Exploring Borders and Boundaries in the Humanities

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Edited by

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Banu Akçeşme and Betül Ateşci Koçak

Cambridge
Scholars
Publishing

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This book first published 2021

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

Lady Stephenson Library, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2PA, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

MELIH KARAKUZU[1]

The present book is mainly composed of comprehensive revisions of papers presented at the 6th International Western Cultural and Literary Studies Symposium on Borders*,* organised by Erciyes University, Kayseri and Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University, Nevşehir, Turkey, in November 2019. As the event was the sixth biennial up to 2019, known as the BAKEA symposiums, it was designed to continue the previous events held biennially at various universities in Turkey.

As a brief history, Pamukkale University's Department of English Language and Literature, the first organiser of the event, also functions as the founder and executive committee for choosing the next biennial gathering. This committee welcomed Erciyes University's and Nevşehir Hacı Bektaş Veli University's joint application to share the hosting and organisation of the 6th event of the BAKEA symposiums. The joint organising committee members of these two universities then agreed that the symposium's central theme would be "Borders*."*

As we approached the end of the second decade of the 21st century, we assumed the world's countries had begun to remove borders, while spiritual and mental boundaries within the human psyche still restricted us. Borders dividing the countries were losing their functions over time. We, world citizens, thought the world was beginning to turn into a global village thanks to strikingly improving technological facilities in communications to interact with the people of other countries and cultures. Therefore, people worldwide felt optimistic about humanity's future, thinking we would have more cultural exchange and friendship with other countries.

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A few months after the symposium, however, almost one-third of the world was exposed to the New Coronavirus (COVID-19), allegedly spreading from Wuhan in China to Europe and America. As a reaction to this, governments worldwide began to take precautions to protect their people from the terrible damages of the virus and the massive human losses consequent on it. One of the primary precautions governments have taken was closing their "borders" to 'other' countries. While peoples' roaming and mobility were being restricted, Coronavirus has been the sole nomad crossing all possible borders and trespassing over the assumed borders. It has been a great disappointment for people worldwide as they witnessed the reestablishment of "Borders" as a reality. What they had been working, perhaps earnestly, towards removing has now returned with its ethnic, racial, and political implications.

In retrospect, in spring 2019, we had doubts about the relevance of the symposium's topic "Borders"; looking at it now, we are happy that some of the issues addressed in this gathering in November 2019 have now resurged in the common parlance of people, nationally and internationally.

Authors who have contributed to this book's creation have discussed various linguistic, literary, cultural, political, ethnic, and racial analyses pertinent to the central theme, "Borders." They have associated this concept with some sub-themes, such as "Borders and Identities," "Borders and Body," "Crossing the Borders," and "Borders and Culture," to name but a few.

The present volume includes a collection of some selected articles presented in this symposium. This book has four parts based on the four subthemes mentioned above.

PART I:

BORDERS AND IDENTITIES

CHAPTER TWO

PROTECTING AND PROJECTING CROSS-BORDER IDENTITIES: JHUMPA LAHIRI'S *THE NAMESAKE*[1]

MERYEM AYAN[2] & DERYA ARSLAN YAVUZ[3]

From the beginning of human existence, there has been a search for every vital necessity: water, food, shelter, land, and even identity. The quest for identity has been one of the primary issues in many fields, from anthropology to literature. In this sense, within the light of postcolonialism, this study aims to present the struggles of Indian immigrants related to their search for identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's outstanding novel, *The Namesake*. As an Indian immigrant in the United States and a Pulitzer Prize award-winning author, Lahiri best depicts the struggles of Indians in forming an identity in a foreign land. In this process of constructing identity, the characters' in-betweenness will be defined through the concepts of cultural clash, hybridity, displacement, and dual identities.

With time, human beings' needs have changed and reshaped according to the conditions, environments, and requirements of the century and humanity. As a nation supplies all its necessities and develops domestically, it aims to search for new resources or dominate different and significant lands. However, there has always been a more valid reason, such as spreading religion or civilising the backward

[1] This study has been extracted from the dissertation entitled "Protecting and Projecting Identity in Jhumpa Lahiri's Novels: *The Namesake* and *The Lowland*" and it includes the literary and theoretical analyses scrutinised within the scope of the master's study of Derya ARSLAN YAVUZ

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regions rather than directly expressing the will for hegemony over weaker nations. This idea of dominating the more vulnerable or civilising the uncivilised is the core of colonialism from the beginning of the 16th century. With the effects of geographical discoveries and gaining new raw materials, powerful nations stimulated their desire to conquer the weaker ones. These weaker ones are always labelled as uncivilised, inferior, irrational, and identified with the East, while the dominant ones are called the West. From this point on, the disparity between the East and West began, and the terms coloniser and colonised have been generated. In this sense, the search for the colonised identity started with the alienation or othering processes of the dominant cultures. During the settlements in the new lands or attempts to govern the weaker ones, there inevitably occurred interactions, and "as a result of the connections between the two countries, there have been alterations in the cultures of nations, but chiefly the weaker country is infected by the customs, traditions, and cultures of the powerful country" (Ayan, 2013: 197).

