

**Decolonizing the Self/Community in Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt's Poetry**

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ENG499: Senior Study

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April 5<sup>th</sup>, 2023

### Abstract

Post-colonial female writers have played a large role in voicing themselves and “writing back”, especially in poetry. Zeina Hashem Beck and Sujata Bhatt are two poets who have dealt with many feminist and post-colonial themes, which may be used to compare and contrast their poems. The aim of this study is to compare both Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt’s poems using the post-colonial lens. Employing post-colonial theories such as Homi Bhabha, Edward Said and Gayatri Spivak, this paper argues that both poets Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt feel dislocated and are writing in search of a lost homeland. They seem to return to their homeland through a “poetic return” and they attempt to decolonize the self and the community. They attempt to retrieve their lost culture, history, language and civilization through writing poetry. Both poets employ the device of the duets as a form of resistance. Though they are aware of double consciousness, they cannot get rid of the “us” and “them” divide.

*Keywords:* diaspora, exile, unhomeliness, alienation, othering, hybridity, writing back, double consciousness, resistance, mother tongue

## Introduction

Post-colonialism and feminism are both topics that hold a lot of value and importance, especially when it comes to literature. Post-colonial literature contains the literary works of countries that have been previously colonized. Wang (2018) mentions that post-colonialism started to exist in the 1970s and became popular in the world. Post-colonialism is a critical approach that deals with the lasting impact of colonization in previously colonized countries. Using themes such as hybridity, double consciousness, unhomeliness, and othering, Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt both wrote post-colonial poems.

The aim of this study is to analyze the concept of resistance to fight back and retrieve the culture according to Salman Rushdie's concept of writing back with a vengeance in both Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt's duet poems. This study focuses on Beck's "You and My Country and I", "Prophecy", "Daily", "Dear White Critic", and "Ode to Leaving" which come from her book "O" which was published in July 2022 and Bhatt's "Search for my Tongue", "A Different History", "The One Who Goes Away", "How Far East is Still East", and "My Mother's Way of Wearing a Sari". The reason the following poems were chosen is because they contain similar themes in terms of post-colonialism, and they are relevant in proving that the two poets are writing back as a form of resistance. In addition, the poems contain numerous examples such as vocabulary, word diction, and statements that provide evidence for the study. The two poets are trying to retrieve their history and identity through writing duets and writing back. This paper tackles themes related to post-colonialism such as resistance, writing back, exile, double consciousness, and hybridity and examines how there is more than one language in the poems. Having more than one language in a poem may help in analyzing the double consciousness of the poet. Zeina Hachem Beck coined the term "duet", which is mentioned in an interview and

defined as using Arabic and English in the same stanza. This study borrows this word and applies it to Bhatt's poems, knowing that there is a difference in the way the poems are structured. The word 'duet' in this study is defined as a poem containing two languages. The duets are used differently by both poets Beck and Bhatt, and this will be discussed in detail later on. One common thing between the use of duets between Beck and Bhatt is that they use them as a tool for resistance against the extinction of their language, loss of identity, and colonization. Resistance is described as the colonized people's attempt to decolonize themselves and fight against/resist the oppression of the colonizers, in addition to the extinction of their language and loss of identity.

Through a deep literary analysis of the works of Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt, this study employs the post-colonial theories and frameworks of Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, Homi Bhabha, and Gayatri Spivak. Furthermore, the themes in the poems will be analyzed in a deep and detailed way and compared to each other.

Both poets deconstruct the semantics of language by using English in addition to their native language in their poems. Beck uses Arabic as her native language while Bhatt uses Indian in the Gujarati dialect. Language may be a symbol of several factors such as identity, home, or culture. In addition, the poets express their feelings in exile and their feelings are clearly represented in their poems.

It is essential to draw attention that both mother countries of the poets, Lebanon and India were colonized at some point in history. After World War I ended, in 1920, Lebanon was administered by France and became a part of the French Colonial empire. The French called Lebanon Le Grand Lebanon, and this was called the French Mandate for Syria and Lebanon. This French mandate continued up until 1943 when Lebanon became an independent state. India

on the other hand, was occupied by European colonial powers from 1858 until 1947 when India gained independence. Lebanon and India gained independence in approximately the same era/time period.

Zeina Hachem Beck is a Lebanese poet who grew up in Tripoli. She has written five short story collections and poems mostly about exile, Lebanon, and being a woman. She graduated from the American University of Beirut with a master's degree in English Literature. Her short story collections and poems have won five awards and prizes. Halawa (2022) contends that Beck gives a voice to the women in her poems, which is one of the things that this study will tackle by using the subaltern theory of Spivak. Beck is not excluding anyone from her poems when she writes in Arabic, but she feels the need to write in Arabic for the people who are like her (Kanaan, 2022). This study disagrees with Kanaan (2022) and believes that Beck excludes people who do not understand Arabic from her duets on purpose, as a form of resistance to the domination of the West and Eurocentrism.

