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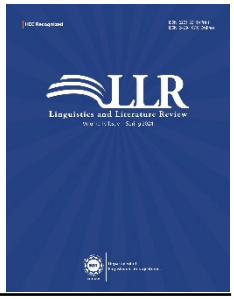

Title:	**Ambivalent Temporalities of Nation-Space: A Study of Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things***
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Ambivalent Temporalities of Nation-Space: A Study of Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

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Abstract

Following Bhabha's (1990a) theorization on the ambivalent temporalities of nation-space, this research seeks to analyze how the mutual tension between the pedagogical and the performative temporalities of nationalist representation plays out in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000). This article explores how the nation-space narrated by Roy and Hamid is marked by a tussle between the pedagogical and the performative on the lines Bhabha describes it in his seminal essay, 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation'(1990a). The novels display how the narration of the nation engages in a 'double movement' through a harking back to the past while simultaneously being progressive and forward-looking. These double movements cause ambivalent temporalities and produce a disruptive anterior where a deterministic past/history comes head-to-head with the daily performative of the people. The invasive presence of the past quashes the emancipatory maneuvers of the characters who try to chart a performative of their own in contravention of the traditions. In both the novels, the pedagogical pitted against the performative enforces its impersonal and transhistorical outreach by trying to quash what it sees as the unauthorized performative of the people. The nation-space, therefore, remains ambivalent and split between the myths of the past and the realities of the present.

***Keywords*:** nation-space, nationalist representations, the pedagogic, the performative, ambivalent temporalities, disruptive anterior

Introduction

Nation's nostalgia for its past has been the key element of its psychological and ideological configuration. Nations endeavor for invented continuities by putting forward a dynamic yet unhindered, unbroken, and linear stream

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of history. Renan (2018) maintains that upholding a glorious past becomes an essential ingredient in the formation of a national consciousness that prospers on the twin principles of memory and desire. He proposes that the nation's identity formations employ a heroic past as the "social capital" (p. 307) and spring from its subjects' mutually complimentary feelings of "having done great things together (memory) and wishing to do more (desire)" (p. 301). This spiritual collective consciousness creates a mythic memory that profoundly impacts the national subjects. Brennan views maneuver as an attempt to lend "permanence and solidity to a transient political form of the nation" (Brennan, 1990, p. 47). Francis Mulhern (1990) also views the process of selective memory and forgetting as a defense mechanism against "the threat of heterogeneity, discontinuity, and contradiction" (p. 253). According to Renan (2018), nation's forging of the past operates by selecting certain "suitable" strands from a diverse and heterogeneous corpus of history, myth and legend. Invented traditions with little or no historical antecedents are used "to establish continuity with a suitable historical past" (Hobsbawm & Ranger, 1983, p. 3). Flags, festivals, days, monuments, rituals, and cultural artifacts are imbued with psychological, spiritual, and liturgical significance. Thus, a correspondence between the public sphere of history, politics, and ideology and the private spheres of subjectivity and psychology is sought.

These maneuvers of nation's master narratives have been employed as a recuperative mechanism by the postcolonial intellectuals to recover a pristine past unsoiled by colonization. The reinterpretation of history as a golden age has been sought through a revival of native forms of art like elegiac poetry and an appropriation of "Western genres of the novel, sonnet, and short story to articulate their own perceptions of cultural space and experience" (Boehmer, 2005, p. 96). However, this attempt to superimpose a sense of linearity and linkedness has garnered a cautious response from critics like Appiah and Gayatri Spivak. Gandhi opined. "It is good to swim in the waters of tradition, but to sink in them is suicide" (Gandhi & Shah, 1992, p. 325). These critics do acknowledge tradition's myriad potentials and yet contend that the past is not something that substantial and stable "which is waiting to be found, and which when found, will secure our sense of ourselves into eternity" (Hall, 1990, p. 225). He believes that identity formation is a process of "becoming" rather than simply harking back to "being" (p. 225). Spivak, too, believes that "the romanticizing of once-colonized societies as distant cultures, exploited but with rich intact

heritages waiting to be recovered" (Loomba, 1998, p. 21) is essentially a colonial project designed to divert attention from imperialism. Further, this situation engenders a temporal paradox. A simultaneous longing for the past and a desire to modernize makes nationalism "Janus-faced, paradoxical in its cultural, temporal modernity (Lazarus, 1999, p. 183). In his *The Nation and its Fragments,* Partha Chatterjee (1993) dubs Indian nationalism as Janus-faced, which he says has an 'inner space' of culture, tradition, religion, and spirituality and an 'outer space' of west-oriented secular democratic modernity (p. 6). However, the most endurable intervention to the debate on nation's temporal paradoxes has been made by Homi K Bhabha (1990a).

