill town" (85). These revelations come after Hana has assumed sole responsibility for the English patient and David Caravaggio has arrived at the villa. Now she does have a member of the family and a replacement for her father. The only missing character in her life is a lover to replace the dead soldier. It is no coincidence that Kip and Hana's relationship begins in the next fifteen pages.

Kip has been selected for his affinity for mechanics, and he excels because of his desire to be accepted into the European world. Kip is not only valuable as a skilled bomb technician, however. He is also seen as a body to replace other Europeans who have been killed in the line of duty. After his mentor is killed, he eventually meets Hana who, like the allied cause, needs

replacements for the people that she has lost. Kip will become the perfect surrogate for her dead soldier, as he is already accustomed to the role as a stand in.

What becomes most important in this work is the relationship that develops between Hana and Kip. Both of these characters have become traumatized by their experiences in the war, much like their respective countries have been traumatized. Kip and Hana have defining characteristics that, when analyzed, will shed further light on how Hana uses Kip to patch up some of the holes in her life. From the very first time the two meet, the things that define them can be seen in their actions. One night in the library Hana decides to sit and play an old piano, struggling to remember her lessons as a child. As she continues, she notices that two soldiers have approached, and “she saw that one of the men was a Sikh ... She was surrounded by foreign men. Not one pure Italian. A villa romance” (63-64). This scene first shows Hana’s state of disconnectedness from reality. She sits, playing a piano in the rain and seemingly ignores the two soldiers that have approached her in the night. The only thought she has during this is that the villa has become a sort of stage for a romance. This mentality will persist as she casts people in the roles of the books she reads and as the people she has lost in her life. Kip’s perception of this scene in the following excerpt reveals his state of mind as well:

He had approached the villa on that night of the storm not out of curiosity about the music but because of a danger to the piano player. The retreating army often left pencil mines within musical instruments. Returning owners opened up pianos and lost their hands. People would revive the swing on a grandfather clock, and a glass bomb would blow out half a wall and whoever was nearby ... He was unable to look at a room or field without seeing the possibilities of weapons there. (75)

Through his experience as a bomb technician, he has become hyper-vigilant to the point that he sees everyday objects as a threat. It is also no coincidence that Hana is first seen as a danger than as the woman that Kip will fall in love with. While she is seemingly participating in a harmless act—playing the piano—she is unknowingly putting herself and others at risk. This scene reveals Kip’s connection to explosives and his suspicious nature. Smyrl comments on his nature by stating that “Kip consumes almost nothing without suspicion. His caution as a sapper permeates his character” (33). This caution is something that Kip retains in all aspects of his life, especially towards people, until he inevitably lets his guard down. If there is anything that is universally understood about explosives and the disarming of them, it is that one mistake is all that is necessary to kill the most experienced technician. In *The English Patient*, people should be considered just as dangerous.

Just as Kip approaches bombs with caution, he too approaches people with suspicion. This is because of the death of his mentor Lord Suffolk, who he had grown close to. He also has, through his experience with Europeans, grown accustomed to being alienated because of his race. He applies this caution much like he does when he approaches Hana playing the piano at their first meeting and for a period of time after that: “The Sikh sets up a tent in the far reaches of the garden...At first he will not come into the house at all...He will turn, suddenly realizing she is watching him. He is a survivor of his fears, he will step around anything suspicious, acknowledging her look in this panorama as if claiming he can deal with it all” (72-73). It is important to note Kip’s caution of Hana—as if he is avoiding an explosive—because of the way in which their relationship is figuratively consummated.

After Kip has become more accustomed to living near the villa, he comes across an explosive that he cannot disarm alone. After yelling for help, Hana arrives and holds a wire for

him even after he told her to leave him. After cutting the wire and killing the bomb, he thinks about Hana's intervention that likely saved his life: "He was still annoyed the girl had stayed with him when he defused the bomb, as if by that she had made him owe her something. Making him feel in retrospect responsible for her, though there was no thought of it at the time. As if *that* could usefully influence what he chose to do with a mine" (104). This interaction is key in establishing the terms of their connection. Kip wants to be alone and self-sufficient with nothing else to worry about, until someone forces their way into his care as Hana does here. Spinks speaks on this moment when stating that the "evolving relationship between Kip and Hana is exquisitely rendered in the scene in which Kip, defusing a bomb in the villa grounds, unexpectedly finds himself holding two live wires without the safety of a descant cord...[His] salvation only arrives when Hana rushes from the villa to pluck one of the wires from his grasp" (199-200). This is significant, not only because of their doomed personal relationship, but also because of the larger post-colonial and political implications. In scenarios where the colonizer has control over another culture or nation, the typical process involves making the colonized dependent on their invaders. This process becomes more and more significant as the colonizer builds more leverage against their colony. This can even be seen in the life of Kip as he feels a duty to enlist in the British military, a group that has control over almost all of the Indian subcontinent due to the way in which they have forced the country to be dependent upon them. Even if she is unconscious of it, this is how Hana draws in a surrogate for her dead soldier since she has no other way to make him dependent on her. This also resembles the way in which she keeps the English patient alive to stand in for her deceased father. This now shared trauma, centered around a possible explosion, links these two together until another, more significant explosion rips them apart.

Once Kip and Hana are brought together, their relationship persists because the characteristics that define them. Both of these characters have certain tendencies and motivations that make their connection inevitable. The reasons for their connection also further the idea that their relationship is a model for the relationship between European and colonized nations during the second World War.

Kip is a man who has come to love some aspects of European society thanks to the man who first made him feel accepted, Lord Suffolk. S. Poorna Mala Devi observes this in the following excerpt:

Kip, who admires his commanding officer Lord Suffolk, seems assimilated into English culture as he is renamed Kip although his real name is Kirpal Singh. His singing of the song: 'They're changing the guard at Buckingham Palace/ Christopher Robin went down with Alice' is a song his friend Hardy used to sing while he is defusing a bomb, which indicates his mimicry of English culture (4-5).

