CHAPTER ONE

Literatures of Colonial Contact

Cultural Geography and the Structures of Identity

Postcolonization Literature and Cultural Geography

The first problem facing anyone who sets out to write on postcolonization literature is to determine the scope of the field. Unlike most literary "periods," postcolonization literature is broadly multinational and multicultural. More importantly, not everyone is agreed as to which nations and cultures fall under the rubric. There are some unequivocal cases: India, Pakistan, Kenya, Nigeria, Ghana. And there are some almost unequivocal cases: Jamaica, Trinidad, Barbados, South Africa. But some writers include New Zealand, Australia, and Canada; some add the United States; others include Ireland.

These various countries and their literatures can be grouped in different ways, depending upon one's interests and aims. It does not seem to me productive to try to decide that one or another grouping is definitive, that it captures some sort of essence—or, conversely, that there is an essence to the "postcolonial" that can be rightly instantiated in one particular grouping. Rather, the best approach, in my view, is to define the sort of colonial situation in which one is interested, and then to determine which regions are relevant to that definition, and in what degree.

By "postcolonization literature," I mean literature emerging from the historical encounter between culturally distinct and geographically

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separated societies, where for some extended period one society controls the other politically and economically; moreover, during this period, the dominated society remains numerically and culturally prevalent in its own geographical location, and the dominant society justifies its control through the denigration of the dominated culture and through the ideological insistence that the dominated people are an inferior race. In other words, the body of literature I should like to isolate has the following characteristics: It is the historical result of direct political and economic domination. This direct domination need not be in place currently (i.e., the colony may have achieved independence). However, direct domination must have continued for a long enough period to establish lasting political and economic structures, as well as ideological or cultural institutions (schools, etc.) that continue to have important effects. Moreover, the initial, direct domination was imposed and maintained through violence or the threat of violence, along with other forms of coercion. Thus, in its most significant impact, it was relatively sudden; it did not develop slowly out of internal conditions. In keeping with this, it involves a salient cultural conflict in which the dominant society claims cultural and racial superiority and justifies its domination by reference to this putative superiority. Finally, each group—colonizer and colonized—retains a geographical domain in which it is clearly numerically superior.

Societies such as India, Pakistan, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, and South Africa fit this definition very well, as does Ireland. Australia, New Zealand, Canada, and the United States do not fit well, for the indigenous population did not maintain majority status in the colony—a fact with important political, economic, and cultural consequences. Thus, we shall not be considering this group at all in the following pages. On the other hand, there are a number of similarities between these two groups. Moreover, any literature from the predominantly European colonies which emerges from an appropriate sort of cultural encounter—not only early settler literature, but, for example, Maori writing in New Zealand, African American literature, Australian writing concerned with aboriginal peoples, and so on—could fruitfully be compared with the paradigmatic postcolonization literatures in this respect.

Colonies that retained an indigenous majority and colonies that were overrun by Europeans do not, however, exhaust all relevant cases. Somewhere between these lie what we might refer to as "alienated majority" colonies. These are colonies, primarily in the Caribbean, in

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which the colonized people are in a numerical majority, but they have been alienated from their land through forced displacement, and alienated from their ancestral traditions, languages, and so forth through forced dispersal and intermixing. In consequence, there are, as we shall see, some significant differences between alienated majority literatures and the indigenous majority literatures of the paradigm postcolonization countries. On the other hand, since the writers in this region are largely of West African ancestry, they retain many African traditions, and they do so in a way that clearly involves the repeated transformation of these traditions in response to novel circumstances—an important point for any study of cultural identity. Moreover, perhaps even more than African writers, black Caribbean writers—whose ancestors were almost all slaves—have been faced with the justificatory racism and ethnocentrism of Europe in a particularly stark form. Because of this, their treatment of identity is in some ways more paradigmatic of the colonial condition than is that of lighter-skinned south Asians or, even more obviously, the Irish. Indeed, the separate racial status of the Irish was slowly dissolved into a reconstituted "white" race—which, in some versions, includes Semitic and south Asian peoples—all opposed to blacks.

As this definition already makes clear, by its very nature, postcolonization literature is, in a sense, two literatures: one arising from the dominant or colonizer society, the other from the dominated or colonized society. This is, indeed, the most fundamental division, which one must draw in anatomizing postcolonization literature: literature written by members of the oppressor group (i.e., the English) and literature written by members of the oppressed group (Indians, Africans, and so on). As one would expect, these literatures are united by a sort of dialectical tension necessarily produced by the history that defines postcolonization literature. But they also maintain a striking degree of thematic or structural congruence, often centering around the issue of identity. Within the dominated group, we have already distinguished indigenous and alienated peoples. We may isolate two roughly parallel categories within the oppressor group: 1) metropolitan writers—English writers, in the case of Anglophone literature—and 2) settlers and Creoles (i.e., descendants of settlers).