However, Sujata Bhatt's work has been substantially studied. She is of Indian origin and has won many prizes for her poetry. Sujata Bhatt was born in India, educated in the United States, and is German based, living in Germany with her husband (Sandten, 2014). She has written poems about exile and immigration, in addition to feminism. The works of Bhatt may be highly compared to those of Beck, especially in terms of post-colonial feminism. Sandten (2013) argues that there is double consciousness in Bhatt's poems, and this study agrees with Sandten and aims to build on this notion. She sees double consciousness as something positive. Sandten (2013) also states that the poems of Bhatt express the voice of an immigrant woman, which is true but employing Spivak's theory of the subaltern would shed more light to this issue. Sandten (2000) discusses the mixed identity of Bhatt and her being an exile by exploring her poems.

This study offers a new and different lens that has not been looked at before. It offers the readers and audience a comparison of the two poets and the device of writing back, particularly in Beck's and Bhatt's poems. Thus, this study aims to address a gap because unfortunately, no one has published any academic articles on Beck's poetry apart from book reviews. In addition, no one has compared the two poets. The focus of this study will be on Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt's poems which will help in proving the topic of this study. This study will analyze how both poets Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt employ the device of writing back and of the duets as a form of resistance.

### **Post-colonial Perspectives**

This analysis will be supported by exploring certain theories such as Edward Said, Salman Rushdie, Homi Bhabha, Gayatri Spivak in relation to terms related to post-colonialism such as exile, unhomeliness, othering, hybridity, writing back, resistance, and imaginary homeland.

Edward Said is known to be the father of post-colonialism, and he has largely impacted the frame of post-colonial studies with his theories. Edward Said has written a book called *Orientalism*, which is highly related to the topic of this study. *Orientalism*, by definition, is how people divided the world into two binary oppositions of the East and West, where the East is viewed as inferior and the West as superior. It discusses the difference between the two binary oppositions, in addition to the superiority and power that the West has over the East. *Orientalism* is defined as the Eurocentric prejudice against Arabs and their culture. Wang (2018) claims that *orientalism* is a Western manner of domination and having power over the orient. There is a

cultural division between West and East and this is what orientalism depends on. Orientalism sees the east as savages, backward, barbaric people, and a place of wildness. “Western superiority” is a term that may be used to better understand orientalism, and how there is a large division between the West and the East. Using Edward Said’s theory, the poets want to get back at the negative othering that the colonizers have caused. They use the technique of writing back for a number of reasons, and one of these reasons is because of the stereotype that everything from the West is civilized and everything from the East is backwards and hence should not be taught to any person who wants to be civilized. The topic of this study is related to resistance and how the poets resist, Edward Said’s theory may be used to support the notion of resistance by the two poets Beck and Bhatt.

This paper borrows Salman Rushdie’s concept that the two poets are “writing back” as a form of resistance. Salman Rushdie’s theory and views may be used to contribute to this study. Salman Rushdie is a writer who has written extensively about the theory of post-colonialism, and he is famous for his article “The Empire Writes Back with a Vengeance”, which may be used as an example to prove that the poets write back as a tool of resistance. This article was published in 1982 and is highly connected with the theory of post-colonialism and resistance. Writing back is a technique that is used to show resistance to the colonizers who oppress the colonized. An important question that may be asked when talking about the concept of writing back as resistance is “Is writing back beneficial or should the poet get rid of the “us” and “them” divide?” There is a reason the word “vengeance” is used, and it is because the colonized want to fight and get their voices and identity back from the colonizers. In addition, they write back with a vengeance because they want to be free from the neo-colonial oppression of the colonizers and their superiority over them. Finally, they use vengeance as an attempt to decolonize themselves

and their communities. Thus, they have this vengeance inside them because they have lost their language, culture, and identity.

Homi Bhabha's concepts of dislocation, double consciousness, and hybridity, can shed light on how the speakers feel in these poems. Homi Bhabha is a critical theorist who has widely contributed to the theory of post-colonialism and is known for his theory of hybridity. According to Homi Bhabha, hybridity is the belonging of an individual to two or more cultures or identities. Many of the themes and subheadings of this study will contain theories by Homi Bhabha, and how his post-colonial views are related to writing back and resistance. Homi Bhabha's framework of hybridity will be used to analyze and compare the works of both poets. The poems of both poets are purely post-colonial, and using Bhabha's framework is useful to support the argument of this study which states that the poets are "writing back" to the Empire.

