

REJECTING THE MYTH: CHARACTERIZATIONS OF EMERGING ADULthood IN
THREE CONTEMPORARY NOVELS

Rebekah K. Costin

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Approved by

Advisory Committee

Chair

Accepted by

Dean, Graduate School

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ABSTRACT

Due to changes in the labor force in late-capitalist nations, the years of the late teens and twenties are increasingly being devoted to identity exploration. Three novelists have recently focused their works on the struggles of these emerging adults. RM Johnson's Dating Games, Molly Jong-Fast's Normal Girl, and Mohsin Hamid's Moth Smoke examine the problematic relationship these young people have with society. While the works present characters who attempt to reject the myths that have subdued others in their marginal positions in the past, the authors ultimately indicate that such rejection is impossible. Even their attempts to create their own unique identities are tied to the cultural and national myths of their postcolonial countries, and they are defined and limited by them. The very mythologies that promise individual freedom and choice, but that usually only provide a respite from the hegemonic structures of society, in the end offer a chance of redemption, though. For the marginalized individuals who have turned to dissipation in the face of the inevitable power structure are never truly subaltern. Each of these novels outlines at least one character's dissipation and eventual obliteration from mainstream society, the society that both gives power and its conditions; however, they also all include at least one character who finds a way to avoid self or societal annihilation as well as avoiding accepting totally the systemic power structure that attempts to have them follow its rules. Their interpretations of cultural myths as well as their own flexibility have allowed an identity at least partially self-chosen. True there are boundaries of possibilities sanctioned by society; however, it is the reconciliation of self and society (note neither are entirely sacrificed or victorious) that psychologists have defined as the necessary gateway to maturity and adulthood.

INTRODUCTION

When European settlers first arrived in the Americas, they saw the uncultivated land as an opportunity for a new relationship with the world.ⁱ Some saw it as a means to accrue wealth and status not available to them in Europe. Others saw it as a New Eden as yet uncorrupted by the sins of the Old World. These settlers and their idea of a New World Garden continued to shape the mythology of the United States through the nineteenth century when scholars and religious figures began to present the image of the prototypical (i.e. white male) American as a new “Adam,” untarnished by society and the past.ⁱⁱ This American myth “saw life and history as just beginning. It described the world as starting up again under fresh initiative, in a divinely granted second chance for the human race” (Lewis 5). Moreover, this concept of Americans as innocent, optimistic, and blind to evil, with the freedom to create their lives and existence unencumbered by the constraints of society and its traditions was a means for which this settler-state could begin to create its own identity, an identity of the Promised Land.

The image of the biblical Adam as representative of the American character highlights both the ostensible fissure of the United States with a European past and its purported ability to create its own future. This American Adam was an

individual emancipated from history, happily bereft of ancestry, untouched and undefiled by the usual inheritances of family and race; an individual standing alone, self-reliant and self-propelling, ready to confront whatever awaited him with the aid of his own unique and inherent resources. (Lewis 5)

Defining the new American as someone new and different from the European designation served an important political purpose as well as a cultural one. The “sense of displacement and preoccupation with identity” (Stratton 22) that postcolonial America struggled with was

reformulated in this characterization.ⁱⁱⁱ The Adamic myth enabled a belief that change was possible, that sons of Europe could formulate their own identities unhindered by ancestral constraints, and eventually led to ideas of self-made men and American dreams. While such myths were widely criticized, by thinkers as disparate as Oliver Wendell Holmes and Richard Wright, and especially those oppressed by white “American” culture, the myth of the American Adam still reverberates in the twenty-first century. It in many ways mirrors a new cultural phenomenon of the late-capitalist age—that of the “emerging” adult. These nascent adults, usually in their twenties, like Adam, are separated from tradition and desire to shape their own identities, often without societal models or support. Such attempts are as troubled by tradition and as irrevocably tied to the past as these older American myths of emancipation, for, in spite of their seeming disconnectedness, these emerging adults of late-capitalism rely on models of the past, just as the very model of the tradition-less Adam and his autonomous individuality were based on principles that arose during the European Reformation and Enlightenment (Jehlen 3).

Early/young adulthood is a tenuous term because of the myriad ways in which it can be defined. Often it is employed as a description of a chronological age with legally defined responsibilities and privileges; and these legal rights and roles have depended on developmental, psychological, and material conceptions of adulthood. Psychological definitions hinge on theories of identity integration and maturity, according to which an individual reaches the stage at which he or she is able to take responsibility for his or her own actions, to make logical decisions, to empathize with others, and to accept his or her social roles (Whitbourne and Weinstock 4, 100-101). In most cases, this time of life is exemplified emotionally as one of transition, from dependence to autonomy and from independence to intimacy, both in psychological and sociological terms. These two transitions are necessary in order for full adult

status to be reached; an ability to achieve both allows the individual to take full responsibility for him or herself and to remain tied to a community, being able “to sacrifice[...]his or her own wishes in order to form close relationships with other people” (Schultz and Salthouse 165). As a result of resolving issues of autonomy and intimacy, the individual is able to take on adult status and its accompanying privileges: “having a certain authority, commanding respect, and being allowed to participate in activities forbidden to children and adolescents” (Arnett 218).

However, such status and privileges must be partnered with social recognition if they are to be externally validated, highlighting the importance of community ties. While adulthood was once conferred on an individual through socially recognized rites of passage such as sexual experience, financial independence, marriage, and child rearing, in modern, late-capitalist nations, it now exists as the culmination of developmental criteria that allow the individual to take on the roles that ultimately confer the status of adulthood, roles sanctioned by society.^{iv}

Although early/young adulthood can be defined in several ways, the newest sociological and psychological definitions emphasize the ideas of identity creation and severance from tradition. In recent years, the time period between childhood and full adulthood as characterized by both self-sufficiency and a stable role in the community has become increasingly extended. While the life phase of adolescence has been common in industrial nations for several decades, there has also been an additional period of transition lasting from the late teens to the early twenties. The transitional period from adolescence to adulthood that is now becoming common in late-capitalist societies has been dubbed “emerging adulthood” by sociologist Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. This phase of life is “characterized by growing, but not complete autonomy and continued exploration[...]and is becoming] increasingly extended” (Mortimer 207) as fewer youth labor and more attend universities for graduate and undergraduate degrees. Emerging

adulthood is a time of possibilities wherein individuals are able to focus on themselves and explore different identities, identities that “can increasingly be accomplished based (ostensibly) on a person’s efforts, skills, and achievements” (Côté 122), but it is also a time of instability.

Arnett identifies five major components of emerging adulthood: identity exploration, instability, self-focus, feeling in-between, and possibility (Arnett 8), positing emerging adulthood as a phase in contrast to full adulthood. Where emerging adults are explorers of identity possibilities, self-focused, and in flux, full adults play stable roles in the family, society, and the workforce, at least in accordance to the traditional cultural beliefs and expectations of adulthood. Even though the dissolution of traditional societal markers of adulthood (such as marriage, parenthood) widens the scope of possible roles and identities for many, few alternatives have “emerged to replace them[...resulting in] many people[...]left in limbo” (Côté 31). As there are no longer definite criteria (such as marriage, parenthood) that assign the position of adulthood or criteria (such as gender and ethnicity) that completely determine an individual’s possible roles in society, young people must establish their own criteria to achieve the status needed to exercise power and to hold positions of responsibility within the community.

The phase of the emerging adult is tied to the American myths of the nineteenth century. Both the emerging adult and the American Adam possess the liberty to create identities that do not depend on inherited positions and are not bound by prescribed social roles. The myth of the American Adam, as well as those of the Promised Land, frontier, and American Dream, served as a means to formulate and establish an identity created in opposition to those defined by the European colonial powers, namely those characterized by and emphasizing the colonies’ dependent and child-like relationship with the fatherlands. In much the same way, newly postcolonial nations are attempting to create identities separate from those bestowed by the

colonial powers that once controlled them.^v These political formations of national identity also influence and are influenced by the cultural. As emerging adulthood is associated with the power and wealth of the capitalist West, namely the United States, this phenomenon serves as a cultural and political means of distancing a nation from its colonial past, and emerging adulthood in many cases offers a model of identity formation that is attractive to such postcolonial nations eager to establish themselves on the international political front because of the possibilities for power it offers. Following this Western cultural model, these nations' identities parallel the phenomenon of emerging adulthood in several ways. They are concerned with identity formation and exploration, take place in an unstable period where competing discourses battle over the proper direction to take, and are ultimately subject to the approval and representations of those nations/persons already in positions of power.

The newfound "liberty" of identity formation can have its negative effects for both emerging adults and emerging nation-states. Without the societal markers traditionally used to designate the achievement of adulthood, the societal recognition of a particular sanctioned identity, young people, left outside of mainstream society (i.e. the institutions of family, labor, politics, etc.) for an extended period of time due to labor forces, do not always attain the status and responsibilities of adulthood. In a similar vein, newly postcolonial states, in attempting to forge a new history and future for their peoples, existing without beneficial and established ties to other nations, often founder when confronted with the global status quo.^{vi} Emerging adults, "because of the lack of guidance and the high failure rate[...often] follow easier paths in their life courses as opposed to pursuing trajectories that lead to higher levels of cognitive and identity development" (Côté 42). These apparently lost and occasionally dissipated youth, who are often immature consumers of store-bought identities, continue to function outside of the mainstream,

in that they fail to reach a state of stable identity and remain unable to contribute to society in what some consider a productive way.^{vii} Similarly, nations attempting to establish an identity often find themselves still subject to former colonial powers, which view their burgeoning identities as threatening to the established world order, as is the case especially with non-Western and non-capitalist nations such as Palestine and Iraq.