Bhabha's (1990a) reading of nation's temporalities reveals that the nation space is always split between a linear narration of nation's past and a horizontal and dynamic performative of its people. The inherent contradictions between these mutually antagonistic forces make a nation a paradoxical construction. The pedagogic aspect seeks to find fixed and stable identities while the performative disrupts it through a fluid, ever-evolving performative of daily actions. Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) and Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) embody Bhabha's notion of tension between competing temporalities of nation space. Both novels have been extensively analyzed for their portrayal of postcolonial identities, their commitment to the subaltern and the marginalized, and their depiction of the intersections of global capitalism and the postcolonial condition. However, these novels' conceptual alignment with Bhabha's (1990a) notion of ambivalent temporalities still needs to be examined. Their complex temporal framework, which has a profound bearing on the disjointed identity formations of their characters, has not been fully addressed.

Both the novels use an interlacing of the personal and collective to show a tussle between competing temporalities, which unsettles a linear progression of national past and present and subverts the homogeneous and hegemonic national representations. This research employs Bhabha's (1990a) theorization on the ambivalent temporalities of nation-space to asses how Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) and Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) manifest the mutual tension between the pedagogical and the performative temporalities of nationalist representation. This article explores how the nation-space narrated by Roy

and Hamid is marked by a tussle between the pedagogical and the performative, which fosters a 'double movement' through a harking back to the past while simultaneously being progressive and forward-looking. The research also investigates how these double movements cause ambivalent temporalities and produce a disruptive anterior where a deterministic past/history collides with the daily performative of the people.

Bhabha's Notion of the Contesting Temporalities of the Pedagogical and the Performative

In his essay, 'DissemiNation: Time, narrative and the margins of the modern nation,'Bhabha (1990a) contributed to this debate by problematizing the nation's conviction in its temporal homogeneity and simultaneity, which Benedict Anderson describes as a "homogeneous, empty time of nation" (p. 24), a term he borrowed from Walter Benjamin. In *Imagined Communities*, Anderson (1991) views nation as a "solid sociological organism" implanted in a linear movement progression in calendrical time. Bhabha (1990a) assails this notion of a singular, stable, and homogenous temporality, as he thinks that "the space of the modern nation people is never simply horizontal" (p. 293). Mover, Bhabha, (1990b) argues that "the cultural temporality of the nation inscribes a much more transitional social reality" (p. 1).

Bhabha views nation's space as hybrid and liminal owing to ambivalence arising out of nation's engagement in a double- time which comprises antithetical processes of "historical sedimentation" on the one hand and "the signifying process of cultural identification" (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 304) on the other. Bhabha (1990a) elucidates how nation's cultural territory is split into double-time that places its people into two contesting temporalities which require them to function in two different paradigms. In one paradigm, "the people are the historical 'objects' of a nationalist pedagogy, giving the discourse an authority based on the pre-given or constituted historical origin in the past" (p. 297). According to Bhabha (1990a), the pedagogical temporality of nationalist representations is "continust and accumulative" (p. 297). He explains the pedagogical as a "langue" that houses the sum-total of the authorized, unchanging, dominatory, absolutist, and "pregiven cultural core nations return to in forming themselves" (Roy, 2006, p. 60). The pedagogical requires the people to act as objects or recipients of nation's so-called cultural and historical baggage.

However, in the performative paradigm, the people are caught in a different type of temporality, which requires them to be performers or participants in nation's everyday time and "demonstrate the prodigious, living principle of the people as that continual process by which the national life is redeemed and signified as a repeating and reproductive process" (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 297). He asserts that the people of the nation, in this capacity, assume the status of subjects actively engaged in the "process of signification through repetitious, recursive strategy of the performative" (p. 297). The ordinary bits and fragments of their daily lives assume a cultural significance because of their occurrence and recurrence frequency. Their "complex strategies of cultural identification," like "social and literary narratives," reproduce the nation and outbalance the authority and domination of the pedagogical. These self-conscious performative acts "displace the historicism" (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 292) of the pedagogical.

Michael Huddart (2006) explains pedagogical as "total sociological facts" which performative "subtly altered every day" (p. 121). This dialectic between two contending temporalities brings to bear a "chiasmatic intersection" and "disjunctive time" (Bhabha, 1990a, pp. 293-294). The pedagogical or historicist narrative claims ascendency for being singular, correct, solid, linear, and a guarantor of stable and holistic identity. However, as Bhabha (1990a) puts it, "pedagogical knowledge and continuist national narratives miss the 'zone of occult instability where the people dwell' (Fanon's phrase)" (p. 303). Emanating from these zones, the performative contests and challenges these narratives through a transient, dynamic, and open-ended reimaging of national space.

