



Mimicry Matters: Postcolonial Borrowing and Backfiring

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Abstract: This article explores how postcolonial literary criticism's borrowing of its different forms of cultural (such as poststructural and postmodern) and materialist/Marxist resistance from Europe, with which it has attempted to counter colonial and neocolonial hegemonic dominations, ultimately works as a boomerang to write back to the once-colonized people in one way or another. For this purpose, this paper will use Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry in which the borrowing of European language simultaneously leads to the subversion of colonial domination as well as a subversion of own self. Like Bhabha's mimicry, postcolonial criticism often tends to focus more on its indebtedness to Europe rather than on attempts to subvert European ideologies which became complicit in colonial domination. Like Bhabha's theory, postcolonial borrowing of ideas of resistance from Europe focuses more on once-colonized peoples' inferiority and failure only to produce a kind of self-subversion. Bhabha's immigrant subject attempts a self-assertion from a hybrid identity position and finally acknowledges an inescapable marginalization. This article will show when later postcolonial criticism often borrows from Europe to ironically assert cultural difference, native agency or local specificity, it turns out once again to lead to self-subversion. By using an observation of a number of recent postcolonial books and articles and with reference to a number of influential postcolonial writers, theorists and critics this paper aims to raise concern about the development of postcolonial self-subversion in certain key areas of postcolonial appropriation of European poststructural, postmodern and Marxist politics.

Keywords: Colonial Totalitarianism, Postcolonial Literary Criticism, Postcolonial Resistance, Cultural and Material, Borrowings from Europe, Local Specificity, Native Agency, Self-Subversion

1. Introduction: From Western Ideas of Resistance and Self-criticism to Postcolonial Self-effacement

In the beginning, postcolonial studies were influenced by Marxism and showed the need for radical resistance to capitalist/colonialist domination. Later, they were influenced by postmodernism and poststructuralism and moved away from their initial urge for radical resistance to prefer more literary and cultural forms, which development can be noticed particularly in the field of postcolonial literary criticism (see Boehmer 2005, 2018; C. L. Innes, 2007; Fatoumata Seck, 2023). West originated poststructuralism and postmodernism, in their liberal self-critical mode, have attempted to deconstruct the self-defining and hegemonic ideologies of Western Humanism and Western Subject and other meta-narratives (including Marxism), ideologies of eurocentrism, universalism and their totalitarian politics in the face of the devastating aftermaths of the world wars and European inter-wars. They have intended to resist any particular European theory to be appeared as universal in order to emphasize local specificity. They have attempted to show indeterminacy and undecidedness in any kind of totalitarian view or discourse or representation. Although postmodern and poststructuralist critics speak from their own specific German, British, French or other positions of identity, cultural background and political interest and/or from own personal racial, gender and ethnic positions to invite Europeans to recognize the difference within themselves, their counter-hegemonic ideas have started to be used in a generalized form in postcolonial studies (being oblivious of the larger difference between the western and the non-western).



Postcolonial literary criticism initially has emerged to counter past colonialist misrepresentations produced in colonial cultural productions which were considered as being complicit in colonial actual hegemonic domination. Then it seeks its present relevance by focusing on how the past is still being influential in shaping the present and how cultural representations have continued to lend support to present neocolonial domination. Just as cultural representations or misrepresentations have been seen as being complicit in the past colonial and the present neocolonial political dominations, subversion of those ideologies via literary and cultural formulations or cultural criticism have been regarded as important means for the resistance to past and present political hegemonies. Poststructural cultural criticism initially has been considered by critics as greatly relevant to be used in postcolonial context in order to subvert colonial and neocolonial totalitarian views and ideologies. The ideologies about hierarchical binaries between the colonizer and the colonized which, often being described in Hegelian Master-slave and Manichean human-non-human terms, have been deemed as being important tools for colonial and neocolonial political dominations. Major postcolonial critics, [Edward Said \(1978\)](#), [Homi Bhabha \(1994\)](#) and [Gayatri Spivak \(1995\)](#) have borrowed Jaques Derrida's poststructural deconstructive criticism ([see Royle, 2003](#)) to reveal the connection between colonialist cultural workings and colonial political domination and to subvert colonialist ideologies. This paper will show how such cultural borrowings in later postcolonial literary writers and critics usually lead to a kind of liberal self-criticism or self-subversion just like the western self-criticism as I have mentioned earlier. Nevertheless, postcolonial self-criticism involves a deeper level of self-negating attitudes, and ironically help perpetuate the hierarchical binary between the west and the non-west which poststructuralism and postmodernism oriented postcolonialism has wanted to resist.