As emerging adulthood becomes more prevalent in late-capitalist nations, the problematic themes of self-creation and societal dissolution provoke a cultural dialogue that intimates their relationship to societal views of possibility and responsibility. Three recent novels, Dating Games by RM Johnson, Normal Girl by Molly Jong-Fast, and Moth Smoke by Mohsin Hamid, feature young adult characters attempting to create their identities and illuminate the tensions between myths of self-creation and the realities of social constraints.^{viii} All three novels focus on characters that are outside of mainstream (i.e. white, bourgeois, hegemonic, and Western) society in terms of race, class, gender, nationality, and of course, age. While the creative power associated with emerging adulthood opens up the most possibilities for such characters, the novels indicate that their lack of social status and support undermines any attempts to shape their identities and places in the community. The very cultural myths of individuality and self-creation that now ostensibly allow them power are the result of the Western bourgeois ideologies that deny them such authority, placing the responsibility for societal ills on their heads; for ideologically, individual autonomy and societal pressures are mutually exclusive, and those who do not achieve viable identities are portrayed as either failures or victims.

Johnson, Jong-Fast, and Hamid also explore the relationship between national mythologies and emerging adulthood, albeit in different ways. Johnson focuses on issues of embodiment, representation, and affiliation for marginal characters in a powerful and hegemonic

society, while Jong-Fast envisions a hyperreal America foundering in the excessive consumer goods that once marked it as the Promised Land of the post-World War II global community. Exploring issues of national mythologies in a different context, Hamid sheds light on the status of the emerging Pakistan through representations of its emerging adults, examining the interplay of Muslim, Western, and nationalist myths that all seek the supremacy of hegemonic power. The three novels intimate the relationship between the identity formations of nations and individuals and the impossibility of rejecting the myths that both engender and subvert their identity projects. Ultimately, their emerging adult characters reject the terms that circumscribe their identities and suffer the consequences. They become locked in a self-reflexive project, victims of the mythologies they are attempting to subvert.

A SURVEY OF THE LAND BEYOND STEREOTYPES:
MARGINAL PEOPLES AND BOURGEOIS VALUES
IN RM JOHNSON'S DATING GAMES

Those people at the margins of a nation's political and social center also exist at the margins in terms of national mythologies. Often, they are the "other" by which hegemonic culture defines itself and any attempt of theirs to live out the mythical patterns of that culture simultaneously endanger both the hegemony and the individual. Emerging adults, as well as marginalized populations, occasionally have the liberty to explore other possible identities and lifestyles; however, these identity projects are sometimes threatening and are often rejected by those in society who wield (and wish to maintain) power.^{ix} Due to both the matrix of rhetorical strands weaving through depictions and discussions of emerging adulthood and to the lack of traditional markers of status and responsibility, the manifestation of this life-stage becomes tenuous as young people, marginal and privileged, attempt to reconcile the different voices that establish and shape their social, political, and personal opportunities for power and agency.

This transitional period is enmeshed in both Western and capitalist ideologies of individuality. As a result, emerging adults, while believing in their own ability to formulate a unique identity, are shaped by discourse, and these young people "formulate their beliefs, within positions already fixed by ideology, as if they were true producers" (Larrain 49). In other words, the emerging adult becomes subject to the Western myth of individuality, as well as to other social "recognitions" of his or her status and role; adulthood is a social construction. However, emerging adults "are *always already* subjects, and as such constantly practice the rituals of ideological recognition, which guarantee for us that we are indeed concrete, individual, distinguishable, and (naturally) irreplaceable subjects" (Althusser 59). Possibilities of individuality and uniqueness are not negated, but notions of unhindered self-creation are

foreclosed by social and cultural constraints that, as a result of individualist mythologies, are not always recognized by their subjects, though emerging adults are more conscious of their identity choices than in the model offered in classic subjecthood. The emerging adults' possible role and identities are, then, sited within the parameters created by society and culture. Moreover, these parameters are "particular kinds of 'regimes of the self' [...located] in specific historical and cultural conjunctures. That is, different types of subject are the outcomes of particular historical and social formations" (Barker 175). Due to particular historical, geographical, and cultural positionings, the possibilities available to the emerging adult are not democratic and equal in the twenty-first century any more than the possibilities of adulthood (in terms of independence and social power) were equally available during different historical periods.

The emerging adult, an individual without a definite role in the workforce or family, is often outside of or at the margins of "traditional" society; i.e. the bourgeois and hegemonic arena of the workplace, family, community, and religious group. In part, the emerging adult's exploration of identity speaks to this social break. Identity is available only within the realms of the social (Côté 120), as it "serves as a rudder by which individuals navigate the turbulence generated by their social, cultural, and political environments[....]Understanding oneself, in terms of claiming an identity, is a means by which we announce ourselves to the world" (Headley 45). Therefore, identity exploration is in actuality an attempt to find a viable social identity even while one exists outside of the social. In such instances, marginal peoples often form their own societal models with alternative means of support, as in the case of largely segregated ethnic communities that exist both outside of and within the national culture at large. For emerging adults, however, family and traditional support systems are often not available, and peer groups provide such societal models and support.

Such groups often exist outside of traditional society—they are not socially recognized institutions (such as religious community or family), and most members exist outside of traditional labor markets. As a result, the identities that they nurture and support prove to be socially impracticable. There is no guarantee that the emerging adult’s self-created identity will be accepted by the community, no guarantee that the social role the emerging adult decides is appropriate will be possible given the actual constraints of society. Identities primarily function as social roles. Thus, the identities established by the peer-socialization of emerging adulthood do not automatically carry the status or authority of adulthood in larger society.

RM Johnson, an author who has been accused of “selling out his traditional family-oriented and sensitive writing style for the allure of the big sales and fanfare for novels that feature a lot of violence, ravenous sex and seedy main characters” (Townes 34), explores issues of marginality and socially acceptable roles for those on the outskirts of hegemonic society. His fourth novel, Dating Games, is an attempt to combine hegemonic values with “glamorous” crime sprees and an examination of identity formulations. However, the novel ultimately intimates that such a reconciliation is not possible, and that neither alternative is a viable means to establish a stable identity.

Johnson sets up the main characters as foils for one another. Rafe and Hennessy are presented as positive images of emerging adulthood, while Smoke and Alizé represent its narcissistic and crime-ridden underbelly. In creating these characters, Johnson works with and against stereotypical representations of black men and women and, most overtly, undermines such stereotypes by presenting the ex-con Rafe as an example of sensitive masculinity and Alizé and Hennessy’s single mother Livvy as intelligent and dedicated to both raising her daughters and achieving her personal goals. Johnson also refuses to pigeonhole the characters of Smoke,

the drug lord, and Alizé, the promiscuous man-eater, revealing the human side of such stereotypes. In the end, these characters either move beyond their roles of stereotypes or are sacrificed to the well-being of the community and the family in an attempt to reject the marginality of the black characters. Johnson presents them as individuals who, like Adam, are able to move beyond the past (stereotypes) and, indeed, have the responsibility to create a personal path that will better the community; however, such optimism proves to be unsustainable. Johnson's characters, through their enactment of the identity projects and crises that confront both emerging adults and all marginal peoples (though indeed more difficult to be resolve when in the margins), indicate the hegemonic nature of their societal positions; their attempts at Adamic identity creation ultimately ring false as they become more and more imprisoned by the limited identity possibilities that society affords them.

The individuality of Johnson's characters has much in common with Arnett's description of identity exploration as well as with the postmodernist prototype of identity project.^x For both the novel and these theories, identity "is not static nor[...]already totally completed but rather[...]is] dependent on the stories individuals tell about themselves and their understanding of their place in the world" (Headley 68). For instance, after Livvy decides to stop supporting Hennessy and Alizé upon their graduation from high school, Alizé is thrown from adolescence directly into emerging adulthood. She must now find a way to support herself and to establish an identity that will be recognized by her community. Unlike Hennessy, who has received a scholarship to college, Alizé has made no plans beyond her next sexual conquest. She embarks upon her identity project by pondering future jobs, but as

she thought about the possibilities that were available to her[...]she] could come up with nothing beyond the average, work-your-ass-off-for-minimum-wage gigs[...]That

work was far beneath her, and her image would be torn to shreds if she was ever spotted doing some shit like that. (Johnson 129)

Her refusal to take a job that was “beneath her” on the one hand indicates her teenage inability to recognize her “place in the world” and that she has few practical alternatives. On the other hand, it also indicates Alizé’s belief that her identity is her own creation. She believes she is able to choose her role in life and to reject those that society, as a result of her limited education and relative poverty, attempts to prescribe for her. As a result of her unwillingness to accept the standards of society, she turns to her peer group and criminal activities in order to establish the identity that she chooses.

Johnson’s depiction of Alizé and her struggles to create a socially viable identity illustrates the market sanctioned marginalization of emerging adults. Alizé’s life project focuses more on aspects of self-presentation than individualization. After Rafe rejects her in favor of Hennessy, she wonders what the possible reason could be, considering that she “paid meticulous attention to what she wore each day. Making sure that her clothes fit her body just right[...]every minor detail she looked after in order to make herself irresistible to men” (Johnson 88). Her painstaking focus on her physical appearance, while ostensibly the evidence of narcissism, also indicates Alizé’s recognition of the commodification of both her body and her identity, relating her societal worth to the way she looks.

