

Postcolonial Concerns in the Novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley: A Comparative Study

A Thesis

Submitted in fulfillment of the requirement
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DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Submitted by
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Declaration

I, Shilpi Saxena, hereby declare that the thesis titled, '**Postcolonial Concerns in the Novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley: A Comparative Study**', submitted to the School of Humanities & Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala, in fulfillment of the requirement for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in English literature, is a record of an original and independent research work done by me under the supervision and guidance of Dr. Diksha Sharma, Assistant Professor, SHSS, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology. The work contained in this thesis has not been previously submitted to meet the requirements for a degree or diploma at this or any other higher education institution.

Shilpi Saxena

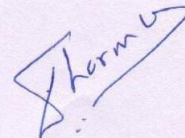
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Certificate

This is to certify that the thesis titled '**Postcolonial Concerns in the Novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley: A Comparative Study**', submitted by Ms. Shilpi Saxena to the School of Humanities and Social Sciences, Thapar Institute of Engineering and Technology, Patiala, for the award of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, is a record of the bona fide research work carried out by her under my supervision.

The thesis or any part of it has not been presented or submitted to any other university or Institute for the award of any degree or diploma.



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Abstract

The present thesis titled ‘**Postcolonial Concerns in the Novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley: A Comparative Study**’ intends to examine and compare the selected writings of a British Asian author, Ravinder Randhawa and a Black British author, Joan Riley from a postcolonial perspective. Being a part of diverse diaspora, Ravinder Randhawa an Asian immigrant and Joan Riley a Caribbean immigrant have contributed extensively to the realm of postcolonial literature by challenging the surviving legacies of the colonial system prevalent in the contemporary British scenario. They have enriched the literary canon through their significant works which are engaged in revealing the dynamics of power and control that maintain the economic, political, cultural, and psychological subjugation on postcolonial societies and peoples.

Although these two authors have come from different social, cultural, historical and linguistic backgrounds and produce their narratives in different ways, the themes dealt with in their novels are more or less similar. Their literary writings are a testimony to the marginalization and discrimination meted out to the migratory subjects in Britain. They bring to the fore the dilemma of the quintessential liminal Britons who find themselves caught between two cultures, identities, and lands, adjusting along the racial continuum. The present study, therefore, aims at examining the socio-political realities of contemporary British society, over-determined by covert and overt power politics, as reflected in the selected novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley. It also explores the approaches adopted by these authors and examines the contribution of their novels to postcolonial literature. In order to support the argument of this thesis and to have a better understanding on how the works of these authors illustrate the challenges and new trends in postcolonial literature and culture, the study also takes into consideration the main theories and perspectives of postcolonialism.

For this purpose, the study employs a case study based approach and carries out an in-depth study of the cross-cultural conflicts- marginalization, estrangement othering, racism, sexism, classism, discrimination, identity crisis, displacement, gender

discrimination, home, belonging, and nostalgia- that are endemic in British mainstream society. The novels that are taken up for the study are: Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman: Drama, Masquerade, Mischief* (1987), *Beauty and the Beast: Enemies, Romance, Fireworks* (2014) and *The Coral Strand: Passion Deceit, Revenge* (2001), and Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985), *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), and *Romance* (1988). These novels have been critically analyzed, and meticulously compared and evaluated, highlighting the colonial residuals and postcolonial concerns. A critical evaluation of these novels provides a more powerful insight into the understanding of the postcolonial scenario in the contemporary British society, thus offering a way to engage with the power constellations that continue to exist and influence the current processes of migration and globalization. The research has been designed in such a fashion so as to bring to the fore the postcolonial aspects infused in these novels and to open up new vistas of research on literature produced by immigrant communities.

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1. Introduction

1.1 Background of the Problem

The movement of population from one part to another has been an integral part of human existence. Since times immemorial people have been crossing the geographical and national borders for various reasons. The reasons for migration have been and continue to be economic, religious, and political. Persecution and war were no less important issues of the displacement of human population. Since the post-world war and the fall of the British Empire, there has been an increased movement of South Asians, Caribbeans, and Africans to the United Kingdom as a land of new opportunities. The movement of diverse cultures from different former colonies and their subsequent settlement in the Western metropolis has its own consequence in terms of adaption, assimilation, and cross-cultural conflicts. The interaction of two or more conflicting cultures coupled with entrenched racism further complicates the scenario. With increasing migration and acceleration of cross-border interactions, the issues related to othering, marginalization, identity, and culture are of paramount concern in the field of postcolonial studies. More specifically, migration and its socio-cultural consequences in an era dominated by imperial legacies and power politics has been a preoccupation for the researchers and scholars across the humanities and other disciplines worldwide. The pervasiveness of colonial structure in the contemporary British society and culture has a major impact on its immigrant communities which has led to a widespread interest in postcolonial scholarship. In that sense, one of the central themes of postcolonial scholarship is the persistence of power structures and social hierarchies and resistance to it.

Despite the fact that the concept is confronted with a wide spectrum of contradictions and debates over the precise parameters of the field and the definition of the term ‘postcolonial’, research in postcolonial studies continues to grow, as the postcolonial critique allows for a comprehensive search into the power relations within various contexts. The impact of colonization on former colonies, the development of new dynamics of power structures, the exploitation of differences based on caste, class, race, religion, and gender, and the discriminatory behaviours and practices against immigrant communities in the

Western metropolis are some of the issues emerging in the contemporary scenario. Hence, there is a pressing need to focus on how the imperial legacies have influenced the British metropolis and its immigrants who belong to the countries with a history of colonialism, with catastrophic consequences on the latter's personal and social lives.

The endeavour of this project is thus to specifically draw attention towards the resurgence of power politics and repressive ideologies prevailing in Britain as represented through the experiences of ethnic minorities in the writings of Ravinder Randhawa, a British Asian author and Joan Riley, a Black British author. It makes an attempt to identify and analyse postcolonial aspects in the selected novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley. The thesis therefore examines and compares the approaches and strategies employed by these authors for dealing with such power politics and ideologies, and evaluates how and to what extent their writings contribute to the field of postcolonial literature. In order to support the argument of this thesis and to have a better understanding on how the works of these authors illustrate the challenges and new trends in postcolonial literature and culture, the study also takes into consideration the main theories and perspectives of postcolonialism. The uniqueness of the research lies not simply in exploring the diverse ways in which people of colour are subject to the entrenched racism and structural inequalities, but in its provision of alternatives and possibilities to challenge and resist such discursive practices.

This study employs a case study based approach to carry out an in-depth analysis of the cross-cultural conflicts resulting from the interaction between the former imperial center and its immigrant communities from the erstwhile colonies. The novels that are taken up for the study are: Ravinder Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman: Drama, Masquerade, Mischief* (1987), *Beauty and the Beast: Enemies, Romance, Fireworks* (2014) and *The Coral Strand: Passion Deceit, Revenge* (2001), and Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985), *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), and *Romance* (1988). The main objective of the study is to enumerate the multifaceted discrimination meted out to immigrants as illustrated by Randhawa and Riley, and to explore the alternatives or possibilities for deconstructing the dominant structures and social hierarchies. Drawing on the postcolonial theory, the present research explores various issues pertaining to the movement and migration and the complexities resulting thereof like othering, exploitation, marginalization, racism, classism,

gender discrimination, cultural clash, identity, hybridity, unbelongingness, and rootlessness.

1.2 Ravinder Randhawa

Ravinder Randhawa is a British Asian novelist and short story writer who was born in India in 1952 and migrated to England with her parents when she was seven years old. She is one of the most prominent writers and activists of the contemporary British literary canon. With a view to promote creative writings by Asian women and their access to publishers, Randhawa together with Rukhsana Ahmad, Rahila Gupta, and Leena Dhingra established the Asian Women Writers Workshop (later known as the Asian Women Writer's Collective) in London in 1984, as recalled by founder members:

The workshop was formed in 1984, originally the result of lone efforts by Ravi Randhawa, who had managed to get the support of Black Ink and funding from the Greater London Council. ...The workshop was the first of its kind for Asian women writers in Britain, and was meant to draw out any isolated woman who wanted to write but needed a supportive environment to achieve this. ... A few Asian women had been published, but not enough to set up parameters which we could break or work within. Organizing as a group gave us visibility, credibility and access to institutions, publishers and other groups in the community. The workshop gave us the confidence to approach publishers, which as individuals we might never have done. (qtd. in Weedon, *Culture and Identity* 108).

With the publication of its anthologies: *Right of Way* (1988) and *Flaming Spirit* (1994), the Asian Women Writer's Collective not only developed the writings by Asian women writers but also provided a platform for them including Leena Dhingra, Tanika Gupta, Meera Syal, Rukhsana Ahmad, and Randhawa herself. In *British Asian Fiction: Twenty-first Century Voices* (2010), Sarah Upstone writes, "Randhawa was essential to the burgeoning British Asian literature... [as she] not only wrote prolifically about the lives of British Asian women, but also fostered the careers of others, including Meera Syal" (62).

An author of three novels, *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987), *Beauty and the Beast* (2014), which was originally published in 1992 with the title *Hari-jan*, *The Coral Strand* (2001), and a short story collection *Dynamite: Adventure. Love.Life.* (2014), Randhawa was

the recipient of the Kathleen Burnett Award (1990) and the David Wong Award (2001) for her significant contribution to fiction. She has leapt into fame and won international acclaim with the publication of her debut novel *A Wicked Old Woman*. The novel which has been described by Susheila Nasta as “arguably the first intrinsically British Asian novel” (*Home Truths* 182), deals with the socio-political and cultural conflicts as experienced by Asian immigrants in Britain, thus substantiating a postcolonial critique of Randhawa’s literary expressions. Furthermore, Randhawa’s importance in the context of this study is that she is an Asian liminal Briton, having grown up in the Warwickshire town of Leamington Spa, and throughout her novels, she endeavors to map the liminality and marginality through the perspectives of the peripheral identities. The liminal positioning of the author is central to her novels which powerfully portray the complexities of those cultural minorities who belong to the former colonies, and whose experience and subject position is defined by their race, class, gender, and colour. She is a part of new generation of writers who use lived realities of their own lives as a subject matter for their fiction. As Aamer Hussein argues:

Writers in the mid-eighties – influenced perhaps, by the organic boom of African American, Asian American and Hispanic American writing, began to turn to their own lives – and the lived experiences of their communities – for subject –matter and sustenance”. (17)

Through their writings, such writers bring to the fore the immigration experiences of minorities in the contemporary Britain from the marginalized perspective and focus on the notions of identity and displacement driven by a combination of racial conflict, violence, power politics, resource scarcity, and socio-political and economic challenges. There are significant issues that have been pertinent to the contemporary fiction as evidenced by *Narratives for a New Belonging* in which the editor Roger Bromley compiles examples of “cultural fictions ...that are written from the affective experience of social marginality, from a disjunctive, fragmented, displaced agency, and from the perspective of the edge,”(1). This perspective of the marginalized thus enables Randhawa to give expressions to the experiences of those surviving not in the centre but in the margins, and of the identities that are displaced and fragmented. Randhawa’s works are highly influential and well known among the Asian Writing community and feminists. Many critics claim Hanif

Kureishi as the first truly British Asian novelist, but for Aamer Hussein, it is Randhawa who deserves such kudos. Her writing – stylistically unique and structurally complex – reflects her desire to always tell a ‘new story’, and is thus difficult to compare to texts by other British Asian writers.

Defying any labeling process that would assign her to a single culture or community, she defines herself as British Asian and emphasizes on being human rather than being fragmented into myriad dichotomies on the basis of ethnicity, as she asserts herself in an interview,

I call myself British-Asian when asked ‘what’ I am, because I’m both. There are important aspects, values and philosophies in both cultures. I love Indian & British music, from Bollywood to classical; the food, fashions, architecture, art, humour, and much more, of both. Rather than the Indian/British dichotomy, I’m much more interested in exploring how to define being human. (“Exploring” 124)

Sceptical of a binary distinction between the ‘West/East’, ‘powerful/powerless’, ‘self/other’, and ‘Occident/Orient’, she believes in defining a person as a human being as she rightly avows in her blog post ‘Fiction and Identity Politics’(2016) that, “the purest manifestation of identity comes from the ethical exercise of individual conscience”. In this era of globalization and robotics, what she argues for is to defend humanity by concentrating on human need, dignity, rights, and autonomy, calling for a society, wherein liberty and human rights are protected, a society that values all its citizens irrespective of their class, colour, culture, religion, gender, and ethnicity.

1.3 Joan Riley

Joan Riley, the youngest of a working class family of eight children, is a Black British novelist who was born in St. Mary, Jamaica in 1958 and received most of her education in Jamaica. She was brought up by her father after her mother died in childbirth and had to live in a strife-torn and prejudiced family. In 1976, she migrated to England where she completed her under graduation and post-graduation in University of Sussex and University of London, respectively. She is one of the first female writers to claim a right for women’s studies and women’s writings. When she began to write, she was a student working in

children's homes. With the publication of her debut novel *The Unbelonging* (1985), she became "the first Afro-Caribbean woman author to write about the experiences of Blacks in England" (Rountree, "Literary"). Her other novels appeared in quick succession, *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), *Romance* (1988), and *A Kindness to the Children* (1992) which deal with the hardships of black¹ immigrants, seeking the hope and possibility of a better life in London. Through her creative works, she reveals the effects of racism and poverty on black community in general, and on black women in particular, during the 1970s and 1980s (Dawson 101). She has been featured in anthologies like *Daughters of Africa and Her True-True Name*, and has also co-edited with Briar Wood *Leave to Stay: Stories of Exile and Belonging* (1996), a collection of fiction and poetry. She was awarded the Voice award for her pioneering work in 1992, and the MIND prize in 1993 for her novel *A Kindness to the Children*.

Joan Riley's novels deal with the experiences of black immigrants who have moved from the Caribbean to Britain, and are notable for their scrupulous realism and sensitive characterization. Across her fiction, she depicts black people's difficulty to overcome the negation of their identities in a world that is determined by imperial legacies and power hierarchies. In a close reading of Riley's texts, John McLeod, in *Postcolonial London: Rewriting the Metropolis*, asserts that Riley's novel doesn't suggest any kind of utopia, on the contrary she "offers a sobering account of postcolonial London in which the hopes of the first postwar migrants to the city – of well-paid employment, jobs with prospects, decent accommodation – are taken away piece by piece" (112). Her novels centrally focus upon the situation of black minorities who remain unrecognized in British society, offering a firm and harsh disapproval of increasingly racialized rhetoric of cosmopolitan Britain. Throughout her fiction, Riley reveals that racism is integrated into the British socio-political system and continues to plague the lives of racial minorities. In her article; "Writing Reality in a Hostile Environment," Riley points out that "race" is not just a matter of biological and innocuous meaning; rather it is a "manipulative form" that goes deep into the structure of society (547). She further asserts that "Manipulation of public opinion, however politically and socially shaded, depersonalizes non-white peoples and creates

¹The term Black is used to describe the people of African and Afro-Caribbean descent.

acceptance of a set of truths which has nothing to do with race” (547). What she emphasizes here is that black immigrants are marked not only by their skin colour, but also by the stigma of slavery, indentureship, and the subordinate colonial positions. Afro-Caribbean immigrants are inherently locked into the inferior position of being “underclass” (548). This inferiority of the ‘other’ by the ‘self’ that is the Whites persuades her to write about her ‘own people’, so that she can expose the atrocities committed on black immigrants. According to her, “I still have a commitment to the people from whom I originated” (Hussain 18). In an interview with Aamer Hussain, she elaborates on this desire: “I have a sneaking wish to be read by my own kind, those similar to my kind...for me I think what is important is that I don’t feel that the people I come from and with whom I can make connections can’t have that dialogue with me” (Hussain 19). Riley intends to write about the everyday lives and the struggles of ordinary working class people, about their search for recognition and survival in a society governed by racist attitudes and hegemonic codes towards coloured people. Isabel Carrera Suarez points out, “Riley’s fiction ... concentrates on the representation of that fragmented self and the disruption of lives and hopes that the racist, post-colonial setting is responsible for” (298). Her novels powerfully depict the trauma of Afro-Caribbean women, who find themselves negotiating the difficulties of being not only a cultural minority within one’s own country, but also of being a female subject to the additional pressures of a patriarchal ideology. Indeed, as Suarez states: “Riley’s novels are women-centred texts [...] Her protagonists are women and the world described in any detail is the female world – its physical, domestic, emotional and social reality; its personal, economic and political dimension” (292). In fact, she has been criticized for focusing much on the situation of black women than on black people in general, and for the negative portrayal of black male. In her article, ‘Writing Reality in a Hostile Environment’, Riley writes about the difficulty of writing about black women, since writing about the lives of those women who are considered as ‘losers’, provokes the hostility of both sides, her black community and the white society. According to her,

Choosing to write about women considered losers raises other questions of hostility ... both from radical black men, seeing themselves as scapegoated by an unholy alliance of black women and white feminist, and from black feminists, unable to

accept the portrayal of weakness as well as strength in black women as an integral part of their essential humanness. (549)

The pressure imposed by her black community restricts her creative process of writing. The paralyzing effect of community's pressure on her creativity is compared by John McLeod to the same tension expressed by Buchi Emecheta's *Second Class Citizen* (1994), exemplified by the burning of Adah's manuscript by her husband Francis on the basis of "familial disapproval" (111 *Postcolonial*).

Riley's works are not autobiographical, yet they reflect some of the experiences like racism, marginalization, and socio-cultural barriers that the author herself has confronted. Her life in England was in great contrast with the impressions and images she created in her mind, which she got from her colonial education. In her interview with Aamer Hussein, she talks about how her being in London and writing across that space, have affected her perception and experience. She says that "The variety which I find in London in particular is something which I think must of necessity colour my perception and I think it actually gives me a lot more depth in terms of my own writing" (19). Indeed, as Wendy Rountree affirms, "[h]er past, in fact, has aided Riley in the creation of her book characters and has influenced how she depicts their economic, familial, political, psychological, and social problems and beliefs" (2). Therefore, it is worth exploring how the author articulates her message through the representation of black immigrants exiled in Europe, struggling to survive in a harsh environment.

1.4 Rationale of the Study

Despite the fact that both the authors belong to different diaspora – Randhawa, an Asian immigrant and Riley, a Caribbean immigrant, they undertake a similar stance against the power hierarchies, and articulate the continuous struggles of hitherto silenced racial and ethnic minorities who are considered as 'others' and 'outsiders' in Britain and are subject to structural discrimination and marginalization. The selection of these authors is based on the point that their novels are set in Britain against the backdrop of colonial legacies, racism, and systematic inequalities which have a bearing on the fate of immigrant communities. Both the authors belong to the countries with a history of colonialism, and

their novels perfectly illustrate how the people from erstwhile colonies are still subject to social, cultural, psychological, and economic subjugation even after the formal decolonization. The forms of othering that their characters encounter bears witness to the profoundly colonial character of the British cultural landscape, which frequently objectify and marginalize immigrants, denying them the opportunities for a better life including employment, proper housing, promotion policies, legal and health care facilities. Focusing on the entrapment of Black and Asian Minority communities within the anti-black and anti-immigrant discourses, these authors reveal how the communities of colour, whether living in colonial, postcolonial, or neo-colonial times, always remain subject to the discrimination, exploitation, violence, and exclusion.

These particular women authors have been chosen for the analysis so as to provide a geographical diversity to this research, in terms of the socio-political and cultural background of the authors and of their characters. The geographical diversity between them provides a broader perspective to the study, and helps to account for and assess the distinctions as well as the commonalities in the experiences of Asian and Afro-Caribbean immigrants, in terms of othering, exploitation, discrimination, racism, the destabilization of identities and cultures. The lingering forms of colonialism and the cross-cultural complexities, reflected in the novels of these two authors substantiate the present study and provide a viable basis for a postcolonial critique of their works. This analysis demonstrates how a postcolonial reading and interpretation of Randhawa's and Riley's novels add a new dimension to the previous researches and also facilitate to develop a comprehensive understanding of the multifarious approaches employed by these authors. As their works are also imbued with the issues of racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, ableism, and agesism, the present study examines their works from an intersectional lens.

1.5 Thesis Organization

The thesis is divided into five chapters. Chapter 1 **Postcolonialism: An Overview** offers a preliminary insight into key issues concerning postcolonialism, deliberating upon its historical, cultural, and theoretical background which has indeed shaped or rather configured its literary canon. It gives an extended elucidation and critique of colonialism,

neo-colonialism, and decolonization and establishes their relationship with the postcolonial theory.

Chapter 2 **Mapping the Politics of Othering** examines the experiences of being othered among ethnic minorities in selected Afro-Caribbean and South Asian fiction. It provides a rigorous exploration of what othering entails, why it matters in the context of migration, and of the factors contributing to the process of othering and interventions that might mitigate or nullify this discursive practice. Through a nuanced critique of the process of ‘othering’, the chapter explores how the ‘self-other’ dichotomies create a hostile and discriminatory environment for the Asian and the black liminal Britons and deny them access to basic services, including health, education, and better job opportunities.

Chapter 3 **Hyphenated Identities: In Search of New Spaces** deliberates upon the issues of identity, cultural chaos, existential crisis, and hybridity in the context of the selected novels. It explores the experiences of liminal Britons whose growth is thwarted by a series of ruptures, ambiguities, and dislocations and whose identities and subjectivities are at stake. The principal concern of this chapter is to reveal how the process of migration and settlement in ex-colonizer’s land causes the physical and psychic displacement in immigrants and shape their modes of identification and the right to self-definition.

Chapter 4 **Between Conflicting Worlds: The Dilemma of Home and Belonging** focuses on the provocative questions of home, belonging, ‘being at home’, survival, and re-settlement. Highlighting the creative tension between the host country and the homeland, this chapter explores the psychic, cultural, and geographical homelessness experienced by the characters of Randhawa and Riley. The principal question that shapes the analysis of this chapter is how the notions of home and belonging are approached and addressed in the novels of Randhawa and Riley and how these notions take on complicated twists and turns for both first and second generation immigrants, thereby shaping the contours of modern day citizenship.

Chapter 5 **Intersectionality: Multiple Forms of Oppression** is a detailed elaboration of the concept of intersectionality and provides an outline of its theoretical background. It points to the multiple axes of domination through which women of colour are exploited and

oppressed physically, emotionally, psychologically, and sexually as represented in the works on Randhawa and Riley. This chapter employs the intersectional lens as a cross cultural comparative tool to analyse the homogeneity of the experiences of Asian and Black women. Offering an unflinching critique of the oppressive hegemonic regimes, it provides a nuanced portrait of the multiple oppressions that women of colour experience through the intersections of racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, ageism, and ableism in the context of migration.

The final and concluding section brings together various concerns addressed throughout the thesis, in terms of writers' portrayal of the effect of migration on individuals who have migrated from the erstwhile colonies to the ex-colonizer's land. It further brings to the fore the conflicts engendered by the divisions/differences based on the cultural, racial, gendered, or socio-economic othering. It analyses the creative genius of Randhawa and Riley as postcolonial authors and provides a summary of the findings of the five chapters, together with a comparative study of the Randhawa and Riley in light of postcolonial concepts.

1.6 Objectives

Concisely the objectives of the thesis are:

- To delineate and discuss postcolonial concerns in the selected novels by Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley in terms of othering, exploitation, cultural chaos, identity crisis, unbelonging, racism, and sexism.
- To elaborate and compare how and to what extent their writings are inclined towards postcolonial concerns and contribute to the field of postcolonial literature.

1.7 Research Methodology

To achieve the aims and the objectives of this study, the qualitative method is employed for an in-depth analysis of the area of research. No data collection or sampling comes within the purview of the study. The proposed methodology includes and incorporates a close textual analysis of the selected novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley, together with a meticulous study and use of books, articles, reviews, interviews, online sources and

material pertinent to the study. The analysis and findings of the study will be supported by both the primary and the secondary sources which include critical works on Randhawa and Riley as well as on postcolonialism. The format and reference style of the thesis is as per the latest MLA Handbook (ninth edition).

2. Postcolonialism: An Overview

2.1 Colonialism

One of the most diverse and contentious fields in literary and cultural studies is 'Postcolonialism'. It is controversial not only in terms of its areas of concern, but also regarding its existence and definition. Hence, in order to understand this field and its contexts that have been a fertile ground for debate and criticism, it is pertinent to understand its background first. This chapter therefore offers a preliminary insight into key issues concerning postcolonialism, deliberating upon its historical, cultural, and theoretical background which has indeed shaped or rather configured this literary canon. It gives an extended elucidation and critique of colonialism, neo-colonialism, and decolonization and establishes their relationship with postcolonial theory.

Since times immemorial, man has an instinctive tendency to assert himself and strengthen his control on others—to territorialize and annex; to seize other colonies not only for political purposes but also for social, cultural, and economic reasons. This territorial annexation and exploitation, stretching across the globe and time, led to what has been termed as colonialism. However, colonialism doesn't just connote the historical perspective of the prolonged European rule on colonies accompanied by physical and economic exploitation, but also refers to the process of social, cultural, linguistic, and psychic colonization through the projection of the 'self' as superior and the 'other' as inferior. Its occurrence and influence have shaped the course of modern history in troubled ways and its practices continue to affect society today even after the end of formal decolonization. Rooted in power and hierarchy, European colonialism had occupied territories in South Africa, Australia, Asia, Canada, and the Caribbean countries. Having exercised its power in over 80 percent of the territories from the fifteenth to the late nineteenth century, it created a legacy of the ethnic and cultural conflict that continue to destabilize the development of democracy, national and cultural identity, and the social, economic, and political aspects of the erstwhile colonies.

The former colonies have experienced colonial domination in various forms and in varying degrees, its effects vary somewhat for each former colony; thereby making it hard to universalize different perceptions and experiences under a single term. Attempts to derive a general theory of colonialism encounter problems similar to those faced in theorizing feminism rooted in “experiential plurality”, proceeding from different experiences, differently perceived (Mansbridge and Okin 332). Essentially, colonialism is plural, derived implicitly from the experiences of each and every person who has been dominated or exploited in one way or the other. However, the fact is that throughout its plurality, the colonial project has one obvious, simple and overarching aim- to dominate indigenous people by imposing its cultural, economic, political and social institutions. Thus, it can be defined as “a widespread and recurrent feature of human history” (Loomba 8) that relies mainly on dominance, where the ‘colonialist’ subjugates the land, culture and the resources of the ‘colonized’. Although colonialism is polymorphous in nature, some of its features generally appear in the description of the term: hegemony, cultural appropriation, and exploitation. Hence, it can be observed as a practice of dominance which connotes the annexation and acquisition of a territory by people from another state.

To expand and extend their domination over several neighbouring nations, the colonial powers seized the colonies and reinforced “the self and the mutual justificatory schemas through recourse to ‘Civilising Missions’, ‘Manifest Destiny’ or the ‘White Man’s Burden’ (Gilson 33) and employed different ideological instruments as an indirect means for exacting various forms of taxes, goods, and wealth from the colonized. This domination involves varied customs and practices, ranging from the exploitation of the socio-economic and political aspects of the colonies to forms that strangle natives’ voices, to significant changes in land ownership, political entity, labour systems, use of resources, and cultural expression. Identifying the predatory nature of the colonial project, Azzedine Haddour, in his introduction to Sartre’s *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* (1964) defines it as a “petrified ideology” which is “determined by the expropriation of the colonized, the pulverization of their social structures, and their exclusion from the colonizing social institutions” (xxiii). In this sense, the policies and practices carried out in the form of proselytization, cultural appropriation, instrumentalization of ethno-linguistic and religious cleavages, the implementation of capitalist appropriation of land, and establishment of

unfair trade relations were all ‘controlled processes’ to override the ‘Orient/non-western’ world.

Whilst colonial domination has had a profound impact on the socio-political structure and economies of the conquered societies, the hegemonistic weapon referred to as the ‘cultural bomb’ by Ngũgĩ wa Thiong’o has more lasting and insidious influence. In his celebrated book, *Decolonising the Mind: The Politics of Language in African Literature* (1981), Thiong’o demystifies the ways the dominant powers wielded and unleashed this bomb to “annihilate a people’s belief in their names, in their languages, in their environment, in their heritage of struggle, in their unity, in their capacities and ultimately in themselves” (3). To this end, the colonialists not only employed coercive measures but also manipulated the latter’s psyche, identity, sense of selfhood, and the ways of life by dismantling their religious beliefs, language, literature, and culture. The implantation of this perverse mechanism by the colonizers, advertently or inadvertently, forced the indigenous people to valorize the western norms and behavior and devalorize their own culture by viewing it “as the wasteland of non-achievement” (Thiong’o 3). European ideologies then became a model of transcendence and provided the natives with a frame of reference for embracing the western culture/civilization. The spread and subsequent rooting of Eurocentric ideologies testify to the fact that the colonial occupation was sustained and fortified by the cultural and epistemological methods as much as by the tangible and vicious forms of usurpation and subjugation (Spivak; Guha; Prakash; Cohn; Dirks). This subtle and perfidious form of hegemony which rested on the successful manipulation of the cultural and social institutions gave the dominant group a position to exercise power and authority on the subjugated society.

The infiltration of western cultural institutions thus led to the state of cultural instability, social disharmony, and unrest in colonial societies, preventing the natives from creating a sense of self and distancing themselves from their own heritage and traditions. Subsequently, they were left feeling as if they belonged to nowhere in particular; a rootless being whose past or sense of origin has been dismantled, disfigured, and distorted. This cultural annihilation of indigenous people that destabilized their identities and institutions, finds an echo in Jean P. Sartre’s preface to *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) wherein he unravels how the colonizers made a calculated manoeuvre to wipe out indigenous people’s

cultures and norms and replaced them with those of their own. Such attempts not only dehumanized the natives but also reduced them to the level of “superior monkeys”, turning them into a creature that is neither man nor animal (Fanon, *Wretched*15). Many theorists or critics have drawn attention to the ways in which such exploitative practices disconnected the naïve natives from their own roots and epistemologies, eroding pre-colonial histories, cultures, and identities (Fanon; Memmi). In most of the colonies, the indigenous peoples internalized western cultures and values to the extent of exercising oppression against their own people. This type of cultural expropriation that remained unrecognized and uncompensated divided the natives, leaving behind a long lasting residue in the form of psycho-cultural marginality– the loss of one’s identity, culture, and social structure. Fanon views this cultural expropriation as a source of destruction and trauma inflicted upon the beliefs of indigenous peoples which made them look down upon their culture, their society, and their people, ultimately resulting in the internalization of Eurocentric ideologies (*Wretched* 227). According to him, the colonial manoeuvre not only created the political domination over other countries but also built an ideology that believed in the supremacy of the European Empire. Critiquing the psychological contours of colonialism that subjugates both mind and body, Ashis Nandy in his text *The Intimate Enemy: Loss and Recovery of self Under Colonialism* (1983) aptly puts it, “West is now everywhere, within the West and outside, in structure and mind” (xi). Here, Nandy comes closer to Fanon in his opinion that colonialism is a product of mind that has distorted the psychology of the colonized societies. He also highlighted how the Empire operated as an ‘intimate enemy’ to pursue the psychological and cultural dominance over the indigenous people, vindicating itself as a missionary effort to spread a particular religion or culture in order to bring modernity, progress, and development in the colonies.

It is no exaggeration to say that colonialism has taken many different forms and guises and has shattered the whole world by upsetting its socio-political, economic, and cultural equilibrium. The essential point is that the colonizers have always tried to legitimize the project they undertook and then interpreted it according to their own ways. The main rationale for the colonial project that colonizers purport was the ‘mission civilisatrice’ or the ‘civilizing mission’ that propagated Western civilization so as to improve and modernize the natives of the colonies. Modernity, coded or miscoded as

synonymous with civilized behaviour, thus became the logic for coloniality and ‘civilizing rhetoric’. Pointing to this fact, Albert Memmi, the Tunisian revolutionary theorist, explicates how the colonizers have defended their mission and have demonstrated the superiority of their culture so as to exonerate themselves and transform their intrusion into legitimacy (52). They believed that the prerogative of bringing the light of civilization to the barbaric non-western peoples and transcending their sub-humanity belongs to themselves, irrespective of the sufferings or the perspectives of the natives. Denying this civilizing mission, Aime Cesaire, the Marxist author-cum-activist, brings forth that the process of colonization uncivilizes the colonizers pushing them down to the extent of brutality and barbarity. According to him, this process of modernization and progress has nothing to do with their stated mission rather it is indicative of the indoctrination and violent enforcement of white supremacy.

It is true that the colonial project has triggered profound changes in some areas in terms of medical, educational, and technological advancements, but the fact remains that the colonies and its peoples were not allowed to become what they might have become; they were prevented from evolving into nation states they might have become. Another point to be noted in this connection is that the colonial encounter has not only distorted the lives as well as the ideologies of the non-western people but has also established a culture of devastation upon all inhabitants, including the colonizer and the colonized which has disastrous consequences for both the ‘victims’ and the ‘perpetrators’.

In his text *Discourse on Colonialism* (1950), Aime Cesaire makes a very close study of colonialism and its dangerous impacts on the colonizer and the colonized and equates the process with "thingification" (42). He uses the equation: colonization = thingification to describe the acute objectification of the colonized by the colonizers. He observes that for colonizers, the indigenous people were not worthy of human dignity, but rather things merely to be used to serve their own purpose who were killed in the name of a law and order rooted in barbarism and injustice. Examining the destructive nature of colonialism, he further posits that it is an extremely inhumane enterprise which dehumanizes even the most civilized man; it has detrimental effects not only on the colonized but on the colonizer as well. He describes it as the “boomerang effect” in which the colonizer treats others like animals and in turn he himself becomes an animal. The

effects of colonialism, he argues, are so barbarous that it is hard to recognize its merits. In a similar vein, Sartre in his introduction to *The Colonizer and the Colonized* (1957) by Albert Memmi views the colonial rule as a dehumanizing process that “denies human rights to human beings whom it has subdued by violence, and keeps them by force in a state of misery and ignorance that Karl Marx would rightly call a “subhuman condition” (20). He examines the dialectical relationship between the colonizer and the colonized as the relationship of the ‘victim’ and the ‘perpetrator’ describing the latter as “sadists bent over wrecks of human flesh” (68). Denouncing such pejorative acts of dehumanization of the indigenous people by the European bourgeoisie, Sartre in *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* asserts:

Let us quit this Europe which talks incessantly about Man while massacring him wherever it meets him, on every corner of its own streets, in every corner of the world. For centuries ... in the name of a supposed “spiritual adventure”, it has been suffocating almost the whole of humanity. (76)

In Sartre’s views, the process of colonization creates conditions in which counter-violence is inevitable and legitimate. This situation is the third stage of violence; the moment of the boomerang; a retaliating violence that revert to attack the perpetrators (Sartre 81). Albert Memmi also supports this argument while arguing that colonialism is a destructive force which is fundamentally unstable and carries the seeds of its own destruction. Through brutal massacre, humiliation, forced labour, and economic and cultural exploitation of the natives, the colonizers are planting the seeds of hatred and resentment. When those seeds reach their fruition, they result not in the absolution of the colonial ideology but in a more widespread sense of counter-resistance to the colonial structure that has exerted a stranglehold over the indigenous lands, bodies, souls, and minds.

Eventually, the confluence of counter resistance and anti-colonial rhetoric configured colonial discourse in such a way as to question the legitimacy of the colonial rule itself. In this way, calling into question the legitimacy of coloniality was the initial endeavour towards the process of decolonization as expressed in the words of Albert Memmi,

In order for the colonizer to be the complete master, it is not enough for him to be so in actual fact, he must also believe in its legitimacy. In order for that legitimacy

to be complete, it is not enough for the colonized to be a slave; he must also accept his role. Just as the colonizer is tempted to accept his part, the colonized is forced to accept being colonized. (*Colonizer* 88-89)

In this sense, decolonization, if it is to be successful, must erode not only the surface manifestations of the 'colonial structure', but its epistemological roots as well. Obviously, such an endeavour, which entails the demise of colonial rule and its social structures as well as the re-establishment of the sovereignty of indigenous peoples, necessitates no less than a revolutionary struggle, bringing about a rhetoric of war – even if the battlefield is the mind. Given that the process that begins in the minds of men must also terminate in the minds of men (Fanon; Nandy; Ngugi wa Thiong'o,), it is necessary for the colonized to dismantle the whole set of beliefs, cultural expression, ideologies, and any trace of psychological repression that has belittled and erased their tradition, culture, and epistemology. This quest for decolonization thus is a project that critiques Eurocentrism and emphasizes the need to “epistemologically transcend, decolonize the Western canon and [Western] epistemology” (Grosfoguel 211). The perspective articulated here is not about shutting the door to the European or other cultures rather it is a project of 're-centring' the marginal or the peripheral: it is about challenging the legacies of the colonial structure; it is about explaining precisely what the centre is (Mbembe). Fanon also believes that decolonizing the mind is the first step towards overthrowing the colonial regimes, but not the only step because an overwhelming yearning for revenge cannot nurture a war of national liberation; it would require both the mind and the muscles (*Wretched* 147). The solution to these recurrent issues can only be realized through a violent uprising of the masses which eventually resulted into anti-colonial struggles that not only employed the rhetoric of revolution but also brought about the dissolution of the colonial empires. As a consequence of the widespread liberation movements, all colonial empires started declining steadily and by the end of the twentieth century, almost all erstwhile colonies witnessed the demise of colonial system. The process of decolonization thus has manifested itself in different shapes, as per the forms and conditions of colonialism in each territory – from a 'gentleman's agreement' with some regions to the protracted war in some colonies. Thus with the emergence of national liberation movements, the natives regained not only their lands but also their lost identity, language, and culture.

Attention to the historical dimensions of decolonization reveals that culture and language have been the strongest means of resistance to colonial rule. In Fanon's views, a national culture has to be fostered in order to attain the legitimate claims of a nation. According to him "the new identity and culture must be national, not, for instance, racial or continental, in order to be useful and sustainable" (*Wretched* 174-176) Indeed, Fanon's emphasis on constructing a national identity and culture makes it clear that culture, in particular, is the most potent instrument in the process of decolonization which must include language if it is to be successful. As these anti-colonial nationalist movements grew and expanded, people not only adopted their traditional culture but also revitalized it by adapting new forms of expression. In this sense, language and culture emerged as the dominant means through which the colonized people asserted their dissidence to domination; redefined and reinvented their cultures. Indeed, such a cultural homecoming is at the heart of the process of decolonization that reclaims natives' history, social and cultural traditions, and provides them agency to celebrate their past, epistemology, ideologies, and discourses.

Highlighting the dual role of language, both as an agent of colonialism and in combating against it, Ngugi wa Thiong'o called for linguistic decolonization. Through the abolition of imperial language, he desires for decolonization. In his views, language was an important instrument of colonization through which the colonial power fascinated and inflicted its beliefs and ideologies on indigenous peoples: "language was meant to complete what the sword had started, and do to the mind what the sword did to the body" (9). While the bullet was meant for physical subjugation, the language was used in an invisible and imperceptible way to subjugate natives mentally or psychologically. Language then became an effective means of resistance to the mental or psychological colonization. Through the language of the colonizers, the colonized have sought to articulate their own culture and identities and have reclaimed their expropriated past. To show their aversion towards the colonial structure and its ongoing legacies, the writers of the erstwhile colonies, be it poets, novelists, or playwrights, have used their writings as a textual violence, constituting an alternative locus of enunciation called 'postcolonialism'. In postcolonial context, the use of English language as a means of retaliation can be expressed in the oft-quoted lines from Shakespeare's *The Tempest* (1611) where Caliban retorts to Prospero: "You taught me

language; and my profit on't Is, I know how to curse" (19 Act I: Sc II). Shakespeare's *The Tempest* depicts the paradigm of a colonial setting where Prospero stands for the colonizer and Caliban for the colonized. Accordingly, the postcolonial authors employ the language of colonialist to imprecate and to challenge the unjust and unequal forms of socio-cultural and political hegemony. The voices, identities, cultures, and epistemologies that had been suppressed and neglected in the colonial discourses are recognized, accepted, and given credibility in this counter-discourse. In this way, 'postcolonialism' has evolved as a literary theory dealing with the literature of the formerly colonized nations, that in particular writes back to the centre. By critiquing and dismantling the literary and cultural production of the colonized 'other' on which the colonial ideology rested, postcolonialism provides an alternative approach: a new perspective, "a departure, a release, an exit, a way out, a way of considering the difference" (Mishra and Hodge, "What was" 399). It has emerged as a discourse that valorizes different cultures, offering indiscriminate attention to marginalization and discrimination of all kinds. It has provided a way through which the hitherto marginalized subjects have repositioned themselves and have redefined their expropriated cultural institutions, reclaiming it from the colonizer.

2.2 Postcolonialism

Over the past few decades, 'postcolonialism' has not only evolved as an important discipline in cultural and literary studies but has become one of the major schools of literary criticism. Both the term and the field of postcolonialism have been subjected to a comprehensive critique from the perspectives of literary, cultural, and political studies. The debates on postcolonialism are now so universal in character and the literature on this topic is so extensive and diverse that it is difficult to summarize it in brief, as expressed in the words of Ania Loomba, "the term itself has become so heterogeneous and diffuse that it is impossible to describe satisfactorily what its study might entail" (2). Due to its eclectic nature, the concept is confronted with a wide spectrum of contradictions, encompassing a wide range of ideas, concepts, and theories in the discipline of literary studies. Despite the disparities of perspectives and differences in the definition of the term, 'postcolonialism' can be defined as a discourse of the oppositionality between the West and the rest (Hall;

Ashcroft)) and the impact it continues to have. Rooted in “the experiences of exclusion, denigration and resistance” (Boehmer, *Postcolonialism* 340), it has become a catchall term for any literary theory, method or approach that seeks to unveil and destabilize the asymmetrical power constellations and thought patterns that continue to exert an influence on the people from the erstwhile colonies. As an aesthetic engaged with the experiences and resistance of the hitherto silenced voices of the world, postcolonialism aims at demystifying the continuities and discontinuities of the colonial structure, searching for the alternative narrative to the hegemonic discourses and offering a vantage point from which postcolonial societies and people can intervene and reassess the lingering forms of colonialism.

It is essential to note that all independent societies are still subject to subtle or overt forms of colonial dynamics in one way or another. For these ex-colonies, their emancipation after the expulsion of their colonizers has failed to reach the desired effects, since according to Ania Loomba “the inequities of colonial rule have not been erased” (7) and continue to exist in the present scenario in a hidden form. The development of new dynamics of power structures within postcolonial societies; the instrumentalization of social cleavages based on caste, class, race, or religion; the continuing discriminatory behaviours and practices against postcolonial peoples and societies— all these signifies the colonizing impulse of the West. Given that the independence is a delusion for the erstwhile colonies, colonialism exists in a neo-colonial mode, having a multitude of different forms of dependence and interference. South Africa, Asia, and some states of the Caribbean are formally independent or sovereign but at the same time, they are neo-colonial in terms of their current economic, political, financial, and military dependencies. Although they have gained political freedom from the British rule, they have not escaped the social, cultural, epistemological, and aesthetic impact of colonialism. Such socio-political realities alludes to the presence of what Ranajit Guha (1997) refers to as the “dominance without hegemony” and testify to the fact that the European constellation of power has not come to a definitive end; rather has evolved and transitioned into neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism— a disguised mechanism that maintains economic, political, cultural, and psychological subjugation on the erstwhile colonies and its people.

Despite its frequent use over the past few years, there has been a lack of consensus regarding the definition and the essential nuances of neocolonialism. Coined by the President of Ghana, Kwame Nkrumah, (1965) ‘neocolonialism’— an ongoing dependency of former colonies on foreign countries— is most probably the last and the most perfidious form of colonialism. From this perspective, it can be argued that this neocolonial system is just a shift from old colonial structure to neocolonial state, a new mode of exercising control without any legal or political authority. Some critics credit the coinage of the term to Jean-Paul Sartre, who first used it in his work, *Colonialism and Neocolonialism* wherein he identifies it as a structure based on the policy of ‘divide et impera’ that empowers the subjugator to get an advantage of the existing or emerging conflicts between the local communities. In fact, it is the existence of the continuing influence of former colonial powers that persuades Stuart Hall to avow,

postcolonial is not the end of colonisation. It is after a certain kind of colonialism, after a certain moment of high imperialism and colonial occupation—in the wake of it, in the shadow of it, inflected by it—it is what it is because something else has happened before, but it is also something new. (“Cultural Composition”9)

What he warns against is the mystification of neocolonial order which has made people unchained slaves and generated more complex situations they can never overcome. The continued existence of the power constellations has led to what has been termed as postcolonialism which is not merely a chronological succession or a temporal sequence; conversely it is a continuing process of analyzing and resisting the surviving legacies of colonial narratives, albeit in new guises. It might be perceived as,

a performative mode of critical revisionism, consistently directed at the colonial past and assessing its legacies for the present, but also focusing on those forms of colonialism that have surfaced more recently in the context of an increasingly globalized but incompletely decolonized world. (Huggan, *Oxford* 10)

In face of the multifarious dynamics of neocolonialism and modern globalization, the postcolonial discourse therefore continues to challenge and destabilize the unequal power relations. It has always had a radical agenda to reject the undue subjugation and conditions of inequality as well as to demand sustainable development, dignity, and well-being for all human beings worldwide. At its simplest level, postcolonialism provides a language of and

for those whose histories, identities, languages, ideologies, cultures, and epistemologies have been dismantled. Above all, it is preoccupied with the ‘oppressed’, the ‘subdued’, the ‘margins’, the ‘peripheries’, and the ‘others’ of any society and these overarching preoccupations indeed form the basis of postcolonial politics and its continuing resistance.

As an oppositional discourse, postcolonialism has come to represent a continuum of cultural confrontation (Ashcroft et al., *Reader 2*), which has taken the form of an academic discipline that provides a forum for an extensive critique of the ideologies and the praxis of colonialism and its continuing influence on the people belonging to former colonies. Over the years, it has emerged as a resistance ideology or as “a body of writing that attempts to shift the dominant ways in which the relations between western and non-western people and their worlds are viewed” (R. Young, *White Mythologies*2). It is a re-examination of the discourse of Orientalism, a reinstatement of the natives’ past and history, and an unlearning of the colonial norms and ideologies. It provides a way of questioning the latent assumptions of the ontological and epistemological foundations of the ‘Occident’ and the ‘Orient’ and of changing the way how the colonized think, believe, and behave. As an aesthetic of subversion and reclamation, it seeks to intervene and deconstruct the Eurocentric politics of knowledge production, while refuting “to acknowledge the superiority of western cultures” (R. Young, *White Mythologies* 7). It is not just the rhetoric of resistance; rather it is the commencement of what Wole Soyinka refers to as the “process of self- apprehension” (xi), that celebrates and redefines the natives’ traditions, identities, cultures, languages, and values by valorizing and giving authority to those people hitherto consigned to no other alternative position than the ‘other’ or the ‘marginal’. It is that cutting-edge of enunciation that provides indigenous peoples necessary agency and expression to create their own space and to articulate concerns otherwise foreclosed.

2.3 Postcolonial Theory

One of the significant and widely employed critical theories that have drawn the attention of many readers and scholars throughout the world is postcolonial theory that is by no means a homogenous and unitary concept or a single set of ideas. It is rather a signifier of heterogeneous and disparate sets of experiences and lived realities of the peoples whose moral, cultural, aesthetic, and historical values have been suppressed and neglected by the

dominant discourses. Though it has emerged from the literary theoretical movements in the late 20th century that interrogates the power asymmetries between the colonial center and its peripheries, it is “situated somewhere in the interstices between Marxism and postmodernism/poststructuralism” (Gandhi, 167). The polysemic nature of postcolonial theory and its multiple as well as complex genealogies contribute to the ongoing debate over the definition and scope of the term. Despite numerous contestations surrounding its connotation, scope, and stature, the theory can be defined as a “proactive and radically anti-colonial theory of and from margins, an articulation from the position of silence and exclusion” (Mishra and Hodge, “What was” 395). It is a collective or an umbrella term that encompasses a wide array of theories and ideas developed by different writers, philosophers, and anthropologists such as slavery, displacement, hybridity, diaspora, ambivalence, identity, representation, migration, exile, belongingness, place, estrangement, racism, resistance, xenophobia, rootlessness, gender discrimination, and cultural chaos (Ashcroft; Goldberg & Quayson; Moore-Gilbert; Punter). Although none of these theories are essentially postcolonial, they have evolved together to address or rather redress the surviving legacies of colonialism and have merged to shape the complex field of postcolonial theory. In *Postcolonialism: A Very Short Introduction* (2003), Robert J. C. Young holds that “there is no single entity called postcolonial theory” (7) rather it is an academic discipline involving a heterogeneous set of theories and discursive practices—constituted by the resistance to colonialism and its residues—that purport to give voice to those individuals whose voices have been silenced or rather effaced by the dominant ideologies. It is the voice of the ostensible ‘other’ emerging and writing back with well-chosen words—a critical assault on the western conceit that addresses and redresses the remnants of European domination, intervention and interference. The prime focus of postcolonial theory is thus to intervene, interrogate, interrupt, and dismantle the Western power structures, epistemic hegemony, and its techniques of knowledge-production. It is an ongoing dialectics between the ‘powerful’ and the ‘powerless’ that does not “seek to subvert the dominant with a view to taking its place, but, in Wilson Harris’s formulation, to evolve textual strategies which continually consume their own biases while, simultaneously, exposing and eroding those of the dominant discourses” (qtd. in Tiffin 96). In particular, it has provided a space of enunciation for the once-colonized peoples to

reconstruct their identity and culture as well as to reclaim their past and epistemology. It is not just a critical theory or an approach to textual analysis; rather it is a ‘politics of resistance’ to the unjust and unequal forms of socio-cultural and political hegemony.

While the definitions, scope, and major themes of postcolonial theory have been discussed above, its thematic and theoretical base will be explored in this section. To comprehend at least partially the diverse topographies of this field, it is essential to provide a brief overview of the major issues and debates at the core of this discourse. For this purpose, the major theoretical positions of postcolonial theory that have shaped this discourse are summarized here. This section not only engages with the issues raised by postcolonial theorist but also offers several arguments that critique postcolonial theory. It is essential to note that the subsequent discussion is certainly not comprehensive in its coverage of the postcolonial scholarship; it simply represents some of its major theorists, intellectuals, critics, scholars and their major theoretical contribution.