With the end of the colonisation period in the early 20th century and the independence of many nations and new humanist discourses, the decolonisation period took its place in the world scene. A new term emerged right after: postcolonialism. The colonial period's massive effects on nations, oppression, and authority of the coloniser over the colonised are questioned and criticised via postcolonialism. Although it has many different definitions and ambiguities, whether it is based upon the changes after colonialism or just an extension of colonialism, the term postcolonialism is not the continuity of the colonial period but a new period opening the gates to identity formation. The term contributes to the analysis of the outcomes and features of the previous period, and "it addresses the problem of cultural identity and theoretical concepts like orientalism, subalternity, and hybridity which are important in identity formation," as well (Ayan, 2013: 198). In postcolonial studies, immigration and immigrant concepts are the most prominent determinants as these are the starting point of the lasting culture and identity problems. These migrations also bring along the issues of otherness, cultural hybridity, ambivalence, and mimicry, which are considered the key elements of postcolonial theory and literature.

In terms of contextuality, postcolonial texts mainly study the colonised lives' changes through a wide range of issues such as ethnicity, language, multiculturalism, the quest for identity, assimilation, sense of belonging, the immigrant experience, clash of cultures, place,

and displacement. All these topics have continuity today as they are changing and challenging issues in the present identity crisis. Therefore, it is said that "postcolonialism is a continuing process of resistance and reconstruction" (Ashcroft et al., 2002: 2). The search for identity is a continuing process that seems to last for a long time as the world agenda is continually changing and reconstructed.

Since postcolonial theory intermingled past experiences with the present facts, it can be said that it combined and reoriented the suffering people's perspectives with the harsh historical truths. In sum, "postcolonial theory emerged from the colonized people's frustrations, their direct and personal cultural clashes with the conquering culture; and their fears, hopes, and dreams about the future and their own identity formation" (Bressler, 2007: 238).

Homi Bhabha states that one of the most essential postcolonial theory entities is identity. As a result of colonial discourse and later on postcolonial theory, identity has always been reflected as a chaotic term that the people of once colonised or immigrant societies have suffered. He regards identity as "never an a priori, nor a finished product; it is only ever the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (Bhabha, 2004: 73). Constructing a pure identity or conserving the roots of one's identity seems impossible in a world of mixed-ness today. According to Bhabha, "in the postcolonial text the problem of identity returns as a persistent questioning of the frame, the space of representation, where the image – missing person, invisible eye, Oriental stereotype – is confronted with its difference, its Other" (2004: 66).

Within the frame of postcolonial theory, one has to note that the concept of place and displacement is another primary concern that has an essential place in analysing the literary works. In this sense, the name of Bhabha's work also signifies the importance of Location of Culture since it "addresses those who live border lives on the margins of different nations, in-between contrary homelands, such as migrants and diasporic peoples" (McLeod, 2010: 251). It is unequivocally evident that people who experience migration or exile suffer to find a place in a new society. When they arrive in a different land, they become strangers, and in its strictest form, 'others.' They have belonging problems as neither the new land nor the previous one is their real home. The sense of belonging somewhere is a compelling fact that many migrants lose under dominant cultures' control. Thus, most of them are depicted as in-between, that is to say, having a double identity. As also stated in *The Empire Writes Back*, "a major feature of post-

colonial literatures is the concern with place and displacement. It is here that the special post-colonial crisis of identity comes into being; the concern with the development or recovery of an effective identifying relationship between self and place" (Ashcroft et al., 2002: 8). In addition to this identity crisis in a new land, they also suffer from discriminations that vary from biological to regional differences such as ethnic roots, language, appearance, or religion since they do not belong to that place. In clashes between the constructed identity and the real identity, they are shaped and categorised according to norms.

As an Indian immigrant postcolonial writer, Lahiri herself experienced the dilemma of having other roots but living in a different environment; she also struggled heavily balancing these two lives. One of Jhumpa Lahiri's most popular and affecting fictions, *The Namesake* (2003), represents immigrant life and a typical complexity shared by all dislocated people: the search for identity. It is an exact illustration of the struggle of an Indian immigrant family in the United States. The novel is fictionalised upon the lives of the two generations of the Ganguli family trying to find and relocate their new identities in a new land by both adopting and adapting the culture. The young Bengali couple, Ashima and Ashoke, and their children, Gogol and Sonia, represent the "authentic picture of diasporic culture" sometimes with their longings for the homeland, customs and origins, sometimes with their protestation, loneliness and in-betweenness (Chaudhry, 2016: 206). It starts with Ashima Ganguli's delivery of her first child, Gogol, whose story will dominate and lead the events throughout *The Namesake*. Ashima and Ashoke Ganguli emigrate to the United States after their traditional marriage in Calcutta, India, because of the academic position of Ashoke at MIT. The identity crisis, which is also highlighted in the novel's title, starts for Gogol by coming into a foreign land with an ethnic background. Amin Maalouf describes this process of an immigrant child born in a foreign land or taken to that foreign land shortly after his/her birth as follows:

> Imagine an infant removed immediately from its place of birth and set down in a different environment. Then compare the various "identities" the child might acquire in its new context, the battles it would now have to fight and those it would be spared. Needless to say, the child would have no recollection of his original religion, or of his country or language. (2003: 24)

It will be seen in Gogol's case that he will be someone different from his parents, his ethnic, cultural, and expected image of an Indian boy. Additionally, his mother, Ashima, does not feel normal when she thinks of the future awaiting them in this new country, and "she is terrified to raise a child in a country where she is related to no one, where she knows so little, where life seems so tentative and spare" (Lahiri, 2004: 6). In this different environment, Ashima and Ashoke attempt to maintain some Indian traditions, such as naming a baby after birth. According to Indian traditions, a baby is named by an older adult in the family; and for the new-born Ganguli boy, Ashima's grandmother is the one who would give his name. Although she sent it a month ago, the letter has yet to arrive. On the other hand, Ashima and Ashoke are not worried about the name since they think that "names can wait" and "in India, parents take their time" to find the right name for the baby so that sometimes years can pass (Lahiri, 2004: 25).

Meanwhile, the baby is called by a "pet name" (daknam), which is used among family members and friends as reminders of childhood. Pet names have no meanings and cannot be recorded officially. Instead, they function as a funny, ironic utterance for children. Every individual has both a "pet name" and a "good name" in Indian customs. However, unfortunately, the rules are not the same in the United States as they are in India. Chaos and despair are the feelings when they learn that "a baby cannot be released from the hospital without a birth certificate" with a name on it (Lahiri, 2004: 27). At this very point, the identity crisis for their son starts without having a good name but just a pet name, Gogol, since his "true identity is hung up somewhere between India and the United States" (Heinze, 2007: 192).

As Gogol grows up with the Bengali songs his mother sings to him, his name crisis grows, too. When he is about to start kindergarten, his family decides to give him a 'good name' because of their traditions for not using the pet name as a legal name. Since the good name is the "identification in the outside world" and should "represent dignified and enlightened qualities," Ashoke chooses Nikhil, which means "he who is entire, encompassing all," as the right name for Gogol (Lahiri, 2004: 26, 56). One can also recognise the paradoxical circumstance with Gogol's good name: it means someone entire; however, Gogol never feels entire with a complete identity. He always feels the in-betweenness attributed to immigrants due to being from an Indian family in the United States. As Bhabha states, the term in-between refers to something or someone not complete or not belonging entirely to a culture, "constructed around an ambivalence:" Gogol's identity is

also torn between the Indian side of his family and the American side of his environment (Bhabha, 2004: 122). On the other hand, though his parents decide on Nikhil's name, they also feel anxious about "the danger that Americans, obsessed with abbreviations, would truncate it to Nick" (Lahiri, 2004: 56). He first decides to use Gogol instead of Nikhil when he starts kindergarten because he has been accustomed to hearing Gogol since his birth; he feels familiar and safe with it:

> He is afraid to be Nikhil, someone he doesn't know. Who doesn't know him. His parents tell him that they each have two names, too, as do all their Bengali friends in America, and all their relatives in Calcutta. It's a part of growing up, they tell him, part of being a Bengali. (Lahiri, 2004: 57)

He feels the dilemma from which nearly all immigrant children, whose parents have ties to their home country, suffer. As Lahiri states, "they feel neither one thing nor the other" (Lahiri, 2006: 1). One can relate this with the theme of hybridity within the postcolonial context and, as a result, in-betweenness. Within this sense of hybridity, naming is regarded as a tool to dislocate or relocate one's identity. For Gogol, the relocation or dislocation of identity is a repetitive matter that he changes his name to fulfil his expectations to have a place in American society. Although the family tries to teach him their Indian style of living, such as "eating on his own with his fingers," the truth of Gogol's identity crisis is also foreshadowed when he is just six months old, in his *annaprasan* (the rice ceremony for Bengali babies to celebrate their consumption of solid food) (Lahiri, 2004: 55, 38). He is dressed as an infant groom, and his body is decorated with a gold chain and some symbols according to Bengali traditions; his parents Ashima and Ashoke are also dressed in traditional clothes such as Ashima's sari and Ashoke's "transparent white Punjabi top" (Lahiri, 2004: 39). Gogol is expected to choose an item at the end of the ceremony, and this item he chooses would signify his future. At this point, one of the Bengali guests calls out: "Put the money in his hand! An American boy must be rich!" (Lahiri, 2004: 40). This event signifies that Gogol is already accepted as an American boy by his parents' Bengali circle. Even in an Indian rice ceremony, it is so easy for them to call Gogol an 'American':