Such commodification is frequent during emerging adulthood due to emerging adults’ fragmented position in society as well as the growing market of youth culture. For as identity becomes less based on ascribed characteristics and more on individual projects,

people increasingly need to strategically guide and control their own actions in order to continually fit themselves into a community of “strangers” by gaining

their approval through the creation of the right impressions. The wrong impression management can lead to an immediate loss of legitimacy and even censure in the minds of late modern citizens who judge character only by the concrete behaviors they witness. (Côté 123)

Attempting to subvert the patriarchal discourses triggered by her female body, Alizé attempts to gain power for herself by using her body as a tool. However, after she is rejected by Rafe and used by Rick for his sexual gratification, Alizé comes to realize that she is unable to gain power strictly through the use of her body. She is unable to control others' impressions of her in every situation.

While Alizé's focus on her appearance is an extension of her identity project and her socially viable identity is dependent on the way she presents herself in public, she is unable to control the discourse of society. Even though she has barely formed an identity, her project is already in crisis. Such an identity crisis "plunge[s...her] into a certain state of existential vertigo[...causing her] to seek alternative ways of understanding the world so as to reclaim some semblance of normalcy" (Headley 57). As Alizé undergoes her explorations at the margins of society, her identity is not guaranteed to be acceptable to the hegemonic society that bestows the status of adulthood. As she occupies a space outside of society, her explorations are likewise separated from viable societal possibilities. When her attempts at identity construction and efforts to gain social power fail, Alizé must find another way of establishing herself in the community.

Alizé's attempts to create her identity, with few models and little support, lead to a rejection of the patriarchal culture that ties her identity possibilities to her body's usefulness (or uselessness) to men. Livvy is not available as a model of an adult female with status; she is

mistreated both by the nurses she works for and the men she dates. Consequently Alizé turns to popular culture, including movies such as Set It Off, a film detailing the exploits of female criminals who are battling against the power that societal institutions of law enforcement and economics have over their lives. She and her friends decide to seduce, drug, and steal from the men who frequent the nightclubs around town and view them primarily as sex objects. Everyone in the peer group has a negative view towards men, understandably, as each has been abused and/or rejected by the men in her life. Alizé is the daughter of a deadbeat dad; JJ has been sexually abused by her mother's boyfriend until her mother threw her out for "seducing" him; Sasha has been beaten by her boyfriend; and Lisa is a single mother trying to raise her four year old without his father's support. Moreover, none of the young women is successfully able to earn a wage that will pay for necessities and allow for the identity exploration they believe all individuals have the right to enjoy.

While they see their plan as daring and glamorous, Johnson indicates the reality of their situation from the beginning, describing the neighborhood Alizé must visit in order to get the drugs she needs for their targets. She travels to the "rough side of town" where

painfully skinny guys huddled around a single glass pipe, as if they were worshipping it, praying for the next hit of crack[...and] a woman, her dirty blonde hair matted down across her head, dark circles around her eyes[...]held one end of a belt in her teeth[...]a syringe and a tiny vial at her side. (Johnson 130)

These images of the reality of Alizé's new world of crime contrast to those of the Hollywood movie. Due to the constraints exerted on her by her lack of money, valid social models, familial support, and inability to control her own presentation, Alizé is ill-equipped to envision an identity project that proves healthy for her, her family, and her community. Even though her

community does not provide her with an appropriate identity, she must take responsibility for the consequences of her actions. Alizé's sister, Hennessy, is her foil, less for her studious nature than for her ability to create an identity project that is accepted and approved of by her family, even if it does not immediately elevate her status for her peers. Essentially, Hennessy displays bourgeois values and is thus able to achieve success in the bourgeois United States.

The apparent binary opposition of Rafe's "heroism" and Smoke's "villainy" is as ambiguous as the one of the two sisters. The hero and the antihero have both (at least at one time) been seduced by the power of money to deal drugs and have placed peer relationships above family and community. While Smoke continues to reap money and subsequently wield power due to his illegal activities, Rafe has been punished both legally and personally. As a result of his imprisonment and brother's death, he begins to question the direction his life is taking. When paroled, he wants to establish a new identity, one that is recognized by bourgeois society and that is favorable to his community. However, Smoke, and the life of crime that he represents, still constrains Rafe. Upon discovering that his parole officer has arranged to have him work for Smoke, Rafe confronts the law enforcement officer. While Rafe only wants to eliminate Smoke's influence on his life, his parole officer, who has been paid off by Smoke, refusing to help him, responds,

"What? What are you talking about, taking money?" Dotson said, his whisper loud enough to be a shout. "I don't know what the hell you're talking about, and if you repeat that[...]you don't have to worry about who you work for landing you back in the joint." (Johnson 105)

Both his peer relationship with Smoke and social institutions attempt to subvert Rafe's rejection of his former dissipation. For Rafe, a rejection of his prison identity also means a refusal to

remain tied to his family. Since Rafe's incarceration, Smoke has been providing for Rafe's parents. Any relationship with his family would require contact with Smoke. Choosing to distance himself from both Smoke and his family, Rafe finds himself without the support of his parents, friends, or the legal system. The forces of law enforcement, family values, and economic power in this case are at odds with Rafe's bourgeois dreams, the dreams they ostensibly protect. Ultimately, Rafe rejects his peer relationships and endeavors to establish new familial ties with Hennessy, her mother, and her sister; only by eliminating the negative influence of his "friend," Smoke, and eventually that friend himself, can Rafe exercise his ability to form a new identity.

While Rafe is ultimately able to establish a support system that can allow him the opportunity to explore and establish an identity of his choosing, Smoke's attempts at creating an alternative community are untenable. His friendship with Rafe, a member of his peer group, is a partial attempt to create a means to bolster his own identity project. Due to his alienation from and abandonment by his family, Smoke's friendship with Rafe, in the hip-hop model described by Tricia Rose, serves as a source of "alternative identity formation and social status in a community whose older support institutions ha[ve] been all but demolished" (qtd. in Lunine 261).^{xi} In fact, Smoke's character exemplifies such a community, as his own support institutions of family have abandoned him and he turns to existence outside of the law to gain economic and social status.

However, Johnson seeks to subvert the mythology of hip-hop culture, establishing traditional institutions such as family, which are more entrenched in community well-being as ultimately the most worthwhile while recognizing that "families" are defined by their supportive capabilities rather than ties of blood or honor. Not only do the peer groups throughout the novel

lead the main characters to poor decisions, but the alternative of the “gangsta” version of hip-hop culture is detrimental to the community at large. As Brij Lunine explains, this style of hip-hop offers

narratives that are violent and confrontational. The creators of both[...rude-boy reggae and gangsta rap] provide a mythical example of revolt by portraying individual violence with which their audiences can identify and sympathize[...]. To be more exact, the gangsta genre of rap is preoccupied with the individual status of revolt. (263)

While this myth (like the American myth of Adam) emphasizes the individual over the collective, the hip-hop narrative of gangsta rap that is mirrored in Smoke’s peer relationships and lifestyle is a revolt against traditional communal and bourgeois cultures—ironically the cultures that lead to the societal and economic marginality of these black characters. Johnson indicates through Smoke’s dissolution and Alizé’s brush with death that such revolt is impracticable. It destroys the rebellious individual, leaving the hegemonic culture unthreatened. However, Johnson’s final endorsement of both community and individualization also remains untenable for his characters. Hennessy’s family is still not Rafe’s, and the societal and material forces that constrained the characters at the beginning of the novel are left untouched and unchanged.

Johnson’s sanctioning of communal values and endorsement of individualization offer the reader an unlikely optimism about the future of his characters. Even Hennessy’s life is saved, miraculously, after being shot. However, by upholding the values of traditional bourgeois society, the society that has authorized the marginal positions of his characters, Johnson’s optimism proves unsustainable. Such a reversal is consciously presented by Johnson in his description of Alizé’s and Smoke’s attempts to subvert the systems that limit their possibilities

and stunt their personal growth. The very means by which they endeavor to battle these systems lead to a consequent reinforcement of the restrictive structures. The attempts of the margin to thwart the center and its hegemony backfire and ultimately strengthen it.

The apparent freedom of the individual shadows social inequalities, placing all responsibility on the individual for his or her “choices” (Côté 127). In other words, both emerging adults and marginal peoples, as the result of the mythology of self-determination, are held responsible for their inability to achieve their dreams, whether or not access for achieving such dreams is unequal. Those emerging adults who belong to populations who are already marginal to the hegemonic culture must face numerous contradictions that serve to limit their possibilities, power, and status. Their bodies provoke a discourse in patriarchal and colonialist societies that they cannot escape, and they are held responsible for their supposed failure in achieving an adulthood that is “promised” to many but awarded to few, to the few who choose identities that the hegemonic society deems appropriate and who uniquely possess the means by which to access them.

Johnson warns against making identity choices that are detrimental to the community, choices that emphasize money and sexuality, individual good over communal good. However, he fails to fully explore the consequences of choosing more traditional identities, identities that ostensibly strengthen community ties but that fail to battle the social and economic forces that lead to marginalization, or to envision an alternative.