We can render this division more precise, and use it to provide a framework within which to discuss identity, if we consider in more detail the geography of the colonial situation. We may distinguish, first

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of all, the metropolis, which is to say, the home country of the colonizer, and the region of colonial contact, which is to say, the region of settlement where colonizers live in close interaction with the colonized people. Finally, we may isolate an indigenous region or region of cultural autonomy involving little contact with the colonizer, a region parallel to the metropolis. Regions of contact are most often large urban centers (e.g., Lagos in Nigeria), where the colonized inhabitants (e.g., Igbos) are, like the Europeans, settlers themselves, and not strictly indigenous to the place. Perhaps the most famous example of this general division is Ireland. For centuries, the region of contact—and, for a long period, the region of English control—was confined to the city of Dublin and a small area around the city. This area, referred to as "The Pale," was Anglo-Irish in culture. Outside of this area (beyond the Pale), Ireland remained largely Gaelic in language, customs, dress, and so on. (On the Pale, see, for example, Hayes-McCoy, 176, and Cosgrove, 168.)

Within the region of settlement, we may distinguish regions of high intensity contact and regions of low intensity contact between colonizers and colonized. I shall reserve the term "region of contact" for the former (i.e., areas of high intensity contact). Obviously there is often a continuum in intensity of contact between the contact region and the autonomous region. Indeed, sometimes it will be important to distinguish low intensity contact regions. However, I reserve the term for high intensity contact because the zone I wish to isolate is a zone in which interaction is extensive, structured, even routinized, in such a way that it has structural consequences regarding culture. This sharply differentiates my use of the phrase "region of contact" from Mary Louise Pratt's use of the similar phrase "contact zone." While I am concerned with established, structured contact, which is integral to the daily life of both colonizers and colonized (as in, say, Lagos), Pratt is concerned with the sorts of contact that are not well established, structured, etc. Hence her view that colonial encounters are "improvisational" and her statement that the contact zone is "often synonymous with 'colonial frontier'" (6). At the frontier and in the early stages of contact, encounters may well be improvisational (though they may also be governed by a rigid set of military protocols, known and understood by one side only). My concern, however, is with contact that is not at all improvisational, but highly regulated, and regulated in such a way as to define a system of interaction, for this is the sort of contact that is consequential for one's sense of identity. It is worth noting that the region of contact (in my

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sense) is typically the region that is under the firmest control of the colonial government, whereas Pratt's contact zone would be the area least firmly controlled.

It is also worth mentioning that, in the region of contact, the relations between the colonizers and the colonized are often partially mediated by some third group, which is also often considered racially intermediate. Mulattos and other mixed-race people often fill this role. Privileged relative to people of fully indigenous ancestry, they can aspire to a higher station than ordinary "natives" and can be used by colonizers as a sort of buffer. Indeed, the mixed-race character who strives to be white and who collaborates with the colonizer is a common figure in much postcolonization literature. On the other hand, this function is not confined to mixed-race people. It can be taken up by any race considered "closer" to being white. In Africa and the Caribbean, this role is frequently taken up by South Asians. Indeed, during apartheid, the South African government strictly distinguished between South Asians and black Africans in precisely this way. But this was not confined to South Africa. As Benedict Anderson has pointed out, "Almost everywhere economic power was either monopolized by the colonialists themselves, or unevenly shared with a politically impotent class of pariah (non-native) businessmen—Lebanese, Indian and Arab in colonial Africa" (116). This colonial division—sometimes exacerbated by extreme collaborationism and anti-"native" racism on the part of some members of the buffer group—often gave rise to considerable (racist) resentment against this group after independence, Uganda providing perhaps the most notorious instance. In the absence of such a racially intermediate group, an indigenous group, often one with a more "European" culture—religion, political structure, dress, etiquette, whatever—could serve the same function, with similar results.

In terms of identity, the most important aspects of this geographical relation are cultural and social. The metropolis and the indigenous region maintain what might be called "basic" culture—English culture in England and Igbo culture in the interior Igbo villages. In contrast, the regions of high intensity contact (e.g., Lagos), develop two sorts of Creolized culture. Most obviously, indigenous culture is affected by metropolitan culture—through English education, forced Christianization, or simply through the partial Europeanization produced by the structure of work and the physical and economic environment. Less obviously, the

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settler culture is altered by indigenous culture. We may refer to both the modified indigenous culture and the modified metropolitan/settler culture as "contact cultures."

At the same time, despite this cross-cultural interaction and the formation of contact cultures, settlers and contact-region indigenes often form tightly knit, socially rigid, and mutually antagonistic societies which operate to rigidify aspects of basic culture viewed as threatened by contact. Contact leads to widespread modification or even loss of basic culture. But it leads simultaneously to a reification of that culture. Basic culture has always evolved in the metropolis and the autonomous region and continues to do so. In the contact region, the recollection and practice of basic culture often become fixed at a particular moment—the moment when the settler left the metropolis or autonomous region. For example, the English settler/Creole often feels him/herself to be somewhat African (Indian, etc.), and thus to a degree different from the English. But, at the same time, he/she often believes him/herself to be more "truly" English than the English, more genuinely faithful to English custom, etc.