This disjunctive double-time thwarts the pedagogical project of solidity and linearity as "certainties and anxieties…always go together" (Huddart, 2006, p. 108). These anxieties culminate in dispersing the "homogeneous, visual time of the horizontal society" (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 293). Given the diverse and contradictory nature of the cultural significations and the co-existence of multiple performers, it is strenuous to imagine and narrate nation as a single entity or totality. The situation grows more labyrinthine for a postcolonial third-world nation that is forced to contend with a "dialectic of various temporalities — modern, colonial, postcolonial, 'native'" (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 303).

Bhabha (1990a) illustrates that the historicist narrative of nation is self-generative but is always prone to being stymied by the performative. In

comparison, the performative can generate innumerable narratives that enjoy a remarkable edge over the pedagogical as they bring to bear their ability to invent and reinvent themselves. They are always in a flux where they can rewrite their previous version with great felicity and without any danger of self-repudiation. Huddart explains them as "palimpsests" which "offer a suggestive model of hybrid identity" (Huddart, 2006, p. 107). The displacement of the all-encompassing historicist narrative by the performative narratives repudiates the romanticized myths about the organic past. It problematizes the invented, essentialist, and totalizing nature of celebrated national memories/past/history. Bhabha (1990a) celebrates the horizontal "people's history" as a "practice that destroys the constant principles of the national culture that attempt to hark back to a 'true' national past . . ." (p. 303).

Roy's *The God of Small Things* and the Hammer Headed Shark

Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* (1997) showcases a profound cognizance of the ambivalent temporalities enunciated in Homi K. Bhabha's theories. Her fiction and essays devote substantial space to examining the temporal paradoxes inherent in nation-time. Her 2002 essay, "The Ladies Have Feelings, so, Shall We Leave to Experts," furnishes the image of a hammer-headed shark to crystalize a "schizophrenic" oscillation between past and present in this passage of lush, poetic prose:

> India lives in several centuries at the same time. Somehow, we manage to progress and regress simultaneously. As a nation, we age by pushing outwards from the middle—adding a few centuries on to either end of our extraordinary CV. We greaten like the maturing head of a hammer-headed shark with eyes looking in diametrically opposite directions. (Roy, 2002, p. 205)

Roy replaces Bhabha and Paratha Chatterjee's Janus with a more sinister-looking hammer-headed shark, employing her acumen at transforming dry theoretical concepts into vividly graphic images. In addition, the passage echoes Bhabha's other notions on spatial and temporal paradoxes of nationalist representations. The nation-space, she delineates, is visited by several temporalities mentioned by Bhabha. She also unravels how the historicist master narrative of nation fattens itself by subsisting on the invented tradition. Nation, she hints, selectively invents and adds

centuries to its CV, which acts as her handy substitute for the pedagogical dimension.

The God of Small Things (1997) is a fictional expansion of the image of the two eyes of a hammer-headed shark. It depicts how the pedagogical, the eye turned backwards, has the edge over the performative, the forward-looking eye. *The God of Small Things* (1997) is mainly narrated from the perspective of the dizygotic twins, Estha and Rahel, whose lives are forever ruptured by the "Love Laws" that lay down "who should be loved, and how. And how much" (Roy, 1997, p. 15). Their lives are, forever, traumatized by a sequence of gruesome events which create "A History-hole. A History-shaped Hole in the Universe through which, at twilight, dense clouds of silent bats billowed like factory smoke and drifted into the night" (Roy, 1997, p. 138). The whole narrative seems to drip from the History hole drop by drop. The story, set in the Ayemenem, is narrated through a complex temporal scheme that keeps shifting back and forth between 1969 and 1993. Ammu Ipe, the mother of twins, is the daughter of ill-tempered sadistic Imperial entomologist Pappachi and his long-suffering unpleasant wife, Mammachi. She is denied higher education and is subjected to an abusive temper by her father. To escape domestic violence and avoid returning home, she marries a Hindu boy in Calcutta and moves to a tea estate where her husband works. Her marriage turns out to be a fiasco as her husband is found to be an alcoholic who forces her to give sexual favours to his boss for job security. Left with no choice, she returns with her twins to Ayemenem House, now inhabited by Mammachi, her son Chacko, and Pappachi's sister, Baby Kochamma.