This instance is not the only way in which Kip shows his reverence for English culture, or, more specifically, the art and music of English culture. By focusing on these aspects of European culture, Kip effectively blocks out and ignores all of the rotten parts of these societies.

This tendency first appears just after the reader is introduced to Kip, and the narrator talks about how the sapper would think of a painting of *The Queen of Sheba* while he was lying in the mud of a riverbank, praying he was not hit by enemy gunfire: "The young sapper put his cheek against the mud and thought of the Queen of Sheba's face, the texture of her skin. There was no comfort in this river except for his desire for her, which somehow kept him warm" (70). These first pages about Kip are filled with his appreciation of art and the painted murals of Europe. After some time has passed, he takes an old medievalist to see *The Flight of the Emperor*

Maxentius. A few pages after this trip is referenced, Kip is seen looking “at the ochre faces as if he were searching for a brother in the crowd” while he is visiting The Great Hall in Monte Cassino (77). Kip’s story starts in this way to emphasis how he views Europe while serving the British military. He chooses to focus on the beauty of art rather than the ugliness and rot of the reality that he is living in.

Kip’s appreciation for the art of Europe is not limited to paintings as he also has used music as a way to drown out the world around him. When he is in the process of disarming the same type of bomb that killed his mentor the narrator explains Kip’s use of music: “Later, when there was a whole personal history of events and moments in his mind, he would need something equivalent to white sound to burn or bury everything while he thought of the problems in front of him. The radio or crystal set and its loud band music would come later, a tarpaulin to hold the rain of real life away from him” (194). Kip is seen using this music, much like the song he sings while disarming a bomb, to shut out any of the traumatic things that would normally distract him. Smyrl points out this dependence as well, tying his use of music back to his dependence on European culture: “In the chaos of war, Kip turns to the universal stability of art...Culture becomes the ultimate distraction, culminating in his reliance on the short-wave radio and popular music to block out thought as he works as a sapper” (33). This reliance on music is significant, as this is the thing that first draws him to Hana as she plays the piano, becoming a physical embodiment of the music he needs to cope. However, Hana becomes more than just music in order to draw Kip in even closer.

Sculpture becomes a significant focus for Kip, and his soon to be lover takes on this form as well. In one of his recollections of being in the war he found a sort of calmness while in the presences of statues: “He had given his trust only to this race of stones” (104). He later tells

Hana about his experiences, and she thinks about this as she “climbs into the dry bowl of the fountain,” and “sits in the cradle of the stone,” imitating a statue herself (90). Kip tells her that “he had slept beside one [statue] who was a grieving angel... He had lain back, looking at the body, and for the first time in the war felt at peace” (90). Hana assumes the position of a statue and further establishes herself as the thing that Kip loves about Europe. Whether she does it consciously or not, Hana is drawing Kip into a connection where he will let down the defenses that he has put up against other people.

The final art form that Hana embodies is that of the explosive. While most would not consider this a form of art or anything other than a weapon, Kip, Lord Suffolk, and the English Patient all revere bombs and their creators. Upon their first meeting, Kip and the English patient establish their friendship over the discussion of Italian fuses and bombs, going back and forth over the complexity of circuitry and wiring (88-89). Once again, this is an art form that Kip is given by Lord Suffolk, and it is the one thing that gave him a sort of acceptance and agency in Europe. So, while these bombs are designed to kill him, they are also something to be loved, as his ability to handle them has given him passage into the European culture he idolizes so much. Kip does not recognize that he has become attached to Hana for this reason.

All of the significant moments that they have together are centered around a bomb, explosion, or language that alludes to explosives. When disarming the type of bomb that killed his mentor Kip learns that “removing the main gaine had released an unseen striker that activated the second, hidden gaine” (197).¹ The reader is shown this flashback just after Kip contemplates his growing relationship with Hana and wonders how she helped him let his guard down to her. This is no coincidence, as the reader sees that Hana, like the explosive that killed Lord Suffolk, is

only safe to be around for a short period of time before a hidden gain destroys Kip before he is the wiser.

Kip's viewing of Hana in this way—as a piece of art—is not unlike the way in which Hana views the sapper. However, Hana chooses to see Kip a character, as just a part of her story, rather than seeing him as a something in and of himself. Like Kip, Hana has a deep appreciation for art and chooses to use it as a way to ignore the reality of her situation. Hana has lost some of the most important pieces of her life, and she begins to fill those newly created gaps with other people that don't necessarily belong there. Since she began living in the villa, Hana “fell upon books as the only door out of her cell. They became half her world” (7). Therefore, it is fitting that she sees these new people in her life as characters to play a role rather than the individuals they already are. One of the most damaging ways in which she does this is by her Orientalizing of Kip.

Kip arrives at the villa just in time for him to walk into the role of Hana's dead lover. While Hana becomes enamored with him, it is important to see the context in which she appears the most affectionate. When Kip first arrives, she watches him from a distance and “notices the darker brown skin of his wrist” (74). After she helps him disarm the bomb in the garden, she tells him, “I wanted to place my fingers against [his skin]. I've always liked flesh the colour of rivers and rocks or like the brown eye of a Susan...” (103). Later still, after their love affair has begun, the narrator says that Kip “was unaware that for her he was just a silhouette, his slight body and his skin part of the darkness” (114). The novel and the narrator seldom describe how Kip looks except in relation to Hana. In Eleanor Ty's essay on the question of “racial otherness” she claims that “many descriptions of Kip are mediated through Hana, who observes him. Her fascination with and growing attraction for him becomes a point of contact for the reader” (3). Through

Hana's eyes the reader becomes hyper aware of Kip's difference racially as she fantasizes about her new exotic lover.