The overall conceptual framework of postcolonial theory has emerged from the writings of anti-colonial intellectuals such as Albert Memmi, Frantz Fanon, Jean-Paul Sartre, Aime Cesaire, Ngugi wa Thiong, Chinua Achebe, and their successors like Edward W. Said, Gayatri C. Spivak, Bill Ashcroft, Homi K. Bhabha, Ashis Nandi, Robert J.C. Young, and many others. Postcolonial theory mainly relies on the theoretical contribution of Frantz Fanon, and the triumvirate — Said, Spivak, and Bhabha, whose writings are actively engaged in the process of de-centering, destabilizing, and deconstructing the colonial discourses. As an intellectual discourse, postcolonialism has taken its inspiration from the revolutionary works of Frantz Fanon, who in the words of Albert Memmi, is “a prophet of the Third World, a romantic hero of decolonization” (qtd. in Loomba 147). While Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* (1952) seems more concerned with the psychologies of the oppressed, his groundbreaking text *The Wretched of the Earth* (1961) turns the attention to the revolt of the oppressed. In fact, the appearance of *The Wretched of the Earth* could be argued to have marked the birth of postcolonialism. Written during the Algerian war, it has had a major impact in the field of postcolonial studies and paved the way for worldwide liberation movements. In it, Fanon not only writes about violence, national consciousness, anti-colonialism, and freedom fighting but also analyzes the effects of undue subjugation on people— particularly the economic and psychological

consequences of imperialism. His works are engrossed with a Manichean psychological framework that describes the roots of the colonial oppression in Algeria. In accordance with psychoanalytic theory, he delves into the psychic dimensions of colonialism through notions such as racism, Manichaeism, internalization, inferiority, segregation, epidermalization, dehumanization, alienation, and psychopathology.

Elaborating on the psychopathology of both the victims as well as those of the perpetrators, Fanon proclaims that the colonial world is infected by a “Manichean delirium” that is based on a radical pairing of Good-Evil, Beauty-Uglyness, White-Black, and Settler-Native dichotomies (*Black Skin* 141). This Manichean structure has subsequently fabricated the white settlers’ conceptions of race and continues to have a significant hold on their imagination, thus laying the groundwork for the colonial rule. Fanon views colonialism as a discursive practice that not only exploits its subjects physically but also enters ‘the psyche and skin’ of the colonized. He deploys psychological methodology to decode the causes of colonialism and its consequences on the black people. He identifies colonialism as a complex system that is marked by the natives’ “internalization- or, better, the epidermalization of inferiority” (*Black Skin* 13). According to him, it is the ‘dynamic of inferiority’ that persuades indigenous people to internalize the sense of their own inferiority, further causing a hatred towards their own body, race and culture. Focusing on the role of language and culture within this colonial framework, he demonstrates the ways the colonizers institutionalize colonialism and its exploitative practices and how the colonized in turn internalizes the sense of their own inferiority that entails emulating the culture and norms of the perpetrators. Correspondingly, the colonized are forced to take on implicitly the western forms of norms and expression. This process of emulation results in the belittlement, or even distortion and perversion of the natives’ cultural milieu. This internalized inferiority constructed by the ‘Manichean Structure’ dehumanizes the natives, to such an extent that “it turns him into an animal” (Fanon, *Wretched* 42). According to Fanon, this dehumanization of the natives necessitates and even legitimizes the counter-violence as an intrinsically valuable tool not only to naturalize their dehumanized attributes but also to decolonize their body and their psyche. He believes that it is only through counter-violence that a native can create himself, as it revives his humanity eroded by colonial ideology. As he puts forward:

Irrepressible violence is neither sound nor fury, nor the resurrection of savage instincts, nor even the effect of resentment: it is man recreating himself ... no gentleness can efface the marks of violence; only violence itself can destroy them. The native cures himself of colonial neurosis by thrusting out the settler through force of arms. When this rage boils over, he rediscovers his lost innocence and he comes to know himself in that he himself creates his self. (*Wretched* 21)

In Fanon's views, counter-violence becomes a necessary means of liberating the black man from himself, the liberation from a desire to become something other than the true self. It not only liberates him from his fetish to be white, but also brings back his lost sense of self and self-respect, thus leading to the discovery of a true self.

While Fanon has been deeply influenced by many negritude intellectuals such as Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, Jean-Paul Sartre, among others, he is critical about their concept of negritude. His seminal *Black Skin, White Masks* is implicitly based on the concept of negritude which articulates the black consciousness in order to establish an equal status between the 'Whites' and the 'Blacks'. Initiated by Aime Cesaire, Leopold Sedar Senghor, and Léon-Gontras Damas, 'Negritude' is a resistance movement that celebrates 'blackness' as a distinct racial-cultural way of being; it is a collective condemnation of White supremacy, Western hegemony, racism, enslavement, and colonization of black people. By reclaiming African culture and history as well as its achievements, this movement seeks to deconstruct the denigrating myths and stereotypes associated with black people, thereby restoring their rightful place within the world. Fanon ambiguously supports the negritude as a source of identity and criticizes it due to its lack of universal approach. His incredulity towards negritude is expressed in his chapter 'On National Culture' in *The Wretched of the Earth*, in which he does not want to be tied down to an African past only because he wants to recapture the past of the entire world (176). In Fanon's views, negritude is a way to claim the position of the black people in relation to the other races in the world, but he disavows this methodology on the basis that it is operating within the European dialectical ideology and thus is incapable of detaching itself from the racist ideology. Against this Fanon proposes a national consciousness, a movement beyond the national towards the universal, directed towards all oppressed peoples committed to the struggle for national liberation. Many African writers have supported Fanon's skepticism regarding the advocacy of negritude including the Nigerian

author, Wole Soyinka who criticizes this philosophy with the immortal quip that “a tiger does not need to proclaim his tigritude” (10), hence, it is redundant for Africans to broadcast their African identity. Fanon also critiques the concept with Sartre’s quotes from “Black Orpheus” that negritude can be a process, not a destination, “a transition and not a conclusion, a means and not an ultimate end” (*Black Skin* 102). He emphasizes to combine emancipatory violence against cultural imperialism with a vigorous defense of culture as the only means of dismantling the sense of racial inferiority constructed by the colonial structure.

Although Frantz Fanon explores the colonial relationship in Africa and the Caribbean, claiming that Europe has created the ‘Manichean structure’ as the mainstay of colonial system, it is Edward W. Said who goes a step further to analyze how that ‘Manichean Structure’ has been constructed through the western representations of the ‘Orient’ based on the stereotypical assumptions. Fanon’s revolutionary and explosive thoughts have inspired the anti-colonial movements stimulating the formation of postcolonial theory, whereas the credit of “initiating the discourse of post-colonialism” goes to Edward W. Said (Ashcroft, *Empire* 198). In fact, the most influential third-world scholar and literary theorist to have an impact on postcolonial discourse is Edward W. Said, a Palestinian, whose seminal work *Orientalism* (1978) examines the western construction and the conceptions of the ‘Orient’. Many theorists and critics are indebted to Said and his pioneering work, *Orientalism*, which according to Bhabha, “inaugurated the postcolonial field” and Gayatri Spivak describes it as “the source book in our discipline” (qtd. in Moore-Gilbert, 34). Indeed, *Orientalism* is perceived to have laid the cornerstone of postcolonial theory. He offers a plethora of insights into the western ways of representing the ‘Orient’, analyzing the self-other binaries between the West and the rest as “the relationship of power, of domination, of varying degrees of a complex hegemony” (5). Critiquing the West’s hegemonic discourse on the East, he questions the concept of ‘Occident-Orient’. In accordance with Michel Foucault, Said proclaims that Orientalism— a Meta-discourse— is a systematic “body of theory and practice” that creates and constructs the discursive and textual representations of the ‘Orient’ (14). However, for Said the ‘Orient’ does not exist; rather it is a European construct— an idea, or a long-reigning ideology— that has been fabricated and employed by the Occidentals as an instrument in buttressing the colonial

mission. Tracing the complex dynamics of Orientalism, Said reveals the ways in which this fabricated ideology apparently legitimates and consolidates the Western political hegemony and cultural power.

According to him, the discourse of Orientalism has created a dichotomy, a binary framework that is “based upon an ontological and epistemological distinction made between the Occident and the Orient” (10). Unraveling the dichotomies of the ‘East/West’, Said critically examines this binary opposition that has not only served as the underlying ideology in the construction of the ‘Orient’, but has also acted as a rationalization for the justification and success of the Western colonial structure. He refers to anthropology, history, linguistics, and literary criticism as well as European literary works that have interpellated the Orientals as barbaric and inferior ‘other’ who, as opposed to the Occidentals— the modern, rational, and superior ‘self’— are incapable of self-government. He believes that such ‘self-other’ binarism has been used either to exploit the ‘Orient’/ ‘East’ or simply as a validation of the occupation of its territories.

Drawing on Michel Foucault’s conceptualization of power and knowledge, Said encapsulates the ways the Occidentals have manipulated the knowledge in their pursuit to consolidate power and to exclude the knowledge of the ‘Orient’. In order to dominate the ‘Orient’, the West has imposed their language and culture in the name of enlightenment, civilization, and humanization of the East, thereby neglecting and even distorting the cultures, histories, values, and languages of the Orientals. In this way, the colonial discourse operates on a process of knowledge production employed by the Occidentals as a tool of exercising dominance and power:

Orientalism can be discussed and analyzed as the cooperate 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 as Western style for dominating , reconstructing and having authority over the Orient. (*Orientalism*3)

The knowledge of the ‘Orient’ resulted in the perpetuation and legitimization of Western hegemony and cultural superiority, thus making the colonialism enforceable and lucrative. In this way, Orientalism served as a systematic discourse through which ‘Occident’ was able to manage— and even produce — the ‘Orient’ politically, sociologically, militarily,

ideologically, scientifically, and imaginatively” (*Orientalism*3). The image that the ‘Occident’ created for the ‘Orient’ recreated history, leading to the fall of oriental cultures and legitimizing colonial rule.

Orientalism thus became an important resource, a primer that helped decipher discursive constructions of the ‘self-other’, ‘centre-margin’, ‘subject-object’ binaries, catalyzing our understanding of how and why the ‘Occident’ abstracted its political-ideological dimensions and reassimilated them to its broader socio-economic context. As a magnetic stimulus, the books’s method and critique traveled across disciplines, histories, and geographies. In travelling across discipline, its theoretical implications were adopted by a number of disciplines, ranging from feminism and gender studies to anthropology, development studies, comparative literature, and cultural and postcolonial studies. All these disciplines applied the discourse of Orientalism to a variety of other historical-geographical contexts and phenomena. Hence, it would not be an exaggeration to say that postcolonial theory owes its existence to Said’s theoretical contributions,

Despite an extensive celebration of *Orientalism* and its significant role in triggering postcolonial studies, it is the concept of ‘amateurism’, ‘worldliness’, ‘secular criticism’, and ‘exilic consciousness’ which stand as Said’s most innovative contributions to literary and cultural criticism. This eclecticism and the logical approach to assimilate these hugely heterogeneous fields of knowledge is what distinguish his critical identity from the rest of the scholars. As an amateur critic, Said espouses the secular trio of the ‘world’, the ‘text’ and the ‘critic’, and endorses a criticism free from the confined speculations. His passionate advocacy of amateurism enables him to ‘speak truth to power’. Hence, exposing truth to power can be considered Said’s penultimate mission where he considers amateurism as an ethical critical stance in which an intellectual’s work must be influenced by “where it takes place, whose interests it serves, how it jibes with a consistent and universalist ethic, how it discriminates between power and justice, what it reveals of one’s choices and priorities” (*Representations* 89). In exploring the nexus between culture, politics, and society, he defiantly emphasizes the need for an intellectual work to consistently reclaim its connections with the political realities of the society. Often considered as an author of a radically secular body of work, Said remains committed to juxtapose truth and power, to counteract prevailing stereotypes and institutions and emerges as a potent entity whose

essence of being is to voice grievances of those who are relegated to the margins perforce. As Ella Shohat puts it, in an appropriate summary of his contribution, he is a critic who has “negotiated a discursive space for a suppressed national narrative within a specific intellectual and political conjecture” (qtd, in Ashcroft et al. 135).

Said’s writings and implications are concerned with various colonial subtleties of interpellation of the Orient as the putative ‘other’ and with the power dynamics that are embedded within it, where as Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak’s works expand on Said’s thoughts by shifting the focus of her discourse to the people who have been affected by the colonial encounter. Hence, the works of Spivak and other scholars of the subaltern studies group mark a shift in the way of critiquing the colonial texts from an analysis of colonial discourse to the experiences of the colonized. Acknowledged for her remarkable erudition, Spivak is one of the leading scholars in postcolonial studies under the subaltern studies group who has expanded her discourse to an array of concepts like knowledge and power, subalternity, othering, counter-discourse, strategic essentialism and epistemic violence which have gained a specific reference in literary studies. Her opaque manner of theoretical writing and exclusive approach of criticism make it very challenging for classifying or presenting an explicit picture of her works, which is very much like opening the floodgates for a number of debates without reaching a general consensus. Her erudite abstractions—almost going against the flow—has made it easier for her to evade essentialism. She observes that the limitations of essentialism lie not in its essence but in its application; in its binary articulation of difference; in its creation of the ‘self’ and the construction of the ‘other’. Hence there is a socio-political need for temporary strategic essentialization— or what she calls ‘strategic essentialism’— of an ethnic group or minority group so as to create solidarity and a shared sense of belonging and identity for the purpose of a social action. In an interview with Elizabeth Grosz, Spivak introduces the term ‘strategic essentialism’ that subsequently became the key concept in contemporary theories of identity, be it postcolonialism, feminism, queer theories, cultural studies, and the like.

Adopting a novel interdisciplinary approach, Spivak critiques the imperial structure from a feminist-deconstructivist stance and scrutinizes an explicit link between the socio-cultural and economic aspects of colonialism, neocolonialism, and modern globalization. Interrogating the production, proliferation, and reformulation of the indigenous knowledge

within the context of imperialism, Spivak vehemently critiques how the hegemonic discourse has schematically subjugated the knowledge of the colonized, thus colonizing the knowledge of the putative 'other'. With a view to undermine the Eurocentric epistemic hierarchy and power structures, she introduces the term 'epistemic violence' in her seminal work, "Can the Subaltern Speak" that exposes the way in which the 'self/Occident' has constructed the explanations and knowledge/s of the 'other/Orient' and how it has exploited the latter for its own political and economic purposes. In accordance with Foucault and Said's conceptualization of power-knowledge matrix, she holds that power appropriates and consolidates the production of knowledge and insidiously objectifies both the subaltern male as well as female. Exposing the limitations of the subalterns by invoking the historical contexts, Spivak raises the ante and puts forward a far more radical critique of the dominant discourses by way of giving voice and agency to the silenced subalterns. She prefers the model of the Italian Marxist Antonio Gramsci's 'subalternity' that focuses on the cultural and economic oppression of the subordinate groups and individuals who are 'at the margins' of the dominant cultures, discourses, and social formations as she avows, "Everything that has limited or no access to the cultural imperialism is subaltern—a space of difference. Now who would say that's just the oppressed? The working class is oppressed. It's not subaltern. It's in capital logic" (qtd. in De Kock 35). The term subaltern, thus, refers to the underrepresented groups or minorities who are subject to hegemony, encompassing the children, the women, the colonized, the poor, the illiterates, the proletarians, and/or the religious-ethnic minorities. Stephen Morton notes that for Spivak the term 'subaltern' is useful because it is flexible and more inclusive and incorporates social identities and various differences— race, gender, class, age, and the like— that are not subject to strict class analysis, as expressed in her own words "I like the word 'subaltern' for one reason. It is truly situational...That word, used under duress, has been transformed into the description of everything that does not fall under strict class analysis. I like that, because it has no theoretical rigor" (qtd. in Morton 46).

Through her essay, "Can the Subaltern Speak?" (1988) Spivak revitalized the feminist discourse by shifting her discourse to reconsider the issues of the sexed subaltern particularly Indian women during colonial times. Elucidating the manner in which the naïve natives are represented in colonial archives having no room for self-representation,

she proclaims that the subaltern, particularly, the females are denied access to dominant discourses: “There is no space from which the sexed subaltern subject can speak” (307). This provocative assertion does not claim that woman cannot speak as such, but that she lacks the position of enunciation (R. Young, *White Mythologies* 206). The primacy of narrative as a means of recovering the voice and the agency of the subaltern female is the core concern of Spivak:

Between patriarchy and imperialism, subject-constitution and object-formation, the figure of women disappears, not into a pristine nothingness, but into a violent shuttling which is the displaced figuration of the third-world woman caught between tradition and modernization. (“Can” 308)

What Spivak emphasizes here is the incoherent and the indistinct enunciating position of the subaltern women who are a victim of double epistemic violence – that of colonialism and that of the patriarchal order. According to her, an evident example of such epistemic violence is the custom of Sati– the self-immolation of a widow. Epistemologically, the colonial discourse represents the widow as an object or as a victim of Brown patriarchy, whereas the patriarchal system views her as a voluntary participant in this ritual. The practice of sati, be it a barbaric act in the eyes of British colonizers, or a necessary tradition for the Indian patriarchal society, does not give the woman much space for self-articulation; as a subject, she is excluded from the arena of discussing whether to abolish the practice or not. Spivak further clarifies that she is not supporting Sati or such type of violence, but merely demonstrating that the abolition of sati was imposed in such terms that it did not really liberate women, but simply changed modes and models of male domination. The gendered ‘subaltern’ who embodies threefold subalternity – gendered, ethnic, and social has been represented either in terms of British colonizing system or through Indian patriarchy, without being allowed any space and never being defined by herself. In Spivak’s views both are complicit in effacing and even mutilating the voice of the sexed subalterns through appropriation, reinterpretation, and reinscription. What she calls attention to is that both the colonial structure and the Indian patriarchal order operate as mutually supporting systems of domination that intersect the lives of sexed subalterns making it extremely difficult for them to speak: “Within the effaced itinerary of the subaltern subject, the tract of sexual difference is doubly effaced...the subaltern as female

is more deeply in shadow” (“Can” 287). Spivak’s critique of the effacement of sexed subaltern is rightfully considered as her most polemical contribution to subaltern theory.

In contrast to the renowned postcolonial intellectuals, Fanon, Said, and Spivak who bring to light the self-other dichotomies and the schematic production of knowledge as well as the way in which these discourses have established and contoured a subject of its own creation, Homi K. Bhabha assesses the outcome of the colonial encounter in terms of hybridity, ambivalence, and in-between space. While Spivak problematizes the representation of the subaltern in colonial and postcolonial archives, positing that the subaltern cannot speak, Bhabha exposes the nature of the colonial relationship providing a third space from which the subaltern can speak and celebrate the “difference without an assumed or imposed hierarchy” (Bhabha, *Location* 4). Lauded by San Luan as the most ‘doctrinaire instigator’ of postcolonial theory, Bhabha has shifted the limelight from the dichotomies of the ‘dominant-subordinate’, and ‘centre-periphery’ to the liminality or the in-between spaces. He has popularized the postcolonial theory through his works like *The Location of culture* (1994), *Nation and Narration* (1990), and *Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial discourse* (1984) amongst others that have had a widespread influence on postcolonial studies. In these highly speculative treatises on (post)colonial condition and the ensuing hybridization, which he seems to celebrate, Bhabha has developed an array of influential ideas and terms— ambivalence, interstice, in-betweenness, third-space, liminality, mimicry, hybridity— that were formative for postcolonial studies and have inspired the works in many other fields. Drawing on the theoretical standpoints of the psychoanalytic and the post-structuralist thinkers, he extends the works of Said and Spivak by deconstructing the dichotomies of the ‘Occident’/‘Orient’, ‘self/ other’, ‘victim/perpetrator’, ‘oppressor/ oppressed, and ‘us/them’.

For Bhabha, the encounter between the colonizer and the colonized is a moment filled with confusion, which further leads to a cultural void. Those who are living in this void find it difficult to identify fully with either of the culture and become a part of what Bhabha refers to as “the third Space - a state of mind that he argues to be the place where the hybrid identity comes into existence” (Childs and Williams 123). In (post)colonial context when two seemingly simple, opposite groups/cultures collide, there is a complex blend of acceptance and rejection that defines their relationship. This continual fluctuation

of attraction towards and repulsion from an object, person or action is identified and termed by Bhabha as “ambivalence” – a symbolic state of (post)colonial people and migrant communities (R. Young, *Colonial Desire* 161). Borrowing from psychoanalytic theory, Homi K. Bhabha has incorporated the concept of ambivalence into the (post)colonial discourse to explain how the ‘self-other’ binary has dissolved into an ambivalent condition consisting of contradictory dimensions and perceptions and exhibiting a persistent and inevitable oscillation between “complicity and resistance” (Ashcroft et al., *Key concepts* 10).

This manifold and ambivalent consciousness instituted by the colonial discourse and exacerbated by migration and globalization is synonymous to a nervous condition and an uncanny state which turns into a sense of displacement and from which the crisis of identity derives its nourishment (Ashcroft et al., *Empire* 8). The conflicting relationship between the colonizer and the colonized forces the marginalized culture to take on the cultural values, traits, languages, beliefs, assumptions, and ideologies of the dominant culture, which eventually results in a condition of mimicry, not far from mockery, producing uncanny copies of the colonizers. Bhabha in his essay ‘Of Mimicry and Man: The Ambivalence of Colonial Discourse’, affirms that, “Mimicry repeats rather than represents” (88). The term mimicry retrieved from Frantz Fanon’s *Black Skins White Masks* was further developed by Bhabha as a strategy that can be deployed by the colonized to de-centre the authority of the colonizers. “The discourse of mimicry,” he argues, “is constructed around an *ambivalence* ... [it] must continually produce its slippage, its excess, its difference” (“Of Mimicry” 86). In his views, through the mimicry of the colonizer, the polarity of ‘self’ and the ‘other’, the underlying assumption of the colonial ideology can be destabilized. Such mimetic practices– sometimes as camouflage, sometimes as mockery or parody– produces subjects who are “*almost the same but not quite... almost the same but not White*” (Bhabha, *Location* 86, 89). According to Leela Gandhi, this “inappropriate appropriation” (149) makes the colonized as culturally intelligible, thus opening space for contesting the rigid codes of hierarchical binarism. In other words, this ‘insignia of authority’ becomes the site of articulation that allows the colonized to evade the alleged dichotomies and to challenge the essentialist view of cultural identity. Reassessing the conventional notion of nationality and identity, Bhabha foregrounds that nationalities,

ethnicities, and identities are dialogic and indeterminate and are characterized by hybridity. Challenging the fixity of the colonial hierarchies and binary distinction, he draws attention to the fluidity of nationality and identity and proposes the strategy of “hybridity” which is a “sign of the productivity of colonial power, its shifting forces and fixities” (*Location* 112), and which has the potential to disrupt any possibility of a stable binary opposition and to reverse the dynamics of domination. Rather than stressing the negative effects of the conflicting relationship between the two cultures, Bhabha brings forth this concept of hybridity which allows the possibility of innovation within (post)colonial and globalized context.

As a site of cultural commensurability, hybridity, according to Bhabha, is not monolithic but heterogeneous (*Location* 2); not given or primordial but fluid or plural; not fixed or static but contingent that is constructed with the interaction of two or more cultures. It is a way of articulation; a space of representation and intervention, a space that is “interruptive, interrogative and enunciative” (Bhabha, *Location* 103). It is in this space that new forms of identities and cultural practices take shape that interrogate the authenticity of the essentialist view of culture and identity and negotiate the liminality of the ‘other’ be it in the colonial space or in the globalized context. In an interview with Times Higher Education, Bhabha himself describes hybridity in terms of: “A fraught, anxious and ambivalent condition. It is about how you survive, how you try to produce a sense of agency or identity in situations which you continually have to deal with the symbols of power and authority” (Wallace). The cultural interaction resulting from this conflicting encounter has led to the formation of hybrid identities that enable minorities to shift their position within a liminal spectrum and to resist the hegemony of the authoritarian groups. The notion of hybridity is one of the most important concepts introduced by Bhabha which possesses the power to “enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority-its rules of recognition” (*Location* 114). In an era of intensifying global movement, migration, and border-crossing, hybridity, as subversion of authority, provides the terrain for elaborating strategies of individuality and for the creativity of translation and transformation, thus contributing to new identities that transcend social binaries of race, ethnicity, and nation.

Whilst Said, Spivak, and Bhabha have nurtured postcolonial theory when in a nascent state, there have been some scholars and critics who have offered a stark critique of the theory. The polemics against postcolonialism posed by critics range from the evasion of contemporary imperialist practices (Davies 23) to the ambiguity of the term 'postcolonial' to its "growing provincialism" (Albrecht 1). For example, Anne McClintock in her influential essay, 'The Angel of Progress: Pitfalls of the term 'Post-colonialism'' (1992), interrogates postcolonialism as an all-embracing concept that homogenizes complex and diverse experiences of various colonized nations. In her words:

"post-colonialism ... is unevenly developed globally... Can most of the world's countries be said, in any meaningful or theoretically rigorous sense, to share a single "common past," or a single common "condition," called "the post-colonial condition," or "post-coloniality"?... Can these countries ... be understood as shaped exclusively around the "common" experience of European colonization? Indeed, many contemporary African, Latin American, Caribbean, and Asian cultures, while profoundly effected by colonization, are not necessarily primarily preoccupied with their erstwhile contact with Europe. (87)

She objects to such generalization that distorts and homogenizes diverse experiences by reorienting "the globe around a single, binary opposition: colonial/postcolonial" (85) and emphasizes the need to be careful not to use the term postcolonial as it is "prematurely celebratory and runs the risk of obscuring the continuities and discontinuities of colonial and imperial power" (88). According to her, the ubiquity of the term lies in its "academic marketability", since the term postcolonial sounds more palatable than "third-world studies or "studies in neo-colonialism" in the academic realm (93). This critique of the ambiguity of the term recurs in Ella Shohat's 'Notes on the 'Postcolonial' (1992) wherein she raises many of the same concerns like homogenization of different cultural experiences, premature celebration of the end of colonialism, and its emergence as the master-sign of history. Echoing McClintock's objections for using the term postcolonial, she brings into question the "ahistorical and universalizing deployments [of the term] and its potentially depoliticizing implications" (99). She is particularly concerned about the theoretical professionalism of postcolonialism that has eroded its radical potential. According to her, the theoretical and professional concerns that its ascendancy marked supersede anti-colonial/anti-racist struggles and discourses. This shift in theory is reflected in its emphasis

on the postcolonial condition of migrancy and its after-effects in terms of cultural contradictions, ambiguities, ambivalences, identity crisis, hybridity, and syncretism. For Shohat, the notions of ‘hybridity’ and ‘syncretism’ that signify mutually imbricated relation between ‘central’ and ‘peripheral’ cultures have failed to take into account the material status of the operation of power. She contends that, “A celebration of syncretism and hybridity per se, if not articulated in conjunction with questions of hegemony and neo-colonial power relations, runs the risk of appearing to sanctify the *fait accompli* of colonial violence” (109). What Shohat warns here is that the primacy of imperceptible concerns trivializes the ‘political-economic’ dimensions of the imperialized formations that have perdured even after the end of formal decolonization.

Her views resonates Aijaz Ahmad’s observations who being a Marxist critic, expresses a similar concern about the theory’s failure to interrogate the material side of colonialism, especially the role of capitalism. He suggests that: “we should speak not so much of colonialism or postcolonialism but of capitalist modernity, which takes the colonial form in particular places and at particular times” (“Politics” 7). Ahmad’s focus on ‘capitalist modernity’ is part of his critique of postcolonial theory which according to him is entirely complicit with the contemporary global economic conditions— a form of neo-colonialism. For Ahmad, the primary failure of postcolonial theory lies in its eagerness to consider “cultural domination exercised by countries of advanced capital over imperialized countries” (*In Theory*2). What he bewails is the theory’s diversion of attention from the contemporary geopolitics of power to the self-invented, dematerialized world. He criticizes postcolonial theory and its intellectuals for universalizing the experiences of the third world people. He attempts to subvert the work of Homi K. Bhabha who theorizes hybridity as a universal condition as exemplified by the postcolonial migrant. Bhabha’s focus on the intangible aspects of migrancy like displacement, ambivalence, and hybridity earns Ahmad’s denunciation for failing to foreground the contemporary national and international issues like capitalism, socio-economic inequalities, and power relationships that influence the entire world:

History does not consist of perpetual migration, so that the universality of ‘displacement’ that Bhabha claims both as the general human condition and the desirable philosophical position is tenable neither as description of the world nor as

generalised political possibility [. . .] Among the migrants themselves, only the privileged can live a life of constant mobility and surplus pleasure [. . .] Most migrants tend to be poor and experience displacement not as cultural plenitude but as torment; what they seek is not displacement but, precisely, a place from where they may begin anew, with some sense of a stable future. (“The Politics” 16)

In other words, the issues of national identity and culture, central to postcolonial subjectivities must defer to the conflict between classes within global spaces since, “Postcoloniality, as he argues, “is a matter of class (“The Politics” 16). Ahmad here points to the class politics as the ‘true’ predicament of the contemporary world that remains absent from the agendas of postcolonial theory. It is for this reason that he calls for a shift of focus from postcoloniality to globality, arguing for a reconfiguration of critique of structural power relations wrought by global capitalism.

In the same line of thought, Arif Dirlik in *The Postcolonial Aura: Third World Criticism in the Age of Global Capitalism* (1997) analyzes postcolonial theory in light of the exacerbation of global capitalism that has destabilized the binaries such as the ‘victim’ and the ‘perpetrator’, the ‘First world’ and the ‘Third world’, and the ‘West and the rest’. He goes a step further by criticizing postcolonial critics of being actively complicit with global capitalism and accuses the postcolonial intellectuals with the exception of Spivak and Ahmad who have been silent, “on the relationship of the idea of postcolonialism to its context in contemporary capitalism” (331). He accuses them of being an essential part of the imperial capitalism they purport to undermine and repudiate its foundational role in history. Postulating a connection between postcolonialism and capitalism, Dirlik challenges the third world and the global intelligentsia to produce an exhaustive critique of its own doctrines and “formulate practices of resistance against the system of which it [postcolonialism] is a product” (356). Further, analyzing postcoloniality as the condition of “intelligentsia of global capitalism” (356), he posits that the lacuna in the postcolonial discourse lies in its diversion from structural contestations of power and in the mystification of its own relationship to what can be interpreted in varied ways as late capitalism, disorganized capitalism, flexible production or accumulation, and global capitalism, as he asserts:

The complicity of “postcolonial” in hegemony lies in postcolonialism’s diversion of attention from contemporary problems of social, political and cultural domination, and its obfuscation of its own relationship to what is but a condition of its emergence: a Global Capitalism which, however fragmented in appearance, serves nevertheless as the structuring principle of global relations. (331)

Dirlik here is accusing postcolonialism for its putative masking of the contemporary hegemony of neoliberal globalization as well as for its critique of the power relationships of past empires. For him, the primacy of privileging colonialism as the central optic in understanding history prevents the recognition of the role of other socio-political and economic forces in the shaping of the contemporary world.

In *Beyond Postcolonial Theory* (1998), E. San Juan Jr. articulates a similar concern that is based in materialist analysis. Echoing Ahmad and Dirlik, he contends that the field’s emphasis on colonial discourse evades materialist concerns of global capitalism and fails to speak to the contemporary socio-economic inequalities and geopolitical power relationships that influence the entire world. Another problematic issue that clouds postcolonialism, he argues, is its negligence of urgent life-or-death questions. He further interrogates the silence of the postcolonial intelligentsia on the questions of inequality of power and control:

Where were the postcolonial gurus during the Gulf War? ... How does postcolonial theory... explain the plight of millions of “overseas contract worker”- women domestics, “hospitality girls,” and mail-order brides comprise this large, horizontally mobile cohort- all over the world? (13)

This distressing silence by the sophisticated and the elite theorists and critics who have often projected themselves as the putative revolutionaries and reformers is something that needs to be examined. He is especially critical of the theory’s negligence of any specific scenario of injustice, domination, or actual resistance. It is for this reason that he calls for a revised humanism in the service of social and material transformation, amid the exhortation to undermine the discourses of power.

Neil Lazarus’s assault on postcolonialism runs along lines similar to San Juan’s and further goes to the extent of accusing postcolonial theorists and scholars for this bewildering neglect of the exploitative nature of capitalist globalization. Although

postcolonial theorists and scholars have filled the wide chasm between ‘the self and the other’ by introducing concepts of “hybridity” (Bhabha, *Location* 5) and intermediary “contact zones” (Pratt 8), Lazarus has criticized them for the potential neglect of “the realities of the contemporary world-system that constitutes their putative object” (*Postcolonial*1). He criticizes Bhabha for ignoring the class and caste issues while arguing that Bhabha’s notion of hybridity privileges the postcolonial intelligentsia who have received recognition in the West like Bhabha himself. In providing an extensive critique of theory’s failure to address the materialist concerns, he asserts that the postcolonial discourse has often been based on “a distinctive and conjuncturally determined set of assumptions, concepts, theories and methods that have not only been adequate to their putative object – “the postcolonial world’ – but have [also] served fairly systematically to mystify it” (*Postcolonial* 17). Such criticism, however, did not go uncontested as a number of theorists have criticized the postcolonial theory’s complicity with global capitalism (Ahmad; Dirlik; San Juan,; Huggan; Parry; Wilder). In particular, these critics are tired of the theory’s infatuation with the past at the expense of the present.

Lazarus shares his viewpoint with Benita Parry for whom the mystification of the material realities and the neocolonial relations of postcolonial world has been the most obvious obstruction of postcolonial theory’s intellectual agenda– the total liberation and equal power relationship. According to her, the postcolonial discourse has neglected such concerns and has taken a “cultural turn”, rearticulating “colonialism and its aftermath from a theoretical position freed from the categories of ... state formation and socio-economic relationships” (*Postcolonial Studies* 4). This neglect of the perceptible material concerns and the neocolonial strategies has engendered the ferocious criticism of postcolonialism. Parry further notes that,

The abandonment of historical and social explanation was soon apparent in the work of those postcolonial critics who disengaged colonialism from historical capitalism and re-presented it for study as a cultural event. Consequently an air-borne will to power was privileged over calculated compulsions, ‘discursive violence’ took precedence over the practices of a violent system, and the intrinsically antagonistic colonial encounter was reconfigured as one of dialogue, complicity and transculturation.... The transition...should be seen in the context of a ‘wider shift within social theory itself away from materialist understandings of

historical processes ... and towards collapsing the social into the textual'.
(*Postcolonial Studies*4)

The theoretical orientation of postcolonial studies and its focus on discourse and textuality rather than on politics operating in real-world situations earns Parry's denunciation. By playing with texts instead of with politics, the theory is not in a position to keep the promise to "chart the worldwide contemporary condition" (Parry, *What Is Left*341). This critique reflects the conflict that has emerged within and around the theory in which discursive approaches supplant the material concerns.

Vivek Chibber's allegation that postcolonialism is Counter-Enlightenment repeats the aforementioned argument. His devastating critique *Postcolonial Theory and the Specter of Capital* (2013) can be seen to build on the discussion initiated by Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik, E. San Juan, Jr., and Benita Parry whose writings are overtly polemical against postcolonialism. He develops a coherent critique of postcolonial theory, accusing it for denying the universality of an expansive vision of human need, interest, rights, truth, reality, progress, and knowledge amongst others. In his views, the most fundamental challenge to subaltern classes is to defend their humanity: "That is the core motivation in all those thousands of campaigns for wages, land rights, basic health, and security, dignity, self-determination, autonomy, and so forth—all those Enlightenment concepts against which postcolonial theorists inveigh" (233). This call for humanism and enlightenment is indeed the first step in the process towards creating a viable global future for the coming generations that is more responsible, equitable, and inclusive of humanity.

Despite calls to embrace enlightenment concepts, the theory has also been interrogated from an ecological perspective (Nixon; Huggan and Tiffin, *Postcolonial Ecocriticism*). Dialogue between the two has been underway for a while, with a number of critics working to critique the inescapable fact of the climate change and the idea of the Anthropocene (Crutzen and Stoermer; Steffen et al.; Baucom; Emmett and Lekan). In a much-noticed article, 'The Climate of History: Four Theses' (2009) and 'Postcolonial Studies and the Challenge of Climate Change' (2012), Dipesh Chakrabarty has drawn attention to the challenges of Anthropocene— a new geological epoch dominated by human activities, questioning postcolonial criticism which has no explanation for the current planetary environmental crisis within which human beings find themselves today ("The

Climate” 199). Concerning the current climate crisis which requires collective efforts, Chakrabarty emphasizes that “the idea of the human needs to be stretched beyond where postcolonial thought advanced it” (“Postcolonial Studies” 15). Following Chakrabarty’s line of thought, Gabriele Dürbeck, in ‘Narratives of the Anthropocene: From the perspective of postcolonial ecocriticism and environmental humanities’ (2020) critically assess the Anthropocene discourse and its universalistic implications from the perspective of postcolonial studies and ecocriticism. According to him, it is important for a postcolonial critique to include an ecological perspective so as to meet the challenges of the planetary environmental crisis. He stresses the need to reflect on human condition on global spatial scales as well as to think of human agency over multiple and incommensurable scales. This renewed stress on Anthropocene and the global environmental crisis, he argues, will facilitate to connect the local and the global, culturally situated knowledge, and universal concerns without reducing the one to the other.

To summarize, postcolonial theory is increasingly challenged by the continuing influence of environmental crisis, globalization, and its geopolitical configurations. In the face of such realities, the postcolonial perspective needs to reflect on the human condition from multidirectional perspectives, without losing sight of the impact of capitalism and environmental violence on different groups or communities across the world. Hence, there is a need for a renewal of postcolonial studies; a more flexible yet diverse framework which incorporates a multifaceted approach to address the colonial past and the neocolonial present, without any slippage. In a context, where globalism declines to be colonialism’s new hat, this renewal must entail a methodical revamping of all those binaries, perspectives, and underlying assumptions that have shaped the scholarship in this field. The point here is not choosing one framework/perspective or the other, rather it is as to how to use the theoretical conceptualizations of the aforementioned theorist and critics to analyze the complex nature of neocolonial realities that have neither been experienced nor foreseen. It requires broadening the lens of the postcolonial studies to include a focus on social equality and justice so as to make room for the cultures, voices, agency, and rights of human beings in different geopolitical spaces and social institutions. For this field to recognize the complexities of human experience, it clearly needs an adapted version that can critique and redress the social and material inequities with a realist approach and assist

in achieving parity with the wretched of the earth, thereby promising a utopia of cultural compassion.

2.4 The Prefix ‘Post’

Confronted with a wide spectrum of issues and debates, postcolonialism is an academic discipline in which even its spellings— post-colonialism and postcolonialism— denote a plentitude of connotations and significations. Despite the long-standing controversy over the preference of a hyphenated ‘post-colonialism’ or a non-hyphenated ‘postcolonialism’, no general consensus has emerged. However, some postcolonial intellectuals and scholars have come to prefer either one of the two terms since they assign divergent and in some cases entirely contradictory connotations to the use of the hyphen. For example, John McLeod, in *Beginning Postcolonialism* (2000) makes it clear from the very start that he will use the non-hyphenated term, ‘postcolonialism’ which refers to varied forms of representation, textual analysis, values, and attitudes circulating across the barriers of the colonial rule and national independence, whereas the hyphenated term ‘post-colonial’ appears to indicate a historical epoch, like ‘after independence’ or ‘after colonialism’ (5). According to him, the word (post-colonialism), when spelled with a hyphen connotes a chronological order—that it is a temporal sequence, a historical epoch coming after the demise of colonial rule. However, due to disparate colonial structures and different processes of political independence, it is difficult to identify precisely when colonialism ended and postcolonialism started. Many theorists (Loomba; R. Young; Ashcroft; Innes) contend that postcolonialism doesn’t indicate that colonialism has perished, rather it continues in a neo-colonial form in many societies. Since the inequalities, exploitation, oppression, and uneven power dynamics continue to exist in present scenario, it is right to state that colonialism has not come to an end but has merely changed its forms. As McLeod puts it,

Postcolonialism [without hyphen] recognises both historical continuity and change. On the one hand, it acknowledges that the material realities and modes of representation common to colonialism are still very much with us today, even if the political map of the world has changed through decolonisation. But on the other hand, it asserts the promise, the possibility, and the continuing necessity to change,

while also recognising that important challenges and changes have already been achieved. (*Beginning*33)

According to McLeod the hyphen in post-colonialism signifies a chronological succession; whereas, postcolonialism is a response, a challenge to the lingering forms of colonialism (including its newer manifestations). Hence, he prefers to use the non-hyphenated term postcolonialism which is broader and more flexible than the hyphenated term, as it represents the contestation of both the colonial rule as well as the legacies of colonialism within contemporary scenario.

Despite numerous critiques from within as well as outside the field, the term never signifies the end of colonial occupation; indeed, the persistence of asymmetric power dynamics in this era of globalization and modernity remains the mainstay of postcolonial literary criticism. Leela Gandhi also shares the same views in this respect and avers that “the postcolonial condition is inaugurated with the onset rather than the end of colonial occupation”, and hence, prefers the word ‘postcolonialism’ since “it is more sensitive to the long history of colonial consequences”(3). According to her, the term postcolonialism, spelled without the hyphen is concerned with the writings that are set in one way or the other to challenge and disrupt the colonial structure/colonial ideologies both before and after the period of decolonization.

Ashcroft et.al contends that the term postcolonialism does not refer to 'after-independence' or 'post colonization' because it imprecisely ascribes an end to the persistent inequalities of the colonial system, rather it “begins from the very moment of colonial contact. It is the discourse of oppositionality which colonialism brings into being” (Reader 2). In his essay ‘On the Hyphen in Post-colonial’ (1996), he claims that the post-colonial (with a hyphen) represents,

an increasingly diverging set of assumptions, emphases, strategies and practices in post-colonial reading and writing. The hyphen puts an emphasis on the discursive and material effects of the historical ‘fact’ of colonialism, while the term ‘postcolonialism’ has come to represent an increasingly indiscriminate attention to cultural difference and marginality of all kinds, whether a consequence of the historical experience of colonialism or not. (23)

The hyphen in post-colonialism signifies a particularity, the historical and cultural aspect of the colonial experience and as such confines postcolonial discourse to Europe’s

colonization. Hence, it becomes obvious for theorists and scholars to remonstrate against such a restrictive signification of the term and to prefer the unhyphenated term ‘postcolonialism’.

In his paper ‘Post-Colonialism or Postcolonialism? Relocating the Hyphen’ (1996), T. Vijay Kumar calls attention to the function of hyphen in the term post-colonialism. Referring to Shashi Deshpande’s quote about A. K. Ramanujan in which she explains that the hyphen unites two words but does not bridge the gap, Kumar asks whether the hyphen in post-colonialism really unites these words. Focusing on different arguments regarding the hyphen, he concludes that the hyphen in post-colonial is “a distancing and anti-integration mark” (196); it is a synecdoche for both the aspects – its invocation of the former colonization and its continuation of hegemonic nature as well. He observes that the term post-colonial separates and detaches our experiences of colonial rule and the hyphen used in it is a sign of that separation. Admittedly, the hyphen used in post-colonialism represents a particular historical period and thus signifies the break or rupture that has occurred between two eras. In this context, Williams and Chrisman have a different perspective. They contend that the prefix ‘post’ used either in post-colonialism or postcolonialism does not exclude the specificity of historical and existential subjugation but indicates a discursive project or strategy that is always in process, never consistent with itself. What they emphasize is that the term post-/postcolonialism as it has been employed in academic discourse, does not stand for post or after, it connotes an ongoing opposition to Western hegemonic policies and practices that continue to exert undue influence over postcolonial societies.

To be precise, all the above arguments can be summed up in the words of Leela Gandhi, “Whatever the controversy surrounding the theory [or the use of the term], its value must be judged in terms of its adequacy to conceptualise the complex condition which attends the aftermath of colonial occupation” (4). In this sense, the ‘post’ that is never truly post in ‘post-/postcolonial’ signifies resistance: a rhizomatic pattern of discursive struggles against the deeply fraught dynamics of colonialism and its ongoing interferences in the lives of once-colonized peoples living in both the West and the erstwhile colonies. Although there is no general consensus regarding the use of hyphen and no binding rules for the use of the term, the present thesis will retain the non-hyphenated

use of the term: ‘postcolonialism’ and ‘postcolonial’ as it is more appropriate and broader than the hyphenated term ‘post-colonialism’, and is firmly bound up with the experiences of oppression and marginalization shared by both pre-independence and post-independence colonial societies.

To summarize the discussion so far, the term postcolonialism has expanded well beyond the deceptive temporal marker of ‘after colonization’ or ‘post-independence’ and is now used to denote all aspects of the colonial process, from the beginning of colonization to the present day (Ashcroft et al.; Gandhi; Loomba). Its strength lies not in its historical orientation but in its potential as a set of analytical and methodological tools for critiquing the colonial foundation of the contemporary geopolitics. The central point of postcolonial intervention thus is to challenge the restructuring of asymmetrical power relations in the era of migration and globalization. In particular, it calls for the acknowledgement of the significance of the surviving legacies of colonialism in the making and unmaking of the contemporary world. The proponents of postcolonial theory contend that even after the end of colonialism its aftereffects are still pervasive socially, economically, culturally, and psychologically in both the erstwhile colonies and in the Western metropolitan societies (R. Young; Loomba). Hence, the major fundamental challenge to mainstream postcolonialism is to understand the relation between external/material concerns and psychic aspects of colonialism (Fanon; Nandy; Bhabha) as well as to pay equal attention to each particular aspect.

Postcolonialism has been largely informed by the theoretical insights of Fanon, Said, Spivak, Bhabha, and by many scholars following their lead who have turned postcolonialism into an institutionalized movement, by way of giving voice, expression, agency, and self-representation to the once-colonized peoples. With their incisive style and wide erudition, these theorists interrogate the ‘self-other’, ‘Occident-Orient’ or ‘centre-margin’ dichotomies, offering a plethora of insights into the subtleties of the colonial discourse that have been employed by other scholars as a set of “analytical tools” or “strategies of analysis” (Ziai) to deconstruct the stereotypical assumptions on which the knowledge about the other is generated and institutionalized. At their most general level, they share a common commitment to addressing the colonial occupation and its ongoing impact on the erstwhile colonies within the context of contemporary globalization.

Many critics and scholars criticize the postcolonial discourse for its lopsided stress on textual analysis at the expense of real and lived experiences (Ahmad; Dirlik; Parry). In pointing out the lacunae in the postcolonial approaches, critics like Ella Shohat, Epifanio San Juan Jr, Neil Lazarus, Anne McClintock, Vivek Chibber, have criticized the theory for glossing over actually existing social, political, and economic conditions. For such critics, the primacy of privileging textual analysis prevents the recognition of actual material conditions influencing the contemporary world. In particular, they criticize postcolonial theorists for packaging the literature, history, and culture of the third world into the compact-sized consumable products for the consumption of the Western canon and of shifting the attention from the facts of neocolonial order to the less controversial field of fiction produced in the erstwhile colonies (Huggan, *Postcolonial Exotic*). In view of this, the flaws in the postcolonial theory can be summed up as follows: first, its theoretical approaches are too obsolete to grapple with contemporary world problems; second, its narrow geographic focus has overlooked “problem areas,” like the Middle East; third, its infatuation with the past at the expense of the present and fourth, its tendency to privilege textual analysis over neocolonial realities. It is for these reasons that many critics have called for a strategic renewal of postcolonial studies and expressed a desire to push the field in different directions.

In spite of severe criticism from outside as well as within the field, postcolonialism remains exceptionally productive in terms of research and scholarship, and extremely creative in its engagement with enduring after effects of colonialism. Despite the contradictions and conundrums over the definition and scope of postcolonialism, it remains committed to supporting postcolonial people, and their struggle for rights and participation in political decision-making and continues to unravel and deconstruct what Chew & Richards (2010) aptly referred to as the “myths of power” and the “myths of civilization” that justify the colonial project and its present day intervention and interference into the non-western societies. Preoccupied with an interrogation of the power-knowledge constellations, postcolonialism is perennially engaged in revealing and decentring Eurocentrism and its hierarchal mode of representation so that the hitherto subjugated and silenced can speak for and represent themselves. Postcolonialism thus represents certain attitudes and standpoints shared by writers belonging to former colonies who use the

‘writing back’ paradigm to show their aversion towards the shifting contours of the colonial domination. In doing so, many postcolonial writers have used the literary forms, techniques, and language varieties of the colonizers to critique and challenge the colonial structure and its single-voiced authority. In other words, the postcolonial writing has provided the political and cultural agency to the once colonized people who have used it “to appropriate the dominant language, transform it, and to reveal their own cultural reality to a wide audience of readers” (Ashcroft et al., *Empire* 203). These writings are also part of a broader project that seeks a way to define cultural differences that does not rest on the ontological and epistemological distinction but that thrives on a system of beliefs and attitudes that validate and valorize the identities and existences of all diverse groups in a society.

The impact of colonization on erstwhile colonies and its cultures is a major preoccupation of postcolonialism, but it also subsumes the writings that are produced by those who have migrated from the countries with a history of colonialism or those descended from migrant families; the writings that are primarily concerned with the experiences of migration/diaspora, and the complexities resulting thereof. Many authors who left their native land for foreign shore such as George Lamming, Samuel Selvon, Chinua Achebe, Ngugi wa Thiong’o, Wole Soyinka, V.S. Naipaul, Salman Rushdie, Anita Desai, Arundhati Roy, and Amitav Ghosh among others have contributed to the realm of postcolonial writing. Through various literary genres like fiction, drama, and poetry, they have shown their resentment to all forms of subjugation, addressing issues such as the pain of immigration, exile, marginalization, displacement, estrangement, othering, representation, nostalgia, race, ethnicity, rootlessness, fragmented identities, destabilization of cultures and languages, belongingness, and gender discrimination. The preoccupation of postcolonialism thus is not only to combat and undermine the dominant discourses but also to create a space for the voices, cultures, and identities of the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities within the context of migration. Above all, it is connected to a broader struggle against neo-liberal globalization for social and political empowerment and provides a platform for interrogating humanistic values in both the academia and in the world.