Back in Ayemenem, Ammu and her children develop a bond with Velutha, an untouchable Dalit endowed with exceptional artistic skills. Looked down upon as a pariah by almost everybody, he becomes the focus of Ammu's love and longing. She comes to "love by night the man her children love by day" (Roy, 1997, p. 20). However, the reckoning for the star-crossed inter-caste lovers arrives too soon. Ironically, it is Velutha's father who reports this sexual liaison to Mammachi, whose initial fury is fueled by Baby Kochamama, who resolves to exact vengeance on Velutha for a personal grievance. Ammu is barred from leaving her room and Velutha is summoned, abused, and kicked out. Ammu's Twins escape to the abandoned dwelling called History House after their boat capsizes and their English cousin Mol drowns on the way.

At the Kottayam Police station, Baby Kochamma accuses Velutha of attempted rape, abduction of twins and murder of Sophie Mol. Inspector Thomas Mathew, with "his Air India moustache", worries "about his touchable wife, two Touchable daughters–whole Touchable generations [are] waiting in their Touchable wombs" (Roy, 1997, p. 119) and springs into action. Kochamma fuels his fury by describing the "brassy insolence" in Velutha's voice and his lack of remorse" (Roy, 1997, p. 119). Hounded by the policemen, Velutha hides in the 'History House'. The twins are already there. In the morning, they wake up to the sounds of thuds and kicks meted out to Velutha by the posse of 'touchable' policemen. They are surprised at "the absence of caprice in what the policemen did. The abyss where anger should have been. The sober, steady brutality, the economy of it all" (Roy, 1997, p. 139). The twins are forced to witness something they would be burdened to carry for the rest of their lives: "In the back verandah of the History House, as the man they loved was smashed and broken… (Roy, 1997, p. 139). In the aftermath of Velutha's brutal extrajudicial murder, Ammu is banished from home and dies friendless. Rahel and Estha experience a traumatic childhood with devastating consequences.

It can be argued that Ammu, Velutha and the twins, owing to their liminality, traverse the "occult zone of instabilitity" marked by the tension between their performative and the pedagogical. The transgressive, liberatory and repetitious nature of Ammu and Velutha's performative is an act of self-definition against dictates of tradition, which puts them on a collision course with the oppressive, homogenizing, unchanging and predetermined inflexibility of the pedagogical. Their inter-caste taboo-breaking love affair culminating in sexual liaison seeks a subversive reimaging of the space, which is rigidly regulated by the History-driven pedagogical. Their performativity "generates a non-identical excess over and above what we thought they were" (Huddart, 2006, p. 109) and displaces the pedagogical memory and hegemonic historiography through their refusal to be interpellated.

Roy employs poetic prose to meticulously document the transcendental moment when Ammu and Velutha catch each other's eyes and exchange telepathic wows of love to see "Things that had been out of bounds so far, obscured by History's blinkers" (Roy, 1997, p. 176). For Roy, this moment straddles all moments of resistance scattered in history. It is a textbook moment from Bhabha's visions, and Roy paints it as a cataclysmic act of

erasure and displacement of the historicist narrative. This moment pierces a chink in the thick armour of history: "Madness slunk in through a chink in History. It only took a moment. ...Centuries telescoped into one evanescent moment. History was wrong-footed, caught off guard. Sloughed off like an old snakeskin" (Roy, 1997, p. 176).

The God of Small Things (1997) hails this short-lived triumph of the performative over the pedagogic as a victory of nature/biology over civilization. It is noteworthy that civilization is another portmanteau term the narrative of nation employs to connote the accumulative and unbroken "langue" of the hierarchies and their almost unbreakable hold. The novel employs eroticism to suggest the radical act of overwriting and reimaging of these pedagogical texts. Ammu's intense yearning for Velutha is transformative and all-consuming: "Ammu longed for him. Ached for him with the whole of her biology…Biology designed the dance…. her body existed only where he touched her. The rest of her was smoke" (Roy, 1997, pp. 148-150). It obliterates all the lessons of the pedagogical, and places the lovers in a state of unsullied purity.

These events trigger backlash from the forces of History as the pedagogical swiftly moves in, stepping out of its celebrated role of a guide and enforcer into a force that annihilates. To use Bhabha's jargon, the pedagogical moves beyond teaching and guiding and rolls out an apparatus for "subordination, fracturing, [and] diffusing" (Bhabha, 1990b, p. 3). "History's fiends return" (Roy, 1997, p. 81) to claim the lost territory and drag the rebellious performers back into its folds. Impelled by the "subliminal urge to destroy what … [they can] neither subdue nor deify" (p. 139), "History's twisted chickens come home to roost" (p. 283). Hounded by the "History's henchmen," (p. 139) Velutha has nowhere to run. He flees to the History House for his "blind date with History" (p. 128). "History walks [him like] the dog" (p. 130) and on the morning of that fatal day, "the History reveal[s] itself to … [Velutha and Twins] in the back verandah of the House" and makes them feel "History's smell" (p. 24). Arundhati Roy paints the policemen as only history's henchmen who are incarnations of "civilization's fear of nature, men's fear of women, power's fear of powerlessness (p. 139). In Velutha's decimation, History appears "in live performance" (p. 293) with a "clinical demonstration … [in] pursuit of ascendancy. Structure. Order. Complete monopoly" (Roy, 1997, p. 139).