Furthermore, she also casts him in her story as she, in the wake of her many traumas, has come to see her life in the villa as if it were one of the stories that she has read to the English patient. In this way, she is like her father who is described from time to time: "Her father loved a city of his own invention, whose streets and walls and borders he and his friends had painted. He never truly stepped out of that world" (91). Like her father, Hana has opted to live in a world of her own creation rather than the tragedy that is her real one. Just as she constructs this fantasy world, she places the people around her into the roles that she sees fit. Spinks states that "Hana has emotionally withdrawn herself from the ravages of wartime Italy into a private literary universe. Literature affords her an imaginative consolation or the diremptions of contemporary experience by providing a fantasy space apparently untouched by current geopolitical and ethnic division" (178). Hana's delusion not only mimics that of the colonizer who would rather ignore the damage their country is doing, but she actually is entranced by and emulates the literature that promotes colonization. She takes this delusion further by imagining that Kip is just another aspect of her story: "All of this occurred before the sapper entered their lives, as if out of this fiction. As if the pages of Kipling had been rubbed in the night like a magic lamp. A drug of wonders" (94). For Hana, Kip seems to magically appear like a genie to grant her wishes. Her wish was for Kip to play the surrogate for her dead soldier; much like the English demanded that India replace their dead soldiers and preserve the living ones.

Kip's willingness to ignore the unpleasant reality of his status in a European military and Hana's desire to live in a fantasy world of her own bind the pair together. However, their affair is destined to end as quickly as it was formed and in a tragic fashion. The fear of an explosion

introduced the two in the library while Hana played the piano. The near explosion by the tree almost killed them both and initiated their love affair. In a similar way, the apocalyptic news of the bombings in Japan forced the violent separation of Hana and Kip. “One Bomb. Then another. Hiroshima. Nagasaki” (284). In the moment when Kip hears the news of the bombings, he flies into a rage, nearly executes the English patient, and passionately condemns all white nations in the space of a few paragraphs. “The event that tears the villa community apart is the successful detonation, rather than a defusing, of an explosive device: the dropping of the atomic bomb over Japan in August 1945” (Spinks 200). These final moments in the villa effectively destroy the illusions that have kept the group in harmony.

Once Kip hears the news, he begins to dismantle all of the things that have become representations of his idea Europe: “Kip looks condemned, separate from the world, his brown face weeping. The body turns and fires into the old fountain, and the plaster explodes dust onto the bed. He pivots back so the rifle points at the Englishman” (283). This act is Kip’s symbolic rejection of the things that have shielded him from the reality of his status as a non-European. The fountain that Hana is seen sitting in becomes the art and the culture that Kip was able to turn to in his time in the British military. Because he rejects this symbol that is so tied to his lover, he also sees her for what her intentions are. He now realizes that she has used him as a tool just like the British have used him. Kip then aims his rifle at the English patient, who has also come to represent for Kip all of the good things about Europe. However, he is now “consumed by images of nuclear annihilation and [is] convinced of the moral bankruptcy of the Western Powers,” seeing the patient for the empire that he represents (Spinks 201).

The novel concludes soon after Kip leaves the villa in a fury on his motorcycle. This action, like that of the other colonized characters discussed in this paper, is not to be seen as a

coward-like flight from conflict, however. Kip returns to his home country because he realized that the brother that warned him about the British was right all along. Kip tries to “retreat from his error, retracing, in his journey back through Europe, the process of his engagement with western culture” (Smyrl 35). He wishes to take back everything that he had done after he left home and reclaim some of his heritage and past. Unfortunately, it is too late to reverse the hybrid state that he has entered, as India and other colonies cannot reverse theirs. This analogy is best seen in the final sentence as Hana, half a world away, drops a glass just as Kip catches the falling fork that his daughter drops (302). Like India and the western world that abused it, Kip is forever connected to Hana as her once surrogate lover.

CHAPTER 3

THE RELUCTANT FUNDAMENTALIST

“One evening I was walking with Erica through Union Square and we saw a firefly. ‘Look!’ she said, amazed. ‘It’s trying to compete with the buildings.’ Indeed it was: a tiny greenish glow visible up close but overwhelmed by the city’s luminance when viewed from even a modest distance.”

—*The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, Mohsin Hamid

Post-9/11 fiction swings the narrative towards either the mourning of the American nation or the treatment of immigrants from those nations that were so easily condemned because they were in the Middle East. Works in the latter category have geared themselves to highlighting issues regarding the aftermath of the attacks and the unthinking prejudice against diasporic and émigré minority populations within America and abroad. One such work, Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, was born from his time attending Princeton and Harvard.

The main character in this work, Changez, is a Pakistani man, who, like Hamid himself, is educated in the United States. Changez falls for an American woman, Erica, amidst the turmoil of the September 11 terrorist attacks. Back in Pakistan, Changez recounts to a mysterious American the story of his rise and fall in the corporate world of New York City as well as his rocky relationship with Erica. It is well established that Erica represents America, and Changez’s relationship with her is pitched as a parallel to the one that the U.S. has with Pakistan and other countries in the same part of the world. There are many critics that claim that these allegorical relationships exist, such as Anne Balfour in her work “Risky Cosmopolitanism: Intimacy and Autoimmunity in Mohsin Hamid’s *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*,” as well as Jenn Brant in her paper “Gender and the Nostalgic Body in Post-9/11 Fiction: Claire Tristram’s *After* and Mohsin

Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*." While much of the criticism on this work agrees that Erica cannot understand Changez for what he truly is, a full explication of Erica as one who imposes neocolonial power on Changez has yet to be written.