3. Mapping the Politics of Othering

At the core of postcolonial project is the impulse to deconstruct the politics of ‘othering’ or difference and to create a counter-discourse for challenging the assumptions on which such politics is based. Just as the notion of the ‘other’ is important to postcolonial discourse, the notion of the ‘self’ is also an essential key to understand how it constructs the ‘other’ in relation to the ‘self’ and how it establishes and exploits the difference to maintain and solidify its position of power and authority. In his magnum opus *Orientalism* (1978), Edward W. Said argues that among many other things, the ‘Orient’ has served the ‘Occident’ as “one of its deepest and most recurring images of the Other. In addition, the Orient has helped to define Europe (or the West) as its contrasting image, idea, personality, experience” (2). Said’s ideas provide a perfect point of departure for a discussion on ‘politics of difference’ in the literary representations by Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley who have demonstrated the extent to which this ‘self-other’ configuration has created a hostile and discriminatory environment for the cultural and racial minorities in Britain, thereby hampering their growth and integration in the society. From colonial representations to postcolonial or neocolonial realities, this binary relation plays a crucial role in broadening the schism between the ‘Orient and the Occident’, the ‘civilized and the savage’, and the ‘West and the rest’. Attention to the historical dimensions of colonialism reveals that the ‘other’ has been deliberately kept alive to maintain and legitimize the hegemony of the ‘self’. Hence, it would not be an exaggeration to say that the ‘self-other’ dichotomy is the *sine qua non* for the genesis of the politics of ‘othering’ or difference which is played out in various socio-cultural settings.

The process of ‘othering’ – the stratification of identities into the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ and the subsequent marginalization of the presumed ‘other’ – is not peculiar to our modern age, but it had started way back in ancient times. The use of the word βάρβαρος or barbarian by the Ancient Greeks to describe the non-Greeks who used to speak foreign languages is paradigmatic of the process of ‘othering’ *avant la lettre*. The ease with which the adjective ‘other’ has undergone a functional shift and has turned into a verb ‘to other’ indicates the significance, currency, and the power of a term that has become a key

concern not only for theorists, philosophers, anthropologists, and ethnologists but also for all people in general.

The notion of ‘othering’ was coined by the postcolonial intellectual Gayatri C. Spivak for the process by which imperial discourse casts the colonized into the role of the objects or the ‘other’, denying them subjectivity and the defining characteristics of the ‘self’ (Jensen, 64). In her essay, ‘The Rani of Sirmur: An essay in Reading the Archives’ (1985), Spivak systematically introduces the theoretical concept of ‘othering’ to analyze “the fabrication of representations of historical reality” (271). According to her, it is a discursive practice in which the imperial ‘self’ valorizes its own cultures, positions, and dispositions while devalorizing and stigmatizing the colonized ‘other’ through an arbitrary difference. The process of ‘othering’ describes the various ways in which the colonizer projects itself as superior and civilized and interpellates its ‘other’ i.e. the colonized subject as inferior or barbarian. In other words, it is a process in which the ‘superior self’ creates its presumed ‘other’ by emphasizing a real or supposed ontological and epistemological difference which further gives rise to negative stereotyping, devaluation, misrepresentation, and potential discrimination (Beauvoir; Fanon; Said; hooks; Minh-ha; Kristeva; Hall). The concept of ‘othering’ thus has arisen from the need to distance the ‘self’ from those who are non-conformists and “who lack the particular, chosen traits which become the basis of a classifying typology and comparative evaluation” (Gilroy, *Against Race* 104) and whose existence is crucial in defining what a conformist is, since conformity is a relative concept.

Edward Said has exemplified this process through the discourse of Orientalism. The ways in which the ‘Occident’ has orientalized the Orient by emphasizing an ontological and epistemological difference, points to the ‘othered’ position of the Orientals who are merely, in Abdel-Malek’s words:

an “object” of study, stamped with an otherness -as all that is different, whether it be “subject” or object”-but of a constitutive otherness, of an essentialist character This “object” of study will be, as is customary, passive, non -participating, entered with a “historical” subjectivity, above all, non-active, non-autonomous, non-sovereign with regard to itself: the only Orient or Oriental or “subject” which could be admitted, at the extreme limit, is the alienated being, philosophically, that is, other than itself in relationship to itself, posed, understood, defined - and acted--- by others. (qtd. in Said, *Orientalism* 82)

The way Orientalism objectifies and interpellates the ‘Orientals’ or the ‘Orient’, and fixes its identity in relation to the ‘Occident’ is the most perceptible paradigm of this process of ‘othering’. At the same time, it serves to illustrate how the difference between the ‘Occident’ and the ‘Orient’ is dramatized and charged with social meaning so as to create a presumed ‘other’ who, according to Johannes Fabian, is “never simply given, never just found or encountered, but made (qtd.in Hallam & Street 1). To put it differently, there is no ‘other’ without the thought that defines it as such. It is a social and ideological construct to legitimize the authoritarian rule and that only exist through, or against, the powerful gaze of the dominant discourse (Gingrich 11).

This complex relationship between the ‘self’ and the ‘other’ thrives on power politics which defines the patterns of subordination and oppression. The most vital statistics in such politics is, “how power operates and who has power over whom” (qtd. in B. Mishra 226). Indeed, the asymmetrical power relations are the mainstay of the construction of the ‘other’, since only dominant groups are in the position to impose the value of their peculiarity and negate/nullify the individuality of the others. Rather than accepting the existence of the distinctive cultures, the dominant culture exploits the difference, exaggerating it to a heightened consciousness of power and privilege, a point affirmed by James Clifford: “‘Cultural’ difference is no longer a stable, exotic ‘otherness’; self-other relations are matters of power and rhetoric rather than of essence” (“Predicament”14). What Clifford emphasizes here is that the self-other relation is not a stable unitary category rather a shifting construct that is pursued and further radicalized in colonial and postcolonial context. In this respect, it is essential to recognize that the binary opposition of the ‘self-other’ is never neutral, but always hierarchical where the powerful, the ‘self’ is always privileged at the expense of the powerless, the ‘other’, as expressed in Childs’ & Fowler’s words:

the self – whether it is conceived as male, white, European or heterosexual – is constructed as the positive term. Conversely, the other – be it female, black, non-European or homosexual – is constructed as its negative reflection. (165).

Indeed, the construction of the ‘other’ that is intimately associated with the questions of power is rooted in the solipsistic negation or the devalorization of a debased ‘other’ and which can be used further not only to rationalize or legitimize certain discursive tendencies

and practices (colonialism, gender inequality, queer bashing) but also to normalize them (Beauvoir; Said; Butler). This is the reason why the notions of the ‘other’ and ‘othering’ have evolved as the most significant contributions to the feminist, postcolonial, cultural, minority, and queer studies.

In the face of shifting socio-spatial and material context, this construction of the ‘other’ can be perceived as a tendency of the dominant group to legitimize and maintain the existing power hierarchies. The phenomenal increase in globalization and migration is one of the factors exacerbating the politics of ‘othering’ that positions Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) into an asymmetrical relationship and prevents them from creating a sense of self and place. Over the years, the concerns relating to the exploitation and stereotyping of the communities of colour have received much attention by postcolonial authors, as can be seen from the literary oeuvres by Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley that are highly relevant for exploring how the ‘self-other’ dichotomies create a hostile and discriminatory environment for the Asian and the Black liminal Britons. Through a nuanced representation of the British mainstream society, both the authors have shown how the dominant culture reduces people of colour to mere clusters of physical characteristics and signs of difference – Asian dusky beauty, Oriental woman, exotic being, dark pigmented Afro-Caribbean, Afro hair texture, and the like and renders their individuality null and void. The racial and cultural hierarchy based on these differences has further led to the emergence of the notion of ‘Britishness’ that cast racial or cultural minorities into the role of the ‘other’, and has legitimized and normalized an uneven pattern of allocation of economic, cultural, and social values within white institutional spaces. Throughout their narratives, both Randhawa and Riley reveal the myth of cosmopolitanism in Britain, representing it as a place whose values and norms are strictly ethnocentric and Eurocentric, having no room for ‘cultural difference’. In doing so, these authors unravel the mechanism of ‘othering’ through which the West foists its socio-cultural norms and oppresses the racial and cultural minorities socially, economically, culturally, and psychologically. Through their novels, they shed light on how this process of ‘othering’ marginalizes immigrants and how these immigrants in turn deconstruct this discursive practice negotiating access to rights, protection, and resources while adjusting along the racial continuum.

The forms of ‘othering’ that communities of colour face while crossing borders and transgressing boundaries is explicitly demonstrated in Ravinder Randhawa’s *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987). Set in 1970, the novel encapsulates the experiences of the quintessential Asian Britons who find themselves located in a liminal spectrum, where they are compelled to negotiate their ‘otherness’. Constructing the novel around the polarized scenario of the ‘self-other’, the ‘insider-outsider’, and the ‘us-them’, Randhawa represents her characters as explicit examples of the silenced and invisible ‘others’, who despite being born or raised in Britain, are always considered as the cultural outcasts. The novel centers on the experiences of a British Asian subject, Kulwant Singh (Kuli), the protagonist of the novel, who faces the difficulties of growing up as an Asian in Britain. Despite her prolonged stay in Britain, she is considered as an outsider— a quintessential other who always remains on the fringes of the society. Her migration to the foreign shore has been compared with the experience of a fetus as articulated by Randhawa “You came over the sea. Cradled in water, day and night, just like a baby in a womb. And starting a new life. And hating it as much as a baby hates leaving the womb” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 50). This feeling of insecurity inherent in the experience of a fetus closely corresponds to the experiences of immigrants who are unable to gain acceptance by a society with norms defined by the white culture. The complexity of being a subject frequently overlooked is reflected in the experiences of Kulwant who, as the first Asian child in British school, “caught the school status symbol and gained the status of an old-fashioned, traditional Indian girl in pig-tails”, and “a plain and dumpy dowl...to be bitched about” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 5). Such negative stereotypes and formulaic images that the White construct about Asian immigrants create a heightened sense of consciousness among them and augment their feeling of being different from the mainstream of the society.

Kulwant’s growing awareness of her ‘otherness’, of being different from the norm makes her feel alienated and estranged, and instills in her a strong desire for equality and for embracing western mores. This desire for acceptance, equality, and respect leads her to engage in a love affair with the most coveted English boy of her school, Michael, who orientalizes her as the ‘Indian Princess’, ‘the mysterious oriental woman’, “the Mata Hari of his heart”(Randhawa, *Wicked* 6). Being hesitant to abandon her Asian culture, she

however rejects his marriage proposal and decides to settle for a traditional 'arranged marriage', which according to C. L. Innes is "the special feature of [Indianness] emphasized by the Europeans as the mark of difference and unacceptability" ("Wintering" 31). The metaphor of arranged marriage used by Randhawa highlights the ethnic differences among Asians and Whites, reinforcing the culturally embedded negative stereotypes. Kulwant's simultaneous desire and rejection for western culture articulates the complexity of British Asian existence that is marked by instability and bereft of any fixity.

Her arranged marriage, however, is not a success as the readers perceive later on. Her husband is engaged to a younger woman, Kurshid and Kulwant herself also indulges in an extramarital affair with a politician Mark. Initially she is unwilling to fall prey to another white man after Michael but later on she is charmed by Mark's wit and intelligence and readily engages with him in a political partnership which soon takes the shape of adultery. The sweetness of this illicit relationship turns bitter with the revelation of Mark's intentions who exploits Kulwant's exotic connections to fulfill his own political aspirations as expressed in the words of Kulwant, "Was I your contribution to anti-racism? Not only can you say 'some of my best friends are black [Ethnic Minorities]', but also 'some of my best lover'" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 167). She soon recognizes her marginal position within the hierarchy of power relations and leaves both the party and Mark –the relationship crudely ends with a hostile parting. The exploitative and discriminatory practices experienced by Kulwant draw attention to the dynamics of othering, suggesting that whether commodified as exotic objects or relegated to the status of invisibility, the Asians or the Orientals are constructed by a discourse that maintains a firm border between the 'self' and the 'other', rendering the latter unthinkable, unrepresentable, and incomprehensible. Such incomprehensible 'others', for Randhawa, belong to a community that is not even worthy of being defined as the negative opposition to an existing social norm. They are, in effect, the silenced and unrecognized lower strata of British society.

Kulwant's awareness of her position within this 'self-other' and 'insider-outsider' continuum compels her to shift effortlessly between different spaces to negotiate her difference. It is the complex realities of the Asian Britons' everyday experience of living in

Britain that leave her protagonist in a cultural limbo (void) and contributes to her unique predicament of estrangement. This alienation further gives rise to a sense of insecurity and persuades Kulwant to adopt different personas so as to shake off the uncanny image imposed on her by the mainstream English society (Innes, “Wintering”). Hence, to step out this uncanny image, she adopts the guise of a homeless old woman, walking with a stick and “oversized coat swaying around her, buffering the loneliness knocking at its threadbare fabric” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 113). She experiments with different personas by changing herself into an “Oxfam bag lady” by “procuring right accessories” and even tries to rub “the colour of her skin, which wasn’t ever going to rub off” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 31). The way Kulwant cast off her ethnic identity, her ‘otherness’ could be read as her deliberate attempts to identify with the ‘self’ simply to gain equality and dignity. Not only does she endeavour to step out of her clothes, but she also crosses the threshold to step out of her house to walk the streets to redefine the geographies of her past life. The disguise of an old tramp allows her to claim the benefit of a recognized ‘other’ - the persona of an elderly person that the society recognizes (Doring 259). As an old woman, she is the ‘other’ of youth, the one who is ignored, but to be ignored indicates her presence against the denied existence of a racial or cultural ‘other’— the most unconventional subjects, the nonconformists, who do not conform fully to the definition of ‘Britishness’.

Throughout the course of the novel, Randhawa provides many innuendoes to expose how such unconventional subjects are cast into the role of objects and are made to feel ‘othered’ from the mainstream: the old grandmother roasted to death, slowly, piece by painful piece; the medical student beaten into paralysis; the doctor knifed to death in his own car; the casual beatings on streets, in parks, pubs, anywhere (Randhawa, *Wicked* 158). Randhawa makes these experiences central to understand how the fraught relationship between the East (other) and the West (self) continues to build repressive ideologies that marginalize cultural minorities and keep them in a disadvantageous position of an outsider, thereby threatening the very existence of migrants and their upcoming generations. This complexity of being an outsider, of being a subject frequently overlooked is voiced through Kulwant’s eldest son, Anup, who lacks the courage “to step outside the threshold of the established order” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 117) and desires anonymity to escape his ‘othered’ position within the narrow constructions of Britishness. This kind of an escape from the

fact of being an Asian in a white environment, to which Fanon aptly refers to as “the fact of blackness” (Fanon, *Black Skin* 82) can be perceived as Anup’s awareness of his invisibility, of his unacknowledged existence, his uncanniness. This sense of invisibility that is woven throughout the novel is foregrounded by a discussion between Maya and Asha:

‘We’re making ourselves invisible, which is precisely what they want us to be. It’s like the old nigger in the book who says “Please massa, you’re right massa, I’m not here massa.”...Warming to her subject Maya is not to be silenced: ‘If we have a right to be here, don’t we have a right to be human, warts and all!’. (Randhawa, *Wicked* 123)

Drawing attention to this sense of ‘invisibility’, Randhawa imparts universality to the experiences of such British Asian subjects who are always the ‘others’ within the dominant discourses. Across the narrative, the author fictionalizes the experiences of several younger generation British Asians, struggling to gain acceptance and recognition in the society.

This awareness of ‘difference’ becomes an extremely painful personal encounter for Anup’s brother, Arvind as he endeavours to discover his place in a society where he finds himself situated within the politics of colour. In an attempt to negotiate his ‘othered’ position and to gain recognition, Arvind renames himself as Arnold and marries a white working-class English girl Shirley “not because he wanted to be English but because he hated to be Indian” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 106). This act of renaming oneself is indicative of the discomfort in bearing a name that marks him as an ‘other’. This difficulty of escaping the symbolic boundaries of the ‘self-other’, the ‘insider-outsider’ is further reflected through the character of Rani who transforms herself into Rosalind to cover up the aggression of being an outsider or of being considered as an inferior. The awareness of being an outsider complicates Rani’s sense of selfhood to the extent that she embraces the English culture and rejects her traditional Indian background, “Don’t you give me your Indian greeting, I was born on English soil you know. So what if my colour’s different? It’s an even sun-tan” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 95). Struggling to cope with her sense of self – Indian and British, Rani/Rosalind runs away from her home and chooses to live as an “urban nomad”, unfettered by any normative constraints, ending up living an anonymous life, ‘a ticket [to hide and]... to enter, voluntarily, into the mouth of this urban whale...[to] breathe and live in anonymity” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 161). She formulates her life to make a new

beginning with an alternative social position, but she fails to escape exploitation and descends into mental illness after two attempted rapes. After having killed the man who tried to rape her, she retreats from the society and is engulfed in the throes of an existential vacuum. What she did was to defend herself, but she finds herself in an unfortunate position of being accused of a murder since “this country don’t take too kindly to darkies hurtin’ one of their whities. Even if it was in self defence . . .” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 236). Her predicament cannot be understood without consideration of the conflicts that she faces as an outcome of being an immigrant situated within the community of the ‘other’. The exploitation and hostility that Rani/Rosalind is subjected to points to the ‘othering’ of people of colour that cannot be neglected or rendered imperceptible in the process of articulating issues universally.

In imparting universality to the issues of othering, marginalization, and exploitation, Randhawa weaves the stories of several other characters– Maya, Shanti, Ammi, Big Sis, Shazia and Angie– that run parallel to that of Rani so as to show the complexities and conflicts both within and outside communities in the British metropolis. All these different characters are connected not by a religion or a cultural background, but linked primarily, if not exclusively, by historical and political factors of colonisation and imperialism. They share similar predicaments of being an invisible ‘other’ in predominantly white spaces, thus confirming to Chris Weedon’s assertion that “whatever the internal problems and conflicts in the Asian community, differences become insignificant in the face of white racist oppression” (*Identity And Culture* 113). Weedon here emphasizes how the white oppressive discourse supersedes differences within Asian community and provides a shared basis for communal identification. This is reflected in the novel where Randhawa traces hegemonic white-centered narratives of Britishness through a series of loosely linked, unnumbered vignettes of life in Britain. Through an emphasis on homogeneity of the experiences among Black and Asian subjects, the author suggests that communities of colour, whether living in colonial, postcolonial, or neo-colonial times, always remain subject to discrimination, exploitation, violence and exclusion. Providing a realistic and insightful description of immigrant’s experiences, the author demonstrates how the politics of difference afflicts visible minorities, engendering an extreme sense of paranoia and void which may culminate in suicides, mental trauma, murders or other forms of counter reactions.

Demystifying the myth of cosmopolitanism, Randhawa thus reveals a variety of complexities of being an liminal individual in a land where the rhetoric of ‘otherness’ triggers the dehumanization and disenfranchisement of communities of colour, leading to an existential void– a by-product of migration.

The existential void of immigrants who are living in constellations of non-recognition is further explored in Randhawa’s young adult novel, *Beauty and the Beast* (2014) which provides an insight into the tensions and ambiguities of the twenty-first century Britain, offering a lucid critique of the ways in which the notion of the ‘other’ continues to feature within the mainstream culture. The narrative is an excellent work of Randhawa, which explicitly explores what it means to grow up and live in Britain as an ethnic minority; what are the affective and emotional entanglements emerging within the cross-cultural context. Set in 1990s, the novel traces “the difficulty of escaping stereotyped identities imposed by the dominant white society” (Innes, *Wintering* 30). What Randhawa challenges in the novel, is the “deeply ingrained old pattern of label-fitting and label-fighting” (Dhingra 103). Such a stance that “challenges, resists, and transforms the dominant regimes of representation” (Hall, “New Ethnicities” 163-4) is widely exemplified in her writing.

The novel is centered on Harjinder/Hari-jan, a charismatic British born Asian subject who faces the difficulties of growing up as an Asian in Britain, as she not only has to come to terms with her difference, but also has to meet the high expectations invested in her by her parents. Harjinder’s mother is quite aware of her daughter’s inner conflict, as can be seen in the novel where her mother explains the conflicting challenges of being a British Asian subject:

It must be difficult living in England, yet being Indian.’ [...] ‘It must be hard to um...negotiate between the two’ [...] ‘You know what it’s like as soon as you step out of that door. It’s like having to struggle through an extra, invisible layer. Sometimes the racism is just nasty and obvious and hits you bang in the face; sometimes it’s thin and vague, other times it’s like everything’s clear and shiny, but it gets you, just under the surface.’ ‘you’d better learn how to be strong’.
(Randhawa, *Beauty* 14-15)

This excerpt clearly reveals how complex negotiations between the two cultures coupled with entrenched racism may affect the younger South Asians sense of place and self. It is indeed this sense of place – not solely the physical dwelling space but at times the psychological and emotional one – that prevents her from creating a sense of an emotional security and denies a harmonious relationship between herself and the outside world.

This emotional insecurity, the complexity of being an outsider, an ‘other’ is more emphatic in the case of the Muslim immigrants as illustrated through Harjinder’s friend Gazala/Gazzy who moves into adulthood with a growing awareness of her difference. Through her experiences, Randhawa reflects on profound affective tension that accompanies the lives of the Muslim immigrants as expressed in the words of Gazala:

One look at me and the whole world knows what I am. Or think they do - ‘fundamentalist, extremist, frightening ...’ You think it's easy to walk down the street, go into a shop? You think it's easy to go off for my prayers with everyone looking and sniggering. (Randhawa, *Beauty* 36)

Gazala’s ‘otherness’, the stigma of being considered as an ‘outsider’ characterizes almost every aspect of her existence – from her clothes to her ethnicity to her citizenship status. The suffering that Gazala experiences can be paralleled to what Sneja Gunew describes as a newly translated “structure of feeling”- *han* (183), a kind of ‘social suffering’ which he defines as an “intensity of suffering and frustration yoked to plural as well as specific histories of political exploitation linked to dense substrata of national groups enduring colonialism and other forms of oppression” (185). It is a predicament that is composed not only of individual elements but also linked to people and communities who live on the margins of society; who are perennially considered as ‘outsiders’ by virtue of their colour, race, and ethnicity. The exclusion and stigmatization of racial minorities in the dominant culture is so intense that Gazala’s suffering can directly be identified with *han*. Gazala’s cultural identity makes her vulnerable to negative stereotypes and prejudices even from her friend Harjinder who is skeptical of Gazzy’s intentions of organizing a Diwali party, “What’s a Muslim doing organising a Hindu festival?” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 95). She is doubtful of Gazzy’s desire to “unite with others” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 95), of Gazzy’s ‘multicultural pack’ or ‘mini-United Nations -Jews, Greeks, English, Afro-Caribbean, Asian boys and girls – who are together celebrating Diwali: “this lot is going to plan

Diwali? They don't know the first thing about it" (Randhawa, *Beauty* 120). Harjinder's words are like thrusting a pebble into the pond of Gazala's consciousness—the gesture produced reverberations consistent with Islamic fundamentalism. However, she challenges Harjinder's skepticism by questioning, "I do what I choose to do. I choose to unite with others. And what makes you think I don't want to have fun? Because of what I wear? Because I pray five times a day? Who's into racist stereotypes now?" (Randhawa, *Beauty* 95). The hostility that Gazala perceives in those around her points to the way how a particular religion is seen internationally or especially here in Britain. Of interest here are the emotional responses that such negative attitudes or gestures elicit and the ensuing affective tension that can result in an intense sensitivity to the shaming of the nation as well as of race. In exploring the affective dispositions of living in the constellation of anti-immigrant discourses, Randhawa reveals how the feeling of shame in relation to one's culture and religion may erase the manifestations of pride and self-esteem. By virtue of being a quintessential 'other', Gazala faces continuous challenges to her existence, as expressed in her own words: "I feel like I'm in new territory, so I can't depend on anything" (Randhawa, *Beauty* 34-35). These lines adequately articulate the complex realities and the everyday experience faced by new generation Britons. Even in her school, Gazala experiences hostile attitudes by two fellows:

It was break time at school as I zigzagged my way through the crowded corridors... I glimpsed two stupid yobos peering in through a door window; giggling and making funny little gestures with their hands...they meant to be loud and meant Gazzy to hear them.(Randhawa, *Beauty* 59)

Despite being a British citizen, she has to face harassment based on her actual or perceived non-conformity. Her skin tone, her *hijab*² and *abaya*³, the visible marker of her cultural difference fix her identity as an extremist, fundamentalist, 'other' in the white cultural space and exclude her from the definition of Britishness. Through this insightful depiction of Ghazala's predicament, Randhawa articulates the concern posed by Bharati Mukherjee: "First, you don't exist. Then you're invisible. Then you're funny. Then you're disgusting" (26). These lines explicitly illustrate the complexity of being embedded

²headscarf generally worn by Muslim women

³a full-length gown generally worn by Muslim women

within the spectrum of non-recognition and illegibility. Like Panna, the protagonist in Bharati Mukherjee's *A Wife's Story* (1988), Ghazala, as a cultural 'other', confronts the contradictory forces that impinge on her social and personal life. The white ideology and power structures embedded in British cultural space influence migrants' lives in a variety of ways, forcing them to live in a perpetual state of an outsider or an 'other'. Through the experiences of her characters, Randhawa contextualizes immigrants' survival and their disruptive encounter with the notion of the 'other', demonstrating the fact that the life for British Asian subjects continues to be a struggle to carve out even a simple and meager existence.

Like *A Wicked Old woman*, and *Beauty and the Beast*, Randhawa's third novel *The Coral Strand* (2001), is also preoccupied with the politics of 'othering', an intrinsically hostile framework that perpetually relegates people of colour to a position of marginality. The fact that the novel oscillates between two historical contexts – 1990 London and pre-independent 1940 India, provides a double perspective on the complex process of power politics, hegemony, and class struggle and allows Randhawa to historicize the issue of othering. The novel problematizes the notion of 'other' as a challenge to immigrants who are indelibly marked with visual markers of difference – 'insider and outsider', 'us and them', 'West and the rest', and the 'normal and deviant'. The negative figuration, stigmatization, and white supremacy that feed exclusion and discrimination of ethnic minority communities are universalized in both the contemporary and the historical period of the narrative. The novel is structured as a series of vignettes providing insights into the lives of diverse characters who, as quintessential 'others', face a continuous challenge to their very existence.

Engaging with the ideology of white supremacy, the novel explores the quotidian struggles against exploitation and marginalization and innumerable moments of dehumanization that characterize the experiences of Asian immigrants. Grappling with processes of othering', stereotyping, and stigmatization, the novel chronicles the experiences of a young woman named Sita/the Ferret, who is raised in the Victorian house in Britain by an English woman, Emily, and her Indian servant, Champa. From the very beginning of the narrative, the readers perceive how the dominant culture neutralizes

the existence of visible minorities and denies them subjectivity and the defining characteristics of the 'self'. The novel begins with a reference to the dehumanization of Sita who is remembering her childhood days in the Victorian house which she calls "Mausoleum" and where she has been scolded and humiliated with the words "gutter ki batchi, vermin of the sewers" (Randhawa, *Coral* 2). Sita along with Champa has been brought over to London by Emily who always tries to stigmatize them with a sense of white supremacy considering herself from 'over here' and the latter from 'over there': "This [Old Spice] is for the girls like you, from Over There. Look it says 'spice' on it, so it's especially for you" or "You don't know all the things I know from Over There" (Randhawa, *Coral* 2, 9). Constructing the novel around the dichotomized rubrics of 'self-other', 'here-there', and 'ruler-ruled', Randhawa illustrates how Emily controls and manipulates 'others' particularly Champa and Sita, while retaining the dominant position in the Mausoleum: "[Sita] Gutter children don't go to school...You are lucky here in Great Britain, where else they give free schooling to the wretched" (Randhawa, *Coral* 34). Relegating Sita to a 'disobedient worm' and 'gutter ki batchi', Emily keeps humiliating her and makes her feel different from the norm. Randhawa makes these experiences central to understand how the processes of stigmatization and dehumanization deny the basic human rights to the putative 'other' and how this 'other' in turn internalizes the sense of his/her own inferiority to which Fanon refers to as the "epidermalization of inferiority" that entails emulating the norms and dictates of the perpetrators (*Black Skin* xiii). In Fanon's views, it is the "dynamic of inferiority" that persuades the black and Asian subjects "to emulate the white man, to become like him, and thus hope to be accepted as a man" (*Black Skin* xiii). This dynamic of inferiority is explicit in the novel, wherein Champa and Sita are forced to take on implicitly the western forms of expression and behaviour.

Since colonization, the whites have recognized that the power to construct or manipulate images is the power that legitimizes and sustains the discursive system of domination and discrimination. This is reflected in the novel where Emily reinforces white supremacy by constructing images of India, re-inscribing patterns of colonial power and hegemony, where the 'other' is always objectified, interpreted, represented, taken over by those in power. This tendency of the 'self' to define the 'other' and its

culture leads to the construction of a narrative in which the difference or the alterity of the 'other' is considered as something that must be maintained and overemphasized so as to achieve and sustain authority and domination. In Stuart Hall's views, such misrepresentations that rationalize the justification of the white supremacy can only be understood by analyzing the nexus between domination and power:

[...] in Said's "orientalist" sense, were we constructed as different and other within the categories of knowledge of the West by those regimes. They had the power to make us see and experience ourselves as 'Other'. Every regime of representation is a regime of power formed ...by the fatal couplet, 'power/knowledge'. It is one thing to position a subject or set of peoples as the Other of a dominant discourse. It is quite another thing to subject them to that 'knowledge', not only as a matter of imposed will and domination, by the power of inner compulsion and subjective con-formation to the norm. ("Cultural Identity" 225-226)

The power and knowledge nexus that Hall points to is epitomized in Emily's relationship with Champa, Sita, her mother, and many other characters in the novel. Denying them subjectivity and representing them as "undifferentiated mass" (Branach-Kallas 141), Emily relegates British Asian subjects to the status of invisibility or non-existence as is evidenced in the case of Sita's mother- who had been Emily's servant, is simply 'The Girl': the unacknowledged subject who is denied even the rights of self-definition (Upstone 68). Such subjects who are robbed of their individuality become what Judith Butler refers to as "the unintelligible" subjects who exists "between the norm and its failure" (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 74). Such a perspective is clearly mirrored in the character of 'The Girl' who is neither the 'self' nor the 'other'; who does not have the right of being defined as a negative subject. For such unintelligible subjects, however, the problem is not of being identified as unacceptable but rather as not being a subject at all (Butler, *Undoing Gender* 48). It is, indeed, this sense of unintelligibility of Black and Asian bodies that Butler calls attention to and that Randhawa theorizes throughout her fiction to highlight how this feeling may further lead to various psychological-emotional disorders in cultural minorities. Part of this trauma is intense mental suffering, which serves to create a feeling of nothingness in such unintelligible subjects, particularly in Sita: "Over there...Sita had come to hate over there" (Randhawa, *Coral* 12) or "I'm not over There. I'm sick of Over There. I'm sick of your hand-me downs" (Randhawa, *Coral* 107). The stereotypical,

controlling images of Sita, who is described in relation to a mythical 'over there', are indicative of the ways in which Emily re-inscribes white supremacy to uphold her position of power and to perpetuate domination. The forms of 'othering' that Sita experiences as a quintessential 'other' and as a result of her illegitimacy and unknown genealogy illustrate how the practice of ruling and enslaving others for generations has created an ideology of power, dominance, and authority in the brains of Whites that persists even in the contemporary scenario. The experience of everyday dehumanization and discrimination persuades Sita to run away from Emily's house or 'The Mausoleum'. After running away from Emily's house, she quickly learns survival strategies and uses her agency in a way that defies these discursive processes.

Since the narrative is also set in the 1940 pre-independent Bombay, the question of the interpellation or controlling images of Asians becomes a critical and prominent theme in the novel wherein India has been represented as a land of opportunity, "[where] there is gold all over the place, in the land itself ... Bangles as thick as your arm, necklaces you could use to weigh pounds of potatoes... The natives dress in rags, live in huts, with their animals" (Randhawa, *Coral* 63). Through these constructed images, Randhawa illustrates the tendency of whites to project their own notions, prejudices, and fantasies to define or misrepresent the Orient which is for them, "a place of romance, exotic beings, haunting memories and landscapes, remarkable experiences" (Said, *Orientalism* 1). The stereotypical portrayal of Randhawa's characters exemplifies the ways in which Oriental women are represented in the colonial/Occidental fantasies:

[Indian] girls matured early and ready for a man when English girl were still in pinafores... the dusky beauties driven by animalistic desires who'd been trained to please men, who knew all the pleasures of the flesh, and could take a man to paradise. (Randhawa, *Coral* 59)

These lines point to the ways in which Asian women are objectified as exotic creatures for sexual pleasure who held the key to a myriad of mysterious erotic delights. What is more, such fetishistic representations that exoticize and eroticize Asian women for the gratification of the white men, could be understood as a way of appropriating and commodifying the 'otherness' or the 'exoticness' of those not recognized as part of dominant culture. It is this commodification and fetishization of 'otherness' or difference

that hooks identifies as the process of “eating the other”, where the culture as well as the bodies of the ‘other’ are “offered up as new dishes to enhance the white palate...[where] the ‘Other’ will be eaten, consumed, and forgotten” (“Eating” 380). It is the desire to experience the exoticness of dusky Asian beauties that leads Thomas Miller, Emily’s husband to indulge in a sexual relationship with Champa, a whore whose unconventional body becomes an object of sexual desire. Though this illicit relationship ends after Thomas Miller’s death, the secret connection between Champa and Emily’s husband creates a connection between these two women, a relation not of solidarity or coalition but of ‘self’ and ‘other’, of ‘sameness’ and ‘difference’, of ‘knowledge’ and ‘ignorance’, of ‘ruler’ and ‘ruled’- a re-configuration of Hegel’s ‘Master-Slave dialectic’, an unequal relationship of power wherein the existence of the ‘self’ is premised on that which is ‘other’ to it. Emily’s perverse machinations– the commodification, exoticization and exploitation of the ‘others’– enable such configurations to remain in motion. The English Rose Garden, a brothel run by Emily, becomes a place for consuming the ‘other’, or what hooks identifies as a process of commodification:

The commodification of Otherness has been so successful because it is offered as a new delight, more intense, more satisfying than normal ways of doing and feeling. Within commodity culture, ethnicity becomes spice, seasoning that can liven up the dull dish that is mainstream white culture. (hooks, “Eating” 366)

The exoticization and romanticization of the ‘other’ thus serve as a powerful component for the dominance of white culture. It is reflected in the way Emily exploits the exoticness of Asian women and makes profits from the brothel, a ‘Palace of Delights’, and thus reaffirms her power over the exotic ‘other’. Through such examples of commodification of the ‘others’, Randhawa reveals the layered accounts of ‘othering’, exposing the ways in which the ‘exoticness’ of the ‘other’ is fetishized and commodified as a resource for pleasure. Such discursive practices that reinscribe western hegemony draw attention to the fact that ‘otherness’ is both an instrument and an effect (outcome) of power, a mechanism for the manipulation of undifferentiated mass. Viewed in this light, power is a productive force that shapes in particular who is the ‘other’, since only the dominant groups that is ‘Whites’ are in a position to construct the ‘other’: the self who arbitrarily represents ‘other’; exploits ‘other’; and also silences ‘other’. It is precisely these untidy power relations that underpin

the ‘othering’ of unconventional bodies and that Randhawa problematizes throughout the course of her novels. Such power structures operate in the novel in manifold ways, taking on specific forms in specific cases. In portraying the intricate details of such dynamics, Randhawa provides multiple versions of othering— be it through Champa, The Girl, Sita or the golden boy, Gopal, suggesting that whether commodified as exotic objects or relegated to the extent of subhumanity, the Asians or the Orientals are defined by a discourse which exaggerates or essentializes their ‘otherness’ and renders them as cultural, economic, and social outcasts. In a society, deeply influenced by traditional white notions of Britishness, where othering, discrimination, and exclusion of ‘other’ are legitimate, it is challenging for cultural minorities to seek assimilation and integration.

While Randhawa addresses the problematic configuration of the ‘self-other’ and reveals how it operates as a cultural politics of exclusion, Joan Riley brings to the fore the psychological ramifications of such configurations on black immigrants, unraveling more complex formulations of ‘otherness’ that render visible minorities invisible. Riley’s writings are profoundly concerned with the marginalization, stigmatization, and dehumanization of black communities and the affective disorders resulting thereof. Such affective disorders are central to Riley’s depiction of the female subjects and are treated extensively in her debut novel, *The Unbelonging* (1985) wherein she depicts a powerful and emotive portrayal of the visceral and embodied effects of non-recognition and illegibility.

Interrogating the role of the Afro-Caribbeans as the quintessential ‘others’ in terms of their appearance— weight, skin tone, hair-texture, the author focuses on the experiences of growing up and living in the constellations of anti-Black and anti-immigrant discourses; the emotional cost (affect) of being embedded within the spectrum of non-recognition and illegibility. Grappling with issues of dehumanization, stigmatization, and microaggression, she demonstrates how the politics of ‘othering’ that characterize the everyday lives of Afro-Caribbean immigrants in Britain prevents them from creating a sense of self, and making it difficult for them to navigate the structural inequalities. The novel chronicles the experiences of eleven-year-old Hyacinth Williams who has been brought over from her native land Jamaica to live with her father in Britain where she is subjected to stereotypical

readings as the quintessential other and is inevitably thrown into a hostile environment, referred to as the “contact zone” by Mary Louise Pratt:

The space of colonial encounters, the space in which peoples geographically and historically separated come into contact with each other and establish ongoing relations, usually involving conditions of coercion, radical inequality, and intractable conflict. (8)

In her first cold and frightening experience with this ‘contact zone’, Hyacinth soon becomes aware of being a black person in a world of almost exclusive whiteness: “There had been a sea of white faces everywhere, all hostile. She had known they hated her, and she had felt small, lost and afraid” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 13). These lines give a true account of the embodied nature of being Black in white spaces, a feeling of inferiority and cultural bereavement that traumatizes her throughout her life. Like Randhawa’s characters, Kulwant and Ghazala, Hyacinth finds herself trapped in an immediate and sustained environment of hardship in which her ‘otherness’, her black body is uncanny and out of place. Her cultural identity, her blackness makes her an object of derision within the cultural landscape of English society.

As a black child in school, she confronts open hostility from both the fellow pupils and white authorities, and becomes “the butt of many jokes, taunts and cruel tricks” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 12). These steady onslaughts of verbal abuse from her white schoolmates often turn into physical assaults as can be seen from an incident where Hyacinth’s fellow mate, Margaret White hits her in the ground with no obvious cause, while screaming “Kill the wog!” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 15-16). Through Hyacinth’s demeaning experience of being hailed as a wog, Riley brings to the fore the affective dimensions of stigmatization– how it feels to be the subject of varying modes of dehumanization. There are many recurrences of such slurs and pejorative terms used against her: they “mimic her accent”, call her a “wog” a “nigger” and even ask her to “go back to the jungle where [she] come[s] from” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 19-20). Through such humiliating experiences of Hyacinth, Riley focuses on the myriad ways in which black people are subject not only to discrimination but also to the subtler, arguably more insidious quotidian violence. The everyday experiences of Hyacinth also point to the ways in which the dominant culture consistently negates black existence, relegating them to the status of invisibility and illegibility.

Throughout the novel, Riley focuses on the perennial plight and struggle of Hyacinth against the processes of exclusion and discrimination, thus illustrating Barbara Shaw Perry's statement, "whether [Hyacinth] is on the playground or in the classroom, she cannot find refuge from the ...[dehumanization] and hatred that circulate around her". What is more, the author highlights the teachers' indifferent and prejudiced attitude towards Hyacinth's situation. Instead of preventing Hyacinth from such discursive practices, the teachers, who seem more or less to be complicit in this process, show no concern and deliberately overlook such abuses in classroom or school premises. These everyday experiences of stigmatization and dehumanization, that are more likely to be perceived as micro-aggressions, point to the ways in which black existence is beset by violence at every level. Such humiliating practices that occur in every conceivable sphere— in the classroom, at the playground, in the reception centre, and later in college— effectively negates any sense of kinship between Hyacinth and the surrounding world as expressed in her own words: "It's awful being different, and she hated the way people in the village near her home would nudge each other and stare when she passed ... if only she could belong" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 68). This stigma of being an 'outsider', of being different from the norm creates a heightened sense of consciousness in Hyacinth exacerbating her sense of fear, shame, and estrangement and intensifies her resolution "to never end up here again" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 89). Indeed, she finds no other choice but to avoid white people as much as she can: she chooses to spend her break times alone, segregating herself from others and standing "in her customary position, huddled against the soot-stained wall of the science block" or "huddling against a wall shivering with cold (Riley, *Unbelonging* 14, 15), or standing "in her usual spot against the wall" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 31). This imagery of 'wall', constructed by Riley, is a metaphor of confinement that symbolizes black suffering and demonstrates how the processes of marginalization and dehumanization serve to exclude black minorities from surrounding world and obstructs their way to move ahead in life.

Besides contextualizing Hyacinth's complexities of living in Britain against the backdrop of colour politics, Riley approaches the theme of incest which magnifies Hyacinth's victimization. The narrative provides many innuendoes to expose the sexual abuse of Hyacinth by her father, Lawrence Williams who vents his frustration on Hyacinth

and on his second wife Maureen. As critic Isabel Carera Suarez aptly puts it: “The frustration or sheer hatred of whites is discharged on black men, who then discharge their own on black women” (293). This process is continued in *The Unbelonging* by Williams whose abusive behaviour towards the women of the house can be seen an indirect result of his own victimization within the white institutional spaces. Throughout the course of the novel, Riley provides subtle nuances which allude to Williams’ exposure to white prejudice, exploitation, and discrimination. Such structural entrapment of black males triggers their feelings of insecurity and motivates them to participate in violence and sexual abuse against women. The violent behavior of Williams thus can be perceived as a way to regain his power and authority in his family, as Hyacinth insinuates, “he sounded annoyed, as if the night had not been successful. She prayed that he would find nothing wrong, no excuse to take out his frustration on her” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 60). Owing to his own traumatic experiences, Williams ends up victimizing others as a way to deal with his frustration and discontentment. Denouncing this dominant narrative that advertently or inadvertently produces and legitimizes violence against women, bell hooks posits, “the black man who had seen himself as the loser in the all-male competitive struggle with white men for status and power could show a trump card – he was the ‘real’ man because he could control ‘his’ woman” (*Ain’t* 96). According to hooks, the patriarchal stance of black men is not merely an acceptance of the myth that as a male they have an inherent right to power and privilege, rather, it can be seen as an outcome of their thwarted self– the loss of power and authority– within the mainstream of the society. Their expressions of rage and anger are, in fact, a reaction against the fact that their power has not been recognized in social hierarchy, and their subjugation of women is just a way to demonstrate that they are the dominant figure in the black family. Such black men who are fragmented by their exploitation in the mainstream of the society exercise authority in home to satiate their desire for power and to compensate for their ruptured selves. This quest for self is mirrored in Hyacinth’s father who while exercising his authority and power in home, sexually harasses Hyacinth, plunging her in a stressful and suffocating situation that adds to the intensity of her sufferings and traumatizes her forever. What Riley emphasizes here is the “double colonization” (Rutherford and Peterson) of Hyacinth who is a victim of English dominant power on one hand and that of the patriarchal order on the other. The ways in

which multiple structures of domination shape black women's social and personal lives give rise to the notion of "intersectionality", a concept discussed further at length in Chapter V.

Later in the novel when Hyacinth manages to escape from her father's home, she is provided with a lodging by the social services, but even here she is exposed to physical as well as verbal assault by Sylvia, her white housemate and Mr. Cluft, her house supervisor who stigmatize her calling 'nigger' and 'wog'. Rather than showing concern, her house-owner Auntie Susan ignores such incidents and directs racial slurs at Hyacinth, "I will not allow *you* to come here and establish *jungle law*!" (Riley, *Unbelonging*76; my emphasis). In this instance, Hyacinth, the racialized '*you*' is perceived through an anti-Black logic wherein the black people are always already unduly, irrationally 'violent' and 'angry'. Hyacinth's anger, as a response to the psychic and physical violence that she experiences, has no audience; instead, it is received as absurd, a sign of madness and sub-humanity. In such instances where Hyacinth responds to the slights against her very being (racial slurs, violence, and humiliation) with anger, frustration, and annoyance, she is dehumanized and her response is only legible as irrational black anger, excessive affect. As Jared Sexton affirms, "The intramural affairs of the Black life world ... [are] invisible, inaudible, illegible—indeed unthought—in the world, to the extent that Black life unfolds 'out of the world' by definition". Throughout the novel, the interiority of Hyacinth is constantly neglected by the projection of 'anger'. She comes to stand as the site of excess affect and hyper emotionality, while her actual feelings, emotions, and desires go unrecognized or unnoticed: "because I am black. I have to take the blame for everything" (Riley, *Unbelonging*77) The negligence of Hyacinth's emotions is indicative of what Tyrone S. Palmer theorizes as "the fundamental opacity and unthinkability of black affect" (32). This inability to read or perceive black emotions, the sheer denial of black sentience, as illustrated in the *The Unbelonging* is rooted in an anti-Black discourse, wherein the expression of black affect is seen as excessive, and/or inadequate, reifying blackness— as infra-humanity.

Caught in the constellations of anti-Black discourses, Hyacinth repents her stay in Britain where she finds herself "trapped, sandwiched between the hate and spite of the white world and the dark dingy evil that was the house of her father" (Riley, *Unbelonging*

51). The physical, verbal, and sexual violence that she experiences in London augments her emotional and physical estrangement, leading to an existential void. Throughout the course of the novel, Riley not only highlights Hyacinth's pervasive sense of being a quintessential 'other' but also parallels this experience with her persistent bed-wetting which signifies her loss of control over the functions of her body. As it is explicit in the novel where she is extremely scared of her step mother's anger as she has wet the bed again:

She stayed where she was, incapable of response, of obedience, for a few moments. The woman [Hyacinth's step mother] shifted menacingly, and Hyacinth could sense the angry impatience within her. It mobilised her, caused her to push her legs to the floor in an automatic motion. Her whole body was mechanical, twisting jerkily, legs shifting, feet lowered to cold floorboards ...the angle of her body was tense and awkward with expectation. (Riley, *Unbelonging* 11)

This spilling over is symbolic of Hyacinth's disengagement with her present, or in Brian Massumi's words the unmediated bodily intensities that remain unseen, unnoticed, and unrecognized in plain sight. Underscoring the psychic toll of living under the constant threat of violence, Riley brings into focus the profound tensions that accompany the lives of black minorities. By focusing on the affective dimension of being embedded within the spectrum of non-recognition and illegibility, the author deftly theorizes the embodied nature of being a black person in a white society.

Moreover, such dehumanizing processes are seen to have a detrimental effect on Hyacinth's psychological wellbeing that cause in her the feelings of embarrassment and guilt, eventually leading to a wistful desire to return to Jamaica to be with black people because, "There [In Jamaica] her colour didn't matter, for everyone else was the same" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 68). Her blackness— weight, skin tone, hair-texture — as a physical marker of her 'otherness' not only makes her an object of derision within British cultural landscape but also triggers the emotions of shame and inferiority. Through her protagonist's plight of not being accepted, Riley highlights how the pressure for cultural conformity can be detrimental for black minorities, who ultimately end up internalizing white cultural myths that rationalize the practice of 'othering'. This internalization has its own negative consequences which often transmutes into 'self-othering', as expressed in the words of Corhay-Ledent, "Hyacinth is very much a product of English racism against coloured immigrants who, as a consequence of racial hostility, are made to reject and despise their own racial group and finally their own selves as well" (508). Having learnt to

despise her own self, Hyacinth develops a sense of insecurity and a very unstable perception of her own self-worth as a black woman and consequently disassociates herself from black community, since ‘blackness’ for Hyacinth, is associated with “violence, aggressiveness, dirt, lack of education, drink, poverty” (Suarez 296). Her hatred towards her own culture, her sense of insecurity and lack of self-worth are indicative of affective responses of her stigmatization and dehumanization.

Even in college, when she is surrounded by other black students, including the Caribbean and African students, she is unable to relate to her peers. She has internalized the white stereotypes to the extent that she is contemptuous of Africans, whom she considers backward and inferior to the West Indians and avoids them whenever possible. However, she becomes friendly with a Jamaican girl, Perlene and some Indian girls, since “they made her feel included” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 84). What is more, she experiences a kind of relief as “the spite and name-calling [is] reserved for the Indians” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 66). On the other hand, it reminds her of her own struggle as a black immigrant, “bringing back memories of the circling crowd, the faces of hate and anger bearing down on her” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 83). Such hostility and dehumanization that is endemic in British cultural space prevent racial ‘others’ like Hyacinth from fully integrating into the mainstream and forecloses the possibility of a cosmopolitan society. The violence, hatred, and humiliation Hyacinth experiences in these spaces keep her a cultural outcast, an ‘unintelligible’ subject who fails to fit into the environment. Thus, in a society where blackness is considered as an essential marker of ‘otherness’, the only solace for her is the hope of returning to Jamaica, a place far from “the rejection and all the uncertainty” she experiences in Britain (Fischer, 112). At the end of the novel, Hyacinth does return to her place of birth in the hope of seeking recognition and acceptance. However, her return is eerily similar to her arrival in London: “She was painfully aware of the eyes peering from the other shacks, the hostility all around her, shapes circling suspiciously, out of sight, yet glimpsed out of the corner of her eye” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 137). In Jamaica, where she hopes to achieve a unified sense of self, she experiences the sense of alienation and hostility and is again marked as ‘other’ or different with her ‘plated hairs’ and ‘speaky-spokey ways’. Her return to Jamaica turns out to be a catastrophe, a site of denial and denigration. It is really unfortunate that in her own ancestral land, she becomes an ‘outsider’, or what Patteson labels as “the ultimate

alien, the tourist” (Patteson 129) and is rejected by her own friend, Florence, “Go back where you come from. We don’t like foreigners in a J.A” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 142). This rejection of Hyacinth by her childhood friend furthers her sense of ‘otherness’ intensifying her outsider status, preventing her from fully integrating to either of the two cultures. Riley details the overwhelming sensory experience of this dilemmatic situation as such:

She felt rejected, unbelonging. Where was the acceptance she had dreamt about, the going home in a triumph to a loving, indulgent aunt? Was what she had suffered for? ...There was a wringing pain in her chest, and tension made her jaw ache as tears refused to fall from burning eyes. But inside she cried, pain-racked sobs that made breathing hard and walking a labored thing. She wondered if they all noticed her pain, the people in the street glaring their hate, the curious taxi-driver. She felt exposed, her blackness ugly and rejected even among her own kind. (Riley, *Unbelonging* 142)

Hyacinth’s reaction— a clear expression of grief, despair, depression, vulnerability, disbelief, inferiority, hatred, anxiety— can be read as an excessive emotional response, the affective dispositions that emerge in response to her complete denial and denigration. Indeed, her life remains fraught with painful struggles of acceptance, marked by a sustained environment of hardship and denigration in which she remains trapped in a whirlpool of estrangement, be it in a foreign milieu like the metropolitan of Great Britain or in her native country, Jamaica.