THE CASE FOR DIFFERENCE:
DEFINING NORMALITY IN MOLLY JONG-FAST'S NORMAL GIRL

Ostensibly, emerging adulthood is a time devoted to identity exploration and formation. In late-capitalist cultures that allow and make such a transitional period possible, identities are less likely to be culturally ascribed. As a result, a person's individualization, or "genuine emotional and intellectual growth" (Côté 34), is both afforded to a larger portion of such nations' populations (due to fewer restrictions placed upon those with the necessary capital) and requires greater personal effort due to the lack of societal support systems. The possibilities for individualization are also made precarious by fractured, postmodern, capitalist societies. As a result,

social identities are increasingly in need of being *managed*[...]people's inherited characteristics and prior accomplishments fail to give them legitimacy in a wide variety of social settings[...]instead, people increasingly need to strategically guide and control their own actions in order to continually fit themselves into a community of "strangers" by gaining their approval through the creation of the right impressions.
(Côté 123)

While a person, then, may create a viable social identity in the context of one social group, that identity may well be unpracticable in another. Also, as such identities are "situational, not developmental (i.e., they tend not to be growth-enhancing)[...] they do not prepare the person for the demands and opportunities of psychological adulthood" (Côté 34-35). In other words, because traditional adulthood requires a stable identity based on social roles and psychological maturity, it is reached only with difficulty by those living in societies that both reward and

necessitate unstable, fluctuating identities. Emerging adulthood, then, can be viewed as less transitional than as the status quo of identities in the postmodern era; the search for viable identities is never ending.

Identities in such late-capitalist nations can be viewed as more of a project rather than as stable roles. While perhaps stability itself is less viable in such cultures, as the culture itself is unstable, elastic identities do not come without psychological concerns. Following the theories of psychologist Erik Erikson, Côté posits that “human identity is not infinitely pliable[...and] some sense of ego identity is necessary for effective psychosocial functioning” (126). A sense of self that is available in all circumstances is thus important, especially in late capitalist nations where identity is in many ways commodified. In other words, a person’s identity is viewed as related to his or her material embellishments (i.e., clothing, vehicles, etc.) rather than to his or her productive role within a community. From this standpoint, then, identity as project

can be seen as a crisis...and appears to be widespread in late modern societies in response to a deficit of meaningful social relations and a surfeit of commodified images...[as] these conditions can encourage a “dissipation” rather than an “accruing” of self. (Côté 131)

The “agent,” then, spends more time on studying and attempting to reproduce the signs of appropriate identities that exist within the communities with which he or she has dealings than on working to build an identity based on personal development and achievement. The appearance of a particular identity becomes as socially valid as one built on achievement; as society becomes less personal, the youth dressed as a young executive may be perceived as more powerful than an actual executive due to clothing and other accessories. In terms of emerging adulthood, the young person who spends his or her parents’ money (or uses credit) to purchase

an expensive car is perceived as more successful than the young person who chooses a less expensive version based on actual finances. The appearance first becomes the reality, and then the appearance becomes everything, as reality is no longer valid since simulations encompass all.

While emerging adults on the margins may have their identity possibilities constrained by stereotypes of the hegemony and material deficits in a consumer-driven, late-capitalist culture, those in the “center” are confronted with a plethora of possibilities. As these possibilities are explored outside traditional societal parameters, many times emergence functions not as a transition to adulthood but as a constant deferral of it. There is no definite teleological destination for the young person, and while “there is evidence that such a period of identity formation can be developmentally useful[...]when it takes an exaggerated form or goes on indefinitely, it is more likely there will be casualties—both emotional and physical—associated with it” (Côté 153-154). Exploring and learning about one’s desires and abilities can translate into an adult with more potential and experience. However, explorations can also lead to dissipation and unhealthy lifestyles that, like those of the hip-hop culture of Johnson’s marginalized society, exist outside of society for valid reasons. Moreover, a lengthy extension of emergence often leads nowhere; emerging adults who are unable to find a valid societal position, or have enough economic resources to support them regardless, remain on the margins of society, to their detriment and to that of community upon which they are dependent yet separate.

Focusing on the identity explorations of those American Adams living not on the margins of culture but in the midst of endless possibility, Normal Girl examines a postmodern American culture wherein identity possibilities are based on the hyperreal simulacra of a consumer culture rather than on communally important societal roles. Opening with six popular culture references and a funeral and ending with a trek to an AA meeting, Molly Jong-Fast’s debut novel follows

the downward trajectory of eighteen-year-old Miranda Woke and her possible “redemption” to normality, her rejection of the hyperreal. In part a reaction to, and conceived as a parody of, the work of writers Jay McInerney, Bret Easton Ellis, and Tama Janowitz (Buchwald 1), the novel offers a slew of repetitious “brand-name” references and chronicles the growing dissipation of a young and wealthy party girl. However, as Jong-Fast relates,

I feel that their [McInerney’s, Ellis’s, and Janowitz’s] characters get off too easily. They always maintain their slickness, and there don’t seem to be a lot of consequences to their actions. They can sleep with whomever they want and they aren’t called sluts; they can do as many drugs as they want and they don’t overdose. I felt that I wanted a character who people called a “coke-whore.” The stuff I know really happens, because I’ve known people like this before. (Buchwald 1)

Instead of allowing her protagonist to indefinitely waste away in an existential purgatory where designer clothes, and even designer drugs, make the woman, Jong-Fast rejects the romanticization of youthful dissipation and attempts to establish a criterion for normality. Such normality nevertheless remains tenuous, as its signifiers remain in the universe of the hyperreal; Jong-Fast attempts to allow her character, through rehab, an escape route from the surface world of simulacra that she once inhabited, but ultimately that road can not provide an escape from the hyperreality of the center.

The hyperreal world that Jong-Fast describes is tied to the consumer culture of late-capitalist America. After World War II, the United States reworked the utopian myth of the New World Garden in more materialist terms; it was

reconstructed as the site of apparently limitless consumer goods at a

time when Europe was suffering a scarcity even of staples[...and was] constructed as the place of materialization for the nexus of concerns that articulated the commodity fetishism of consumption capitalism: primarily, youth, sexual desire, female beauty, and leisure. (Stratton 28)

In other words, utopia, earthly perfection, began to be viewed as possible due to the surfeit of consumer goods. Such goods confer virtues; they represent socially valuable ideals such as wealth, success, and independence. However, as such goods become attainable (at least to some extent) by anyone able to afford them, their value diminishes. Such a utopia of availability, then, leads to a culture of hyperreality, as simulation “starts from the *utopia* of this principle of equivalence, *from the radical negation of the sign as value*, from the sign as reversion and death sentence of every reference[...].simulation envelops the whole edifice of representation as itself a simulation” (Baudrillard 11, italics his).

The myth of a religious utopia is, then, replaced with one of a plethora of consumer goods. In turn, the American Adam’s value is no longer his [or her] freedom from the ties of tradition; the myth is commodified and produced as a simulacrum of youthful “perfection.” Normal Girl’s “Madison Avenue Mafia,” Miranda’s “second mother of a sort” takes such ambitions as the basis of their existence, believing that

no matter how large the nose or how bad the birthmark, whatever it is it’ll look better waxed, tweezed, trained, starved, and squeezed into a miniskirt. Eventually you’ll have a product that has been honed, perfected. One that will be married before the end of the summer season. (Jong-Fast 26)

The value of an individual in Miranda's world is based on his or her ability to induce someone to "buy," to accept as valuable. The means to become so marketable lie in one's physical image, how much one's outer appearance (including profession, family, social circle) conveys culturally desirable commodities, such as youth, wealth, and beauty. The individual is therefore a product, a commodity, subject to the same market forces.

As material consumption becomes the basis for culture and finance in the late-capitalist world, its products often become standardized in attempts to compete effectively in the marketplace. Such standardization has much in common with Baudrillardian simulacra, in that it is "formulaic, repetitive and superficial[...and celebrates] trivial, sentimental, immediate and false pleasures at the expense of serious, intellectual, time honoured and authentic values" (Strinati 14). In other words, standardized goods and cultural products have no "true" referent; there are no "traditional" markers of value, just as there are no longer traditional markers of adulthood. Judgments of value and propriety are based on image and its commonality with the "standard," the hegemony, as well as its generic individualization. Such is also the case with those living through the stage of emerging adulthood, where

the mistaking of individuality (an impression management derived from mass culture) for developmental individualization (genuine intellectual and emotional growth) seems to be the crux of the problem many people face today in making a transition from youth to adulthood. (Côté 34-35)

Emerging adulthood, then, is subject to the same problems of the late-capitalist culture that brought it into prominence. Both have had their "traditional" markers of value replaced with repetitive and formulaic simulacra that no longer reference a deeper meaning. Image replaces

myth as the harbinger of meaning, and the American consumer utopia becomes a hyperreal universe where the simulation carries more value than the “real.”

Instead of blaming late-capitalism society for such a hyperreality, however, Jong-Fast implies a modicum of control for her characters, designating their choices of lifestyle as the cause of this state. After all, if they are creators of the hyperreal world, they can be destroyers of it as well. For instance, while Miranda laments that “nothing ever really changes, not around here anyway[...]our relentless obsession with The Next Big Thing-ism (T.N.B.T.-ism) remains the same” (Jong-Fast 3), that obsession is not ultimately blamed on the consumer driven culture of late-capitalist society. Rather, Jong-Fast implicates the characters’ lack of responsibility for their own choices, moving away from the tradition of Ellis and other New Fiction writers of the 1980s. For instance, in his novels, Ellis attributes alienation and dissipation to absentee parents,

establish[ing] a clear source of the intimations of nonbeing that haunt...

[Less Than Zero’s] young characters. [Moreover,] taking the place of the parents so ready to abandon their offspring both physically and emotionally is an array of ironic surrogates who appear to compensate for parental shortcomings while actually exploiting the young. (Sahlin 28).