1.1 Postcolonial self-subversion: Its definition and development

[Steven Donald Shirk \(2002\)](#) in his MSC thesis titled "Self-subversion: Undermining the Self as a source of Information" (prepared as a requirement for the MSC degree in the field of social psychology) defines self-subversion as a condition in which an individual tends to disregard his own beliefs and feelings and think or behave in accordance to an external or social guide. Postcolonial writers and critics while borrowing resistance ideas from European cultural, intellectual and materialist movements often appear as self-subversive as they tend to reflect European biases about non-western peoples, places and their struggle for independence. Often small unknown non-western writers for cheap publicity and recognition in the west produces self-criticism ([see Peter Hitchcock, 2010](#)). There are also other reasons which may overlap with these reasons. After the official end of colonialism, the present post-independence postcolonial nation states are generally seen as continuing colonial totalitarian hegemonic domination ([Ahmad, 1995](#); [Loomba, 2015](#)). Moreover, recent neocolonial domination is believed to be best perceived in postcolonial local grounds than its global operations. As a result, whenever postcolonial critics attempt to generate resistance against western colonial, neocolonial dominations, they tend to counter postcolonial "hegemonic dominations" in a similar way which are always already taken for granted. It has been a postcolonial burden for writers and critics to keep themselves up to date by seeking a connection between the past and present, colonial and neocolonial, western and non-western hegemonic nationalistic and totalitarian dominations. It would be worth noting that almost all post postcolonial major critics Said, Bhabha and Spivak and their followers have used deconstructive reading techniques to subvert both colonial and postcolonial ideologies, not only considering colonial and postcolonial dominations in the same generalized manner but also viewing all postcolonial situations from the same perspective, ignoring their local specificity. Borrowings from Marxism, on the other hand, does not offer a better alternative either; instead proceeds to invite a materialist resistance against neocolonialism in the form of a class struggle inside the postcolonial local ground ([see Loomba, 2015](#); [Sethi, 2011](#)) which once again acts as a boomerang to hit back the once-colonized. This paper also aims to include postcolonial materialist self-criticism as well to enhance the present discussion. This paper will bring attention to postcolonial self-criticism both in cultural and materialist forms. It will discuss how postcolonial literary criticism's idea of resistance to colonial/neocolonial hegemonic dominations unhealthily depends on both cultural and materialist borrowings from Europe as a result of which postcolonial criticism often tends to focus more on its indebtedness to Europe rather than on attempts to subvert European ideologies which became complicit in colonial domination. Moreover, with such borrowings, postcolonial criticism turns at the end to emphasize more on self-criticism than on the critique of western domination.

This present article is going to focus on a few areas where postcolonial borrowing finally leads to self-criticism. First, it will identify problems with postcolonial borrowings from European poststructural criticism with which



it attempts to deconstruct ideologies about hierarchical binary between the colonizer and the colonized, the victor and the victimized and attempts to acknowledge the native agency and the colonized people's active participation in the history. Then it will explore the problems in postcolonial borrowings of European postmodern politics, particularly its idea of local specificity and fragmentation versus hegemonic totalitarianism and idea of the recovery of history. Later, it will turn its attention to problems with postcolonial resistance as reflected in migrant literature. Finally, it will investigate into problems with appropriating Western Marxism in generating postcolonial resistance to colonial /neocolonial dominations. This article will explore in detail how all these postcolonial borrowings from Europe as well their critical receptions to some extent goes against the interest of the once-colonized producing a liberal self-criticism.

