

Mimicry as a Strategy of Survival in Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife*

*This research interprets the various undercurrents of western culture which creates adverse conditions for Ojibwa tribal in Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife*. The whites are dominative against Ojibwa tribal culture of America and Canada during the war of Independence of the 1920s. The central character of the novel Scranton Roy gets tempted from western culture. Along with the inclusion of Ojibwa Tribal culture, practice of non-western mysticism, issues of salvation and the non-western cultural practices, Roy and other characters adopt western education system, religion and way of life as strategy of survival in the novel *The Antelope Wife*, that makes them hybrid in identity. This thesis employs Homi K. Bhabha's concept of mimicry to analyze the text.*

Key Terms: Ojibwa, Mimicry, Hybridity, Orientalism, Hegemony

This research focuses on the influence of mimicry of Western culture on Ojibwa culture in Louise Erdrich's *The Antelope Wife*. This novel is set in Tribal Areas of America during the War of Independence in 1920s. The title character is Scranton Roy, who was born near the border of Canada and America. Roy is separated and abandoned; he is later picked up by tribesmen, where he meets Ojibwa culture. He handed off from person to person and eventually, he simply strikes out on his own was. He is a typical colonial character, an individual confused by the plural but unequal society he was raised in and for whom identity is a crucial concern. Since the novel is situated in the colonial societies and portrays brightly the complexities inherent to such society. Roy goes through problems of the colonized people: their sense of alienation, identity crisis, displacement, and homelessness, which make him a mimic man.

The novel is all about the hybrid mentality of Scranton Roy and other Ojibwa characters. Characters are frustrated with life and always dreams of adopting the western cultural norms. From fragmentation of familial relationship and responsibility, some characters try to escape from tribal cultural values and family responsibility through drinking, smoking, extra marital relationship and fantasizing. Roy is longing for personal freedom, extramarital affairs, alcoholism and involvement in sexual affair to make him adjust with colonial culture.

The novel depicts the theme of cultural fragmentation due to Western influence where the tribal culture is replaced by Western culture. In this aspect, the Western culture, or precisely the developed nations in the western part of the globe have since long claimed their supremacy over the nonwestern world. The base of their claim, through dubious, largely rests on the facts that they play a leading role in the present world politics and occupy a definite place in determining the development activities carried out in the present global scenario.

Tribal do not get education, health facility and freedom. Natural rights and fundamental rights are mere dream for tribal. In the midst of prejudice and other anti-tribal hassles, tribal do not hesitate adapt to the shifting cultural locale as a strategy of survival. The protagonist of the novel Roy adopts western way of education, culture and religion as a camouflage to resist western atrocities.

Set in the Independence War era in the mess of land on the Canadian and American border, *The Antelope Wife* follows the life of Roy, a nomad. As Roy visits different tribes in the region, unwilling to settle with any of them and instead preferring a solitary life, gets a sense of the difficulties of life in this harsh but beautiful environment. Through Roy, *The Antelope Wife* examines the nomadic way of life, as well as the tribal culture of the region. We get a glimpse into this

completely foreign world, encountering the difficult realities of tribal justice (honor killings, kidnappings, etc.), but also getting the chance to explore the unique culture behind this lifestyle. Roy himself was an orphan, raised by many different people, so he is a wanderer even among the nomads. Through his quest for closeness to God, the reader really gets a sense of life in this desolate place.

The Antelope Wife depicts the condition of Ojibwas and questions their own beliefs about the conflict and its root cause of Ojibwa Tribal-suffering. Tony Bennet considers “*The Antelope Wife* is a novel that seems like it takes place centuries ago, in the wild lands on the borders of Canada, and America. The culture is ancient, and the nomadic way of life, a time honored tradition among the tribes” (45). They live life as they have been living for hundreds of years; time seems to stand still in the desolate region. However, as modernity encroaches upon these nomadic tribes, the realities are jarring. As the region becomes more important on the world stage and modern notions such as international borders set in, it affects the life of Roy and other nomads in ways no one could have predicted.

The novel revolves around young Roy and his war ravaged native tribe and the growing tension from whites. His journey from one land to the other and the barrage of issues he faces which leads him to places and people which unexpectedly become part of his life and share their sorrows and joys with him. The Ojibwa Tribal society and religion has been marginalized in the name of its perfection. What are the features of the Ojibwa tribal culture to make it powerful? How the West judges the Ojibwa tribal in terms of relative marginalization? Which aspects of the text empower the position of the Ojibwa Tribal culture? What is the motto of the author to empower the Ojibwa tribal cultural uniqueness? These are some of the issues that the research aims to solve.