Jong-Fast also presents several surrogate parents providing support for Miranda in the wake of her parents’ self-focus. Janice, the aging ex-model turned heroin addict and her husband James are the most notable. These characters and their relationships with the protagonists mirror a feature of the dark side of emerging adulthood, wherein the young are stripped of societal support, then interpolated as ravenous consumers by mass culture marketing ploys promising identity but offering only socially perishable goods (Côté 125). Identity, for them, is viewed as unreliable, as it varies from situation to situation and from social season to social season;

however, it is, like every other facet of their lives, able to be bought. If identity is never stable, then any identity is forever possible.

Rather than placing ultimate responsibility on the “adults,” Jong-Fast lays blame on the young Miranda for the part she plays in these destructive relationships. While Janice and others support her habits, she also supports theirs, convincing Janice to go to a party after Jeff’s funeral and calling her for a fix before an art opening. She is just as exploitive as these “surrogate parents,” taking advantage of whoever can provide her with drugs, whether they are ex-boyfriends or bums off the street. Miranda’s hyperreal world is not the cause of her drugged escapism; her dissipation is the result of her own desire to escape the responsibilities and limitations of the “real” world. However inasmuch as the traditional authority figures in Miranda’s life, her parents, are unavailable, peer authority (not necessarily age based) provides the examples of a mode of conduct for her. Such a “total breakdown of authority[...]sets the stage for arbitrary authority to assert itself by offering certainty to replace uncertainty” (Côté 123). This arbitrary authority in Miranda’s case is the general mode of conduct of her friends; their lifestyles allow her to view her own as “normal.” Due to her exclusion from a world that places value on achievement and personal attributes rather than on drug availability and haute couture, Miranda has few alternative models of existence.

Miranda’s “redemption,” then, is the result of being presented with such alternative models and is tied to her awareness of her own responsibility. She refuses to explain away her drug habit as the result of alienation or distant parents, telling her mother, ““this has nothing to do with you. This isn’t about the fact that you missed my seventh birthday[...]or why you and my father got divorced[...]this is about me and that’s it. Me and my drugs”” (Jong-Fast 329-330). In such a way, Jong-Fast allows Miranda to mature and grow, to use her emerging

adulthood in a positive way, to establish a stable identity rather than condemning her to the diffuse and image-conscious existential purgatory occupied by characters of the New Fiction writers. In fact, Jong-Fast seeks to even renew the connection between sign and meaning, combating the parade of simulacra that makes up the hyperreal universe of those dissipated youth. Through Miranda's words, she suggests that the angst of the postmodern capitalist world is the result of personal choices of escape. Miranda relates,

I can say with some authority that it's been a long time since I've had a feeling that hasn't been the direct result of some drug I've taken. So the word *sad* just seems like another word that rolls down my tongue and out of my mouth. (Jong-Fast 8)

Again, Jong-Fast intimates that Miranda's hyperreal world is the result of her drug habit, rather than the effect of any societal or parental abandonment. Simulacrum and its resulting hyperreality, the disruption between a sign and its meaning, are the result of concrete behaviors that can be changed. Thus, Jong-Fast's characters retain their ability to control and change their "real" universe.

In order to reach a state of "normality," where words still signify a "true" meaning, Miranda must renounce her attempts at escapism. Jong-Fast represents Miranda's journey to normality through her material, bodily experiences. At first, Normal Girl, along with Ellis and the other New Fiction writers, depicts a world in which the realities of human existence, even those of the body, no longer have a meaning. Death and sickness are presented as fodder for gossip rather than as circumstances with consequences. Miranda even notes that "funerals are the cotillions of the nineties, where the young people meet and mingle" (Jong-Fast 5). As in Ellis's debut novel, Less Than Zero, the world of Jong-Fast's characters is portrayed as death-in-

life, where “obsessions with appearance and material acquisitions, addiction to chemical substances, and an unreflective attraction to death combine[...]to form a picture of existence devoted to, rather than questioning, the absurd” (Sahlin 30). As a result, because of the accepted absurdity of existence, life has no meaning for these characters.

However, Jong-Fast foreshadows Miranda’s ultimate espousal of life and its realities and responsibilities from the beginning of the novel. For instance, after Janice injects herself with heroin at Jeff’s funeral, Miranda eagerly watches her body regain life, relating,

I sit her on the floor and watch her come back from the place that isn’t quite death but isn’t quite life either[...]I like secretly watching the life come back into her feature, white lips go pink, cheeks rose up, then her eyes recognize me again. Her hands shake, and it’s clear to both of us she’s just trying to get straight, chasing a high lost years ago.

(Jong-Fast 22).

Unlike Ellis’s characters, Miranda does question the absurd and eventually rejects it in favor of “real” life. Jong-Fast, in fact, describes Miranda’s normality through the material relationship between her body and the outside world. Once she has gone through rehab and given up drugs, Miranda can no longer escape from the “real” world, a world that can offer both pleasure and pain. For instance, in the final scene of the novel, Miranda sensuously rejoices in physical pleasure (“I take a bite. The frosting melts on my tongue” [Jong-Fast 194]) and is surprised by pain and vulnerability (“I try to pick up the shattered plate but slice my hand on a piece of porcelain. I’m slightly surprised that even after all I’ve been through I can still cut myself so easily, and I can still bleed from such a dull shard” [Jong-Fast 195]). No longer is Miranda’s world characterized by death-in-life; after rejecting the hyperreal existence caused by escapism

and drug abuse, Miranda must reacquaint herself with a world of the “real,” a world to which she is tied by her body.

By the novel’s end, Jong-Fast associates normality with a lack of self-delusion, a lack that leads to a search for fulfillment, an emerging adulthood about growth not dissipation. Unlike the crack-addicted Bee who is unaware of the reason she is in the rehabilitation clinic or even of the death of her parents, Miranda faces the daylight and heads to an AA meeting, taking responsibility for her life and in touch with her own mortality. While in the hyperreal world of Baudrillardian simulacra in which Miranda once lived “words possess no force because they lose the hidden reference of their referent” (Brusseau 41), she begins to seek meaning in her life after her rehabilitation. Discovering a grocery list her father once wrote, Miranda “look[s] at it for a long time, like I could discover something about my father from what he used to eat” (Jong-Fast 194). However, these lines also underscore a different meaning: Miranda’s separation from others. In order to save herself from the death-in-life of hyperreality, she must break ties with many of those whom she once cared about, indicating the tenuous nature of her new maturity, one that still exists outside of society, even if that society (as in Miranda’s case) is a dangerous hyperreality.

Jong-Fast’s novel indicates the result of the United States’ mythological past as it is welded to its late-capitalist present. The American Adam is able to obtain any identity, as identity now can be posited by material goods. However, as now the United States is conceivably a utopia of consumerism, and that utopia allows a plethora of identities, there is nowhere else to go. For, “the utopian promised land always [before] existed in the mythical space of the frontier. With settlement came the loss of transcendence, as the settled area became incorporated into earthly reality” (Stratton 39). While intellectuals of the early twentieth century

began to lament the dissolution of the frontier space, the writers of the early twenty-first century have begun to examine the result of said loss. Just as Miranda finds her normalcy in its difference to the hyperreal world of signs around her, the utopia of the United States must be proven by its difference to the world around it. In other words, “it is always a question of proving the real by the imaginary, proving truth by scandal, proving the law by transgression, proving work by the strike, proving the system by crisis and capital by revolution” (Baudrillard 36). The nation can maintain its position of a promised land only by defining itself against the paucity of options available to others. Likewise, the identity diffusion characteristic of emerging adulthood becomes more prevalent as the status of endless options is posited as superior to the “limitations,” to the stability, of traditional adulthood. Jong-Fast’s novel displays several characters, across age groups, who can be viewed as emerging adults; the stability of adulthood is postponed indefinitely as it becomes viewed as a foreclosure no matter what age individual is. However, both following and in reaction to the American model of the Utopia that has led to a hyperreal state, Jong-Fast indicates a new “Utopia” of the spiritual and physical rather than the material (in terms of economic materialism). Miranda’s possibility for adulthood is posited to exist only when in contrast to the spiritual paucity of those who postpone participation in the “real world,” a move that is both conservative (in its return to the values celebrated by past generations) and potentially revolutionary (in its rejection of the materialist terms that have promoted the West’s authority in international economics and politics). Jong-Fast’s conclusions are still problematic, however. As a wealthy, young white woman, Miranda has the luxury of rejecting the material while not risking further disapproval from the community. Her return to the physical and spiritual realm are also troubling in this is the domain that has historically been connected to the “feminine,” shaky ground for a purportedly feminist author.

TRAPPED BY BINARIES:
IDENTITY FORMATION FOR NATION STATES AND INDIVIDUALS
IN MOHSIN HAMID'S MOTH SMOKE

As more nations across the globe reap the benefits of the late-capitalist marketplace, or attempt to compete in it, the stage of emerging adulthood becomes more prevalent—both as a way of life and as a perceived natural right. Because the stage mirrors to some extent the in-between class and cultural positions of society, authors as diverse as Taslima Nasrin and Ngũgĩ Wa Thiong'o have used young adult characters to illuminate the postcolonial positions of their nations and their relationship with the rest of the world, especially the affluent and culturally and politically pervasive West.^{xii} Many times, the national myths of these second and third world nations are acted out by these young characters; however, as both the young people and the nations are in flux, they create hybrid myths, combining elements of both the “East” and the “West.” Moreover, just as in the postcolonial United States, while these myths attempt to project an image of individual freedom, they are ultimately subject to the main goal of these nations: to show the world the extent of their power and the necessity of their inclusion as peers on the international front.^{xiii}

In fact, often the myths that are chosen to convey a nation's identity, no matter the source, are chosen for their ability to create such an impression. The hegemony that results is “secured[...]because concessions are made by dominant to subordinate groups. The culture which is built around this hegemony will thus express in some way the interests of the subordinate groups” (Strinati 166). Hegemony thus exists on two levels, that of the existing world powers and that of the nation state itself. In the first case, the nation state is the subordinate group allowed concessions by international powers. As a result, in order to compete on an international level, the subordinate nation must model its identity and development on the

patterns established by the dominant ideology. In the second case, the individual is subordinate to the goals and aims of the nation state and must in some ways sacrifice individuality and personal agendas in the face of the models upheld by national authority. In either case, the binary structure of power relationships is upheld, even while the positions of particular entities (nation-state, individual) are allowed some flexibility.