Here as elsewhere, the Caribbean is slightly different from India, Africa, and Ireland. Through slavery, virtually all Africans were, at least initially, thrust into a contact region, and removed entirely from autonomous regions. Of course, slaves—including newly arrived Africans, who carried particularly fresh memories of their culture (see Price, 24)—sometimes escaped from the plantations and formed Maroon communities, and these partially had the function of autonomous regions. Moreover, even plantation work could involve more or less contact. Though extensively routinized, it could be structured in such a way as to make it highly oriented toward European culture (with forced church attendance, etc.), or it could be structured more or less purely as labor, with other aspects of culture not entering systematically into regulated interaction. Nonetheless, there was no strictly indigenous region where an indigenous culture could be revisited, for even the culture of the Maroons was a sort of ad hoc synthesis of different African traditions—Yoruba, Ashanti, and so on (see Price, 29).

We can more fully specify the nature of culture in the region of contact by distinguishing three related parameters. The first is intensity of contact. This is a matter of frequency of contact (i.e., how often Europeans and non-Europeans come into contact), significance of contact types (whether contact involves essential matters of livelihood or more

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peripheral matters), the diversity of areas affected (e.g., is it merely a matter of commerce, or does it enter into religious observance, education, etc.), systematicity and rationalization (i.e., is it governed by articulated rules that make interactions regular and predictable), and so on. Again, I reserve the term "region of contact" for an area in which contact is relatively intense, in this technical sense.

The second parameter is the degree of severance, the degree to which one is cut off from basic culture. This is a highly complex matter and involves several subvariables. The most obvious subvariable within severance is a matter of the actual lines of connection with the basic culture—the distance, the freedom of travel, the existence of means of transportation, and so on. Clearly, there are differences here between India, with its extensive infrastructure, Africa, with its more limited infrastructure, and the Caribbean, where there was no access to the original autonomous regions at all, for the slaves simply could not return to African villages.

A second subvariable here is the mode of existence of the basic culture, the degree to which it is codified in writing, etc. It is clearly easier to maintain a culture that is preserved in writing than to maintain one that is not—the latter will simply die out if it is not practiced for a single generation. Mode of existence is closely related to a third subvariable, the uniformity of basic culture across communities. It is clearly easier to preserve a culture that is broadly consistent across the indigenous region. Members of many different local communities mix together in the contact region; insofar as they share detailed cultural ideas and practices, they are more likely to repeat and thus preserve them. Though, for ease of explication, I have referred to "basic culture" in the singular, there are significant cultural differences determined by region, profession, economic status, and so on. These differences can impede, and sometimes undermine, the preservation of what is common. For example, if all Yoruba share a particular ritual, then that ritual may be practiced in the contact region, even when the Yoruba there are from different regions. However, suppose that, despite common abstract principles, this ritual is subject to considerable regional variation in its actual performance. Then it is much less likely that the ritual will be repeated and preserved, for its performance will require a high concentration of Yoruba from a particular region.

This is related to a fourth subvariable, the degree to which a tradition may be continued at a distance from the autonomous region. Consider, for

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example, the difference between Hindu and Igbo practices. Much Hindu ritual is performed within a family, and thus does not require a large community. In contrast, as Isichei points out, in Igboland, "Traditional religion is essentially local—tied to this local shrine, this village festival, this village taboo. A man who left his village for Lagos was almost bound to cease to practice his inherited religion" (169).

Another subvariable affecting the parameter of severance is the degree of linguistic continuity. Irish and Caribbean people, including writers, no longer share the language of everyday culture used by their colonized forebears. Africans and Indians typically do preserve that language in fluent, daily, native use.

Finally, the third important parameter is degree of internalization. Each of us assimilates certain ways of thinking about ourselves and about the world, and certain ways of acting. We come automatically to conceive of people in particular ways, to organize our conception of life in relation to particular structures, and so on. The parameter I wish to isolate here is a matter of the degree to which any given culture has been internalized in this sense. In the region of cultural autonomy, the people have internalized the basic culture—Igbo or Hindu or whatever. The same holds for the metropolis. In the region of contact, however, there will be a variety of internalizations. Some indigenous people will have internalized a culture that is largely indigenous; others will have internalized a culture that is largely metropolitan; and there will be all intermediate cases as well. A simple example should illustrate the point. The story of Romeo and Juliet does not have a place in basic Indian culture. There, the paradigmatic literary instances of romantic love would be Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā or Rāma and Sītā in the Hindu tradition (see Kālidāsa and Vālmīki) or Laila and Majnun in the Muslim or Arabic/Persian tradition (see Nizami). Clearly, there is a difference in acculturation—that is, internalization of culture—between an Indian who spontaneously assimilates lovers to Duṣyanta and Śakuntalā and one who spontaneously assimilates them to Romeo and Juliet. The same holds for settlers/Creoles. It is rare for any colonizer fully to internalize the indigenous culture (though this is an important literary motif—cf. *Gora*, *Kim*, and *Midnight's Children*). Nonetheless, even among colonizers, there will be many degrees of partial internalization of indigenous culture. As we shall see, this has considerable bearing on the attitudes individuals and groups take up toward cultural identity.