Throughout the development of their relationship, Erica uses the man who has fallen for her as a surrogate for her deceased boyfriend, inflicting irreversible damage on Changez in the process. A thorough analysis of their relationship reveals the scale of this surrogacy and the implications that it has for American-Pakistani relations in a post-9/11 world. Historically, this relationship has been one of neocolonial benevolence, with the U.S. both offering and withholding security assistance and civilian assistance in reaction to Pakistan's performance on several metrics. When Pakistani forces reclaim parts of the country previously held by militant groups, or take action against externally-focused militant groups and UN-designated terrorist organizations operating from its territory, relations with the U.S. are cordial, and the aid flows. But when Pakistan does not take decisive and irreversible action against these groups, or fails to comply with other American requests, the U.S. suspends security assistance. Since the U.S. is one of the largest sources of foreign direct investment in Pakistan and is Pakistan's largest export market, any heightening of tensions between the two countries, or, indeed, between Pakistan and India, severely impacts the country's economy and stability. This economic coercion, coupled with the ever-present threat of military intervention, creates a severely imbalanced international relationship, one where Pakistan must reinvent itself according to American designs.

To see how Changez becomes the surrogate for Erica's lost boyfriend and the representative of his home country in its dealings with the U.S., one must look at how Changez is brought to America. Like Mustafa and Kip, Changez is caught up in the colonial process of the bringing of colonized subjects back to the core of the empire. The purpose of this process was to

mine the best and the brightest individuals to help the colonizer. In the case of Changez, he is brought from Pakistan and is eventually hired by a firm that guts failing business throughout the world. We see Changez mention his being selected early on in the novel: “I was one of only two Pakistanis in my entering class—from a population of over a hundred million souls, mind you” (3). But this privilege of studying in America did not come without a cost: “Students like me were given visas and scholarships, complete financial aid, mind you, and invited into the ranks of the meritocracy. In return, we were expected to contribute our talents to your society” (4). Within the first pages of the work, an older Changez reflects on the reasons why he was allowed to study in America. He was one of the best and the brightest and, therefore, was useful as a tool in American society. Maryse Jayasuria supports this when saying that the U.S. used this process as “a purposeful means of creating a ‘brain-drain,’ luring the crème de la crème of those countries into the service of the United States, with little concern for the repercussions of their loss on the countries left behind” (251). Much like the way that Erica draws Changez toward her in the absence of Chris, the machine of the American colonizer pulls him in.

However, being brought to the empire is not enough to keep the colonized on the side of the colonizer; therefore, there must be some other incentive. In the case of Changez, he is awarded acceptance by his peers at Underwood Sampson and by Erica regardless of his Pakistani heritage. Early in his time at the valuation firm his is even singled out by the directing manager who says he also identifies with Changez’s outsider status (42-43). In many respects, Changez truly is accepted by his peers. Alla Alghamdi states that “Changez quickly finds and gainfully occupies a coveted place. He notes the sameness between himself and his colleagues, a uniformity that persists despite their diversity” (53). However, this slowly deteriorates after the September 11th attacks. Changez’s changed demeanor, decrease in productivity, and even his

growing of a beard also become things that make him feel alienated by others. Changez learns that the acceptance of the American people is conditional—dependent on his ability to produce and fit a certain mold. Like others that spend time working within the core, Changez soon recognizes his status as a tool rather than as a fully accepted individual.

On multiple occasions in his role at Underwood Sampson, Changez notices a sensation that makes him feel like an impostor posing as an American. These feelings come to a head while he is put in charge of valuating a publisher in Chile. The founder of the company, Juan-Bautista, talks to Changez frequently, and this is what eventually leads to him to leave Underwood Sampson and return to Pakistan. The following excerpt is the major turning point in Changez's mentality:

Then he asked, "Have you heard of Janissaries?" "No," I said. "They were Christian boys," he explained, "captured by Ottomans and trained to be soldiers in a Muslim army, at that time the greatest army in the world. They were ferocious and utterly loyal: they had fought to erase their own civilizations, so they had nothing else to turn to."

He tipped the ash of his cigarette onto a plate. "How old were you when you went to America?" he asked. (151)

This unprompted history lesson on how Christian boys were used against their own people, followed by asking when Changez entered the US, is no accident. Juan-Bautista does this intentionally to provide Changez with an analogy for himself and his role in American society. Changez then comes to, as Brigidia Gaztold states, "question ethical issues involved with his job and feels uncomfortable as an obedient cog in the corporate machine" (18). It is this status as a tool that defines his experience with the corporate American world and as Erica's temporary love interest; he is accepted while he is useful.

In order to analyze the actions of Erica, as an extension of the United States, it must be established that she does take part in this national allegory. Anna Hartnell states that “Changez’s relationship with Erica...carries the burden of representing far more than an individual love interest. The love story in the novel between man and woman does not simply mirror but also complicates the protagonist’s relationship with America” (342). Hartnell agrees that Erica carries this weight of being parallel with America and points out the significance of her connection with Changez.

Early in the novel, aspects that hint at the imperial nature of America are seen in the girl’s body and clothes: “—ah what a navel: made firm, I would later learn, by years of Tae kwon do—was visible beneath a short T-shirt bearing an image of Chairman Mao” (17). The first reference, Tae kwon do, is a Korean style of martial arts. The fact that Erica is well-versed in a discipline that originated in a culture that has been subjugated and colonized since the 10th century—by modern powers such as China, Japan, Russia, and the United States—is significant (Lambert 1). The second piece in this scene is her shirt depicting Mao Zedong, better known as Chairman Mao. Mao Zedong was glorified for his driving of imperialism out of China; however, he also promoted it in Korea and Tibet. He was also responsible for the death of between 40 and 70 million lives, more than the frequently vilified Hitler and Stalin (Schram). These images being presented so early in the narrative, and in association with Erica, foreshadow the dark turn of events to come and help to establish her as the American “lioness: strong, sleek, and invariably surrounded by her pride” (Hamid 22).

Edward W. Said defines Orientalism as “the corporate institution for dealing with the Orient—dealing with it by making statements about it, authorizing views of it, describing it, by teaching it, settling it, ruling over it: in short, Orientalism [is] a Western style for dominating,

restructuring, and having authority over the Orient” (1785). Said’s concept is a key part of postcolonial theory and is necessary in order to see the effect that Erica has on Changez.