1.2 Literature Review: Good Borrowings, Bad Borrowings and Self-Subversion

Postcolonial criticism often tends to focus more on postcolonial borrowings from European colonialist ideologies or in other words, on its indebtedness to Europe rather than on attempts to subvert those ideologies. Many critics have drawn attention to postcolonial borrowings of poststructural deconstructive reading politics, some of whom appreciated such borrowings and explained their benefits (Morton, 2007) while the others denounce poststructuralism's textual limitations and the inappropriateness of its use in postcolonial materialist and radical politics where the culture and textual representations may appear as the only explanation for colonial and neocolonial problems as well as their solutions (Ahmad, 1995; Dirlik, 1997; Brennan, 2004). Some others have been critical of postcolonial writers' inappropriate borrowing and mishandling of European postmodern literary and aesthetic politics (Appiah, 1995; Lazarus, 2011) which reminds us of Bhabha's theory of mimicry. Postcolonial materialist critics have emphasized on postcolonial study's necessity of borrowings from Marxism. Both Aijaz Ahmad (1995) and Timothy Brennan (2004) locates postcolonial studies' origin in materialist Marxism and observe their later deviation in the field of postcolonial literary criticism under the influence of poststructural cultural criticism. Brennan further adds that European inter-war Marxism removes its political context and is transferred to postcolonialism in a poststructural "self-critical" form. As for the Marxist political context, non-western people's struggle for independence from colonialism is seen simultaneously both as a success and a failure. A success of European socialism and a failure of non-western people not being able to appropriate the teaching of Marxism to its full extent (which also reminds us of simultaneous success and failure story implicit in Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry which will be discussed in detail in methodology section). Marxist idea of liberation appears to expect much more than the liberation from colonialism wanted, as Ahmad (1995), J.C. Young (2001) and other critics usually argue. The present postcolonial nation states are generally seen as continuing colonial totalitarian hegemonic domination and are taken as evidences of the failure of their decolonial struggles. Most postcolonial discussions indicate that if there is any success in anti-colonial movement, the credit goes to the European colonial political leaders and/or European intellectual philosophers from whom the once-colonized people have supposedly borrowed their ideas of resistance and whom they have wanted to counter. On the other hand, despite so much borrowings from Europe, anti-colonial struggle is often ultimately regarded as a failure. Moreover, if there has been anything bad in colonial hegemony, its impact is supposed to have inevitably fallen on the anti-colonial leaders or postcolonial rulers. In both cultural and materialist criticisms, anti-colonial literature, discourse, or even the movement itself is regarded as just a production of some good and bad borrowings from Europe. The postcolonial present is also seen as continuing to witness the colonial legacy. While a lot of earlier critics have emphasized the theme of postcolonial writers and critics' borrowings from Europe, my paper will extend the existing research to bring attention to how such borrowings eventually become complicit in leading to producing a self-criticism in postcolonial literary theory and criticism. Many recent postcolonial writers and critics have continued to follow the tradition of borrowing from European literary and cultural techniques (postmodern literary style and poststructural cultural criticism) to acknowledge non-western failures, own political and cultural shortcomings or drawbacks, in other words, to use European styles for self-subversion. Most of them have attempted to regard colonial and anti-colonial/postcolonial ideologies in the same manner and put the same emphasis to subvert both of them (Sultana, 2023; Seck, 2023).

2. Methodology

The theme of Good and bad borrowings reminds us the simultaneous success and failure story implicit in major postcolonial theorist Homi Bhabha's theory of mimicry (1994) where the colonized subject or the mimic man



desires for colonial power and in the process, although ironically and unconsciously destabilizes its universalizing claim by producing caricatures of the image of the colonial master and colonial hegemonic language through his inappropriate use of colonial language, reflects an ultimate failure to imitate the colonial master and share his power in its fullness. Bhabha's theory of mimicry reflects simultaneously the desire and the failure of a not quite/ not white, the split subjectivity of the mimic man and his self-effacing attitudes. In their perpetuation of this hybrid subjectivity's predicaments regarding the desire for following the colonial standard and failure to achieve it in its fullness, the once-colonized nation and people may be seen as inescapably locked in colonial discourse as well as in a hierarchical "self-other" binary relation.

With Bhabha's theory of mimicry in mind, this article explores how postcolonial criticism seems to be locked perpetually in its desire for borrowings from Europe and yet, how all forms of postcolonial borrowings of western postmodern literary and poststructural cultural criticism as well as Western Marxist materialist criticism—all at the end remind us the failure of mimicry not only in the sense that the self-other binary nevertheless continues to stay, but also that they all are employed to turn postcolonial ideas of domination and resistance into a matter of self-criticism or a kind of self-effacement for the once-colonized in both liberal and radical forms. This paper will investigate into a few areas where postcolonial borrowing of European ideologies finally leads to self-criticism. For this purpose, this paper will use a number of books and journal articles written around and after 2000 until now on postcolonial criticism to explore the issues of postcolonial borrowings from European poststructural and postmodern cultural or literary ideas or ideologies (such as books or anthologies written or edited by Robert J. C. Young 2001; Elleke Boehmer, 2005, 2018; Ania Loomba, 2005, 2015; Leela Gandhi, 2019; C.L. Innes, 2007; John McLeod, 2007; Fawzia Afzal-Khan, and Kalpana Seshadri-Crooks, 2000 as well as Marxist materialist movements (*Key Thinkers from Critical Theory to Post-Marxism*, by Tormey, S. and Townshend, J.) and notice the development of postcolonial self-criticism (in essays particularly by Anthony Appiah, 1995, Neil Lazarus, 2011 and Timothy Brennan, 2004, and Elleke Boehmer, 2005. see the Reference section for details). This paper will also support its arguments by drawing evidences and analyses from major postcolonial critics such as, for the theory of mimicry, from Homi Bhabha (1994), and for other issues, from Edward Said (1978), Gayatri Spivak (1988), Aijaz Ahmad (1995), Anthony Appiah (1995) and others.