Last but not least, the famous question of Gayatri Spivak "Can the subaltern speak?" is highly significant to this study, since the subaltern may be related to colonized people in the two setting of Lebanon and India. Zembylas (2018) mentions that the essay "Can the Subaltern Speak" by Gayatri Spivak, contributed a lot in the field of post-colonialism. In an interview with Gayatri Spivak, she answers her famous question by mentioning that the subaltern cannot speak. To further explain, she means that the subaltern are not heard by anyone (Zembylas, 2018). The word subaltern describes people who are of a lower status in a hierarchy. Spivak (1988) mentions that the subaltern people are victims of colonial oppression, which is highly related to the topic of this study. The theory of the subaltern by Spivak states that those who are subaltern do not have a voice and are unable to speak up or defend themselves. The subaltern are unable to speak because no one represents them, they do not have power in order to express themselves, and they are of a low class in society. They are oppressed by several factors such as gender, race, class,



religion. The subaltern people are on the margins of society and are considered outcasts. The theory of Spivak will be used to show whether the poets have a voice or not, and if they have one, how did they gain it. The theory of the subaltern is related to this post-colonial study, because representation and hegemony/power may be discussed.

### **Themes**

After examining the poems written by Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt, both poets share the following themes in their writing:

#### **Diaspora/Exile**

Both poets Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt write about their diasporic experiences in their poems. They both immigrated, which makes them exile. In addition, both poets tell stories, which are related to diaspora and exile. The word “diaspora” is taken from the Greek, meaning to disperse. Diaspora refers to people who migrate from their homelands to another country, and it can be by force or by freedom of choice. After settling in a new culture, the diasporic individual comes to terms with two cultures, their individual culture and the new one (Nayar, 2008). Roger Bromely proposes that every narrative in diasporic writing is “both an individual story, and, explicitly, a cultural narrative” (2000, p. 21). The poems are able to present the diasporic state of the immigrants. By definition, the word diaspora means to reposition a specific culture into another culture geographically/physically. Such a shifting or repositioning of cultures was the norm during colonial times. The writing of both Beck and Bhatt is considered exilic writing because it deals with immigration themes in addition to moving from one culture to another and carrying all the traditions of the original culture. In Bhatt’s poem “The One Who

Goes Away”, she says “but I never left home. I carried it away with me”. This statement shows that even if she cannot carry her home with her physically, she carries it in her memories and through her traditions. Similarly in the poem “My Mother’s Way of Wearing a Sari” by Sujata Bhatt, she mentions her traditions throughout the whole poem, especially the word “Sari” which is directly associated to the Indian culture when someone hears it. Nayar (2008) contends that exiles tend to hold on to their homelands and traditions in an attempt to preserve their idea of a homeland. Kanaan (2022) reports that all Zeina Hachem Beck wants to write about is her experiences, specifically her diasporic experiences. When Beck and Bhatt moved away after adapting to the traditions and customs of their own countries, they carried with them the effects of these traditions and customs. Bromley (2000) defines diasporic writing as both a personal story and a cultural one. This applies to both poets because their writing is personal in which they narrate their childhood stories and their personal story as an exile, and it is also cultural because they are writing for their communities and speaking for them. In their diasporic writings, they mention how they feel dislocated from their own culture, and this is shown in many of their poems. The diasporic authors, in this case, Beck and Bhatt, speak and write for the whole community and for their people who do not have a voice to talk. Diasporic writing does not only include the experiences of the writers in exile, but also in their homeland. One of the characteristics of diasporic writing is memory, where the diasporic individual includes memories and nostalgia about their childhood in their homeland (Nayar, 2008). In many of the duets, we see memories and narration about the experiences of the poets in their homeland. They aim to visit their homeland through their poems. The poets write about their experiences from their original homelands until they migrated to the new regions. Another characteristic is feeling alienated in the new culture. This is shown in the poems of both Beck and Bhatt where the

speakers of the poem deal with the old and new, home and foreign, and familiar and strange. Thus, both Beck and Bhatt return to their cultures and roots, since exiles hold on to their traditions in an attempt to gain back their original country.

### **Unhomeliness/ Alienation**

Diaspora has an effect on the poets, which makes them feel like they do not have a home and that they are alienated in their new culture. Since both poets are diasporic, then this has left in them a sense of unhomeliness and alienation. It was hard for them to adapt to the new culture and traditions. This is one of the reasons they choose to include their original language and mother tongue in the duets. They are alienated and do not want to become part of the new culture, so they resist by using the technique of the duets. Alienation is one of the characteristics of diasporic writing, because adapting to a new culture makes an immigrant feel like they are othered. There are many examples in the poems, especially the duets, which show that Beck and Bhatt are alienated. For example, in Zeina Hachem Beck's poem "Prophecy", she mentions the word "الوحدة", meaning loneliness, which represents her alienation and her feeling lonely. Furthermore, in the poem "Dear White Critic", there is also a sense of loneliness and alienation when she says "الصباح". Therefore, the poem "daily" makes Beck feel alienated. She feels like she cannot fulfill herself in her country. There is the feeling of alienation in her own land, which is ironic. She feels like she does not belong in her own country, which makes her feel like she does not have a home, which is unhomeliness.