Velutha dies of torture in the police cell abandoned by friends and foes who join hands with "History's waiting glove" (p. 128).

In doing so, Roy presents history as a totalizing, overwhelming and over-arching dispensation which subsumes all subsidiary narratives like patriarchy, traditionalism, racism, casteism, religion and, in this case, the local brand of communism too. The pedagogical appears personified as history (with capital H), which becomes deterministic, intrusive and interventionist. As Needham (2005) puts it, it is "a dominating, oppressive force that saturates virtually all social and cultural space, including familial, intimate, and affective relationships" (p. 373). It moves swiftly to rigidify its 'continuous' and 'accumulative' domination, and its annihilation of Velutha is achieved through a complex nexus of almost everybody who wields control in any sphere of life. History, thus, becomes an umbrella term for all domineering hegemonic narratives.

The History in *The God of Small Things* (1997) appears as a transhistorical and impersonal force with indifferent clinical precision; its 'henchmen' cherished no illusion of kinship or affinity about him. The text does not furnish any names and idiosyncrasies of the policemen. Their individuality is lost, and their actions become impersonally pedagogical. They are "an era imprinting itself on those who lived it" (Roy, 1997, p. 292), and their only task is "inoculating a community against an outbreak" (Roy, 1997, p. 292) and, by extension, preserving, for all ages, the ascendancy and absolutist domination of the 'Love Laws'. Roy imbues transhistorical character to the discursive and physical forces of History operating against Velutha by implying an unbroken ascendency of pedagogical over the performative. This ascendency spans over a long succession of temporalities is catalogued herein: "Equally, it could be argued that it actually began thousands of years ago. Long before the Marxists came. Before the British took Malabar, before the Dutch Ascendency before Vasco da Gama arrived, before the Zamorin's conquest of Calicut" (Roy, 1997, p. 14). This rigidified and deterministic pedagogical appears to have been devouring several performative temporalities on its way down. Thus, the religio-cultural historicism originating in ancient texts has always held an ever-lasting dominion.

Besides personifying History as the primal mover and shaker, Roy imagines it as a physical space. The whole performative of the nation's everyday time has been portrayed as trapped in History, like the sparrow

who dies in the now-grounded Plymouth of Pappachi and who "never found her way out" (Roy, 1997, p. 133) after sneaking in. Sparrow is a metaphor for the characters of *The God of Small Things* (1997) trapped in the prison of the history house. The incomprehensible ancestral whispers that are "looming in the Heart of Darkness" hint at the deterministic nature of History. They are like "Hansel and Gretel in a ghastly fairy tale in which their dreams would be captured and re-dreamed" (Roy, 1997, p. 133) by the overwhelming force of History. Thus, the "History House", an enormous, abandoned estate pivotal to the novel's narrative, can be read as a metaphor for Bhabha's ambivalent temporalities of the nation.

Serval temporalities ranging from ancient pre-colonial to colonial, modern and native are present in the events that take place in "History House". Its Gothic setting is reminiscent of the British Raj and still "doctor(s) the dreams" (Roy, 1997, p. 24). However, what transpires to Velutha in its back verandah is more ancient and transgressive. It witnesses the unavoidable showdown between two contending temporalities. It is a place where the "disruptive anterior" of the pedagogical has its "chiasmatic intersection" with the present. The collision of the ancient and the modern temporality in this physical space highlights a total dispersal of the project of the homogenous and horizonal time of nation.

The God of Small Things (1997) also reads like a riposte to the historicism of the nation. Laura Chrisman (2004) says, "Nationalism's imagined community stretches back to antiquity where the nation's identity and credibility depend on the assertion of unbroken cultural tradition" (p. 186). The nativist project in India tries to hark back to the myth from the 'Vedic past' and 'ancient India.' The scholarship about ancient India digs up an imagined community from religious and historical texts that describe "ancient India as a golden age of great prosperity, cultural vitality, civilization, spirituality, in which women had high status" (Puri, 2008, p. 100). Its prime example is Jawaharlal Nehru's *Discovery of India* (2004), which connects India to an organic past of Indus Valley civilization and maps the historical progression of India in a linear and continuist fashion, as is the practice in a typical pedagogic narrative of the nation. His description of Indus Valley civilization surprisingly resembles his vision of modern, socialist, secular and multicultural India. He says, "Unlike the other civilizations of the ancient world, the Indus Valley is shown to have privileged the common man over the elite" (p. 71). Contrary to these

pedagogical texts, *The God of Small Things* (1997), appears to be shorn of any such illusion about the vitality of the past. It revisits history to paint an altogether contradictory picture. It resonates with Hope Jennings's (2010) assertion that "postcolonial nationalist narrative" operates in oblivions to its history of dispossession" (p. 183) and unevenness to their push agenda of retrieving a "suitable", invented pre-colonial origin to serve the pedagogical of the nationalist representation.