Timothy Brennan (2004) has already showed how poststructural politics is transferred to postcolonial literary criticism in a "self-critical" form by completely erasing its European inter-war political history. Anthony Appiah (1995) and Elleke Boehmer (2005, p-231) provide a list of a number of non-western writers with their literary works who adopt English or European language as well as postmodern literary style to express their discontent with their own nation states and 'the list is difficult to complete', as Appiah comments. This article will extend Brennan, Appiah and Boehmer's observation about postcolonial self-criticism to focus on some particular areas of poststructural, postmodern and Marxist politics from which postcolonial criticism borrow ideas only to express self-subversion in the name of showing resistance to colonial and neocolonial dominations.

3. Discussion

3.1 Borrowing European Poststructural Ideas: Recognizing Native Agency and Considering the Victor as Victim to Postcolonial Self-effacement

3.1.1 Recognizing Native Agency: Victim as Victor

Critics argue that if we always keep focusing on the past colonial violence and if we always view the colonizer as the oppressor in a structural way, then the relationship between the oppressor and the oppressed, the powerful and the powerless would rather be always unhealthily reminded or perpetuated, and the gap between the colonizer and the colonized would rather be intensified in the present and the future. If the colonizer is seen as perpetually powerful, the colonized is at risk of always being considered as the passive victim as a result of which the agency of the colonized may be denied, that very agency with which the colonized could stand against the colonial oppression. Moreover, in poststructuralism and postmodernism oriented postcolonialism culture or textual representation appears to be only explanation of colonial/neocolonial problems as well as their solutions, as I have already mentioned. Postcolonial criticism often attempts to get rid of the stigma of textuality, to acknowledge the agency of the colonized in the history and erase the gap between the colonizer and the colonized. One of the notable contributors to post-Marxism, Cornelius Castoriadis has already refuted previous Marxist ideas of passive victimization of the working class and introduced the idea of active participation of such dominated groups in the dominant system (Tormey and



Townshend, 2006). In postcolonial context, when the colonized people should no more be seen as passive victims, they are considered to be seen as active participants in the history. Yet, they are considered to have division within themselves between elite rulers/ elite anti-colonial leaders and common people. With reference to Spivak, Ania Loomba argues that powerful and powerless are not unitary categories (Loomba, 2005, p. 199) rather there are divisions within each of these categories. In Spivak's essay "Can the subaltern speak"? she argues that colonized natives themselves were divided by differences of gender, class, caste or other hierarchies (Loomba, 2005, p. 196). Such acknowledgement of difference within own culture in terms of pre-colonial existing hierarchies is problematic though as this may be served for the justification of colonialism. Spivak's defense of native cultural and gendered difference is based on the idea of oppression on women by local patriarchy and an almost rare and controversial caste practice such as "widow immolation" which already was served for colonial justification. While the common people are considered to have contributed to the anti-colonial struggle, they are seen as having been exploited by their elite nationalist leaders who supposedly used them to their personal or nationalist ends. Even when the anti-colonial struggle is considered positively as genuine struggle of the common people, it is often described in terms of militant activity and criminality (see Morton, 2007, p. 168; Sultana, 2023, p. 53). Local rulers are also reconsidered as having been oppressive to their own people and collaborative to colonial and neocolonial powers in the past and the present respectively (Sultana, p. 52-53). Only in these *liberal* poststructural ways the colonized is represented in postcolonial criticism as the active participant in the history, replacing their earlier passive victim status, and displacing the hierarchical binary between the colonizer and the colonized, the oppressor and the oppressed.

3.1.2 Victor as victimized

While postcolonial criticism is increasingly being concerned with controversial native agency in the history, it is showing more and more liberal attitudes to the active agency of the colonizer in the colonization. Too much one-sided focus on the past colonial violence may only intensify the gap between the colonizer and the colonized; and the once-colonized also may want to get over the colonial traumatic experience by taking instead a different approach to the colonizer and the colonized. Octave Mannoni's (1956) work *Prospero and Caliban: The Psychology of Colonialism* and George Orwell's short story "Shooting an Elephant" (1936) draw attention to the inescapable helplessness of the colonizer who himself is believed to be trapped within the colonial system of violence. However, it may be argued that seeing both the colonizer and the colonized in the same perspective as victimized by the colonial system may lead to the denial of the political responsibility on the part of the colonizer and the deliberate violent actions carried by him. In an attempt to challenge the conventional postcolonial wisdom and defend the Europeans from the charge of their stereotyping of the Orient (a view presented by Edward Said's work), as well as to acknowledge the colonized peoples' native agency and their participation in the history, German historian Jürgen Osterhammel (2018) argues that such stereotyping started with the development of imperialism in the later period in the nineteenth century. Osterhammel's accounts of the early historical representation of the East inform that "there was a 'balance of power between Asia and Europe' that was 'matched by an intellectual equilibrium'" (p. 27). Then in response to Osterhammel's view of "positive balance of trade" between Asia and Europe, his reviewer Prayag Ray (2019) comments: this seems a gross understatement of the genocide of ten million Bengalis by the East India Company during the largely manmade famine of 1769–70 alone (p. 3). Leela Gandhi (2019) also expresses the same concern: "This emphasis on the victimisation of the victor is not intended to elide the palpable suffering of those directly oppressed by colonialism" (p.138).