Similarly, in Sujata Bhatt's poems, there is also unhomeliness. In the poem "Search For My Tongue", she feels lost and alienated without her mother tongue and she is searching for it. She emphasizes the importance of the mother tongue and that it will rot if you don't practice it. In addition, the poem "The One Who Goes Away" portrays that Bhatt always wants to leave and

never feels that she wants to stay in any country except her homeland. This is shown through the phrase “maybe the joy lies in always wanting to leave”. Lastly, in the poem “My Mother’s Way of Wearing a Sari”, Bhatt tries to deal with her alienation and unhomeliness by carrying her traditions with her, and this is why the word Sari is mentioned constantly throughout the poem, even in the title. In conclusion, in almost all the duets, the poets feel like they do not belong in the new culture, and that they do not feel at home. They have left all their traditions and family behind, which places in them a feeling of being alien to the Westerners.

### **Othering**

The word othering refers to the colonizers’ treatment of the colonized as less than fully human. Moreover, the colonized people feel like they are inferior to the colonizers. After feeling alienated and having a sense of unhomeliness, the binary opposition of “us” and “them” becomes clear. It is obvious that the poets cannot but feel the divide between the two oppositions because they are othered. The concept of othering is prevalent throughout many of the poems by Beck and Bhatt. In the duet poem “Dear White Critic” by Zeina Hachem Beck, she is othered and the binary opposition is present. She tries to break the binary opposition, especially in the English section of the duet. A poem written by Sujata Bhatt that may be used as an example to show othering is the poem “Search for my tongue”. People see her language as inferior, and she is othered due to this reason.

### **Hybridity/Writing Back**

Hybridity is a powerful concept, and it has an impact globally, especially on literature (Mizutani, 2013). Hybridity is defined as being a mix of several races together. Homi Bhabha coined the term hybridity and defined it as a mix of cultures (Wang, 2018). When people are

exposed to a new culture, they form new identities, which illustrates hybridity. There are differences between Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt in terms of hybridity.

Sandten (2014) contends that Sujata Bhatt's poems contain several voices in terms of time and place and that her poems are considered hybrid. This study disagrees with Sandten and aims to prove that she is not a hybrid. In her poems, Bhatt uses several voices that help connect continents, language, and identities, which are the main topics of her poems. In her poems, there are many examples which highlight that she is alienated and othered. Sujata Bhatt is not a hybrid because she cannot get rid of the divide since she is being othered. In Bhatt's poem "Search for My Tongue", there are several examples which highlight that she is not a hybrid. First, the title of the poem implies that she lost something or lacks something that she is searching for such as that she lost her identity, and she is searching for it. In the poem, Bhatt uses the phrase "two tongues in your mouth" which shows discomfort or unpleasantness. To further illustrate, it shows that she is unable to have two tongues or to belong to two different cultures at once. In addition, the phrase "You could not use them both together" also highlights the idea that Beck is unable to be a hybrid. There is a Volta or turning point in the poem when the statement "But overnight while I dream" is mentioned. After this statement is mentioned, the Indian part of the poem is found. Maybe Bhatt dreams in her mother tongue, and her unconscious is in Indian. When she dreams, it all changes, and the tone of this turning point is considered a triumphant tone. In addition, it can further be proven that Bhatt is not a hybrid because she described her mother tongue in a beautiful way and pushes aside the foreign language. "Every time I think I've forgotten, I think I've lost the mother tongue, it blossoms out of my mouth". This statement in the poem shows that Bhatt is praising her mother tongue and describing it in a beautiful way. She uses the word "blossom" to beautify her mother tongue and mentions that her mother tongue will

always be there even when she thinks she has forgotten it. This poem shows that her language is still there, which is something positive. She also mentions the phrase “it pushes the other tongue aside” which shows that her mother tongue will always win, and no other language can compete with that. Therefore, Bhatt clearly mentions the impossibility of having two tongues together.

The poem “A Different History” also shows that Bhatt is not a hybrid, but that she has a conflict. She feels conflicted, it is as if she wants to be a hybrid, but she is unable to. The title of the poem shows that Bhatt somehow wants to change her history. Maybe she wishes India was never colonized, or she never immigrated. Great Pan is the Roman god of freedom and liberty, so when Bhatt mentions “Great Pan is not dead”, she is implying the idea that India is free of colonization. In this poem, Great Pan moved away from Europe and came to India. This shows that Bhatt wants India to be free of the oppression. In this poem, Bhatt’s conflict is shown. Great Pan is half human and half goat, which means that he is a hybrid. Maybe Bhatt wants to be like him, but she cannot. In this poem, Bhatt shifts in terms of hybridity; she relates to Great Pan for being a hybrid but at the same time does not want to get rid of the “center” and “periphery” and she still feels alienated and othered. The statement “here the gods roam freely” shows that Bhatt feels free in her original culture, as opposed to her new culture. She does not feel free or comfortable in her new culture. Furthermore, the tone of the poem is imperative and an example of this is when she uses “You must” which shows that she is resisting breaking the binary opposition. The poem “The One Who Goes Away” shows that wherever Bhatt will go, her home will always remain with her, even if it is not physically. In the poem, she says, “But I am the one who always goes away” and this shows that she has this feeling of remorse and guilt for leaving her homeland, and her attachment to India. “Of saris flapping in the wind” is a statement where she mentions a part of her culture, the saris. “A place where I want to leave” is an important