In *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987), Riley continues to explore the complexities of what it means to be a Black, an ‘outsider’ in a predominantly white society. Through a more rigorous and nuanced critique of the process of ‘othering’, Riley calls into question Britain’s cosmopolitanism while representing it as a nation where white culture hinders the social integration of ethnic communities, pushing them to the edge of the society. The marginalization and dehumanization of Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities recreate the colonial narrative, since the people from the postcolonial societies who have migrated to England, are marked with a stamp of ‘otherness’, and thus are considered as cultural outcasts. For such communities, the hue of their blackness becomes a source of their marginalization, exclusion, and oppression, thus limiting their opportunities and means for survival. Some of these struggles of migrants’ survival figure prominently in *Waiting in the Twilight*.

In contextualizing the experiences of Afro-Caribbean immigrants, Riley sheds light on the affective entanglements of living in anti-immigrant and anti-Black discourses. The novel chronicles the lives of a middle-aged Jamaican woman Adella and her husband Stanton who face constant belittling and humiliation at the hands of white people. The opening paragraphs of the narrative plunge the readers into Adella's struggle against the hardships of being a black immigrant: "Dey can help it....Dey doan care how hard a haffe work" (Riley, *Waiting* 1). These images form the core of the novel, where Adella crippled by a stroke at 34, is forced to endure the drudgery of working as a cleaning woman so that she can keep her five children clothed and fed. After being deserted by Beresford, the father of her first two children, Adella voluntarily migrates to Britain to join her husband, Stanton because she has "heard of people going off to England...heard that country was so rich you could pick money off the street" (Riley, *Waiting* 118). Unlike Hyacinth, who unwillingly migrates to London, Adella and Stanton are among those who have come voluntarily to this country in the hope of fulfilling their dreams for a better life away from Jamaica. Likewise, Mr. Weston, Adella's former lodger in Jamaica, sees London "as a chance to escape, as a way to make the money he would never earn in Jamaica" (Riley, *Waiting* 126). However, such expectations are shattered when they find themselves trapped in an immediate environment of 'otherness', striving to live a decent and meaningful life. For those such as Adella and Stanton, who are the undesirable 'other' within the social and cultural space of Britain, the journey to the West is full of challenges and obstacles punctuated with pain, anguish, denial and denigration. Apart from Adella, many Afro-Caribbean immigrants have left the continent to pursue their dreams and aspirations in Britain which they expected to be a utopian society possessing highly desirable or nearly perfect qualities for its members. But here they are exposed to a stark 'otherness' that not only stops them from pursuing their dreams and careers but also denies them access to basic services, including health, education, and better opportunities. Their dreams of a better future are shattered as Britain, the utopia of an ideal life, proves out to be a dystopian place marked by inequalities, oppression, and poverty with little or no hope for improvement.

Through her central characters, Adella and Stanton, Riley gives voice to the experiences of black immigrants who strive to be a part of a changing global order— a

major preoccupation of migrant literature in general and of African literature in particular. In analyzing the nuances of immigrant experiences, the author exposes how the discursive processes of marginalization and exploitation has thwarted immigrants' fantasies of a romanticized future and their dreams of a big-city life. By virtue of being a body of colour in predominantly white spaces, Stanton is trapped in a hostile surrounding where he is constantly reminded of his difference, his 'otherness'; where he is forced to adopt an occupation from which he derives no satisfaction: "Stanton was bright and had been a carpenter in Jamaica and it was only because there were no jobs like that for black men in England that he had to work on the buses" (Riley, *Waiting*23). In spite of his ability to work as a carpenter, he is forced to work for London Transport. His discontentment with his occupation is reflected in his habitual smoking, drinking, and in his brutality against Adella. Stanton's aggression and abusive behavior towards Adella can be seen as a part of his own entrapment in an insider/outsider continuum where those who do not conform to the social norm are excluded from access to opportunities, resources, and equal rights.

The marginalization and structural entrapment of Stanton have a crippling impact on his family life as he is likely to become less responsible and more aggressive and violent due to inequalities. This is also clearly consistent with what Suarez argues: "Riley's fiction...concentrates on the representation of that fragmented self and the disruption of lives and hopes that the racist, post-colonial setting is responsible for" (298). What Riley tries to expose in the novel is the damaging and corrupting effect of discrimination and marginalization on communities of colour, a concern expressed in the words of Adella: "what it was doing to Stanton, the way the white people treated him and sometimes she wished there was something she could do" (Riley, *Waiting*12-13). Recalling her earlier days in Jamaica, Adella repents how Stanton has started neglecting his children and mistreating her, "as if she was to blame for all the things gone wrong with him since he had come to England" (Riley, *Waiting* 90). The social pressure that Stanton faces as being a black person in Britain causes a sense of insecurity in him. To regain his secure sense of self and to secure his position as an authoritarian, he relegates Adella to a peripheral position where he can vent out all his frustration and feelings of incompetence. In this context, Isabel Carrera Suarez explains: "since blacks are constructed as the necessary 'other' by the white society, black women are left as the only available 'other' to black

men” (294). The dichotomy between the ‘self-other’ is reproduced more rigorously in the relation between man and woman. In her path-breaking text, *The Second Sex*, Simone de Beauvoir employs the notion of ‘other’ to contextualize man-woman relationship and to explain how the position of ‘other’ is ascribed to women who by virtue of their femininity are negative in value:

man never thinks of himself without thinking of the Other....But being naturally different from man, who posits himself as the same, woman is consigned to the category of the Other; the Other encompasses woman....When the woman’s role grows, she comes to occupy nearly the whole region of the Other. (104)

Viewed in this context, Adella thus evolves as a quintessential ‘other’ who has to conform to Stanton’s behaviour and violence. Like Buchi Emecheta, Riley underscores how the entrenched notion of ‘othering’ negatively affects the marital relationships of black immigrants. Like Hyacinth’s father, Lawrence in *The Unbelonging*, and Adah’s husband, Francis in Emecheta’s *Second Class Citizen* (1994), Stanton can be seen as an insecure and disempowered man who is unable to perform the role of a breadwinner and consequently experiences loss of social status, respect, and authority. Through the marginalization and discrimination of black immigrants like Stanton, Riley gives voice to the experiences of racial and cultural minorities whose growth is thwarted by the complex processes of power structures and socio-economic forces and which has a damaging effect on their personal and social life.

In underscoring the detrimental effects of adverse circumstances, Riley brings to the fore the constant struggle of Adella against discrimination whose suffering is magnified by her physical stroke, by the isolation of the nuclear family, and the irresponsible behavior of her husband. The narrative fictionalizes the inhumane treatment that Adella as a black immigrant is subjected to. Apart from the hard and monotonous work that she is forced to do, she has to live with the shame and humiliation inflicted upon her by white people. This is exemplified in the lack of respect shown to Adella by her supervisor, a young white girl who harshly summons her by her surname ‘Johnson’, ordering her to empty the ashtrays and at the same time prompting Adella to mutter that slavery is not dead. This shame of being humiliated, of living in a state of non-recognition causes a severe damage to her dignity, making her feel distressed and disappointed: “No wonda yu treat yu old people

dem so bad” and tempting her to ask “if this is how they are at home; bit back the words because she would never dare to tell them anything. Where else could she work?” (Riley, *Waiting* 1). The constant fear of getting sacked prevents her from protesting poor working conditions or low wages. Being fired from her previous job for being late, she has learnt that the black lives are expendable and easily replaceable. Even during her job interviews, she faces a subtle hostile environment on the basis of the notion of difference, as it is expressed in the “contempt on the receptionist’s face, the way the porter let the door swing back at her” (Riley, *Waiting* 87). Such appalling images not only offer a glimpse of the everyday experience of ‘let downs’ and ‘stereotyping’ which black communities are confronted with, but also sheds light on how white supremacy and dehumanization operates at the most intimate level, generating affective disorders particularly in individuals or communities, naturalized as inferior or subhuman.

The discriminatory practices and humiliation recounted in Adella’s narrative could be understood as a way of disempowering those recognized as “alien wedge” (R. Young, *White Mythologies* 218), the undesirable ‘others’ who allegedly represent a threat to the social and cultural space of Britain. By virtue of being a Black in a densely white community, Adella is exposed to a stark ‘otherness’ that denies her basic rights, including health, equal wages, proper housing, and good working conditions. In fact, it is her blackness— the visible signifier of her cultural difference— that becomes a barrier to buying a decent house. Despite availability of affordable and proper houses which are “nice [...] well painted with neat gardens and pretty gates” (Riley, *Waiting* 14), the accommodations available for black people like her are just those run-down houses infested with fungus and mold, a type of “broken- down, half-dead place in the middle of a rotting street” (Riley, *Waiting* 16) located somewhere in “Eldridge road” the “decaying part of Brixton” (Riley, *Waiting* 14). Her skin tone, colour which is a “trope of ultimate, irreducible difference between cultures” (Gate 5) becomes the basis on which such discrimination has been justified.

Although Adella, despite being old and disabled, works hard to improve life for her and her children, the persistence of discrimination, harassment, and inequality makes it extremely difficult for her to survive on a daily basis and traps her within a landscape of whiteness, where black people are always considered as ‘outsiders’. This heart-breaking reality kills the dreams of the first-generation immigrants like Adella who are neither

respected nor valued in Britain and who endure exclusion and marginalization in the hope that their children would be accepted someday. The hatred and hostility that Adella is exposed to cause her to complain that “this was how they all behaved: everybody knew white people were like that” (Riley, *Waiting* 41). Voicing strong condemnation of the politics of difference embedded in British culture and of the hostile climate that has destroyed Adella, Lisa– Adella’s friend tries to persuade her to return to her native land: “Adella, dis country killing yu” (Riley, *Waiting* 47). The shame of being abandoned by Stanton, coupled with the inequalities meted out to her as a black immigrant stops her from going back to Jamaica. She finds herself stuck in a trap from which there is no escape. Her dream of a better life and economic prosperity turns out to be “a dystopic nightmare” (Davis 2019) as she remains mired in pain and loneliness throughout her life and ultimately dies in the hospital corridor, waiting for the medical treatment: “She was going to lie here and die, waiting for a bed” (Riley, *Waiting* 163). In an interview with Donna Perry, Riley explains how this concluding scene and the title of the novel metaphorically represent black women’s everyday lives and emotions:

[...]so many people die waiting for a bed. It’s so ironic because for so many of these women, their whole life is waiting. It’s all they ever do: waiting to do the cooking, shift cleaning, waiting to retire, waiting for the husband to come home, always in the twilight because they have to save electricity. But also in the twilight because they can’t really live. What kind of life is it? (Riley, *Unbelonging* 272)

Adella’s physical-material loss and unfortunate death demonstrate the devastating consequences of the entrapment of black communities in the constellation of anti-black and anti-immigrant discourses. Adella’s personal suffering thus has a universal significance as it can be seen to be the paradigmatic of black immigrants’ experiences in Britain, where the politics of ‘difference’ denies them the opportunity to live a decent life and ensures that they remain entrapped in a cycle of severe material deprivation.

A clearer and flagrant manifestation of this politics of ‘difference’ is mirrored in Riley’s third novel *Romance* (1988), which gives an impression of the harsh reality of stereotyping and discrimination, caused by uncomfortable encounter between two contrasting cultures. The author provides an unflinching critique of the notion of ‘otherness’, with the aim of highlighting and thus undermining the colonial reverberations in the contemporary society,

since even here in cosmopolitan Britain, the same power dynamics are at work, along with the social hierarchies of domination like the 'centre-margin', 'master-slave', and 'Occident-Orient'. Underscoring the limits of Britain's cosmopolitanism, Riley interrogates the long-established social hierarchies that construct the 'other' essentially as a deviant and further translate this difference into illegibility and non-recognition.

In exploring the illegibility and non-recognition of black subjectivity and black sentience, Riley captures the quotidian lives and struggles of two Guyanese sisters—Desiree, a typical housewife and mother, and Verona—single and overweight, who reads romantic fiction to find a refuge from the everyday experiences of marginalization and the trauma of her childhood sexual abuse. Since marginalization and dehumanization of Blacks have been the central issues of Riley's narratives, in *Romance*, she interrogates the stereotypical representation of the black people, questioning their subjectivity as the quintessential site of 'difference'. Significantly, the narrative opens when Verona is being followed by her company's representatives who are trying to force her to sign a false confession which is referred to as "their lying piece of paper" (Riley, *Romance* 13). Under compulsion and after being reassured that she will not have to repay the stolen money, she signs the statement confessing the theft. Despite their assurance, when Verona is fired for theft without any proper evidence, she realizes how she is exploited due to her marginal position and rendered powerless to contradict such accusations that spoiled her name and reputation. Later in the novel, a similar incident occurs with Desiree's friend Mara whose son Jay, a teenager is arrested and is also forced to confess a fake burglary: "he had been kicked and punched and how the police had told him they wouldn't let him go until he confessed" (Riley, *Romance* 124). By virtue of being Black, both Jay and Verona are accused of a crime they did not commit, as expressed explicitly in the words of Mara: "she knew too many people who had fallen foul of the police, only to end up confessing to things they hadn't done" (Riley, *Romance* 130). Such forms of criminalization and disparate treatment meted out towards the likes of Jay and Verona demonstrate how the colonial legacy of discrimination and inequality continues to exist in the contemporary British social and legal system that deliberately targets visible minorities. Due to such hostility and innate disparity that is rooted in the anti-Black discourses, Mara loses all her hope, fearing that Jay might be convicted without proper evidence since "the magistrates

seem to hate black people, specially the youth; if they tried Jay, they'd more than likely find him guilty" (Riley, *Romance* 167). Through these examples, Riley provides unique insight into the patterns of discrimination and inequality against particular groups or communities who are assigned the role of a scapegoat, a concern posed by Patricia J. Williams, "those who compose the fringe of society have always been the acceptable scapegoats" (167). Jay's and Verona's criminalization on account of their colour expose the narrow view of Britain's cosmopolitanism that denies hospitality to strangers and tolerance to cultural differences or diversity, a point affirmed by Runnymede Trust Commission's report, "Britain continues to be disfigured by racism, by phobias about cultural difference... by institutional discrimination; and by a systematic failure of social justice or respect for difference" (qtd. in Weedon, *Identity and culture* 4). It is indeed this intolerance towards black immigrants that consigns people of colour to the status of the 'other' and that is reflected in British social, political, legal, and judicial system.

Across the novel, Riley reveals an array of discriminatory practices and policies that not only hamper the growth of culturally diverse communities but also pose a threat to their very existence, ensuring that the racial and cultural minorities remain the 'other', necessarily in a subordinate position, always subjugated, silenced, and non-conformist. Such a process of discrimination is manifested during the course of the novel and is seen to emerge from various sources as it is evident in the case of Desiree's husband John, who has been working as a skilled electrical engineer for several years, is repeatedly turned down for promotion, "usually for a younger, less qualified, less experienced man - someone white" (Riley, *Romance* 25). The racism that he experience at his workplace thwarts his self-esteem and negatively affects his personality. In this sense, John's predicament can be paralleled with that of Haroon's in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990), since both of them seem to be trapped in a discursive process of 'othering', a point which Kureishi perfectly sums up "The whites will never promote us....while there is a white man left on the earth" (Riley, *Romance* 24). Such socio-economic inequalities, though differential in extent and magnitude, operate as a cultural politics of exclusion and silencing Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities. At the same time, these examples serve to illustrate the prevalence of white privilege— a less conscious, subtle form of 'othering' which is often unacknowledged and denied but which is consistent in its strategic effect. Thus the way

John is superseded by a young and undeserving white colleague is indicative of the way in which benefits or privileges are bestowed upon the Whites.

These structural inequalities leave a long term effect on an individual's identity and personality as is indicated by John's behaviour, who like Adella's husband– Stanton and Hyacinth's father– Lawrence releases his anger and frustration on his wife Desiree, maintaining her "in a position of dependency to preserve his sense of manhood" (Duboin 104). In fact, it can be seen as an outcome of his failure to integrate into a society where his identity is threatened and he remains on the margins, as an "invisible 'other' against predominantly white aesthetic and cultural discourses" (Hall, "New Ethnicities" 441). By situating man-woman relationship as a centre-margin paradigm, Riley explores how Desiree who is the only available 'other' to John, has to comply with his frustration and behavior since being a black female it is her responsibility to encourage and support the manhood of his man (hooks, *Black Men* 7). Riley strategically positions this narrative similar to her previous novels to magnify its effect. The discursive processes of discrimination and exclusion reproduced in Riley's novels shape many of the relationships– not just those between 'Blacks' and 'Whites', but also between man and woman. This emphasis on marginality reveals that the outsider status of immigrants traps them in a whirlpool of hatred that shapes their everyday lived experiences, thus plaguing their family life and relationships.

Throughout the course of the novel, Riley demonstrates how the discourse of 'otherness' continues to exclude black bodies through everyday silent practices in a seemingly egalitarian and liberal society. The author portrays London as a place where the centre-margin paradigm exists and perpetuates the rigid hierarchies of difference; where minorities are forced to live with "the silent hostility of the neighbours" (Riley, *Romance* 4-5). The reader is given insights into the hegemonic beliefs that misrepresent the cultural minorities by distorting the truth– from barefaced lies to the false representation of the facts. The negative stereotypes held by Desiree's neighbour Mrs. Evans who makes a prejudiced remark on Desiree's joint family, "it's your culture, ain't it" (Riley, *Romance* 155) exemplify how black people are interpellated as 'other', as objects of contemplation within the anti-immigrant discourse, where they are denied recognition and rendered invisible (hooks, "Eating" 377). The invisibility and silencing of black bodies

which reflect the situation in England during the sixties resonate across the novel, wherein black minorities are not recognized and represented fairly in the society and the media.

Highlighting the subtleties of 'othering' in a putative cosmopolitan Britain, Riley draws attention to the role of mass media in sustaining and propagating the stereotypes pertaining to black British culture. With a view to target media bias, she captures the misrepresentation and the symbolic annihilation of the communities of colour within a predominantly white society as shown in the novel where John who is "angered by biased headline or twisted story in the newspaper *Mirror* does not read it because it was subsidising racist crap" (Riley, *Romance* 83). Similarly, while watching a programme on Jamaica which was full of lies, John's grandparents observe that the media is also seen complicit in spreading the distorted notions regarding black communities and their culture. Through such instances, Riley illustrates how the commodified images and texts created by the media misrepresent and symbolically devalorize black individuals. These unrealistic biases and stereotypical perceptions against Black people, which have pernicious effects on their everyday lives, can be seen to have jeopardized the existence of such communities of colour: Verona cannot get another job since being unable to get a reference from her employer; John is unsuccessful despite several attempts to gain promotion and ultimately ends up in frustration; Jay is charged with the offence he did not commit and his image is tarnished forever with a police record. Such a discursive process of scapegoating can be seen as a strategy to exclude people of colour from the community of the 'selves' in pursuit of the preservation of its racial purity or what Doris Lessing argues "as an explanation of racist violence and as a justification for increasing restrictions on immigration" (60). Accordingly, the rhetoric of 'otherness' can be perceived as a narrative that circumscribes minorities as being "out of place" (Puwar 2004, 8), denying them opportunities for a better life, while simultaneously positing the discourse of 'whiteness', of Eurocentricism as a point of reference; as a way to eliminate minorities from an economy that does not require their employment and wherein their mere existence is a threat to the country's cultures and resources, as expressed in the words of John: "They wanted black people out of Britain and didn't care how they did it" (Riley, *Romance* 36). In highlighting the restricting and marginalizing environment of metropolis, Riley offers a nuanced and subtle satire on cosmopolitan Britain which is supposed to be a place of multiple opportunities and "decries

the mythic allure of its promise of a better life (Duboin 105). In exploring the complexities of living in the constellations of anti-Black and anti-immigrant discourses, Riley demonstrates that the racial turmoil and the violence that characterized the early 1980s have subsided but the politics of ‘difference’ that maintains and perpetuates the asymmetrical power relationships continues to exist in the contemporary scenario in Britain.

In summarizing the above discussion, it can be stated that the literary representations by Randhawa and Riley offer a nuanced critique of the discourse of ‘othering’ that has shaped what Mckittrick refers to as “the absented presence” of Black and Asian geographies (99). Demystifying the ways the politics of ‘difference’ denies and erases the minority culture, Randhawa and Riley articulate the experiences of those postcolonial subjects whose voices have been excluded from the dominant narratives, thus creating a space for a counter-narrative that lays bare and contest the “fetishization, objectification and negative representation” of Blacks/Asians in white culture (Hall, “New Ethnicities” 442).

Unlike Riley, Randhawa not just unravels the intricacies of power hierarchies, but also offers ways of negotiating and subverting the dominant discourses. For Randhawa’s characters, their ‘otherness’ is not only a site of vulnerability and marginality but also a locus of agency or radical possibility— a space of resistance. This site of negotiation, of resistance, gives such ‘othered’ individuals a space from which they can deconstruct the oppressive regimes and articulate the unaddressed and unredressed ‘silences’. In emphasizing the agency of such immigrants, Randhawa conveys a strong message about the power of ‘unity or coalition’. Her novel *A Wicked Old Woman* ends with a positive note, stressing the need for activism, solidarity, and coalition to bring about socio-political change and to provide the possibility for growth. Similarly, in *Beauty and the Beast* through the celebration of festivals like Diwali, Christmas, Eid etc. by Hari-jan, Gazzy, and their multi-cultural group of “Asians, Greeks, Afro-Caribbean, English, Jewish- the lot” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 120), Randhawa forges a spirit of mutual respect across race and religion while developing a collective sense of identity and solidarity. Likewise, in *The Coral Strand*, Randhawa re-inscribes the power of agency and self-determination. From a figure of unintelligibility and negative stigmatization, Randhawa’s characters become

newly emergent British Asian subjects who reconstruct the notion of Britishness, redefining space that is characterized not merely by weakness and degradation, but by creative resistance, revolution, and change (Gadsby). These spaces created by Randhawa's characters provide the possibility for contesting the dominant discourses, while making it possible for them to claim social recognition. Across her novels, Randhawa gives the message that accepting your differences and existence even as an unintelligible subject is not just a source of suffering but also a source of empowerment. Once accepted, it connects you with a strong community of people who, regardless of age, class, and race, are caught in the same process of suppression and dehumanization. Indeed this celebration of communal power is one of the most important messages given by Randhawa.

While Randhawa emphasizes the optimistic portrayal of multicultural Britain, Riley exposes the darker side of Britain's socio-cultural milieu, unraveling the tensions and impasse in British cosmopolitanism. Being a witness to racial intolerance, and Eurocentrism, Riley provides a dystopian view of the city spaces "demythologizing the colonial myth of Britain as the heart of a welcoming site of opportunity and fulfillment for those arriving from the erstwhile colonies" (McLeod, *Postcolonial London* 27). Capturing the brutal inequalities in much acclaimed cosmopolitan London, she calls attention to the fact that contrary to its claims to be accommodating to cultural diversity, it is a place disfigured by conflict, xenophobia, discrimination, and marginalization, having no room for cultural diversity. By confronting the readers with fragmentation, sufferings, and disillusionment of her characters, the author documents the unflinching reality of immigrant life, a life full of uncertainties and unplanned ruptures. Through the inconclusive ending of *The Unbelonging* and *Waiting in the Twilight*, Riley exposes the "myth of syncretism" and the "myth of success". In this era of postcoloniality, migration, and globalization where class and colour codes continue to cast a shadowy specter, the notion of assimilation and acculturation is a myth. Not only do these narratives help maintain the lacuna between the 'self' and the 'other' but also foreclose the promise of a cosmopolitan society. Hyacinth's sense of estrangement (both in the host country and the native land) and Adella's painful struggle and eventual death gloomily demonstrate their futile endeavour to contest the politics of exclusion and marginalization and to build a better life for themselves. For these characters,

the boundaries of ‘difference’ are insurmountable, as they are unable to negotiate their complex cultural positioning and to perform alternative identities.

Quite contrary to Hyacinth’s and Adella’s failed approach to navigate the insider-outsider dialectics, the main characters of Riley’s *Romance*— John, Desiree and Verona are able to control their lives and to create a space for themselves in the mainstream of the society. Through an optimistic ending of the novel, the author subtly suggests that the problematics of ‘othering’ can be subverted by dismantling the dominant discourses and by accepting and celebrating the ‘difference’ or ‘otherness’ that the dominant culture has always despised. This celebration of difference by centering on one’s own cultural traditions and social mores and by respecting various cultural, racial, ethnic, and other differences would indubitably neutralize or even nullify the politics of ‘difference’. Hence there is a need for creating what Robin Cohen refers to ‘an egalitarian multicultural society’ where individuals maintain their own cultural norms and where differences are valued and accepted to make a society culturally rich and diverse. In his article, ‘Ethnic identity and the nation state: the political sociology of multi-cultural societies’, John Rex emphasizes to construct a communal society in which:

It is possible, without threat to the overall unity of the national society, to recognize that minorities have a right to their own language in family and community contexts, the right to practice their own religion, the right to organize domestic and family relations in their own way, and the right to maintain communal customs. (qtd. in Cohen 11)

Moreover, this celebration of difference by creating a ‘space’ for each ‘race or culture’ and a ‘territorializing of each individual entity’ can contribute to promoting social cohesion, equity, and peace among human beings.

To sum up, it can be stated that both these authors foster the preservation of cultural diversity in order to protect and preserve the “otherness of the other” (Ahmed 140). Disavowing the legitimacy of the so-called racial purity, they stress the need for moving beyond the conflation of race and nation and identifying ‘cosmopolitanism’ as a world force in relation to the wider context of contemporary globalization. While Randhawa’s works focus on the ways Asian immigrants claim their voice and survive in a hostile land, Riley looks at how the discursive processes of marginalization and exclusion result in silence and destruction for black immigrants, and how their dreams of a better life are

turned into dystopic nightmares. Randhawa, in contrast to Riley, re-theorizes and reconfigures the cultural space of Britain not as a site of dystopia, but as a metonymic site for radical possibility, where her characters not just accept their ‘otherness’ but also create a space for themselves through agency, solidarity, and communal power. Despite dealing with different dimension of othering, both authors make an attempt to subvert the dominant discourses, stressing the need for creating space for each community’s cultures and traditions, and for constructing a living condition in which people of different or even oppositional cultures may learn to accommodate the existence of the ‘other’.

4. Hyphenated Identities: In Search of New Spaces

One of the most contested issues in this era of postcoloniality and postmodernity is a quest for identity that has become a primary impetus for the ontology of contemporary literary and cultural studies. Within the context of increased migration and globalization, the concept of identity has emerged as one of the most persistent concerns for psychologists, social scientists, and people in general. The term identity, which seems a simple concept, is a phenomenon having varied connotations. All individuals have a distinct identity that circumscribes the ways individuals define themselves i.e. their manners, styles, behavior, attitudes, values, and beliefs. However, this explanation fails to capture the social and the cultural aspects that also contribute to the construction of an identity. Thus identity, that is conventionally considered as static, already existing or intrinsic to the individual, is a dynamic process, always in production, and thus undergoing a constant transformation. Far from being thought as something that already exists, identities are instead contingent, “subject to the continuous ‘play’ of history, culture and power” (Hall, “Cultural Identity” 225), a positioning belonging to the future as much as to the past. Identities, in this sense are “contextual and relational constructions” (Collier 131; Thompson & Collier 2006) that are re-inscribed in the positions individuals take up or identify with. In other words, identity is a socio-cultural construct that is not solely predicated on an individual’s traits; rather it is constructed, negotiated, and performed through social interaction. In Stuart Hall’s conceptualization, identity is a process— evolving rather than fixed, plural rather than singular, malleable rather than firm, adapted rather than inherited. Defined as a matter of ‘being’ that includes a set of values, identity is a process of ‘becoming’ that incorporates the dynamics of place, space, time, and location, and is influenced by both the subjective/internal factors and the objective/external factors. The rapidly growing social changes such as the mass movement of people across the world further complicate the notion of identity.

Since decolonization, a large number of people have migrated voluntarily or involuntarily from the erstwhile colonies to the ex-colonizer’s land in order to escape poverty, to seek employment opportunities, or to eschew religious intolerance or political

instability. Although migration is not altogether a recent phenomenon, it has connected different cultures and languages, which further leads to the immigrant dilemma of negotiating identities and adjusting along the racial continuum. Indeed, it is the question of identity that this chapter intends to address not because it is central to defining one's individuality; rather it has contingently come back to us, as expressed in the words of Stuart Hall who reconceptualizes the notion of identity within contemporary theoretical discourses: "I return to the question of identity because the question of identity has returned to us; at any rate, it has returned to us in British politics and British cultural politics today" ("Old and New" 144). However, it is not the conventional notion of identity, rather the emergence of 'new identities' or 'new subjectivities' that are subject to the play of glocal (global and local) factors. In this sense, identities, that are never left unaffected in the process of migration and relocation, are altered in a different space and time frame with the interplay of power politics and social hierarchies, thus challenging the notion of impermeable and static identity. The massive wave of population movement from the former colonies across the world has contributed to an enormous richness in the diversity of cultures, religions, and ethnicities creating a conflicting situation where two racial boundaries, antagonistic groups, cultures, and spaces collide. With the increasing interaction of the different societies and cultures, the postcolonial identities are at stake and are defined or rather redefined by their interaction with the mainstream white culture and the ambivalence resulting thereof. Thus, it can be argued that in this era of cultural homogenization and globalization, identities are not primordial that already exist; rather they are at the play of place, time, history, socio-cultural and political space, power politics, and dominant structures, and thus "are constantly producing and reproducing themselves anew, through transformation and difference" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 235). The interplay of the acculturation process, cultural bereavement, together with racism and power dynamics leads to the possibilities of redefinition and reconfiguration of immigrants' identities.

Within the context of migration, identities are influenced by its spatial and temporal movement in much the same way as theories, concepts, and cultures do while transgressing the borders. Many literary and cultural theorists like Edward W. Said, James Clifford, and Davies Bal employ the metaphor of travel to elucidate how ideas, meanings, narratives

circulate among different disciplines, audiences, languages, national cultures, and historical periods and how they are altered, even reinvented in the course of their journeys. The multilayered processes involved in the acts of translation, adaption, and transformations of theories, concepts, or other cultural phenomena seem similar to the process of identity transformation. In this sense, identities, like ideas or concepts, are reconstructed with the change of space and time and in the process are incessantly shaped and redefined by the socio-cultural, political, geographical, historical, and structural forces. The complex interplay of different cultures, languages, spaces, beliefs, and ethnicities calls forth the creation of hyphenated identities which positions them on the margins or interstices, a liminal space lying on the border line between the 'self' and the 'other', the 'insider' and the 'outsider'; a surface of protection, reception, and projection (Bhabha, *Location* 156). Further, in his collection of important essays, *The Location of Culture* (1994), he refers to this in-between space as a locus for developing "strategies of selfhood- singular or communal- that initiates new signs of identity" (2). According to him, the integration of diverse cultures and ethnicities entails developing identities that are hybrid and complex; that harbour dynamism; that produce a counter-narrative to evade the politics of polarity and to articulate new forms of subjectivity. Thus, in a world characterized by "movement, relocation, displacement" (Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 111), hybridity can be seen as a site of representation; a site of change and transformation where static and authentic/primordial identities premised on essentialism are called into question.

Although, the term hybridity has its roots in biology and botany, it has evoked diverse responses and has been attributed with multiple connotations varying from its core definition as syncretism, to fetishistic patterns of identification, to its reclamation in the works of different authors such as Homi K. Bhabha, Stuart Hall, Robert J. C. Young, Paul Gilroy, James Clifford, Iain Chambers, and Papastergiadis. Within the context of migration, the conventional narrative describes hybridity as a dynamic understanding of relations between conflicting cultures where the minority culture adopts the traits and features of dominant culture and reconfigures and redefines it in the construction of new cultures and new 'hybrid identities' (Bhabha; Chambers; Hutnyk). When people of a specific culture migrate to another region, their identity also travels through a new place and time, where it comes into a new environment and confronts different socio-cultural

factors. During this process an immigrant's identity is isolated from its original self and occupies a third space where he/she is forced to embrace the culture of ex-colonizer, thus creating the possibility of cultural fusion or hybridity, a space of enunciation where cultural signs and meanings "can be appropriated, translated, re-historicized, and read anew" (Bhabha, *Location* 55). Thus, hybridity can be seen as a crucial possibility or even a necessity at the edge or the intersection of the cultural boundaries, a fusion where the "conventional notion of community as being grounded on the standards of ethnic purity and cultural homogenization" is challenged (Papastergiadis 162). Rather than stressing the negative effects of the differences between the cultures of the 'self' and the 'other', this hybrid identity allows immigrants to adopt the cultural and linguistic codes of host society via appropriation, mimicry, and translation. The emergence of hybrid or rather transnational identities offers immigrants the means to speak for themselves, thus subverting the dominant narratives and destabilizing the cultural incommensurability. It is the alternative representational space that interrogates the authenticity of essentialist view of culture, negotiates the liminality of the identities forged between two conflicting cultures, and produces in Bhabha's terms a sense of "agency" in a cultural milieu where immigrants have to cope with the narratives of power and authority.

The interaction of the different societies and cultures due to migration calls forth the creation of new boundaries, while at the same time 'blurring' the previous ones— the demarcation between 'here' and 'there', 'center' and 'periphery', 'us' and 'them', and more important, between 'self' and 'other', thus leading to hybrid identities. The immediate result is that the immigrants no longer feel the burden of displacement or dislocation, as the boundaries between the racial and ethnic groups are wiped away and there emerges a new site of translation— a space of hybridity that "opens up new opportunities for diasporas to emerge, re-emerge, survive and thrive"(Cohen 160). In the face of complex and shifting locales, this hybrid space has become a cutting-edge of creativity and translation where the immigrants, as the de-territorialised cultures, are "seeking ways of 're-territorialising' and 're-embedding' their identities in other imaginings of space" (Lull 159). In that sense, the spatiality of migration which has the potential to foster new forms of counter-hegemonic practices and re-articulation of identities, serve as triggers for journey or discovery of a fluid and hybrid subjectivity. Such subjectivities that are defined by their location in a unique

spatial condition are in Floya Anthias's term "translocational positionalities", the temporary points of belonging and identification, of orientation and installation, of radical possibilities and agency.

Recognizing the constitutive interplay of migration and socio-political factors, a number of theorists such as Stuart Hall, bell hooks, Paul Gilroy, Homi K. Bhabha, and Avtar Brah draw specific attention to the intersection of a range of factors that shape the identity and subjectivity of migratory subjects. They bring together the concepts like borders, politics of location, positioning, situation, in-between space that assists in understanding the changing relationships between space, time, and place in relation to identities. In this sense, the socio-cultural, national, and political space are thus of particular importance, as the movement and resettlement in the Western metropolis shape not only the experiences of ethnic communities but also their modes of identification. Moreover, different positions and locations, that such communities take in relation to power structures, define their identity and subsequently serve as catalysts for the journey or the discovery of a malleable identity, enabling them to play upon and with their plural and multiple identities. This spatiality of migration calls attention to the hybridization of both space and identity, positing migration as the metonymic site of hybridity which is strongly associated with Bhabha's conceptualization of the "third space". According to him,

It is significant that the productive capacities of this Third Space have a colonial or postcolonial provenance. For a willingness to descend into that alien territory—where I have led you—may reveal that the theoretical recognition of the split-space of enunciation may open the way to conceptualizing an international culture, based not on the exoticism or multiculturalism of the diversity of cultures, but on the inscription and articulation of culture's hybridity. (*Location* 38)

In this respect, Bhabha's third space is highly relevant in understanding the hybridization of cultures and identities. The complex confluence of movement, location, space, and place contributes to a better "understanding of global migration, emerging identities, complex oscillating flows and unexpected patterns of settlement and integration" (Cohen xiv). Thus the 'third space' referred to by Bhabha points to a site that is perpetually shifting and which signifies a primary locus where the postcolonial identities are transformed, transfused, transmuted, and metamorphosed. This site of third space prompts a view of subjectivity as an ongoing cultural processing, a "changing same" (Baraka; Gilroy, *Black Atlantic* 49),

where postcolonial subjects participate in and, at the same time, transcend both cultures, oscillating and negotiating between stability and mutability, identity and difference, here and there, and now and then. Indeed, this positioning and repositioning of the subjects in 'new' spaces lie at the heart of the immigrants' condition that subsequently entails practices and strategies to find a locus for the articulation of their new identities or subjectivities.

This de-territorialization and re-territorialization of identities born out of the existential void of immigrants who are neither here nor there, have been captured by many postcolonial authors like Salman Rushdie, V.S. Naipaul, Chinua Achebe, Bharati Mukherjee, Kiran Desai, Jhumpa Lahiri, , David Dabydeen, and Caryl Philips amongst others. Offering significant insights into immigrants' experiences, these authors bring to the fore the dilemma of negotiating and navigating two cultures, societies, identities, and languages within postcolonial context. In mapping the cartographies of migration, these authors shed light on the interplay of power dynamics and social hierarchies in the production and reproduction of identity and subjectivity. Their narratives propose identity as a relational process that is constructed and performed through immigrants' movement and re-settlement in a society whose norms are extremely ethnocentric and Eurocentric. Texts like *Paradise* (2007) by Toni Morrison, *Jasmine* by Bharati Mukherjee (1989), *The Inheritance of Loss* (2006) by Kiran Desai, *In the skin of a Lion* (1996) by Michael Ondaatje, *The Buddha of Suburbia* (1990) by Hanif Kureishi, and *Praisesong for the Widow* (1984) by Paule Marshall have addressed the relationship between identity and the politics of location, pointing towards the fact that such spaces can be seen as the sites of resistance for the communities of colour to develop and perform alternative identities. In representing the experiences of social, cultural, geographical, and historical dislocations, these narratives encourage readers to perceive the changing dynamics of identities and cultures.

This process of production and reproduction of subjectivities in the constant shifting dynamics of space, time, language, culture, geographies, and boundaries has been precisely articulated in the novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley. In their writings, these authors pose the question of liminality and marginality through the lives of different generations of immigrants who are in a constant dilemma of negotiating cross-cultural conflicts and socio-political spaces. Through their narratives, they explore and analyze the

fragmentation, appropriation, and transition of identities comprehended through the processes of ‘estrangement’, ‘dislocation’, and ‘deterritorialization’ that emanate and evolve within the context of migration. The space addressed by these authors is one wherein the question of identity has become crucial for Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities and wherein there is an ongoing struggle to reclaim and redefine the identity and culture which lack the space of representation. Their writings predominantly lay stress on migration as the metonymic site for deterritorialization, displacement, liminality, marginality, in-betweenness as well as for the formation of new communities, syncretism, identity, and belonging (Bromley 8).

Embedded in distinct socio-political contexts, the literary works of Randhawa and Riley can be considered as a critical map that provides readers with an orientation to analyze socio-cultural milieus and to comprehend the spatiality of human life, a point elucidated by bell hooks in the following words: “Spaces can be real and imagined. Spaces can tell stories and unfold histories. Spaces can be interrupted, appropriated, and transformed through artistic and literary practice” (“Choosing” 152). In short, the spaces, reflected and communicated in/through these literary works facilitate the readers to understand, interpret, and interrogate the world around them, as Robert Tally contends: the spaces addressed by postcolonial authors “call for new cartographic approaches, new forms of representation and new ways of imagining our *place* in the universe” (42-3, italics in original). According to him, these spaces, places, and locations are significant within the cultural and literary production just as they are crucial for living in an ever-changing social, cultural, and geographical milieu. Many theorists like bell hooks, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Homi Bhabha have addressed the relationship between identity and space, pointing towards the fact that such lived and imagined spaces are contexts for resistance and identification, as they not only enable migratory subjects to negotiate the cross-cultural conflicts but also facilitate them to develop and perform alternative identities. In this respect, Randhawa’s and Riley’s works are highly intriguing in analyzing identities as relational processes that are constructed and performed through immigrants’ movements and re-settlements in the spaces that are captured by socio-political and economic powers. They seem to confirm to James Clifford’s point that the “cultural space is never ontologically given. It is discursively mapped and corporeally practiced” (1986, 54). By highlighting the discursive

dimension of space, Both Randhawa and Riley exhibits the subtleties of “overlapping territories, intertwined histories” (Said, *Culture* 3) in a society divided by class and colour codes. In their narratives, both identity and socio-cultural factors are shown as malleable and dynamic through the characters that are shaped by such spaces, while at the same time, intensively transforming them.

To begin with, Randhawa’s debut novel, *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987) demonstrates the ways in which the transgression of boundaries from India, the “mirror image of Europe” (Douglas 12) to the shores of Britain, has blurred the racial boundaries for communities of colour. In the novel, she offers perceptive accounts of the effects of migration and settlement on Asian communities, giving insights into the problems engendered by the cultural differences in an ethnocentric white society. Underscoring the mobility of identities across racial geographies, the author charts Kulwant’s journey from self-disguise to self-discovery that ushers in new dimensions of her identity and subjectivity. Across her narrative, Randhawa presents a kaleidoscopic array of Kulwant’s transition from an Oriental princess to a wicked urban tramp, to an adulteress and finally to a self-empowered British Asian immigrant. Drawing attention to the instability of identities, Randhawa portrays her protagonist Kulwant as ‘a newly emergent Machiavelli’ who navigates the socio-cultural boundaries through the multiple nuances of her identity that change over time, space and in different situational contexts. Being a first generation immigrant, Randhawa defies Indian/British dichotomy and identifies herself as a ‘British Asian’. The author’s sense of identity is voiced through her protagonist Kulwant/Kuli, who confesses her desire for a British Asian identity: “she had wanted everything, wanted to be Indian and English, wanted to choose for herself what she wanted out of both” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 29). The novel starts with a reference to the cultural dilemma of Kulwant who oscillates between different identities so as to define herself in a different socio-cultural environment. This is what Susheila Nasta finds typical of postcolonial narratives in which the characters are continuously engaged in negotiating the space to “disrupt the seamless pattern of social integration...[and] to invent an alternative means of inscription and identification” (*Home Truths* 195). This process of identity formation and performance is reflected in the way Kulwant casts off her identity and adopts the guise of an urban tramp, while crossing the

racial boundaries that liberate her from “the spaces previously allocated by her pre-determined cultural and social positioning” (Nasta, *Home Truths* 195). Her obsession to escape her cultural dislocation and to relocate herself into the mainstream is clearly exhibited in the way she engages in a taboo relationship with a white man, Michael the Archangel, and moves out of the restrictive socio-cultural spaces to have a taste of English life. Being hesitant to forsake her culture, she, however, refuses Michael’s marriage proposal, and ironically enters an arranged marriage with a British Asian to avoid “falling or floundering in the in-between spaces”(Randhawa, *Wicked*104). Right from the beginning of the story, Kulwant’s sense of identity fluctuates and she moves back and forth to explore and experiment with different identities in search of one she is most comfortable with. What readers witness here is the malleability of identity as Kulwant is shifting and floating from one world to another (Randhawa, *Wicked* 15), while embodying Roger Ballard’s depiction of new generation immigrants who deliberately code their behaviour according to different circumstances, and for an advantageous effect (32). In fact, such immigrants, as Felicity Hand argues, are not stuck between two spaces and cultures, but rather they are “skilled cultural navigators” (135) who shift fluidly from setting to setting with a changing context, depending always upon the point of reference. Thus the way Kulwant changes subject positions and performs identities according to her location, albeit never being able to evade her condition of an outsider, is an indicator of her attempt to achieve re-territorialization and discover alternative ways of being and becoming.

However, despite taking different routes, performing several identities, and negotiating her complex cultural positioning, Kulwant cannot completely root out the English facet of her identity; it keeps impinging on her in her later life; on the bringing up of her children; on her relationship with her husband as well as with her illicit lover Mark. This cultural dilemma of Kulwant is paradigmatic of new generation’s existential void where they are caught betwixt and between the positions of neither here nor there– an extreme sense of displacement and de-contextualization, brought out by the traumas of racism and migration to a hostile land. Such British Asians who are positioned within the liminal space assigned by the dominant white discourses, often anglicize or shorten their names whether as Kulwant/Kuli, Arvind/Arnold, Rani/Rosalind or Parminder/Pauli and so on (Nasta, *Home Truth*196), a process which effectively challenges their assigned and

perceived positions within the society and alter the way they relocate themselves within such spaces. Such an identity adopted by these British Asians does not necessarily reject their Asianness; rather it helps them in establishing a sense of self and identity in a land where they are always the 'other'. Trapped between Britishness and Asianness, such subjects who continually strive for recognition, for giving themselves a meaning in a society, offer them a norm or a name to which they can comfortably associate with and which also facilitate them to move along the spatial dimension of liminality. In fact, it is the complexity of liminal existence that Randhawa calls attention to and that Victor Turner theorizes as the in-between space marked by "ambiguities and inconsistencies of meaning" (113). In mapping out the complex realities of the new generation Britons' everyday experience of living in Britain, Randhawa explores how the complex configurations of confusion and chaos, fluidity and instability embedded in such contested terrain leave immigrants in a cultural limbo and contributes to their unique predicament of double estrangement. Due to the ambivalence of their own cultural location, such individuals are constantly motivated by a desire to adopt different masks or personas in order to relocate their identity and subjectivity in the mainstream. Accordingly, Kulwant adopts the persona of an old woman, and extricates herself from any societal classification, gliding smoothly along the 'liminal spectrum'. She performs her identity according to her location and relationship with the people there, displaying a pliable identity, re-defined and re-constructed situationally, by the very situation she finds herself in. Like Meena in Meera Syals' *Anita and Me*, Kuli plans and enacts different tricks to escape her culturally suspended position and to create an existence for herself with which she can connect herself firmly to the larger world outside.

Randhawa's use of the 'performative' or the masquerade, a literary device employed by many Black and Asian immigrant authors, provides authority to hitherto silenced voices, while simultaneously contesting and subverting the stereotypes of static ethnicity. According to Mark Stein, such discursive techniques symbolize the processes of change in society at large (90). Randhawa's use of performance through her protagonist Kulwant is similar to that of the characterization of Karim and Haroon in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia* all of whom, according to Susheila Nasta, are actors of some sort, and

employ “performatives” as means of survival (qtd. in Pervez 218). There is, however, a difference in the usage by Kureishi and Randhawa that Nasta notes:

Whereas Kureishi’s Karim ... celebrates the fluidity of his multiple identities, and wears difference like a costume which he can take on and off whenever it suits him, Randhawa’s character Kulwant is more sceptical from the beginning about the ultimate effects of such performances. (*Home Truths* 204)

Unlike Karim, however, Kulwant is not a professional actor and it is both interesting and ironic that towards the end of the narrative, she discovers that her guise as an old woman is not a reflection of her empowerment, rather an indication of frailty and instability, and consequently abandons this disguise. She achieves her identity as an individual and comes to realize that her disguise “to cover up her disintegrated world” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 190) is no longer useful, since donning of fake personas cannot make her feel a part of the mainstream – it is a reality she has to deal with. Through Kulwant’s realization, Randhawa articulates a message that the adoption of ‘fake’ persona cannot help ethnic minority communities in the process of self-adaptation, rather it is their agency that helps them in re-territorializing or re-contextualizing their identities in new ‘spaces’. Towards the end of the novel, Kuli is seen stepping out of her disguise and taking part in a screen play being directed by Maya, “where the community is gathered together, to tell their stories to the small white screen and to the reader of Randhawa’s text” (Duncker 237) and where the director shouts: “ACTION” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 207). Through these concluding lines, Randhawa calls attention to the ‘action’ or the ‘agency’ of the racial minorities that is important in tackling challenges meted out to them and finding one’s place in the society. In endorsing the power of activism and community, Randhawa re-theorizes and reconfigures spatiality of migration not just as a site of dislocation and displacement, but also as a locus for more radical and transformative activity that helps immigrants in negotiating the cultural and racial boundaries and developing “new ways of being and becoming” (Agnew ix). Though the in-between positioning of immigrants may fragment their subjectivities, it can also open new possibilities for action and collectivities which assist them in re-building and re-articulating their identities.

Randhawa’s second novel, *Beauty and the Beast* (2014), is a coming of age story which brings to the fore the complex cultural positioning that immigrants take in spatial matrices,

focusing on the issue of identity and subjectivity. In highlighting the complexities of British Asian existence, Randhawa focuses on the ambivalence and ambiguities associated with national, geographical, political, and socio-cultural spaces in which cultural minorities are rendered as invisible, and to which they strive to connect with. The protagonist of the novel Harjinder/Hari-jan is caught in a series of binaries which she has to negotiate – life outside home and inside, opposition between two cultures –Asian/Punjabi and English, and clash of languages, and believes “if you cannot negotiate you can’t take control of your life” (Randhawa, *Beauty*174). Being a second generation liminal Briton, Harjinder finds little possibility of negotiation between the two cultures, nationality, and identities, and therefore engages in the power of naming by shortening her name. This act of giving oneself a name that Randhawa foregrounds across her fiction including short stories like ‘Mickey Mouse’, ‘Sunny’, and ‘India’, where the character renames themselves as the Black Narcissus’, ‘Tippy the troublemaker’, ‘Nimbu my nemesis’, ‘Cheeta’, Sunny, and the like, is essential for her characters as for Butler’s “unintelligible intersexuals” to claiming one’s identity and making oneself visible and recognizable (*Undoing Gender* 75). Struggling to claim a sense of self, she realizes that everyone else except her has their own space in the world. Even a box of vegetable has a secure place:

This was my quality time, to stand and stare. When I can, that is, in-between picking up suspicious looks, getting pushed, jostled and being moved on by the shopkeeper who was putting out his boxes of vegetables. They took up half the pavement and no-one pushed them around. Even they have a place in the world, I thought jealously. Me? I’m a wog, a female. *An unwanted Brit-Cit*. An unwanted daughter. (Randhawa, *Beauty* 106; my emphasis)

Positioning herself as ‘An unwanted Brit-Cit’, Randhawa’s protagonist poses the question of belonging. This emphasis on ‘unwanted Brit-Cit’ significantly expresses the existential void of living in the constellations of marginality and liminality. The existential void experienced by Hari-jan is paradigmatic of the ‘lived tension’ (Clifford, *Routes* 255) encountered by many second generation immigrants, a sense of living in the between, caused by the de-contextualization and de-territorialization of identity. This in-betweenness of the contested spaces that all immigrants occupy is reflected in the first generation’s inability to relocate themselves in new location and in the second generation’s dilemma of cultural identity which further leads to the hybridity. Emphasizing the unavoidability of

hybridization within the context of migration, Vijay Mishra argues, “cultural identity is by its very nature predicated upon the inevitable mixing of castes and peoples” (New Lamps 67). Living in such hybrid spaces, Randhawa’s characters choose to speak “Anglicised Punjabi” (147) in *A Wicked Old Woman*, and a “lovely mixture of Hindi, Panjabi and English” (63) in the *Beauty and the Beast*. They exemplify how the white culture syncretizes immigrants’ subjectivities, creating hybrid and hyphenated identities which blur the racial and ethnic boundaries, while at the same time challenging the fixed or essentialized notion of identity. In destabilizing ‘pure’ cultural identities and dismantling the hierarchies between them, Randhawa reconceptualizes hybridity as a counter-narrative, a means by which the margins can deconstruct the rigid racial and cultural boundaries.