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Clearly, degree of internalization is in part a function of intensity and severance. However, it is not reducible to these—in derivation, in consequences, or in explanatory value.

IDENTITY AND TRADITION

It hardly needs to be said that colonial contact disrupts indigenous culture, often radically. For many people, it renders traditional ideas uncertain and ends the easy performance of traditional practices. In doing this, it makes cultural identity a problem—an issue on which one almost necessarily takes a stand. While questions about one's relation to tradition may arise at any time, in any context, they arise with unique force and scope as colonial contact intensifies, the degree of severance increases, internalizations of idea and act fade or shift between antagonistic cultures, coming to rest fully in neither one nor the other. In short, under colonialism, in the region of contact, the conflicts are so strong and pervasive that they constitute a challenge to one's cultural identity, and thus one's personal identity.

As we shall discuss in more detail in the following chapters, identity is best thought of as involving a representational or referential component and a procedural or "skills" component. (The distinction is fairly standard in cognitive science, though the terminology varies; see, for example, Johnson-Laird, 166ff.) The procedural component consists in all of one's unreflective knowledge about how to act or interact in typical situations. It includes knowledge about how to greet and address different people, knowledge of how one is to take part in religious activities or work, and so forth. I will refer to this as "practical identity." The representational or referential component consists in a set of properties that define one's self-understanding. This set is hierarchized in that some properties are "more central" to one's self-definition than are others (e.g., one's sex is more central than one's shoe size). I will refer to this as "reflective identity." Clearly, the two are related. For example, much of one's practical identity is based on one's sex, which is correlatively central to one's reflective identity.

Both sorts of identity are the result of common social practices, not individual decisions. Clearly, I do not choose my practical identity. Rather, I am brought up in such a way that I am comfortable in certain situations, know how to behave, know my "role." The same is true of

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reflective identity. It is standard social practices that define the categories in which I conceive of myself. And it is standard social practices that tell me which of these categories is important. If "male" is centrally important to my reflective identity, this is because sex is generally treated as centrally important in the society around me, because I am regularly identified as male, because my practical identity has been shaped around this categorization.

In terms of both reflective and practical identity, indigenous people in contact culture are caught between two conflicting sets of imperatives. The practices that are normal and natural in indigenous culture are often inappropriate, and are almost always denigrated, in colonial culture. One's reflective identity as defined by the colonizer is often brutally demeaning. And yet the economic and political domination of the colonizers—their widespread control of the structure of work, their system of education, and so on—impels one to accept the colonial categories, their implications and practical consequences. This can give rise to very sharp and painful conflicts in one's self-understanding, aspiration, expectation, action, etc., leaving one almost entirely unable to take coherent action toward humanly fulfilling goals—and thus in effect requiring that one take some sort of stand on the issue of identity. In the very simplest terms, one may respond to this by embracing indigenous tradition, striving for full Europeanization, or combining the two. I should like to discuss each option in turn.

Orthodoxy, Unreflective Conformism, and Reaction

The most obvious way in which one may return to tradition is through a genuine reintegration with the living, changing practices and ideas of the tradition, accepting them in all their precolonial diversity. It is particularly important to stress the open quality of tradition here. As Ashis Nandy has argued, "Those in deeper touch with traditions . . . are, for that very reason, more open to the new and the exogenous" (*Illegitimacy*, 47), for traditions are themselves always to some degree flexible, multiple, various. Bhiku Parekh, following Gandhi, maintains that "A tradition . . . [is] not blind, a mere collection of precedents, but a *form of inquiry* . . . an unplanned but rigorous *communal science* constantly tested and revised against the harsh reality of life" (19). Even if one does not go this far, it seems clear that all traditions neces-

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sarily allow some scope for social change, for regional and other diversity, and even for individual choice and idiosyncrasy. Many allow a great deal.

I call this sort of broad and open traditionalism "orthodoxy," and mean the category to encompass a wide range of attitudes toward tradition, including some that are systematically critical. Indeed, orthodoxy, in this sense, can even be "modernizing," for, like Samir Amin and others, I would distinguish modernization from Europeanization or Westernization. As Amin has stressed, the "debate in which 'identity' (and 'heritage') are placed in absolute contrast with 'modernization,' viewed as synonymous with 'Westernization'" is "confused" and is part of "a false construction of the question of 'cultural identity'" (133). Specifically, I see "modernization" as the adoption of practices which, by the broad principles of traditional thought, count as advances on traditional ideas or practices, either for empirical or moral reasons. For example, there is nothing in orthodox Hindu thought that is incoherent with the development of medicine. Indeed, there is a highly developed Hindu science of medicine. To make use of the benefits of Western medicine would thus count as "modernizing," in my sense, and not necessarily as "Westernizing."