Throughout Hamid’s novel, Erica also indulges in the fantasy of Changez’s Eastern culture, uses him as a surrogate for a dead boyfriend, and rejects him on multiple levels, despite his changing of self in order to get closer to her. Changez, as a result, feels his Otherness in relation to her life, becomes mentally unhinged as a result of her rejections, and even strives to mimic her culture at the cost of some of his Pakistani self.

This mimicry that Changez takes part in is a direct result of the American Orientalizing gaze that Erica embodies wholly. In Said’s *Orientalism* he states, “The Orient was almost a European invention, and had been since antiquity a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences” (1784). This notion of fascination and awe at entire Eastern cultures objectifies the people that occupy them as mere attractions rather than human beings. Said builds on this idea, stating that outlooks that take part in this objectification further “the idea of European identity as a superior one in comparison with all non-European peoples and cultures” (1788).

Erica is the main source of Orientalism in regard to Changez as well, further implicating her as an allegory for the paranoid American gaze. Sobia Khan states that Changez’s “relationship with Erica...makes him acutely aware of his social inadequacy and foreignness” (150). Throughout the novel Erica is seen adoring Changez, but she seems to do this only when indulging her fascination of his Pakistani culture. This reduces him to an exotic object rather than a real person. In Greece she listens to him “as though she were sipping at [his] descriptions and finding them to her taste” (27). When he shows up to her house in in the U.S. Changez recalls her response to his appearance: “‘Wow’ she said, reaching out to graze the embroidery on my

kurta...” (50). Erica also smiles at hearing the stories of his youth in Pakistan and continues to ask about his culture, rather than asking about Changez as an individual. Changez remembers that he “entertained her with anecdotes of Lahore for what seemed like hours” (91). It is clear that she becomes enamored with what Avirup Ghosh calls Changez’s “charming demeanor and his exotic otherness” (52). Ghosh and others (Seval, Gasztold, and Hartnell) have the opinion that Erica’s affection stems merely from her fascination with him as a part of the Orient. It is exactly this Orientalizing gaze, combined with Erica’s longing for Chris, that pushes Changez to alter his identity and become her surrogate lover.

The relationship between Changez and Erica begins while they are vacationing in Greece with a group of friends during their school break. Changez notes that he “had struck up an acquaintance with a woman with whom [he] was well and truly smitten,” and reflects how he had never been happier in his life (29-30). It is here where Erica shows her first symbolic, geopolitical qualities. Changez notes her appearance and her effect upon seeing her, stating that she was “stunningly *regal*” and that her hair was “piled up like a tiara on her head” (17). These initial physical images establish her resemblance to a crowned head of state, which is usually not associated with the new world or the third world, but with the first world. Both her air and her appearance mark her as someone above the unwashed masses. On multiple occasions Changez notes that she “attracted people to her; she had a presence, an uncommon *magnetism*” (22). In this way, Erica embodies the fascination of America that has existed since the establishment of the nation so long ago. After they return to America, Changez states that “she attracted people toward her,” and is reminded “of the *gravity* she had exerted,” while in Greece (56). Erica is the embodiment of the American Dream that so many emigrate to find, and Changez is no exception. Gasztold supports this when she states that the “protagonist’s experiences with America are

foreshadowed by his relationship with Erica, who seduces an innocent boy in the same way that American wealth and opportunities seduce” (23). Here, the influence of Erica as a colonial power begins to emerge as she is seen baiting in the colonized with her charm, looks, and intellect. For Changez, she appears before him as an embodiment of what America is.

In order to understand the reasons for a national power’s actions, a look into the past is necessary. This is also the case with Erica and her motives, as she is haunted by a damaging nostalgia that mimics that of post-9/11 America. It is because of this nostalgia, in part, that her relationship with Changez is so tortured. Erica is haunted by the death of her boyfriend Chris, who died due to lung cancer a year prior to her meeting Changez. Chris, as Erica describes him, had “an *Old-World* appeal”, which lends to the idea that he is analogous for America’s desire for the past (27). Gasztold says that the “girl’s dead lover and her inability to cope with personal loss imply the country’s nostalgia for the security of a time that is now bygone” (24). This nostalgia, and the connection between Erica and America, is addressed by Changez himself in the following excerpt:

I knew even then she was disappearing into a powerful *nostalgia*, one from which only she could choose whether or not to return...[It] seemed to me that America, too, was increasingly giving itself over to a dangerous nostalgia at that time...for the first time I was struck by its determination to look *back*. (113-115)

Changez is wary of the danger of this nostalgic state, and aptly so, as it is one of the main barriers that prevents him from truly connecting with Erica and, in turn, America. Jenn Brant comments on this desire for the past, stating that these “myths and assumptions translate into a form of nostalgia that functions to create divisions rather than bringing people together” (379). In the case of Erica, Changez cannot fill a space that is still occupied by Chris. And, in the case of

America, those who are deemed the dangerous Oriental cannot fill an intellectual category that is tainted with old world xenophobia. However, Erica allows Changez to attempt to fill Chris's role out of her own selfish desire to feel complete.