In an attempt to challenge the pre-determined definitions of identities, Randhawa explores the notion of hybridity and performativity emerging in the repositioning of her characters that further leads to a “fusion of different influences celebrated as a powerful new identity, rather than as detrimental to a stable sense of self” (Upstone 7). Such a fusion where both cultures (British and Asian) are embraced becomes a defining identity for Randhawa’s second generation British Asians who nevertheless express better self-esteem than their parents in assimilating and articulating their identities in contemporary definitions of Britishness. This is reflected in the way Hari-jan adds her own rules into the mix and chooses to wear Reeboks with *shalwar-kameez*⁴ without lamenting her contradictions: “My mother’s drummed all the traditional ways into me,...I know the rules but...And I know how to break them” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 48). Whilst straddling two worlds, cultures, nationalities, and identities, Randhawa’s characters embody hybridity, confirming Bakirathi Mani’s statement that the hybrid clothing of younger generations of South Asian immigrants can be understood in Butler’s terms as ‘ethnic performativity’ (38). Such acts of self re-fashioning breaks normative patternized behaviors and redefine norms that transgress dominant power relations and allow for the creation of what J. T. Warren describes as the new ways of doing and being in the world.

Underscoring the metaphorical significance of dressing patterns and modes of fashion in South Asian immigrant fiction, Noémí Pereira-Ares draws specific attention to

⁴Indian outfit consisting of tunic, complementary trousers and scarf.

the specific role that dress codes play in the negotiation, articulation and reinvention of identities. According to her, the clothing practice of migratory subjects is an alternative aesthetic that has not only defied the conventional discourses but have also deconstructed the pre-defined notions pertaining to cultural or national identities. In the face of shifting dynamics of migration, dress has become a powerful means which has the “potential of policing a minority identity” (Donnell 495), a conspicuous site where rhizomatic, hybrid, and transcultural identities take place. In pointing to this fashioning of British Asian identities, Randhawa explores how the second generation - British born or British bred, finds expression through the metaphor of dress. Such immigrants who are caught between the cultural norms of their parents and the culture they desire, reconstruct a hybrid identity for themselves. Such a hybrid identity is adopted by Harjinder, who in a bid to navigate the dilemma of cultural identity, accepts British cultural norms without losing her Asianness and celebrates her difference as a source of empowerment: “Asians and English? Instead of problems, confusions and contradictions perhaps I should look for the common humanity we all share,...there’s nothing wrong with differences” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 108). Being proud of her Asian descent, she is possessive for Britain to such an extent that she dislikes her American cousins criticizing British things and ways of life, while simultaneously, claiming Britons controversially as “my racists” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 161). Despite the widespread and entrenched racism that she has experienced, and that she has learnt to accept, she shows her awkward solidarity towards Britain and its people.

Like Harjinder, Gazala also makes sincere efforts to navigate her affective ambivalence stemming from her existential void by embracing the local culture of the host society as well as by retaining or maintaining her original cultural identity. She adopts a hybrid identity that develops in her a sense of being anchored and integrated in a predominantly white society. This is illustrated through Gazala’s modern clothing sense at Diwali party where she surprises everyone by wearing a long multi-layered gown with golden leggings, and a super-stylish scarf around her head. By donning a traditional dress in a hybrid way, she not only liberates herself from the normative and traditional constraints, but also redefines the conventional notion of identity, as expressed in her own words:

Modesty begins in the mind. In men's minds and women's minds. That's what I've come to understand. It's about having self-respect and respect for others. Seems to me, if you have that, it's stronger than anything made of cloth could be."

Instead of the *hijab* she [Gazala] was wearing a scarf wound around her head, pinned with a little ornament at the side.

"I've just begun. I have so much learning and thinking to do." (Randhawa, *Beauty* 212)

Through the performance of identity, clothes, and language, she creates a niche for herself where she, while embracing the local culture of the host society, can retain or maintain her original cultural identity. In her struggle for a sense of identity, Gazala discovers her true self and the real meaning of life, developing a voice with which she can demand respect for herself and her culture:

I've realised, you have to decide what you want to do and start working at it. Nothing happens automatically. Everything has its own...route, chart, map...."That's also why I'm wearing the *hijab* and *abaya*; I wanted to know what that really means. I know there's a lot of wisdom in the Koran, the Bible and other holy books, and lots of ideas. I need to work things out for myself. And praying makes me feel peaceful, strong. (Randhawa, *Beauty* 73)

Gazala's celebration of her cultural identity and her choice to wear *hijab* and *abaya* with hybrid clothing articulates the need for self-recognition and self-valuation to survive in and navigate the harsh environments that relegate immigrants to the margins of the society. In this sense, for Randhawa's characters like Harjinder and Gazala, dressing oneself is a constitutive act by which they learn to manage the spatiality of everyday life effectively. It is both an act of fashioning the self as well as an alternative way to create uniformity and gain intelligibility in the society. Dressing pattern thus has evolved as a recurring and prominent feature in the identity construction of immigrants, a point that Randhawa's characters aptly illustrate. Within such a cultural context, fashion or clothing serve as a tool that builds a bridge across national boundaries, while enabling immigrants and their descendants to situate themselves between these boundaries. These young generation immigrants shift from their liminal position and evolve as hybrids who are not bound by territories, nation-states, and localities rather, they are ensconced within new global youth culture.

Thus, the way Hari-jan and Gazzy value both cultures and try to be loyal to both countries in their complex world of modernity, can be understood from Igor Maver's perspective as a sense of "double belonging" (51), where they integrate and at the same time transcend both cultures, oscillating and negotiating between Asianness and Britishness, stability and mutability, identity and difference, here and there, and now and then. They adopt a bicultural identity where they internalize the host culture, while at the same time retaining the behaviours, values, and particularities pertaining to each of their individual cultures. Drawing attention to this dual sense of identity, Randhawa sheds light on how immigrants' dilemma of cultural positioning can be negotiated by being bicultural that is being integrated to both cultures. However, having a bicultural identity does not mean a weakening of identification with one's native culture, rather identifying with both the mainstream and the ethnic cultures (Phinney & Devich-Nevarro). This shifting mode of identification allows such British Asian subjects to form double or multiple positionings and identities that refer not only to the history or the past but to the futurity as well. Such a bicultural/fluid identity, indeed, facilitates immigrants in positioning and repositioning them in 'new' spaces, which is especially crucial in a multicultural pluralistic society like Britain and in the contemporary increasingly interconnected and globalized world.

Randhawa's third novel *The Coral Strand* (2001), which is set in two different time frames, charts the everyday negotiations and existential crisis of her characters who are continuously engaged in negotiating the British socio-cultural space to disrupt this seamless pattern of unintelligibility and to bridge the gaps and fissures emerging within such spaces. It unravels the ways in which the social, political, cultural, and economic structures influence immigrants' modes of identification and subjectification, and how the search for identity and intelligibility leads to the protagonist's growth from an unintelligible to a hybrid British Asian subject who is successful in acculturating and integrating into the mainstream of the society.

Approaching movement as a site of dispossession, Randhawa exposes how the geographies of migration, structured by the interplay of both glocal forces and colonial dynamics shape immigrants' trajectory in locating their sense of self and identity. The spaces, places, and locales that Randhawa's characters occupy point to a contested site

that is filled with politics, dominant ideologies, conflicts, and contradictions which have a profound influence on the characters of the novel. Through the protagonist of her novel, Sita/Ferret, the author explores the tensions and ambiguities experienced by British Asian subjects who find themselves floating between two worlds, identities, and cultures. For Sita, it is both the cultural dilemma and the void resulting from her lack of knowledge about her nationality, culture, and family that causes in her an existential crisis, preventing her from creating a sense of self. Since she is uprooted from her roots and culture, she finds it difficult to relate herself to the place of her origin and floats like a survivor of a shipwreck trying to find her authentic self. Such subjects, who do not even merit the recognition of self, are what Butler refers to as ‘the unintelligible’ subjects. In this sense, for Randhawa’s characters, unintelligibility is not only about existing “between the norm and its failure” (*Undoing Gender* 74), but it is also expressed in the way one feels alienated from the lack of self-knowledge needed to find one’s place in the world. In the case of Sita and Harjinder, this unintelligibility is added to by their own lack of knowledge about their backgrounds, as Harjinder calls India “the unknown part of me” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 69), while Sita declares “Insufficient data ... that’s who I am” (Randhawa, *Coral* 37). These characters depicted by Randhawa have no points of reference for what they are, or who they are. Such examples serve to illustrate how the unintelligibility and the socio-cultural space constitute what Frankl termed as an “existential vacuum” (59) in immigrants that further ferments “a crisis of identity” (Pereira-Ares xv). Such subjects who are disconnected from their origin, their background, even their genealogy experience difficulties in re-contextualising and relocating themselves at several levels—geographical, social, cultural, and psychological. As can be seen in the novel where Sita, while performing a traditional Indian identity through reading the magazine *Asian Woman*, feels disconnected from her Asian heritage. Since she doesn’t know how to dress for an Asian occasion, she assembles herself item by item; make-up by make-up, “from the kameez to the salwar,...from the dupatta, the sheer scarf she draped around her shoulder, to the green platform sandals” (Randhawa, *Coral* 14) copying the image from the magazine. The ignorance of native culture—the lack of knowledge about her home, nation, culture, roots—causes a feeling of ambivalence and ambiguity in Sita and pushes her into a crisis of identity where she is unable to define her being or her cultural identity.

Drawing attention to the role of immigrants' roots and routes in the construction of their identities, Randhawa focuses on the formation of subjectivity as a matter of 'self-determination and 'self-fulfilment'. This is reflected in the way Sita undergoes identity transformations as part of her adjustment to the host society and deliberately shifts her identity fluidly from setting to setting, with a changing context, depending upon the point of reference. She continually renames herself: Sita the Ferret, then she is engaged in a naming game 'Flotsam and Jetsam' with her friend Jeevan and later she dons the identity of Mrs Pandey, an Asian widow in order to gain the benefit from the recognized form of a married woman. In this guise of a widow, she cannot only gain employment but also evade the questions about her past origins and family circumstances. Like Kulwant, Sita also celebrates the adoption of her fake persona as a common strategy of survival within the contested space of migration: "Camouflage! But a common enough device employed by Asian women living in the West who had to hiphop between cultures" (*Coral* 30). With a view to highlight these strategies to ensure the continuous survival of racial minorities within the white society, Randhawa calls attention to the transformative power of 'performatives'— a powerful means through which identities can be translated into something anew, an altered subject-position which according to Bhabha is the "third space of enunciation" (*Location* 36). By destabilizing the existing norms pertaining to conventional identity and disrupting the hegemony of the authentic, Sita like Kulwant, uses her new form to interrogate and challenge the world. These moves taken by Randhawa's characters reflect Butler's emphasis on discovering and creating new possibilities in life:

"the thought of a possible life is only an indulgence for those who already know themselves to be possible. For those who are still looking to become possible, possibility is a necessity. (*Undoing Gender* 31)

The adoption of fake identities by Kulwant, as an old woman, and by Sita, as a widow may at first appear worthless; it is, however, a move far beyond such implications, a shift from impossibility to possibility, from being nothing to being ignored. For Randhawa characters, their in-between positioning is an experience of suffering as much as something to be celebrated. Sita's celebration of her different facets on different days is very different to the fusion or hybridity, observed in other South Asian literature as she chooses to fall outside the socially sanctioned norms, while refusing to opt between traditions:

Sita/Ferret wears flimsy dresses with deep necklines and high hemlines that swish around her thighs, sunglasses and a satin-ribboned straw hat. She melts into the London crowd – but only on alternate days. The other days she wears sheer saris with bikini blouses, displaying her body as never before, revelling in its shape and form, admiring its composition. The body is for display, enjoyment and fulfilment – not for locking away. (Randhawa, *Coral* 298)

This act of dressing not only sets her apart from the crowd but also shapes her modes of inscription and identification. Through the metaphor of dress, Sita attempts, either strategically or willfully, to articulate an identity which is hybrid (Bhabha), postcolonial (R. Young), malleable, and ever-changing that may be ‘in-between’ but always in-the-making (Anzaldúa; Hall, “Cultural Identity”; Minh-Ha). Such paradigmatic shifts allow liminal Britons like Sita to create new ways of being and to construct a malleable identity that is constantly performed in-between two or more worlds (Bardhan; Urban). Through the characterization of Sita, Randhawa seems to be suggesting that hybridity too can become a non-normative choice where an individual can choose to live outside of binary definitions; to choose between prevalent social norms or the liberal alternatives. This non-normative choice of Sita is an evidence of Butler’s depiction of “humans ... who live and breathe in the interstices of this binary relation, showing that it is not exhaustive ; it is not necessary” (“Doing Justice” 187), and who can exist outside of the norms, not waiting for recognition rather they are comfortable in the absence of it. Through such accounts, Randhawa focuses on how immigrants develop and perform alternative identities in British cultural space as a way of celebrating differences and as new ways of being. Randhawa’s narratives thus reflect the broader perspective on British Asian identities and subjectivities in which difference “is very far from postmodern notions of free choice, celebration and play” and hybridity is “far from liberating”(Weedon, “Redefining Otherness” 233). The ways in which Randhawa’s characters celebrate their difference and maintain their own individual identities in a culturally diverse world indicates an acceptance of a more cosmopolitan multiculturalism which is not Bhabha’s abstract world of hybridity, but rather a real world in which hybridity as “a performative act of intervention and survival” (Nasta, *Home Truths* 94) is nurtured, strengthened, and consciously constructed.

While Randhawa highlights how the constitutive interplay of migration, social hierarchies, and colonial dynamics leads to the creation of hybrid identity in her characters, Joan Riley

provides insights into how such a complex interplay fragments immigrants' identities and the right to self-definition. In her debut novel *The Unbelonging* (1985), Riley approaches the issue of identity through a search to belong to a world characterized by the questions of race, nationality, and culture. By exploring liminality—the threshold of existence, she examines the ways in which Black British subjects negotiate their identity in relation to the contested spaces where they are located and dislocated. The novel recounts her protagonist Hyacinth's fruitless search for a positive sense of self in a society that is antagonist towards Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic (BAME) communities. From the beginning, the author points out her central character's sense of displacement (both emotional and physical) and her inability to adapt to an entirely different environment which causes a rupture in her identity and prevents her from negotiating her position between two identities—Caribbean and British.

This perpetual crisis for identity is also mirrored in Hyacinth's father Lawrence Williams who is trapped “within radically asymmetrical relations of power” (Clifford, *Routes* 192), striving for recognition and giving himself a meaning in the mainstream of the society. Through his characterization, Riley focuses on how the conditions in the host land, in particular, unfavourable terms of employment, promotion policies, racism, and white privilege threaten the sense of self-esteem of black men, consequently leading to a crisis of masculinity which forces them to perform hegemonic and/or hypermasculinity (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005; Pasura, and Christou 2018). The text provides only a few innuendoes about Williams' exploitation at workplace where he is said to “ha[ve] been working overtime that week” or to be “on the late shift” and even to be “working nights that week” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 39, 40, 25). The racial biases and discrimination that Lawrence faces not only challenge and disrupt his subjectivity and sense of identity but also force him to perform ‘hegemonic masculinity’. As a way to restore his ruptured self, he torments her daughter, Hyacinth and his second wife, Maureen with physical and emotional abuse, thus exercising authority and control in the family.

In capturing the fractured identities and split subjectivities of her characters, Riley calls attention to the configurations of power that plunge migratory subjects into a suffocating and restricted environment, fueling their sense of estrangement and leading to a quest for new geographies of belonging (McKittrick). By reflecting on Hyacinth's

migration to Britain and her immediate and systematic marginalization and objectification, Riley narrates her quest for a secure sense of identity as a critical practice of survival in a hostile land in which she confronts a climate of “anti-blackness” (Sharpe 54), and in which she is always positioned as an external, outsider to the social, cultural, and national geographies. In this sense, the spaces that Riley charts are not simple settings rather they are represented as contested sites that are not neutral, rather “filled with politics and ideology” (Keith and Pile 4). They are also the sites of shame which complicate the ways in which the Afro-Caribbeans as individuals identify and locate themselves in relation to the rest of the society. It is the shame of social rejection; the shame of racial consciousness that Riley theorizes throughout their novels to explore the fragmentation and distortion of identities. Like Antoinette in Jean Rhys’s *Wide Sargasso Sea*, Hyacinth internalizes her inferiority (based solely on the visible differences: black skin, thicker lips and plaited hair) and harbors the ensuing shame that forces her to negate her blackness and cultural identity. Like Charlotte Williams in *Sugar and Slate*, she has internalized the racial stereotypes and prejudices against black people to the extent that she distances herself from her own people and dislikes “the way they [blacks] all bunched up together, and were so arrogant and rude to white people, nor the way they insisted on talking in that awful broken English so that the other students kept staring at them” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 81). Another explicit example of Hyacinth’s internalization of racial prejudices is when she asserts that a black man “would have looked nice if he wasn’t so black” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 81) because for Hyacinth, ‘blackness’ is associated with violence, aggressiveness, abusiveness, drink, and poverty. These racist attitudes of Hyacinth prove her hatred towards her own culture. In fact, she is so ashamed of her belonging to the black race that she not only cultivates a disdain towards her own culture, but also develops a desire for European features and physical characteristics, forgetting her roots and pretending to be someone she is not: “She often wished that she had nice hair, that her skin was lighter. She was sure they would not pick on her then” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 74). Hyacinth’s shame of being a Black and simultaneous fear of and longing for whiteness “a badge of acceptance” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 75) are nothing but the projection of complete self-abnegation or self-loathing that shape her sense of self, ultimately denying her an identity or a place in the world. It is consistent with what Sushila Nasta appropriately states: “In the need for integration, in the

abrupt separation from the home community, the culture is lost, the self disintegrates” (*Home Truths* 301). Riley perfectly illustrates this through the characterization of Hyacinth who, in an attempt to assimilate into the mainstream culture, ultimately ends up losing her own sense of self and identity.

The hatred and racism that she experiences in British cultural space keep her as a cultural outcast, an ‘unintelligible’ subject who fails to fit into the white environment. The problem seems to lie in the fact that she cannot acknowledge her origins and roots: “I’m not an African, ‘I’m a Jamaican, of course; or a West-Indian if you prefer” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 112). This statement sets the stage for the crisis of identity, a concern that her Jamaican friend, Perlene raises with the following words, “why don’t you admit what you are and be proud of it?” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 112). Without a perfect knowledge of her own roots and past, Hyacinth, like Sita in *The Coral Strand*, is unable to find her routes, thus illustrating Heidi Safia Mirza’s concern, “If you lack a nation, as diasporic travellers do, then how do you celebrate who you are?” (16). It is thus the history or the origin of migratory subjects that Riley stresses in the process of self-formation since without knowing one’s roots and acknowledging them one is unable to find a stable sense of identity. It is for this reason, that Hyacinth is unable to create a Black British identity that marks her in sharp contrast to other Jamaicans friends like Perlene and Charles who are part of a burgeoning black student movement. Patricia Duncker precisely proves the point:

Hyacinth’s college friends, Perlene and her comrades, are radical, articulate Blacks, engaged in political activism. Their painful failure to reach Hyacinth in her isolation and unbelonging never puts either their radical intelligence or their committed protest in question. (Riley, *Unbelonging* 221)

Though both Perlene and Charles try to make her aware about the socio-political state of Jamaica, it is only on her return to Jamaica that she comes face to face with the reality, an experience that erases her sense of self, ultimately leaving her utterly rootless and isolated.

The celebration of racial identity and history is indeed well illustrated through the character of Perlene who appears as a role model as well as a support for Hyacinth, enabling her to move forward with more self-confidence. Riley introduces this character so as to depict a different perspective of immigrants’ existence. The way Perlene has embraced her black identity and is more confident and empowered than her friend

Hyacinth, points towards a level of success in adopting and creating new spaces in a different socio-cultural milieu. Although part of Hyacinth is attracted to Perlene's ideas and radicalism, she is never able to engage in activism herself, thus confirming bell hooks statement: "you can't effectively resist domination when you are all messed up" (*Yearning* 218). Hyacinth's inability to come to terms with her blackness proves the importance of race and culture in the formation of one's identity. Through the depiction of Hyacinth and Perlene respectively, Riley reveals how the spatiality of migration can be a locus of both a celebration of identity and culture, as well as of displacement and dislocation for black individuals. In analyzing the complexities of Black British identities, Heidi Safia Mirza notes,

Being 'black' in Britain is about a state of 'becoming' (racialized); a process of consciousness, when colour becomes the defining factor about who you are. Located through your 'otherness' a 'conscious coalition emerges: a self-consciously constructed space where identity is not inscribed by a natural identification but a political kinship....Thus to be black in Britain is to share a common structural location; a racial location. (3)

It is thus the *blackness* in Britain that Mirza calls attention to and that Riley theorizes throughout her fiction to articulate the experiences of black Britons, and to highlight the racial location where the colour of Black people becomes a defining factor, a "signifier" of whether they belong or not (3). This racial consciousness is clearly felt most acutely by Hyacinth who fails to negotiate her 'racial location' and becomes a displaced figure in search of a fully constituted subject-position. Her geographical and psychic displacement, which is seen to have a detrimental effect on her subjectivity, causes in her a feeling of homesickness, a strong desire to return to Jamaica to be with black people because in Jamaica her blackness hardly mattered (Riley, *Unbelonging* 67). Thus, in order to emphasize her ties with her homeland, Hyacinth clings to her pleasant and comforting childhood memories about Jamaica and tries to construct an alternative identity for herself. Her yearning for an ideal time and place can be interpreted as an expression of her inability to creatively negotiate the British cultural space. In dealing with the loss of identity and culture, she seeks refuge in the nostalgia of her idealized native land, until a rude awakening brings her back to the grim reality of her life. Throughout the novel, she retains a fragmented and unstable sense of self and her return to her homeland further dismantles

her identity, leaving her rootless and liminal within both British and Jamaican cultural spaces.

When she travels to shantytown in Jamaica, she witnesses the desolation and destruction that her friend Perlene warned her about. She is confronted with a shocking reality different from the one she had partly remembered and partly imagined. The lush landscape of her native land is filled with “dirt, drink and urine” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 139) pouring the salt of sickness into her mouth. She is so surprised to see the destruction of this place that she is not ready to accept it and asks herself “how she could be here, after she had vowed to it would not happen? Why must she always come back to so much dirt?” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 136). She finds that the Jamaica of her dreams is replaced by a reality of poverty, slum life, and disease, and ultimately ends up “thinking longingly of the taxi, of the hotel and of England, all so far away and safe. God, how civilised England seemed now” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 138). Thus the way Hyacinth is longing for England demonstrates the ambivalence and ambiguity of her existence; her permanent sense of being out of place and out of time. In Jamaica, where she hoped to achieve a stable sense of self, she becomes a completely displaced figure and comes to realize that she has been chasing an illusion in her search for an identity rooted in an imaginary Jamaica of her childhood memories. Her displacement within her own emplacement points to an extreme sense of aporia where she is caught in a continuum of dislocation and relocation, regression and progression. In both the communities the Black and the White, she has no identity except as an alien and is perennially considered ‘out of place’. Neither purely ‘outsider’ nor completely ‘insider’, Hyacinth becomes a completely displaced figure— an aberration bereft of cultural space and identity, who is in the constant negotiation of self-making.

Riley’s second novel *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987) maps the liminal positioning of Afro-Caribbeans in Britain, re-interpreting and re-interrogating the crisis of identity in a working class environment. Like her contemporary Buchi Emecheta, Riley explores the ways in which Black people are constituted in and through their interactions with the dominant white spaces. Emphasizing the role of spatio-temporal forces in the process of (re)construction of identities, Riley depicts how colour and class codes in Britain aggravate liminal Britons’ sense of de-territorialization and fragment their modes of identification and the right to self-definition.

The narrative gives an impression of the harsh reality of Britain where racial and cultural minorities like Adella and Stanton are stuck in poorly paid and low-status working conditions with no hope of betterment. From the very beginning of the novel, Riley gives voice to a narrative that exposes the vicissitudes and daily afflictions of a silenced minority in the white spaces where their identities are shaped by a complex interplay of social, economic, environmental, and geopolitical factors. Through her protagonist, Adella, Riley demonstrates how the experience of being excluded and marginalized in a racist society is further incited by her physical stroke which not only causes her to lose her job as an embroider but also prevents her from achieving a sense of self in a foreign milieu. According to Susan Alice Fischer, Adella's crippled state "underscores her displacement and her difficulty in negotiating London" (12). Despite being disabled, Adella struggles hard to clothe and feed her family on the wages she earns from her job as a cleaner, while Stanton squanders money on fine clothes, drinking, and womanizing: "There was Stanton giving her no money with the big house and new baby coming, not caring how the bank loan was paid back. He still spent his money on clothes and blues parties every weekend" (Riley, *Waiting* 30). Stanton's squandering and changed behavior can be seen as a part of his own entrapment within the dominant discourses. He is fragmented and worn down by the experiences of racism he encounters in the society. Conditions in the host land, in particular, Adella's breadwinner status and the changing gender roles, pose a challenge to his masculinity and force him to enact hypermasculinity by resorting to domestic violence, alcoholism, and aggression. Stanton's failure to exercise power in a society where he is unable to perform the role of a provider and a breadwinner for his family thwarts his masculine identity, forcing him to engage in compensatory masculine behaviors. This crisis of masculinity, which has been a major preoccupation of African women's authors in general and a recurrent theme in Riley's fiction is reflected in the way he blames Adella for his failures and torments her frequently so as to maintain power and control over his family. Through the structural entrapment of Black immigrants like Stanton, Riley represents London as a place where the dominant discourses shatter the masculine identity of black men which has demoralizing and damaging effects not only on their physical and material well-being but also on their personal and social life.

Unlike Hyacinth who is unable to resist the oppressive structures, Adella is a determined and self-reliant woman who resists the restrictive forces and tries hard to establish herself grappling with the rampant racism. Like Emecheta, Riley portrays her protagonist Adella as a resilient woman who is determined to achieve self-integrity and to give meaning to her life because “she could not lose her pride, become like brother Winston who had taken to drink and lost his job when his wife left him” (Riley, *Waiting* 4). This resilience provides her the strength and power to overcome adversity and to retain her sense of self. Throughout the course of the novel, the reader perceives a strong determination and perseverance in Adella to be integrated into the host society. Despite being caught in a racial continuum, she tries hard to negotiate her cultural identity and perseveres in order to have a house of her own as “she had learnt ... that the English looked down on foreigners... [and so] was determined to get on, to become a success. She was determined to build a better life for the children” (Riley, *Waiting* 14). Adella succeeds in moving into her house, which is supposed to be a safe and secure place, but it proves to be a big failure. Instead of being a site of change and improvement, the house becomes a locus of loss and dislocation, an extension of that hostile environment where she is condemned to live a life of deprivation, humiliation and isolation. The condemnation of her house by the local council, her physical stroke, and Stanton’s abandoning her for her cousin, Gladys— put together symbolize that Adella’s attempts to succeed or adjust into the oppressive environment turn out to be a failure. The social, racial, political, geographical structures restrict Adella from having a minimally decent life, and thus affect her physical as well as psychological wellbeing, as expressed in her own words, “If ongly a neva so tired...If ongly de bone dem inna me body would stop hurt” (Riley, *Waiting* 137). The entire novel is permeated with such harsh images of Adella’s suffering and distress, and offers little hope for the first generation Black British subjects whose identity is influenced by the interplay of the place, space, and time, since their mobility and resettlement within the metropolitan cultures not only causes the physical and psychic displacement, but also shapes their sense of self. Such Black British subjects who are not accepted in the host country and who are just an ‘object’ of loathing, find their conditions marked by the “dislocation of presence” (Richards 10), a space of contestation, of complex and often conflicting articulations of identity. However such spaces become the site of possibility and

transformative resources for Adella's black friend Lisa who appears as a role model as well as a source of strength, as she not only provides care and financial assistance to Adella and her children but also encourages her to circumvent the oppressive restrictive forces. Riley introduces her character so as to depict the possibility of change and transformation. The way Lisa is more rooted and empowered than her friend Adella points to her agency and ability to adopt and create new spaces for herself in a different socio-cultural milieu.

Riley offers hope and the possibility of change through the character of Lisa as well as through Adella's Britain-born children particularly Carol and Audrey who are successful in negotiating their sense of self and place, and thus have better integrated into the mainstream culture. Unlike many of the first generation black subjects who are unable to navigate their liminal position, Adella's daughters have succeeded in having a good education, a better mobility and access to the British system: "They were going to be just like white people. They were going to be accepted" (Riley, *Waiting* 15). This new generation of black British is indeed what Portes and Rumbaut describes as the "decisive turning point for change in ethnic and national self-identities" (150). Much like Randhawa's protagonists, Kulwant, Harjinder and Sita, both Carol and Audrey as westernized Africans—polished, well-dressed, and educated urbanities—reinvigorate cultural productions with their distinct new generation insights, ideas, and by articulating identity on their own terms. Moreover, they do so consciously and deliberately as means of claiming agency and authority in a community that might otherwise relegate them to the margins of the society. Unlike her mother Adella, both Carol and Audrey are capable of raising their voices and of protecting themselves against the restrictive forces of the mainstream society. Being born and educated in Britain, their voices are not influenced with the Jamaican or Afro-Caribbean accent and as such do not invite ridicule. In fact, they have the confidence and confrontational skills to challenge the British institutions and know "how to speak their [English] language" (Riley, *Waiting* 77). The way Carol and Audrey defend their mother and challenge police and health care officials who attempt to condescend to her indicates that they have learnt the skills needed to survive in a hostile land. The linguistic and other social performatives that Adella's daughters employ to find common social or intellectual grounds with Whites destabilize the boundaries of their cultures, while simultaneously challenging the existing social and cultural hierarchies. In

this sense, language serves as a vehicle for the alternative mode of identification, which is to say, as a medium for the articulation of hybrid identity. The performative negotiations of cultural identity employed by ethnic minority communities through various practices to which Bhabha defines as “mimicry” and Dhananjay Singh refers to as “mimesis and anukaran”, allow for the creation of new ways of doing and being in the world. These young black Britons bear striking resemblance to those who are in Bhabha’s words “the not quite/not white” (“Of mimicry” 132). Indeed Bhabha’s concept of mimicry serves as a means to understand the cultural identities of the racial and cultural minorities and their in-between positioning from which these enunciations emerge.

This in-between positioning may fragment the subjectivities of first generation Black British subjects like Adella and Stanton, but it can also open new possibilities for younger generation like Adella’s daughters who, in a bid to navigate the interstitial spaces, inscribe new meanings to Black British identity. However, their experiences differ greatly from their mother for whom the experience of migration to ex-colonizer’s land results in a sense of displacement, leading to a denial of identity and, ultimately, to a denial of life. After having another stroke, she approaches death in the corridor of the hospital, waiting for a bed. This dystopian image which is the extent of Adella’s dislocation, symbolizes Riley’s pessimistic realism. This unrelenting approach of Riley leads John McLeod to describe her novels as the “pessimistic” ones, in which any endeavour of the protagonist’s towards resistance, empowerment, and transformation in the postcolonial London has been thwarted and crushed (*Postcolonial*118), as demonstrated through the closing scene of the narrative where she is unable to find a space to manoeuvre and breathe.

Riley’s novels thus chart Afro-Caribbeans’ migration stories as the narratives of displacement and dislocation associated with hardship and oppression, as her protagonists are unable to resist the oppressive structures. Instead of processing their experiences and learning from them, they remain disempowered throughout their life and ultimately succumb to the dominant forces. In fact, Riley deliberately avoids any possibility of a happy ending and provides no solution for her characters (as in the case of Hyacinth and Adella), for it leads the readers away from confronting the issues and complexities meted out to the people belonging to the former colonies in a cosmopolitan Britain. She herself points out that,

I feel that happy endings in much of my work would be a betrayal of the community...who give unstintingly of their lives to flesh out my creative world. ... To allow the readers to retreat into their comfortable world and not accept their collective part in resolving the issues that did not go away with the final full stop – this would be to have failed in achieving the purpose of the work. (“Writing Reality” 217)

It is for this reason that she does not provide a happy or conclusive ending to her works, and this attitude is reflected clearly in her works, particularly, in *The Unbelonging* and in *Waiting in the Twilight*. According to her, ending a book on conflicts resolved is like closing “the world of endless struggle, disappointments, bad housing, raw deals, which continues to make up the daily lives of many millions of people” (“Writing Reality” 217). Being careful not to trivialize or romanticize the experiences of those rendered invisible and ungeographic, she tries to unravel the hidden rhetoric and issues prevalent in British society. Like other black and Asian women writers in Britain, Riley captures the continuous struggle of racial and ethnic minority communities for identity and existence, stressing the need for creating possibilities of social change.

The problems that black people face in migrating from the former colonies to the postcolonial London including their adjustment, assimilation, the quest for identity, and acceptance in an unfamiliar environment, are further explored in Riley’s novel *Romance* (1988). The author raises the question of identity at the site of the convergence of social, political, and cultural spaces. In mapping the trajectory of de-territorialization and re-territorialization of black Britons, she explores how their movement and resettlement in these spaces shape their modes of identification and how they (re)inscribe those spaces with alternative meanings. In the novel, Riley chronicles her protagonists, Desiree’s and Verona’s quest for the self, their existential status in the host society, demonstrating their pathways to success based on the acquisition of a strong sense of identity and purpose. On one level, they seek to define their identity as black women in a white supremacist society and on another level they seek recognition in a male-dominated world.

The quest for Verona’s true self begins when she was raped at the age of fourteen by Desiree’s black boyfriend. Not only does this experience rob her of a sense of self, but it also estranges her from her body, instilling in her a fear and distrust of black men. For Verona, her body becomes a source of displeasure and shame. Like Hyacinth, she also

constructs an alternative identity in an imaginary world of self-delusion in which she imagines herself as a white heroine with slim waist, blonde hair, and blue eyes, while her aged white lover becomes her romantic hero. In dealing with her sense of shame and guilt, she seeks refuge in food and reading romance novels, denying her true self and oscillating ambivalently between the white romantic heroine and the exotic black whore: “What was *herself* anyway, she wondered unhappily? She never seemed to know from one day to the next who she was; and she sometimes thought her many lives would catch up on her, and it might not be such a bad thing” (Riley, *Romance*74). As a displaced black Briton immersed in white idealist concepts of feminine beauty, Verona like Hyacinth, feels alienated and insecure amongst hostile Londoners and disconnects herself from the outside world: “She cut across the common – the most direct route – liking the pretence that she was out of the crowded rush of city life. ... Her spirit lifted, her mind letting go of worry and shifting to her latest fantasy” (Riley, *Romance*39). She escapes her unhappy reality by creating a series of fantasies where she is able to erase her blackness, locating beauty in European features and physical characteristics and where the aggressiveness of black men is not present and the heroine gets a ‘happily ever after’ ending. Her dissatisfaction and her quest for ‘self’ makes her choose a love on Guy, a white and aged married man. As the novel progresses, the readers perceive that she has casual affairs with married white men since this is the only way she can compensate for her loneliness and fill the emotional void in her spirit: “With them she was in control and could indulge her fantasy. She needed that control....and at the end of the day the men went home to their wives and nobody got hurt” (Riley, *Romance*19). The fact that married men move on from this relationship and do not force Verona to cultivate the lasting relations motivates her to engage in such illicit relationships. On the other hand, such relationships allow white men, who are attracted by Verona’s black skin, to live out their fantasy: “She realises that men like Guy [her current man] were fascinated by her skin, finding the colour and the texture, alien and exotic. They were flattered by her attention” (Riley, *Romance*19). From the very young age, Verona has lost her confidence and sense of self-worth and has developed an incessant quest for self, love, and identity. The derision and negligence she perceives in those around make her feel inferior and contemptuous of her race, ultimately leading to an existential crisis. In fact, it is the shame of black consciousness and the quest for recognition that Riley calls attention to and that is

reflected in Verona, who like Pecola in Toni Morrison's *The Bluest Eye* (1997), internalizes the white standard of beauty. Like Morrison, Riley calls attention to the ways in which such internalized beauty standards disfigure the lives of black females like Verona who connects beauty with being loved and respected and is trapped in her lumpy folds of flesh, yet ironically feels secure in it: "Verona still felt cut off, padded around by her romance and her fat" she was safe in the protection of her large body" (Riley, *Romance* 69, 3). Thus, to fill the existential void and to alleviate her most secret pain – the trauma of rape, she engrosses herself in reading the "endless piles of romance novels that seemed to cover every available inch of floor space" (Riley, *Romance* 11) of her room and develops bulimia nervosa for sweets. In her imagination, she recreates the intimate romantic moments of the novels while fantasizing: "he was tenderly caressing her quivering white flesh" and "the fingers tweaking at her short hair were really tangling in her imagined long golden tresses" (Riley, *Romance* 174). Although her imaginative recreation can be understood as an escape mechanism or a refuge which provides an alternative from her humiliating and undignified life, it also articulates the need for the recognition of self which seems to be sorely lacking in Verona.

In contrast, her sister, Desiree is not afflicted with such self-contempt and is apparently more connected to reality. Through her character, Riley gives voice to those black women who are exposed to confinement and immobility within the suburban home and are striving to fulfill their dream. Confined to the unfulfilling role of the devoted and self-denying housewife, Desiree has spent her life sacrificing her own personal happiness for the sake of her marriage and children. Her disillusionment in marriage eventually causes her to lose the sense of self and emotional strength to construct resistant spaces. She has embraced her destiny– a selfish and careless husband who is worn down by the racial discrimination: "It was always the same; whenever disappointment hit him he took it out on her. What she felt didn't count, only his hurt mattered" (Riley, *Romance* 86). She accepts her husband's authority and his unreasonable behavior because she empathizes with him. Like Adella, even Desiree realizes that her husband, John is not the man whom she married and blames the discrimination he confronts at his job, where in spite of his hard work "his skill and merit were getting him nowhere" (Riley, *Romance* 84). Like Haroon in Kureishi's *The Buddha of Suburbia*, and Lawrence in *The Unbelonging*, John faces racial

biases and discrimination. The rejection and denigration that he experiences cause a dig at his self-esteem, challenging his sense of masculine self and identity. To preserve his manhood, he exercises power and authority over Desiree, maintaining her in a position of dependency. Even when she tries to counsel John for facing failures and for not expecting too much from his job, he lashes out at her “Why is it every time I try a thing, all you can do is go on like I not good enough for nothing?... That’s all I getting from the white man out there,” he continued, ‘but I ain’t taking it from you’” (Riley, *Romance* 26). He expects Desiree to quit her career to take care of their daughters and when she expresses a wish to restart education, he discourages her because he sees it as a sign that she will leave him or why would she want to ‘better herself’? Although Desiree chafes against the restraints imposed upon her, she, for the most part, sullenly acquiesces to it. She has defined her own notion of what it is to be a woman, “*I have a duty to support John.... If he don’t get loyalty from me, where he supposed to get it?*” (Riley, *Romance* 10), and her definition puts limits on what a woman can do, stopping her from navigating and circumventing such parochial notions. When she learns that she has to undergo a hysterectomy, she views it as a threat to her subjective female identity and defines herself as “a black woman abandoned and alone, without her womb” (Riley, *Romance* 102). Riley inscribes her hysterectomy as a metaphor for loss and emptiness, as a threat to her feminine self which constitutes a sense of dispossession and incompleteness. Desiree is so preoccupied with this thought that she has no sense of her own self-worth without her womb: “I won’t be a whole woman no more!” (Riley, *Romance* 64). Her loss of fertility signifies the fragmentation, annihilation of herself as a woman in a society that despises rather than respects. Like her sister Verona, Desiree is unable to transcend the dominant discourses that define her subjectivity and belittle her individuality.

By fictionalizing frustrations, loss, and emptiness within personal as well as in social spaces, Riley demonstrates how the characters are not only alienated from themselves and their families but also from their hostile surroundings. In mapping out the inner worlds of her protagonists, Riley illustrates that the disillusionment experienced by the sisters is due to their own perception towards their lives and if they could change their attitudes they could transcend each and every difficulty in life, as reinforced in the novel by Granny Ruby: “There’s nobody to liberate yourself from but yourself” (Riley, *Romance*

226). By placing emphasis on self-assertion and self-valuation, Riley provides a way for ethnic minority communities to deal with the existential vacuum often eventuated in a postcolonial setting, stressing the need for them to find their own strength to assert themselves and to claim their identity. As a case in point is Mara– Desiree’s friend and a motherly figure, much similar to Lisa in *Waiting in the Twilight*– who redefines her identity through self-realization and self-determination, evolving as a strong and an autonomous individual in the mainstream society. She is seen as an independent and self-sufficient woman who has left her husband who kept her under his control and has returned to college to complete her degree. Mara, Perlene, and Lisa are paradigmatic of such independent women who know how to assert themselves and to create new possibilities and resistant spaces for themselves and their children in the land of Whites. Mara’s resilience and emotional courage and Granny Ruby’s “new ways of seeing life” (Riley, *Romance* 231) serve as a model for Desiree and persuade her to start reconsidering what a woman can do. She comes to realize that she can reclaim her identity by transcending the circumscribed boundaries and by creating a life of her own away from rigid stereotypes and parochial notions. Consequently, by the end of the narrative, Desiree is seen steeping out from her meek and submissive role and rediscovers her identity as an empowered woman whose life is not “wrapped in that womb” (Riley, *Romance* 226). For the first time in her lifetime, she views herself, not as a wife or as a mother, but as a woman who possesses the strong desire to change her destiny and who ultimately finds a sense of purpose and meaning in life, “But now things would be different. The old Desiree was long gone, and all those other battles could come now” (Riley, *Romance* 231). In her journey towards an independent identity, she is regenerated and reinvigorated by transcending her subordinate position and emerges as a strong black British woman who has an intense desire to move ahead. Likewise, her sister Verona also finds strength and determination to assert her identity and claim her rights. Despite being deserted by her white lover and impregnator, Steve, she is ready to face the real world and challenges of life as a single-parent. Although, Riley does not make direct reference to Verona’s self-recognition or assertion of blackness, yet she implicitly indicates that Verona is ready to face the challenges of life and will no longer hide in a world of day-dreaming and self-delusion: “Tonight she’d read romance, she decided. *But tomorrow, who knows...?*” (Riley, *Romance* 230). The trajectory of Verona’s life thus

moves from seeking refuge in overeating and fantasy to coming out of those confined boundaries. Through her protagonists' transformation, Riley stresses the need for self-articulation. Unlike Riley's earlier protagonists, Adella and Hyacinth, who are unable to claim their voice and survive in a hostile land, both Verona and Desiree manage to survive and navigate their new social status and geographical location. Through this optimistic and promising ending, Riley emphasizes the significance of autonomy, self-affirmation, and self-articulation, providing a way to survive in and transcend the physical, spatial, temporal, and discursive boundaries that circumscribe lives of black British subjects.

To sum up it can be stated that Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley are perfect examples of first generation immigrant writers who raise the question of identity and subjectivity within cross-cultural context, where racial and cultural minorities live within the liminal spectrum in search of a place or space where they could live as they are. Their articulations predominantly lay stress on the confluence of racial, social, political, geographical, and cultural structures and how identities are made, unmade and re-made (Winston 232) at the sites of those convergences. In writing about the complexities of ethnic minority communities, they concentrate on a variety of issues including identity, masculinity, location, alienation, isolation, existential crisis, displacement, marginality, and liminality.

Randhawa views liminal space not simply in the negative sense of being caught between conflicting cultural identities, but in the positive sense of marking a space of potential and transformation, where her characters can claim their voice and survive successfully through navigating the discursive boundaries. In emphasizing the plurality and malleability of identity, Randhawa illustrates how the liminal space calls for the cultural negotiation that could possibly be carried out through a fusion of different influences celebrated as a powerful new identity. Such a fusion may be established in opposition to the rhetoric of racial purity, authenticity, and essentialism but may also be conceptualized, in Kureishi's words, "a new way of being British after all this time" (qtd. in Upstone 3). Indeed, it is the fusion of different cultures that Kureishi calls attention to and that Randhawa theorizes throughout her fiction to explore how the white cultural space syncretizes spatiality of migration and creates hybrid identities that, while harbouring dynamism, produce a counter-narrative to evade the politics of polarity and to articulate

new forms of subjectivity beyond erasure and loss of self. Thus, for Randhawa's unintelligible subjects like Kulwant, Harijinder, Gazala, and Sita, identity-performance and self-positioning are the constitutive acts by which they not only gain intelligibility within the antagonistic environment, but also learn how to manage the affective ambivalence of everyday life effectively. This positioning and repositioning of Randhawa's characters in new spaces through the performance of identities, dressing patterns, and language facilitate them to find a way for the articulation of their subjectivities. Thus the way Randhawa engages with British Asian identity points towards the possibilities open to the communities of colour. By enabling her characters to celebrate their otherness and to perform identities situationally, Randhawa offers them alternative ways of approaching the issues of identity and subjectivity. The need to perform different identities at different places draws attention to the ways in which communities of colour can evade their ambivalent existential positioning and re-locate themselves within such spaces. For Randhawa's characters, real survival depends upon making oneself recognizable, however creatively achieved, however unpalatable. It is for this reason that these characters employ varied images of their persona to traverse British cultural space for a successful manoeuvre. Such performances enacted by Kulwant, Harjinder, Gazala, and Sita allow them to manipulate their positioning in a society in which they are otherwise marginalized and rendered unintelligible. At the same time, these moves allow these liminal Asian Britons to reinvent themselves with new selves, new identities, while at the same time calling into question the notion of essentialism.

For Randhawa's characters, their liminality is a space of possibilities and transformation as they shift their liminal position by performive acts and by reconstructing a fluid and hybrid identity for themselves, but for Riley's characters, this liminality is an insurmountable deterrent, a site of stagnation and ambivalence, of disorientation and confinement, of complex and often conflicting articulations of identity where they are unable to claim rights and assert agency for themselves. In dealing with black individuals' search for identity and acceptance, Riley disavows the possibility of cultural fusion or hybridity, offering the reader little hope of a better horizon. For her characters, thus hybridity is a dislocating force associated with pain and suffering, far from their reach and not liberating in any way. Unlike Randhawa's protagonists, Kulwant and Sita, Riley's

protagonists Hyacinth and Adella fail to perform alternative identities and find little possibility of negotiation between the two cultures and finally end up as submissive victims who fail to create a niche for themselves in white spaces. This is apparent in *The Unbelonging*, where the protagonist, Hyacinth is unable to negotiate her 'racial identity' and creates a personality at the expense of erasing her own individuality, culture, history, and background, living somewhere in-between, *sin fronteras*. Riley takes this discussion further in *Waiting in the Twilight* where identity becomes a vague notion for her protagonist, Adella as her struggle for existence ultimately culminates in a denial of subjectivity as well as of life. However, it is not only socio-political spaces but also the circumstances that render her incapable of resisting the dominant structural forces. Nevertheless, Riley reserves hope and change for younger generations who are more successful than their parents in achieving a positive sense of self in the face of the multi-faceted and institutional racism. Like Randhawa's second generation British Asian subjects, Adella's daughters Carol and Audrey reconstruct a hybrid identity for themselves, inscribing a new meaning to Black British identity. Her third novel *Romance* is moderately more optimistic than *The Unbelonging* and *Waiting in the Twilight* as in this novel Riley opens up new alternatives for her characters, for whom their liminality is what hooks identifies as a "location of radical openness and possibility....a radical creative space which affirms and sustains our subjectivity, which give us a new location from which to articulate our sense of the world" (*Yearning* 153). What hooks emphasizes here is the need to embrace one's marginal positioning and to transform oneself individually, collectively so as to discover alternative means of inscription and identification. In a manner somewhat similar to hooks, Riley also stresses the need for communities of colour to find their own strength so as to assert themselves in a hostile environment. In *Romance*, the author endows her protagonists with inner-strength and empowers them to take the reins of their life into their own hands. The love and care these sisters provide each other and the support Mara and Granny Ruby provides them eventually help them to create a space for themselves and to redefine their identity. Celebrating their existence through assertion of blackness, both Guyanese sisters ultimately succeed in reclaiming their identity as women, as mothers, and as independent individuals in the mainstream of the society. In depicting identity as a difficult process engaged in an ongoing process of crossing and negotiating

boundaries, Riley also shows how the opposition to restrictive forces and the realization of self-consciousness can help ethnic minority communities in building a positive sense of self. Hyacinth's friend, Perlene, Adella's friend Lisa, and Desiree's friend Mara are paradigmatic of such liminal individuals who, by subverting the dominant paradigm and celebrating their otherness, acculturate themselves in British cultural landscape.

All the novels discussed here, schematically, capture racial and cultural minorities' struggle for identity and acceptance in a predominantly white environment in which cultural differences as well as personal narratives play crucial roles. This quest for an assertion of identity as well as for a positive sense of self and recognition, that is central to Randhawa's and Riley's writings, suggests strong similarities across cultural differences in the experiences of ethnic groups on which these authors draw. Despite different approaches in their representations, they delineate a variety of choices open to the characters in their quest for individuality. Instead of representing their female protagonists as merely victims, these authors try to expose what their actual difficulties are and what could possibly be done to overcome them. In giving voice to the complexities of immigrant experience in a society antagonist towards the Black, Asian, and Minority Ethnic communities, both the authors write about the difficulty as well as the necessity to assert oneself and to claim or rather reclaim the identity and culture which Blacks and Asians have been taught to despise since the time of colonial era. Probing new grounds for growth and survival of communities of colour, they call for social reforms and changes, conveying the message that change, transformation, adaptability, celebration of one's culture, self-assertion, and self-articulation are essential skills to attain self-empowerment and to claim one's identity and subjectivity in the mainstream British society.

5. Between Conflicting Worlds: The Dilemma of Home and Belonging

Who are you? Where do you belong to? or ‘Where are you really from ? Such questions that are always laden with multiple connotations are integral to immigrant experience, open up venues for the interrogation of home, roots, and belonging, nationality, country of origin, and citizenship. When people of a specific culture and region migrate to another nation, a sense of loss and exile always dominate their psyche and they are persistently afflicted by the sense of being distanced from the essential structure of the host society. The movement of diverse cultures from different former colonies and their subsequent settlement in the Western metropolis therefore complicates the scenario, as it exacerbates the quest for identity and survival for immigrants and their upcoming generations, leading to the sense of displacement, exile, and rootlessness. The interaction of two or more conflicting cultures in the host society together with entrenched racism and colonial dynamics evokes an emotional attachment to the ancestral homeland, aggravating the desire to reassert their culture and identity.