3.2 Influence of Postmodernism: Fragmentation and Specificity versus Totality in Postcolonial Self-criticism

3.2.1 Postcolonial Self-Subversion: Post-Independence Fragmentation Refutes Postcolonial "Totalitarian" Self-Rule

Under the enormous influence of postmodernism, postcolonial cultural and literary criticism present postmodern ideas of fragmentation, specificity, locality, historicity as counterpoises to the threats of colonial and neocolonial totalitarianism. There too, postcolonial struggle against totalitarianism prioritizes itself, by being a self-critic about the supposed nationalist/totalitarian attitudes involved in past anti-colonial struggles as well as postcolonial nation states' totalitarianism which appears as a pre-requisite for criticizing any totalitarian attitudes in colonial domination. Anti-colonial struggle often assessed as a failure considering post-independence disorientations



and more importantly because the working-class people never rose to power in the Marxist terms. Often issues of partition, disorientation and fragmentation initiated by the independence struggle gets the same or more priority over the issues of deportation and destruction caused by colonialism, slavery, and so on. Besides, under a broad generalization, all once-colonized nation states are assumed to be continuing the colonial systems of oppression such as colonial totalitarian nationalism. They are assumed to be oppressive on own minority people ignoring religious, ethnic, class and gender differences within own people. Moreover, whether anti-colonial struggle in one particular society should be considered as a failure or a success appears to depend on that society's most immediate improvements occurred soon after the period of its independence. The time remains static for thirty-forty years representing same postcolonial situations without progress.

3.2.2 Deconstruction of Nation, Nationalist Essentialisms and Postcolonial Self-Subversion

With an aim to resist postcolonial totalitarianism, postcolonial critics often argue for the need for the deconstruction of the concept of the nation and nationalist essentialisms (Chatterjee-1993, J. C. Young, 2001; C.L. Innes 2007). C. L. Innes considers that controversial writer Salman Rushdie's novel *Midnight's Children* should belong to the genre of national epic, (Innes, p. 132). She cites Rushdie to show how postcolonial literature reveals the fact about the construction of a nation through nationalist imagination and fabrication (while, according to this view, in reality, the postcolonial nation state appears to reproduce the colonial state in its same oppression on the same non-western people). Although Innes herself admits that Rushdie and Abdur Razzak Gunrah (another writer whom Innes refers to) do not show alternatives, but only tend to reveal problems and distortions (Innes, p. 165), she continues to draw on Chinua Achebe, Ngugi Wa Thingo, Ayi Kwei Armah, V. S. Naipaul and other writers in order to emphasize repeatedly the same point about the postcolonial nations or nation states as ideologically constructed. Borrowing Benedict Anderson's (2020) concept of imagined community (which shows how the non-western nationalist community is ideologically constructed following the European exploitation of nationalism) Rushdie, in his attempt to deconstruct the idea of nation, imagines that the incident of Amritsar massacre was "imagined" by the Indian nationalists for the purpose of justifying anti-colonial movement (C. L. Innes, p. 134) which makes us wonder to what extent the once-colonized people are the product of imagination and how much they are really themselves.

3.2.3 Postmodern politics of rewriting History and postcolonial self-subversion

Borrowing postmodern politics of rewriting history Innes also brings the female writers who would counter the male nationalist writers' knowledge of "his"tory with "her" story and reveal the difference between the glorified women in nationalist literature and real women in real life. She cites Spivak to argue that we must understand the anti-colonial nationalist essentialisms alongside those of colonialist ones (Innes, p.161). Ania Loomba has also argued that while certain positive aspects of anti-colonial history are always "remembered" for the purpose of the nationalist constructions or fabrications (through which India, Pakistan and Bangladesh achieved independence, as she mentions, see Loomba, 2005, p. 169) some incidences of violence committed by the indigenous people are always "forgotten". Loomba herself "remembers" one or two such incidences of violence committed by her own people from the whole Indian history of anti-colonial movement (Loomba, 2005, p. 169). Loomba warns about rewriting history by pointing out that non-Western cultural specificity was the specificity of polygamy, widow immolation and so on (Loomba, 2005, p. 182) and that maintaining them or undermining them became "central to colonial struggles, often tinting them with an extremely patriarchal hue".