The Antelope Wife captures the depth of emotions and the journey of a young and a native lad. The depiction of family commitment, the sorrows and joys, love and hatred, courage and sacrifice has attracted attention of several readers and critics. Different critics have analyzed the novel from multiple perspectives that proves the univocal nature of the novel. Eamonn McCabe views:

The novel depicts about the expatriates in countries where the language is never known quite well enough, where customs are followed rather than understood. The plot is based on the lurking situation of Canada and America after the Independence War. All I could perceive and understand was that it is somewhat similar to the situation prevailing between India and Pakistan and their saddening political mishaps.(4)

He argues that the novel seems as an allegory of reality that explores the momentous themes that reveals the complexities of cultural interactions. Paul Karl Lukacs views the title of the novel as the sufferings of characters. Each of the characters is notionally not free about what people choose to do with freedom. Lukacs writes:

As soon as you start with reading the chapters, you continue to visualize the scenes discussed and feel pain that they feel. Description of the pain and terror through the eyes of a young boy, who is merely 10 years old is painful and at times might fill up your eyes with tears. The writing style of the author is so simple yet influential and you need not put an extra effort to visualize the scenario, facial expressions and emotional turmoil of the characters so much so that you can actually feel the bullets hitting you hard as soon as they take the form of words. (23)

But the stroke was probably author's idea of collecting five different characters and their sufferings from the War, cultural loss and destruction of civilization. Derek

Wright discusses about use of native culture in the novel using the scientific method call gravitational pull. He Claims:

Roy seems to move without any clear direction in a space without any gravitational pull or magnetism which would hold them together around a common center. You should read this book to understand the state of the people facing these conditions and find the answer to the question – Is war the only solution left for deciding about the political issues? Do political boundaries actually outline the borders of two states or they leave marks in the form of scars of common people, who are least involved in harming others? Why do they have to suffer too? (21)

The narrative's movement has a roaming, associative kind of logic that criticizes the single western hegemonic culture. Any number of possibly spurious correspondences between its episodes and, narratives tend to dismantle western supremacy.

Although the critics have talked about the influence of the western culture upon native American culture. No one has talked about the writer's strategy of defending native culture throughout the politics of mimicry. The central character Roy adopts the western culture, manner, behaviours, and language only to mottled him and defense the colonial encroachment.

Since the novel moves around the issue of cultural encroachment that results in to hybridization in Ojibwa culture, this research uses the concept of mimicry and hybridity as Homi K. Bhabha discusses in the text *The Location of Culture*. The principal intention is the hybridity of colonial identity, which, as a cultural form, made the colonial resistant ambivalent, and as a result altered their power and identity. He argues that the nature of colonial identity is not monolithic, but ambiguous

or hybrid and to the interaction, even asymmetrical between the culture of the colonizer and the colonized

Bhabha talks about mimicry in relation to colonialism. He brings the reference of Lacan in the beginning of the essay. Lacan considers mimicry as a camouflage or the process of hiding. Redrawing the concept of Lacan regarding mimicry, he further argues:

Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial literature is most commonly seen when members of a colonized society (say, Indians or Africans) imitate the language, dress, politics, or cultural attitude of their colonizers (say, the British or the French). Under colonialism and in the context of immigration, mimicry is seen as an opportunistic pattern of behavior: one copies the person in power, because one hopes to have access to that same power oneself. Presumably, while copying the master, one has to intentionally suppress one's own cultural identity. (56)

Mimicry, however, is not all bad. In his essay "Of Mimicry and Man," Bhabha described mimicry as sometimes unintentionally subversive. In Bhabha's words, mimicry is "thinking and strategy of survival" (56). By contrast to mimicry, which is a relatively fixed and limited idea, postcolonial hybridity can be quite slippery and broad. At a basic level, hybridity refers to any mixing of east and western culture.

Homi Bhabha argues that there is always ambivalence in colonial discourse. According to him colonial mission of mimicry is to form 'othering' of colonized by excluding them. It is the subject of difference that is "almost the same but not quite." It means mimicry in the surface level seems to design for the betterment of colonized but colonizers never let colonized to improve and become like themselves. Mimicry is not quite like colonizers but it is ironical improvement of colonized. Colonizers teach

language, culture and civilization to 'empower' and 'civilized' colonized and to create hegemony.

In the novel *The Antelope Wife* Roy takes that mimicry as the technique of camouflage to defend colonizers. He is like a serpent that hides his face with the mask of western culture. However, irony of mimicry is only to teach imitation of European culture and spread colonial discourse by misrepresenting national culture and his own civilization. In a single sentence, Roy imitates mimicry as a strategy of survival from colonial encroachment but he oscillates like a pendulum.