phrase to analyze in the poem because it shows that she wants to leave England, which is evidence that she is not a hybrid. A hybrid would not want to leave, but she does. If she leaves, she will be happy, meaning that she does not want to stay, and this is shown through the phrase “maybe the joy lies in always being able to leave”. Last but not least, Bhatt mentions the statement “sometimes I get asked if I were searching for a place that I can keep my soul from wandering a place where I can stay without wanting to leave”; she is trying to show that she will never find a place like home because wherever she goes, she wants to leave. Finally, the poem “How Far East is Still East” clearly portrays the binary opposition of East and West. Similarly, Zeina Hachem Beck’s poems contain othering, which proves that she is not a hybrid because she is not able to break the binary opposition of “us” and “them” or “I” and “you”. In Beck’s poem “Dear White Critic”, she mentions that she is tired of knocking on the doors of the West, and this clearly shows that she is unhappy in the foreign country and is tired of trying to belong. She feels lonely and alienated, which also show that she is not a hybrid. She directly addresses the West and tells them that she will not talk to them anymore, and this shows that she does not want to break the binary opposition of the “center” and “periphery”. Furthermore, in the English part of the poem “Prophecy”, Beck puts on a mask, which shows that she is not her true self around the West and that she is changing her identity for them. Therefore, both Beck and Bhatt are not hybrids because they are othered, alienated, and are not ready to break the binary opposition of the “center” and “periphery”.

Using Salman Rushdie’s framework, the poets write back for several reasons. In addition, the technique of writing back is used to get rid of imperialist ideologies. First, they write back because of the stereotype that everything from the West is civilized while everything from the east should not be taught. Next, they write back with a vengeance because they want to be free

from the oppression of the colonizers. In addition, they use vengeance in order to be decolonized, and get rid of the effect of colonialism on them. The poets write back because they want to preserve their mother tongue, culture, and traditions. Both poets want to retrieve their culture and history. They want to decolonize themselves and they do so by writing poetry and the technique that they use is the duets. The duets aim to decolonize the poets and their communities. Writing back is directly connected to resistance because they resist colonialism by writing back. Both poets use the technique of the duets on purpose so that the colonizers cannot understand the mother tongue language.

## **Duets**

### **Multiple Readers**

Both Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt use the duets for different reasons and in different ways. In an interview conducted with the poet Zeina Hachem Beck, she mentioned that there are three types of readers for whom the duets are written. In other words, the poems may be interpreted in three different ways or be addressed to three different readers. The first reader is the one who understands only Arabic. The second reader is the one who understands only English. Lastly, the third reader is the bilingual reader who understands both Arabic and English. In the duets, one of the two languages might be an echo, or at other times they might be two completely different stories or narratives being told in the same poem. Beck mentions that the echo might in some cases be a contradiction. They might sometimes be a translation, but Beck does not see it as a translation. According to Beck in her book “O”, the duets in English and Arabic are connected and separate at the same time. In addition, both languages make a poem when they are read with each other. Zeina Hachem Beck wants the colonizers to feel the way



they made her feel when she uses the duets. It is as if she is telling them to learn Arabic in order for them to fit in and understand the poems, she is imposing her mother tongue on the colonizers. To illustrate the technique of writing back, this study will analyze two famous poems by Beck: “Dear White Critic” and “Prophecy”. Each reading has a different meaning or interpretation.

In the Arabic part of the duet poem “Dear White Critic”, the person that Beck is addressing might be someone who is immigrating with her. The white critic, who is in the title of the duet, might be the West or a white critic Westerner. For the Arabic part, the audience is Arab since the first type of reader is the one who only understands Arabic. There is a message being sent that you should not forget your Arabic language. Beck mentions that it is like a muscle, and you must practice it. In this Arabic part, the theme of nostalgia is prevalent. Beck is nostalgic and the listeners/audience will relate and be nostalgic because they are Arab like the poet. She mentions that she is tired of knocking on the doors of the West. She is forced to leave her homeland and she is bored in the West, but this does not stop her from continuing to go there. She says that a lot of people are immigrating. She also wonders why the West is amazed that we are bilingual. There is nostalgia when she mentions her homeland and the “زيتون”, meaning olives. Perhaps the listener, who is Arab, will identify with the “زيتون” if they come from Lebanon. She also talks about culture in addition to her first love, and these are all examples of nostalgia. The olive, or “زيتون” symbolizes peace and maybe this is why she decided to include it in the poem. She feels alone and alienated, and this may be interpreted through “الصباح”. There is also a mention of God and how she is jealous of God for being immortal. Through all this mention of her homeland, childhood, and the theme of nostalgia, it may be interpreted that Beck goes back to her childhood and she does this through poetic return since she cannot go back physically to her childhood. In the English part of the duet poem “Dear White Critic”, it is not a