3.2.4 Literary Postcolonialism, Comparative Literature and Postcolonial Self-criticism

In the literary critique of colonialism and postcolonialism the role of literature is given so much importance that it almost reduces the colonial, anti-colonial and postcolonial situations to purely literary affairs (such as the works by Elleke Boehmer, 2005 and C. L. Inne's, 2007). Borrowing European postmodern techniques such analyses often give more focus on the literary style rather than on the content. However, later critics have been more and more aware of connecting the content, the context or the materiality of the text with its cultural aspect of the style. Madhu Krishnan (2021, p. 1-3), the reviewer of Elleke Boehmer's book *Postcolonial Poetics: 21st Century Critical Readings* (2018) reveals Boehmer's carefully planned conflation of the cultural and material as she invites her readers to discover "real world" issues in the "poetics" of the text such as textual structures, poetic forms and features, the



reading of which would shape the response and reception of the readers as “postcolonial” in a creative and transformative way. Similar to her previous work written in 2005, instead of focusing directly on political contents, such criticism would study the cultural development of colonial and postcolonial situations. Following the footsteps of Stephanie Newell’s (2002) study of the literary culture of Ghana (as Boehmer herself mentions), she traces creative lineages in the deep structures of Nigerian text. Such literary criticism often gives more importance to literary representations than real colonial/neocolonial power operations. Moreover, postmodernism oriented postcolonial literary criticism appears to produce a liberal self-criticism regarding the representation of once-colonized people, anti-colonial nationalism, liberation movement, decolonization and present post-independence nation states. For instance, critics often focus on the modernist forms and techniques while dealing with colonial and postcolonial literary works ignoring largely their content which may reflect their biases about the depiction of non-western nations and nation states (see C. L. Innes, p. 120). Appiah (1995) shows how postcolonial writers turn postmodern in their writing styles while appearing post-nativist in their content. (also see Neil Lazarus, 2011).

In Boehmer’s earlier work *Colonial and Postcolonial Literature: Migrant Metaphors* (2005), anti-colonial or postcolonial literatures often are presented just as counter-misrepresentations of colonialist misrepresentations, both of which appeared to have important impacts on the real colonial, anti-colonial and postcolonial situations. Boehmer argues that if colonialist literary representations have showed one kind of radicalism, anti-colonial literatures exhibit just another kind of radicalism. A theme of borrowing dominates Boehmer’s discussion only to reveal at the end that despite so much borrowing of radical politics from Europe, the anti-colonial movement has turned into a failure as a result of which the distance between the East and the West has remained to stay. With an aim to avoid any kind of radicalism, Boehmer suggests to turn to a liberal cultural criticism in terms of a comparative analysis between the literatures of the East and the West that would also serve to bridge the gap between the two regions. In such an analysis, as Boehmer advocates, the postcolonial writer has to be more honest to depict the local realities of their post-independence nations. For instance, Boehmer has showed how postcolonial writers like Rushdie can borrow the Western idea of magic realism and use it honestly (!) to depict the reality of an India or an Africa that “has run out of food, medicine, liberation ideals and even officially sanctioned identities” (p. 236). Considering Boehmer’s view, such comparative analysis between the literatures of the East and the West is to be based on impossible comparison among Australian, Irish and Indian and African postcolonial situations and moreover, is to be drawn in negative terms—in terms of the similarity of radicalisms and misrepresentations. In such comparatives specific immigrant situations also may be generalized as postcolonial typical conditions. Besides, in a comparative study in which the west is repeatedly showed as dominant power and the non-western cultural specificity is described as the specificity of the “untouchables” or “outcasts” of different societies or “disorder” or strangeness (Boehmer, p. 241), in a comparative analysis where everything belongs to the Eastern is seen as produced as a result of mimicking or countering the West, where every Eastern literature or discourse or even political movement is already ironically second hand (Boehmer, p. 237-238), how much distance it can reduce between the East and the West, might raise a question.

3.2.5 Refuting Borrowing and Recognizing Local Specificity in Postcolonial Self-criticism

Ania Loomba’s *Colonialism/ Postcolonialism* (first edition, 1998) which is published three years later after Boehmer’s book (first edition, 1995) is almost a complementary work of the Boehmer’s work except that the earlier one is mostly about the relation between the two literatures, colonial and anti-colonial/ postcolonial literatures, the other is about the relation between these two political dominations. Although in both Boehmer and Loomba’s works, anti-colonial literature, discourse or the movement itself is mostly seen as just a product of some good and bad borrowing from Europe, Loomba has also attempted to show how some of the critics have offered alternative views to draw on local specificity. Loomba points out that when Benedict Anderson (2020) shows how anti-colonial nationalism was shaped and made possible by borrowing ideas from Europe through the dissemination of European languages all over the world, Chatterjee (1993) refutes this assertion to argue that Indian anti-colonial nationalism both borrowed from Europe and showed its own Indian specificity, as for India, nationalism was not only a political movement but also a cultural construct. Chatterjee focuses on the centrality of culture and of women in the construction of nationalist discourse (Chatterjee; Loomba, 2015, p. 188-189). Loomba cites Chatterjee (1993), Jayawardena (1986) and Sarkar (2001) to argue that just as colonialist rulers exploited the issue of the reformation of indigenous women in order to justify colonial rule, anti-colonial nationalist leaders also wanted to justify anti-