> At times he wishes he could disguise it, shorten it somehow, the way the other Indian boy in his school, Jayadev, had gotten people to call him Jay. But Gogol, already short and catchy, resists mutation. Other boys his age have begun to court girls already, asking them to go to the movies

or the pizza parlor, but he cannot imagine saying, "Hi, it's Gogol" under potentially romantic circumstances. He cannot imagine this at all. (Lahiri, 2004: 76)

With all the ambiguities in his mind and the embarrassment in social surroundings, when Gogol becomes a teenager, he changes his name to Nikhil just after learning that changing names is "a right belonging to every American citizen" (Lahiri, 2004: 99). His family respects his decision because they have nothing to do but accept that their children are not the same as themselves; they are the second generation Indians in America and are shaped by American culture instead of Indian. At this point, it can be related to the postcolonial aspect of the novel that the quest for identity, which is dispersed from the past of the characters through their present experiences, never comes to an end. Since he lacks a stable identity, Gogol is torn between his Indian and American worlds' ambivalence and the hybridity that prevents him from being someone complete.

As in most immigrant cases, their visits to the home country also reveal their incompleteness. They are also treated as foreigners in their own homelands, precisely like their experiences in America. Staying in their homeland with so many relatives sounds good, especially for Ashima. On the other hand, it is like a joke or an unbearable situation for Gogol and Sonia. Where they belong and what they like are completely different, which is seen as the children grow up. While their parents feel safe and relieved when they meet with relatives and go back to their origins with their pet names, Sonia and Gogol feel meaningless, anxious, and scared because their parents' being addressed with pet names makes the children become foreigners to their own parents:

> Ashima, now Monu, weeps with relief, and Ashoke, now Mithu, kisses his brothers on both cheeks, holds their heads in his hands. Gogol and Sonia know these people, but they do not feel close to them as their parents do. Within minutes, before their eyes Ashoke and Ashima slip into bolder, less complicated versions of themselves, their voices louder, their smiles wider, revealing a confidence Gogol and Sonia never see on Pemberton Road. "I'm scared, Goggles," Sonia whispers to her brother in English, seeking his hand and refusing to let go. (Lahiri, 2004: 81-82)

They feel like strangers coming from another universe because they do not belong to this culture and because their relatives treat them as

aliens. Their American life, which they represent by mimicking, interests their relatives in Calcutta. They represent the American side in India and the Indian side in America. Thus, their relatives see the mimicked American image, the repetition of "the original"; not the identical (Bhabha, 2004: 153). When they get ill on their most extended visit, it is seen that neither their identities nor their bodies fit in with the Indian lifestyle. Their relatives say, "It is the air, the rice, the wind, their relatives casually remark; they were not made to survive in a poor country" (Lahiri, 2004: 86).

Besides their outsider status in India, one of the basic postcolonial literature themes can also be seen via these visits. It is the displacement of the Ganguli family as a whole. There is not a confident home image in their minds as they are immigrants. For Ashima and Ashoke, the first-generation immigrants, Calcutta is home, but they cannot feel a sense of belonging because they know these visits are just transitory belongingness. Each of their departures from Calcutta means grief and worry for Ashima, "but for Gogol, relief quickly replaces any lingering sadness" (Lahiri, 2004: 87). Like many other feelings, their sense of belonging also stands for different things for the parents and children. At the end of these journeys, although the place they go back to is called 'home,' the parents "feel disconnected from their lives" (Lahiri, 2004: 87). John McLeod explains this home image from a postcolonial frame as follows:

> For migrant and diasporic peoples in particular, 'home' is a particularly complex idea which impacts in central ways on their existence [...]. It can act as a valuable means of orientation by giving us a fixed, reliable sense of our place in the world. It is meant to tell us where we originated from and apparently where we legitimately belong. (2010: 242)

Together with Gogol, another central character is Gogol's mother, Ashima. Lahiri starts and ends her novel by depicting Ashima's struggles in America, but unlike Gogol or other second-generation characters, she is not searching for an identity. She tries to preserve her Indian side, although she seems adapted to the American way of living. In her first days in America, she associates pregnancy, from which she suffers, to being a foreigner, from which she will suffer for the rest of her life.

> For being a foreigner, Ashima is beginning to realize, is a sort of lifelong pregnancy – a perpetual wait, a constant burden, a continuous feeling out of sorts. It is an ongoing responsibility, a parenthesis in what had

once been ordinary life, only to discover that that previous life has
vanished, replaced by something more complicated and demanding.
Like pregnancy, being a foreigner, Ashima believes, is something that
elicits the same curiosity from strangers, the same combination of pity
and respect. (Lahiri, 2004: 49-50)

Bhalla explains Ashima's position in its most straightforward way
that "as mother and wife, Ashima represents normal, stereotypical
modes of traditional South Asian femininity. The metaphor of
pregnancy to characterize her adaptation to living in the US reinforces
the limited trope of the long-suffering Asian mother" (2012: 120). This
long-suffering Bengali mother is the stereotypical Indian woman
wearing nothing but saris, cooking Indian dishes in her kitchen, and
being afraid of her children becoming complete Americans. However,
through the end of the novel, it is easy to see Ashima as a half Indian
and half American woman as she adapts to the culture in which she
lives. At the end of the novel, she decides to "spend six months of her
life in India, six months in the States" (Lahiri, 2004: 275). She is also
aware of the fact that "she is not the same Ashima who had once lived
in Calcutta. She will return to India with an American passport" (Lahiri,
2004: 276).