translation, on the contrary, the English part is totally different, it just looks like a translation. Here the English part is dedicated/addressed to the non-Arabic speaker. There is a tongue twister in the poem, which may have several interpretations. Perhaps Beck wants to make a point to show that the English she is using is Arabized English, that is, her own version of English. Instead of mentioning the past like she did in the Arabic part, she mentions the present. The expression “dark chocolate” refers to the West, as opposed to the olive which was used to refer to her Arab country. Perhaps in the West they eat dark chocolate when they feel depressed. Here, she is directly addressing the Westerner saying that she will not talk to him or her anymore and expels the latter by saying “I banish you”. It is not symbolic or metaphoric anymore, she is open and direct about it. Therefore, it is clearly seen that in the Arabic part of the duet, she is more friendly maybe since she is addressing Arabs and her people. The Arabic refers to her Arab identity while the English part is where she tries to deal with exile, at times she fights back and at other times she tries to pick up new habits from the new culture. If we were to interpret both parts of the duet together in Arabic and in English, it would be more insightful if the reader is bilingual. In addition, the use of the two languages together shows that Beck has double consciousness.

In the Arabic part of the duet “Prophecy”, from what Beck’s daughter told her, it can be argued that no one listens to these Arabic singers anymore, which shows that there is a generation gap between her and her daughter. The daughter does not enjoy or appreciate Arabic songs and feels that they are outdated. If the singers are not literally dead, to the daughter they are. When Beck mentions “المدينة”, meaning the city, maybe she is talking about her homeland. As mentioned before, there is a sense of loneliness and alienation when she says “الوحدة”. She asks if the streets that she used to walk in when she was young will still remember her when she

is old. She might be addressing God in this poem, but it is not clear. The Arabic part of this duet is ambiguous. In the English part of the duet “Prophecy”, there is what looks like a dialogue. The speaker is possibly conversing with a friend. When the question “Do you still smoke” is asked, there is no answer, unlike the Arabic part. Maybe when Beck moved to the West, she was so depressed that she started smoking again. Carl Yung’s shadow and persona terms shed light on the different versions of the poem. When the speaker is employing Arabic, the shadow is released while the persona comes out in English. Beck puts on a mask, which shows that she cannot always be herself. In this poem, there is a contradiction between the English section and Arabic section. In English, she might go back to her homeland; if not physically then mentally. She hopes that the streets will remember her. On the contrary, in Arabic, the street will not remember her. In addition, she stops looking for God in the Arabic part, but in the English part she is still searching and has not stopped looking.

Sujata Bhatt also has multiple readers in mind when writing most of her poems. The poem “Search for My Tongue” will be used to illustrate the multiple readers. The first reader is the one who understands English, the second reader is the one who understands Indian, and the third reader is the bilingual individual who understands both languages. This study understands the English part of “Search for My Tongue”, but not the Indian part. It could be argued that she is excluding non-Indian speakers. As mentioned before, there is a difference between the duets of Beck and Bhatt. Beck’s duets are echoes or contradictions while Bhatt’s are a translation for those who understand Indian. Furthermore, the format/design of the duets differs between the two poets too. For example, in Zeina Hachem Beck’s poems, the left side is in English while the right side is in Arabic, while in Sujata Bhatt’s poems it is different. Sometimes both the left and

right side are in English while the middle is in Indian. The format of the duets may also be considered resistance since they write in freestyle and format the poem the way they want.

### **Double Consciousness**

Sujata Bhatt's poems may be used to discuss double consciousness, which is introduced by Du Bois. According to Du Bois, double consciousness is defined as a "two-ness".

Furthermore, the latter explains that double consciousness is described as having two souls and two thoughts, thus the name "double" consciousness. Double consciousness is feeling torn

between two opposed cultures. According to Sandten (2014), Sujata Bhatt may be described as having double selves, and as having a double consciousness. There is double consciousness in

Bhatt's poems, which tackles the idea of someone who is represented by more than one identity.

Du Bois states that the two selves which make up a double consciousness are constantly in a competition and are opposed to each other. However, this study in addition to Bhatt's poems

oppose the theory of Du Bois. Bhatt considers that her two selves are just part of the multiple voices found in her poems and her condition as an immigrant. Bhatt has multiple identities,

which proves her double consciousness. As stated before, she was born in India, educated in the United States, and she is German based. She does not have one specific culture that she belongs

to, but many cultures. In the duets, there are several voices and even more than one language that connect language and identities. There is more than one voice because they represent the voice of

an immigrant woman who wants to share her experiences as an exile. She uses more than one language in order to explain her experience as a diasporic individual and as an exile.