Hamid's Moth and the Myth

Mohsin Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) enacts how the tussle between pedagogical and the performative plays out in a postcolonial nation space. The narrative plan of *Moth Smoke* (2000) alludes to the susceptibility of nation to exclusivism and elitism and illustrates how a deterministic past intrudes upon a pluralistic and progressive performative of the present. *Moth Smoke* echoes Bhabha's concerns about a disruptive anterior, a distracting presence of the past, and a disjunctive ambivalent temporality. The novel foregrounds the fact that the baggage of history threatens to meddle with the forward march of the daily performative of people. Furthermore, it delineates how this tension debunks the myth of the past as a golden age.

The mytho-allegrical structure of *Moth Smoke* (2000) mirrors and captures several dimensions of ambivalent temporalities of the nation-space. Mohsin Hamid employs a quasi-allegorical narrative structure in *Moth Smoke* (2000). The events and characters of novel's two historically distinct narrative plans share an approximate correspondence. The novel features a prologue and an epilogue from the history of Mughal rule in India. The unnumbered pages of prologue and epilogue bracket the main plotline featuring the contemporary Pakistan of 1998. It fuses the Mughal allegory with the national allegory. The prologue features a snippet from Mughal history about how Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan once consulted a Sufi soothsayer about the future of his succession and empire. The Saint predicted the future of his sons in cryptic responses that the legend has preserved for us. The Emperor flinched, and his "toes curled beneath him" (Hamid, 2000, p. 1) upon hearing about Dara, Shuja, and Murad when the Sufi decreed: "Aurangzeb will be Aurangzeb" (p. 1).

The war of succession proved bloodier than predicted. Aurangzeb personally mutilated the severed head of Dara and presented it to his

imprisoned father and showed similar ruthlessness towards his other two brothers. Dara, his father's favourite son, had penned down a pantheistic treatise named Majma ul Bahrain, the mingling of two seas, to synthesize Islamic mysticism with strands of Indian mystic traditions. As an ardent pluralist, he had translated *Upanishads* into Persian for the consumption of Muslim audiences. Aurangzeb, his arch nemesis, championed an orthodox backlash against his pluralism. Mohsin Hamid quotes *The Alamgirnama*, which states, "The pillars of Faith apprehended disturbances from Dara Shikoh's life" (Hamid, 2000, p. 2). *Alamgirnama* camouflages Aurangzeb's fratricide with myths about his ascetic way of living. The epilogue fast-forwards to when Emperor Aurangzeb lies on his deathbed after ruling his empire for half a century. Fearing yet another cycle of fratricide, he decides to divide his empire among his sons, which could not save his empire from disintegration.

Bracketed within these unnumbered pages is the central narrative of *Moth Smoke* (2000), which captures the "fissures" of the newly "atomized" postcolonial nation of Pakistan. It is set in Lahore in 1998, the year when Pakistan tested its nuclear capabilities and "the mountain trembled like an earthquake, ... the rock turned dark red, like the color of blood" (Hamid, 2000, p. 158). The modern-day Aurangzeb and Darashikoh are locked in a tussle with each other in national life's private and public spheres. Aurangzeb is the son of an army officer turned bureaucrat who amassed a vast fortune through kickbacks and commissions. His main task is to hide his father's assets in foreign bank accounts. As the first Muslim nuclear nation reels from power shortages, trade and aid embargoes, and a global acceptance crisis, Darashikoh loses his job at the bank after a scuffle with a member of the landed aristocracy. He develops a clandestine love affair with Mumtaz Kashmiri, Aurangzeb's (Ozi) wife, who is torn between her role as a mother and her secret life as a journalist and lover. In a moth-like frenzy, Darashikoh (Daru) is attracted to both Mumtaz and hash (drug). As his social and financial status falls to pieces, he launches himself into a career of drug peddling and robbery. A disastrous rendezvous of robbing an elite-frequented boutique ends in the murder of a child at his hand. However, he is framed and sentenced for a hit-and-run death of a kid whom Ozi ran over.