Present research focuses on the issue of mimicry, hybridity and ambivalence in the novel *The Antelope Wife*. Colonialism had generated a contact zone between native Ojibwa culture and European culture. As a result both colonizers and colonized are turning mimetic and hybrid. Roy's Father belongs to Ojibwa but he mimics European style of marriage. They get married without the consent of family and society. Their identity turns out to be in-between and dislocated. They do not belong to any culture. Finally, due to the attack of tribes they bear a tragic death. After that, Roy adopts the nomadic life. He incorporates western life, befriends with whites, indulges in free life forgetting his cultural root. Roy is the orphan of two fugitive lovers hunted down by their tribes and killed. He is brought up by various nomads and is thus unique and troubling to all because he belongs to no tribe. He goes through mimicry and hybridity as a strategy of survival.

According to Bhabha, mimicry is one of the most effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge. Mimicry in colonial and postcolonial discourse is defined as a condition where people of the colonized country start imitating the behaviours, attitudes, language, and culture of the colonizers. The feeling of superiority of the colonial masters over the natives leads the members of the

colonized nation to look at themselves as the inferior human beings. Thus, it automatically establishes the belief that the West is always “educated,” “civilized,” “reformed,” “disciplined”, and “knowledgeable”, while the east is illiterate, barbaric, primitive and ignorant.

Mimicry seems to be an opportunistic method of copying the person in power. This suppresses one’s own cultural identity and leaves the person to an ambivalent and confused state. Bhabha says “...the discourse of mimicry is constructed around an ambivalence”(86). In *The Antelope Wife* Roy’s father went to prison when he was young for helping a Ojibwa tribal refugee. As the oldest of 14 nine children, his father had to work to support the family. It was quite difficult to survive in the poverty. He met an English man and started the job of spy to disclose the secrecy of natives. While accompanying with whites he used to disguise in the manner of whites. This fact is evident from following lines:

The story is based on my personal experiences. The greatest issue I had was learning how to tell my story. One lives and survives only if one has the ability to swallow and digest bitter and unpalatable things. We, you and I, and our people shall live because there are only a few among us who do not love raw onions. It is quite difficult to survive where life is larger than it appears.(3)

Mimicry is the mean by which the Roy’s father adapted the culture (language, education, clothing, etc.) of the colonizer but always in the process changing it in important ways. Such process pushes him to the direction of “ the ambivalence of hybridity” (Ashcroft 23).

Derek Walcott’s concept of what we do is “all about the mimicry of our culture”(67) again proves the relevance of postcolonial constructivism. Walcott takes mimicry as laboring task that is the mirror of purpose, balance, and hierarchy. Walcott

argues, “language itself is mimicry so that no literature, history and culture can be separate from mimesis” (87). Walcott further states that we human beings are imitator of monkeys so that everything is imitation in this world. He further argues:

Alexander to Columbus all are imitators. Walcott considers mimicry as an act of imagination and creativity. Some animals mimic and transfer into camouflage to defend enemies. Human also needs imitation of other animals and creatures to survive. Human phenomenons are the imitation of nature. We learn many things by other. Mimicry is strategy to learn than lose. (78)

He gives examples of Ford car and electricity as the imitation of nature. He further states that we imitate the advancement of western culture whereas itself is imitation of nature. The mimesis theory of Walcott further becomes dense when he argues every religion and culture are imitation of another culture.

The Antelope Wife presents Roy, Ojibwa Tribal from America who wants to study science, but then America makes military service a prerequisite to high level scientific jobs. He wants to study in Ojibwa tribal way but adopts western way because it is prestigious among the community. This is an example of objective or factual Mimicry. This becomes more clear when the author puts “Roy, is a compilation of many Ojibwa Tribal from America I knew personally and whose lives I witnessed. I wrote about what I know that affected me” (3). The characters are compilations of many Ojibwa Tribal the author knew over the years. Edrich becoming able to preserve the identity become clear from the following authorial comment:

To make sure my story is strong enough that it transcends the historical context. In *The Antelope Wife*, I wrote about a Ojibwa tribal boy who overcomes seemingly impossible obstacles to achieve what others have only

dreamed. My concern was that my story be reach anyone who has overcome hardship so that reader can relate to my story on a human level. (55)

The Antelope Wife is a story of a character larger than life itself. It is a journey comprising of despair, hunger, fear, death, life, joy, happiness, courage, sacrifice, and determination. Edrich has to experience very painful condition during her childhood. Death of his siblings due to various unwanted situations, getting her father jailed for no crime, getting debarred from their house and ultimately moving from bad to worse situation in life. But one symbolic companion that kept inspiring, motivating and helping Edrich is an almond tree that is grown outside his house. That is reflected through unfavorable situation of Roy when his residence is being gripped:

It was summer and the whole house breathed slowly from the heat. I stood alone in her room, hoping the quiet would tell me where she'd stumbled off to. A white curtain caught a breeze. The window was open – wide open. I rushed to the ledge, praying that when I looked over she wouldn't be there, she wouldn't be hurt. I was afraid to look, but I did anyway because not knowing was worse. *Please God, please God, please God.*(1)

They could only opt for the least living standards, lowest possible work, no possibilities of growth and then their each and every move is under the supervision of army. "Postcolonial studies is not one thing," Bhabha asserts, "it has never been one thing" (99). It is an engaged mode of inquiry committed to understanding the complex terrain of the postcolonial in connection with relations of power. Postcolonial studies presents itself, then, as less a conversation than an intervention (Ashcroft 5). Hence, we can find the relevance of the implantation of the tool of postcolonial studies. The unfavorable situation of the individuals in America is gain replicated from the information of curfew in the novel, as Roy puts "curfew begins in five minutes, a

soldier announced through his megaphone from his military jeep. Anyone found outside will be arrested or shot (8)". More than a dozen soldiers were fencing their land and home with barbed wire. Roy's mother kneeling under olive tree holding middle brothers observes the harsh situation. This is also presenting the unfavorable contemporary life of Canada.

Bhabha analyzes mimicry in the colonial discourse hints that there is a need to use mimicry as a subversive method in postcolonial discourse. According to him mimicry is an "eccentric strategy of authority in colonial discourse" and the ambivalence of mimicry leads us to think that the "fetishized colonial culture" is an "insurgent counter-appeal" (78).

In *The Antelope Wif* nomadic Shredianano has brought his livestock to graze along their traditional wandering routes, but now the border is guarded by soldiers who will not let them pass without proper papers. But these documents cost money and require birth certificates, health documents and identity papers, neither of which Shredianano possesses. Shredianano puts the Bible on his head, relying on the fact that he will be protected, and leads his animals forward only to be fired on by soldiers. As others make the same attempt, they and their animals are mowed down in what will become a massacre. The narrator implicitly states about the strategy of the survival of nomadic people as:

There was a full moon, and it hung half hidden behind the northern cliff. The moonlight was strong and dazzling to the eyes . . . A long distance away on the mountain crest, he could see small antlike figures silhouetted against its orb. There was a long chain of them moving slowly with loads on their backs. These were the ice cutters. (67)

A tribe comes to grips with the newly enforced border between Canada and America, not sure if everyone will be able to get across as they move their few animals to better grazing. The tribe's leader tries to negotiate safe passage with an army official pretending as if they are converted Christians. As he leaves, he adjusts his cloak and remembers his own tribal god.

Bhabha's analysis of mimicry in his essay "Of Mimicry and Man" is largely based on the Lacanian vision of mimicry as camouflage resulting in colonial ambivalence. He sees the colonizer as a snake in the grass who, speaks in "a tongue that is forked," and produces a mimetic representation that ". . . emerges as one of the most elusive and effective strategies of colonial power and knowledge" (122). In postcolonial studies 'mimicry' is considered as unsettling imitations that are characteristic of postcolonial cultures. It is a desire to sever the ties with 'self' in order to move towards 'other'. Roy expresses his penchant for colonial mimicry when he wishes to desert his roots. He says: "I wanted to break away. To break away from my family and community also meant breaking away from my unspoken commitment . . ." (Erdrich 31). For Bhabha, "colonial mimicry is the desire for a reformed, recognizable 'Other', as a subject of difference that is almost the same, but not quite" (Bhabha 122). He is the foremost contemporary critic who has tried to unveil the contradictions inherent in colonial discourse in order to highlight the colonizer's ambivalence with respect to his attitude towards the colonized Other and vice versa. He continues, "The menace of mimicry is its double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority" (126). It is a double vision that is a result of what he describes as the partial representation/ recognition of the colonial object.

In *The Antelope Wife* Roy goes through various stages encountering various inspiring characters - like his father, his childhood friends, his first love, and many Indian Tibals; and more than those the characters who tried to downtrend/ demean him from time to time. The hardship the protagonist faced along with his family members can be clarified from the following lines:

The pattern glitters with cruelty. The blue beads are colored with fish blood, the reds with powdered heart. The beads collect in borders of mercy. The yellows are dyed with the ocher of silence. There is no telling which twin will fall asleep first, allowing the other's colors to dominate, for how long. The design grows, the overlay deepens. The beaders have no other order at the heart of their being. (45)

The protagonist is presenting how the repressive society has made compelled to stop their mouth, or listen. He presents a heart-wrenching and inspiring story of his suffering throughout his life. The book starts with his family living on the nomadic state in Canada where his family has owned camels for decades. Throughout the book, his travels take him throughout the various border areas, serving as the vehicle among the different tribes who inhabit this landscape.