colonial movement in the name of protecting own women and thereby own tradition from the colonial process of deculturation (Loomba, 2015, p. 188). Thus, in their analysis, anti-colonial movement is reduced to merely a cultural conflict or a gender struggle as they see women as a site of cultural struggle between colonial and anti-colonial patriarchy. Yet, it can be argued that in reality, colonial rulers did not only want to modernize or educate women but also wanted to civilize or convert the men too. There is no base in such assumption or assertion that these protests at the process of deculturation only came from men, not from women too. Again, besides these cultural or gender issues, there were also larger racial, economic, political and other issues which jointly worked for anti-colonial movements. To view one cause in separation from the others only may produce a myopic view of anti-colonial struggle. Even if critics treat both colonial domination and anti-colonial resistance from cultural perspectives, they are aware of colonial political materiality as well. In refuting Boehmer's argument that there is still a gap between the East and the West (which gap Boehmer aims to reduce by inviting a cultural criticism and comparative analysis between the two literatures), Loomba proceeds to reduce the gap by drawing parallels between colonial and postcolonial political hegemonies with reference to the specific case of Indian postcolonial nation state. The idea of Indian specificity once again ironically depends on borrowings from Europe and more importantly, produces a self-criticism.

3.3 Borrowing European Materialist or Marxist Criticism to Postcolonial Self-subversion

3.3.1 Marxist struggles as postcolonial resistance

While in recent years a need for combining the materialist criticism with the cultural one is increasingly being felt, many recent critics (such as Larsen, 2000; Bernard *et al.* 2016; Bhattacharya, 2017, Bhagat-Kennedy, 2018; Watson and Wilder, 2018; Niazi, 2021; Seck, 2023) like Aijaz Ahmad (1992) (who criticizes the politics of literary and textual postcolonialism), have chosen to keep their materialist criticism limited to Marxism. Despite living in a post-Marxist time, some of them still hold the classical Marxist view of a class struggle and still cherish the hope for winning the battle against capitalism via class struggle. Some others attempt to link class struggle with other struggle-based politics. Some of them wish to extend the scope of the Marxist politics by including ecocriticism and environmental issues. Some of them have also argued to include the Middle East to postcolonial Marxist criticism although it has never been colonized and more importantly, whether Islamic issues can ever be treated and interpreted in Marxist terms might arouse doubt. While the Marxists acknowledge the native agency and the once-colonized peoples' active participation in the history of decolonial struggle against colonialism, most of the critics unanimously argue that decolonization has been a failure (Aijaz, 1995; Boehmer, 2005, p. 231; Watson and Wilder, 2018, p. 1; Sethi 2011, p. 111; Fadakinte, 2020. P. 144; Smith and Jeppesen, 2017, p. 3). The evidence of the failure of anti-colonial struggle is drawn through a significant analogy made between colonial violence and postcolonial violence. Though the past anti-colonial movement is assumed to be a failure (as in Young's (2001) view, perhaps because the indigenous people failed to appropriate the European knowledge of Marxism properly during that time), now a revision of Marxism can lead to a fruitful postcolonial future, (as Young argues). Young's reading of Fanon, Gandhi and Nandy shows that the political, cultural, and psychological—all kinds of resistance have been borrowed from Europe and hence there should be no idealization about the postcolonial nation. Young here suggests to combine the radical political responses with the cultural awareness and casts his supports for Chatterjee's idea about the deconstruction of the concept of nation (Young, 2001, p. 345) and Asish Nandy's resolution about the need for accepting the reality of plurality and hybridity in the recent world (Young, p. 345).

3.3.2 class struggle as postcolonial resistance from local ground

Like Young, some other critics who aim to purge the world from neocolonial ills argue for the need for generating Marxist resistance from the very local ground of the postcolonial nation states (Loomba, 2015; Rumina Sethi 2011). It is interesting to note that while in recent postcolonial criticism, on the one hand, there can be seen a fetishization of post-identitarian politics, and post-structuralist suggestion of a deconstruction of nation, on the other hand, the national or local ground is deemed as the most important place for generating resistance to neo-colonial oppression from the micro-level.