In conclusion, *The Namesake* is an influential work presenting the
identity search of ethnic rooted characters in a foreign land. They all
struggle with the loss of identity and then the quest to find or fix a new
identity and the feelings of being dislocated, out of place, in-between,
and hybrid of the two cultures. In that regard, considering the title of
the present study, it has been possible to conclude that first-generation
Indian immigrants, such as Ashima, mostly struggled to protect their
cross-border Indian identities, which they brought within their cultural
luggage and tried to create an 'imaginary homeland' (Rushdie, 1991:
10). On the contrary, the second generation always tried to project their
American identities due to their observations and experiences in both
countries. Their sense of belonging has been built up within American
norms as they were born and raised in America despite their parents'
efforts to retain Indian roots. However, identity formation is a lifelong
process, so in postcolonial literature, characters cannot gain a new
identity without being exposed to the facts of immigration, such as
dislocation, hybridity, ambivalence, and in-betweenness. Consequently,
identity is not a pre-given feature, especially to those in-between; on
the contrary, it is an outcome of a long process. It is something gained
after many struggles, changes, and quests in postcolonial literature.

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CHAPTER THREE

BREAKING THE BORDERS:
WOMANHOOD AND SELF-ATTAINMENT
IN SEFI ATTA'S *EVERYTHING GOOD WILL COME*

YAKUT AKBAY[1]

In present-day literature, various discourses introduced by third-generation Nigerian women writers take the form of literary criticism, which attracts the attention of scholars particularly interested in African studies. Although most women authors live away from their homeland (in this case, Nigeria), they retain strong bonds with their country and culture. The arrival of Nigerian women writers in the literary sphere started to take place after decolonisation. Until that time, women were predominantly regarded as "the giver of life, the source of the life-force and guardian of the house," also "the depository of the clan's past and the guarantor of its future" (Newell 40). Women played an essential role in forming written literature, which was achieved through the oral heritage transmitted using nursery rhymes, stories, and songs. However, because of social and economic reasons, women could not transfer this to the art of writing. The Nigerian novelist Buchi Emecheta mentions some of these difficulties arguing that to create literature, she must have time and space since, for most Nigerian women writers, neither the time nor the space is available (Taiwo 1). Another urge that paved the way for the emergence of women writing was the African woman's misrepresented image in literature. Women were depicted as subservient, weak, and inferior, which largely excluded them from most public spheres of life. Therefore, establishing African women's writing tradition was essential to reconstruct and redefine women's previously misrepresented

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characterisation by male authors. African women writers strongly believe that women must not readily accept the roles assigned to them by the patriarchal system. Nowadays, in Nigeria, they call into question the social issues directly concerning women of their communities, such as bride price, polygamy, fertility, male child preference, widow inheritance, and favouring boys over girls in traditional families.

There are several third-generation writers in contemporary women's literature, such as Sefi Atta, Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie, Yejide Kilanko, and Nnedi Okorafor. They have made their mark both at home and abroad, inheriting their predecessors' literary tradition and expanding and enriching Nigerian women's literature by depicting much stronger and more assertive female characterisations. These writers also struggle to gain literary recognition, believing that the African woman's authentic image will subvert male writing traditions that relegate women to inferior positions. The most prominent among them is Sefi Atta, who explores contemporary Nigerian culture and tradition, illuminating her perspective on Nigerian patriarchy, the role of women and mothers in society, and neo-colonialism in the city (Collins ix). Her works are also famous beyond the places in which she has lived, which she acknowledges as follows: "My work as a writer is a long-term engagement with places I have called home—Lagos, Nigeria, in particular. England has given me work to do, and America is giving me work to do right now. But Lagos just keeps on giving" (xiv). According to Feldner, "living in Europe and the United States while retaining strong connections to Nigeria, these novelists are members of the new African diaspora. They can therefore be subsumed under the heading of 'Nigerian diaspora literature.' At the heart of this literature lies the fundamental tension of living abroad while being drawn back to Nigeria" (Feldner 2).

Sefi Atta's *Everything Good Will Come* (2005) is a coming-of-age novel awarded the inaugural Wole Soyinka Prize for Literature in Africa. It deals with the life of a girl growing into a woman in post-independent Nigeria. In the novel, the author gives a direct account of the events and experiences where the first-person narrator, Enitan, appears as both an insider and an outsider. The novel is set in one of the biggest cities of Nigeria, Lagos. The story spans three decades of Nigeria's political history, beginning in 1971 and ending in 1995. The protagonist, Enitan, grows up in a privileged middle-class family. Her father, Bandele Sunday Taiwo, nicknamed Sunny, is a lawyer with enlightened modern views, whereas her mother, Arin, is a devout Anglican. Enitan's upbringing is determined between her mother's

extreme religious adherence and her father's contemporary beliefs. With her brother's death, Enitan's parents start to exert more control over her life, preventing her from having a normal childhood. Meanwhile, she makes friends with the next-door neighbours' daughter, Sheri. Years pass and Enitan is sent to London to study Law. When she returns to Lagos, she starts to work with her father as a lawyer. She resumes her friendship with her childhood friend, Sheri, and notices Sheri's changes in her absence.