As I've explained, the myth of the American Adam, as well as those of the Promised Land, frontier, and American Dream served as particular means to formulate and establish an identity for the newly postcolonial United States, an identity created in opposition to those ascribed on its existence and people by the European colonial powers. In much the same way, newly postcolonial nations are attempting to create identities separate from those bestowed by the colonial powers that controlled them for so long. These political formations of national identity mirror the phenomenon of emerging adulthood in several ways. Both are to some extent concerned with identity formation and exploration, take place in an unstable period where competing discourses battle over the proper direction to take, and are ultimately subject to the approval and representations of those nations/persons already in positions of power. As well, cultural identity is seen not as a reflection of a fixed, natural, state of being but as a process of *becoming*[...]identity is continually being produced within the vectors of similarity and difference[...]and the points of difference around which cultural identities could form are multiple and proliferating. (Barker 177)

Cultures as well as nation-states must undergo the same identity exploration as the emerging adult in order to discover, through discourse with other powers, a viable and acceptable identity. As those relationships are often structured as binary or either/or, the position for those with

emerging identities, whether they be nation states or individuals, becomes tenuous. A time of in-between-ness is unstable not only due to the investigation of different options but also because it is able to take place only in a no-man's-land outside the power structures that ultimately control it.

Additionally, in a binary system, there is always a party with power and a party without. For the individual, no matter the myths of individualism, the nation and its cultural hegemony always occupy the position of power. Their concessions to the individual, in the face of ultimate powerlessness, are mythologies of individualism. However, while such myths seemingly provide agency for those who would otherwise hold little or no power, they also hide systemic inequalities and political issues that if confronted would fissure the already fragile nation-state. For instance, while “the postcolonial dream of liberation[...]is based on an irresolvable contradiction that is revealed in the violence that seeks to suppress it” (O'Brien 75), the dream of individual freedom is not subject to such aggressive strikes. Only when the individual attempts to forge an identity that is by definition anathema to the structures of the society is such force wielded. Often, the mythologies that shape the nation also shape the emerging adults who seek a place in its society. However, if this identity reflects badly on already precarious nation states, the individual is condemned for his or her defection from the unspoken cultural norms which he or she is in fact upholding.

Ultimately the cultural, economic, and political forces that novels such as Nasrin's Shame and Ngũgĩ's The River Between appear to undermine are upheld, as is the case in Mohsin Hamid's debut novel Moth Smoke. This novel, along with the others, explores the relationship of an emerging adult, a nation, and a mythology, all of which are threatened by the reach of late-capitalist culture. Hamid combines elements of the historical myth of Shah Jahan and juxtaposes

it with the “Pakistani Dream” of his protagonist Daru, re-framing and re-centering the Pakistani subject. Moreover, Hamid sets up the novel as a trial for the reader. Each character is allowed to tell his or her story, to attempt to convince the reader of his or her innocence and the validity of his or her identity. Such a structure serves two purposes. On the one hand, presenting each character’s testimony allows the author to present several different facets of subjectivity and gives the characters agency within the framework of the novel even if they do not actually have such power within the framework of the plot. On the other, these differing explanations and perceptions of social and personal identities serve to harmonize disparate, conflicting beliefs and ideologies as

the possibility of explanation carries the presupposition of an explainable (even if not fully) universe and an explaining (even if imperfectly) subject.

These presuppositions assure our being. Explaining, we exclude the possibility of the *radically* heterogeneous. (Spivak 33)

In other words, because the majority of Western readers come to a trial structure of the novel familiar with the genre, they expect an answer, an explanation, a thematic unity. Such a unity is also purported by the nation-state. Concerned with its international image, the newly formed nation attempts to provide a coherent “explanation” of the values it stands for and a validation for the position it would like to hold in world politics and economics.

Hamid also manipulates readers’ expectations with the use of a Pakistani historical myth, setting the story of a trial, a history, and a nation within the brackets of the tale of Shah Jahan, Moghul emperor, and the fission of his empire at the hands of his sons. The unnumbered pages both before and after the body of the novel tell how in the years of the Moghul Empire, there lived a great emperor with three sons, and Darashikoh was the favorite. However, his brother

Aurangzeb gained control of the nation and punished Dara for apostasy from the established Muslim tradition. In between this bracketing, two modern day sons of Pakistan lay claim to the future of the nation and to the body of Mumtaz, the novel's heroine, while the nation itself vies for international power, testing its first nuclear weapons. The two modern sons are Daru, a former scholar then bank employee who falls into a downward spiral of drugs, crime, and illicit sex after losing his job, and Ozi, a powerful son of a corrupt businessman. All in their mid to late twenties, the three main characters (including Mumtaz, Ozi's wife and underground journalist) attempt to navigate their emerging adulthoods in the midst of a country torn by nationalist ideologies and disputes of tradition. Enmeshed in capitalist ideologies of progress, the three and their homeland try to establish identities of power and possibility. However, Daru, like Pakistan, occupies a position outside the center of power and both of their attempts at establishing self-created identities lead to potentially dangerous and damaging outcomes.

An orphan, Daru Shezad embodies the position of emerging adult as outlined by Jeffrey Jensen Arnett. He is exploring alternative identities, attempting to find one that will fulfill his ambitions yet be socially sanctioned. He is also self-focused, as one reviewer phrases it, almost "whiney" (Stracher 1). Additionally, his life is as unstable and there are few possibilities available to him in terms of identity or lifestyle. Daru is literally in-the-middle, in a city where there is barely a middle; he desires the life of power inherited by Ozi, yet, materially, he is more akin to the socially unacceptable Murad Badshah, corrupt owner of a fleet of passenger carts. He does not have the means to even pay for his food or bills, much less his servant Manucci; hence he decides to turn to a life of crime, one of the few possibilities that he feels is available for him to support the identity that he has *chosen*. Like Badshah, he is "socially unconnected[...and] loses his precarious footing among the respectably employed and falls into an abyss of emotional

depression, moral turpitude, and criminal activity” (Goldsmith 116). Moreover, Daru’s attempts at identity formation are foiled by the constraints of a highly stratified society. A subaltern will always exist in a binary structure, even if the subaltern state is occupied by different individuals. Only by negating the binary can the subaltern ever be able to speak and be heard.

However, just as the dream of liberation is threatening to those in power, any attempt to create a space for one’s identity outside of the existing structure jeopardizes the pre-eminence of the system. Such a menace is especially troubling to structures such as newly postcolonial nation states that have little in the way of power and stability anyway. Theirs is not a hegemony readily able to offer concessions to the subordinate. As a result, not content to remain in the middle (even if able to do so), and refusing to occupy a position of service, Daru loses the material means to maintain even a middle ground position. He loses his job in the bank after refusing to pretend obsequiousness to a client. And even his outward appearance of “rude[ness]” disguises the vehemence of his inner rebellion. He thinks, “I’m not one of your serfs, you bastard. And I want you to get the hell out of my chair,” but he only says, ““Mr. Jiwan, I’m not trying to be disrespectful”” (Hamid 20). Whatever his choice, Daru must relinquish some part of his identity. Either he maintains an appearance of submission to the authority of the wealthy and powerful Mr. Jiwan and loses the possibility of societal respect, or he defends himself and relinquishes his job and societal position. He is striving to attain an adult position characterized by an independence having supporters hostile to the powerful elite. However, he also avoids taking responsibility for his actions and their results, for the societal nature of his identity.

His attempts at individualization are in fact unfeasible because of his position as a middle man in society, contrary to the expectations of the Western bourgeois, a fact that Daru repudiates repeatedly. He is able, though, to recognize this impossibility for others, as he worries about his

young cousin Jamal who has started a web design agency with a friend. Upon visiting their office, Daru reflects,

I'm happy to see Jamal so excited, but the more he tells me, the more worried I become. The equipment all belongs to his friend. The office is in his friend's house. The clients have come to them because of his friend's father. The entire venture is being bankrolled by his friend's father[...]And unlike wide-eyed Jamal[...]his friend looks very business-savvy. (Hamid 94)

By looking at his cousin's situation, Daru becomes aware of how dependent those in the middle are on the upper class in their attempts to find economic and social success. Just as Daru has depended on Ozi and his father, Jamal now depends on his friend, and Daru worries that their situations are equally unstable. However, he does not recognize his own part in the process of creating his social position. While Daru thinks that he knows what he wants out of life, he fails to recognize that

this "freedom" requires a great deal from people because it places pressure on them to continually reflect on their relations with others; to be conscious of the necessity to think ahead; to make choices, the results of which they will have to live with; to be solely responsible for their failings and limitations; and to overcome structural obstacles such as social class, race, gender, and age barriers. (Côté 127)

His failure to be aware of his own responsibility, his assumptions that his goals are possible without severe sacrifice, leads to mere "pettiness—the snarls about who's in and who's out" (Stracher 1) and the frustration that continues his downward spiral. While Mumtaz is ostensibly

the site of his and Ozi's competition, and according to the central metaphor of the novel is Daru's flame, she is merely the physical form standing in for their true competition of power; that power and possibility is the flame that Daru continues to flirt with and circle, the fire that eventually extinguishes all of his possibilities.