In an era dominated by popular forms of culture and complicated by postcoloniality and postmodernity, the notions of home, identity, and nation take on complicated twists for once-colonized people whose experience of migration to the ex-colonizer’s land leads to a search for roots and belonging. This longing for home, belonging, for reassertion of the self reaches a highly contested terrain when it is associated with immigrant literature that “places the discourse of home and dispersion in creative tension, inscribing a homing desire while simultaneously critiquing discourses of fixed origins” (Brah, *Cartographies* 192-193). The homing desire that Brah points to complicates the very notion of what ‘home’ means, a concern which lies at the core of immigrant experience. In this context, home is not simply an accommodation in a geographical location/area; instead it is a place of security and seamless belonging, of comfort and contentment, and a space providing escape from the intrusiveness of the world, a place of eventual return:

It [home] can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a sense of our place in the world. It tells us where we originated from and where we belong. As an idea it stands for shelter, stability, security and comfort. To be “at home” is to

occupy a location where we are welcome, where we can be with people very much like ourselves. (McLeod, *Beginning* 210)

Far from being thought in terms of fixed origin, the notion of home thus connotes variegated meanings which shift across a number of discourses: from private to public spheres, from symbolism to social reproduction, from a physical place of origin to a rhetorical construction, from “a mythic place of desire” to “the lived experience of locality” (Brah, *Cartographies* 192). The word ‘home’ therefore is not a particular place inhabited by individuals, rather it is a conflicting site of belonging and becoming, of reconstruction of shattered subjectivities (hooks; R. Young), a complex mediation between “roots and routes” (Gilroy *Black, Atlantic*; Clifford, *Routes*). Home then attains the site of different possibilities and becomes the very location in which subjectivities can be restored and strengthened, and which further opens up multiple semiotic spaces in which individuals can reclaim their sense of identity, home, and belonging.

However, this traditional meaning of ‘home’ ceases to exist for ethnic minority communities, for whom the migration to ex-colonizer’s land, that is characterized by marginality and liminality, contributes to an oscillation and simultaneity between past and present, homeland and host land, here and there— a back and forth shift of recognition and affiliation which calls for a constant negotiation of these diametrically opposed poles. In a society determined by race and class codes, such ethnic minority communities are constantly considered as out of place and are pushed to the margins, which eventually contributes to their sense of alienation and prevents them to be at home in Britain. In his seminal article, ‘Diaspora’ (1991) William Safran traces the tensions between homeland and dispersed people who have “a triangular socio-cultural relationship with the host society and the homeland” (372). According to him, although migratory subjects may be far away from their homeland, yet an attachment to their place of origin is always with them. For such subjects, the narratives of “being at home” and “not being home” (Mohanty and Martin), belonging and estrangement become highly ambiguous and multilayered and take on complicated twists and detours. Focusing on complex and ambivalent relationship between these contrasting narratives, Sara Ahmed identifies that home is sometimes as much about present as about future where one has not arrived at, often a destination to be pursued in ‘detours’:

The narrative of leaving home produces too many homes and hence no Home, too many places in which memories attach themselves through the carving out of inhabitable space, and hence no place that memory can allow the past to reach the present. The movement between homes allows Home to become a fetish, to be separated from the particular worldly space of living here, through the possibility of some memories and the impossibility of others. In such a narrative journey, then, the space that is most like home, which is most comfortable and familiar, is not the space of inhabitation – I am here – but the very space in which one is almost, but not quite, at home. In such a space, the subject has a destination, an itinerary, indeed a future, but in having such a destination, has not yet arrived. (331)

This stands true for ethnic minority communities for whom their imagined or idealized home, their past and history play a major part, not just in preserving a feeling of rootedness, but also in facilitating their efforts to make new homes, particularly when they are unable to create a sense of belonging in their current location where they are excluded from the social, cultural, and national geographies, and are perennially considered as ‘outsiders’.

Such communities, who are positioned between the hostland/homeland quandaries, oscillate between the culture and customs of the old world and the freedom and attractions of the new one. The disjuncture between these two trajectories creates a constant dystopic tension, forcing them to inhabit psychologically what Said identifies as “the perilous territory of not-belonging or unbelonging” (*Reflections* 177). This dilemma of belonging or rather unbelonging becomes the source of attachment to past, roots, memories, nostalgia, and a hope to return back to their paradise, their ‘homeland’. But the idea of return as Safran argues exists only in the mind since “there is no homeland for diaspora [migrants] to return. Although a homeland may exist, it is not a welcoming place with which they can identify politically, ideologically, or socially” (91). The idea of return thus is fragmented from the experience of returning home and becomes what Safran’s identifies as “a myth” (86), a crucial site which remains fraught with tension and ambivalence, where “there is almost never a definite arrival “at” the subsequent homes” (Rus). It is indeed this in-between detour of leaving and never arriving that signifies the oscillating movement of immigrant existence and that the postcolonial authors re-inscribes while theorizing migratory experience in general, and ‘home’ and ‘belonging’ in particular.

This constant shuffling of homeland and host land, belonging and unbelonging– a condition felt by liminal Britons who are at odds with their environment, is explicitly expressed in the works of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley. By invoking the creative

tension of living in the racial continuum, they articulate the psychic, cultural, and geographical homelessness experienced by their characters. Through their characters' strained relationships with their immediate surroundings, they evoke provocative questions of home, belonging, being at home, survival, and settlement. In focusing on the complexities of movement and re-settlement in the Western metropolis, these authors examine not just the psychic, cultural, and geographical displacement, but also how power politics, spatiality, and subjectivities are mutually constitutive. More specifically, their works explore how communities of colour redefine their homes and identifications and in the process construct new ways of understanding and negotiating the sense of place and belonging that give meaning to liminal individuals and communities, thereby shaping the contours of modern day citizenship. The primary question that shapes the analysis of this chapter is how the notions of home and belonging are approached and addressed in the writings of Randhawa and Riley and how these notions take on complicated twists and turns for ethnic minority communities who are striving to be a part of the British mainstream.

The notion of being unanchored, not-being-at-home caused by cross-cultural conflicts has been explored convincingly by Ravinder Randhawa in her debut novel, *A Wicked Old Woman* (1987). In foregrounding the struggles of cultural minorities against marginalization, Randhawa highlights her characters' search for new geographies of home and belonging as a critical practice of being a part of the British mainstream. This desire to belong and to assimilate into the mainstream society is exhibited clearly in the narrative where Kulwant is seen having a relationship with a white man, Michael, a marker of integration into an English world. This relationship not only strengthens her presence in the host country but also provides a comfortable room for Kulwant, thus erasing her stereotypical image of an "old-fashioned, traditional Indian girl in pig-tails" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 5). Her attachment to white culture is also reflected in her friendship with a white girl Caroline who "had adopted the newcomer in junior school" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 54). This friendship that lasted for years facilitates Kulwant's assimilation in white community and makes her feel a part of mainstream, thus allowing for the creation of a safe environment in which Kulwant feels secure and at home. Redefining the geographies of

belonging, albeit temporarily, she crosses the threshold, embarking on a symbolical journey, “from one world to another” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 16). However, despite her strenuous efforts to belong to the English culture, the dilemma of belonging remains open for Kulwant,

The ease of belonging...[that she perceives in the people around her] “acted like floodlights on her internal landscape of broken desolation... where fragments of scenes faced each other in alienation...her inner world floated in space without history to anchor the location or a future to give it a guiding assurance. (Randhawa, *Wicked* 17)

The sense of alienation, of being ‘torn apart’ felt by the protagonist points to the tension that plays out amongst second generation British Asians subjects who dwell in what Randhawa describes as a “dangerous territory” (*Wicked* 41). Thus to avoid losing her territory and plunging into what Nasta refers to as the “holes in the diasporic net” (*Home Truths* 206), Kulwant willingly agrees for an arranged marriage. What readers witness here is multiple and simultaneous affiliations and disaffiliations, a back and forth shift of attachment and belonging. Right from the beginning of the narrative, Kulwant’s sense of belonging oscillates and she moves back and forth in search of an affiliation she can associate herself with. Her lack of knowledge of her roots and history culminates in her continual oscillation between the host and the native culture. This oscillation of “‘being’ in one place, and ‘longing’ for another” (Hedetoft and Hjort vii) is indicative of the dynamism, fluidity, and multiplicity of home and belonging. This is precisely what Avtar Brah finds typical in migratory subjects whose sense of belonging is malleable, “always-in-the-making, and emerges in constant interplay with ‘host’ cultures” (Sigona et.al. xx). This perplexing dilemma has put Kulwant amidst the unceasing battle of emotions and intellect, a constant conflict between her inner self and her outer self, her roots and routes, as confirmed by Kulwant’s mother who never lost her anchor of certainty but is well aware of her daughter’s bewildering state: “this country has put you in one of its mixers and whirled you round till you can’t tell your inside from your outside, your duty from your rights, your needs from your responsibilities” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 54). Caught in-between two cultures and two identities, Kulwant’s existence is characterized by ambiguities and inconsistencies, marked by fluidity and bereft of any essentialising fixity.

Ironically, Kulwant's effort to establish her roots, being, and culture – the extreme choice of a traditional arranged marriage turns out to be a failure. The difficulties that she experiences in this relationship also give her the sense of unhomeliness. Hence, she constantly leaves home, in search of a sense of belonging which is impossible for her to achieve. Her sense of homelessness finds an expression when she weaves a fantasy about her ancestral land while experiencing a moment of nostalgia:

[India] for some was home, for others nothing more than a distant childhood memory, and for those born here a patchwork land transmitted through parents' stories of places, people, happenings: an infrastructure kept alive with baby milk, mixed with rotis and savoured with the mature taste of chillies. (Randhawa, *Wicked* 33)

These lines articulate the rootlessness of second generation British Asians who visualize their homelands through their childhood memories or through their parents' perspectives. For such individuals, food serves as a metaphor for inducing a longing or a sense of belonging to the land of origin. As it is explicit in the novel where the aromas of the spice rack in an Asian grocery shop in London recreate the memories of home for Kulwant in a foreign land:

If you closed your eyes, your memories would take you back: back to hot baking sun, the clamour of voices, the press of bodies and all these smells would drop into place: the signature tune of an Indian Mandi: grains and dals on hand scales, eyes capable of measuring to the last grain, tasty whiffs from food stalls starting an avalanche of desire in the taste buds. (Randhawa, *Wicked* 218)

This nostalgic reverie provides Kulwant a temporary return or what Ketu Katrak describes as “imagined returns to homeland” (qtd. in Mannur 27), transporting her to temporally and geographically distant childhood home and giving her a feeling of being at home in Britain. Additionally, such fragments of culinary memory underscore how food and aroma take on a cultural significance and becomes a way to anchor rootless identity.

However, in this quest to belong, Kulwant employs a different version of belonging by deliberately donning the identity of an old woman, walking with an Oxfam bag and a stick, “her oversized coat swaying around her, buffering the loneliness knocking at its threadbare fabric” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 113). In her new guise as a homeless cripple, Kulwant becomes what Tobias Doring calls as a “socially declassified” that enjoys “greater

mobility”, while at the same time claiming the “benefit of unbelonging” (259). However, after hearing the traumatic stories of Rani and other women, she realizes her own selfishness, how she has “gone into hiding from the future in play-acting”, how she has “tried to cheat the future by pretending she was old and past it” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 191). At this point, she sheds her self-imposed exile and her adopted guise of an old woman and joins other British women of colour like Maya, Soni, Shazia, Ammi, and Angie amongst others in the act of storytelling which gradually recover Rani/Rosalind “from semi-consciousness and the abyss of madness” (Innes, “Wintering” 33). Randhawa thus encapsulates the experiences of such liminal Asian women who are homeless by choice like Kulwant and Rani herself; or by circumstances, like Ammi whose life centers around the key issue of finding a sense of belonging.

This complexity of belonging, “a never-ending dialogue of same with other” (Bromley, 5), of being in-between is further explored through various characters of different generations in relation to both the ancestral homeland and the new socio-political space. Not only Kulwant but other characters like Parminder who prefers being called Pauli, Arvind, who anglicizes his name to Arnold, and Rani who turns herself into “Rosalind of mythological fame” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 45), all are torn by the conflict between Asian and British culture and are engaged in the act of renaming themselves as part of the process of identification with the predominant white culture. In Martina Michel’s opinion, “they are not so much torn between two cultures as concerned with assuming an identity that enables them to feel at home in Britain” (149). What Michel underlines is that it is not that they want to reject their culture and ethnicity, but rather that it provides them a sense of belonging, of being anchored and grounded in the British mainstream culture. Such performative acts indeed facilitate immigrants to make themselves visible, feel at-home and safe in a predominantly white environment, which is especially crucial in a culturally diverse society like Britain whose values and norms are defined by color codes and Eurocentricism, having no room for cultural minorities.

The dilemma of belonging/being anchored is always a difficult one, especially for second generation British Asian subjects who grow up in what Gauri Bhat describes as a “vacuum culture” (qtd. in Mishra, *Literature* 184), having ambiguous relationships with both their

countries of origin as well as of citizenship. In her novel *Beauty and the Beast* (2014), Randhawa powerfully portrays the trauma of such younger British Asians for whom home and belonging are complicated concepts; for whom the meaning of home is not different, but the home itself is different from their parents' home. To put it more succinctly, their idea of home is translocated from the place of origin (their ancestral land) to the place of being or citizenship (their homeland).

As a second generation liminal Briton, the protagonist of the novel, Harjinder does not feel the impulse to maintain links with her 'ancestral land' as she considers Britain as her home, marking her difference from the first generation immigrants. Though she makes a conscious effort to live a life free from traditional Punjabi culture, she ironically experiences the feelings of rootlessness and loneliness on a number of occasions. Feeling disconnected from her past and history, she describes India as "the unknown... the unfulfilled, lonely part" (Randhawa, *Beauty* 69) of herself. These lines reveal the meaning of spatial and material aspects of self-positioning and show how the feeling of alienation ensuing from the dominant socio-political spaces may thwart the feelings of belonging and affiliation. Her lack of knowledge of her original home and cultural roots stimulates in her a desire to visit India, "the place that mattered", or the place "that really meant something" (Randhawa, *Beauty* 69). She symbolizes the predicament of the second generation British Asians who are cut off from their origins, exiled by birth itself. Through the character of Harjinder, Randhawa brings into focus the sense of rootlessness and alienation that accompany the lives of immigrants' children, thus illustrating the concern posed by Bota et al.: We are different from our parents. We have ... other values and ideas about living in Germany. They are the foreigners, not us. But we are still far from being German. So what are we then? What do we want to be? (qtd. in Röttger-Rössler). The affective ambivalence illustrated here finds an expression in Harjinder and Gazala, who find themselves straddling two cultures and identities. Both the characters find themselves in a paradoxical situation and make sincere efforts to establish their sense of self in order to find the security, stability, and comfort in the contested spaces.

As a British citizen, Gazala is not so much caught between host land and homeland quandary and is more rooted to her culture, but she experiences a sense of unbelonging due to her traditional Islamic background. Her race, her *hijab* and *abaya*– the 'visible' marker

of her cultural difference fix her identity as an extremist, fundamentalist, and racial ‘other’ in a predominantly white society and exclude her from the definition of Britishness. Her *hijab* and *abaya*, as a signifier of her Muslim lineage not only makes her an object of derision within the cultural landscape of Britain but also triggers the emotions of shame, guilt, and inferiority. Aside from fostering a sense of shame and guilt, such negative stereotypes affect Gazala’s identity and self-esteem, preventing her from creating a sense of belonging and ‘being-at-home’ in Britain. Regardless of the differences in their personal experiences, what unites the new generation British Asian subjects like Harjinder and Gazala is the fragility and ambivalence of their affiliation to Britain and the resulting feeling of unbelonging.

In contrast to Harjinder and Gazala, Randhawa represents Suresh Robinson, Harjinder’s classmate, whose mother Lakshmi has inculcated Indian culture and traditions in him all the while making sure that he “speaks fluent Hindi, can read and write it” and “is perfectly at home in India” (Randhawa, *Beauty* 83-84). Furthermore, Suresh’s prowess in Bhangra⁵ at Diwali party makes Harjinder realize that, unlike her many new generation Britons are very much in touch with their parents’ roots, culture, and traditions. Despite being a mixed-race adolescent, Suresh is rooted to both the cultures and expresses greater transnational loyalties than Hari-jan. It is this ease with his Punjabi roots and culture that elicits emotional response of pride in Suresh and enables him to build a strong sense of personal and social confidence. The feeling of rootedness leaves no room for emptiness or existential void, thus leading to higher self-esteem, motivation, and aspiration in him. Although Suresh has adopted the British ways of living, he maintains emotional connections to his ancestral land through his frequent trips to India as well as through Indian music, film, and television serials to which Arjun Appadurai refers to as “mediascape” (“Disjuncture” 296) and Sandra Ponzanesi theorizes as “diasporic digitality”(988). The use of digital media allows ethnic minority communities to keep in touch with their native land and culture, thus strengthening their cultural ties and sense of rootedness. Such individuals who are continuously engaged in negotiating the tension of assimilation and integration in a hostile land create emotional geographies of belonging by employing a different version of citizenship to which Renato Rosaldo theorizes as ‘cultural

⁵folk dance and music of Punjab.

citizenship'. In this sense, the cultural citizenship that ethnic groups create through various cultural acts and practices allow for the performance of home, identity, and belonging within the context of migration and help them in claiming multiple modes of home and belonging.

Suresh watches Hindi classic films, like *Pyaasa*, and popular television soaps in India in the late 1980s like *Nukurdh*, whereas his mother, Laxmi wears *Khadi*, as a way to assert her cultural roots and preserve her ethnicity. In a discussion with her friend Manjit, Laxmi affirms that her decision to wear *Khadi* is her chosen way of life, or in Judith Butler's (1988) terms, "a performative act" for constituting the sense of belonging:

I vowed I would always wear khadi as my... as my... as a way of showing that I won't become foreign. So I got married in khadi. Manjit, you can't imagine the scandal!' laughing gleefully. 'The scandal wasn't that I was marrying a white man, but that I was getting married in khadi. (Randhawa, *Beauty* 83)

The above extract serves to illustrate how racial and cultural minorities perform home and belonging through cultural citizenship that allow individuals like Suresh and Lakshmi to create multiple modes of belonging and to claim multiple locations of home and affiliations. At the same time, such performances serve as a means for maintaining social interaction and group solidarity within the Asian community. Besides, the reference to classic Hindi movie *Pyaasa*, and its music "...udaas raat hai ... zuban pe dard..." (Randhawa, *Beauty* 107) provides a romantic background to the narrative, bringing Hari-jan closer to her future boyfriend, Suresh. Thus for Hari-jan, finding a link to the Bollywood movies and music loving side of her, is like finding herself, the othered "me' that had lain trapped, in exile" (Randhawa, *Beauty* 108) or a homecoming which she cannot describe but experiences while falling in love with Suresh. Her sense of connection and belonging to Britain is as strong as that associated with her nationality. Furthermore, the celebration of *Diwali* and *Bhangra* dance performance arranged by Hari-jan, Gazala, and their multi-cultural group facilitate not only first generation British Asians but also new generation Britons in preserving a feeling of rootedness as well as in fostering a sense of belongingness and being-at-home in dominant white spaces. Through these cultural and emotional ritual performances, Randhawa underscores how festivals, dance, and music take on a cultural significance and becomes a way to anchor the destabilised and displaced

identities. Crossing boundaries between alleged different social positions, such liminal Britons learn to develop new skills such as managing ambivalence, shifting codes and languages, and claiming new modes of identification and belonging— all of which make it easier for them to feel accepted, safe and being-at-home in Britain.

In this sense, for Randhawa's characters like Suresh, Harjinder, Gazala, and Laxmi, the cultural citizenship as performance facilitates them in maintaining a sense of community and belonging both within and beyond the boundaries of the nation-states. For such individuals, home then is not solely about roots or nostalgia but at times more of a feeling of safety or security within a community of shared values, networks, and practices (Anthias, "Belongings" 21). It is indeed these common affiliations, interests, and affinities that facilitate individuals like Suresh and Laxmi to be at home where the overcoming of disregard for the self, challenged culture, loss of identity, and uprootedness of the being is contiguous with "new forms of 'longing' that become 'belonging' as suggestively phrased by Appadurai"(qtd. in Ponzanesi 989). This is also reflected in the way Harjinder, Gazala, and Suresh redefine the boundaries of citizenship and membership through various emotional cultural practices, sustaining long-distance relationships and claiming multiple modes of home and belonging. Far from being thought as a static or fixed notion, the notion of belonging is thus multivocal, multiscalar, and multisited, that is always in process, contextual, and fluctuant. Drawing attention to the flexibility of belonging, Randhawa underscores how the crisis of homelessness and unbelonging can be negotiated through multiple affiliations that is being rooted to two or more cultures, since belonging is not just a question of identification, but it is about social and emotional connection that individuals create through emotions, participations, appearances, and allegiances. It is, indeed, through these multiple attachments, affiliations, positions as well as parallel loyalties that the liminal Britons are able to answer the questions 'who I am and where do I belong?', while at the same time expressing new forms of belonging and being at home.

The quest for belonging that is a recurring leitmotif in Randhawa's novel is further reflected in *The Coral Strand* (2001) where the protagonist's lack of knowledge about herself and her culture leads to an incessant quest for roots and home. Being cut off from her past and culture, Sita finds it difficult to relate herself to the place of her origin and

floats like the survivor of a shipwreck trying to find her authentic self. Though she is born in Britain and considers it as her 'home', the lack of knowledge about her nationality, culture, and family becomes a significant cause of her alienation: "she was too within it [London], part of it and yet alien to it" (Randhawa, *Coral* 35). However, unlike first generation immigrants, she is not overwhelmed by the nostalgia for the place left behind and instead looks forward to confront the complexities of being an Asian in Britain. Her experiences are very different from that of the first generation British Asians, as the home becomes unreal to her, "just a space of imagination rather than of nostalgic recollection". (Satchidanandan 19). This assertion stands true for British-born Asian subjects like Sita who are unfamiliar with their past, "Insufficient data... that's who I am" (Randhawa, *Coral* 37), and "where does she [her mother] live?" (Randhawa, *Coral* 251), yet feels unconsciously part of it.

Despite belonging to an Asian descent, she is completely unaware of her past origins. Even when she is questioned by her boyfriends about her past, culture, religion, and tradition, she gives made-up stories of an Asian home, weaving complicated plots of intrigue and drama but "all they got was the 'Englishness' running through her" (Randhawa, *Coral* 184). Moreover, the imagery comes not from the landscapes of the 'home country', but rather from the influences directly connected to England. In this sense, Sita's Britishness reflected in the description of her past is indicative of the existential void that second generation often feels in relation to their home, as Sara Vannini and Ricardo Gomez opine, "Home is not just a place; it is a feeling. Home is not only a physical space, it is also an imagined one" (1). Being a second generation subject, she is unable to identify with either of the culture and thus fails to fill the ensuing void and alienation. Such immigrants who have been disconnected from their past and background are obsessed to build a relation, whether real or imagined, to their homelands. This obsession to maintain ties to their ancestral land is clearly exhibited in the way Sita metamorphosizes herself into Mrs. Pandey, "trying to tie knots around holes, to give herself a background, so she could fit in, to make them think that she was one of them" (Randhawa, *Coral* 38). Sita's persona of an Asian widow rooted in the desire to be safe and secure is indeed a defense mechanism that she employs to fill the void within her and to anchor her rootless identity. She has succeeded in moving out of the confined boundaries of Emily's house or the Mausoleum,

and has more territories inside her now; more names and experiences filling her memory, yet “her world still begins in her head and ends at her fingertips” (Randhawa, *Coral* 6). When historical reference is no longer possible, when identity can no longer be tied up with a place, it produces an existential vacuum, leading to an extreme curiosity to know about one’s past and origin. This curiosity to know the past, the history is evident in Sita, who being unable to fill the lack within herself, takes on employment of a saleswoman for Asian products:

[She] salivated at the idea of stepping into others’ lives, getting glimpses into homes where regular Indian life happened, of eavesdropping on tradition and culture, brushing against the real stuff.... Afterwards, she discovered that her work began and ended in the basement. (Randhawa, *Coral* 24)

Sita’s made-up stories of Asian home, her metamorphosis to Mrs. Pandey, her employment as a saleswoman—all signify her rootlessness, her desire to belong, to fill up the space around her, however, none of these mechanisms are able to connect her to Asian roots and culture.

In highlighting the existential vacuum often eventuated in the context of migration, Randhawa therefore emphasizes the importance of the notion of home which is as much about emplacement as belongingness, the security of a destination—the feeling of being anchored and safe. Sita’s desire for the same experience is reflected in the novel where she asserts that all those around her “had a background, whether they bucked against it or not” (Randhawa, *Coral* 90). Her jealousy for Rajesh/Kala’s sense of “being placed, materially, psychologically, geographically, historically” (Randhawa, *Coral* 224) marks the value of roots, past, history, and belonging. In dealing with immigrants’ experiences of rootlessness and unbelongingness, Randhawa calls attention to self-knowledge that is needed to find one’s place in the world. In fact, it is the lack of knowledge about one’s home, nation, and culture that makes Sita feel rootless (Randhawa, *Coral* 23), proclaiming “who I am” (49). Disconnected from her Asian heritage, she feels as if someone has stolen her from herself because “if you’re not anchored by a family tag, if there is nothing of the past, it’s like the ground’s never solid under your feet” (Randhawa, *Coral* 148). For Sita, home is not only an enclosed space, filled with comfort and safety, but as Jennie Germann Molz points out, “as a site of familial relations ... [that] reproduce home as home, that is worth pursuing...”

since the imagining] of home is also about the re-imagining of the family (qtd. in Fortier 2). Hence, she tries to put the puzzled pieces of her family together so that they make some sort of sense and she can finally have a sense of belonging. In search of her past and roots, every year she takes a secret journey to the Victorian house, the place of her childhood memories as well as warped beginnings. But this year proves to be crucially different as her journey takes her to the truth about her mother, “an attachment, no matter how toxic or tense which banished loneliness and solitary existence” (Randhawa, *Coral* 272). She had come from the Mausoleum filled with the image of the *she*, her mother: “Sight seen, Image stored. Vacant spot filled. A face to hand betrayal on” (Randhawa, *Coral* 273). Sita’s growth to self-awareness empowers her to live an authentic life and to create a sense of home and being anchored she did not have as a child. Inherent in Randhawa’s discussion is the sense that belonging comes with legibility and that focusing on one’s ‘roots’ can be a way of negotiating and establishing new routes and spaces. This legibility not only facilitates in creating a sense of belonging but also allows entry into a communal identity that would otherwise be denied. In this sense, the legibility offers the British-born subjects like Sita with her firm knowledge— a sense of being placed and an ‘emotional security’ which allows a ‘harmonious relationship between herself and the outside world.

Like her contemporary Ravinder Randhawa, Joan Riley also problematizes the notions of home and belonging through her characters’ fraught relationships with their immediate surroundings. She reveals a common concern with questions of estrangement, rootlessness, and (un)belonginness— the conditions felt by migrants and their descendants at odds with their environment, something Riley herself encountered while living as a Black in Britain. Through her protagonist, Hyacinth the author powerfully portrays the trauma of such immigrants, whose lives are stuck between two cultures or societies without belonging completely to either, thus creating a void in their lives. For Hyacinth, the notion of home is similar to how Anne-Marie Fortier describes as the one which is “never fully achieved, never fully arrived-at” (Fortier 11). Her experience highlights a sense of suspension between departure and arrival, between homeland and host land.

Significantly, the narrative moves between Hyacinth's past and present, between Jamaica of her childhood memories and her present location in Britain. It provides an account of Hyacinth's struggle to find a sense of home and belonging in relation to her surrounding both in a physical as well as in a psychological way. Her struggle symbolizes the restless quest of Edward W. Said's "exiles" who are "cut off from their roots, their land, and their past" (Said, 51). As an exile cut off from her past and culture, Hyacinth repents her stay in England where she finds herself "trapped, sandwiched between the hate and spite of the white world and the dark dingy evil that was the house of her father" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 51). Across the novel, Riley provides many subtle references to what frightens Hyacinth, when the author indicates in the novel how Lawrence haunts Hyacinth: "[He is] sitting in his blue chair" or "he'll kill me" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 22). The entrenched racism as well as physical, verbal, and sexual violence that Hyacinth experiences at home give her a sense of "not being at home" which is according to Martin and Mohanty "is a matter of realizing that home was an illusion of coherence and safety based on the exclusion of specific histories of oppression and resistance, repression of differences even within oneself" (196). Thus the idea of home as a place of security and protection turns out to be a myth for Hyacinth who fails to find the ideal home. The only solution she has is to escape the wicked environment of her father's house: "God if they only knew how much she wanted to leave that bleak, unhappy house", wishing "she could go anywhere but to that house" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 28, 22). Being unable to recapture the sense of home and security, she often clings to her childhood memories of Jamaica to find a shelter from the unrelenting cruelty of her stepmother and her father's abusive behaviour, thus confirming Maud Sulter's statement that: to "retreat into [her]self was the only way [she] knew to keep [her]self alive" (qtd in Ngcobo 59). The novel begins with a prefatory poem entitled 'Memories' celebrating Hyacinth's innocent childhood in an ideal landscape as well as a pleasant dream of back home:

Hyacinth felt the lazy warmth of the early afternoon air wrap her in well-being as she lay back in the cool grass ... It was safe in this little green cave, the recesses of the bushes laden with long-stemmed hibiscus and yellow trumpet-flowers and humming with insect activity. (Riley, *Unbelonging* 9)

But her dream is suddenly interrupted by the harsh voice of her stepmother, Maureen, who scolds Hyacinth for she has wet the bed:

Harsh and strident, the accent grated on her ears ... Coldness enveloped her ... Hyacinth struggled to sit up, eyes opening reluctantly to dingy grey walls, before moving blankly to the equally grey sky she could just glimpse through the ill-fitting curtains. (Riley, *Unbelonging*10)

This dichotomy between Hyacinth's past and present, between the warm and colourful Caribbean and the cold and dull landscape of Britain symbolizes her extreme physical and emotional estrangement and her desperate longing to return to her homeland. Not only does Riley highlight Hyacinth's pervasive sense of being 'othered' and 'out of place' but also parallels this experience with her persistent bed-wetting, a physiological effect of being stuck in a whirlpool of grief and chaos. This whirlpool represents the emotional upheaval and disorganisation that follows her shame of being a black subject, her anger against her oppression, her angst for the loss of homeland.

For Hyacinth, the homeland is lost and the physical return seems impossible, but there is a re-turn, a repeated turning to the lost homeland through imagination, memories or creating what Vijay Mishra refers to as the "diasporic imaginary", the imagined landscapes of dreams and fantasies. This stands true for migratory subjects who reconfigure 'home' by constructing imaginary homelands, as an illusionary solution to their marginalization and victimization. Hyacinth withdraws into the nostalgia for her homeland, which is idealized and conjured as a mythical, dreamlike place and is redefined through her personal memories and contoured in her consciousness, a place where she is not subjected to overt racism. In other words, she takes a solitary refuge in memories of Jamaica; a temporary escape, a place of sunshine and of warmth where she is 'safe' and sheltered and most important, happy. In fact, her dreams and memories of home are a source of comfort which provide an emotional release for the conscious or unconscious conflict operating in her psyche. It is for this reason that Hyacinth escapes to a utopia of her own dreams, harboring a romantic image of Jamaica to find a sense of home, belonging, and comfort she left behind (Gadsby). As the title of the book suggests, finding a sense of belonging is hardly possible for Hyacinth whose visions are only construct and self-defeating. Hyacinth's idealization of Jamaica beyond recognition not only alienates her from black communities

but also prevents her from 'being-at-home' in Britain, denying her relationships with other black British people.

Despite her friends' efforts to make Hyacinth aware about the socio-political realities of Jamaica, she is not ready to accept the truth and comes face to face with reality only when she returns to Jamaica. Hyacinth's return to her homeland is supposed to be therapeutic and may rejuvenate the conflicting self; instead, it lays bare the chasm between her fantasy and reality: "this is not the place she remembered" (Riley, *Unbelonging* 135-137). It is indeed this incongruity between migrants' dream of a romanticized home and their experience with the reality that makes their return impossible. The migratory subjects can return to their homeland only by accepting the fact that the "home" they remember no longer exists and that they are indeed a foreigner everywhere, a point which James Winston precisely illustrates:

The tragedy of the exile's return is that he/she forgets this and is reminded of it the hard and painful way. It is not that the returning Jamaican is "a foreigner in my own country" (Jamaica), it is that he has no country at all and is a foreigner everywhere—in Britain as well as in Jamaica. He is indeed "an eccentric at home and [an] exile abroad." Time and change have robbed him of his "country"—he is a citizen without a nation. He can only "return" to his homeland by coming to terms with the fact that he is indeed a foreigner: he and his country have both changed and they will both have to re-learn and learn about each other. This is the new relationship that each returning migrant has had to embark upon more or less consciously, more or less successfully. (248-249)

This sense of homelessness, of belonging nowhere is by no means exclusive to returning migrants and nor was it for Hyacinth whose sense of estrangement and alienation is doubled when she finds herself stuck in an unfamiliar landscape where people treat her as a foreigner, asking her to,

go back whe you come fram'. The words whirled about insider her head. How many times had she heard that since coming to Jamaica, or was it since she had gone to England? She felt rejected, unbelonging. Where was the acceptance she had dreamt about, the going home in triumph to a loving, indulgent aunt? Was this what she had suffered for? It was all so pointless, all for nothing...[I]f it was not Jamaica, where did she belong? (Riley, *Unbelonging* 141-142)

This passage clearly illustrates the state of Hyacinth who confronts a complete denial as she is neither accepted in the host nation nor welcomed in the homeland she longed to

return, thus inhabiting a ‘neither-here-nor-there’ trope, alluding to the in-between positioning of the mythological figure of Trishanku who was suspended between heaven and earth. This metaphor of “Trishanku” is employed by Uma Parmeshwaran in a sequence of poems, *Trishanku* which seem appropriate in capturing the dynamics of migration and settlement and its effect on the idea of home and belonging. The notion of Trishanku that connotes an unavoidable vacuum, a feeling of being in-between, of physical as well as psychological unbelonging is significant in defining the ambiguous state of Hyacinth who is suspended between homeland and host land, thus illustrating the ‘never fully achieved’ meaning of home.

In this sense, Hyacinth’s return turns out to be no more than a chimera, a journey of profound disillusionment or to rephrase Elleke Boehmer, “an emotional crisis, the end of a nostalgic dream” (qtd. in Nyman 41), since the status quo ante does not exist. Hyacinth’s fetish for an idealized home and her absolute detachment from reality push her over the edge to cause schizophrenia, a condition involving split personality: This is not reality, her mind rejected. The reality is not here, this is the nightmare” or “this had to be a dream” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 139, 140). This de-mythification of the myths of homeland and return provides a tentative opening that she should go through a process of self-adaptation to find a sense of place where she can feel anchored and safe. This idea is particularly relevant for returning migrants who must go through a process of change and negotiation of their identities as part of their adjustment and adaptation to the social environment of their homeland. The novel ends with an ambiguous note, leaving readers with a character still shifting between two cultures, floating in two worlds, while raising hydra-headed questions of nationality, home, and belonging.

The tension between the host land and the homeland, belonging and unbelonging is also reflected in Riley’s *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987) wherein she gives a more nuanced analysis of such notions, stretching these concepts across time and space. The novel represents the protagonist’s journey across the ocean from one geographical, political, socio-economic, and cultural-religious realm to another. In exploring the trauma of marginalization and discrimination, Riley brings into light the affective dimension of being exiled and out of place and the ensuing sense of displacement and estrangement, as

experienced by Adella Johnson who finds herself caught between two worlds; one she voluntarily deserted, and the other, where she has been struggling to assert her identity and to make both ends meet.

The novel is structured around Adella's memories which encompass three distinct phases: her childhood spent in the rural Jamaican village of Beaumont; her adult life as a young woman in Kingston, Jamaica; and her time spent as a blackimmigrant in England. Through flashbacks or reminiscences, Riley chronicles the journey of Adella whose life becomes progressively more challenging when she moves to Britain where she is engaged in a fierce struggle for survival in an environment of crushing poverty, prejudice, and racial discrimination (Fischer). Adella's arrival in London proves out to be as hopeless as the one she left behind. As Isabel Carrera Saurez rightly affirms that for migrants, "The irony is the exchange of a homeland for a supposed 'motherland' in the hope of improving a life made difficult in great part by the exploitation of that 'motherland' itself, only to find the utter rejection and ill-will of the newly adopted country" (300). Stuck between the homeland and the host land, a supposed 'motherland', Adella is unable to blend into the new socio-cultural landscape and to secure a sense of being at home in a society which excludes all those considered as foreigners or 'others' from the space of belonging. While struggling to survive in a hostile land, Adella experiences a feeling of uprootedness, overshadowed by loneliness and passivity, and retreats into the past memories of Jamaican land, its tropical fruits, its weather, and her childhood: "Schooldays reciting little gems, sitting under the spreading branch of big mango tree, its fruits useless, riddled through by the ever-present worms" (Riley, *Waiting* 3). She fondly recalls her early life of Beaumont where she grew up: her aunts, Granny Dee, and her mother all protecting, loving and caring for her. Through such remembrance practices, Riley illustrates how the marginalization and discrimination experienced by migratory subjects in an alien land makes them nostalgic towards their homeland and how such memories serve as a powerful alternative that provides emotional abreaction to them, soothing their heart and alleviating stress (though minimal or provisional). In depicting Adella's melancholic condition, Riley employs memory as a tool that regulates Adella's emotions and provides her an escape and a degree of solace from her humiliating and undignified life and ultimately helps her in resisting the challenges of everyday life. Emphasizing the significance of memories for migratory

subjects, particularly, women, Anh Hua argues that the act of delving into personal histories facilitates ethnic minority communities in resisting the colonial tropes of victimization and of ‘otherness’ and also “serves as a catalyst for self-recovery” (“Diaspora” 205). It is for this reason that Adella seeks refuge in memories of happier times spent in Jamaica; “Sometimes she would think bitterly of warm Caribbean sun, bus rides to the beach and the money she had earned in Kingston. To think she had left all that, for this. All her young life spent struggling to raise her children, all her old without respect” (Riley, *Waiting* 2). As a black subject in a society which survives on the belief that Britain should be white, Adella receives little respect irrespective of her age, ill health, and hard work. In fact, part of Adella’s suffering is the lack of respect. Being unable to renegotiate her sense of home, she remains mired in nostalgia of her homeland, which according to Fischer is indeed “a final attempt to gain control of her life” (112), a healing practice, which soothes her heart and relieves stress. Beryl Gilroy echoes this point while assessing the significance of reminiscence to the experience of Adella’s aging and maintaining a sense of self, “How right she had been about memory. It is right to double-take, leave out, accentuate, and change.... We can do what we like with the chameleon of memory” (124). It is the persuasive power of memories that encourages Adella to succeed in life and eventually leads to her own recovery and emotional resilience.

Despite being old and disabled, Adella fights back for the sake of her children, working harder than ever in order to have a house of her own; to find a place where they can feel safe and included; to provide a secure future for her children; and to give a meaning to her life. However, her attempts to find an accommodation— a place she can definitely call home- take her into the shabby street and across a number of derelict houses. Though she succeeds in having a house of her own, which is supposed to be a space/place of safety and refuge from the external oppressive forces, it turns out to be a threatening space, an extension of the isolated and hostile environment, wherein she faces cruelty, humiliation, and physical as well as emotional abuse. In Riley’s fiction, thus home is not a safe place, rather it emerges as an “unhomely space” (Bhabha *Location*; Mukherjee), a place filled with violence, neglect, cruelty, disease, and poverty. Thus for Adella, finding a sense of belonging is close to impossible, since the “unhomeliness”, which according to Bhabha is a “condition of extra-territorial and cross-cultural initiations” (*Location*13),

surrounds her and prevents her from creating a secure sense of home. The shame of living in a government house and her deteriorating health intensifies her sufferings. Hence, she often dwells in reminiscences, enduring the pangs of uprooting and re-routing, the struggle to negotiate the difference between her past and her present surroundings. Ever since she has become sick, all she has been doing is just filling the hours with past memories, “waiting for the furtive sounds that told her he [Stanton] was back” (Riley, *Waiting*30). Despite Stanton’s infidelity, Adella seeks happiness in this relationship and this is indeed a decisive factor that leads to her immense misery or distress.

The shame of doing a cleaning job, of living in a government house, and of Stanton’s abandoning her for Gladys, prevents Adella from returning to her homeland and furthers her sense of unbelonging. Despite her efforts to live a happy living, she is ultimately doomed to a life of loss and dislocation. The end of the novel where she dies in the corridor waiting for a bed and is deceived by an elusive and unfulfilled dream of Stanton’s return, points to her permanent sense of being unanchored and out of place. The corridor here is a metaphor of the isthmus between an anchored and an unanchored abode, where Adella floats both physically as well as emotionally:

Stanton had come back, just like she knew he would. He had come back and she had kept faith; and now he knew she had waited. The images flickered, faded slowly as her eyes dimmed. But it didn’t matter now, nothing mattered. She had fulfilled her promise to herself and she knew in her bones that they would keep a Binkie for her like Mada Beck and Granny Dee. ‘All dat respect,’ she murmured to herself, and this time her eyes smiled as they closed. (Riley, *Waiting*165)

For Adella, it is the lack of respect that is a source of her problems, the respect that she deserves, but got it neither from her husband nor from the Whites. The respect and honor that she has strongly desired throughout her life remains elusive at her death. Throughout her life, Adella has been betrayed by her idealized notions about the perspectives of life and even on her deathbed she is deceived by her dream where she is reminiscing and eulogizing her homeland. Like Hyacinth, part of Adella’s tragedy is that she is unable to accept reality as such and to make a clear distinction between reality and idealized notions, dreams or illusions, thus confirming Suarez’s statement “Adella’s dream represents a legitimate desire of fulfillment, and the mistakes of the dreamer lies not in her wishes, but in her inability to distinguish between dream and reality” (306). It is indeed this inability to

differentiate between the dream and the reality that is the source of Adella's and Hyacinth's tragedy, which disrupts their lives, alleviating their sense of unbelonging and self-imposed exile (in case of Hyacinth), while at the same time preventing them to be at home in Britain.

The idea of home as something located in an imagined idyll is even more striking in Riley's *Romance* which charts the journey of two Guyanese sisters, Desiree and Verona who give new meaning to the notion of home and belonging. Through these main characters, Riley brings to the fore the search for home and belonging at two levels: what does home represent for Desiree as a typical housewife and for Verona as a black immigrant? And what does it trigger off in their lives? While Verona faces discrimination and contempt in British society, Desiree experiences alienation and refusal in her own house. Both protagonists are uprooted and struggle all the time to find a place they could belong, a place where people will accept their being and tolerate their existence. Riley's treatment of home in her narratives aptly fits contemporary literature, as confirmed by critic Rosemary George: this "search for the location in which the self is 'at home' is one of the primary projects of Twentieth-century fiction in English. This project may get obscured or transcended as the narrative unfolds, but it is never completely abandoned" (George 3). Indeed, Riley constructs her narrative around this dialectic of homelessness/homeliness, never losing sight of her characters' perpetual quest for the sense of self.

Being raped at the age of thirteen, Verona is estranged from her own self. The guilt and shame of sexual abuse and the false accusation of theft, which results in the termination of Verona's job, cause a sense of insecurity and an unstable perception of her self-worth as a black woman. This not only affects Verona's sense of self and place— both the physical dwelling space as well as the psychological one— but also triggers her sense of unbelonging and unhomeliness, the state of being surrounded within the antagonistic spaces where you, your culture, language, beliefs and values no longer fit in, as Lois Tyson explains, "To be unhomed is to feel not at home even in your own home because you are not at home in yourself: your cultural identity crisis has made you a psychological refugee" (421). In other words, to be unhomed implies a strange feeling of being somewhere you do not belong to or you can never be a part of. Divided between a painful past and an

unwelcoming present, she feels insecure amongst hostile Londoners. Her daily encounters with hostility aggravate her sense of unbelonging: “She saw them before they saw her, the two men leaning against a dusty red Cortina and looking out of place in the regimented grey street. Her heart lurched and her stomach sickened” (Riley, *Romance* 1). This intriguing incipit depicts an austere and grim urban landscape, suggesting the possibility—whether real or imagined—of danger and hostility:

The wild idea of retreating around the corner came to her but she forced herself to approach the men. [...] They were deep in conversation and she toyed with a half-formed notion of slipping past and into the safety of her sister's house. [...] She [...] edged towards the pale yellow gate and the neat box-like front garden of the house. (Riley, *Romance* 1-2)

The hostile and threatening environment of city is contrasted with the private sphere of Desiree’s house. Both the gate and the garden here function as protective barriers which provide Verona a temporary refuge from the insecure and oppressive city spaces. Riley’s fictional reconstruction of the metropolitan London portrays it as a threatening open public site – street corners, alley public squares, all surrounded by an invisible aura of danger where her protagonist Verona drifts aimlessly. Her condition is similar to Jean Rhys’s female characters who, as Mary Lou Emery describes, “wander aimlessly, living in between the gendered urban spaces of early twentieth-century England and Europe” (11). Despite her desperate quest for a sense of self, roots, love, acceptance, and recognition, Verona, by virtue of being a black immigrant in white spaces, is unable to find her place, and as a consequence disconnects herself from the outside world. The continuing sense of unhomeliness, of never arriving, of never attaining the comfort of assimilation plunges Verona into a suffocating and restricted environment, leading to a perpetual moving in and out in search for a place where she can feel secure and being anchored:

Her [Verona’s] feet dragged as she wandered the street in aimless indecision. The rain had stopped but the wind, if anything, was worse. It cut through the thick layers of clothing she had cocooned herself in, making her shiver....It was bitterly cold and no doubt the rain would come again, judging from the heavy clouds hanging in opaque masses across the skyline.(Riley, *Romance* 39)

Like many other Caribbean authors, Riley depicts London as an unwelcoming place, emphasizing its cold, grey, and unpleasant weather and highlighting the antagonism

between Verona and her surroundings. The cold here not only refers to the climate of London but also to Verona's feeling of estrangement; a pervasive sense of being uprooted and out of place, which forces her to live between two worlds— the imaginary and the real. Struggling with her homelessness, she insulates herself from the outside world and takes refuge into the fabricated image of a small cottage which,

gave her a sense of freedom as she stepped on the short grass Her spirit lifted, her mind letting go of worry and shifting to her latest fantasy. Narrowly missing a spot where a dog had relieved itself, she moved reluctantly to the winding path. Still, she made believe it was a country lane. At the bottom she pictured a little cottage where she lived, its whitewashed walls wreathed with rambling roses. Do roses bloom in January? she wondered fleetingly. The green fields drowsed under the blossom-scented heat of an imagined Spanish sun. It was a world away from the bleak reality of a South London winter and an endless struggle for survival. (Riley, *Romance* 34)

These lines perfectly illustrate how Verona constructs an imaginary homeland to compensate for her unfulfilled desire to belong and to be at home in Britain. Looking for a way out of the bleak reality of London and to avoid the angst of her victimization, she resorts to fiction and confines herself to her bedroom, laying “in the warm cheerfulness of her buttercup room and ...[losing] herself in the champagne world of Rosemarie and her brooding Frenchman” (Riley, *Romance* 39-40). For Verona, her dreams are the only source of comfort where she can find love, acceptance, recognition, and feel at home, since for black British subjects like her it is difficult to assert themselves, to claim their identity and culture in the very circles that keep them perpetually on their peripheries. Hence, she repeatedly takes refuge in reading pulp fiction which momentarily provides her psychic solace, a certain kind of relief from her humiliating and undignified life. At the same time, these safe places turn out to be self-imposed enclosures, the traps of self-marginalization that indicate her placelessness within British socio-cultural milieu. Throughout the narrative, Riley's characters experience this kind of displacement at various junctures. The biases and discrimination that Verona and other characters like John and Mara's son, Jay face in social, cultural, legal, and political system causes a sense of insecurity which prevents them from creating a stable sense of home and belonging.

This sense of alienation is also manifested in Desiree, who like her sister Verona, experiences ‘homelessness at home’. Through her character, Riley gives voice to those

black women who are exposed to confinement and immobility within the suburban home and are striving to fulfill their dream. In the novel, the author does not depict the house as the traditional symbol of comfort, intimacy, anchorage, permanence, and reconciliation; rather she constructs it as a site of silence, emptiness, confinement, and disorientation, a space where women like Desiree are trapped in an unfulfilling and stifling relationship with their husband. In the novel, Riley theorizes the notion of home as an unhomely space, which according to Dubois is a metaphorical site of Desiree's "cramped life, of stasis on the margin; ... a site of objectification where Des lets John 'use her' for his own sexual gratification" (Riley, *Romance* 104). Although Desiree is not afflicted with guilt and shame like her sister Verona, she does find herself in a suffocating relationship, as John maintains her in a position of dependency to exercise his authority within the family. The "long narrow kitchen" (Riley, *Romance* 15) where she is trapped or boxed-in becomes the metaphoric space of a restricting and marginalizing environment. Confined to the traditional role of a wife and a mother, Desiree suffers in her own flesh "stooped and shambling, giving her the appearance of an old woman, all vitality swallowed by long months of suffering" (Riley, *Romance* 7). Her hysterectomy as a symbol of barrenness, emptiness and fragmentation furthers her sense of loss and unhomeliness. In this sense, both the sisters experience a sense of loss, disillusionment, and unbelonging, though in a different way. What is more, the lack of familial links back to Guyana further augments their sense of unhomeliness.

However, as the narrative unfolds, both Desiree and Verona find the strength and determination to renegotiate their space, claiming a positive sense of self and place. The house eventually becomes an alternative space; the kitchen and the room emerge as the locus of solidarity and emotional healing where Desiree, Verona, and Mara confide their troubles and voice their issues, while developing a sense of attachment and belonging. Once "they ha[ve]drifted into the kitchen" and "the door securely shut behind them" (Riley, *Romance* 142, 97), the room becomes a friendly, communal space where these women establish strong bonds of community and sisterhood through mutual support and collaboration, as Riley asserts herself in an interview with Aamer Hussein that women sustain women. Like Randhawa's *A Wicked Old Woman*, Riley's *Romance* also expresses a stronger sense of filiative relations which is represented through the bond that Desiree,

Mara, and Verona shares, thus confirming McLeod's assertion, "Riley is slightly but significantly more hopeful about the resourcefulness of filiative relationships in sustaining the fortunes of black women in London" (*Postcolonial*112). By giving space to dialogues throughout her novel, Riley stresses the need to communicate and to connect so as to forge the bond of sisterhood and friendship which allows immigrants to recover from the loss and trauma generated by living in a society which refuses through an institutionalized racism to recognize your existence and denies the rights to that existence. Thus in addition to voicing the stories of the silenced minorities, the dialogues and communication provides them a sense of togetherness and solidarity, thus facilitating them in overcoming their sufferings. It is explicit in the novel which ends on a positive note as Desiree asserts "This was home, and the truth was it wasn't too bad" (231), such is the case with Verona who not only manages to rejuvenate her alienated self but also achieves integrity and point of anchorage.