In contrast with open-minded orthodoxy—especially modernizing orthodoxy—we might distinguish "unreflective conformism" or "unreflective traditionalism." As I am using the term, "orthodoxy" involves an openness to the reflective consideration of tradition, and genuine attention to the structure and meaning of traditional beliefs and acts. Unreflective conformism, in contrast, is merely the thoughtless repetition of the common ideas and practices of a tradition, not only without criticism, but without an understanding of their relations and purposes. It is roughly what Heidegger called "inauthenticity," doing what "one" does. It is not entirely complementary with orthodoxy, as any given orthodox traditionalist is likely to be reflective about certain aspects of tradition but not about others. Indeed, it is not possible to be reflective about everything. In that sense, everyone is, to some degree, an unreflective conformist. However, there are highly significant differences in degree, with some people—or at least some literary characters—being almost entirely unreflective conformists, and others being highly reflective.

The nature of orthodoxy becomes clearer when we consider the third standard mode of affirming tradition, what I call "reactionary

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traditionalism"—or, sometimes, "reactionary nativism" or "reactionary racialism." Reactionary traditionalism is, first of all, a rigidification of indigenous tradition. However, it is a rigidification governed by European culture—*not* by indigenous tradition itself—and this in one of two ways: It is either *purgative* or *stereotypical*. If purgative, the reactionary traditionalist tries to eliminate from indigenous culture all elements that it shares with European culture. Simultaneously, he/she stresses all elements of indigenous culture that oppose European culture. If English men and women mix freely, then the traditional practices surrounding the isolation of women and men must be extended and strengthened, with exceptions eliminated. Arguably, this form of reactionary traditionalism is not simply a matter of eliminating Europeanisms, but involves a larger "purifying" practice, in which the reactionary traditionalist purges indigenous culture of anything that seems to make it weak in the face of colonial culture. This would centrally include any element shared with colonial culture, for a point of contact might equally provide a point of entry for cultural "infiltration." But this sort of purgative traditionalism also seeks to eliminate any non-European aspect of indigenous culture that appears to make it vulnerable. Thus, distinctive indigenous traditions of pluralism, nonviolence, and the like, may be purged by reactionary traditionalists, insofar as these are seen as weakening tradition in the face of colonial threat.

Purgative reactionary traditionalism often takes the form of originalism or pseudo-originalism. Originalism is the return to a putatively "pure" form of tradition, an original form that was followed by degeneration. Reactionary traditionalists often see this putative degeneration as the reason for the eventual triumph of colonialism, making the elimination of degeneracy and the return to the origin crucial for the political struggle against colonialism. Originalism is the antithesis of the modernism found among some orthodox traditionalists, for it counsels, not the continuation of development, but its abandonment. "Fundamentalism," in the popular sense of the term, is typically a form of originalist reactionary traditionalism, usually involving some sort of dogmatic textual literalism linked with coercive force.

The stereotypical version of reactionary traditionalism is an adoption of tradition based not on tradition per se, but rather on the colonial, ideological misrepresentation of that tradition. It is typical of the

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reactionary traditionalist that he/she does not truly know indigenous tradition. He/she has lived away from communal practices for too long, has never studied the sacred texts or learned the holy tongue, has never internalized the ways and stories of his/her ancestors. Indeed, the reactionary traditionalist is typically someone who has tried to become English and be accepted into English society, but has failed. In seeking to become English, he/she has internalized not indigenous culture, but colonialist views of indigenous culture.

Most often, the stereotypes in question involve specific views about the nature of indigenous traditions. But sometimes the stereotype is even cruder than this, for it in effect represents indigenous people before colonialism as living in as state of nature, acting from a sort of brute spontaneity. When an indigenous person takes up this sort of stereotype, it hardly makes sense to refer to this as "traditionalism." In this case, I substitute the term "reactionary nativism." Similarly, when a stereotypical identification by race is the basis for reactionary traditionalism, I refer to this as "reactionary racialism."

Sometimes indigenous "traditions" adopted by the reactionary traditionalist were not precisely what we would call "stereotypes," but were, nonetheless, a byproduct of British administrative practices, which comes to much the same thing, as both involve the substitution of the colonizer's ideas about tradition for tradition itself. Parekh presents a fine illustration from the British treatment of Hindu law. "The complex customary law which the traditional system of administering justice knew how to interpret and enforce" was too flexible and complex for "the British-established courts of law." In consequence, the traditional system was "replaced by the *shastras* and their rigid and sometimes obsolete and impractical norms" (31). In this way, the rigidity of some Hindu reactionary traditionalists was a direct result of this prior, British rigidification of Hindu law, which was entirely out of keeping with living Hindu tradition.