Thus, the two modern-day mythical sons of Shah Jahan lay claim to the future of the nation while the nation struggles with internal discord and vies

for international power, testing its first nuclear weapons. In the private domain, they contest over the body of a lady who is also a mother. This tussle plays out over the motherland and its narrative and resources in the public domain.

Emperor Aurangzeb subscribed to a conservative ideology, while modern Ozi is depicted as a staunch secularist. However, the allegorical parallels between Aurangzeb and Ozi are more pronounced regarding their methods and means, their treatment of their political or personal enemies, and their use of state apparatus to decimate dissent. Similarly, there are parallels between historical Dara Shikoh and modern-day Daru. Like his historical namesake, Daru cannot evade reckoning from the nation's elitist formations. He is falsely accused of a murder, which Ozi has committed. The courtroom proceedings reveal that the elite-serving law and order apparatus is duly complemented by its discursive interpellative apparatus. Daru is framed as "a man capable of anything and afraid of nothing" and who "killed out of indifference…, because the death of a child has no meaning for him. (Hamid, 2000, p. 3). According to the Prosecutor, Drau's actions invite the "hammer of God" while "tender humanity screams in fear, confronted by such a monster, and conscience weeps with rage. The law licks its lips" (Hamid, 2000, p. 3). The Prosecutor's neocolonial rhetoric against Daru carries the strategies of "domination, exclusion, and instrumentalisation [which] are, thus, regarded as integral to the operations of textual representation" of a postcolonial nation. (Chrisman, 2004, p. 193).

The performative of the transgressive characters like Daru, Mumtaz, and Murad is quite visibly dictated and bracketed within a phenomenon described as historical sedimentation by Bhabha. Cara N. Cilano (2013) proposes the idea of "historical determinacy" (p. 187) regarding this phenomenon depicted in *Moth Smoke* (2000). The intrusive and invasive character of the historical or pedagogical can also be seen as an additional element of historical determinacy. *Moth Smoke* (2000) enacts before its readers how the disturbing presence of the deterministic pedagogical time can turn nation-time into a disjunctive time. The moth symbolizing Daru and his free-flowing passions is consumed by these bracketing myths that permit only static and unchanging power relations. Through this entwining of two historical planes, the readers have been made to confront the image of the present fettered and shackled by an intrusive and oppressive

past. Through these means, *Moth Smoke* (2000) captures and reflects the ambivalent temporalities proposed by Bhabha.

As discussed earlier, the pedagogical narrative of nationalistic representation usually posits a continuist and linear history by invoking clichés like 'the forward march of history' and 'the stream of history'. Bhabha dubs it as the teleology of linear progression. In this regard, Hamid's *Moth Smoke* (2000) proposes a model marked by an unending pattern of events that occur and recur, so much so that it becomes trans-historical. The pedagogical, with its full-spectrum domination, is ever-present in every era to dictate its terms and extend its sway over the performative of every generation. Hamid explains this dominance pattern through an idiom related to nuclear reactions. In the epilogue, he writes, "Every time this happens, Fission of empire, a new fusion, then fission again" (Hamid, 2000, p. 256).

This notion has been further elaborated in another passage from the text. "Professor Julius Superb's article, which catches Mumtaz's eye, elucidates this notion through a deft phoenix metaphor. Phoenix is a legendary bird who is reduced to ashes in a blaze after the completion of one life cycle. Then, it is reborn from the ashes. The blaze is expected to be "purificatory, redemptive, rejuvenating" (Hamid, 2000, p. 33). The young phoenix is reborn with fresh vigour and no trace of an earlier life cycle. However, in Julius Superb's opinion, the blaze, on the contrary, is "a manifestation of entropy, slowly sapping the life-energy of the phoenix over the eons, a little death in a life that could know no beginning and no end" (Hamid, 2000, p. 33). The blaze, a metaphor for history, depletes the life energy of the phoenix and diminishes its magnitude in every rebirth. The process culminates in "making the strong stronger, the weak weaker, and the dangerous deadly?" (Hamid, 2000, p. 34).

In Julius Superb's thesis, every cycle of this contestation results in a further consolidation of the pedagogical. Ozi's grip has tightened and grown more hegemonic. Aided by a broad-spectrum apparatus, he exhibits the characteristic inventiveness of the pedagogical in retaining its hold on all temporalities and in every new context. Therefore, Daru, the alternative future, the poet and pantheist, reaps the deadly consequences of his never-ending desperation, deprivation and inability to break free. The modern-day Murad has also been hurled into a savagely piratical avatar who believes in exercising no half-measures. Mumtaz has grown increasingly

uncomfortable in all sorts of robes. Thus, Prof Julius Superb's dystopic vision of the fissions getting deadlier with every cycle captures the tension between the pedagogical and the performative in a delightfully apt rhetoric based on the Marxist dialectic.