The motivation that drives Changes in his relationship with Erica is the same one that pushes him in his desire to be accepted into American society. In the novel, American society has, in part, Othered Changez to the point where he can feel his status as an outsider. This can be observed in the scene in Greece, when his joke about becoming an Islamic Dictator is met with silence (29). Sobia Khan also recognizes this Othering gaze when she states that "we find Changez again and again in circumstances which affirm his role as that of an outsider" (142). He is reminded of this status by his employer who, in an attempt to engage Changez and actually bridge the us / them divide, states on multiple occasions that he knows "what it is like to be an outsider" (120). In the post-9/11 atmosphere Changez is searched at airports, threatened, and is regarded with suspicion because of his skin color and his appearance. He sees Erica, a person who he believes sees beyond his skin color, as the only way to achieve the status as a true American citizen. His desire to be with her is all of the fuel he needs to begin to change his own identity

In *The Location of Culture*, Bhabha states that "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (86). According to Bhabha, mimicry is the nature of the colonial beast in regard to the colonized culture. The powerful position of the oppressor is so great that it encourages the Other to imitate the oppressor in order to gain a sort of agency. This is relevant in Hamid's text as Changez is the Other that feels he must change in order to be accepted. Shirin Zubair says that "those who go west have two roads to choose from: the backwards path home, or the forward path of

assimilation” (68). Changez takes part in this assimilation due to the pressure of American society and his desire to connect with Erica. His first recognition of this mimicry is when he is offered a job at Underwood Sampson: “On that day, I did not think of myself as a Pakistani, but as an Underwood Sampson trainee” (34). Here, Changez has seen that, in the pursuit of success and acceptance in American society, he has begun to sacrifice parts of his Pakistani identity. Gasztold holds that the “American experience... requires the protagonist to put on appearances in order to meet its expectations” (22). Throughout the novel Changez continues to put on a sort of performance in order to be accepted, such as his wanting to dress as he believes Erica’s parents would, acting like his condescending peers in impoverished countries, and even choosing not to speak to a Pakistani taxi driver in the presence of Erica (55).

However, it is with Erica that Changez makes the biggest sacrifice in order to assimilate. During their second intimate encounter Changez tells her to pretend that he is Chris. He then describes the experience in the following excerpt:

I cannot, of course, claim that I was *possessed*, but at the same time I did not seem to be myself. It was as though we were under a spell, transported to a world where I was Chris and she was with Chris, and we made love with a physical intimacy that Erica and I had never enjoyed. Her body denied me no longer; I watched her shut her eyes, and her shut eyes watched him. (105)

In this moment Changez takes on the persona of Chris as this is his last resort in his pursuit of Erica. Brant, as well as many others, holds that “Changez’s willingness to play a dead man reflects not only his desire to be with Erica, but his larger need to ‘fit in’ in America” (373). Changez has made the sacrifice of his own identity due to his love for Erica and her continuing rejection of him as an opponent of Chris. This mimicry, facilitated by Erica and America as a

whole, is what leads to Changez's loss of self, feeling of shame, and his eventual leaving of the life he has begun in the United States. Gohar Karim Khan echoes this, stating that is "is a realization that manifests itself in a psychological self-loathing, whereby Changez is disgusted even by his reflection in the mirror" (97). The taking on of another person's identity proves to be catastrophic for both Erica and Changez, as she feels like she has betrayed Chris, and Changez feels he has betrayed himself. It is this moment when the role of his surrogacy becomes most apparent. Whether Erica is aware of it or not, she is casting Changez in a temporary role, much like the way the US was allied with the Pakistani cause until their relationship became tense after 9/11. Just as their motivations become completely clear, the impossibility of their relationship begins to show.

The rejection of the Other is a common theme in postcolonial literature, and Hamid's novel is no exception. Homi Bhabha claims that an Other "is at once an object of desire and derision, an articulation of difference contained within the fantasy of origin and identity" (19). With Bhabha's words in mind, one can look into the ways in which Erica refuses to accept Changez, despite her expressed desire to be with him. The nostalgia that she retains plays into this, as she holds on to the old world values of Chris and keeps Changez at arm's length. When Changez visits Erica's home for the first time, he notices and asks about a sketch on her wall. She explains that Chris drew it based on one of his favorite *Adventures of TinTin* comics: "It depicted under stormy skies a tropical island with a runway and a steep volcano; nestled in the caldera of the volcano was a lake with another, smaller island in it—an island on an island—wonderfully sheltered and calm" (52). The symbolism of this sketch is significant for understanding the fragile psyche of Erica. Chris, the center of her old-world longing, has made for her an image that shows an island that is twice removed from the world and the storm that

looms above it. This image mimics the reclusive nature of an America that is not only separated by oceans from the rest of the world but is also further removed by its xenophobic mentality.



Figure 1: Panel of comic that Chris's sketch is based on. (Hergé)

The television series that animates *The Adventures of Tintin* series in the 1990s aired the episode referenced in relation to the sketch. In the episode the protagonist and his group are on a plane that is hijacked by their arch nemesis and brought to a remote island that erupts after several dynamite detonations (“Tintin Flight 714”). The parallel nature of this episode to that of the 9/11 attacks is too significant for the reference to be merely coincidental. Erica embodies the island sketched by her late boyfriend as she believes that she cannot live without the sense of security that comes with separating herself from Changez.

Like the sketch, Erica cannot exorcise the memory of Chris from her life. In turn, it becomes Changez's job to compete with Chris in his desire to have Erica return his feelings. Looking back at the scene where he visits Erica's room, she shows him the copy of her

manuscript that she is reluctant to give to a publisher. The following excerpt of this moment reveals Erica's desire to hold onto the past:

It's like I'm an oyster. I've had this sharp speck inside me for a long time, and I've been trying to make it more comfortable, so slowly I've turned it into a pearl. But now it's finally being taken out, and just as its going I'm realizing there's a gap being left behind, you know, a dent on my belly where it used to sit. And so I kind of want to hold on to it for a little longer. (51)

This pearl of her book, we later learn, is autobiographical and a concrete expression of her past. This past, represented here by a manuscript, is what Changez is competing with. Changez even perceives and expresses his knowledge of this competition when he states that he feels "the presence of a rival in Chris...with whom [he] feared [he] could never compete" (82). He later describes Erica and Chris's relationship as "a religion that would not accept [him] as a convert," giving the past connection between the two Americans a sacred connotation (114). Through her nostalgia she has rejected anything that does not resemble her past idea of love; she has closed her gates, much like America, to the foreigner that only means her well.