Along the same lines, reactionary traditionalists often unconsciously anglicize indigenous tradition themselves, reformulating it in British terms, shaping it in British categories. As Nandy points out, many traditionalists remade Hinduism in the image of Christianity, "introduc[ing] into Hinduism the principles of organization, proslytization, specialized priestly orders, the concept of religion as a principle of political mobilization, a hard sense of history and even, in some cases, a patriarchal God" (*At the Edge*, 57).

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Assimilation and Mimeticism

But, again, one need not accept indigenous tradition; one might turn instead to the metropolis. Directly parallel to orthodoxy is what I shall call "assimilation." Assimilation is the full acceptance and internalization of the other basic culture. For an English person, it is, in effect, becoming African or Indian. For an African or Indian, it is, in effect, becoming English. Some Europeans find themselves drawn to Indian religion, Indian literature, Indian food and customs. Some Indians find themselves drawn to Christianity, English literature, and so on. Though the colonial situation limits the degree to which assimilation is possible in either direction, there are, I think, many cases where it occurs. This is particularly true if one allows the possibility of being truly multicultural—and there is no reason not to allow this. In other words, it seems to happen with some regularity that Indians or Africans or Caribbeans (or even Irish) come to be perfectly at home in English society, think of themselves as English (as well as Indian, or whatever), act with perfect, unreflective ease in English society, and so forth. It also happens that English persons come to be perfectly at home in Indian or African or Caribbean (or even Irish) society, and so on. Though it is more difficult, one can assimilate another culture just as one can become fluent in another language. (Having mentioned that the English may assimilate, I should probably note that all these categories apply to the colonizer as well as the colonized. For example, a settler may adopt a reactionary traditionalist attitude toward English culture. I have not treated the English side here as it has only very limited bearing on the literature we will be examining.)

If we like, it is possible to distinguish a form of assimilation that is critical or deliberative and a form that is unthinking or mechanical. If we wish to make this distinction, we may reserve the term *assimilation* for the former (maintaining its parallelism with "orthodoxy"), and refer to the latter as a type of unreflective conformism—perhaps distinguishing the two types of unreflective conformism as "emulative" and "traditionalist." In real life, both sorts of unreflective conformism are no doubt important. However, the distinction between assimilation proper and emulative conformism (i.e., unreflective, uncritical, but genuine internalization of the ideas and practices of the alien culture) does not have much of any place in literature. This is unsurprising as it is really a distinction important only within the

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alien culture, and thus has little bearing on the problem of cultural identity as it appears in indigenous literature.

The general nature of assimilation becomes clearer when contrasted with the remaining manner of adopting metropolitan culture—mimeticism. Mimeticism is directly parallel to reactionary traditionalism, but, like assimilation, it moves in the opposite direction. An early account of this response to colonialism was given by Douglas Hyde, in his seminal lecture of 1892, "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland." As Lyons summarizes, "Hyde protested . . . against the slavish conformism which made the Irish adopt everything English simply because it was English" (*Culture*, 42). More exactly, mimeticism—or, equivalently, "reactionary assimilationism" (I shall use the terms interchangeably)—is closely related to reactionary traditionalism, not least in having two main types, purgative and stereotypical. In the more common, purgative mode, mimeticism is the repudiation of indigenous traditions, and includes the repudiation of those aspects of English culture that overlap with indigenous traditions. It involves the maximization of difference between the two traditions. It is enacted through an emphasis on and exaggeration of the most extreme and non-Indian/non-African/non-Irish aspects of English culture, even to the extent of appearing to be a sort of parody of English custom—as when a Hindu gives up Indian food to sit every evening at a high table with a white cloth and eat vast quantities of boiled beef. This parodic effect is particularly easy to achieve because, much like the reactionary traditionalist, the mimeticist most often has only the most superficial knowledge of the culture to which he/she has devoted him/herself. This is equally evident in the less common stereotypical mode. In this mode, the mimeticist strives to imitate a standard idea of English custom that has little relation to actual British practical identity–as when an Igbo man wears an ill-fitting three-piece suit while at leisure in a remote village on a sweltering afternoon

One particularly important connection between reactionary traditionalism and mimeticism is that reactionary traditionalists are typically reacting against a prior mimeticism. In other words, a colonized person who ends up as a reactionary traditionalist will very often do so after having passed through a period of mimeticism. In general terms, this point was one of the main themes of Fanon's work (see, for example, *Black Skin*, 8–9 and *Wretched*, 217–23). Ashis Nandy's analyses of Sri Aurobindo and Nathuram Godse, the assassinator of Gandhi, provide excellent illustrations of this process (on Aurobindo, see *Intimate*

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Enemy, 85–100, on Godse, see *At the Edge*, 70–98). As Nandy put the general point, one group "paid their homage to the alien authorities by identification and imitation," while the other did so "by compulsive and counterphobic rejection" (*At the Edge*, 61, see also 113).