The performative of Daru, Mumtaz and Murad is not a passive acceptance of the dictates of the pedagogical. They actively participate in the signification process that questions the nation's historicism. Their acts of erasure of their fluid and dynamic identity formation are an attempt to rewrite these myths in new power relations. Through their actions they problematize the past as disruptive anterior. Performers like Mumataz and Daru fail to bring radical changes, but their performative bars the historicist narrative of the nation from asserting a temporally and symbolically stable and homogeneous identity. They reimagine it in their mould. Their performative constitutes a palimpsest, an overwriting, with the previous version visible from underneath.

Moth Smoke (2000) resists the attempts to categorize itself with the literary works that, according to Masood Raja (2010), "draw upon the transnational Muslim past to question the present and to articulate a future" (p. xxiii). Asma Mansoor (2012) explains this valorisation of the past by the generations of Muslim writers in colonial/postcolonial times: "Like Janus, the Muslim writer viewed both the past and the future at the cusp of the present …with the aim of retrieving a lost history and re-shaping the present according to the requirements of the Muslim community under colonial rule" (p. 16). Hamid seems to have consciously diverged from this tradition. He debunks the myth of the organic unity of the past by portraying the specter of a haunting past in *Moth Smoke* (2000). By furnishing the past as oppressive and sterile, he downplays the "golden age" and "organic past" myths disseminated by the textual/literary representations of the nation. The readership that subsists on this pedagogically induced image of a single homogenous past confronts an uneasy situation here.

The allegory in *Moth Smoke* (2000) contradicts the image of "a discrete Muslim identity found in Mughal rule" which entails that "the end of the Mughal court meant the loss of the South Asian Muslims' unique culture, language, and kingdom" (Shah, 2011, p. 84). A disconcerting, oppressive past opens up fissures in the present and possible futures: "When the uncertain future becomes the past, the past in turn becomes uncertain" (Hamid, 2000, p. 256). Hamid thus critiques the postcolonial nation's

attempt to impose homogeneity and linearity upon "fissures of the present (Bhabha, 1990a, p. 294) and tyranny of the past. He resonates with Ayesha Jalal, who says: "Muslims shared a common religious identity, [they] were hardly united in their politics, which was more defined by class, reginal and ideological affiliations" (Jalal, 2012, p. 10). Therefore, instead of looking for a holistic continuity in the past, she calls for a critical inquiry into past to "cultivate a "[c]ritical awareness of Pakistan's present problems" (Jalal, , 2012, p. 9). Hamid precisely achieves this in *Moth Smoke* (2000).

In *Moth Smoke* (2000), Mujahid Alam's assessment of the ills of Pakistan and his rant against Western values and globalisation (p. 261) mirrors the viewpoint Chatterjee has labelled as the inner core of the nation's bifurcated discourse. Mujahid's assessments are based on his fundamentalism or the inner core of nationalism. He professes his open resentment against all byproducts of colonisation, including the concept of nation and its democratic dispensation in its Western avatar. Mujahid, bearing a symbolic name, champions a more hardcore version of the pedagogy of the nationalist representation. His discourse pitted against the modern progressive outer course of the nationalist representation further disperses and splits nation's goal of temporal homogeneity. His fundamentalism, thus, appears as a 'fissure of the present,' with its antecedents in the past, a fault line with a danger of lapsing into it. Thus, the past, in *Moth Smoke* (2000) comes not to rescue and heal the fissures of the present but to precipitate them.

Conclusion

Moth Smoke (2000) and *The God of Small Things* (1997) embody Bhabha's (1990a) notion of tension between the performative and the pedagogical, and the notion of the disjunctive time. Roy and Hamid bring out the temporal ambivalence of their respective postcolonial nation-spaces by enacting a massive showdown between the pedagogic and the performative. They bust the myth of homogenous time by presenting the tyrannical meddling of a deterministic past that appears more of a bane than a boon. They nullify the highly eulogized notion that the past alone energizes people and heals their rifts. They insinuate that the deployment of the past is only meant to conceal the unevenness of the present. They show how certain convenient strands of history are made more ascendant for this purpose. They show that double movement between two competing temporalities is more of a distracting presence than an organic pristine past. By enacting a

conflict between the progressive and regressive modes, they show that the inner space of regressive traditions and myths is antithetical to the outer space of individualism and liberty. The intrusive and invasive character of the historical/pedagogical hints at a historical determinism, which, according to Roy and Hamid, is a dangerous consequence of sinking too deep into the tradition.

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