Both symbol and individual in the novel and in the culture of the nation state, the very name of Mumtaz bespeaks this woman's unstable position. While in the novel she holds the position of Ozi's wife and Daru's lover, in the history, Mumtaz is Darashikoh's and Aurangzeb's mother. In effect, the character of Mumtaz represents the nation, the mother, and the sexual female. Hamid also depicts the character as an author, constructing her own world and, ultimately, the future of Pakistan. In an interview with Vibhuti Patel of Newsweek, Hamid upholds Mumtaz's ultimate agency. Responding to his naming her after the beloved wife of Shah Jahan memorialized by the monument of the Taj Mahal, he states,

that Mumtaz is remembered for a building built to commemorate her;
my Mumtaz is the architect of her own vision. She follows a direction
that's painful. The steps she takes are the only positive ones taken
in the book. (Patel 62)

While upholding Mumtaz's agency in the interview, Hamid also compares her with the disputed Kashmiri region because "the feuding 'brothers' fight over her just as India and Pakistan do over Kashmir" (Patel 62). He even gives her maiden name as Kashmiri (Hamid 86). Mumtaz then becomes more than the positive character who creates her own identity presented by Hamid, and her body becomes a space of contention for two warring entities, each laying claim to her. In other words, Ozi and Daru exist as representatives of "preponderantly masculinist ideolog[ies of nationalist propaganda] that propagate[...themselves] through a heavy reliance on feminine

ideals” (Ray 129). In effect, these emerging adult characters represent the emerging national mythologies that compete for primacy in both Pakistan and in the world marketplace. In such a way, they play several roles, with Ozi and Daru forever at separate ends of a binary and Mumtaz as the ground over which the two wage battle, whether it be international (the West and Pakistan, India and Pakistan), national (the elite and the masses), or individual.

Throughout the novel, Hamid toys with these positions and the ideologies that uphold them. For instance, Mumtaz’s Halloween costume of Mother Earth is fitting considering the nationalistic discourses pervading her birth country where “such terms as ‘motherlands,’ ‘mother cultures,’ and ‘mother tongues’ continue to flourish in this era that is witness to a resurgence of violent nationalist discourses globally” (Ray 129). At least for this one night that she begins her relationship with Ozi, Mumtaz occupies a space of nationalist discourse that emphasizes the domestic nature of both statehood and the female sphere. From her first meeting with Ozi, Mumtaz assumes an unnatural, for her, mantle of nationalistic motherhood, and after giving birth to Muazzam, this assumed attire becomes more and more uncomfortable for her. She does not feel the way a mother is “supposed to,” and questions why she is so “unnatural”: “I felt so guilty. I knew there was something wrong with me. I was a monster” (Hamid 153). When confronted with a pre-constructed identity such as motherhood, Mumtaz feels the dissonance between her personal identity and the one pressed upon her by essentialist ideology. Such feelings of being unnatural are tied to nationalist propaganda that “describes its object using either the vocabulary of kinship or home, in order to denote something to which one is ‘naturally’ tied[...]not chosen” (Kandiyoti 382).

Mumtaz feels that she, by virtue of giving birth and caring for a child, should inevitably feel the bond of motherhood and should cease to desire a life outside of the constraints of marriage and

family. While she may have assumed the role of Mother Earth for Halloween, a costume that could be discarded at the end of the night, her role as actual mother places her at a site of nationalistic discourse from which she is less able to extricate herself without also discarding the material and social means that allow her agency. Her emerging identity throughout much of the novel is in many ways shaped less by her own identity project than by the nationalistic dialogue that surrounds her and her gender. In other words, Mumtaz's agency must be sacrificed to her role as wife and mother, as her "natural" female position precludes any sphere outside of the domestic. The female space, the place of the family "conventionally the domain of private, female space[...is] figured as beyond history" (McClintock 93). Therefore, her femininity becomes tied to her role as mother; if she refuses to enact this role to the letter, then she is indeed a "monster" and a threat to societal security.

Whatever identity options available to Mumtaz must be weighted in relationship to how they reflect on those to whom she is socially tied, namely Ozi and Muazzam. As a representative of the capitalist elite and modern Pakistan, Ozi is unconcerned with Mumtaz's secret existence as journalist Zulfikar Manto, going so far as to "preview his later work[...and seeing] she was passionate about it[...]let her keep up the pretense for as long as she wanted" (Hamid 192). Even her revolutionary journalistic activities are unthreatening to the establishment, as she remains locked in her domestic roles as wife and mother. In fact, her activities strengthen Ozi's claims of his tolerance and decency. He allows her transgressions, "thrilled that she was having adventures" (Hamid 192), because they indicate that he is a "new" man, a Western man, willing to allow his wife freedom of experience and expression. Ozi even turns her adultery into a means to protect the authority of his status as an enlightened, modern man. He describes his feelings about finding out about Mumtaz and Daru's affair using language that relies on

tradition, explaining that he “couldn’t put what I endured into words. There’s a reason prophets perform miracles: language lacks the power to describe faith[...and] its flip side, betrayal” (Hamid 193). In his testimony in this trial of society, Ozi claims the authority of both tradition and modernity, in much the same way nationalist politics proclaim the authority of the past and the promise of a utopian future.

Ironically, these nationalist politics that constrain the possibilities for so many are the result of the constrained possibilities of the state. In attempts to compete with its “brother” India, Pakistan experiments with its own nuclear weapons. The novel is set at this time “in 1998 as the nuclear one-upmanship between Pakistan and India escalates[...spurring] Pakistan’s destructive fascination with nuclear technology” (Waters 1). In many ways, the relationship between Pakistan and India is mirrored in that of Daru and Ozi. If these situations are parallel, Daru’s fall at the result of his competition with Ozi implies Pakistan’s ultimate fall if it continues to compete with India on a global playing field wherein its only role available is that of second-class state. Hamid demonstrates that possibility in an exchange between Murad and some of his workers:

“Everyone has a bomb. And now the Muslims have a bomb. Why should we be the only ones without it?”

“And when prices go up, and schools shut down, and hospitals run out of medicine, then?”

“Then we’ll work twice as hard and eat half as much.” (Hamid 134)

The price of attempts to gain power is dissipation and failure, both for Daru and for Pakistan.

Hamid closes his novel by again referring to the historic myth of the Moghuls, writing that “it is perhaps between hope and memory, in the atomized, atomic lands once Aurangzeb’s empire, that our poets tell us Darashikoh, the apostate, called out to God as he died” (Hamid

246). Just as the mythical Darashikoh is unable to escape the traditions of religion enforced by Aurangzeb, Daru is unable to escape the traditional upper-class power held and imposed by Ozi. In Simulations, Jean Baudrillard writes, “all the hypotheses of manipulation are reversible in an endless whirligig. For manipulation is a floating causality where positivity and negativity engender and overlap with one another, where there is no longer any active or passive” (Baudrillard 30-31). In much the same way, emerging adulthood proves to be most tenuous when it attempts to exist outside of the tradition of myth. At the very points it allows individuals to create their own identities, it ties them ever more firmly to myths and traditions that formerly would have ascribed their fates. Combining Emerson’s parties of Hope and Memory, reconciling the myth of possibility with the reality of inscription, the mythical son of the emperor, the parallel of the nation Pakistan, even when bereft of all, still attempts to gain the identity that is forbidden, and finds himself calling out for mercy to the powers that he once believed were no longer there.^{xiv} Daru, Ozi, and Mumtaz, ostensible creators of their own identities and fates, are ultimately in the hands of the systems of power. Even Mumtaz’s attempt to tell Daru’s story, in the end, while being “the story of [his] innocence[...is only] a half-story” (Hamid 245). His identity is ascribed by the readers of this novel, hence the frame of the trial. Adulthood is still socially assigned, whatever the aim of the individual.

HOPE VERSUS MEMORY: THE CASE OF THE EMERGING ADULT

The portrayals of these American and Pakistani emerging adults mirror the complex political identity formations of the two nations. Undoubtedly, Pakistan, as a relatively new nation-state, is searching for a stable identity. In Moth Smoke, Hamid presents the nation as almost another emerging adult character. While Daru attempts to combat the power of Ozi and the traditional aristocracy that he represents, Pakistan sets off its first nuclear weapon in attempts to prove to India that it holds as much power and promise. Though the United States has been in existence for approximately two hundred years longer than Pakistan and holds more global power, it still struggles with its national identity. Johnson's and Jong-Fast's novels less clearly draw a parallel between the nation and the individual; however, the attempts of some of their characters to shape harsh realities are analogous to some American mythic trends. For instance, R.W.B. Lewis notes that myths of the American Adam indicate in some ways that "there has been a resistance in America to the painful process of growing up, something mirrored and perhaps buttressed by our writers, expressing itself in repeated efforts to revert to a lost childhood and a vanished Eden" (Lewis 129). Such efforts are both argued against and supported in the two novels. Johnson critiques the immaturity and worship of the material of Alizé and Smoke, but he ends the novel happily with those who are on the traditional path to success, to the "American Dream," protected and well on their way, Alizé a convert to their way of thinking, and Smoke both repentant and dead. Jong-Fast de-glamorizes the decadent lifestyle of Miranda and her fellow revelers in the unreal yet promotes a vision of normalcy that relies on traditional bourgeois definitions and values.