As Nandy's allusion to psychoanalysis suggests, the process here is closely related to—and is often an instance of—what psychoanalysts call "reaction formation," the repression of one impulse or idea and its substitution by the precise opposite. Reaction formation is, in a sense, a sort of hyper-repression. It in effect says, "That is so false that the complete opposite is true!" Suppose, for example, that I have strongly aggressive impulses toward someone, which cause such intense and disturbing conflict that they are repressed. As part of my defense against these impulses, I may come to behave toward this person with excessive affection and care. This is a reaction formation. Though my outward behavior and conscious attitude are solicitous and loving, they are in fact a defense against aggression and hatred. Reactionary traditionalism, racialism, and so on, are directly parallel in that they are outward affirmations of one's cultural or racial superiority, but they are frequently derived from, and in many cases still based on, a prior or underlying belief in one's cultural or racial inferiority.

Syncretism and Alienation

Finally, one might privilege neither indigenous nor metropolitan tradition, but try instead to combine the two, choosing what seems best from each, and bringing them together into a new culture, ideally superior to both precedents—or, if not superior, at least better suited to those people who have internalized aspects of both cultures. This is syncretism. It is the attitude toward identity preferred by the bulk of Anglophone postcolonization writers—predictably, given their background, readership, and so forth. (It should be emphasized that this background is by no means typical of postcolonization people, as Appiah [239], Ahmad [149], and others have stressed; indeed, for this reason, and due to the diversity of opinions and practices in any society, the views of these writers should never be generalized or taken as "representative" of their home cultures.)

For the most part, the nature of syncretism is straightforward and does not require explanation. However, it is worth noting that what

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counts as orthodoxy and what counts as syncretism is relative to cultural context. In Afro-Caribbean literature, there is no "pure" orthodoxy. Rather, what counts as orthodox (in our sense) is any cultural practice that, however synthetic, preserves elements or structures of African origin. For example, in Africa itself, a religion that combines Yoruba and Christian beliefs would be syncretist and would be opposed to "pure" orthodox Yoruba belief on the one hand and "pure" metropolitan Christianity on the other. In the Caribbean, however, the "pure" Yoruba practices survive, for the most part, only in syncretistic forms. In that context, then, the Yoruba/Christian synthesis would be the only relevant form of "orthodoxy." The overall result is that the alternatives in Afro-Caribbean tradition are more limited than alternatives in India or Africa. Orthodoxy and syncretism are, in effect, collapsed into a single category.

Paired with syncretism is what I will call "alienating hybridity," the estrangement from both traditions, the sense that one can be neither English nor Igbo (Hindu, etc.), the paralyzing conviction that one has no identity, no real cultural home, and that no synthesis is possible. In literature, at least, the condition is linked with madness. This extreme cultural alienation appears to be particularly common in Caribbean literature, unsurprisingly, given the high degree of severance experienced by all colonized people in the region. As Walcott puts it, the "West Indian feels rootless on his own earth" ("What the Twilight Says," 21). Indeed, in some cases from the Caribbean, the alienation is so severe that it might more appropriately be referred to as "alienating denial of identity." In the standard less severe case of alienating hybridity, the character in question internalizes the alien culture after extensive education, typically including a period in the metropolis. His/her racial or ethnic origin prevents true acceptance in the foreign culture, and the internalization of the foreign culture makes him/her (in Achebe's phrase) "no longer at ease" in the home culture as well.

Identity and Gender

As Ashis Nandy has pointed out, the colonial denigration of indigenous culture consistently involved an assimilation of cultural hierarchies to sex hierarchies (*Intimate*, 4–11). Specifically, the indigenous cultures were seen as feminine or effeminate and the metropolitan culture as

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masculine. Colonialists who promulgated this view stressed or fabricated elements of indigenous culture putatively indicative of effeminacy (passivity, weakness, irrationality, wiliness, etc.) and elements of metropolitan culture putatively indicative of masculinity (aggressiveness, strength, rationality, honesty, etc.). Correspondingly, they downplayed or denied the aspects of both cultures that did not fit this schema.

As Nandy emphasizes, colonial ideologists tended to focus particular attention on indigenous men, in effect denying their manhood. On the other hand, the position of women was ideologically important as well. First of all, indigenous women were viewed as the most passive creatures possible. Subservient, even to the point of lacking separate will, they were the shadowy tittering figures on the margins of *A Passage to India*: "All the [Indian] ladies were uncertain, cowering, recovering, giggling, making tiny gestures of atonement or despair" (36). Or "those Indian women . . . silly, pretty, flimsy nincompoops" of Virginia Woolf's *Mrs. Dalloway* (10). At best, they were fitting objects of pity for Western liberals, including Western feminists. In this way, colonial ideology tended to "feminize" indigenous men and "hyper-feminize" indigenous women.