Eventually, Enitan marries a divorced lawyer, Niyi Franco. However, the differences in each other's views lead to their separation. She becomes involved in political activism that results in her short-term imprisonment. Enitan believes that women must have the right to decide for themselves. Western education's role is presented as one of the major factors due to which Enitan becomes aware of the rights denied to women in her culture. At the end of the novel, the author's positive overtone is observed through the main character's eponymous utterance, "everything good will come to me," accompanied by the local dance of palongo (Atta 257).

Enitan's father is a Cambridge-educated middle-class lawyer. As an advocate of democracy, he promotes "the liberation of women," by which he instils a sense of self-determination in his daughter (15). Opposing traditional upbringing whereby girls are nurtured to be "kitchen martyrs," Enitan's father subverts the stereotype that women should be defined by their household roles (30). Instead, he urges Enitan to become a lawyer and defend her rights. By espousing this stance, Sunny also justifies his wife's submissive position within the domestic sphere when he declares that "[he] has never asked [her] to be in [the kitchen] cooking for [him]" and that "it is hard to compete with [her] quest for martyrdom" (15). Arin's acquiescence to submissiveness as the status quo suits Sunny's purpose in that by keeping his wife at bay, he not only alienates Enitan from her mother but also aims to raise her following his own principles based on the so-called 'liberation of women.'

Language is another aspect of the novel that is worth considering. Enitan recalls that whenever her father spoke English at home, she knew that he was angry (16). She even did not understand what he meant most of the time. Bhabha's idea concerning "the difference between being English and being Anglicized" comes to the fore when Sunny uses the former coloniser's language and asserts his authority over the household members (Bhabha 128). In this respect, Sunny represents the educated national middle class who, "fully grounded in

Western education, is qualified to join the elite that has inherited the management of the country from the colonizer" (Muoneke 65). Likewise, Sunny's labelling of western Nigeria as 'the Wild West' points to the appropriation of the coloniser's heritage (Atta 7).

Given Sunny's attitude regarding both women's empowerment and the use of the language of the former coloniser, it can be argued that the strategy of mimicry, which is "the desire for a reformed, recognizable Other, as a subject of a difference that is almost the same, but not quite" is a mode appropriated by Enitan's father to "exhibit the eye of power" exerted by the Nigerian patriarchy (Bhabha 122). On the one hand, Sunny adopts western values believing that women are empowered enough to make their choice between subordination and emancipation; on the other, excluding the presence of his wife in the upbringing of their daughter and imposing his own beliefs on Enitan, he reveals both his manipulative and hypocritical stance informed by patriarchal culture. According to James, by denying that there is any oppression of women in Africa, the male-dominated society behaves in the typical sexist fashion (James 68). Sunny imitates the culture of the coloniser and customises its values to his own needs, which enables him to camouflage his patriarchal views. In Bhabha's sense, this sly civility is the liminal moment of identification, which eludes resemblance producing a subversive strategy for Sunny to negotiate his own authority at home (Bhabha 265).

Despite Enitan's distant relationship with her mother, there are moments when she overtly admits the influence of her mother's views dictated by the patriarchal society. In the opening paragraph, it is implied that Arin prepares her daughter for the domestic sphere by forcing her to help in the kitchen (Atta 6). By doing so, she is trying to socialise Enitan into the role of women by their society. Arin's heavy influence on her daughter also explains Enitan's fear of her when she remembers that "the mere sound of [her mother's] footsteps," "made [her] breathe faster" and that "her looks were hard to forget" (14). Along with Arin's social role by acting as a docile, homebound woman, "the quest for martyrdom," ironically put by Enitan's father, suggests that Arin's choice of being a 'kitchen martyr' is not her own preference (16). Moreover, the fact that Arin instils the same values in her daughter does not make her a volunteer for this submissive role. Her silent obedience is the outcome of the socio-cultural practices by which women are treated as inferior members of society.