To summarize, both Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley bring attention to the affective dimension of being considered as 'outsiders', the emotional cost of being embedded within the spectrum of liminality and marginality, which further contributes to the quest for a sense of home and belonging. Throughout their novels, they meticulously articulate their characters' existential void, the feeling of homelessness, of the duality of belonging, of not belonging at all, and of all the variations within this paradigm. Despite significant differences in the contexts and contents, their works powerfully portray the trauma of such immigrants for whom their colour is associated with their sense of unbelonging, of being out of place.

However, what distinguishes the oeuvres of Randhawa from that of Riley is her ability to redefine the notions of home and belonging in ways that build up new ways of understanding and negotiating these concepts. In contrast to Riley's construction of home as a site of unbelonging, Randhawa's layered and multifaceted construction of 'home' inscribes not just displacement but also the possibilities of belonging beyond erasure and loss of self. Unlike Riley's protagonists Hyacinth, Adella, and Verona, Randhawa's characters are not torn between two cultures, nationalities, and lands; rather they are rooted to what Brah defines as "the double, triple, or multi-placedness of 'home'" (*Cartographies* 197). Their attachment or affiliation to multiple cultural and geographic locations disrupts

the dichotomy between the homeland and host land and allows them to build a sense of belonging and being-at-home in Britain. In contrast to Riley's characters, they do not cherish a myth of return to their original homeland; rather they wish to redefine and reinscribe their place of settlement. In this sense, the 'homing desire' that Kulwant, Rani, Harjinder, Gazala, and Sita exhibits is not the desire for a homeland— the desire that is reflected in Hyacinth and Adella, instead it is a longing to feel at home or what Antara Chatterjee refers to as "re-homing" (10). This "re-homing" does not signify the physical return to the ancestral land, rather it suggests Brah's notion of "homing desire", which according to Nasta is "a desire to reinvent and rewrite home as much as a desire to come to terms with an exile from it" (*Home Truths* 7). This shift from un-homing to re-homing, from dislocation to relocation, from loss of home to be at home, from rupture to rapture is indeed the characteristic feature of Randhawa's narratives. Unlike Hyacinth and Adella, Randhawa's characters are able to claim multiple attachments to multiple homes through cultural citizenship that offers them new possibilities for affiliations, allowing for the creation of new ways of doing and being in the world. Through various cultural acts and practices, Harjinder, Gazala, Suresh, Laxmi, and Sita lay claim to what Ann Hua describes as "multiple identities, multiple homes and affiliations", and rewrite their citizenship status within and outside their community (*Homing* 45). These characters make sincere efforts to navigate their sense of unbelonging through cultural citizenship. For Randhawa's characters, hybrid clothing is both an act of fashioning the self as well as an act of performing the cultural citizenship that enables them to manage the ambivalence of everyday life and to stake claims to multiple modes of identity and belonging. As a site of multilocality, cultural citizenship provides them a new mode of identification and membership where the 'right to be different' is pursued. The notions of home, belonging, and affiliation are thus remediated through emotional cultural practices that allow migratory subjects to affirm their relations with host land and to create new connections across nation(s). From being displaced to be emplaced, Randhawa's characters manage to negotiate the tensions between the past and the present, the host land and the homeland, the roots and the routes, staking claims to multiple positions, identities, and belongings in a situated and contextual way. It is within the context of multiple attachments to multiple homes that Randhawa's characters are able to create a sense of home and belonging, since

to 'be at home' or 'to belong', is a matter of negotiating or rather renegotiating one's place in the world for people in general and for migratory subjects in particular. In this way, Randhawa's focus on plurality of homes reconfigures the notion of home and reconstruct the ways of belonging and being-at-home in the context of movement, migration, and displacement; in her novels, the 'rootless' is 'anchored', and the 'unhomed' is 're-homed'.

Although the notion of home connotes a safe and secure place for Randhawa's characters as a location filled with new possibilities and transformative resources, but for Riley's characters, it is a site of dystopia marked by a pervading sense of loss, estrangement, and unbelongingness. Riley's treatment of home, exile, and belonging correspond rather well to what Edward Said describes as "neither here nor there, but rather in-between things" ("Reflections" 99). In contrast to the anchored and rooted characters of Randhawa, Riley's characters are rooted for the most part in unbelongingness. Unable to recapture the loss of home or place, Riley's protagonists Hyacinth, Adella, and Verona (to some extent) embrace the very notion of "in-betweenness", or of belonging nowhere at all. This sense of being "in-between", or belonging "nowhere" at all experienced by Riley's characters lead them to the creation of imaginary homelands, mental constructs, fantasies and dreams that provides them comfort and solace from the geographical, cultural, and psychological displacement. In her works, Riley uses memory or nostalgia not just as a way of disengaging with the present but also as a cathartic method which allows her characters to let all negative feelings out, while simultaneously enabling them to rejuvenate their emotions to face the challenges of life (though not in the case of Hyacinth), thus facilitating survival and belonging (though minimal or provisional). Through Hyacinth's and Adella's inability to create their spaces, routes, and homes, Riley emphasizes that immigrants must reinvent themselves through a process of constant change, negotiation and renegotiation of their identities so as to be at home in an antagonistic environment like Britain. Such an approach is highly significant for migratory subjects whose return exacerbate their dilemma of belonging, as in the case of Hyacinth who after returning to Jamaica comes to realize, in the words of hooks, that "home is nowhere" (*Yearning* 148) in particular, and thus perhaps everywhere in general, since the notion of home is dynamic, always in process, flux, never fixed or settled.

What emerges from these narratives is a more fluid concept of home and belonging that transcends the conventional definition of such notions, thereby emerging as a site of multilocality in which multiple attachments, affiliations, and positioning are possible. In depicting the intricacies of migration and resettlement in ex-colonizer's land, both Randhawa and Riley bring into focus the tensions as well as the possibilities that come with multiple and at times, contradictory attachments to these spaces. In doing so, these authors explore and theorize the concept of home as a geographical and a metaphorical site that is crucial in the construction of identities and subjectivities, which according to Gilroy is defined not by "where you're from" but "where you're at", not by roots but by routes ("It ain't"). For immigrants, having a more fluid relationship with the home is necessary to negotiate the complexities of affiliations and to form multi-local dwelling, roots, and belongings. To sum up, it must be pointed out that rather than seeking to return or being rooted in the past and origins, the migratory subjects must negotiate or rather renegotiate their sense of home and belonging in new socio-cultural, economic, and political spaces. For such immigrants, a life well-lived involves a careful balancing act between their past and present, imaginary and real, virtual and material, the place of origin and that of destination— a complex mediation between 'roots' and 'routes'. In other words, to view home and belonging as a process or as a 'becoming' rather than as a 'being' contribute to a better understanding of these concepts, while at the same time, offer new ways of belonging and being at home in the mainstream culture.

6. Intersectionality: Multiple Forms of Oppression

Racism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one race over all others and thereby the right to dominance. Sexism, the belief in the inherent superiority of one sex over the other and thereby the right to dominance. Ageism, Heterosexism, Elitism, Classism.

(Audre Lorde 285)

The above quoted excerpt from Audre Lorde's 'Age, Race, Class and Sex: Women Redefining Difference' offers an insight into various forms of discrimination and oppression based on multiple social identities, positions, and differences. Within current debates about identity and difference, 'intersectionality' is the contemporary location that calls attention to the way in which certain voices and bodies are systematically silenced, ignored, and discriminated. Rooted in Black feminism and Critical Race Theory, the concept of intersectionality has become a predominant way of conceptualizing how social identities interact and overlap, often simultaneously, to create systematic injustice and social inequality. Over the years, it has emerged as one of the most significant contributions to women and gender studies (McCall; Geerts & Van der Tuin). The confluence of multiple identities— race, gender, sexuality, disability, class and more— plays a prominent role in defining or rather altering one's place/position and participation in the world. This metaphor of mutually reinforcing intersections of discrimination was introduced in the late 1980 by the Black feminist legal scholar Kimberlé Williams Crenshaw to analyze the ways in which race, gender, and other axes of difference interact to form a unique set of discrimination against Black women (including other women of colour).

This metaphor rearticulated concerns that were voiced through the notions of 'double jeopardy' (Beal), 'interlocking systems of oppressions' (Combahee River Collective), 'double colonization', (Rutherford and Peterson), 'multiple jeopardy' (King), 'subaltern women as doubly effaced' (Spivak), and 'matrix of domination' (Collins). Like postcolonial theory, the historical roots of intersectionality are much harder to pin down.

As early as the 19th century, Sojourner Truth, an abolitionist and former slave, gave one of history's most influential speeches, criticizing her contemporary feminists for focusing on the lived experiences of only white women:

That man over there says women need to be helped into carriages, and lifted over ditches, and to have the best place everywhere. Nobody ever helps me into carriages, and lifted over ditches, or over mud-puddles, or gives me any best place! And ain't I a woman? Look at me! Look at my arm! I have ploughed, and planted, and gathered into barns, and no man could head me! And ain't I a woman? I could work as much and eat as much as a man—when I could get it—and bear the lash as well! And ain't I a woman? I have borne thirteen children, and seen most all sold off to slavery, and when I cried with my mother's grief, none but Jesus heard me! And ain't I a woman? (qtd. in Loewenberg and Bogin 235)

This extemporaneous but cutting edge speech by Sojourner Truth offers a stark critique of the ways in which black women are denied 'womanhood' and are subject to the physical, social, political, and economic oppression. More generally, her narrative points to the way how the gender of black women differs from the construction of white femininity as it interacts with multiple social identities as well as with the socio-political space from where the concept of intersectionality emerges. In this sense, the intellectual roots of intersectionality and its relevance to politics date back to a century *avant la letter*. Before the term intersectionality was even coined, black feminists and other women of color were searching for a theoretical framework that could encapsulate the complexities of their experiences and bring public attention to the effect racism, classism, and sexism had on their lives, a point discussed at length in Combahee River Collective:

We believe that sexual politics under patriarchy is as pervasive in Black women's lives as are the politics of class and race. We also often find it difficult to separate race from class from sex oppression because in our lives they are most often experienced simultaneously. We know that there is such a thing as racial-sexual oppression which is neither solely racial nor solely sexual, e.g., the history of rape of Black women by white men as a weapon of political repression.... We struggle together with Black men against racism, while we also struggle with Black women about sexism. (271)

In contrast to white feminists⁶ who emphasize their oppression based on gender, the Combahee Collective theorizes the interconnection of race, class, and gender and stresses the need to build and define a political theory and practice based upon the fact that women have multiple identities that affect their lives in complex ways. Critiquing the practice of privileging one dimension of social difference over others, it argues for the scholarly attention to what Maria Paino et al. refers to as “interlocking nature of multiple oppressions” (751), a concern which eventually become known as ‘intersectionality’. In 1989, the legal theorist Kimberlé Crenshaw introduced the term intersectionality in her ground-breaking study, ‘Mapping the margins: Intersectionality, identity politics, and violence against women of color’, to expose the ways in which women of color were being marginalized by the antiracist and feminist policies in legal theory:

Contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider intersectional identities such as women of color.... Because of their intersectional identity as both women and of color within discourses that are shaped to respond to one or the other, women of color are marginalized within both. (1242-43)

The concept of intersectionality is premised on demonstrating the failure of feminist and anti-racist scholarship in assessing the simultaneity of oppression endured by women of colour. It has grown under the assumption that both race and sex are categories of difference that intersect to create simultaneous and overlapping discrimination against women of colour.

The fact that gender is not the only defining feature of women’s lives was not embraced by white feminist theorists and the issues concerning gender equality were at the forefront of their intellectual and political agenda. By universalizing their own experiences, disregarding differences between women and putting sexism at the center of all women’s lives, white feminists expose their racism and thus subscribe to a reductionist approach to female oppression. This reductionist approach of feminist theory is problematic, as hooks affirms that it “lacks wholeness, lacks the broad analysis that could encompass a variety of human experiences” (hooks, *Feminist Theory*x). The refusal to acknowledge differences

⁶The term white feminist or white feminist theory is used to refer specifically to the ideas and scholarship of feminists who racially identify as white and whose concern lies in the experiences of privileged white women, seeking to address only gender-based oppression. This is opposed to ‘feminist theory’ in general, which is not race-specific.

illustrates a lack of care and respect, an unethical disregard for people who belong to a particular race (Taylor 33). By homogenizing diverse experiences across differences, it prevents feminist solidarity and community, and thus thwarts social change. The narrow and one-dimensional approach adopted by white feminists exclude women of color, working-class women, non-privileged women, lesbian women, and all those women victimized by one or the other forms of oppression, thus ignoring the multiple and complex ways in which structures of domination shape their social and political lives.

White feminist theory's universalization of womanhood and the resulting failure to acknowledge differences is criticized widely not only by black women but also by other women of colour. Elizabeth Spelman, Patricia Hill Collins, Esther Ngan-Ling Chow, Valerie Amos, and Pratibha Parmar are among those feminist scholars of colour who have criticized mainstream feminist scholarship for failing to consider the salience of race and class in their theoretical discourses. In her study, 'The Feminist Movement: Where Are All the Asian American Women?', Asian feminist Esther Ngan-Ling Chow focuses on the lack of attention paid to Asian women in feminist scholarship. She criticizes white feminists' disregard for Asian American women's needs, issues, and concerns, while arguing that Asian American women who are committed to fighting both sexism and racism feel that white feminists are not aware of or sympathetic to the differences in concerns and priorities of Asian American women (371). This reductionism, the exclusion of Asian American women's experiences within white feminism exposes the inadequacy of their approach. Although the overall goal of feminist theory was to provide a framework for understanding oppression, inciting societal change, achieving liberation, and attaining social justice, it does not take into account the distinct forms of oppression faced by ethnic minority women and does not facilitate an understanding of their specific and complex experiences. The neglect of black and Asian women's voices in feminist thought is a clear indication of what British feminist scholars of colour, Amos and Parmar have termed as "white feminist supremacy" (20). Identifying the inadequacies of mainstream feminism, Amos and Parmar critique the hegemony of the Eurocentric western feminism that is rooted in the experiences of the privileged white women, seeking to address gender-based oppression (17). Criticizing the oppressive nature of feminist movement both in terms of its theory and practice, they argue that no white feminist perspective exists that adequately accounts for

the experiences of black women and other women of colour. By reducing oppression to one dimension that is patriarchy alone, they fail to acknowledge racism as a cause and thus tend to utilize a reductionist approach. The oppression that women of color experience is multidimensional; it cannot be reduced to one or two dimensions, a point affirmed by black feminist Hazel Carby, who in her article, 'White Woman Listen! Black feminism and the Boundaries of Sisterhood', reveals that unlike class-privileged white women, women of color can point to no single source for their oppression. When white feminists emphasize patriarchy alone, women of color want to redefine the term and make it a more complex concept (390). She critiques the ways in which white feminists generalize women's lives, experiences, and needs across cultures, assuming that all women are invariably similar regardless of their race, class, and culture. Since Black women and other women of colour are different from White feminists' conventions of womanhood, the former needs to challenge those conventions to articulate their concerns and to make themselves and their experiences visible and heard.

Scholarships by many feminists of color claim that the ability to acknowledge difference among women is a powerful tool for social change, and thus is necessary for women's liberation. In her text *Sister Outsider*, black feminist Audre Lorde asserts, "Ignoring the differences of race between women and the implications of those differences presents the most serious threat to the mobilization of women's joint power" (117). What Audre emphasizes here is that the exclusive and racist tendencies within the mainstream feminism not only fail to theorize the cross-racial experiences but also prevent coalition and community between diverse women indulged in feminist action, since the ideologies of womanhood are as much informed by race and class as by sex. According to Mohanty et.al, it is at the intersection of class, race, heterosexuality, and nation that the struggles of ethicized women are positioned (*Third World* 13). What they emphasize here is the multiple, fluid structures of power that intersect to reproduce social divisions in the everyday lives of women of colour. By virtue of being women and people of colour, they encounter discrimination in "ways that are in the words of Crenshaw "similar to and different from those experienced by white women and Black men" (qtd. in Nash 2008).

Moreover, sex and race are not only two intersections in the lives of black and Asian women, nor they are the only ones who are victimized by different axes of

oppression. It is quite possible for other groups with multiple identities to suffer from intersecting social inequalities. There are various social, cultural, and biological categories such as gender, race, class, age, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, nationality, religion, caste, language, and other axes of identity that intertwine and intersect on often simultaneous levels, contributing to what Naila Kabeer describes as multiple “intersecting inequalities” (qtd. in Norton et. al). Consequently, theorists and researchers have come to understand that oppression is not a “single axis,” (Crenshaw, “Demarginalizing” 139), and that intersectionality framework is applicable not simply to Black women and other women of colour but to all people in general (Collins “Toward” 98). Intersectionality thus “rejects the ‘single-axis framework’ often embraced by both feminist and anti-racist scholars” (Nash), and helps in recognizing how multiple categories of difference work concomitantly to create multiple layers of discrimination. The core insight of intersectionality can be described in the words of Patricia Hill Collins and Sirma Bilge:

Intersectionality investigates how intersecting power relations influence social relations across diverse societies as well as individual experiences in everyday life. As an analytic tool, intersectionality views categories of race, class, gender, sexuality, nation, ability, ethnicity, and age – amongst others – as interrelated and mutually shaping one another. Intersectionality is a way of understanding and examining complexity in the world, in people, and in human experiences. (1)

What Collins and Bilge explains here is that in a given society at a given time, race, class, gender, and other categories of difference are not discrete and mutually exclusive, but rather build on each other and work together and affect all aspects of the social world. The discourse of intersectionality thus offers a vantage point from where common claims can be made about the experiences of people of colour, white women and men; a space where a number of heterogeneous voices can speak for themselves and participate in constructing an understanding of the world that is sensitive to difference.

Although the roots of the concept of intersectionality can be traced back to early nineteenth century, the articulations that it makes are still quite relevant today. Women of color are still discriminated and marginalized by virtue of being women and people of color. It has not only influenced real life and culture, but also creative literature, literary theory and criticism. Over the years, the concerns related to the multiple overlapping

oppressions of women of colour have received much attention by postcolonial authors who interrogate the role of women of colour as “quintessential intersectional subjects” (Nash). Prominent novelists like Kamala Markandaya, Toni Morrison, Jean Rhys, Audre Lorde, Alice Walker and Bessie Head, Anita Desai, Shashi Deshpande, Kiran Desai, Arundhati Roy, and Zadie Smith besides many other authors have revealed multifaceted discrimination imposed on women in a multicultural society and have challenged such discursive practices with a subjective consciousness to protect and establish equal social, political, and economic rights and equal opportunities for women. A distinctive body of contemporary writing by women is informed by an understanding that identities are intersectional; that ‘race’ and/or gender are not substantial units of analysis in themselves to understand social positions, and that gender interacts with other dimensions of identity such as race, class, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and nationality to create systematic injustice and inequalities. Today, women writers all over the world are making a more conscious and coherent effort to voice the unique challenges faced by women of color who face stigma and discrimination on multiple fronts. The literary works of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley are also imbued with the issues of gendered racism, ethnicity, religion, sexuality, and nationality. Through their writing practices, these women writers examine the unique experiences of oppression faced by ethnic minority women due to their intersecting identities and social positions linked to societal structures. In mapping the multiple social positioning of women of colour in the context of migration, they provide a deep and meaningful understanding of the problems, conflicts and struggles of their respective societies and how the female characters in their fiction struggle to reformulate and relocate their identities despite the multi-faceted oppression they endure.

In her debut novel *A Wicked Old woman* (1987) Ravinder Randhawa offers a perceptible account of the lives and experiences of the Asian women who are at the intersection of racism, sexism, classism, xenophobia, ableism. Drawing an explicit link between multiple social identities, she explores how her female characters experience discrimination as being women of colour in Britain, the “seeming contradiction of being Asian, British and female (Innes, “Wintering”). In an interview with Tobias Doring, she has spoken eloquently about the difficulties of being an ethnic minority (Asian) as well as of being a female in England:

Certainly culture and of course gender acts on us. I mean, gender and culture and race package us but we mustn't be put in a straightjacket by them. In a sense our struggle as human beings is to go beyond it and to fight it in an active way in our personal lives and our political lives and not to say 'I'm a woman and therefore I can't do this or 'I'm an Asian in England and therefore I can't do this.' Of course these boundaries exist; boundaries exist for every human being. The challenge is to go beyond them. (51)

In Randhawa's views, every society is molded by the power structures and unjust ideas are often perpetuated in the name of religion and culture, but the real challenge lies in how to deal with them.

In capturing the complexities of a British Asian female, she reveals how the multiple axes of domination can lead to social isolation and lack of self-esteem particularly in the characters of Kulwant and Rani who are subjected to the dominant and oppressive regimes. However, such inequalities affect women in different ways, depending upon the individual's approach to cope up with such oppressive structures. Through her protagonist, Randhawa draws attention to the mode of discrimination taking place at the domestic sphere as well as the public sphere as reflected in the novel where Kulwant experiences male chauvinism both within and outside home. The narrative highlights the protagonist's experiences as an Asian female who is expected (by her community and parents) to abide by the traditional gender roles. Her desire to fall into an interracial relationship with Michael challenges the expectations of her Asian community. The conventional romance plot is further complicated by Kulwant's abrupt decision to end the relationship, a relationship which she finds restrictive and oppressive, "all men are oppressive, don't matter what colour pigment they got . . . white people can't be anti-racist just by saying so" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 34). To avoid any possibility of falling into the matrix of domination, she then moves to another extreme position of agreeing to an arranged marriage to a doctor from India. As a young generation Briton, she demonstrates the courage to take the reins of her life into her own hands: "Can't live your life for you mother – this is mine and it'll be me who'll live it" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 54). Instead of providing a comfortable home, the marriage left her feeling "empty and disappointed" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 130). She is neglected by her husband who has an extra-marital affair with a younger woman, Kurshid. Unable to become an 'ideal' wife and mother, she is trapped in patriarchy's power regulations to the extent that even her son Anup accuses her of her unsuccessful marriage,

“If you had been more of a wife ... more as a woman should be, Dad wouldn’t have been attracted elsewhere” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 116-117). Kulwant’s challenging relationship with her sons is not just an example of her refusal to submissiveness but through this relationship Randhawa also provides an illustration of the class, generational, and educational differences within Asian community. What readers find is an intersection of age, class, race, and gender issues in Randhawa’s representation of British Asian characters.

Besides being discriminated against at home, Kulwant also experiences racial and sexual discrimination on account of her colour by Mark, a politician who exploits her for his own political purpose. Later on, their political relationship transforms into adultery and soon it comes to an end when he leaves Kulwant, who was a source of objectification and commodification for him. Patriarchy, racism, and gender issues feature strongly in this illicit relationship as Mark’s friendship with Kulwant was his contribution to “anti-racism” (Randhawa, *Wicked*167), a key political strategy to secure the Asian vote. Mark’s evil intentions are transparent to Kulwant – Mark’s political aspirations that allow him to exploit his exotic connections with Kuli, do not allow for “a sordid love affair with a married woman hanging around his neck. Particularly an Asian woman” (Randhawa, *Wicked*143). Dismayed by this revelation, Kulwant recognizes her marginal position within the hierarchy of the power relations, and refuses to join this “brand of snakepit” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 144). She leaves both the party and Mark who dismantles her relationship with Kulwant crudely and brutally by accusing her, “I was your bit on the side. Light entertainment to relieve the tedium of suburbia. Nothing like a dose of illicit sex to brighten a housewife’s day” (Randhawa, *Wicked*167). In this way, Kulwant is trapped in the power structures lie embedded in the society and is subjected to multiple layers of discrimination which further turns the theme of intersectionality into a universal subject.

Shattered by Mark’s betrayal and frustrated with her married life, Kulwant finds empathy from her English friend, Caroline as she too has a similar experience and has encountered upheavals in her life. Unable to find a medical cure for her postpartum depression, Caroline has to struggle with her role as a single mother. The oppression that Kulwant and Caroline experience in their lives, regardless of their race or class, points to the fact that gender has always been the basic differentiating factors that foster inequalities

and relegate women to a peripheral or a subordinate position where they are simply an object for male sexual gratification, as expressed in the words of Caroline, “we’re nothing but their stepping-stones, useful when we’re fashionable, displayable and adorable; practical around the house when we need to be kept in the background” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 53). Despite being white and belonging to the dominant British society, being a woman makes Caroline’s predicament universal. Identifying their identical situation, Kulwant states,

We’ve been through the mangle, but they didn’t squeeze all the juice out of us. Asian or English, did it make a difference to the amount of pain you carried through your lifetime? “We may be sailing in different boats, but the sea is the same. (Randhawa, *Wicked* 54-55)

In spite of having different racial background, both Caroline and Kulwant share a similar predicament and seek support in each other. The difference between Caroline’s predicament and that of Kulwant’s can be summed up by their conversation, where Caroline, referring to her postnatal depression says, “the bottom falling out of [her] world” and Kuli asserts, “perhaps my world never had a bottom” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 50). Despite the differences in their race and ethnicity, their positions as women remain similar, thus illustrating novel’s overall message – the universality of female subordination, and confirming Avtar Brah’s assertion of the importance of gender over all other markers of differentiation (“Difference” 55). By claiming cross-cultural commonalties, Randhawa not only raises the issue of universality of women’s oppression but also points to ways in which patriarchal structures construct the gendered identity across space and time.

Across the novel, the author presents several female characters such as Ammi, Big sis, Rani, Kurshid, who experience axes of inequality pertaining to their gender, race, class, ethnicity, and nationality. Through the character of Rani/Rosalind, Randhawa points to the intersectional experience of Asian women and their physical and emotional vulnerability. Although Rani tries hard to slip away from her culturally suspended position by shedding off her “Asian identity”, she fails to escape the sexual exploitation. Rosco’s attempt to commit rape on Rani and latter’s retaliation by killing him traumatizes her forever, leading her to experience more serious and long-term psychological trauma. She fails to survive the pressures of community, both internal and external, and descends into mental illness

because of the inner conflict raging within her, which Susheila Nasta calls a “voyage into a state of psychological instability and desolation”. (*Home Truths* 209). Struggling to cope up with her traumatic experience, she withdraws from the society and is found lying in hospital, “staring at the white ceiling” unable to close her wide eyes fixed at the horrific scenes of the “blood rushing out of Rosco’s head” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 143). Gender and race act together to oppress Rani and her mental illness is a physical manifestation of being denied any rights or recognition. Her character has been designed to bring many of the other women’s narratives together neatly in the novel. There are many female characters in the novel with complex and intertwined relationships, not related directly, but suggest a connection between women’s suffering. The narrative several times juxtaposes accounts of Ammi and of Rani, who are in a state of complete withdrawal from the world. Shattered by her abandonment from her husband for an English woman, Diana, Ammi is suffering with relentless nightmares which come from her particular experiences and anxieties. Ammi’s mental illness, like Caroline’s depression and Rani’s withdrawal, can be seen as one of the “nervous conditions” pointed to by Fanon, a psychological state wherein the suppressed anger turns inward and finds expression in self-destructive ways, devastating the oppressed themselves (*Wretched* 18). Similarly, Ammi’s, Caroline’s, and Rani’s sufferings are articulated through severe mental disorders which are symptomatic of their emotional response to the patriarchal power structures that oppress women and render them to a subordinate position in the society. Such traumatic experiences not only point to the pervasive sense of being marginalized but also symbolize their discontentment with the present, in Fanon’s words a ‘physiological effect’ in which body “rebelled against the mind and sprouted aches, pains, illnesses that no doctor could locate or cure” (Randhawa, *Wicked*, 75). Through these experiences, Randhawa reveals the affective dimension of oppression that negatively affects women and prevents them from leading a normal social life.

Unable to sustain herself in the face of economic instability and unemployment, Ammi is reliant on her family and friends, especially on her daughters Big Sis and Kurshid for support, since poverty and class are other dimensions that combine with gender and race to multiply vulnerability of women. What Randhawa emphasizes here is a convergence of race, gender, age, and class issues in the representation of British Asian

characters. It is the intersection of multiple social identities within which Asian women's everyday experiences are contextualized. Another character who is caught up in the tangled network of race, class and gender is Ammi's eldest daughter, Big Sis. She showcases the issues of class divides and deplorable conditions confronted by the working-class community. Big sis is a powerful character in the novel whose identity differs from that of elite or middle class women. Randhawa empowers her with autonomy and self-efficacy and portrays her as an audacious working-class woman who resists limitations imposed by social structures. Being a self-reliant and independent woman, she is not subject to the kind of exploitation that other working-class women of colour confront. She is deliberately constructed as an active worker so as to challenge the stereotypical image of Asian women as passive, meek, and submissive. She counters the promotion policies and workers' exploitation in the factory and actively participates in factory union activism after a woman suffers a horrific accident. Shattered by her mother's abandonment from her father, she realizes the need for self-representation and being independent and rejects her marriage proposal, "What do I do when he leaves me?" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 77). Not only is she doubtful about the prospect of marriage following her mother's experience, but also holds a strong philosophy: "marriage was the same as the clothes, food, household articles that they could never afford" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 78). In order to support her family, she has abandoned her studies at school and has taken up a job at a factory. Thus when approached with a marriage proposal, Big Sis denies vehemently despite her mother's persuasion and focuses on her job prospects and higher salary. Through the failed marriages of her female characters, Randhawa deromanticizes the fanciful myths associated with marriage prevalent in the minds of many youngsters, particularly, Big Sis. Through her characters predicament, whether through molestation, exploited working class or failed marriages, Randhawa points out how patriarchy, hierarchical structure, and heterosexual matrix regulate the social position of women, thereby perpetuating the hegemonic existence of the race and gender based formation of the society.

However, Randhawa is not only involved in making such communities heard or in unraveling the intricacies of power hierarchies, she also attempts to capture the changing landscape of Britain. As Wisker rightly states:

Black and Asian women writers in Britain write of women's lives, of racism, identity, their communities, difference. As 'Observers with beady eyes' they create a rich, powerful, humorous and articulate comment on a changing Britain. (300)

Through the representation of Kulwant, Rani, and Big Sia, Randhawa offers ways of negotiating and subverting the dominant discourses. In contrast to Riley's pessimistic approach, Randhawa powerfully portrays the changing dynamics of British society where the British-born Asian subject abrogate the rigid rules and orders within and outside their communities. The author does not portray her female characters as weak and submissive; rather she empowers them with agency and autonomy through which they deconstruct the dominant conventions and limitations imposed by social, economic, and political forces, as illustrated through the character of Kulwant who is rebellious since her childhood and raises a voice against her parents who force her to continue her studies, as she asserts, "You couldn't. I wouldn't be. I'd not toe the line. I'll bend the rules and make you do what I want" (Randhawa, *Wicked* 59). As an audacious new generation adult, Kulwant is ready to take the responsibility of her decisions, confronting its consequences. Here, Randhawa does not portray Kulwant as an embodiment of 'Bharatiya Nari', a traditional woman, who suppresses her desires and aspirations and compromises her negligible position in the family; rather she renders her as a strong woman who resists oppressions and empowers herself to respond to those social inequalities which curtail women's lives by limiting their access to opportunities, resources, and power. Kulwant's challenging relationship with her sons as well as her husband is an example of her resistance to dominant patriarchal structure. Rather than being an object at the hands of power structures and patriarchy, Kulwant deconstructs her subdued position and undergo a metamorphosis to redefine herself in a quest for self-empowerment. As Tobias Doring (2001) claims, "Unlike postmodern tales of endless re- and unmasking, Randhawa's is a narrative of female emancipation: asserting the real face behind the mask, Kulwant moves from self-disguise to self-discovery" (259).

Like Kulwant, Rani is also represented as a rebellious woman who challenges the dominant and hegemonic white patriarchal norms and resists against rigid gender norms in a liberal society like Britain, expressing her disgust at women's inferior status: "a woman is still nothing except her spot of blood, her vaginal passage. Judged by who she's with rather

than what she is” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 143). With her inner force and power, she tries hard to protect herself from male domination: “Never giving herself over to another, neither in emotional or sexual bondage, she had kept her inner self protected and secure. That’s where her strength, her determination to carry on had come from” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 123). When her boyfriend Rosco tries to rape her, she takes the form of ‘KALI’– the Indian goddess with ten arms, and kills him with an iron rod. As Michael reiterates, “She Rosalind She Rani, She Kali. Kali, Kali, K-A-L-I. ... ‘Kali had ten arms,’ ... ‘Rani had an iron bar’” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 202). Randhawa depicts her character as a non-conformist, self-reliant woman who takes the power of ‘KALI’ to oppose the sexual assault and finally succeeds in protecting her inner self. She endows her with the capacity for agency which allows her to struggle against the oppressive social environment. In the novel, the author effectively demonstrates that women can exercise agency in many different ways: as individuals and collectively within the family, and through their participation in politics and other formal and informal collectives– a form of activism which is central to Rani’s life. The novel offers a more explicit account of the links between activism and healing.

In negotiating the challenges arising out of the frictions and differences within predominantly white environs, Randhawa stresses the need for “affiliations, and collectivities” (Innes, *Cambridge* 188). Emphasizing activism as the essential element for tackling discrimination and oppression, Randhawa represents several characters like Kulwant, Soni, Pavan, Big Sis, Maya, Kurshid, Shazia, and her Affro-Caribbean friend Angie who are engaged in several types of social and political activities. Across her fiction, the reader perceives a variety of complex engagements in various forms of personal, social, and political activism in Britain ranging from party politics to activism for physical and sexual violence to contributions in support of the Greenham Common movement. Greenham Common was a movement of white women that was set up outside the RAF base to protest against US nuclear weapons on British common land, but the campaign engaged in the novel is a particular contribution by British Asian women trying to help women of colour struggling to survive amidst severe adversity in an oppressive society. Like the campaign of Jasbinder Singh in Meera Syal’s *Life isn’t all ha ha hee hee*, the Greenham Common in *A Wicked Old Woman* is a form of activism that is associated with solidarity among Asian women in a hostile society. The novel gives a glimpse of such

solidarity in its portrayal of the characters who are involved in or supportive of the campaign, and make a contribution to the movement by preparing food and collecting clothes and quilts, something that is domestic and a traditional women's activity. Kulwant's, Ammi's, Big sis's, and other women's involvement in supporting the Greenham women and nursing Rani back from the edge of madness through massaging of stories is an explicit example showing this interrelationship of activism and healing. As Nasta Points out:

The figure of Rani acts as an important framing device throughout, and brings many of the other women's narratives together at the close of the novel. More importantly however, her healing, which results from the literal massaging 'of stories into her body' by the collective efforts of the whole community, who individually recite parallel narratives to her as she slowly regathers her consciousness, can be seen to be a significant political act. (Nasta, *Home Truths* 209-10).

In Nasta's views, the massaging of stories is a significant political act that not only helps Rani in surviving her trauma but also benefits the wider community:

For it is through the collective vigil engendered by the telling of these stories that Kulwant abandons her persona as a crippled old woman and, with Caroline, Ammi, Angie and Maya, nurses Rani back from the edge of madness. Significantly too, as the accretion of stories – the individual histories of the different characters' lives— begin to infiltrate into Rani's consciousness, the community itself begins to visualize the possibility of growth and the creation of an alternative space to represent the contradictory realities of their existence. (Nasta, *Home Truths* 210)

The campaign not only creates a relationship of solidarity among women but also serves as a healing practice that helps Ammi overcome her nightmares, thus depicting "the making whole of damaged psyches through involvement with others in the community, through recognizing and seeking to heal the pain of others" (Innes, "Review" 33). Like the campaign to help Ammi and support the Greenham women, there is a new campaign of solidarity that is organized to defend Rani against the charges of murder. After Rani has returned to consciousness, Rani's mother, Shanti started this campaign which develops (like Greenham movement) as more and more people are persuaded to get involved. In exploring the interrelationship of healing and activism, Randhawa depicts a range of characters across race, religion, and age with different aspirations and approaches, all centered on a common goal— to help vulnerable women redeem their dignity and restate their self-hood. In emphasizing the agency of such immigrants, Randhawa conveys a strong

message about the power of ‘unity or coalition’ as expressed in the words of Soni who tells Maya: “I’m not saying everyone should go off and live in a commune, or be a hippy or that kind of thing, it’s just that we all need each other and we gotta do things for each other” (Randhawa, *Wicked* 197). The novel ends with a universal sense of solidarity towards all those shattered by their intrapersonal and interpersonal conflicts within a hostile society.

Although Randhawa’s intersectional approach to oppression is not much explicit in her young adult novel, *Beauty and the Beast* (2014), the novel does bring up the theme of racism that characterize the ‘everyday lives’ of ethnic minority communities in Britain, as already discussed in detail in chapter two. The author perfectly illustrates the emotional valence of living in the constellation of anti-black and anti-immigrant discourses. She also sheds light on how white supremacy, racial politics, and biases operate at the most intimate levels, generating affective grammars particularly in Muslim communities who are stigmatized as fundamentalist and extremist. The Muslim character Gazala and her parents are subjected to a range of racist attitudes and biases and experience economic hardship. The experiences of discrimination and marginalization against cultural minorities are reflected not only in Muslim immigrants but also in Indian immigrants like Harjinder’s *Masi* (her aunt) who is also subject to racism and white privilege and faces multiple problems in getting promoted. Finally, she does get the promotion after fifteen years of her career, just because her boss Mr. Johnson fancies her, as she asserts:

After fifteen years? Why? ... It is a nice place, I like working there. I have friends. But why now?... I asked Mr Johnson, 'Why are you doing this?' He smiled, he took my hand, you know how these English men are. No respect for women. We are talking merely. He does not need to touch me. He tells me all sorts of things, I am very experienced, I am good at dealing with other people.... (Randhawa, *Beauty* 40)

Despite having experience and potential, Harjinder’s *Masi* was passed over for promotion and now she is getting promoted because a white man finds her attractive. Even her husband (*Mausa*) doesn't get the kind of jobs he should have had with his qualifications (Randhawa, *Beauty* 39). Such politics of colour entrenched in British culture epitomizes

the dimension of the dichotomy between the West and the rest that allows the Whites to retain the hierarchical position in the metropolis.

In the novel, Randhawa does not take up the issues of sexual and gender discrimination, but she implicitly emphasizes the need of community support, sharing experiences and raising voices against the victimization of women. Through the 'Beauty contest' held in Hari-jan's school that is organized by a multicultural 'Harmony committee', Randhawa subverts its very notion. Initially, Harjinder is deeply suspicious of the underlying motive behind this pageant: "beauty contests are degrading to women, because looks shouldn't be something we should get marks and awards for" (*Randhawa, Beauty* 100). However, towards the end of the novel, this pageant is revealed as a metonymic site for feminist consciousness-raising, demonstrating that "colour's no barrier and women mostly have the same problems" (*Randhawa, Beauty* 158). Rather than commodifying women and their bodies in name of a social cause, this beauty pageant allows women to share their personal experiences in such a way as to build their self-esteem. The sharing of personal experiences of inequalities and discrimination functions as a cathartic mechanism for these women and raises their consciousness, thus opening up new avenues of self-expression. Developing a sense of collective identity in women of different communities and cultures, this beauty pageant not only provides them jobs, money, and accommodation but also develops understanding and co-operation among them. Similar to her debut novel *A Wicked Old Woman*, in *Beauty and the Beast* too Randhawa stresses the need for solidarity and coalition to bring about socio-political change and to provide the possibility for growth for all those shattered by interpersonal and cross-cultural conflicts in a society governed by stereotypical assumptions and preconceptions about the 'other'.

Randhawa's third novel *The Coral Strand* (2001) is an explicit example of how racism, sexism, class, and nationality intersect to create oppressive circles of power against women. Throughout the novel, the readers perceive that the characters are trapped in a system of continuous restrictions of power and access. Without this access to power, the female characters of the novel are forced to rely on the choices of privileged Whites in order to

grow and survive. Their dependence on white oppressors in turn stifles their agency and traps them in a continuum of multiple intersecting inequalities.

Through the character of Champa, the author exposes how the intersections of race, gender, poverty and class are linked and create oppressive regimes of power. However, as manifested in the novel, such regimes of power are created here not by a man but ironically by a woman—Emily, whose perverse machinations control and manipulate her dysfunctional ‘quasi-family’ which is made up of herself, Champa, the Girl and Sita. In fact all those who cross Emily’s path suffer in one way or the other. Being a woman, Emily has little power within white community, but as a White, as a superior ‘self’, she can exercise power over the ones below her on the social hierarchy, and in this case the Asian men and women. The most obvious examples of this hierarchy are Champa, the Girl, and Sita who by virtue of being Asian and a sub-class, are exploited by Emily as servants for household chores. As a passive victim, Champa does not even consider or question the seemingly blatant inequalities against her and follows “Emily like a cowed cat- cooking for Emily, echoing Emily, smiling at Emily. If they’d to breathe in turns, Champa would always be saying ‘Pehle aap pehle aap, after you after you’” (Randhawa, *Coral* 9). Not only does Emily relegate Champa to the extent of sub-humanity but also renders her as an object of sexual gratification. After her husband Thomas Miller’s death, she starts a prostitution racket, offering “dusky beauties to her clients, ‘Exotic orchids of the Orient’ no less— not that the customers know on orchid from a weed” (Randhawa, *Coral* 160). This exotic image of dusky Asian women represents them as sexually voracious seductresses who know all the “pleasures of the flesh, and could take a man to paradise” (Randhawa, *Coral* 59). For Champa, her position as a seductress woman intersects with her race and contributes to her complex experiences to which Peterson and Rutherford describe as double victimization. In their anthology, *A Double Colonization: Colonial and Post-colonial Women's Writing*, Peterson and Rutherford introduce the term “double colonization” that refers to the victimization of women from colonized nation who simultaneously experience the oppression not only as a colonized subject, but also as a woman. By presenting women as victims of colonial and patriarchal ideology, they bring to light the crucial condition of women in a post(colonial) nation. Through Champa’s experiences, Randhawa exposes the oppression of Asian woman during colonial times within both Asian and white community.

Similarly both Sita and her mother, the Girl – the nameless character who is denied the right of being defined by a name, who is merely referred to as ‘*she*’ faces oppression based on the intersection of race and class. As a matriarch, Emily who is of “the ruling class, the one who has the power” (Randhawa, *Coral* 133) exercises authority in family and maintains other in a subordinate position. In a conversation with Sita, Champa ponders on their miserable condition as women who have no right to share their emotions, “Push back those silly tears. ... control the emotions, ‘or you have no chance, not in this house, not anywhere.’...‘You are only a girl, a woman’” (Randhawa, *Coral* 34). Associating femaleness with helplessness and vulnerability, Champa shows that in a colonial society defined by hierarchies of power based on race, class, and gender, no one is more powerless than a woman. A significant quotation from the novel enables the readers to understand the relation between femininity and vulnerability: “From Helen of Troy to Cleopatra, from the Mona Lisa to Marilyn Munroe, women are the one who’ve possessed... [the power of beauty], and have either used it or been used of it” (Randhawa, *Coral* 37). This vulnerability that is associated with dependency, weakness, violability, susceptibility to harm, and sexual victimization makes women’s predicament universal.

Through the character of Emily, Randhawa universalizes the exploitation or objectification of women, illustrating that it is not only Asian women whose race or gender intersects other categories of difference but it is also an English woman like Emily who is vulnerable to oppression. In her case, poverty is another dimension that combines with her gender to augment her woes. Unable to survive as a single woman in an unknown country, Emily resorts to prostitution as she asserts herself: “What can a woman who’s alone and penniless do here? I was going to die on the street like a beggar” (Randhawa, *Coral* 218). After her husband, Thomas Miller’s death, she has learnt that women have only one thing to barter and this is the only way for her to survive. The readers witness a repetition of victimization in the character of Emily who despite being a White is subjected to the brutality of Anant/ Anthony Bernard Child, whose malicious intentions are expressed as such, “They [Indians] have their women. We [Whites] have our women, a laugh, and their women too” (Randhawa, *Coral* 220). These lines explicitly illustrate the point that the gender is a source of conflict for both Asian and white women who are the victims of oppressive patriarchal social structures. Apart from that, through such statements,

Randhawa highlights the cross-cultural commonalities, thus imparting universality to women's experiences.

Through the character of Anant/Anthony Randhawa hints at the hypocrisy and double standard of White people. The following malicious comment clearly brings to the fore the selfish and hypocritical nature of Anant who condemns Emily for her defiance against traditional gender norms: "Our women are sacred to us.... This trade [prostitution] can't cross the line. Once they've got between a woman's legs they'll think they can spit on us" (Randhawa, *Coral* 218), but paradoxically he himself tortures Emily with physical and sexual abuse. Randhawa gives a few details about Emily's encounter with sexual violence, using striking phrases to emphasize Emily's predicament:

In the bed, he roved over her flesh; bending her fingers back, till she winced, immediately letting go. Gradually pulling at her hair, till she moaned, immediately letting go. Teasing and biting at her flesh till she gasped, immediately letting go. Bending her arm till she tried to move it back – immediately pinning it behind her back till red hot pain burnt through her and she was begging him to let her go. He parted her legs and brutally pushed in, his Hindi endearments turned to English swear words, compliments to fishwife insults. (Randhawa, *Coral* 218-219)

In spite of being White and belonging to the dominant English society, being a woman makes her predicament universal. As a woman, Emily is conferred an inferior status, thus illustrating Randhawa's ideology – the universality of women's oppression. Such a universal standpoint of Randhawa points to the homogeneity and similarity present in experiences of Asian and white women but through the character of Champa, Sita, and the Girl, the author acknowledges the multiplicity and heterogeneity of women's experiences ensued from the hierarchical, multiple and changing power relations of gender, class, poverty, race, and ethnicity which construct their social realities.

Joan Riley's *The Unbelonging* (1985) is an explicit example which offers an unflinching critique of the multiple axes of inequality, as evidenced through the intersections of race, class, nationality, and gender. It explores the ways in which these forms of oppression interact and reinforce each other in the context of migration. The novel addresses the personal, internal damage wrought by the ideological, social, and political forces of racial, cultural, gender, and sexual oppression through the victimization of its protagonist

Hyacinth. In London, she experiences blatant and excruciating racism at the hands both of fellow pupils at school and of white figures of authority. Her experience of racism is magnified by her father's cruelty whose beatings and sexual violence make her feel trapped, sandwiched between the irrational hatred and hostility of the white world and the suffocating and restricting environment that was the house of her father. Hyacinth's migration from Jamaica to Britain puts her into a situation of profound loneliness and pain, arising from apparently unending traumas of physical, racial, and sexual abuse.

To add to Hyacinth's situation, the author puts her in a tensed relationship with her stepmother, Maureen who is literally her enemy:

Maureen had made her hatred known from the start, had announced her intention of getting Hyacinth out from the day the girl walked through the door [...] telling her that her two children were the only children of the house, and she, Hyacinth, only there on sufferance. (Riley, *Unbelonging* 28)

The lack of female solidarity, support, and understanding in Hyacinth's life contributes to her double victimization. The mother-daughter relationship which is of utmost importance in the development of a girl's personality is disrupted here by Riley through Hyacinth and Maureen's hopeless relationship, which emphasizes the absence of nurturing and intimacy in Hyacinth's life, as affirmed by Nasta, "the strong matrilineal line is abruptly interrupted. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts do not accompany the protagonists when they move away. The bond is severed, with grave consequences for the child/woman" (*Motherlands* 301). For Hyacinth, it is the absence of her mother, of Aunt Joyce, and of her friends Cynthia and Florence that prevents her from developing a secure sense of self and building relations with others as well as with the host land. Like her contemporary, Jean Rhys, Michelle Cliff, and Jamaica Kincaid, Riley stresses the importance of mother-daughter relationship – a bond of solidarity and affection, which according to Gina Wisker, plays an important role in nurturing immigrants' relation to the host land (96). The physical and racial violence that she encounters at school and the presence of a cruel father and mother at home affect Hyacinth's way of living and influences her behaviour towards her immediate surroundings. Through this insightful depiction of Hyacinth's plight, Riley provides a nuanced portrait of the multiple oppressions that Hyacinth experiences through the intersections of racism, sexism, migration, parental abuse, and psychological trauma.

Besides, to add to the victimization of women, Riley depicts Maureen as the subordinate black woman who is oppressed by her husband Lawrence who acts as a patriarch, the center or the head of his family. As a black male in England, Lawrence is victimized and tries to regain his manhood and sense of superiority by exercising authority and dominance upon the women of the house, as illustrated in the novel, “[Lawrence] hated Maureen as much as he hated ...[Hyacinth]. After all, why else would he beat her, and in front of his friends too?” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 28). Maureen’s oppression can be put in parallel with Hyacinth’s since they both encounter domestic violence and sexual abuse as a female in a male-dominated society. However, as the narrative unfolds, the readers perceive that Lawrence’s attitude changes towards Hyacinth subtly after the beginning of her menstruation and his physical violence turns into sexual abuse, foreshadowed and accompanied by the threatening lump of his anger in his trousers (Riley, *Unbelonging* 14, 52). Maureen does not dare resist her husband, but she does warn him to leave Hyacinth alone, accusing him openly, “If the government find out what you do to Anne [his cousin], you would be in prison now, Lawrence. Hyacinth is your daughter, man. You can’t do this thing to her” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 53). For the first time, she acts as a protector and warns Hyacinth against her father: “You must watch your father [...] You old enough for him to trouble you like he did with your cousin” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 45). Before leaving the house, she offers Hyacinth to take along, but Hyacinth’s hatred and distrust for Maureen is so intense that she denies her offer and stays with Lawrence whose abuse turns even more explicitly sexual in the absence of Maureen. Besides, his changed attitude is not only perceptible in his behaviour, but in his actions as well, as can be seen in the novel where he starts watching his naked daughter bathe. This terrible incident can be seen as the foreshadowing of Lawrence’s intrusion and violation of Hyacinth’s body. Riley adds intensity to the scene by giving Hyacinth’s perspective: “[she] hated these times. She would rather sit in the water, dying from embarrassment ... praying he would leave before she had to stand up” but he instead “many times ... order her to stand up and wash” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 52). This striking incident demonstrates how humiliating such a situation can be for a young girl and how traumatic and long lasting its effect can be.