But this feminization did not merely involve seeing indigenous people as passive. As, for example, Homi Bhabha has stressed, the colonizer never views colonized people as simply and unequivocally subservient. He/she always sees colonized people simultaneously as dangerous and uncontrollable. As we shall discuss below, Bhabha identifies these two aspects of the colonizer's attitude with fetishism and paranoia. But, insofar as there is a dualism here, it seems much closer to the dualism of misogynist stereotypes, more like virgin and whore. Indeed, the dissembling or duplicity that allows for this duality is itself a misogynist stereotype. Thus, indigenous peoples came to be viewed in colonial ideology as seemingly passive and subservient, but harboring hidden violence and lust. Out of sight, they were drugged and lecherous, immoral and dissolute. These are the "Eastern excesses," bacchic "opposites" to European "values" (57), the putative "lechery" and "debauchery" (62), explored by Edward Said in *Orientalism*.

This racist and sexist view was applied cross-culturally by colonial ideologues, but there were some important variations in degree. In particular, the more vicious the cultural denigration, the more sexually degraded was the image of colonized people. This denigration reached its nadir with respect to sub-Saharan Africa. Thus, it helped give rise to

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the racist image of the African rapist or the African man with huge reproductive organs and inexhaustible drives—a psychologically deep, historically persistent, and ideologically functional image, as Frantz Fanon demonstrated in *Black Skin, White Masks*. In this way, the ideological feminization and consequent sexualization of colonized people—which, again, involved a misogynist stereotype of vast and predatory sexual appetites—paradoxically contributed to the apparent hypertrophy of male sexuality in the ideological representation of the African man. This is not to say that women did not suffer from this ideological sexualization. Quite the contrary. Here, too, indigenous women were "hyper-feminized," which in this case means assimilated as a group to prostitutes, or rather to a fantasy of the prostitute, an imago of an insatiable, scheming, threatening temptress.

In part as a result of this colonial imposition of gender models on cultural relations, and in part as a result of a cross-cultural tendency to assimilate important social divisions to the division between men and women, many indigenous Anglophone writers too came to see the opposition between tradition and colonial culture as bound up with gender issues. Indeed, a great deal of characterization in postcolonization Anglophone literature may be viewed as a direct, if partially unconscious, response to this ideological feminization of indigenous people.

Beyond this, gender is in any case a central part of both reflective and practical identity. It is typically the first and most repeated way in which we are defined. In every culture of which I am aware, children are categorized by sex from birth and are consistently referred to in terms of their sex thereafter. Moreover, this categorization is consequential. In a wide range of cultures, sex is one of the most highly stereotyped categories, especially in terms of ideals. In other words, moral and practical ideals appear to be based on gender distinctions far more often than they are based on distinctions of any other sort. Many cultures also have descriptive stereotypes associated with sex. In other words, most cultures assign distinctive normative roles to men and women—obvious instances for women would include serving their husbands and nurturing their children. In addition, a large number of cultures impute distinctive psychological and other traits to men and women—for example, rationality and nonrational intuition respectively in Euro-American culture. Thus, one's reflective identity as male or female is not a matter of simple sexual categorization. Rather, it entails a wide range of beliefs about what one should do and what one is able to do.

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In keeping with this, social interactions in work and leisure, in public and in the home, are largely organized according to sex. What jobs one can have, what tasks one is expected to fulfill, what forms of relaxation one can engage in and with whom—these are all at least in part determined by whether one is male or female. Not only one's reflective identity, but one's practical identity is largely a function of one's sex. All this makes gender identity a central concern in deliberations over cultural and personal identity and in responses to crises of cultural and personal identity.

We may conceptually organize the possibilities for gender identity in parallel with the general categories of cultural identity, beginning with orthodox masculinity and orthodox femininity. These are, of course, social categories—not so much because gender identity is "socially constructed," in the sense of resulting from socialization, but rather because gender identity is ideological. In other words, reflective identity is not a matter of what we are made into by culture, but of what we believe we are. In all cultures, conceptions of masculinity and femininity are determined not by what men and women are really like—whether this results from nurture or nature—but by the function of the concepts "male" and "female" in structuring social hierarchies. Thus, "orthodox masculinity" here is masculinity *as understood* in the culture in question; the same holds for "orthodox femininity." Moreover, this category is *normative* within the tradition in question, which is to say, a definition of "orthodox masculinity" or "orthodox femininity" indicates a *standard*, not necessarily a belief about real people—still less any fact about real people.

Orthodox masculinity and orthodox femininity necessarily involve competence, as well as strength and a degree of fortitude, in traditional spheres of activity. This is part of any literary representation of characters of this sort. On the other hand, there are, unsurprisingly, differences in the precise ways this is depicted. This type is usually of two sorts, depending upon the age of the character. A younger woman is chaste and respectful of her husband—though not necessarily, or even typically, subservient. An older woman is most often a repository of spiritual and folk wisdom. Both figures occur in literature by men and by women, but the strength and independence of both is somewhat more likely to be emphasized in literature by women. Moreover, the strength and competence of traditional men is less in evidence, and their abuse of social, economic, and physical power is more likely to be exposed in work by women—though this motif is not absent from writings by men.

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