That these novels, for the most part, are marketed as “pleasure reads” (with perhaps the exception of Moth Smoke) bolsters the importance of their portrayals of emerging adulthood.

They are viewed as pleasurable in part due to their very redundancy and generic nature, as

in contemporary industrial society[...]everything can be summed up under the sign of a continuous load of information[...]and] narratives of a redundant nature would appear in this panorama as an indulgent invitation to repose, the only occasion of true relaxation offered to the consumer.

(Eco 875)

In other words, they afford the reader pleasure due to the standardized nature of their plots, and such standardization, such repetition of the same myths and character-types, indicates the ways of thinking most familiar and amenable to their readers. As a result, the stance that these novels take on adulthood is important due to its commonality, to its broad appeal. In order for the novels to have mass appeal, the majority of readers agrees with and subscribe to the characterizations that they present. Moreover, the commentary these authors provide on adulthood, a time of life that privileges “‘sanity,’ ‘normality,’ rationality, continuity, sobriety, responsibility, wisdom, conduct as opposed to mere behavior, the good of the family or group or species as distinct from the desires of the individual” (Stegner 227), all traits that seek to stabilize the status quo, is worthy of notice. Members of marginal groups themselves, including that of the emerging adult, Johnson, Jong-Fast, and Hamid all portray dissipated emerging adults, and all attempt to place the responsibility for that dissipation on the heads of their troubled characters, indicating the primacy of the individual over that of the culture of the nation-state. By doing so, they can avoid prescriptive or essentialist identities that would have plagued their

characters several decades ago, identities not flexible enough to allow for individual choice and exploration.

However, they also portray environments that have handicapped their characters in their attempts at identity formation, resulting in challenges against the very structures that they seem to uphold. While individual agency is upheld by both the Western bourgeois and capitalist ideologies, and thus may be suspect to those who wish to counter this ideology's paramount sway over the peoples of late-capitalist (and even postcolonial) nations, such misgivings do not presuppose its ultimate possibility. Ideology does not necessarily mean distortion as "economic relations themselves cannot prescribe a single, fixed and unalterable way of conceptualizing" the world (Hall quoted in Larrain 50). Hamid, Jong-Fast, and Johnson do not so much dispute the identity myths that emphasize personal freedom and responsibility as elucidate the violent possibilities that such identities, if available for all, would ultimately occur. Economic and, as a result, social relations act as only one player in a discourse of several different voices. In fact, just as the trial structure of Moth Smoke prevents total fragmentation, the very study of emerging adulthood can be an attempt to explain to avoid radical individual differences. According to postmodern theories of identity, agency is possible because of the instability of ideology and culture, an instability that is fought by the hegemonic culture that bestows the status of adulthood, highlighting the problematic nature of emerging adult identity as well as the true nature of its possibilities for society. If it is "unthinkable that we should call 'adult' anyone who is unstable, extreme, or even idiosyncratic" (Stegner 227), then those who either by choice or by the result of their social class, gender, or ethnicity do not uphold the bourgeois ideals of the hegemonic culture must, like Smoke, be punished and/or expunged.

However, the very mythologies that promise individual freedom and choice, but that usually provide only a respite from the hegemonic structures of society, in the end offer a chance of redemption. For the marginalized individuals who have turned to dissipation in the face of the inevitable power structure are never truly subaltern. Jong-Fast illustrates this through both her and Miranda's battles against the self-destructive recreation that almost removed them from society, namely, their drug abuse. They are both eventually able to voice their own stories, to connect from outside of hegemonic society to its center—the mass audience, or in mythical terms,

Adam takes his start outside the world, remote on the verges; its power, its fashions, and its history are precisely the forces he must learn, must master or be mastered by[...]the Adamic hero is an “outsider,” but he is “outside” in a curiously staunch and artistically demanding manner. He is to be distinguished from the[...]dispossessed, the superfluous, the alienated, the exiled. (Lewis 128)

Each of these novels outlines at least one character's dissipation and eventual obliteration—through death, jail, or drugs—from mainstream society, the society that both gives power and its conditions; however, they also all include at least one character—Rafe, Miranda, Mumtaz—who finds a way to avoid self or societal annihilation as well as avoiding accepting totally the systematic power structure that attempts to have them follow its rules.

NOTES

¹ While Native Americans had already utilized the land of the Americas for hunting, fishing, and sustainable agriculture, their land-use was neither as intensive nor extensive as that to which the European colonists were accustomed.

² Authors such as Nathaniel Hawthorne began using Adamic metaphors in novels such as The Marble Faun (1860) which addressed the interplay between sin and innocence and the necessity of the Fortunate Fall. Drawing from the writings of Emmanuel Swedenborg, the elder William James used Adamic imagery, “identi[fy]ing the creature prior to moral consciousness as Adam, and that consciousness itself as Eve, reading the Book of Genesis as a darkly mythic report on the psychological history of Everyman” (Lewis 55). Walt Whitman later took this mythology a step further, glorifying the “newly sprung” Adam as the “new man” of the Americas, innocent and severed from the original sin of Britain and the Continent.

³ Here, I am using Stratton’s definition: the term *postcolonial*[...]refer[s] to the complex of concerns surrounding the problem of identity that characterizes the experience of states—particularly settler states—that have their origins in the European practice of colonization” (Stratton 21).

⁴ These developmental tasks include financial independence, a steady job, marriage and family, and recognition within the community (Whitbourne and Weinstock 3-4).

⁵ R.W.B. Lewis highlights such attempts in his description of America’s Adamic mythology, highlighting how “Adam takes his start outside the world, remote on the verges; its power, its fashions, and its history are precisely the forces he must learn, must master or be mastered by”

(128). Both Adam and newly-formed postcolonial nations, thus, find themselves in similar predicaments; in many ways, they exist outside of the established world, but the rules of that world still determine and shape their possibilities.

⁶ Due to labor changes of the twentieth century, nations became more industrialized and less dependent on large labor forces, and “the young were ‘technologically displaced’ from the economy[...and] child labor laws were passed to justify their exclusion” (Côté 167). The young were no longer needed to sustain the work force, and as a result of increased mechanization, were in fact a detriment to it. Labor became less necessary, jobs became more specialized, and an extended education became more important to an individual’s and community’s future success. The full status of adulthood, in many ways related to material self-sufficiency, was postponed, resulting in emerging adulthood.

At the dawn of the twenty-first century, in fact, many young people are still blocked from many areas of the work force, typically the areas that provide the wages sufficient for self-support. The education then needed to achieve jobs that do provide adequate material support also extends the period of dependence and further delays adult status. However, not all young people even in a late-capitalist society experience emerging adulthood in the same ways due to “variations in socioeconomic status and life circumstances[...]even within a country that is affluent overall” (Arnett 22). As a result, the phase of emerging adulthood is viewed as a luxury, even while it in some form remains necessary for future success. Ironically, those who are unable to “enjoy” it achieve adult status within the community at an earlier age but are less able in the long-run to maintain a viable social and economic status.

⁷ In late-capitalist societies,

it is now commonplace to adorn the body with various fashions,

jewelry, and cosmetics in order to project a particular image that pleases others while gratifying narcissistic desires; and it is customary to spend great amounts of time in experiences that similarly project an image while gaining validation from others[....]These all involve image consumption in the sense that illusions are used as a basis for key interactions with others. (Côté 130).

In other words, “identity” is often believed to be and is marketed as the result of bought goods rather than societal roles or community actions. For instance, certain clothing brands, as one example, may “identify” a person—from goth to prep to yuppie to surfer, whether or not said person’s actual activities correspond to any such particular subculture.

⁸ According to all published articles, RM is Johnson’s name, not a set of initials. Therefore, I will not designate it as such with periods.

⁹ By “hegemony,” here I follow the definition given by scholar Raymond Williams. Rather than limiting the definition to “political rule or domination,” he asserts that hegemony is “a whole body of practices and expectations, over the whole of living[,....] a lived system of meanings and values—constitutive and constituting—which[....]constitutes a sense of reality for most people in the [a] society” (Williams 108-110). To say that hegemonic society defines itself against the “other,” is to indicate that there is a distinction between the “right” of hegemony and the “wrong” of any other structure of thought and behavior. If a marginal population exhibits such structures, it is viewed as wrong or misguided by the majority. Moreover, “the central, established values claim universal status and are taken to be gender-free” (Gledhill, 345). In

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¹⁰ Postmodern scholar Giddens views identity as a project, meaning that it is constantly being honed in light of new experiences; there is no essentialist identity, just one in relation to one's experiences in society and life. While some find such a theory of identity to be liberating as it rules out any notion of identity ascription, others express concern at its instability, asserting that an individual who only possesses a certain identity in light of a particular situation has little psychological coherence and is psychologically endangered by changes in outward, societal circumstances.

¹¹ Hip-hop is a culture that has arisen in some urban communities, especially among minorities and the poor that values such skills as oral self-expression, self-sufficiency, loyalty to one's self-made family, and the ability to prove oneself to be better than another, usually either with humor or violence.

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¹³ Rather than referring to a geographical region, "East" here signifies essentially all that is not considered Western or Judeo-Christian in cultural terms. Specifically, in this section, it will refer to Arabo-Indian culture.

¹⁴ Upon studying the works of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century American novelists, Ralph Waldo Emerson surmised that the focus of American intellectuals was split between two groups: those concerned with the past (ignoring the future) and those concerned with the future (ignoring

the past). He recognized that there was “a split in culture between two polarized parties: ‘the party of the Past and the Party of the Future,’ as he sometimes called them, or the parties ‘of Memory and Hope’” (Lewis 7).

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