Arin's plight is deteriorated by the failure to give birth to another male child after her first son's death. In the Nigerian culture, womanhood is strictly defined by childbearing, and to attain full womanhood, a woman is obliged to bear children. Hence, herself is directly identified by motherhood, which becomes her sole purpose in society. Moreover, to preserve male authority, a woman is expected to bear sons, and if she cannot, she is regarded as a failure by her culture. Worst of all, a woman internalises this failure and starts to believe it herself "as if she is doubly exiled from her body—once as a woman, an outsider to patriarchal power, and next as an infertile woman who cannot fulfil her biological destiny" (Katrak 60). In this respect, African feminism, otherwise known as womanism, is an accommodating discourse to address the issues regarding polygamy, infertility and male child preference. This newly emerging model of female discourse voices the realities and experiences of African women focusing upon various aspects of womanhood in African culture. Ogunyemi explains this concept as follows:

> [W]omanism is a black outgrowth from feminism. Womanism is black centred; it is accommodationist. It believes in the freedom and independence of women like feminism; unlike radical feminism, it wants meaningful union between black women and black men and black children and will see to it that men begin to change from their sexist stand. (60)

African feminist discourse is closely associated with the constructions of female sexuality since patriarchal control is exerted through the female body's control. This is clearly illustrated in the incident recollected by Enitan from her teenage years. Being raped by a group of young people, her best friend, Sheri, feels too ashamed to confide in anyone and finds it difficult to recover from this terrible experience. The thought of rape embarrasses Enitan, and she is convinced that "bad girls [get] raped" and that Sheri has become one of those "loose," "forward," and "advanced" girls (Atta 48). This opinionated attitude is based on the enforcement of patriarchal discourse that represses female sexuality and indoctrinates gender stereotypes, explaining Enitan's first reaction guided by the established beliefs. As Katrak aptly puts it, "control of female sexuality is legitimized, even effectively mystified under the name of tradition" (Katrak 209). In the Nigerian culture, "sexuality is full of silence and discretions" since "it is culturally taboo to discuss sex and sexual matters outside marital condition" (Ikpe 6). In the novel, the taboo nature of female sexuality is contained

as another manipulative instrument of patriarchy whose power is confirmed through the effective silencing and dismissing of a woman's voice, subjecting her to both psychological and physical violation. As a result, Enitan and Sheri cannot speak about the horrible incident that has befallen them; instead, they seek refuge in silence to avoid public shaming.

Nevertheless, the rape incident strengthens the bond between Enitan and Sheri, by which the author underscores another female attribute of her culture, which is sisterhood. Nnaemeka argues that "[women] appropriate and refashion oppressive spaces through friendship, sisterhood, and solidarity and in the process reinvent themselves" (Nnaemeka 19). Indeed, maturing into young women, a strong sense of solidarity between Enitan and Sheri helps them face the most severe aspects and practices of their culture, such as polygamy, infertility, domestic abuse, and political violence.

Enitan's secondary education in the boarding school marks a significant step towards her moral, intellectual, and social growth. There, she also becomes aware of cultural practices characterising different ethnic groups. On the other hand, in London, where she is sent to study law and spends nine years, she becomes acquainted with Western ways of romantic commitment characterised as "[a] boy loves a girl and he calls her his wife. A girl loves a boy and she stays at home on weekends to cook for him, while he goes out with some other girl" (Atta 56). Western society provides Enitan with an opportunity to express her thoughts and behaviour fully, thereby opening space for her self-realisation. In England, Enitan is free to enable her agency, which her own society denies her due to the enforcement of strict gender norms. Her ironic attitude is expressed in the description of social constructs that are firmly situated within the discourse of patriarchal culture:

> The first person to tell me my virginity belonged to me was the boy who took it. Before this, I'd thought my virginity belonged to Jesus Christ, my mother, society at large. Anyone but me. My boyfriend, a first-year pharmacy student at London University, assured me that it was mine. (54)

Enitan's exposure to both Western and native cultures enables her to acknowledge the fact that although Nigerians have not lost interest in the Western culture and "still [make] pilgrimages to London," Nigerian authorities inheriting colonial belief still hold on to patriarchal ways rooted in their culture (225). On the other hand, through her

Western exposure, Enitan explores British society's profoundly ingrained aspect: racism. Nevertheless, the host society's impact is strongly felt in her subsequent social awareness in that she becomes more conscious of her rights and such concepts as justice, inequality, and crime. Caught between two different cultures, Enitan is trying to find a middle ground where both cultures negotiate and interact. Bhabha characterises this condition as the "third dimension that gives profundity to the representation of self and other" (Bhabha 68). This opens up a cultural space or a third space, which "carries the burden of the meaning of culture" (56).

Enitan's attempt to accommodate both cultures within herself is also illustrated in her marriage to a person who comes from a traditional patriarchal family. Enitan performs one of the most essential cultural expectations assigned to a woman, who is "raised to believe that [her] greatest days would be the birth of [her] first child [and] [her] wedding" (Atta 76). However, she does not resign herself to the traditional role of a submissive wife, exemplified in her refusal to perform household duties and cook for her husband's family. Her rebellious attitude comes to the fore once again when she calls her husband a "woman wrapper" in front of his family (142). The narrator, Enitan, explains that a "wrapper is the cloth women tie around their waists" and that a "woman wrapper is a weak man, controlled by his woman" (142). Enitan's continuous struggle to reconcile herself both with western values and with those of her own culture is "the act of articulation and enunciation," which "marks the site of an ambivalence" (Bhabha 72). Bhabha defines it as a point of identification, which "is never a priori, nor a finished product," but only "the problematic process of access to an image of totality" (73). It is, as Bhabha argues, a shifting boundary of otherness within identity (73).