The culmination of this rejection comes in the abortive sexual encounter that Changez and Erica have. She was "silent and unmoving...[Changez] found it difficult to enter her...[he] could see her discomfort, and so [he] forced [himself] to stop" (89-90). The pair are unable to connect intimately and Erica comments that she has not been sexually active since the death of Chris. Despite all of her advances and the progress of their relationship, she cannot allow Changez to be with her in the way that Chris was. Gohar Karim Khan, in agreement with others (Sobia Khan, Ghosh, and Hartnell), holds that "her impenetrability, both literal and metaphorical, ... is paralleled in his growing inability to be accepted in an altered America" (100-101). Erica,

being the extension of America, rejects the Other in Changez in this crucial moment in a relationship. Changez, the embodiment of the Pakistani foreigner, must now mimic what he believes Erica longs for in order to be accepted.

The reaction to this attempted assimilation is not what Changez, or the Other in general, expects or desires. In the end, both are rejected by the imperial power that sees them as similar but not similar enough to be accepted. Erica's Oriental lens is removed after their successful sexual encounter, as Changez has become more real to her than she ever had expected. The morning after she leaves early and ignores Changez's attempts at contacting her and, after finally letting him see her, is distant and avoids physical contact with him. In the end she commits herself to an institution to maximize her solitude. This is best illustrated by the comments that the nurse of the institution makes to Changez: "You're the hardest person for her to see. You're the one who upsets her the most. Because you're the most real, and you make her lose her balance" (133). He has, as Seval notes, "[breached] the tolerated and respected distance one keeps between the self and Other" (110). Changez, after everything he has sacrificed to be with her, is rejected a final time for being the very thing he was forced to become. He states the following realization: "For it was clear Erica needed something that I—even by consenting to play the part of a man not my-self—was unable to give her" (113). Erica, though she may have felt something for Changez, was never able to see beyond her Orientalized image of him and when the veil was dropped, so was her affection for him. Changez, as a surrogate, was no longer needed or desired.

In the end, Changez is able to alter his choice to assimilate and returns to his home in Pakistan. However, some of the damage that has been done cannot be repaired as he states: "I lost something of myself to her that I was unable to relocate in my city of birth" (172). Changez

realizes the ways in which he was made an Oriental Other and recognizes that Erica—and America—never truly loved him or could fully accept him. He was merely a stand in for what was lost. In the days before he leaves the U.S. he gets a chance to read Erica’s manuscript, only to find that “she had chosen not to be part of [his] story” (167). He would forever be an outsider to Chris and Erica’s relationship.

Hamid’s novel gives the reader an alternative perspective of post-9/11 America that many will have not seen. His characters’ personal lives and relationships serve as an allegory to the state of affairs between a nostalgic, paranoid America and the Other of the Middle East and its immigrants. Erica serves as a parallel to an America that tolerates the Other as long as they stay in the category of the distant Oriental and serve a purpose. Once the hospitality of America is tested and the Other gets too close, the nation will recede into itself, creating the island within an island effect portrayed in Chris’s sketch. By Orientalizing and making a surrogate out of Changez, Erica participates in the continuing objectification of immigrants from the East who will never be accepted as true Americans.

CHAPTER 4

CONCLUSION

These three works differ greatly, of that we can be sure. Sudan, India, and Pakistan are the formerly colonized nations that Mustafa, Kip, and Changez come from respectively. England, Canada, and America are the world powers that the women in these works trace their origins to and represent in each national allegory. What ties these novels together is the relationships between their characters and what those relationships mean for the conversation around postcolonial literature.

These relationships, having subverted the typical gender dynamic of postcolonial and colonial literature, have forced the reader to reevaluate the positions of both the colonizer and colonized. In other works, the male colonizer is an aggressive, dominating force that seeks to control the female outright. Within these three works, the male is the colonized individual that seeks survival, acceptance, agency, or some combination of the three through a romantic relationship. The female in other postcolonial texts is the quintessential colonized individual that is submissive or is forced to submit to the will of the male. This changes in the novels discussed here, as the female colonizer seeks to seduce the unwitting male out of a desire to control him. Imperialism becomes more clandestine, and the colonized becomes disillusioned to the falseness of their agency and the lack of control over their own lives.

This lack of control is best seen in the way they are used by the women as tools, replacements, fantasies, and as objects to be owned. In this way, Mustafa, Kip, and Changez act as surrogates for something that their female counterpart is missing. While their relationships may seem healthy at times, the women here, whether they know it or not, are using these men to stand in for something else. This objectification reduces these men to something that is imperfect

or not quite right. This means that, inevitably, these men become obsolete to their partners once they are no longer needed or act out of character. The disposable nature that these colonized individuals embody is parallel to that of the immigrants the world over who are only accepted given that they contribute and act accordingly.

Taken in chronological order, as they are here, these works show the changing images of these postcolonial characters over time. Salih's *Season of Migration to the North* provides the reader with the most clear-cut depictions of the colonizer in Jean Morris, a siren-like woman who drags Mustafa Sa'eed to his own destruction. While we are offered very little in the way of their full history together, Mustafa's recounting of their relationship is enough to see the way in which Jean seduced her mark and brought him to his knees. She embodies the spirit of an imperialist, yet presents herself as something to be conquered by Mustafa. Because of this, Mustafa cannot see that he is being manipulated by the colonizer who hides behind the mask of a beautiful woman's face. He serves as a surrogate for her, filling in for all that was lost when the European powers gave up their strangleholds on their colonies. He becomes a plaything in her twisted game, one designed to give her pleasure, release, and ultimately, death. As symbols of the core and the periphery, Jean and Mustafa reveal how the allure of Europe draws in the best and the brightest only to use them for her own designs, just as Jean uses Mustafa. Mustafa breaks character by seeking to dominate the other women of England, so he must necessarily be marked and eventually eliminated by Jean Morris and the ensuing legal proceedings.