Furthermore, Bhatt has experienced different cultures and she shows this in her poems (Sandten, 2014). In Bhatt's poem "Search for My Tongue", there is a lot of double consciousness. Bhatt

somehow contradicts herself, which shows her double consciousness. On one hand, she feels

nostalgic and longs for India and wants to be an independent migrant writer. On the other hand, she wants to discuss India's colonization in addition to her being an immigrant. Having a double consciousness means that an individual does not have a specific identity or does not belong to one particular culture. This applies to Bhatt since she does not belong to one specific place, but she puts on different masks and personalities and in this way, she is able to adapt to any place she goes to. Many if not all of Bhatt's poems, focus on identity and she searches for her identity even though she is aware of her double consciousness and that she does not belong to a specific place. Some of Bhatt's poems cross geographical borders and deconstruct them, which shows that she is ready to break the binary opposition of the several cultures that she belongs to. Thus, Sujata Bhatt is characterized by a double consciousness and even a multiple consciousnesses which describe her immigrant and diasporic situation. Both Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt use duet as a form of resistance against the colonizer and this is related to double consciousness but which of the two poets win? This is related to the concept of hybridity which has been discussed before. Beck is not a hybrid because she is ready to get rid of the "us" and "them", and Bhatt is also not a hybrid, but she has a conflict. She wants to be a hybrid, but she can't. In addition, she belongs to several cultures and has multiple identities which illustrate her conflict. Beck is characterized by a double consciousness because she uses both Arabic and English in her poems. In addition, the parts written in Arabic are different than the ones written in English, which indicates that she has a split personality. This split personality shows that she is a different person in each of the two languages that she uses in her duets. In English, it is as if she puts on a mask because she is not herself. On the other hand, in Arabic, she is herself and is more friendly. Therefore, both poets are characterized by a double consciousness. This double consciousness

that the poets have leads them to mimic and imitate the colonizers, and it may be subversive at times.

### **Resistance**

In post-colonialism, resistance is an aspect of great importance and significance. First, resistance is when the colonized people do not want to be affected by the colonialism of the colonizers and rebel against colonialism. Thus, the colonized people do everything they can to resist the oppression/power of the colonizers, loss of identity, the extinction of their language, imperialist ideologies, and perpetuation of the idea that their culture is uncivilized or not important. There are several reasons why the duets are considered a form of resistance. First, they are writing back by using the duets. The writing back technique and the duets are considered resistance. They write back in order to change the stereotype which states that everything from the West is civilized while everything from the east should not be taught. This study opposes the view of Sandten (2013) which states that Bhatt does not resist; on the contrary, she does resist by using the writing back technique and the device of the duets. Both poets deconstruct the semantics of language by using two languages to resist. The colonizers have taken away the voices and identities of the colonized leaving them with nothing, and this is why the colonized people want to fight back. The poets want their identity back and they write back with a vengeance, which is connected to Salman Rushdie's article "Writing Back With a Vengeance". The poets are angry and want to take revenge (vengeance). An important concept that may be discussed to show how the poets are angry is their use of violent terms in their poems. In Bhatt's poem "A Different History", some violent terms are "sin", "slam", "murder", and Both Beck and torture. Similarly, in Beck's poem "Dear White Critic" she uses the word "banish" and repeats it twice in the same sentence, which is considered a violent term. Bhatt

want to break free and do not want to be colonized. This is why they write back and use the duets in order to decolonize not just themselves, but their communities too. They want to fight back and win back their original culture, identity, language, and traditions that the colonized have taken away from them. They do not want their language to be extinct, or to lose their identity. Thus, they use vengeance in order to be free and decolonized. There are many samples of resistance in both Beck and Bhatt's poems. At first, Zeina Hachem Beck started to write in English only, then she started to add some words in Arabic, and then sentences. In her book "O", she used a lot of Arabic and wrote whole sections of poems in Arabic, which made the duets. In the poem "Dear White Critic", Beck uses resistance by kicking out the West when she says, "I banish you". In addition, she is more friendly in her mother tongue which also shows that she is resisting. She is happy and content that her words tire them. In addition, the word "ours" shows that they are independent somehow, and that they are attempting to decolonize themselves. In the poem "Search For My Tongue", Bhatt shows resistance by emphasizing the importance of the mother tongue and mentions that it is impossible to use both tongues together. The impossibility of using the two tongues together is evidence that Bhatt is not a hybrid. This shows that she is resisting and does not want to be colonized. In addition, the largest example of resistance in this poem is when the mother tongue ties the other tongue in a knot, not allowing it to speak. She wants to silence the colonizers. In addition, Bhatt resists because she wants to preserve her language, and this is connected to identity and that she does not want to lose her identity. For example, the poem "The One Who Goes Away" is written in free verse and does not have a particular rhyme scheme, which shows that she is writing however she likes, and this is considered resistance. According to Kanaan (2022), Beck uses the duets and includes Arabic so not everyone can have access or understand the Arabic part. She writes for the people who can

relate to her, the Arabs. In conclusion, Beck and Bhatt use the duets as a form of resistance to retrieve their culture and history. In conclusion, the two poets are trying to retrieve their identity through writing duets as a form of resistance and vengeance from the colonizers. It is clear that they are fighting hard against the colonizers to decolonize themselves and the people of their original culture.