Enitan's confidence in her principles and beliefs is undermined when she starts to struggle with fertility problems. While previously she was proudly declaring that "[women] [are] greater than [their] wombs, greater than the sum of [their] body parts," her current situation is encapsulated in the statement, "I shrunk to the size of my womb" (Atta 144). Like her mother, Enitan is subject to gender stereotyping, by which a woman's role is defined by fecundity. Stifled by the "fertility regime" of her culture, Enitan withdraws into herself, losing her voice both in the private and public spheres (144). Reflecting on her hopeless situation, she utters the judgment dictated by the patriarchal ideology that it is "better to be ugly, to be crippled, to be a thief even, than to be barren" (76). Enitan's predicament verifies that

"[t]he need to contain and restrict women's wisdom within the mothering role is [a] constant in social institutions across cultures; and women's status as child bearer continues in many African contexts to be the test of their womanhood" (Minh-ha 31). Indeed, infertility is one of the most discussed issues in African literature. It has become the focus of women writers, mainly because of the negative image of 'barren' women depicted in male-authored works. Women writers are opposed to the equation of womanhood with motherhood commonly propagated in men's writing. They do not deny that motherhood is an essential part of African culture since this attribution is an indicator of a particular social status for a woman. However, there is also a different aspect of mothering, which is "mothering as m-othering, when the experience of being a mother, or of not being one (infertility, or by choice) is alienating and destructive to a woman's psychic state" (Katrak 212). Similarly, Enitan comes to believe that

> It was a punishment; something I'd done, said. I remembered the story of Obatala who once caused women on earth to be barren. I made apologies to her. I remembered also, how I'd opened my mouth once too often and thought that if I said another bad word, had another bad thought, I would remain childless, so I swallowed my voice for penitence. (Atta 145)

Despite her exposure to Western cultural values and acquaintance with western education, Enitan cannot extricate herself from the gender stereotyping deeply rooted in her own culture. She regards herself as a failure and an incomplete woman. This ambiguous position makes it difficult for her to identify with either culture. Enitan's situation supports Bhabha's views regarding the articulation of "cultural differences within [the] vacillation of ideology in which the national discourse also participates, sliding ambivalently from one enunciatory position to another" (Bhabha 211). According to Bhabha, this ambivalence opens up "the chasm of cultural difference," which, in Enitan's case, stems from the fact that she is trapped between two different cultures that hardly interact (45). Eventually, she gives birth to a baby girl, and after realising that Niyi has failed to be her "greatest ally," she breaks up with him (Atta 239). Enitan's separation from her husband may be regarded as a woman's empowerment that provides her with the agency to break with the patriarchal social system's domestic oppression. This assertive role enables her to raise her child exempt from the patriarchal indoctrination that propagates gender

stereotypes. Contrary to the concept of motherhood as a patriarchal construct, she undertakes this role in terms of female authenticity performing it exclusively on her terms.

Enitan explains that "[she] was born in the year of [her] country's independence and saw how it raged against itself" (254). However, she believes that "freedom [is] never intended to be sweet" and that "it [is] a responsibility from the onset, for a people, a person, to fight for, and to hold on to" (254). Attributing her birth to the start of Nigerian independence, Enitan implies that this notable event may also offer a new beginning for women who suffer from the oppressive patriarchy. She gives voice to all the women who are obliged to remain silent to the circumstances making them inferior and passive members of society. Being a dimension of African feminism, the Nigerian feminist movement places patriarchal institutions at the centre of their concern, thereby reaffirming their "commitment to dismantling patriarchy in all its manifestations in Africa" (Madunagu 161). They acknowledge that even though they have multiple identities, their focus is on the condition of African women on the continent (161). By defining themselves as feminists, they politicise their struggle for women's rights (161). Securing her liberated position in the private sphere, Enitan also sets out to fix gender imbalances in the public realm through political activism. Becoming a socially aware person and equipped with legal education in England, she is gradually transformed into an empowered, self-reliant woman. The novel ends on an optimistic note accompanied by a cultural dance of Nigeria, when Enitan, "fearing nothing for [her] sanity, or common sense," exclaims that "everything good will come to [her]" (Atta 258).

To conclude, Enitan is a dynamic and assertive character who encourages women to change their submissive roles. Although she is subjected to various forms of discrimination exerted through the imposition of cultural norms predetermining women's place and role, she seeks to rise above them. Her education in England, as well as exposure to western ways, contribute to her social awareness. In terms of Bhabha's concept of enunciation, Enitan undergoes inner growth; thus, she develops a new hybrid identity from the interweaving elements of Nigerian and western culture. Accordingly, the protagonist creates her own locus of enunciation. She articulates her agency as a self-determined woman and subsequently comes to terms with the cultural differences that shape her individual self. This self-realisation helps Enitan to carve out a middle ground between her native culture and personal independence.