The sexual nature of Lawrence’s violence becomes more obscene before the attempted rape. To add dramatic intensity and obscenity, Riley gives some details about the

rape incident: “[this time] she saw the lump in his trousers, no longer hidden. Exposed. Large, obscene, frightening” or “He had taken off his jacket and loosened his tie, and there was a dark stain where he had spilt drink on the white shirt” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 62, 60). This imagery of ‘white shirt’ can be seen as the representative of Hyacinth’s purity and innocence and the dark stain here is the symbol of her violated virginity, an indelible mark which a father leaves on a daughter’s life. Though Hyacinth manages to leave this house, the trauma and pain of her father’s sexual violence remains with her throughout her life, causing her acute embarrassment and shame at her feminine self.

Throughout Hyacinth’s journey, Riley depicts her as a passive black female whose sufferings are the outcome of the “combined forces of racism and sexism” (Chancy 52). For Hyacinth, it is both her blackness and femaleness that are too painful for her and that she associates with helplessness and vulnerability. Her body – as a black and as a female – becomes “the quintessential site of oppression and a source of ... permanent anxiety” (Griffin 21). Riley gives many details to emphasize her character’s shame or embarrassment of being a black subject. During the gym time in her school, as she goes to a “changing room,” a smiling, sniggering silence left her “bowed under the weight of shame” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 16). Indeed, “she hated the communal showers, hating having to step naked and defenceless along its length, her blackness exposed for all to see, to snigger about behind her back” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 45). Even in the reception home where she is kept after that brutal incident of rape, her body becomes a site of shame, as here too her bath is supervised. Like her father, a red-faced woman watches her bathing with unblinking eyes ((Riley, *Unbelonging* 68), making her feel naked and ashamed in her blackness. These two instances of bathing illustrate the intertwining oppressions played out through her body. Her suffering is magnified by racism in one case and by sexism in the other, but in both cases she feels the same shame at the exposure of her black, female body. For Hyacinth, from the very beginning of her puberty, her blackness and femaleness are the source of trouble for her. It also goes along with what Nasta states “Acceptance of the female body can become as difficult as that of blackness when its femaleness seems only a source of pain” (*Motherlands* 297) and it is exactly what Riley depicts through Hyacinth’s experiences of femininity. The trauma that Hyacinth has gone through influences her relation with the outside world, leading to the self-depreciation and the misrepresentations

of her surroundings. The painful experience of rape takes an emotional toll on her life and restricts her to move forward in a healthy way.

The way Hyacinth encounters racism and exclusion in her school, she finds that in college too racial minorities are excluded from the mainstream and are considered to be of 'low' social status because they speak different languages, follow different cultures, or belong to a different race or ethnicity. Although even here she faces the hostility of whites, but she experiences a kind of relief when Indians are the scapegoats in her stead and serve as a buffer between her and white people. Throughout Hyacinth's school life, Riley depicts her as a lonely child with nobody to confide and trust in, but the moment she enters college, she makes friendship with Perlene and some Indians who make her feel less alone and provide her support, but her relationship with men turns out to be a failure, especially black men who remind her of the haunting image of 'the lump', of her father's brutality and sexuality, thereby leaving no room for any gentle and sweet feelings. It is ironic that being a black person she herself hates and fears black men because she associates Blacks with violence, aggressiveness, abuse, and harassment. Hence, she always ignores the black men, lifting her nose high when they came close to her, feeling the need to establish herself as different in other people's minds. Hyacinth's sexual and emotional harassment by her father make her disdainful not only of her own feminine self but also of her race and community. Myriam J.A. Chancy explains Hyacinth's fear of men as a rejection of both blackness and sexuality:

In Hyacinth's mind, to be associated with other Black people would result in the endless repetition of her abuse. She does not for a minute believe that she could entrust others with her shame when her own father could not love her for who she was, an alienated Black girl in a foreign and hostile land. (Chancy 57)

Hyacinth's sexual abuse by her father has traumatized her forever and negatively affected her psychological and social development. The trauma of rape negatively affects Hyacinth's relationship with friends and family members, instilling in her the feelings of shame, guilt, self-hatred, passivity, and fear of black men.

As a victim of incest and a black female in a white male dominated society, she faces difficulty in constructing a positive image of self as well as of men which further forecloses the possibility of a healthy relationship between her and some of the men she

meets throughout the novel. The first black man that she meets is Mackay who according to her is “not like the rest [...] he’s my friend” and “he never made any attempt to be like her father” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 102). In fact, she finds that she can trust him, and therefore visits his flat where she “is immediately at ease” and feels “safe there, loving the bright colours, and the modern furniture” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 103-104). This apparent environment of safety is broken by a simple sentence from Mackay, “I find you very attractive” and “he kissed her” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 105). This moment not just makes Hyacinth feels entrapped in stifling environment and but also marks the end of Hyacinth’s trust in men, immediately she starts thinking of the “lump [that] she knew would be there... [praying] God! Please don’t let him hurt me! [...] Don’t let him do what happened to Anne” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 105). Through this intimate experience, Riley proves that Hyacinth is still traumatized and feels persecuted. Since her father has stained her sexual life, she takes any form of affection as a violation of her being, as Ngcobo rightly points out: “[Hyacinth’s] response to sexuality is forever marred by her father’s assault” (292). Whenever Hyacinth is confronted with a sexual situation, the phrase/ sentence “Incest flourishes where the roads were bad” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 49, 106) echoes in Hyacinth’s head, haunting her and reminding her constantly of her father’s lump, “big and obscene, rubbing against her belly” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 106). The repetition of the sentence is made on purpose to emphasize Hyacinth’s incapacity to move forward sexually.

Another black man whom she tries to trust is Charles who according to her, “was different, he was certainly not aggressive and disgusting like Jamaican men” and this is the reason why “she ... [has] been alone with him before” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 125). Hyacinth seems to have a good impression of him, yet she is still haunted by upsetting thoughts, as the “visions of Mackay filtered into her mind” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 125, 127). Although she feels secure and safe with Charles as he was “small and thin [and] was the exact opposite of her father” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 125), the continuing sexual assaults of childhood and her sexual experience with Mackay overwhelm her with guilt and shame, thus preventing this relationship to grow and evolve. Hyacinth’s fear of sexual relation can be seen as an outcome of her traumatic experiences, as explained by Ruth Porter, who asserts that many of the victims of sexual assaults “regard themselves as spoilt, debased and violated” and find themselves guilty of a “secret they have never been able to share”

(16). This seems to be true in the case of Hyacinth who is unable to extricate herself from the trauma of sexual abuse. Because of her previous sexual experiences, any sort of bodily contact or intimacy is related only to violence, and even when the opportunity for companionship with other Black women and men exists, she cuts off herself from them out of shame and internalised hatred of her blackness and femaleness. It is evident in her relationship with Charles who seems to be compassionate and can help her in the process of healing since he suggests her to confide in him, asking her “[w]hat happened to turn you so away from men? ... You are the only girl on the campus that seems to be about to take flight when a man approaches” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 127). Charles seems to be a real friend to her, like Perlene who also asks Hyacinth “[...] if there’s not something bad why you don’t like men? Something that happened to you” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 129). Indeed, her friends try to offer her help and provide support, insisting her to confide in or share the real matter, but her stubbornness and shame force her to keep on repeating: “Nothing happened” (Riley, *Unbelonging* 127). Hyacinth’s hesitation to confide in someone or to share her experiences prevents her healing from sexual trauma, as Laurie Vickroy affirms, “for healing to take place, survivors must find ways to tell their stories and to receive some social acknowledgement if not acceptance” (19). In fact, sharing personal experience or trauma within community may provide some sort of purgative release, relieving stress and offering a set of alternative ways of approaching issues and conflicts. If Hyacinth had succeeded in voicing this terrible event, she might have been able to pull through but her refusal to talk leads her to more entrapment in her past and pain. Like Anna in *Voyage in the Dark*, Hyacinth is left scarred for life by her traumatizing experiences as Bénédicte Corhay-Ledent argues: “Anna is on the verge of a schizophrenic madness and Hyacinth develops an almost neurotic fear of any sexual involvement” (508). For Hyacinth, her femininity is associated with male sexual aggression and her blackness is a position which is marked with negative facets such as otherness, ugliness, dehumanization, and so on. Both the oppressions intersect at many points in the novel and cause an incurable pain with consequences on her personal, social, and sexual life, thus making it difficult for her to have a harmonious relationship between herself and the outside world. Through Hyacinth’s plight, Riley provides a much nuanced portrait of the multiple oppressions that Hyacinth experiences through the intersections of racism, sexism, migration, parental abuse, and

mental illness. Indeed, the author perfectly deals with the concept of intersectionality, pointing to the necessity of articulating and preserving the black women's voices.

Riley's *Waiting in the Twilight* (1987) offers an insightful depiction of how racism, patriarchy, language, class, disability, and cultural differences make the process of migration and settlement traumatic for black women. The novel interweaves Adella's experience of life in Britain with flashbacks that depict Jamaican society as both patriarchal and exploitative. However, in Britain, racism, poverty, culture, and language barrier compound and intensify the effects of class and gender oppression. The narrative strategy of moving between the homeland and host land shows how the oppressive structures in both Jamaica and Britain force Adella to enter into sexual relations in return for support for her children.

Adella's predicament begins in her home town where she is deceived by a married man, Beresford who is a police officer. She conceives in her first sexual encounter with him and is therefore socially disgraced and condemned. When she is kicked out of her cousin's house for being pregnant, Beresford offers her support by paying her rent, but demands sex from her in return. This financial blow is further compounded by the loss of her job and female support:

How many of them [her customers] had said she was the best dressmaker in town, that they would always stand by her if she ever needed help. But that was before ... After that had come the excuses. ... 'we can't have you coming here in case it's a bad influence, you know'. (Riley, *Waiting* 114)

Her illegal pregnancy not just affects her work but also severs her ties with other women in the community. Riley represents her character as a doubly victimized woman who has to struggle against traditional restrictions within her community on the one hand and patriarchy's power regulations on the other. bell hooks quotes from John Stoltenberg's essay — 'Toward Gender Justice' is quite relevant in this context:

Under patriarchy, men are the arbiters of identity for both males and females, because the cultural norm of human identity is, by definition, male identity—masculinity. And, under patriarchy, the cultural norm of male identity consists in power, prestige, privilege and prerogative as over and against the gender class women. That's what masculinity is. It isn't something else. (hooks, *Ain't* 99)

Adella becomes a victim of such oppressive social order and is conferred the status of a mistress; she is supported financially by Beresford as long as she continues to accommodate his sexual demands. Adella manages to escape Beresford's financial hold by marrying Stanton and joining him in London leaving some children in Jamaica, but her life in London is permeated with suffering, aggravated by race, aging, disability, and poverty. In the beginning Adella was leading a happy married life with Stanton and their children, but the financial struggles and pervasive racism plagued their relationship.

After her first stroke, Stanton abandons her, and Adella is forced to care for her children as the sole breadwinner. Through Stanton's portrayal, Riley exposes the weakness, brutality and selfishness of black man, but also acknowledges the negative ways in which migration, socio-economic status, and racism challenge his masculinity and sense of worth, thereby forcing him to enact hypermasculinity. Instead of blaming Stanton for his irresponsible and abusive behavior, Adella regards herself as a failure and tries to justify his behavior when he deserts her: "It wasn't Stanton's fault...he did love her. But five children and a crippled woman and him still young and sharp. One day he would come back" (Riley, *Waiting* 11). Adella finds herself entrapped within the matrix of domination. Her African origin, her low economic class, her gender, aging, and disability all intersect to intensify her sufferings. For Adella, her aging and disability add to her discrimination and negatively impact her feminine roles, furthering her vulnerability and helplessness, a point affirmed by Hiba Hagrass:

You have to realize that men and women are judged using completely different criteria. A man should be strong, able to earn money and provide for his family. Many disabled men, regardless of the type of their disability, can fit this description. A woman is judged according to a completely different scale.... She should be beautiful and attractive, a good housekeeper able to comply with the demands of her husband, particularly physical ones. A disabled woman cannot be beautiful, not when judged according to our scale of beauty in any case. And a disabled woman cannot certainly be sexually attractive? (qtd. in Abu-Habib 17-18)

Here, Hagrass explicitly illustrates how the gender-biased norms prevent disabled women to fulfill their expected feminine roles. This inability to fit expected gender norms creates many problems for Adella and affects her role within the household, the community, and the society.

In the novel, Riley represents Adella as a black woman who is reduced to her basic biological function, to be used and discarded, but never to be treated as equals by either black men or the members of the white society. Riley's contention suggests that like Hyacinth, it is Adella's gender and her blackness that make her a matter of scorn for both communities: white people who are disgusted by her colour and black men who make use of her body as a commodity, where any acknowledgement of her beauty or lack of beauty is irrelevant. The worst thing to happen to Adella is Stanton's reaction towards her disability. Instead of supporting her, Stanton leaves her and children for her cousin, Gladys. After Stanton's abandonment, Adella's life becomes a series of traumas as she has to suffer financial problems. To feed her children, she depends financially on other men and in return she fulfills their sexual demands. This recalls her financial dependency on Beresford in Kingston, demonstrating that her life in London is a repetition of her life in Jamaica. With advancing age and her crippling state, she, however, can no longer attract men and thus could not earn money. The scarcity of money forces her to work double shifts as a cleaner in a company where the young white officer shows no respect to her. For Adella, the intersectional forces of gender, ageing, socioeconomic status, racism, and disability create multiple layers of oppression and impact the ways in which she experience discrimination and a lack of access to appropriate resources within and outside of her family and ethnic community. As Meredith M. Gadsby observes, "Riley shows us how the expectation of success that migration to England is supposed to facilitate, is shattered by the material reality of desperate poverty, physical abuse, racist oppression, and physical disability" (98). As an ageing black disabled woman, Adella's experiences clearly deconstruct the myth of Britain's 'multiculturalism' which according to Hywel Dix and Mustafa Kirca "includes those who fall outside the mainstream of categories such as gender, sexual orientation, religion, race, geographic origin, ethnicity, and language (1). In a society which is supposed to be governed by equal opportunities and anti-discrimination legislation, she is sacked from her job when her poor physical condition affects her timekeeping: "She felt weary as she walked down the stairs, her bad leg dragging more than ever as she left the building for the last time. [...] The tiredness weighed on her heavily and she felt old beyond her time" (Riley, *Waiting* 121). Adella's situation continues to crumble as she loses job after job and also loses her home to the bank. The shame of living

in a government house, the isolation of her nuclear family, the financial hardship, the physical weariness, and chronic pain rob her sense of self-esteem and quality of life, “She felt older and older, as the pain in her bones increased. She was always lonely now, cut off from the life outside” (Riley, *Waiting* 142) and “Adella sighed, feeling the ache deep in her back, the burning pain in her legs that got worse as the days slipped by” (Riley, *Waiting* 148). Adella’s repressed anger and feelings of humiliation contribute to her strokes and physical ailments, revealing the damage inflicted by racial and patriarchal oppression, as Chris Weedon argues: “[racism] produces arrogance in its perpetrators and humiliation and anger in its victims” (“Identity and Belonging” 24). Adella’s ailing and ageing body thus take on a symbolic dimension, representing the plight of Black British working-class women.

Reflecting on Adella’s deteriorating physical and financial condition; Riley makes the readers witness socio-cultural, economic, and political realities that surround the black people in Britain. Adella’s discrimination is not only revealed in her attempts to find better housing, job positions, and child care, but also in the legal and the health care system. After having been attacked by two white boys, she encounters racial discrimination from a white policeman who was insisting that her attackers are Blacks and their conversations reveal the hidden prejudices and injustices of white people against black immigrants. The association of black people with criminal activities therefore becomes a part of the racial and political ideologies that tend to judge black people through their race and class, which justify their being othered, racialized, and marginalized as observed through the experiences of Adella who faces discrimination from health care officials also, when she has another stroke. Even on her deathbed, she does not receive a proper care in the hospital, as illustrated through the conversation between Adella’s daughters, Audrey and the nurse:

“It’s just past one...’When is she going to find the ward’? Audrey asked coldly.
‘We’re doing our best to find her a bed, but I’m sure she’s quite comfortable here’,
the voice replied.
‘Quite comfortable?’ I’ve been here for three hours and in that time a nurse has
looked in on her twice.’
‘I’m sorry, Miss Johnson, but we are rather busy at the moment and your mother is
not in any danger, I can assure you. (Riley, *Waiting* 158-159)

Both Carol and Audrey are striving to find a ward and proper treatment for her mother and are distressed as the doctors and the nurses show no concern and do not move Adella from the corridor: “They’re not going to move her.’...’Well they can’t just leave her here,’ ... ‘She’s getting worse’... ‘She’s been lying here all day, and they haven’t even bothered to give her something to make her feel better” (Riley, *Waiting* 164). Despite their efforts, Carol and Audrey are unable to find a bed and a proper treatment for Adella who ultimately dies on a gurney in the corridor, waiting for a bed. The readers perceive that Riley provides no respite for Adella during her tragic journey from Kingston to London. For this reason, John McLeod describes the novel as a harsh portrayal of black women’s experience, the one in which, “Families are coercive, the streets are unsafe, the neighbourhood is a ferment of hypocrisy and scandal, the police are racist, and men and women seem perpetually locked in unhappy marriages or adulterous affairs” (*Postcolonial* 118). In her representations of black women’s experiences, Riley depicts the realities of postcolonial London, where the structures of race, class, language, culture, and gender are still present and make settlement and survival extremely difficult especially for black British individuals.

In *Romance* (1988), Riley captures black women’s experiences of migration, their frustrations and setbacks as a black and as a female. Through the characters of two Guyanese sisters, Verona —single and unemployed, and her sister Desiree — a housewife and a mother of two children — Riley gives voice to those women who are exposed to constant racial and sexual discrimination. Through their victimization, the author reveals how marginalization operates at different levels through different agencies, and how categories like gender, class, race, ethnicity, immigration status, and disability become the sites of operation of power.

From the very beginning of her puberty, one of the main characters, Verona becomes a victim of sexual abuse as she was raped by her sister’s boyfriend, Ronnie who formed a good relationship with Verona’s father and sister to earn their trust so that he can execute his heinous crime. The teenaged Verona never revealed the secret of rape to anyone, fearing that no one would believe her and consequently her silence gives power to males and strengthens her belief that she is ruined, debased and violated. Verona’s situation

can be juxtaposed with Hyacinth's since both of them are instilled with the feelings of shame, guilt, self-hatred, passivity, and fear of black men at the very beginning of their adolescence. For them, their gender, their femaleness becomes a source of pain and makes them susceptible to violence, exploitation and sexual abuse. At a very young age, Verona has internalized the belief that she is not at par with white women because she does not have white European features and therefore does not deserve the same respect or protection. She responds to the trauma of being raped by maintaining a bulky frame, creating a series of fantasies and dating with older men. Each of these acts gives her the illusive sense that "she was in control" (Riley, *Romance* 19).

With her bruised femininity, the protagonist encounters discrimination as a black immigrant in Britain where she faces the silent hostility of her inimical white neighbours, whose "false niceness" and "patronizing smile" (Riley, *Romance* 9, 155) implicitly exposes their racist innuendoes. Even at her workplace, she is exposed to racism. Scared of being falsely imbricated by police, she confesses the theft and signs a paper admitting her guilt. Despite her innocence, she loses her job and her good name and is unable to find work as an accountant. She discloses the matter neither to her sister who is ill nor to the police owing to their biased attitude towards black people: "how many stories had been reported of black women raped and men murdered, seriously injured or brain-damaged in police custody?" (Riley, *Romance* 30-31). So she hides it with everyone and lies to her sister, pretending to leave the house for work but spending her days in library reading romance novels. She buries herself in pulp fiction and disconnects herself from the outside world because she cannot deal with the trauma of rape and the resulting sense of guilt and shame. Through the theme of childhood abuse, Riley adds complexity to Verona's victimization, plunging her into a traumatic situation which prevents her from accepting her own image and from trusting men. As Laurie Vickroy explains:

Despite the human capacity to survive and adapt, traumatic experiences can alter people's psychological, biological, and social equilibrium to such a degree that the memory of one particular event comes to taint all other experiences, spoiling appreciation of the present. (12)

Unable to deal with the past trauma and current harsh reality, Verona engages in a series of affairs with elder married white men. Eventually she develops a relationship with Steve,

who she believes “wasn’t one of those ignorant racist white people” (Riley, *Romance* 203) and genuinely likes her. She tries to convince herself of Steve’s honesty and reliability but when he finds out that she is pregnant, he starts beating her and throws her from his flat crudely: “The way Steve had kicked her in her stomach was the height of nastiness.... I don’t want no black bastard calling me Dad” (Riley, *Romance* 214). She finds that Steve was no different from other white people who only wanted her because they were trying something “exotic” (Riley, *Romance* 213). Verona’s sexual experience which begins with the trauma of rape by a black man Ronnie makes her feel dirty and shame, leading to her fear of black man and to a desire to engage in short-lived affairs with white men. Steve’s betrayal marks the end of Verona’s confidence in men and she realizes that the only difference between Steve and Ronnie was that Steve was White and Ronnie was Black, and it hadn’t taken long for both of them to show their true colours. Indeed, Verona faces “double jeopardy” (Beale), once because she is a Black in a white society and then because she is a female in a patriarchal society. According to Susheila Nasta,

[Riley’s novels] emphasize the way in which black women are reduced to a double silence, imposed by race and gender; it is a silence that involves the reduction of a ‘person’ to a ‘nobody.’ ...This is the ultimate tool of oppression. It is suffered by the men of Riley’s fiction at the hands of colonialism / racism (England takes away their “pride”), and by her women, doubly, with the addition of sexism [...] What has been described as double jeopardy by Afro-American writers, is here defined as a double non-entity: black women are doubly “nobody.” (*Motherlands* xxviii)

As a “doubly nobody”, Verona experiences different forms of oppression and is marginalized not only by white people but also by men of her own race. It is the birth of her child Jason that soothes her and enriches her life. Finally she finds an ideal man who doesn’t measure her by her physical attributes but by her capacity to love.

In contrast to her sister Verona, Desiree does not experience such sexual abuse, but she does find herself in a stifling relationship which is premised on fixed gender roles, and a rigid adherence to them potentially spoils her life. Her husband John perfectly shows what it means to be a man: he is tough and rules his household with absolute authority by restricting Desiree to the traditional gender roles. He expects her to do housework and cooking for him, even at odd hours of the night because it is woman’s work while her own daughters are not expected to help with housework because they are to concentrate on their

studies. As children, born in Britain, the girls are considered by their father to have more potential than their mother whose task is to serve him. He draws clear lines of 'male' and 'female' behavior and consequently asks Desiree to quit her job and raise their daughters. When Desiree expresses a wish to return to college for resuming studies, he actively discourages her: "What make you think you can go college, eh? ... You can't even look after your own house and you talking 'bout' college" and reminds her that "you got me and the children to look after" (Riley, *Romance* 63). Desiree aids and abets John's patriarchal attitude, whereas Verona seethes with impatience at how her sister is being treated and condemns John's changed behaviour:

It was strange how much John had changed. There had been a time when he was always urging Desiree on with her studies, arguing with Verona in an attempt to persuade her not to leave school. Now he wouldn't even let her sister go back to work part-time. He was forever talking about the role of African women and how the children needed a mother. 'What about a father?' Verona was tempted to ask" (Riley, *Romance* 23).

Tired of looking after the house and children which are her assigned responsibility, Desiree is too scared to ask for a change because she is too empathetic towards her husband and understands that the constant racism he encounters at work has eroded his sense of worth and self-esteem. Hence, she sullenly accepts her gender role, constantly reminding herself and her friends that John is "a good provider" (Riley, *Romance* 25). Her complicity leads her into the sacrificial and typical role of a woman who puts her husband's and children's needs first. This attitude puts her at risk, as when she gets ill she refuses to see a doctor because she is so afraid of death or some debilitating illness that it will disrupt her family life. When Desiree learns she has to go through a hysterectomy, she starts belittling herself and is filled with a sense of self-loathing: "I really did feel I ain't have no use leave in me- for if I can't children, what leave" (Riley, *Romance* 225). She perceives it as a sign of disability which can interfere with her symbolic role and can make it difficult for her to fulfill her specific gender roles. When Desiree comes back from hospital, John expects her to fulfill his sexual demands, in spite of giving her comfort and support:

He had rolled in at his usual eleven -thirty, smelling of drink and sweat...she felt him slip into bed beside her ...his hand slide across the back.... To him, this was

just another Wednesday night....John's night of recreation: a few jars with the boys then home for some sex to round the evening off. (Riley, *Romance* 103)

John's lack of concern and empathy embody the patriarchal discourse that renders women as objects for sexual pleasure. His adherence to this ideology fixes women's roles, or at least for the one whom he is married to – she must be a woman who makes no demands on him, who never question him, who never troubles him with ill health and is always there to see to his each and every comfort. Such specific gender roles are clearly delineated in John who places her sexual desires ahead of Desiree's health. However, Desiree refuses John, explaining him her discomfort and pain: "John, my belly have one big, big cut and the whole thing paining bad...how you expect to do that now. She refused to let her off the hook. Not this time" (Riley, *Romance* 103-104). She gathers strength to reject her objectification and stubbornly resists John's sexual innuendoes, thus discouraging oppressive patriarchal structures to exercise its power and dominance. The moment she starts to question her assigned responsibilities and stands for herself – a part time job, going back to college, some consideration in the home, she liberates herself from the confining role of a good wife and mother,

I spent a long time bothering about what everybody was doing to me. It was always how John treat me, what white people was doing, why the children don't listen... The only person that never counted was me. What everybody else did was what my life revolve around (Riley, *Romance* 226).

Desiree realizes that it is the female submissiveness that perpetuates and fuels the patriarchal ideology. She was blaming other people for her situation or for taking away her agency and power but it is she who can take the reins of her life in her own hand. Later in the novel, Riley demonstrates that when Desiree takes a stand for herself, she sees that John shows an ability to adapt. Finally, John and Desiree are able to forge a bond of mutual support and respect and their marriage survives albeit in a slightly altered form. The novel ends with a positive note, insisting on the fact that it is only through agency and power that women can challenge racial norms and traditional gender roles and can liberate themselves from the oppressive structures.

In summarizing the above discussion, it can be argued that both Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley have focused on the ways in which the intersection of race, class, gender, age, ability, sexuality, nationality, and language shapes the complex experiences of

women of colour. They use these societal constructs to highlight the oppression of women of colour who are expected to act or behave in a pre-defined framework. Both these authors represent various aspects of inequalities that exist in the British society which is organized and structured on the basis of power hierarchies and social divisions. Though Asian and black women are perceived as very different in terms of race, nationality, language, and culture, their experiences cannot be isolated since they are women of colour. These women authors depict that both black and Asian minorities in Britain have been relegated to the margins from cultural, racial, political, and economic points of view. Their novels investigate the issues such as rape, marital relations, domestic and sexual abuse, racial discrimination, and lack of respect for women of colour. Through their creative works, these women writers have found a way to voice the exploitation and the repressed traumas experienced by both the Asian and the black women living in a society which not only marginalizes them as people of colour but also victimizes them as a weaker sex.

In an attempt to map the multiple positioning of Asian women, Randhawa contests the established codes of femininity by challenging the male-dominated social system. Through her protagonists, she narrates the positions of subjectivity and highlight forms of agency previously denied to women of colour by colonial as well as androcentric ideology that marginalize them and objectify them for sexual gratification. The protagonists of her novels define their identity as women of colour in a multicultural society on the one hand, and achieve self-empowerment as women in a male-dominated patriarchal world on the other. Randhawa portrays her female characters as empowered women who deconstruct the dominant conventions and limitations imposed by social, economic. and political forces through their agency. Here Randhawa refers to women's agency as being the essential ingredient for tackling oppression. *A Wicked Old Woman* offers a more explicit account of the link between activism and healing. The activism centers around supporting and defending the character Rani whose mother, Shanti along with other women rally around to support Rani, both to restore her health and to defend her against the charges of murder. In another instance, some female characters are seen involved in supporting the women at Greenham Common campaign. The novel gives a glimpse of the solidarity among women involved in or supportive of various kinds of activism. In the novel, Randhawa emphasizes women's agency and social activism, affirming a belief in the power of individual as well

of collectives to transform both oneself and the society. Similarly in *The Coral Strand*, Randhawa endows her protagonist Sita with power and agency to explore new possibilities and avenues for resisting her victimization. In Sita, the readers find features of a new generation Briton who is not merely challenging but also dismantling the dominant norms through her agency and resistance. Rather than showcasing her characters merely as objects of victimization, Randhawa demonstrates their ability to resist their victimization and survive amidst adverse circumstances. Unlike Riley's protagonists, Randhawa's female characters do not depend on others to take steps towards their liberation, rather they counteract in their individual style. As Martina Ghosh-Schellhorn affirms "Randhawa has not only overcome oppression, her novels offer her readers the opportunity to enjoy her triumph" (247). In seeking empowerment in a male-dominated and hegemonic white society, Randhawa's female characters adopt a pragmatic approach to oppression. They do not fold their arms in tears and self-pity; rather they think, plan, and execute their endeavors to resist oppression, thus evolving from exploitation to emancipation, from submissiveness to rebelliousness, from frailty to indomitability. In her novels, Randhawa effectively demonstrates that agency, community support, and activism are crucial in challenging dominant structures in respect to different categories such as race, ethnicity, gender, and sexuality.

Randhawa's characters have more access to agency within their family and society, whereas Riley's characters fail to raise their voices against racial and sexual abuse. While Kulwant's, Rani's, and Sita's agency is reflected in their resistance to the racial, gender, and sexual discrimination, Hyacinth, Adella, and Verona are unable to circumvent the oppressive regimes with little or no self-agency. In *The Unbelonging*, Hyacinth is unable to take a stand and protect herself against her father's physical and sexual abuse, her stepmother's verbal abuse, and the hostility of the Whites. As a consequence, she starts despising all that her body represents: its femininity, its blackness, its sexuality and its presumed ugliness. Riley represents Hyacinth as a person incapable of taking decisions and resisting physical and sexual harassment. The author aims at showing that for Hyacinth the lack of support in terms of mother-daughter relationships, sisterhood, and community restrict her to raise her voice and fight back against those who have tormented her. Her silence victimizes her and disavows any possibility of leading a happy, secure, and

comfortable life. For Hyacinth, this silence not just perpetuates her subjugation but also gives consent to the maintenance of dominant power. Through the tragic ending of *The Unbelonging*, Riley implicitly stresses the need to break the silence and fight against injustice. Similarly in *Waiting in the Twilight* Adella finds difficulty in finding a voice against her intersecting inequalities. Trapped in the maze of patriarchal and racial discourses, she is unable to achieve the same type of success or happiness as the female characters of Randhawa, whose agency and pragmatic approach are the determining factors that change their lives. Though she shows strength in leaving Beresford in Kingston, adapting to conditions in England and purchasing a house of her own, but her every effort is doomed to failure. Adella's inability to stand against Stanton, to resist her physical, emotional, and sexual discrimination, and to build a community support prevents her from leading a secure and decent life. Riley thus provides no alternative for Adella, as revealed through her tragic journey of life and death. The novel's setting provides a space, where "little agency, voice, or movement is possible" (Hron 26). This lack of autonomy and agency also prevent Verona and Desiree in *Romance* to fight against their oppressions and injustices. Verona's failure to speak out her physical, racial, and sexual violence and Desiree's submissiveness to patriarchal system stop them from escaping the situations they find themselves in. Once they break the silences and start to question the dominant ideologies, they are able to emancipate themselves from the burden of patriarchal and racial subjugation. However, in their case, it is the solidarity and support that help them to find a voice and resist their victimization. As Vickroy affirms that "trauma cannot be faced alone and that recovery is possible only 'within the context of relationships'" (22). Riley ends the novel with a positive note, emphasizing the role of community support and solidarity in challenging the hierarchal social structures.

Both Randhawa and Riley demonstrate that the experiences of women of colour can be understood only through the lens of intersectionality— the economic, racial, social, patriarchal, and political structures that shape their lives. In theorizing the complexity of oppression of Asian and black women, they offer possibilities of resisting such challenges through self-assertion, autonomy, agency, speaking out, solidarity, community support, and activism. It is, indeed, the power of agency that can not only liberate women from their submission to dominant ideologies, but can also assist them in challenging and redressing

unbalanced power equations within the family, the community and the society. Such a change or transformation in women's subjectivities can make them aware of the mechanisms of their social oppression and at the same time facilitate them to seek ways to eradicate multiple axes of inequalities, thus changing existing asymmetrical power relations.

7. Conclusion

The present thesis is an exploration of social and cultural restructuring of the colonial structures and repressive ideologies in the contemporary British scenario, as represented in the novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley. The study argues that their novels cannot be read without postcolonial framework and critique, for they deal with the issues colonizing impulse of the West is responsible for. It is observed that in their writings, there is a harsh critique and resistance for the rigid hierarchical and dominant structures of power that marginalize and exclude immigrants who have come from the countries with a history of colonialism, positioning them in relation to the particular discourses and practices which render their experience and existence invisible and unintelligible. Both Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley, willing to give voice to the hitherto marginalized voices, precisely broach themes pertaining to postcolonial literature. Among the themes dealt within their novels are exploitation, marginalization, discrimination, exclusion, identity crisis, hybridity, cultural chaos, spatial perplexity, existential disintegration, home, (un)belonging, and the interconnection of race, gender, class, and sexuality. Indeed, as Wisker states:

Defining identity and recognizing that race is itself a social construction has been part of the project of UK Black and Asian women writers. They write against racial and gender stereotypes, reclaiming a cultural identity both British and connected to family roots in the Caribbean, Africa, Asia, India, Pakistan etc. (274)

The discussion of the selected novels by these women writers reveals the extent to which both Asian and Black people are within but not a part of London's socio-economic and cultural fabric. At the core of these novels lies an immigrant sensibility that collides with and articulates 'otherness'. Their characters, as immigrants from the erstwhile colonies, are subject to a series of attitudes which frequently objectify and marginalize them, questioning their rights of belonging and citizenship to the cosmopolitan London. The perpetual identification of migrants and their descendants as 'outsiders' or 'others', rather than as citizens of London, bears witness to the profoundly colonial character of British cultural landscape, which denies cultural and racial minorities the opportunities for a better life including employment, housing, promotion policies, and legal and health care facilities.

Although these two novelists have taken a similar stance against the power politics and repressive ideologies prevailing in Britain, their difference lies in their adaptation of the strategies for dealing with such politics and ideologies. The resistance produced by Randhawa's novels is quite different from the resistance in Riley's novels because their characters come from different socio-cultural, historical, and linguistic backgrounds and they have an individuality of their own. Besides, their psychological make-up along with their personal past and history affect their sensibility to negotiate life in the alien culture of the adopted land. This reveals the multi-faceted and multi-layered nature of their sensibility and resistance to the oppressive and hegemonic power structures.

In demystifying the ways the discourse of 'othering' denies and erases the minority culture, Randhawa, as compared to Riley, offers ways of negotiating and subverting such dominant discourses, while simultaneously enabling her protagonists to create a space for their own racial identity and cultural values. For her characters, their 'othered' position is not only a site of marginality but also a locus of agency and radical possibility. This site of resistance is indeed what hooks refers to as a "critical response to domination" ("Choosing" 153), since the space that difference creates is also the very site of combating discrimination. The "agency" of such individuals is their most empowering characteristic or what Bhabha argues a form of negotiation (*Location* 25, 38). This site of negotiation, of resistance provides the 'othered' individuals like Kulwant, Harjinder, Gazala, and Sita a space from which they can challenge the hegemonic structures and social hierarchies. From the figure of unintelligibility and negative stigmatization, Randhawa's characters become newly emergent British Asian subjects who reconstruct the notion of Britishness and create a space for themselves where dominant structures of race are deconstructed and new hybrid identity emerges in which "the transformational value of change lies in the rearticulation, or translation, of elements that are neither the One .. .nor the Other... but something else besides, which contests the terms and territories of both" (Bhabha *Location* 28). Within such hybrid space, Randhawa's characters negotiate the tensions of assimilation and survival by playing upon their identities, "performing slightly or radically different selves in different situations" (Schechner 361), thus displaying identity as a relational process that is constructed and performed through the immigrants' movement and re-settlement in these spaces. As Stuart Hall puts it: "we should think ... of

identity as a ‘production’, [one] which is never complete, always in process, and always constituted within, not outside, representation” (“Cultural Identity” 222). This insightful observation relates to the way Randhawa’s characters resist the dominant constructions of race by negotiating their subjectivities within multiple locations. In contrast to Randhawa, Riley exposes the darker side of Britain’s socio-cultural milieu, unravelling more complex formulations of ‘otherness’ that render cultural minorities what Butler refers to as illegible and invisible (*Undoing Gender*). Through the narrative of the illegibility of the black people, Riley forces her reader to relive the immensity of human degradation within the landscape of whiteness. Her work does not lead to “the articulation of utopian visions of London,” but highlights instead the ways in which new configurations of imperial system are beginning to exert their effect on both the Western metropolis and the colony (McLeod, *Postcolonial* 16). For Riley’s characters the restrictive pressures of their social environment lead to the silence and destruction (Fischer 316), as they are not in a position to challenge or change the prevailing status quo and its hierarchies, and thus remain on the peripheries. Quite contrary to Kulwant’s, Harjinder’s, Gazala’s, and Sita’s successful approach to navigate the ‘self-other’, ‘insider-outsider’ dichotomies, Riley’s protagonists Hyacinth, Adella, and Verona are unable to circumvent such oppressive structures. For them, their ‘otherness’ or ‘difference’ is an insurmountable deterrent, as they are unable to negotiate their complex cultural positioning and to perform alternative identities. Riley depicts that in this era of mass movement and migration, in which the social hierarchies, socio-cultural, economic and political factors contribute to the immigrants’ insider-outsider positionality, the notion of assimilation and acculturation is a myth. Besides, the prevalence of the narrative in which the presumed ‘other’ always remain incomprehensible, unintelligible, and uncanny constantly invites re-representations of ‘difference’ and perpetuates the incommensurability between the ‘self-other’, ‘powerful-powerless’, ‘ruler-ruled’, and ‘insider-outsider’.

This insider-outsider positionality, that signifies the extent to which immigrants find themselves within or outside the community, has deeply rooted insinuations. It is an expression that further leads to a quest for a sense of home and belonging. In a quest to belong and being-at-home, Randhawa’s characters find expression through the performance of what Renato Rosaldo theorizes as the ‘cultural citizenship’, and in the

process, they rewrite their citizenship status by staking claims to multilocal identities, homes, and belonging. The cultural citizenship that Randhawa's characters employ through emotional cultural acts, dressing pattern, renaming, and speaking a mixture of Hindi and English facilitate them in maintaining a sense of identity and belonging both within and outside their community. Unlike Riley's characters like Hyacinth and Adella who have been deceived by the idealized notions about their lives and are engrossed in reminiscing and eulogizing for a past or 'homeland' left behind, Randhawa's characters consider Britain as their home and identify themselves as being British and their concern, therefore, lies with their present. In contrast to Riley who takes a pessimistic approach to deal with the questions of home and belonging, Randhawa adopts a flexible approach for dealing with such concerns, thus shifting the emphasis from the fixity of 'roots' to the fluidity of 'routes'. Unlike Riley, Randhawa's construction of 'home' inscribes not just displacement, but also the possibilities of belonging through the theorization of Avtar Brah's concept of "multi-placedness of home" (*Cartographies* 197). Randhawa's characters do not cherish a wish to return to their place of origin, rather they inscribe Brah's "homing desire" which they satiate through emotional cultural acts and practices like dance, music, clothing pattern, hybrid language, and rituals. For her characters, the sense of home is not always fixed in a particular location; rather it is multi-located, existing in the realm of imaginary rather than in geography. For them, the performance of identity and culture conjure a sense of being-at-home beyond geographical boundaries, thus challenging the fixity of home, origins, and belonging, and demonstrating the tenuousness of the idea that cultural identity should be based on origins and "some essentialized past" (Hall, "Cultural Identity" 394) or on a fixed, physical concept of "home" (402). The attachment or affiliation to multiple cultural, psychic, and geographical locations disrupts the dichotomy between homeland and host land and enable Kulwant, Harjinder, Gazala, and Sita to build a sense of home and belonging in Britain, thus illustrating the plurality and fluidity of the notions of identity, home, and origin. From victims to survivors, from displacement to emplacement, from in-betweenness to positioned belonging, Randhawa's characters negotiate the tensions of assimilation and survival by performing identities, by accepting their 'otherness', and by community support. According to Roger Bromley, "The seminal importance of migrant writing is that...they offer alternative ways of seeing and thinking, and thereby allow for

narratives of plurality, fluidity, and always emergent becoming” (qtd. in Pandurang). This fluidity allow Randhawa’s characters to form multiple attachment to multiple locations and further opens up possibilities for creating a sense of being anchored and rooted, but for Riley’s characters this fluidity seems to be a mirage for they are rooted for the most part in their past and origins. The British metropolis, as it is described in these novels, has not undergone major modifications and can be seen as a place where racial and cultural minorities are perceived as belonging elsewhere. McLeod argues that in Riley’s novel, “the possibility of change is almost thwarted by the representation of London as a place of repetition rather than a space of transformation” (Postcolonial 111). Instead of being a site of agency and change, the home, which is supposed to be a place of safety and security for Hyacinth and Adella, proves out to be a threatening space wherein they face cruelty, humiliation, physical, emotional, and sexual abuse. However, the main characters of her novel *Romance*, Desiree and Verona, are able to find a secure sense of home and belonging. Towards the end of the novel, the house becomes an alternative space; the locus of solidarity and emotional healing where Desiree, Verona, and Mara confide their troubles and issues and find the strength and determination to negotiate their sense of self and place so as to be at home in Britain. Although, Riley provides Hyacinth and Adella little hope of a better horizon, she does offer hope and possibility of change for Britain-born black subjects like Carol and Audrey who, unlike their mother, are successful in navigating their liminal position and in creating a space for themselves with a better mobility and access to British system. Like Randhawa’s characters, both the sisters, as hybridized individuals, reinvigorate cultural productions by articulating identity on their own terms and by claiming agency and authority in a community that might otherwise relegate them to the edge of the society.

Despite having commonalities in the cross-cultural experiences in the characters of Randhawa and Riley, there is a stark difference in their approach towards the power politics and oppressive structure. In their novels, both British Asians and Black British people are subject to the racial ideologies and hegemonic structures, but what distinguishes Randhawa’s characters from that of Riley is their pragmatic approach to oppression. Unlike Riley’s characters who fail to accept their otherness and celebrate their culture, Randhawa’s characters like Kulwant, Harjinder, Sita, and Gazala are able to

celebrate their otherness, their culture, their racial identity. Randhawa offers them alternative ways of approaching the issues of identity and subjectivity by performing identities, home, and belonging situationally. For them, the real survival depends upon making oneself recognizable and acceptable, however creatively achieved and however unpalatable. The performative acts or the varied images of persona employed by them can be understood in Oliver Goldsmith's words as a way to "stoop to conquer". In other words, they stoop to be a part of the mainstream culture, to identify themselves with the Whites which according to them are synonymous to power, and in the process they redefine and reinscribe British Asian subjectivity in creative ways. In contrast, Riley's characters particularly Hyacinth and Adella are unable to achieve integrity in the British cultural landscape. Their inability to come to terms with their otherness, their internalization of their racial inferiority prevents them from reasserting their identity and redefining the geographies of home and belonging, which eventually culminates in a quest to return to homeland, a place where their colour, their ethnicity, and their 'otherness' does not matter, a place where they can feel included. Indeed, it is their inability to negotiate their sense of self, place, identity, and belonging that impede their growth and survival in Britain, and that sets her apart from the characters of Randhawa.

Despite some differences in the contents and contexts of the novel, they take a similar stance against the marginalization and victimization of the women of colour. The key characteristic which is common to both Randhawa's and Riley's writing is the oppression of Asian and Black women based on their multiple social intersecting identities, though such matrix of domination is more obvious and complex in Riley's characters, with grave consequences on their personal and social life. Despite their different approach to resistance and tackling oppression, both the authors highlight the cross-cultural commonalties by raising issues such as rape, marital relations, domestic abuse, racial discrimination, sexual harassment, lack of respect, and commodification and exotification of women. In their novels, women's position in London is complicated by the intersecting ideologies of gender, class, race, sexuality, language, disability, and nationality. Moreover, they are shown to be doubly, triply or multiply 'othered' and victimized subjects, who are continuously engaged in a struggle against the patriarchal and traditional restrictions within their communities as well as in a struggle for recognition and survival in the hostile

environment of the British society. Through their creative works, these women writers have found a way to voice the exploitation and the repressed traumas experienced by both Asian and Afro-Caribbean women who despite their differences in their race and ethnicity, share similar predicaments, thus emphasizing the universality of female subordination and subservience.

However what distinguishes the novels of Randhawa from that of Riley is her depiction of the social world that renders the resistance conceptually and practically possible. Randhawa's characters, Kulwant, Big Sis, Rani, and Sita have more access to agency within their family and society, whereas Riley's characters – Hyacinth, Adella, and Verona fail to resist their multiple and overlapping oppressions. Their inability to take a stand against oppressive forces, to resist their physical, emotional, and sexual violence, to build a community support prevent them from leading a happier life. As opposed to Riley, Randhawa portrays her female characters as empowered women who deconstruct the dominant conventions and limitations imposed by social, cultural, economic, racial, patriarchal, and political forces through their autonomy and agency. Rather than being the objects at the hands of power structures and patriarchy, they raise their voices and fight against the oppressive and restrictive environment. What is distinctive about Randhawa is that she foregrounds the need for agency, autonomy, affiliations, and collectivities in forging a politics of resistance against racism and sexism in Britain. In theorizing the complexity of oppression of women, she emphasizes the role of the agency, autonomy, solidarity, and activism that assist women in challenging and resisting the unbalanced power equations within the family, the community, and the society. On the contrary, Riley's portrayal of the social world provides a space where agency, autonomy, and movement are near to impossible as illustrated through her protagonists particularly, Hyacinth and Adella who are unable to fight against their intersecting inequalities. Riley neither endows her characters with forms of agency nor does she offer any alternative or solution for them. Nevertheless, she does offer possibilities for resisting the oppressive regimes through community support, solidarity, breaking silence, speaking out and raising voices against discrimination because the silence of victims not just perpetuates their subjugation but also allows dominant structures to maintain power and authority, a point confirmed by Patti Duncan who argues:

[The rhetoric of] ‘speaking out’, ‘finding a voice’, ‘breaking silence’, places its liberatory aspirations precisely within the very discourses of speech, suggesting that speech itself represent liberation, while in opposition to speech, silence represents both the precondition and the very foundations of oppression. (Duncan 7)

What Duncan emphasizes here is the importance of finding a voice and speaking out. Throughout her novels, Riley implicitly stresses the importance of breaking the silence and finding a voice to challenge and resist the structural inequalities.

To sum up, it can be stated that the literary oeuvres by these authors are a testimony to the marginalization and discrimination of Asian/black immigrants in Britain. Both Randhawa and Riley appear as truly committed authors, who defy the hierarchical social structures, while promoting a more radical, social, and structural change and demanding reformation in social, political, constitutional structures so as to meet basic human needs and interests. Through their creative writing, they demonstrate that there is a continuous struggle against the power politics prevalent in the Western metropolis which is determined by the imperial history and power hierarchies, yet as the study demonstrates, their writing offers alternatives or possibilities for deconstructing such power politics and hierarchies, stressing the need to move beyond the rigid dichotomies of ‘self and other’, ‘Occident and Orient’, ‘powerful and powerless’, ‘centre and margin’ and to create a space for each community’s/individual’s existence, identity, and culture.

7.1 Significance of the Study

The present thesis analyses Ravinder Randhawa’s and Joan Riley’s novels in the light of postcolonial theory and brings to the fore the affective dimension of marginalization; the emotional cost of being embedded within the spectrum of non-recognition and illegibility. In focusing on the oppressive regimes and articulating the unaddressed and unredressed ‘silences’, the research provides new methods and alternatives through which postcolonial societies and people can intervene, reassess, and contest the lingering forms of colonialism. Theorizing the complexity of oppression of Asian and black immigrants, it offers possibilities of resisting such challenges through self-assertion, autonomy, agency, speaking out, solidarity, community support, and activism, thus opening space for contesting the hegemonic discourses and social hierarchies. It will contribute to the understanding of the possibilities of dealing with and resisting the dominant discourses,

both personally and politically, an area of concern that is central in an era of intensifying global movement, migration, and border-crossing. It entails an exploration of the issues of loss of identity and culture, othering, marginalization, and intersectionality in the context of the selected novels, and thus provides a deeper understanding of the human predicaments in an era dominated by popular forms of culture and complicated by modernity and postcoloniality. Thus, there is a significant relevance of this research in addressing and grasping the lived experiences of postcolonial people, with all their fragmentations, ambiguities, contradictions, and crises.

This study will be able to contribute substantially to the growing body of research on Black British, postcolonial, transnational, diasporic, and migrant literature, and at the same time, inspire explorations into newer areas within the creative writings of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley. The research will be helpful to literary scholars as well as to common readers to comprehend identity and marginality which is influenced by the movement and migration, as apprehended through various issues such as liminality, exploitation, ambivalence, cultural chaos, home, and belonging. The thesis serves as a stepping stone to awaken a genuine interest in postcolonial literature and author, and enables scholars to comprehend varied facets of postcolonialism, within the context of migration.

7.2 Suggestions for Future Research

1. The thesis is focused only on the novels of Ravinder Randhawa and Joan Riley for analysis and interpretation. The research can be extended to other authors who deal with the postcolonial concerns that have been discussed in the present study.
2. The novels selected for the research study are analysed and interpreted from a postcolonial point of view. There are many literary theories like postmodernism, feminism, gender studies, transnational studies, and ethnocentrism that can be applied to these novels.

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1. Saxena, Shilpi and Diksha Sharma. "Emotional Geographies of Home and Belonging in Ravinder Randhawa's *Beauty and the Beast*". *JNT: Journal of Narrative Theory*, vol 53(2), Accepted for publication in 2023. (AHCI)
2. Saxena, Shilpi, and Diksha Sharma. "Identity, Affect, And Cultural Citizenship In Diasporic Context", *Trames: Journal of the Humanities and Social Sciences*, vol.26, no.1, 2022, pp 23-33, DOI: <https://doi.org/10.3176/tr.2022.1.02>. (SSCI)
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