M. S. Nagarajan refers to mimicry as “divided self” of the colonized as “unhomeliness”. He says, “One becomes a psychological refugee, in not being able to feel at home even in one’s own hom”(187). During the rule of the colonial masters in the colonies, the influence of imperial powers led the dominated natives feel dispossessed, and devoid of the language of the colonizers to communicate. This pressure forced them to imitate the superior Other. The colonized native at this first stage of imitation belongs to Lacan’s, “mirror stage”, when the child neither has the language, the symbolic system, nor the understanding of the world. He looks at his

own image in the mirror and looks at “Others”. This ignorant and child-like native also looks at his own image in the mirror of colonial masters” superior etiquettes only to find himself inferior and small, but he cannot express himself until he enters into Lacan’s “symbolic stage” and learns to speak and raise his voice. Mimicry reveals something in so far as it is distinct from what might be called and itself that is behind. “The effect of mimicry is camouflage . . . It is not a question of harmonizing with the background, but against a mottled background, of becoming mottled— exactly like the technique of camouflage practiced in human warfare” (Bhabha 121).

The Antelope Wife opens with a horrific scene of loss and sadness. A young child, heedless to the danger, steps into a closed area in the Ojibwa Tribal Territory controlled by England, and is blown up by a mine in front of her mother’s and sibling’s eyes. They were helpless to help the 4-year old child as she ran through the minefield chasing a butterfly. Tribal crammed into a small area with barely any amenities to support life, which have never allowed the Ojibwa Tribal to enter and assimilate their identity. The novel is a tragic tale of horror. It is evident from following lines:

I was disgusted by the unjust brutality the author accused America of committing. Although I believe they have justification in being overcautious, because of the past incidents committed against them by the Arabs, the existence of so much hate and anger on the part of America came as a shock to me. After all the brutalization of nontribal, down through the ages, I thought we would have had more compassion on our side rather than vengeance.

(Erdrich77)

Tribal people are the victim of colonization. They are prevented from the basis ground of human identity. They are not free to adopt their own culture. They do not have any

chance to feed their stomach without the mercy of Whites. They feel without home in their own home. As a result they adopt western culture to survive.

While the Roy isolates himself from the world, he is cast out in it utterly “ill-equipped” (Erdrich 24). He meets different people in colonial America. As Roy makes friends with, and comes to admire, Smith Smith, a white Christian from London, he has to confront his own prejudices:

Smith was kind and he was not Paki. Therefore he was OK? . . . Therefore he liked Ojibwas and hated only Pakis? Therefore he liked Smith, but hated the general lot of Ojibwas? . . . No, no, how could that be . . . Therefore he hated all black people but liked Smith? Therefore there was nothing wrong with black people and Smith? (Erdrich86)

From this line of reasoning emerges a perceived hierarchy of the immigrant communities, where whites are superior to (at least) blacks and Ojibwas.

Nonetheless, Roy seems to discover that, even though his fellow immigrants may be different from him, they all suffer from the impact of colonisation and racialization. However, he never manages to discard his beliefs in a hierarchical system, even though, he finds that he had “a habit of hate” (86) and “possessed an awe of white people, who arguably had done great harm, and a lack of generosity regarding almost everyone else, who had never done a single harmful thing to Ojibwas” (86). This further indicates an internalised racist discourse and, as noted by Roy, the difficulties for Others to connect in the “context of a shared his Royy of political violence” (378). With the arrival of a Canadai in the kitchen comes relief: “At least he knew what to do . . . against Pakis. Ah, old war, best war” (Erdrich25). In his condition of great solitude and abuse, he appears to return to a familiar discourse; partly because of its familiarity, the maintenance of it seems comforting.

Roy's place in the hierarchy is non-negotiable. The restaurants he works in offer "the authentic colonial experience. On top, rich colonial, and below, poor native" (Erdrich 23). The aforementioned fight with the Canadian, leads to their being fired as "the sound [travelled] up the flight of stairs . . . they might upset the balance, perfectly first-world on top, perfectly third-world twenty-two steps below" (Erdrich 25). This could be read as "balance" being created through the hierarchical divide of people, within restaurants, but also, beyond. Masterson writes: "[b]eneath the glossy rhetoric of a borderless planet, supposedly liberated by liquid capitalism, lies the principle that order is ensured by the increasingly intense policing of these stratifications"(423).