3.3.3 Gender struggle as postcolonial resistance

It seems that just as the issue of class gets so much undue attention in postcolonial studies, so does the issue of gender. The works of postcolonial feminists sometimes appear to prioritize gender so much over other issues that it reveals in fact an objectification of gender. The critics of gynocriticism find the same fault with it (gynocriticism) as it exclusively deals with female experience and ignore a woman's other concerns—racial, political, religious, social, and economic and so on. While there may be some truth in certain amount of victimization or exploitation of women in the process of colonialism, neo-colonialism or neo-imperialism—it is not of course, the cause of women that matters most in such processes, —not their victimization, nor their protection, nor their reformation nor development. Similarly, in case of decolonization, it was not all about safeguarding own native women from the exploitation of them by colonial rules. In fact, women have never been seen in isolation; women themselves fought along with men (who were also victims of colonial process). Moreover, in case of post-independence state, when a new nation is struggling to develop itself, both men and women have often suffered. Besides, we should not forget about the presence of successful women rulers, women politicians or women nationalists in such states (as [Hanifa Deen, 2006](#), [Taj Hashmi, 2000](#) argue with reference to the postcolonial nation state Bangladesh). While there is a necessity to resist the patriarchal ideologies, too much focus on cultural or literary representations of women or gender symbolism makes us forget who the real women are. This is also another question posed by the critics of gynocriticism.

4. Conclusion

The idea of an analogy between the western colonial/imperial power and the non-western post-independence local power in terms of class or gender issues make us forget the larger issues and greater differences between the two powers. Discrimination by class or gender is a very old problem dating perhaps back to the ancient periods, a problem that has never completely been resolved anywhere in the world—neither in the East nor in the West. It would be wrong to assume that after independence, postcolonial nation states, unlike other places would suddenly turn into egalitarian and class or gender-neutral utopias. The works of Aijaz Ahmad, Arif Dirlik J.C.Young, Ania Loomba and their positive receptions may give us the idea that it is the working class who matters most. When the culturalists put overemphasis on literary and linguistic formulations of postcolonial criticism, it often appears that it is the elite immigrant who needs more focus (as supported by works of Homi Bhabha and Boehmer's work on migrant literatures). Postcolonial feminists like Spivak complain so much for the exclusion of native women in male-oriented discourses as well as mainstream Western feminist discourses that it appears that it is the women who deserve most attention. It is noteworthy that they all make a necessary distinction between the postcolonial nation state and its people when the unity of them should deserve more attention for resistance against hegemonic dominations.

After so much-repeated emphasis on the importance of cultural difference, critics sometimes homogenize the idea of the non-western nation states when they try to subvert its supposed hegemonic power. I have showed how Spivak and Boehmer's idea of Eastern cultural specificity is described in negative terms. and Chatterjee's notion of "Indian specificity" which both borrowed and countered the theory of Benedict Anderson is portrayed in terms of an ideological construct. When Loomba attempts to counter Boehmer's view that there is still a distance between the West and the East, Loomba tries to draw analogies between the Western and Eastern hegemonic dominations. While Boehmer in her book title keep colonial and postcolonial separate by putting an "and" between them (Colonial and Postcolonial Literatures), Loomba in her book title reduces the gap between them by putting a slash between them (Colonialism/Postcolonialism) to indicate that they are the same in terms of hegemonic dominations. Marxist radical materialist criticism often tries to reclaim native agency by suggesting class struggle or other minority people's struggle against neocolonialism from the postcolonial local ground only to turn their struggle against themselves.

Further research can be done on exploring ways on how to avoid postcolonial self-subversion and move out from the static circularity of the age-old West-non-West hierarchical ideological binary relations which may be drawn again for the justification of western colonial and neocolonial dominations. If there is fear that the glorification of the non-west identity, literature or culture may be seen with suspect and termed necessarily with nativism, then postcolonial criticism should deal with ways how to create awareness about decolonizing them. As a result of postcolonial mimicry and self-subversion, the non-western nation state is seen as frequently divided on class and gender issues when the west-oriented ideologies of nation versus working class and nation versus women visit there,



when unity between the people and the government could be also considered as significant in the context of postcolonial resistance. To see issues of Western Marxism or Western feminism as always postcolonial issues and borrowing solutions for Eastern problems from them may seem ridiculous. Only a small minority of Marxists or feminists attempt to overemphasize class and gender issues respectively, and in the process, separate them from other issues.

Although I have based this research on the idea of proliferation of cases of mimicry and self-subversion in postcolonial criticism, it should not be taken for granted that everything related to non-western is "borrowed" and "already second hand", as Boehmer tried to argue, as I have earlier mentioned. The fact is that the non-western authenticity is not focused with same emphasis because of their writing in native languages or their dependence on the west for good publication. Although Bhabha's theory of mimicry implies a sense of helplessness, its warning about possible bad impacts of the good borrowings from the west has had significantly positive influence upon the once-colonized people who since then have attempted to decolonize their local institutions (such as local classrooms) to assert native agency. Recently a lot of research works have been undertaken and publications produced to this end. My present article also can contribute to this cause and direct to think about the possibility of postcolonial self-assertion.

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