Kip and Hana, in Michael Ondaatje's *The English Patient*, take the idea of flipping the gender dynamic, as presented in Salih's work, and push it further. In this work, Hana is representative of the allied powers and their abuse of former colonial nations. Kip, a Sikh bomb technician, is drawn into an affair with Hana, much like he is drawn into World War II to fight

for the British. Their relationship is one that can only exist in the context of a conflict, as the conflict opens the opportunity for Kip to become her lover. In the midst of the second World War, Britain began to call on its subjects in India to replace the lost European soldiers. Hana parallels this in her attraction to Kip, as their relationship is only facilitated by the death of an unnamed, European soldier that was with her before. In this way, Kip becomes the unwitting surrogate for this dead soldier in Hana's life. It becomes clear that Hana is living in a fantasy world where she has chosen to replace the dead people in her life with whomever is available. Kip is even seen as an exotic fantasy in the eyes of Hana as she only thinks about his brown skin, heritage, and Indian lifestyle. After hearing of the bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, Kip realized that he will never be fully accepted by Hana, the group at the villa, or Europe as a whole. Rather than the outright destruction that is seen in Salih's work, Ondaatje shows the gentle and progressive manipulation by the colonizer in the form of Hana's drawing Kip in. After Kip finally sees his position for what it really is, he returns home like the other rejected surrogates.

Mohsin Hamid's *The Reluctant Fundamentalist*, being the most recent of the three works, contains the most relevant form of postcolonial commentary. Changez's connection with Erica embodies the same tension between America and the Middle East in a post September 11th world. In a time where the memories of colonization are the furthest away, Hamid presents a scenario that reminds the reader that the efforts of the empire are very much alive. While the U.S. does not see Pakistan and other Middle eastern countries as their "colonies" per se, this novel strives to show how America still imposes the same types of prejudice while also seeking financial gain. Changez becomes the surrogate for Erica's dead boyfriend, but he is only allowed to do so long as he doesn't get too close. A Pakistani immigrant is accepted in the United States,

given that he produces and assimilates to the culture. Changez is rejected by Erica in the end because he attempted to become a permanent fixture in her life instead of just a stand in for the boyfriend that she could never let go. In the same way, America refused to allow the acceptance of the Middle East or its immigrants after the loss of its piece of mind in the terrorist attacks on 9/11.

These men and the women that they encounter play out a new version of colonial interaction. The methods of the colonizer are covert, and the colonized are not aware of the trap they have been drawn into until it is too late. What these relationships demonstrate are the lasting effects of colonization and the existence of neocolonialism in the modern world. The word colonialism has been all but removed from the rhetoric of world powers, but, like the female roles in these three texts, they still exercise their power over their former colonies. The pressuring of these smaller countries to produce and work towards the benefit of the stronger world powers is the current white-collar crime version of colonization. The valuation firm from *The Reluctant Fundamentalist* shows this pressure in the form of economics. The conscription of Indian soldiers in *The English Patient* reveals the military obligations that England placed on their former colony. Lastly, in *Season of Migration to the North*, Jean Morris' plot to reduce Mustafa to the "savagery" that Europe sees in Africa reveals England's need to constantly keep the white nations at the top of the world's social order. The issues that are addressed in these works open up new lines of dialogue concerning the influence of the western world powers on those that were former colonies.

APPENDIX:

DIRECTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

While this paper covers many of the postcolonial aspects that define these three novels, there are areas that I did not explore due to the limitations and scope of my argument. One commonality that exists within all of the works is the problem of narration. In Salih and Hamid's novels, the stories of Mustafa and Changez are communicated to the reader through the filter of another unnamed and uncharacterized interlocutor. Hana, in turn, creates an internal narration for her own life, essentially telling herself stories about her life rather than actually being immersed in it. All three novels present their action, then, at a distance, where readers must negotiate the veracity of the tale as it is not primarily intended for us or relayed in retrospect, with or without internal editing. As texts addressing neo-colonialism, this ambiguity, both in the speaker's story and in the primary listener's identity, could be connected to the covertness of those who are caught in the throes of postcolonial nostalgia. The reader is forced to question the validity of the speaker's story as well, much like the way that the West would be skeptical of the Other from the East and the South.

Another possible question to be explored within all three of these works is that of the significance of art. While these chapters do comment on the art that appears within these novels, the use of art by both colonized and colonizer characters has significance as a topic in and of itself. Mustafa has photographs and paintings of his past lovers, while Jean and his other lovers all see him as an exotic piece of art himself. Kip and Hana both have a great affinity for art, but they view its purpose in very different ways. Hana constructs a view of the world that casts people as characters in the story of her life while Kip distracts himself from the rot of Europe by focusing on the continent's artistic legacy. Changez sees and interprets the painting by Chris,

which gives him his first inkling about his position as a surrogate, and his reading of Erica's manuscript only confirms that there will never be space for him in her life. One of the ways in which people celebrate their past cultures is through their reverence for the art, sculpture, writing, and music of the past. This emphasis on the power of art in these works, and its primacy for revealing truths that might otherwise remain hidden, is a topic for further exploration. The art that is presented in these works is all produced by the colonial power, and is consumed by the colonized, but they move toward an appreciation of it willingly. Unlike other impositions by the colonizer, this art could be something that the colonized actually desire, or it could be yet another enticement toward the tired trope of mimicry. Obviously, this is beyond the scope of this study, but could provide a fruitful avenue for future research.

NOTES

1. In his article “History and Technology: How Shell Fuzes Work,” Nathan Okun explains the purpose of the “Gaine” that is referenced in Ondaatje’s novel: “Boosters were originally just large chunks of the same explosive used as the main filler, but packed tightly into a can (magazine or gaine) at the end of the fuze pressed tightly up against the detonator blast opening to ensure that the booster would be set off properly and, in turn, be powerful enough to ensure a good explosion of the main filler”

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