Said's *Orientalism*, published in 1978, focuses his attention in this work on the interplay between the "Occident" and the "Orient." The Occident is his term for the West (England, France, and the United States), and the Orient is the term for the romantic and misunderstood Middle East and Far East. According to Said, the West has created a dichotomy, between the reality of the East and the romantic notion of the "Orient" (76). The Middle East and Asia are viewed with prejudice and racism. They are backward and unaware of their own his Roy and culture. To fill this void, the West has created a culture, history, and future promise for them. On this framework rests not only the study of the Orient, but also the political imperialism of Europe in the East. Said further writes:

Orientalism is a style of thought based upon ontological and epistemological distinction made between "the Orient" and (most of the time) "the Occident." Thus a very large mass of writers, among who are poet, novelists, philosophers, political theorists, economists, and imperial administrators, have accepted the basic distinction between East and West as the starting point

for elaborate accounts concerning the Orient, its people, customs, "mind," destiny, and so on.(6)

Said's own focus in *Orientalism* is specifically and almost exclusively on the non-west, which he presumably (and gratuitously) considers a representative case study illustrative of the situation throughout Asia. In *The Antelope Wife* non-tribal exploit nature as well as all possible human resources, of mind, of science, as they want to possess Ojibwa Tribal wealth as much as possible and want to keep them under their control. It is the story of Ojibwa and whites' conflict for a land which is spiritual for both the communities. Therefore, actually the conflict is between the Oppressive power represented by the non-tribals who are a strong military power and a creative Ojibwa tribal boy who struggle throughout his life for his family and people and gain power. Throughout the novel, the novelist has tried to reflect a strong critique of the reductive bias worldview experienced by the nontribal.

Eventually, Roy feels barely human at all. He has internalized a view of himself as something deviant and abnormal, he has become the Other, all in relation to the English, white majority. Frantz Fanon has described this process: "in the white world, the man of color becomes an image of the third person. All around the body reigns an atmosphere of certain uncertainty" (90). Fanon's man of color is no longer in authority to define himself freely, but with qualities attributed to him by his oppressor, qualities which are derogatory. There is no doubting the Roy's view of himself as "the third person": he stops using the personal pronoun "I" altogether, instead reverting to the impersonal "one" when speaking about himself. It is a conscious decision, a refuge to "keep everyone at bay, to keep himself away from himself" (Erdrich 122). As we have seen, Roy comes to mimic the English, but he is also made into an Other:

Roy's mind had begun to warp; he grew stranger to himself than he was to those around him, found his own skin odd-colored, his own accent peculiar. He forgot how to laugh, could barely manage to lift his lips in a smile. They seemed too private. In fact, he could barely let any of himself peep out . . . for fear of giving offence. He began to wash obsessively, concerned he would be accused of smelling. To the end of his life, he would never be seen without socks and shoes and would prefer shadow to light. (Erdrich 45)

At once, he is isolating himself from others but also hiding, or negating, his own opinions or agenda. Again, Fanon has described the impact on one's identity when one, as he puts it, "gives oneself up as an object" and he describes this as causing tangible pain on the body itself (Erdrich 92). Surely, it is also an attempt to remedy the *certain uncertainty*, which can be seen as originating from what Fanon calls an awareness "of his liminal position in between the spaces that are unequivocally occupied by the coloniser and the colonised" (61). In this liminal space, between borders, Roy's mimicry is a survival strategy in a colonial world. With the Afghani independence, however, the demands are the contrary (62). This only paralyses him further. Thinking back on the English leaving America, he grieves them "leaving behind only those ridiculous Indians who couldn't rid themselves of what they had broken their soul to learn" (Erdrich 224). Contrary to what Bhabha suggests, Roy is not able to find no strengths to resist binary notions in this position; instead, he identifies himself as "broken" and withdraws from the world, which he finds is "only a different version of the same old [with a] man with the white curly wig and a dark face covered in powder, bringing down his hammer, always against the native, in a world that was still colonial" (Erdrich 224).

In *The Empire Writes Back*, Ashcroft writes that hybridity has been accused

of being depoliticised since it sometimes fails to consider “the material status of the operation of power” (206). Hybridity and mimicry both serve as reminders of the ambivalence and weakness within the hierarchical system (102). Ashcroft argues that as the colonised subject takes on traits of the colonizer. He further describes:

lose the sense of the masterful self and its social sovereignty. It is at this moment of intellectual and psychic ‘uncertainty’ that representation can no longer guarantee the authority of culture; and culture can no longer guarantee to author its ‘human’ subjects as the signs of humanness. The other can, of course, only be constructed out of the archive of ‘the self’, yet the self must also articulate the Other as inescapably different . . . and this instigates an ambivalence at the very site of imperial authority and control. (195)

Like hybridity, mimicry breaks down the boundaries between what is considered for example English and Ojibwas, leaving the colonizer powerless to control it; thus, the limitations of authority are revealed. In *The Antelope Wife*, Roy moves through federally administered tribal areas which have become “. . . a political quagmire known for terrorism and inaccessibility” (78). He witnesses all the extremes of the human condition and behavior – hatred, poverty, honor, deep love, brutality, and humanity. He sees dishonesty when a white man named Smith tries to avenge the murder of one of his cousins. However, the murderer had died a natural death leaving a widow and two young sons. Smith is waiting for the boys to grow up, so he can kill them. However, they will not wear the deer skins, signifying the transition into manhood. Since the traditional code was clear that revenge could not be visited on women and children, and the young men did not want to be killed, Smith would probably never get his revenge. Roy sees various faces of hospitality – given graciously when an old tribal woman gives him a meal of coarse millet loaves, milk,

but ungraciously when they ask for walnuts and corncobs. Roy's maturity sees a transformation from typical tribal man to mimic men at the end of the novel.