### **Mother Tongue**

The mother tongue that is used in Beck and Bhatt's duets has several purposes and messages behind it. According to Halawa (2022), as Beck's duets expanded, she started to read and write more arabic. She feels the need to share poems in Arabic, her mother tongue, and this shows how attached she is to her mother tongue. Similarly, Sujata Bhatt is also attached to her mother tongue, and this is shown in her poems, especially the poem "Search for My Tongue" where she emphasizes the significance of mother tongue. It may be analyzed that the two poets write in the mother tongue as a new kind of mothering. To further explain, just like mothers give birth, the two poets also give birth. They give birth to stories and narratives, in addition to their diasporic experiences. This may be interpreted as a situation of power and identity. There is an important relationship between the mother tongue and communication. The whole purpose is to build bonds and relationships. The mother tongue is important to both Beck and Bhatt. It helps them resist, write back, and value their original culture more. The poems of both Beck and Bhatt emphasize the importance of the mother tongue and how we must always practice it or we will lose it, and by losing it we lose our identity.

### **The Subaltern**

The people who are considered subaltern usually do not have a voice to express themselves, specifically their pain, sadness, and oppression. Spivak (1988) mentions that the



subaltern people are considered “other” and that they must be represented by someone. Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt have a voice and are not considered subaltern because they are able to express themselves through their duets, which are used as a form of resistance. Thus, Beck and Bhatt are not subaltern, they are elite. They write and speak for the people of their original culture and for the subaltern colonized people who do not have a voice to express themselves. Furthermore, Beck and Bhatt write for the subaltern and express what the subaltern wish they could say through their poems and through writing. The reason they write for the subaltern is because there is no one to represent the subaltern, so they are representing them through their writings and poems. Representation is an important aspect in Gayatri Spivak’s subaltern theory. These people usually have no one to represent them and this is why they do not have a voice to express themselves. Beck and Bhatt have a voice in their poems, and they use this voice in order to represent the subaltern people of their original country.

### **Discussion**

Both Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt are writing in search of a lost homeland. They use what is called poetic return in order to return to their homes through poetry and through imagination. They do this by writing about their childhood memories and nostalgia. Furthermore, they write what the homeland is about. Cosmopolitanism is the idea that all humans are part of one universal and single group. When analyzing Beck and Bhatt’s poems, it may be analyzed that there is no cosmopolitanism or globalization. It is clear that there is still a clear division between East and West, and the binary opposition of “us” and “them”. Both Beck and Bhatt do not feel like they belong, or that they are part of one community with the colonizers. This lack or absence of cosmopolitanism leads to the fact that there is also an absence of assimilation. They

do not seek assimilation, and this is clearly shown. Furthermore, there is no solidarity between them, the poets still feel lonely. Both poets are caught up in the gender divide of “center” and “periphery”. In addition, it may be said that they are still affected by colonialism and despite their colonization, they feel that they are neocolonized.

### **Conclusion**

In conclusion, Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt are writing back as a form of resistance. Both poets have a lot of similarities and some differences between them. First, they both are not able to be hybrids because they have a personal struggle to adapt, they still feel othered, and they are still affected by colonialism. They are both exiles who write about their diasporic experiences. Since they write about their diasporic experiences, then both poets’ poems are considered semi biographical poem. They both feel alienated in their new culture and have this sense of unhomeliness and that they do not belong. In order to deal with this alienation, Beck and Bhatt bring their traditions and home with them. They feel othered by the colonizers and that there is a clear binary opposition of “us” and “them”. In addition, from the poems that this study looked at, both of them use the device of the duets and write in two languages. They also use violent terms in their poems to fight back and they do this in order to resist, because they want to decolonize themselves and their communities. It is clear that Beck and Bhatt do not want to be colonized, and they fight back to retrieve their identity and culture. They both write in search of a lost homeland and go back to their culture through poetic return and nostalgia. Last but not least, both poets have their own unique styles of writing duets in terms of themes, structure, and languages. Thus, Beck and Bhatt are two women who share a lot in terms of colonialism. There are also differences between the poets such as the use of their duets, the purpose, and the format.

To conclude, the duets are used as a form of resistance from the colonizers. Other approaches might be relevant in analyzing the poems of Zeina Hachem Beck and Sujata Bhatt. This study only covered a sample of Beck and Bhatt's work, perhaps further research would deal with more of their work.

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