For Bhabha, even if the hybrid arises from contact, it is hybridity within what was (seen to be) coherent and a unity that he calls up. In this way, his version of hybridity gestures more directly to the unequal position of power within which hybridity is created. He argues:

If the effect of colonial power is seen to be the production[emphasis in original] of hybridization rather than the noisy command of colonialist authority or the silent repression of native traditions, then an important change of perspective occurs. It reveals the ambivalence at the source of traditional discourses on authority and enables a form of subversion founded on that uncertainty, that turns the discursive conditions of dominance into the grounds of intervention.(173)

Bhabha's hybridity is more concerned with an assessment of the Unitarians of dominating discourses, which are then revealed to be fractured, doubled, and unstable. But he also believes in the remedial power of a new conception in which he makes a "shift from the cultural as an epistemological object to culture as an inactive site"(178). In this form, culture is revealed to be hybrid, and this hybridity provides the space from which subaltern agency can be enabled. Hybridity is generated by dominating discourses.

The Antelope Wife A hybrid identity is, at once, both more and less than a pure one. Roy if his dreams were true, he would be the great judge. Roy's "face seemed distanced by what looked like white powder over dark skin – or was it just the vapor?" (Erdrich 37). The vapor, here easily confused with white powder, has created a distance between the judge and others. If mist is a symbol of hybridity, hybridity

creates a distance between the judge and others. Certainly, the judge is lonely: as he cannot make sense of himself nor the world, he distances himself from it and every one he knows.

Growing up in colonised tribal land

Roy is the only son in an ambitious family of low social status. Eventually, to attain legitimate influence and rise socially, Roy is sent to English school to study law. During his five-year stay, he is constantly subjected to racial discrimination and a landlady refusing to call him by any other name than “James”, in a sense completely denying his identity. In defense, Roy retreats into solitude, which “became a habit, the habit became the man, and it crushed him into a shadow” (Erdrich 45). Ashamed to be Indian, Roy desperately tries to overcome this, occupying the liminal position between the coloniser and the colonised by performing English identity: “He envied the English. He loathed Indian. He worked at being English with the passion of hatred and for what he would become, he would be despised by absolutely everyone, English” (Erdrich 131). This quotation indicates how mimicry can be perceived as a threat toward the racist discourse, where the upholding of difference is a prerequisite of the system’s survival. Roy, mockingly, being “almost the same but not quite”, “almost the same but not white” (Bhabha 127-128), exposes the ambivalence at the heart of imperial control. His behaviour uncovers the limits to the colonisers’ authority; thus, Roy’s semblance to the English serves as an unpleasant reminder of the arbitrary divide between the coloniser and the colonised. Furthermore, the quotation underscores how Roy’s struggle to construct a pure English identity is, ultimately, what leaves him utterly lonely.

The Antelope Wife follows the lives of the inhabitants of a tribals. In the opening scene of the novel there is an opaque and ever-moving mist covering the land, not only further denying the borders but also mocking them. We see how it is constantly attacking the borders drawn by people, but also how people struggle to enforce the borders. In a sense, the mist can be seen as a symbol of the demise of the absolute, the pure, as the process of moving beyond binaries. Furthermore, it is inescapable as the mist gets “thicker and thicker, obscuring things in parts – half a hill, then the other half . . . Gradually the vapour replaced everything with itself, solid objects with shadow, and nothing remained that did not seem molded from or inspired by it” (Erdrich 2). As solid objects are turned fluid and changeable and boundaries are dissolved, the effect of the mist, in fact, seems to be hybridisation.

Roy becomes a symbol of all the oppression he has suffered; a coloniser and the embodiment of a Tribal . In the confrontation with an English woman Hilsey, he turns against her and uses her apparent lack of national allegiance to insult her: “It’s clear all you want to do is copy. Can’t think for yourself. *Copycat, copycat*” (Erdrich 180). This resembles Frantz Fanon’s analysis of the period of decolonisation, during which, the colonised “shower [the values of the coloniser] with insults and vomit them up” to silence the arrogance of the coloniser (*The Wretched* 8-9). However, this reaction can also be seen as an indication of the acceptance of the stratifications and categorisations of people. Hybridisation, to Roy, appears as mere copying. Thus, his desire for authenticity results in a loathing of hybrid identities, which he fears himself to have (Lisa 85). Nevertheless, his ambiguous feelings regarding a hybrid identity are not easily suppressed. This is apparent in the last part of the novel as:

ordinary humans . . . without revelation, composite of contradictions, easy principles, arguing about what they half believed in or even what they didn’t

believe in at all, desiring . . . authenticity as much as playacting . . . Every single contradiction history or opportunity might make available to them, every contradiction they were heir to, they desired. But only as much, of course, as they desired purity and a lack of contradiction. (Erdrich 283)

Yet again, Roy is split between different sides of himself, which results in anxiety. As with Roy, Roy's attempt to construct a pure identity ends with his being lonely, after having mistreated those close to him.

If Roy is vacillating between the search for purity and the acceptance of contradictions, Roy seeks purity as a means of self-preservation. Roy's story is a more isolated, who is exploited by English. Feeling in place, is not equally attainable for everyone: social class and unequal access to education and economic capital provide different opportunities of belonging. McCabe Eamnon calls the "concrete experience of living 'out of place' . . . a perpetual tryst with pain on a number of fronts" (240), which is what Roy experiences. For Roy, the ever-escalating exploitation brings increasing pain, both mentally and physically.

The Antelope Wife humanizes a culture and brings characters from a distant land to life, with a family united by love but divided by their personal beliefs. From Roy's staunchly traditional and at times overbearing mother, to his father who believes in the power of education, the crux of the family's story lies in the development of paths in order to create a new future. Gifted with a mind that continues to impress the elders in his village, Roy struggles with the knowledge that he can do nothing to save his Ojibwa Tribal friends and family. Ruled by the British military government, the entire village operates in fear of losing homes, jobs, and belongings. But more importantly, they fear losing each other. On Roy's twelfth birthday, that fear becomes a reality. With his father imprisoned, his family's home

and possessions confiscated, and his siblings quickly succumbing to the dangers of war, Roy begins the endless struggle to use his intellect to save his poor and dying family and reclaim a love for others that was lost when the bombs first hit. Roy sees this realization as prompting an understanding of power asymmetries and of the nation always being culturally and politically embedded in the world (Erdrich 385). Roy's self seems to shrink as his world expands, and paradoxically, it is out of this that his commitment to the world grows (554). However, to Roy, loss is a basic condition of life, and even a prerequisite of love: "he decided that love must surely reside in the gap between desire and fulfillment, in the lack, not the contentment. Love was the ache, the anticipation, the retreat" (Lisa 3). To Roy, the lack is where love originates. Relating the notion of loss, or lack, to hybridity, to being less than pure, this is to Roy a source of strength. This is very similar to Bhabha's view of "the third space" as empowering.

Finally, the present research uncovers mimicry as strategy of survival in *The Antelope Wife*. The political and historical uncertainties are represented in the novel. The author makes international and constructionist mimicry of tribal culture. The thesis also illustrates that Roy's characterization blends the legacies of the colonized and the colonizer to deconstruct a biased narrative integral to the vision of the tribal-nontribal conflict. By questioning the ambivalence of Ojibwa tribe's identity, Roy emphasizes significant colonizer / colonized interaction engaging postcolonial dynamics. Deploying a plethora of voices as reflection of the attitudes of a multi-ethnic community, the incidents of the novel are presented to unearth the protagonist challenging the postcolonial inconsistencies and confirming the identity.

The protagonist Roy could never achieve what he did if he only remained in his village. He came from a rural, impoverished village. He was born in one of the

Ojibwa tribal families living like slaves in a country that was once their own home. Under these dire conditions, members of these families were not allowed to go for a respectable job, for studies, for a well built house, for any good opportunities in their life. Postcolonial studies do not have a single history that can be simply returned to. Nor does it have a fixed or stable identity that is always and everywhere the same, be it that based on an idea of the organic intellectual or otherwise.

As Fanon analyses the psychological effects of colonial domination as trauma of being a black and the desire to be like the whites. The desire to mimic the white haunts the black day and night. He confesses, "I am obliged to state it: For the black man there is only one destiny. And it is White"(12). HomiBhabha strikes at the same point and says that the metamorphosis of the "colonized black" in the process of being a white makes him different from his own race and community and transforms him only to resemble the white. Thus, Roy is excluded from his own society and belongs to neither his own people nor to the whites, and he is "almost the same but not white" (44). His parents are shot in front of his eyes by other nomadic tribes, which triggers his own nomadic lifestyle, by being passed along from one tribe to another, gaining several foster parents along the way, and ditching them whenever circumstances force him to, Roy oscillates like pendulum between two cultures for his survival.

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